

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE  
(GRADUATE PROGRAMME)

A FEMINIST READING OF SELECTED FILMS:  
A CASE STUDY OF TWO FEMALE – AUTHORED AMHARIC  
FILMS – SARA AND ROMAN

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FILMS – SARA AND ROMAN

BY  
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Not by might, but by His.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Women are one of the greatest sources of human life. They were marginalized and ignored as if they were unimportant part of the society. The truth is they are the nucleus of each community especially in Africa. This fact also influenced African women writers who contribute to the writing business over the years. African feminist literary criticism encourages those women writers to open up and write about themselves. Film is a visual medium which can play a great role in directing human's mind. As it is a new phenomenon in the Ethiopian Society, female writers can use it to challenge the existing social system.

Therefore, this thesis has attempted to analyze two female authored Amharic films from the African Feminist Literary Criticism point of view. It examines how the female characters are represented in each film. The concept of feminist film criticism bases on Laura Mulvey's (June, 2007) male gaze and Eva-Maria Jacobson's (May, 1999) female gaze. There is a challenge between the male power over female which is also seen through the gaze of each sex. This thesis also observes how gaze differences applied in these films. Films can show the social and cultural expectations established through patriarchy how women are considered to be. This thesis focuses on the emotional and cultural clashes existed using the visual art.

As few feminist film critics believed, the findings of the study prove the possible existence of female gaze in these two female-authored Amharic films. Unlike the previous norms of portraying women as sexual object, passive and ignorant beings, few females are made to be logical and intellectual. They lived beyond the patriarchal domination and cultural expectation of women. They were appeared to control their life and influence other male characters around them. They are the center of their own story and become heroines with whom audience want to identify themselves.



# **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Literature is a reflection of life which can be controlled by its creators. Authors and authoresses explore language in order to entertain, persuade, provoke and convince their readers or audience. According to Wikipedia (June, 2007), they can induce their audience to see what they see, to feel what they feel and to believe what they believe. This idea might seem an outdated and ancient way of winning a game between author and audience. However, this kind of non-noticeable mind game has lived for such a long time and still lives in today's literary world.

Literary works reflect the values of each society. They show the real image of their society using their culture as a backdrop in order to give it a reality touch. As a part of a society, women have a great role in making literary texts. The different literary materials show what these women experience and how they live accordingly. Starting from the very beginning of human existence, literary works are designed and shaped by using the binary oppositions. Rich over poor, elders over younger, leaders over oppositions, imitators over originalities, blacks over whites, men over women and so on. Every activity in a literary text has its own opposition which looks over to improve or to change the system in general. This might be true about the cultural, social, economic, political and psychological events of humans; the binary oppositions Wikipedia (Feb, 2007).

Therefore, for a long period of time, women had been expressed and guided under the patriarchal situation. Whatever men do is accepted, while it is so embarrassing when women are involved in it. The patriarchal culture undermines women and denies their rights as humans. In literature too women have been pictured as most submissive, irrational, emotional, sassy and

beautiful creatures, or as dependent, unable to make their own decisions. On the contrary, men appear as rescuers, courageous beings, and heroes, rational and decisive bodies. Women shall submit themselves to the rules and regulations set by the culture or norms of those days.

Culturally, not naturally women have been made to be inferior to men, while men are pulled up to be superior to women. This idea is strengthened by Ruthven (1984:44), "The subjection of women, therefore, is brought about not by their 'natural' inferiority but by their classification as intrinsically inferior by a male-dominated culture they can not avoid living in." If a girl obeys not rebels, she shall be rewarded. However, the one who rebels from the will of the society shall be judged.

This is also reminding us of the different ancient fairy tales and folklores written and spoken a long time ago. The beautiful girl who lost a very important person at the beginning of the story who obeys her parents or society shall be rewarded by marrying a very charming prince or king. Such kinds of repetitive writing also appear in modern literary works.

Most people believe women should be responsible for the household activities: yet, they can be shown as active participants in the social, economic, and political sphere of the society. Moreover, society expects women to be humble, emotional and submissive. Therefore, they are unable to do any responsible activities because they are already discouraged by society's categorization. This categorization is highly influenced by patriarchal domination. This idea is strengthened by Guerin and et al (1992:182), "Feminism is concerned with difference and marginalization of women. Feminists believe that our culture is a patriarchal culture, that is, one organized in favor of the interests of men."

In our country, Ethiopia, the cultural domination and bias of patriarchy made women helpless, passive creatures, which feminism strongly opposes. The films which the researcher selected for analysis show that female characters are

representative of women in actual life. As most feminists agree, the psychological barriers set on the path of individuals prevent them from looking beyond patriarchal influence. People look or understand things, theories and ideologies as they are set in the traditional gender role and patriarchy. Nevertheless, feminist criticism chose to reveal the feminine sensibility and eliminate the psychological assumption of categorizing women as passive, submissive, emotional, and sassy persons.

Words, the writers used and the style in the texts have a great impact in giving women a specific status in the society. Guerin and et al (1992:185) define this as: “Feminist criticism is always political and always revisionist, no matter what the emphasis, and most feminists now agree that despite their diverse approaches there is a distinctive feminine sensibility, even a primordial female part of the psyche reflected in style and in language itself.”

On the basis of the growth of technology in our world, movie writers and viewers spread vastly to push forward the rapid change in the film production. Likewise, women have started to be a part of this area in Ethiopia where film business is at its infancy. Though it is still influenced and dominated by male authors, two women are found to promote their talents. However, movies mirror the real social life reflected in the works. They convey the atmosphere of the society that created each scene.

It seems that writers get the theme of their work from their environment. This also makes it difficult to produce a material that is free from the influence of each society. Therefore, the place of women in a given society, the impact of their being, the image of their existence and the expectations of their role can spring from the existing situation.

According to Arnheim (1977:110) as a part of another literary genre, film has the same influence: “Film is one of the most characteristic means of expression, and one of the most effective means of influence in our times.”

Once more, women are pictured as beautiful, passive creatures that are looking for a man to save them; they have that negative image in films too. As O'Connor and Jackson cited in Tigist (2006:3), film writers view women as:

*decadent woman, exotic, world weary, sexual creatures whose lives revolved around men in the films. Each actress, of course, created a unique interpretation of the image. Some with humor and others with pathos, but all operates within the stereotypical framework of the Eve image.*

This study in particular uses feminist literary criticism in feminist film criticism to reveal how women writers view or describe other women in films in relation with other male counterparts. The thesis also takes great consideration for these female writers who encourage other female writers who might be interested to write scripts from the female point of view. Therefore, this thesis tries to answer the following questions:

1. Are the female characters in each film exposed to patriarchal premises and prejudice?
2. Are the women in the films represented as independent beings that are the center of attention without the help of male characters?
3. Do the films written by women challenge the patriarchal culture and normative writing system?

## **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

Literary works reveal aspects of a given society. The only difference they can make is showing how the beliefs and influences are reflected. Women writers of our days are shouting for the equality of women so as to hoard and rescue the unprivileged women through their writing. They show how women have been undermined and oppressed while women are the center of one's being. Through

films' visual instrument, women can still voice their message. Based on these facts, the objectives of this study are:

1. to analyze the representation of female characters in relation with the male characters in the two Amharic films
2. to examine the prejudice and cultural bias to which women are exposed in society
3. to analyze how the female authoresses view the female characters

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This thesis is believed to be a springboard for further studies regarding film from a feminist perspective. Therefore, the outcome of this thesis might help others to see the feminist ideology which ridicules the prejudice over females in a given society. Moreover, the analysis of these films might reveal how women had been oppressed psychologically and how they are still inferior to men. It might even show whether the female writers view the female characters from a male's perspective.

### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

Women, as a part of society can challenge the ideologies of the stated society through their writing and viewpoint. Almost all film writers, producers and directors in the film industry, particularly in Ethiopia, are men. However, this thesis focuses on few female writers who are also directors. This paves the way for the focus of this paper to be narrowed down to two Amharic films: *Sara* (2004) by *Helen Tadesse* and *Roman* (2004) by *Emebet Girma*.

### **1.5 Limitations of the Study**

Since the research is based on the analysis of Ethiopian films, it might be difficult to find documents and research papers done on this area. This seems difficult because the film production is not well established as a literary genre

that can influence society. The writer of this thesis hopes that film criticism in Ethiopia will develop in the near future.

## **1.6 Method of the Study**

This study is expected to implement the textual analysis method of studying. Two female authored Amharic films are selected for the analysis: *Sara* by *Helen Taddesse*, and *Roman* by *Emebet Girma*. These films are selected because they were written by female writers and viewed by audience over a year. The study will examine both the performance of the film and the written scripts from a feminist film criticism point of view. The basic theoretical framework of the study will be based on the African feminist literary theory along with Laura Mulvey's notion of the discovery of male gaze in combination with the possible existence of female gaze according to Eva-Maria Jacobson's findings. It is intended to analyze the portrayal of female characters as dependent on male counterparts including the societal prejudice on female characters and the consequences of their rebellious existence which will be taken from the film scripts and visual scenes.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.1 Feminism**

The theory of feminism was considered as a dark revolution which ran against the deeds of each society. Liberating women from their cultural bondage and teaching them to have confidence and exploring their potential were taken as a crime against what was a normal rule for most communities in the world. Women were inferior for such a long time, even though they are naturally equal with men. However, feminism is a theory that condemns the social, cultural, psychological and political discrimination of women.

It is still hard for many people to accept that a woman can perform, and carry out the same work a man does. It is still hard to accept that a woman can be a great leader in taking responsibilities outside her home. They think something lacks in her mind which does not allow her to be independent. A woman always needs, looks for a man to help her out in her day-to-day life. She cannot accomplish a given work or face the dangers of life without her right arm, a man. This is what has been clearly seen in real life as well as recent films. The hurdles women face is again reflected in the films.

Before discussing the very facts of the feminism elements in films, answering what feminism is all about and how it started has its own benefit. There is no clearly documented information regarding the how and by whom the feminism movement was started. Some scholars think it was begun around the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century and some others think it existed long before that. Most people agree it was in full swing and started working around the 1920's. It was established in the West based on the concept of women having equal natural and cultural rights with men. It is one great thing for sure the whole world needs to know.

In some places, women are considered as a second citizen, a second family in their own house because of cultural expectations. The culture of each society upheld the view that women are not as decisive as men, as strong as men. It made a clear distinction between the psychological differences among female and male. As blacks had faced discrimination over their color, women were expected to accept the dishonor over their sex.

It is true that women and men are different physically, mentally, emotionally and psychologically, but they should not be set to be higher or more privileged than the other. People of early times took these differences for granted and made women less important in the society. In the interpersonal relationship between male and female, male dominance over the female had been taken and accepted as an inevitable factor. This idea is strengthened by Stockard and Johnson (1992:10) as:

*Not only does male dominance pervade our language, religion and media, it also influences the everyday interactions of males and females. Gender segregation and the devaluation of women appear in everyday life. ... They are both different and differently evaluated like culture, our social roles are such an expected part of our lives that we usually do not realize the extent to which our day-to-day activities reflect, re-create, and reinforce both gender differentiation and male dominance.*

The male dominance over female had been seen in every aspect of life. Whether it is a civilized society or a primitive community, males are more powerful than females. Men are always encouraged to be brave, rational, non-emotional, strong and decisive. Therefore, they have the higher social respect and acceptance through many generations. This difference of giving value over the other sex is not only working in social and political areas, but also in religious and economic arenas.

Most women are economically dependant on their husbands since they do not earn more money than their husbands do. Or else they do not earn enough to help out themselves, provide themselves with what is necessary with their own

money. Employers have less expectation in giving assignments to women as they consider women have a lot of burden and responsibility at home. As a result, women cannot fight back for their right even if they are living with very abusive husbands. Since they are jobless and economically dependant on their husbands, they cannot leave or mark their equality at least at the household level. It is known that it takes a very long time to change deep-rooted assumptions of social views.

Religious organizations, especially Christian denominations did reflect the same thing as the society. However, through time a few religious organizations changed their attitude and started fighting with women. According to Walker (Feb, 2007), this idea is presented as:

*For black women living in slavery in America the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was a turning point, as Protestant evangelism combined with the anti-slavery movement. Women made up a large part of revival congregations both in white and black churches. Women were not supposed to preach but some – like the former slave Jarena Lee – ignored this. Black women realized that freedom from whites was not enough. They had to have freedom from men too.*

This shows that black women had been oppressed twice: for being female and being black. However, the Protestant church and anti-slavery movement helped them to work together and ridicule what has been called male dominance over women for many years.

Feminism strongly stresses the difference between gender and sex since these two appear as one element for most people. All feminists argue and fight for the same purpose. According to Thatcher and Stuart (1996:58) gender and sex can be defined as:

*...Sex is a biological designation and corresponds to male and female as biological/sexual definitions. .... Gender is a social designation referring to socio-cultural consequences or implications of sex, i.e. the particular cultural shape of sex (biological nature) into*

*different roles, status and normative patterns of behavior attributed to men and women in a given culture. ...*

Therefore, most feminists agree on the natural difference between the two sexes. It is something that should be celebrated. There are two different sexes with different physical and emotional aspects which make the world more beautiful. However, the problem is caused when one thinks highly and pushes down the other to be someone different and unnatural which is inferior to them. The social designation created a new creature as ruler and slaves. Slavery cannot be seen as it is used to be in other situations and life styles. It is a very civilized way and no one can understand it clearly. What is the society's tool that ridicules the potential of women? The answer is patriarchy. It is the great policy of our community that feminism strongly opposes.

## **2.2 Patriarchy**

As it was discussed earlier, most families of any society had been dominated and ruled by men. Such an institution is named: patriarchy. The dominant figure is always shown as a saving hero over his family whether the rest of the family accepted or rejected. Nevertheless, women were not aware of the influence called patriarchy through the way they see things, judge events and view their own world. As Schein quoted in Watkins (1981:101), the foundation of patriarchy is the oppression of women.

### **2.2.1 Traditional role of Patriarchy**

Women were pushed down and oppressed through cultural and economic barriers while men pulled up to rule over everything around them. Society even made a clear distinction between job occupations as women able to work and impossible to carry out. Even though a few women joined a higher education, they could not influence the majority of society that they can do better or perform as well as men do.

Again Schein quoted in Watkins (1981:101) elaborates the aspects and outcomes of patriarchy as:

*The patriarchal nuclear family makes its entire members dependant upon the male (father-husband). It is in this oppressive atmosphere that we grow up, and are extremely sensitive to this hierarchy of power even as children. We realize, more than adults know, that our father (and society in his image, from policeman to doctor to president) is powerful, and that our mother is powerless. She has to scheme and manipulate through sympathy to get what she wants.*

According to the above information, a woman has to always smile, become submissive to get what she wants from her husband, man. A very aggressive and self-confident woman cannot survive through the patriarchal society. One child can be surprised to find his father cooking in the kitchen where his place has to be in front of a TV screen or computer. The patriarchal society already determined the roles of men and women. Hence, man is always superior to woman.

Patriarchy has all the influences in a woman's life without her awareness on the way we see things, judge events, and view our world. It is deep-rooted in our society and in our life too. The traditional gender role of our society reveals the assumption of categorizing men as protective, supportive, rational and decisive, whereas women as emotional, weak and submissive. However, feminists argue that the physical differences cannot guarantee for men to be intellectual, smart, and knowledgeable and courageous.

According to Tyson (1999:84), "Feminists don't agree that such differences as physical size, shape and body chemistry make men naturally superior to women: for example, more intelligent, more logical, more courageous, or better leaders." The strongest belief of all feminists is that the difference between sex and gender needs to be defined clearly, in order to set women free from cultural bondages and eliminate the assumptions or categorizations of behaviors as male and female groups. Ruthven (1984:8) strengthens this idea as:

*The purpose of making this distinction has been to free women (but uneventably men too) from sexist stereotyping based on limiting conceptions of their 'nature'; and the upshot has been a discrediting of essentialistic theories of human behavior which designate certain characteristics as male-specific and others as female-specific.*

On the contrary, patriarchy pushes down the assumption of women to disprove that they are naturally capable of doing anything that men can. Nevertheless, feminists are trying to show the natural equality of men and women which is hidden by the cultural biases of ancient society. Unfortunately this idea still influences the modern society. The system even oppressed women not to look at their rights and be submissive. Moreover, Tyson (1994:94) states:

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

Women had been marginalized and denied their birth right in which they can be great leaders, good politicians and most of all extraordinary writers. They were not allowed to attend school and get educated, but expected to be a good house wife. These judgments of the society hindered them from expressing themselves through their writing and revealing whatever they have beyond patriarchy. Feminists judged that the superiority of men over women is an oppressive factor.

### **2.2.2 Influences of Patriarchy**

It can be said that all feminists have one common enemy which they ridicule and detest: patriarchy. It was started in the early stage of human beings living in communities. Something which started many centuries ago still has an effect on human relations especially, when equality among sexes and natural rights are concerned. Those natural rights which were there by nature were denied by society. To understand why this term is taken as an enemy by

feminists, it is important to define what it is and find out the reasons why it is rejected and abhorred by women. Patriarchy is defined as male dominated society which does not have any room for women Wikipedia (June, 2007).

