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Suffering and the Sense of Self in Contemporary Tigrigna Poetry (1999-2010): A mystical Interpretation

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Yohannes Asfaw, entitled: *Suffering and the Sense of Self in Contemporary Tigrigna Poetry (1999-2010): A Mystical Interpretation* and submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Literature complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to the originality and quality.

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ABSTRACT

Suffering and the Sense of Self in Contemporary Tigrigna Poetry (1999-2010): A Mystical Interpretation

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Addis Ababa University, 2014

This thesis examines the question of human suffering from the viewpoint of the sense of self. To this end, an interpretive framework focused on mystical conception of self is employed. Despite the discrete self of sense perception, the mystical conception of self posits an intuitive experience of self that is progressively inclusive of the other. This experiential conception of self is implicated in the alleviation of human suffering. Such an experientially sensitive epistemology is suitable to literary texts which usually rely more on emotional and intuitive experiences than on empirical or rational explications. Poetic imagery constitutes an important literary tool in unveiling experiential realities that may be elusive to words lacking sensory details and suggestions. In view of this, twenty contemporary Tigrigna poetic texts that deal with the subject of suffering and are imbued with poetic imagery were selected for analysis. The study attempts to discern textual elements that suggest the dissolution or formation of self/other dichotomy and examine how these experiential conceptions of self bear on the text's representation of human suffering. The results of the study indicate that although there are ample instances that deconstruct the sense perception of a separate self, none of the texts express a sustained and all-inclusive unitive sense of self. Consequently, the texts assume a complex relationship with the question of human suffering. While the alleviation of suffering is implicated in an experience of self/other connectedness, its perpetuation is also implicated in the limitedness and/or unsustainablity of the experience. The suffering implicated in the frustration of the unitive sense of self, however, also suggests a positive experiential implication in the sense that it may urge the experiencers to root their sense of self on grounds that are more inclusive and hence less susceptible to mutability.

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List of Acronyms

1. E.C. = Ethiopian calendar (unless otherwise indicated by the abbreviation E.C. all years used in the study are written in Gregorian calendar).
2. EPRDF = Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (armed opposition movement that ended the military rule of Derg- a military government that overthrew the emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Slassie I in 1974)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Suffering seems intrinsic to life. This seems to be most evident in the evolutionary trajectory of life where "predation, pain, and [finally] death [are]… the very instruments of creation" (Murray, 2008, p. 2). In a manner that captures this tragic aspect of life, Charles Darwin (1901, p. 105, as cited in Murray, 2008, p. 2) writes: "What a book a devil's chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering, low, and *horribly cruel works of nature*! [emphasis added]".

Paradoxical though it may seem, with the most developed and complicated intelligence at its disposal (at least relative to other species on earth), humanity seems to stand at the peak of this planetary predicament. "Animal pain and suffering, while both real and bad [since they too are sentient beings to varying degrees], is . . . not as bad as pain and suffering in humans" (Murray, 2008, p. 193). In view of this, suffering is perhaps the most glaring feature of human existence.

Religion and science are apparently concerned with understanding and alleviating this human condition. It seems, however, they mostly appear to be the major instigators in the creation and perpetuation of suffering. Religion, for instance, mostly renders human life so grim that it might be, at times, described as "perhaps the most widespread and insidious form of human violence" (Lipton2005, p. 201). Along these lines, Garyling (2002) also dares to call it "the cancer in the body of humanity" (p. 34). Although this seems a bit exaggerated, it can somehow point to the fact that religion, in a seemingly stark contradiction to its goals of finding ultimate truth, divine peace and/or redemption, might usually serve to instigate violence and suffering.

Science also, despite its apparent interest in lifting humanity out of the plight of ignorance and suffering, has mostly been an instrument of chaos and destruction. In its myopic and aggressive impulse to control and understand nature, this human endeavor mostly causes suffering and unhappiness. Lipton (2005), in this regard, observes that science's "goal of control and domination of Nature . . . has brought human civilization

to the brink of spontaneous combustion by disrupting the web of nature" (p. 185). This disruption, engendered by the treatment of the environment as "other" that has to be manipulated and subjugated to the interest of materialistic individual desires, has created a picture of a world that seems to be sinking into technological catastrophe that is polluting the air, the soil, water and the food we eat.

In light of this, with its conspicuous emphasis on the dualistic epistemology of rationalism in the study of the natural world and human culture, the Enlightenment vision of bringing about the emancipation of humanity seems to prove a shocking illusion. The recent nuclear catastrophe in Japan in 2011 is a fresh reminder of where science, in its current form (with its excessive reliance on the rational approach), could be taking the world. This might call to mind Miller's (1993) incisive critique of science: "After two world wars, the atom bomb, the cold war, and the final threats to the species itself looming into sight, man's honeymoon with science is over" (p. 297).

This end of "honeymoon with science" is reflected in different postmodernist philosophical sensibilities. Johnson (2008) in this regard writes: "It is likely that the majority of postmodernists would disagree with, reject, or assert the failure of what is called the "Enlightenment Project," specifically the promise of science to bring forth a more just world" (p. 321). In line with this, existentialists contend that although science is "capable of many worthy achievements" it is also responsible for "much suffering and misery" (Johnson, 2008, p. 321). It seems, thus, evident that life is growing more painful and chaotic with the passage of time and the intellectual and cultural progress (material culture at least) of the human species. Putting these points into account, many scholars lament that human civilization, in most cases, increases suffering and unhappiness (Adams, 2002, p. 369; Freud, 1961, pp. 86, 92; Huxley, 1947, p. 51).

While it may be argued that the prevalence and mystery of this human condition epitomize human history, the creative arts, on the other hand, seem to serve as a space in the tapestry of human consciousness where the affective dimension of this phenomenon leaves its unmistakable marks. The emotional complexity and depth of the experience of

pain and suffering fill numerous pages of the creative arts so much so that Schweizer (1997) equates literature with suffering.

Considering suffering as a universally shared experience, written Tigrigna poetry that has started to mushroom since the nineteen ninetieth is engaged in its creative reflection. The recent history of this region especially seems to be a distillate of this universal human condition. This region bears scars of dreadful inflictions caused by recurring political and social unrest and natural calamities in recent times. Being the gateway of Ethiopia, most of the wars against external powers were fought in this part of the country (Aregawi, 2009, pp. 43-44). It is not to be forgotten, as Aregawi (2009) acknowledges, that:

> Ethiopians of different ethnic nationalities, religion and gender have shed their blood on fronts of war from home. Yet, the fact that many of them and the major ones took place in Tigray…had long-lasting and devastating effects on the region that were felt deeply by succeeding generations. (p. 44)

Worth mentioning in this regard are the wars fought against the highly armed Italian army in Shire, in Maichew and Adwa which caused tremendous human and material devastation (Tekletsadiq, 1968, pp. 96-97,257, 266). During the civil war between EPRDF and the Derg regime as well "many lives have been lost, a great deal of property lost or damaged, women raped, and entire villages bombed to rubble" (Solomon, 2007, p. 6). Bertschinger (2005), an aid worker during the famine in 1984, also witnesses the horrendous suffering the region went through. Describing the dire situation there, she writes: "JULY 1984. THE SMELL OF DEATH, SWEAT AND SHIT MIXED with the fragile scent of eucalyptus hit me immediately as I stepped off the Ethiopian Airline DC3 Dakota at Mekelle" (p. 142; emphasis original). In short, "The spiraling combination of foreign assaults, local wars and famine left Tigray destitute" and the bruises these incidents caused are felt to this day (Aregawi, 2009, p. 44).

In light of this, Tigrigna literature could be an apt cultural space for creative reflection on the shared reality of human suffering. Owing to political inconveniencies, however, this phenomenon was not well expressed in the written poetry of the vernacular of the region until recently. Consequently, the people's poetic reflections could not be investigated. The introduction of the local language as a medium of education and work, the

establishment of local radio stations and printing presses in the region which have ushered Tigrigna poetry into the print world from the nineteen ninetieth onwards (Issayas, 2003, pp. 4-6) appear to have changed this condition. Investigating these emerging literary works of art may, thus, help in gaining insight into experiential realities of suffering as depicted in the selected Tigrigna poems.

Hence, the fact that this human condition seems to be prominent in the recent history of the region and its likely expressions in its literary works, that Tigrigna poetry has received little intellectual attention and my proximity with the culture and language of the region, are intellectual and experiential reasons that have necessitated this research.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Suffering, as discussed in the preceding section, is an ever-increasing global predicament. Despite this, however, it is a subject that has received little intellectual attention (Cassell, 2004, pp. 29-32). The reason for this appears to be science's disinclination to deal with subjective human realities since its meaning making mechanism is largely founded on sensory perception and reason, to the extrusion of non-sensory sources of knowledge (such as intuition and emotion).

This can be evidenced by the fact that ever since the time of Plato, most scholars thought that it was only through reason and the "objective" understanding of life thereof that humanity can be liberated from ignorance and suffering. They believed that there is nothing worthwhile one can understand from affective experiences. What is more, feelings and emotions were considered obstacles to reason that have to be drained off, should one achieve meaning in life (Johnson, 2008, pp. 318-319). This disregard for affective experiences has resulted in poor knowledge of human existence. In this regard, Cassell (2004, pp. 29-32) notes that one of the reasons for modern medicine's unsatisfactory role in the understanding and alleviation of human suffering (a task he believes should be the primary goal of medicine) is attributable to its exclusion of emotions from its scientific endeavors.

In line with these contentions, studies have been revealing that feelings and emotions are indispensable sources of experiential insight into the mystery of human existence (Goleman, 1995, p. 5; Kottler, 1996, p. 27). Consequently, notions that disregard the affective dimensions of human existence have been incisively criticized (Goleman, 1995, p. 4; Johnson, 2008, pp. 318-319). Perhaps, an interesting development in this regard came with the advent of phenomenology and quantum physics. These intellectual movements started to challenge the taken-for-granted element in scientific inquiry; objectivity. Making evident the interrelatedness of the observer and the observed they debunked naive realism which accords the observer an independent vantage point (Capra, 1982, pp. 78-79,152-153; Spinelli, 2005, pp. 16, 202-203, 213).

Consistent with this challenge of the hegemony of the rational approach, such thinkers as Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, Jacques Derrida, etc. "emphasized instead the role of emotion, the body, sexuality, the unconscious" (Habib, 2005, p. 503). One important element, in this regard, that has received a renewed interest is intuition. This is especially true when one considers the advent of quantum physics into the subatomic world which came up with discoveries that have their parallels in the intuitive understanding of reality in mysticism (Capra, 1982, pp. 47, 154).

In the nondualistic epistemology of mysticism, the intuitive understanding of self is one of the most important factors in understanding reality. This means that depending on whether a person makes sense of him/herself on the basis of sense experience and intellection or on the basis of intuition, reality can be interpreted and thus experienced differently. While the former mode of seeing the self is believed to result in a separate sense of self that gives rise to fear and aggression, the latter mode of seeing is believed to engender a unitive sense of self that is characterized by the alleviation of fear and aggression (Capra, 1982, p. 28; Cooper, 2010, p. 31; Fromm, 1976, pp. 8, 45; Suzuki, 2002, p. 34; Taylor, 2006, p. 173). In light of this, the researcher believes that an investigation of human suffering within the context of discussions and debates centered on mysticism's interpretation of self can be especially helpful in cultivating an experiential understanding of the phenomena of suffering.

Poetry can be a good resource for probing into different experiential interpretations of self in relation to suffering since, not unlike mysticism, it is interested in non-sensory modes of understanding and engaging with the world that disrupts dichotomous ways of thinking. Put another way, poetry mostly attempts to understand the world not by distancing the self from its object of observation (which is characteristic of the rational approach) but by establishing identification with its object of observation. Asserting this knowledge by coalescence as characteristic of poetry, Brogan (1993) writes:

> If a sparrow comes before my window," said Keats, "*I take part in its existence* [emphasis added] and pick about the gravel." Whether such entering-in upon the conscious lives of other selves, other beings not human, and even events beyond all selfhood be dream or truth is a question that seems, finally, less important than the evident fact that it proceeds from *a human capacity certain beyond cavil, and one which poetry above all arts, for some reason, makes central* [emphasis added]. (p. 625)

Putting this into account, poetry can be a rich laboratory for probing into revealing existential insights that can illuminate the question of human suffering.

In a conception of an intuitive understanding of reality, the question of poetic imagery has an indispensable role. This is because poetic imagery, owing to its appeal to the senses and its potential for symbolic associations and suggestiveness, is believed to enable poetry in depicting the subtleties of lived realities. In view of this, this poetic tool can be especially helpful in unraveling experiential knowledge of self and human suffering embodied in the texts. The focus of this study is thus examining how the phenomenon of suffering in the selected Tigrigna poems is informed by experiential conceptions of self. To my knowledge, the issue of self and its relation to suffering as reflected in poetry has not been explored to date.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to explore how a poetic text's experiential conception of self bears on its representation of human suffering.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Based on the above general objective, the study has the following specific objectives:

1. Identify textual elements that are suggestive of the dissolution or formation of self/other dichotomies.
2. Examine the inclusiveness and sustainability of experiential instances that undermine self/other dichotomy.
3. Explore what these experiential conceptions of self reveal about human suffering the texts articulate (for example, whether a representation of a certain sense of self generates desirable experiences, such as calm, joy, hence alleviation of suffering or undesirable experiences, such as, unrest, fear, anger, hence the creation or perpetuation of suffering).

1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are hoped to make a valuable contribution in:

1. enriching reader's understanding of the question of human suffering as reflected in the texts under study by grounding interpretation on two experiential conceptions of self,
2. Providing readers with insight into meaning variations that are generated by variations in experiential conceptions of self as depicted in the selected poetic texts,
3. presenting "new" ways of seeing the self that could provide a vista into a redemptive engagement with the world,
4. presenting local literary works to international critical gaze.
5. reinforcing existing theories of the unitary interconnectedness of life (for instance, mysticism and quantum physics) by providing an experiential impetus from poetic texts that can be easily accessible to the public.
6. finally and more importantly, serving as grounding for further studies into the nature of self in order to provide a more detailed and refined insight into the

human condition and help expand the domains of peace and understanding in the human family and the environment (animals and plants) that nurtures it.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The time frame given, financial and material resources, and the expertise of the researcher have delimited the study to the analysis of twenty Tigrigna poems from five poets dealing with the subject matter of suffering. Since written Tigrigna literature is a yet emerging tradition in Tigrai, finding ample poetic texts that deal with the question of human suffering and are at the same time rich in imagery was difficult. Hence to broaden the chances of finding texts that would lend themselves to the analysis of the issue under investigation, poems published as late as 2010 were included. This has somehow delayed the time of data analysis that was indicated in the proposal. It was worth it, however, for it has allowed poems relatively rich in imagery to be incorporated.

In addition to this, although the theoretical assumption being considered is reinforced from varying disciplines (such as existentialism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis and quantum physics) to better explore the possible and most likely meanings of the selected texts, this approach cannot still claim to exhaust all the meaning potentialities of the selected texts. The study, thus, admits that alternative interpretations of the same texts (under different theoretical framework, for instance) remain open. This, although a limitation, celebrates the plurality of meaning.

Still another limitation of the study has to do with translation. In addition to being a laborious task, the rendering of the poems cannot claim to reproduce the source texts intact. Translation, especially when it is of poetic texts, with their disruptive and primarily metaphorical use of language, is a complicated task. Although this does not necessarily mean nothing can be transferred from source to the target or host language, an identical copy of the original is likely to prove impossible. Hence, to enable a relatively effective rendering of the essence of the source texts, sense-for-sense, as opposed to the literal (or word-for-word), translation has been attempted (this subject is expanded upon in “Note on Translation”). The final limitation of this study is that for availability and

convenience reasons, Tigrigna poems that could have been collected from Eritrea are not currently included in the study.

1.6 Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. In this chapter (Chapter 1) a general introduction to the study and the objective, significance, scope and limitations of the study and definition of key terms are presented. This chapter also discusses the methods and procedures used for data collection and analysis.

Chapter two is devoted to the examination of literature concerning the topic of the study. This chapter aims at contextualizing the study by discussing related studies in Tigrigna poetry and human suffering. This chapter closes by setting the ground for developing a theoretical framework on the basis of the discussion.

