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# A Circular Mediation of Time: Temporality, Memory and Narrative Identity in Selected Postmodern Amharic Novels

Yesehak, Abrham

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**Bahir Dar University**  
**Faculty of Humanities**  
**Department of English Language and Literature**

**A Circular Mediation of Time: Temporality, Memory and Narrative Identity  
in Selected Postmodern Amharic Novels**

**By**  
**Yesehak Abrham**

**August 2022**  
**Bahir Dar, Ethiopia**



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**A Circular Mediation of Time: Temporality, Memory and Narrative Identity  
in Selected Postmodern Amharic Novels**

**By**

**Yesehak Abrham**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English Language and  
Literature for the Doctor of Philosophy in Literature**

**Principal Advisor: Tesfaye Dagneu (Assoc.Prof.)**

**Co-adviser: Anteneh Aweke (Assoc.Prof.)**

**August 2022**

**Bahir Dar, Ethiopia**

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## Declaration

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**A Circular Mediation of Time: Temporality, Memory and Narrative Identity in Selected Postmodern Amharic Novels**”, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature to the Department of English Language and Literature, Bahir Dar University, is a record of original work carried out by me and has never been submitted to this or any other institution to get any other degree or certificates. The assistance and help I received during this investigation have been duly acknowledged.

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Name of the candidate

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Date

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Signature

**Bahir Dar University**  
**Faculty of Humanities**  
**Department of English Language and Literature**

**Approval of Dissertation for Defense**

I hereby certify that I have supervised, read, and evaluated this dissertation entitled “**A Circular Mediation of Time: Temporality, Memory and Narrative Identity in Postmodern Amharic Novels**” by **Yesehak Abrham** prepared under my guidance. I recommend the dissertation be submitted for oral defense.

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**Bahir Dar University**  
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**Approval of Dissertation for Defense Result**

As members of the board of examiners, we examined this dissertation entitled “**A Circular Mediation of Time: Temporality, Memory and Narrative Identity in Postmodern Amharic Novels**” by **Yesehak Abrham**. We hereby certify that the dissertation is accepted for fulfilling the requirements for the award of the degree of Ph.D. in Literature.

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Chairperson		
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## Abstract

This study focuses on the human experience of time in narrative as applied in selected postmodern Amharic novels. There have been studies conducted on narrative time in Ethiopia though no study shows how fictional works reveal the experience of time. Therefore, the objective of this study is to investigate temporal variations, memory, and narrative identity in selected postmodern novels. For this purpose, a narrative inquiry was used as a research design, and Paul Ricoeur's theory of Time and Narrative was applied as a theoretical framework. For the analysis, two Amharic novels, which are *Afə* (2010 E.C.) by Adam Reta and *Bäfəkər Səm* (2009 E.C.) by Alemayehu Gelagay have been selected and analyzed in separate chapters. The findings showed that both novels presented temporal variations that were brought by the effect of fictive imaginative variations. In line with this, *traversed time* and *linear time*, *public time* and *mortal time/ordinary time*, and *metatemporal time* have been explored in *Afə* as well as *Bäfəkər Səm*. Additionally, *death* (mortal time) and *eternity* (eternal time) between *public time* and *mortal time*, and *metatemporal time* were explored as forms of imaginative time. Additionally, different conceptions of time have been identified. Time with the views of *transformation* and *progress*, *transiency*, and *cyclicity* was identified in *Afə*. It has been explored cyclical time is dominant in *Afə* that is because of its unique narrative technique. In *Bäfəkər Səm*, the time conceptions such as *transiency* and *permanence* were identified. Moreover, different forms of memory were found in the selected novels. In *Afə*, *reminiscences of narrators and characters*, *tizta as making sense of the past*, and *textual memory* have been explored, whereas, in *Bäfəkər Səm*, only *reminiscences of the narrator and the hero* and *textual memory* were identified as a major representation of memory. Regarding narrative identity, the study presented how novels provide mediation of self and the world through the plot's function presenting an identity of change in permanence. Hence, *self-constituency* and *self-knowledge* were explored in *Afə* while *self-constituency* and *a quest for self-same* are what have been identified in *Bäfəkər Səm*. Finally, the study concludes that the selected novels present the circular mediation of time and narrative through temporal structures and narrative emplotment.

**Key Terms:** Amharic novels; Circular time; Emplotment; Memory; Narrative identity, Postmodern novels; temporality; Time



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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

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

The issue of time is a subject of frequent academic and theoretical debates. Grosz (1999) notes that time is one of the assumed yet irreducible terms of all discourse, knowledge, and social practices that provide different interpretations and meanings. In Newtonian physics, for example, time is defined as the movement of instances that is absolute, one-dimensional, measurable, and flows uniformly in different spaces; whereas Einstein believes that time is relative and must be understood in terms of a different movement and space-time relation (Di Bernardo, 2016). Movement, change, and the continuity of life and the universe depict a sequential perspective of time that flows from a distant past to an unknown, infinite future. However, these interpretations are confined to the time of the world, which cannot be measured or explained outside of space. As a result, time exists in space, which represents cosmological time.

On the other hand, philosophy challenges the cosmological or physical understanding of time that predominates a view of linear time. For instance, phenomenologists claim that time is a human experience and mental construct, not a cosmic fact (Osborne, 1995). Therefore, time is not a natural occurrence that comes into our lives, but a living experience constructed through our cognition. Furthermore, cultural orientations provide multiple perspectives on time. In Western culture, time is dominantly viewed as linear, whereas in Eastern culture it is cyclical (Olujic, 1984; Kimmel, 2007; Sentov, 2009). Unlike the presentation of clock time in Western society, “African notions of time are usually expressed in inherently communal terms—as age groups and market days” (Olufunwa, 2005, p. 51).

Respectively, narrative as a cultural construct weighs a diverse form of temporal aspects, making temporality a practice of “cultural engagement” (Matz, 2011, p. 217). Through narrative, humans construct time and conceptualize the activities of their time with a past and future. This infers that narrative by its virtue provides perspectives of time, which in

turn, can be a source of philosophical and cultural interpretations. At this point, the current research focuses on the issue of time and narrative and their entwining aspect, which is one of the subjects of narratology. The narrative understanding of time and the relation between time and narrative as Lloyd (1993) says, has “... taken on in recent philosophy a significance that reaches beyond its role in theory of literature” (p. 11).

In this context, the current researcher aspires to study the narrativity of time and the temporal aspect of narrative. The researcher was motivated by Messay’s article entitled, “The Ethiopian Conception of Time and Modernity” (2013) which presents the philosophical interpretation of the Ethiopian conception of time through one of Kebede Michael’s poems, that is “ሁሉም የሆነ ነው” (“Everything is Dèjà vu”). Based on his interpretation of this poem, Messay claims that time is cyclical for Ethiopian society. Additionally, there are proverbs and sayings about time as “ጊዜ የሰጠው ቅል፡ ድንጋይ ይሰብራል” (“Time cures more than a doctor”). The proverb is indicative that time has an existential power, which destroys or heals. This reveals the public view of time, which in turn presents people’s understanding of life and existence. Hence, the current researcher took the assumption, as Messay posits that literary works like the poem by Kebede Michael may inhabit public views of time.

Similarly, Barrows (2008) affirms that African fictions present a culturally indigenous temporality, which is cyclical, mythic, and ritual. He also concludes that circular temporality is “not as a style of Avant-garde novels that are labeled as “modernists”, but as characteristics of non-Western forms of cultural temporality” (2008, p. 603). The conception that how Ethiopian or African views time denotes the respective people’s experience of time. Beyond such a claim of cultural temporality, time is considered one of the aesthetic aspects of literary texts. Specifically, postmodern writers engage with issues of time and selfhood because of the use of stream of consciousness as a dominant narrative technique Lloyd (1993). In this respect, the current researcher aspires to explore time as an aesthetic and cultural construction in Ethiopian literary works, specifically Amharic novels.

As part of the long Ethiopian literary tradition, the novel emerged in the early twentieth century. Following the publication of *Libb-waled Tarik (Tobia)* (1908) by Afework Gebreyiasus, notable Amharic novels have been produced. As many literary scholars would agree, Haddis Alemayehu, Dagnachew Worku, Abe Gubegna, Bealu Girma, Birhanu Zerihun, and Sibhat G/Egziabher are among the foremost notable Amharic novel writers, especially in the periods between the 1950s and 1980s. Studies indicate that there is a growing trend in the theme, style, and narrative presentation of Amharic novel writing. Taye Assefa (1986) in his Ph.D. study “Form in Amharic Literature”, investigates that works produced after the 1950s emphasize aesthetic effects, and innovativeness of techniques of presentation, which is unlike the preceding novels that were dominantly illustrative and didactic. For instance, “The retardatory structure and the constriction of current story time” employed in one of Abbe’s novels, *Ya-raggafu Ababoch* (“Fallen Flowers”) is one of the innovative aspects in the style of Amharic novel writing (1986, p. 256), Taye says.

On a similar argument, Assefa (2020) argues that there is a growing trend in the style and narrative technique of Amharic novels published after the 1990s. Assefa states that the novels like *Märäq* by Adam Reta involve non-linear structure, multiple narrators, and fragmented plots unlike the earlier Amharic novels that dominantly used linear or *telos*-driven structure. Such narrative presentations testify that some writers are taking the Amharic novel to another verge of development as they apply new narrative techniques that are different from the dominant and conventional styles. According to Richardson (2019), non-linear narratives, fragmented plots, cyclical time, and plural meanings are the main features of postmodern texts. This assertion makes the current researcher focus on postmodern Amharic writers.

In this regard, Adam Reta is one of the contemporary writers who are acclaimed for introducing new narrative techniques to the dominant style of fiction in Ethiopia; as a result, became the center of attention for many literary researchers (Aklilu, 2010; Demeke, 2014). Adam is known for his experimentation with *hisnawinet* (intertextuality). In an interview with Aklilu Dessalegn (2012), Adam describes *hisnawinet* as, “The intention of

*hisnawinet* is filling this space. What is read is the filling, which is the new text. I translated this as intertextuality” (p. 351). This narrative technique is more elaborated in his essay entitled, “ሥግር: በአፅናዊነት”, Adam has introduced a narrative technique called, *Sigir* (transformation, crossover) as one form of *hisnawinet*. In this essay, Adam claims:

Many of the traditional and ‘modernist’ narratives established their plots from an ideology that arise from fixed facts, and predefined answers and that claimed to know what is good and what is bad. Hence, their narration happens to be linear, defined one, known or suspected ending. (p. 8; translation by the researcher).

For Adam, *Sigir* narrative technique avoids fixed or ready-made facts, and creates surplus spaces, thereby providing multiple perspectives. In contrast to the linear narrative form, *Sigir* provides multiple options of ending since there is always an unsaid part of a story, which takes the narrative form into many voices and perspectives. According to Adam, *Sigir* could have been established as a unique narrative technique for Ethiopian literature if it had not been for Afework Gebre-Iyasus’s *Tobia*, which was written in the European style of a linear narrative, which probably influenced the subsequent Amharic authors who were publishing narratives in newspapers and other forms of publications.

Alemayehu Gelagay is another writer who is believed as an “experimental novelist” (Dereje, 2019; Tewodros, 2017; Yaqob, 2020). Tewodros (2017) demonstrates that one of Alemayehu’s novels, *Bäfäkar Säm* (2009 E.C.), has a unique narrative technique that is different from the author’s previous work as well as works of other writers. One of Alemayehu’s unique attempts is that “he disrupts the line between fact and fiction, the actual world and the fictive world, or the real author and the narrator” (Tewodros, 2017, para. 5; translation by the researcher). This fills the space between the actual reader and the actual author. Tewodros further comments that, unlike most novels, the novel *Bäfäkar Säm* presents issues that are narrated with a neutral or impartial voice, without making any judgment. This statement is similar to what Adam says about the function of *Sigir*. Accordingly, the current study aims to conduct a study on selected Amharic novels by Adam Reta and Alemayeu Gelagay.

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

As explained in the preceding section, the current researcher was inspired by Messay's (2013) study that attests cyclicity is a reflection of the Ethiopian conception of time because it reveals the meaning or secret of life. In this view, everything is cyclical, and the end of the circle is the beginning of another. The current researcher thinks that what Adam attempted by his narrative technique of *Sigir* is related to the circular view of existence and time in which everything is connected and where the end becomes unknown. However, any story has also a linear aspect of narration as it invites the reader toward the end. Additionally, Tewodros (2017) explains that Alemayehu mostly uses the episodic narrative technique, which has a reference to time. The current study is based on the hypothesis that fiction can reveal the human experience of time as well as its various interpretations. In this regard, the current researcher hardly found similar research in the libraries of Ethiopian University and online research portals.

Moreover, the current research tends to focus on the study of time beyond its objective view of structural time which was predominantly the focus of previous studies on Amharic novels. So far, researchers who took time as a topic exert their attention on the structural perspective of time. To mention some, Ayele (2007), Paulos (2013) Assefa (2020) have conducted on this aspect of time that is based on the temporal relationship between the story and discourse levels as established by Genette's theory of narrative discourse that focuses on the analysis of specific techniques for representing time in a text. Hence, the experience and conception of time as a research topic have been deemphasized.

In light of this gap, the current researcher seeks to adopt a different theoretical framework. To this end, memory as a representation of past time and identity as a reflection of experience in time can be considered issues under the discussion of time. Memory has been the subject of a study in the anachronic variations of order, or the iterative character of the narrative *frequency* (Genette, 1980). However, Genette's order and frequency focus only on the technique of narrative arrangements and numbering of recounted events in the story, so it does not recognize the notion of memory (Ricœur, 1985; Erll, 2009). Additionally,



the change and the transformational role of time in narrative, which forms narrative identity, has never been an issue for researchers who used narrative time as a theory for the study of Amharic literary texts. Narrative identity infers that through time, the narrative subject (character, narrator, and voice) maintains or questions his or her identity. Thus, narrative identity is one aspect of time, which could be a subject of analysis for the study of time in literary texts. In this sense, philosophical narratology encompasses issues that the researcher considers to study in the current research.

Therefore, the current researcher hopes that this study presents an additional endeavor to the previous studies on narrative time. The researcher believes that the current study establishes a different perspective for the conceptual analysis of time, which has remained a gap in the narrative time study of Ethiopian literary texts. Accordingly, *Afə* (2010 E.C.) by Adam Reta and *Bäfəkər Səm* (2009 E.C.) by Alemayehu Gelagay are selected for the study.

Consequently, the current research tries to address the following research questions:

- ✓ How does narrated time mediate different aspects of time as presented in selected postmodern Amharic novels?
- ✓ What are the imaginative temporal variations identified in selected postmodern Amharic novels?
- ✓ What are the conceptions of time prescribed in the selected postmodern Amharic novels?
- ✓ How is memory employed as a narrative presentation of time in the selected postmodern Amharic novels?
- ✓ How is narrative identity established as an experience of time in the selected postmodern Amharic novels?

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

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The main objective of the research is to study the mediation of different aspects of the human experience of time established by fiction as reflected in selected postmodern Amharic novels.

#### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives**

This critical study has the following specific objectives:

- ✓ To investigate the mediation of narrated time in selected postmodern Amharic novels.
- ✓ To explore the imaginative temporal variations identified in selected postmodern Amharic novels
- ✓ To identify the conceptions of time presented in selected postmodern Amharic novels.
- ✓ To analyze memory as a form of narrative presentation in selected postmodern Amharic novels.
- ✓ To interpret how narrative identity is established as an experience of time in selected postmodern Amharic novels.

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

Time as a central theme is one of the important issues in literary studies. The concept of time is more understood when it is expressed in narrated terms (Ricoeur, 1988). Bearing in mind the thesis that time and narrative are fundamental and inescapable aspects of life, the current researcher postulates that this study would be of some significance. The first significance is that the current study would show how fiction, specifically Amharic novels, as a mode of discourse reflects the human experience of time. Secondly, this study could contribute to filling some knowledge gaps in the area of Ethiopian literary research. Finally,

the researcher believes that the study could be used as a resource material for other researchers who want to conduct additional research on related topics.

### **1.5. Scope of the Study**

The study is delimited to two postmodern Amharic novels. These novels are *Afə* (“mouth”) (2010 E.C.) by Adam Reta and *Bäfəkar Səm* (“In the Name of Love”) (2009 E.C.) by Alemayehu Gelagay. These particular works are considered for analysis and interpretation, as novels that employ the textual features of a postmodernism and establish time as a major aspect of the text. The novels are analyzed by using the three-volume book entitled, *Time and Narrative* by Ricoeur (1981, 1984, and 1988) as a model, which Nünning (2003) categorized under the branch of philosophical narratology that is the theoretical framework of the study. This theoretical framework is selected to explain the philosophical aspect of time in narrative. In this approach, fiction is understood as the configuration of everyday phenomena that includes the cultural meaning of time. As a result, the analysis focuses on how characters and narrators make meanings to their narrated world, or how they would configure or understand their world i.e. through their fictive experience. Among the other genre of fiction, the novel is selected for its suitability for broader interpretive of narrative time.

### **1.6. Limitations of the Study**

In this study, there were some constraints during the analysis of the research. One of the constraints was related to the translations of extracted data. Since the source texts were written in the Amharic language, it was difficult to find equivalent translations for some culturally loaded expressions. However, attempts were made to minimize errors in translation by consulting English language teachers and other people who have experience in translating texts. The other constraint of the study was the appropriation of the extracted data. Some lengthy extractions that require extra space were condensed, which may have weakened the overall meaning of the data. The quality of the analysis could then be impacted by this limitation.

## **1.7. Methodology of the Study**

### **1.7.1. Research Approach**

The data for this study relies on texts; thus, the current study applies qualitative research. Hence, a narrative research design is used because the study mainly focuses on describing and interpreting experiences and events presented in the texts. Riessman (2008) states that narrative research focuses on the details of how and why a particular event is storied, perhaps, or what a narrator accomplishes by developing the story that way, and its effects on the reader or listener. Regarding the theoretical framework, the study employs Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (a trilogy published in 1984, 1985, and 1988) as a model to support the analysis of the selected Amharic novels. The researcher found out that Ricoeur's theory of Time and Narrative is resourceful to investigate how time is refigured in fiction, and how the plot as a resource of fiction presents its temporal structures.

### **1.7.2. Basis for Selection of the Texts**

The novels that are the subject of the current study are selected based on the basis described herein. The primary basis is established on novels that employ features of postmodernism. This basis has been considered because non-linearity, fragmented plots, cyclical time, and plural meanings are features of postmodern texts, where the notion of subjective time is also an inescapable aspect (Richardson, 2019). These features are aligned with the issue of time and narrative, which is the subject of investigation, interpretation, and analysis in the current study. Relied on this assumption, the researcher undertook a reading survey research, published commentaries, and critics of Amharic novels. In this sense, the researcher arrived at a consideration of the works of Adam Reta, Endalegeta Kebede, Alemayehu Gelagay, and Bewketu Seyoum.

Later on, the researcher understood that the works of Adam Reta and Alemayehu Gelagay could be classified as postmodern texts. After the selection of authors, the researcher made another basis on the novels that have similar narrative techniques and common literary features. It is noted that Adam and Alemayehu have common characteristics in using self-reflective narration and fragmented plots. After a primary reading assessment of the novels

of the chosen authors, two novels are then selected. These novels are *Afā* (2010 E.C.) by Adam and *Bäfākər Səm* (2009 E.C.) by Alemayehu. The current researcher found out that plot fragmentation, non-linearity, narrative repetitions, memory, and identity are dominant issues in the selected novels. More importantly, time is the principal subject in the selected novels. Therefore, the two novels are selected because the issues of time that are reflected in the novels were of some interest.

### **1.7.3. Methods of Data Collection**

The data are collected through close readings of the selected novels. As primary data, important excerpts are identified from the novels and are transcribed into English using literary and communicative translation methods. The excerpts taken from the selected texts are data used as textual evidence for the whole analysis. These excerpts are identified based on the conceptual tools that can show temporality, memory, and narrative identity.

### **1.7.4. Methods and Procedures of Analysis**

The study employs analytical and descriptive methods of analysis. The analysis follows the interpretation method and critical study of the “hermeneutic circle” (Gadamer, 2004). The hermeneutic circle emphasizes understanding and interpretation as an interplay of the whole and its parts. In essence, the parts of a text should be understood out of the whole, which can be the entire text or its purpose. Based on the theoretical concepts adopted from Ricœur’s *Time and Narrative*, analytical concepts are provided for the analysis of the texts. The conceptual tools used for the basis of the analysis are temporality, memory, and narrative identity. These concepts are appropriated based on Ricoeur’s discussion on the threefold mimesis processes of narrative and the temporal structures of *within-time-ness* and *repetition*.

The research uses textual and contextual approaches for the analysis. Textually, the research presents how texts employ features of temporality and the fictive experience of time by characters and/or narrators. In addition, voice as a narrative category is included in the analysis because the narrative instance represented in the text by the voice presents

temporal features. This helps to analyze a change in temporal dimensions and contradicting experience of ‘extra-temporal’ or time in its pure state. Contextually, it shows how the conception of time and the fictive experiences of characters and narrators in the text world intersected with the views about time in a given cultural context of the actual world.

In addition to the method of analysis, the researcher takes the following procedures to address objectives. First, the research is started with critical readings of reference materials and related research on written narratology, specifically narrative temporality. Then, reviews of related literature and theoretical debates of time and narrative are explored under the theoretical discussion of philosophical narratology. After close readings of the theoretical framework, conceptual tools are outlined. These concepts are used as a reference for the data gathered from the source texts or selected novels, which are to be organized, classified, analyzed, and interpreted. Then, the analysis is presented with the help of textual evidence extracted from the texts, which are translated from Amharic to English. The novels are analyzed individually under a separate chapter with a respective critical summary at the end of the chapters.

#### **1.7.5. Trustworthiness of the Research**

In qualitative inquiry, researchers have to follow procedures and validation criteria to realize the trustworthiness or accuracy of the research. The most commonly accepted criteria are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Creswell and Creswell, J.D., 2018). Additionally, Creswell and Poth (2018) organize these validation strategies into three groups based on the lens the strategy represents, as researcher’s lens, the participant’s lens, and the reader’s or reviewer’s lens. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative researchers should “engage in *at least two* of the validation strategies” to employ the accuracy of their studies (p. 340; emphasis original). The current study is mainly textual analysis, not a field-based study. Thus, the current researcher has not been engaged in the participant’s lens validations like “member checking, prolonged engagement and persistent observation with participants and collaboration with participants” for the credibility of the data (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 342).

To achieve conformability, the current research has passed through external audits which are the reader's or reviewer's lens. Valuable feedback was generated from the presentation of the faculty seminar and research conference at Bahir Dar University. For the transferability of the study, it has been confirmed that the findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data with thick descriptions. Additionally, peer-debriefings were adept about the methods and procedures of the study, including an inspection by professional English language teachers for the English translation of excerpted data. Furthermore, to make convincing and credible analyses, the research paradigm and methods of analysis were carefully designed and the researcher collected appropriate data for the analysis.

### **1.8. Organization of the Study**

This research is organized into six chapters. The first chapter discusses the introduction part which consists of the background, statement of the problem, objectives, significances, scope, limitations, methodology, and organization of the study. The second chapter presents reviews of previous studies and other related literature regarding different approaches to time in the narrative theory. Chapter three mainly discusses the theoretical framework of the study. Drawing from the theoretical framework, the concepts of temporality, memory, and narrative identity are elaborated in this chapter. Chapter four and chapter five are devoted to the analysis and interpretation of the selected Amharic novels based on the theoretical framework. The last one, chapter six presents the conclusion of the study.

### **1.9. Definitions of Key Terms**

**Emplotment:** is the way which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind.

**Memory:** is a critical capacity that involves remembering past events along with their spatial and temporal contexts.

**Narrative Identity:** is a person's internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imagined future to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose

**Temporality:** Structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity.



## Chapter Two: Review of Literature

This section of the study is divided into two subsections. The first is focused on a discussion of prior studies on narrative time undertaken in Amharic literary works. In the second subsection, relevant studies of foreign literature are explored in order to show the relevance of presenting the analytical approach for Amharic novels.

### 2.1. Review of Related Studies in Amharic Literature

In the study of narrative time, a considerable number of researches have been conducted on Amharic literary and non-literary works. Zenebe (2003) conducts his M.A. study: “*Narrative Time Analysis in Tä’ammōRä Maryam*”. This study is applied in a religious text where Zenebe analyzes it by using the theory of Gerard Genette and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan. With a similar approach, different genres and languages are studied by Ayele (2007), Paulos (2013), Haile (2013), and Assefa (2020). Ayele’s (2007) “የተረክ ጊዜ ትንተና በአማርኛ ረጅም ልብ ወለዶች (Analysis of Narrative Time in Amharic Novels)” is an extensive study that investigates selected Amharic novels published between 1901 E.C. to 1962 E.C. Paulos (2013) explored “Narrative Time in a Biography: ቀኝ ጌታ ዮፌታሐ ንጉሤ፣ አጭር የሕይወቱና የጽሑፍ ታሪክ in Focus”, in which the study focuses on biographical text. Haile’s (2013), “*Narrative Time and Mode in Minkuhkuwah Zeyfleyelu Mae’tso and Hezike Nabey*” studies narrative time and mode in Tigrigna novels.

The researchers mentioned above have conducted studies on different genres of texts. For instance, Zenebe’s (2003) study on the hagiography of St. Marry and Paulos’s study on the biography of Yoftahe Nigusse shows the remarkable approach researchers to study narrative time in the whole range of literary and non-literary Amharic works. Despite applying to different genres, those researchers use Genette’s theoretical approaches that study order, duration, and frequency to examine the temporal relationship between the story and the discourse in a text. The findings show how the logical order of events is distorted, the duration of story time over discourse time in the narration, and the frequency in the presentation of events. Though research has been conducted in the area to examine

different Amharic literary works, it can be said that they present a similar literary taste to these works.

Unlike the aforementioned studies, Messay (2013) presents a philosophical interpretation of time. In his article entitled, “The Ethiopian Conception of Time and Modernity”, Messay interprets one of Kebede Mikael’s poems, “ግንባር ግንባር ግንባር” (*Everything Is Déjà vu*), as a correct reflection of Ethiopians conceptions of cyclical time. For this thesis, Messay argues that not only time but the concept of modernity has also always been associated with the privileged future-directedness viewpoint of Europeans. As a result, the issue of backwardness and civilization are labeled based on the assumption of what is ahead and behind linear time. Nevertheless, Messay confronts that we need to break with Europe’s understanding of history that travels in a single line direction, and have “the perspective that teaches the repetition of time” (p. 14). For Messay, the notion of repetition is renewal or rebirth, through which mistake is understood or self is regained.

Further, Messay explains that life itself passes by the same renewing process, “All natural things are renewed because rather than going in one reversible direction, they have repetitive character” (p. 14). In support of this view, the lines in Kebede’s poem: *The naïve person constantly fooled/Is there anything constantly stays the same?/While that which you have put trust in crumbles /The unplanned is found happening/The weak become strong while the powerful if humiliated /Young plants grow while fruits are reaped/ ... In the past, in the future, and today in this world/ There’s nothing new; everything is cyclical* – show this perception of time. Messay interprets the poem that like any natural phenomenon, Ethiopians view time as a repetitive occurrence. That means as day substitutes night and night for day, individual and social life, in the same manner, enters into this cyclicity; happiness to sadness, rich to poor, or vice versa. Nothing stays permanent; at the same time, the changes do not bring anything new.

In his study, Messay emphasizes the philosophical aspect of time since his main objective is interpreting time and modernity as a central philosophical question. The philosophical discussion of time is one important issue to consider in literary studies. In this regard,

Messay presents the aesthetics of literary texts reflecting cultural views about time. Though the study mainly focuses on the philosophical interpretation of time, not the narratological approach, the current study is related to applying the philosophical and narratological approaches.

Assefa's (2020) study, "Narrative Voice and Time in Selected Amharic Novels (ca. 1991-2014): A Comparative Approach" is another related study that is conducted on Amharic novels. This presents a more revealing analysis of time in Amharic novels though Assefa still uses the theoretical approach of Genette's narrative time like the other researchers. In his study, Assefa investigates the relation between discourse time and story time as well as the narrator's relation and their level of participation in the story. Voice and time are different narrative categories as put by Genette (1980). Assefa includes narrative voice with a justification that it involves a related aspect of narrative time. Similarly, the current researcher considers the notion of voice as one aspect of time because it determines the temporal relationship between the discourse and the story, and the temporal distance or the narrator's position to the story that he/she is narrating.

However, Assefa's analyses of voice seem more intuited to the tense of verbs. He states that in the novels *Märäq* and *Därəso Mäləs*, narrators use present and present continuous tense while narrating past events. He further discusses, "The reason behind the use of these tenses is to increase the variety of sentence structure or to achieve a certain language style", and it is "a new experience in Amharic novels" (pp. 204 & 219). Nevertheless, the aspect of narrative voice to the story time has a function beyond tense structure or language variety that further explains the fictive experience of time. Every voice is a past in relation to the story that is telling. In this case, the narration acquires the voices of the hero who is experiencing action and the narrator who is telling what was being experienced. This, in turn, would present us with the perceptual difference between the hero and the narrator. This aspect has not been emphasized in previous studies. Even though the focus and depth of analysis are different, all the researchers mentioned above rely on a similar approach to narrative time, which is based on the theory of Genette and Rimmon-Kenan.

Therefore, the study of time in Amharic literature dominantly focuses on the relationship between story time and discourse time of order, duration, and frequency. The analysis usually concentrates on the structural analysis of time. Literary narratologists and historians have taken for granted that time has a linear role, hence, infer events in their sequential and chronological manner. In this sense, we are all tempted to see time as an objective, measurable and unambiguous category that can be pictured as a dotted line progressing from past to future (Fludernik, 2003). Moreover, the study of memory as one aspect of time is reduced to the analepsis order of events. In this case, memory within narrative time is understood as a narrative technique in which narrated events are anachronic or iterative (Genette, 1980).

Differently, the current researcher aspires to include broader issues of memory. At this point, the current study includes memory as a subject of analysis which has not been broadly investigated in the previous studies. Additionally, the issue of narrative identity has also never been a theme in the previous studies of Ethiopian literary texts. However, this is not true when it comes to the study of foreign literary texts. The researcher finds similar studies on time. The next section provides a review of some related studies of foreign literature conducted on temporality, memory, and narrative identity.

## **2.2. Review of Related Studies in Foreign Literature**

Plentiful research has been conducted on literary works regarding narrative temporality, memory, and narrative identity. Most of these studies apply Ricoeur's theory of narrative temporality. Among those studies, the current researcher only reviews journal articles that are conducted on the literary works of some celebrated authors. To mention one, Barrows (2008) studies the views of African temporality in Ayi Kwei Armah's, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. He claims that, in contrast to Western time's telos-driven linearity, African time depicts temporal forms of cyclicity, myth, and ritual. Such culturally indigenous temporality is presented in African fiction like this one. Africa and Diasporic Africans reject Western historiography, which views history as a sequential, linear

unfolding of a sequence of causes and effects, which is “a very notion of historical transformation as a myth of racist imperialism” (p. 634).

Though the current researcher applies a different theoretical framework, Borrows’s analysis of temporality in an African novel is an exemplary study. The current researcher finds a similar approach to the interpretation of cultural temporality. Borrows’s argument on the Western tradition of linear time goes in line with Ricœur’s theory of Time and Narrative which the current study is used as a theoretical framework. Ricœur (1980) asserts, “... both the theory of history and the theory of fictional narratives seem to take it for granted that whenever there is time, it is always a time laid out chronologically, a linear time, defined by a succession of instants” (p. 171).

Similarly, for Barrows, the view of time as linear pointing from beginning to end is the Western orientation that is taken for granted; practically, humans do not experience time sequentially. This claim is similar to that of Messay (2013) who also states cyclical time is a form of indigenous temporality. However, Messay has a point of difference, insisting that the Ethiopian cyclical time is different from the African because it also has a characteristic of teleological time or future-oriented time like that of the Western. According to Messay (2013), the cyclical temporality of other Africans is inclined into a goalless process that has no future, whereas the Ethiopian cyclical time involves a Divine intervention. Messay puts, “Since humans destroy what they have built, they can never escape, by their efforts, from the law of cyclicity” unless God stops the directionless repetition of time so that humans have fixed or eternal time (p. 10).

The other related study conducted on foreign literature is Martinez’s (2013), “The Eternal Return and Ricoeur’s Theory of Time in Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*”. In this study, Martinez asserts that the treatment of time in “The Sound and the Fury” is circular and recurrent rather than rectilinear and progressive. He uses Ricoeur’s theory to show how readers move backward and forward in narrative time and how circularity works in narrative configuration. The study reveals that time, in particular, undergoes a strange treatment in Faulkner’s novel. In reading, readers are immediately struck by the

intersection of present events with memories of the past. These shifts present a sense of reciprocity between narrativity and temporality. Moreover (2013), Martinez shows how readers move back and forth between the narrative of the present and narratives from the past as if actual lives are not lived chronologically. He concludes that Faulkner's novel disrupts chronology and instead makes it circular, moving back and forth throughout the narrative, presenting no point of the entrance as there is no sense of beginning and end.

The current research is similar to this study that it applies the same theoretical approach. However, the study is more specific to the study of narrative techniques that the novel, *The Sound and the Fury* disrupts the conventional linear presentation of time, and presents a circular time. The fictive experience of time which is emphasized in Ricoeur's theory is not presented in the analysis. The issue of memory that is a part of experiencing time is not given a focus. In this regard, Salmose (2014) studies F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Salmose in his journal article, "Reading Nostalgia Textual Memory in *The Great Gatsby*", explores the use of the reader's textual memory to create a nostalgic experience within the text as an enhancement of the novel's nostalgic themes. He identifies that to make narrative sense, reading is dependent on remembering what came before the present sentence the past events of the reading, and assessing this memory in the present reading situation.

According to Salmose (2014), modernist writers staged their experience of the modern world through a variety of nostalgic methods. He demonstrates how the text in the textual experience reflects a nostalgic aesthetic to the reader. As a result, the reader has textual nostalgia as well as a phenomenological nostalgic experience. Such nostalgic strategies include varied techniques such as temporal re-ordering of events, the nostalgic use of both flashbacks and flash-forwards, and the dichotomy between inner time and clock time. Hence, in this study, the act of remembering becomes a part of the reading experience in a text. This illustrates how the reader's past textual memory is aroused not just by the change in style, but also by the repetition of common symbols developed in the first part. In this regard, the current research is more related to Samose's study.

To sum up, the discussion above, attempted to show studies of time in Ethiopian as well as foreign literature. As far as the current researcher's knowledge is concerned, most M.A. and Ph.D. studies of Ethiopian researchers exerted on the structural narratology of Gerard Genette's theory. Many Amharic novels have been a subject of investigation for the study of narrative time, but the perspective of studies was still the same, which lacks a different approach regarding the study of time in Amharic novels. Therefore, taking the issue of time in the Amharic novels, the current researcher presumes the narratological and philosophical approaches to time. Ricoeur's theory of narrative time conjoins the narratological and philosophical discussions of time and provides a different model for the study of time in literary texts. Even though reaches on foreign literary texts have been studied by using Ricoeur's theory of narrative time, no study has been conducted on Ethiopian literary texts.

Therefore, in the current study, temporality, memory, and narrative identity are examined as interlinked aspects to analyze the human experience of time. Memory, as one key aspect of time, is regarded as "the ability to retain and recover information over the course of time" (Ruin, 2016, p. 114). On the same note, Neumann, (2005) says that narrative is successful at establishing a significant relationship between past experiences and the present. This is the continuity creating potential of memory narrations, in the sense of a meaningful synthesis of heterogeneous elements. This creates an interplay between temporality, memory, and identity, by which the element of the past is meaningfully integrated as a narrative entity and creates a sense of identity, that is, narrative identity. More importantly, time is "... a category intricately related to our sense of self-awareness and identity" (Meister & Schernus, 2011, p. XIV).

## Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

### 3.1. Introduction: Approaches to the Study of Time in Narrative Theory

Time was first installed at the heart of literary criticism by way of narrative theory and narratology, which sought to explain the narrative's irreducibly temporal structure (Martin, 2016). For Richardson (2019), time as a subject of exploration is started by the neoclassical critics' fascination with the relationship between a play's represented story time and the time of its presentation. The formalists' dichotomy of story versus discourse established the way narratology treats the concept of chronology, which connects the study of temporal levels between story and discourse (Kindt & Müller, 2003; Phelan & Rabinowitz, 2005; Herman D., 2007; Fludernik, 2010). In line with this, Fludernik (2010) identifies three perspectives on the relationship between time and narrative. These are the general and philosophical aspects of temporality (Bergson, Ricoeur), the temporal relationship between story and discourse levels (Müller, Genette), and the grammatical and morphological devices or tense markers (Weinrich).

By extending and modifying formalists' ideas, Gerard Genette's narratology brought a fruitful analysis with the systematic distinction of duration, frequency, and order as key parameters for narratorial control and manipulation of how readers experience time in and through narratives (Meister & Schernus, 2011). Fludernik (2010) also asserts that the study of temporality has gained much discussion after the publication of Gerard Genette's influential work, *Narrative Discourse*, 1980. Genette's analysis of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, he subsequently set narrative temporality as a framework. Genette (1980) formulates that every narrative, be it written, oral, cinematic, or pictorial has dual temporality: "the time of thing told and the time of the narrative" (p. 33). In this sense, time is presented in relation to 'story' and 'discourse'. While the story reveals a sequence of events arranged in time, discourse entails the time in an act of writing and the time in act of reading.

Thus, story time and discourse time ('*text time*' in Rimmon-Kenan, 2005 term) are two forms of temporalities manifested in the narrative. As narrative is produced in time, there



is a time to consume the text, a time needed for “*crossing and traversing*” i.e. discourse time (Genette, 1980, p. 34; emphasis original). However, this temporality is metonymically borrowed from its reading; thus, it is “*a pseudo-time*” (p. 34; emphasis original), a false time taking in the displacement of true time. Studying this relationship between the time implied by the chronological happenings of the story (story time) and the time that reshapes that story in the telling (pseudo time of the narrative) is the focus of classical or structural narratologists.

However, the structural analyses of time often overlook the subjective experience of time of the narrative agents - “narrator, focalizer and actor” (Bal, 1997, p. 20) that serve as mediators of narrative experiences. Against this backdrop, postmodern narrative analyses show a preference for textual passages that are hard to date or that go against the separation of past, present, and future (Herman L. & Vervaeck, 2005). They prefer the chaotic swirl of time to the domesticated time of structuralist diagrams. Consequently, they reject the notion of a generally accepted temporal framework – the *fabula* or story – but assume instead that any literary text involves dozens of different time frames and scales.

In the structural analysis of narrative order, events are taken for granted as if they naturally appear in chronological order. In this case, Genette unpretentiously admits that comparing the temporal order of narrative discourse with the order of the story is not always possible and useless in novels where “temporal reference is deliberately sabotaged” (1980, p.35). Herman L. & Vervaeck (2005) point out that texts cannot be approached with this method all the time. For example, in novels that do not allow the reader to establish their primary narrative, one can forget about order altogether. Similarly, Currie (2007) argues that structuring events chronologically as they appear in the text with Genette’s model of narrative order is problematic. The problem is how do we assign the priorities of events as primary narrative “A” is first, secondary narrative “B” is second, and so on. According to Currie (2007), such distinction is made as if there is no narrative, which begins in prolepsis to be assigned as the “primary narrative”.

Therefore, as Martin (2016) posits, postmodern novelists highlight the complexity, contingency, and nonlinearity of time. With such complexity, we, as a reader are tempted to forget the linear supposition of narrative temporality, taken into even more accelerated and subjective forms of time. Martin confirms: “These temporal logics tend not to be reducible to a single human subject; instead, they are expressed only at the level of the postmodern text as a whole” (p.19). Interpolating playfulness, mixtures of time, hyper-present, and temporal irony, postmodernism takes time from “a cultural category turns into a personal category” (Fedosova, 2015, p. 78).

Richardson (2019) distinguishes modernist or realist fictions as “mimetic narratives”, in which time and place are recognizable extensions of the spatial or temporal parameters of our world. Whereas, postmodernist or experimental is “antimimetic narratives” that may fabricate contradictory temporal sequences as time flows differently for different characters; they may form “temporal loops”, and “challenge rather than conform to these conventions” (p.22). In this case, time goes unpredictably, displacing lifelike, realistic connotations and Newton’s fundamental view of space and time. Violating the realistic temporality, there are six kinds of temporal reconstruction in postmodern texts, as (Richardson, 2019, pp. 104-112) identifies:

1. Circular (there is no sense of ending or beginning, the story returns to its beginning);
2. Antinomic (the order of the *syuzhet* is simply the opposite of the order of the *fabula* that time’s arrow is reversed);
3. Hypothetical (hypothetical future events become transformed into an incontrovertible past. Time and space collapse each other);
4. Contradictory (incompatible and irreconcilable versions of the events are set forth. For example, the 20<sup>th</sup>-century character may appear face-to-face with 18<sup>th</sup> century one);
5. Multiple (stories have different temporality for different characters);
6. Denarrated (unknowable, self-negating, or inherently indeterminate story times present in numerous texts).

Additionally, Richardson (2019) maintains that these temporal constructions are not the only ones; other temporal features might be identified as the postmodern narrative is receiving critical attention. In postmodern narrative analysis, stories are no longer viewed as a reconstruction of the past, because there was no “real” event first and a narrative repetition afterward. Hence, this will take us to the conclusion that in literary texts, time and space are just metaphors, which is a rejection of the traditional narratologists’ view as “real – as if these texts are staged a time, a space, and a world” (Herman L. and Vervak, 2005, p.107).

Furthermore, the study of narrative temporality has been considered with philosophical approaches of time. Temporality, in the philosophical or phenomenological sense, is understood as the perspectival, horizontal range the diversity that produces the manifold of past, present, and future and brings variety to the relationships among them, the forms of duration that convert presence into a field of difference (Matz, 2011). In this regard, Ricœur (1984; 1985; 1988), and Carr (1986) are remarkably good examples (Nuning, 2003). Instead of the structural teleological analysis, they intend to emphasize the phenomenological assumptions of time (unity of time). This philosophical view of time emphasizes how mind and time interplay in the subjective experiences of human temporality, which is very ambiguous to identify their relationship. Considering phenomenological discussions of temporality, philosophical narratology focuses on the subjective experiences of human time.

The phenomenological explanation of time in terms of “being”, “existence”, “consciousness”, “subjectivity”, and “experience” set a basic foundation for a philosophical application of time in narrative studies (Ricœur, 1984). Ricœur’s phenomenological approach to narrative temporality is established on the oppositions between the cosmological and phenomenological views of the time. Inspired by the seemingly unrelated thesis of Augustine’s theory of time in the *Confessions*, and Aristotle’s plot in *poetics*, Ricoeur formulates the theory of *Time and Narrative*. The understanding of time in historiography and literary narratology which is related to succeeding events as

“before” and “after” of things gives us no way of thinking about time as it is experienced personally.

On the contrary, Augustine’s phenomenological view of time as the “distention of the soul” does not give us any clue to think about an objective time. Ricoeur presents both the concept of cosmic time, “... that hermeneutic phenomenology never completely follows through on and with which it never manages to come to terms” (1988, p. 88), and the notion of subjective time, which could not be explained in objective terms. Augustine confesses that time itself had a beginning along with created things, which in turn takes back to the thesis of cosmological time or universal time (Ricoeur, 1984). In this sense, time refers only to the time of the world, which we cannot measure or think of time outside the space of this world.

Though Ricoeur has consented to Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology that brought to light the hierarchy of levels of temporalization, he believes that Heidegger’s analysis of ordinary time lacks credibility. At this point of departure, Ricoeur proposes narrative as a solution to the aporia of phenomenological and cosmological time that remained as a gap in different discourses. Ricoeur calls this narrative solution, “third-time” (1988, p. 100). On one hand, the third-time lies in the interweaving nature of history and fiction: history takes the function of “standing-for” historical past while the latter takes the possible past. Additionally, fiction brings a poetic solution to the two opposing views of time using its imaginative variations; then, it serves as a “third-time” between phenomenological and cosmological time. At this point, Ricoeur (1985) identifies two types of narrative fiction, *tales of time* and *tales about time*. All fictional narratives show “the structural transformations that affect the situations characters take time”, which are *tales of time*, whereas *tales about time* are distinctive ones because “... in them, it is the very experience of time that is at stake in these structural transformations” (Ricoeur 1985, 101).

In the same way, Carr (1986) argues that our knowledge of history and connections to the “historical past” is constructed based on the historians’ knowledge of the past, objectively portrayed with warranted claims and evidence of documents, monuments, ruins, etc.

However, independently of the historians' interest, we are there in "pre-thematic awareness" of the historical past, as ordinary persons – "in a naïve and prescientific way the historical past is there for all of us, that figures in our view of things, whether we are historians or not" (p .3). The social past serves as a background for the individual's narrative or a projection of life. In this sense, narratives are an extension and configuration of everyday experience; thus, literary storytelling arises from life.

Further, Carr (1986) acclaims that our temporal experiences are always already organized, possessing the structure of narrative or story. Putting simply, we project "our concerns, prejudices, and interests to the events we gave meaning", and "... what stories and histories represent or depict is not a purely physical event but human experiences, actions, and sufferings ..." (1986, p. 19-20). Moreover, this time consciousness possesses space consciousness which implies that we do not encounter things in space, "we live through them", so the temporality of my experience of a particular object (event) is like the spatiality of my perception of a spatial object" (p. 26). Thus, human temporality exhibits a narrative structure in which the narrator and his/her audience are mediated as everyday human experiences.

In different to Ricoeur, Currie (2007) claims that time can be a predominant topic that should be studied in all novels, not an exclusive way of "novels about time". Additionally, Currie goes saying, Ricoeur's narrative temporality "hurtles towards an absurd complexity" in the description of the objective linearity of clock time and the phenomenological view of time as embedded presents (p. 32). Affirming this, Currie believes that fiction has been one of the places in which new experiences of time have been rehearsed, developed, and expressed. He follows Augustine's view of time that past and future are embedded in the present where the present is also continuously vanishing and considers *prolepsis* (Genette's temporal form) as a characteristic of contemporary novels. For Currie, the structural definition of prolepsis related to the hint of a future event does not make sense that cannot be marked by a particular tense. In this case, we find ourselves projecting forward in the act of reading to envisage the future in the decoding of the narrative present.

Emphasizing the phenomenon of time that is best understood through a self-reflexive exploration of intentional acts of human subjectivity; both Carr and Currie reject the objective and chronological notion of time. However, for Ricoeur (1984), the pure phenomenological account of time leads to an aporia, a dead-end of time, between the subjective and the objective, between the individual and the cosmic, which needs repairing or healing through a theory of narrative imagination. Put simply, the pure phenomenological analysis of temporality for fictional narratives remains enigmatic, and one cannot reach to complete understanding of time. Humans belong to the cosmological time that life has a beginning, middle, and end as we are born, grow and die. On the other hand, life has its phenomenological aspect of time through the continuity and coherence of a person's life.

Ricoeur's (1984; 1985; 1988) temporal model is quite different in that without rejecting the cosmological time in the narrative, he recognizes the notion of temporal expansiveness. Concerning the distinctions of novels, Ricoeur put *tales of time* referring to transformations of universal time features that affect narrative structurally, and *tales about time* are all about the very experience of time in the narrative. The other departing point of Ricoeur in addition to the above one is his approach to the plot. He defines plot in relation to time to comprehend the complexities of narrative temporality: "The plot is a movement ... to know all the roles - is not yet to know any plot whatsoever" (Ricoeur, 1985, p. 43). Thus, narrative temporality is only understood after one understands the complete narrative text. The objective and subjective explanation of time in fiction gives a rise to another issue, narrative identity which is not considered by other philosophical narratologists such as Carr (1986) or Currie (2007). The narrative aspect of self and identity are additional concepts that could be explained along with the human experience of time.