According to Wikipedia (June, 2007) patriarchy can also be viewed as:

*The word is often used, by extension, to refer to societies where men are also expected to take primary responsibility for the welfare of the community as a whole and hence take on the duties of public office. ... Patriarchy is seen as a hegemonic gender order imposed through individual, collective and institutional behaviors.*

The influences of patriarchy in any society began from the time when men were set to be the only responsible beings for things that happen inside their family and their community. They are made to rule everywhere they are. It is a very difficult thing if they have women bosses especially, on their jobs. It is impossible to accept women as leaders, because the patriarchal society taught men to be first, primer no matter what.

Therefore, it became rather gender-oriented when women were taken as slaves. Even though, they have the talent to rule, they are forced to be ruled. It seems unnatural to find them on the top of something, to be successful and to be smart. The patriarchal society expects them to speak slowly, to be shy and loveable if they wanted to be rewarded by the community. If they rebel or live against this, they will be punished fiercely. Humble women have big rewards.

The ancient idea of patriarchy still has its own impact on our society. People get surprised when they find out that the authoress of a very successful book is a woman. They think that the woman is tail of man. Women are perceived as passive objects who take men as their role models. New things and ideas can be discovered by men only women do not have the skill, ability and talent to take a risky decision to be role models.

This compels us to wonder why a woman cannot be a great writer, speak out about womanhood. The answer is she can and she will, but the problem is the

prejudice against women in the patriarchal society. A woman is pictured as a girl who always waits for some charming and generous man to save her. That is why a girl cannot work alone by herself using her intelligence to overcome her problems, troubles and challenges. She always needs a man to support her which strengthens the belief in each patriarchal society that a woman cannot be whole without a man.

Patriarchy influences society to believe a woman is always dependant on a man. Therefore, in movies and real lives, writers are expected to show that women are inferior over men. This appears not on a written paper or judicial law, but inside a community which governs each society.

## **2.3 Feminist Literary Criticism**

During the early 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and long before that, we found that mostly men writers who did great works in the literary world. They did write about life, how the people lived and their own philosophy depending on the literary movement that took place, yet women were denied the might to write books and publish them. In one way, the patriarchal society influenced writers to portray women as weak, helpless, and submissive creatures. A woman who rebels against the will of her father or husband was condemned as a witch, evil being or faced the consequences of disobedience.

Feminist literary criticism emerged as an attack over other modes of criticism which had failed describing women as women. According to Guerin and et al (1991:183) feminist literary criticism can be viewed as:

*The exclusion of women from the literary canon as a political as well as aesthetic act being addressed and remedied, but impatience with such patriarchal prejudice is not enough for most feminists. ...feminism represents the single most important social, economic, and aesthetic revolution of modern times.*

Nowadays, most writers understand that a novel or a short story should not portray women as helpless creatures, but a partner who can work as hard as men do. Feminist literary criticism also ridicules the various language usages which discriminate women. It is difficult to tell how far those women fought to have a different language that did not undermine the ability of women. Women writers passed through three different literary phases, each focusing on different issues.

### **2.3.1 Phases of Feminist Literary Criticism**

Many feminists have their own theory and basic point to discuss their view. Showalter as one of the giant feminists figure categorized the various movements of feminists specifically based into three phases. According to Showalter quoted in (Ibid), the three literary phases are distinguished as feminine, feminist and female.

The feminine phase has existed from 1840-1880. During this period, women were trying to imitate the dominant tradition (Ibid). The dominant tradition was patriarchy. They were imitating and describing women as men did. They wrote for the sake of the patriarchal society. If the society punished a woman who was rebellious and outrageous, the women writers did the same to stay in the writing business.

The feminist phase has existed from 1880-1920. During this phase, women protested and advocated minority rights (Ibid). Women writers moved their ability of writing to the next step by protesting against patriarchy and other systems. Minority people like Blacks, Asian, Latinos and Caribbeans including women of the world shouted through the literary texts, moved to establish a new phase to have a new outlook towards the people around them. Those women writers moved on the assumption of writing the same way men wrote

about them. They had opened a new era of literature which revealed that the dominant tradition was wrong.

During the final phase, the female phase started in 1920. During this phase, women opposed exposing men who hated women in their texts (Ibid). These writers even uncovered their identity and replaced by a turn inward and a resulting rediscovery of women's texts and women. They started writing about women as women without the influence of men or their dominant tradition, patriarchy. Women viewed them as strong and self-sufficient being rather than dependent and weak creatures.

The literary development has shown changes through the three different stages. This indicates that women had developed their self-confidence and discovered themselves through time.

### **2.3.2 Black Feminist Literary Criticism**

These feminists are taken to be minorities and they believe that they had been oppressed for three reasons; for being women, working and low class minority groups, and non-whites (colored). They had been abused and neglected not only in the patriarchal notions, but also by the upper class white women. This idea is strengthened by Ruthven (1991:19) as: "...black feminists, who feel themselves to be doubly if not triply oppressed: as blacks in a white supremacist society, as women in a patriarchy, and as workers under capitalism."

Black feminists have argued for such a long time. They were also attacked for their color. The whole interest of black feminists laid on, to write or criticize about their ancestors' journey from freedom to slavery, the big crisis in family, the physical and emotional damage caused on black women. Guerin and et al (1992:209) emphasise this idea as:

*...black feminists are interested in exploring texts for motifs of interlocking racist, sexist, and classist oppression, the portrayal of black women as complex selves, spiritual journeys of black women from victimization to the realization of personal autonomy or creativity, the centrality of female bonding, personal relationships in the family and community, reclaiming such figures as the tragic mulatta or the black mother image; validation of the epistemological power of the emotions; the iconography of women's clothing and black female language.*

Unlike the other study groups, black feminists blame the white feminists for creating or spreading out fragmentations of the self and the community. Black feminists require the presence of their men in their work. They believe men shall be included which is contrary to the suggestion of white women whom they consider as separatists. Therefore, according to black feminists literary texts can overcome or eradicate the fragmentation of consciousness induced in a racist or racial focused society in using both its creation and analysis. This means that they can overcome the oppression by writing about black women and analyzing the text from a black feminist point of view.

As the other feminists struggle to eliminate and investigate the patriarchal experience of literary texts, black feminists need to change the oppressive world from being color or race based with the inclusion of black men. They struggle to set themselves free from any cultural prejudice as well as their men. They believe that if they cannot save their men, saving themselves alone would not bring any change or make any difference in their life.

Both the cultural prejudice and the color discrimination caused inferiority as they are women and black. Most people think that they do not perform their job properly. That is why black female writers and feminists want to change their image in the world. They wanted to liberate their men and themselves with their writing. This shows that they know writing is as powerful as any political, social, psychological, and cultural weapon.

### **2.3.3 African Feminist Literary Criticism**

Like Black feminists, African women have been discriminated over the years. African women were taken as second-class citizens in their own country. Even though they had been denied their honorary living style, they were doing all the labor work with their husbands and sometimes even more than required. In all places, they were responsible for the household activities including bringing up their children properly.

Having all these duties in each house, they were described as dependant, inactive and weak creatures. Without the existence of their husbands or great men in their family, they cannot survive the ups and downs of life. A girl wants a father, a woman needs a husband and a widow looks for a second chance behind the curtain. Each woman waits for the appearance of a new hero, unbeatable guy to conquer her defeat and to overcome her problems and troubles.

African women had been pulled down again by the beliefs of a highly patriarchal society even after the end of the colonization era. While African people gained their freedom, African women were under their cultural bondage. Men were the first to start writing, and they were the ones who were describing women as they perceived them; humble wives and dependant women. However, female writers changed the image of women in the African society. This idea is strengthened by Chukukere (1995:10) as:

*African female writers offer us a concentrated vision of the female experience. That is, that the artist ensures that women play crucial roles in the up folding of the plot and in our oppression of the story. ... In their attempts to present a balanced viewpoint, female writers are equally objective in their analysis of female roles especially in exposing the inherent weaknesses of their victims which assist to perpetuate their subjugation within the patriarchal society.*

As opposed to male writers, African female writers narrate the story of their life on the circle of their normative society. The main focus of this thesis is to reveal how female characters were shattered down by patriarchal assumptions. However, few female writers have a different point of view which shows women were victimized by their own kin and ridiculed by cultural beliefs. Those beliefs had denied the natural equal rights of both sexes.

African feminist literary criticism deals with gynocritics which identifies four models of differences as it is stated in Wilson-Tagoe (1997:11). Therefore, most feminists focus on the four models of differences namely: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytical and cultural. Female writers rebelled on these frames that block the life of all females in the African society. According to Wilson-Tagoe (1997:12), this idea is elaborated as:

*...the writing of African women: namely that it is marked by gender perspectives that are mediated by history, culture and class, that it operates within a male discourse and is in constant interaction and dialogue with it through its double-edged perspectives and its revisionist and other interrogations; that women writers themselves engage in dialogue with each other's writing as a way of linking to or differentiating themselves from a continuum of women's writing in a continuously changing female discourse.*

The above statements show that women writers have related to the existing cultural problem. They fight with the stubborn consciousness of their fellow male counterparts. With their writings, they have tried to challenge what the society believes and how women had been previously portrayed. That is why their literary work seems, an issue, a thing which persuades and rebels rather than narrates a very smooth story.

In addition, African women writers are trying to create, invent a new way of addressing what is wanted to be said or voiced. Wilson-Tagoe (1997:17) states:

*... in this context of rearranging and rewriting a given reality that African women writer's search for new voices, narratives and*

*languages to structure the problematic nature of female experience in a changing African world. Their writing can be seen, then, as a constantly shifting discourse in which writers continually enter into dialogue with each other's writing within a continuum.*

According to the above statements, the world is changing especially that of the Africans. African women have changed in many ways including moving against the patriarchal society. This policy was once their guidance for many centuries. They are not trying to change it completely, but they are challenging the wrong gender categorization and assumption which came out of this nucleus.

Therefore, they are creating and rewriting, the reality in which the women are living. They are looking for a new way of addressing who women really are. Women are not just housewives, good mothers and charming girls. They can perform well in everything they do if they get the opportunity.

## **2.4 Film**

Film is a part of a literary work which is mainly different from the others with its art of being seen. This fact makes it different from the other literary genres. The written literary works have their own effect on their readers. Still writers can use their talents and styles to persuade and to convince their readers. Similarly, film can be a way of transferring the intended message clearly.

In novels and poems, messages can be transmitted through narration. However, in plays messages can be conveyed through conversations. This genre is more advantageous than the novel and poems because the audience can watch what has been happening Short (1996:168). Plays combine written art with visual art. Moreover, the audience can listen to the conversations among characters and at the same time watch the performance. The audience has an opportunity to compare how plays are written and viewed. Whatever is challenging to listen to or whatever is not audioable can be solved while watching what has been performed.

As a visual art, film has all the possibility of reaching and influencing the audience. As it was said at the beginning of this thesis, it is impossible for writers to write against their culture and social beliefs. They reflect whatever has been upheld or rejected by society. This idea is stressed by Armour cited in Tigist (1980: XXIV):

*Movies have clearly had an impact on our social and artistic lives. Except for television, there has been no more persuasive medium in our country, or any medium that has done more to shape the way we live. It has influenced our view of men and women, of blacks, and of our enemy in war. It has created customs and added words to our vocabulary. It has influenced us as sexual and social beings. It has reinforced those things about ourselves that we most like, and it has drawn us toward new dreams.*

Movies introduce ideas and speak out their messages using the perfect sense of art. These materials have tremendous influence and impact on their viewers. Audiences can be pulled to whatever is designed by the movie writers. This happens because looking has its own power of challenging the consciousness of the viewers. Audiences see what the movie makers want them to see and comprehend what has been dictated accordingly.

It is stated that film is another way of ruling and guiding viewers without their interest. Kaplan (1997:4) elaborates it as, “Like everything in culture, looking relations are determined by history, tradition, power hierarchies, politics, economics.”

Whatever the theme is, film has been influenced by the culture and economic status of the producer. A film maker cannot use any other material or idea which is not present in the context of where he/she lives. This is the reason why it is said looking cannot be innocent. According to Kaplan (1997:6), “..., looking relations are never innocent. They are always determined by the cultural systems people traveling bring with them. They are also determined by the visual systems a particular stage or type of technology makes possible.”

If a play is performed on the stage, the viewer's eyes are forced to follow the speaker in each conversation. They focus on how and why the actor/ess delivers such kind of speech. The attention of the audience is marked on the story of the play rather than what the actors wear or what they look like. However, in films the audience watches and follows what the writer and co-workers want them to watch. That is the main reason why film influences the mind of its viewers and has never been innocent. Through film cultural, economic and political messages can be voiced out loudly.

Moreover, Arneheim (1977:110) describes film as a huge and powerful weapon of twisting ones mind. He argues that, "Film is one of the most characteristic means of expression, and one of the most effective means of influencing in our time. Not just individuals, but also people, classes, and forms of government play a part in it."

This strengthens the previously stated ideas that through films, writers can show out their expressions. Films allow people to watch for a few minutes, which save their energy in so many ways. Besides, films can persuade and be used to present a certain group of people who have differences. They are not done to influence individuals, but people, nations in particular and the whole world at large.

Films can help to portray what women can be and what they can do. Whatever has been accepted in the society, in the community, might also be reflected in films. As a matter of fact, films can control the mind set of its viewers and change the attitudes or strengthen the prejudice lived so long for so many years.

#### **2.4.1 Film as a Literature**

Literature is used by written words. It is also known in creating image in reader's mind. The twentieth Century powerful literature film has both

qualities. The main reason why and how film is included as literary genre next to drama is because it has the ability of succeeding the power of written word. The relationship between word and image progress around as the two modify one another (June, 2007).

The image and portrayal of characters can be seen through film using the powerful written words that are implemented in the visual arts. Using the technology and the talents of different people participating in the film industry, film can show how the story can be narrated using the different characters and showing their personality at the same time.

#### **2.4.2 Film in Ethiopia**

It is believed that the beginning of the film industry like any other technology started in the West. Film production is a recent phenomenon in Ethiopia. Before the film presentations, the Ethiopian people were introduced to the first film that came to Ethiopia during the reign of Emperor Menelik II in the form of a biopic of Jesus Christ. That was when the Ethiopian people watched a film even though it had a religious theme. The traditional beliefs of the then people discouraged those who opened a cinema hall right after the display of the film. The cinema house still held its name for many years. It used to be called 'The House of Satan' because it was believed that the things were performed by evil spirits with many Ethiopians, Stranger (February, 2006).

Ethiopia comes third to learn this visual art next to Egypt and Nigeria in Africa. The first Ethiopian movie that was performed by Ethiopians in Amharic language was 'Hirut: Who is her father?' which was presented in 1964 E.C. *Negest* (1998:31). After consecutive successful years in producing and presenting films, the Ethiopian film production did not progress until recently. Breaking the silence took many years, but unlike the first traditional responses

of viewers, the result seems encouraging. Films are written in local language, produced and presented mostly by Ethiopians.

The advantage of watching a film which is done by a person who lives next door brings familiarity and identification. Hence, film viewers can identify themselves with actors and understand the message easily. Even though it has all these advantages, it sometimes has the imitations of other huge film companies in the world, Stranger (February, 2006). It is hoped and expected to improve through time. The interest of the people who would like to watch Ethiopian films has increased recently. People have started appreciating films as an art and reflection of Ethiopian life. This is one main quality of literature which films reveal quite widely.

### **2.4.3 Feminist Film Criticism**

Men have dominated the film industry as they have dominated and controlled the other literary genres. It has required great effort and struggle to inter into this business. Women were also prejudiced to write about emotional things, love affairs rather than adventure and thrillers. Such kind of films were concluded to attract only female audience and made low income. This is said because it is believed women are naturally emotional, submissive and needy help beings. Thus, their works reflect such matters. On the other hand, women writers were taking other men as their role models. They were imitating men writers Seger (1996:111).

Even though it has taken a number of years and sacrifice to reach this point, many women directors and writers are now leading the film business along with their counterparts, men. The feminist film theory has the same starting view as the feminists have at the beginning of feminist movements.

Feminist film criticism focuses on the female characters: how they are portrayed and imagined. Film is said to be a powerful and more attractive

medium because it is both a writing art and a visual art. A writer who writes or designs a character for the purpose of film has many responsibilities, even though the final production mostly takes place in the hands of the producer and director. This is because whatever ideas the writer has, they will be printed out on the mind set of the film viewers. Film also has an extended purpose in playing a magnificent role on the psychology of each sex.

This is the main focus of feminist literary criticism. The feminist theory stresses gender and biological differences. When analyzing any literary text from the perspective of feminist theory, it is necessary to have a certain point of view that is shared by feminists. Nfah-Abbenyi (1997:17) states, “Feminist theory has introduced gender as an important category of analysis – one with sociological, cultural, political, anthropological, historical, and other implications.”

On the basis of the above point, both feminist critics and feminist film critics focus on gender politics and family arrangement. This indicates that any of the feminism ideas are the backbone, the spring board for feminist film criticism. However, feminist film criticism focuses on some points which cannot be used or implemented in other literary genres. According to Wikipedia (June, 2007) it is stated that, “... feminist film critics often consider the apparatus of the film: the role of the gaze, the look, identification, spectatorship. They examine the conversation so far about an issue, about feminist film theory and criticism, and/or about a particular film.”