Chapter three sets out to build and clarify the epistemological perspective (mysticism) espoused by the study. In addition to articulating the vernacular of the study, this chapter aims to focus and direct the subjectivity that is inherent to the interpretive nature of knowledge.

In the fourth chapter of the study, the poetic texts selected for the study are examined from the epistemological viewpoint discussed in chapter three.

On the basis of the analysis in chapter four, the final chapter (chapter five) offers a summary and discussion of the study, draws conclusions and makes recommendation for the possible application of the results of the study and future avenues for research.

1.7 Definition of Terms

In this research the key words and phrases below are defined as follows:

1. Imagery: a word that appeals to sense perception (for instance, the word “warm” as opposed to words such as “love” that have no sensory details) (see pp. 59-64).

2. Intuition: a felt understanding of reality characterized by coalescence between the knower and the object of knowledge. This is contrasted with the knowledge of sense perception and intellection which are characterized by distancing the subject of knowledge from its object of knowledge (see pp. 40-42).
3. Mysticism: an experiential knowledge or awareness of the organic oneness of the universe (see pp. 42-48).
4. Separate sense of self: an experiential conception of self as a discrete and unified entity. This sense of self is implicated in the formation of self/other dichotomy (see pp. 37-38).
5. Suffering: an experience characterized by physical or mental distress (see pp. 19-20).
6. Unitive consciousness: a state of consciousness characterized by an awareness of the fundamental unity or oneness of reality (see pp. 48).
7. Unitive sense of self: an experiential conception of self as intrinsically interconnected or one with the other (other here being specific being/s or the universe as a whole). Unlike the individual in the separate sense of self, the individual in the unitive experience of self is not considered an independent entity. This sense of self is implicated in the dissolution of self/other dichotomy (see pp. 40-42).

1.8 Methods and Procedures of Data Analysis

Poetry engages itself with experiential knowledge as opposed to conceptual abstraction. Qualitative research is a suitable approach for the examination of such lived realities as it attempts to explore "how individuals see and experience the world (Given, 2008, p. xxix). In view of this, the study attempts to explore the question of human suffering as reflected in selected Tigrigna poetic texts. Textual analysis is believed to help this project by engaging it in a critical and in-depth dialogue with the texts under study.

This textual analysis is carried out within the context of the mystical interpretation of self which is the organizing principle of the theoretical framework of the study. Accordingly, this study attempts to explore possible and most likely meanings of the texts as can be

realized within the mystical conception of self, i.e., a conception of self as an elasticity of being set in motion by its desire for unitive experiences. Meaning, within this context, is, hence, conceived of as an emergent property resulting from the dialogue between the theoretical framework (as a set of critical assumptions the researcher brings to bear on the texts) and the meaning possibilities inherent within the linguistic rules of the text.

1.8.1 Source and Type of Data

The literary texts selected for this study are contemporary Tigrigna poems (1999-2010) dealing with the question of human suffering. Poetry is a rich resource for probing into the question of human suffering in relation to notions of self. This is because poetry is believed to present unique or marginalized lived experiences of self and the world that are well suited to an experientially sensitive epistemology the study employs.

1.8.3 Sampling Technique

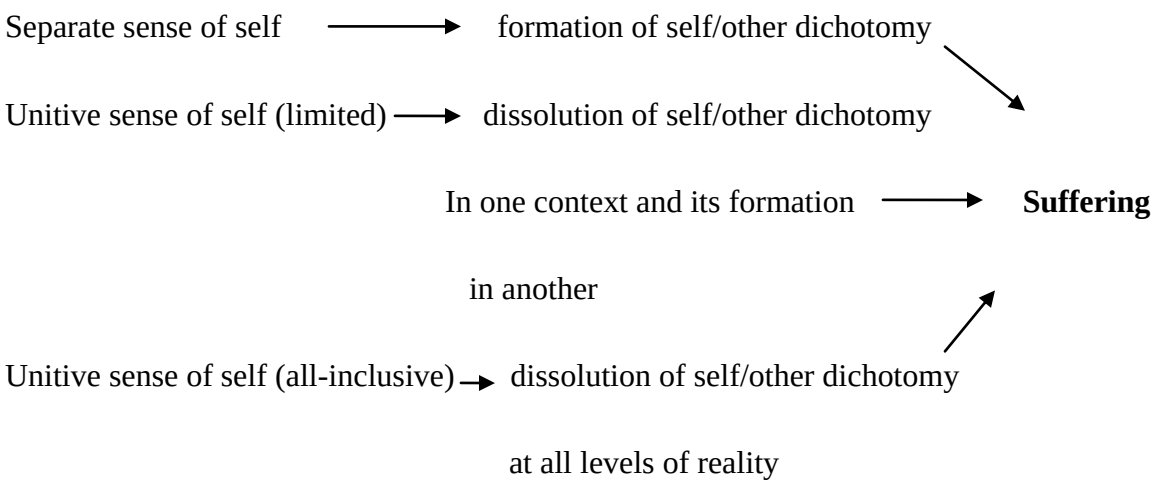
The study employed the purposive sampling method to collect its texts. This sampling technique has enabled the study to make a strategic selection of texts which specifically deal with the phenomena of human suffering and are, at the same time, rich in poetic images. Based on this sampling, the study first selected five out of twelve poets whose works presented ample portrayals of human suffering. Following a close reading of the poems of these five poets, twenty poems (four poems from each poet) that are considered to be rich in imagery were further screened out. This selection is in keeping with the theoretical framework of the study that accords imagery a prominent place in communicating the subtleties of experiential realities. The small number of texts (characteristic of qualitative research) has also enabled the study to be engaged in an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under investigation.

The twenty poetic texts selected to this end are: 1) *Tsibaqe'lo Leyti* (Beauty in the Dark), 2) *Yibreheley Getsika* (Illumine your Face), 3) *Shih Gize Imine* (My Fervent Desire), 4) *Timuy Nikibeli'a* (A Prey for the Hungry) from Adera Tesfay's *Kula Neni Tsahla* (All for the Good of their Tummy) (2009); 5) *Kisab Meqabirey* (Unto my Grave), 6) *Meqabir Meritsu* (The Gloomy World), 7) Motn Hiywotn (Life and Death), 8) *Anes Zimereni*

(What Embitters Me) from Desta Cherqos's *Kobakbti Meret* (Stars of the Earth) (2007); 9) Lomi'win Alena (Unremitting War), 10) *Rifer Nab Meqabir* (Referred to the Grave), 11) *Atranos* (Lectern), 12) *Halyotu Yitrefeni* (Their Care I Want Not) from Mulu H. Slassie's *Atranos* (Lectern) (2008); 13) Nimintay Alilen? (Why did they Ululate?), 14) *Zektam* (An Orphan), 15) *Kesiru* (Crisis in Tandem), 16) *Kihalif Ilu'yu* (To Behold the Daybreak) from Muluworq Kidanemariam's *Mirdida'e Tirah* (Communication is what Counts) (2010); and 17) *Lidet* (Nativity), 18) *Neqefeta* (A Reproach), 19) *Fiqiri Demegna* (Loving the Nemesis), 20) *Tehabeni Ayder* (Proud be Ayder) from Sisay Hishe's *Mergeta Hailu* (*mergeta*, a title of a church scholar, *Hailu* a name of a person) (1999).

1.8.4 Conceptual Model

An attempt is made in the diagram below to show the possible relations between the phenomenon of human suffering and the experiential conceptions of self that are believed to bear on it.



The first case represents a separate sense of self as is implicated in sense-experience that engenders suffering. In the second, the transcendence of the separate sense of self in one context but also its formation in other contexts is indicated (for instance, there could be the dissolution of self/other dualism in a mother/father-child bond, while the assertion of self/other dualism might be implicated in a child-neighbor context). This represents a phenomenon where suffering is alleviated at one level of reality (familial or social/, for

instance) but is engendered at larger levels of realities (for instance, trans-cultural/national, cosmic etc). In the third case is represented an all-inclusive self/other connectedness. From a mystical perspective, this complete transcendence of dualistic interpretation of reality marks a sustainable alleviation of human suffering.

1.8.5 Analytical Procedures

To get an intimate feel or impression of the texts, repeated readings and contemplation of the texts has first been made. This is followed by a close reading that attempts to trace the texts' depiction of the sense of self by identifying textual elements that suggest the assertion or dissolution of self/other dichotomies. The texts' artistic manipulation of poetic images is believed to be especially helpful in this respect. For example, a text's use of food imagery to portray the relationship between two individuals might suggest the interconnectedness of self and other. Similarly, a description of a group of people as part of one body might be suggestive of their lived sense of oneness. The analysis, at this hermeneutic stage, thus, seeks to draw out of poetic images embodied interpretations of self that are sensitive to the subtleties of lived experiences.

An attempt is then made to see how inclusive or exclusive of the other is the sense of self being depicted. Based on this, the texts are organized into five categories: (1) biological (2) socioeconomic and political (3) environmental (4) universal and (5) intrapsychic. Next, an attempt is made to explicate how the dissolutions and formations of self/other boundaries in various contexts inform the text's representation of the phenomenon of suffering. In other words, the analysis attempts to see the relationship between a text's particular depiction of self and its relation to the portrayal of human suffering therein.

Finally, the study attempts to integrate the texts' representation of self and their interrelationship with suffering into a coherent description and discussion of the phenomena of human suffering. To allow a sustained interaction between the textual data and the theoretical framework of the study, these procedures have been carried out in a nonlinear or non-sequential manner (i.e., going back and forth throughout the different sections of the study).

1.8.6 Note on Translation

Due to lexical and syntactic variances among languages, achieving an exact equivalent of the source text in translation is very unlikely. This is especially true when one considers the translation of literary texts (Kuhiwczak, 2002, p. 122). This is so much so that English poet, critic and philosopher of the nineteenth century Samuel Taylor Coleridge argued for the inherent untranslatability of poetry (Habib, 2005, p. 450). Such a stance was also prominent in Russian Formalism and New Criticism (Habib, 2005, p. 568). This is in part true since meaning is influenced by the lexical and syntactical structures of a language which cannot be reproduced. It is, hence, difficult to reproduce form, i.e, rhyme, meter, rhythm, in the rendition of poetic texts.

This should not, however, amount to an assertion that content is entirely lost in translation. In this regard, Neubert (2002) contends that "translating poetry is never tantamount to, producing something entirely new" (p. 68). In support of this view, history has witnessed remarkable achievements in renderings of poetic masterpieces across different languages and cultures (Cuddon, 1999, p. 936). These translations have been instrumental in intercultural communications and in expanding the universal pool of knowledge and enriching literary experience worldwide (Raffel, 1993, p. 1305). In light of this, although it appears naïve to attempt to preserve full linguistic effect of the source text intact, it is conversely, an obfuscation to argue that the entire poem is lost in translation.

The focus of such a translation that prioritizes content over form is not finding a word-for-word concordance between the source language and the host language, but finding an equivalent meaning that is rendered in words that are deemed most appropriate in the host language. This form of translation "has deeper and more universal roots both in the West and in the East…[which] is usually understood as a matter of practicality rather than anything idealistic or romantic" (Raffel, 1993, p. 1304).

This "matter of practicality" can be evidenced in the following examples. The Tigrigna idiomatic expression *ch'awch'iruw zeyblu* describes a desolateness of a place. The

onomatopoeic word *chaw'chiruw* in the source language describes the sound of birds. And the word *zayblu* means that which does not have. The resulting literal equivalent of this phrase would then be "a place that does not have chirp" or "a place that does not have twitter". This rendition, however, sounds awkward and is likely to lead to a distortion of meaning. The English expression "a place where no soul is to be heard", on the other hand, can more effectively capture the content of the phrase in the source language.

Another example is the phrase *shih gize imine*. The phrase *shih gize* means a thousand times. And the word *imine* means I wish or desire. Hence, the literal translation of the phrase is "I wish a thousand times". Such an expression of an intensity of a wish or desire, however, does not sound common in the host language. Hence, in such a way as to suggest the intensity of the wish, the phrase can appropriately be rendered as "I have a fervent desire".

Still another instance where sense-for-sense translation is believed to be important is when a word, phrase or expression in the source language carries cultural connotations. One example could be the word *gihits'hits*. This word describes a manner of eating until all the meat on the bone is completely gone. Perhaps because of cultural differences in dietary habits, a culturally equivalent word that describes such a manner of eating could not be found. However, the spirit of this manner of eating can be described as "eating to the bones".

In cases where such form of translation is still believed to have left some important message of the original text, an explanation in prose is given in the analysis of the texts under consideration. Consider, for instance, the expression *dirar ayni* which literally means "a dinner for the eyes". A culturally equivalent expression is "a feast for the eyes". However, although the word *dirar* (dinner) and the word *feast* share the semantic field of being food, the word *dirar*, describing a meal at specific time of the day (at the end of the day), seems to have an added connotation of something that is desperately needed. Hence, this added connotation is discussed in the interpretation of the text.

Since translation into prose is likely to fail to capture the aesthetic quality of the poetic texts in question, a rendition of the poetic texts in free verse, however laborious and time consuming it proved to be, requiring repeated editing and gestation, has been favored.

Since images are given a crucial place in the interpretation of the texts, the extracts from these renditions are focused on this linguistic feature of the texts being examined. These extracts are presented in both the source and target languages so as to enable readers experience the poetic texts in either/both languages. And for those who might be interested in reading the full texts selected for analysis, they are appended in both languages at the end of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review under this chapter has two goals. The first is to situate the current research within existing critical studies on Tigrigna poetry in particular and that of human suffering in general. The second is to set the ground for developing an appropriate conceptual framework on the basis of these discussions.

The first section of this chapter is concerned with studies on written Tigrigna poetry. A discussion of intellectual engagements with the issue of human suffering is presented on the second section of this chapter.

2.1 Review of Related Studies on Tigrigna Poetry

To the knowledge of the researcher, there are no studies in Tigrigna literature that specifically deal with the question of human suffering. An introductory review of studies on written Tigrigna poetry, however, might be appropriate to help contextualize the current study.

Tigrigna is a language that has a large number of speakers in Ethiopia and Eritrea. It is the major language in the administrative region of Tigrai and in Eritrea (Mekonnen, 1998, p. 58). Because of recurring political favoritism and unrest, however, this widely spoken language did not enjoy much the dignity of a written literary language until recently (the late twentieth century).

The marginalization of Tigrigna as a written language had its most bleak time during the Derg regime (1974-1991). During this period of political turmoil, it was unsafe to write in Tigrigna in Tigrai (Getahun, 2004, p. 48) as well as in Eritrea (Ghirmai, 1999, p. 178). Because of these unfavorable conditions, the literary potentiality of the language was primarily confined to oral literature (Ghirmai, 1999, p. 89). A collection of this oral literature, compiled by Conti Rossini, Faitlovitch, Kolmodin and Gebre-Medhin Dighnei, are analyzed first by Hailu Habtu (1981) and then by Ghirmai Negash (1999). Following these two studies, many more researches have been conducted on the oral literature of the language in question (Hadgu, 2009).

The first written literary piece in Tigrigna is said to be a travel book entitled *Toblahta Bza'iba Were Megedy inkab Tobya n Italiya* (An Impression about a Journey from Ethiopia to Italy). This travelogue is written by a man from Yeha, Tigrai, named Fiseha Giorgis Abyezgi in 1895 (Ghirmai, 1999, p. 77). Glimpses of written Tigrigna literary texts had also started to emerge from 1941-1952 in Eritrea in a weekly newspaper initiated by the British intervention that ended the Italian colonization (Ghirmai, 1999, p. 178).

However, this development started to wane as the language was politically dominated by Amharic during the Derg regime. During this time, no considerable works of literature were produced in areas controlled by the regime (Issayas, 2003, p. 5). In war fronts in both Eritrea and Tigrai, however, written Tigrigna literature was flourishing and being used in the opposition of the Derg (Daniel, 1998, pp. 52-53; Ghirmai, 1999, p. 178). This phenomenon, Ghirmai (1999, p.178) notes, has played a remarkable role in laying the foundation for the development of the language (both literary and nonliterary). It was the fall of the Derg regime in 1991, however, that ushered in a full blown blossom of written Tigrigna literature. In Tigrai, the introduction of the local language as a medium of education and work, the establishment of *Mahber Bahli Tigrai* (Tigrai cultural association) in 1995, the establishment of local radio stations and printing presses in the region, two national symposiums on Tigrigna (all attributable to the downfall of the Derg regime) are believed to be responsible for this development (Mekonnen, 1998, p. 72; Issayas , 2003, pp. 4-6). Needless to say, poetry is among the literary genres that started to emerge during these times. It is, however, a genre that has, to date, received little intellectual attention. To my knowledge, only seven studies have been conducted so far.