By the same point of departure, Ricoeur's approach to narrative temporality is also different from the structural narratology and postmodern narratological approach of time. Ricoeur sees Genette's principle of narrative order "beyond the literary technique of anachrony" (1984, p. 83) where for instance, what structural narratology takes as pseudo-time of the narrative is a temporal strategy that can be placed in the concept of time as lived

and lost time. Time in postmodernism is concerned with “narrative disruption, nonlinear sequencing, and circular temporal organization” (Richardson, 2006, p. 109) which still emphasizes the non-linear constructions of plot and time, not the experienced time of characters or narrators.

Fludernik’s (2010) argument that fiction provides the function of “*experientiality*, which is inherent in human experience” (p. 59; my emphasis) alludes to Ricoeur’s experience of time. According to Fludernik, a reader will see a text as a story when it implies; that is, when it evokes “real” experiences that the reader recognizes, or assumes that he recognizes, and that enable him to relate to the story. Therefore, Ricoeur’s theory of time and narrative is considered an appropriate theoretical framework for the current research. The section of the paper exclusively discusses Ricoeur’s *Time and Narrative* as a theoretical framework of the study.

### **3.2. Ricoeur’s Theory of Time and Narrative**

In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur’s fundamental argument is that fiction brings a poetic resolution to the irreconcilable aspect of cosmological (objective) time and phenomenological (subjective) time; unlike philosophy, fiction combines both versions of time. By analyzing the study of literary narrative and the analytic philosophy of history and their relationship, Ricoeur found out that the problem of representation is the central one in the academics of historiography and literary narratology. Ricoeur argues that “*time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence*” (1984, p. 52; original emphasis). Thus, time as narrated and narrative as temporality construe a meaningful understanding of time and its experience. According to Ricoeur (1984), the plot plays a circular mediation linking time and narrative through the structure of threefold mimesis – *mimesis*<sub>1</sub>, *mimesis*<sub>2</sub>, and *mimesis*<sub>3</sub>, the symbolic interactions, and the threefold structure of time experience that are temporality, historicity, and within-time-ness.

Ricoeur (1984) defines *mimesis*<sub>1</sub> or prefiguration as the pre-narrative structure before the composition of the plot; it is suggested by our ordinary way of talking about stories that happen to us. In daily life, humans understand each other through “the semantics of an action” (1984, p. 54). He argues that human action has structural aspects, which involve agents (who perform actions), motives (which give rise to main and secondary actions), goals (which have to be reached), outcomes (expected or unexpected), and circumstances (which determine the action’s success). Every action has a symbolic meaning that articulates the experience and that has an inherent temporality because it relates past events to a present situation and future expectations. It does not have a chronological structure with a succession of instant and duration; but it already brings a temporal order of what is first (motives and goals), and what comes afterward (outcomes). These actions quest for narrative because they are articulated in the language of symbols (signs, rules, and norms), which provide a meaningful cultural context for interpreting human action. In this sense, people act, narrate and judge according to the dictates of cultural norms, historical background, or other cultural symbols.

In addition to its narrative structure and symbolic presence, Ricoeur says, “The understanding of action goes so far as to recognize in action temporal structures that call for narration” (1984, p. 59). Reiterating Heidegger, Ricoeur (1991) explains that everyday-life structures over and against those of temporality ruled by being towards death and of historicity ruled by repetition, which is called within-time-ness. In this case, humans establish action at the level of within-time-ness that time is held as ‘in’ which events occur. Ricoeur asserts that the temporal structure of within-time-ness is a mode of preoccupation that deploys representation of time in a linear way. It also describes the ‘being - “within”-time’ experience of “reckon-with time” (1984, p. 62). We measure or calculate time because we reckon with time, not vice versa.

The existential description of “reckoning with” presents time in a preoccupation of ‘having’ time or ‘don’t have time ‘to’ (do this or that); ‘take time’ or ‘lose time’, and so on. This preoccupation is common to every human; hence, puts time in the public character of “inter-time”. It can be also expressed through a network of temporal adverbs: ‘then’,



‘after’, ‘later’, ‘earlier’, ‘since’, ‘until’, ‘so long as’, ‘during’, etc., which makes time datable. Additionally, the time of preoccupation signifies ‘now’ characteristics of within-time-ness, which is “making-present” of saying ‘now’ from “now on ...” of human decision and “now that ...” of human intervention (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 108). Thus, it is a time contracted “with respect to awaiting and retaining” (1984, p. 63). This breaks the linear representation of time and put it in successions of ‘now’. Therefore, within-time-ness involves features of *datability*, *public time*, and *lapse of time* (Ricoeur, 1988). In this sense, narrative achieves such a fundamental description of temporality.

Accordingly, actions and agents at the level of *memesis*<sub>1</sub> are assembled into a narrative through *emplotment*, which is configuration or *memesis*<sub>2</sub>. By the logic of emplotment, the plot creates a causality of these actions out of a meaningless succession through an act of “grasping together”. It also mediates the parts of the story and the story taken as a whole. This is explained by taking Aristotle’s concept of *mythos* or plot, a teleological principle that drives the story toward an anticipated conclusion. For Ricoeur plot is an intelligible whole that, “so long as we can discern temporal wholes bringing about a synthesis of the heterogeneous between circumstances, goals, means, interactions, and intended or unintended results” (1985, p. 8). At this point, events occurring in separate orders of reality are grasped as an intelligible whole. This intelligible whole signifies the entire plot, which is equivalently expressed as “thought”, “point” or “theme”; which in effect views time in its homogeneity (1984, p. 65). “Thought” in this case is not chronological which finds itself in the act of retelling those events, from which the story can be seen as a unity that brings a new perspective.

Then, emplotment combines the dual temporal dimensions, which are episodic and configurational. By the episodic dimension, the plot draws narrative time in the direction of the linear representation of time (“then, and then”), constituting open series of events (“then, and then” a “and so forth”) with irreversible order of time. This implies that narrative establishes man at the level of within-time-ness that narrative establishes action ‘in’ time. The time of the story retains the “reckoning-with” time because it reveals a thrownness to natural time. When someone storyteller/historian starts to recount everything

is spread out in time. “The heroes of stories reckon with time. They have or do not have time for this or that. Their time can be gained or lost”, Ricoeur (1980, p.175) puts it. On the other hand, the configurational dimension implicates that the story has already been grasped as “the unity of one temporal whole” (1984, p. 66). At this level, plot imposes a “sense of an ending” that gives the story a “followability” function, which in turn, furnishes the point of view from which the story can be perceived as forming a whole (1984, p. 67).

At the same time, “the repetition of a story, governed as a whole by its way of ending, constitutes an alternative representation of time” or inverted ‘arrow of time’ (1984, p. 67). Then, time experience is brought back from “within-time-ness” to *recollection*, or from reckoning-with time to recollecting time. As a result, plot mediates a story by synthesizing temporal characteristics into a unified whole, and leads the reader along by expectations, guided by a “sense of an ending”, to a conclusion, or endpoint that provides of perspective from which the story can be seen as a unity. At this point, Ricoeur applies the term “*totum simul* (God’s knowledge of the world)”, an essential concept to the double temporality of narrative structure (1984, p. 160). Whenever a narrator tells a story in the past tense, events must be moving toward a conclusion so far unforeseen by its characters and by us as its audience. In this way, plot establishes human action not only within time but also within memory.

The final synthesis of Ricoeur’s circular mediation of narrative and time exerts an act of reading that is called *mimesis*<sub>3</sub> or refiguration through which a story comes to life in the consciousness of those outside its imaginary world and gives the reader “as if” or fictive perspective. This is what Ricoeur (1984) models the phenomenology of reading and the theory of reception by Wolfgang Iser, which he describes as “the intersection of the world of the text and that of the reader” (p. 71). According to Ricoeur, the configuration act is only completed when the horizon of the text and the reader are fused through the power of text to project “being-in-the-world”, capable of being inhabited. Ricoeur borrows Wolfgang Iser’s notion of the *implied reader*, suggesting an audience projected by the work itself. This brings the world of the horizon, which is “the other side of the instance of discourse”, and “new experience to language and shares it with someone else” (1984, p.

81). Thus, mimesis<sub>3</sub> affects the integration of the imaginary world to the real by anchoring the time depicted in a dated “now” and “then” of actual, lived time that, as a result, unfolds imaginative time.

Additionally, the followability or forward movement, which belongs to what Ricoeur (1984, p. 56) calls the “syntagmatic order of discourse”, links a movement from event X to event Y in an irreducibly temporal way as a *telos* or movement toward a destined or predetermined end. In line with this, Ricoeur (1984) states, “To follow a story, in effect, is to understand the successive actions, thoughts, and feelings in the story inasmuch as they present a particular directedness” (p. 150) that makes the concept of “followability” into more psychological reception. In effect, this creates a sudden change for characters and readers from imperfect knowledge to recognition or *anagnorisis* (in Aristotle’s terms), which makes them have ethical judgments for actions. Actions in the narrative sentence establish an identity that is subjected to the agent’s motives and goals. Similar to Aristotle’s *anagnorisis*, Ricoeur (1984) brought the concept of *totum simul*, the moment at which the forward motion of emplotment comes into abrupt collision.

At the level of mimesis<sub>3</sub>, plot constitutes the temporal character of *repetition*. In this case, Ricoeur explains that narrative interpretation constitutes the expression “(as yet) untold story” imposes itself upon us with a surprising force; which in turn, telling, following, and understanding stories is simply the “continuation” of these untold stories. Ricoeur calls this “a hidden affinity between the secret of where the story emerges from and the secret to which it returns” (1984, p. 76), which is a return to the origin. Thus, time is intertwined with the linearity of the quest and the circularity of imaginary travel. Through repetition, plot retrieves past potentials in the form of personal fate and collective destiny. Finally, an action that is being recollected in stories, entails an identity of the Doer, which is merely a *narrative identity*. In line with this, Ricoeur (1988) confirms that through the process of emplotment, narrative mediates the aporia of time prescribed in change and permanence.

Therefore, the act of reading is an indicator of the refiguring of the world of action under the sign of the plot that joins mimesis<sub>3</sub> to mimesis<sub>2</sub> with a circular process. However, Ricoeur

argues that such circularity is not vicious, rather it is “a healthy circularity” (1984, p. 76). The narrative text provides a distinctive mode of understanding since it gathers together or “emplots” episodic events with all their semantic heterogeneity and their temporal aporias into a story. In such a way, scattered actions and stories became a meaningful whole. Finally, narrative provides meanings for actions and experiences, which are again subject to prefiguration. There is no story if our attention is not moved along by a thousand contingencies” (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 174). According to Ricoeur’s phenomenological analysis of time and narrative, humans only have consistent experiences of time when those experiences are narratively constructed. Consequently, his analysis of narrative and time structures provides the circular mediation of narrative and time as a human experience. The subsequent sections present temporal variations, memory, and narrative identity.

### **3.2.1. Temporal Variations**

Ricoeur (1988) posits that theorizing about time is only possible by the virtue of having experienced time narratively. With this in mind, narrative functions as a mediator for the irreconcilable aspect of cosmological and phenomenological time in two ways. First, by the interweaving of history and fiction that form *narrated time* that mediates the aporia of phenomenological time. In this context, Ricoeur (1988) underlines narrated time “... is a hybrid time, issuing from the confluence of two perspectives on time - the phenomenological perspective and that of ordinary time” (p. 122).

Thus, narrated time is a third time between lived time and cosmic time. That is why he accentuates, “... there can be no thought about time without narrated time” (1988, p. 241). The second mediation is established through the imaginative variations of time brought by fiction’s inscription of historical or fixed time. Fiction explores resources of phenomenological time that are not inhabited by cosmological time. As Ricoeur (1988, p. 128) notes, it is “... a treasure trove of imaginative variations applied to the theme of phenomenological time and its aporias”. By this conjuncture, novels scrutinize the experience of time beyond the narrative structure and, therefore, operate with the existential analysis of time.

### 3.2.1.1. *Narrated Time: Between Lived Time and Cosmic Time*

Narrated time, as a third time mediates lived time and cosmic time through three connectors of objective time that are inscribed to the phenomenological time as a third-time maker. The first one is *calendar time*, which Ricoeur regards, as “The time of the calendar is the first bridge constructed by historical practice between lived time and universal time” (1988, p. 105). As its synthesis of social and astronomical aspects, calendar time originated from the mythic representations of rituals, celestial cycles or motions of stars, and biological and social rhythms; then, it integrates ordinary time, centered upon the lived experience of active, suffering individuals, into the time of the world. Here, Ricoeur notes that as a presiding element, *mythic time* constitutes every calendar, and recalls the idea of “great time” whose rhythms are broader than that of ordinary actions. As a result, mythic time functions on conforming to the order of the world and that of ordinary action i.e. between *world time* and *human time*.

In its broader sense, calendar time consists of three features that are common to every calendar for the computation of *chronicle time*. The first is a founding event, like the birth of Christ or of the Buddha, the Hegira, the beginning of the reign of a certain monarch, etc., used as a “zero point” reference to determine the date of every event. The second feature is explained with the help of a founding event, time is traversed in two directions (from past toward present or from present to past), or as a time before and after. Finally, calendar time can be explained with units of measurement for time, which is determined by using intervals between the recurrences of cosmic phenomena. For example, a day is measured between the rise and set of the sun; a month is founded on the interval between two conjunctions of the moon and the sun; whereas a year is defined by one complete revolution of the sun and the seasons.

The computation of chronicle time between numbers of years, months, days, hours, etc. with equal intervals of time gives a sense to the notion of what is called *physical time*. Physical time, as a linear continuum of instants “... connected to movement and causality” (Ricoeur, 1988, 107), is determined by the “before” and “after” of an instant or event. This

two-dimensional aspect of physical time can be presented along with the phenomenological notion of threefold “present” experienced in retention and pretension without which “... we would not be able to make any sense of the idea of a new event that breaks with a previous era ... (p. 107). Given this point of explanation, chronicle time coordinates periodic astronomical events with human modes of experience, between individual subjectivities and physical nature, or *physiological time* and physical time.

Hence, Ricœur inscribes such notion of physical time to Heidegger’s notion of historicity, as “stretching-along” in between from one instant to another instant. This describes the lapse of time fixed between actions or circumstances. Care, as “Being-toward-death” experiences quasi-present because any remembered instant is a present with its own retention and pretension. Calendar time, thus, humanizes time by identifying beginnings and directions, and constituting the triad of past, present, and future: “It cosmologizes lived time and humanizes cosmic time” (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 109). In this sense, calendar time constitutes a third time between physical time and phenomenological time. Our own lives as well as those of the communities to which we belong are part of those events that calendar time allows us to situate at a variable distance in relation to this axial moment. Without the constitution of phenomenological time, “the physical definition of time by itself is incapable of accounting for the psychological conditions for the apprehension of this time” (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 245) underlines.

The second connector or objective time maker is *biological time*, the biological basis of the historical third-time, which is formed by a succession of generations as predecessors, successors, and contemporaries. The notions of the succession of generations present an anonymous relationship by instituting “we” that affects every temporal relation between past (predecessors), present (contemporaries), and future (successors). As a result, it construes the mediation between *mortal time* and *public time*. As Ricœur asserts, the idea of a generation expresses several brute facts about human biology: birth, aging, and death. However, expressing this replacement of successive generations in quantitative terms is not sufficient; for instance, thirty years is the unit of one generation which is expressed in regular calendar time: days, months, and years.

More importantly, the notion of successive generations constitutes an intermediary structure between physical externality and the psychic internality of time. Ricoeur (1988, p. 112-13) states, “We are oriented, as agents and sufferers of actions, toward the remembered past, the lived present, and the anticipated future of other people's behavior”. This implies the coexistence of living people with memories of no-longer living people for not-yet living people where they share, “a community of time”. Here, death is presented as the replacement of generations, “the euphemism by which we signify that the living takes the place of the dead” (p. 115). Thus, death and eternity can be maintained as a theme in this sense of temporality.

The third objective time maker lies in archives, documents, and traces. Ricoeur (1988) calls trace an “enigmatic instrument” in the refiguration of time (p. 125). It indicates either the “mark” that one was left by or the “passage” that one was passed by. Hence, Ricoeur says, “the trace indicates “here” (in space) and “now” (in the present), the past passage of living beings”, which in turn, orients the hunt, the quest, the search, the inquiry of trace” (p. 123). Trace also marks the passage of an object or a quest in space through a calendar time or beyond. Ricoeur appropriates the notion of Heidegger’s analysis of ordinary time in three ways: first, following trace is one way of “reckoning with” time or bringing datability with its “now”, “then”, “earlier”, and so on. Next, to follow a trace, is to decipher, in the space of “stretching-along” of time. This one is a lapse of time stretched between the passage or trace it left which is reconstituted in terms of successive time. Hence, the connecting trace and dating allow us to reconsider the relationship between the fundamental time of Care, the temporality directed toward the future and death, and “ordinary” time, which according to Ricoeur is the problem left unresolved by Heidegger.

Finally, the trace is visible to everyone, projecting our preoccupation (our hunt, search, or inquiry) into public time, which makes our private durations commensurate with one another. In the same manner, a story is incorporated into a community through its audience that “gathers together”, and became open to the public; hence, creates timelessness. Accordingly, trace inscribes the features of within-time-ness. Ricoeur (1988) states that the act of following or retracing a trace can only be carried out within the framework of

historical time that is neither a fragment of stellar time nor simple aggrandizement of the communal dimensions of the time or personal memory. Thus, “The time of trace”, Ricœur declares, “is homogeneous with calendar time” (p.122).

With the help of the above objective time indicators (calendar time, biological time, trace), “... history in some way use fiction to refigure time; on the other hand, fiction use history for the same ends” (Ricoeur, 1988, p.181). This assumption of narrative temporality considers both the phenomenological and cosmological conceptions of time. Ricoeur maintains that narrative through its tools of clocks, calendars, generation successions, archives, documents, and traces, serves as a bridge to the lived and cosmic time through the narrative organization of *emplotment*. Through narrative configuration, separated events are linked to one another, making temporal flows meaningful. At this point, narrated time becomes third-time, a bridge set over the breach speculation constantly opens between phenomenological time and cosmological time.

### ***3.2.1.2. Imaginative Variations of Time: Between World Time and Internal Time***

As discussed in the previous section, the third level of mimesis establishes an appropriation of a text that plays an imaginative variation of time between the world of the text (possible world of narrators and characters) and the world of a reader (actual or lived time). Fiction, specifically, refigures time as the reader swing between the fictive time and actual lived time and creates a third-time with the reverberation effect. As a reader’s sense of time is refigured by the act of reading, the world of the text being read enters into the world of the reader, completing the text and taking effect in the world of reality. Ricœur (1988) notes that the fictive experience of time relates in its way to lived temporality and time perceived as a dimension of the world. As, “a treasure trove of imaginative variations”, fiction presents a time of imagination that represents the time of consciousness, which is a third-time “window” to see the textual world capable of being inhabited (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 128) states. This brings a mediation for the contrast between the internal consciousness time and the objective succession of physical time.



As Ricœur (1988) explains, fiction by its virtue of imaginative power presents a fictive experience of time. He argues that it precisely can explore and bring to language the divorce between worldview and their irreconcilable perspectives on time. This fictive experience is the space between the narrative time of the text and the lived time of the reader. The temporal relationship is studied by the pursuit of finding the tension between narrated time and time of narration which is called a “game with time” (Genette, 1980) and “armature of time” (Ricœur, 1985). As discussed in the earlier section, the action of refiguration or reading through backward and forward views creates an armature of fictive time and the reader’s experience. On this aspect, Ricœur considers Muller’s analysis of third-time reference which is the “time of life” in addition to the distinction between the time of narrating (Erzählzeit) and narrated time (Erzählte Zeit). The time of life, for Ricoeur corresponds to the world of the text.

Then, Ricœur (1985) retains Weinrich’s attempt to disassociate verb tenses from time. He stresses that the disconnection of tense systems from lived experiences and the tenses have nothing to do with time: “What grammars call the past and the imperfect ... are narrative tenses, not because a narrative expresses past events, real or fictive, but because these tenses are oriented toward an attitude of relaxation, of uninvolvedness” (p.68). Creating a sense of ‘as if past’ is one function narrative, in which past tenses like in fairytales, “once upon a time” calls for detachment and marks an entry into the narrative world. The tenses of the lived past and the tenses of the narrative are exemplary illustrations of the relations between *mimesis*<sub>1</sub>, and *mimesis*<sub>2</sub>. In addition, Ricoeur (1985, p. 68-9) explains that tenses present “speech perspectives” as fiction redirects our gaze toward features of experience that it “invents” that is to say, both discovers and creates; finally, it functions as “putting into relief”, projecting certain contours into the foreground and pushing others into the background.

In the first, case, the narrative world is a possible world that is capable of deciphering our condition and its temporality. Fiction makes the transition between the experience that precedes the text and the experience that follows it. In this sense, the fictive experience of time is the temporal aspect of this virtual experience of being-in-the-world projected by the

text, which is “capable of intersecting the ordinary experience of action, and experience certainly, but a fictive one” (1985, 101). The metaphorical representation of the past as “having-been” is an imaginative mediation of knowledge through fiction. This mediation is done at the deep level of repetition, which presents telling, following, or understanding stories that always imply that it is a “continuation” of ‘yet untold’ stories. Thus, “It opens up the past again in the direction of coming-towards” (1988, p. 76). Hence, repetition brings travel towards the origin, which is the psychological and metaphysical dimension.

At this point, Ricoeur presents the model of the heroic quest in Propp’s analysis of *Morphology of Tales*, which takes a linear structure following the chains of episodes that leads the hero from challenge to victory. However, repetition does more than this and involves existential deepening that reduces the chronological to the logical. Ricoeur (1991) explains, “Before projecting the hero forward for the sake of the quest, many tales bring the hero or heroine back into a primordial space and time which is more akin to the realm of a dream than to the sphere of action” (p. 112). Hence, two qualities of time are intertwined, which are the circularity of the imaginary travel and the linearity of the quest. In this sense, the time of the quest brings a new quality of time, which is the *metatemporal* mode or timeless one.

Ricoeur (1991) states, “When the expression of our debt to the dead takes on the color of indignation, of lamentation, or compassion, the reconstruction of the past needs the help of imagination that can place it ‘right before our eyes’...” (p. 353). The expression of the dead lies under successive generations that bring mortal time and public time. In this regard, Ricoeur (1988) explains that Heideggerian repetition serves to be the emblematic expression of the most deeply concealed figure of discordant concordance, the one that holds together, in the most improbable manner, mortal time, public time, and world time. Ricoeur notes that such confronting of time gives us a dynamic of temporality that is only detected in fiction.

According to Ricoeur (1988), the imaginative variations of fiction are not only confined to illustrating the themes of phenomenology; it uniquely offers, “... the imagination a vast

field of possibilities of making eternal, all of which share but one common feature, that of being paired with death”, which is the limit of phenomenology (p. 141). At this point, the work of imaginative variations opens the field of *existentiell* modalities capable of authenticating “Being-towards-death”. Hence, fiction confronts eternity and death at the same time. The other invention of the imaginative variations of fiction that phenomenology left unsaid, is it constitutes the unity of the temporal flux through coincidence. This unity of temporal flux is achieved by the constitution of the Husserlian theme of temporal networks of retentions and protentions.

Additionally, the fictive experience involves the category of narrative voice as it is the temporal and spatial planes. Ricoeur (1985) asserts, “The notion of fictive experience of time ... cannot do without [the] concepts of point of view and narrative voice” (p. 88). For Ricoeur, “Point of view designates in a third or first-person narrative the orientation of the narrator's attitude toward the characters and the characters' attitudes toward one another” (p. 93). Here, special and temporal perspectives are taken as expressions of point of view. Usually, narrative theory conceives a point of view with perceptual perspectives, implying position, angle of aperture, and depth of field, for instance, the study of *focalization* (Genette, 1980). However, in the context of Ricoeur’s analysis, the point of view involves multiple temporal perspectives.

Similarly, Ricoeur (1985) accentuates voice, as it is important for temporal connotations. For Ricoeur narrative voice is attributed to the instance of discourse or narrative utterance, which is not signified by verb tenses like Genette’s application of voice to determine the time of the narrating (when the narrator speaks). He argues that narrative voice has a function beyond tense structure or language variety that further explains the fictive experience of time. Every voice is a *preterite* to the story it tells. Thus, the preterite tense preserves its grammatical form and its privilege because a reader understands the present of the narration as *posterior* to the narrated story. Therefore, a reader is far distant in time from the time of the narrator. In this case, the narration acquires two voices: the hero who moves linearly towards uncertain consequences and outcomes, and the narrator, who is telling what was being experienced and knows events, agents, consequences, and outcomes

ahead. The flow of time with coincidence constitutes an interplay between the perspective of the hero, who advances toward his or her uncertain future through the apprenticeship to signs, and that of the narrator, who forgets nothing and anticipates the overall meaning of the adventure.

Correspondingly, “Characters unfold their own time in the fiction, a time that includes a past, present, and future ... even quasi-presents ... as they shift their temporal axis in the course of the fiction” (Ricoeur, 1985, p. 98). Stepping with narrators and characters in whose company we move inside the world of the text, we as readers think and act in terms wholly familiar to us in ordinary life. By this conjecture, point of view and voice are detrimental factors to explore fictive experience, perspective, and actions of fictional narrative. Therefore, Ricoeur (1985) understands that point of view and voice are so inseparable and indistinguishable. He insists that it is a matter of a single function considered from the perspective of two different questions; that is “From where do we perceive what is shown to us by the fact of being narrated?” and “Who is speaking here?” (p.99). While the point of view invites readers to direct their gaze in the same direction as the author or character, the narrative voice presents the world of the text to the reader.

Furthermore, fiction is not restricted to its exploration of the imaginative variations of time. As it follows a trace of “being-towards-death”, fiction presents the limit-experiences that mark the boundaries of time and eternity. By *remythicizing* time, it marks the borderline between fable and myth, “effacing of measurements makes a non-measurable time border on an incommensurable time” (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 137-38). This provides the elevation of time to the level of a distinct content of experience. In this case, time is exalted and personified. Myth and fable make the faces of time visible, providing people’s reactions, and conception. For instance, in the fables, “Destructive time” and “Time, the artist” make faces of time, one “moves hastily”, and the other “works very slowly”. In this case, internal time is free from chronology and collides with cosmic time. According to Ricoeur (1988), these are the imaginative variations of time presented by fiction, which phenomenology is silent on.

### 3.2.2. Memory

Narratology specifically uses the term ‘remembering’ when referring to the concept of memory in narrative (Errl, 2009, p. 216). According to Dowling (2011), remembering has two different concepts in Greek – *mnémè*, which is simple memory that rises spontaneously, and *anamnesis*, which is an effort to remember something. Hence, the feeling of longing associated with remembering and the actual effort to retrieve the past are descriptions of memory. In line with this, the Amharic version of remembering termed as, ‘*tizta*’ gives a specific conception of the feeling of longing. As Dagmawi (2009) defines it, *tizta* is nostalgia or memory of loss and longing that in turn evokes melancholy or an expression of loss. Furthermore, Maaza (2011) presents *tizta* as a “poetic expression” of storytelling as it recollects events and actions in the past, which is the experience of being in the past (p. 854). At this point, *tizta* can be interpreted along with Ricoeur’s interpretation that further explicates human experience in quest of lost time.

In *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur’s approach to plot, as a significant whole translates into one “thought”, the theme or overall meaning of the text as an “organized whole”, or an “act of grasping together” constitutes the viable definition for narrative construction as an act of remembering. According to Ricoeur (1985), narratology excludes the experience of time in the study of remembrance in relation to “involuntary memory” “because the inquiry concerning time has been until this point artificially contained within the limits of the relation between the stated narrative and the diegesis” (p. 85). In this respect, great importance is given to the narrative voice which is distinguished as the hero's voice and that of the narrator who establishes experience in the quest toward the future and visitation toward a remembered past.

Recently, postclassical narratology studies the issue of memory in the narrative as a literary representation of the past which is how literary works depict an individual’s or group’s view of the past which is configured based on culturally given discourse (Neumann, 2005; Errl, 2009). However, in both cases, what is called past or memory is pulled out as that occupies a physical space or separate entity. In the phenomenological perspective, memory

is an activity of consciousness configured through a temporal unity of retention (past), perception (present), and anticipation (future) (Ricoeur, 1984). Hence, memory is an experience that only expresses a perceptual field of the past, not a complete or isolated one.

As presented in the previous section, *repetition* is a temporal structure that the plot establishes human actions “from ‘reckoning with’ time to ‘recollecting’ it” at the level of mimesis<sub>2</sub> (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 67). For Ricoeur, memory is an important aspect because it helps to recover other events by repetition. In parallel to his discussion about history as a narrative that “stands for” or “having been there”, Ricoeur finds an appropriation for fiction as an “as if” aspect of imagined or possible past. Memory recollects events stretching time story from beginning to end (Ricoeur, 1980, p.179). Memory then repeats past human actions in the present. It repeats events over time so that some narratives establish human actions at the level of *historicality*, and establish *quasi-present*.

To explain quasi-present, Ricoeur (1988) retains Husserl’s concepts of retentions and protentions coincidences, by which a living present excretes the recent past and creates memories that are continually issuing from the living present. In this case, narration opens up the past again in the direction of coming towards, making-present at the level of historicality. Commonly, one may feel that there is a pastime left behind. In this sense, “... memory has a fixed place in the unitary flow of time, along with the increasing fading away of these contents resulting from their falling back into an ever more distant and hazy past” (Ricoeur, 1988, p.253). For this statement, Ricoeur presents a substitutive expression, “to happen *in time*” (borrowed from Kant). However, this expression only infers the fixed temporal position of an experienced object and its distance between the living-present creates a problem of totality and uniformity of time despite the temporal positions.

Therefore, the problem of the totality of time has a resolution through a literary category of narrative voice, which “... can place itself at any point of time, which becomes for it a quasi-present, and, from this observation point, it can apprehend as a quasi-past the future of our present” (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 260). In this sense, memory is a narrative past, which is the past of the narrative voice, assigned to a quasi-present. In a similar account, *tizta* as a

“poetic expression”, signifies the power of art and literature to adapt to its time, to mold itself out of one moment and insert itself into another, changing each as it goes along” (Maaza, 2011, p. 854). Despite the temporal and spatial dislocation, it establishes the experience of a subject into quasi-present. Additionally, *tizta* can be considered a perceptual field, in which a subject is determined to be in the visitation of time. In this case, memory is the temporal flux, connecting the temporal levels (past, present, and future), and can be considered as one way of storytelling.

As Ricoeur (1985) notes, narrative voices involve the experiences of the hero and the narrator that are in quest and visitation of time. The hero “tells his worldly, amorous, sensuous, aesthetic adventures as they occur”, and utterances marches toward the future, “even when the hero is reminiscing; hence, it takes the form of the “future in the past” (p. 134). Through memory, the hero places himself or herself back into the stream of a search that advances, and in order to preserve the event-like character of the visitation. Being in the present, characters in their imagination may transport to the recent past, retained within the present, and to the imminent future. At the same time, the narrator, incorporating the reminiscences of the hero, is caught up in the course of a search that moves forward, giving the narrative the form of a “future in the past”. Again, the narrator gives meaning to the experience recounted by the hero. Ricoeur sees the voice of the narrator is ahead of the hero’s progress.

In this regard, Ricoeur (1988) explains, “narrator performs an authentic repetition when he relates the Quest constituted by the apprenticeship to signs to the Visitation prefigured in moments of happiness and culminating” (p. 134-5). Thus, as a mediation of art, repetition takes full signification for the expression of the distance traversed; hence, “Time lost is equated with time regained” (p. 135). In this process, memory and recollection play an important role. Memory, the ability, (or lack of it) to recall and reflect is important in the development of characters and characterization in texts.

Readers are also to remember to put together the underlying story of the narrative as well as understand the meaning of the configuration because the strategy of judgment, which

“grasps together” once again, brought back from within-time-ness to repetition. Reading does not merely flow forward, but the recalled segments also have a retroactive effect, with the present transforming the past. This creates textual memory as readers traverse through the physical space of the text. As Ricoeur (1991) states, “By reading the end at the beginning and the beginning, in the end, we learn also to read time itself backward, as the recapitulation of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequences” (p. 110).

Therefore, memory repeats the course of events according to an order, which is the counterpart of time as stretching-along between a beginning and an end. In this case, Ricoeur (1988) presents that the play of retentions and protentions functions in the text only if it is taken in hand by readers who welcome it into the play of their expectations. Ricoeur (1988) further explains:

[reading] consists in traveling the length of the text, allowing all the modifications performed to “sink” into memory, while compacting them, and in opening ourselves up to new expectations entailing new modifications. This process alone makes the text a work. So this work may be said to result from the inter- action between the text and the reader. (p. 168).

### **3.2.3. Narrative Identity**

Ricoeur asserts that time becomes meaningful when it is narrated, and so does life. Yet the gain, fiction, by its power of imaginative variations, constitutes unavoidable mediation between self and world (Ricoeur, 1988; 2003). At this point, it is a “plot that looks for the mediation between permanence and change” (2003, 195). Narrative allows humans to assume the structure and configuration of their lives through plot and temporality, in which life is often chaotic (Ricoeur, 1984; Goodson & Gill, 2011). Similarly, Fludernik (2009) posits that fictional narratives create worlds in which human beings exist and interact within life-worlds that are almost completely the same as the real world. Thus, there is an important connection between life as lived and life as told in narratives. In this sense, fiction with its ‘as if’ dimension, put the temporal structure of repetition to its highest form, which is, as Ricoeur (1991) states “... the equivalent of what Heidegger called Fate -



individual Fate - or destiny - communal destiny” (p. 114). Ricoeur (1984) explains about narrative identity begins with language reference, saying that:

Language is for itself the order of the Same. The world is its Other. The attestation of this otherness arises from language's reflexivity with regard to itself, whereby it knows itself as being in being in order to bear on being. (p. 78).

In the same way, fiction projects to “being-in-the-world”. Ricoeur (1991) explains, “Characters on stage or in a novel are beings similar to us—acting, suffering, thinking and dying” (p. 196). Thus, the imaginative variations in the literary field have as their horizon the inescapable terrestrial condition.

Therefore, the question of identity finds a stake in narrative where it forms an identity that escapes from the dilemma of *sameness* and *self-hood* identity. Ricoeur (1988) says, the dilemma “... rests on a temporal structure that conforms to the model of dynamic identity arising from the poetic composition of a narrative text” (p. 246). This identity is called *narrative identity*, which is found in the plot that creates the character’s identity. At this point, identity is understood through an allegiance of a person as a material object (what) and a person as an agent of his or her actions (who). For Ricoeur (1988), identity is not only related to the answers we intend to give with certain proper names for the questions of “Who did this?” or “Who is the agent, the author?”. It has also a justification for taking the subject of action as the same throughout a life that stretches from birth to death. Talking about the subject of the action, we name someone with a proper noun whose life stretches from birth to death. Hence, to answer the question “who?” is to tell a story of a life, the action of the “who” must be narrative identity.

According to Ricoeur (1988), the problem of personal identity would be condemned to an antinomy with no solution. The problem posited on the dilemma, which is either a subject identical to itself through the diversity of its different states; or, a subject that is nothing more than a substantial illusion, whose elimination merely brings to light a pure manifold of cognitions, emotions, and volitions. Ricoeur proposes that this dilemma disappears when identity is understood in the sense of being the *same* (*idem-identity*) and in the sense of

oneself as *self-same* (*ipse-identity*). Ricoeur argues that unlike the abstract identity of the Same, narrative identity is constitute self-constituency that includes change and mutability within the cohesion of one lifetime.

As Ricoeur (1988) presents, the *same* is the identity of “what” that constitutes different criteria. First, sameness, in a numerical sense can be understood as uniqueness and extreme resemblance. For uniqueness, “...its contrary is *plurality*—not one, but two, or more” (p. 189). It suggests identification and reidentification of the same. In the latter case, the extreme resemblance is put in contrary to *different*. In the second criterion, Ricoeur puts sameness as an identity the same over time “... the uninterrupted continuity in the development of a being between the first and last stage of its evolution” (p, 190). We say a man is a man from birth to death, and the same thing goes for other things too. Contrary to this, *discontinuity* is there with a sense that shows change through time. The third criterion of sameness is *permanence* in time is identified in its contrary to diversity.

Concerning the *self-same*, Ricoeur gives more emphasis to it to theorize narrative identity. Selfhood, which goes with Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein* (“being there” as Ricoeur associates), presents the conscious existence of human beings. It is only for *Dasein* that being itself is an issue not for other things (a tree or a rock); that is how human beings ask a question of their existence. The question of *who* is distinct from the question of *what*; first, it assigns agents to the action through *ascription* of the grammatical person (I, you, he/she), pronouns (my, mine; you, yours; his, hers, etc.) and adverbs of time and place (now, here, etc.). Then, through the act of *imputation*, it takes on explicitly moral significance (excuse or acquittal, blame or praise). Thus, the question of “who” is asked in the field of action so that the “self” constitutes a response or range of responses, and the *self* recognizes itself through the identification of certain given norms and ideals. Ricoeur (2003) explains:

The break between self (*ipse*) and same (*idem*) ultimately expresses that more fundamental break between *Dasein* and ready-to-hand/present-at-hand. Only *Dasein* is mine, and more generally self. Things, all given and manipulable, can be said to be the same, in the sense of sameness-identity. (pp. 191-92).

In this case, selfhood intersects with sameness at *permanence in time*. Ricœur (2003) describes selfhood as self-constituency, “pursuing ascriptions to be a character defined by a certain constancy of its dispositions, or pursuing imputation one sees it in the kind of fidelity to the self which is expressed in the form of keeping one’s promises” (p. 192). While a character can be marked by genetic identification, habits, traits, or other physical attributes, the self-constituency who keeps one’s promise commits to remaining self-same. *Ipseity* or self-constituency brings to the processes by which the permanence of character is instituted an inner, first-person self-referential activity in which one takes one’s attributes *as* one’s own so that carries those attributes forward in time, constituting the continuity (permanence in time) of *who* one is. Then, self-constituency within a structure of values and beliefs provides ethical judgment. At this point, Ricoeur (2003) stresses that “Imaginative variations of narrative fictions bear on the variable connection between selfhood and sameness ...” (p. 197).

Therefore, narrative identity involves self-constancy, which can be refigured by all the truthful or fictive stories that a subject tells about himself or herself. In this sense, narrative identity presents lived time where *Dasein* or being is thrown between birth and death. Subjects and agents of those actions determine what subjects as narrator, character, or reader do or act accordingly in the story. Further, Ricoeur (1988) explains that the connection confirms the self of self-knowledge, which is described as “the fruit of an examined life” (p. 247). In this sense, narrative identity refers to both the self-constituency of individual subjects and the self-constituency of a community. Thus, narrative identity goes beyond the identity of characters in the story, it also includes what story a person tells about his or her life, or what story others tell about it.

As a result, narrative identity can be applied to both individual and community levels. Ricœur draws this proposition of narrative identity from two examples: one is individual subjectivity, and the other is the history of cultures and *mentalities*. The first one is similar to Freud’s psychoanalytic work of “narrative cure” in that through narrative, the scattered pieces of stories will become coherent and acceptable so that the subject can recognize his or her self-constancy. Ricœur (1988) stresses, “Subjects recognize themselves in the stories

they tell about themselves” (p. 247). The second example explains how narratives shape or reshape the communal or national identity. In this case, Ricœur takes Biblical Israel as an example that is so overwhelmingly impassioned by the narratives it has told about itself. He argues that the narratives in the Bible about Israel (the Exodus to Canaan, the Davidic monarchy, the exile, and return) are taken to be a testimony of the founding events of its history and that biblical Israel became the historical community that bears this name. Thus, Jewish people drew their identity from the reception of those texts it produced, which has a circular relation.

The notion of circularity reinstates the threefold mimesis structure of the narrative, which is the circular relationship between the narrative activity of what we may call a character (individual or people), and the narratives that both express and shape this character. Put simply, “Narrative identity is the poetic resolution of the hermeneutic circle” (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 248). This interpretation of narrative identity goes in line with the refiguration of narrative, in which the narrator implicitly or explicitly induces a new evaluation of the world and the reader as well. In the discussion of the third mimesis in his first volume, *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur (1984) says, more than just the sense of the work, the reader receives “the world and the temporality it unfolds in the face of this experience” (p. 79). Here, he acclaims that narrative belongs to the ethical field of “the reader, now an agent, an initiator of action, to choose among the multiple proposals of ethical justice brought forth by reading” (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 249).

Affirming Ricoeur’s notion of narrative identity, Venema (2000) explains that narratives construct worlds of possibility where agents are subjected to change and subject others to change in search of their identity. Narratively, “emplotment” makes meaning out of discordant and desperate everyday happenings (Ricoeur, 1984). Then, the narrative refiguration establishes a narrative identity in which that textual world is made real through the reader. To search for one’s identity is to accept responsibility for one’s own past to one’s present “space of experience” and “horizon of expectation” for the future. Therefore, narrative and experience are linked by the power of the mimetic activity of narrative, which moves from prefiguration through configuration to the refiguration of experience.

Coming across those three volumes of theoretical discussions, Ricœur reveals his final thesis after the third volume of *Time and Narrative*. Hence, narrative identity became a poetic resolution to the problem of narrative and experience. This narrative identity is an experience, which is defined by narrative refiguration (third mimetic relation), and it is a fruit of narrative activity. Narrative refiguration requires an act of productive imagination that interactively constructs the meaning of the text. In this sense, narrative identity bridges a gap between the fictive world of the text and the real world of the reader. In Ricœur's words, "... the act of reading leads us to ... the practice of narrative lies in a thought experiment by means of which we try to inhabit worlds foreign to us" (1988, p. 249).

Ricœur stresses that narrative identity is not stable and seamless because the imaginative variations of fiction constantly destabilize an identity. It is due to the plot's preference that identity is plural and unstable in the refiguration of time: "Just as it is possible to compose several plots on the subject of the same incidents, so it is always possible to weave different, even opposed, plots about our lives" (Ricœur, 1988, p. 248). If not by plot, narrative identity remains a singular identity of characters or people in a story or history. For Ricœur, the narrative serves humans not only to mark the passage of time but also to find meaning and truth in that passage of time. As a temporal being, human stretches from birth to death, hence, life is concordant that remain the same for everyone, having a natural course of being born and dying. On the other hand, an individual's experience of life is discordant, for which, it is full of random acts and everyday happenings. This is why that time is taken as one important function for identity and experience (Kumorek, 2021).

## **Chapter Four: Temporality, Memory and Narrative Identity in *Afə***

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the novel *Afə*. It mainly explores how time becomes fully understood when it is reconfigured through fiction. Ricœur (1984) notes, "... between the activity of narrating a story and the temporal character of human experience there exists a correlation that is not merely accidental but that presents a transcultural form of necessity" (p. 52). Therefore, features of temporal experience in *Afə* are explored. Additionally, the analysis explores the concepts of memory and narrative identity as aspects of time and narrative.

### **4.1. Synopsis of *Afə***

This novel contains 253 pages including extra explanations about the novel by the writer, and it is organized into three main chapters with footnotes, which also add branch stories to the main plot. In the first chapter of the novel, *mälkéa mälké 1* (effigy 1), a third-person (non-participant) narrator introduces the names of the main characters, and objectively describes their physical appearances and psychological attributes, identifying their unique features. The second *qélélböš* (grappling) and third, *mälkéa mälké2* (effigy 2) chapters involve multiple voices of narrators - first-person narrators (by Gersamot, pp. 23-52 and Ramisu, 144-205) and third-person narrator (pp. 53-143 and 206-250) - who turn by turn present about events and actions of the same sphere. On the other hand, the footnotes bring an alternative view of the story and introduce new characters and events with another dimension of time and place.

The main storyline established its plot with five young protagonist characters named Gersamot, Geleta, Zerihun, Bəkafa, and Ramisu who are intimate friends residing in one part of Addis Ababa, Tabot Madəria. The story is told between the time span of a teenage girl who turned fifteen years recently and follows ten years lapses later revealed by Ramisu as he turned twenty-five years old. On the other hand, the story within the footnote has forty years span of time, which is identified through the story of Gersamot's mother. Since

there is no time indicated in calendar years, the time span of the story is revealed through the biological time of the characters. Gersamot is placed at the center of the story where other protagonist characters (Geleta, Zerihun, and Ramisu) established imaginary connections with a secret desire they have for her. In the narrative instance, Gersamot is in her early sixteenth. She used to have a common physical attraction, what one may call a good-looking one. However, a sudden incident that happened to her lips changed her appearance and the way other people look at her. Specifically, those young boys began to have a desire for her. However, their desire is a secret that they do not reveal to each other. They struggle to acquire Gersamot in their way. Gersamot, by her side, wanted to be dated by one of them but ended up unsuccessful.

Later, as the youths start to have their work career, their friendship started diminishing. They do not meet frequently as they used to do. They are dispersed in different places. One day, Geleta coincidentally met Gersamot while she going home. He was madly affectionate of Gersamote because of her beautiful lips. After a month of that moment, Gersamot heard that Geleta went out of Ethiopia. She felt depressed. She did not know his whereabouts and never heard of him after that. Some other years passed. Gersamot who used to be a high school student is now about to join university. Bakafa started a job at a bank. Ramisu who used to establish his newspaper is now jobless and became a daily drunkard.

One morning, Gersamot met Ramisu on the way back to his home after spending the night drinking. Gersamot told him she is going to Adama University and she gave him her number. Ramisu invited her to a party, which is going to be on a week after the day. After a week, when Gersamot was preparing for the party, her father prevented her. On this same day, she was sitting at her friend's flower shop, feeling bored because the dating appointment with Ramisu was unsuccessful. At this moment, Zerihun was passing by and he saw Gersamot sitting in front of the road. As he wanted to date her, he went to the place she was sitting. On this coincidence, Bakafa was going to the flower shop to buy a flower for his friend's wedding ceremony. He saw Gersamot sitting with Zerihun. Bakafa greeted Gersamot after Zerihun departed her. Then, he took Gersamot with him into the car and spent some moments chatting and flirting with her. He told her that he is leaving for Kenya

the day after tomorrow and will meet her when he came back after fifteen days. But, Gersamot did not meet him because Bakafa was ill. Gersamot felt loss and depression.

After some months, an unexpected incident happened to Gersamot that her lips lost their former beautiful form, which was a center of attention for those youths. The beauty of her lips was lost after she had a bracelet for her tooth. Consequently, those who used to admire her lost their interest in Gersamot. She met Bəkafa and Ramisu, but their strong desire vanishes when they noticed Gersamot is not who she was before. Finally, the youths who used to love and admire her, quit questing for love, lose interest in living, and feel hopeless. Geleta who was missed in the middle of the story found dead in Durban by a police officer named Delani who later mysteriously got a dimple on his left cheek that was Geleta's unique feature. And, Gersamot's mother finally found her mother who had abandoned her forty years ago while her father (Kolasie) disappeared mysteriously from the family and was found to be nowhere.

#### **4.2. Temporal Variations in *Afə***

One of the main arguments of Ricœur against the earlier narratologists is that measuring the temporal relation of story time and narrative time will leave us with the problem of measuring subjective experience time by characters and narrators. Given that, there is a narrated or lived time shared by all the characters or narrators in the text, these characters can also experience time subjectively. As a narrative way of telling temporality, *calendar time* (clock time, chronicle time, and physical time), *biological time* (mortal time, public time), and *traces* (time of quest) are tools of narrated time linking internal to external time flows and producing text-based intersubjective temporality. Hence, this section of the study presents an analysis of narrated time as a third-time connector between lived time and cosmological time, which in turn narration provides the imaginative variations of time or fictive time such as linear time and traversed time, metatemporal time, ordinary time, and public time, and other forms of internal time discussed under the subsequent sections.



