



A Postmodernist Reading of Selected Historical Novels in Amharic: A Quest for Heroic Personalities

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Abstract

This article was designed to explore the portrayal of heroic personalities reflected in selected Amharic novels as per some postmodern narrative strategies specifically Hutch's (1995) notion of historiographic metafiction and Lacan's (1977) the mirror stage. This is so, for researchers in most of the time perceive historical texts are primarily approached from historical point of views. However, what is more important as per the writer's point of view here is approaching historical discourse from the perspective of historiographic metafiction in which individuals could impart knowledge to the mass. As per postmodernists' notion, taken as the tool of analysis in this article, being a big man is there in the minds and hearts of everyone. Hence, the article under discussion has shown the different heroic personalities; like, sacrifice, compassion, focus, honesty, loyalty, determination, courage, virtue, wisdom, visionary, intrepidity, fortitude, etc.

Keywords

Historical novels, Postmodernism, The Secretes of Tangut, The Tear of Tewodros, Abakostir, Heroic personalities

1. Introduction

Both History and Literature are age-old establishments of human experiences noticed since the long distant periods. That is why many fictional writings what so ever they are a mixture of fact and fiction, like the works of the classic giants including Homer have been considered as historical texts Chirobocea (2017). It is because of History's and Literature's connection that scholars have reached the extent of developing theories Historicism and New historicism in general and Historicist and New historicist literary theories in particular. The interconnection between these fields may be viewed in a way where the experience of historical events could lead the production of literary texts. Since historical events are events and incidents beyond the day to day events, they have a potential of attracting writers.

Taking the above issue into consideration, Ethiopians have experienced different historical texts; like, "Aned Lenatu"-One for His Mother and Defiance by Abbie Gubegna; "Alulla Abanega" by Mammo Wudneh; "Abba Koster" by Aberra Jemberie; "Atse Menilik" by Afework Gebreyesus; Warrior King by Sahile Silassie and etc. are texts which have being read; while, Plays like, "Peter at the Hour", "Tewodros" by Tsegaye Gebremedhin; "Belay Zeleke" by Getnet Enyew can be mentioned as exemplary plays. In this article, Reading Historical Novels in Amharic has been addressed from the perspectives of postmodernist literary theory. Postmodernism in this case has been viewed as the cultivation of heroic personalities, for postmodernists believe that heroic personality has a potential to be developed in the minds and hearts of every individual. Therefore, the article entitled *A Postmodernist Reading of Selected Historical Novels in Amharic: A Quest for Heroic Personalities* has been designed to make a discussion on the potential portrayal of some selected historical novels in Amharic in cultivating heroic personalities.

The phrasing "heroic personalities" is a concept which discloses the manifestations of actions, thoughts and courage, of heroes and heroines in the notion of "Heroism". As per Frsik (2019), Heroism refers to the area of interest in which the study of great men; hero stories; heroic actions; and hero institutions. In addition, According to Golaszewska (2000), Heroism is most often associated with the performance of an extraordinary deed in war that concludes with the death of its doer. Though heroism may not always lead to the death of the heroes and heroines, it is an action which cares little to the performers; therefore, heroism is mainly associated with the engagement of heroes and heroines where the action is made for the betterment of the mass. Though different scholars suggest different unique characteristics of heroes and heroines differently, the following qualities are basic shared qualifying qualities of a hero.

The first quality that a hero has is courage. A heroic individual is always in a mood of psychological and physical readiness for the potential problems, fears, obstacles and other sanctions that he/she encounters. A heroic individual has the commitment and endurance as well. The second reputed quality that a hero qualifies is virtue and wisdom. Heroic individuals are individuals who are standing in search and utilization of all the potentially available opportunities behind the targeted solutions driven to the antagonists' scenarios in the discourse line or on the pathways towards the successful of their mission. The third unique trait associated to heroes and heroines is sacrifice. This is the quality of heroes and heroines which refers the selfless practices of the heroic personalities to the extent experiencing death. The other characteristic heroic personal trait of individuals is determination, and this is related to a belief relied on the imagination of considering everything possible. The fifth personal quality is also focus. Each engagement of the heroes and heroines are radiating towards the mission they have been inspired to realize. The sixth important personal quality is compassion. It is a personal trait related to sacrifice, kindness, light-hearted, emphatic, etc. The other important personal quality of heroic individuals is related to the quality of perseverance. This is the personal quality that makes the heroes special. Even if heroes encounter failure on their way, they are determined to get over it and fight till they achieve success. The other most important human quality that heroic personalities have in common is related to the quality of loyalty and honesty. Heroic personalities are too loyal to their objectives, to their friends and anybody with whom they are acquainted with. The other most important heroic qualities are intrepidity and fortitude which cumulatively lead us the discharge of responsibility.