Feminist film theory examines the gaze, how gaze is looked and identified with the characters and by the viewers. Through each conversation and the appearance of each character, the main topic or issue of the film can be observed especially from the feminist point of view. This theory mainly tries to underline the form and content of the film. Reading between the lines of each conversation helps to understand how the form, the appearance contributed to

the content, the message of the film. Wikipedia (June, 2007) states that, “Though feminist theorists may either emphasize the formal innovations of a film text, feminist film critics most often explore how form creates, supports, or subverts content, or how the film positions the viewer and what that positioning implies.”

This indicates that a film can address a particular group of the society. The structure of the film also can have an impact on how the audience reacts to the film. This means the way it is presented can magnify the message that is transmitted. The main point here is how women are viewed by the audience.

Visual art has its own impact on human psyche. Through the gaze and the imagination, women can be still ridiculed. In order to understand why and how they are ridiculed, it is important to understand what gaze is. Laura Mulvey, one of the pioneers in this arena used psychoanalysis as the backdrop for film production and critics. In her article, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ (1975/1989), she used Sigmund Freud’s and Jacques Lacan’s theories and findings as a framework to invent the theory. She concluded and proved that the main purpose of female characters is “to-be-looked-at-ness” in films. This is how the word gaze came to the film theory and with the studies and findings of Mulvey; there appeared the concept of male gaze.

This thesis attempts to analyze male gaze in female authored films. It also aims to find out the possible existence of female gaze in these films. Since film is seen as a psychological game, the existence of female gaze might be possible and inevitable. However, before concluding on these issues, it is important to define and discuss what male gaze and female gaze are.

## **2.5 Male gaze versus Female gaze**

Jacques Lacan, one of the influential psychologists found the concept of gaze at the child’s early stage. According to Lacan, children enjoy looking themselves at

the “mirror stage” as he called it himself. Gaze has an important role in the analysis of a visual culture. Even though it was first discovered by a psychologist to explain how children gaze at a mirror image of themselves, the concept extended to be a part of the feminist theory.

According to Wikipedia (June, 2007) gaze is: “... is extended in the framework of feminist theory, where it can deal with how men look at women, how women look at themselves and other women, and the effects surrounding this.” That is how the other forms of gaze were created: male gaze and female gaze. On the basis of the above ideas, male gaze seems more natural than the female gaze. The idea of men looking at women for sexual desire and pleasure, as women are their inferior and dependant beings was there for many years. The same thing applies to the cinema of our world today.

Feminist theories define male gaze as a means of exhibiting uneven relationship among male and female. In their relationship, women and men have an unequal power. Men are more powerful than women. According to those feminists, the male imposes an unwanted gaze upon the female Wikipedia (June, 2007).

Most people think that it is good to be seen by men for women, but men do not have to look at women in a very humiliating way. Men should not take them as a sexual object that can satisfy their natural feelings. They have to accept women as humans as they are and women as capable of doing things men can perform.

Male gaze shows women as inferior to men. A woman needs a man to take care of her. Sometimes, even though the main character of a film is a girl, viewers can see the ability of a man who works with her. It shows that without his existence and help, she cannot solve her problems, or the man who stands next to her has the smartest brain while she is emotional, weak and lazy. Jacobson (May, 1999) states:

*The traditional display of the woman has functioned on two levels: she has been the erotic object of desire for the male characters within the movie and an object for the audience, the spectator. This objectification is done with the help of the camera. The woman as the object of the gaze is not the one of importance in the story line or carries the story further, but she is important as the one who makes the male character/hero to act the way he does. She provokes fear or love, but the male figure is the one carrying the story on. The active male character is in control, he makes things happen, ...*

As Laura Mulvey is the pioneer for the existence of male gaze in films, Eva-Maria Jacobson suggests the possible existence of female gaze. Laura Mulvey thinks the only way a female gaze can exist is when women identify them with masculinity. Female characters are made to attract their viewers' attention physically rather than with their mental strength. This can be done with the help of camera and the way they are portrayed. However, Jacobson believes that writers can be affected by the patriarchal influences of the society and the social beliefs in their society. Such influences can still make women as the center of the story and men move around them.

According to Jacobson, female gaze is not identifying oneself with men. It is how women view themselves and how they see men around them. It can also show how independent they are alone without anybody's help. They can attract other men characters towards them, not sexually but through their maturity and rationality. The writers can make men characters to move around as inactive instead of making women characters passive with their own story. This will change the normal writing system that magnifies a male character over female characters.

We may find female characters that are covered by another huge male figure with a narrative film, a story which talks about a woman. Though the main story relies upon her life, she is hidden by the charming looking man who came for her rescue. It is very difficult to ignore the patriarchal assumption and beliefs in the society and lose the male gaze in films. This might be considered that the film undermines the male gaze and glorifies the female gaze Jacobson

(May, 1999). However, films that can be made by female writers and directors may stress the female character as an independent figure who does not conform to the social beliefs.

People can transfer their message through their writing, but to impose and change a cultural belief which has been accepted for generations takes time. Having a female gaze in films seems difficult since it goes against the social will. This kind of revolution takes time, but it has been seen in some movies though it still attributed a subordinate role to women. In order to make female gaze as powerful as male gaze, the generation has to bring about a radical change in what has been held as true for so long Jacobson (May, 1999).

The female gaze opened the way widely for women to voice out their message clearly. It is still difficult to affirm indisputably the power of the female gaze. Jacobson (May, 1999) argues:

*To simplify try to codify a male character as an erotic object, or a female character as the gaze becomes difficult due to connotations and codifications into the language of the dominant patriarchal order. However, the possibilities of a female gaze are present and the sexual objectifications of the male is not to be dismissed,...the masculine does not have to be active and the feminine the passive, although it might seem relevant in the social structure of today.*

The possible existence of looking at men as sexual objects or viewing them as the person who lives there not to save lives, but to have some physical commitment is possible. This is what happened for years in the film industry. Male gaze is viewing women as sexual objects, passive elements and help need creatures. This can happen differently in which men seek women for help.

## CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 3.1 Introduction

At the beginning of this thesis, it was pointed out that literature is the reflection of real life. Film is a reflective art. It combines both visual and written art together. The two films which are selected for analysis in this thesis are *Sara* and *Roman*. Both, *Sara* and *Roman* are Ethiopian films which are written in Amharic by female-authoresses; *Helen Taddesse* and *Emebet Girma* respectively.

In Ethiopia, there are few female film writers among the vast association or assembly of male writers. The number of female poets, writers and producers and directors are small. Moreover, film is a newly introduced art in Ethiopia. This writing business area is still dominated by men. However, there are three works produced by females in the film industry. This thesis focuses on the two female movies: *Sara* and *Roman*.

Besides, the two films take the names of the protagonists in each film. This thesis will analyze how the female characters are represented and their relation with the male characters. Secondly, it aims at discovering the prejudice and cultural bias to which the female characters may be exposed in the society. Third and last, it will look at to these films from the African feminist literary criticism point of view.

Before analyzing the films, it may be useful to look into the summary of each movie briefly. The summary of each movie is included in this part believing it will give highlights about the theme of each film. Moreover, it shows how the theme is related with the representation of each character and the influences they have in magnifying the message. It will prove how the message has been spoken out loud.

### **3.2 Sara**

The film is written by *Helen Tadesse*. *Sara* is her third film which came next to the family movie with two parts called “*Yeberedo Zemen*.” This shows that the film production was not a new phenomenon for the writer. However, the themes of the previous films and the new film are different. *Sara* is a breakthrough in certain hidden and taboo issues in the society. Having a sexual intercourse with little children was considered as taboo for many years.

*Sara* is a very young girl who is about fifteen years old and is continuously raped by her step-father. Her mother got married with the person years after she was divorced with her first husband. *Sara* was an independent, kind, outgoing and confident girl before the death of her mother. Her mother was passed away when she was seven years old due to a heart attack. The step-father was cruel towards women, but he got married with her mother because she was rich. After her sudden death, he inherited her money, her fortune and her daughter.

As any little girl, the independent *Sara* had an open mind for things. She insisted to know why her mother had died through the heart attack. Her step-father delayed the question with the promise that he will explain another time. After some time, he arranged one night when they were alone and told her the disease of heart can be transmitted from mother to child unless they had sexual intercourse with boys. She wanted to find out what that meant and he promised to show her. The same night he forced himself into the little girl.

She was terrified to discuss about it with anyone not even with her nanny. Suddenly, she became quite, shy and lonely. The previous out-going, charming and confident girl was transformed into a mute, slow and coward woman. Once in her life, she opened up herself to her maid, and the maid got killed by her step-father. He showed her the blood of her nanny and told her that he would

put an end to her life. She locked her doors on all human beings and was ruled by her step-father silently and humbly for seven years. She had two grandparents who were drunk and gamblers and she could not go to them for help.

When her step-father had decided to take another woman as his wife, *Sara* had enough of that life. The new woman thought that he went to his daughter's room to give her comfort since she was not happy with the newly presented family. She warned her bitterly to behave nicely if she wanted to live peacefully in the same house with her. *Sara* decided to seek for help first from her best friend and then from her birth father and grandparents respectively.

However, nobody was interested to help her out. So she decided to take matters in her own hands and refused to sleep with him. The newly wedded wife heard their argument and learned why her husband visited his daughter's room more often. The loss of his gun drove him crazy and he threatened to kill *Sara*. The truth was that she did not steal his gun. While he tried to stab her with his knife, the new wife entered into the room pointing his own gun at him.

At the last minute, when she decided or wanted to stop the abuse of her life time, many rescuers appeared to exist. Her grandmother triggered the last bullet and saved her from killing her step-father by smashing his head with a whiskey bottle. It seems that such kind of abuse and harassment would not be done by someone on a small child. However, it revealed the fact that many young girls can be raped by their own relatives.

### **3.2.1 The Representation of Female Characters in the film, *Sara***

Women in Ethiopia have similar image, that was given for African women. African female writers suggest women shall be identified with four models of differences from men. Female writers made dialogues of their own to persuade

the negative image of women. That is why they search for new ideas, presentations to portray women differently.

In *Sara*, there are five female characters. Three of them can be categorized as strong women who are capable of independent actions and the other two are shown as weak and submissive women. Each of the five women had their own qualities that contributed to the unfolding of the theme. These qualities are rare and are not obvious in most women. These women characters show the rapid change over the African society.

### **3.2.1.1 Women Capable of Independent Action in the film, *Sara***

One of the main focuses of African women writers is to challenge the existing cultural situation. Thus, they rebel and move against these wrong assumptions. That is why they are looking for a new way of addressing strong women in their works. These characters in the film *Sara* appear differently in which viewers identify them easily.

W/ro *Teseme* is portrayed as a very tough, challenging, confident and outspoken woman. She had suffered a lot because of the death of her two sons. She smokes cigarettes and drinks alcohol a lot with her husband. She plays cards and poker equally with him even she seems better than him and bits him badly. Her behavior, attitude and the way she responded to situations and things are not those expected from an Ethiopian woman. She acted differently. She rebelled and challenged her husband instead of submitting herself to his will. She did not seem to be afraid of physical struggle and did not hesitate to knock his head if necessary.

ትሆሜ - አይ ወንዶች አይ ወንዶች ልባችሁንና ምሳሳችሁን አውጥተው በአንድ ላይ  
ሚዛን ላይ ማስቀመጥ ነበር  
ደመሳሽ - የቱ ደመዘናል ልትይ ነበር?  
ትሆሜ - ደሜ ሙት ምሳሳችሁ ደመዘናል!  
ደመሳሽ - የኛ ምሳሰ ብዙ ከመዘነ የናንተማ ሚዛኑን ይሰብረዋል በይኛ! (ገጽ 3)

Teseme - Oh! Men! It would have been great to let your heart and mouth be measured.  
 Demelash - Which one measures more?  
 Teseme - I swear, your mouth measures more.  
 Demelash - If our mouth measures more, yours will break the balance. (Page 3)

She teased her husband and threatened him like a man. If he tried to impose his manhood, she would ridicule it without fear. She would not hesitate to mock at him if he did try to be smarter than her. It seems that she did not pay respect to her husband.

The audience laughs at her actions and admires her strength through which she challenged the social system. She did not accept anything that stood against her will and feeling. It is obvious that it is rare to find such kind of women in the society. Therefore, it is easy to recognize her as a different woman from those women who live in the Ethiopian society; humble mothers and submissive wives.

ህሲና - አንቺ ብቻ ነሽ ልጅ የዋተብሽ?  
 ትሠማ - አዎ እኔ ብቻ ነኝ የልጆቼን ራሳ ደጅ አቅፌ ያደርኩት ፣ እኔ ብቻ ነኝ ከፊላ ጋር ተቃቅፌ የተኛሁት ፣ እኔ ብቻ ነኝ ሁለት ቆንጆ ቆንጆ ገረምሳ ልጆቼን በአንድ ቀን የቀበርኩት ፣ እና ምን ሁኔታ ነው የምትደኝ? (ገጽ 12-13)  
 Helina - Are you the only one who lost any children?  
 Teseme - Yes, it is only me who hugged the corps of my two young boys and spent the night, who buried them in one day.  
 What do you want me to be? (Page 12-13)

Even when she was accused of having bad and harmful habits, she refused to recognize her weakness. Unlike many women who blame themselves for any wrong things in their lives, she had an excuse for her behaviors. She pointed her finger at her bad luck which took her two young sons in one day. That was death. They died and her life changed. That was her reason. She did not accept anyone who told her she did wrong. In order to forget her losses, she used extra things which helped her to survive the painful event. When she stated what happened to her sons, she pictured it vividly so that audiences can see

how strong she is. No mother can bear the pain of losing one child, but she hugged two bodies and spent the night.

- ትሠሜ - ሰማ እንጂ እኛ እንደሆን ካንተ ውርስ እንፈልግም ገና ሰገና ምን እስፈራለሁ?  
ሚካኤል - አረ እንደእሱ አይደለም::  
ትሠሜ - ቅደ ዛሬ ምን እሰኝቶህ ደመልክ ልጄን እንደሆን አስረስተኸኛል እድሜ ሳንተ  
አንተ ባለ ልጅ እኔ የወሳድ መሆን  
ሚካኤል - በዚህ ሠዓት ደውሎ ረበሽኮት መሰለኝ?  
ትሠሜ - እኔ ትሠሜ እንደሆን ድብብቆሽ አላውቅም ንገረኝ ካልክ እነግርሃለሁ ማን  
መሆኔን ባለማውቅህ ነው የተጫወትክብኝ ዘረቢስ (ገጽ 27)  
Teseme - Listen! We do not need to inherit anything with you.  
Why did you scare so much?  
Michael - I have never said that!  
Teseme - I do not understand. Why did you call us today?  
Thanks to you I can already forget my daughter's  
death. You became a parent and we became childless.  
Michael - I guess I called you at a bad time.  
Teseme - Listen to me! I do not play hide-and-seek with you. If  
you want to know who you really are, I can tell you  
that. You have no idea who I am that is why you are  
trying to play with me. (Page 27)

Even though Michael appears to be a strong and wise guy, she could interrogate him. She was smarter than he was. She did not hesitate to show him that she did not trust him. She also showed him how unfaithful he was to her daughter. It seemed that she had another sixth sense organ or instinct that helped her to decide who is faithful and who is not. According to the above conversation, she did not let him do whatever he wanted. She made him mute, stumbling to explain why he called to their house late.

Moreover, she did not accept the accusation of her husband for being irresponsible woman. She did not think the household activities and things are only her concern. She thought that her husband had to sweat to keep the house clean and prepare something to eat.

- ደመሳሽ - ሚስት ነው ያገባሁት ባል  
ትሠሜ - ባል ነዋ! አባቴ ሲደርስህ እንደማልሆንህ ቢነግርህ ጥሩ ነበር  
ደመሳሽ - ያኒማ መቼ እንደዚህ ነበርሽ ታዛዥ ባለሙያ ስቀጥቀጥና ሰው አክባሪ ሆነሽ  
ነው የማውቅሽ ከጊዜ ጋር እንደገናድ ተጣመምሽ እንጂ ምን ታደርገ

የህይወት ትርጉም የሚሰጠው አንድ ክር ድንገት ከአይምሮስ ውስጥ ተበጠሰና  
አንቺም ግራ ተጋብተሽ እኛንም ግራ አጋባሽን።

ትሠሚ - ደሚ ሙት ልክ ልኪን እየነገርከኝ ነው

ደመሳሽ - አረ ተይኝ እኔም ወደአንቺ እየመጣሁልሽ ነው

ትሠሚ - ብትመጣ ይሻልሃል ... (ገጽ 20)

Demelash - Did I marry a husband or a wife?

Teseme - A husband. My father should have told you that I  
won't be that kind.

Demelash - At that time you were not like this. You were humble,  
submissive and respectful. After some time, you lost  
why you are living here and we all are confused with  
you.

Teseme - I swear you are insulting me.

Demelash - Whatever. I am joining your club.

Teseme - You better. (Page 20)

When her husband accused her of not being a decent wife, she told him he should have known before he made the vow. She had her own reasons to be what she was. She was the winner in her own ways, not in her husbands or the society's beliefs and value systems. She lives against the will of society which compelled her to be a passive and submissive wife.

W/ro *Azeb* comes towards the end of the film; she appears to be a loving and understanding woman who believes relationship should be arranged between the two parties. She was not ashamed to tell openly how much she loved her new husband. She could clearly speak about what she needed and why she needed it. She was a purpose-oriented woman. She did not want anyone to interfere in her affairs. She fought in order to get what she wanted.