As part of his pioneering study on Tigrigna literature, Hailu Habtu (1981), "Aspects of Tigrinya Literature until 1974", has made a typological classification of ten written poetic texts from different issues of the *Eritrean Weekly Newspaper*. In this study, Hailu has provided sociocultural, historical and literary commentary on these poems. A later study by Ghirmai Negash (1999), "A History of Tigrinya Literature in Eritrea: The Oral and the Written (1810-1991)", also offers a brief thematic analysis of eight poems. Two of these poems are taken from the *Eritrean Weekly Newspaper* and another two from news papers printed in the Eritrean warfronts. The remaining four poetic texts are taken from an

anthology of poetry published in 1992 (which appeared with poems in Tigrigna and Tigre languages). Ghirmai views these texts (together with a plethora of Tigrigna literary texts from varying genres) from a postcolonial perspective.

Since the above two studies are historical surveys of a wide range of Tigrigna literary corpora, they do not deal with the genre in question in detail. The first study that exclusively deals with the genre in question is one by Issayas G. Medhin (2003). This unpublished BA thesis makes a thematic analysis of one poet named Ghirmai Gebru. Recent additions to this study are four BA senior Essays. One is by Tirhas Gebre Mesqel (2010). This study is a thematic analysis of one poetry book entitled *Kiristia*. This study analyses the poems from the book on the basis of social, historical and political categories. Much in the same manner, the remaining three studies also deal with a general thematic analysis of three more poetry books under the aforementioned categories. One of these studies by Tsige Hadush's (2012) deals with a thematic analysis of poems from *Atranos*. In the same year, Teshale GebreIgziabiher analyzes a collection of poems from *Nibi'at Imahoy*. The last of these three studies is conducted by Tsega Gebru (2012). This study is also a thematic analysis of a collection of poems from *Biri'ey*.

The fact that written Tigrigna poetry is given exclusive critical attention should be appreciated and encouraged. However, not unlike the first two studies mentioned previously, none of these five studies takes the issue of human misery as its focus of inquiry. What is more, the current study employs an explicit interpretive framework (mysticism) in its analysis of the question of human suffering as reflected in Tigrigna poetry. To my knowledge, thus, the study is different in regard to both the subject matter being addressed (i.e., suffering) and the theoretical framework employed for analysis.

2.2 Existing Debates on the Study of Human Suffering

2.2.1 Suffering and Biological Determinism

Suffering is a phenomenon that is usually associated with distressful or negative experiences. These experiences can be psychological or physical. In its most usual sense the word suffering is associated with undesirable emotional experience. In this sense, it

usually serves as a generic term for varying types of negative affects. The word pain, on the other hand, is mostly associated with the physical aspect of acutely unpleasant experiences. With qualifiers such as mental, emotional, and spiritual, however, it may also serve as a synonym for the broader term suffering. One would, therefore, find ample instances where the two words (suffering and pain) are used interchangeably to express both psychological and physical experiences.

Science has long sought the origin of not only the seemingly obvious physical suffering (Cassell, 2004) but also that of psychological suffering in the physiological and chemical processes of the body. This physicalist approach reduces human suffering to mere biological traits or genetic factors. In so doing, such an approach, as pointed out by Polly Young-Eisendrath (2001), "block[s] any desire to understand the personal motives and meanings that lead to…suffering" (p. 203).

Much in the fashion of such conceptions of suffering, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis seeks to understand human unhappiness and suffering by understanding biological drives and their unconscious operations in the human mind which he thought are fixed and unalterable. At the heart of this theory of human suffering lie the instinctual forces of Eros and Thanatos. While Eros (sexual energy) is a force that strives for integration, Thanatos (the drive of death) is a destructive force that strives for disintegration and aggression. Thanatos accounts for the intrapersonal and interpersonal aggressive behavior (Tyson, 2006, pp. 21-22). Eros, on the other hand, the force that animates the sexual desire (which he calls "genital love"), is the luring snare of elusive pleasure. In this regard, Freud (1961) writes:

> Man's discovery that sexual (genital) love afforded him the strongest experience of satisfaction, and in fact provided him with the prototype of all happiness…. made [him]… dependent in a most dangerous way on a portion of the external world, namely, his chosen love-object, and *exposed himself to extreme suffering* [emphasis added] if he should be rejected by that object or should lose it through unfaithfulness or death. For this reason the wise men of every age have warned us most emphatically against this way of life. (p. 101)

Freud argues that human beings are always arrested within these two opposing drives "which we can barely fathom" (Habib, 2005, p. 571). Predetermined by these instinctual forces, human behavior is characterized by insatiable desires, aggression and resultant suffering. In light of this, Freud's biological orientation to the psyche, which "tended to view psychological reality as an epiphenomenon reducible to biology" (Welman, 2000, p. 121), reveals a deterministic and pessimistic stance on the question of human suffering.

Freud's negativistic interpretation of human suffering is vulnerable to criticism. According to his sexual theory, for instance, the impermanence of an individual's "chosen love-object", on which his/her "strongest experience of satisfaction" depends, is a source of suffering (1961, p. 101). However, although Freud's observation of this human behavior might apply to ample instances of human sexuality, one can find instances where this experience can have safe and desirable effects. Put another way, there can be ways of relating to this human experience without falling prey to dependency on the phenomenal world and the suffering it entails.

In Taoism (Chinese religious philosophy dating as far back as the 4th century BC.), for instance, the sexual act is not perceived as necessarily entailing a precarious attachment with an objectified "external world". It is, rather, seen as a holistic (physical, mental and spiritual) experience that boosts human energy by integrating aspects of an individual within him/herself and that of his/her sexual partner. This integration is characterized by the coming together of the two complementary forces of the individual's psyche which are known as yin and yang (feminine and masculine forces) (Marlan, 2005, p. 124). In a sense, thus, in engaging in sexual intercourse, one does not risk an unsteady dependency on an external object but is united with a latent feature of him/herself in the other. Otherwise put, sex, is interpreted not as a mere physical act but also, and more importantly, as a psychological and spiritual one that aims at discovering one's implicit self in the other.

Fromm (1976, p. 95) also has a conditional view of human sexuality. Fromm maintains that it is only the "loveless sex ", (which he concedes is the usual type of sexual engagement) that is destined for negative aftereffects. As regards this kind of sex, which is characterized by possessiveness, he is in keeping with Freud in asserting its negative

characteristics. Sex that is not possessive and is not characterized by egoistical attachment, on the other hand, he argues, is joyful. Thus conceived, it is the perception of the external or phenomenal world via sense-bound consciousness and not the objects and people themselves that are the source of suffering.

It is worth noting, in this connection, that this act of self integration is not necessarily predicated upon the sexual act. From a mystical point of view, such a state of mind is also believed to be achievable "on a higher plane of consciousness where the realm of thought and language is transcended and all opposites appear as a dynamic unity" (Capra, 1982, p. 161) (see chapter three for an expanded discussion of mystical experiences).

In addition to the above contentions that defy Freud's deterministic stance, the reduction of human behavior into mere biological derives is a stance untenable even to some biologists. In his critique of biological determinism, Bruce Lipton (2005), for instance, contends that "the fully conscious mind trumps both nature and nurture" (p. 29). Matt Ridley (2000) also maintains that "Some time in the 1970s…the old world of certainty, stability and determinism in biology fell. In its place we must build a world of fluctuation, change and unpredictability" (p. 146). In light of these points, to categorically describe sex as a source of human suffering does not seem tenable. It is thus the manner of one's interpretation of the sexual act (or any other phenomenon, for that matter) and not sex per se that determines whether or not this act becomes a source of suffering. In this respect, it may be argued that Freud's reductive interpretation of human suffering that predominantly pivots around the question of sexuality, fails to take into account the interpretive element in the operations of human experiences.

2.2.2. Suffering and the Human Mind

What may be observed in the above discussion is the extrusion of the human mind (as the seat of thoughts and feelings) from conceptions of human suffering. This phenomenon can be attributed to western intellectual ethos that has mostly been driven by Cartesian ideals of human nature that regard the body and mind of human beings as two different and separate realms (Capra, 1982, p. 27, Nadeau & Kafatos, 1999, p. viii). In such conceptions of reality, the mind cannot affect the body. The fallacy of such a conception of human life

is unraveled by findings that prove the interrelatedness of mind and body. These studies reveal that not only do the thoughts and perceptions embedded in the mind affect emotional experiences but physical experiences as well.

In respect to the mind's influence on the body, Lipton (2005) writes: "our new understanding of the Universe's mechanics shows us how the physical body can be affected by the immaterial mind. Thoughts, the mind's energy, directly influence how the physical brain controls the body's physiology" (p. 125). Along these lines, Ridley (2000), synthesizing scientific studies on this subject, asserts that "The mind drives the body" (pp. 152-153). According to these findings, negative or distressful thoughts are detrimental to physical wellbeing while desirable thoughts promote physical wellbeing. Put in Lipton's (2005) terms, mental states "can activate or inhibit the cell's function-producing proteins via the mechanics of constructive and destructive interference" (p. 125).

Exemplifying this point, Lal (2003) writes:

> Quite often an injured person in pain is pain-free after an injury until he sees blood spurting out of the injury, a fractured limb, bruise or bump on the body which he perceives as a threat to his survival-that is the time when pain sets in. It appears injury, *per se*, does not generate pain, but the meaning and significance attached to it…Pain, therefore, is not a matter of sensation. It is a matter of meaning and perception (emphasis original). (p. 15)

In the above statement, it is evident that it is when a certain event (such as "blood spurting out of the injury, a fractured limb, bruise or bump on the body") is interpreted or "perceived" negatively ("as a threat to his survival") that pain is experienced. Corollary to this view is that an individual's pain experience can be alleviated if s/he can change the meanings s/he gives to the experience (for example that the event is not a real threat, that it can be treated, that it has a lesson to teach, or that one is not bounded in his/her biological body etc.). In a similar vein, Cassell, (2004) also contends that the suffering of patients cannot be alleviated without understanding the "meanings they [patients] assign to their illness and its course" (p. 277).

Such changes in meanings and their resultant altered experiences can be so stark as to shake the foundations of biological determinism. In this regard, Bernstein, Penner, Stewart,

& Roy (2006, p. 141) discuss an instance where an individual in a religious ritual pierces his body with sharp objects yet experiences no pain. This person has been able to give a positive meaning to the experience (inspired by religious beliefs) to be able to reverse the usual physical sensation that accompanies the piercing of the body.

Such observations make it evident that "there is no basis in contemporary physics and biology for believing in stark Cartesian division between mind and world that some have rather aptly described as "the disease of the Western mind" " (Nadeau & Kafatos, 1999, p. viii). In so doing, these scientific findings negate the popular conception that human beings are at the mercy of their biological predispositions or the tendency to interpret reality and behave in biologically predetermined ways. What matters, it may be argued, is not what happens or the event but rather how the event is perceived or interpreted. In other words "our responses are not to the stimuli themselves but, rather," as is noted by Spinelli (2005), "to our current interpretation of them" (p. 211). Based on the above discussions, thus, it may be underlined that the question of meaning should be constitutive of studies that aim to gain insight into and possibly alleviate human suffering.

2.2.3 Suffering and the Question of Representation

A challenge to any study of suffering that attempts to incorporate the question of human meaning/s is likely to be the problematics of representation. The experience of suffering, some scholars argue, is too deep for any representation to be possible. In this regard, Schweizer (1997, p. 1) argues that "while suffering is a universal human predicament, it also remains the most unsharable, incommunicable mystery, the very epitome of secrecy and particularity". Schweizer's argument about the unrepresentability of suffering might remind one of Theodore Adorno's often-quoted statement regarding the problematics of the representation of human suffering: "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Adorno, 1967, p. 34, as cited in Jeffery, 2008, p. 16).

In such conceptions of human suffering, the interiority of the individual's experience is presented as existing within an impenetrable carapace shielded from the outside world. These two scholars, however, contend that the arts could be the only vehicles this human condition might be represented. The arts are privileged with this potentiality, however, not

because they can somehow communicate or represent suffering but because these specific types of discourse themselves defy the communication of meaning. In this respect, Adorno writes:

> I have no wish to soften the saying that to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric…but…it is now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it. (as cited in Jeffery, 2008, p. 16)

In a similar vein, Schweizer (1997) argues that although art can represent suffering, it cannot convey any understanding of what it attempts to represent. For him, both art and suffering are among human experiences that ever remain incomprehensible. "If suffering is the site of the crisis of meaning and understanding," he writes "art, I claim, is an analogical site" (1997, p. 2). This assumed resistance to meaning is, for Schweizer, so important that it is the criterion with which literature should be measured. Consequently, he conclusively states that "if the literary text does not produce such failure, [failure of understanding]…it is not literature" (p. 210).

What good does art, then, do to what it is "representing"? Schweizer's answer is that literary language in its attempt to articulate suffering can help one feel the inarticulate pain; "in its sounds and rhythms recall[ing] and repeat[ing] the cry "(p. 209). Hence literature, "reveals the secret of suffering only by keeping it" (Schweizer, 1997, p. 1) and not by being able to communicate the experience.

The fact that art is not mostly governed by reason but by feelings and intuitions might make one sympathetic to such arguments. This is perhaps true because the arts in their suggestiveness might usually escape complete comprehension or reduction into some specific meaning. To rule out comprehension altogether from the arts, however, seems an obfuscation of the affective dimension of human consciousness. The same also appears to hold true regarding human suffering.

Such intellectual stance that "refuse to accept that it is possible to find expressions to describe or interpret our darkest human experiences" (Lara, 2007, p. 76) are likely to have their roots in postmodern sensibilities where language's potential to represent experiences

is questioned. Alternatively, they might be viewed as moderate forms of such postmodern sensibilities. This is to say that while postmodernists question language's potential to represent all human experiences, such scholars challenge language's potential to represent human suffering particularly.

Language is used to communicate our thoughts, feeling and sensations that are produced by various forms of interaction with the world (for example, sense perception and intuitive experiencing). This perhaps uniquely human tool, however, is far from being a perfect means of interpreting and expressing the broad and complex spectrum of human experiences (thoughts, emotions and physical sensations). This has been evident to some scholars who started to question its adequacy as a reliable mode of communication. Rickman (1996) points out that this "has become obtrusively prominent in modern philosophic movements ranging over logical positivism, linguistic analysis, structuralism, existentialism, and deconstruction" (p. 31).

The challenge against the representability of experiences is especially accentuated in deconstruction where any attempt that uses language to explore truth and meaning is questioned. "If meaning, the signified, was a passing product of words or signifiers, always shifting and unstable, part-present and part-absent," postmodernists question, "how could there be any determinate truth or meaning at all?" (Eagleton, 1983, p. 143). Thus, according to the views of postmodernists, language is slippery and the reality one holds based on it an illusion or at best a distortion.

Questioning the adequacy of language to express human experiences is important in disenchanting assumptions of language as the mirror of the human mind or reality at large. Language far from being a direct and entire re-presentation of thoughts and feelings can "communicate *only* [emphasis added] minute part of the sum total of any experience" (Spinelli, 2005, p. 27). This glimpse of the experience, too, is not directly reflected onto language. Language, thus, cannot have a one-to-one correspondence with experience, since every experience is mediated by interpretive variables (biological and cultural). Care should, however, be taken lest these arguments amount to polemical claims that language is estranged from reality or human experiences. This would be as good as nullifying the

whole bulk of experiences and ideas human beings have ever recorded. Nonetheless, what has been experienced, understood (however imperfect) and recorded in language has always been communicated and forms the very basis of human existence and intellectual and cultural endeavors.

Such anti-referential claims, however, seem to form the core of postmodern intellectual tendencies. According to such arguments, language is a self-referential system which can only refer back to itself and does not communicate any extra-linguistic reality or experience. Stating this anti-referential conception of language of postmodernism, Tyson (2006) writes: "language is nonreferential because it refers neither to things in the world nor to our concepts of things but only to the play of signifiers of which language itself consists" (p. 252). It follows then that, an individual cannot claim any access to pre/extra-linguistic experiences. This would, in turn, amount to declaring that we are all encaged in a linguistic web that is estranged from reality and experiences can only be possible within this self-referential system.