The qualifying Personal traits mentioned above have concerns which may attract different fields of studies especially Literature. This is so, for Literature is mainly preoccupied with the glorification of heroes and heroines since the classical periods like the works of Homer, where Achilles and Hector are stars in Iliad; general Odysseus is the hero indeed in Odyssey, Sophocles' tragic hero Oedipus is the hero in Oedipus Rex, and the famous heroine, Antigone, is well recognized in Sophocles' play, Antigone. Therefore, these are some of the different literary texts which represent outshined biography of heroes and heroines. It is therefore because of literature that these heroes and heroines are directly attached with the memory of people. Therefore, literature is expected not to miss the fundamental mission of imparting history in a way developing heroic personalities who will make use of their effort in the political, economic and social well-being of their respective countries. As it has been mentioned earlier, one can understand Ethiopian history and literature in general and Ethiopian Amharic Literature in specific sense could be considered as the two sides of a coin where different historical incidents of the country have been used as causes in which writers have been writing on. Knowledge impartation from historical texts as representations of heroic deeds of history is so, for it is the very important individuals upon whom historical novelist concentrate on, and this will practically be implemented when the novels are presented in a postmodern philosophy. This is so with the emergence of postmodernist literary theory that the idea of historiographic metafiction has been inaugurated. Historiographic metafiction is first coined by Hutcheon (1995) to refer to novels fictionalizing actual events and characters, and the quote below articulates the concept as follows:

The postmodern relationship between fiction and history is an even more complex one of interaction and mutual implication. Historiographic metafiction works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction. And it is a kind of seriously ironic parody that affects both aims: the intertexts of history and fiction take on parallel (ibid. 1995: 4).

From this, one can understand that the historical incidents and personalities presented in postmodern texts are used in the way they are important to the plot development of the texts so that historical personalities presented in historiographic texts are more appropriate in knowledge impartation. Unlike historical narrations where the narration is used for teaching the peculiar personal traits as if the described personal qualities were privately inborn traits for only the owner of the story in a way the qualities could not be owned by some other individuals, in historiographic metafiction, the described personal qualities are used for the development of the plot of the narration; in turn, these qualities can be imparted from one to the other. For example, addressing the historical novels on King Tewodros II through historiographic metafiction approach enables one to transfer the heroic personalities of Tewodros II than addressing the same historical novels through historical approach in which disclosing the heroic personalities that Tewodros II had experienced are belonged for only him. Interpreting personal qualities in historical texts in a way that can enable us to impart the personal qualities have less been experienced in researches before. This is so, for researchers in most of the time perceive historical texts are primarily approached from historical point of views. However, as it has been mentioned above, what could be more important is approaching them from the perspective beyond history in a way that can enable us to impart knowledge. The emphasis of this article is a kind of practice relied on the cultivations of many heroic personalities through backgrounding the history of few heroes. The following attempts are some of the previous researches which could foreground the gap the current engagement would fill.

Assefa (1996) deals with the literary style and the historical meanings in selected Historical Novels in Amharic. This is similar to the present article in addressing the issue of Amharic Historical Novels, but its point of attention is different from the point of attention of the current article which will be practiced in the analysis and interpretation of Historical Novels in Amharic from the postmodernist approach mainly designed in relation to the novels potential of portraying heroic personalities. Anteneh (2014) deals with the representation of Ethiopian politics in Amharic novels, and it is also similar to this article in focus-Amharic Novels, and it is different from the current paper in the issue what the

current paper raises, approaching Amharic Historical Novels in relation to heroic personalities. The same researcher, Anteneh (1993) has carried a research on the role of narrators as reflected didactic nature of Early Didactic Amharic prose Fiction along with Geez Literature, and this paper is also different from the article in concern, for the emphasis of Anteneh is on the narratology. Taye (1986) deals the form related to the literary styles that some Amharic novels have reflected. This is also similar to this article in its emphasis-being on Amharic Novels. However, the dissertation by Taye is different from the article that Taye's paper is dealing with the form of novels as per the basic conventional requirements of literary qualities that the novels should disclose.

In addition, Demeke (2014) has dealt with the narrative strategies of selected Amharic Literature. This study is also similar to the current paper in emphasis-on the great umbrella of Amharic Literature, and Demeke's focus is on the narrative strategies that the recently written novels 2000-2010 is more of form-oriented so that it is different from the current undertaking. Moreover, Assefa (1981) deals with the origin and development of Amharic literature is important to be reviewed for this article, for it widens the over-all image on the issues related to the introduction, progressive and regressive changes of Amharic Literature. Still, the paper by Assefa is different from the current paper, for the origin and development of Amharic Literature is not the primary target of the current article. Furthermore, Fekade (1988), is dealing with the intellectual in the Ethiopian Novels which have been written from 1930-1974, and this is similar on only its coverage that both the study by Fekade and the present article are designed on the view of Ethiopian novels in Amharic. However, the emphasis in Fekade's is on the characters preoccupied with some sort of transformative intellect; while, this issue may be one aspect of heroic personalities, and it is not the primary emphasis in the current engagement.

As sources acknowledged so far indicate, it seems true that research works on Ethiopian Amharic historical novels from postmodern view are not yet touched; even, there are not adequate researches on the theory too. Nicol (2009: 10) states as "though the term 'postmodernism' is still an important one in a number of academic disciplines and remains essential in the literary studies lexicon, the topic of postmodernism is no longer hotly debated in academic journals and research monographs". This insufficiency of researches on postmodernism is also strengthened by Zewde (2017). Thus, coupled with the intention of disclosing individuals with heroic personalities in historical novels, the pressing matters on the tool of analysis -postmodernism, necessitate this article. To put the rationale in a nutshell, the need to cultivating heroic citizens and the less studied feature of Ethiopian Amharic historical novels from postmodernists' view have triggered this article. Thus, the objective has been designed to explore the portrayal of heroic personalities as reflected in some selected Amharic novels as per postmodern narrative strategies.