አዚብ - እና ምንድን ነው እኔን ስታይ ደምሽ የሚፈላው? እኔ ምን እንዳደርግልሽ ትፈልገዋለሽ ባንቺ ምክንያት የምወደውን ሰው ማጣት አልፈልግም ሚካኤል ሰኔ ጥሩ ሰው ነው ጥሩ ባል ነው እወደዋለሁ በመሆኑላችን እንድትገቢ በፍጹም አልፈልግም ፍቅሩን እንድትበጠብጧል አልፈልግም። (ገጽ 29)

Azeb - And why is that you get mad whenever you see me? Then what do you want me to do? I do not want my life to be messed up because of you. I do not want to lose the guy I love because of you. Michael is a nice guy and a great husband and I love him. I do not want you to spoil whatever is good between us. I do not want you to interfere between us. (Page 29)

*Azeb* is so self-centered that she could not understand what had been happening in that house for years. She could not understand *Sara* because the only thing she wanted was to be a wife of Michael. What she saw was like *Helina* did his charming face and attractive manners. She thought that he had been avoiding marriage for the last seven years because he wanted to raise his daughter without the influences of a step-mother. She thought that he loved her and she loved him. Her feelings for him and her being a possessive woman prevented her from seeing the reality.

አዜብ - ስሜ ሣራ ከአሁን በኋላ አንቺን የማባብስበት ልብ የለኝም መኖር እንዳለብሽ ሆነሽ በግድሽ ትኖራለሽ አስበሰዚያ ከዚህ ቤት እንደምትወጡ እወቁ

ሣራ - እባክሽ ከዚህ ቤት ልታስወጡኝ ከቻልሽ አስወጡኝ ... አስወጡኝ ... አስወጡኝ ...

አዜብ - አታደርገውም ብለሽ ነው ቅደ አሳደሻለሁ ባለጌ... ስድ... (ገጽ 31)

Azeb - Listen to me, Sara! I am not going to tolerate you more than this. You will live in this house behaving as you are expected to behave. Otherwise I will throw you out of the house.

Sara - Can you do that? Please do it! Do it!

Azeb - Do you think I won't? You will see! (Page 31)

*Azeb* thought that she had the power to throw *Sara* out. She thought she could convince Michael on this. However, when she found out the truth, she punished her lover and husband cruelly. At one time, she was madly in love with him and, when she discovered the truth, she did not stop herself from pulling a trigger to kill him.

አዜብ - ሚካኤል ሽጉጥህ ይኸውልህ ና ውሰደው

ሚካኤል - አዜብ

አዜብ - በቃ ሁሉም ነገር ገብቶኛል አንተ ሰገኛህ ያልሆንክ ለኔ አትሆነኝም እንደዚህ ዓይነት ሰው በህይወት መቆየት አለበት ብዬ አላምንም ስለዚህ ... (ገጽ 33)

Azeb - Michael, here is your gun!

Sara - Azeb!

Azeb - Enough! Now I understand everything. You are not the person I thought you were. If you can't be trustworthy to your own daughter, you will act in the same way towards me. And I decided that such kind of person should not stay alive. (Page 33)

*Azeb* was brave. She knew how to punish cruel people. She could subdue them. She believed that someone who was vicious must be punished. The punishment could be death. It did not really matter to *Azeb*. She had the courage to do anything. The principle of 'Winning cruelty through kind hearts and deeds did not work for her.

*Sara*, the main character is a genuine, kind, charitable and intelligent girl. She had a different wild spirit and kind soul before she indulged in such kind of life. She looked for a logical reason behind something that happened around her. She asked what she wanted and knew how to get it. She had free thoughts and she was straightforward and innocent.

*Sara* is an independent, loving and caring girl. Like other children, when she was seven years old, she wanted to be loved and enjoy life. She played and had fun by herself without the help of anyone. Even though her mother brought her up with so much care and love, she always wanted to have a father who played and spent time with her.

ሣራ - አባቴ ገን አይወደኝም መሰለኝ  
ሚካኤል - መፈጠርሽን የት ያውቅኛ!  
ሣራ - ገን እሱ አይወደኝም መሰለኝ?  
ሚካኤል - እሺ እኔ በቃ አባት እሆንሻለሁ አልኩሽ እኮ!  
ሣራ - Promise?  
ሚካኤል - I promise! (ገጽ 11)  
Sara - I don't think my father likes me.  
Michael - He doesn't know you exist.  
Sara - But I think he doesn't like me.  
Michael - Okay. I have said, I will be your father, right?  
Sara - Promise?  
Michael - I promise! (Page 11)

When she asked Michael to promise that he would be her father forever, it seemed to be futile. However, she wanted to make sure this person will not abandon her; she wanted to be sure that she has someone to lean on. She is more mature than her peers. She was always anxious to know everything, to discover new thing even to try harmful things and activities.

ሚካኤል - ይህኛን ነገር ትሞክራለህ?  
 ሣራ - ብዙም አልጣፈጠኝም ግን  
 ሚካኤል - ግን ትሞክራለህ?  
 ሣራ - አሲ! /የውስኪውን ብርጭቆ ተቀብላ ትጠጣለች/ (ገጽ 13)  
 Michael - Do you want to try this thing?  
 Sara - It doesn't taste sweet, but ...  
 Michael - But can you try?  
 Sara - Okay! /She took the glass of whiskey and drank/  
 (Page 13)

She was self-confident. She was also an outspoken person. However, she could confirm she was honest and kept her promise. She wanted to be the judge of something which all of them accepted as harmful thing. She dared everything; she never had any fear to open up herself and explain what she was looking for. This was the child *Sara*, who was brave, straightforward, independent, confident and humorous.

When she became fourteen that girl who has all these great qualities was changed. Instead, *Sara* was a passive, submissive and weak girl. She appeared as a terrified girl who had low self-esteem about herself. Her body was possessed by her step-father and she was used as a sex object. She could not do whatever she wanted with her own body and womanhood. She was his personal sexual property, a machine that stood for his own evil satisfaction. She understood that her life was different from that of her peers. She could not accept the fact that she slept with her own step-father while others had their freedom.

The abnormality of her life and the oppressive nature of her step-father killed her internal being. She could not resist the reality and what was happening to her calmly. For seven years, she tolerated this odd situation. The man ruled her life while she became a slave for three reasons. She was young and she did not have any place to go. She was financially dependent and she was alone. She had a great fear that he might come after her and kill her.

- ሚካኤል - ትናንት ሰምንድን ነው መቻ ክፍልሽ የተ ኛሽው? ነው ወይስ ከትሳንት ወዲያ እጩ ኛዬ መጥታ ስላደረጃች ተቀንቶ ነው? ...ምን እስቀናሽ እንቺ ሁልጊዜ ታገኚኝ የሰ እንዳንዳ ሰላ ቢደርሳት
- ሣራ - አረ ባክህ ተወኝ አረ ባክህ!
- ሚካኤል - ዘም በይ! ... መቻ ክፍሌ ገብተሽ ተ ኒ ከዛሬ በኋላ ደግሜ አልነግርሽም ከኔ ጋራ ማንም ሌላ ሴት እንደሌለሽ ባየሽ ጊዜ ክፍልሽን ሰቀሽ አልጋዬ ሳይ መጥተሽ እንድትተ ኒ! ሰነፃነቱ ከሆነ ሌላዋ ተረኝ ሴት ስትመጣ ነፃነትሽን እሰጥሻለሁ:: (ገጽ 24)
- Michael - Why did you sleep in your bedroom yesterday night? Or were you jealous because my fiancé spent the night here the other day? Why are you jealous? You can have me all the time.
- Sara - Please leave me alone. Please!
- Michael - Shut Up! Whenever you see there is no other woman with me, you have to be in my bed. You can have your freedom when another woman comes in. I am not going to tell you this again. (Page 24)

She could not have privacy. She could not live her own life. She could not even decide when to eat and when not to eat. Michael forced her to do whatever he desired. It seemed that she did not have any idea about what she wanted. It was a very terrifying thing to her. However, she could not stop begging to be left out and to lead her normal life again. She wanted to have a new beginning without the influence of anyone.

Suddenly, she had enough of the abusive life and she started looking for help. Her friend had offered at least to hear her out so she opened herself up to *Nebiat*. The problem was that *Nebiat* turned her down. *Nebiat* was scared of Michael while *Sara* had lived half of her life raped, threatened and harassed by him. She knew that he could do anything, even killing people, but she asked for help and she was rejected. She went to see her grandparents that did not help either. They were so busy with their own life and did not have the time and energy to listen to her.

- ሚካኤል - ምን እያልሽ ነበር ስትነግረዎት የነበረው?
- ሣራ - እኔ ምንም አላልኩዋትም ...
- ሚካኤል - ደሂን ሚስጥር አወጣሽ ማለት በህይወትሽ ትልቅ ስህተት ሰራሽ ማለት ነው በዚህ ቢሳ ተልትዬ አሟሟትሽን እስቀደሚ ነው የማደርገው:: ከዚህ ጋላ እንቺ ሚስቴ ነሽ እንድ ቀን ደህን እምነሽ ትቀበደዋለሽ:: (ገጽ 25)
- Michael - What were you telling her?

Sara - I didn't say anything!  
 Michael - If you tell her about the secret, you are going to do the biggest mistake of your life. I am going to kill you with this knife. One day, you will accept that after all, you are my wife. (Page 25)

According to the above conversation, Michael, like the other people in the society, thinks a wife shall be obedient regardless of who her husband is. She is a little bit socially higher than a paid maid, but lower than any free woman outside. Under the name of marriage, women had been oppressed and pushed down. That was what happened to Sara. She gave everything she had against her will, but in return she was asked to shut her mouth for seven years.

She looked for her birth father and asked him to help her, but he ridiculed her request. He did not want to help her. He even broke her heart by saying that his new family had no idea about her existence. When she learned how helpless she was, she hated her life.

ሣራ - አስተኛም! አስተኛም!  
 ሚካኤል - ሽሽ ዝም በይ አርፈሽ ተኚ!  
 ሣራ - ውጣልኝ! ውጣልኝ!  
 ሚካኤል - ከመቼ ወዲህ ነው እንደዚህ ጉልበታም የሆነሽው?  
 ሣራ - ከዛሬ ጀምሮ  
 ሚካኤል - እኛ በጉልበት ልታሸንፈኝ ነው?  
 ሣራ - ሳላሸንፍ እችላለሁ ግን ከአሁን በኋላ ካንተ ጋር ከምትኛ ሞቴን እመርጣለሁ ህይወቴን አበላሽህ አባት ተብላለህ በአባት ስም ባል ሆነህ ከልጅህ ጋር ትተኛለህ ወደ እብደት እየመራኝኝ እንደሆነ ታውቃለህ?  
 ሚካኤል - ዛሬ ቀን ዝም ብትይ አይሻልሽም?  
 ሣራ - ግደሰኝ ግደሰኝ ...  
 ሚካኤል - እሺ ... እሺ እንተደደሰን (ገጽ 32)  
 Sara - No, I won't sleep with you.  
 Michael - Be quiet and sleep!  
 Sara - No! Get out!  
 Michael - When did you become so daring?  
 Sara - Starting to night.  
 Michael - And do you think you can defeat me in this way?  
 Sara - I might not win, but I prefer my death rather than sleeping with you. You have ruined my life; you are supposed to be my father. But you became a husband and slept with your daughter. Can't you see, you are driving me crazy?  
 Michael - It would be better if you shut your mouth!  
 Sara - Kill me! Kill me! I don't care to live any more. Get out!

Michael - Okay! Okay! We'll see! (Page 32)

Suddenly, the helpless *Sara* became aggressive and independent. Though there was no one to help her, she refused to be humiliated. *Sara* who used to be active, straight forward as a kid was hidden behind the abused young woman. She said everything she had to say and showed how determined she was to fight for her natural right. She refused to be overcome by the odd situations she was in. She did not mind even if she was going to be killed.

She carried the entire psychological burden all her life. However, she suddenly gained the awareness of how to stop the evil. She threatened to kill him if necessary. She preferred her death rather than living such kind of life. Nonetheless if she had to, she would not hesitate to kill him. She gained her power again. She was in control of her life. She was seen as a determined, intelligent girl. She decided to take actions independently.

ሣራ - አስፈላጊም ከአሁን በኋላ የማንንም አርዳታ አስፈላጊም፡፡ /ገጽ 29/

Sara - I don't want anyone's help! (Page 29)

*Sara* did not have good female friends. *Azeb* failed to understand her. *Nebiat* refused to help her. *Teseme* was unable to listen to her problems. This made *Sara* sad. However, at the end everything changed. Michael begged her for his life. She was courageous enough to punish him. She did not hesitate to take his life away. She could not listen to anyone's reasons. She was determined to do things without having the interference of other people. At last she became powerful, independent and courageous who changed the image others have about her.

### **3.2.1.2 Submissive Women in the film, *Sara***

Unlike the above three women, there were two women portrayed as weak and submissive. They were pulled down to be such nice women as the social viewpoint required.

*W/ro Helina* appears on the film to represent a caring and humble mother. The first husband left her with a little girl without giving her any good or convincing explanation. She lost her two elder brothers in a terrible accident. The boys passed away in one day. After the loss, her father and mother turned out to be alcoholics. That left her to bring up her only daughter alone.

*Helina* was a kind of woman who seeks the help of a man. Michael was a perfect match for her needs, because she was kind, submissive and charming. She was not wise or smart. Even though her first relationship ended with abandonment, she did not question that the second one would have another purpose behind. She wanted to be a loving and protective wife to her husband and an honest daughter to her mother. She faced a dilemma because of a daring rebellious mother and manipulative mischievous husband.

ህሲና - አማይ አረጋ በይ ብሎ ሲሆን ይችላል ግን ያንቺን አዎንታዊ ጠልቶ አይደለም። ሳራ አዛ ቤት ስትመጣ የምታየው ሁሉ አደገኛ ነገር ነው። በዚህ አእምሮዋ የእናንተን ስራ ሁሉ መመልከት የሰባትም ብሎ ስለሚያምን ነው እንጂ ጠልቶም አይደለም።

ትሠራ - ምንድን ነው የኛ ስራ ነፍስ ስንገድስ አይታችን? (ገጽ 4)

Helina - Mom, calm down! He might be. But he was trying to protect Sara. He believes that the thing she sees in that house is dangerous to her right now.

Teseme - What have we done? Have you seen us killing people?  
(Page 4)

*Helina* wanted to play ‘Miss Perfect’ with the two extreme sides. Her new husband did not require the intimacy between his family and her parents, whereas her mother did not accept him as her new son-in-law. She thought that he was a big barrier between her granddaughter and herself. She believed that he had a very good reason for becoming more restrictive and protective other than his responsibility of being a step-father. On the other hand, her daughter was so innocent that she did not question why things happen differently. Therefore, she could not produce and present a valid reason for her mother. She became a passive decision maker in her own house with her own daughter’s life.

Moreover, she was so humble and protective; she was the one who looked for her parents and called them continuously and she asked them to forgive her while things were not her mistake. She always feared that she was going to die and would leave her daughter alone. She thought that Michael was an answer to her prayers from God. That is why she tried to make him happy. She trusted him with her life. Even when she answered his phone and listened to another woman screaming at her, she believed his made up story.

- ሚካኤል - ማንን ነው የፈለጉት አርከምን ማን ልበል ተከስተ ... አረ ረጋ ይበሉ ተከስተ የሚባል ሰው በዚህ ስልክ የለም ... ተሳስተዋል!
- ህሲና - እንዴ እኔ ደግሞ ምን መጣ ብዬ ...ሆ...አንዳንድ ሰው እንዴት ባለጌ ነው
- ሚካኤል - የት እንደደወሰኑ በመጀመሪያ ማረጋገጥ ሲገባት ዘላ ትጮሃለች ... (ገጽ 8)
- Michael - Hello, who is speaking? And for whom are you looking?  
Tekeste ... Please calm down. You cannot find a person called Tekeste with this phone. You made a mistake!
- Helina - She shocked me! Some people are really manner-less.
- Michael - She yelled without confirming where she called. (Page 8)

She was also a very honest person. She did not suspect he might have another life before her in which he was not proud of. She did not think he might cheat on her. She saw a very nice, quite and charming guy every day and that person was her husband. He was innocent and committed. He knew that she was a modest woman and took advantage of her innocence. In addition, she thought people do bad things on others, but she had to let it go. She taught to her daughter how to let go of bad things until she learnt to take revenge is not something she should enjoyed with.

- ሣራ - እደበድባታለሁ ልቀቂኝ! እንዴት እንደመታችኝ እኮ አላየሽም ልቀቂኝ እደበድባታለሁ::
- ህሲና - ሣርዬ የኔ ቆንጆ ስሚኝ መቼም ቢሆን ምንም ቢሆን ክፉን በደግ አሸንፌ እንጂ በክፉ አትሸነፌ! (ገጽ 24)
- Sara - No, leave me alone! You have not seen how she hits me. I will hit her back.
- Helina - Sara, my darling listen to me. Whenever it is, whatever the matter be, try to win evil by doing good. (Page 24)

Even though, someone who she trusts hurt her, she had to be kind and never take revenge. *Helina* believed that a person has to forgive in order to be

forgiven. She had a moral belief which she wanted to impose on her daughter too. Through her innocence, she represented perfect mothers who are the backbone of each home in our society. Most African women are portrayed as *Helina*; loving, submissive and weak.