Hutcheon (1988) sees this conception of language as one of the tenets of postmodernism. She, however, argues that this is only half of the story of postmodernism. The other half, according to her, does not deny the relationship of language to extra-textual reality but only problematizes it: "…two types of postmodernism: one that is non-mimetic, ultra-autonomous, anti-referential, and another that is historically *engagé*, problematically referential" (p. 52, emphasis original). This "problematized" referential character of language is the rejection of "simple mimeticist/realist notions of reality" (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 52). Put another way, language cannot have a one-to-one correspondence with reality but it does have an indirect and interpreted one.

The anti-representational view of language, as stated by Hutcheon, emanates from Roland Barthes's conception of language: " 'what takes place' in a narrative is from the referential (reality) point of view literally *nothing*; 'what happens' is language alone, the adventure of language, the unceasing celebration of its coming" (Barthes, 1977, p. 124 as cited in Hutcheon, 1988, p. 144, emphasis original). Such anti-referential views, Hutcheon (1988, p. 52) argues, have no ground in logic for if language has no relation to reality (however

problematized) it cannot at all be understood. And since this is not the case, such views cannot be tenable.

Another important postmodernist intellectual tendency that warrants careful examination is the reduction of all human experiences to language. This postmodernist zeitgeist of language as the exclusive organizer of human experiences defines a human being as a subject made entirely of language (Habib, 2005, p. 594). According to this postmodernist conviction, there can never be any possible experience that is unmediated by language. All experiences are molded by the linguistic webs that exist in all cultures. In other words, one cannot have any experience whatsoever that lies outside the existing linguistic structures. This contention, together with the above anti-referential conception of language, envisage the human species as a lonely island cut from the rest of the natural world. Carroll (2004) reflects on this disembodied picture of human reality. Arguing against this linguistic reductionism and determinism, he writes: "Within the poststructuralist paradigm, the rich world of experience within reality has been emptied out, and in its place we have been given a thin and hectic play of self-reflexive linguistic functions" (p. 24). According to him, however, human experiences are too rich and intricate to be "emptied out" by language (p. 24).

True, experiences are mostly mediated by cultural variables (such as language). This, however, should not delude one into believing that life cannot be experienced without language or representation. Steiner (1967), for instance, agrees that: "It [language] is the root and bark of our experience and we cannot readily transpose our imaginings outside it" "But," he continues "we should not assume that the verbal matrix is the only one in which the articulations and conduct of mind are conceivable" (p. 12). "There are", he adds, "modes of intellectual and sensuous reality founded not on language, but on other communicative energies such as the icon or the musical note" (p. 12). More importantly, Steiner proceeds to argue that even these other communicative tools cannot exhaust all possible human experiences for "there are actions of the spirit rooted in silence" (p. 12).

This should make it evident that the totalizing tendency (regarding language) of much postmodern thinking in grounding human realities on language fails to see or chooses to

ignore human experiences that emerge out of the body and its affects and those that might remain beyond expression altogether. As Habib (2005) points out, thus, "more recent thinkers such as Clement Rosset, Jacques Bouveresse, and Richard Rorty have turned away from the tenets of poststructuralism, such as its reductive view of reality as ultimately linguistic" (p. 566).

Recently, awareness of the existence of experiences that come prior or remain beyond the linguistic realm has animated an intellectual movement known as the *affective turn*. This recent intellectual movement attempts to bring intellectual attention to the body and its emotions that may not entirely be textualized and yet are important in understanding the human condition. As Greco and Stenner, (2008) note "the affective turn is thus a turn against the privileging of text and discourse as the key theoretical touchstones" (p. 9). This move, as Greco and Stenner (2008) further point out, goes:

> Beyond the socio-cultural domain to include pre-conscious and pre-discursive forms of existence…turn[ing] against what is perceived as a linguistic imperialism that threatens to throw the babies of the 'body' and its 'affects' out with the bathwater of naïvely scientistic 'representational theory'. (p. 10)

Hence, when considering human experiences and their representation in language, it should be noted that language is neither a direct and entire representation of every possible experience nor the only possible way of experiencing reality. Put differently, the kaleidoscope of all human experiences cannot directly and fully be represented in language. In using language, thus one should be humbled to obtain a mediated representation of some aspects of our experiences. In light of this, suffering, although it might be one of the deepest human experiences, does not seem to escape such conclusions. In communicating this human experience through language, neither a direct nor an entire representation is to be expected. However, a total failure of representation appears to be a tenuous contention. Historical accounts of pain and suffering can prove this.

True, suffering can mostly be one of the human experiences that defy expression. In great suffering, not finding the aid of reason or the relief of expression, one may prefer to remain enclosed in silence and/or solitude. Reflecting on his experience of the Holocaust, Wiesel (trans. 2006, p. x), for instance, recounts the difficulty of putting into words the horrendous

experience he and his fellow Jews went through. Serving in the feeding centers of Mekelle and Korem in Tigrai during the 1984 famine, Bertschinger (2005, p. 217) had also very often resorted to silence unable to express her painful experiences the event caused her. These individuals, nevertheless, have reflected on their experiences and in so doing hoped that others would have some understanding of the painful phenomena they witnessed.

With similar observations, Lara (2007) also points out that "the proliferation of stories about past catastrophes contradicts Adorno's claim that there could be no poetry after Auschwitz" (p. 14). "[S]ome stories of past atrocities" she further notes "prove that human experience can be *narrated*. At the limits of what can be told, we are always confronted with another extreme need-that of sharing with others what has happened" (p. 14, emphasis original). Lara argues that such recorded personal testimonies as that of Primo Levi, a Holocaust survivor, "reveal hidden angles that we were incapable of seeing before" (p. 120).

This disclosed understanding of evil and suffering in turn, Lara (2007, p. 151) is convinced, can help humanity transform its future positively. One such helpful interpretation, according to her, is Primo Levi's narratives of his personal experiences of the Holocaust. Although Lara does not deny how representing the experience had mostly been difficult to Levi, she follows his narratives and explains how his language matures through time to be able to interpret and describe the ordeals he faced in Auschwitz more adequately (pp. 77-79). Putting this possibility and importance into account, she argues for the moral imperative of representing and comprehending suffering in order to alleviate it. According to her, the failure to represent or to attempt to understand is to question the very moral duty of being human (p. 79).

Another scholar interested in the question of suffering and representation is Elaine Scarry (1985). Scarry assumes a problematic posture on the question of representing suffering. In keeping with both Schweizer and Adorno, she argues that not only is pain beyond linguistic representation " but actively destroys it [language], bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned" (p. 4). Unlike Schweizer and Adorno, however, she, tones

down this statement by conceding that under special conditions the experience of pain can be represented and communicated. She notes that pain is only ordinarily impossible to express. There are, thus, those who can sometimes represent it in language and she glorifies these individuals as "creators or near-creators of a language for pain" (p. 6).

Through the power of imagination, Scarry (1985) argues that "this most radically private of experiences begins to enter the realm of public discourse" (p. 6). Among those that are engaged in this struggle of linguistic objectification are "medical case histories, the publication of Amnesty International, the transcripts of personal injury trials, the poems and narratives of individual artists" (p. 9). These texts make it evident that, although difficult, the experience of suffering is not entirely beyond linguistic expression.

In sum, language should be understood as an indirect (since interpreted) tool capable of expressing some aspects of human experiences. Put differently, it is neither a mirror (direct) reflection nor an entire depiction and sole instrument of representing all possible human experiences but an interpreted or mediated one. What seems to give poetry (or literature in general) worth in such a conception of language is not, as Schweizer and Adorno argue, its failure to communicate meaning but its resistance to a determinate and direct meaning. This disruption of definite meaning gives poetry the potential to address the fluidity and subtlety of human experiences. Hence, the aim of analyzing poetic texts cannot be extracting a single definitive meaning, which presupposes direct depiction of reality or experiences in language, but meaning/s that is/are mediated by such factors as the theoretical underpinnings being considered and the meaning potentialities within the linguistic rules of the text.

2.2.4 The Question of Meaning in the Study of Human Suffering

Observant of the effect of meaning on human experiences, Lara (2007, pp. 9-10, 29) takes a non-deterministic stance regarding the question of evil and resultant suffering. Arguing against deterministic conceptual categories, she attempts to get an enhanced view of evil by probing into the various perceptions and meanings people can have on the question of evil as depicted in stories. Why these human conditions are difficult to capture through conceptual schemes has to do with the difficulty of reducing the question of evil into

simplistic definitions, which would blind one to different interpretations and different experiences the same event can provoke (Lara, 2007, pp. 16, 49).

To address this diversity, Lara (2007), "focus[es] on the way language can be disclosive by shocking us with new meanings and stimulate us to reorient our moral thinking" (p. 10). In so doing, she implies the interpretational openness of a given human experience. However, this interpretational openness is likely to lead to the mist of subjectivity engendered by the plethora of all possible meanings. Put differently, this will likely bring the difficulty of tapping into all possible meanings that can be generated; the realm of infinite subjectivities.

Jeffrey (2008), who is also of the view that the seemingly unintelligible interiority of suffering and evil can be communicated and understood "if within certain limits" (p. 18), is concerned with such a problem. "[T]he individual", he notes "determines whether or not they are suffering" (p. 24). Jeffrey attempts to resolve this problem by resorting to instances of human suffering that are "beyond dispute…the suffering of the victims of the Holocaust, the genocides of the late twentieth century, and the terrorist attacks of the early twenty-first century" (p. 24).

Clearly, most would not question the painfulness and hideousness of these events. Yet to categorically consider these experiences as negative would overshadow how individuals were experiencing it. As is argued by such scholars as Marlan (2005), Schopenhauer (trans. 1896), Schweizer (1997), and Underhill (1911), for instance, suffering might be perceived as a positive experience one might welcome to achieve an altered state of consciousness. Perhaps in a way that summarizes such disorienting views, Schweizer (1997) pictures suffering as a "sacred door…[a] gate to heaven" (p. 72). In light of this, Jeffrey's approach would run the risk of avoiding (by extruding individual differences) the role of meaning from the experience of suffering. Such an approach, thus, would misrepresent the situation and fail to offer an adequate understanding of the phenomenon.

The subjective nature of suffering, however, can be investigated from a vantage point that does not efface interpretational differences or entail relativism. Instead of taking a universalistic stance by ignoring individual differences (reductionism) or leaving

interpretational differences and resultant variations in experiences open (relativism), it seems prudent to investigate the grounds that are responsible, in the first place, for changes in meanings and experiences. Such an approach, in addition to clarifying the sources of interpretational differences, may also open up marginalized and untapped potentialities of understanding and overcoming, or at least alleviating, human suffering.

It is the belief of the researcher, at this juncture, that the sense of self or experiential awareness of self, that is constructed on different sources of information or knowledge about self and the world (such as sense perception and intuition), lies at the heart of how one interprets and experiences reality. In such a conception of reality, the sense of self a person assumes or how s/he interprets himself/herself on the bases of lived experiences informs his/her conception and experience of human suffering. A discussion of this point forms the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical considerations that inform the study pivot on the mystical interpretation of self. In contradistinction to the sense-experience of a discrete and unified self, the self, in Hindu, Buddhist and Christian mysticism, is conceived of as all-inclusively unitive. Employing such a conception of self as a theoretical framework is believed to be a suitable approach for studying the representation of human suffering in poetry for three reasons.

First, in keeping with mysticism, poetry is interested in experiential interpretation of self as opposed to conceptual or theoretical speculations that are usually estranged from lived (experiential) realities. Rooted in lived intuitive realizations, poetry often disrupts the commonsensical notion of the self as a discrete entity. Emphasizing this poetic quality, Laude (2005), defines poetry as "a contemplative discipline geared toward transcending the self" (p. 160). In a similar vein, Habib (2005), summarizing Emerson's transcendental view of poetry, writes: "Whereas ordinary perception is filled with images of discrete and unrelated objects, the poet…is able to see the connectedness of things (p. 462)"

Second, in accordance with the direction of this study, mysticism views human suffering as a contingent phenomenon that is informed by a person's subjective interpretations of reality that are based on sense perception or intuition. The last reason, and a corollary to the second, is that mysticism provides a broader interpretation of self ranging from the separate sense of self produced by sense perception to the all-inclusive sense of self produced by intuition enabling a treatment of a wide range of human experiences.

Serving as the central and organizing theoretical framework of the study, the mystical conception of self is enriched by arguments and insights drawn from existentialism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis and philosophical implications of quantum physics. A discussion on the revelatory function of feelings and the role and primacy of experiential reality in understanding human existence is enriched by insights from existentialism and phenomenology. The unitive sense of self is discussed in light of the challenges from psychoanalysis against the sanity of such an experience, and the theoretical oneness of

the physical world as discovered by quantum theory. In addition to reinforcing the arguments of the study, viewing the subject under study from varying disciplines resonates with what Rice and Waugh, (2001), call "the sudden erosion of boundaries across philosophy, political theory, psychoanalysis, social theory and literary criticism" (p. xiii) and hence implicating a timely endeavor.

In accordance with these points, this chapter is organized into eight sections. The first section concerns itself with conceptions of self. The sense of self informed by sense perception and the experiences thereof is dealt with in the second section of this chapter. The sense of self as informed by intuition is the subject of the third section. The fourth section concerns itself with the significance, prevalence and trajectory of the unitive sense of self. The fifth section deals with the unitive sense of self and its relation to human suffering. The sixth and seventh sections are concerned with challenges against the interconnected sense of self and the conception of unity in the physical world in psychoanalysis and quantum physics consecutively. A discussion of the interrelation between creativity and the unitive sense of self forms the final (eighth) section.

3.1 Conceptions of Self

Before embarking on the discussion of mystical interpretations of self, it seems important to look into the various conceptions of self and make clear what aspect of such conceptions the study is interested in.

Apart from mysticism, the question of self has long been one of the central questions for a number of western philosophers of mind. One point of convergence for these inquiries into reality (mysticism and western philosophy of mind) is the notion that the self as a discrete and unified entity is a mirage. Albahari (2006) mentions western scholars such as "Hume, James, Dennett, Flanagan, and Damasio" as "eminent thinkers who have…denied the existence of a self" (p. xii). Postmodernism also undermines the notion of a static and unified sense of self. The self, in this philosophical sensibility, is conceived as unstable and chaotic vortex of different social and cultural forces with different and conflicting forms and hence having no essence whatsoever (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 159; Tyson, 2006, p. 257).

There are, however, two critical differences between the rejection of the self in Western philosophy and in mysticism. Whereas the western philosophers reject any conception of self whatsoever (for instance, the self as a separate entity and the self as unitive and interconnected entity), mysticism rejects only the separate sense of self. The self as a unitive consciousness, on the other hand, is believed to be experientially real (Albahari, 2006, pp. 17-18, 139, 183; Suzuki, 2002, pp. 34-37, 88).

Another difference is that while the conception of self is based on speculative philosophy and theoretical abstractions in the former, mysticism is interested in experiential interpretation of self and the transformation of consciousness thereof (Suzuki, 2002, p. 34-35). The instability of self dealt with in Western philosophies, in other words, is not a lived sense of a separate or an interconnected self as it is shaped, for instance, by sense perception or intuition. They seem rather to be interested in the character traits of self which can assume different conflicting forms and hence has no essence. Of course postmodernist, for instance, also argue that the self cannot be defined or understood in isolation from the other. They have, in other words, a relational concept of self (Lorraine, 1989, pp. 26-32) which renders a discrete and unified self nonexistent (Tyson, 2006, p. 257). However, while the postmodern sensibility is interested in revealing the contextual variability of the self in relation to the other, mysticism is interested in unveiling whether a person is experiencing him/herself in a unitary connectedness or as separate and disconnected from a given other.

While it may be important to probe into the fluidity and instability of character traits of the self, it is not within the scope of this dissertation to go into these aspects of the issue under investigation. Instead, this research, consistent with the importance accorded to experiential realities as revelatory of truth and as pertinent to the question of the human condition in mysticism, existentialism and phenomenology, aims to focus on the experiential interpretations of self. To this effect, the word “sense” in relation to self is employed to suggest the experiential dimension the study is interested in.