2. Methods

The article is a qualitative engagement. Therefore, the main task is exploring and describing selected literary texts. Therefore, this article is dependent of textual data. Thus, the main method of analysis is a qualitative textual analysis. Hence, textual data presented in the literary texts and discourses related to these novels have been interpreted through close reading of the novels as per the formulated theoretical frameworks in postmodernism endorsed as a tool of analysis. The theoretical model used in the analysis and interpretation of the novels in this paper is related to postmodernist literary theory specifically magical realism, a notion of presenting extraordinary narrative as a day to day engagement and historiographic metafiction, a concept which indicates the function of historical discourse for the plot development of texts.

The rationale behind the models is related to the nature of historical novels. Unlike historical fictions where history is used for the impartation of historical discourses of great men (heroes and heroines), in historiographic metafiction, the historical discourse of heroes and heroines are used for the development of the narrative discourse or the fiction. In turn, this implies that the very extraordinary heroic trait of the heroes and heroines are going to be used as traits that every ordinary individual can develop, and it is because of this assumption that Hutch's (1995) notion of historiographic metafiction is used as a model of analysis in this paper. Similar to historiographic metafiction, magical realism is also one of the very important postmodern features, and it is used as theoretical model of analysis. Magical realism, according to Geetha (2010), is believed to be the technique, composed in oxymoron forms, with the utilization of two unrelated terms- 'magic' and 'realism'. Writers use it to include the mythical beliefs, supernatural elements and dreamlike elements in the way which does not reject the representative feature of literature to life (Slemon, 1988).

Therefore, as explained above, the extraordinary heroic features of heroes and heroines narrated in historical novels can impliedly interpreted as the heroic personalities of ordinary individual. Therefore, Lacan's (1977) The Mirror Stage is used as another model of analysis for this article. Lacan has discussed this issue how an infant can sense things through his/her own external image shown through the mirror. As the famous Marxist, Luis Althusser, extended Lacan's theory into the individual's reaction in relation to others in the society in which an individual lives with; Lacan's theory is not restricted to only the infant's development. Thus, Lacan's theory of the mirror stage can impliedly be adapted to the discussion of narrative description in particular and presentations in general in the way how the individuals' skill of developing heroic personalities through the heroic personalities of heroes and heroines in historical fictions.

2.1 Basis of Text Selection

The Amharic novels, "Abakostir", "YeTangut Misitir" and "YeTewodros Emba" were selected. The novels were purposively selected where different heroes are their central characters fit to the discussion endorsed by postmodernists

view. The heroic characters in the novels are from the family of the mass, not the family of “noble men”; they are originally a born of “lower class”, and this is why the analysis has been made from the perspective of postmodernists’ views.

2.2 Data Sources

Mainly, the dominant data which were used in this article are the textual data extracted from the selected novels. These data are supported by other related reviewed data where the narratives of the selected novels allow the researcher to do so.

2.3 Analysis Techniques

The extracts of the selected Amharic novels for the article have been translated into English. The method of translation used in this article is Semantic Translation where the meaning of the source text, Amharic text, is translated into the target language, English version of the text. The Amharic versions of the extracts of the novels are equivalently placed before the translated versions of the extracted lines. Translating only the extracts used for the analysis is sufficient so that the writer is not in need to translate the whole selected novels. In some cases, the dominantly textual data were supported with the data collected through reviewing other related texts. Finally, the thematic categories that the heroic personalities reflected in the novels were thematically analyzed.

3. Analysis

Scholars believe that final and binding certainty in the analysis and interpretation of texts is not attainable. Because of their different exposures readers have gone through in a certain narrative situation, they can feel the narrative features differently Stanzel (1971). It is through the theoretical frameworks upon the possibly made analysis and interpretation readers can reach in consensus. Before the analysis and interpretation made on the selected novels, synopses are briefly presented as follows.

The first text selected for the analysis in this article is *YeTewodros Emba* which could semantically be translated as “The Tear of Tewodros”. This is a novel which deals with the experiences following the crown, kingship experience, of Emperor Tewodros II in the minds and hearts of people in Gondar city, and it is all about the plot made by Aklilu, Tewodros’ friend before Tewodros’ kingship, to dethrone Tewodros with the help of Gared and other characters. The plot of this text includes the kings’ Journey from Gondar to incorporate Shewa, one of the most influential provinces of Ethiopian since the medieval period. The most important episodes of the text are experienced after the return of the king from Shewa, and the story comes to its end with the demonstrations of agonies of Tewodros II resulted from the destruction of the city Gondar as a result of the war experienced between Tewodros II and the people of the city mobilized by the different bandits and local lords. These forces were remnants of the monarchical systems of Ethiopia designed to wage a war to dethrone Tewodros II.

The second novel is *Abba Kostir* which deals with the summarised biography of Belay Zeleke from birth to death. The novel deals with the big deeds of the patriots led by Belay Zeleke titled with Abakostir, the name of the patriot’s horse. The different battle fields experienced between the Ethiopian patriots and Italian colonizers are concerns in the novel. The novel comes to its end with the experience of the death of the patriot including his believed brothers, Ejigu Zeleke, Shiferaw Gerbbaw and other closer patriotic contemporaries who have paid a lot in the patriotic resistance of the nation. In other words, the story has come to its end with the ironical happening that has taken the lives of the irreplaceable patriot, Belay Zeleke and his men. Unlike the rewards which one normally anticipates to be made for the patriot as a result of the great achievements that Belay Zeleke has made in the independence that Ethiopia has made against the Italian colonial attempt upon Ethiopia, the story comes to its end with the killing of the patriots by the political trickery.