*Nebiat* was *Sara*'s only friend. She was a young girl who had a different style of living. Her parents abided by the social norms. They believed girls should stay at home. They believed that girls should be decent. There will not be any explanation for such kind of situations in which they could protect themselves.

- ነቢያት - ግን ስለሁሉም ነገር ይቅርታ  
ሣራ - ስለምኑ?  
ነቢያት - በመስኮት ያስገባሁኝ እናቴን ፈርቼ ነው አየኝ እሷ ሳትረዳኝ ትቸላለች ሴት ልጅ እንዲት ከቤት ወጥታ ታደራለች ነው የምትለው ... (ገጽ 27-28)  
Nebiat - I am sorry about everything.  
Sara - For what?  
Nebiat - I was afraid of my mom. You see she might not understand me. She believes that a girl should not spend the night outside her home. (Page 27-28)

From the above conversation, we can easily conclude *Nebiat* was a girl who acted according to society's expectations. Even when she wanted to help her friend, she was conscious of social norms. As she grew up with care and protection, she was terrified when Michael threatened to kill her. She was innocent; she gave up helping her friend, even though Sara begged her to help her.

- ሚካኤል - ሣራ የት ናት?  
ነቢያት - እኔ እንጃ!  
ሚካኤል - ሣራን እፈልጋታለሁ አስበለዚያ ባንቺ ላይ እነሳለሁ አሁኑኑ ታመጪያታለሽ ወይስ አታመጪያትም?  
ነቢያት - እሺ አመጣታለሁ! (ገጽ 28)  
Michael - Where is Sara?  
Nebiat - I don't know!  
Michael - I want Sara. Aren't you going to bring her out or what?  
Nebiat - Okay! I will! (Page 28)

She was scared of Michael. The stories she heard about him frightened her. She broke her promise of helping *Sara* and she gave up helping her. When

Michael grabbed her neck and told her he would kill her, she forgot about her promise. It seems that *Nebiat* represents humble and decent African young girls who try to abide by the social norms of a society.

ነቢያት - ይኸውልክ ሣራ ወድጄ እኮ አይደለም የሆነውን ሁሉ ልንገርክ እኔ ወደውጪ ስወጣ በሩን ዝገው አሰኝና ስዘጋው ጉሮሮዬን አንቆ ሲገሰኝ ነበር አንቺን ባልጠራክ እንደሚገሰኝ እርግጠኛ ነበርኩ። በዚህ ላይ ሰራተኛችሁ በእሱ እጅ መሞቷን እንደምትጠረጥረ አንቺ ራስሽ ነግረክኛል ታዲያ እኔ ልሙት።

ሣራ - ሲሆን ይችላል ... ባንቺ አይፈረድም ነገር ግን ይሄ ሁሉ ህዝብ ባለበት ዓለም ውስጥ እኔን ከሞት አፋፍ የሚመልስ አንድ ሰው መጥፋቱ ይገርመኛል።

ነቢያት - እሺ ይቅርታ አድርገክልኛል? (ገጽ 29)

Nebiat - You do not know what did really happen there. When I got out, he pulled me and grabbed my neck and threatened to kill me. Even you told me, he might have killed your maid. And if I did not let you out, I was sure he would have killed me. What was I suppose to do? Die?

Sara - It might be! I won't blame you. But I wonder there is no one in the world that could save me from dying.

Nebiat - All right, have you forgiven me? (Page 29)

She explained the difficult situation she had been in the previous time. She was sincere when she told her she had to choose between saving her own life and her friend's. She had never thought of lying to Michael so he appeared to be more smart and brave. When she asked to be forgiven and she wanted to know the secret, it was not because she was eager to help *Sara*. *Nebiat* has a pure heart, but unclean intentions when she asked to be forgiven. She knew *Sara* would forgive her because that was what she learned from her mother. It seems that *Nebiat* was so anxious to find out the big secret in which a maid lost her life. That was the secret that Michael wanted to be buried with the knowledge of only two people who were involved. *Nebiat* was aiming to hear the story rather than be ready to help *Sara*.

### 3.2.2 Male Gaze Versus Female Gaze in the film, *Sara*

The film, *Sara*, is written as a thriller movie with a very sad story about a little girl. It magnifies how men have been powerful over women. The cultural beliefs

and value system had given them the opportunity to rule over women. In the film *Sara*, it is shown vividly by portraying the female characters as help seeker and emotional beings and men as brave creatures. They were seen as God sent rescuers of a weak girl.

Michael, *Sara's* step-father, is portrayed as a manipulative person who can convince anyone. He appeared to be kind, charming, intelligent and powerful over women. He deceived three women with his intelligent mind. He fooled all three of them. It was only *W/ro Teseme* who could see the real him and his real aim after marrying her daughter.

ህሲና - አማጭ ልጅሽን ልትገድቅ ነው አንዱ ልትገድቅ ነው

ትሠሜ - ማን እንደሞተ እሷ ትሞታለች

ህሲና - አሃ ሰካ ሚካኤል የሚሰው አውነቱን ነው?

ትሠሜ - የማነው ሚካኤል? ማነውእሱ? አንድ ነገር እንድትናገረኝ አልፈልግም  
አንቺም ሚካኤልሽም ገደል ግቡ (ገጽ 10)

Helina - What is wrong with you mom? Are you trying to kill your daughter?

Teseme - Like who dies she dies?!

Helina - Michael was right about this!

Teseme - Who is Michael? Who is he? I don't want you to say anything. For all I care you can go to hell! (Page 10)

Whatever *Teseme* had said did not come out of jealousy, but rather identifying what kind of thief he is. It was her wish to protect both her daughter and granddaughter from the beginning. However, that seemed impossible since both of them were in love with him out of innocence and sincerity.

Michael has deceived *Helina* and made her to be dependant on him. He cheated *Azeb* by pretending to be a very caring, responsible and committed father. He let down *Sara* after he promised her to be the best father she had ever imagined. As a young girl, when he took her to places and raped her cruelly, she thought he was doing that to save her. She even liked to sleep next to him without shame and guilt. He explained very well why she needed to have sex with him. He cheated the seven years old *Sara*, and he was so talented to fool

all young women around him. He had shown how men use women as sexual objects.

ሚካኤል - የወንድ ጓደኛ ስለሌለኝ ከኔ ጋራ ወሲብ ብንፈጽምስ ከምትሞቱና በየውክሚገባብኝ አይሻልም

ሣራ - ይሻላል ግን እኔ እኮ አላውቅም

ሚካኤል - እሱን እኔ እነግርሻለሁ። አንቺ ግን ይሄንን ሚስጥር ሰማንም ትንፋሽ እንዳትይ እኔ ይሄን የማደርገው ሳንቺ ብዬ ነው ጓደኛ ስለሌለኝ ከምትሞቱብኝ ብዬ እሺ?

ሣራ - እሺ ... (ገጽ 19)

Michael - Right now since you don't have a boy friend, what about having sex with me? It is better to prevent the transmission. Don't you think?

Sara - Yes, it is. But I don't know how to do it.

Michael - I will show you that! But you have to keep this as a secret. You cannot tell it to anyone. I am doing it because you didn't have any boy friend and I don't want you to die too. Okay?

Sara - Okay! (Page 19)

The reasons for his deception are logical and show how creative and cruel he is. He twisted her mind and made her to believe him more than anyone in the world. He had the masculine power made him to be smarter than anyone else. Sara has been submissive for being a child and victimized for being a girl. On the other hand, he has shown his physical power over Sara, the dead maid, and Nebiat. When Sara grew up, she found out she was doing a very disgraceful thing. Even though he was the one who persuaded her to sleep with him, she is the one who took the blame and guilt.

የብዙ ሰዎች ድምፅ - የእናትሽን አልጋ አረከስ!

ሣራ - እኔ አይደለሁም። (ገጽ 24)

Voice of many people – You slept on your mother's bed!

Sara - It isn't me! (Page 24)

She was hunted down with the memory of her mother's accusation. She could not sleep and eat; she was raped, physically abused and emotionally disturbed by her step-father. Nevertheless, she was blamed by her own conscience as she is the one who needed to be punished. She suffered both physically and

emotionally while he was having a peace of mind and did not regret doing what he did.

*Ato Demelash*, unlike Michael, was controlled by his wife and attracted by her habits. Even though he knew that the things she did hurt so much he was accepted what she was doing and shared the same thing with her. They had the same and equal rights as humans. In their home and marriage, there was no power difference. They both felt they are equal. *Teseme* was not expected to take care of the household activity and *Demelash* to use his male dominating privilege. They both ruled their home and household, and comforted each other with the loss of their children. They supported each other with love and enormous respect.

It is clearly seen that the women who are found in the movie represent the different types of women. However, many of the women are oppressed and are insensitive to the cultural barriers and value systems. The point is, there is no one male character that can be seen as the center in the movie. Michael was an antagonist who was trying to mess up every woman's life in the movie. He used the women around him as a sexual object which made him to manifest the existence of male gaze.

*Teseme* ridiculed his powerful gaze and fought him with female gaze that identified him as a worthless person. He cheated, killed, raped and humiliated the women around him or when he got them near. He had influenced them taking the advantage of being a man till the end of the film, but he stopped and was sent to prison. At that point, *Sara* became the controller of her own life and Michael's. She pointed a gun and made him to beg, but justice had to be done at last. She could not give him the freedom he took away from her a long time ago. At last *Sara* appeared as active with her own story.

### 3.2.3 Patriarchy in the film, Sara

Like any other society in the world, Ethiopian people have their own way of living. Culture has undermined women; they are believed to be effective in some ways and lose in other ways. There are things a woman cannot do and be successful. Women are expected to stay in one circle of life. If they are found out of that circle, they will be judged as crazy beings.

According to the film, *Sara*, most female characters in the film are exposed to the cultural expectations and prejudice. If they react against what is believed to be right, they are considered as abnormal and crazy beings. Women are not accepted to perform what men can do. *Teseme* was taken as a ridicules object that lost control over her life. The courageous, smart and strong woman cannot be seen. Her husband accepted what he had been taught in the society, he ridiculed her abnormality.

ደመላሽ - ሚስት ነው ያገባሁት ባል ታዲያ

ትሠሚ - ባል ነዋ አባቴ ሲደርስህ እንደማልሆንህ ቢነግርህ ጥሩ ነበር (ገጽ 20)

Demelash - Did I have a husband or a wife?

Teseme - A husband. My father should have told you that I won't be that kind. (Page 20)

*Demelash* remembered how humble, decent and honorable she was. If a woman smiles all the time and provides her husband and her family with everything they need properly, she will be respected. To get respect, acceptance and honor from her family and the community, she is expected to live according to the society's norm. If she moves against, she will be considered either ill-mannered or indecent woman. She is taken as a disgraceful and shameful being for her household. *Teseme*, on the other hand, did not mind to be prejudiced. She felt, she was doing the right thing, even though it is against the norms of the society.

When *Sara* looked for help and was certain *Nebiat* would help her, she was still thinking that Michael would harm her. That would be the end of *Sara*. She

preferred death than living like a wife to her step-father. Nowadays, it is not strange to find a man having many sexual partners in the Ethiopian society. Many women did come to the house for the night and left in the morning. Nevertheless, *Sara* stayed there and fulfilled his sexual needs. The social practice that man can have physical power over woman has been demonstrated in the relations between *Sara* and Michael.

ሚካኤል - ከመቼ ወዲህ ነው እንደዚህ ጉልበታም የሆነሽው?

ሣራ - ከዛሬ ጀምሮ

ሚካኤል - እና በጉልበት ልታሸንፊኝ ነው? (ገጽ 32)

Michael - When did you become so energetic?

Sara - Starting to night.

Michael - And do you think you can defeat me like this? (Page 32)

*Sara* has been oppressed for years. The social prejudice discouraged her from having the physical and emotional strength to overcome the existing situation. She could not go to the police and notice what has been happening. Such kind of things needs a previous knowledge of how to deal with the law of the country. She was just a child and ignorant about it. For her, Michael is the last powerful person in the world. However, she started rebelling against Michael. She began to fight for her freedom and opened the door widely for a new life ahead.

*Sara* was terrified of Michael. She felt that he would harm her or any other people she loved. She accepted him as the powerful agent in her life, and her environment. Therefore, she was ruled by him. This happened to her, because of her mother's sudden death. *Sara* trusted him as her mother took him to be her loyal and devoted husband. Michael was a mischievous criminal who took advantage over a little girl. It is believed that woman cannot be physically fit to battle with a man and win. Thus, she has gone through those seven years doing what he wanted her to do. As a child, she was afraid to be killed so she kept quiet and paid the price alone.

In addition, *Sara* was always anxious to meet her father and be loved by him. Her mother protected her from being hurt in so many ways hiding the real reason of their divorce. However, *Sara* wanted to meet her father. It was important for her because having a father is something a little girl needs more than anything. Fathers hold an important place in the Ethiopian society other than the natural obligation they have.

ሣራ - እናንተ ገን ቆይ መቼ ነው አባቴን የምታስተዋውቁኝ። የሠርጋችሁ ቀን ዛሬ ትተዋወቁዋለሽ አላችሁኝ ሳይሆን ቀረ። ከዚያ ሰአት ዓመት በዓላችን ትተዋወቁዋለሽ አላችሁኝ እሁንም ሳታስተዋውቁኝ ቀረችሁ። ቆይ መቼ ነው የምታስተዋውቁኝ?

ህሊና - አንድ ቀን! (ገጽ 7)

Sara - But when are you going to introduce me with my father? Last time you told me that I was going to meet him at your wedding, but it didn't happen. Then you promised me you were going to do it on your first year anniversary, still it did not happen. So when are you going to do it?

Helina - One day! (Page 7)

The more she was eager to meet him, the more her mother broke her promise giving her one reason after another. She understood her father was not the kind of person the one she always dreamed him to be. After her suffering, she did not lose her hope so she called him to ask for help, though it was worthless. He did not want to have a part in her life, because he was too protective of his new family, denying the possibility of introducing her. He blamed his wife for whatever was happening now. *Sara* sought to be protected by her father to take over his parental obligation as her mother had done. However, *Sara* was a victim of a selfish and cruel step-father.

*Azeb*, on the other hand, was so protective about her love affair with Michael. She was defending it from trouble. She was convinced, their relationship was real. She thought all the kitchen chores and obligations are left out for women. In the story, Michael cooks food and takes good care of *Sara* makes her angry. *Azeb* thought he was spoiling *Sara*. He is a man, a father and a husband. He

needs to sit down and be served, not serve one spoiled little brat. He was the kitchen boy which *Azeb* thought was wrong.

Moreover, men in the film have a strange feeling towards women. They need women, but they do not accept them as humans who have feelings as they do. They openly discuss the main reason why they adore women. They accepted without the women's being, they cannot fulfill their physical needs or sexual needs. That is the only thing they pursue from women. Having women for mutual companionship and friendship is not a primary requirement. This does prove men have power over women.

ሚካኤል - ስለሴቶች ምን ዓይነት አመለካከት አለህ?

ገደኛ - ጭፍን፡፡ በጣም ጭፍን፡፡

ሚካኤል - ለምን? ከምን የተነሳ?

ገደኛ - አላውቅም ግን እወዳቸዋለሁ! አንተ ግን ለምንድን ነው ሁልጊዜ እየመጣህ ስለዚህ ነገር የምትጠይቀኝ? አንዱ ሴቶችን ትወዳቸዋለህ ወይ ተብሎ ሲጠየቅ ምን እንዳለ ታውቃለህ?

ሚካኤል - ምን አለ?

ገደኛ - አዎ ግን ማታ ማታ ብቻ አለ! (ገጽ 18)

Michael - What is your attitude towards women?

Friend - Dark. Very negative.

Michael - Why? What is your reason?

Friend - I don't know. But I like them. Why are you always asking me this question? You know what a guy said when they ask him whether he likes women?

Michael - What did he say?

Friend - Yes, but it is only at night. (Page 18)

These men did not have any concrete reason to hate women, but they needed women for their sexual satisfaction. Women are not capable of working in offices and participating in different social and economical aspects. Women are highly exposed to social prejudices. They are needed to bear children, be successful in raising them and be mature enough to keep their household. They are cornered to one side of the society while they are the center of every human being.

### 3.3 Roman

*Roman* is another Ethiopian film, written by *Emebet Girma*. She is known for her collection of poems ‘Nardos’ before she produced this film. It is a new dimension for her that adds another woman film writer in the untouched and infant film industry of Ethiopia.

The story of the film *Roman* focuses on the life of a girl named *Roman*. It starts before her birth and goes all through her becoming a beautiful woman. A jealous man stole her mom from her wedded husband and he abducted her to Addis Ababa. She was pregnant with her previous marriage. When he learned the family of her husband killed his brother, he went to the village and set fire on their house. He killed the whole household for revenge. He brought up his dead brother’s son to the city and gave him to one sterile rich old woman. He rose up there with great care, but without getting love and care.

When *Roman* was six, her step-father (*Mekonnen*) killed her mother and was sent to prison. At that time, a very generous man (*Taddesse*) who lost his beloved wife and daughter through a terrible accident took her to his house. She grew up safely, became close with the generous man and forgot about her mom’s terrible death or unknown father. However, the generous man’s nephew, *Abera*, raped her and threatened her to move out of the house. It is because he wanted to make sure; he is the only one who will inherit his uncle’s wealth.