3.2. The Self in Sense Perception

One source of knowledge that informs the interpretation of self is sense perception. Sense perception engenders an understanding of life built on the basis of the temporal and spatial positioning of material objects (including one's own body) as perceived by our sense organs. This manner of acquiring knowledge has long been the foundation of most scientific endeavor. "The world of science" Malin (2001), thus, notes, "is the world as given by the senses" (p. 202).

Malin (2001) attributes science's strong adherence to sense perception, to the exclusion of other sources of knowledge, to Newtonian success in explaining some features of the world at macro level. According to him, this scientific achievement "led scientists to consider other types of experiences, such as feelings and intuitions, irrelevant" (p. 238). As is further noted by Malin (2001), this view also dominated "the leading philosophers of the Enlightenment, Locke, Hume, and Kant [who] were so awed by the success of Newtonian physics that they too denied the validity of all but sensory experiences as revelatory of truth" (p. 238).

In line with this, Capra (1982, p. 34) also notes the devaluation of intuitive perceptions in the scientific arena. According to such intellectual tendencies, inquiries, such as mysticism and the arts that seem to depend much on such non-sensory perception are not considered credible sources of knowledge. These affective faculties are, in fact, deemed detrimental to the intellectual progress of the human species (Han-Pile, 2006, p. 240) and hence irrelevant to the emancipatory project of the enlightenment.

The self as informed by sense perception is interpreted as a unified and discrete entity. The world, on the other hand, is a collection of fragmented and independently self-subsistent entities. In this way of interpreting the self, the other (a given person, animal, the environment, etc.) is perceived as an external entity that is either a threat to one's survival or gratification of desires or, if deemed less powerful, a resource for individual consumption and gratification.

What is engendered in such interaction between self and other is fear and aggression. The sense of self construed on this basis, thus, lies at the heart of human suffering. In support of this, many scholars maintain that this way of engaging with the world easily mutates into pervasive anxiety, hatred, vicious competition, conflict and therefore account for much of individual and social suffering that swarm human life (Capra, 1982, p. 28; Cooper, 2010, p. 31; Fromm, 1976, pp. 8, 45; Suzuki, 2002, p. 34; Taylor, 2006, p. 173). To quote Capra (1982):

> The belief that all these fragments-in ourselves, in our environment and in our society-are really separate can be seen as the essential reason for the present series of social, economic and cultural crises. It has alienated us from nature and from our fellow human beings. It has brought a grossly unjust distribution of natural resources creating economic and political disorder; an ever rising wave of violence, both spontaneous and institutionalized, and an ugly, polluted environment in which life has often become physically and mentally unhealthy. (p. 28)

Considering the fact that this way of interpreting self seems natural, it is perhaps clear why human existence is usually a tragic phenomenon. We are, it thus seems, biologically (via sense perception) predisposed to create and perpetuate suffering.

Mystical traditions, however, argue that this interpretation of self constitutes only a stage in the trajectory of human consciousness. In this experiential philosophical tradition, it is believed that a person can expand his/her boundaries of self (as defined by sense perception) and be born into broader redemptive realities (Underhill, 1911, p. 164). Hence, the life of pain and suffering that seems to be necessitated by the inherent limitations of sense perception is not considered the only reality characterizing human existence and is discredited as a source of knowledge regarding the self.

Before embarking on the discussion of the mystical conception of self, it should be noted that the distrust of sense perception is not confined to mystical conception of reality. In western philosophy, for instance, the platonic idea that devalues sense perception was the most dominant idea both in theology and philosophy before the emergence of the enlightenment (18th century) (Habib, 2005, p. 21). This idea of reality conceived of the sensible world as a faint reflection of an enduring and unchanging reality of unity and

order which can only be accessed through contemplative engagement (Malin, 2001, pp. 13, 16, 115, and 116).

The experience of a contemplative world of order and unity resonates with the experiential philosophy of mysticism. Plato's belief on the importance of reason as the sole path to this realm of existence (Habib, 2005, p. 21), however, appears to have some problems. This mode of consciousness as "a system of abstract concepts and symbols, characterized by linear, sequential structure" (Capra, 1982, p. 35) entails rigid structuredness. Lived experiences, on the other hand, are not always straight and simple. "Whenever we expand the realm of our experience, the limitations of our rational mind become apparent" (Capra, 1982, p. 177). The rational approach to reality, in light of this, seems to sap the subtlety, spontaneity and creativity that seem inherent to life. Celebratory of these qualities of reality, mysticism, thus, is profoundly skeptical of reason.

The reliance on reason to understand reality (which was also characteristic of Enlightenment), is also a point that is severely criticized by many of the so called "hetrological thinkers". As pointed out by Habib, (2005), Schopenhauer is the first scholar to challenge such erroneous enlightenment notions as "the scientific progress of civilization and the perfectibility of individual and state through refinement of the faculty of reason" (p. 503). Habib further notes that this "heterological tradition opened up by Schopenhauer was continued by figures such as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Bergson, Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida, and modern feminists, thinkers who challenged the very discipline of philosophy and its claims to arrive at truth through reason" (p. 503).

Contemptuous of the Enlightenment glorification of reason as the sole road to truth and redemption, Nietzsche (trans. 1990, p. 53) and Schopenhauer (trans. 1896, p. 469) seem to take this argument even further. Both argue that reason is no more than a mere practical tool for self-preservation. Unlike Schopenhauer, however, Nietzsche, as one of the prominent initiators of postmodern intellectual sensibilities, envisions no other possible way of seeing the world. This is probably due to his philosophical stance that advocated linguistic determinism. Taking anti-representationist stand, he does not

propose any “real” way of interacting with the world so long as language is concerned. For him linguistic representations are simply “metaphors which correspond *in no way* [emphasis added] to the original entities” (Nietzsche, 2000, p. 55,) (see chapter two for a discussion of the question of language and representation).What seems to unite these scholars, however, is their interest in the affective dimensions of human life.

With similar observations, scholars such as Heidegger, and Sartre also challenged the hegemony of the rational approach and turned instead to affectivity as an indispensable domain to gain a profound and revealing insight into human existence (Han-pile, 2006, p. 240). Scholarly movements inspired by these scholars, such as existentialism and phenomenology, have, thus, made feelings, moods and experiential understanding of life the primary focus of their studies in their effort to better understand human life (Johnson, 2008, pp. 318, 319).

What is noteworthy at this juncture, however, is that these scholarly movements are not entirely new enterprises in the history of human thought. As noted by John M. Johnson (2008, p. 318), the pre-Socratic philosophers had long understood the indispensable importance of feelings and emotions in understanding reality. It might be argued, nevertheless, that these scholars have unearthed it from under the piles of empiricist and positivistic epistemologies with renewed strength. Bringing affects into the frontiers of academic endeavors, they seem to have enabled an intimate understanding of the broad spectrum of human experiences thereby celebrating the potentialities of human existence.

3.3. The Self in Intuitive Experience

The separate sense of self that sense perception gives rise to is often challenged in our interaction with people and the world at large at different stages of our psychophysical development. Unlike both the empirical scientist and the rational philosopher, mysticism is interested in affective consciousness that challenges one’s sense of separateness from the other (other being fellow human beings or the rest of nature in general). Challenging the self/other dichotomy through which we view the world, mysticism thus aims to understand life in the disruption of common-sense notions of self.

Intuition is considered the central source of knowledge in this mode of consciousness while sense perception is considered a delusion one has to overcome should one wish to obtain a profound and healing experiential understanding of reality (Capra, 1982, pp. 142, 154; Cooper, 2010, p. 67). Stressing the intuitive dimension of consciousness as characteristic of the mystic's way of perceiving reality, Spurgeon (1913) writes:

> This is his distinguishing mark, this is what differentiates him alike from the theologian, the logician, the rationalist philosopher, and the man of science, for he bases his belief, not on revelation, logic, reason, or demonstrated facts, but on *feeling*, on intuitive inner knowledge. (p. 5; emphasis original)

This alteration in meaning effected by nurturing intuitive consciousness is so stark that Underhill (1911) describes it as "a sharp...break with the old and obvious way of seeing things" (p. 178). Similarly, Watts (1966) contends that intuitive mystical consciousness "turns our ordinary view of things, our common sense, inside out and upside down" (p. 7).

Many scholars agree that the central change in perception that results in this mode of consciousness is the experiential knowledge of the underlying unity and oneness that connects all life beyond all conceivable categories (gender, race, class, religion or even species) (Capra, 1982, p. 29; Cooper, 2010, p. 6; Nadeau & Kafatos, 1999, p. 198; Spurgeon, 1913, p. 3; Underhill, 1911, pp. 239).

Unlike the dominance of sense perception as a factor that informs most human realities, this mystical view leaves the limited mode of consciousness centered on sense perception to embrace an interconnected and non-dualistic view of self and the world that transcends sensory and cognitive apprehensions. What this felt oneness entails is the illusion of a separate and unified sense of self which is nevertheless the very image one gets from sense perception. Typifying a radical plasticity of consciousness, the self engendered by this experiential awareness is a unitive and interconnected entity or "a self," in the words of Watts (1966), "which is far beyond the image of the ego, or the human body as limited by the skin" (p. 140).

This unitive experience might be thought of as Jung's (trans. 1966, p. 105) psychic experience in his conception of the collective unconscious. According to him this psychic stratum is a vast reservoir of thought and feelings that predate the individual and is shared by all humanity. However, while Jung's conception of unitive experience is confined to the human psyche, that of mysticism is inclusive of all creation. In such a cosmic conception of consciousness, when we are "looking outward we see many faces; look inward and all is the one head" (Plotinus, trans. 1930, p. 191). Whereas "looking outward" entails the focusing of awareness on the manifoldness of the sensory world, "looking inward" entails the focusing of awareness on intuitive self-realization or the underlying reality of the sense-perceptible world.

In this sense of self that is in a unitary connectedness, it is the affective state of a person and not his/her physical body that defines the self. This conception or experience of self is sure to challenge the question of who we are. As it casts our usual notion of self (as a separate entity confined within a physical body) into doubt, it is also likely to sound absurd. If one's sense of self can transcend one's body to be inclusive of the other (as an independently existing entity in the external world or space), or if the other, in more absurd terms, can be experienced as one with oneself, what then is the self?

3.4. The Significance, Prevalence and Trajectory of the Unitive Sense of Self

Although it is against the evidences of sense perception, when the experience of oneness occurs, it is felt to be more vivid, intense and meaningful apprehension of life than is our usual conception of life via sense perception. In this regard, Underhill (1911) taking the heart as a metaphorical seat of this intuitive awareness, points out that "The heart outstrips the clumsy senses, and sees-perhaps for an instant, perhaps for long periods of bliss-*an undistorted and more veritable world* [emphasis added]" (p. 239). In a similar vein, Malin (2001) writes: "When it is experienced, it is experienced as more real than the sensible world; ordinary experiences pale in comparison, to the point of becoming devoid of meaning" (p. 195).

Although such an experience of self is not a state of ordinary consciousness, it is not an entirely unique experience. It seems, in fact, to have its roots and to be discernible in a number of everyday experiences throughout the physical and psychosocial developments and interactions of a person. Common among such experiences are the early stages of childhood, sex or lovemaking, familial bond, nationalism and universal human unity.

According to Freud (1961), the first instinctive unitive sense of self is experienced during the early periods of childhood. The child at its early stage of development cannot as yet distinguish itself from its mother and the world around it:

> Originally the ego includes everything, later it separates off an external world from itself. Our present ego-feeling is, therefore, only a shrunken residue of *a much more inclusive – indeed, an all-embracing* [emphasis added] – feeling which corresponded to a more intimate bond between the ego and the world about it. (p. 68)

This primordial experience of self is believed to be an intimate union between the child and the world around it that is characterized by fullness and safety (Fromm, 1956/2006, p. 36).

This experience, however, does not last long for it begins to wane as the child's sensory and psychomotor skills develop enabling the formation of a separate sense of self based on the physical boundaries of his/her body (Freud, 1961, pp. 68-72). While Freud regards the psychomotor development of the child as marking the end of this experience, Lacan, views it in light of language acquisition. According to this scholar, the child's entrance into the "Symbolic Order", a stage where the child's experience is mediated by language, destroys the desirable world of oneness s/he was enjoying in its preverbal stage. This loss is a traumatizing experience the desire of which asserts itself throughout the child's life (as cited in Tyson, 2006, pp. 27-28).

Another experience that is believed to yield the unitive sense of self is sensual love. Although Freud (1961) argues that the separate sense of self as perceived via sense perception is the most intimate, usual and correct knowledge one can have about the self, he concedes that the boundary of self or the "ego" as marked by the physical body is transcended in one "unusual state":

> There is *only one state-admittedly an unusual state* [emphasis added], but not one that can be stigmatized as pathological-in which it [the ego] does not do this [remain within the confines of the body]. …At the height of being in love the boundaries between ego and object threaten to melt away. Against all the evidence of his senses, a man who is in love declares that *'I' and 'you" are one* [emphasis added], and is prepared to behave as if it were a fact. (p. 66)

As may be noted from this quotation, Freud is defining the self empirically based on sensory data. This can be evidenced in the phrase "Against all the evidence of his senses". It should also be noted, however, that the "evidence of the senses" is being overrun by the feeling of oneness in persons who are in love. Another important point that has to be noted in the above quote is that Freud does not as yet describe this unitive state or felt oneness among two persons as "pathological".

In connection to this, the loss of individuality or a separate sense of self and accompanying unitive experience of the very act of sexual intercourse (which is perhaps the usual implicit motivation for sensual love) is also worth mentioning. The unitive experience engendered by sexual intercourse (especially during the climax of the sexual excitement or orgasm) is remarkable. This experience is currently being supported by neurological studies that have revealed that a loss of a separate sense of self and accompanying suspension of anxiety occur during orgasm (Austin, 2006, pp. 93-94).

Perhaps owing to the prevalence of the unitive sense of self induced by sexual intercourse, sensual love is in Hinduism embraced as integral to intuitive self realization and used to elucidate mystical unitive sense of self (Capra, 1982, p. 103). The sexual union also occupies a central place in Christianity. In its literal sense, the sexual intercourse is conceived of as the ultimate unity of the two sexes (male and female). In this unitive experience, self/other dichotomy is suspended as "The *two become one flesh* [emphasis added] as they engage in sexual relations" (Ryken, L. et al, 1998, p. 2616).

This experience is also employed as a frequent metaphorical image for the union of God and His people. This is especially evident in Song of Songs and in the New Testament's descriptions of the marriage of Christ and the church (Ryken, L. et al, 1998, pp. 2616-2619). Similarly, and perhaps building on such literatures, sexual imagery has often been

an apt metaphorical image for the interconnected sense of self in mystical literature (Spurgeon, 1913, pp. 48-52, 113-114).

The sense of oneness among a group of people is another experience that gives rise to a unitive sense of self. This form of unitive experience, as pointed out by Freud (1966) "becomes valuable from a cultural standpoint because they [it] escape[s] some of the limitations of genital love, as, for instance, its exclusiveness" (p. 103). This unitive experience is more inclusive and less obstructed by the physical limitations entailed in sexual union, since, unlike the sense of oneness induced by sexual engagement, it is engendered by immaterial aspects of human existence such as "customs, practices and beliefs" (Fromm, 1956/2006, p. 12). As such, group-based sense of oneness can range from ethnic or racial identification to nationalism.

While still regarding the loss of a separate sense of self in persons who are in love "unusual", Freud (1961) even concedes to the experiential possibility of oneness that is inclusive of all humanity:

> A small minority are enabled by their constitution to find happiness …by directing their love, not to single objects but to all men alike; and they avoid the uncertainties and disappointments of genital love by turning away from its sexual aims and transforming the instinct into an impulse with an *inhibited aim* (emphasis original). (pp. 101-102)

Freud is convinced that "far-reaching mental changes" (p. 101) are required to effect such a compassionate sense of unity with all humanity which he, nevertheless, regards as misdirected psychic energy (pp. 101-102). Such a universal love for all mankind is, according to him, a perversion of the sexual energy which he considers to be the foundation of all human behavior.