The third novel is *YeTangut Misitir* semantically translated as “The Secret of Tangut”. Beyond the experiences of the central character, “Tangut”, the wife of “Gebrye”, the chief commander of the army of emperor Tewodros, the novel deals with very deeds of emperor Tewodros and his men including Gebrye. Almost most of the episodes experienced in the novel from the crown of Emperor Tewodros to the newly established camp-like palace of *Tewodros*, Meqdella, are similar with the stories and plot structures we find in the narratives of *YeTewodros Emba*. So far, the plot summaries of the three novels have briefly been stated. The first basic related heroic personalities discussed as reflected in the selected novels of the study are related to being visionary.

3.1. Loyalty, Honesty and Straight Forwardness

Heroes and heroines are straight who act their deeds as per the words they uttered. Their actions and words are too parallel in a way they lead a life free of conspiracy, selfishness, dishonesty and etc. All these personal traits lead heroes lead to be respected and accepted in the minds and hearts of the others. The extract below deals with the narratives that Gebrye has said about Tewodros II.

እስቲ ቴዎድሮስን በምን ልመቅኘው! አልበደለኝ። በጥቅም በድሎት አልበለጠኝ። እንደኛው ይዋጋል። ያለውን አብረን እንበላለን። አብረን እንጠጣለን። ሐሳቡን፣ ግቡን፣ አብረን እንማከራለን። ከዙፋኑ በቀር ጆረ እርሱ ከኛ የተለየ ምን ነገር አለው መሰለኝሁ? (የቴዎድሮስ እንባ፣ 1958: 70-71)።

I do not have a reason to be vicious for Tewodros! He has not done anything wrong. He equally participates in all activities with us; he eats, drinks, participates in war, and discusses everything related to his goal equally with us. Do you think he has things special to hide it from us? Practically, he does not have! He is different in only in his crown which signifies his kingship (The Tear of Tewodros, 1966:70-71).

In one way the above extract, shows the acceptance and loyalty that the hero (Tewodros II) has in his people. On the other hand, the postmodernist consideration of a hero as one of the ordinary individual (for postmodernism focuses on the trait that the individual who owns that trait) is depicted in the extract. In the excerpt, the hero is special only in his crown. Accept this status, he does everything equally with individuals under his leadership, and this typically signals the notion of postmodernism. Considering everybody has a potential to be a hero, for heroism is not an inborn trait given to only some individuals is further reflected in the extract below.

ቴዎድሮስ ከሰገነቱ ላይ ቆመና ህዝቡን ቁልቁል በፈገግታ ተመለከቱት። ከዚያ ሰገነት ላይ መወጣት ቀላል ጉዞ አልነበረም። ቋረኛዉ የኮሶ ሻጭ ልጅ ከራስ አሊ ጋር ተፎካክሮ ሲሸፍት ተሹፎበት ነበር። እንኳን ጉማ ስጋ ቁራጭስ ቢላክለት! ጉርምስና ነው ተባለ። ምናልባት ፍራዳ ተልኮለት ቢሆን ኖሮ ባልሸፈተ ነበር። ባይሸፍት ደግሞ የጎንደር መሳፍንት አገልጋይ ሆኖ በቀረ (የቴዎድሮስ እንባ፣1958: 14)።

Tewodros has gladly shown the mass forward from the stage. Having himself there on the stage was not a simple action. Tewodros was teased by people while he started waging war against Rass Alli II (the commander of the army and the powerless king of the then time). Let alone some big piece of meat sent him by his mother-in-law (Menon/the mother of Rass Alli) and brother-in-law (Rass Alli) for his recovery for the injury he experienced between the war Ethiopia and Turkey, even a very slice of meat could have been enough for Tewodros has been reared from a very helpless, ordinary and poor family; as every effect has its own cause, if the cause mentioned was not there, Tewodros could have been remained slave of dukedom in Gondar (The Tear of Tewodros, 1966:14).

From the extract above, one can understand that Tewodros has grown up from ordinary and poor Ethiopian family which could not potentially be leaders in the Ethiopian monarchical system. Cases in point, leaders are expected to be from noble blood. However, as one can understand from the extract above, and as this discourse is similarly supported by the actual biography of Tewodros II, everybody has a chance to be a king. This is the notion advocated by postmodernists' notion of thought. This is the case which is reflected in *Abakostir* too.