#### 4.2.1. Traversed Time and Linear Time

As Ricoeur (1984) insists, every narrative structure encompasses dual temporality. The first one is the chronological (*telos*) dimension that moves forward linearly with the plot; the other one is the achronological (*totum simul*), a dimension that traverses time back and forth bi-directionally. Chronologically, the story invites characters and readers to move forward in a world of certain motives, goals, and desires, but with uncertain consequences and outcomes. This makes characters experience time in the temporal structure of with-in-time-ness. Conversely, the story already exists where the narrator already knows events, agents, motives, and outcomes and gazes from the *totum simul* perspective. In this case, time is subjected to be in the recollection where actions are viewed and interpreted from a different spatial and temporal dimension. At this point, the convergence in these two aspects of time brings a fictive experience of time. This kind of experience permits the reader to grasp their immersion in the story as having been an interlude within the mortal time of their existence.

In *Afā*, the first chapter of the story opens the narration with a *preterite* narrative voice who stands as an observer for the ongoing narrative. This voice, first presents a summary of the physical appearance and psychological traits of each protagonist, gazing from a *totum simul* or divine perspective. As “being-toward-death”, these characters *stretch-along* between beginning and end. By giving a separate space for each protagonist, the narrator introduces their lived time. The narrator recounts an experience in a world of “having-been” there. This represents a cosmic or eternal time that is always there. The characters’ actions and circumstances are subject of recollection, which at the same time unfolds a story to come, inviting toward the end linearly while the narrator moves forward and backward, to tell us about their identity from the anticipation of remembered past.

The narration is presented with the temporal and spatial mark of ‘then’ and ‘now’, and ‘there’ and ‘here’, presenting who they were before and what they become now. This part of the narrative contains an introduction of the story which is to be unfolded later. More importantly, it gathers the scattered plots of different events together and recollects

temporalities so that the reader expects the time, which is already known but remains untold. The time of the narrating is so fast that the narrator projects the whole story in a glimpse. It is just like flashing into the world of the story where a reader can see the temporal dimension of the story and the characters' horizons. Such speedy narration abridges the temporality of the narrator, characters, story, and reader, which in turn refigures the unity of time. Thus, the narrator can be located in the living present or the imminent future of the characters to tell about the past.

At the level of within-time-ness, the story unfolds toward the unknown or end, inviting characters and the reader to move forward into a world of desires and actions with unknown outcomes or consequences. Thus, the characters who are the agents of action within the story, move linearly toward an uncertain future, which is already a past for the voice who is positioned from an unknown temporal distance. Here is a statement by the narrator that presents the first protagonist, Gersamot:

በወንዶች አጠገብ ስታልፍ እስከ ቅርብ ጊዜ ድረስ የሴት ጠረን አልነበራትም።

...  
እስከ ቅርብ ጊዜ ድረስ አፋ ለራሷም ባዕድ ነበር።... ከንፈሮቿን የሰጧት ሌሎች ነበሩ።  
እግዚያብሔር፣ ወላጆቿና አድናቂ። አሁን አሁን ካማሩላት በኋላ እየተንከባከበች ልኩራባቸው ትላለች።

[Gersamot] was not a girl who would get the attention of men when she passed them until recently.

...  
Previously, she hadn't been interested in her mouth. She once believed that her lips were a gift from God, her parents, and her fans. Now that she understands how beautiful her lips have become, she starts to feel proud of them. (pp. 7–8).

In the above excerpt, the narrator provides a span of time for the story, which is between events of the past, “until recently” and the present of the utterance, “nowadays”. The narration is presented in a preterite form of narrative. However, the preterite narrative does not only imply the grammar form or the time of the narrator. As Ricœur announces, the preterite is a basic form of narration that signify an entry to the narrated world which “redirects our gaze toward features of experience that it ... both discovers and creates” (1985, p. 76). In this sense, the reader is posterior to the narrated world. When the narrator opens the narrated story, which is already there as a real world, the reader gazes into the

experience of being-in-the-world proposed by the text. For the narrator, actions, events, and motives are the subject of narrative repetition, and time is traversed.

Similarly, as a character, Gersamot with her expectation and ambition pushed forward in time, which dictates a linear perspective. She is thrown into such circumstances where she has no control. The expressions like “until recently” and “nowadays” are datability features of within-time-ness, which is also a calendar time. On the other hand, the expression evokes a lapse of time that marks the time between ‘then’ and ‘now’ that shows the physical time of Gersamot. Ricœur (1988) confirms that physical time can be configured from two directions. One reversely moves backward from a point; the other comes from a point forward. However, the two-dimensional aspect of physical time is explicable only in the narrative utterance. As Ricœur presents, *the physical time that time is defined by the axis of event, traversing time from the past toward the present and from the present toward the past*. As a result, physical time calls for private time distinct for Gersamot creates her *lapse of time, stretching-along* between “then” and “now”.

Similar to Gersamot, the narrator presents other protagonists who are already thrown to a circumstance they do not control. To quote an extract:

በአንጨት ስራ ሊሰለጥን ተግባረኛዎች ገበታል። እጆቹ በአንጨት ስራ መደደር ቢጀምሩም ጣቶቹ ገና ለምለም ናቸው። ከልጅነቱ ጀምሮ ታቦቶች ለጥምቀት ከየአቅጣጫው ሲመጡ ሰፈሩን፣ የሰውን ልቦናና መላዕክትን በማራም ድምፁ ያደምቅ ነበር።

To study woodworking, [Geleta] enrolls in a polytechnic College. His fingers are still gentle despite the strength of his hands. He has always participated in the epiphany celebration by singing a hymn since he was a small boy. With his seductive voice, he used to astound everyone, including the angels. (p. 13).

As the excerpt above indicates, the act of narration involves retention of past events while at the same time recollecting forward what is being expected ahead. In this case, a reader encountered with characters’ past and future. The time lived by Gelta is identified. The other protagonist character, Ramisu is presented in the same way: “ስድስት ኪሎ አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ጋዜጠኝነት ይማራል። ... መለስተኛ ሁለተኛ ደረጃ እያለ አንዳንድ የክፍሉና የሰፈሩ ልጆች ፈላስፋው ግራኝ አፈንድደህ ጥራኛ ይሉት ነበር።” (“[Ramisu] is studying journalism at Addis Abeba University. ... In the elementary level, his classmates

and friends used to make fun of him for being left-hand.”) (pp.15-17). In this way, the narration abridges the characters’ *past* (their childhood) and *present* (their youthful status in the narrated present).

As a result, these characters are stretching-along in the time lapse between their boyhood and youthful status. They are brought into the story, having the same lived time shared as public time. However, the characters have also private time, being constituted with their own experience of actions established in stretching-along of time that describes an experience fixed between actions or circumstances, which in turn, presents a psychological time. In this sense, an act of narration forms a temporal function of *making-present*, which is a ‘now’ characteristic of within-time-ness. Hence, by identifying beginnings and directions, and constituting the triad of past, present, and future, narrated time serves as a third-time between physical time and phenomenological time. Then, mind and time are inseparable. In this sense, as Ricoeur states, one would not be able to make any sense of the idea of a new event that breaks with a previous era if we did not take the phenomenological consideration of physical time. It is because the physical definition of time by itself is incapable of accounting for the psychological conditions for the apprehension of this time.

As the story of the novel progresses ahead, a narrator who knows everything leaves the narration for a first-person narrator. For instance, quoted previously, an omniscient narrator: “... She used to think that her lips did not belong to her; rather, God, her parents, and lovers gave them to her. Nowadays, [Gersamot] begins to feel proud of her lips after she realized that they became so attractive”) – followed by a voice of a narrator-hero who revisits the narrative quest of “what happened then”. At this point, Gersamot as a narrator-hero reveals what happened ‘then’ repeats the same story that has been presented earlier: “ያን እለት ነው የነበረው መጋረጃ የተገለጠውና አፍጠው የሚያዩኝን አየሁ። ... እድሜዎ ወደ አስራ አምስተኛው አመት ሊገባ ደፍደፍ ሲል የሆነ ነው።” (“The curtain was unveiled on that particular day. I noticed that persons who were gazing at me. This happened when I was just turning fifteen.”) (p.38). For the passage of story time, it seems time stands still

when the narrative moves from one level to another level. In this case, time is traversed to the circumstance that was stated previously by the narrator by the voice of *totum simul*.

However, Gersamot, as a narrator-heroine became preoccupied with the time that she is reckoning with time. The time that is stated is her time of preoccupation, which stretched ‘then’ and ‘now’. Then, experience is traversed back to the axial point of narration. Here is an excerpt: “ይህቺ ጌርሳሞት ግለሰብ እንድትሆን ምልክት የተሰጣት በዛ የፍልሰታ ጦም መፍቻ ቀን ነው። ... ከንፈሮቹ በጣም ማለቴ በጣም አምረዋል። ማለት በአምሳለ ምትሃቴ ውበት ራሴው ማለልኩ”። (“I was identified as a person on the festive day of félsäta [August sixteenth] that. I mean, my lips became lovely. The allure of my beauty had me spellbound.”) (p. 38). The ritual time of *félsäta* (a ritual time remembered on August 16 by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church tradition after two weeks of fasting) is used as an instant of narration, which constitutes public time as well as private time. It is private time for Gersamot because it marks a special experience, which is only known to her. The event is also marked by biological time (“early fifteenth”) which also indicates a mortal time.

Ricœur (1988) notes that ritual time and biological time are among the ordinary form of time that can be presented in narrated terms. As a result, *félsäta* as an event of ritual time gives this narrative datability aspect which is one characteristic of within-time-ness. She is temporally aware of having or experiencing that time so these forms of time came into use. Since the circumstance connotes a special experience for Gersamot, it is narrated backward in a traversal time. Given this point of explanation, chronicle time coordinates periodic astronomical events with human modes of experience, between individual subjectivities and physical nature, or physiological time and physical time. On one hand, as a being-towards-death, linear time is revealed, depicting a certain transformation in Gersamot’s physical appearance as the narration moves forward. As an experience of reckoning-with time (taking time to date or measure), she looks back a year to the moment that changed her experience and her attitude about herself.

It seems that she identified herself and people in her early fifteenth: “I became aware of people that were staring at me”. It happened during my early fifteenth”. This expression

entails a biological transformation of Gersamot's sexual maturity period that presents us with biological time. This form of time has a linear notion in which people or things are progressing /aging/ towards the future or death. As the narration traverses time to the day when her lips were wounded, Gersamot finds herself in a new experience of time. Therefore, the narration presents the opposing view of linearity; thus, traverses time. The time that is marked as *fělsäta* is also monumental for the other protagonists and the narrative as a whole because it traverses the course of the story. The incident that happened to Gersamot's lips at that time changed the way others view her. In this sense, actions or circumstances place characters in "inter-time" or common time.

As a result, Gersamot stands at the center as a magnetic field for the story where other protagonists are caught in preoccupation and experience time accordingly. Their view of Gersamot changed after that incident. Gersamot became a concern for every one of them. They started to have a secret desire for Gersamot. They are college students who are at the same age level – “ክረምት ያበዘናቸው ተማሪዎች ናቸው።” (“These youngsters are in the summer recess period of their academic year”) (p. 44). They live in the same public time, gather around, and spend time within their vicinity. However, the secret desire to have a romantic relationship with Gersamot makes them be in a quest for her love, which involves a linear experience towards the unknown future that someday they will have her. Hence, future expectation is formed based on the preoccupation at hand.

For instance, Bakafa's monumental time can be explained by the day he sees Gersamot at the shop: “ባካፋ ባልና ሚስት የተጋቡበትን ቀን እንደሚያከብሩ እሱም ጌርሳሞትን ያየበትቀን ማክበር ነበረበት። ከዛ ቀን በፊት፣ ከዛ ቀን ጠዋት አራት ሰአት በፊት ጌርሳሞት የጎም ሱቅ ብትገባ የምትገኝ አይነት ቢክ እስክሪቢቶ ማለት ነበረች።” (“Bakafa had to celebrate the day he first met Gersamot, just as a married couple would. Before that day (it happened at 10:00 am), Gersamot was just another common item like a pen. that is found in every shop”) (p. 108). As the extract shows, a narrative voice who stands from a different temporal position in relation to the narrated event presents Bakafa. The narrator knows what lies behind or ahead. That gives the story to be a subject of repetition, and time is traversed. Because Bakafa reckons-with time, he counts and measures time for the

circumstance he has preoccupied with that is dated in clock time –“it was on 10: 00 A.M.”. He is aware of the time experience because he reckons with time; thus, his time is linearly presented. At the same time, the voice of the narrator in the act of recollection of actions presents the voice in the quasi-past of traversed time.

Additionally, the quoted expression above shows how narrative establishes action in ‘now’ time. It is expressed with the physical time aspect of stretching-along between ‘then’ (the time Bakafa saw Gersamot at 10:00 am) and ‘now’ which indicates his preoccupation and the decision made after that. For Bakafa, it was not his first time seeing Gersamot because he knew her before. Rather, the change in Gersamot’s physical appearance changes Bakafa’s perception of her. In this case, the clock time function as an axial point to traverse back in time. The stated clock time is the instant event to present Bakafa’s physical time. This physical time is stretching-along from the moment he felt differently about Gersamot to the present moment of narrating. Though everyone can share the clock time, it also involves personal experience. Hence, it became a personal time for Bakafa. He remembers the moment repetitively because of the experience only known to him. In another word, the stated clock time serves as an axis object of remembrance to speak about an experience in the past.

Furthermore, the narration in Afə establishes characters with ‘in’ time. This presents lived time of characters between beginning and end, or birth and death. For instance, in the narrative part where Gersamot speaks as narrator-hero, an instant time of birth is expressed. Here is an excerpt: “በተወለድኩበት ዘመን ቦታው እንደ ዛሬ ብዙ ሰው አይኖርበትም ነበር፡” (“When I was born, there weren't as many people living here as there are now”) (p. 26). From the point of reference or the instant time, the narration by the voice of the narrator-hero moves into two experiences of time. The first is the time that stretching-along between birth and death that involves a traverse of time between “before” and “after”, or “then” and “now”. It places the narrator-hero with ‘in’ time, which is a lapse of time *-between the time she was born and the time of the utterance*. In this sense, time is traversed in two directions from present to past, an instance to which “zero” time reference of physical time is indicated, and then moves back to the present. The second is the time constituted by being-

towards-death, which establishes time in a non-reversal linear end. The expression on the excerpt does not specify calendar time to refer to the time forward. Nevertheless, the situation is datable that it indicates the linear passage of time moving from birth towards death or end.

Thus, the plot in its episodic dimension, presents open series of events like “then, and then” a “and so forth” that shows the irreversible order of time. The following excerpt shows how the plot presents events or actions ‘in’ time, arranging sequentially what one comes after the other.

ያን ዕለት ማታ ትክክለኛ እንቅልፍ አልወሰዳትም። በሆዷ ተንበልብላ፣ በጀርባዋ ሆና ፊቷን ትራስ ውስጥ ቀብራ አስር ጊዜ አለመኘው። በሚቀጥለው ቀን ሁሉን የዘረዘረ የውሽትም ቢሆን ወሬ ቢወራ ትወድ ነበር። ... ከዚያ ቀን በኋላ ግን ጠፋ። ... በሚቀጥለው ወር ታህሳስ አይደል... ገለታ ከሰፈር እንደለቀቀ፣ ከሰፈር ብቻ ሳይሆን ከአገር እንደለቀቀ ሰማች።

On that day, she was awake all night. As she was lying in bed, she kept thinking about him. Even if it wasn't real, she would have preferred it if everyone had talked about it on the following day. ... After that day, he disappeared. By the following month, in December, she has learned that Geleta had vanished from the neighborhood and the entire country. (pp. 76-7).

As stated in the extractions above, the expressions (*on that day, on the following day, after that day, by the following month*) series of actions that are put in the time. In this sense, characters reckon-with time. They have or lost time to do actions. The marks of chronicle time make us count time in days, weeks, months, etc. Then, time is moving forward. On the other hand, through the point of view narrative voice, the story can be perceived as forming a whole that brought the experience to the reversal of time. Ricoeur (1985) put it, “Our own life is part of the events our vision passes over in either direction” (p. 106).

Furthermore, the experience of expectation (future) is equally weighted with the preoccupations and concerns for the things at hand. The expectation is one form of experiencing time in which goals, desires, or motives are stretching-along between ‘now’ and the time expected to come. Gersamot’s experience of time stretching-along being is constituted by her preoccupation. According to Ricoeur (1991), the time of preoccupation signifies ‘now’ characteristics of within-time-ness, which is “making-present” of saying ‘now’ from “now on ...” of human decision and “now that ...” of human intervention (p.



108). As Bakafa promises to call her after two weeks, Gersamot became concerned about the passage of time. “ከአስራ አምስት ቀን በኋላ ስለምመለስ እደውልልሻለሁ።” (“I will call you when I am back after fifteen days”) (p. 107). Taking this concern to wait for the coming fifteen days, Gersamot anticipates the future. She experiences from “now on ...” her objective for the day she is waiting. In this case, the narrative establishes action as ‘now’.

Being reckon-with such concern of time, Gersamot stretches between the instant of the narrative present and the day in the future (the expected day after 15). As she waits for the last day, she counts the days and feels the passage of time: “ሳምት አለፈ። ደሞ ሌላ ቀን፡ ሌሎች ቀኖች እየተያያዙ ሳያፍሩ ባዶአቸውን አለፉ። ወደየት ነው በእግዜር? ይህ ሁሉ ደቂቃና ሰዓት መክልትና ሌሊት ለመሆን የሚችኩለው ስለምንድን ነው?” (“It has been a week. A new day has come and gone. Many more days pass without a thing. Where are these days going, for the love of God? Why are the minutes and hours passing by so quickly as they create the day and night?”) (p. 108). In this narrative section, Gersamot as narrator-hero presents the narration. In this case, the voice in the narration constitutes a deep psychological experience of time where it slows or passes quickly. The narrator-hero feels time as counted in minutes and hours, days and nights, and weeks passing by. It is because Gersamot is preoccupied with things that she reckon-with time; hence, time becomes a subject of measurement. To quote Ricœur (1984, p. 61), “Being-“within”-time is above all to reckon with time and ... to calculate”. When the day she anticipates is presented to her, the lost expectation transports her into hopelessness.

To sum up, the idea of traversal time stands against the successive units of linear. However, narrated time conjoins them by establishing a narrative instant that distinguishes time from the point-like instant and connects it to the recent past, retained within the present, and the imminent future, which constitutes a zone of protention corresponding to the zone of retention in the present. At the same time, consumed by within-time-ness, each character generates his or her own time. By making retention from the living present to the past, and stretching to the imminent future, the narrator recollects action. Furthermore, characters experience traversal time, being excused into the past through endless coincidence of the

retentions of the living present. Through the aspects of narrated time (calendar time, successive generations, and trace), the analysis shows how *Afä* mediates the irreconcilable aspects of phenomenological time and cosmological time whereby *traversed time* and *linear time* are forged between lived time and cosmic time.

#### 4.2.2. External Time and Internal Time

According to Ricoeur (1988), lived time emerges from the combinations of internal and external or world time pulsating flows, whereby the cosmos is experienced from a human horizon through shared symbolic representations. Calendar time is one aspect of narrated time that links the internal and external time flows and produces text-based intersubjective temporality. In *Afä*, external time and internal time are juxtaposed. The external time is represented by the naming of seasons- “*Summer*”, dates – “*Thursday*”, month – “*December*”, year – “*1968*”, festivals – “*félsäta*”, ages – “*fifteen*”, and even mythical time – “*Once upon a day*”. Such naming of seasons (cosmic time), ages (biological time), dates and months (chronicle time), and mythic time are external or considered a manifestation of world time. This reveals the narrated world of the story, formed with an ordinary time that is shared by the reader in the actual world time. In the space between the narrative time of the text and lived time of the reader, a fictive or imaginative experience of time is formed. *Afä* provides internal time formed out of imaginative variations like *objective time* and *subjective time*, *public time* and *mortal time*, *death* and *eternity*, and *metatemporal time*.

##### 4.2.2.1. Objective Time and Subjective Time

In some parts of the story, there are explicitly stated examples of objective time. Chronologically, the story’s span of time provided by the narrator shows the reader that the story is moving towards the future or an end. For example, on page 81 of the novel, it is indicated that three or four years have passed since the time of the story from page 37 as in the excerpt: “በሦስት አራት አመታት ውስጥ በወጣቶቹ መሀል ነፋስ ገብቷል። ወሬአቸው የጋራ ይዘት ስለጎደለው ሳይሆን አይቀርም የተኮራረፉ ይመስላሉ።” (“Within three or four years, there is a sense of estrangement between them. Because they no longer have the same issues to discuss, it appears as though they are at odds”) (p. 81). This time

is revealed through the characters' progress and changes in their lives. They were intimate friends before, and they used to meet regularly. Now, Bakafa, Ramisu, and Zerihun met on a mourning occasion because someone from their neighborhood has passed away. Bakafa changes his place as he gets a new job at a bank. One of their friends, Geleta has already left the country. Time has separated them, as they are living their dreams, respectively. On that occasion, they sat quietly as if they did not know each other.

As a result, they are dislocated and separated being in their own private time. Hence, their worldview is also changed. The change in the characters' lives shows the passage of time, which in turn reminds the passage of time. These protagonists are in a spatial distance of "there" and "here, and in a temporal gap of "then" and "now". Previously, at "then" and "there", they shared the same temporality. Currently, at "now" and "here", they are concerned with their own time. Technically, the narration is also dispersed, giving a separate space and time for each protagonist. With a shift of narrative voices from third-person to first-person turn by turn, the narration provides different perceptual perspectives that form the subjective or psychological time of the characters in the story.

Externally, characters are in the same chronicle time that time passes or measures equally. How these characters are experiencing time personally is a time of consciousness or subjective time. There is a thought that time passes through the rupture of moments that put it under measurement tools such as years, weeks, days, and hours which is an external time that is shared publicly. In contrast, one can read characters being pulled back into memory and pushed ahead by expectation, which is their internal time. On the same day of that mourning event, Ramisu meets Gersamot on his way home. He asked her out for the block party next week. The narrator immediately moves ahead to the expected day when Gersamot agreed to have a date with Ramisu: "ከሳምንት በኋላ ለራሚሱ ቤቱ ደወለችለት፡፡" ("After a week, she called Ramisu") (p. 84). In its objective manner, the chronicle time measured in a week has passed between two events.

As one feature of calendar time, chronicle time is a shared time or universal time commonly lived by people in different locations (Ricœur, 1988). Thursday is chronicle time. How

Gersamot experiences time on the expected day, “Thursday” is an internal aspect of time. Within this time moment of narration, each protagonist experiences the same day differently. Different events are narrated from a different spatial angle or location within the same chronicle day, “ሐሙስ” (*Thursday*: pp. 87, 90, 103), in which events are just arranged in a happenstance, not in a causal connection or sequential order. There is a sameness of chronicle time for every character, but the experience these protagonists establish with the specified date is subjective. To show an example:

ሐሙስ ዕለት (ሐሙስ የቀን ቅዱስ) ዘሪሁን የነርስነት ኮርሱን ተምሮ ስለጨረሰ በየቦታው ማመልከቻ አስገብቶ (እሱ እንደሚለው ሺ ቦታ) ተዳክሞ በእግሩ ወደ ቤቱ እየሄደ ነው።

...

በቀስታ እየተራመደ ሲንገዝ ኮምቤ ፊቭን የአበባ ሱቅ፣ አደይ መስላ ወንበር ላይ ተቀምጣ ሻይ የምትጠጣ ልጅ አየ።

Zerihun was on his way home on Thursday (a beautiful day of the week), exhausted by his long walk to submit job applications at several places (thousands of them, as he exaggerates).

...

He saw a girl who sparkled like a flower as he was moving forward straight. She was sitting on a chair in Kombe Feven's flower shop, having tea.. (pp. 87-89).

For Zerihun, it is a good day because he meets the girl he desires that is Gersamot by coincidence. Later, on page 90, events on the same day are narrated, as the day, *Thursday* was not good from Gersamot's angle: “ሐሙስ ዕለት (ሐሙስ የቀን እርኩስ) ከቤትዋ ስትወጣ ከአባትዋ ጋር ደጃፍ ላይ ይገጣጠማሉ” (“On Thursday (a bad day of the week), [Gersamot] encounters her father at the gate as she is leaving the house”) (p. 90). On this day, Gersamot was thinking to go to a party with Ramisu. However, she did not meet Ramisu, nor does she goes to the party because her father forbids it. She did not experience the day as she has expected it. As she met friends whom she did not expect, Gersamot experiences the time out of her desire and goal. This makes that she is having “a bad time”. There is a variation in their temporal experience depending on the occasions and events they encountered. The same is true for Bakafa who is having another experience on that day. Baka and his cousin Isayas were driving to Feven's flower shop where they buy a flower for a friend's wedding. Suddenly, Bakafa saw Gersamot sitting beside the flower shop where she was expecting Ramisu. Below is the extraction:

ያው ሐሙስ (ያው የቀን ቅዱስ) የኮንትራት ታክሲ ውስጥ ከጀርባ፣ ጋቢና ውስጥ ደሞ ዘመዱ ኢሳያስ ተቀምጠዋል። ...ለአፍታ በመስኮት አየና እንደደነገጠ ሁሉ አይኖቹ ፈጠጡ።

He was sitting in the back seat of the cap on the same day, Thursday (a blessed day), while his cousin Isaias was in the front. ... He throws a glance out the window, his eyes heightened as if he were startled. (p. 103).

Within a moment of conversation with Gersamot, Bakafa feels happy and arranges an appointment for a date – “ለስራ ጉዳይ ከነገ ወዲያ ኬንያ እሄዳለሁ። ከአስራ አምስት ቀን በኋላ ስለምመለስ እደውልልኻለሁ” (“I will be traveling to Kenya for work on the day after tomorrow. When I am back after fifteen days, I will give you a call”) (p. 107). This expression leaves another expectation of time for Gersamot. The protagonists’ desire for Gersamot and their expectation of meeting one another make them experience time differently. For one, it is a happy moment; for the other, it is a bad one.

Parallel to this moment of narration, a different narrative voice presents a situation that happened on the same “Thursday”, which gives another dimension to the story. This time, Ramisu(narrator-hero) narrates – “ከእሷ ጋር በቅርበት የተዋወቅኘው ሰፈር ብሎክ ፓርቲ አድርገን የቀጠርኳት ጌርሳሞት አብራኝ እንዳትወጣ በድጋሚ ቤተሰቦቿ ከልክለዋት ስትቀር በመነፈጌ ተደብራ ነው” (“I met [Asrat] on a day I was bored because Gersamot was prevented by her parents for the second time”) (p. 166). In this case, the time of the narrating is different. The narrator-hero presents what happened back on that day that shows a temporal distance between the event and the narration. The expression, “We get to know each other with Asrat on a day I feel bored ...” shows the passage of time, which is a reference to objective time because it refers to the day he took an appointment with Gersamot. However, how he experienced the day that he was ‘feeling bored’ is a subjective time. Zerihun, Gersamot, Bakafa, and Ramisu are having the same moments of chronic time, yet they are experiencing time differently. This reveals how characters, being in a different consciousness would experience or feel about the same time.

In fact, there is no objective measurement to label a day as a “bad day” or “good day”. It is the expectations and the events one experiences that determine a sense of time. Culturally, some people consider Thursday as “a blessed day” as the Amharic saying goes

– *hamús yékén kídús* (refers as: Thursday – a blessing day). Nevertheless, this still does not work for individuals who experience time subjectively. As a result, the experience of time is determined by the events that one has encountered, which again is found in the preoccupation or concern one has for things. In this sense, the reader must stand in the opposition between the external time called by everyone “Thursday” and the internal time, which is experienced by characters based on their expectation.

Therefore, how characters feel and experience time within the same day is very subjective. Hence, the internal time of characters becomes an inescapable part of time experience that one cannot measure the duration other than by expressing the feeling. Within *Afā*, the multileveled nature of the narrative voice offers a spatial gap between voices, which in turn creates the internal or subjective experience of time. This is not because the narrative is stated in chronological time. Rather, it is due to that the story is presented from a different dimension, angle of view, and perception. The chronology of the story is interrupted subjectively by the narrative voice in which characters provide their own version of time and story. In this case, time passes subjectively for these characters. The story does not seem that moves forward because scattered events are narrated here and there. With this fact, the narrative makes time to have a sequential or representational function. Subjectively, the characters experience time based on the events they are encountering, and the moment of telling varies based on how the characters feel in the moments (good time and bad time, or happy moments and boring moments).

Throughout the story, the order of the narration is not chronological; it jumps back and forth in time and presents the narration with a different point of view to support the emotional experience of inner time instead of clock time. As the story goes back and forth, it deeply expresses the subjective experience of time; hence, it is the time of consciousness. Moments are passing, but time is not dated. Such experience of time is difficult to understand in the objective view of time, and unmeasurable. The narrator plays time with an act of remembering- retention, recollection, and repetition. This can be an example of how fiction reflects such irreconcilable forms of time. As Ricoeur (1984) notes, time remains inexplicable if one only looks for its objective notion.

Therefore, time is not only expressed chronologically, it is also experienced consciously without a sense of clock time. Since the story in the same chronicle time is dispersed in different narrative spaces, the reader finally finds himself or herself in the circular labyrinth of time. It seems that it is a deliberate technique of Adam to disrupt the sequential events and time. A reader reads chaotic events dispersed here and there and happening now and then. The narration is not presented chronologically like one event following another one or in a time series, happening as ‘before’ and ‘after’. The narrator emphasizes on internal time of characters that potentially have the same event from the angle of each protagonist. Hence, *Afā* explores variations of temporality that truly define the human experience of time.

#### ***4.2.2.2. Metatemporal Time***

According to Ricoeur (1985), this form of time is provided by fiction at the deep level of repetition, which is anchored in the third narrative process, mimesis<sub>3</sub>. Telling, following, or understanding stories, at the same time implies, a “continuation” of ‘yet untold’ stories. The narrative repetition provided by different voices invites travel towards the origin. The time of quest involves the linear experience towards the quest and the circular imaginary travel towards the origin, which is a *metatemporal* or timeless time. Having multiple narrators and voices, the narration in *Afā* allows for different temporal perspectives, presenting ‘yet untold’ stories, and possible worlds. Being in their own time, different narrators simultaneously present the same events, actions, and circumstances; whereby, everything is unfolded towards the origin. At this point, the narration in creates the virtual or fictive experience of time. As Ricoeur (1985) underlines, narrative voice makes the work speak and address itself to a reader; it offers the reader an armful of temporal experiences to share.

Despite the plot’s principle of order, the different narrators narrate the same situations. For instance, the voices of the non-participant narrator, and the narrator-hero (Gersamot) present the narration about Kolasie, as in the excerpt: “ከፊት በስተቀር ገላው በፍዝ በናማ ፀገር ተሸፍኗል፤ በስተግራ የታች ከንፈሩ ተሰንጥቆ አብጧል ...” (“His entire body, except for his face, is covered with brown hair. A scraped and swollen mark is seen on his lower

lip. ...”) (p. 24). This expression is taken from the footnote narrative, which presents a background story about Kolasie. The narrator who knows all the fates of this character narrates how the infant Kolasie was found by the riverside. However, the storytime for this narrative is unidentified that only calls into an imaginary time. This makes the reader experience a possible horizon of dark and past fairy time. Regarding time of the narration, it is presented in parallel with the narration about Gersamot. When Gersamot narrates about herself, another dimension of the story about her father (Kolasie) is presented in another narrative space, the footnote. The story about Kolasie happened in the past, in a time unknown to Gersamot.

Similarly, the voice of Gersamot narrates: “... ደረቱ በሙሉ እስከአለባባቢቱ ድረስ በፃገር የተሸፈነ ነው። በግራ በኩል ስስ ከንፈሮቹ ላይ እሱ እንደሚለው ሲወለድ ጆምሮ አብረውት የተወለዱ ሶስት ጠባሳ መስመሮች አሉ።” (“...He has hair from his chest to down his belly. The left side of his lip has three lines of swollen markings on it. He frequently claims that the marks are begotten by birth”) (p. 34). This narration is presented by Gersamot as a narrator-hero. Similar to the earlier narration, this expression presents the same perspective, establishing a quest toward the origin. This creates a virtual experience of time shared by narrators in the text and the reader while being located in their own time, which is what Ricœur (1985) calls, *temporal armature*.

The story is told by different voices and has different story times. However, the narration presents the same perspective about Kolasie where a reader attempts to fit himself into the narrative past and narrative present. The swollen marks left on Kolasie’s lips can be a metaphor for how time is collapsed, creating a shared time symbol for the narrators and the reader. A narrator who omnisciently knew all the characters’ identities and fate, gives information to the reader that how those scars on Kolasie’s lips are created which Gersamot (the narrator-hero) and Kolasie did not know about it. Gersamot by her side narrates - *he says that they are begotten since birth*. Therefore, it erases time, allowing the reader to experience multiple worlds from the privilege of the present. In this case, time constitutes a metatemporal mode or extra-temporal.



Additionally, the narrative parts about Geleta in the main story and the footnote create a space of time that results in a metatemporal or extra-temporal experience. It is stated that Geleta was arrested for one month: “አንድ ወር መታሰር እዚህ ያደርሳል እንዴ?” Does a month in jail really make that much of a difference?”) (p. 62), stated as a thought of Gersamot. However, in the footnote (on page 63), another dimension of the story is presented by a different voice that Geleta was not imprisoned; rather, he has experienced a mental disease called “Selective Amnesia”, giving a reader another perspective and another experience of time. Referring back to what happened to Geleta, the story is presented by the voice of the narrative past; hence, it creates imaginative variations between the time of the narrated world and the time of the reader’s world.

Presenting the same story from the perspective of another voice, the narration takes the reader back to the past: “ገለታ ያን ቀን የተሰወረው ታግቶ ሳይሆን በሽታው ተቀስቅሶ ለሳምንት የቤቱ አድራሻ ጠፍቶት መመለስ ስላልቻለ ነው።” (“Geleta disappeared that day; nevertheless, he was not abducted; rather, he was suffering from forgetfulness and was unable to travel back to his home for a week”) (p. 64). Since Geleta was not conscious of his whereabouts and he did not remember what happened for a week, he did not feel time. Things happened, but for him, they are as if non-existent. The time one does not experience is a no time. However, it does not mean he is out of time and space; rather, he lost the sense of calendar time. The time passes for others, counting one week; for Geleta he was just feeling as if it is one day. In this sense, the voice of the narrative past presents a time forgotten by Geleta. Then, the reader accesses those times of the narrator (divine time) and story time (the time Geleta forgets) while the ordinary time of the reader is interrupted because of the story in the footnote.

As shown in the two perspectival stories of Geleta, the space or break between the backward and forward view of a narrative shows a different dimension of facts. It is the time when the reader must come to terms with the decision point to be submerged and the implications that the narrative has for the reader right now. The reader experiences stories in the narrative present, bringing the fictive present to the personal present of the reader. Then, the reader too blurs the lines of time by traveling through the spaces of imaginative

time. It is the engagement of the reader in the narrative, acknowledging the present of the reader by using narrative techniques. Therefore, this metatemporal mode of time is the space between narrative time and the actual time of the reader. It is a fictive or virtual experience of “being-in-the-world” proposed by the text (Ricœur, 1985, p. 100).

More aptly, the narrative sections in the second chapter of *Afḥ* can be synthesized with Ricœur’s notion of the fictive experience of time. Throughout the narration, the narrator continuously changes the angle of view. The gaze from one character toward the other changed turn by turn; as a result, a reader can comprehend multiple perspectives as if he or she perceives things being at the foot of each character. Every presentation signifies a continuation of ‘yet untold’ stories. For instance, when Zerihun meets Gersamot at Fevon’s flower shop, the narrative moment is presented from the angle or perspective of Zerihun. In this sense, the reader perceives and feels actions from the perspective of Zerihun. Immediately, the same narrator shifts the position and makes Gersamot a focal person.

Then, the angle of view is given to another character, Bakafa. During that moment of meeting between Zerihun and Gersamot, Bakafa is watching from a distance, observing what is going on between Zerihun and Gersamot. Here, the narrator also develops the story in the perception of Bakafa. Here is an excerpt: “ኧሷን ሊያወጣ ይፈልጋል። ኧሺ የምትለው አይመስለኝም” (“He wanted to date her, but I do not think she would say yes”) (p. 104), Bakafa comments about Zerihun. The narrator states: “ዘሪሁን የጌርሳሞትን ጉንጭ ስሞ ተሰናብቶ ሄደ።” (“Zerihun kisses her as he departs.”) (p.104). This expression was stated previously from a different view angle – “ግራ ጉንጭዋን ስሞ ቀኙን ለመድገም ሲሄድ አስቆመችው።” (“She rejects his attempts to kiss her on the right cheek after kissing her on the left”) (p. 97). The narration in this section is presented by the same narrative voice. However, the angle of presentation establishes a different perceptual view, which in turn, gives the reader a different temporal armature.

Like a movie shot with different angles and locations, this narration gives a reader multiple dimensions of things. In this sense, the reader’s experience of time depends on the narrator’s perceptual presentation. It seems that Adam intentionally uses narrative

techniques as a means to distance the reader from the present. Then, the reader submerges into the present of the narrative present, the narrator’s present and the characters’ present collide with the reader’s present in the actual time. Ultimately, this leads the reader to have multiple interpretations, presenting human experiences, and linking the time experienced by characters. Events happen in the same spot of time, not in terms of before and after. However, they appear to be at a different time when they are presented from the eyes of Zerihun, Gersamot, and Bakafa. Naturally, one cannot present both dimensions of the story at the same utterance of time; hence, the time of statement between the two focal points came to be different. Therefore, the fictive experience of time is not only a space between narrative time and the lived time of the reader; it also presents how one could understand narrative time by being exposed to a different experience of time.

Further, the extracts below can be taken for more interpretation of the fictive experience of time. The narratives on pages 142 and 154 unfold in the same physical time but are narrated in different narrating time and by the different voices of narration. On page 142, it has been already stated that Gersamot had tooth surgery and got a tooth brace: “ጥርሶቿን ብሬስ ተሰርታለች። እሷ እንዳለችው ለጥርሷ ብሬስ በተሰራች በሁለተኛው ቀን ከንፈሮቿ አብጠውና ቆስለው ህመምተኛ ሆነች።” (“She wore a tooth bracelet. She said that two days after having the tooth bracelet, her lips developed wounds and damage”) (p. 142). Later on page 154, the same narrative situation about Gersamot is taken back in time, where Ramisu as a narrator-hero is temporally behind what was narrated by the narrator. The following extract from the conversation between Ramisu and Gersamot shows such a temporal gap. As the excerpt shows:

“... መድሃኒት ገዝቼ ናዝሬት እሄዳለሁ። የሐኪም ቀጠሮ ስለአለብኝ እቸኩላለሁ።”  
 “ምን ሆነሽ?”  
 “ለአንድ ጉዳይ። አይነገርም። ትንሽ ከአዲስ አበባ ይረክሳል እዛ።”

“I will go to Nazrete after I buy some medicine. I am in a hurry because I have a medical appointment.”  
 “What happened to you?”  
 “It is for one purpose. I’m not going to tell you now. It is cheaper there.” (p. 154).

From the conversation above, one can infer that the action is yet to happen, which is already become a past in another narrative part. Hence, the narrative voice frees the narration from tenses and chronological orders; just projecting into the “as-if” world of the past. Because of the non-sequential character of *Afə*, the narration came into a full circle that supports the reader’s experience of time. What is past for the voice of the narrator is a future for the voice of the hero (Ramisu). As result, this shows a temporal position of two narrative voices. Chronological time is lost because the time of the narration is on a different narrative present. By continuously back to the present, the narrative became circular where the reader found himself in no escaping from the ever-occurring now. The narrative voice tells us, as a reader a common perspective toward all characters. The narrative repetition of these different voices presents a fictive experience of time. That brings the reader into a virtual circular experience towards the beginning.

In another case, the narration cancels the chronology and story time; hence, the reader is suddenly interrupted by another narrative. For instance, Asrat and Ramisu are watching an Amharic movie entitled, “**ቅብብሎሽ**” (“relay”). This time the narration is presented by the voice of Ramisu who is a narrator-hero. Then, the narrative voice immediately shifts into narrating the story in the film that tells about a single flute, which by coincidence, is handed to different people from the place called *Metekel* to *Wolete Shop* in *Tabot Maderia*. The film metaphorically presents a group of friends (Bakafa, Ramisu, Zerihun, Geleta). At the end of the story, the film is dedicated to the memory of Gersamot and his other friends. The narration provides another dimension of the narrated world that looks back at the early life of the same protagonist characters. For Ramisu, the story in the film is about him and his friends at *Tabot Maderia*. Hence, it presents the narrative repetition at the deepest level. The following excerpt shows how the narrator-hero is immersed in the story of the film:

አይኖቼን እንደገለጻኩ አስር አመታት ወደ ልጅነቴ ተንሸራተትኩ። ቶሎ ወደሚያልቁ ሽንቃጣ ቅዳሜና እሁዶች። የምሽት ፀሐይ ወደ ተቀቡ ቢጫ ምሽቶች፣ ወደ አረንጓዴ የነሐሴ ሆያሆየ፣ ወደ ኮምቤ የእጠፋርስ አውሊያ ለመጠጡ ህልመኛ ነጭ አሞራዎች፣ ወደ ወጨጫ የጦስኝ ነፋስ ...

I was transported back ten years to the early years of my youth as soon as I opened my eyes. I go back in time to when the weekends used to pass so quickly. I go back to the spot where I can still picture the yellowish evening sun, the song “Ho ya Hoye!” we used to sing during the greeny season

of August, the flock of white birds and the fresh wind breathed from Wochecha Mountain.... (p. 203).

As stated in the above excerpt, the text presents a new horizon of the narrated world (a world within the story world) through the voice of the narrator-hero. As a result, the narration project into another experience of time. When the story is interrupted by the narration about the movie, the reader is subjected to enter into the realm of imagination proposed by this narration. In this case, the reader who was experiencing the “as if” world of characters, is suddenly invited into the realm of imaginative time, thus, possesses a double fictive experience of time. The story is a re-narration of the whole text, to be read again in the form of a movie. This provides that the narrated world is to be represented metaphorically by the imaginative mediation as “having-been”, which in effect, creates a circular imaginative experience as it is a continuation of ‘yet untold’. What is more is that the narrator-hero who is watching the movie became a reader of his own life which gives a sudden change for him from imperfect knowledge to recognition, to look back on his life from a perspective of the *totum simul*.

Ricœur (1985) confirms that as an imaginative reordering, fiction uses the “unreal” to show variations of the real or the not-yet thought. Hence, *Afə* comes closest to an expression of the actual human temporal experience when the world of the textual structure is intersected with the *life-world* of the reader. There is a separation between the time of reading and the time existent in the story but meanwhile, the readers must immerse themselves into the time of the narrative. Thus, imaginative time is an intermission of engagement, a period between which the reader's engagement with the text and the narrative temporality cease to exist.

With many shifts in narrative voices and perspectives, *Afə* employs a non-chronological narrative that involves different and dispersed plots. Due to such a subtle technique of narrative presentation, the text appears to be dimensions of a story, providing the characters’ horizon of the world and their experience of time. For instance, Gersamot’s story is narrated three times by different narrative voices. Usually, the time of the story remains on pause as another narrative disrupts the previous, then, presents a new dimension

of the story. It is as if the reader looks back and expects forward while reading. As a reader, one expects the sequence of the plot's "what is next?"; nevertheless, he or she constantly falls in a circle of the same narrative present because of the plot's dispersed nature. Adam's unique technique of presentation makes the story have a labyrinth of temporalities where characters found themselves in different experiences of time. By having characters meet at the same place (*Des Bar, Sosi café, Wolete Shop*), the narrator makes them perceive the same sound and be present at the same time. Events are happening at the same time; however, since they are perceived from a different angle of view, they are foreign to each character. The moment of space (a point in space), brings a pause in time and forms the footbridges between different temporalities foreign to each other.

#### ***4.2.2.3. Mortal Time and Public Time***

Time in this category finds itself in finitude and infinity which is a contrast between the time passes and remains. The finite time determines the mortal time of "being-in-time". On the other hand, infinite time envelops the "world-time" that remains there. Biological time as the third-time connector is constituted by the succession of generations that gives anonymous temporal relationship, between past (predecessors), present (contemporaries), and future (successors). The expression of the dead lies under successive generations that bring *mortal time* and *public time*. On one hand, "being-in-time" constitutes the lived experience of active, suffering characters under "world-time", which is mortal time. On the other hand, "world-time" is the time of the world outlined by the visible heavens, which is public time and eternal. This analysis shows how fiction explores an experience of a shared world, which depends on a community of time as well as space.

In *Afə*, the narrated time of footnote narratives is extended back in the past and stands as the precedence for the main plot. For example, Kolasie's time extends back to the time of the five protagonists making him a predecessor. Similarly, the parents of Kolasie and Makida who are not existing in the living present, are situated in the unknown past. The biological time of Kolasie is different from that of the protagonists. Gersamot's mother, Makida, Ramisu's mother, Mekrez, Geleta's mother, Fortuna, and Bakafa's aunt, Lidya are both employed in the footnote section, who are also in the same regime of time. With this

fact, the whole story unfolds in three generations, being constructed in different plots and narrative voices. Therefore, public time is a time between these successive generations. Then, time is reconfigured with marks of successive generations as predecessors – contemporaries – successors. Here time is marked: time of the dead (past), time of the living (present), and time of the unborn (future).

Public time gives a chain of historical agents as living people who come to take the place of dead people in mortal time. In the narrative, these different regimes of time are mediated by a common time which is public time. Kolasie's and Makida's parents are dead, but they are brought into the narrative that made them share public time with that of the living. The supplementary stories in the footnote section make the text a story of different subjects and experiences other than being a story of the five young protagonist characters. The excerpts below show how the mortals were brought into the living through narration:

ኮላሲ የሚጠራው ባላደጉት ሰውዬ ስም ነው። አቶ ባሪያውና ... ሚስታቸው ወይዘሮ ንግስት ሃምሳ አመት ያለፋቸው ልጅ በሞላበት አገር ልጅ ያልነበራቸው አዛውንቶች ነበሩ።

Kolasie is named after his foster parents. *Mr. Bariaw* and *Mrs. Nigist* are an adult couple who have not been blessed with a child for fifty years, unfortunate enough in this surplus world of children. ....

መግደላዊት ረሷም አባትና እናቷን ሞላ እያለች ነው ከሕይወቷ የተሰወሩት። ሁለቱም ትዝ የሚሏት እንደ ህልም ነው።

Megdelawit's parents too were gone from her life when she was a child. She barely remembers them as if she saw them in a dream. (pp. 23 and 34).

The narrations in the excerpts above are in the footnote sections of the text, footnote<sup>4</sup> and footnote<sup>9</sup> respectively. Both Kolsie's and Megdelawit's parents are non-existent in the world of living where “being-towards-death” is the main concern. However, through narration, the mortal time is brought into the time of the living, whereby, creating ‘*contemporariness*’ among each other and presenting a ‘*community of time*’ between them. Beyond the ordinary calendar measurements of ages, they are interconnected in physical externality and the psychic internality of time. In this sense, fiction by its virtue of imagination provides a world of *eternity*.

Ricoeur (1991) asserts that when the expression of our debt to the dead takes on the color of indignation, lamentation, or compassion, the reconstruction of the past needs the help of imagination that can place it ‘right before our eyes. As “being-towards-death”, the living characters like Kolasie and Megdelawit are consumed in the face of death. At the same time, they share eternal time, replacing the dead under the mortal time of their parents. Ricœur (1988) explains that we are oriented, as agents and sufferers of actions, toward the remembered past, the living present, and the anticipated future of other people’s behavior.

Additionally, the story in *Afə* projects to the world of ‘having-been’, which stands the same for every reader who gazes through its ‘window’. The narrated world remains eternal where different readers symbolically represent successive generations of the mortals and the living. The narrative part on page 196, would explain such a notion through a metaphorical representation. Here, the state of *dirqosh* (dried *Injera*) became a metaphor for the cycle of life between birth (with the development of infancy, teenage, youth, adulthood, and old) and death. *Dirqosh* is presented as an existential entity formed after the death of the other through the process: *Teff* (the grain) – *duqet* (the flour) – *litə* (the liquor) – *Injera* (the fried) – *dirqosh* (the dried).