At his juncture, given the weight of meaning Freud accords to the sexual energy, it would not be inappropriate to look into this matter a little further. True, it is perhaps beyond doubt that the sexual desire is usually an overwhelmingly powerful energy that characterizes most of human endeavors and behaviors. It is also worth remembering that it is a biological act that gives rise to life on earth in its myriad forms. To subsume the

whole spectrum of human affections (familial ties, patriotism and universal human unity, for instance) and behaviors under this libidinal force, however, appears reductive.

This reduction is one of the central points where Jung diverges from his former mentor, Freud. Jung (trans. 1966, pp. 70, 80) rejects Freud's reductive analysis of the sexual energy and argues instead that there are expressions of psychic energies that transcend the sexual desire. Profound ideas as expressed by Plato and Christ and works of art such as that of Dante Alighieri, William Blake, Hoffmann E.T.A and Friedrich Nietzsche are, he argues, cases in point. In light of this, a broader, and perhaps more interesting, conception of the sexual energy is that of Fromm (1956/2006).

Fromm (1956/2006) also rejects Freud's reductive view of human life as essentially and ultimately erotic. While for Freud every human behavior is reduced to sex, for Fromm(1956/2006) sex or the sexual desire is subsumed under the much broader desire "for love and union" (p. 33). The desire for sex, thus, is only one manifestation of the desire for unitive experience. Needless to say, this more inclusive desire, in addition to sex, can take various forms such as familial love, patriotism, fraternity, the love of nature or the love of God. In light of this, the sexual desire might be viewed as the latent expression of the mystical urge inherent in the human psyche.

Such conceptions of the sexual act seem to make evident why the sexual pleasure is one of the most desired experiences and why it is used as an apt metaphor for unitive consciousness (Capra, 1982, p. 103; Ryken, L. et al, 1998, pp. 2616-2619; Spurgeon, 1913, pp. 48-52, 113-114). It should be noted, however, that, although the sexual pleasure is a moment of bliss marked by the dissolution of the sense of separateness, it is an elusive experience that is adulterated by the inherent flux of physical reality. Hence, if this pleasure is pursued as an end by itself, Freud's (1961) contention that one has made him/herself "dependent in a most dangerous way on a portion of the external world…and exposed himself to extreme suffering" (p. 101) holds true.

Still another means, and perhaps the easiest and most common that occasions unitive sense of self is "taking drugs, alcohol, or other substances that *momentarily lift* [emphasis added] the bonds they [one] feel[s] chained in" (Shoshanna, 2002, p. 201). It should,

however, be remembered that these ways of achieving or enhancing unitive experiences can be highly addictive (either/both physiologically or psychologically) and hence detrimental to the overall health of a person. Hence, although the ingestion of a number of psychedelic herbs, for instance, can help us ease out of the anxiety, chaos and violence the sense of separateness induces (Barry, 1983, p. 464; Fromm, 2006/1956, p. 11), it is important to note that "in too many cases, excessive and indiscriminate use ends tragically" (Barry, 1983, p. 469).

Considering the prevalence of unitive experience across different personal and social instances, effected by a number of psycho-physical and social forces, it might be argued that the unitive sense of self is an inherent human potential expressed in a person's instinctive desire and striving toward self-transcendence. In this respect, Miller (1993), notes that whether or not realized by all, human beings strive to "transcend the natural childhood selfishness, necessary for survival, in the direction of a more inclusive reality-first family, then tribe, then humanity, ultimately totality, including past, present, and future" (p. 288).

In this statement Miller presents the possible trajectory of the transcendence of a separate sense of self with its culmination in an all-inclusive unitive experience. As consciousness is, thus, allowed to grow, the sense of self grows from a discrete entity, as defined by the boundaries of the physical body (as perceived by the senses), to "family, then tribe, then humanity", until it is finally swallowed by an awareness of "totality", as in the profound interconnectedness and oneness of all (1993, p. 288).

This trajectory of the unitive sense of self is also well observed in Suzuki's (2002) explication of the mystical journey in his comparative study of Buddhist and Christian Mysticism. These mystical journeys, according to him, aim at expanding the inherent striving for the transcendence of separateness by moving from an "ego-centered love into something universal, [from] eros into agape" (p. 63). The ultimate goal of mysticism is thus realizing the all-inclusive unitary interconnectedness of the self/other dyad; a cosmic web of relations with and concern for all that are part of the great family of creation.

Putting these points into account, it seems reasonable to agree with Spurgeon (1913) that, the only difference between the intuitive feeling of oneness of the mystics and an ordinary person is one of degree and clarity. While:

> This sensation, which *many people experience vaguely and intermittently* [emphasis added], and especially at times of emotional exaltation, would seem to be the first glimmerings of that secret power which, with the mystics, is *so finely developed and sustained* [emphasis added] that it becomes their definite faculty of vision (p. 7).

Hence, while the unitive sense of self experienced by an ordinary person is likely to be spasmodic and dependent on "emotional exaltations" with selected others, the goal in mysticism is to achieve a sustained unitive sense of self with non-selected or every "other". The goal, in other words, is to consummate the innate striving for the transcendence of a separate sense of self, in an all-inclusive unitive consciousness.

This difference in degree and scope is not, however, without serious ramifications. While all selective unitive experiences of self tend to depend on the external world or physical manifestation of life which is subject to change and decay, mystical union is independent of selective attachment to the external world (Shoshanna, 2002, pp. 77-79). The former bond is subject to suffering as the unitary connectedness with one's chosen object/s cannot be spared from the physical law of impermanence (Suzuki, 2002, p. 43).

For this reason, the mystical journey for experiencing and sustaining the unitive sense of self bases itself in contemplative and intuitive experience of the profound connectedness and fundamental oneness of all life and not on the external observation of the surface and chaotically changing features of the sensible world. Put otherwise, the mystical goal and practice is directed at experiencing the myriad diversity of the external world as constitutive of a person's intuitive inner world.

This should not imply a denigration of the sensible world but a conception of it as a unified cosmic whole and its individual parts as microcosmic reflections of this system. The sensible world, hence, is not perceived as an independent reality but as a reflection of cosmic reality. Understood this way, the focus of the mystical way of seeing is not the

corporeal world, which is subject to mutability and demise, but the underlying principle of this reality which can be an object of contemplation and intuitive union within everyone's consciousness. When such a state of consciousness is reached and stabilized, "the false notions of a separate self have forever disappeared and the oneness of all life has become a constant sensation" (Capra, 1982, p. 108).

3.5 The Unitive Sense of Self and Human Suffering

In an experience of a unitive or an interconnected sense of self, the other is perceived or rather experienced as part of one's own self. Otherwise put, self and other are not perceived as dichotomized entities (as perceived by sense perception or as they appear in the phenomenal world) but as intertwined and inter-constitutive unity- one always reflecting the other.

The other is, thus, not seen as a threat or as an object to be exploited for the satisfaction of personal desires. What this intuitive perception entails is the absence of hierarchies and dichotomies. Although this does not translate into asserting that one would automatically be blind to all manifest hierarchies (for example, economic, political etc.) and dichotomies (for example, gender, race, etc), it would mean that they cease to assume any essential meaning or value (save a functional and dynamic one).

This all-inclusive unitary connectedness that transcends the physical boundaries of the body is believed to be a healing experience that ends the anxiety and aggression that are entailed in a separate sense of self encaged in a physical body. This consciousness of unity is described by James (1958) as a healing movement "from unrest to rest" (p. 319). Similarly, Jung's (trans. 1966) postulation of the collective unconscious has conceptions of healing as one enters this psychic substratum. Although his conception of union is limited to humanity, Jung maintains that when a person has this experience, "He has plunged into the *healing and redeeming depth of the collective psyche* [emphasis added], where man is not lost in the isolation of consciousness and its error and suffering, but where all men are caught in a common rhythm" (p. 105).

The positive effects of the unitive sense of self, however, are not to be confined to psychological growth and fulfillment only. Some scholars argue that such a change in human consciousness has indispensable implications for the wellbeing and survival of planet earth at large. This is so because "unitive experiencing functions as a corrective to anxious grasping, greed, aggression, and violence associated with our ignorant exclusively dualistic perception and experience of the world" (Cooper, 2010, p. 88). Similarly, Fromm (1976) argues that the interconnected mode of living, as opposed to the mode of being characterized by a preoccupation with sense of separateness, is required "not only as an ethical or religious demand, not only as a psychological demand arising from the pathogenic nature of our present social character, but also as a condition for the sheer survival of the human race" (p. 8).

In conclusion, it may be argued that human suffering is inextricable from the experience of self. The sense of self is informed by sense perception, and the separate sense of self thereof, or intuition, and the varying degrees of unitive experiences of self thereof. While the former sense of self is manifestly implicated in suffering, the latter engenders healing experiences depending on the scope and sustainability of the sense of self induced. Within these experiential possibilities, contrasting ways of experiencing life is, thus, to be expected not only among individuals but also within the same person depending on different affective conception of him/herself engendered in various forms of his/her engagement with the world.

3.6 Could the Unitive Sense of Self be Pathological?

A challenge to the picture of human potentiality discussed in the preceding section comes from psychoanalysis. How can one's separate sense of self be transcended to embrace all creation? And how can one maintain his/her consciousness when s/he feels merged with the other (during experiences of nirvana or the peak of sexual excitement, for instance)? These two questions particularly seem to concern Freud.

Much in the manner of a disciplined intellectual, Freud (1961) begins his reflection on mysticism with a confession that he has no experiential knowledge of the subject: "I

cannot discover this ‘oceanic’ feeling [unitive or mystical experience] in myself…But this gives me no right to deny that it does in fact occur in other people” (p. 65). Corollary to this, he also admits that he does not think whatever he has to say on this subject “could have a decisive influence on the solution of this problem” (p. 65). However, his challenge against the plasticity of self that is freed from its seeming traps of the physical body is worth discussing.

For Freud, as has been noted in preceding sections of this chapter, the transcendence of the separate sense of self in love between two individuals is “an unusual state” and that of the more inclusive love for all humankind, a perversion of the sexual energy or an “aim inhibited” love. The transcendence of a discrete self in felt connectedness and oneness with all life, on the other hand, is simply a pathological regression to infantile psychological state: “…we are perfectly willing to acknowledge that the ‘oceanic’ feeling exists in many people, and we are inclined to trace it back to an early phase of ego-feeling” (p. 72) where “…originally the ego includes everything” (p. 68).

One can note, in the course of human history, a number of influential personalities, with varying disciplinary and cultural backgrounds, who are believed to have an all-inclusive unitive sense of self. These include Moses, Buddha, Lao-tzu, Jesus, Plotinus, Eckhart Meister, Jacob Boehm, Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein, Marcel Proust, Werner Heisenberg, William Blake, Baruch Spinoza (Goswami, 1999, p. 493; Malin, 2001, p. 195; Nadeau & Kafatos, 1999, p. 216; Suzuki, 2002, p. 88; Underhill, 1911, pp. 77, 80, 133) In defining the unitive sense of self as a pathological mental regression, thus, Freud , in effect, risks regarding such individuals as persons who had regressed into their infantile psychic state and hence were psychologically abnormal.

Corollary to this, if these persons are considered mentally abnormal, what is psychological normality? Such untenable conceptions of the mystical experience are characteristic of most psychoanalysts (Cooper, 2010, p. 204). In contrast to Freud (and most psychoanalysts), Schopenhauer (trans. 1896), proclaims the opposite. As is perhaps befitting a philosopher delving ever deeper and deeper into the nature of reality, it is the sense of separateness that is for him an abnormality. “Individuality,” he thus writes “does

not constitute the inmost kernel of our being, but is rather to be thought of as a kind of *an aberration of it* [emphasis added]" (p. 308).

In contrast to Freud's speculative conception of unitive experiences, which fails to take into account the experiential reality of felt interconnectedness or oneness, Albahari (2006, pp. 208-210), clarifies the difference between a pathological form of loss of sense of self and that of a healthy one. He argues that while the former is characterized by law attentiveness, the latter is characterized by an enhanced attentiveness and awareness. With this in mind, Albahari entertains the possibility that individuals with a unitive mode of consciousness could have a more effective consciousness than those people whose consciousness is centered on a separate sense of self.

Cooper (2010) also argues for the possibility of such a healthy loss of separate sense of self. He differentiates the loss of self or individuality that is associated with a psychological disorder and that which is associated with enlightenments or the expansion of consciousness. For Cooper, the feeling of connectedness is crucial in understanding these two different states of altered consciousness. While the former is characterized by loss of connectedness with the world, in the latter loss of individuality is a result of the experience of connectedness with the cosmos. He calls the first case "pathological, regressive" while the second he describes as "healthy, progressive, and liberating" (p. 170).

A personal historical testimony of a neuroscientist who suffered a brain hemorrhage of the left brain for eight years can also illuminate this point further. Taylor (2006) equates her experience of life with only one hemisphere of the brain (right hemisphere) with mystical experiences and nirvana. During this time, she witnessed a profound peace that emanated from the experience of unitive sense of self without loss of consciousness. For this reason, she believes that "we are capable of having a "mystical" or "metaphysical" experience- relative to our brain anatomy" (p. 3). Putting these points into account, it is evident that an experience of a healthy unitive sense of self without loss of consciousness is an experiential verity.

3.7 The Conception of Unitive Reality in Quantum Physics

In addition to being an experientially viable phenomenon, the unitive sense of self is also being reinforced by emerging understanding of the physical world. The findings of quantum physics is at the center of this understanding. This science, journeying beyond the familiar territories of empiricism (which was solely founded on the understanding sense perception and subsequent experimentation could provide) is bringing the interrelatedness and oneness of reality into the frontiers of the hard sciences. To quote Capra (1982):

> The basic oneness of the universe is not only the central characteristic of the mystical experience, but is also one of the most important revelations of modern physics. It becomes apparent at the atomic level and manifests itself more and more as one penetrates deeper into matter, down the realm of subatomic particles. (p. 142)

In this groundbreaking scientific understanding, the limitedness of sense perception was made evident as the empiricist spirit of Newtonian physics, which had influenced many enlightenment thinkers and the positivists of the nineteenth century (Malin, 2001, p. 38; Nadeau & Kafatos, 1999, p. 6), began to crumble unable to explain the physical world at subatomic levels. Taking into consideration the insufficiency of sense perception in revealing the nature of reality, this science thought it imperative to navigate beyond the evidences of the senses to mathematical symbols that are more akin to intuitive mystical experiences than to a sensory experience of the world. On the basis of this discovery, "to believe that our abstract concepts of separate 'things' and 'events' are realities of nature is an illusion" (Capra, 1982p. 142).

In this conception of reality, all the objects of the world (people, animals, plants and so called inanimate things) that appear to one's sense experience as independently existing entities are "*parts of a unified whole*[emphasis added]" (Capra 1982, p. 150). This understanding of reality as interconnected web is also made evident by Nadeau and Kafatos (1999) who write: "All of modern physics contribute to a view of the universe as an unbroken, undissectible, and undivided dynamic whole" (p. 195). As such, every

individual physical form "is deeply and intrinsically interconnected with the whole universe" (Jitatmananda, 2006, pp. 34-35).

Although such a unified view of reality emerged full-fledged in quantum physics, traces of it can be found in a preceding scientist. The eminent physicist Albert Einstein, right before the complete postulation of quantum physics, had also observed (although he died before he could develop a unified theory of the physical world) the fundamental oneness of life. For Einstein, the illusion of separately existing entities is a result of the limitation of human sense perception (specifically visual impression) which he called "an optical illusion". According to him, thus, the fact that an individual "experiences himself, his feelings and thought as something separate from the rest" is "a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness" (Einstein, 1972, pp. 12, as cited in Nadeau & Kafatos, 1999, p. 179). "This delusion" he further observes, "is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us" (Einstein, 1972, pp. 12, as cited in Nadeau & Kafatos, 1999, p. 179). In view of these scientific discoveries, thus, the separate sense of self that is propagated by the limitedness of our sense perception is denied reality in the understanding of the physical world.

The fact that the oneness and interconnectedness of life is supported from two apparently incompatible domains of knowledge (mysticism and physics) makes this conception of reality noteworthy. Remedying the sense-perception-born delusion of physical individuality, the finding of quantum physics seems to lend considerable support to the mystical contention that unitive consciousness marks the highest stage in the unfolding of consciousness (Jitatmananda, 2006, p. 21; Underhill, 1911, p. 8)]. Furthermore, it appears to lay the ground to meaningfully embrace the highly imaginative and intuitive worlds of many mystics, poets and philosophers across time and space.