*Roman* was depressed due to her mother’s death and while she got raped, she developed a great fear of being alone. When she was growing up with her step-father; he kept calling her ‘bastard’. It was *Ato Taddesse*, the generous man who gave her the name *Roman*. All the people in the film have their own hidden, secrets and forbidden subjects they are afraid to discuss with anyone. *Roman* had her own secrets and nightmares similarly.

In this way, *Abera* became a real enemy of *Roman* and his own uncle. *Abera* took advantage of becoming her best friend's (*Fekerte*) lover and tried to attack her after he killed his uncle. When she lost *Taddesse* after she finished her University education with distinction, she found *Million*. However, she does not want to be involved with him because she was biased against men. Firstly, she was abused by her step-father and then by *Abera*. The young man won her heart when she found out he was lonely too. *Roman* had fallen in love with a young, attractive, and rich person who was brought up by a rich sterile old woman. *Roman* and her lover had no idea about their parents' background. They innocently fall in love and thought to have a new beginning together.

This plan was disrupted by *Mekonnen* (*Roman's* step-father) when he got out of prison after ten years and met *Million* (*Roman's* fiancé). After he found out that *Roman's* biological father was still alive, he convinced *Million* to kill the person who made him fatherless. Without having a clue that the monk was *Roman's* biological father, *Million* tried to kill him. *Fekerte* knew about *Roman's* father whereabouts and she had never told her instead she gave the information to *Abera*.

Nevertheless, *Roman* learned about the monk who fascinated her in many ways while she was gathering information for her show in the Ethiopian Television was her real father. When she went up to see him, she heard he was killed in the previous night. The worst thing was the person who killed him at the last minute was her own fiancé. *Mekonnen* and *Abera* decided to take her life, even though she was already dead emotionally. They crashed her with a car, but she survived from the accident. However, *Million* wanted to make things right to gain his trust with *Roman* and to be forgiven for shooting. The monk told him he had nothing to do with his parent's death. He returned back to the monastery and found the wounded monk. He brought the monk to his daughter (*Roman*) and made peace with her. Her love and trust was so high she could not resist herself from forgiving him immediately.

### **3.3.1 The Representation of Female Characters in the film, *Roman***

Ethiopian women are oppressed by cultural beliefs and value systems. The life style of their parents has its own impact on the children, especially female children. The history, culture and class of each family influences the way of their living. This is the belief of African Feminist writers which they want to change in the patriarchal society. These women characters have vividly shown the cultural bondage of women and how they overcome their burden eventually.

There are four women characters in the film *Roman*. These women have their own different appearance in the film, but their existence has contributed something with picturing it as a female-oriented film.

#### **3.3.1.1 Women Capable of Independent Action in the film, *Roman***

For many years, African women were believed to be dependent and submissive. They are expected to be obedient, not rebellious for social needs. However, African women writers wrote against those expectations. They wrote about women who are influential and strong in their environment. These two characters, *Roman* and *Alganesh*, reflected this assumption clearly. They have ridiculed and challenged the image of that women had earlier.

*Aleganesh*, the old woman shown only once in the movie, but she is an influential person in the story of the movie. She was sterile with a huge fortune that no child was to inherit. However, *Mekonnen* brought his nephew after the death of his brother. Violating the cultural norms, she named the orphan boy's last name after her own. She refused to accept complaints from *Mekonnen* and insisted to inherit her name. The boy lived all his life ashamed of his identity just because he has a woman's last name.

መኮንን - ሚሲዮን ጋሻው ነው ስሙ።

አርገቲ - ምነው ሸዋ! ስሙማ የሚጠራው በኔ ነው!

መኮንን - እኮ በሴት ስም?! (ገጽ 11-12)

Mekonnen - His name is Million Gashaw.

The old lady - Who cares? He will have my name.

Mekonnen - What? A woman's name? (Page 11-12)

She fought over the existing situation, what had been normal for many years and what had been accepted in the society. She had rebelled over the belief of patriarchy, male-dominated society and exercised domination on her little boy. That had its own impact on the boy's life. He was asking why he was forced to live such kind of life. Even though he was brought up by a rich woman and inherited her fortune, he was forced to ask about his true identity. The old woman appeared to be a female character that is beyond the cultural bias and prejudice. She had done what she had to do.

*Roman* is a very strong, honest, determined and rational woman. She became an orphan after her mother's death. However, she grew up with a great care by a loving father. He gave her his love, wealth, and most of all the courage to reveal what she has gone through. She was hunted down by her step-father's attempted rape when she was a little girl. She was raped by *Abera*. She also experienced a tragic death of her mother. She lost her biological father. However, nothing could stop her from accomplishing her dream.

During childhood, she was a charming, but timid girl. She was usually beaten up by her step-father and grew up listening to her mother's physical suffering. She did not have a name, rather named a 'bastard' till *Taddesse* appeared in her life to help her out. Her mother died while she tried to save her from a rape attempt by her step-father. All these events in her life did not prevent her from succeeding in achieving her dream eventually.

ታደሰ - ብዙ ጊዜ ትምህርት ቤት አካባቢ ብቻሽን መሆን የሰብሽም። ንደኛ ሊኖርሽ ያስፈልጋል።

ሮማን - ያው እናንተ አላችሁ አይደል? አንተ አሰህ? ጋሼ አሰ ደግሞ ቡቺም አሰች ሲላ ንደኛ ምን ያደርጋል? ...ብቻዬን መሆን ነው ነፃነት የሚሰጠኝ። (ገጽ 22-23)

Taddesse - You shouldn't be alone while you're in school. You need to have a friend.

Roman - But don't I have all of you? I have you, I have my uncle? I have Buchi also. I don't think I need another friend. Being alone gives me freedom. (Page 22-23)

Even though she was always afraid to be alone, she had been lonely in high school and colleges. She lost her mother when she was a small girl. She did not have any idea about her father except that she heard he was a kind person. She was sometimes irrational and emotional in some way. She was haunted with the thought that anyone who is close to her will die or be hurt.

ፎማን - አፈራሰሁ አባ ብቻዬን መሆን ያስፈራኛል። ሰውየው አስፈራርቶኛል ይህንን ቤት ካስቀቅኝ እንልሻለሁ ብሎኛል

ታደሰ - ማነው እሱ ፎማኔ? ማነው ልጄን እንዲህ ብሎ የሚያስፈራራኝ

ፎማን - በመጀመሪያ ምንም እንደማታደርግ ቃል ግባልኝ። እኔ ብቻዬን እንዳልሆን ብቻ ነው የምፈልገው። ... (7ጽ 30)

Roman - I'm afraid to be alone, Abba. The guy threatened to kill me if I didn't leave the house.

Taddesse - Who is the man, Roman? Who is threatening my child like that?

Roman - Firstly, you've to promise me that you won't do anything. What I want is, not to be alone.... (Page 30)

She was raped by a close family member; she did not want him to be thrown to prison. She did not want to get through all the trouble of accusation and court process. She was protecting *Ato Taddesse* from suing his own nephew. All she wanted was to be with *Taddesse* and lived peacefully. She did not need any man to protect her, to love her; but she has a very soft heart for someone who is lonely or alone.

ሚሊዮን - ፎማ ብቸኝነቴ የሚገፈፈው በአንቺ ነው። የግድ አፍቅሪኝ አልሰጥም ግን በቃ እንዳፈቅርሽ አብራሽ እንደሆን ፍቀጃልኝ?

፡  
፡

ፎማን - ሁልጊዜ አብራህ እሆናለሁ። ... (7ጽ 40-41)

Million - Romi, you are the only one who can help me to overcome my loneliness. I won't ask you to love me, but let me love you and be with you.

፡  
፡

Roman - I'll always be with you. ...(Page 40-41)

That was the reason why she opened up her heart to *Million*. He chased her for months and often he had been unable to talk to her. However, when she found out that he had an emotional need, she surrendered. *Roman* was attracting male characters. She was the center of attention. *Million* had cried out to be loved by her, because he had been alone all his life.

She wanted to get an answer to all the problems that *Taddesse* and her mother failed to answer. She had a kind and dedicated mother who paid a price to bring up her daughter. She had been brought up by a generous and protective person who gave her his fortune and his life. *Taddesse* did that because he believed she deserved an opportunity for good life and comfort. He also wanted to have a second chance to be a father. Though she had these great people in her life, she had one big question that needed to be answered. She had to find her biological father.

ፎማን - እኔ ግን ስምን ስስቃይ ተፈጠርኩ? እግዚአብሔር ስምን ብቻዬን እንድኖር ፈረደብኝ?

ሚሊዮን - እኔም እኮ ስብቻዬ ነበርኩ። ፎማ አሁን ግን አንቺ አስከፍኝ ብቻዬን ነኝ ግን አስፈራም።

ፎማን - አባቴን ባውቀው ኖሮ የት እንዳለ ባውቅ ... (ገጽ 41)

Roman - Why am I born to suffer? Why did God let me live alone?

Million - I was alone too. But Romi, I have you now. I'm alone but I am not afraid.

Roman - If I knew my father, if I knew where he is ... (Page 41)

Her dream was to become a great authoress. The strong woman, who had been a shelter for a weak man, suddenly seemed unable to get over her past. She was still haunted by a nightmare of murder threat, rape and abuse. She looked for someone who would tell her she is secure and protected. She thought that her lover might vanish if she told everything that happened to her. She lost self-confidence. She again experienced emotional disorder.

ፎማን - ሚሊ መከራዎች ሁሉ በኔ ላይ የተቆሰሱት። አትጠላኝም የኔ ጌታ።

ሚሊዮን - አፈቅርሻለሁ። ምን ጊዜም አስጠላሽም የኔ ፍቅር። (ገጽ 42)

Roman - Milli, I am burdened with problems. Won't you hate me,  
my love?

Million - I love you! I will never hate you, my love! (Page 42)

She was afraid that she would be blamed for losing her virginity, although she was raped. She had totally forgotten that she was a victim who needed encouragement and sympathy. She had to be admired for her courage, but not ridiculed. However, she opened herself up to be judged by a man. It seems that she did not want to lose her love.

The quest to find her father had begun ever since she was a little girl. Her mother was alive and she had many questions starting from her name. She heard about his kindness, and she wanted to find him. He seemed very different from her step-father. The psychological damage caused by the step-father pushed her to look for another refuge under her biological father. She did not know his real name and his whereabouts, but she was eager to find him after her mother passed away.

አቻምዩሌሽ - ምነው ብቻሽን ዩኔ ዓለም?

ሮማን - አባ ትቶኝ ሂደ ... ሞተብኝ ብቻዬን ቀረቡ::

አቻምዩሌሽ - አባትሽን ፈልጋው?

ሮማን - ዩት ነው ያለው? ስሙ ማነው?

አቻምዩሌሽ - ስሙ ... (ገጽ 38)

Achamyelesh - Why are you alone, my heart?

Roman - Abba is gone. ... He died. I am alone, now.

Achamyelesh - Find your father!

Roman - Where is he? What is his name?

Achamyelesh - His name is .... (Page 38)

She wondered how her dilemma would be resolved, that is, when she can fulfill her dreams, other than becoming a great writer. That is why she opened up her heart to *Million*. However, her expectation was that her father had all the answers to her confused thoughts. Even the existence of *Million* and his love could not cover the void left by the absence of a father.

### 3.3.1.2 Submissive Women in the film, *Roman*

The rest of two women in the film, *Roman* are portrayed as weak and submissive women. They were highly pushed to the other side in their own life. They were expected to act and live according to the social expectation which leads them to oppression.

*W/ro Achamyesh* came from the rural side of Ethiopia where women are taken as sex objects who bear children. The woman is not considered a help mate for her husband. She fed him, slept with him to satisfy his sexual needs and gave birth to kids. She did not have any right to resist him once she is married with him. The thing is the women are oppressed all their lives. They were under the rule of their fathers before they were married and they will be ruled by their husbands after marriage.

መኮንን - ተይህ በላይ ምንክንዳደርግልሽ ኖሯል? አንድም ቀን የባል ወግ ሳታሳይኝና አብረሽኝ ሳትተኝ እኔ እንደሚሰት ቆጥረሽ ቤት ተቀን ከድንጋይ እየታገልኩ አንቀባርሬ ይዘኝላሁ። አልራብሽ አልጠማሽ ምን ሆነሽ ነው የምትነፈርቂ?

አቻምየላሽ - ተይህ በላይ መራብና መሰቃየት የት አለ? ቀን ሙሉ ቤት ዘግተህብኝ እየዋልህ። (ገጽ 4)

Mekonnen - What do you want me to do more than this? You have never considered me as a husband and slept with me. I, on the other hand, took you as a wife and provided you with everything you want. You are neither starved nor thirsted, what makes you cry?

Achamyesh - You locked me up whole day. Is there any greater starvation than this? (Page 4)

*Achamyesh* appeared as a helpless, humble and weak woman. It is clearly shown how women are needed to live with their husbands. She was expected to sleep with him, proved to him that he was her husband. On the other hand, he locked her up inside the house and left her alone the whole day. He expected her to be happy because she has everything she needed. He took her away from what she wanted, brought her to a new place and locked her up, but he ordered her to be happy and be a wife. She was neither thirsty nor hungry. He

played his part by providing money and she had to do her own by providing what he needed.

አቻምዩሌሽ - በይ ነይ እንግባና ቆንጽ ሽሮ ሰርቴልሽ ትበደለሽ። ለራትሽ የሚሆን ገንዘብ ለማግኘት ቅጠል ልሸጥ ሂጂ እኮ ነው። (ገጽ 9)

Achamyelesh - Come on in. Let us go inside and I'll cook a very delicious 'shoro' and you'll eat. I was selling leaves to have money for your dinner. (Page 9)

She was hindered by, misunderstanding and a rude husband and her little daughter. Since her daughter is not his own, he did not want to give money for her. He always told her how worthless she was. Thus, she wanted to support herself and her daughter. She did not have enough money to pay for her daughter's and her need. Her job was conditional and seasonal which made her to stay longer than required. However, she was a loving mother to her daughter calling her 'my love or my world'. She called her by that not only because she loved her, but also to erase the name given by her husband; 'bastard'. She did not have anything else but her daughter. It seemed that she had only one reason to live, her daughter.

ሮማን - እማ... እንትን ማለት ምንድን ነው?

አቻምዩሌሽ - ምን ማለት የኔ ዓለም?

ሮማን - እንትን... ዲቃሳ?

ምን ማለት ነው? ...እሱ ሁልጊዜ ለምንድን ነው ዲቃሳ የሚለኝ? ... ስም ነው እንዲ? (ገጽ 9)

Roman - Ma, what does that mean?

Achamyelesh - Which means, my love?

Roman - This ... bastard.

- What does it mean? Why is he always calling me a bastard? Is that a name? (Page 9)

She was a very patient and tolerant woman. She was always afraid of her husband since he beat her up for no reason at all. She loved and protected her daughter because she did not want her to be hurt as she had been. She was sensitive since her daughter was getting the parental compassion only from her. Therefore, she suffered a lot because she did not want her daughter to be harmed psychologically. She was convinced that she cannot have her own house and life alone with her daughter away from all the harassment and

abuse from her husband. They were highly depended on his income, even though they were living as second citizens in the house.

*Fekerte* is created to represent most women of our world. Women who are beautiful and attractive those are hunted down by men for their beauty. Men look at them as objects of sex. The way they dress and live show that they are asking to be watched and chosen by those men. They are proud of being hunted by men.

አበራ - ዛሬ ደግሞ ገዳይ ሆነኝል።

ፍቅርተ - አመሰግናለሁ። ... ብዙ መራቅ የሰብንም። ትሱ መመሰስ አለብኝ።

አበራ - አይ ... እንደዛ ብሎ ነገር የሰም። ዛሬማ በቀሳሱ አንሳቀቅም። ... ከዚህ የማር እሽት መቅመስ አለብኝ። (ገጽ 26)

Abera - Today, you look great!

Fekerte - Thank you. ...We can't go far. I have to go back early.

Abera - No way. I don't let you go easily today. ... I need to taste your love. (Page 26)

*Fekerte* appeared to be weak in her educational status and abilities. She was more interested to have a guy around her and to tell her how beautiful she is and to fulfill her material needs. She did not mind to be the object of desire by a male. She could easily be dominated by male. She does not have any confidence by herself. She did not think she could do things for herself by herself.

Her naked body which triggers other viewers to watch had been enclosed. *Abera* even requested the main purpose of that and strengthened the thought of attracting viewers. Women designed to be beautiful and loving, attract men with their physical appearance and wearing style, but they are only wanted for sexual needs. It seems that *Fekerte* accepted her being an object of male's gaze for he was admiring her beauty. She was happy and smiling because she liked his being straightforward.

She always needs a man's help for her own future. She thought that she is smarter than *Abera*. She was also emotionally weak and could be easily

manipulated. She could be cheated with repeated favors and love affairs which seemed true and right.

አበራ - ቅንጽ ቤት ነው ያገኘሁልሽ አይደል ፍቅር?

ፍቅርተ - ያገኘህልኝም ስራም ቅንጽ ነው። ከአባዬ ጥቅጥቅ ገላገልኩኝ።

አበራ - አንቺን ለማስደሰት የማሳደርገው ነገር የለም የኔ ቅንጽ!