“ጎበዝ እግዚአብሔር አልቆ የፈጠረው ሰው አለን?” ብሎ አብረውት የነበሩትን አርበኞች ጠየቀ።
 “በአጋጣሚ ወይም በስራው አንዱ ከሌላው ቢበልጥ እንጅ፡ ሰው በተፈጥሮ ያው ሰው ነው” ሲሉ ፈታውራሪ አድገህ መለሱለት።
 “በትውልዳቸው ለሚመኩትስ አግዜር በተለይ ለመሪነት ያደላቸው ነገር አለን?” ሲል ጠየቀ በቁጭት።
 “የጊዜውና የአካባቢ ሁኔታ ቢያልቃቸው እንጅ በተረፈ ብልጫ የላቸውም” ሲሉ ከአርበኞች አንዱ አዛውንት መለሱለት።
 “እኔም እነደነሱ አምላክ ፈጥሮኛል፤ ለእነሱ ያደላቸውን ለእኔስ አይሰጠኝም?” ብሎ ጠየቀ በተረጋጋ መንፈስ።
 “የእርሱ የፈጣሪ ሃይል ካደረገህ የፈለከውን ማድረግ ትችላለህ” አሉ አባ ገብሬ በአረጋግ አነጋገር ።
 “እንግዲያውስ ተዛሬ ጀምሮ ለማንም አልታጠቅም” ብሎ አስጨናቋ... (አባኮስትር፣1983: 52-54)።

“Comrades! Is there a person who has already been created as superior by God?”, asked Aschenaqi (Belay) the accompanying patriots.
“Though one is superior over another due to his performance, man is equally created”, said Fitawurari (general) Adigeh.
“Is there something that God naturally has given to the leaders because of their hereditary matters?” Aschenaqi angrily asked.
“Only exposure and conditions might be open for them; except this, nothing has practically given to them!” one of the experienced patriot replied.
“God has already created me equally as He has done them, can He make me what has been made for them?”, Aschenaqi asked calmly.
“Physically possible; if His wisdom bestows upon you, everything is equally given to you”, said Abba (the elderly father) Gebrie.
“If so, hereafter, I will not be under the leadership of others anymore”, said Aschenaqi... (Abakostir, 1991:52-54).

The above extensive extract discloses the interrogation of grand narratives related to the hereditary matters that leaders in the monarchical system of Ethiopia has used to be superior over the others-upon the individuals from the mass as if it (accepting one as superior is naturally and correctly established fact of human happening) were true; while, the reality behind is practically ironical, and this is typically a postmodernist considerations of grand narratives. The excerpt above has been narrated by the interrogation that the patriotic character Aschenaqi, the fictional representation of Patriot Belay Zeleke, has posed to curve the “hereditary supremacy” of “Rass” (General/Commander) Hailu Belew-the grandson of King Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam, made upon the patriots whose family route is from the mass technically known as “lower-class”. The other grand narrative that attacks the narratives of the novels mentioned above is related to the social and ethnic strata experienced before the period of Tewodros II. Tewodros as reflected in the novels under study, has practical engagement provided fully to the different ethnic groups; like the Amharas, the kimants, the gumuzes, the

Shinasha, Tigrians etc. Here we can take as evidence the name and the most rounded character who is used as the title of one of the novels selected for the study *Tangut* is reflected as an individual from Kimant ethnicity. Moreover, as reflected in the novels, emperor Tewodros has declared a strong proclamation which extends to the extent of death penalty against the stereotyping categorizations and taboo associations made upon the artisans.

In addition, postmodern philosophy gives emphasis to the trait than the heroes who have developed the trait. For example, in the sentence, “አንድ የኢትዮጵያ ንጉሥ በፈረንጆች ጦር ኃይል መፈታት የሚያቃጥል ብሔራዊ ውርደት ነው” (የቴዎድሮስ እንባ፣1958: 7) which could be translated as, “The conquest of Tewodros, a Mighty Ethiopian King, by the foreign force is a bitter national crisis” (The Tear of Tewodros, 1966:7); what is emphasised is not the death of the emperor, death, the penultimate horrifying practice of individuals; instead, what makes the people worry is the national image transferred through the death of the king. The next section deals with other related heroic personal qualities; namely, focused, selfless and sacrifice.

3.2 Focus, Selfless and Sacrifice

The aforementioned qualities are the selfless practices of the heroic personalities that may lead them to sacrifices to the extent of experiencing death. Focus is a crucial heroic personal quality for heroes. In the novels, *YeTewodros Emba* and *YeTangut Misitir*, nation building is the central focus that Tewodros II and other heroes including Gebrye make centred; whereas, in the novel, *Abakostir*, the issue of independence is the central point that Belay Zeleke and his people are concerned so that each episode of the text is striving to this independence, and all sufferings scarified by the patriots are made for the benefit of the nation. The sentence, “አንቺ ሰንደቅ ዓላማ! አምስት ዓመት ማተቤ ነበርሽ፣ ዛሬ ለዚህ ሰጠሽኝ፣ ለችግረሽ የሚቆም ...” (አባኮስትር፣1983:265) (You, the national flag, you were my living reason for the last five consecutive years, but today, you have led me to death. I do not know the one who has been your side during your hard times...., *Abakostir*, 1991: 265), has been uttered by Belay Zeleke when he was heartbreakingly taken to be killed by the system has shown the central thesis that the patriot has had in mind. Whatsoever, the sacrifice and problems he has encountered, he has a focus which has been concentrated on the independence of Ethiopia from Italian invasion. The following extract is about the choice provided for the patriot to choose between his daughter and the legitimacy of his country. The Italians have requested Belay to stop his independence struggle so that he will get his daughter free from the Italians, for his daughter, Yeshashiworq, has been taken prison by them. Though the choice provided for Belay Zeleke was too challenging, he does not hesitate to take the advantage of his country over the wellbeing of his daughter, and the expression he has used to express his choice is stated as:

ይገርማል እኮ ድፍረቱ! ደሞ ሹመት የሚሰጠኝም እሱ ሆነ፡ በልጄም ሊሞግተኝ አሰበ? ልጄ እናቷ በጦር ሜዳ ስትሞትባት ያለኋት አለኝታ እኔ መሆኔ አሙን ነው፤ እኔም ለእርሷ ያለኝ ፍቅርአጅግ ከፍ ያለ ነው። ቢሆኑም ቅሉ አካሌ የሆነችው ልጄም ሆነች ነባቢት ነፍሴ ተኢትዮጵያ ነጣነት እንደማይበልጠውሰኝ አምናለሁ (አባኮስትር፣1983:144)::

What a paradox! The Italians want to appoint me on my own land! Did they try to win me in the name of my daughter? I am the only right-hand left after her mother had been killed at the war, and I have an immense love to my daughter. However, I do not want saving my daughter's life and me are not precious than the independence of my country (Abakostir, 1991:144).

As reflected in the extract above, the decision is not a simple decision one could easily take the patriot has taken. In addition, the selected novels reflect the different kindness, selfless and sacrifice that the central characters face for the realization of the main thesis they have. In the novel *Abakostir* for example, Belay prefers to eat later if possible and not to eat at all when he does not have enough food for him and his people; he has exchanged food by bullet, for he does not want to get his people hungry; above all, as it has been indicated above in the extract, he has lost his wife, he does not want to save his daughter even he does not be suspicious for his own Saul than to get the independence of his country violated. Similarly, in *YeTewodros Emba* and *YeTangut Misitir*, sacrifices are there in the narratives of the texts. We can have the extent that *Tangut* went through. She has tried to get birth to *Gebrye* with the help of the holly water, and she reaches to the extent of giving birth to *Gebrye* by having a hidden affair with other man. This secrecy, *Tangut* has made to give birth to *Gebrye*, makes the novel to be titled with *YeTangut Misitir* translated as “The Secrete of *Tangut*”. In addition, the sacrifice that *Tewodros* went through reaches to the extent of practicing suicide. One can imagine that the psychological, emotional and socio-political demotivation of the people during the first and second Ethio-Italian wars and during other wars that Ethiopia has successfully defended if *Tewodros* could have been captured alive by the British Government. Therefore, the decision he has made to make a suicidal death upon him for the betterment of his nation is the highest stage of heroic mind-set. His suicidal death has paid a lot to lift the political, social and psychological apparatuses of Ethiopia up in the history of its independence. The next section deals with other most important features of heroic personalities including virtue, wisdom and strategic.

3.3 Virtue, Wisdom and Strategic

Heroic individuals are strategic in utilizing all the sources and techniques which take them to success. The following systems the heroic characters designed go as follows:

«ታሁን በፊትም ቢሆን በዚህ አዳራሽ ሹም ሽር ሲደረግ ቀሚስ ሲሰጥ የኖረ ነው፤ አዲስ አይደለም። እነ ራስ አሊ፣ እነ ራስ ጉግሣ፣ እነ ራስ ይማም፣ እነ ራስ ማርዬ፣ ጸረ ስንቱ ተቆጥሮ! አገሬን ላቀና ወገኔን በመልካም ላስተዳደረ ስለሆነ የምሾመው የምሾልመው ለዚህ ይረዳኛል የምለው እንጂ ሌላውን አይደለም... «እናንተም ቢሆን ታሁን በፊት ተሹማችሁ የነበረ አላችሁ። ታሁን በፊት አገር ተሹማችሁ የማታውቁም አላችሁ። ዛሬያ የዛሬው ሹመት እንደ ድሮው ልትቀማጠሉበት ሳይሆን ሕዝቡን እንድታስተዳደሩበት፣ ዳኝነቱን በሚገባ እንድትፈረዱ ነው። ወንበዴና ወስላታን አጥፍታችሁ አገሩ ሰላም እንዲሆን ታረጋላችሁ። የምትቀበሉት ግብርም የተወሰነ ይሆናል። »... «ለዚህ ሁሉ በቅርብ እየተመካከርን የምናወጣው ሕግ አለ። ሕዝቡን የሚበድል፣ ሕግን የሚጥስ ሹም እንደሌላው ሁሉ ይቀጣል። እንዲያውም አይማረኝ አልምረውም፣ በሹምኩት ሰው ላይ ነው ቅጣቴን የባሰ የማከብድበት!» (የታንጉት ምስጢር፣1979: 44)።

“Appointing officials is not a recent experience for this palace. Leaders like, Rass Alli, Rass Gugssa, Rass Yimam, Rass Maryie, etc. have appointed their officials. The central parameter taken here to appoint my official today is related to their will who will be keen actors in my goal to make centralized and strong Ethiopia. Some of you had been appointed before, and some of you are new for appointment. However, what makes your current appointment different is related to the responsibility you will discharge. This appointment is not for the betterment of you, officials; instead, it is vested on you to serve the mass day and night without oppression, exploitation, and this in turn, has to be different from the previous officials did. The laws and guidelines will be enacted in consensus with you officials. Ones the law has already been legitimated, every official has to obey it. If not, I will punish him severely; my punishment upon the officials will outweigh than the punishment I will make upon the mass, ordinary individuals (The Secret of Tangut, 1987: 8).

The visionary leader has universal thinking; this is what exactly reflected in the practice of Tewodros II while he has been appointing the expatriates as reflected below.