Yet, it is still a bit too hasty (at this point of humanity's understanding of cosmic interconnectedness at least) to lump the finding of quantum physics and mysticism together as identical. It is important thus to be cognizant of the point of divergence between the mystical and quantum notions of interconnectedness and oneness.

Critical in their difference is their conception of the ontological implication of this experiential and theoretical reality. While the mystical traditions and philosophies inclined to mysticism take the experience to imply the indestructibility of human beings or the existence of a spiritual realm or God (Spurgeon, 1913, 3; Uždavinys, 2009, pp. 30-34), quantum physics refrains from making any metaphysical and ontological implications of the oneness of life. In the words of Nadeau and Kafatos (1999) "orthodox quantum theory, which remains unchallenged in its epistemological statements, disallows any ontology . . . Although this discovery may imply that the universe is holistic, physics can say nothing about the actual character of this whole" (p. 192).

Hence, although the philosophical implications of the interconnectedness of life at the physical plane of existence can go to great lengths in encouraging cooperative spirit for the common good of all (Nadeau & Kafatos, 1999, p. 208) and may animate productive dialogues between the humanities and the natural sciences and make our world "far more humane and much more enlightened than any that has gone before" (Nadeau & Kafatos, 1999, p. 218), an experiential knowledge of the interconnectedness and oneness of life is the much more needed impetus to bring about this cherished result. In this regard, Nadeau and Kafatos (1999) note that "While some, like Einstein, have achieved a profound sense of unity based only on a scientific worldview, most people, as Schrodinger [a renowned twenty century physicist] noted, require something more" (p. 216). They elaborate this "something more" by quoting Schrodinger (1984) who observes: "The scientific picture of the real world around me is very deficient. It gives me a lot of factual information, puts all our experience in a magnificently consistent order, but it is ghastly silent about all and sundry that is really dear to our heart that really matters to us" (p. 81).

Taking this need for an experiential knowledge of oneness into consideration, Nadeau and Kafatos (1999), suggest that "the religious imagination and the religious experience to engage the complementary truths of science in filling that silence with meaning" (p. 216). Similarly, Capra (1982) contends that "Although their [scientists'] theories are leading to a world view which is similar to that of the mystics, it is striking how little this has affected the attitudes of most scientists" (p. 339). In contrast to the theoretical

knowledge of quantum physics, the mystical knowledge of oneness, however, stands on firm experiential ground. Elucidating this point, this physicist writes:

> In mysticism, knowledge cannot be separated from a certain way of life which becomes its living manifestation. To acquire mystical knowledge means to undergo a transformation; one could even say that the knowledge *is* the transformation. Scientific knowledge, on the other hand, can often stay abstract and theoretical. (p. 339, emphasis original)

The consequence of this lack of experiential basis is that "many of them [these scientists] actively support a society which is still based on the mechanistic, fragmented world view, without seeing that science points beyond such a view, towards a oneness of the universe" (Capra, 1982, p. 139). To bring a positive transformation in the world, thus, an experiential knowledge of the interconnectedness and oneness of life is indispensable. It should be noted, however, that religion is not the only cultural space where the experiential reality of oneness can be realized. In this regard, a number of scholars argue that non-dual consciousness is also characteristic of the act of creativity.

3.8 Transcending a Separate Sense and Creativity

Schopenhauer (trans. 1896) is one of the scholars who consider the transcendence of a separate sense of self the touch stone of creativity. According to him, a person in a moment of creativity "*loses* himself" in the object being contemplated (p. 231, emphasis original). By engendering the merger of subject and object, this experience leads to the loss of a separate sense of self or individuality. The subject is, in this state, identified with the object for there to remain any sense of separateness. In absorbed contemplation, thus, dualistic consciousness dissolves.

With this in mind, Schopenhauer (trans. 1896) maintains that "the powers of knowledge beyond the measure which is required for the service of the will" are required for the production of creative works (p. 181). The will in Schopenhauer's philosophy is the instinctive desire to live and its instrument reason which aids it in dichotomizing the external world in ways that are supposed to maximize the survival of the organism. It is

thus only when this will is at rest in the contemplation of the world that works of art can be produced.

The transcendence of separate sense of self is also an important ingredient in Amit Goswami's (1998) conception of creativity. Equating the concept of "quantum leap" in physics with the abruptness of intuitive insights in the process of creativity, he argues for the unconditionality of creativity. He contends that this feature of intuitive insight speaks to the fact that creativity does not occur in the linear processing of thoughts of ordinary consciousness implicated in sense perception and reason. This intuitive experience, he further notes, is an encounter with what he calls the "quantum self". This self, according to him, is a transcendental and universally unitive state of being. Creativity, within this context, marks the breaking of the mental conditioning of viewing the self as a separate entity (pp. 493-497).

This creativity that transcends conditioning, as Goswami (1998) further observes, can be "outer" or "inner". Outer creativity is a new way of expression or seeing things in the world of science and art. Inner creativity, on the other hand, involves a fundamental change in an individual's life whereby "a new context of being is discovered and manifested into a product (the personality of the creative)" (p. 493). Goswami presents Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Lao Tsu and Mahatma Gandhi as examples of this type of creativity. While the unitive sense of self is a temporary unitive experience that gives birth to creative insights in the former, it is an "stabilized" experience in the latter: "In outer creativity, we temporarily rise above these ego tendencies, encounter the creative and tangled-hierarchical quantum self, and then return to our ego homeostasis. In inner creativity, we learn to stabilize our self-identity beyond ego" (Goswami, 1998, p. 493).

In this connection, it is important to note that, although this observation may be true with many works of art (especially in the West), creativity (specifically as regards poetry) and individual transformation cannot be easily separated in the East. This is well observed by Laude (2005). For Goswami (1998), on the other hand, the type of creativity that entails a transformation of a way of being or behaving at a permanent level is attributed to religious figures such as mentioned above. Elaborating this point, he writes:

> Mahatma Gandhi made an impact on the entire world culture through his discovery of the effectiveness of nonviolent struggle for freedom against oppression, but his act of creation was intimately connected with his own personal transformation; he himself became nonviolent to the core. (p. 493)

As may be noted from this, creativity is marked by the transcendence of a conditioned way of engaging with the world centered on a separate sense of self and its preservation. Although the biological and cultural tendency to oppose violence (oppression in this case) is probably to engage in counter violence or submission (in accordance with the fight-or-flight instinct), Gandhi's creative transformation of being enabled him to break biological predisposition and see a more effective, and healthy, way of opposition regardless of concern for his immediate individual being.

Another scholar who regards the transcendence of individuality as a measure of creativity is Carl Jung. In addition to the personal unconscious theorized by Freud, Jung (trans. 1966), a former associate and student of Freud, is known for postulating the concept of the collective unconscious that is shared by all humanity. This sphere of the human mind, according to him, is the source of the creative impulse. Jung strongly argues that creativity emanates from the very depth of the collective unconscious and is not mere expression of primitive and aggressive urges and instincts repressed into the individual unconscious as Freud had thought (p. 71).

In this psychic state we (all human being) share one mind and hence whatever we think, imagine and experience resonates with all. "At such moments" thus, "we are *no longer individuals* [emphasis added], but the race; the voice of all mankind resounds in us" (Jung, trans. 1966, p. 82). It is, at this point, important to note that while the experience of union conceived by Schopenhauer and Goswami have a universal dimension (regardless of any conceivable categories, such as human and animal or animate and inanimate, for instance), that of Jung seems to be tinted with anthropocentrism as he confines it to the oneness of the human race alone. Nevertheless, as may be noted from the above discussions, central to the conception of creativity espoused by all these three scholars is the issue of the experience of self. Unlike the sense of self engendered by sense perception, the self, for three of them, is defined as unitive to varying degrees. This

experience of self and its reflection in art, on the other hand, is conceived of as a defining feature of creativity.

3.8.1. The Conception of Self in Poetry

Poetry is one of the creative acts that lay claim to ample records of felt interconnectedness and oneness. Further reinforcing its role in the transformation of consciousness, poetry, unlike the conception of oneness in quantum physics (which is based on theoretical knowledge), is rooted in experiential knowledge of self and the world which "obliges us to transcend the purely sensory dimension of our being" (Laude, 2005, p. 160).

While sensory reality presents to our consciousness apparent physical differentiation, poetry aims at perceiving the oneness implicit within this seeming separateness. Thus conceived, such unitive experiences as parent-child bond, romance, patriotism, humanity and cosmic unitive consciousness find their intimate depiction in poetry. Owing to this poetic tendency, a number of scholars argue that poetry affords a textual space for the expression and flourishing of the urge to transcend the sense of separateness (Laude 2005, p. 161; James, 1958, p. 295; Spurgeon, 1913, pp. 12-13; Underhill, 1911, p. 25).

In this regard, Spurgeon (1913) writes: "Naturally it is with the poets we find the most complete and continuous expression of mystical thought and inspiration" (p. 12). In her study of mysticism in English literature, Spurgeon considers English poets such as William Wordsworth, William Blake, Henry Vaughan (Welsh), Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning, Francis Thompson, John Donne, Thomas Traherne, Richard Crashaw, George Herbert and W. B. Yeats (Irish) as typical examples of poets displaying mystical sensibility. In addition to Spurgeon, scholars such as Evelyn Underhill and William James also give much credit to poetry as regards mystical sensibility. For Underhill (1911), the mystical element is the reason why poetry "move[s] us to unspeakable emotions" (p. 25), while James (1902/1958, p. 295) contends that the purpose of poetry should be to stir to life the dormant mystical urge in the human mind.

Although the mystical consciousness of self is believed by a number of scholars to be a basic characteristic of poetry, one historical literary movement stands out as a prominent example of this literary element in Western literary tradition. This historical movement, initiated by German literary figures such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in the late eighteen and mid nineteen century, is known as Romanticism. This movement was later celebrated in Britain by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Nadeau & Kafatos, 1999, p. x; Habib, 2005, pp. 432-433). By focusing on the unitive dimension of human experiential reality, the Romantic poets conceived of poetry "as a mode of knowledge that reveals what is most essential in mankind" (Laude, 2005, p. 161).

As may be expected (and rightly so), in the history of Eastern poetics, on the other hand, the unitive sense of self is almost equated with the very art. Indian poetry with such towering literary figures as Rabindranath Tagore, and Sufi poetry crowned by the world famous works of Jalal al-Din Rumi and the Haiku in Japan literature perfected in the works of Basho could be reminders of this fact. The dominance of this artistic quality in Eastern poetic traditions is insightfully elaborated by Laude (2005) in his extensive study on the relationship between poetry and spirituality.

Not unlike mysticism, poetry's route into the unitive sense of self is intuition. Intuition is considered intrinsic to poetry so much so that Laude (2005) calls poetry "the language *par excellence* of intuition" (p. 209, emphasis original). Brogan (1993) attributes the reason for the predominance of the intuitive faculty in poetry to poets "belief in the power of intuition to bypass the circuits of feeble human rationality and fickle human perception" (p. 625).

Within this interpretation of creativity, poetry is likely to appear disagreeable with "normal" everyday consciousness with its preponderance on sense-experience. This could bring to mind Leech's (1969) contention (in his explication of semantic deviation) that "it is indeed almost as commonplace to regard a poem as a kind of inspired nonsense" (p. 48). His remark on John Keats's famous line "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" as "mystical unity of concepts" seems especially worth noting in this regard. While the word "nonsense", in Leech's statement, seems to discredit the truth value of poetic meaning,

the word “inspired” suggests the existence of something deep and striking in poetic reality.

Whether all or even most poetic texts achieve this characteristic, however, is open to question. Underhill (1911), for instance, argues that such a goal is achievable so long as the poet is “in some measure contemplative” which she believes is characteristic of all poetic endeavors (p. 278). In line with Underhill, Spurgeon (1913, p. 13) also contends that the mystical quality is characteristic of many great poets. If one would agree with Underhill and Spurgeon then, poetry, by challenging our conditioned separate sense of self, can be one of the discourses that can help the experiential knowledge of interconnectedness and oneness gain momentum. For Laude (2005, p. 9), on the other hand, only a few ever achieve this artistic goal. At any rate, one thing seems indubitable. By virtue of being an emotional discourse, the transcendence of self at different levels is more likely to make itself felt in poetry than in other disciplinary discourses (to the exclusion of spiritual discourses).

In such conceptions of seemingly absurd experiential reality, the role of poetic imagery cannot be overstressed. Focusing linguistic representation on the affective dimensions of human existence, this literary tool enables poetry to move beyond literal representation to associations and suggestions evoked by words and phrases. Hence, it is an important literary tool that can be used to express experiences that challenge sense-knowledge. What is poetic imagery? How does it appeal to affective sensibilities? And to what effect does poetry employ it? These questions are addressed below.

3.8.2. Poetic Language and Experiential Reality

Our interpretations of the self based either on sense perception or intuition is further represented in different communicative forms (language, painting, music etc). In literature, language is entrusted with this task. Although it is not to be denied that everyday verbal communication is also permeated with metaphorical use of language, it is in literature, especially poetry, where a conscious and pronounced creative manipulation of words is most evident (Wolosky, 2001, pp. 3-4). Imagery is perhaps the most important element in this creative manipulation of words. In this regard, Wolosky

(2001) describes imagery as "one more [feature] specific to poetry and much more obviously exciting; it is the fireworks of poetry, often thought of as poetry's defining characteristic" (p. 29).

In literature, an image is "a word or words that refer to an object perceived by the senses… colors, shapes, lighting, sounds, tastes, smells, textures, temperatures, and so on" (Tyson, 2006, p. 142). Because an image is a word that appeals to the senses, it is different from a word that has no sensory details. The following example by Kane (2009), clarifies how: "A concrete word like *kitten* or *bell* or a phrase like *the smell of fresh-mown grass* is an image, but an abstract word like *justice* or *supervision* or phrase like *inattention to detail* is not" (emphasis original). Put succinctly, thus, an image in a poem is an instance of language that refers to sensate experiences.

Images usually, but not necessarily, develop a symbolic or metaphoric quality. For instance, in the phrases her soul *flew up* (visual), his words were *sweet* (gustatory or taste), her wrath was like onions *sizzling* in a pan (visual and auditory), the images employed do not have literal signification. These images are rather used to concretize abstract experiences or ideas such as the *soul*, *words*, and *wrath* using sensual experiences. In other words, these images have metaphoric as opposed to literal signification.

It should be noted, however, that images can also be used in a literal sense and still evoke associative feelings. The image of *dark*, for instance, in the statement *she went into the dark* can evoke fear. Another example by Tyson (2006) also explains that the image of clouds literally "means that the weather is cloudy— [but] they can evoke an emotional atmosphere as well: for example, a description of clouds can be used to evoke sadness" (p. 142).

Whether it develops into a symbol or metaphoric use or remains literal, thus, in using poetic imagery, one "does not seek to give simple factual or physical representations, but more to evoke *feelings* in the reader and atmosphere within the poem" (Cadden, 1986, p. 40, emphasis original). This feature of imagery is also noted by, Ryken et al. (1998, who

write: "[unlike] conceptual and emotionally neutral words…words that name images…are emotionally laden" (p. 30).

In this sense, by rooting meaning in feelings, imagery enables poetry to impart experiential insights that are likely to prove elusive in the hands of conceptual abstractions. As such, "poets have frequently resorted to imagery to express their understanding of some of the greater mysteries of human experience—love, time, death, man's nature, and life itself" (Scott, 1977, p. 137).

On account of the richness and the subtlety of the non-cognitive energies it can communicate and stimulate, poetic imagery has, thus, long attracted the interest of psychologists and mystics alike. According to Psychoanalysis, the bulk of psychological experience is unconscious and can mostly be detected in dreams, tongue slips, jokes and artistic creations. Using the analysis of images, psychoanalysts hope to delve into the intricacies of the human mind (Houtz & Patricola, 1999, pp. 6, 11; Jung, trans. 1966, p. 80). Images are the channels through which these psychic experiences are released and their analysis can be of remarkable value in understanding the intricate dynamics of the unconscious mind (Tyson, 2006, p. 18). While Freudian psychoanalysis employs images to get insight into the unconscious mind of the individual, Jung's (trans. 1966, p. 80) analytical psychology accords to images a broader significance. In his conception of the human mind, images are used to gain access to the psychic realm that is shared by all humanity.