In this case, the death of one substance is a means for the emergence of another one. At this point, death is a central theme, as characters in the story institute a character of eternity and finitude. For instance, the protagonist characters live forward towards death by expectation and backward by recollecting others' experiences. Nevertheless, they experience time as if they are not mortal. Below is an excerpt, in which a narrator by the voice of a character named, Abebe presents about death in the narrative in footnote<sup>22</sup>:

ለመሆኑ ስንቱ ነው እርጅና ጋ ሲደርስ በፈገገታ ወደ ሞት መሻገር የሚፈልገው ማንም መሞት አይፈልግም። ዘላለማዊነትን ከመመኘታችን የተነሳ ዘላለማዊነት ባይኖር እንኳን ሃይማኖተኛ እንመስላለንና ወይም ለተገኘው ሃይማኖት አቃጣሪ ሆነናልና ዘላለማዊ ህይወትን ቀርቶ ትንሽ እድሜ ለመጨመር ልጆቻችንን ለአውሬ ምሳ አድርገን ብንሰጥ ግድ የለንም።

Nobody wants to pass away, after all. Even if one is old enough, he/she will not cheerfully accept death. We want to live forever. Because we seek eternity, we want to find it by acting like we are religious even though eternity does not exist. In addition, given that we have joined a particular



religion, we would not hesitate to give our kids to the beasts as prey if it meant to live a little longer, let alone an endless life. (p.196).

The above excerpt establishes the view about death and eternity. Man is ‘thrown’ to natural time, and possesses an experience of within-time-ness between birth and death. He or she knew that one is cognizant of his or her mortality, but at the same time, he or she fears the future for it is uncertain. For example, Ramisu is so desperate about life and he found himself in a state of unhappiness at the present, but he also fears death because he still has a quest regarding the future. Here is an excerpt that shows the expression in the voice of a narrator-hero: **“ምናልባት አርፌ እተኛሁበት ወይም ዝም ብሎ ኣሁን ከሩብ ሰኣት ቦኒላ የምሞት ይመስለኛል። ... ለምን እንደምኖር አላውቅም። ምን እንደምፈልግ አላውቅም።**” (“I am afraid I will die right now, as I’m lying down, or in a quarter of an hour.... I do not know why I am living. I do not know what I want”) (p.170). By this expression, Ramisu knows that he is mortal and he will stop breathing at some point in time. Being with the awareness of “being-towards-death”, he wishes to be an eternal being.

Coming to another issue of imaginative time, the narration in *Afa* *remythicizes* time. In this case, narrated is represented by a mythical time. By the mythic representations, time has become unmeasurable through the loss of its handholds and measures. As a result, internal time freed from chronological constraints collides with cosmic time. For instance, the following narrative statement does not indicate a chronological date but rather expresses a certain unmeasurable distant time, stated in ritual or festival day: **በሆነ አመተ-ምህረት በመጋቢት ማርያም እናቴ የሆነ ቦታ የታሪክ ኤግዚብሽን ልታይ ሄደችና ነጭና ጥቁር የሸክላ ወለል ላይ ተገላገለች።** (“Once upon a year, on St. Mary’s Day of March [March 21], my mother was attending a historical exhibition show; at that moment, she gave birth to me on the black and white brick floor”) (p. 26). Without specifying the calendar year, time is represented in a ritual or liturgical time. In this sense, time is understood by socializing and contextualizing the event. It is a cultural form of time, communicated to a specific audience.

In a similar point, the narration in the story of Kolasie opens – “ከዕለታት አንድ ቀን ሊነጋ አካባቢ. ...” (“Once upon a time, when the sun was about to rise ...” (p. 23). This line begins a story that happened at an unknown distant time. There is an unmeasurable distant past, which is mostly expressed in the storytelling technique of fables - *once upon one a time*. This form of time has also cosmic representation, that is celestial cycles (rise and set of sun and moon) – “when it was about to dawn”. Having this mythic element, the narration also develops a mythical presence in which the infant Kolasie was mysteriously found in the wilderness having a genetic line from the baboons. Additionally, the narrator establishes events about Kolasie in the unknown future, which is a mythic and dark time. This is expressed on page 32 through Kolasie’s repetitive dream of the mountain finding himself among baboons. The narration indicates a day in an unspecified and mysterious future dimension. Later, at the end of the story, the dream world of Kolasie is presented happening in his lived world.

As Ricoeur (1988) notes, the mythic representation of time marks the borderline between fable and myth, “effacing of measurements makes a non-measurable time border on an incommensurable time” (pp. 137-38). When internal time collides with cosmic time, time becomes exalted and achieves a new understanding. In this sense, “time needs a body in order to externalize itself, to make itself visible” (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 138). Pursuing this assertion, the following section presents how the story in *Afə* reflects conceptions and views regarding time.

#### **4.2.3. Conceptions of Time in *Afə***

According to Ricœur (1988), the personification brought by myth and fable necessitates views about time. That time does everything; it heals or kills as: ‘*Destructive time*’ and ‘*Time, the artist*’ externalizes or makes time visible. Beyond its measurability with clocks, time can be understood in regular and repetitive changes in the surrounding world beyond human control. In this case, things and actions occurred in rhythms of day and night, seasons, or years. How does one sense the time passage? How can one identify the

boundaries between past - present - future? Time with the sense of transformation and progress, transiency, and cyclicity are conceptions about time identified in *Afa*.

The idea of progress and change is imposed by the temporal structure of human life that in effect creates control of time in human lives. In this sense, time is moving forward, pointing toward the future. In the following excerpt, time is exalted and personified as it flies like an arrow from the perspective of Bakafa:

የጊዜ አሰላለፍ ፍጥነቱንም። የስዎችን የዝግመት ወይም ስርነቀል አለዋወጥ። ከፊት ወደ ጎላ። እልም ያለው ለሰይጣን ያቀነቅን የነበረው ዛሬ ለክርስቶስ ከበሮ ሲደልዝ። እንደገናም ለጋንጨር ሲዘምር። ገብረክርስቶስ የተባለ ልጅ ጠዋት ጊዮርጊስ ጸልዮ ማታ ሺሻ ጢስ ስር እንደ አብደላ ሲቀመጥ። የወይዘሮ መቅረዝ ከሳይንስ ወደ ኢ-ሳይንስ ወደ አጃቢው ቅጠል ብጠሳ በዕድሜና በፀፀት መርከብ ላይ ሲንሳፈፍ።

How time flies. As time goes on, people change over time through either evolution or revolution. This one is a reversal change towards the back. It is as if someone who worships Satan offers his or her adoration to Christ. A religious man who prays in the morning at St. George church goes to a hookah house in the evening. Mrs. Mekrez traversed herself back from experimental science to ancient tradition. (pp. 132–33).

In the excerpt above, the protagonist character presents time as a continuous process of change. This gives the time a transformational conception of time. Dr. Mekrez was once a specialist medical doctor, but now she ignores her modern education and is a traditional herbalist. In Bakafa's view, the transfiguration of Dr. Mekrez from being a surgeon to being a herbal gardener is a shift in time from the present (civilization) toward the past (backwardness). This presents change either physically through biological changes, or psychologically through a change in personal behavior, desire, role, etc. However, these changes and transformations are explained by telling about time. As Ricoeur (1988, 87) affirms, we say of time that "flies" because we fly from ourselves, in the face of death and the state of loss in which we sink, when we no longer perceive the relation between thrownness, fallenness, and preoccupation, makes time appear as light and makes us say that it passes away. Hence, time is a fundamental element of existence that determines people's fate.

Similarly, Ramisu shares the same view as Bakafa. Speaking about his mother, he states □

እማማ ከቅርብ ጊዜ ወዲህ የባህል መድሃኒት ሰብሳቢና አጥኚ ሆሚኦፖቲስት ሆናለች። ...  
 ከሳይንሳዊ አለም ርቃ አገራዊ መድሃኒተኛ መሆኗ ለእኔ ለመጀመሪያ አድናቂዋ ከብዶኛል። ...  
 ታዲያ ስራዋ የጎልጾችን ኢቮሉዥን ይመስለኛል።

Mom has recently concentrated on collecting herbal remedies and training as a homeopath. ... I found it strange that she left her scientific career to work as a traditional healer. ... It seems to me that her activities are like going backward in evolution. (p. 150).

Here, Ramisu presents his view of time in terms of the evolution of things that are presented under the sign of the past. In this view, everything evolved in its own time, and man is transformed into bipedal, or from backwardness to civilization, etc. One that remained behind time is considered backward. Tracing to the signs (previous tradition), which is a ruin of time is traversing oneself to the passage of “no longer”. Ricoeur (1988) presents that the phenomena of trace along with the phenomena of ruins, remains, and documents displaced from the historical toward the *intratemporal*, which is “within-time”.

In this case, trace through the sign of the immemorial past guides Ramisu to reflect on the conflict between past tradition, which is under the sign of “no longer” and modernity within “at hand”. What Ramisu expresses as “backwardness” is a past more distant than any past and any future, which are still ordered in terms of the time of the preoccupation, which is a time “at hand”. He thinks his mother is regressing time. However, this establishes an *intratemporality*. As Ricoeur (1988, p. 125) explains, deciphering the distant past is entering “to where eternity is indicated”. Dr. Mekrez was a famous surgeon who relied on science; now, she abandoned all her status and the scientific explanation of things, attracted to the things of the past or what is called traditional. Conceiving time in a forward movement defines the transformational and change sense of time.

In other view, phenomenologists claim that time has no existence since the future is not yet, the past is no longer, and the present does not remain. Ricoeur asks, “How can time exist if the past is no longer, if the future is not yet, and the present is not always?” (1984, p. 7). This view brings the notion of transience, which is another theme of time. Transience implies that time is constantly moving, shifting, and therefore, fading away with every given moment. In *Afፊ*, the narration is presented with many ‘now’ of the narrative present. In the story, the reader finds narrative instants because of the story’s disentangled plot;

every narrative instant has its present. The instant is always other, as much as the undifferentiated points of time are always different. What is always the same is the present, even though it is in each case designated by the instance of discourse that contains it.

Adam interestingly tends to focus on the psychological situation of the characters. Within the time of the narration, characters reconstruct their past and future based on the present they have at hand. Some are trying to escape while others try to reconcile with the present, which shows how time affects their experiences. For instance, Gersamot feels disillusioned after the things she has expected are all vanished:

የቀለበችው ሁሉ ከአጁ አያፈተለከ። ምኞቷ ነው ወይስ ዘመነ፣ ጠማማ? ይህን የጠለቀ ስሜቷን መስመር የሚያሰዘው ባካፋ የለም። ...ነፍሷ ሰው የሌለበት አለም ዜጋ ናት ... ጊዜም ያልፋል ... ልብ ቢሉም ባይሉም ሰዎች ከወዲያ ወዲህ ሳያፍሩ ይመላለሳሉ። እየተመላለሱ ለአላፊ አግዳሚ መንገድ ይለቃሉ።

Everything she has been holding in her hands dissolves from her grasp. Is time itself being wrecked, or are her expectations? She is no longer with Bakafa, who would erase this deceitful emotion. Her heart is part of this world, yet she does not own any men. Time goes by. People occasionally passed by with honor, whether or not they were aware of it. Each person has a turn to walk over the passageway as soon as the previous one left. (p. 116).

According to the above extract, it is only by being in the present that one can imagine the future and remember the past, which by itself is transient. In this sense, humans are also temporal beings who always live in vanishing moments of “now”. Because time exists only in the mind, the narrative explores the inner nature of characters and reflects how they are affected by time.

Contrary to transiency, there is transcendence or eternity as time appears to remain there. Being out of the physical time, narrators/characters try to escape from society, and civilization, being cramped and uncomfortable, escape from the value of the community entails an escapade from time. The protagonist of *Afə* establishes subjective consciousness of time as struggling to discharge themselves from the confinements of time pervasiveness. That makes time eternal, as Ricœur (1984) states, eternity “guards against the forgetfulness of death and the dead, and remains a recollection of death and a remembrance of the dead” (p. 87). He says that if we keep in mind the fact that each work of fiction unfolds its world.

In each instance, it is in a different possible world that time allows itself to be surpassed by eternity.

Furthermore, the repetitive narration of events from a different angle of view by multiple voices makes the reader move within the cycle from one dimension to another dimension of a story. At this point, time is conceived as a cyclical experience of recurrent occurrences like that of the cosmic rhythmic pattern. Technically, the plot plays in a circular structure. A story never ends at a certain point; rather, it oscillates again to another dimension of the events. There is no sense of ending that the narration moves back and forth between past, present, and future. At the end of the novel, the narration shifts back to where it starts, then, the end becomes the beginning. At the beginning of the story, on page 34, it narrates how Megdelawit grew up without her parents – “Megdelawit’s parents too were gone from her life when she was a child. She barely remembers them as if she sees them in a dream” (p. 34). Then, at the end of the novel between pages 245-249, the story completes where it narrates back how Megdelawit was separated from her mother – “ኔኔ አይደለሁም ጳውሎስ ይዞኝ ጠፋ” (“I did not abandon you; Paulos took you away from me and disappeared” (p. 249).

Similarly, time plays cyclically in the story of Kolasie as his past, present, and future are collapsed living the fate of what he was and what he would become. This event is stated – “Once upon a time, when it was about to dawn” (p. 23) – an old man named Ato Bariaw was wandering around *Menagesha* Mountain. Then, Ato Bariaw saw fighting baboons, and he found an infant boy fallen at the riverside. The infant Kolasie was mysteriously found in the wilderness and is probably a child of one of the gorillas. The excerpt below shows this:

... ብዙም ሳይለፉ ሁለቱም እግሮቹ ጥልቀት ወንዙ ውሃ ውስጥ ያረፉ፤ ሁለመናው ራቁቱን የሆነ፤ በብርድ የሚንዘፈዘፍ አንድ ሞሳ ወድቆ አዩ። ... ከቅርባቸው ያለ ቅርንጫፍ ላይ አንድ ግመሬ ጋማውን እየነሰነሰ መቀመጫዋ እንደ ፍሬቻ የቀላ እንስት አጠገብ ይንጎራደዳል።

... The moment [Mr. Bariaw] arrived, he witnessed a baby whose legs were drowned in the river. The baby was nude and freezing. From a close distance, a male baboon was seen tipping a female baboon. (p. 23).

In the excerpted narration above, the story time is represented in a cosmic recurrence, that is celestial cycles (rise and set of sun and moon) – “when it was about to dawn”. On pages 32-33, this same situation is narrated where Kolasie repetitively dreams about “የተራራው ሀልም” (“dream of the Mountain”). Later on pages 221-227, the narrator presents a story that Kolasie mysteriously disappeared and joined with a family of baboons, which is the same occurrence as what Kolasie saw in his dream. Here is the excerpt, “ዘንጀሪትን እንዳቀፈ ለአፍታ ወደመጣበት አቅጣጫ አየ። በትላልቅ ዛፎች መሀል ሰዎች ያያል። መኪናውን ያያል። መኪናውን የማያውቃት አጠገቧ ያሉትም ልጆች አደገኛ መሰሉት።” (“He glances back in the direction he came from while giving the female baboon a hug. People can be seen among the large trees. His car is visible. He fears that the individuals encircling his car pose a threat”) (p. 227). This presents the circular repetition of the story. The entire story is to be repeated identically and there is an endless repetition of a situation. This gives the notion of cyclicity that everything evolves around.

In this sense, time is no longer anchored in a static frame; rather, temporal signifiers float loosely with the stream of consciousness as the reader gropes her/his way through the narrative’s circular rather than linear progression. As the notion of “eternal return” (Ricoeur, 1985, p.125) preserves, all existences recur in a similar way, in different places, and at infinite times. In *Afፅ*, events are repeated in different places and times. As a result, the story finds its way cyclicity returns to and departs from the point of origin instead of moving forward. Gersamot ends up, being her former look of an “unattractive girl”. First, she accidentally got her lips having a beautiful form: “My lips became beautiful” and people began to admire and wonder about her lips (p.39). Later, the situation is reversed she suddenly lost the beautiful form her lips: “መስታወት ፊት ለፊት ቆማ ገጽዋን ስታይ የምታየው ቀድሞ ያልነበረ በሰምብ የተመታ ባግዳድ የመሰለ አስቀያሚ አፏን ነው” (“She sees an ugly face that she has never seen before as she stands in front of the mirror that reveals her face”) (p. 228). What happened to Gersamot is the return to the origin. Her lips accidentally took a beautiful form during *fēlsäta*. Again, her lips lost their beautiful form faded, and took their original form.

The change in Gersamot's lips forms changes the attitude of characters who used to admire her lips and were in the quest for her attraction. When she lost her beautiful lips, their desire for Gersamot suddenly vanished. To show an example of this case, here is an extract that reveals a situation when Bakafa met Gersamot after the sudden damage to her lips: “የገጣሚው ስንኝ ተሸርፎ በሃሳቡ መጣ፡ በሞቀው ነፍሱ ውስጥ ... አንድ ትልቅ በረድ መጥቶ ተወተፈ...” (“He instantly remembered the poet's lines, ‘My warm soul abruptly consumed by ice-cold’ ...”) (p. 142). Similarly, Ramisu who has a desire and planned to date Gersamot feels the same: “ተፈጥሮ ያለ ሳንካ ሰራቻት እሷ ሳንካ ሰራች፡፡ አፏ ውስጥ እንከን ገነባች፡፡ ከዛን ቀን በኋላ ጌርሳሞት ጌርሳ አይደለችም፡፡” (“She was flawless, just as nature intended. She did, however, add a flaw to her mouth. She is not the Gersamat I had known previously after that day”) (p. 188). As a result, the story finds its way cyclically returns to and departs from the point of origin instead of moving forward. There is always a new beginning and a return. Characters found themselves in a state of *de j'avou*.

As the story moves playfully from one beginning to another, characters found themselves in a spiral of being in the same situation where they used to be first. Such repetitive occurrence shows the circle of sameness and its circle of difference and its inner circles; it seals the unity of the movements of the great celestial clock. Ricœur (1988) insists that regardless of what we may think, do, or feel, it partakes of the regularity of circular locomotion; it is in the universe of symbols where the circle signifies much more than the circle of geometers and astronomers (p. 278). Likewise, in *Afā* everyone appears to be found within an eternal repetition of circumstances and existences.

Above all, the metaphor and image of circularity dominate the text. Given the title itself, *Afā* (mouth) is an image of circularity with which all the characters in the story are preoccupied or concerned about. Characters speak about or comment regarding the mouth, giving it a new role and identity for the story. For instance, a character named Wudineh comments, “አፍ ምግብ ማስገቢያ ብቻ ሳይሆን የፊትን ቅጥ እንደሚያበጅ የገባኝ ያኔ ነው” (“On that day, I came to understand that the mouth's function extends beyond simply taking food; it also gives proper shape for the face.”) (p. 149). Ramisu: “አፍ ክሱት በመሆኑ ቸል



አልነው። አፍ ብዙ ነገር ነው” (“We did not give attention to mouth because we are used to it. Mouth could imply many things.”) (p.187). Similarly, Gersamot’s lips are good examples. Moreover, lips are not only a symbol of circularity; the attention of the characters and narrators is centered on those lips that present a circular imaginative experience for the reader.

### 4.3. Memory in *Afə*

Ricoeur (1984) states that human actions are established not only within-time-ness, but also within memory. His reference to narrative configuration, as an act of “grasping together,” puts storytelling in the act of remembering. Memory recollects events stretching time story from beginning to end, and establish an experience of *quasi-present*. The narrative repetitions that continuously recall narrated events evoke textual memory for the reader as a way of “grasping the whole”. In this case, the reader became a part of imagination through imaginative appreciation. Additionally, repetition presents the constant longing and recalling by the narrator or characters that they retain backward in search of experience. The narrator recollects the reminiscence stories about events and characters. A character in the living present experiences the past through the retention of the mind. The forthcoming subsections present the analysis of memory in *Afə*.

#### 4.3.1. Reminiscences of Narrator and Characters

In the first chapter of the novel, the narrator provides the whole essence of the five protagonist characters, establishing a view from the present narrative instance (see 4.2.1). In this case, the narrator is in the recollection of discerning temporal wholes bringing about the heterogeneous circumstances, goals, means, interactions, and intended or unintended results into one “organized whole”. The following excerpt can be an example of how the narrator with a past voice presents the narration:

በጥላን እንደሚሰራ አይኖቹ ይናገራሉ። በአካውንቲንግ ዲግሪውን ለማግኘት ያቀደው ገና ፕሪፓራቶሪ እያለ ነው። ... ህልሙ ቻርትድ አካውንታንት ሆኖ በሚያገኘው ገንዘብ ፊልም መስራት ነው። ... ሰፈር ውስጥ በብዛት የሚታየው ለክረምት ነው። አዋሳ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ስለሚማር በጋውን እህ ይከርማል።

One can tell from his eyes that he [Bakafa] works on planning. During his preparatory level, he had already decided to study accounting for his B.A. ... His dream is to become a film producer with the income he gets as a chartered accountant... He is studying at Hawasa University, and he is usually seen around the neighborhood during the rainy season. (pp.14-5).

As stated in the excerpt, the narrative voice who is a past to the story that is being recollected narrates from a *totum simul* perspective. Surveying from the above, this narrator presents characters who are still advancing towards the “future in the past”. The narrator is in a visitation of past actions with intended and unintended outcomes. Hence, the narrator unfolds the narrated world in the form of recollection or memory. Actions, events, and circumstances are subject to narrative repetition. In this case, the narration is an act of remembrance by the narrator who is organizing the discordant actions, providing temporal unity for the structural time as past, present and future. Through memory, temporal flux is established, which Ricoeur (1988), calls *three ecstasies of time*, “*coming-towards, having-been, and making-present*” (emphasis added; p.77). Thus, memory is an act of recollection that establishes action in quasi-time of *making-present*. The narrator retains back and collects actions as coming-towards, provides the horizon of having-been, and repeats it in the present as making-present.

Frequently, the hero characters are immersed in remembrance in the middle of narrative utterance. Every action or thought dictates another one that happens in the recent past which is an excursion to the time of the past. Such a form of remembrance is reflected in the narrative utterance of the dialogue between Geleta and Gersamot. While they were wondering about each other’s romantic feelings, the narrator is immediately caught up by Geleta’s remembrance:

እንዲህ ያማረ አፋን እያየ ትዝ ያለው አንድ ጠዋት ከወር በፊት የውድ ወርክ አስተማሪው ... ወርቃማው ሬሽዮ ስለተባለው የዓለም የቁጥርና የኪነጥበብ ሰዎች ስለሚጠቀሙበት የቀመር አይነት አሳያቸው። ... የዚህ ወረቃማ ሬሽዮ ስሙ ፋይ ይባላል።

He remembers what his woodwork teacher had taught him a month ago as he stares at her lovely lips. The instructor explained to the class the “golden ratio,” a mathematical formula used in both geometry and art. It is known as the FI ratio. (pp. 69-75).

In the above excerpt, Geleta’s remembrance of “the golden ratio” is associated with Gersamot’s lips. Hence, a circumstance in the present instigates actions in the past. Geleta

as preoccupied with the present desire finds a symbolic connection for his remembrance. Acting in the present, he associates things that happened in the past. Therefore, previous actions are perceived through the present perspective; then, it provides repetition. Ricœur (1985) notes that the narrator might be caught up in a sort of overlapping time span by incorporating the reminiscences of the hero in the course of a search that moves forward, giving the narrative the form of a “future in the past”. Similarly, the narrator incorporates the reminiscence of Geleta in the course of advancing into the search. Hence, the narrator provides meaning to the experience remembered by Geleta, as the excerpt states - “የጌርሳን ፊት ይዞ ከንፈሮቿን ሲያይ የሚያስበው እግዜር ይህችን ልጅ ሲሰራት ፋይ ተጠቅሞ እንደሆነ ነው።” (“He holds Gersamot’s face in his hands and looks at her lips, wondering if God used FI to design them”) (p. 75).

Encountering action, at the same time instigates an event that happened earlier. Looking at a beautiful woman would make characters visualize Gersamot. For instance, when Ramisu encounters a photo advertising board displaying running women, he remembers and visualizes Gersamot. Ramisu as a narrator-hero presents:

ወደ ፎቶው ስቀርብ የፍቅር ዋሻ የተባለ ፊልም ስትሰራ እንዳየኋት ትዝ አለኝ። ከእሷ ጀርባ ያለችው ሴት የሰባት ወይም ስምንት አመት ትንሽ ልጅ መሆኗን አየሁ። የዚህች ልጅ አፏ ጌርሳሞትን አስታወሰኝ። የዛች የጌርሳሞት አፍ ምን እየበላ ይሆን?

I recognized that I saw the woman in the movie “Washa” when I got closer to the billboard image. A girl who looks to be around seven or eight years old is behind her. Her mouth makes me think of Gersamot. What would she do right now? (p. 182).

In a similar case, the narrator presents reminiscences in the pages between 108 and 115 where the reminiscence is collected from the point of view of anticipation of remembered past. To show an excerpt: ባካፋ ባልና ሚስት የተጋቡበትን ቀን እንደሚያከብሩ እሱም ጌርሳሞትን ያየበት ቀን ማክበር ነበረበት። (“Bakafa had to celebrate the day he saw Gersamot, just as a couple does for their wedding day”) (p. 108). By this statement, the narrator is ready for an excursion toward the past when Bakafa and Gersamot were met by some coincidence. Then, repeating the course of action, the narrator uncovers a span of memories, moving back to the present Bakafa’s early childhood experience. Here is a series of reminiscences narrated in the form of a search for the denouncement:

ባደገበት በዛ ሰፈሩ ባካፋን ባካፋ ብሎ የሚያውቀው ጥቂት ሰው ነው። የሚጠሩት ባኪ ወይም ባኪ-ብለው ነው። ታቦት ማደሪያ የመጣው ገና የአራት አመት ልጅ ሆኖ ነው።

Only a few individuals in the neighborhood where he grew up refer to him as Bakafa; most people call him Baki or Baku instead. He was only four years old when he moved to the neighborhood of *Tabot Maderia*.

ሳይንስ ሊያስበው፣ ሊደርስበት በማይችል፣ ቢደርስበት እንኳ ሊገልፀው በሚከብደው ፍቅር ባካፋ አደገ። ... ከአክስቱ አልጋ ወጥቶ የራሱ አልጋ የገባው አስራ ሶስት ሲሞላው ነው።

He was raised with the greatest amount of love and care, which science could not possibly explain. When he was thirteen, he started using a separate bedroom and stopped sleeping with his aunt.

አንድ ጠዋት አራት ሰዓት ላይ አክስቱ የአስገባችለትን ልብሱን ከላውንደሪ ሊያወጣ ... ወደ ወዳ ላውንዳሪ ሲሄድ ጌርሳሞት ጉዳይዋን ጨርሳ ከሱቅ ስትወጣ በር ላይ አጋጠመችው። ... ባካፋ ጌርሳሞትን እንዳያት ሊቀጥራት ሲያስብ ሁልጊዜ በገላው ውበት እርግጠኛ አይደለምና ... ጌርሳሞት መለኮታዊ አፍ ፊት ለፊት ደፍሮ መቆም የሚችል አልመሰለውም።

One day in the morning, he was going to Wude's laundry service one morning to pick up the clothes that his aunt had delivered. At the shop's doorway, he met Gersamot while she was exiting after finishing shopping. As he saw her, Bakafa was immediately drawn to Gersamot and wanted to date her. Because he believes that he is not handsome, he feels that he is out of her league, and he would not dare to face the divine beauty of her mouth. (pp. 108, 109, and 112).

In the excerpts above, the narrator presents different reminiscences about Bakafa's childhood and how he grew up that are left unknown to the hero as well as the reader. These reminiscences are yet untold memories to be found in the recollection by the narrator. Hence, Bakafa's reminiscence is caught up as the narrator shifts toward the present narration coinciding with Bakafa's thoughts about the past incident at the shop. This is an excerpt: “ያን ቀን አበባው ሱቅ ሲደርስ ጌርሳሞትን አያት። ልቡ ለአፍታ ቀጥ አለች።” (“On that day, he saw Gersamot when he arrived at the flower shop. For a brief moment, he feels his heart stop beating”) (p. 103). The earlier coincidental meeting stated as: “One day in the morning ... he met Gersamot while she was exiting after finishing shopping” is recounted as a memory of Bakafa while being in the narrative instance of the present (Bakafa meets Gersamot for the second time). As Bakafa met Gersamot coincidentally for the second time, his mind retains the past, recalling how felt about Gersamot when he encounters her at the shop. Bakafa had an affection for Gersamot that “[he] wanted to date her”. In this sense, any remembrance takes anticipation of the future.

Moreover, the day Bakafa met Gersamot is memorable that it left something special to the hero who is the subject of the action. The expression: “Bakafa had to celebrate the day he saw Gersamot, just as a couple does for their wedding day” gives the subject a special remembrance. This shows that reminiscence takes heroes or characters to the visitation of circumstances they established a preoccupation. Hence, through such acts of recollection and retention, characters tend to anticipate the future. After all these continuous memories of the narrator and characters, the narration demarks the experience of time in the past and the present. The demarcation is indicated with retention toward the present which signifies moving out from remembrance or trapped time. The narrative statement, “... he saw Gersamot when he arrived at the flower shop. For a brief moment, he feels his heart stop beating”. This statement repeats what was stated earlier to show that the story is now back to the narrative present, and Bakafa is also back from his remembrance.

More importantly, the act of recollection allows a return to the past that constitutes the experience of the present, the density of an unfathomable past, and a few emblematic memories, which continue to exist in the mind of each protagonist character. For instance, Gersamot presents an incident that happened a year ago, narrating as a narrator-hero. The voice of a narrator-hero, states: **ያን እለት ነው የነበረው መጋረጃ የተገለጠና አፍጠው የሚያዩኝን አየሁ። ምን ተፈጠረ? ትንሽ ልዘርዘር? እድሜዎ ወደ አስራ አምስተኛው አመት ሊገባ ደፍደፍ ሲል ... የሆነ ነው።** (“On that day, the curtain was removed. That is when I first noticed people looking at me. What happened during then? May I provide more details? It happened just as I was about to turn 15 years old”) (p. 38). As the narration returns to the past, Gersamot refers to a special event. It is special because that moment changed how others looked toward her and even her attitude about herself.

The expression, “What happened during then? May I provide more details?” shows that the narrator-hero is ready for an excursion to the past. Since the narration about the past is not a sudden act of remembrance, it calls for an invitation for an excursion to the dimension of a story presented by the hero. While being in the present, the narrative voice excurses the past that provides an experience from a different temporal position. This establishes a quasi-present where the voice of the narrator-hero attains different temporal positions at

the same time as she retains from present to past, and recollects events again to present. Consciously, the narrator-hero aspires to tell about the past. Gersamot has a point of remembrance to present about what happened a year ago. In this case, the narration is total retention.

In this sense, the narrator reminisces what happened in the past; while at the same time, establishing narrative utterances in the present. Similarly, amid actions or occurrences memories rise that create characters' excursion into the past. Gersamot's recalling of a particular incident before a year, Geleta's remembrance of "the golden ratio" and Bakafa's confidential time at a shop also tells about their existence in the present. In the human experience of time, there is always a remembered past and an anticipated future. As a result, Adam interweaves the present with its stretches of the imminent future and the recent past, and a recollected past. That makes time slow down, hence, reminiscences are the trap of time. This kind of narration gives a reader an experience of circularity. The story begins somewhere and then ends at the point where it begins.

#### **4.3.2. *Tizta* as Making Sense of Past**

As has been explained in chapter three (section 3.3), *tizta* is a "poetic expression" that envelops emotional longing or yearning for the past that is ceased to exist. Therefore, people live in clashes of reality interspersed with flashes of memory. Here, reality and memory create the individual perspective of time, but individuals still feel overwhelmed by the reality presented to them. In this case, they try to anchor meaning from the present reality, or to escape from the present situation; hence, making sense of the past. This synthesis of time and non-existent things can be equated with Ricœur's (1985/1988) appropriation of "Lost time regained", which lost refers to a past time, prey to the universal decay of things that is against forgetfulness; the time dissipated among signs not yet recognized and to be reintegrated through recapitulation; and a dispersed time, like the places in space. Hence, the act of *tizta* is a quest for lost time that is to be regained later.

In *Afə*, characters and narrators continuously experience nostalgia for things in the past. They know that those things are non-existent, but it is impossible to forget. Thus, such kind

of *tizta* or nostalgic remembrance is means of sense-making the past. This notion can be explained in the narrative part where Bakafa meets Mrs. Mekrez at a church. In this situation, Bakafa suddenly enters into a nostalgic thought, being in the quest for the previous physical appearances of Mrs. Mekerez, thinking about what she used to look like “then” and how she is changed “now”. Below is the excerpt:

ባካፋ አንዴ ዞር ብሎ አይቶአቸው አረማመዳቸው እንደደከመ አየና ትንሽ ትርጉም የሌለው ሀሳብ አሰበ። ከአሁን ጋር የማይያያዝ በልጅነቱ በጋቢና መስኮት አንገታቸውን ብቅ አድርገው አቡን አላየኸውም? የሚሉት አፈ-ጤነኛ መቅረዝ ትዝ አሉት። አንዳንዱ ያለፈ ነገር ሲታወስ ጎኑ የሚያሳዝን ለውጥ ቆሞ ነው።

Bakafa turned around and observed how Mrs. Mekrez looked tired. Then, some absurd ideas began to cross his head. He recalls the previous Mekrez who would look over her car window and ask, ‘Have you seen Abu?’ Every memory of the past is melancholic. (p.122).

The excerpt shows that characters make sense of the past through the voice of the narrator. Such a notion of understanding the past is revealed through the technique of stream of consciousness. Characters have usually taken to the past trying to make sense of what was there or what we have done so far. On one side, it is a kind of confession; on the other side, it is an evaluation of self in the present. Mentally, humans can experience different space and time. Being in the physical time, characters move back and create memory and anticipate forward. What is more is that *tizta* as a form of remembrance establishes an imaginative quest of time in the past, dislocating from the physical time and space. Hence, the voice of the narrator experiences a quasi-present.

In another way, *tizta* is formed as means of escaping from the present situation. When characters find themselves in unfavorable conditions, they become immersed in a certain thought of remembrance. Gersamot was in a deep feeling of desperation after she realized that her expectation is not fulfilled; her desire was lost. She was trying to escape from the harsh surrounding. Here, the narrator states: “ትዝ ይላታል በልጅነቷ መንገዱ የዛፍ ጥላ ነበረበት።” (“She distinctly remembers seeing trees on the street when she was a child”) (p. 116). In this expression, the narrative voice presents how things are changed from the perspective of Gersamot. The story’s technique of stream of consciousness that puts

characters and narrators into the deep psychological state of the world exalts such remembrance of sense-making.

Another aspect of nostalgic remembrance is also presented in the narrative part about Delani. In this section, the course of the story is moved to a foreign character and place. Delani is not happy about everything: his work, his wife, people, and other things around him. The narrative states:

እናቱ ተመልሳ ትዝ አለችው። ከሺህ አመታት በፊት በመሰለ እርቀት። አፏን አሰበና ዐይኖቹን ከደነ። ለአፍታ ይሄን ቅፅበት ያስታውሳል። በጀርባዋ ተኝታ በትኩሳት የደረቁ ድንብሼ ከንፈሮቿን አነቃንቃ እስኪ የምጠጣው ውሃ አቀብለኝ የምትለው።

His mother reemerges in his memory once more, albeit it feels distant from a thousand years ago. He closes his eyes as he considers her. He recalls what she uttered with her dried lips, “I want to drink. Give me water,” as she lay on her back. (p. 211).

As the narration is presented through the technique of stream of consciousness, it reveals how the characters’ mind is immersed in memory and how they experience time. Delani feels negligent and bored by the present situation so he is continuously immersed in *tizta* or nostalgia to escape from the present situation. Similarly, the narrative moment where Asrat and Ramisu are watching a movie called, *Qibiblosh*, presents the pursuit of lost time. Here, Ramisu desperately misses the time. After watching the movie, Ramisu immersed into *tizta* in search of those happy moments ten years back. The excerpt read as follows:

አይኖቹን እንደገለጥኩ አስር አመታት ወደ ልጅነቴ ተንሸራተትኩ። ቶሎ ወደሚያልቁ ሽንቃጣ ቅዳሜና እሁዶች። ... እዚህ በመዳፌ ካደረኳት ሲጋራ ጠስ እየተነነ ... ዘራሁን ጣቱን እያጮኸ ነይ ገላ ገላ-የልቤ አለላ - የሀይወቴ ጥላን ሲዘፍን፣ ተዘራ ከአንቺ ይደብራል ስንለው። ገለታ በአጥንታም የሚያልም በመሰለ ኮስታራ ፊቱ እየዘፈነ በዲምፕሉ ጨረር የቺኮችን አይን ሲያወጣ ... ኦ ድምፅ! ቀለም ነበረው የምሽቱን የመሰለ ... ባካፋ እጁን አፋ ላይ አድርጎ ግጥም በድምፅ ሲያዳምጥ፣ የውዴ ላውንዳሪ ቤት ጠረን፣ ጫጫታችንና ሳቃችን።

I immediately went back ten years, to the early years of my youth, after opening my eyes. I return to that time when the weekends passed without being noticed. As I sit here idly, a cloud of smoke is rising from the cigarette I have between my fingers. I remember the moments in the past when Zerihun would clap his hands while singing, “ney gela gela - ye libe wolela - ye hiwote tila,” and we would make fun of him by saying, “You are better than the original singer, Tezera.” I recall Geleta singing with a serious expression on his face, and girls' eyes were drawn to his charming dimple. How mesmeric his voice was! ... I remember Bakafa putting his palm on his face and listening to poems on audio. (p. 203).



Ramisu immerses into the nostalgia of his youthhood period, in the lost time ten years back. With his imaginative quest for the lost time, Ramisu experiences different temporalities. As he regains it back, he realized that the time he used to spend with his friends before ten years was sweet and fantastic that – “... the weekends were unnoticeably passed”. Because he is uncontented by the present situation, he longs for the time that he used to be happy. In this case, the lost time is regained through the remembrance of those happiest moments. Thus, the voice of the narrator-hero establishes a quasi-past, as he experiences the lost time of ‘then’ to the place of ‘there’ while being ‘here’ at ‘now’. The imaginative world brought by a nostalgic experience of the narrator-hero is a narrative repetition that recalls the narrated world, in which the reader also enters visitation. The remembrance is not only the time; his *tizta* imaginatively dislocates him to that place. He displaces himself being there, in the common meeting place where his friends used to gather and enjoy joking or chatting.

The above narration constitutes the quasi-past of the narrator-hero, imaginatively experiencing as being in the space of ‘here’ and ‘there’ and in the temporality of ‘now’ and ‘then’. Physically, he exists ‘here’ in his room, watching a film with his girlfriend, Asrat, and smoking: here, *as smoke rises from the cigarette I put between my fingers*. Mentally, he is ‘there’ in the quest for lost time, experiencing every moment as if they are happening now. In this sense, Ramisu feels different experiences of time within ‘now’ and ‘then’, in ‘here’ and ‘there’. He is making sense of the past, inferring that there was a good time during ‘then’ and at ‘there’. As a means of escaping from the unfavorable ‘now’, Ramisu’s mind is immersed in a quest for ‘those sweet days’, of his youthhood. While retaining the past through *tizta*, he views the past from the point of view of the present and vice versa. Hence, the voice takes into a re-examination of lived time, making sense of the past. The following excerpt illustrates:

ምን ያህል ጊዜ በጎንጎል እንደቆየሁ አላውቅም። ልብ ስል በጉንጮቼ ላይ እንባ ይወርዳል። ቶሎ ጠረኩት። አለም እንዳየኝ ሁሉ አፈርኩ። ከዓይኖቼ እየተሳበ የሚወጣው የፅንባ ስለት ውስጤ ተመቻችቶ የተዘረጋውን የመደበር ብራና ቀዶ ነጠላ ሰረዝ የምታክል ብርሃን እንደሚያሳየኝ ይገባኛል። ያንባሁት ወዳጆቼን እንደማላገኛቸው ስለጠረጠርኩ ነው።

I am not sure how long I have been feeling this depressed. I realized that tears streaming down my cheeks. I quickly cleaned it up. I was ashamed because I thought everyone was staring at me. I am hoping that the tears that are streaming down my face would penetrate inside the vellum of

depression that enclosed me and would bring me some twilight. I cried because I was afraid I might not see my friends again. (p. 204).

As stated in the excerpt above, *tizta* presents a reflection on lived time. It is the voice of the narrator-hero, as Maaza (2011, p. 854) puts it, a “poetic expression” that makes “to adapt to its time, to mold itself out of one moment and insert itself into another, changing each as it goes along”. *Tizta* gives a distracting thought as narrators or characters are trying to escape from the present where they are uncomfortable with the people and situations around them. Pursuing the past, they imaginatively travel into the lost time; then, time is regained which makes them re-evaluate the past and anticipate the future. The expression, “I cried because I thought I might never see my friends again” is anticipation made after time is regained. Therefore, a sudden thought about past events or circumstances distracts narrators or characters from the present preoccupation they have at hand. In line with this, Ricoeur (1991) remarks that distraction is what prevails when we are torn between the fascination with the past in regret, remorse, or nostalgia; the passionate expectation of the future in fear, desire, despair, or hope; and the frailty of the fleeting present.

### **4.3.3. Textual Memory**

Reading does not merely flow forward, but the recalled segments also have a retroactive effect, with the present transforming the past. In the case of *Afā*, the narrative repetitions can be a good example of entailing textual memory. The narrative repetitions show how characters are connected throughout the story. In effect, such connection involves textual memory in which a reader within a text remembers what has been said about things before; for instance, the symbolic repetition of “lips” is presented as a dominant issue within the story where characters are preoccupied with. These repetitions of events or things actualize the reader’s memory. Mostly, the narration is presented simultaneously with the characters’ time and actions, but sometimes the moment of actions are taken back into the past as the character or narrator’s memory. In this case, time and actions are repeatedly presented. As a result, textual memory is maintained for the reader.

In the second chapter, the narrator-hero narrates about a movie, entitled *qibiblosh* which is produced by Bakafa and given as a dedication to Ramisu, Geleta, Zerihun, and Gersamot who are the protagonists of the story. In this case, without a repetition of what has been presented in the text, the narration instigates the reader's memory. By the narrative configuration, the reader is reading back and forth while traversing the physical space of the text toward the end of the story. Hence, it is noted that Bakafa had a vision of becoming a film producer. Again, the issue about a movie is narrated in the conversation between Zerihun and Bakafa: **ፊልም ልንሰራ እንሄዳለን፣ የመጀመሪያ ሹት መተከል ነው። ከዛ ባህር ዳር ከዛ አዲስ አበባ አራት ኪሎ። መጨረሻችን እዚህ ወለቴ ሱቅ ነው።** (“We will be traveling to Metekel to start shooting for a movie. It will thereafter take place in Bahir Dar, Addis Abeba, and Arat Killo. The last shot will be right here at Wolete Shopping Center”) (p. 89). This narration is presented by the narrator who possesses unlimited knowledge about everything in the narrated world including the fate of the characters.

However, the narrator-hero, as presented by the voice of Ramisu, is completely foreign to this narration about making a movie. Thus, the reader connects the two events which are foreign to each other through textual memory. Watching the movie that is being uttered by the voice of the narrator-hero is a “future in the past” to the action that was once stated by the narrator, “We will be traveling to Metekel to start shooting for a movie”. The narrative about the film, *Qibiblosh* is repeated in another section of the story that actualizes the reader's memory. A good example of this is the narrative section entitled: **ሁለቱ ወረቀቶች** (*The two papers*) on page 240. This time, the narrative presents the script of the film *Qibiblosh*. The previous narration of the narrator-hero who was watching *Qibiblosh* is repeated by another narrative voice. The script papers contain dialogues of characters and the scenes developed in the film, which is a reminiscence of the previous narration left untold or being told by a different technique of presentation. In this case, the reader pertains to the refiguration act and recollects dispersed stories and events, creating textual memory.

Reading time not only embraces the number of hours spent traversing through the pages. Rather, as Ricœur (1988) conceptualizes, the act of reading comprises the expectations and interpretative moves of the mind. The aspects of narrative reception affect the temporality

of reading with its continuous retention and expectation process that makes the reader experience time in memory. As a narrative repetition presents textual memory, here is also another excerpt:

**ከማን ጋር ነው የምታወራው?**

**ራሚሱ እኮ ነው**

**... ከእጅዋ ላይ ሞባይሊን ነጠቀቻትና ሶፋ ላይ ዘጭ ብላ ተቀመጠች። ... የነካካችውን ነካካታ እናት በቢሮዋ የታወቀች ስልጡን ከታቢ ናትና።**

To whom are you talking?

It's Ramisu.

... Her mother grabbed the phone out of her hand and sat down on the couch. Because she is well-known for her typing abilities at her office, she then checks something in it. (p. 85).

This excerpt shows a circumstance when Gersamot was talking to Ramisu over the phone. Later, this action became a subject of textual memory when Gersamot meets Ramisu on the road. **“... ይልቅ ቁጥርህን ግፍልኝ። ያን ቀን እማማ ነጥቃ ስናወራ ሰረዘችብኝ።”** (“...Give me your phone number anyhow. Mom took my phone that day and deleted it while we were talking”) (p.155). That day refers back to the day Ramisu called and arranged a day for dating. Hence, the reader’s mind will immediately enter into the retention of the previous action.

In another case, on page 122, the following excerpts show how dispersed events are connected through narrative configuration where the reader establishes memory between events that are foreign to each other. To state an excerpt: **“ጊወርጊስ ሲደርሱ የአቡ እናት ወይዘሮ መቅረዝ ጸሎት ጨርሰው ከደጀሰላም ሲወጡ አገኙአቸው።”** (“They met Abu's mother, Mrs. Mekrez, at St. George Church as she was leaving after prayer”) (p.122). In another section, a different narrative voice states: **“እማማ ሲጠብቁህ ቆይተው ቤተክርስቲያን ሄዱ።”** (“Mom has been waiting for you, and she went to church”) (p. 155). The two narrative statements seem to be appeared on different days because they are disordered and have different time of narration. In this case, the story actualizes memory and the reader will understand that the separate events were happening at the same time. Events in different places are taking place at the same time, but the order of narrative utterances makes them deceptively have a different time of narration. In this case, it is difficult to identify which one comes first and which one follows. Actions and events are

repetitively narrated so that it discloses textual memory for a reader while it presents a different dimension of action. Mostly, these repetitions occur when the narrator presents the same event from a different point of view. Thus, through the reader's memory, the story is configured.

In another way, the reader encountered with characters' preoccupation with things, like the lips of Gersamot. Their obsession with Gersamot's lips is how the story prevails over the narrative issue. For instance, Geleta wonders, “ለምን ከንፈሯ እርዘ ሆነ? ... እንዴት ከንፈር ፍጽምና ይኖረዋል?” (“Why are her lips so stunningly beautiful? ... How did lips able to posses such perfection?”) (pp. 60, 76); Zerihun wishes, “እንደዚህ አይነት ከንፈር ቢኖረው ለዘላለም ያፏጭ ነበር። ጠጋ ብሎ ከንፈርሽ እንደ ቅዳሴ ያምራል ሊላት ፈለገ።” (“He would have been whistling incessantly had he owned such lips. ‘Your lips are exquisite,’ he wanted to say”) (pp. 96 - 97); Bakafa desires, “ባካፋ አፏን እያሳደደ ያያል።” (“Bakafa keeps gazing at her mouth”) (p. 107); and Ramisu would ask, “ከንፈሮቻችሁ ለምን እንዲህ ያምራሉ? ስለምን አፍሽን ሳይ ሁልጊዜ እደነግጣለሁ?” (“Why did your lips get so beautiful? Why do I tremble every time I see your mouth?”) (p. 153). Additionally, another narrative in a footnote (pages 69, 92 & 127) tells that Mrs. Mekrez (Ramisu's mother), being inspired by Gersamot's lips, writes a book about lips and related cosmetics. These excerpts show that the issue of lips is constantly repeated throughout the text, which in effect, functions as a constant recall for the reader and creates a textual memory.