ብዙውን መኳንንት ይባስ ያናደደው ሌላም ሹመት ተከተለ። ሊጋባው ላንዳፍታ ገታ አለና፤ “ልጅ የሐንስ” ብሎ ሲጣራ ጆን ቤል ተነስቶ እጅ ነሳ። መኳንንቱ ሁሉ የሚሰማውንና የሚያየውን ማመን እስኪያቅተው ድረስ ተደመመ። ሊጋባው “ሊቀ መኳስ” ብሎ ሲናገር ቴዎድሮስ የመኳንንቱ ስሜት ገብቷቸው ቴዎድሮስ ፈገግ አለ። ስምምነት የሚጠይቅ ይመስልም ወደ አቡነ ሰላማ ዘወር ብለው ተመለከቱ (የታንጉት ምስጢር፣1979: 7)።

Many of the nobilities have got anger with somebody’s appointment. While the stage man takes a break and he said “Prince John”, John stands and makes a salute to the emperor and the people in the assembly. The assembly except the emperor have already been surprised. Having the intentions of the assembly understood, Tewodros gladly smiles when the stage man utters the phrasing, “Liqe Mekuas” (the title which Ethiopians use to refer an expert in discourse making and in music); gazes at Pop Selama in a temptation of support (The Secret of Tangut, 1987: 7).

As per impressive discourses that Johan makes with Tewodros, Tewodros appointed John for the purpose of having consultancy in making his country Ethiopian great through wisdom transfer experienced in John’s country-England. The other strategic heroic personality of emperor Tewodros has clearly reflected when he has decided to shift his capital from Gondar to Debre Tabor. He makes his mind disillusioned on the different opposition which potentially be emanated from the different sectors of the town as a result of his basic reforms. He has made reforms on the church men, local chiefs, military men, etc. As a result, Tewodros considers Gondar a polluted City which will spoil all the systems he has. Though the solution will not be a long lasting solution, the first immediate solution what has come to the patriotic emperor is making a shift of capital city from Gondar to Debre Tabor. The next some pages are going to deal with other heroic personalities related to intrepidity, fortitude and courage.

3.4 Intrepidity, Fortitude and Courage

Patriots usually wait for a situation in which they will experience a sense of self resilience. The following excerpt is going in the mind of Aklilu one of the rounded characters in the novel, The Tear of Tewodros. The narrative is related to all the various possibilities that Aklilu along with Gared has designed to win emperor Tewodros. In the extract below, Aklilu advices Gared to become victorious over Tewodros with the integration of Gared’s good quality, warrioriness and Aklilu’s, wisdom. Especially making Gebrye in their side than Tewodros’ is unthinkable in the normal circumstance, for Gebrye is Tewodros’ boxer as reflected in Orwell’s Animal Farm, for Gebrye is an everlasting loyal general for Tewodros. The intrepid it personality of Aklilu has led him to think and practice the case in point.

“አመመህ?” አለው ጋረድ። አክሊሉ ራሱን በአሉታ ነቀነቀ። ከወጭ ትንሽ ድብዝዝ ብሎበት ነበር። በሌሎች ግምት ሞቅታ ተሰምቶታል። ከወሰጥ ግን አምሮው ሾሎ ያስባል። የሴራው ቅደስ ቤት እንደሚመታ ገበግ ከቅድቡ ስር ፍነትው ብሎ ታየው። የት ላይ ነው የካሣ ሃይል? ቡድኑን መምረጥ ያውቃል። እነዚህ ጎረምሶች ይዋገሉታል። ይሞቱሉታል። ምናልባትም ሲአል አብረውት ይወርዳሉ። ነገር ግን ከነሱ የሚለያየው ዘዴ አይኖርም? ከነዓለሜ ከነብርዬ ቢነጥሉት ነፋሱ የወጣ ወናፍ ነው። ባዶ። ከንቱ። “ይህንን ባርያ መያዝ አለብኝ”። አለ አክሊሉ በሆዱ። ዓይኑን እንደከደነ በሃሳቡ ገብርዬ ይታየው ነበር። በጀግንነቱ በሰውነቱና በሽለላው የሚቀኑ ሁሉ “ጉልበት ድምጽ ለባርያ ማን ብሎ” የሚል ሽሙጥ አውጥተዉለታል። “ለካሣ እንደውሻ ታማኝ ነው” አለ አክሊሉ እንደገና በሆዱ “ግን እችላለሁ”። በሃሳቡ ገበግውን ያቀነባር ገባ። ግብሩ ሲያበቃ ከጋረድ ጋር አብረው ወጡ(የቴዎድሮስ እንባ፣1958: 24)።

“Don’t you feel okay?”, Said, Gared.

Aklilu showed a sign of approval by nodding his head. Everything for him was gloomy. He was sharp in contemplating things though others have perceived the case where Aklilu is as intoxication resulted from alcohol. His plot of conspiracy waged upon Tewodros was so clear from him as a very calculated game he has accustomed. "Where is Kassa's Power?" he is skilled enough in recruiting members in his squad. These newly recruited squad members are tough and ready in experiencing all his projects till exposing themselves to the extent of experiencing hell. "Is there a means which detaches Kassa from them?" he is null and void if we able to detach him from Alemie and Gebrye. Yes he is like an engine with no fuel if we can make him alienated from them. Yes; he is in vain. "I need make this slave (Gebrye) my own right-hand man!" Aklilu thinks deeply. Individuals who are vice for Gebrye's heroic trait, physical well-being and his well-performed heroic recitals tease on him with their utterance roughly expressed as "A slaves is readymade creature for physical strength and heroic recital performing!" Aklilu contemplates things with visualization; like, "He (Gebrye) is loyal to Tewodros as a dog is to his owner!" "But I can pinch him from Tewodros and make my own!" Aklilu well designs the plot in point further. Then Aklilu and Gared have left the place after the meal, the king's festivity with people nearer to the palace, over (The Tear of Tewodros, 1966:24).