ፍቅርተ - ስዚህ ውስታህ ምንድን ነው የምከፍሰው? (ገጽ 36)

Abera - I have got a beautiful house for you, right Feker?

Fekerte - And you have got me a nice job too. You saved me from my father's nagging.

Abera - I'll do anything to make you happy, my darling.

Fekerte - What can I do for you in return? (Page 36)

She thought that she did not deserve to be loved. She thought she owed something to her lover. She saw no other commitment in love other than having strong sexual relationship. She felt that as long as *Abera* loved her, she could lead a comfortable life. She thinks that it is her obligation to give back.

She became a weapon for him. She had shown her loyalty to *Abera* than *Roman*. She forgot the promise she made for *Ato Taddesse*. She had hid a very important thing from *Roman*, but she had never felt guilty. Rather, she gave the information to *Abera* so he could cheat *Roman*.

ፍቅርተ - ወይ ለምን ከሷ ጋር አትደራደርም?

እኔ ጋር እሷ በጣም የምትፈልገው ነገር አለ። አባቷ በሚስጥር ነው የሰጠኝ። ለምን በሱ አትደራደሩም (ገጽ 40)

Fekerte - Why don't you propose to her?

I have something very important that she needs. Her father gave it to me secretly. Why don't you negotiate with that? (Page 40)

It seems that *Fekerte* wanted to give *Roman's* secret for a return of *Abera's* favor. Since *Abera* wanted to have *Taddesse's* wealth, this might be her contribution for that. If *Abera* became rich, she could be wealthy too or have a comfortable life. Her lack of confidence and low self esteem along with her being emotional, irrational and materialistic person made her to be a traitor. She was more honest and loyal to *Abera* than *Roman*. In the film, *Fekerte* is viewed as dishonest.

ሮማን - እውነቱን ከሆነ የፈለገውን ነገር ሁሉ እሰጠዋለሁ፡፡ የሚፈልገውን ሁሉ...  
 ፍቅርተ - እሱ እንደዛ ነው የሚለው፡፡ በቂ መረጃ እንዳለው ነው የነገረኝ፡፡  
 ሮማን - አሁኑኑ ልፈርምሰት እችላለሁ፡፡ አባቴን ከሰጠኝ ያለኝን ነገር ሁሉ ልሰጠው  
 ፈቃደኛ ነኝ፡፡ ... (ገጽ 47)  
 Roman - I'll give him whatever he wants, if he is telling the truth.  
 Everything he wants...  
 Fekerte - He was saying that he has enough information about it.  
 Roman - I'll sign it for him. If he gives me my father, I will give  
 him everything I have. ... (Page 47)

Thus, she is going to get in trouble both with *Roman* and *Abera*. *Roman* will hate her for she did not tell her the truth, the big secret she held back. *Abera* will blame her for she did not give him the secret to cheat *Roman* beforehand. *Fekerte* is trying hard to live for others happiness and safety. On the one hand, she wanted to save *Roman* from any harm that *Abera* promised to cause because of the fortune. On the other hand, she was helping *Abera* to get his hands into the fortune, treasure of *Ato Taddesse* which he had dreamed of years.

### 3.3.2 Male Gaze Versus Female Gaze in the film, *Roman*

In the film, *Roman*, there are some male characters that are unusual. They are portrayed as people with a very innocent loving and caring heart. On the other hand, there are also men who are similar to that of women. There also other men who use sex as a weapon to influence women. We can see how men dominate women under the cover of culture or society.

*Mekonnen* is a man who cannot let himself to be humiliated by his community. When he asked *Achamyesh* for marriage and his request was rejected by her family, he decided to show them he is a man. A man is pictured to be powerful, thus he used his power to snatch her from her wedded husband. He was hurt not because he lost his love life rather she was married to another man. He could not accept the fact that was loved by another man. Therefore, he decided to punish them, humiliate them bitterly.

- ጋሻው - ተው ኃሳ ደም መቃባት ነው ትርፉ!
- መኮንን - ወንድ ልጅ ጥቃትን የሚሸከም አቅም የሰውም::እውነት ወንድማችን ነህ ጥቃትህ ይሰማናል ታላቅሁ አሁን ነው የሚሰየው:: (ገጽ 1-2)
- Gashaw - It will bring unnecessary bloodshed!
- Mekonnen - A man doesn't have a humble heart that can accept rejection and defeat. If you believe that I am your brother and feel my shame, you shall stand with me. (Page 1-2)

From the above conversation, we can see that men do not want to be looked down on by other people. If they do not get or have whatever they request, they will be perceived as someone who is a coward. The only thing that happened here was, *Achamyesh's* parents rejected his request for marriage and allowed her to marry another person she was in love with. It is clear that love and all emotional connections, willingness and affection do not have anything with his search. He wanted to have her as his wife and that had to be done.

He went to the extreme of abduction without her will. He had never thought for a second that a marriage should be based on mutual love. He declared that men should not be humiliated by the society. However, women can bear the pain of losing someone who is dear, adapt to another way of life and be a loyal wife to someone they do not love at all. It seems that they are obliged to live as if their life is decided by a man, not themselves.

- መኮንን - ልትከሰክሰደኝ ትፈልጊዎለሽ እንዴ?
- አቻምየሰሽ - እኔ አሞኛል ... ተወኝ እባክህ
- መኮንን - ዝም በይ ...ልጅ እፈልጋለሁ:: ከአንቺ ወንድ ልጅ እፈልጋለሁ::
- አቻምየሰሽ - ወትሮውንስ ፈጣሪ ቢከሰክሰኝ እንጂ መቼ ልጅ አይሻኝም አልኩ:: (ገጽ 13)
- Mekonnen - Do you want to refuse?
- Achamyesh - I'm sick...Please, leave me alone!
- Mekonnen - Be quiet!... I want a child. I want a boy from you.
- Achamyesh - The lord did not give me a child. I yearn to have a child! (Page 13)

Men want to live a good life according to *Mekonnen*. Women fail to have a successful and peaceful life. He used his physical strength to have a baby. He was cruel and arrogant towards his wife. He thought because she is his wife, he has all the power even on her body. He believed that abusing his wife is his

right. She was his wife, so she had to tolerate physical and psychological damages caused by her husband.

Thus, the relationship between *Mekonnen* and *Achamyelesh* was characterized by male dominance in which the woman is object of desire. In Ethiopia, husbands are the head of their family. *Mekonnen* is a typical male character that rules over *Achamyelesh* and her little daughter. He did not care about the feelings of his wife and her little girl. He was controlling their life. They were economically and psychologically dependant on him. That is why she could not name her daughter.

- ሮማን - ሮማን ነው እሺ እማ። ግን አንቺ ድሮ ስምን እሮማን አላሰጥክም።  
ማነው ሚሚ ብሎ ስም ያወጣልኝ?  
አቻምዩለሽ - እሱ ነው። ትምህርት ቤት ሲያስመዘግብሽ ሲሳ ስም ዩሳትም ብሎ ሚሚ ያስባለሽ። (ገጽ 13)  
Roman - It is Roman, okay Ma? But Ma, why didn't you name me Roman before? Who gave me the name Mimi?  
Achamyelesh - He did. When he took you to the school, he named you as Mimi, believing that you didn't have any other name. (Page 13)

He was a decisive body in the family while she was playing passive. They did not have the guts to call him by his name, because they were afraid of him. This shows that the relation between *Mekonnen* and *Achamyelesh* was that of a ruler and a slave.

On the other hand, in the film, we find a kind of relationship which is based on physical attraction and infatuation. Their relationship lasts as long as each of them satisfies their need. *Abera* openly told her that he wanted sexual love from her. Even though he was not successful with his profession and was unable to change his life, he knew he could win a girl's heart easily. She also appeared as weak emotional girl who can easily give her heart to a man who is not responsive to her love. After they fought, she came back to him because she was sure he would help her.

ፍቅርተ - ይልቅ ደሳለኝ አይደለህ እስከ ሰኔ ስራ ፈልግህ?  
 አበራ - ስራ ነው እንጂ እኔን ፍላጎት አልመጣኸም ማለት ነው? ... ያቺን ያቀመስኽኝን  
 ካሳጠግብኽን ሳንቺ የሚሆን ስራ የሰጥኝ።  
 ፍቅርተ - ሂድ ወደዛ! ሞዛዛ! (ገጽ 33)  
 Fekerte - Can you find me a job?  
 Abera - You didn't come back for me. You came back for the job,  
 right? I don't have any job unless you gave me that love.  
 Fekerte - Stop it! (Page 33)

It can be seen that she enjoyed the physical relation between them. She did not give value to herself that is why she did not give him up while he treated her like a sex object. The audience does not appreciate this kind of girl, submissive woman. He admitted the reason why he was chasing her. He enjoyed sexual intimacy with her.

He favored her body and womanhood rather than her personality and good nature. He promised to help her to find a job if she satisfies, fulfills his sexual needs. She was an object of desire as Mulvey put it. She attracted and pulled the male gaze to herself. Male audience is attracted to her physical beauty and identifies her as a cheap person who can easily give herself to men. The impact of the male power over women can be seen in the relation between *Abera* and *Fekerte*.

Unlike the kind of life *Roman* had, she was strong enough to overcome her losses and troubles in her life. In the film, the audience can identify themselves with the protagonist. It is not like other films which give the title to a woman character and make her to circle around a male character. This always magnifies a hero rather than recognize the existence of a heroine. However, *Roman* is a heroine in her own narration pulling all men around her. It all started with her step-father when she overcame his jealousy, hatred and attempted rape. He was threatening to destroy her for he had a deep fear whenever he saw her.

He was haunted down with the mistakes he made and the crime he had committed in his birth place. When he saw her, he remembered he was unable

to produce a child. This reason made him an impotent man who cannot show his manhood. Therefore, he blamed his wife for not bearing a child. However, she was not barren; she had a girl from a previous marriage mate. The existence of *Roman* made him suffer and hate her more. As a little girl, even though she was terrified of him, the fear of having him around did not break her apart or make her emotional rather mold her to be a beautiful and brave girl.

ታደሰ - ሰምን ደብተር የሰሸም? አስተገዛሪሽም እንዴ?

ሚሚ - እሱ ገዝታልኝ ነበር ግን ቀደዱብኝ::

ታደሰ - ማነው የቀደደው?

ሚሚ - እሱ

ታደሰ - ማነው እሱ?

ሚሚ - አ...አባቴ (ገጽ 16)

Taddesse - Why don't you have an exercise book? Didn't they buy it for you?

Mimi - Ma bought it for me, but he ripped it.

Taddesse - Who did rip it?

Mimi - He.

Taddesse - Who is he?

Mimi - My f.. father. (Page 16)

Her childhood life ended with tragedy, her mother was killed and her step-father was put to jail. *Taddesse* became her life savior, but she saved his life too. He wanted to be close to her, involved in her life and help her to grow because he was unable to get rid of the terrible accident. The accident which killed his beloved wife and little, adorable daughter had left a scar in his heart. He always remembered them and mourned them. He could not move on and marry another woman. That was impossible for him. He had chosen to live alone with the memory of a lost family. However, he found refuge in *Roman*, a little girl across the street. She brought back all the beautiful memories of having a daughter. Fortunately, their life line crossed when she lost a parent and he decided to raise her as his own.

አበራ - ምን እያየህ ነው አጎቴ?

ታደሰ - ያቺን እዛ ቤት በር ሳይ የተቀመጠችውን ህፃን:: እንዴት ታሳዝነኛላች መሰለህ:: ከ15 ዓመት በኋላ ልጄን አስታወሳችኝ::

አበራ - አጎቴ በቃ ያንን ያሰፈ ነገር አስረሳ ማለትህ ነው?

ታደሰ - እንዴት ይረሳል! ... (ገጽ 12)

Abera - What are you looking at, uncle?

Taddesee - That little girl over there. You have no idea, how much I feel sorry for her. After 15 years, she reminded me my daughter.

Abera - Uncle, you couldn't let go that terrible accident, right?

Taddesse - How can I forget! ... (Page 12)

Here, the audience will sympathize with him, with his loss. As *Taddesse* needed to help *Roman*, *Roman* unknowingly helped him to come out of his loneliness. It was not a one way favor, she had contributed too. She was not designed to be a passive and emotional woman. She was made to help people who suffered from loneliness. She had filled the gap in *Taddesse's* life by becoming his daughter. That made him to be selfish and he did not help her to find out the whereabouts of her father. He became very protective. He wanted to have her for himself only. The thought of losing her terrified him. She was not just a girl for *Taddesse*; she was a very important person in his circle of life. In addition, *Million* sought answers to his confused questions from *Roman*. That is why he openly told her about his life on the first day meeting. He suffered from loneliness throughout childhood.

ሚሊዮን - ስሜ ማን እንደሆነ ታውቂዎለሽ? ሚሊዮን አልጋነሽ። አልጋነሽ ያሳደጉኝ አሮጊት ስም ነው። አየሽ የሚች አባቴ ስም እንኳን አልቀረኝም። ከወንድ አባት እንዳልተወለድኩ በሴት ስዚያውም ባሳደጉኝ ሴት ስም ስጠራ ነው የኖርኩት። አንድ አጎት አለኝ ከ10 ዓመት በላይ ተሰይቶኝ ቆይቶ ስንገናኝ የአባቴን ስም ነገረኝ። በቃ ዘመድ ዘመድ የሚሸት ሰው ያገኘሁ መሰለኝ።

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ሮማን - ሁልጊዜ አብረህ እሆናለሁ። «ተመሳሳይ ክንፍ ያላቸው ወፎች አንድ ላይ ነው የሚበሩት።» (ገጽ 41-42)

Million - Do you know my name? It is Million Aleganesh. Aleganesh is the name of the old lady who adopted me, you see, I couldn't even have the name of my dead father. As if I wasn't born from a man, I was named after a woman that adopted me. I have one uncle, I didn't see him for 10 years, and he told me my father's name. Then I felt that I've found someone I call family.

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Roman - I will always be with you. Birds which have the same wings can fly together. (Page 41-42)

*Million* thought that her love would cure him from his pain, but he did not force her to love him. He narrated the troubles and the unanswered puzzles hoping she would give her hand to hold him, her heart to share his love. She had the same need in her life. She wanted to find her real father, and settle down. They had the same quest, thus she responded to his love.

Unlike many men in the society, he uncovered his real self to her. He had never tried to lie, or to appear as a very successful and smart person. Rather, he spoke out of his heart that he was after a woman to heal his loneliness. He was looking for a strong and successful woman to save him from his life long pain. However, he confirmed that he needed an honest friend that can understand him. He did not think that he has a right over a woman's body and soul. This made *Roman* to have power over him. She was able to help him to cure him from his loneliness.

He got relief from loneliness. She became the center of his life. He did things to make her happy, and promised to be with her no matter what would happen. However, she had strong morals than him. He appeared to be emotional that is why he rushed to murder the assumed killer of his father. He did not give himself a little thought or realize the consequence of being a killer rather he went out and shot a man at the back. It was a dark night and the monk was praying, but he did not hesitate to pull his trigger. This shows how blind and weak he is. He could be easily intimidated by another person. He was dedicated to make her happy, but suddenly he took away the one thing that would change her life.

- ሚሊዮን - አገሩ ሰደጣን አትሁንብኝ! ያሰኝላት መቅረቱን እያነሳህ ሰውየውን እንደበቀል ያደረግከኝ አንተ ነህ። አሁን ደግሞ ሮሚን ... ብትኝነቴን ያሸነፈኸኝን እመቤ ቴን ግደል ነው የምትሰኝ? ምን ዓይነት የደም መንፈስ ነው የተጠናወተህ?
- መኮንን - ስትፈሰፈሰ ነገ ጠዋት ታስደፋሃለሽ! (ገጽ 53-54)
- Million - Uncle don't be evil! You pushed me to avenge the guy, telling me how I lived without a father. Now what Romi

... do you want me to kill the one person who helped to win my loneliness?

Mekonnen - She'll have someone to kill you because you are weak.  
(Page 53-54)

According to the above conversation, *Million* was dependant on *Roman* to overcome his loneliness. He wanted to make her happy, but he was the one who killed her dream. For that reason, he was already punishing himself before any law and *Roman* herself suited him. He was helpless and unable to decide what he should do in his life. He was so emotional that he could not realize he would do a serious mistake in his life. He paid a price for this because he lost a loved one.

*Abera*, like *Mekonnen* loses confidence when he is around *Roman*. Ever since she was a child, he wanted to get rid of her, but that was impossible. His uncle was so attached with the little girl that he became envious. The one thing that he laid his eyes on was the fortune of his uncle that he could not get hold of so long as *Roman* lived with his uncle. His cowardice and lack of confidence made him to do evil things.

አበራ - ዘላለሜን ስቋምጥሰት የነበረው የታደሰ ሀብት ከየትም ሚዳ ተገኝታ ሲሳዩን ቀምታኝ እንድወዳት ትፈልግ ነበር።

ፍቅርተ - አህ ብቀሳ መሆኑ ነው?

አበራ - ህይወቴንም ባጠፋው እመኝ ነበር። ገና አሰራሳታለሁ የአገሬ ቴ ሀብት እያለ እያካከኝ አስኖርም። (ገጽ 30)

Abera - Do you want me to like her when she came out of nowhere and took the one thing that I have waited for years.