Furthermore, textual symbols and the identity of characters may help to actualize the reader's memory. For instance, in the narrative section about Delani, there is a character who resembles Geleta. In this narrative, a person by the ID name of Bekelech (Geleta) is found dead on the street of Durban. Then, through the textual symbol, the corpus is Geleta's body as it is narrated: “ለሰከንዶች የሬሳውን ፊት በአይኖቹ አገላብጦ አጠናና ምን እንደሆነ አገኘው። ልጁ አንድ የጉንጭ ሰርባዳ ብቻ አለው።” (“After a brief moment of observation, he discovered what the corpse was. The boy has a dimple on one side his cheek”) (p. 216). Reader's memory is actualized here because Geleta got a unique dimple on his left cheek that was stated previously. The narrator introduces the situation in three lines. Suddenly,

the narration moves back from the moment how Delani is nagged by his wife in the morning to the present moment. Since the narration is simultaneous, the reader may read it as it is happening in the present.

Hence, narrating is making-present (bringing what might have been to the present). In this case, the narrator interpolates memory. On pages 206 – 214, the narrator presents what happened earlier this moment: “ደላኒ ጥላ ያለበት ቦታ ምርጦ ቴሌፎንን ከፈተና ለአንድ ወዳጁ ደወለላት። የሚጠራት አልማዝ ብሎ ነው።” (“Delani look around to find a shadow place, then pulled out his phone to give a call to a friend. He called her name Olmaz.”) (p. 206). This expression is repeated on another page: “... የልጁን የመስቀል ጌጥ ማን ጋ እንዳየው ትዝ አለው። ያኔው ጥላ ያለበት ቦታ ምርጦ ቴሌፎንን ከፈተና ለአንድ ወዳጁ ደወለላት።” (“He remembered where he had seen this particular cross trim on the boy’s neck. He finds a shade right away and calls a friend”) (p. 214). With this fact, the repetition creates retention of the past, and a recollection of the future as the narrator tries to present the whole identity of the character. The reader likewise will be in retention and recollection as he or she reckons with the time of the story. The narrative repetition like page 206 and page 2014 helps the reader to identify the past and present time in the narrative. Thus, the present is regained after a reader too lived through the experiences of Delani’s past time.

Additionally, the footnotes establish narrative repetitions so that give a textual memory to the reader. The narratives about Kolasie on pages, 23, 29, 31, and 221 are similar narratives presented in different forms. The narrator with a voice who knows everything repeatedly presents and narrates about Kolasie. First, in the voice of a narrative past; second, in a form of prophecy in a form of a character’s dream; and third, by the voice in the present narrative utterance. The prophet sees the imminent future and its menace threatening the present and recounts the precipitation of the present toward its future ruin as something that has already happened. The present seems to be repeatable in the future, which was once a past. Such repetition involves textual memory for the reader who is reading the story back and forth in the processes of narrative configuration; where at the same time, the repetition provides

the reader a different horizon of “being-in-the-world”. This according to Ricœur (1988) is the fictional role of projecting a horizon.

#### **4.4. Narrative Identity in *Afə***

According to Ricœur (1988), a question of the identity of the subject or the “who” of an action (designated by his, her, or its proper name), remains the same throughout a life that stretches from birth to death. This shows a *self-constituency* within the *permanence in time*. The plot of fiction employs identity, which is a narrative identity for the characters involved. The details and actions that the author chooses to tell create an image of each character just as the details an individual tells to others develop an identity for himself or herself; the addition and subtraction of details can significantly change the identity of the character that is portrayed to the reader. Hence, the plot by its imaginative power destabilizes identity (constitute of permanence in time), which in turn, provides *self-knowledge*. In the case of *Afə*, every narration presents the characters’ identity as the plot helps to unfold their selves, changing within the permanence in time.

##### **4.3.1. Self-constituency**

To search for one’s identity is to accept responsibility for one’s own past in relation to one’s present space of experience and horizon of expectation for the future. In the first chapter, the protagonists of the story are introduced with their physical and psychological attributes. Beautiful *lips* uniquely portrayed Gersamot. Zerihun is very sociable and is uniquely known for his skill of *whistling*. Geleta is a silent person who uniquely possesses a *dimple* on his left cheek. Bakafa is a well-planned person who is studying accounting to make more money and be a cinema producer. He is fat and has a *round* face. Ramisu (Abu) is a tall and handsome person who always complains about people and things. He is *left-handed* and he feels discomfort for being one. As a result, all these protagonists, with their characters and traits, are constituted within the permanence in time as having been between birth and death. Thus, they establish an identity of “who” for the subject of the action within

the narrated world. As temporal beings, these characters stretch from birth to death, thrown in the course of the story that has a beginning and end.

In chapter two, *qibiblosh*, the narration opens with the voice of a narrator-hero who reveals her identity, “**ስሜ ጌርሳሞት ኮላሴ ይባላል።**” (“My name is Gersamot Kolasie”) (p. 23). Gersamot speaks about herself, revealing “who” she is, adding an ascription of her name who recognizes the *self* through the given norms. As the narration continues through time, there is a change and mutability in her identity. Gersamot feels that her being present is different from the previous. A certain change in her physical attributes changes her attitude. She was not beautiful, but now because of the sudden change in her lips, she feels loved. In her perspective, the way the other boys look at her is changed after her lips took a new form. She has also a desire for them; each of them has a quality she admires. Her gaze toward them is equally maintained.

Relating the present with her past, Gersamot is struggling for her freedom to love and to be loved. She wants to be the girlfriend of one of them. She is carried along by events she wanted to change which beyond her control: “**የተሳሳተ ውሳኔ ቢመስልም እኔ በከንፈሮቼ ብቻ መወደዴ እንግዳ ጉዳይ ሳይሆን ሚስጥርነቱን ማወቅ እንደማይቻል ተረድቶ ብልጥ መሆን ነው።**” (“It may seem that it is an unverified conclusion that uncommonly I am loved only because of my lips, but I want to keep the secret about my lips which no one knows”) (p. 40). She confirms that she was not attractive before a certain incident happened to her lips. But the secret of how her lips became attractive remained hidden from others. Yet, she tells how she has possessed beautiful lips that she never expected. Therefore, Gersamot constitutes self-constituency, first, by pursuing ascriptions to be a character defined by a certain constancy of its dispositions that *she owns beautiful lips*; second, by pursuing imputation one sees it in the kind of fidelity to the self that *she admits her lips were not beautiful before, which is a certain miracle for her*.

Therefore, Gersamot’s self-constituency involves an identity marked by a permanence character of beautiful lips who aspire to carry it forward in time within the continuity of permanence in time. Being cognizant of who she is, Gersamot wanted to keep her attribute,



which is a self-referential activity. In this sense, she raises questions regarding other permanent attributes that can be an expression of self-constituency. The following excerpt presents:

ለመሆኑ ከንፈርሽ ያምራል ሲባል ... ሌላው ገላየ የት ሄደ? ... ለመሆኑ አንድን ሰው አውቀን ውብ ነው የምንለው እንዲህ በቁንጣሪ መረጃ ነው? ማወቅስ ሲባል ምን ማለት ነው? ሌላውን ሰው ማወቅ ቀርቶ ራስን ማወቅ አይከብድም?

When one tells that my lips are beautiful, where is that the other part of my body is put aside? ... Are we simply saying that we know that someone is handsome based on such partial facts? What does knowing mean by itself? Is it not difficult to know about oneself after all; let alone to know others? (p. 40).

The excerpt above provides the questions regarding identity through the voice of a narrator-hero. Gersamot as the subject of an action is trying to conform herself to her new identity. She is unable to understand what makes one beautiful because she never thinks of herself as a beautiful girl.

The subject remains the same throughout the story, but they are subjected to change and subject others to change in search of their identity. What the other characters speak about Gersamot forms a change of identity. Here is an excerpt that Ramisu states about gersamot: “መከት ነገር ጠልቼ እሷን የወደድኩበት ምክንያት ፍልስፍና ስለምታወራ አይደለም። የሚባል አታውቅም። ... የፀዳ ላድርገውና የወደዱኳት አፏን ብቻ ነው።” (“The reason I exceptionally love Gersamot from all other things I hate is not because she is smart or knows philosophy. She did not know it at all. Let me be honest, I loved her only because of her lips”) (p. 177). Thus, what Ramisu tells about Gersamot gives a different form of identity. Hence, the ‘as if’ horizon of the text projects the reader to a mutation of change and permanence.

Ricoeur (1984) infers that narrative identity is an imagination product constructed where the textual world appeared to be real to the reader who receives “the world and the temporality it unfolds in the face of this experience” (p. 79). At first, the narrator presents the pre-existing identity of those characters, introducing their physical appearances and behaviors. As the story continues, a character or hero peruses a certain quest in the dimension of linear time toward a discovery stretching from birth to death. Plot retrieves

past potentials in the form of personal fate and collective destiny. Then, through narrative reconfiguration, the reader will become aware of how the actions of these characters entangled one another, and the changes through time, thereby, creating complex identities.

Characters must identify their existence first in order to recognize their self-worth. They are thrown into life (birth) and must deal with some way. Their quest is established based on the identity they are ascribed that provides expectations for the future. Hence, the quest presents an imaginary travel toward an end or a discovery. Accordingly, they put imputation as a subject of an action to change the outside world which they do not have control. Such self-constituency of identity is prescribed in the narration about, Bakafa. The excerpt reads, “**ሳይንስ ሊያስበው፣ ሊደርስበት በማይችል፣ ቢደርስበት እንኳ ሊገልፀው በሚከብደው ፍቅር ባካፋ አደገ።**” (Bakafa grew up with too much love and protection which beyond the imagination of science to describe” (p.109). The voice of the narrator with unlimited knowledge speaks about Bakafa being grown up by his aunt Lidiya who mentors him, providing all the care he needs.

Bakafa’s life is well planned and structured. Lidiya’s goal for Bakafa’s life is to see him being a “prodigious man” – “... **በልቧ የምትፈልገው፣ ምን እንደሆነ የማታውቀውን አይነት ‘ትልቅ ሰው’ እንዲሆንላት ነበር።**” (“In her heart, she wanted him to be a certain ‘prodigious man’ she does not know about”) (p. 109). Thus, Bakafa’s quest for life is projected following the trajectory of the “prodigious man” to whom he imputes a responsibility of this imaginary figure. His identity of self-constituency is so shaped by his mentor. In this section, the story time moves backward. It presents the reason for what he became now, as a “being” in the present. The story goes back to Bakafa’s childhood and the way he has been mentored and how he has acquired his current career.

Thus, the plot recollects past potentials where the reader imaginatively stretches back in time, witnessing the personal and physical change from childhood to adulthood over time. He joined Hawasa University and graduated in Accounting and Finance. He is interested in producing movies; that is why he has to make money first by studying other fields to achieve his dream of being a film producer. This shows how repetition by the plot presents

actions being recollected from the past and provides the identity of the Doer. In *Afa*, such kind of narration is common where the fate of a character is already decided in story-making. Then, the reader interprets how this character came through to achieve his or her goal or live the expectation set by the narrator or reader, which is a duplication of a travel in space that assumes the shape of a return to the origin.

In this sense, Bakafa as a hero has a quest or tries to act toward his expectation outside of his actual world toward the potential world. He expects to be a film producer - *His dream is to become a film producer with the income he gets as a chartered accountant* (p. 15). The excerpt below tells Bakafa's early dream that reveals his identity:

ባካፋ ሲኒማ የማዘጋጀት ወይም ፕሮዲዩሽን የማድረግ ፍቅሩን ስራ ላይ ለማዋል ሲመኝ በመጀመሪያ የተገነዘበው ቀላል ነገር በቂ ገንዘብ በእጁ ሊይዝ አለመቻሉ ነው። ... በሁለት አመታት ውስጥ ከከንፈር ቀለም፣ ከቅንድብ መከርከሚያ፣ ከብሩሽና ከመሳሰሉት ባገኘው ትርፍ የመጀመሪያውን ፊልም ለመስራት አቅም አገኘ።

When Bakafa wanted to achieve his vision of producing a cinema, the first thing he realized was that he did not have enough money. ... Within two years, he produced his first film with the huge profit he got from selling lipsticks and related cosmetics. (p. 120)

The narration in the above excerpt shows that the quest of the hero involves the character of repetition, which is still imprinted in time by the circular shape of the travel in space. The quest is absorbed into the movement by which the hero becomes who he is. According to Ricoeur (1991), this is the highest form of narrative repetition achieved through the plot. He affirms, “The end of the story is what equates the present with the past, the actual with the potential. The hero is who he was” (p. 114).

Therefore, the refiguration act of narrative provides the translations of consciousness which retrieve the hero's past and brings resoluteness to his or her inherited potentialities that are thrown by birth. Ricoeur takes Heidegger's notion of “repetition”, to infer, the retrieval of our most basic potentialities of “being-in-the-world” inherited from our past in the form of personal fate and collective identity. Accordingly, our destiny and fate happen only in the repetition of action in a narrative. As a result, the issue of coincidence and fate are inscribed in the self-constituency of characters. In *Afa*, the plot is organized by

coincidental events happening here and there. The protagonists continuously encountered things they do not have control and could not change.

Mostly, their actions and meetings with one another are accidental. Ramisu meets Gersamot by coincidence: “እንደ ፀባዩ አቅርቅሬ እየተራመድኩ እያለሁ ፊት ለፊት ኮቴ ሰማሁ። ... በጎንዎ እያለፍኩ ዐይኖቼን ለዘበት ጣል አደረኩ። እሷም ጣል አደረገች። ታዲያስ አቡ! አለች።” (“While I was walking keeping my face down, as usual, I heard footsteps in front of me. I looked for a moment as I pass by. She looked at me too. ‘Hi, Abu’, she says”) (pp. 152-153). In another part of the narrative, Ramisu and Zerihun met on the bus by coincidence – “ከየት ነው በሌሊት አለኝ እዛ ውስጥ ይኖራል ብዬ ያልጠበቅሁት አንድ ሰው። ይህ የሰፈሬ ልጅ ዘሪሁን ይባላል።” (“From where are you coming at this early morning? A guy asked whom I did not expect that he would be around. This guy is called Zerihun who is from my neighborhood”) (p. 179). These excerpts show that each coincidental action is narrated within a separate narrative section.

The narration takes back and forth presented from different narrators in order to display their perspectives. For instance, after the narration by the voice of Gersamot as a narrator-hero, the narrator takes the turn and speaks about other characters like a regular turn-taking conversation. Hence, a new perspective is formed when the narrator presents characters to audiences – like projecting a motion picture from cinema. The narrator’s angle of vision is different from time to time. With all his unlimited knowledge, the narrator unfolds the future fate of the characters. Below is an excerpt:

ይህ ወጣቶች ስብሰባ ቅርፅ ብዙ ጊዜ አይለወጥም። አቅደውት ነው? አንዳንድ ጊዜም ለመሮጥና ወዲያ ወዲህ ለመበታተን ያቀዱ ይመስላል። ምናልባት ወዳጅነታቸው ውስጥ የተገነባው ግን የተደበቀው ጊዜ የሚያመጣው የህይወት ጉዞ በጨረፍታ ራሱን ሲያሳይ ይሆናል። ሁሉ ነገር ተለዋዋጭ ከሆነ፣ በረሃው ካበበ፣ የአበበው ከረገፈ፣ የረገፈው ከፀደቀ እንዲህ የተሰበሰቡ ወጣቶች የማይበታተኑበት ምክንያት ይኖራል?

The way this youth group gathered usually has the same structure. Have they planned it? Sometimes it seems that they are ready to go away or to be dispersed. Probably, this is a hint for their life journey that time would reveal one day, which is now being hidden within their friendship. If everything is changing unceasingly; if the desert gets blossoms and the bloom perishes, or the deceased grow again; then, why not this group of youth would one day be dispersed? (p. 49).

Will their friendship be permanent? The excerpt above presents doubt about the authenticity of their relationship. Since their actions are congruent with the desires of Gersamot and, not their own, they allow the identity of Gersamot to determine their identity. Their intersection revolves around Gersamot's lips. The followability of the plot allows the reader to remain in full attention to grasp the quest of characters in the form of fate or destiny. In this sense, time functions as an experience/change within permanence.

Does time determine the fate of these characters? Beyond their thrownness to birth and death, the narrator is capable of accessing their future – giving a hint of what they would become. However, for the reader, it seems that the narrator is giving the power to time to decide, “Time will tell” (*If everything is changing unceasingly ... why not this group of youth would one day be dispersed?*). This expression presents the self-constituency of the characters whose self-hood will remain the same from beginning to end while circumstances may alter their friendship over time. Certainly, everything is in continuous change. For example, in a cosmic or natural time, there are changes in phenomena, seasons, and natural events. Likewise, biologically people and things change their behavior and form going forward with time.

Now, those friends are separated; they are not as close as they used to be. The narrator repeats what was hinted at previously. Here is an excerpt: “በሦስት አራት ዓመታት ውስጥ በወጣቶቹ መሀል የመራራቅ ነፋስ ገብቷል።” (“Within three or four years, a gap has been noticed between the intimacy of these youths”) (p. 81). Similarly, on page 122, the reader would understand the change in their friendship as he or she is guided by the plot's particular directedness toward an end. The excerpt from Bakafa and Mrs. Mekrez's conversation shows the change within the self-constituency of characters who once used to be close friends: “አርጅተህ እኮ ልትጠፋኝ ነበር። አቡን እጠይቀዋለሁ። አይቼው አላውቅም ይለኛል። ስታድጉ ትራራቁ?” (“You look old that I even barely recognize you. I asked Abu about you and he told me that he had never seen you. You became detached when you get older”) (p. 122). Previously, it was presented in the form of expectation, now it is being discovered. Thus, the reader discovers the quest that was established through the narrator's anticipation in the form of the “future in the past”.

As time and space change, there is also a change in the protagonists' characters or traits. Previously, the protagonists used to sit together in one common place having fun and sharing ideas. They had hidden secret desires toward Gersamot and they all love her lips. As time goes by, these protagonists separated and they met by coincidence. Des Bar and Sosi Café are their common place of meeting. Speaking about the characters, the narrative voice gives new perspectives that remained unknown to the other characters. The narrative about Geleta is a good example. In this case, Geleta's story (who he is? what he does?) is presented in the voice of Gelta's mother (Mrs. Fortuna). This gives another identity to Geleta. His identity was revealed starting his birth. His quiet behavior can be attributed that a character that indicates *permanence in time*. This is Mrs. Fortuna's description of Geleta:

ገለታ ሲወለድ በዛምታ ነበር። እንደማንም ጨቅላ ከማህፀኔ ሲወጣ የደንቡን አላለቀሰም። ... ድሮ ከወዳጆቹ ጋር ሲንቀሳቀል የማየው ልጅ አሁን አሁን እጆቹን ኪሱ ከቶ ሲያስብ አየዋለሁ፣ ወይም ሲያንጎራጎር እሰማዋለሁ።

Geleta was quiet starting from the day he was born. He did not even cry as everyone would do when he was delivered. ... He used to play and hang out with his friends, now I see him being alone immersed in his thoughts or singing for himself. (p. 49).

Similar to the narration in the above excerpt presented by the character-narrator, another narrative voice presents why Geleta shows unusual quiet behavior. This narrative voice states, “ከሁለት ወይም ሦስት አመተት በፊት ቀልቃላ የነበረው ይህ ልጅ ብርድ እንተነፋብት ሁሉ ለምን ቀዘቀዘ? በዕድሜ ከምትበልጠው ሰላማዊት ጋር ግንኙነት በመፍጠሩ እርጅና ተሰምቶት ነው?” (“Why has he become so reserved now? Before two or three years, he was talkative and uncollected. Maybe his relationship with a girl who is older than him makes him look old”) (p. 46). Another voice (a new character in the footnote) also gives personal descriptions of Geleta. The narrator presents that Geleta dreams every day about the same incident, but what he continuously sees in his dream is told by the voice of a participant narrator, Abebe. This dream is Geleta's secret confessed only to Abebe who is a priest, which remains secret for others, even for the narrator who surveys everything from the above. Such technique of narration in the footnote gives the reader new knowledge of the characters' actions which the other narrative may not know.

As a result, the perspectival stories told by different characters retrieve consultation of potentialities. Then, the plot with its repetition, makes identity unstable and complex. Actions and their subjects would become a subject of diverse interpretation by the reader. The ethical judgment toward the characters' actions does not emerge from a single perspective; the reader has access to different voices from different perspectival angles which is made possible by fiction's imaginative variations. This shows how the organization of the plot unifies multiple, seemingly unrelated events into one successive that provides 'shape' to what remains chaotic, obscure, and mute. Since a reader has his own reading time and the act of reading is from beginning to end, he or she may establish a temporal judgment. Such experience is just like a person's experience of time from childhood to adulthood. One perceives things at a certain time. Later, in time, he or she may feel as have been mistaken before. As a result, the reader develops his or her own narrative identity. Man changes in time; as being of within-time-ness, man moves forward in the trajectories of his goals, desires, and circumstances, and in the process acquires a change in personal identity.

The dispersed order of the story is internally connected by the plot's followability which becomes concordant to the discordant series of events. In presenting these different anachronies, the narrator seems to provide information for the reader from the perspective of each character. As Ricoeur writes, differing perspectives about similar events depict characters differently. Multiple perspectives exist for every person (for example, about the dimple of Geleta). Geleta's motives are unclear, making him more mysterious and elusive, even his fate remained mysterious to the reader at the end of the story. In this case, the reader sees the same situation from a different angle, remaining inconsistent identity of each character. Thus, the character has different perception of each other. Therefore, it can be said that the writer of this novel creates a real-life experience for these protagonists. For instance, what Ramisu speaks about Geleta is that: **“ገለታ በትክክል ማን እንደሆነ አይታወቅም። አንገቱን በቋሚነት ደፋ እስሰት ማለት ነው።”** (“No one knows exactly who Geleta is. He is a chameleon that always bends down its neck”) (p. 180).

On one hand, an identity remains self-same; but, within the cohesion of their lifetime, characters must change themselves and refigure different identities. Some cases show characters' unique physical attributes are also changed. For example, when Bakafa meets Gersamot after he came back from Kenya, something has changed in Gersamot's appearance. Her lips are not in their beautiful form as everyone including Bakafa used to admire. There is a change in Gersamot's physical appearance that in turn changes Bakafa's affection towards her: “የመጣችው ሰአቷን አክብራ ቢሆንም ያልጠበቀው ነገር አጋጠመው፡ ፡ የገጣሚው ስንኝ ተሸርፎ በሃሳቡ መጣ፡ በሞቀው ነፍሴ ውስጥ ... አንድ ትልቅ በረድ መጥቶ ተወተረ...” (“[Gersamot] arrived on time, but something that he did not expect has happened. The poet's line came to his mind, an *ice-cold suddenly swallowed into my warmest soul*”) (p. 142). Such moves of narration develop a narrative identity of characters. Gersamot's lips are no more in their previous attraction.

The excerpted expression above shows how Bakafa is defined by the change in Gersamot's appearance. His view of the world, other people, and himself changed after meeting Gersamot for the second time. The change of one's character or personal identity is revealed with the characters' experience of time. The protagonists in this story have to speak about themselves in the experience of being in a different time. To answer the question of “who am I?” one must travel back in time where he or she finds a different self and sense of identity. What he or she and others did are concerned to rebuild an identity of “now”. As Bakafa's views of himself and Gersamot changed, Ramisu too acted in the same way. For these characters, there is an identity explained as before and after which mainly reveals time as experienced by humans. Similar to Bakafa, Ramisu insists:

ተፈጥሮ ያለ ሳንካ ሰራቻት እሷ ሳንካ ሰራች። አፏ ውስጥ እንከን ገነባች። ከዛን ቀን በኋላ ጌርሳሞት ጌርሳ አይደለችም። ለእህቴ ይሄው አልጨነቅም። ... ሰርታታዎ ታቦት ማደሪያ ሆይ ጤና እደሪ!

She was created flawless, but she creates defection in her mouth. After that day, Gersamot is not the person I used to know. ... I will not be concerned for her anymore. ... O my beautiful *Tabot Maderia!* Goodbye to you. (p.188).

For Ramisu, Gersamot was his only hope. After losing Gersamot, everything is the same and insignificant. Through her, he used to look at the world from a different perspective.



When something is changed in Gersamot's appearance, his perspective of her is changed too. As a result, he builds another form of identity for himself and Gersamot. The statement: "After that day, Gersamot is not the person I used to know", shows such a notion of identity. Gersamot's lips were the magnetic attribute to which all the protagonists are attracted. When her beautiful lips forms disappeared, these protagonists have no longer any affection for Gersamot. Looking at her in that way, Bakafa and Ramisu became shocked and tried to redefine themselves afterward.

Mostly, characters take on a new identity. They are in full circle one becoming the other or replacing a space of the other one. Their identity can be explained as before and after the coincidences. For example, one can read Delani's different identities before and after a coincidence. He was a person who was ashamed of his look. Later, he gains a new identity and becomes happy. To show an excerpt text: "የመስታወት ነፀብራቅ ውስጥ የሚያየው ፊት ሰፊው ደሴሊ ንግራ ጉንጨቴ ላይ ጥልቅ ስርንዳ አውጥቶ አየ።" ("From his reflection that he is looking through the mirror, Delani sees a deep dimple marked on his left cheek") (p. 219). Accidentally, Delani got a dimple on his left cheek, taking a new identity and transformation. It is like when one loses the other one gain. Delani encountered the dead body of a young man found on the street of Durban, South Africa. The man has got a dimple on his left cheek. Delani unconsciously touches the dimple, and it is mysteriously placed on his cheek.

Time as a fundamental element of existence determines the fate of characters. Those who were ugly become handsome; those who were beautiful become ugly. Hence, everyone appears to be found in an evolving situation and identity. In line with this, the story notes the notion of circularity where nothing remains static or permanent and everything is in a dynamic of change. Delani was physically fat and looked ugly; then, he gains a new appearance: "ገፁ ብቻ አይደለም የተለወጠው፣ ከአካሄዱም ከእድሜውም አስር ቁጥሮች የቀነሰ ወጣት መስሎ ነው።" ("It is not only his appearance that is changed; he walks like a young man as if ten years detracted from his age") (p. 219). He was bored with life and his career. As he gains a new identity, Delani appears to start a new life with fresh hope,

“ሁለቱንም ክንዶቹን በመደሰት ወደ ላይ አነሳ።” (“He stretched both his arms pleasure”) (p. 220).

What happened to Gersamot is the reverse. She had beautiful lips, but suddenly, they disappeared. Her identity is lost. People who used to admire and wish to date her now lose interest. The narration states, “መስታወት ፊት ለፊት ቆማ ገጽዋን ስታይ የምታየው ቀድሞ ያልነበረ በቦምብ የተመታ ባግዳድ የመሰለ አስቀያሚ አፏን ነው።” (“When she looks at her face through the mirror, what she sees is an ugly face she has never seen before. It looks like a place smashed by bomb”) (p. 228). The physical and psychological change is reversed for Gersamot and Delani.

In the last pages of the narrative, the story takes the reader back to its beginning. In footnote<sup>30</sup>, the narrative comes back to Megdelawit. To the story time, three months passed since Kolase disappeared. Gersamot passed a university entrance exam, and she was preparing herself to join the university for the next academic year. Here is an excerpt: “መግደላዊት ያለ ኮላሴ ከሶስት ወር በላይ መኖሯ እንደጎዳት ገጽዋ ላይ ተዕፏል።” (“One can tell from her face that Megdelawit is sorrowed because it has been over three months since she lost Kolasie”) (p. 245). Suddenly, the compound door is knocked on. A man accompanied by an old woman and a young girl enter. Below is a dialogue between Megdelawit and the guests:

“ወይዘሮ መግደላዊት ነሽ? አይደለም?”

“ለመሆኑ ሰላማዊት የምትባል እናት ነበረችሽ?”

“እናትሽን ወይዘሮ ሰላማዊትን አገኘሁአቸው”

“Are you Mrs. Megdelawit?”

“Do you used to have a mother named Selamawit?”

“I found Mrs. Selamawit who is your mother”. (p. 247).

Megdelawit parents divorced when she was a child, and she was raised by other parents. She did not know her father as well as her mother. The fate of Megdelawit and Kolase seems to be reversed. She lost her husband, but she is reunited with her mother after 40

years — “ከአርባ አመታት በላይ ተለያይቶ መገናኘት ለማንም ከባድ ነው። መግደላዊት የማታውቃቸው ብዙ ዘመዶችና ዘመድ አስተኔዎች አንዱ ለአንዱ እየተቀበሉ ያደገችበት የልጅነት ጊዜ ነው።” (“It will be tough for anyone to meet a parent after forty years of separation. Megdelawit grew up by the hands of many relatives and acquaintances who she did not know well”) (p. 248). Megdelawit’s quest for her identity is now gained as she always wondered why her parents abandoned her. Her identity is now regained; as the saying goes, *what goes around comes around*. The plot’s notion of followability offers the reader layers of interpretation. As Ricoeur (1984) states, “Every story, we have said, in principle explains itself. In other words, narrative answers the question “Why?” at the same time that it answers the question “What?” To tell what has happened is to tell why it happened” (p. 152).

It seems that the whole narrative situation of *Afə* has got a resolution. The whole story comes to where it begins, taking a circular narration. The protagonist's identity is also reversed. Kolasie was found as an infant at a riverside; then, he mysteriously disappears. Gersamot accidentally possessed beautiful lips; accidentally, she loses those beautiful forms of her lips. Megdelawit lived without her parents; now, she is reunited with her mother. The story seems moving toward the same goal. It seems that there is a similar fate encountering every character. They either change their identity or found themselves in a state of *de j'avou*. They lost themselves in the cyclical coincidences and happenings. Ricoeur (1991) notes that tracing in the quest for identity formed at the level of repetition; it is a kind of repetition that would generate the quest itself. It presents a circular return to the origin. The hero is who he was.

#### **4.3.2. Self-knowledge and Confession**

Characters look back in time. Through retention of the past, they recollect their time and reevaluate their own “self”. Through plot, scattered pieces of stories will become coherent and acceptable so that the subject will recognize his or her self-constituency. In this case, characters as the subject of an action confess how they came through in all such unfulfilled desires, goals, and motives. This confession, however, is a way to regain another identity.

They admit or accept the bittersweet and try to settle down. The narrative about Ramisu clearly shows such a development of narrative identity. In this section (pages 170-175), the narration is full of a stream of consciousness. The narrator is deeply involved in confession and revelation of his internal self. The confession opens up with a statement, “**ይኸው ልናገረው**” (“*Let me speak it out now*”) (p. 171). This expression is a kind of narrative cure. He is revealing why he hates everything, expressing what he had come through. Therefore, it is a new self of narrative identity that the self is proclaiming himself, “I am this man now”. Ricoeur (1980) asserts that “If one succeeds in getting out of the labyrinth, then he becomes a new being (p. 189).

The narrator-hero provides his new self-image of the past and his being in the present. His previous identity of man with ambition, goal, and dream to fulfill and his identity at ‘now’ are presented. Why has he become so hopeless now? Here, the narration presents, “... **እንዲህ መራራ የሆንኩበት ምክንያት ግራኝ በመሆኔ ሳይሆን ምናልባት ምናልባት እድለቢስ ስለሆንኩ ነው።**” (“I became so nasty not because that I am left-handed; perhaps, it is because I am not lucky”) (p. 172). Characters come to being in a state of chaos. Dasein or being is thrown between “birth and death”. Ramisu’s questions about himself reveal such a notion. His sense of time became lost; thus, his identity was questioned. Ricoeur notes that the future is designed by expectations. Ramisu’s concern and expectation about Gersamot are now gone. Then, his anticipation of living forward is lost too. He is always trying to escape from the reality. He pretends to live, but he hates life, people, and things around him. Everything around him happens against his will. He thinks his time and place are taken by others as if he is living in a world he does not deserve.

Gersamot, on the other side, was hopeful and had a purpose in life. Once her beautiful lips get deformed, she seems to lose all her sense of being in the world, “**የወጣት መንገድ ነው የጀመረችው ግን በቅጥታል።**” (“She was just stepping in the route of youthhood, but she is done with it”) (p. 232). Her youthhood hopes vanished with her lips. She accepted her fate finally. In this sense, self-knowledge is a confession that characters admit they are living in a world they do not have control over. This shows that the expectation is human

beings' sense of existence as living toward death. With the goals and concerns they have in life, they live through the future in the form of expectation. In this sense, human values time and be influenced by time. Ricoeur puts that narratives often create a feeling of necessity, which can make acts seem as if they rely on each other and must happen in the order they happen. However, as discussed earlier, behind every narrative is nothing more than a series of discordant episodes, which the author links together through a plot, to develop a cohesive and meaningful story.

The contingent events at the core of identity are often mistaken to have happened by fate instead of by choice (Gersamot, Geleta, Ramisu, Delani, Bakafa). Characters of course cannot choose their future. Ultimately, the characters in *Afə* are in a world that operates by fate alone. Like the game of *qibiblosh*, the player acknowledges the deterministic world of the actor. Thus, characters, although determined by fate, have reason to wonder whether destiny shapes their lives or not, or whether they truly control their lives, or if fate is responsible for dictating their lives. They found themselves in uncontrollable situations. They accept the situations and submit themselves easily to the things around them, "let it be" as they have no choice. For example, Gersamot and Ramisu endorse the fateful world - *I will not be concerned for her anymore. ... O my beautiful Tabot Maderia! Goodbye to you*, Ramisu finally confesses. He finds that at the heart of fate is the meaninglessness of existence.

Similarly, Ramisu seems to accept his fate and lacks meaning in his life. In the previous analysis about memory, it is already explained that Ramisu's encounter with watching a movie made him trespass into remembrance of his youthhood. He then tries to imagine himself outside of his existence in the present. Imaginatively dislocating oneself is questing for a lost identity far from time and space. Because of the film, he is watching, Ramisu dislocates mentally from the present time and space. When the film ends, he is suddenly immersed in his past, united with his lost identity. The narrator-hero continuously narrates about himself:

ወንድሜ ባካፋ ከእኔ ይለያል፡ ውጊያውን ያላቆመ ገና ከፈረሱ ያልወረደ ጊወርጊስ ነው። በለጠኝ?  
... የሚወዱኝ እንዳሉ አውቃለሁ ግን ሀሉን እጠላለሁ። ምናልባት ጥጋቦኝ ነኝ። ምናልባት  
በጥጋቦኝነቴ እኮራለሁ፣ እመካለሁም።

My brother Bakafa is different from me. He is like a St' George who is still on the back of the horse and did not quit fighting. He is better than I am, yeah? ... I know some people love me, but I hate all of them. Maybe I am an arrogant man. Maybe I am proud of my arrogance. Of course, I am feeling proud. (p. 204).

Ramis, who once was a person full of dreams and had a bright future, is now lost his hopes and previous identity. The person who had a goal and dreams to achieve is now lost. That infers a person in time with two different identities. As a reader, one can understand that his hope was dashed because he could not find things as he expected. However, through narrative, he tries to redefine himself, in effect developing another identity. Narrating one's story is just like revisiting how a "being" passed through those trajectories in time. As a self-story, the film helps him to look back and unite with the identity lost. Such an act of remembrance helps the narrative voice to gain a new narrative self as the film is a reflection of his childhood experience. This narrative identity answers another "Who am I?" of the narrative self or voice gained after self-knowledge.

#### 4.5. Summary

The story of *Afə* depicts discordant aspects of aspiring youthhood and despairing maturity periods; authentic expectation and unexpected consequences; joyful moments and unfulfilled desires, and above all divergent experiences of transiency and permanence in time and selfhood. The narration involves multiple narrators and voices who present about themselves and other characters. Furthermore, the footnotes presented as supplementary plots and commentaries give the text a metanarrative mode. *Afə* is situated in the narrative technique of stream of consciousness that serves as the basis for the experience that its characters have of time and that the narrative voice of the novel wants to communicate to the reader. This gives the readers different temporal and spatial perspectives of the story. As a result, the whole analysis of the research has relied on the theoretical issue of time as a subject of analysis. Based on the theoretical framework of Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative*, the analysis presents temporal variations, memory, and narrative identity.

In the first section, the analysis has presented the issue of temporality on *Afə*. It has been analyzed that the novel *Afə*, as one form of fiction provides mediation of time between lived time and cosmic time, and world time and internal time. As has been stated redundantly in the previous sections, fiction by its virtue of imagination presents a complete understanding of the experience of time which neither the cosmological nor the phenomenology of time has answered. In this theory, Ricoeur includes the notion of narrative voice theory in the interpretation of the experience of time is that he includes. Through the narrative voice, every narrative involves dual temporality; the first is a linear one that moves toward an end with the plot's "followability" while the other one surveys the story that is being "grasped as a whole" which puts the experience in recollection and presents traversed time.

Having said this, the narration or utterance of *Afə* is subjected to different narrative voices and narrators. In the first chapter of the story, a non-participant narrator presents the five protagonist characters, gazing from a *totum simul* perspective. In this case, the narrator with past voice recollects actions and events; hence, time is being traversed. Putting characters forward in the lived time, this voice takes a divine or eternal time, which represents cosmic time. Characters by their side constitute linear time in the lived time or live forward in the within-time-ness, as a temporal being between birth and death. These characters are put forward in time toward the future they are uncertain about. Without knowing the future, they linearly experience time by establishing goals, desires, and motives.

Additionally, because characters and their action are established 'in' time, they constitute a physical time marked as "before" and "after" which is the experience of being *stretching-along*. In this sense, they have private time to do or not to do things, or to have or lose time, etc., which is prescribed within the subjective aspect of time. As a result, the novel, *Afə*, simultaneously presents the linear and traversed or non-linear aspects of time. In this way, narration mediates the cosmological and phenomenological time, which are to be irreconcilable from one another. Mostly, calendar time which is a form of external or universal time has not been emphasized in the story time. In addition, technically, the

narrative is organized with non-chronological distorted plots that continuously disrupt the story and make it difficult to explore temporal gaps within the time of the story.

In this novel, the footnotes also develop their plot and time in addition to that of the main story. Thus, it has been noted that in *Afā*, events or actions are presented by different voices and time of utterances. For this case, the analysis has illustrated an example from chapter two on pages 87 and 103, in which a spatial, as well as temporal perspective of a story, is presented. In this section, events on the chronicle day of *Thursday* have been presented with multiple perceptual angles that provide a subjective experience of time by different protagonist characters who are having the same Thursday, which is an external or public time. Therefore, the analysis has illustrated the objective and subjective forms of time. Such kind of narration is also explored in the other part of the story, which also established different temporal and spatial perspectives of the story.

Furthermore, the novel *Afā* involves narrative repetitions, which is the other temporal quality of the story. At this point, it is noted that the narration in establishes actions at the deep level of repetition, which in turn, provides imaginative forms of time like metatemporal, mortal time and public time, eternal time, etc. Due to the involvement of multiple narrators, the story unfolds itself to the reader with different world possibilities of “being-in-the-world”. In this case, different excerpts have been provided as an illustration of the imaginative time formed between the narrative time and the world time of the reader. More importantly, Adam used mythic form time which the time of narrative is mostly stated as - *once upon a day, one day, on one period*, etc. In this form of time, time has become unmeasurable through the loss of its handholds and measures. Such kind of narration presents a different quality of time limit-experience between eternity and time. By the mythic representation, time is personified; then, provides a different conception of time. In this sense, transformation, transiency, eternity and cyclicity have been identified as the conception of time reflected in *Afā*.

Dominantly, the cyclical notion of time is reflected. Like the recurrent patterns of nature, *Afā* employs similar actions and events that are subjected to repetitive occurrences. This



explanation alludes to Messay's (2013) argument about the Ethiopians' cyclical conception of time (see section 1.1). Likewise, in *Afə*, the author employed different narrators and voices; the narration presents the rhythm of actions, which are appeared to be cyclical. Nothing remains permanent; everything evolves repetitively. Such circumstances reflect African temporality, in which the meaning of time and existence is inscribed with the rhythm of life. Recurrent patterns and rhythms of actions are dominantly orchestrated in the novel, *Afe*.

Concerning memory, the novel, *Afə* employed a narrative voice who is in the act of recollection discerning temporal wholes bringing about the heterogeneous circumstances, goals, means, interactions, and intended or unintended results into one "organized whole". The narrator recollects stories about events and characters that they retain backward in search of experience. Through memory, time is unified with a temporal flux of *coming-towards*, *having-been*, and *making-present*, which is different from the teleological structure of past, present, and future as a separate entities of time. The narrators and characters recall an action in the past where they put themselves backward in the visitation of lost time. As a result, they experience quasi-present. In this sense, the Ethiopian notion of *tizta* has been interpreted along with the concept of remembrance. When the protagonist character, for instance, Ramisu immersed in nostalgia, he imaginatively travels in the space where he is united with his past time. Thus, *tizta* as a voice of the past constitutes the quasi-past of the narrator-hero, experiencing the space of 'here' and 'there' and in the temporality of 'now' and 'then'.

The concept of narrative identity was the other issue of analysis. How characters identify a *self*, how they act to keep their self-constituency, and how they respond as the subject of action have been explained. Characters must identify their existence first in order to recognize their self-worth. They are thrown into life (birth) and must deal with some way. The existence of dealing with and being trapped by circumstances and personal issues is a constraint to leading meaningful lives. To establish control, they see themselves as agents of change. Thus, in *Afə*, the hero's quest is established in the dimension of time which is an imaginary travel. Accordingly, he or she acts to change the outside world which they do

not have control over. Hence, the characters try to imagine life outside their present state of existence.

In the story, characters are interconnected by actions that present fate and coincidence. Things happened by coincidence. Constituting self in the time between birth and death, characters have put desires and goals, which are established in the quest forward. However, when they act accordingly, things appeared to be not working. For instance, Ramisu and Gersamot failed to meet when they plan to a dating. Hence, the narrative voice seems to focus on the characters' feelings, not on the chronological appearances of events. Events happened at the same stretching-along of time and the events are also the same, but they are narrated with the focal view of different characters; hence, different identities are perceived in each one of them. Finally, the separate narratives of each protagonist give the reader a complete identity of the characters. Ricœur discusses how all actions are interactions with others because no action can be isolated from others and thus will affect others in some way. These different perspectives can create varying identities of the same person from the same event.

### ***The Metaphor of Qibiblosh as a Circular Narrative Technique***

At the end of the novel, Adam explained the narrative technique he employs when writing *Afə* is imitated from a game called *qibiblosh*. It is a puzzle game played by a group of individuals using five small gravels, which in the context of the current research, this novel can be taken as a metaphor for the pre-narrative structure of action in the real world. In this case, the existential structure of *qibiblosh* as a metaphor of prefiguration is used to organize the narrative structure of the story in *Afə*, which is an act of configuration. The narration of the story is organized in just the way *qibiblosh* is played by oscillating gravels with steps and procedures.

When playing *qibiblosh*, a player picks five gravels that are round and the same size and put them on a convenient flat space. One among the five gravels has a unique purpose the other gravels are picked by using this gravel, called *meklebiya* (picking gravel). By tossing the *meklebiya* gravel, a player picks up the others one by one and collects them. It is played

with different steps and rounds until the player makes a foul, and gives the turn to another player.

Similar to the five gravels, the five protagonists in *Afā* are assigned to the circular action from one narrative to another narrative acting on the same events turn by turn. There is already a given rule for this game; the player certainly knows and plays accordingly with the rules and steps that follow. However, the player has no control over choosing which gravel to pick first because they are randomly picked. Accordingly, the story of *Afā* is established with five protagonist characters (Gersamot, Geleta, Zerihun, Bakafa, and Ramisu) whose action is determined by circumstances and coincidences. Gersamot is placed at the center of the story that she used to pick other protagonist characters. Being at the center of the story, other characters react to situations around them and judge the world in relation to her. Thus, she is the focal person where everything is perceived. The characters act randomly, and events are organized as if they are happening by coincidences that in effect make the narration cyclical.

As a result, *qibiblosh* as a narrative technique can be explained along with Ricoeur's notion of threefold mimesis. Ricoeur maintains that narrative is a circular action of pre-figuration or mimesis<sub>1</sub>, the configuration or mimesis<sub>2</sub>, and refiguration or mimesis<sub>3</sub>. Like the five gravels in the *qibiblosh* gravels picked turn by turn, those five protagonists in *Aff* are involved in a motive of picking or dating Gersamot. A character acted on circumstances without knowing the other did the same thing. Humans are thrown into a world where they do not have control. As Ricoeur states, their temporality dictates as "being-toward-death" thrown between birth and death that is to "with-in-time-ness". They are eager to live ahead, they think, desire, act, and plan, but they do not have control over things. In *Afā*, the author act as a player who intentionally determines the number of gravels and plays them randomly.

## **Chapter Five: Temporality, Memory and Narrative Identity in *Bäfəkər Səm***

This chapter is exclusively devoted to the analysis of the second Amharic novel, *Bäfəkər Səm*. As it has been analyzed in the previous analysis of *Afə*, the forthcoming sections under this chapter present temporality, memory, and narrative identity in *Bäfəkər Səm*. The analysis under this chapter shows how fiction is a concordance for such discordance of time, thereby presenting a complete understanding of time.

### **5.1. Synopsis of *Bäfəkər Səm***

The novel, *Bäfəkər Səm* (“In the Name of Love”) by Alemayehu Gelagay designates the theme of identity, love, culture, and time. The time of the story pervades a historical context of the period between two Ethiopian governments. The story is set in Addis Ababa, a specific neighborhood called, Shegole. The story depicts life in one family that is presented through the perspective of a first-person narrator named, Talə. Being the only male child, he gets maximum protection and nursing from his mother and sisters. “Only King Solomon and I knew the benefits of being surrounded by females,” he says. His mother gives him special attention because she has begotten him after praying to the Holy and invocation to a sorcerer. However, his father, Mr. Bizen does not like the way Talə was being nurtured or treated in the family. Mr. Bizen thinks that his son is nurtured with a feminine character because Talə always stays at home and does tasks assigned to females. On contrary, Chayna (his elder sister) does more male things. She has a muscular complexion; exercises karate; she stays outside. She mocks Talə calling him, “sissy”.

Despite all the love and care that Talə was enjoying from the other members of the family, his elder sister exceptionally does not love him. He wonders why she hates him. He got the answer after she revealed to him a family secret about his true identity. In one incident, he met Chuchu, a mentally retarded boy who lives next door. Chuchu told him that he has eaten a chicken that Talə’s mother has thrown it away after a superficial practice. Then, his mother warned Talə not to meet Chuchu again. One day, Chayna told him that Chuchu is

ailed because his childhood ailment was transferred to Chuchu through their mother's solicitation to a sorcerer. Then, he has possessed the body and identity of Chuchu. Realizing this fact, he began to hate himself. He thinks that he is in the body of another boy and that his true nature exists in the body of Chuchu. He thinks that his mother's love for him is a curse in "In the Name of Love" that gives suffering to others.

Talə falls in love with a girl named Sifen. She is a beautiful girl from another city called, Nazret who occasionally came to Addis Ababa to visit her distant father who lives next door to Talə's family. Sifen and Talə's mother believes that Talə possesses a magical spirit. One day, she revealed to him that she slept with him thinking that his supernatural spirit may consent to her. At this point, Talə questions again about his identity – "who am I?" – as Sifen loved him for the spirit he has been possessed with, not for who he is.

The story reaches its climax when Talə has intruded on another question of gender identity. One day, Sifen was in his room preparing dry food for Ato Bizen because he was called to the military for the second time. On this occasion, Talə was troubling Sifen by calling her repetitively. Then, Sifen became angry and humiliated him that he is a "sissy" and he is not doing what men do. At this time, Talə became alerted to his gender reference. He wonders why his sister Chayna, his father Ato Bizen, and again Sifen were calling him "sissy". Then, he begs Chayna to help him avoid his sissy character and became like a man.

One day, news about the death of Ato Bizen was heard that it has died on the war front. Sifen came to share the grief of the family. Three months later the news about the death of Ato Bizen, and strange soldiers are seen in the city. These soldiers were the defeated government soldiers. Then, it has announced that the president of the country, Mengistu Haile-Mariam has fled. A new government was established in the country. On this day, Ato Bizen has returned home with other two soldiers despite the news of his death. However, an accident has changed the family's moment of happiness into a grievance. One of the family members Chayna died from expulsion from the Shegole bullet factory where she was around with her friends collecting metals.