Aklilu has designed all the possibilities which are less likely to be happened in normal situations. Aklilu has designed a plot to detach Tewodros and Gebrye while he is cognizant in the thick loyalty between them as the expression in the extract, "He (Gebrye) is loyal to Tewodros as a dog is to his owner!", indicates. Surprisingly, Aklilu contemplates this and other extraordinary things even while he is in drinking and festivity which are not conducive for thinkings like in this strong courage which in turn informs us whatsoever the scenario is tougher and gloomy, heroic individuals are individuals who are engulfed with the utilization of all strange possibilities crafted in use. In addition, we can conceptualize the various unique possibilities the heroic personalities in the selected novels have used. For example, possible to think of the various means of struggles that patriot Belay Zeleke and his men in the novel *Abakostir* have used. Belay Zeleke has used burning the areas where the Italians are in search of the local patriots to attack as a means of struggle while he is in scarcity of bullets and war armaments; the different hopes that emperor Tewodros does not give up when problems by problem are loaded upon him; the uninterrupted courage and intrepidity that almost all rounded characters have in mind; like, characters, Shiferaw, Ejigu, Temesgen, Bisewur in the novel, *Abakostir*; characters, Tangut, Aklilu, Gebrye, Alemie, Gelemmo and others in the novels *The Tear of Tewodros* and *The Secrete of Tangut*. So far, heroic personalities related to intrepidity have briefly discussed. The next few pages are going to be made on other most important related heroic personalities; like, perseverance, dedication and determination.

3.5 Perseverance, Dedication and Determination

Personalities, mentioned above, are related to the heroic personalities which enable heroes and heroines to think everything they have in mind is possible. The determination that Tewodros has as reflected in the novels *The Tear of Tewodros* and *The Secrete of Tangut* extends to the extent of determining to lose his precious life. Tewodros prefers his nations dignity than his own soul, and he has shown us as experienced in his actual history (as narrated in proper history) and as it is reflected in the story of the novel *The Secrete of Tangut*, Tewodros makes suicide to lose his life for national pride and dignity. This sacrifice as reflected in the narrative of the aforementioned novel, and in the history of Ethiopia, Tewodros has made a suicidal practice when he has been requested to surrender himself to General Napier of Great Britain is taken as a determination, and as it has already been explained in the previous discussions, it is a backup for the nation's long lasting independence struggle that most of the Ethiopian leaders; like emperor Menilik, emperor Hailesillassie, etc., and patriotic fighters like Rass Abebe Aregai, Dejazmach Belay Zeleke, Rass Wubneh Tessema etc. have played a remarkable block in the frequent attempts of foreign invasions and influences waged against the independences of the country. Therefore, the determination one can make to lose his life for the betterment of his nation is the very critical decision only patriotic individual like emperor Tewodros makes.

Likewise, the strong perseverance in the novel, *Abakostir*, has been shown in the narrative which deals with the proposal provided for Dejazmach Belay Zeleke to choose either saving the life of his daughter, or quitting his struggle for independence. Belay Zeleke's daughter Yeshahsiworq has been captured by the Italians, and they use her for the political bargaining in the way they request to stop the independence struggle led by her father. Belay as it has been explained in the previous pages of the analysis, does not take even much time to decide the matter related to the independence of his nation is by far outweighed than saving the life of his daughter. In general, the previously discussed matters related to the determinations of the rounded characters, and other demanding dedications are well-reflected in the here and there parts of the narratives of the selected novels; namely. Having all the previous discussions concerning the novels, the next part of the article leads to the precise conclusions.

4. Conclusion

Practical analysis as per the formulated theoretical framework has been dealt on the novels, namely, *The Secret of Tangut*, *The Tear of Tewodros* and *Abakostir*, and it is possible to deal with the conclusions.

First of all, interpreting personal qualities in historical texts in a way that can enable us to impart the personal qualities are less experienced in researches. This is so, for researchers mostly perceive historical texts are primarily approached from historical point of views. Therefore, A Postmodernist Reading of Selected Historical Novels in Amharic: A Quest for Heroic Personalities, has been designed to deal with on heroic personalities that can be transferred

from heroic individuals treated in historical Amharic novels than to deal with the historical novels as a means of the discussion of heroic personalities as if they were the inborn personal traits of few individuals.

As per the analysis, all the three novels are similar in reflecting most of the basic heroic personalities. Hence, the frequently reflected heroic personalities are sacrifice, compassion, focus, honesty, loyalty, determination, courage, virtue, wisdom, visionary, intrepidity, fortitude, etc. These are ideal in relation to postmodern narrative strategies like, magical realism, the presentation of very strange narratives as if they were the day-to-day engagements; historiographic presentation of fiction, the notion which presents history as a means of discourse development and knowledge transfer; the unusual interwoven of discourses, intertextuality, and interrogating grand narratives.

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