Fekerte - Okay, was it revenge?

Abera - I wish I killed her, I can't live like this while I can have my uncle's money. (Page 30)

*Abera* could not accept the fact that his failure to get what he wanted did not have anything to do with *Roman*. Regardless of the existence of *Roman*, *Taddesse* would not make him his legatee because he did not trust him. He could not be faithful to his uncle. He could not blame himself for anything except pointing his fingers at her. He became envious because *Roman* had a

purpose in her life; to write what she had been through, to let people know the cruelty of mankind and to communicate with readers, to show the dark side of life. On the contrary, the purpose of his life was to have his uncle's wealth, to become a very wealthy person so that he can have enough money to waste.

አበራ - ንደኛሽ ዩኒቨርሲቲ መግባቷን ሰማሁ።  
ከትቢያ ሳይ ተሸሽ ሰው ሆነች። ዩናት ሞት በዚህ ምድር ሰላ ነው  
የጠቀማት። (ገጽ 33)

Abera - I heard your friend joined the University.  
I have never seen any one so blessed like her after the  
death of a mother. (Page 33)

He was blinded with jealousy so that he could not understand that the only person who is to be blamed for his failure is himself. He did not change his way of living through working. On the other hand, *Roman* used the given opportunity and changed her life. She went to university and graduated being top of her class. However, he could not appreciate her success.

It seems that *Million* and *Roman* exchanged places. They have equal contribution in their relationship, though he was more dependent on her. *Taddesse* looked a secure family with her presence in his house. He got a second chance to be a father for a brave girl. *Abera* became jealous of her intelligence and intimate relationship with his uncle. She was more trustworthy than he was. *Mekonnen* was always afraid of her. She reminded him of his unsuccessful previous life from which he wanted to run away from, an incident that ended with blood shed and sent him to prison. He had never thought he could meet her again and the fear of having her around would make him uncomfortable.

*Roman* was the center of the story and portrayed as a special heroine who transcended beyond the social bias, the cultural bondage and patriarchal prejudice. She was unpredictable. *Roman* was not used as a sexual object after male gaze. Rather, she was used to show the mental and emotional strength of women. In this way, the female gaze came to the knowledge of each viewer,

assuming women can see themselves without the influence of cultural bias, sexual burden and social prejudice.

### 3.3.3 Patriarchy in the film, *Roman*

In real life, women are exposed to cultural prejudice dominated by their male counter parts. Men appeared as decisive bodies, active groups and strong leaders, whereas women are restricted to bearing children, raising them properly and taking care their household besides assisting their men to be settled in economical problems. In the film, *Achamyesh* was highly exposed to patriarchal prejudice and cultural biases. According to *Mekonnen* and other men, women's role is to produce babies. Any failure in such circumstances is going to be blamed on their female partners.

መኮንን - አስር ዓመት ምን ይሰ ምን ይሰ እንግዲያው እኔ መስፋቴ አልቀረ።

ጓደኛ - እንዴት ተሞኝተሃል ጃል!

መኮንን - ምን ሳርግ ብሰህ ነው?

ጓደኛ - ምን ሳርግ? እሷን ወዲያ ትተህ አንዷን ወላጅ የማግባ ምን ሆነህ ነው?  
(78 14)

Mekonnen - All 10 years. I have done everything, but I haven't seen anything.

Friend - You're very fooled!

Mekonnen - What can I do?

Friend - What can I do?! Why don't you throw her away and marry another who can give birth? (Page 14)

*Mekonnen* could not give birth for any child; he blamed it on his wife and step-daughter. Therefore, he was not providing them with sufficient income for their necessities. Besides the bad influences, women were also exposed to discouragement. They could not have a permanent career, and educational status. They had a low status. No one expected a girl to have educational abilities. They perceived that girls are lazy and have low mental capacity naturally. That is why they quit school early before men do. Joining university and finishing college are unthinkable issues for women due to society's bias toward women.

መኮንን - አንቺን ብሎ ተማራ። ተምረሽ ምናባሽ ስትጠቅሟኝ ነው የማስተምርሽ!  
(ገጽ 8)

Mekonnen - Why do I bother to teach you? You won't go anywhere! (Page 8)

Even though she was a little girl with a great dedication for school work, he had tried a lot to kill her interests to learn. The society believed that boys learn to the higher level of education and get success in life, which is a dream of each family. However, a woman does not have the knowledge and ability to achieve success in life.

In addition, women who give birth without marriage have bad names. People who wanted to hurt the kids or ridicule their being use that name. With that identification, others will know that person was born before marriage or in the absence of marriage. The crime was committed by both parties. However, the society burdened the abuse and harassment only on women. Though *Achamyesh* conceived her daughter from her first marriage, she could not save her from social prejudice.

ሚሚ - እኔ ሴት ስም የለኝም ሁሉም ሰው ሚሚ ነው የሚሰኝ። እሱ ብቻ ነው ሚሚ እያለ የማይጠራኝ።

ታደሰ - ማን ይሰኛል እሱ?

ሚሚ - ዲቃሳ ይሰኛል። (ገጽ 10-11)

Mimi - I don't have another name. Everybody is calling me Mimi, except him.

Taddesse - What does he call you?

Mimi - A bastard. (Page 10-11)

The influences of such things had their own impact on her personality. *Roman* grew up believing if she did not have a father; she did not have any identity. She could tell about herself if only she knew about her father. This had its own impact on her life style. Though she grew up in a very attractive, comfortable house, with a generous father, her heart was longing for her real father. Finding her father was her day-dream and final goal in life which would save her from social prejudice and community discrimination.

ፎማን - አባቴ የት እንደሰ ... ማን እንደሆነ ሳትነግረኝ ሞተች። ግን ብዙ ጊዜ በህልሚ አይታሰቡ። አባትሽን ፈልጊና አግኝትሽ። እናም ሁልጊዜ ሳገኘው ብናፍቅም ስለሱ የማውቀው ምንም ነገር ስለሌለ ሳላውቀው እየናፈኩት እናራሰቡ። አባ ግን የአባት ያህል ሆኖ አሳደገኝ። በቃ አባቴ መሆኑን አምኜ ነበር። የአበራ ድርጊት ግን በመሀከላችን ያለውን ርቀት አስታወሰኝ። ብቻዬን መሆኔን አሳየኝ። (ገጽ 28)

Roman - She died without telling me who my father is or where he lives. But I see her in my dreams. She keeps on telling me to find my real father. And I always wish to find him, but I don't know anything about him. But Abba brought me up like a father. And then I believed he was my father. But what Abera did remind me our situation, how far we are. It reminded me that I am alone. (Page 28)

Loneliness is the greatest sickness of the characters in the film along with a question of identity. *Roman* always searched for a strong shelter, a companion that could make her overcome her loneliness. She begged *Ato Taddesse* to come home early without completing his work. She spoke about loneliness and its pain more often.

She described her life as a confused search of identity with a battle field in which she fought to eliminate loneliness. After the death of her father, she had a love affair with *Million*, and she could not deny her one great fear. It is because she wanted confirmation from him that he had to tell her he would always be there. Neither death nor betrayal would take him away because she knew their love was mutual. She wanted to make sure the mutual understanding they had between would last longer.

ሚሊዮን - እኔ አስቤልሽ እኔ ምን ጊዜም ካንቺው ጋር ነኝ።

ፎማን - እፈራሰሁ ሚሊ አንተንም የሆነ ነገር የሚያሳጣኝ የሚነጥቀኝ እየመሰሰኝ።

ሚሊዮን - ... ማንም አይሰየንም የኔ ፍቅር! (ገጽ 41)

Million - I am here. I'll always be with you.

Roman - I am afraid, Milli! I am afraid something comes up and takes you away from me.

Million - Nothing will come between us, my love! (Page 41)

She hated to have the kind of life her mother had. The man was supposed to love her, but he took her life. In that way, she proved people change beyond

immortality and accidents. Their feelings changed with the change of their life span. Therefore, her fear of losing loved ones has logical reasons. However, the words used by *Million* proves that women need men to survive hardships, to overcome obstacles and to deal with problems. Even though she did not ask for help, she was demanding his presence deep down.

On the other hand, *Fekerte* was exposed to playing the part of an evil girl. That is why she was punished by her father and reckless lover. She was easily judged by viewers too as a weak, emotional and dependant woman. Her father decided that having fun and enjoying the company of friendship was permitted only to teenage boys, not girls. She was highly exposed to patriarchal prejudice. In addition, she did not try anything to change the way she was perceived. Her father perceived her as a cheap girl.

ተገኔ - አሺ ዩኔ ገረምሳ የት አድረህ ነው? ...  
የታባሽ ነው አድረሽ የምትመጧው?

ፍቅርተ - ሰቅሶ ቤት

ተገኔ - ዘርክርክ! ታደኛችሁ ኮሌጅ ገብተዋል አንቺ በሰቅሶ ቤት እያሳበብሽ ተንዘሳዘይ!  
ድንጋይ እራስ! ሰብሳቢ እንደሌለው አህያ የትም አምሽተሽ ስትገቢ ቅር  
አይልሽም? ቆይ እኔ ተገኔ ታዘሽን አስጠቅልጭ ባሳሰናብትሽ! (ገጽ 26)

Tegene - Okay! MY boy! Where have you been?...  
Where did you spend the night?

Fekerte - At a mourning house.

Tegene - Clumsy! Your friends have joined the University; you still give pretexts and do bad things. Stupid! Don't you feel ashamed when you spend the night anywhere you want as if you don't have any house and come back? I'll throw you out soon. (Page 26)

The conversation and the repeated insult of her father made her lose her confidence. She felt lost somehow unable to find her purpose in life. Men use her as a weapon to achieve their target. She also exploits others for her own needs, but that could not change her life. She was highly targeted for social prejudice. This influenced her to change her life style and become an object of male's gaze.

Her father like that of any other person could not help comparing her with *Roman*. *Roman* was a strong woman and a good girl. *Roman* used the opportunity she got and became successful. On the contrary, people frustrated *Fekerte* by comparing her with her friend. If it was a man who had failed, he would have blamed it on someone or bad luck, like *Abera* did. He blamed the death of his father, his uncle and *Roman*.

However, *Fekerte*, it was her stupidity and weakness. She should have obeyed her father, and lived like a girl who abided by the social norms. She should have been decent and

stayed at home. Had *Fekerte* been a boy, her father would not have reproached her for spending the night outside. Men have more rights than women have. In the Ethiopian society if a girl has a baby, before marriage, the society would consider her an outcast.

That is why *Ato Tegene*, *Fekerte*'s father, gave her a name which is obviously used for boys, in their teens. *Fekerte* was acting like a teen, who did not obey parental rules according to *Ato Tegene*.

- ተገኔ - ዳይ! ያዥና ውጪ!  
የሴት ገረምሳ የምቀልብበት ዕዳ የሰብኝም:: የሸነሽ ገረምሳ ሳይርቅ ተከተይው::
- ፍቅርተ - እንዴ አባይ እኔ ...
- ተገኔ - መልስ አልፈልግም እቃሽን በመሰብሰብ አግዝሻለሁ ቤቴን በመልቀቅ ተባበረኝ::
- ፍቅርተ - እሺ የዛሬን!
- ተገኔ - ውጭ! ዘርክርክ ደነዝ! (ገጽ 35)
- Tegene - Come on. Take it and get out!  
I can't feed a girl like you. You better move fast before the guy who brought you here went far.
- Fekerte - Oh! Daddy I ...
- Tegene - I don't need your explanation. I will help you with packing your things; you should cooperate by leaving my house.
- Fekerte - Okay! Just let me stay for the night!
- Tegene - Get out! Clumsy! Stupid! (Page 35)

Thus, *Fekerte*, the one who grew up in a city and *Achamyelesh* that came from the rural side of the country were victimized due to social expectations on

women. They were marginalized since they were passive and sassy beings. They were wanted for their womanhood and they were considered as object of desire by their men. The main point is that they were unable to rebel against the existing situation. They accepted and lived through it. Like *Fekerte* if they wanted to change, they used their womanhood and lust. Or else like *Achamyelesh* tolerate the continuous humiliation and abuse for the sake of a little daughter.

However, the day *Achamyelesh* decided to stop *Mekonnen*, which brought her dreadful end. She died as a heroine, protecting her little girl from a life-long pain, eternal breakdown. That made her to be remembered in the film. Viewers attached themselves and mourn with her not out of sympathy rather admiration. Besides, *Fekerte* stopped *Abera* from killing *Roman* at the last minute. All she has done for him and gone through to help him were nothing; hence she wanted to save her only friend.

She did know that she could not change what happened, but she could stop what was coming. She smashed his head with a whisky bottle and killed him. Throughout the film, viewers were mourning sympathizing with these women for they do not have any help. Nevertheless, they did protect the heroine from death twice in one way or another. *Roman* got help from her mother and her only friend during her innocent childhood years and during her matured adulthood.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

The main focus of this thesis is to analyze two Ethiopian films which are authored by female writers from the feminist literary criticism point of view. In the analysis attempt was made to find out how women are perceived in the society using visual art. Since both of the films are written by female writers, attempt has also been made to analyze how the writers have portrayed female characters.

The two films are similar other than being written by female writers. The films are titled with the names of the main characters in each film. Both female characters have natural strength and beauty which is not obviously seen in other movies. The female writers focused on the characters emotional ability and strength and how they have survived their challenging life.

Culturally, women are denied to have equal rights with men. They are expected to fail in exams, quit school work, marry at an early age and bear children. They have been cornered to help their mothers or other family members in the house. They are not seen as outspoken and intelligent people who can compute with men equally. The cultures of the community, in line with the patriarchal assumptions always pull them down to humiliate them, make passive and emotional dependant beings.

In films, it was said that female characters are perceived as an 'object of desire.' *Sara* did not require to be seen as a sexual object, but just because she is a woman she did not escape from social prejudice. *Azeb* blamed her of being a spoiled brat and her teacher did not understand why she had weak performance in class. However, I can conclude that *Sara* is made to represent women who can save themselves by themselves, transcending the social and cultural bias.

There were five female characters in the movie, *Sara*, that represent women in various ways. The main point is that all of them were victimized in one way or another for being women. A mother lost her two sons and could not recover herself. A woman divorced and was left alone with a little girl. She was seeking for a perfect husband for her and a caring father for her daughter. When she found one man, she thought that she was blessed for he had both qualities and abilities.

Another woman thought she had found a perfect lover who romanticized her life. He made her to think about herself until she finally found out his real nature. A girl imposed by her parents and the society failed to help her friend. A victimized young girl lived silently till she decided to take action without anyone's help. *Sara* knew whatever reason drove Michael and abused her, she could stop the harassment with her own weapon, calling enough.

The same is true about the film *Roman*. Some of the women were outcast in many ways, though some of them were considered as 'object of desire.' *Achamyelesh* and *Fekerte* were thrown to patriarchal judgments as a bad wife and a worthless girl. *Achamyelesh* was cursed for not having a baby while she was a mother of a daughter before. She was economically dependant on her husband, and that made her daughter and herself suffers a lot.

*Fekerte*, on the other hand, represented the perception over many women around us, women who cannot decide for themselves and who are always dependant on others. She also represents those who seek help from men, to save them from parental and social bondages. Those women who have attractive looks are used as a sexual object for men. They do not object when men perceive them like that, they rather enjoy the fatal attraction with men.

However, *Roman* was a strong, independent, decisive and rational person. She conquered all her problems. She was living in a safety wall and listened only to

her problems and challenges in life. She is also a woman who takes risks to change life, to speak about her past and to bring new light in her future. She has never required for a lover's or a father's help to fulfill her goal. They offered their help and she used her effort to success her life long plan. The betrayal of her best friend, the deception and cruelty of her lover and the death of her father did not kill her dream or break her apart rather gave her the strength to complete what was started at the beginning of her life.

Both films view women as strong beings which are against the social understanding. They have shown what they can be regardless of what is expected in the community. It is true literature is the real reflection of life, but these women were beyond what can be seen in reality. Nevertheless, this does not mean there are exceptional and extraordinary women who can change the image of women. Some of the female characters were exposed to the patriarchal prejudice and male gaze. The female characters were made to attract other male characters not with their physical appearance and sexuality, rather with their intellectual ability and maturity.

Therefore, the female writers have tried to question the social exposure and patriarchal system by not focusing only on the male gaze in their films. They were more focused on the behavior and attitudes of women characters and produced films that narrate the suspenseful lives of each woman. They did not even push their audience to be emotional in the love affairs rather identify themselves with the female characters. Viewers do not only sympathize with them, but also recognized them as brave and courageous women. That is one thing which ridicules the way female characters used to be presented and accepted in the writing business. It is possible women can be seen as heroines and successful beings.

On the basis of all these, the researcher encourages other women writers to write and reveal the burden of women. In this way, they can fight the existing

social system and contribute something to change the attitude towards women. Bringing a very significant change in what was believed for generations will take along time. However, as time changes so as the image of women change. This can happen if many women participate in the writing business as well as try to liberate both men and women. This is said because if the writers describe only the misery of women, but don't show how their life can be different and persuade men to accept women as they are, the desired change cannot be done. To have this change women need to write about themselves, describe how they are important in the society and they are the center of life.

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work done under the guidance of my advisor. All relevant sources used for the thesis are duly acknowledged.

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