Talə is introduced to one of the soldiers who has returned with his father. The soldier was a captain and he loves reading books. He shared his experiences for Talə, who he was, and what he did when he was at a young age. He recommends books so that Talə could have broad imagination and perspective. The Captain asked Talə about Chuchu; then, Talə told him that Chuchu became what he is now because of him. However, the Captain disregard what Talə believed is not true. He told him that Chuchu was mentally retarded and it is not transferable, and his ailment is since from he had been born. Struggling with the belief that his mother and Sifen thought about him and what the Captain told him about, Talə finds himself in confusion. His attachment with Sifen became closer than ever before, but, at the same time, he was feeling discomfort in their relationship. Questioning identity, religion, gender, and other issues, he became negligent to Sifen.

One day, when Talə came home from the place where he waited with friends, he realized that Chuchu was not there. His sister told him that some voluntary people from an NGO have taken Chuchu where he could get medical treatment. Soon, Talə was shocked and lost consciousness. He became retarded like Chuchu; he was not properly talking, unable to walk either. His family took him to different places for his recovery. Talə remained in a state of mental retardation for three months until he is finally taken to a psychiatric hospital. After analyzing the case, the psychiatrist suggested bringing Chuchu back home. When Chuchu was brought back home, Talə regains his consciousness and became healthy as he was before. Then, the family rejoiced and Chuchu became a part of the family.

## **5.2. Temporal Variations in *Bäfəkar Səm***

The *Bäfəkar Səm* is organized in an episodic narrative structure with three episodes, entitled: **ከልውጥውጡ በፊት** (“before the change”), **ልውጥውጡ**, (“during the change”) and **ከልውጥውጡ በኋላ** (“after the change”), which are structured in terms of chronological order. The first episode sets in the final periods of the then Derg government while the second episode encompasses the time during the transitional period of the emergent government. The third episode is presented in a pictorial that is given a narrative space of only one page. This envisages the story forward but remains untold after the

change. This episodic nature of the novel presents the story with time references of “before” and “after”. Each episode consists of opening verses of the Bible, recited from Genesis 2:79; Genesis 3: 17; and Isaiah 46: 1-2 respectively. These verses entail a change and transformation in the course of the narrative. The narrative starts with the voice of an unidentified hero opening the utterance. The name, place, and calendar time are deemphasized and become recognizable to the reader on the later pages.

The external time is mostly expressed in terms of historical events, seasons, ritual/festive days, or the age of the characters. It does not directly specify calendar or clock time. The time of utterance is in the living present from which the narrator takes a visitation of an earlier experience that refers back to the time of the hero’s childhood and youth experiences. In this case, the narrator directly enjoins the hero who is telling about his internal experience. Through the expression “አሁን ሳስብው” (“When I think about it now”), the voice of the narrator considers the present from the point of view of the anticipation of remembered past. In this case, the narrative has two voices: the hero and the narrator.

### **5.2.1. Linear Time and Traversal Time**

As Ricoeur insists, every narrative structure encompasses dual temporality. This dual temporality is achieved through the function of the narrative voice. The voice of the hero moves linearly towards uncertain consequences and outcomes; whereas, the narrator who puts himself in the visitation tells what was being experienced and knows events, agents, consequences, and outcomes ahead. At the level of the story, the characters move forward linearly with the plot; the other one is an achronological dimension that traverses time back and forth bi-directionally. By its chronological dimension, the *telos* of the plot carry the hero forward in a state of imperfect knowledge about the consequences of his actions. By its achronological dimension of the *totum simul*, the narrator who already knows the outcome gazes backward on events from a fixed perspective.

As Ricoeur (1988) explicates, great mediation of art is achieved through the narrator who performs an authentic repetition by relating the *Quest* in the apprenticeship to signs and the

*Visitation*. At this point, the convergence in these two aspects of time brings a fictive experience of time. This kind of experience permits the readers to grasp their immersion in the story as having been an interlude within the mortal time of their existence. In *Bäfəkar Səm*, the story involves not only dual temporality of narrative structure but different experiences of time envisaged by the narrator and a hero-character. A hero named, Talə narrates life's desires, circumstances, and goals with limited knowledge about the consequences of his actions. As a narrator, he is ordained to access the hero's past and future.

In this story, as a hero, Talə is a privileged boy who enjoys maximum protection and family care. He has a strong attachment with female companions like his sisters, his mother, and his female friends. These females shape his worldview or identity. He owes them for love and caring: “በሴት የመከብብን ጥቅም የምናውቀው እኔና ጠቢቡ ሰሎሞን ነን።” (“Only I and the wise man, Solomon blessed to know the benefits of being surrounded by females” (p. 7). This expression opens the narration, already stretching into the narrative world; at the same time, it projects the reader toward the *anagnorisis* or recognition, which is sequentially being unfolded.

Therefore, the hero with his expectation and ambition pushed forward in time, which dictates a linear perspective. Additionally, the hero plunges into confusing matters and various questions of life such as identity, love, motherhood, and religion. He wonders why his father (Ato Bizen) and one of his sisters (Chayna) do not like the way he is being nurtured in the family. For example, his father comments, “እግዚዮብሔር የሰጠኝን ወንድ ልጅ የገዛ ሚስቴና ልጆቼ ነጠቁኝ” (“God gave me a son, but my wife and daughters snatched me”) (p. 8). And Chayna humiliates him by calling him “ሴታሴት” - which means “sissy”. The attitude of Chayna and his father toward him is conflicting with what he believes: “ሴቶች እጣፋንታዎቼ ናቸው” (“Females are my good fortune”) (p. 8).

Hence, Talə is moving toward this recognition unforeseen by him and the reader. He is not yet cognizant of what Chayna and his father already knew about him, which indicates the story is being grasped as a whole. Being within-time-ness, the hero moves toward the future



that he does not know about circumstances and consequences. To understand the hero, the reader traverses into, as Ricoeur says, “a particular directedness” (1985, p. 150) through an act of following. This presents a spatial structure of time. As a result, the act of reading conjoins the series of events that are presented with the spatial reference of ‘before’ and ‘after’.

Therefore, the hero and the reader move linearly in the story world where they have limited knowledge regarding actions and circumstances. For the sake of recognition, they move towards the future in terms of possibility and uncertainty. For example, Talə’s confusion about what his mother is doing for him - “አንዳንዴ የእናቴ ነገር አይገባኝም ...” (“Sometimes, I do not understand what my mother is doing”) (p. 9); the confrontation between his mother and father regarding himself - “ጠንቋይ እየቀለብኩ፤ የጠንቋይ ልጅ እያሳደኩ” (“I am serving a sorcerer; I am raising a sorcerer’s son”) (p.18), that puts him in a linear quest towards a recognition. Such dialogues make the hero involved in an inquiry about his personhood and life in the future. This takes us to Heidegger’s notion of “thrownness among things” that man is thrown into the world of circumstances where he has no control. Similarly, the hero of this novel has any control over the situations and circumstances and awaits the future in terms of possibility. Hence, the reader advances with the story along with the experience of the hero who is in the quest of time.

The storyline of *Bäfäkar Säm* is established as an advancement towards the hero’s search for an answer or meaning for his question. Talə enjoys life because of the privilege of being the only son. However, there are things on his mind that are not clear yet. For instance, he wonders why his mother took him to a sorcerer named *Ofa Buko*; why his father did not like the superstitious belief in his mother; why Chayna belittled him by calling him “sissy”? The following excerpt shows this:

ቻይና ከቤተሰቡ ሁሉ የምትጠላኝ ይመስለኛል። ገና ስታየኝ “ሂሽ” ትለኛለች። እኔና ቻይና አይንና ናጫ ነን። የቃል ኪዳናዊ ወንድነቷ ዋጋ ያጣው እኔ ስወለድ ስለሆነ ሴትነቷ ተረጋግጦ ትዳር እስክትይዝ በጠላትነት እንቆያለን ስል አስባለሁ።

I think Chayna hates me more than anyone in the family. When she saw me, she said, “Hish” Chayna and I are at odds. I think we will remain hostile until her feminine nature is revealed and get married because her manhood character is taken on the day I was born. (p. 20-21)

As stated in the excerpt above, the hero’s awareness of himself is limited by what other characters think about him. For example, Talə does not know why Chyna calls him “sissy”. In this sense, he attempts to find an answer to his questions by moving toward the time of his expectation. The voice who is narrating the story in the present utterance guides the hero and the reader to an experience, which awaits there to be recognized later. Through the hero’s motives for the future, there is a time waiting at some spot. This indicates a spatial spot of “there” and a temporal mark, as Ricoeur says, the “future in the past”.

The hero’s awareness of time and self is determined through objects or circumstances that surround him. Thus, he lives with presupposition and possibility. Sometimes he does not know what is going on around, him nor has a clue about his identity. For instance, he is cognizant of his age (biological time) through his mother’s statement: “አሁን እኮ ጉልቅ ነህ፤ አስራ አራት አመት ሆኖሃል።” (“You are now a big person; you are fourteen years old”) (p. 8). It seems that time is moving forward. But, the change in the hero’s view of the world, and attitude, is changing continually. The change and progress (physical or psychological) reveal the sense of time that is understood through biological time. It presents how man comes through time. As it continues ahead, the story preserves the passage of time. At the same time, the worldview and perspective of the hero change with the passage of time.

One day, Talə encounters with mentally retarded boy named Chuchu who lives next door. His mother told him not to approach Chuchu ever again. When he became afraid of Chuchu, his mother told him to blare a horn so that Chuchu would become panic. Being cognizant of what happened to Chuchu, Chyna sympathizes with him “በሽተኛ አይደል በስንት ነገር ይበደል?” (“He is sick. For how many things does he have to sacrifice?”) (p. 39). Chayna believes that Chuch is retarded because of her mother’s magical spell, which reverses the illness of Talə to Chuchu. In this sense, the narrative consciousness of the hero is limited to that of the other characters. He is behind what happened in the world of the

story. When he realized what happened to Chuchu, he began to hate his mother. As a narrating self, the hero advance toward an uncertain future. He does not know what the future holds for him. Being in the time of utterance, his mind is full of unsolved questions, multiple dilemmas, and uncertain possibilities.

However, the narrator who is beyond the hero's time narrates the story of the hero and traverses time. With full access to the future narration (knowing what to tell and what comes next), the narrator presents the experience of a young hero. As the narrator turns back to the time of the hero's childhood and youth, the narrative interprets Talə's view regarding life, family, and himself. The narrator is already cognizant of the time that is still unreachable for the hero. For instance, the narrator already knows Chayna died in an accident of the explosion of the *Shegole* gun bullet factory but presents as if Chayna is still alive. That put the narrator in the divine (out of the time boundary), presenting a former identity placed in another time and place.

In this regard, the narrator revisits the time of the hero. He traverses back and regains the time that was once passed and lost. Some remarks by the narrator like – “አሁን ሳስበው” (When I think about it now) - confirm that the extra-temporal is only the first threshold of time regained. For instance, the statement:

አሁን ሳስታውሰው እንደ አዲስ የሚያስቀኝ የመጀመሪያው የስፖርት ገጠመኔ ነው። ... ያኔ ያለቀስኩ ይመስለኛል። አሁን ሳስበው ግን የሚስቀኝ ሆነ። ከቻይና ጎላ ጎላ መሮጥ ብቻ ሳይሆን ስንሄድም እርምጃዋን እንድቀዳ አስከትላኝ ነው።

When I think about it now, I burst into laughter during my first sporting experience. I think I cried then. Now, it is a moment that makes me laugh when I recall it. I run and walk behind Chayna to imitate the way she does. (p. 79).

As indicated above, the excerpt statement identifies the narrator's temporal position. The past voice temporally distances itself from the time of the story. The story established itself between the present utterance and earlier events that function as transitional points in the hero's initiation. The expression - “When I think about it now”, shows the “stretching-along” in between from one instant to another instant. Hence, the lapse of time fixed between “now” (an utterance in the present) and “then” is the narrator's physical time. In

this case, constituting “being-towards-death”, the voice of the narrator experiences quasi-present because any remembered instant is a present with its own retention and protension. Additionally, the expression shows the narrator’s voice supports the hero’s discovery of an extra-temporal being. Then, time is regained through the narrator’s observation of the hero’s time.

Similarly, the narrator’s voice is distinctively heard again as an observer of the hero in the statement - “አሁን ሳስበው ያንን መጥፎ እውነት እንዴት እንደተጋፈጥኩት ግራ ይገባኛል፡” (“As I think about it now, I do not understand how I managed that unpleasant truth”) (p. 99). This statement shows that a voice traverses toward the past from the point of the present utterance. Apart from the extra-temporal feature, time is sensed back and forth bi-directionally, and gave us a spatial reference of physical time as ‘there’ and ‘here’. As Ricoeur asserts, the extra-temporal being is an aesthetic creation, but it is not the product of words; it is an existence that precedes us. It has only been discovered as creating is translating.

Through the expressions like above, the narrator’s voice is distinctively heard which traverses and establishes a visitation to the past. Whereas, the hero’s voice moves toward the future in the linear quest of time, wondering why Sifen humiliates him as Chayna and his father did: “ለምን ወንድ ለመሆን አትደፍርም? ለምን እነሱ የሚያደርጉትን አታደርግም? ለምን እነሱ የሚውሉበት አትውልም?” (“Why do not you dare to be a man? Why do not you do what men do? Why do not you be on the place where men are expected to be?”) (p. 64). Hence, the voice of the hero still wonders what is that being a man is while the voice of the narrator interprets self from the position of present utterance. The experience is different for both voices.

Shocked by Sifen’s comment, the hero began to question his identity. Henceforth, the hero defines himself in terms of physical time that is marked as ‘before’ and ‘after’ this moment. Sifen comments on what his father and China used to say. What is new in her remark is because of the hero’s attention toward her. He redefines his father’s expression - “አፋብትን ያላየ፣ መች ወንድነቱን ለየ” (“One who did not see *Afabet*, could not affirm his manhood”)

to “ሲፈንን ያላየ፣ መቸ ወንድነቱን ለየ” (“One who did not see Sifen, could not affirm his manhood”) (p. 49). With his strong desire for Sifen, he immersed himself in the awaiting of a future time that is the expectation of having Sifen. The hero’s desire for Sifen is stroke by her comment regarding his gender identity – “Why do not you dare to be a man?” He was ready to possess love and sexual desire. He identifies himself as a young man, but Sifen gives him another question of identity. In this case, the narrator awaits to present about Sifen until the hero’s age of maturity. Sifen is introduced here as a figure who plays a defining monument in the hero’s search for meaning in life.

In this case, Sifen is a figure of authority by whom everything is explained as before and after. Time gets its meaning after the narrative is stated. What is defined here is the time lived by the hero. What was like “before” is defined in relation to what is experienced “now”. In another narrative statement, the voice of the narrator speaks from the distant past and provides an interpretation of the narrative experience. This aspect of temporal distance is reflected on page 138. Below is an excerpt:

አሁን ላይ ሆኜ እንደሚገባኝ በዚያ ጊዜ ከሲፈን ያገኘሁት እርፍትና ፀጥታ ሌላኛው የእውነታ ግላጭ ሆኖልኝ ነበር። በተረት አባሮሽ እሸሽ የነበረው የቻቹና የቻይና እውነት በሌላ እውነት ካልሆነ በስተቀር ድብብቆሽ እድሜ እንደሚይዳረኝ የገባኝ ይመስለኛል። ልክ እሾህን በሾህ እንደሚባለው የሲፈን እውነት የቻቹና የቻይና አስካሪ እውነት የሚያለዝብ እውነት እንደሚሆን ገብቶኝ ነበር።

As I understood it now, the relief and tranquility I got from Sifen was a manifestation of the other side of the truth. I think I understand that I would not have time to live while trying to escape from the myth of Chuchu and Chayna, which I had to confront through another truth. Like the saying goes “removing thorn by thorn”, I understood that Sifen’s truth would be an answer to the complicated truth about Chuchu and Chayna. (p. 138).

In the above extraction, a distinct voice of the past is heard interpreting the experience of the hero. The expression, “When I understood it now” marks the narrator’s view of the past from the position of the present. Traversing time, the voice of the narrator sees the hero from the *totum simul* perspective, or a temporal and spatial distance that reflects experience through the eyes of the present, which is still the hero’s future. The religious and superstition conflicts regarding Chuchu and his mother, his unfulfilled desire for Sifen, and all the psychological dilemmas experienced by a growing hero are later interpreted by the voice of the narrator. Hence, the experience of time is traversed or visited again.

Therefore, it is an experience maneuvered by the quest and visitation. In this sense, the narration in the above excerpt presents a trace of the narrator's voice that marks a passage for a quest toward the circumstances of the past. Quest establishes an imaginative travel to "then" (a datable time in the past) in the form of "reckoning-with" time, and deciphering into a space between "now" and "then" in the form of "stretching-along". Hence, the quest presents a virtual time, which is a new quality of time provided by fiction's imaginative power. The voice of the narrator envisages experience, moving within the bi-directional time from present to past and from past to present. With such an act of narration, the narrator establishes action in a quasi-present.

Talə, as the hero, envisages time towards the future while the narrator in the present utterance looks back into the past. The hero's expectations, ambition, and goals are presented in a form of a search for future achievements. In turn, the narrator presents the experience of the young hero through the voice of an adult man. The narrator speaks about lost time. But, through narrative, time is reversed. Thus, time is regained. It also traverses a place where the narrator is spatially distanced from that the hero. This narrative repetition reveals the act of the mind, moving back and forth in time. Conversely, there is a sense that time has passed chronologically, linear time which gets its attention through lived time.

Further, the lived time is illustrated in the narration through chronological time. Here is a statement, **“የዛኑ ቀን አመሻሽ ጓድ መንግስቱ ጊደለማርያም መሸሻቸው ተለፈ። የበለጠ ለውጡ ፈጠነ። ሁሉም ነገር ቀጥ ብሎ የቆመው ግንቦት 22 ከቀኑ አምስት ሰዓት ገደማ ነበር።”** (“On that evening, Mengistu Hailemariam's escape was announced. The change was even faster. Everything was stopped on May 22 at 5:00 p.m.”) (p. 108). In this section, a series of events are organized according to the concern of the narrator, being “reckon-with” time that makes time datable. Events are established ‘in’ time, and arranged as what happens ‘now’ and ‘then’ with a causal relationship of the *telos* of the plot, presenting linearity of time. The mark of the day, “May 22 at 5: 00 p.m.” is a chronicle time within calendar time where events are established ‘in’ time. Thus, calendar time identifies beginnings and directions by constituting the triad of the past, present, and future. At this

point, Ricoeur (1988) states, “It cosmologizes lived time and humanizes cosmic time” (p. 109).

Ritual time is another form of ordinary time that is presented in this novel. The narration reveals: “ነገ ጳግሜ ሦስት ነው። ጸበል ከሰማይ ይወርዳል፤ ልጆች ይጠመቃሉ። ከፈውስና ከቅድስና በላይ እርቃናቸውን አደባባይ የመውጣት ነፃነታቸውን በፈቃድ ያገኛሉ።” (“Tomorrow is *Pwagme 3*. Holy water falls from the sky. Children will be baptized. Apart from the salvation, they will enjoy the freedom of nudity”) (p. 113). In this statement, the utterance in the present time tells about an event that will come by tomorrow. It states an event that is yet to happen. As it is presented by a voice who is out of the time-bound, this event is already passed for the narrator. The narrator is in the experience of past time and knows what will come tomorrow while the hero expects the day yet to come. Later in another section (page 118), this same event is narrated by the voice of the hero. Here, the narrating self presents events on that ritual day *Pwagme 3*. This reveals how the same event is presented from a different temporal position. This creates temporal collusion between the hero’s time, the narrator’s time, and the reading time.

At the same time, when the story is recognized through the spatial traverse of reading, time is traversed by the voice of the narrator. The narrator speaks in the past voice by stating historical events and clock time. The narrator’s voice is distinctively heard in the statement: “ያን ቀን ረፋድ ላይ ፍራሽ ላይ ሆኜ መፅሀፍ ቅዱስ እያነበብኩ ነበር። ቸቸም ከአልጋ አልወረደም። ወዲያው አንድ ጎላ ያለ ድምፅ ተሰማ።” (“On that morning, I was reading the Bible laying on a mattress. Chuchu did not get out of the bed. Suddenly, a loud blasting sound was heard” (p. 108). This statement reveals Chayna’s sudden death by the accident of the *Shegole* bullet factory explosion. Chayna is dead in this incident while she was collecting materials with her friends. Such kind of narration collides with the fictional world and the real world where time is shared among characters in the fictional world and readers in the real world. Within the space of traversing, there is a quest and visitation that presents a trace of an imaginary time. This is the fictive experience of time which gives time *metatemporal* mode which is discussed under the next subsection.

### 5.2.2. Metatemporal Time

Metatemporal time is one form of internal time presented through fiction's imaginative power. In *Bäfäkar Säm*, the time of quest is established by the voice of the hero, and the time of visitation is presented by the voice of the narrator happens to be taking a travel toward the origin. In this sense, the hero at the level of within-time-ness and the narrator who is recollecting actions are in the same inquiry of the unity of wholeness, that is temporal unity. As the story moves forward, the reader also establishes the same trace of inquiries.

On page 200, a summary of the whole story is presented. This time the narrator wraps up what is been narrated so far. This narration revisits what is been told by the voices of the narrator and the hero. Hence, a reader gets into a narrative repetition. The narrator now uncovers the hero's identity and his quest for meaning; thus, the reader finds the complete whole of the narrative. Here is a statement uttered by the voice of the narrator:

ሰው ሁሉ የየራሱ ማንቂያ ተኩስ አለው። ያ ተኩስ ለአንዳንዱ ሰው የአብሪ ጥይት ፋና በመንገዱ ላይ ይተውለታል። ያልተጠበቀ አቅጣጫ ተከፍቶ ለመሄድ ያደፋፍረዋል። የኔ አብሪ ጥይት ወጣው ከሲፊን አፍ ነበር። በሴታሴትነት የነቀፈችኝ ዕለት ለእኔ ተተኩሷል። አሁን ላይ ሆኜ ስመለከተው ከዚያች አብሪ ጥይት በኋላ ህይወቴ ሰተት ካለ ነዳና ወደ አልተገራ ወዳልተመነጠረ ጭፍን መንገድ ገብቷል።

Everyone has his or her wake-up bullet fire. For some, the bullet leaves a flashlight and paves them to follow a new pathway. The bullet that awakened me was fired from Sifen's mouth. It was fired when she criticized me that I am 'sissy'. When I observe it now, I was led into a dark path from the smooth one after that her remark. (p. 200).

As implied above, the narrator is temporally and spatially positioned between a self within 'then' and 'there', and a self who perceives within 'now' and 'here'. The expression "When I observe it now" gives us both temporal and spatial positions. Hence, an extra-temporal being traverses time from a point of 'now', which is a time of utterance, to a point of 'then', a time of hero. This indicates a physical time of the narrator that gives double temporality. The voice of the narrator interprets the experience that is gone. In a different view, the narrator is presenting a different sense of self that existed then. The narrator interrupts the hero's time through past voice or memory. Hence, this voice examines a life that is lived. Honest mistakes once committed, immature decisions, youth dilemma examined – "I was



lead into a dark path from the smooth one after that her remark”. He defined life before and after meeting Sifen. For him, a life lived afterward is full of uncertain and fuzzy paths. Therefore, the narrator finds a sense of relief, as Ricoeur says, “putting into relief”.

Furthermore, the narrator’s distinct voice shows an interpretation that fills the distance between the present impression and the past impression. The hero was not cognizant of his self or identity; it is found in another impression. Most of the guilt and concessions are revealed by the narrator’s voice which notifies its temporal distance from the past. For instance, here is an extraction that shows how the narrator traverses in time to interpret the past:

ትዝ ይለኛል ለመጀመሪያ ጊዜ ላይ የተከሰኩት ሲፈንን ነበር። .... ሁሉም ነገር ውሸት ነበር። እናቱ ሆን ብላ ለእኔ ጊዜ ማሳለፊያ አመቻቸኛችኛ፣ በአውለያ እያስፈራራች በብር እያበለሰች። ካንቺ ጋር እሰከ መጨረሻ እንድቀጥል አትፈልግም።

I remember when I present Sifen as my first backfire. ... Everything was false. My mother presented you for me as my servant who simply spent time with me. You are submitted to me because she made you fear through a sorcerer and appease you with money. She does not want me to be with you. (p. 200-201).

Separated from the hero’s time, this voice takes position in the time of utterance, in which the story is presented after years when the hero became an adult. This gives the narrator an extra temporal. The present identity who is uttering the statement interprets the hero that is a past identity. The narrator continues: “ከሰማየ ሰማያት ወርዶ፣ ወደ መቀመቅ የተጣለውን እናትነት በእናቱ በኩል ማሸማቀቅ የዚች ቀን ምኞቱ ነበር። ከሲፈን አንጻር ደግሞ ጣሪያ ላይ እንደወጣ አውራ ዶሮ ሰማየ ሰማያት ላይ ሆኖ ወደ ምድር ለመጣል የሚጣጣረውን ሴተንት ከም ማድረግ።” (“Regarding my mother, my wish was to discard her maternal identity that was thrown from the heaven. Regarding Sifen, my purpose was to demoralize her feminine dignity that was plunged above and ready to come down”) (p. 202). The hero hates his mother and Sifen as he thinks they are a reason for such an unstable identity. These females are supposed to give him a conducive life and create an abyss of life.

Hence, Talə wanted to avenge them. He put his mother’s maternity into question. Then, a hero’s voice is amplified as the voice of the narrator is heard less and lesser. When Talə

reacted to his mother and Sifen, Chuchu cried. Talə felt sympathy: “በመልስ ምት ያንጠራራሁትን ሰውነት ሰበሰብኩ። ያ እርጥብ ጣውላ ድምፅ ዱልዱም ጦር ሆኖ ልቤን መውጋት ስለተሳነው እየተላተመ አሰቃየኝ።” (“After the confrontation, I gather myself from the sense of bragging. His stiffed voice stabs my heart, which gave me unimaginable pain”) (p. 202). The voice of the narrator has distinctively heard again – “በዚያች ቀን አንዲት ህልም ለማየት ብቻ አይኔ ሽልብ አለ” (“On that day, my eyes closed for a nap and I see that one dream” p. 203). After he woke up, he realized that Chuchu was not around. When I asked about the where of Chuchu: “ፈረንጆቹ ወሰዱት ሲሉ ሰምቻለሁ” (“I heard them saying the foreigners have taken him”) (p. 211).

Then, the hero finds himself in a blundering identity. Suddenly, he loses his identity and his body became paralyzed like Chuchu. Presenting this situation, the narrator's voice interrupts - “ልብወለድ ቢሆን ባልጨረስኩት ነበር። ግን ህይወት ነው። ያውም እውነት የማይገባው እውነታ የታከለበት።” (“I would not have finished it if it was fiction. But, it is real-life. It is a real-life that should not be recognized as real”) (p. 213). In this statement, the past voice became closer to the time of narrative utterance. At the same time, the voice distances from the narrative. The expression - “I would not have finished it if it was fiction. But, it is a real-life” - creates confutation between the story world and reader world, or the possible world and real world.

Again, the hero's voice utters - “ስነቃ ቸቸ ነኝ፣ የጅኒ ንግር ያዘኝ፣ አንገቴ ተቆልሙሟል፣ ጊዜየ ደርብብ ብሏል። ጨካኝዎ የቸቸ እናትና እህቶቹ ከበውኛል።” (“When I woke up, I found myself as Chuchu. My voice is trembling. My neck is bent. My time is slowed. I am surrounded by Chuchu's cruel mother and his sisters” p. 213). This statement is presented by the voice of blundering identity. Here, the hero presents what the reader would assume as an unbelievable story. In this case, the voice of the narrator who is recounting events from a distance appears to be reliable. The hero's voice is unreliable because he still experiences the story, and has limited access to time and knowledge.

The temporal conflict between the hero and the narrator is very prevalent in this section of the novel. The hero's quest ended up becoming a retarded young boy. Strikingly, his entire quest was a search to escape from an identity that was once possessed by him, and given to Chuchu through a magic spell. Again, the narration presents that Talə replaces Chuchu in physique and behavior. When he asked about his identity, he replied, "I am Chuchu". A reliable voice speaks, **“ለሁለት ወር ያህል እኔ ቸቸን ሆኜ ነበር፤ ወይም ቸቸ እኔን ሆኖ ነበር። ልክ ስለአንተ የሚቸነከረው ጌታ አቅም ሲያንሰው መስቀሉን በሸክም የሚያግዝ እድል ቢገጥምህ እንደማለት ነው። ሁለት ወሩን እንዲያ ነው የተመለከትኩት።** (“For two months, I was like Chuchu. Or else, Chuchu took my identity. I assume myself within that last two months with what Christ did, being able to be crucified for others' sin” (p. 214). This situation shows a reversal of fortune the hero with an imperfect journey finally caught up in developments he has not expected, and finds himself in a sense of desperation, to understand.

Therefore, the hero does not know what was happening; or how much time has passed in that way. **“ሁለተኛ ወር ላይ ቸቸን ሆኜ አልጋ ላይ እንደተኛሁ ፍራሽ ላይ ነቃሁ። ቀስ በቆ፣ እንደ አንቴና ተመዝገፎ ወደ አልጋው ስማትር እዚያ ቸቸ በጀርባው ተጋድሞ አይኖቹ ፈጥጦ ተመለከትኩ።”** On the second month as I slept being Chuchu, I woke up from mattress. When I slowly turn around into the bed, I saw Chuchu laying on his back as his wide-open eyes stared over” (p. 214). Later, the hero brings back what happened in the past two months. This time the hero's voice presents: **“ስሰማ ከፀበል እና ከቃልቻ በኋላ የአእምሮ ሐኪም ዘንድ አቀረቡኝ። የሥነ አእምሮ ሐኪም ጋ መራን።”** (“As I heard, after a continuous trial of holy water and sorcerer they took me to a mental hospital. The doctor referred me to a psychiatrist”) (p. 214). After some narrative diagnosis, Talə came back to his consciousness. That is after Chuchu came back home. The doctor told them to bring back Chuchu from where is taken. Then, psychologically, the hero strongly attaches himself to Chuchu's existence and identity. The belief in his mother's sorcery incantation made him believe he is possessing Chuchu's body. He thinks his identity exists in Chuchu's body.

In this section, the narrator's voice dominates the utterance, in a sense helping the hero to put his thought in order so great an extent does the experience of time, in evading chronology and in growing ever deeper, break up into irreconcilable perspectives. Reading toward the end of the story, one can find a reversal in the course of the narrative. For instance, the hero's mother changed her worldview and turned to be more religious by abandoning a belief in superstition. A strong relationship is established between the hero's mother and Chuchu. Hence, the narrator who establishes visitation in terms of a quest, then, enjoins the hero whose quest is toward the future. At this point, double temporality not only produces the unity of time but an inescapable sense of the narrated world as a moral or ethical whole. As a result, the story involves deep repetitions of actions and events, which is a tavel in space and time toward the origin. In this case, imaginative time or virtual time is formed as a third-time between linear and cyclical time. In the end, the whole story presents a mediation for irreconcilable aspects of time.

In this story, the voice of the narrator is distinctively heard only at some point of narration, proving what is presented by the hero. The narrator slowly reveals actions and events that are already known and subjects of his recollection while the hero remains in the quest, tracing toward the state of the unknown. At the same time, the reader follows the same trace of the quest. As a result, the narrative became a circular imaginative travel toward the origin, in search of an answer to the question of personhood, love, and culture that are yet to be known in the name of fate. However, there is no clear temporal distance between the time of the utterance and the time of the story. The voice of the narrator takes the temporal position of the present time, presenting who he was and how he grew up in a female-dominated family.

In this regard, temporal conflict is seen as the voice of the narrator and hero found to be in different temporal positions. Being outside of the hero's time, the narrator knows what lies ahead and interprets what was behind. Presenting an earlier story through present utterance, the voice of the narrator experiences a quasi-present. On the other hand, the hero does not know about the future; with his expectations, goals, and motives, he moves forward with time. The reader, in the other respect, will find himself or herself in such temporal conflict.

The hero's experience of time is different from that of the narrator's experience. This helps to understand the temporal perspectives of the hero and narrator. Later, the hero's experience is reinterpreted by the narrator. The narrator views time (an earlier experience) from a different spatial and temporal location. In this sense, the narrator traverses into past time that was once lost behind.

Hence, the experience is being reinterpreted, and an earlier time is regained. The narrator tells what the young hero thinks about love, identity, and family and at the same time tries to reexamine the personal views of Talə as a young hero. The voice as a narrator presents the life that is lived by distancing himself from the time of experience. This voice reflects the hero's attempt in order to answer questions about identity and love, which in turn notifies what has been learned from time by the hero. In effect, virtual travel is construed by both voices who are found to be united at a certain point. Thus, this circular imaginative time is a metatemporal mode of time presented by the novel under discussion.

### **5.2.3. Ordinary Time and Public Time**

Lived time and cosmic time is a conflation form of time that is brought into play in narrative fiction. At this point, narrated time using calendar time, successive generations, and trace, serves as a bridge to the lived and cosmic time through the narrative configuration of *emplotment*. Heidegger's concept of "Within-time-ness" is taken to explain the issue of ordinary time. According to Ricoeur, it is a time of concern and preoccupation; it is thus, a narrative time. In *Bäfəkar Səm*, events are arranged in terms of concern, where the chronological time is deemphasized in the face of preoccupation. Chronological time is not specified; rather, through the concern of characters over events, which is a time of everydayness. On the other hand, the public time exists in within the story world, in which the characters are "thrown". Characters act in the place of the world they do not know. They are thrown into the world of action that precedes them.

Ricoeur (1988) notes that the fictive experience of time relates in its way to lived temporality and time perceived as a dimension of the world. As, "a treasure trove of imaginative variations", fiction presents a time of imagination that represents the time of

consciousness, which is a third-time “window” to see the textual world capable of being inhabited (p. 128). Therefore, ordinary time is the characters’ time of everydayness that is represented in calendar time, biological time, and trace while public time is the time of the world that confines finitude and infinity of time. In the case of lived time, characters are preoccupied with objects and events that surround them. As being in within-time-ness, they reckon-with time, counting time in terms of their concern. For example, the hero’s time is revealed in the face of his preoccupation with things around him. His time is dominantly mundane, which is organized based on the concern or preoccupation he is occupied with. For instance, the statement - “ሴቶች እጣፋንታዎቼ ናቸው” (“Females are my good fortune”) (p. 8) - shows Talə’s preoccupation. He is mostly concerned with the issue of females, love, and identity, which later became the source of conflicting desires and the unending quest for self. On the other side, the expression shows his limited narrative consciousness regarding other issues. For example, he is ignorant of the gender role of men and women.

When Talə falls in love with Sifen, everything is started to be recounted in terms of his motive, goal, and expectation. In this case, actions are established ‘in’ time having time to do, not to do, or to be done later. Hence, the time of preoccupation is a narrative time that counts everyday activity. This is an ordinary time or everydayness, which is shared by readers in the real world. The hero has issues that he mostly cares about, which is the question of identity and love for Sifen. The story reaches its turning point when the hero enters his maturity at the age of sixteen. Talə began to desire Sifen. He became obsessed with Sifen’s love and spends time thinking about her and the love he is going to possess. All his concern and thought is about Sifen. Hence, he began to count and date events in terms of his care and concern.

As a result, events happen to be datable in the within-time-ness that the hero places to experience in the lapse of time, things have their time, do their time, what is ordinarily called “lasting” or “enduring”. When the hero reveals his preoccupation, things release time. Ricoeur (1988) puts that this is attested by the expression world time and being-in-time. The girl from the neighborhood, Sifen used to come previously, but Talə did not care

about her. Her name is not even mentioned in the narration by the voice of the hero. The reader is not cognizant until the narrator revealed it. From this onwards, the way the hero sees her changed, she became his new world. For the first time, he tries to see life and construct meaning outside the family circle. His thought completely shifts from his mother to Sifen. He associates Sifen of Nazareth with Jesus of Nazareth. He redefines her that she is “**ብፁዓን**” (innocent) by using an expression from the bible.

As the hero desires her every day, he began to count dates and measure time. Here is a statement, “**አበዛሁት ይሆን አስርና አስራ አንድ ወር ሳላስባት ቆይቼ የለም? እና? እህቶቼ እስኪያስታውሱኝ ድረስ መኝ አስታወስኳት?**” (Am I overthinking? Have I never thought of her for ten or eleven months? So what? Is it not that I started to remember her when my sisters recalled me about her? (p. 54). He gives attention to the measurement of time expecting the day she is coming. Expectation makes him care or measure time. This gives experience another characteristic of within-time-ness, which is “making-present” where the hero establishes a decision from “now on ...” or “now that ...”. The expression, “Have I never thought of her for ten or eleven months?”, the voice of the hero asks. This presumes that from now on he is caught by the desire of Sifen.

Because of the preoccupation or concern, he gives attention to an ordinary time. Similar to the above excerpt, bellow is a statement that shows the hero’s concern:

**ያለፈውን ክረምት ጠረን፣ ልዩ መጻዕት፣ ልዩ ለዛ ... ይዛ መጣች። የሲፊን ድምጽ ምን ተቀመመት? የሆነ ነገራን ያገኘኝ ይመስለኛል። ሰውነቴን መቆጣጠር ተስኖኝ ዝርግፍ እያልኩ፣ እንደጥሬ ተባትኜ መሰብሰቢያ ዘዴው ጠፋኝ።**

She came up with the scent of last winter, which is a special scent, special color .... What kind of spice was added to her voice? I think it strikes my heart. I could not control my body anymore; I feel weak. I could not gather myself as I detached from my consciousness. (pp. 50-51).

With the hero’s strong desire for Sifen and his expectation for love, lived time or ordinary time is revealed. He counts and stretches toward his expectation. He does not know what will happen, but he experiences time as a being in within-time-ness. When the day comes,

the hero found himself in a strong conflict between desire by expectation and reality. Thus, it is a time contracted “with respect to awaiting and retaining” (1984, p. 63). That is the moment when Sifen questions his manhood like Chayna and his father do. Sifen strikes him, “Why do not you dare to be a man?”

As people do in the real world, characters move forward in a world where choices must be made with only an approximate guess about their consequences. Accidents might occur at any moment to alter the fortunes of the individual or the community, and where people must be judged on the shifting and uncertain ground of social appearances. On the other hand, there is a world that is already there before anyone. This defines public time, which existed and remains the same for everyone. Likewise, Talə does expect his encounter with Sifen and the consequence of his love, but still experiences time with the concern. This is what counts as ordinary time, which calls the action in terms of ‘then’, ‘now’, ‘since’, ‘during’, or ‘later’.

At the level of narration, the story already exists as a complete whole. The narrator knows the outcome of the character's actions and motives. This is what Ricoeur puts as the *totum simul* perspective of the narrator. This form of time is a public time, which precedes action. It is a shared time, the same for every character in the narrated world. The “as if” aspect of fiction constitutes the virtual experience of being-in-the-world projected by the text, which is “capable of intersecting the ordinary experience of action, and experience certainly, but a fictive one” (1985, p. 101). This narrated world awaits different readers at different times.

For example, the story of *Bäfəkar Səm* can be read as many times as possible time through different experiences of readers who live in different periods. As a hero, Talə's time stretches from the beginning to the end of the story which is already constructed by the narrator. That is an ordinary time of “being-towards-death”. Therefore, characters in the narrated world and people in the real world are put in a parallel experience of time. For example, the cosmic time or time of the world exists before the people with desire and motives thrown to the circumstance or existence. Thus, an existence precedes action.



According to Ricoeur (1985), every voice precedes the story it tells. The time of the narrator is like a divine time that is beyond the time of the characters. The hero falls into this narrated world and constitutes within public time.

In *Bäfäkar Säm*, the story moves forward in terms of preoccupation. In one section, the narrator reveals the news about the death of Talə's father. Everyone in the family was in grief, except Talə. In this section, the narration begins by describing the scene of gathering people who came to mourning occasion. The narration speed is slow, which the reader recognizes later after the voice of the hero announces: “የአባቴን ሞት አላመንኩም። እንዲያውም መቶ አመት እንደቀረው ከእሱ በላይ አምኛለሁ። እንዲያውም ፀሐይና ምድር ያልፋሉ፤ አባዬ ግን አያልፍም። ቆሞ ያሳልፋቸዋል።” (“I did not believe the news about my father's death. However, I believe that he will live a hundred years more. On the contrary, he will everlastingly live and even see when sun and earth vanish”) (p. 84). Then, the narration continues after a week, “በሳምንቱ ሲፈን መጥታ ለቅሶው አገረሽ።” (“The grieving continued after a week when Sifen comes”) (p. 84). In this case, the time of the story is event-based.

Mostly, the narration does not state a specific calendar or clock time. The story time has no reference to physical time. Ordinary time is expressed based on events. It is as if telling “this happens when that happened” rather than expressing the day of an event like “this happens on that day”. In this sense, the notion of within-time-ness is best understood in the form of narration. As the narration continues, the hero began to wonder about Sifen again. He is still in the preoccupation with Sifen, expressing: “ቁመት እና ሰውነት ጨምራለች” (“[She grows up in height and weight]”) (p. 84). This expression reveals the biological time of physical changes that some months or years have passed. The hero's desire for Sifen instigates concern about time.

Therefore, the narrative situation is changed, taking the hero and reader to another dimension of the quest for love and meaning in life. Since there is no reference to chronicle time, the story seems it is not moving forward because the narration mainly focuses on routine activities that show a temporality of everydayness or mundane temporality. In

another case, when situations or events affect the hero's reactions towards things, or when there is a change in perspectives, one can understand that chronological time has passed. For instance, Talə told his mother that he feared Chuchu: "You are now fourteen years old". The story moves towards the future in a measurement of biological time. Effacing this measurement, there is immobile eternity and the changes produced (1985, p. 125). These can be physical, seasonal, or emotional changes. Hence, the notion of change can be taken as time experience brought in the mutation of ordinary time and world time or mortality and eternity.

Apart from the chronicle time, the passage or duration of the story time is in the form of a biological time marker. The reader sees the temporal distance through the physical and biological change of the hero. For instance, Talə's maturity is indicated in the statement: **“አንድ ቀን ወጣ ብዩ ስመለስ አልጋዩ አዲሱ ቤት ተዘርግቷል።”** (“One day, when I came back home, I found that my bed was put in the new home”) (p. 47). Additionally, his sexual maturity is revealed in the conversation between his mother and his sisters:

**“ያቺ ክረምት ክረምት የምትመጣዋ ልጅ የሰራተኛዋ ልጅ”**

(“The girl who came to our neighborhood every summer”)

**“ሲፊን አልኩ”**

(“I said Sifen”)

**“እንዲህ ነው ማደግ”**

(“Oh, you are grown-up”)

It seems that he identified his maturity and temporality after he met Sifen. He counts or measures time because she is his only concern. **“ማደጌን እንኳ ያወኩት በእሷ አቆጣጠር አስልቼ ነው። ምን እኔ ብቻ? እህቶቼም መጎርመሴን የለዩበት”** (“I realized I was grown up because of her. This was not only for me; my sisters also knew that I was matured because of her”) (p. 63). Similarly, the hero speaks of time through biological changes in another part of the story. For instance, his statement about Chuchu depicts a biological time: **“ጉንጨፎ ላይ ሪዝ ማቆጥቆጥ ጀምሯል”** (“Beards begin to grow on his cheek”. p. ); **“የጉንጨፎ ላይ ሪዝ እየደመቀ መጥቷል።”** (“The bread on his cheek is growing”) (p. 115).

This presents a biological time of characters as a being towards death that is mortal in the face of eternity. At the same time, biological time reveals the change and progress of things or events that move forward in the form of ordinary time. That is the contrast between immobile eternity and the changes produced by visible changes in the seasons and the appearance of new vegetation. As Ricoeur (1988) says, “Being-towards-death and world-time, we discover a polar opposition, paradoxically concealed throughout the hermeneutical process directed against all concealment: mortal time on the one side, cosmic time on the other” (p. 94).

The other form of lived time is expressed through the continuity of norms and ideals shared among generations. Such a notion is reflected through the comments of the hero. To show an excerpt: “ቻይና የወንድ አካሄድ ሲሰፍርባት ያበረታትና እኔ ላይ የሴት ሩጫ ሲሰለጥንብኝ የነቀፈው ማህበረሰቡ ነው።” (“It is the same society that criticizes my sissy style of walking and praises Chayna by her adoption of men’s walking style”) (p. 80). This could be explained in documents or traces, what the former generation already established, and the present generation continues practicing it. The hero has to follow every trace of society, where he could not escape from the public time. Ricoeur remarks that to follow trace is one way of “reckoning with” time or bringing datability with its “now”, “then”, “earlier”, and so on. It also states a lapse of time between the distant past and the present. Similarly, when Chayna comments, “ይህን የሴት ተንኮልህን ሂሽ” (“Here is your feminine trick”) (p.81); then, the hero would ask, “የወንድና የሴት ተንኮል አለ?” (“Is there a classification as male trickery and female trickery?”) (p. 81).

In this case, the hero tries to make meaning by revisiting time like comprehending his father’s love, husband’s responsibility, manhood, etc. In quest of looking or following what his father did as a young man, the hero reverses time by following the trace left. Trying to follow the trace of his father, Talə says:

እኔም እንደ አባቴ ግማሽ እድሜየን በበረሃ አሳልፌ ከበረሃ ጅኒ ጋር ባዕድ የሆንኩበትን ቤተሰብ መቀላቀል። የጠጅ ለማግኘት ተሰማማጭ፣ ተሸቆጭቋጭ ሆኜ እንዳላሳጣቸው ፀዓዳ እየለበስኩ ... ይህ ነው ወንድነት?

As my father did, I would spend half of my life wandering in the wilderness. Then, I would join my family as a stranger. I would beg for *Tej*. I would dress neatly to make the family proud. ... Is this what manhood means? (p. 88).

The gender role of what men and women do is an established norm or culture, which precedes the hero's private time. The hero is thrown into the world which is already there. Hence, the hero's motives and goals stand against preceding norms and ideals. In another word, finitude stands against eternity. As a contemporary existence, the hero still struggles to disconnect himself from norms and tries to acquire his own time and selfhood. Externally, society expects him to perform tasks that men are required to do so. The hero does not stop questioning a finitude existence in the infinite world. As he moves forward to acquire new meaning, he finds himself in the labyrinth of another quest. The quest never ceases.

At this point, Ricœur (1988) confirms that "We are oriented, as agents and sufferers of actions, toward the remembered past, the lived present, and the anticipated future of other people's behavior" (p. 112-13). Likewise, the excerpt above presents a continuous confrontation between the past and the present. In this sense, the hero tries to escape from the boundary of public time – not to follow what his predecessors did, nor live up to the expectation of society. This makes the whole narrative a struggle to escape from the chain of time, culture, and religion, in which he is being constituted with memories of no-longer living people for not-yet living people and share, "a community of time".

The hero follows what his predecessors have come through. Hence, time is shared among generations through documents of traces. Narratively, the hero realized that his father come through this way; thus, time gets into a labyrinth of circular experience. This indicates public time unfolds its eternal feature where everything revolves in a continuous cycle of occurrence from generation to generation. The eternal circularity of time produces change, as the saying goes, "things brought about by time". That is an equivalent Amharic expression - ሁሉም በጊዜው ይሆናል (*Everything has its own time*). In this case, we are talking about "change", which entails that nothing is permanent, or everything revolves around its own time.

As the story continues, the narration introduces another event. This time ordinary time is expressed with calendar time. It is stated: “ግንቦት 13 እናቱ ሩፋኤልን በአነባብሮ ስትዘክር ብዙ እንግዳ ሰዎች በአስፈሪ ፊት ታጅበው ጠበል ጣዲቁን ተሻሙት። ልብሳቸው እላያቸው ላይ አልቆ የኔ ቢጤ ሰራዊት ይመስሉ ነበር።” (“On May 13, my mother was serving alms for the memorial day of Angel Raphael. Many strangers appeared to get the food. Their clothes were worn out and they looked like beggar army”) (p. 108). This statement suggests two forms of time: ritual time and historical time. The ritual day is the day Angel Rafael (13<sup>th</sup> day) is remembered. Whereas, the historical time is implied by the impression of tired and hungry soldiers who returned from the war. This suggests a historical event when the Derge government is defeated by the EPRDF coalition forces. It is unknown to the hero, revealed by the reader, which became a shared temporality of the hero and reader.

In fact, what is stated as a historical fact remains only in the narrated world, and it is a fictive past. The temporal marks stated through historical time are the lived time of characters within the story. Wondering through the gathering on that festive day, he heard a man begging by the name of Mengistu Hailemariam. Then, the hero associates as: “መንግስቱ እንደኔ አውሊያም ነበር ማለት ነው? ሳያውቅ ነው የሄደው? ወይስ አውቆ?” እኔም ስሞት ሲፈን እንዲህ ሳትለምን አትቀርም” (“Was Mengistu a sorcerer like me? Did he leave the country accidentally, or did he just fled intentionally? Probably, Sifen too will beg with my name when I finally die”) (p. 119). The hero’s concern is still on Sifen. The narration is presented in a stream of consciousness as the hero associates the present action related to his concern. Earlier, Sifen told him that he is “a sorcerer”. As a being in time, the hero moves back and forth, and his action is defined in within-time-ness, which is his experience of “being-towards-death”. Hence, time conjoined with multiple temporalities, moving here and there – then and now. The hero’s time stretches towards the future.

In this section, the narration is presented with dating events. It has a chronological time reference of physical time like “then”, “after”, etc. This chronological arrangement is interrupted by the hero’s stream of consciousness. On this day, his father (Ato Bizen) returned home, which falsifies the earlier news of his death. Realizing that their father came

home alive, the family was filled with joy and happiness. However, Talə remains puzzled as he did when he heard the news about the death of his father. Here is an excerpt: “አባቴ ከሙታን እንደተነሳ ቆይቶ ገባኝ፣ ከመልአክ ሞት የይቅርታ ደብዳቤ እሰከሰጠው ቢያንስ ለሦስት ወር ያህል በመቃብር ቆይቷል።” (“I realized that my father is reincarnated. He has been in a grave for three months until the angel of death gave him a letter of forgiveness”) (p. 121). This statement presents the passage of time that has been counted since Ato Bizen left home to the war field. Within this lapse of time, there was no narration about Ato Bizen. At this point, the reader realizes that three months have passed in the story time, which was covered by the hero’s time of preoccupation.

Moreover, time of preoccupation can be presented through mythic time which is another form of ordinary time. When telling time, the narration opens with some unknown distant time. For example, on page 68, a statement presents an unspecified time - “አንድ ጊዜ አባቴ ...” (At one time, my father ...). Such kind of narration reflects the mythic time. It is used to recall a certain event that happened in the unknown/unidentified past. Hence, the narrative immediately shifts backward with memory and integrates with the present. In this case, the temporal distance between the time of utterance and narrated time became blurred. Similarly, the statement: “አንድ ቀን እናቱ ደጅ አስቀምጧው እንደሄደች ሳትመለስ ቀረች፡” (“One day, his mother put him in our compound”) (p. 105). “አንድ ቀን ከትምህርት ቤት ስመለስ ችቹ ገላውን ታጥቦ ደረስኩ።” (“One day, when I returned home, I realized that Chuchu had taken shower”) (p. 188). Like the expressions stated earlier, such kind of time presents that it is just one day, one mysterious day without a date or calendar.

#### **5.2.4. Internal Time and External Time**

In this novel, the narrative is organized with selective events that are given a chapter. The whole narrative shifts back and forth, but the chapters are arranged chronologically. This chronological arrangement accounts for an experience from childhood to youth and adulthood. As it presents one’s life development from childhood to adulthood, it tells a life towards the future while the narration is developed from the past toward the denouncement. In this sense, the external time tells the experience that characters pass through while how

time is experienced by these characters reveals the internal time. The issue of time experience may rely on the opposition of phenomenological time. Mostly, in *Bäfäkar Säm*, one can see that a phenomenon or circumstance affects a character's experience of time. For instance, the moment Talə meets Chuchu; when Chayna told Talə their mother reversed his illness to Chuchu through magical incantation; when Sifen renounces his masculine identity. All these occurrences affect the hero's experience of time, in which, every other thing is referred to in relation to those. This in turn changes the hero's worldview and attitude towards others.

Mostly, the story does not specify a calendar or chronological time; the external time is recognizable through cosmic phenomena or referents of events. Some events tell about what was happening during the final periods of the Dergue government. For example, the statement, “አፈሳ ተጀምሯል ነው የምልህ፤ ወደ ቤት ተመለስ” (“I am telling you military recruiting is started. Go back to home”) (p. 55). This indicates the time of the story, which is characteristically external or public time. However, the hero does not care about this incident because his thought and concern are mainly on Sifen. As he no longer cares about issues that are going on, his internal time is revealed. As if he is not living in the same public time, he mainly focuses on the issue that is on his mind. He is not sharing the same concern with other people. The following excerpt is an example:

አፈሳ አፈሳ እያሉ የፍቅር ሀሳቤን አቀዘቀዘብኝ። መውደድን ሲያገኘት የሚያስቡትን ያህል ይጥማል? ሲፈን መጥታ ብታቅፈኝ የመታቀፍ ምኞቴ ያበቃ የለም? ያንን የመታቀፍ ምኞት ምን ይተካዋል?

As they talk about recruiting, they detached me from my thought about love. Does love feel good when it is experienced like I am feeling now as I think about it? If Sifen comes and hugs me, is it not mean that my desire will be fulfilled? What would substitute that desire of being hugged? (p. 59).

As the excerpt shows, while everyone was in a panic about the government's forceful military recruitment, the hero is occupied by the thought of love with Sifen, having a strong desire for her hug. His family is in trouble fearing that the government would recruit their only son. To the family's surprise, the government calls his father to join the military for the second time.

Throughout the narration, the narrator's deep involvement in the psychological state of the characters makes the hero focus on the internal time, without giving concern for external time. Talə's concern or care is only about love or Sifen. That makes him avoid external time. He does not take concern for other occurrences happening around. For example, he would make a mockery of what Mengistu H/Mariam said regarding young soldiers who retreat from the military by coning the speech – **“ወታደሩን በምን ሁኔታ እናጠናክረው ለእናት አገራችን በአሰቸካይ እንድንደርስ”** (“How can we strengthen the Army and defend our motherland”) into – **“ፍቅራችንን በምን ሁኔታ እናጠናክረው ለሰፊን እንድንደርስ”** (“How can we strengthen our love and defend Sifen” (p. 94). The hero always tries to avoid external issues. He is out of the public time that is shared by other characters in the narrated world. Thus, the hero excurses into an underground cave or internal consciousness that he could not give attention to external issues or public time.

The external time of the story is revealed by a mark of the season, which is a cosmic time. For instance, the reader would not know how the duration or how much time is passed in the story. The statement, **“ሰፊን በሰበብ የትውስታ ደጃፊን ቆረቆረች። ክረምትን እዚህ አሳለፈች።”** (“As Sifen came again, she ignites my memory. She spent the winter here”) (p. 113) – shows that one year has passed. The reader identifies the passage of time as Sifen came after a year. The hero passes internal time, pulled back by memory and thrust ahead by expectation. It seems that the hero has regained one of his strong quests which is the love of Sifen. She became closer than ever before. She served him coffee in his room. They began to spend time privately and got a chance to touch and kiss her affectionately. The hero thinks he acquired the love that he desired or longed for a year.

The hero's expectation is acquired as he found time with Sifen to fulfill what he has been longing for, for a year. He feels happy that he is now hugging and kissing Sifen. However, in no time, this moment of happiness soon vanished. When he asked her why she did not resist, Sifen replies: **“ለአንተ እኮ አይደለም ለውቃቤህ ነው። ውቃቤህ ቢያርፍብኝ ...”** (“It's not for you. It is for the spirit within you. I wanted to have your spirit to reside on me”) (p. 115). Her replay gets him into another trap of quest, making him ask - “who am



I?”. Whenever he thinks he gains what he wanted, he gets into another sense of loss or disillusionment. Nevertheless, he never ceases to search or quest: “እንደሴታሴትነቴ ሁሉ አንዳች የታያት ነገር ሳይኖር እንደማይቀር ሳስብ ፈራኂት። እራሴንም ፈራሁት። ከዚያች ቀን አንስቶ እሸሻት ጀመር።” (“I became afraid of her when I think that she may notice something on me like she identified my feminine character previously. I am afraid of myself too. After that day, I began to isolate myself from her”) (p. 115). This time the hero reckons out his expectation. At the same time, he finds himself in the darkest circumstance.

However, Sifen showed up at another time. The hero’s mark of time is strongly attached to the presence of Sifen. Things look bright now. He awakened himself from being timeless and appeared ‘in’ time. Despite the previous desperation, he is now hopeful that he is getting what he desired from Sifen. Then, he became more concerned about time. For instance, when Sifen suggests she will come at night to sleep with him, he began to count time. Time became more personal and internal. The following extraction shows how the hero experiences time while being stretching-along between his physical time and expectation:

ይኼን ጊዜ ለአብርሃም ቃል የተገባው ዘርህን በምድር እሞለዋለሁ ሲፈን ከሰጠችው ተስፋ ጋር እንደማይነጻጸር ገባች። የሙሴ የተስፋይቱ ምድር የአርባ አመታት ፍለጋ ከሲፈን መምጫ ቃል ኪዳን ጋር አይኳኳንም። ምናልባት የተኮነነው አዳም ለመዳን ከሚጠብቀው የልጅ ልጅ ጋር በጊዜ እርዝመት ይኳኳን ይሆናል። ... ጊዜዋ ገና ነዋ።

At this time, I realized that the promise of God to Abraham that the earth will be populated by his descendants is not comparable to what Sifen has promised to me. The forty years of journey of Moses for the Promised Land does not coincide with Sifen’s promise of returning. Perhaps, it could be equal to the duration of the condemned Adam who had been waiting to be saved by his great-grandson. ... the time for her return is not yet come. (p. 125).

The excerpt above reveals the hero’s internal time. Here, time seems motionless, standing still. Does time feel slow when expecting a dearest one? The answer lies in the psychological aspect of experiencing time. In this sense, the hero associates the biblical narratives about the promises given to Adam and Abraham and Moses’s forty years of journey to the Promised Land of Canaan with the time that Sifen promised to come. How the hero awaits time, counting ticks of clocks and moments. Sifen’s promise, “ሌሊት እመጣለሁ፣ በሩን እንዳትዘጋው” (“I will come at night. Do not close the door”) (p. 125)

became long for the hero and feels as if many years are passed - ሲፈን ... ከወጣች ስንት አመታት ተቆጠሩ። ነገር ግን ያለችው ሌሊት ገና አልደረሰም።” (“How many years have passed since Sifen went out. Nevertheless, the night she said she would return on has not been reached”) (p. 125). More expressively, this statement – “በይበልጥ የተፈለገ ነገር ይዘገያል።” (“When a thing is more desired, it will be delayed”) (p. 125) – reflects the notion of internal time, how one feels about the time when expecting things so much more.

Hence, the flow of time is constituted through coincidence. The protention of the hero in the living present arises from the quasi-presents belonging to the past and coincides with the retention of the narrator recentering of scattered memories. The hero’s protention is his expectation is the stretching-along between the living present and the future. When the time that the hero expects or awaits comes, it opens another realm of uncertainty and coincidence. The uncertainty became clear when Chuchu says, “ደግሞ ሲፈንን እወዳታለሁ” (“And I love Sifen”) (p. 128). As the hero’s quest continues, he advances into a more uncertain self and uncertain future. He is neither settled nor satisfied with the present situation. He struggles with external time and things happening around him, and he does not want to submit himself. Therefore, he immersed himself in internal time. For example, the voice of the hero questions:

ይህ ልጅ አሁንም እኔ ነው? ተከፋፍሎ ያለለቀ የጋራ ስሜት ይኖረን ይሆን? ጥበቃየ የእሱ ነው የኔ? ሲፈንን ችላ ያልከብት ዘመን የእኔ ነው የእሱ? የአሁኑ መውደድ የእሱ ይሆን እንዴ?

Does this boy have my identity? May we have a common feeling that is still undivided? Is this time of expectation belong to his or mine? Was the period I ignored Sifen his or mine? Could it be that the present love belongs to him? (p. 128).

The deep monologue of the hero like in the extract above reveals an internal time. The narration involves a stream of consciousness so that thoughts and emotions characters get more attention, not presenting events in a sequence of one after the other. In this case, the sense of external time is lost. Duration of the story time canceled. Time is only perceived from the hero’s mind. How Talə expects the approval of Sifen for his love clearly shows the internal aspect of time.

Usually, the hero speaks of time passing slowly or quickly in reference to Chuchu and Sifen. The time spent with Sifen is filled with moments of love and happiness. Within its succession, the measurement of time is gradually erased, having an almost immobile time. He became less concerned with the outside world or the external time. For example, below is an excerpt:

ለከባቢ ሁኔታዎች የምስጠው ትኩረትም ቀንሷል።፤ ዛሬ ቀን ስንት፣ ምን፣ የት፣ እንዴት የሚለው ለማስታወስ እቸገራለሁ።። አሁን እንኳ አመቱ በጀት መዘገያ የሚመስል ኃይለኛ ዝናብ እየዘነበ እንደሆነ ቆይቼ ነው የተረዳሁት።። መብራቱ እንደበራ ነው።። መንጋቱ መምሸቱ አምታታኝ።። መብራቱን አጥፍቼ ወጋገን ለማየት ሞክርኩ።። እምብዛም ጨረር የለም።። ሊመሽ ወይም ሊነጋ እንደሆነ ገባኝ።።

My attention to the surrounding events has become limited. I hardly remember what is the day today is, what is the date, and where and how things are going. Even now, I came to realize lately that it was raining. The light is still on. I am confused that day is either dawning or it getting dark. I turned off the light and tried to see the outside. There is very little sunlight. I think it is early evening or early morning. (p. 139).

The excerpt above shows that hero has no concern for time anymore. He does not count or care for chronicle or external time. He no longer knows what time it is. Time ceases counting as if it has no day or night, eternal time. The lost feeling of the length of time passed, and the mingling of day and night has brought about this disinterest in measurements of time.

As the story advances, the hero is introduced to a Captain who returned from the Army with his father. In this part, the conversation between Talə and the Captain reveals the external time of the story. Here is the dialogue:

“ልጅ ስንት አመትህ ነው?”

(How old are you, boy?)

“አስራ ስድስት”

(“Sixteen”) (p. 144).

Until on this page, there is no indication of how much time is gone. The erosion of the sense of time and language appropriate to it continues until the hero’s age is announced “Sixteenth” who is previously identified as “Fourteenth”. In this case, the narrative gains consciousness of the duration that two years passed. The sense of duration was lost until

this stage of the narration. One can identify the biological time without specification of the hero's age that is through the change in the physical and psychological symbols. His attraction to Sifen and his quest for identity give time movement and tension that is a manifestation of external time. However, the internal time was still dominant. The time of feeling has eliminated clock time.

### 5.2.5. Conceptions of Time and Temporal Perspectives

With the story's advancement, the hero is exposed to new people and friends. Sifen exposes him to the new environment: “አንድ የናዝሬት ልጅ እዚህ ቤት ተከራይቷል። ቁልፉ ስላለኝ ገብተን ...” (“A person from Nazareth rents a house here. Let us get inside; I have the key. ...”) (p. 173). Sifen introduced him to University students who chew chat and talk about books and issues like religion, philosophy, politics, etc. He became more curious about his surroundings and gets a new perspective. At the same time, he began to lose his trust in Sifen: “ምን እያደረገኝኝ ነው?” (“What she is doing to me?”) (p. 177). Every occurrence is beyond his expectation and control. He always tries to escape from the present situation, but he could not. He asks: “ከዕጣ ፋንታ ማምለጥ የሚቻለው እንዴት ነው ዛሬን አዙሮ፣ የሚመልስ ስሜት እንዲገባኝ ስለተጻፈ ብሽሽም አላመለጥኩም ማለት ነው።” (How can I escape from fate as I am destined to be in the experience of a vicious cycle being in the present” p. 181). The hero is trapped in an unending cycle of sameness and presentness.

The hero quests forward with expectations, desires, and goals in life. When circumstances appear to be out of his expectation, he wonders whether things are occurring out of coincidence or designed fate. To take an example, “እዚች አልጋ ላይ፣ በዚች ሰዓት የመተኛት ከሲፈን ጋር የመተኛት ዕጣ ፈንታ አለ ወይስ ነገሮች እንደ ቦይ ውሃ አጋጣሚ በቀደደላቸው ይፈሳሉ?” (“Is it predetermined to be here at this time on this bed, to sleep with Sifen on this hour, or, is it just those things are flowing like a stream by coincidental circumstances?”) (p. 185). This statement is a kind of acceptance, admitting that it shall be the way it is going and he shall be the one who is destined to be. It coincides with the notion of “being with-in-time-ness” that existence is thrown into time. For existence (being), time is already there stretching from birth to death.

Thus, experience or living is already there in “with-in-time-ness” if that is considered fate. On the other hand, life is forward living which is set by expectations, desires, and goals for the future. In this sense, the hero is on the quest, following the trajectory of his expectation. Thus, the expected future is already set in his mind and he is following the trace of his expectation. This confirms that there is no such thing called fate, rather it is an experience lived up to the expectation or circumstances that happened out of expectation. The hero, being out of his expectation, does not feel comfortable. Hence, he always creates imagination as a sign of revolt against the present. Then, he became out of the story, escaping from the ordinary time and immersed in psychological time. He builds his comfortable world through daydreaming (like on pages 42-43, 88, 119). This is a time of quest which is an imaginative travel, being in a circular trap of time that is atemporal.

The hero’s affections for Sifen never seem constant. His emotions and perspectives change now and then. Here is an excerpt: “**ሲፈንን ልጠላት ነው? ... የሆነ፣ እንጥልጥል፣ መውረድ የሚፈልግ ነገር ውስጤ አለ። ጅምርነት ምኔን እንደሆነ ሳላውቅ ያባባኛል። እንደ ፔንዱለም ማረፊያ የተነፈገው ነገር ከወዲያ ወዲህ ይላል።**” (“Am I developing hate for Sifen? ... I feel something hanged inside that is ready to fall off. I do not know where it is, but I am feeling something fresh. It oscillates here and there like a pendulum”) (pp. 188-9). This shows a continuous shift in the narrative perspective that indicates there is no fixed truth or view. Attitudes and worldviews keep changing with time, which indicates that things or circumstances are transience by themselves.

There is a change of attitude in the characters’ views about each other. This shows the finitude time that nothing is permanent and the characters’ worldview changed based on the circumstances. On the other hand, the repetitive occurrences that are beyond the characters’ control manifest infinite time. For example, his father was not fond of what Talə does being around women, and the way he was treated in the family. When Talə decides to join the military, his father’s attitude toward his son changes. The excerpt shows: “**ይሄ የእኔ ልጅ ትንሹ ካልዘመትኩ፣ አባቴ ሄዶ አልቀርም ብሎ በስንት ምልጃ ተመለሰ አለ! ... ወንድነት ይዘገያል እንጂ አይቀርም።**” (“My son insisted to go to war, and he

stayed after many pleadings. He said that he could not wait here while my father was gone to the war. Manhood may be delayed, but it will reveal itself one day” p. 75). Such kind of occurrences is common throughout the story.

Therefore, the reader can read situations replaced one after the other - love replaces hate, masculine replaces feminine. The hero was happy being around women; now, he no more enjoys it. He was very fond of his mother; he avoids her now. Every state of nature is changing continuously. For instance, here is a statement: “ሳያት እንደጥሬ መብተኔ ቀረልኝና እንደናቴ በጠላትነት አይን ወግቼ እይዛት ጀመር።” (“I no longer feel terrified when I see her. Like I did to my mother, I began to bash her by staring at her eye”) (p. 132). Love and hate, happiness and sadness evolve cyclically. This shows the transience of time. His strong desire or love for Sifen changed into hate. Nothing stays permanent. Things, situations, and experiences cyclically replace one another.

In another case, what the hero’s mother did to cure her child's son brings suffering to Chuchu. This means the eternal love of the mother makes the other suffer. The illness of Talə is transferred to Chuchu. Then, Talə became Chuchu, possessing the illness of Chuchu. In the narration, everything is subjected to a continuous change of occurrences, revealing an unending cycle of things, one replacing the other. Events are recounted and encounters are reported under the same sign of life repetition. The hero never stops wondering, questing that makes him envisage the future. He thinks he moves forward, but he is trapped by the unending and eternal cycle of time. He found himself in the labyrinth of cyclical time. More importantly, the narrative technique employed by the writer of this novel depicts such a notion of circularity.

As the story progresses, the hero’s narrative consciousness increased. Hence, the voice of the hero made a judgment about the previous consciousness, which now found new self-awareness. For example, the hero feels sympathetic to Chuchu because he still believes that he is the reason for the illness. He holds this view after Chayna told him what their mother did to Chuchu. Then, the hero attains a change of attitude:

እኔ እንድፈጥን እሱ ዘገየ፤ እኔ አሳልጬ እንዳሰብ እሱ ላይ ቃላት እየተደጋገሙ እዳ ሆነው ወረዳብት፤ እኔ ቀጥ እንድል እሱ እንዲያቀረቅር ተፈረደበት፤ ዛሬ ደግሞ እኔ ነጻ ሆኜ ወዳሻኝ እንድሄድ አልጋ ላይ ታስሮ ጠበቀኝ። ... እኔ ከቸቹ ከቀማሁት በላይ ማን ምን አግኝቷል?

He became sluggish to make me energetic. I became a dynamic thinker when words are difficult for him to speak. He is put down for I stand bold. And today, he is kept in bed for my freedom to go wherever I want. ... Can a person be found who possesses things more than what I stole from Chuchu? (pp. 147-8).

Talə feels responsible for what happened to Chuchu as he holds the fact that Chuchu is ailing through possession of his illness. This guiltiness expressed in the conversation between the hero and Sifen:

“በቸቹ ትቆጫለህ ማለቴ ትፀፀታለህ?” (“Are you shamed, I mean do you feel guilty for Chuchu”

“በጣም” (“I do”)

“አንተ ምን አደረክ ቁጭቱም ፀፀቱም የሌላ ሰው ነው” (“What did you do? It is someone else’s guilt and regrets”)

“የእዳ ማወራረጃ ያለው ግን እኔ ዘንድ ነው። ክፍያውም ቁጭትና ፀፀት ሳይሆን አይቀርም” (“But the debt is on me. I think this feeling of regret and guilt is what I am paying off.”) (p. 149).

Characters’ views and perspectives are changed when they reach a certain recognition. A mother’s love bears hate. How far a mother would go to save her child? This scarification of his mother’s love is another bitter fact that Talə is experiencing. He struggles to accept a such aspect of love while Sifen tries to help him with his trauma: “ልጄን ከአውሬ መናጠቅ እናት የተወለደችለት የተፈጥሮ አላማ ነው” (“This is an innate maternal behavior that she should protect her child from the beast” (p. 149). This manifests the change in views and perspectives.

At the same time, the hero traverses back in time and evaluates how he viewed things in the past. For example, the statement - “ያኔ እንዲህ አስቤ ነበር? ወይስ አሁን መልሼ ሳስበው ይህ ተሰማኝ? እንጃ!” (“Had I thought about such things then? Or, do I just feel it when I recall it now? Not sure!”) (p. 192). He finds himself in two versions of himself existing between “then” and “now”. What he holds as a fact in the past is found to be false

in the present. Mostly, the hero's misconception about things or himself is revealed to other characters who are involved in some dialogues. For example, in the dialogue between groups of youths, the issue of “ባለአውሊድ” – (“a sorcerer”) is given a scientific interpretation or definition, as people who have psychic power. Then, other characters narrate this issue as an extra-diegetic story; hence, the hero became an observer while trying to comprehend what he believed.

However, occurrences are beyond his control; hence, they affect his perspective. As the hero struggles to develop a new sense of self, he established a new attachment outside the family, with Chayna's friend, Sifen, the Captain. In this case, the narrative perspective is changed as Talə tries to look at the family as an outsider. On the other hand, what his mother and Sifen think about him is not changed. They still hold the belief that Talə possesses a magic power. His mother would say, “ሰብስብ ሳይኖረው አይቀርም” (“Maybe he possesses a snatching spirit”). Later, at the end of the story, the narration states that Talə's mother turned her attention to beliefs in Christianity from the magical incantation. This makes the narrative structure into a labyrinth of circularity, ending where it begins. Events and situations are changed one after another.

### **5.3. Memory in *Bäfəkər Səm***

Narrative as an act of “grasping together” is what constituted the act of recollection. Through repetition, the plot gathers discordant events and creates concordance with the unity of time and actions. The plot establishes human actions “from ‘reckoning with’ time to ‘recollecting’ it” at the level of mimesis<sub>2</sub> (1984, p. 67). Thus, the novel *Bäfəkər Səm* is a novel of memory to put it literally. In this story, scattered childhood memories are brought together into the structure of the narrative. Constituted by retention and protention, the narrator recounts past experiences that bring an interpretation of dispersed experiences left back in time. Hence, the narrator being outside of the hero's time recovers events that recapture childhood and youth memories. The interpretation brings the earlier experiences of unfulfilled love, unstable identity, and the question of motherhood into a complete



meaning. It is a reminder of discordant feelings of hope, disillusionment, joy, and disappointment which later became a subject of inquiry for the hero and the narrator.

Traversing through the text, the reader also involves textual memory by recalling what has been stated earlier and being a part of the narrative configuration. The story of *Bäfäkar Säm* involves action from the past toward the future. In this case, action is not only establishing ‘in’ time; the narration takes action from ‘reckoning-with’ time to ‘recollecting time’. The recollection of the story ruled as a whole by its way of ending constitutes an alternative to the representation of time as flowing from the past forward into the future, according to the well-known metaphor of the ‘arrow of time’. It is as though recollection inverted the so-called natural order of time.

### 5.3.1. Reminiscences of the Narrator and the Hero

The autobiographical narrator presents scattered memories through the retention of retentions. Hence, events are narrated selectively as they appear in the mind, not chronologically. For instance, when the narration unfolds about a sorcerer named *Ofa Abuko*, the situation triggers memories of events. The event is recalled like this: “ደግቅ ቀለም ይበዛል፤ ከባድ ሽታ ይገኛል፤ ኃላኛ ስሜት ሰውን ሁሉ ያደክመዋል። የሚካሄደው ነገር ባይገባኝም አንዳንዴ ደስታ፣ ሌላ ጊዜ ፍርሃት እየተፈራረቀ ይጎበኝኛል።” (“Bright colors were abounded; There was a strong fragrance, the intense feeling of exhaustion overwhelms everyone. Although I was not clear about what was going on, sometimes I was filled with joy and sometimes fear”) (p. 35). This excerpt presents that the hero reminiscences events while advancing toward the future. The hero’s remembrance is assigned to the retentions of the narrator who is recentering the scattered memories in terms of various quasi-presents. Thus, for the hero, it is the retention of retentions. Such an act of retention by the hero adds meaning to the hero’s search for the meaning which is deciphered toward the future.

As a kid, Talə asks why his elder sister, Chuchu is not joining them when they went to *Ofa Abuko*, and his mother would replay: “በስለት ያገኘሁህ ልጄ አንተ፤ ታማሚው ልጄ አንተ፤

እሷ ምን ቤት ናት የቤት ወጠምሻ” (“You are begotten son whom I get you through praying. You are my sick child. She does not have to come here. She is bully”) (p. 35). This statement is brought to the narration in the form of remembrance. In this sense, the hero recalls past experiences that make him wonder again about his future. Talə does not know about his illness “ምኔን ያመኛል?” (“What is my illness”) p. 36). Little does he know about what kind of illness he had when he was a child. The hero narrates it with hazy remembrance - “ስድስት ዓመት ሳይሆነኝ አይቀርም። አንድ ቀን የማላውቀው ጨለማ ውስጥ እንደቆየሁ ሁሉ ድንገት ተግ ያለ ብርሃን ታየኝ።” (“I think I was six years old. One day, I saw a light flushing suddenly as if I had been in the darkness”) (p. 36). The hero with his limited knowledge of the past presents what happened when he was six years of age. By the time of this narrative utterance, the hero is 14 years old.

Therefore, it gives access to the time boundary and the temporal position between the hero’s past and the living present (the time of an utterance). The hero’s memory is limited; his past is almost inaccessible. Hence, the reader’s knowledge about the hero is limited to the hero’s worldview. On the other hand, a narrator presents from a wider perspective and interprets lived time of the narrated subject. Ricoeur (1985) asserts that when the time of the memory is included within a narrative sequence, it presents vast stretches of time, creating the effect of perspectival depth. Hence, the excerpts above depict the position of the narrative voice in relation to the story it tells, presenting from the point of view of the anticipation of a remembered past.

Usually, when the hero feels concerned, he recalls related issues through an act of remembrance. This is the hero’s act of retention and protention through coincidence. In this case, memory is activated because of the things present at hand. For example, when narrating about Sifen, his concern for Sifen makes him think about the relationship between his father and his mother. This narration is recalled by an act of remembering. Here is the remembrance, “አንዳንድ ጊዜ እህቶቼ አባቴን ይጠይቁት ነበር። ከእማየ ጋር እንዴት ተገናኛችሁ? እንዴት አፈቀርኳት?” (“Sometimes my sisters would ask my father. How did you meet Mama? How did you fall in love with her?”) (p. 55). This is the moment when

Talə is strongly determined for Sifen’s love. He constantly thinks about Sifen; then, past occurrences are recalled and associated with present circumstances. Talə has a memory that is not initiated yet, but when he thinks about Sifen, he spontaneously remembers what his sitters asked their father. In this case, memory rises and interpretation is made by comparing the past with the present. Thus, what is presented as a past is not disentangled from the present or the future because the retention became a reason for another protention.

Therefore, the hero comes back to his present and evaluates his experience to that of his father. Here is an excerpt: “ይህን የአባቴን ሚዛናዊነት እኔጋ፣ በእኔ ጉዳይ ሲሆን አጣዋልሁ። ለምን?” (“When it comes to my case, I cannot find this rationality from my father. Why?”) (p. 58). The hero shifts back and forth, bringing the previous action into a narrative repetition. The narrative order is continuously disrupted as the hero is immersed in memory. With such a narrative technique, the main story is interrupted as the narrative voice establishes another quasi-present. Through the activation of memory, events and things in the present are associated with the past one. Hence, the hero makes sense of the present time by revisiting the past.

Then, the past became the subject of narrative repetition. For instance, on page 74, the voice states a certain remembrance - “አንድ ጉዳይ ትዝ ብሎኝ አሁንም ከጣራ በላይ ሳቅሁ፡፡” (“I remember something and I laughed out loud again”) (p. 74). In this statement, the hero recalls the conversation between his mother and father, which was about gender roles. Circumstances or events instigate such reminiscences of the hero. This shows how characters recall and reflect within the story, and how narrative is brought into repetition through selective memory. As Ricoeur says, actions do not only reckoning-with time, they are also a subject of recollection. Hence, the narrative is structured in reflective recollection.

Additionally, another statement shows how the event or action at hand initiates or recaptures past action. For instance, in one part of the text, the narration states how Chayna warned Talə’s female friends not to meet him again, as she was trying to distance him from the female circle. Then, the hero suddenly recaptures what his sports teacher said in school

when students were exercising on the field. The statement reads: “አላዛር ለዛሬ እንኳ ወንድ ሁን” አለኝ። ተሳቀ እኔም አብሬ ሳቅሁ። ታዲያ ሲፈን ከዚህ በላይ ምን ተናግራኝ ቆጠቆጠኝ? (“He said that Alazar can you be a male at least for today? They laughed and I laughed too. So what makes it special when Sifen said the same, and why do I become so angry?”) (p. 90). In this excerpt, the voice of the hero stands between the utterance in the present and the statement that is being referred to in the past. The present is presented from the point of view remembered past in the narrated world. At this point, the hero was trying to comprehend why he gets angered when Sifen comments that is out of the men’s circle. In this sense, the hero tries to reconcile his present with the past through memory. This indicates the hero gets aware of things or himself after some time.

As a result, through retention, the hero makes sense of self and interprets an experience in the past from a view of the present. In this sense, interpretation of the past is made, which helps to interpret the self. The question about his identity is evaluated when the lost time is regained. The hero makes sense of time after it passed, then, reunited with the lost time. This makes the hero extra-temporal. Through memory, one perceives the present in terms of experience, and the past in terms of the present. For instance, the following statement evokes how the hero trying to make sense of past time:

አባቴ አልጋ ላይ ወጣሁ። አባቴ ከትዝታው ውጪ እዚህ አልጋ ላይ ጠረኑ እንኳ አልቀረም። ለመጀመሪያ ጊዜ ለአባቴ ሀዘን ተሰማኝ። ... ከመርዶው አስር ቀን በኋላ ላልቅስ?

I lay on my father’s bed. There is no his bouquet on this bed, I sense only my remembrance of him. For the first time, I felt sorry for my father. Should I cry now after ten days of the news about his death? (p. 98).

How the hero senses the present involves the memory of another character. For example, Chayna tells him how he is cured of his childhood disease through magic incantation. Their conversation dictates another point of view regarding Chuchu’s and the hero’s childhood or past identity. To show an excerpt of this conversation:

“እናታችን ናት እንዲህ ያደረገችው”

(“My mother did this to him”)

“እንዴት? ለምን? መቼ?”

(How? Why? When?”). (p. 99).

Chayna narrates what happened then. She tells what has remained a secret because she thinks she was the only one to witness the situation. This gives a gaze to the reader through the eyes of a character. Here is a statement from the conversation: “**ሂጅ ለጁን አምጪው አላት ሰውየው። ሄዳ ቸቸን ይዛው መጣች። ሰውየው ምን እንዳደረገ አላውቅም፤ እኔ ፈርቼ ተከናከብኩ በቅርብ ቀን ውስጥ አንተ ዳንክ ቸቸ ታመመ**” (“Go and bring the boy”, the man said. She went and brought Chuchu. I do not know what the man did. I was frightened so I hide in the blanket. After someday, Chuchu became sick and you get cured”) (p. 99). After this revelation by Chayna, the hero realizes he is not what he thinks he was. He possesses the body of Chuchu through magic incantation, which is intentionally done by his mother. This action is not in Tale’s consciousness. Whereas, Chayna is certain about the illness of Tale being transferred to Chuchu, which is reconstructed through memory and affects the hero’s present thought. For example, the hero was unable to recollect fully what happened when he was Six: “I think I was six years old. One day, as if I was in darkness I saw a light flushing suddenly”. However, Chayna’s remembrance of the situation gives the hero and reader a wider perspective.

Again, at this narrative level, the memory of the narrator interrupts the narration: “**አሁን ሳስበው ያንን መጥፎ እውነት እንዴት እንደተጋፈጥኩት ግራ ይገባኛል።**” (“As I think about it now, I could not understand how I managed to pass that unpleasant truth”) (p. 99). This statement shows that the voice is in a temporal position of the living present, talking about the past. It also reflects the narrator’s present perspective, what the hero thinks was not true. This recollection reinterprets the belief held by the hero and recovers a lost identity that presents the scars of a shattered belief. Throughout the story, expressions like “When I think about it now” are common which shows that the whole narrative is the memory of the narrator, which is being recollected. At the same time, characters recollect actions while readers remember actions in the text to put the story together.

What is recounted by the hero is an action that is brought into the narrative by the narrator’s recollection. The gives meaning to the experience recounted by the hero. The hero realizes

his lost action that shattered his belief about his mother. He realizes why Chayna hates him, as she was the only eyewitness to tell what happened to Chuchu. To this extent, he realized Chuchu is a relative to the family. The hero's perplexity reaches to climax, "Why does his mother do this?" Is that because she loves him? At this point, the narrator interprets the hero's experience - what was it like "then" and how is it understood "now".

Through remembrance, time is fully understood. For instance, the following excerpt shows how the narrative statement is already in the narrator's act of remembrance: **“አንዳንዴ ነገሮች ይገለበጣሉ፤ ወደ ላይ መወደቁ ግን አይዛነፍም። ይህን ትርጉም የምስጠው አሁን ይሆናል። ነገር ግን ያኔ የነበርኩበት ዓለምና የሚሰማኝ እንዲህ ለመሆኑ እርግጠ ነኝ።”** (“Sometimes, things turn upside down. But, my upward fall is not changed. Perhaps, I am giving it meaning at now. However, I am certain that I was in such situation and I would feel the same by then”) (p. 100). This statement brings a narrative reinterpretation of an experience in the past. The same situation is parallel presented and understood differently by the hero and narrator. This reveals how one sees events from a different temporal and spatial position. By the act of memory, time is experienced in a multi-leveled way by the narrator and the hero.

As the story develops forward, the narration is constructed through repetition. The hero not only follows time forward but also initiates his memory in the narrative utterance. For instance, the sudden accident and death of Chayna are narrated later in the form of the hero's memory. The statement says, **“አእምሮህ ወደ ጊላ የተረጋገጠ ነገር ለማሰብ የቻለው ዘግይቶ ነበር።”** (“I became aware of what happened after a while”) (p. 110). At the same time, the narrator who is already in the recollection of an earlier story knows the death of Chayna. In some parts of the narrative, the hero became more of an observer, like in the narrative level of the conversation between his father and the Captain. In this case, the chronology of the story is interrupted, making variations on the time of the narrator, hero, and reader. They also recapture events through memory, remembered events became a subject of narrative repetition. For example, Talə recaptures a childhood memory when

his father was talking about Princess Alem Tsehay, a daughter of *Lij* Eyasu. Here the hero re-narrates:

እኚህን ሴት እኔም አውቃቸዋለሁ። የአላቸው ለነበረው መላው ጉለሌ ባዕድ ሆነው በእንግዳ መልክ ይሽሉኩኩ ነበር። ልጆቼ “ዓለም ፀሐይ ድልድይ” ይሏቸዋል። ስማቸው ስለገጠመ መስሎኝ ነበር፡ ፡ አባቴን ስጠይቀው ዛሬ የተናገሩትን ሁሉ ልቅም አድርጎ ነገረኝ።

I do know this woman too. She was like a stranger to the place where she used to be a landlord. The children used to call her “Almetsehay Bridge”. I thought they gave her this name because it rhymes. When I asked my father, he told me everything which was with what he is narrating now. (p. 134).

As the extract above presents, the narration that is brought by remembrance is a new perspective where time stretches back through memory. It is the imagined past of the hero presented as if it was told before. The repetition is only on the hero’s mind. Thus, the hero places himself back into the stream of a search that advances, and in order to preserve the event-like character of the visitation.

### 5.3.2. Textual Memory

Ricoeur explains that the reader "takes up the wholeness of the traverse from mimesis<sub>1</sub> to mimesis<sub>3</sub> by way of mimesis<sub>2</sub> by accomplishing something - the act of reading - through tripartite mimesis" (1984, p. 53). The “refiguration” of mimesis<sub>3</sub> features the actions of those who read the representations of the past. To make sense through narrative, reading is dependent on remembering what came before the present sentence and how it relates to the past events of the previous reading experience. In this case, textual memory can be explained through the reading process.

The narration in *Befikr Sim* involves textual memory. For instance, when Talə and Sifen pass by ሰባራ ባቡር (Broken Bridge) - “Alem Tsehay Bridge”, Talə has taken into deep emotion of loss, thinking about the accident that his sister, Chayna has been killed. He recalls Chayna’s slung when she ridicule others: “ጭገርህን አበጥረህ ነው” (“You are acting as your armpit hair is combed”) (p. 145). The place reminds him of Chayna and her friends for a moment. “ማልቀስ ከጀለኝ፡ እንደያኔው በህመም ሳይሆን በጎብታ” (“I was about to cry, not with pain though as it used to be by then. It was a tear of remembrance”)

(p. 188). This statement instigates the reader's remembrance of the moment when Tale spends time with Chayna and her friends. The hero tries to reconcile with the time left behind by him. It is a lost time. It is also shared by the reader, which in turn, constructs the reader's memory. The time left by the hero became the memory of the reader. As Ricoeur notes in his discussion of threefold mimesis, reading is a forward and backward activity where the reader is a part of the narrative configuration. It is involuntary memory necessitated by when the hero himself is in a place that involves a special moment in the mind.

The time experienced before is recalled, which in turn, involves the reader's memory as an event narrated before. Because the reader is spatially traversing through the text, the perceptual change of character or narrator reignites the reader about their previous view. For instance, the following statement shows how the reader is provided with perspective about the hero's mother and father. When the hero presents the narration as an observer. Hence, the reader's memory is also activated. For example, “አንንቸ? እናቴ? መጥተናል።” (“Anguach! Momi! We are home”) (p. 140); “አዲስ ፍቅር ያመናቅር” (“Fresh love makes a person crazy”) (p. 140). At this point, the readers encounter a new gaze between his father and his mother that changes the narrative perspective. Earlier, they used to ridicule each other. Now, they respect one another. The reader provided this perspective when the hero presents the narration as an observer. This, in turn, affects the reader's perception of other characters. The relationship between Ato Bizen and his wife is presented from a perspective that is different from the previous narration.

As the story goes forward, the narrative perspective became wider. The space is dispersed, which creates different spatial dimensions for the story. The hero's progress and growth are defined in terms of the hero's movement in space. This in turn provides a change in perspective and worldview. For example, in the beginning, the hero's experience of limited to the house (in the family), then to his private room, friends in the neighborhood, Church, and *Merkato* market center (another vicinity of Addis Ababa). The narrator's time traverses backward and then toward the present. As the hero progresses, he reminiscences. Then, he recalls his past. Finally, it presents a retroactive effect for the reader to recapture what was



stated before. This creates textual memory as readers traverse through the physical space of the text. For example, the following excerpt states:

ሁሉም ወታደሮች ላይ እኔ “ሴታሴት” ስባል የሰፈረብኝ ስሜት ተጭኗቸዋል። የእውነታ ተረትነት እዚህ ላይ ነው። ይህ ሁሉ ወታደር ዘምቶ መንግስቱ ያሉት ቀዳዳ እንዴት ሳይደፈን ቀረ? እነዚህ ሁሉ ወታደሮች ካሉ ለየትኛው ቀዳዳ አፈላ አካሄዱ?

The feeling I see in all soldiers was the same as mine when I was called ‘sissy’. This is the myth of what is called truth. How come this army has not been able to fill the void which is labeled by Mengistu? If all these soldiers were there, for which problem do they recruit? (p. 120).

As indicated in the excerpt above, the narration creates a retroactive effect of what is left behind in the physical space of the text. The hero is making retention of how he felt when Sifen called him ‘sissy’, which he remembers when he saw defeated soldiers dispersed in the city. Like being-towards-death, the reader stretches-along between the beginning and end in which the course of actions are became a subject of repetition and memory. Therefore, the act of reading is traveling the length of the text (between beginning and end) that allows all the modifications performed to “sink” into memory in the form of expectation and interpretation. Hence, the readers too are involved in the act of retentions and protentions. Ricoeur (1988) asserted that the play of retentions and protentions functions in the text when readers who welcome it into the play of their expectations take it in hand.

#### **5.4. Narrative Identity in *Bäfækər Səm***

Ricoeur’s notion of narrative identity is based on the belief that identities are constructed through narratives. An identity that is condemned to pass through the anguish of expectation. Talə’s love for Sifen accompanies him with a repetitive cycle of expectation and disappointments. The hero advances into the question of love, identity, and truth. There are two forms of identity in this aspect. First, through the hero’s voice that is being experienced during the utterance, and the second is through the narrator’s voice that reexamines a former identity which is now become a subject of interpretation. The hero keeps searching for identity while the narrator reevaluates the gained identity. In another word, the hero is a narrating self that is the subject of the narrator’s quest. The narrated self

is another identity that exhibits time with a sense of quest for identity or sense of self as its goal, the leeway for ambiguity, transgression of boundaries, or exploration.

#### 5.4.1. Self-Constituency

Narrative identity denotes self-constituency of an individual as a subject and at a community level. self-constituency presents the identity of characters as one's own so that carries those attributes forward in time, constituting the continuity (permanence in time) of *who* one is. However, the plot with its repetition function destabilizes identity. Then, it gives a change in permanence. In *Bäfəkar Səmə*, the story opens with the narration of the hero named Talə who later is recognized as Alazar in his school name. He is the only son in a family of seven female children. Thus, the hero's self-constituency is presented with the reflection that he is having great care from his sisters and his mother: “በሴት የመከበብን ጥቅም የምናውቀው እኔና ጠቢቡ ሰለሞን ብቻ ነን” (Only me and the wise man Solomon knew the benefit of being surrounded by females”) (p. 7). He also would say - “ሴቶች እጣፋንታዎቼ ናቸው” (“Females are my good fortune”) (p. 8). Here, the hero is giving an ascription and imputation to identify who he is. However, this feeling does not remain the same because these females who gave him benefits would later become a source of questions about his identity.

The ascription that other characters talk about him makes him wonder about himself. His mother and his father constantly argue about the hero. His mother would say, “ልጄን ተወ. ከአባ ኪሮስ እስከ ዲያቢሎስ ደጃፍ የተንከራተትኩበት” (“Leave alone my son for whom I prayed under the face of the saints and demons”) (p. 14). Then, his father would complain, “ጠንቋይ እየቀለብኩኝ የጠንቋይ ልጅ እያሳደኩ” (“I am feeding a son of the sorcerer; I am nurturing a son of the sorcerer”) (p. 18). For example, the statement, እስከ ቅርብ ጊዜ ድረስ እናቴ ለእኔ ... (“Until recently, for me, my mother was ...”) (p. 14). Thus, the identity presented by the hero himself and what other characters tell about him create a fusion of identity. As a result, the question of “who” is asked in the field of action so that the “self”

constitutes a response or range of responses. At this point, the *self* recognizes itself through the identification of certain given norms and ideals.

As the narration flows forward, it presents the lived time of the hero who stretches from birth to death. The narrator is constituted as a self-same identity within his stretching-along between birth and death while the hero forms a new identity over time through the repetition of actions provided by the plot. However, the other voice of the narrative brings the lost identity that once lived and defined. This interpolates an identity that is lost and gained. An identity gained by the hero is lost one that is being regained by the voice of the narrator. As a result, the whole narrative projects a flux of identity that is continuously shaped and defined by various factors like love, family, and religion. This entails how identity is redefined through narration which became a narrative identity.

The hero's first discovery of self begins after he met a boy from next door, Chuchu. Talə began to wonder about himself when he met Chuchu. Then, began to fear Chuchu and his mother as Talə's mother told him not to go around them. He pumps a trumpet that became a terrible noise for the retarded Chuchu. After this incident, Talə began to experience guilt: “ጥፋት ኮተኮተኝ፣ ፀፀት አሳደገኝ። ቹቹ ገና ሲያየኝ ይንዘፈዘፋል። ህመሜ ሆነ። ቢበሉኝ በተሸለ ነበር።” (“I was nurtured with faults; I was grown up with guilt. Chuchu shivers when he sees me. He became my source of illness. It would be better if they (Chuchu and his mother) had eaten me”) (p. 40). The former excerpt - “I was nurtured with faults; I was grown up with guilt” - provides the voice of the narrator who witnessed the experience of the hero.

As a result, as the subject of an action, the “who” added imputation to his action. In this case, the subject takes the blame and makes himself responsible. That brings an answer to the hero's “Who am I?” question. This feeling of guilt raises the question about himself. He began to ask “why” and “who am I”, which results in wondering about his identity. In effect, it brings a change in character or behavior that show a change in permanence. Time gives a perspective of experiences, hence becoming a reason for the awareness of identity. When the question “Who am I?” relies on the narrator's quest for identity or sense of self

as its goal to condense and unite, to resolve ambiguity, and to deliver answers that lay further inquiry into past and identity to rest.

As “being-toward-death”, the sense of self is growing as the story moves ahead. The hero is exposed to the external world which is different from his awareness of self. Hence, he began to confront an established identity that is awaiting him. Biologically, it is the external time that shows the change like believing “I am big enough now”. Below is an excerpt:

ማደጌ የእኔ ስሜት ብቻ አይደለም። አባቴም ማደጌ ሳይሰማው አልቀረም። ከዚህ በፊት ያልሞከረውን አይነት ቁምነገር ያወጋኛል። የነገረኝንም ቢሆን ሲደግመው ከረር ያለ እውነት እየጨመረበት ሆነ።

I was not the only one who recognizes my maturity. My father must have thought the same about me. He was talking to me about some serious things that he never told me before. When he repeats what he had said previously, he would become more and more serious. (p. 40).

The above excerpt shows how time and experience change one worldview and identity. Now, he feels that he is mature. Things are not going as usual in the family. He used to understand things around him from the perspective of his mother. Now, he finds himself in the position of others. As he feel that he had grown up, he began to consider his father’s impression seriously. His father would insist: “የሴት ጠባይ የሴት ነው፤ የሴት ውሎ የሴት ነው። የሴት ጠባይ ለወንድ ነውሩ ነው፤ የሴት ውሎ ለወንድ ወርዶቱ ነው።” (“Feminine behavior belong to women; A woman’s experience is only for a woman. Doing things that belong to a woman is a disgrace to a man”) (p. 41). The hero finds himself in the middle of the opposite aspects of gender. Tale’s perspective and understanding of people (his mother, religion, love) changed over time.

He used to think females are his everything and who gives him joy and care as he used to say, “ሴቶች እጣፋንታዎቼ ናቸው” (“Females are my good fortune”) (p. 8). Nevertheless, his father confronted him about why he should distance himself from them. His father urged him to act manly. However, Tale ridicules his father’s comments about women, as he feels comfortable being around women. His father questions Tale’s gender role and that he should identify himself as a man and act accordingly. As a teenager, he sees females as a protector and caregivers. His father tells him the opposite: “አትሳቅ ሴት የተረገመች ነች።

: የመጀመሪያዋ ሴት ምን አደረገች? የአዳምን የሀጢያት ፍሬ አበላች።” (“Do not laugh. A woman is cursed. What did the first woman do? She gave the fruit of sin to Adam”) (p. 42).

The hero's quest for identity reaches its peak when Sifen strikes him about his manhood like Chuchu and his father. The statement, “ለምን ወንድ ለመሆን አትደፍርም?” (“Why do not you dare to be a man?”) (p. 64) is an awakening one to ask the question of “Who am I?”. He began to reexamine his past identity. What he has missed as a man. He thought he has a rosy and comfortable life. He asks:

ምንድን ነው? ቻይና በኋላም አባቴ ምንድን ነው እኔ ላይ ያዩ የነበረው? አሁን ደግሞ ሲፈን ... ራሴን ሴታሴት አድርጌ አይቼው አላውቅም፤ ስለዚህ እራሴን እራሴን አላውቅም ነበር ማለት ነው? እንዴት ከራሴ ጋር ተጣጣሁ? እኔ ሳላውቀው እኔ ሲፈን እንዴት ተረዱት?

What is it? What is it that first China, then, my father, and now Sifen saw in me? I have never considered myself a sissy. Is that mean I did not know myself? How did I miss myself? How did they know when I was not aware of it? (p. 64).

The above excerpt shows how the plot makes identity unstable, which at the same time, is a self-same within a continuation towards the end. At this point, the hero's perplexity reaches its climax. He feels he luck something. He thought everything is fine in the family, being in the female's world. Now, his essence/being is not even liked by Sifen. Even though Sifen is the reason to question his identity, she is also the one who makes him gain his identity: “ማደንን እንኳ ያወኩት በእሷ አቆጣጠር አስልቼ ነው። ምን እኔ ብቻ? እህቶቼም መጎርመሴን የለዩበት” (“Because of her, not only me that I knew how much I have grown; Even my sisters recognized how I reached to adolescence age”) (p. 63).

Then, the hero has to define himself before and after Sifen's comment about his 'sissy' identity. He is now aware of why Chayna and his father, and now Sifen said the same thing regarding his identity. In this sense, the hero gains self-knowledge because he refigured a permanence of character that other tells about him. Therefore, as Ricoeur explains, the imaginative variations of the plot provide mediation of change and permanence. This is due to the plot's preference to present several perspectives or even opposing views about the same subjects of action.

#### 5.4.2. The Quest for Self-same

Tracing in the quest for identity, formed through repetition, the quest is this type of repetition that would generate the quest itself. This character of repetition is still imprinted in time by the circular shape of the travel in space. This dilemma concerning his selfhood identity is a search for a lost identity. The quest is all about remaining on *self-same* that is once defined. The voice of the narrator establishes a position between the quest or search and the constituted identity that is being searched. Hence, the narrator is making a repetition, deciphering into the space and time of the ‘as if dimension. As Ricoeur presents, to search for one’s identity is to accept responsibility for one’s own past to one’s present “space of experience” and “horizon of expectation” for the future. Therefore, the quest provides circular imaginative travel into time and space, which is toward the origin. The lost identity in inquiry is later regained, then, puts into a relief of self-knowledge, or as Ricoeur describes “the fruit of an examined life” (1988, p. 247).

For instance, Talə as a hero is experiencing a conflicting sense of self. He thought he had a good character being the only son in the family. Later, when the girl with whom he falls in love questions his identity, saying - “*Why do not you dare to be a man?*”, he recognizes that the character is constituted and is gained at the cost of his ‘Other’ identity. Then, the hero establishes a quest in the face of experience unfolding within the narrated world. By the reaction to the imputation (*Why do not you dare to be a man?*) that he is referred to, he began to search for an identity. The first attempt to regain his manhood identity by presenting himself to join the military. Unconsciously, the hero is looking for an identity that would make him accepted by others following the trace of his father. He thinks he would gain an identity that is respected in the face of others, especially Sifen. In this case, he considers his father as a model to regain his lost identity. “ከረንን ያላየ፣ ምን ወንድ ሆኑ” (“One who did not see *Karan*, should not be called a man”) – this is what his father repeatedly urges. This is an authentic identity for a man, and one should come through the military to have an authentic identity of manhood.

Thus, in search of this identity, the hero puts himself on the path that his father once passed. This calls for an imaginary trace that is left by his father. Hence, there is an imaginary identity built on his father's perspective of manhood, which is a narrative identity. As a result, the hero enters into a sense of animosity with his present self since he lost what aspires due to the identity of 'who' he is now. The animosity is between an identity constructed by his sisters and mother and his imagined self which is the process of *resurrection*. Hence, the hero has to question his present identity: “እራሴን ተጸዮኛኩት፤ የት እንዳለ በማላውቀው ማንነቴ ላይ ጥላቻ አደረብኝ።” (“I hated myself. I despised my identity which I did not what it is”) (p. 65). He wanted to join the military, not for the love of his country, but rather, to gain his identity that is accepted as the norm by society, at least by Sifen, his father, and Chayna. This is what Ricoeur (2003) infers that the *self* recognizes itself through the identification of certain given norms and ideals.

Therefore, narrative is a significant aspect in mediating an individual's experience and the world marking the passage of life and developing change in the permanence of time. The hero with his trajectory experiencing time develops a different form of identity. On one hand, it can be considered a narrative organization of a *bildungsroman* novel that presents how the hero changes physically or psychologically through time. In the narrated world, every character stretches from birth to death, hence, it is concordant that remains the same for everyone, like a natural course of being born and dying in a real life. Nevertheless, for an individual character, circumstances are experienced with random and coincidental happenings, which presents a discordant experience of life. Talə as a hero character who has his own experience of time defines the self through the plot that allows an interpretation of past existence. That he has to lose his identity, and feel anxiety, guilt, or disillusionment. Hence, he came to wonder about the future, and peruse a new identity in the process. At this point, the plot mediates the concordance of permanence and the discordance of change.

Then, Talə changes the attitude he used to have toward females – “*Females are my fortunes*”. He lost his desire for Sifen. Because of her comment about being unfit as a man, he has to look back at the past and review his identity. Here, a new identity unfolds by the conflating nature of the time experienced and the expectation or time that awaits. The hero

was already on the quest for love which he was expecting. When his expectation did not meet, he began to evaluate life by moving from present to past. This results in confusion brought out of expectation, that is when one finds himself in the temporal position of the future.

The quest of the hero became bold. He has to confess: “እኔ ፀቤ፣ ከራሴ ከተሸሸገው እኔ ጋር እንዲሆን እንደምን ላስረዳት? ቻይና እሷ ካዩት የእኔ ወካይ ጋር የተፈጠረ የላጥፋህ አጥፋኝ ፀብ እንደሆነ እንዴት ልንገራት? የት እምኔ ውስጥ ተሸሸገ? እንዴት እንደምን አሮጌልቆ ለእነሱ ታየ? (“How can I convince her that I am fighting with my own hidden identity? How do I tell her that I am in a win or lose a fight with an identity which Chayna and she had realized”) (p. 68). In this case, he discovers an identity that is already known by others. Why the hero was not aware of his self? When does Talə recognize his sissy character? He did not know about gender roles – what makes him a man in addition to his given biological masculinity? Others have labeled what he always does as sissy things. What the hero is questioning is an identity that is already there in the permanence. Thus, his quest is an experience that advances toward the origin or permanence. The following excerpt reveals the hero’s questions:

በየትኛው ድርጊቴ ውስጥ ተቀጥላው እኔነት ብቅ እንደሚል አልተገለጸልኝም። ስተኛ? ስበላ? ስለብስ? የቴ ድርጊቴን ተንተርሶ ሴታሴትነት ብቅ አለ? ለኔ ግልፅ አይደለም።

I do not understand which of my trait reveals my other hidden identity. Is it when I am laying? When I am wearing? By which action that my sissy character being revealed? It is not clear to me. (p. 68).

The excerpt above presents the confusion of the hero regarding his identity. He is struggling to have a stable identity. In doing this, he has to lose his other identity. The desire he used to have for Sifen became lost. Contrastingly, Sifen became attached to him because of the regret when she strikes him (because of that he tried to join the military). He says, “ራሴን ፈተሽኩ፣ ከጥቂት ሰዓታት በፊት የጥሬ ክምር እንደነበርኩ አንድም ፍንጭ የለም። ጠላጊት?” (“I assessed myself. I have not seen any clue that my heart was dispersed before some hours ago. Did I hate her?”) (p. 70). Then, he experiences hopelessness and loses his sense of identity. He used to care for the time during the time of his desire. Now his existence became meaningless:



... ከፍተኛ የተስፋ ስሜት መቁረጥ ወረደብኝ። ... ሰዎች ሳይሆኑ ተፈጥሮ ክዳኛለች። ተፈጥሮ የከዳኛው ወንድነት ምን ተረፈው? ስል አሰብኩ። ከሳንቲም ከተዳፈነችው ቀዳዳ የተነሳ አዙሪት መሰል ስሜት ከአካሌ ላይ ህያውነትን አጥቦ ሲወስድ ታወቀኝ።

... I deeply felt hopeless. ... Nature has betrayed me, not the people. I thought “What is left for such manhood that was betrayed by nature?” I felt that I am within a loop like in a tiny hole of a coin, and washed up my existence. (p. 71).

At this narrative point, the narrator is immersed in a stream of consciousness, in which the hero narrates his state of mind – the feeling of meaninglessness, fear, loss, and hallucination. He wonders, “አሞራ ሴታ ሴት ይኖረው ይሆን?” (“Does a bird has womanish character?”) (p. 73). Such kind of narration is presented from pages 72 -77.

Identity is gained as the hero revisits his lost time. His question of existence and the meaning of life is changed. He used to associate himself with King Solomon for the love he acquired from many wives and concubines. He used to call himself a lucky one. His worldview is framed in the experience of time. His thought about women and himself is shaped by the circumstances: “ንጉስ ሰሎሞን በሰባት መቶ እቁባቶች መካከል ሲኖር ሴታሴትነት አልሞካከረው ይሆን? ወይስ እንደ ፍየል ሴት አውራነትን ከሴታሴትነት የሚጠበቅ ተፈጥሮ ነበረው? ...” (“Did King Solomon show womanish character when he was surrounded by seven hundred concubines? Or else, did he has a unique nature like a goat that keeps his manhood away from a womanish character?”) (p. 73). In this section, the hero repeatedly questions tasks given assigned as a gender role. Why some tasks are assigned only to women, and why not it is given to men?

In this manner, the hero presents identity as the self-constituency of the community. This is an identity defined by the history of cultures and *mentalities* where the hero drew his identity from the reception the narrative of the community produced. Hence, narrative identity involves a circular relation between characters as subjects and the recognized norms and cultures within the community of the narrated world. In this respect, the hero still questions the gender traits or roles assumed by the community, identifying what is like to be a man or a woman. Trying to define what is being a man, he associates his father’s identity. His father had been serving in the military, and now he is joining the military for the second time after twenty years. Here, the narration states: “የአባቴ መዝመት የጡረታ

ድልድይ እና የመላው ሩፋኤል ጉዳይ መሆኑ ቀርቶ የእኛ የቤተሰቡ ብቻ ሆነ። ሲዘምት የተኛሁበት ግንባራን ስሞኝ ሄደ። ወንድ ይህ ነው?” (“The news about my father going to a war field is no more an issue in the community of *Tureta* Bridge and the Rafael neighborhood. It is now only the issue of our family. When he went out, he kissed me on my forehead”) (p. 76-7). At this time, the hero tries to redefine gender identity:

በእርግጥም የወንድና የሴት ልዩነት ይህው ነው። ወንድ ህልሙ ከራሱና ከቤቱ ውጭ የሚያድር ነው። ከአካባቢው ርቆ የሚሄድ። ያንን ህልሙን በሁከት ላይ ተመስርቶ የሚያዋቅር።

Of course, this is the difference between being a man and a woman. A man always aspires to live outside himself his and family. He is the one who travels far from his community. Then, he tried to build his dream through conflict. (p. 77).

The above excerpt shows that the hero gives an interpretation of gender after his father joins the military for a second time. He was a soldier 20 years ago. “እናቴም እንደ አባቴ ሁሉ ለአርባ ዓመታት ወታደር ነበረች። የእሷ ውጊያ ግን ከቤቷ ደጃፍ አላለፈም።” (“Like my father, my mother was a soldier for forty years though her fight was limited in our house compound”) (p. 77). Situations changed over time as the hero finds himself in another course/dimension of life. Talə builds attachment with Chuchu. Contrastingly, his strong attachment to his family weakened. Thus, the hero left the dilemma of constituted with the females’ care and love that made him ‘sissy’ and abandoning it to regain his manhood. He asks, what is to be a man? Here is the narrative statement:

በእኔ ክፍል እና በትልቁ ቤት መካከል ብዙ ሊሎሜትሮች የተዘረጋ ያህል ናፍቆት አፍተሰተለኝ። ወንድነት መነጠል ነው? አደን ሄዶ መነጠል? ጦርነት ሄዶ መነጠል? ሲራራ ነጋዴ ሆኖ መነጠል? አብሮ እያሉ መነጠል?

I longed for the family as if my room and the main house is separated by a distance of many kilometers. Is manhood means being solitary? Left for hunting and became solitary? Going to war and being lonely? Becoming a caravan merchant and staying separated? Being courageous to be alone while living together? (p. 87-8).

As the excerpt above shows, the voice of the narrator raises a continuous question regarding what is constituted as a man and a woman. The community’s established definition of gender identity became a subject of interpretation for the hero. This interpretation of narrative identity goes in line with the refiguration of narrative, in which the narrative voice

implicitly or explicitly induces a new evaluation of the narrated world and the reader as well.

However, the hero does not still accept the established norm of being like a father or acting like a man. This invites the narrative voice to evaluate, judge, and interpret fatherhood or manhood. As a result, the circular relationship between the narrative and a character is established, and the narratives about fatherhood or manhood both express and shape the identity of the hero. The following excerpt presents how the hero examines what is to be a man:

**አኔም እንደ አባቴ ግማሽ አድሜየን በበረሃ አሳልፌ ከበረሃ ጅኒ ጋር ባዕድ የሆንኩበትን ቤተሰብ መቀላቀል። የጠጅ ለማግኘት ተሰማማጭ፣ ተሸቆጭቋጭ ሆኜ እንዳላሳጣቸው ፀዓዳ እየለበስኩ ... ይህ ነው ወንድነት?**

As had been done by my father, shall I waste half of my age going to the wilderness and rejoin the family to whom I am strange? Begging cash from them for my drink; acting like a gentleman and dressing neatly to make them proud. ... Is it what meant to be a man? (p.88).

In the above excerpt, the narration shows that the hero still struggles to maintain his self-same. However, externally, the community he lived with expects him to perform tasks that are assigned to men. The hero tries to make sense of himself and life in general. He wants to rebuild his manhood identity. As he is trying to reconnect with his authentic identity, he insists that Chayna teach him how to be a man: “ያኔ ገና በአስራ አራት አመቴ ላይ ግን የማደርገው ሲጠፋኝ ቻይና እግር ላይ ወደቅሁ። ... ወንድ አድርጌኝ አልኳት! እራሴን ጠላሁት፣ በእናትሽ፣ አለዚያ እራሴን እገላለሁ አልኳት።” (“At then, during my fourteenth, I was confused what to do. So, I throw myself under Chayna’s foot. I beg her to train me to be like a man. I told her that I was hating myself and I would make suicide” (p. 77-8). This statement evokes the voice of the narrator who is outside the time of the hero and reinterprets the hero’s experience and identity. Now, the hero has to lose his current identity to regain the quest identity. He took the courage to confess in front of Chayna. He confesses that he wanted to be a man. Thus, Chayna trained him. He does exercise. He avoids his former female friends. He distances himself from his sisters and mother.

The hero's quest builds a circular imaginary travel toward the origin. His search for identity was initiated by the girl with whom he falls in love. Sifen did not comply with Talə's self-constituency. Being rejected by Sifen, the hero builds an imaginary identity that is subject to be regained in the future. Talə did not stop thinking about Sifen. He still tries to give the meaning of manhood by assuming what Sifen gives him instead. His question of manhood's identity relies on Sifen's standard of what is to be like a man. He would ask himself what she would do if he had gone for the military, “ለመሆኑ ሲፈን ምን ታዘበኝ አፈሳን ብደፍር በቀጭን ድምጽዎ ጮሃ፣ በቀጭን እጆቿ ከኋላየ ታቅፈኝ ኖሯል?” (“What was Sifen's reaction when I insisted to go to the war? Would she be cried for me and held me at my back?”) (p. 93).

As the hero progresses ahead with all his confusion about his identity, he began avoids his mother. He began to spend his time with other friends. The hero experiences a continuous sense of helplessness, jumping from one loss to another loss. He was struggling to fulfill what he lacked, act like “a man”. But, as he tried to acquire what he quests for, he loses his previous identity. Below is an excerpt that presents the change in the hero's perspective toward his mother.

እናቴን እየፈራጊት መጥቻለሁ። ...በእኔና በናቴ መካከል የማይለካ ገደል መፈጠሩ ተሰማኝ። አንድ ቀን ጦሴን ሁሉ ሰብስባ ከነወለዱ እንደምትጭንብኝ አስቤ በተስፋ መጠባበቅ ጀመርኩ። ... አንድ ቀን አላዛርን ሆኜ ተኝቼ፣ ስነቃ ቸቸን ሆኜ ወንበሩ ላይ እገኛለሁ።

I began to fear my mother. ... I realized that there is a big hurdle set between us. I began to wait for the moment that one day she will bring all my sins together and put them on me. ... One day as I sleep, I wake up and find being Chuchu and find myself sitting on the chair. (p.102-3).

As indicated above, the hero is becoming more uncertain about the future. The more he stretched toward his future, the more he became hopeless and fearful. What is left of him now? He never ceases the quest – love is the only reason that makes him seek the future. He still hopes for and struggles for the love of Sifen. It is a quest for unfulfilled love. He feels hopeless, but he still waits for the time ahead. There is an ending quest that makes him move towards the future.

In this story, the young hero continues in the second episode where he still quests for unfulfilled love, lost identity, and undefined truth. He never ceases to wonder. The quest for love and his identity that hunts him as a ghost, whispering to his mind: “እውነታ እኔ፣ እናቴና ቼቹ መካከል ያለውን አስጨናቂ ክንውን ይወክላል? ምኑ ያምራል? እውነት ከተረት የባለ የሚታመን ነገር የሌለው ክስተት ነው።” (“Does fact represents the complicated situation existed between Chuchu, my mother and me? What makes it preferable? Fact is just a phenomenon, which is even more devious than a myth”) (p. 113). This time the hero gets into a more complicated quest, questioning the difference between fact vs. myth and a mother’s love.

Then, the hero finds to be in a trap of quest, a never-ending search for meaning for self. Hence, he continuously enters into the stream of denial of the experiences happening around him. He tries to reject the fact about the death of his father, his sister, and what his mother did. This is explained by the deep level of repetition. The quest has been absorbed into the movement by which the hero if we may still call him by that name - becomes who he is. It is itself the spiral movement that, through anecdotes and episodes, brings the reader back to the almost motionless constellation of potentialities that the narrative retrieves. Because his self-same is not accepted by others, he tries to escape from the trap of norms and social ideals that defined him as who he is now.

Then, he immersed himself in his own time which is an internal time. It is the time of quest. Asking who truly he is: “ማነው ራሱን የሚያውቅ? ሴታሴትነታችንና አውሊያነታችን ከራሳችን ከተደበቀ ለራሳችን አፋችንን ሞልተን መናገር እንዴት እንችላለን? በሌሎች ሳይረጋገጥ በራሳችን ስለራሳችን የምናውቀው ምንድን ነው?” (“Who is that able to know himself? If our womanish character and sorcerer identity are invisible to us, how can we tell about ourselves? Which identity is that we can realize it by us before other people’s conformation?”) (p. 116). With such a never-ending quest, the hero’s worldview and perspective are always changing. As expectation and desire came to be unfulfilled, he found himself in another quest. The time and events he experienced are left behind while

his quest continues as the narration progress ahead. The lost experience became a reference for lost identity, while the quest forward is still there.

Usually, the hero tries to build identities from the narratives (Bible, the Story of Raphael the Archangel, and the novel, *Ke Admas Beashager*) to define his self-same and others. For example, he associates himself with King Solomon because he is surrounded by females. Then, he tries to find out about Sifen from the Bible, associating “Sifen of Nazareth” with “Jesus of Nazareth”. He also notes, “ለሽሽት ድርሳነ-ሩፋኤልን ማንበብ ጀመርኩ” (“I begin to read the Story of Raphael the Archangel to escape myself out” p. 116). He associates a story in the story of the Archangel with the incident of the *Shegole* bullet factory explosion. In this sense, the hero is in a deep level of repetition where actions and narratives are duplicated through imaginative travel. He tries to rebuild identity, reconstruct meaning, and interpret the past through other forms of narratives.

He wanted to escape from his self-constituency and present time, “ከእውነትና እውነታ ማምለጫ አጣሁ።” (“I could not find a way out from the reality and fact”) (p. 117). He loses time as he tries to escape from ordinary time. Thus, he is in a spiral of quests and circular imaginative travel. When he was a child, Talə had not enough time with his father. He rarely had a conversation with him. Mostly, he spent his time around females: his sisters and his mother. Thus, he formed suppressed identity. The hero admits in the statement, “ለመጀመሪያ ጊዜ ከአባቴ ጋር ዓይን ለዓይን ተገጣጠምን። ግንባሩ ላይ ብይ መሰል እብጠት ይታያል እንጂ እሱ ነው። አባቴ መንፈሴን ያነበበ መሰለኝ።” (“For the first time, my eyes experience a direct contact with my father’s. I can see he is my father, except that he got a tumor on his forehead. I feel that he reads my mind” p. ). His father seems proud of him because he was insisting to join the military even if he had not.

In every part of the story, there is a dimension of facts about the hero. He got different identities. For instance, his mother and Sifen think Talə possesses the power of bewitchment. They gave him godlike power. They believed he knows that the news about the death of his father was wrong. On page 124, the conversation between Sifen and Talə

gives the hero a different identity in which he is struggling not to be one. Below is the excerpt from the conversation:

**“ለምን አባትህን አልላምካቸውም የአባትህ መምጣት የገረመህ አትመስልም አይደል?”**

(“Why you did not greet your father? Is it not a surprise for you?”)

**አዎ አልኳት**

(“Yes, I said to her”.)

**መርዳቸው የመጣ ቀን ያላለቀስከው ለዚህ ነው። እኔ መች አጣሁት! አንተ ግድ አልሰጥህ አለ እንጂ ...”**

(“You did not cry when the news about the death of your father was heard. I already knew it, but you do not seem to care”). (p. 124).

Sifen and Talə’s mother think that he did not cry then because he already knew that his father was not dead. However, he does not accept this forged identity given by Sifen and his mother: **“አንንች የወለደችውን ለማምለክ ሰብብ እየረለገች ነው።”** (“Anguach is trying to find a reason to worship her son”) (p. 125). This view about Talə’s bewitchment power makes Sifen closer to him like she said earlier, “It is not for you; it is for the spirit within you”.

As the hero’s quest continues, he struggles to attain a new identity. This time he has to find a new figure of identity to model or imitate in his search for identity. Hence, the Captain became the new figure. The Captain suggests the hero books (*Ke Admas Bashager*) to expose him to another world of truth. This indicates how the hero is engaged in new horizons, knowledge, or perspective of life. **“የህይወት ጥያቄ በእነዚህ መጽሐፍት ከሚሰጠው መልስ በላይ ይበዛል።”** (“The answer for the question of life is beyond these books could give”) (p. 155). This statement strikes the hero because he is still puzzled by the question of life. He narrates: **“ሰው ሁሉ የህይወት ጥያቄ አለበት? እንደኔ የማይመልሰው? ታዲያ በቀላሉ ህይወት እራሷ ጥያቄ ሆነችብኝ።”** (“Does everyman has a question of life that he or she could not answer like me? Life became a question for me”) (p. 155). Previously, the hero was hiding in the imaginary quest for Sifen’s love. Now, the answer to his quest is found to be within the books. A Sorcerer, Sifen, books – which could

provide an answer to his grand question of identity. Implying for this quest, he would say, “ከአድማስ ባሻገር የአስማት ክህሎትን ይጠቀማል?” (“Does *Ke Admas Bashager* use magic?”) (p. 156). This expression indicates that the search for identity is now trespassing into books.

To construct meaning, the hero has to get himself into a visitation of others’ experiences. Thus, the Captain’s experienced past would be a trace of the hero’s quest. The hero seeks to learn from his predecessors (elders) – that through narrative, he has to regain/construct his identity: “ይህን የተማርኩት ከአባይ (ከአባትህ) የተግባር ውጣ ውረድ ነው። ከእሳቸው ጋር ባልገናኝ ኖሮ ገና ድሮ ራሴን አጥፍቼ ነበር። ገና ድሮ።” (“I have learned this from your father’s hideous life experience. Had not I met your father, I would have killed myself long ago”) (p. 156). How the Captain learned from the experience of the hero’s father, Ato Bizen, and through the Captain’s voice, Talə has to learn from this shared experience. This shows a series of generations connected by the same experience. “ድንገጥ የሚያደርግ ትውስታ እንደተወረወረ ድንጋይ ጭንቅላቴ ላይ ነጥሮ አለፈ። አባቴ የማይጠቅመውንና የማይደርስበትን ነገር ነበር በክንብንብ ያልፈው የነበረው?” (“Suddenly, my mind recalls a shocking moment. Was my father intentionally ignoring issues which are unimportant and undiscoverable for him?”) (p. 156). The quest for meaning and identity continued as the hero establishes a new friendship with the Captain, who is accustomed to reading books.

The Captain thinks about some questions in life and got answers from books and Ato Bizen. “የሻምበል የሆነ ነገር ሁሉ እኔን የሚያንገኝን ያህል እሱም የእኔን ዕድሜና ወደፊት የተዘረጋ ህይወት አጥብቆ እንደሚመኘው ገባኝ።” (“As much as I get obsessed with everything that the Captain possesses, I understand that the captain himself has an aspiration for my future life”) (p. 157). Thus, Talə aspires to follow the Captain’s trace that was once in the quest. In this sense, the experienced past is a future action to be experienced. What about his own experience in the present? “አንተን ሳክል የአመፅ ስራዎች የመኖሪ ማረጋገጫዎቼ ይመስሉኝ ነበር።” (“When I was about your age, I thought rebellious actions were a conformation for my existence”) (p. 158). The Captain has his own time, by which the hero is developing new experiences and identity through extra-



narrative. The Captain presents another story that made the experience of the hero extra-temporal. He narrates about his time of youth, and about writers he read like Fyodor Dostoevsky; how Fyodor passed through a difficult time as a lifetime prisoner and soldier. In the meantime, the hero tries to make sense of his father. The hero wonders:

አባቴ አርባ አመት ሙሉ የከባድ ጉልበት ሥራ ያለበት እስር ቤት ውስጥ ነበር ማለት ነው? ስንት ትዕዛዞች ተቀብሎ ስንት ትዕዛዞች አስፈፀመ? ማዘዝ የማይችል ተራ ወታደር መሆኑ ከእንግዲህ ያለፀፀት ጠብቆታል ማለት ነው? ... ግን እንዴት አንድ ሰው ይህን ያህል አመት አገልግሎ በተራ ወታደርነት ይቀራል?

Was my father being captive, working hard labor for forty years? How many orders did he accept and commit? Does his sergeant position keep him from guilt because he would not give orders? Why would a man who has long military service work without any rank? (p. 159).

The hero is still trying to reconcile with his time and maintain his guilt as he struggles to take a lesson from the experience of his father and the Captain. In this part, the order of the story is disrupted by the Captain's additional narrative. When the Captain asks about Chuchu, “በእኔ የተጎዳ ልጅ ነው” (“He is a boy who is hurt because of me” p. 160). He thinks Chuchu is retarded because of him. He accepts this superstition (myth) because he heard from Chayna, but he did not know how it had been done. “እኔ እንጃ፣ እናቴና እሁቶቼ ሲነግሩኝ፣ ፈዘዘኩ። አልስቅም፣ አላለቅስም፣ ራብን አልልም፣ አልጫወትም ... እንደ ቸቸ ሆንኩ። በጌላ እናቴ የእኔን በሽታ ወደ ቸቸ አዞረችው” (“I do not know. My sisters and my mother told me that I became stroked suddenly. I was not talking, playing, laughing, or crying. I became like what Chuchu is now. Later, my mother transferred my illness to Chuchu”) (p. 161). Here, the dialogue between the Captain and Talə brought additional perspective to the hero.

However, the Captain denounces what Talə believed so. He states, “አምነህ ለመቀበል አሳማኝ ነገር እውስጥህ መኖር አለበት። እንዴት እናትህ በሽታን ከአንተ ላይ ወደ ሌላ ሰው ማስተላለፍ ቻሉ?” (“To accept it as a fact, you must have a convincing reason. How could your mother transfer your illness to another person?”) (p. 161). The established belief that made the hero be in experience such confusion and conflict of identity is now shattered. He seems to erase his aberration. How the hero avoids his confusion is established through an extra-narrative by the Captain, which in turn, helps form a narrative identity. In this

sense, the hero became a reader of a story narrated by the Captain. For example, he told him a story (pages 161-162) about a soldier who believes that he got bulletproof through a magic spell. Then, the Captain reconciles –“የልጁ ህምም የራሱ ነው። ከአንተ ወደ እሱ የሚሸጋገር አይደለም። የአእምሮ ገግመት አለበት።” (“The illness belong to the boy. It is not transferable from you to him. He has Down syndrome” (p. 162). This conversation between Talə and the Captain foreshadows the hero’s identity, as a reader gets an apprenticeship of the hero’s future identity.

The hero confesses his belief, what he thinks it is true about his mother. Here is the extraction which depicts the confession:

እራሴን ጠላሁ፣ እናቴን ጠላሁ፣ የዓለምን እናቶች ተፀየኛኩ። የእናቴ ልጅ መሆኔ አይደለም ጥፋቱ፣ ልጅ መሆኔ ነው። የትኛዋም እናት ውስጥ በልጅ ፍቅር ተመስሎ ያለው ሰይጣን ነው። በልጅ ስም ብዙ እርኩስት ይሠራሉ። በኋላ ለልጃቸውም የማይራሩ ይሆናሉ። እንዲያ ቢሆን ነው እንጂ የቸቹ እናት ለምን ጥላው ጠፋች? እናቴ ለምን እኔን ፈራች?”

I hate myself. I hate my mother. I despise all mothers in the world. The problem is not that I am her child; it is I am her son. Inside every mother’s heart, there is a devil that exists in the name of a child’s love. In the name of their children’s love, they do many wicked things. Then, they will do the same to their children. If it is not the case, why Chuchu’s mother abandons him? Why was my mom afraid of me? (p. 163).

As stated in the excerpt above, the voice of the hero presents the dilemma about his identity. He holds a view that there is a crime every mother would commit “in the name of love”. The phrase “in the name of love” is used for the title of the novel. This makes the whole story recount conflicting desires, an uncertain future, and the unstable identity of a young hero who plunges into an apprenticeship of life. This feeling is never revealed before. Narratively, the hero is healing himself from the feeling of confusion and uncertainty. Now, he has to speak it out, and this revelation will help him to reconcile with himself. In this fact, the hero as a subject of action finds a “narrative cure” by telling about himself, where through the plot, the scattered pieces of stories become coherent and acceptable so that the subject can recognize his self-constancy.

In this case, Talə is not the only one whose quest is established and his identity manifested. Like the hero, his father, Ato Bizen always try escape from the existing reality or the present situation. He is always trying to avoid the family; he never liked being around a

female-dominated family. “በሴት ግስላ ተከብቤ” (“I am surrounded by female panthers”) - he would insist. He struggled to maintain his manhood and wanted to be “a man of value”. A such deed is acquired when one became a soldier – “ከረንን ያላየ መኝ ወንድነቱን ለየ” (“One who did not see Karan, would not taste his manhood”). Hence, he wanted his only son to follow his path or trace. For Ato Bizen, a man should go into the field of fight where his courage and nobility are testified. When the government calls the former military officials for rehabilitation, Ato Bizen joins them even though he was not a ranked military officer. “ቦታው የወንድ መዋያ ነውና ትንሽ ልታደስ ብየ ቆየሁ እንጂ” (“I wanted to reeducate myself because the place is where men exist”). This indicates he does not like being around the family because he thinks his manhood is compromised when the females are dominating.

## 5.5. Summary

This chapter has presented the analysis of *Bäfakär Säm*. As explained earlier, the story is organized into three narrative episodes that consist of time references as – “Before the change”, “During the change” and “After the change”. By the voice of a biographical narrator, the story is presented in the form of episodic memory that is structured in terms of the character’s growth and development. Therefore, *Bäfakär Säm* can be considered a *Bildungsroman*<sup>1</sup> novel. The whole narration recounts a story from childhood to adulthood from a perspective of a young hero. Thus, it gave the narrative a form of apprenticeship that advances toward the future. At the same time, the story depicts a childhood memory of the narrator who is recollecting actions from the past toward the present or the denouncement.

In this novel, the narration is presented in the utterance of the present tense; nevertheless, the events are construed in the narrator’s past. This makes the novel a type of what

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<sup>1</sup> A German term for a genre of novel, which is defined as a novel of formation or education that dictates an account of the youthful development of a hero or heroine (usually the former) (McCarthy, 2010, 42; Cuddon, 2013, p. 77).

Richardson (2019, p. 106) classified as “antinomic narration” in an *anitimimetic* narrative, in which the narrator moves ever further away from the time of the narrating, and the reader is still moving prospectively, though time’s arrow is reversed. With this distinction, *Bäfəkər Səm* presents dual experiences of time, which are linear and traversed time. Since the narration is established in the present, it cancels the temporal distance between the narrator’s past and the hero’s present. At this point, Ricoeur’s approach to narrative voice as the plot’s imaginative variation coincided with the time of utterance and the time of the story, which presents time beyond its tense structures.

This novel involves the voices of a hero and narrator who envisage the story from the *telos* and the *totum simul* perspectives respectively. From the telos-direction or linear level, the voice of a young character named Talə puts into a quest for love (maternal, romantic) and identity (gender, belief) with his desires and goals, but unknown consequences. Constituted at within-time-ness, he experiences time with the expectation of not knowing what is to come in the future. In this regard, the telos of the plot also constitute a linear time that invites the reader towards a particular directedness or toward an end. On the other hand, the voice of the narrator provides a recollection of time from the past toward the denouncement of the story. Additionally, the narrator enjoins the hero until a distinctive voice is heard by the expression “አሁን ላስበው” (“When I think about it now”) that marks the narrator’s visitation and actions in the story are being recollected. Therefore, irreconcilable aspects of time are brought together in the novel by its imaginative variations.

Other aspects of time were also identified as mediation brought by imaginative variations in *Bäfəkər Səm*. The time of everydayness or ‘now’ time and eternal time are imaginative variations concealed between lived time and world time. In this novel, the character-hero, Talə, is dominantly preoccupied with mundane activities. Most of his actions are presented in ‘now’ time, based on the circumstances at hand. Thus, everything happens to be temporal; nothing stays permanent. Conversely, the voice of the narrator projects the characters and the reader to “being-in-the-world” which is capable of being inhabited. Hence, it provided the world of eternity that constitutes public time. At this point, ‘now’

time in within-time-ness presents death while the public time in the world time conjoins eternity. By this fact, death and eternity are reconciled here. Moreover, internal time and external time are the other irreconcilable aspects of time explored under a subsection of temporality.

Memory as one aspect of time was also a subject of analysis. As the story depicts a childhood experience presented from an adult perspective, it can be said that *Bäfəkər Səm* is a novel of memory. In this novel, scattered childhood memories are brought together into the structure of the narrative, in which the narrator recounts past experiences that bring an interpretation of experiences left back in time. An adult narrator interprets the experience of a young hero who happened to be the only son in the family. Perceiving a different temporal position, the narrator retains back and recollects the conflict of desires and goals, the question of identity, love, beliefs, and all other circumstances he had experienced as a boy. Thus, how the narrator or the hero makes reminiscence of action in the past, and how they establish quasi-present were the subject of discussions. Additionally, as the activity of reading conveys an experience of retentions and protentions, textual memory was an issue that has been considered in the analysis.

The quest for identity was predominantly presented in *Bäfəkər Səm*. Throughout the story, one can read that the main character always struggling to find a stable identity. Talə was not comforted by the identity he had constituted nor complied with the norms or customary practices of the community he was living with. His distinct identity is inscribed with personal traits and characters as being-towards-death refigured to be unstable over time. Thus, a change in permanence is a mediation brought by the plot's imaginative variations. Ricoeur (1988, p. 200) asserts that narrativity or emplotment presents a mediation between the world and self, that is through narrative identity.

To summarize the whole assertions, it has been discussed that *Bäfəkər Səm* explored the *temporal variations* that are brought by the hero and narrator who envisage temporal perspectives of the story as a whole. The narrator is positioned from a different temporal and special distance in relation to the story that is being recounted through *memory* while

the hero presents his desires, conflicting views, wondering, and trajectories of his life as they occur. At the same time, the hero gets into a stream of search that advances through the form of “future in the past”, and receives a sense of past or memory. This indicates the temporal position of the narrator’s voice that looks back into the past and interprets the hero’s experience; in effect, the narrative voice was consigned to the task of discovering a *narrative identity*.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

This study was aimed at investigating *temporality*, *memory*, and *narrative identity* in selected postmodern Amharic novels. For this purpose, *Afə* by Adam Reta and *Bäfəkər Səm* by Alemayehu Gelagay had been selected as a novels constituent of postmodern features. Accordingly, the study has explored different *temporal variations*, which are assumed to be irreconcilable aspects of time (phenomenological and cosmological time) added to the imaginative variations of time that are provided only by fiction. In line with this, it had been attempted to identify the conception of time in the selected Amharic novels. The issue of *memory* was also one of the objectives of the analysis that was being explored, as it has been considered as one of the structures of time in the phenomenology of time and the narrative structure of emplotment. Narrative identity was the other issue that had been investigated in the analysis of selected novels. Through this attempt, the study has reached the following conclusion.

The novel, *Afə* is organized with disentangled plots and conflicting times in the story and the narration. In this novel, the subplots in the footnote supplemented new dimensions of the main story. Hence, the story involves multiple narrators and voices in that it can be categorized as a polyphony novel. For instance, Gersamot and Ramisu are character-narrators in addition to the non-participant narrator who presents action from the *totum simul* perspective. Therefore, the voices present gazes to the narrated world and provide imaginative variations that finally mediate different aspects of time. When it comes to *Bäfəkər Səm*, the story recounts a biographical presentation of a man from childhood to adulthood. It depicts a change and transformation in one life so it is considered a *Bildungsroman*. In this story, a narrator who gazes from a distant temporal position recollects the experience of a young hero named Talə. However, the voice of the hero dominates the utterance which in another respect, establishes actions at the level of within-time-ness toward the future.

Therefore, the temporal variations such as *linear time* and *traversed time*, *ordinary time* and *public time*, *eternity* and *death*, *metatemporal time*, and *mortal time* have been explored

in both *Afə* and *Bäfəkər Səm*. It has been also analyzed that narrated time, constituting calendar time, biological time successive of generations (biological time) and trace, mediates the phenomenological and cosmological time. For instance, physical time as a constituent of calendar time creates an objective succession of time and subjective time. Apart from this, it involves a phenomenological aspect of time, in which, characters has to make retention and recollection, *stretching-along* between “before” and “after” during the narration. Then, traversed time is presented in opposition to the ‘*time’s arrow*’ metaphor of objective successions.

In both novels, the time of narration is presented in the present tense; hence, the story establishes actions in ‘now’ time, *stretching-along* which is also making-present. This gives time a sense of everydayness or mundane with an abstract succession of now. Thus, circumstances happened to be coincidental and the decisions of the characters are mostly situational. Particularly, in *Afə*, characters are assigned in routine actions. Multiple narrators present actions simultaneously that involve multiple characters at different locations. Hence, actions happening here and there where characters cannot hear or see each other, yet the reader perceives these actions simultaneously. Such kind of narrative presentation is a new development for the literary traditions of Amharic novels.

More significantly, both novels established past narrative voices that is far distant from the time of narrating even though their narrative tense is present tense. Therefore, the narrator with the past voice presents reversed time since its utterance precedes the narration that is presented in the present tense and the reader follows the action prospectively. The finds of the study showed that every narration (whatever tense it is) involves a past narrative voice in relation to the story it is telling or the narrated world. The analysis of *Afə* and *Bäfəkər Səm* showed that the writers have used present tense narration while the story depicts events that happened in the past. In this regard, in *Bäfəkər Səm*, the first-person narrator presents an experiencing hero who retrospectively views his former life without evaluating it from the perspective of the narrator. This can be stated as a reflective narrative characteristic of postmodern novels which is usually uncommon in Amharic novels.



In this instance, the current researcher suggests further studies regarding time in story and narration in Amharic novels which requires reinvestigation of the traditional relationship between tense and time in narrative.

The narrative technique developed by Adam is quite different from Alemayehu. Adam has written the story having multiple narrators who simultaneously present other characters and themselves. Hence, the narrative induced a circular narrative technique. With this fact, multiple dimensions of facts and perspectival time are presented. It seems that Adam intentionally uses narrative techniques as a means to distance the reader from the present. In *Bäfəkər Səm*, Alemayehu used episodic narrative presentation involving a single narrator who takes time from the past toward the narrative present. However, the hero, whose voice is dominantly heard in the whole episode, advances toward the “future in the past”. Therefore, both novels involved a chaotic operation of time.

Furthermore, the analysis has identified the conceptions of time as presented in the texts. In *Afə*, *transformation*, *progress*, *transiency*, and *cyclicity* were identified as conceptions of time. In this novel, characters on their side, present a view of time as conceived by themselves. For instance, Bakafa and Ramisu thought of time in terms of progress and change. This view of time, as Messay (2013) explained (see sections 1.1 & 2.1), is perceived by a future-oriented society, which is claimed to be the Western notion of time. However, the narrative technique of the novel infuses a cyclical time as a dominant conception. Mostly, time is presented in regular and repetitive changes of circumstances, which are beyond the character’s control.

Nothing presumably stays permanent. Like nature’s repetitive cycle, actions and events in the story are a subject of endless repetitions that create a cyclical labyrinth of time. Such notions were also identified in the novel, *Bäfəkər Səm*, in which, the conception of *transiency* was presented against *permanence*. On the contrary, there is the permanence of the world established by the narrator who projects “being-in-the-world”. This kind of time conveys *divine time* that is always the same under the transiency of things.

Regarding memory, the study found that different forms of memory are explored in *Afə* and *Bäfəkər Səm*. *Reminiscences of narrators and characters*, *Tizta as making sense of the past*, and *textual memory* were explored in *Afə*. The Amharic notion of *tizta* has been interpreted along with the concept of remembrance. To put it precisely, *Afə* involves characters' psychological loss and longing for a pastime that could be more explicable with the concept of *tizta*. This form of memory is explored only in *Afə*. In *Bäfəkər Səm*, *reminiscences of the narrator* and *the hero and textual memory* are identified as forms of memory in the text. What is unique here is, the narration of *Bäfəkər Səm* is presented in the form of the narrator's memory. An adult narrator recollects scattered childhood memories that are brought together into the structure of the narrative. Therefore, *Bäfəkər Səm* can be called a novel of memory.

*Afə* is presented with entangled stories and narrative repetitions; hence, it involved reach textual memory than *Bäfəkər Səm*. Since the story involves different narrators presenting different dimensions of the same event and action, it created textual memory for the readers. Additionally, symbolic repetitions within the story disclose textual memory. In *Bäfəkər Səm*, mostly, the narrator incorporates the reminiscences of the hero who is in the course of a search that moves forward, giving the narrative the form of a "future in the past". Hence, the narrator who is reminiscing actions toward the denouncement also enjoins the reminiscence of the hero who is advancing toward the "future in the past". At this point, reminisces of the narrator and the hero has been explored in such a way.

Under the analysis of *Afə*, how characters identify a *self*; how they act to keep their self-constituency; and how they respond as the subject of action have been explored. In this sense, the study found *self-constituency* and *self-knowledge* as sub-themes inscribed in the novel *Afə*. In this novel, characters are constituents of certain personality traits. Characters as the subject remain the same throughout the story, but they are subjected to change and subject others to change in search of their identity. Through time, characters realize their self-knowledge, accept the changes, or make ethical judgments. Then, they provide a new self-image, and a change in permanence is mediated by the effect of the plot's imaginative power.

More considerately, *Bäfäkar Säm* provided the notion of narrative identity. In this novel, the hero character is always in search of a stable identity. Conflict of gender role (masculine and feminine), religion (Christianity and superstition), and confusion of personal identity (self and others) were discordant identities that Talə as a hero was struggling to peruse for concordance or unified identity. As a result, the novel established the issue of identity as the main theme. In this case, the quest formed by deep repetition of the narrative voice provides a search or inquiry for a lost identity. As the voice of the hero advances in a quest for self-constituency or identity, the voice of the narrator interprets self-same in the visitation. This brings a reunion to the lost identity. The lost identity in inquiry is later regained, then, puts into a relief of self-knowledge. That is a unity of the whole, perceived as “grasping the whole”, “putting into relief”, and “the fruit of an examined life” ( Ricoeur; 1985/1988).

Above all, the study demonstrated that time is one of the aesthetic aspects of novels. It is also an inescapable form of existence in our daily lives and literature. An event can not happen without time, and the characters are formed in time and through it. As a result, fiction can reflect the human experience of time. The necessity of studying time comes from the importance of this element and its construction, especially in the contemporary and experimental Amharic novels like *Afä* and *Bäfäkar Säm*. Understanding the representation of time in these novels presumably presents different understandings of the literary aesthetic of Amharic novels. Therefore, the temporal structures, representations of time, identity and persistence can be considered the new aesthetic dimensions of contemporary Amharic novels.

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