In mysticism, imagery has an even broader significance than is conceived of it by Jung. In this spiritual tradition, imagery is the most apt linguistic tool for the expression of the oneness of reality. As is noted by Underhill (1911), hence, "the mystic, as a rule, cannot wholly do without symbol and image" (p. 77). This role of imagery in communicating mystical insights is also observed by James (1902/1958) who maintains that "images…play an enormous part in mysticism" (p. 312).

It should be noted at this point, however, that the use of imagery in mysticism is largely symbolic. Mystical literatures exploit the symbolic function of imagery because "symbolism is an integral part of the belief in unity; for the essence of true symbolism

rests on the belief that all things in Nature have something in common, something in which they are really alike" (Spurgeon, 1913, p. 9). Hence, within the context of the mystical interpretation of reality, the symbolic suggestiveness and associations of linguistic signs are more important than their literal significations. Corollary to this, in the mystical use of language, meaning is effected "in some side-long way, some hint or parallel which will stimulate the dormant intuition of the reader, and convey, as all poetic language does, something beyond its surface sense" (Underhill, 1911, p. 77).

In light of these points, it may be noted that imagery, as a literary tool that is "obviously exciting [and]… defining characteristic" (Wolosky, 20001, p. 29) of poetry, is important in unraveling experiential realities that may have otherwise been difficult to capture in the literal signification of words. Hence, by focusing the critical dialogue of the study on the experiential subtleties embodied in the texts, poetic images can play a crucial role in discerning intuitive experiences of self that defy the dichotomous interpretation of reality.

CHAPTER FOUR: SUFFERING AND THE SENSE OF SELF IN SELECTED TIGRIGNA POEMS

For purposes of clarity, the phenomenon of human suffering reflected in the texts of the study have been organized into five categories on the bases of the ground and scope of the sense of self being portrayed. These are: (1) biological (2) socioeconomic and political (3) environmental (4) universal and (5) intrapsychic. In accordance with this organization, the above five categories are entitled (1) biological bond (nine texts), (2), the sense of self and society (seven texts) (3) communion with darkness (one text) (4) the self in full bloom (two texts) and (5), introspective gaze (one text) respectively. Since theses categories are not preconcieved, as the criteria for selection only focused on the general theme of suffering, the text to gategory ratio is not maintained.

It is worth noting, at this juncture, that these categories, however, are not mutually exclusive. It remains possible that the above categories can at times overlap. Biological-based unitive sense of self may have, for instance, implications for societal interconnectedness or separateness and vice versa. These categories are, therefore, only meant to reflect the relative dominance and not the exclusiveness of the sense of self in a given poetic text. Corollary to this, possible interrelations across categories are discussed in the final chapter of the study.

4.1 Biological Bond

In this first category are included nine texts whose portrayals of suffering are implicated in the sense of self/other relatedness that is founded on sexual relations. These poetic texts are: (1) *Meqabir Meritsu* (The Gloomy World), (2) *Neqefeta* (A Reproach), (3) *Kesiru* (Crisis in Tandem), (4) *Timuy Nikibeli'a* (A Prey for the Hungry), (5) *Yibreheley Getsika* (Illumine Your Face), (6) *Atranos* (Lectern), (7) Motn Hiywotn (Life and Death), (8) Nimintay Alilen? (Why Did They Ululate?), and (9) *Zektam* (An Orphan). In addition to familial ties, which are doubtless sexually rooted, texts dealing with romance (with the consideration that such a relationship would naturally lead to biological bond) are also included in this category.

4.1.1 *Meqabir Meritsu* (The Gloomy World)

However fleeting, sexual union is one of the experiences that afford a unitive sense of self. This highly desirable experience, however, could also be fraught with danger. This negative aspect of sexual engagement is suggested by fire imagery in this text by Desta Cherqos:

ይኸድ ኣሎ ወገን . . .
ኣብ ሓዊ ረጊፁ
ዝፀልመተት ዓለም . . .
መቓብር መሪፁ። (line 5-8)

Yonder my people troop;
On fire treading,
The gloomy world
The grave, for they have chosen.

In light of the above lines, the subjects of the text seem to exercise their volition in risking their own lives. The fact that they "have chosen" death (line 8) is suggestive of this reading. Yet, it is unlikely that the death being addressed could be caused by people literally walking on fire. Literal signification of this imagery is thus improbable. A metaphorical consideration of the image, on the other hand, can bring to light a broader semantic significance of the image that entails volition.

It is when contact is made, as it were, with this "fire" that the grave, symbolizing death, is envisaged. In accordance with the implications of volition mentioned above, it is probable that this image is used to symbolize a strong urge that one willingly engages in despite its dangers. One likely urge whose unsafe practice poses deadly health hazards and hence could fittingly be represented by this symbolization is sex. The usual association of fire imagery with lust or the sexual urge (Ferber, 2007, pp. 73-74) can also reinforce this interpretation.

Considering this possible signification, the image in question can refer to the pleasurable bodily sensation of heat experienced during the sexual desire and the sexual act itself. Ironically, however, the association of this image with the image of a grave renders it suggestive of the sinister overtones of the sexual pleasure. Fire, in this context, can thus

signal the dual and conflicting potential of the sexual act: the pleasurable sensation of bodily excitation and the possible demise the act can entail. The fact that the image *grave* is associated with grotesque imagery in the following extract spells out the latter potential:

ብርሃን ናብ ዘይብላ . . .
ፀልማት መፈጠራ
ሓዘን ምስ ትካዘ . . .
ስቃይ ዝሓፀራ (line 1-4)

Void of light;
An abyss of darkness.
Enfolded in misery,
Sorrow and melancholy

In a literal sense, danger might usually lurk in the dark. Darkness can thus be a rich metaphor for an experience that inspires dread. In keeping with this signification, the image of darkness in the above extract is suggestive of an abode of affliction and lamentation. This is especially evident when read in the context of the last two lines of the extract: "Enfolded in misery/Sorrow and melancholy". The use of this image to describe the grave thus helps to suggest fear and anguish that are provoked by death and the horrors it entails; a hostile place of ultimate affliction deprived of solace and company.

Although this phenomenon is one of the most feared givens of human life, it is despite this that the subjects of this poem head towards it willingly (line 8). This brings to the fore a complex relationship between the desire for sexual union and the usual fear of death. The fear of death is one of the strongest instincts in life (Dozier, 1998, p. 195). Describing it as the usual and most characteristic of human existence, Schopenhauer (trans. 1896) contends that it is "the greatest evil, the worst that can anywhere threaten" (p. 252). How did it then fail to "threaten" those who are pursuing the sexual ecstasy at the expense of their very life? The text seems to suggest two possible answers.

The sexual experience is perhaps one of the most desirable, easily accessible, and usual sources of instinctual self/other union. The desirability of this experience might thus

blind people to the inherent dangers of sexual indulgence. In light of this, the subjects of the poem might only overlook the dangers of their behavior at the "heat" of the sexual desire and might regret their self-destructive behavior afterwards (once they awoke from the sexual excitation). Notwithstanding this regression, a possibly striking observation the text makes at this juncture could be that the desire for the unitive experience induced by sexual act can overpower the visceral fear of death. Put another way, the biological conditioning to fear death and avoid pain, could, at moments of the desire for sexual union, be overridden.

There is, however, another, and perhaps seemingly absurd, possibility. Here, what the subjects of the text are afraid of may not be death but life itself. Their actions might, hence, be explained as suicidal. Remarking on the seemingly disorientating phenomenon of suicide, Dozier (1998) maintains that when one is under "constant" pain of some sort "the fear of death begins to lose its sting, with death viewed as the only escape from pain" (p. 195). This may explain why the subjects of this text might be tempted to be engaged in unsafe sexual behaviors. Sex, it seems, could be their only refuge from the distress of life whereas they would not care much for the deadly aftermaths their behavior might entail. Put another way, the sexual experience could be the only thing that brings meaning to their lives and without it there could be no point in living.

This second point is likely to have more currency if these people do not believe in a postmortem existence. Worth remembering, at this point, is the fact that the poem's reference to suffering is not to an emotional or physical state but to a spiritual one. This envisioning presupposes that human beings survive death. Despite the apparent dissolution of the body, death is envisaged as a bridge into a different realm of life and not as an ultimate end of self or conscious experience. This is implicated in the description of the grave as a place of darkness and distress that awaits the dead (line 1-5). For people who do not subscribe to such beliefs, however, an assumed suffering in an afterlife is an unlikely reason to deter them from the desirable unitive experience that can be induced by sex.

Still, even the cherished death and the freedom from the distress of life would not be granted instantly. Death that might be granted through sexual indulgence cannot come without the infliction of pain. Hence, not unlike the first possibility, the sexual desire has also overrun the fear of pain. This seems to imply that the experience must have been so desirable that the subjects of this poem are magnetized to it regardless of its aftermaths (either death or pain).

Hence, in both cases, the experience of sexual union, as is represented in the text, could be desired so much so that the fear of death and pain are suspended. It should, however, be noted that since the unitive experience of sex is marked by a fleeting moment of ecstasy, the suspension of the fear of death and pain implicated thereof cannot be sustained long enough to be able to engender a significant amelioration of human suffering. In fact, in the last analysis, the negative emotional, physical, economical and social consequences implicated in sexual indulgence are likely to outweigh its perhaps intoxicatingly desirable, yet ephemeral, experiences.

4.1.2 *Nqefeta* (A Reproach)

As opposed to sexual indulgence (as was the subject of the foregoing text), wedlock could be thought of as a safe and productive (in terms of its procreative and unitive functions) outlet of the sexual urge. According to the Bible, this social institution 'is the most intimate of all relationships among human beings and the sexual act is a dramatic expression of that unity" (Ryken, L. et al., 1998, p. 2616). Capturing the unitive experience of the sexual act, sanctioned in wedlock, in metaphorical imagery, the Bible describes the act as the becoming one of two physically discrete individuals: "*The two become one flesh* [emphasis added] as they engage in sexual relations" (Ryken, L. et al., 1998, p. 2616). In *Nqefeta* (A reproach), by Sisay Hishe, this unifying enterprise is pictured as an experience that was safely enjoyed in the past:

ቀደም ደቅሰባት እንትታሃራረፉ፣
ብፍቕሪ ብመውስቦ ፀገሞም ይቕርፉ፤
ብዉሑድ በቋራጭ ቀልባቶም የዕርፉ።
ሎሚ ግን ሓልኪሱ ዘመን ተቐይሩ፣
ንፍቕሪ ደቂሶም ብሞት ይቕበሩ። (line 1-5)

When people hungered for one another of yore,
Wedlock would appease it;
Their desire would repose as easily.
Time has gone ill now.
United for love, they part in death.

As may be noted from the last two lines of this extract, however, the desirability of this experience is currently met with a devouring monster: "Time has gone ill now/ United for love, they part in death" muses the persona of the poem. Although not explicit, it seems a fair inference that one of the diseases that are related to sexual intercourse is HIV AIDS. In addition to the association of love and death in line five, the image of predation in line seven seems to reinforce this inference:

ብኣዋጅ ከፊቱ ናይ ህይወት ዕዳጋ፣
መናእሰይ ወዲእዎም ሓይኹ በድራጋ።።
..... (three lines skipped)
ከም ሓራዲ በጊዕ ካርኡ ብምስሓል፣
ከም ብዋዛ ቀሪቡ ዝንጉዓት ብምቕታል፣
ነ'ዛ ነቓዕ ዓለም ኣብዚሕላ ነኺል። (line 6-13)

In an open market of life,
It devours the young in a raw,
…….. (three lines skipped)

Sharpening its knife, as if to slaughter sheep,
Beguiling the unwary it slays,
Cavities it adds to a world already in cracks.

The image "devour" in line seven is disruptive in the sense that the seemingly superior position of humanity in the food chain is threatened from tiny organism that can prey on it from the inside. This unnerving phenomenon is further developed using usually benign images associated with eating and human dietary habits. These images are "slaughter" and "knife". Slaughter in the context of animals (although sentient beings in their own right) is a seemingly benign image. The knife also, as a household utensil, is an image that is unlikely to convey sinister significations. As can be noted from the above extract, however, this situation assumes a different signification in a context where human beings

are the objects. Within this context, these images conjure up a picture of horror the disease has caused. In this connection, this connotation of brutality, perhaps unwittingly, seems to betray an anthropocentric conception of reality where the suffering human beings inflict on animals is rendered invisible.

The above depiction of the horror of the disease in predatory imagery seems to imply a conception of human beings as helpless preys. A word in line twelve ("Beguiling the unwary it slays"), however, seems to mar this picture of victimization. This word is *zingu'at* (unwary). This word is suggestive of the recklessness involved in subjects that are inflicted by the disease. This has the implication that individuals who are not careful about their sexual appetite are subject to the disease. This in turn, injects some degree of volition to the phenomenon. This element of volition seems to be further extended in the last four lines of the poem where a call is made to the government and its people to act in unison in battling the disease:

> ንዕኡ ንምጥፋእ እንተዘይተሪርና፣
> ከንቱ ምትራፉ'ዩ ናይ ዕብየት ትልምና።
> ተግባር እንተዘይስዒቡ ደድሕሪ ዘረባ፣
> ጭርሑ ንበይኑ ዳኣ ማዓዝ የሳግር ሩባ። (line 18-21)
>
> If we travail not to put an end to it,
> Our dreams of growth in vain shall be.
> When action accompanies not speech,
> Slogans are of no limbs.

In light of the above extract, the inability or unwillingness to restrain the sexual urge is conceived of not only as a personal catastrophe but as a phenomenon that has far-reaching socio-economic repercussions. The negative effects of unrestrained sexual urge goes beyond the individual to cripple economic growth. By drawing attention to the interrelationship of individual and social predicament, thus, the text provides a wider view of the sexual union.

4.1.3 *Kesiru* (Crisis in Tandem)

While the foregoing text relates the negative effects of unrestrained sexual urge on both individual and socioeconomic wellbeing, *Kesiru* (Crisis in Tandem), places this urge at the center of a discord between humanity and God. The eye, perhaps as the chief orifice through which we are put in touch with the phenomenal world, is at the center of this contradiction:

ብሓቂ እብለኩም
ኢሉ ዝነገሮም
ሓደ ንሓንቲ ይሓዝ
ሓንቲ ሓደ ትሓዝ
ዓይኒ ኣይተምፅእ መዘዝ
ኢሉ ኣሕሊፉ ትእዛዝ (line 19-24)

"Verily, verily
I say unto you
One man shall to one woman cleave
And one woman to one man
Let not thine eyes bring thee misery"
He decreed.

The eye animates the desire for instinctual oneness with the sensual beauty of the human body. The unrestrainedness of this desire (by virtue of the manifoldness of its objects), however, contradicts the divine injunction to cleave to one sexual partner. While the first four lines of this extract pronounce the divine injunction, the unwillingness of the subjects to abide by it is expressed in the following lines:

ቆናጆ ምልኩዓት
ፅቡቓት ጉልቡታት
ገይሩ ፈጢሩዎም
ዕምበባ ኣምሲልዎም፡፡
ግን ልቦም ሸፊቱ
ሕጊ ምስ ሰሓቱ
ምስማዕ ከቢድዎም
ውነ ምግባር ኣብዮም (line 25-32)

Comely and charming,
Fair and Hearty,

Colorful as flowers
Having fashioned them.
But their heart strayed
And transgressed.
Ears hard of hearing,
Being perceptive they resisted.

Although this extract voices the disobedience of the subjects, it also makes evident how difficult it might be to restrain the sexual appetite when God has created the youth "Comely and charming/Fair and Hearty/ Colorful as flowers" (line 25-27). The image of colorful flowers, in the third line of this extract, especially appears to spell out the beauty the youth are imbued with. This seems to suggest the reason for the disobedience. In light of this, the injunction contradicts sense perception. The subjects, hence, are ordered to behave against the attraction they experience from the beauty of the human body.

This meaning can also be inferred from line twenty three: "Let not thine eyes bring thee misery". The image of the eye in this line suggests the animation of sensual desire that forces the subjects to violate the divine injunction. As an important means of relating with the phenomenal world, this image highlights the contradiction between divine decree and carnal beauty. On one hand there is the injunction to faithfully cling to one sexual partner. On the other hand, there is the human desire for sensual beauty which is doubtless directed to many human subjects. The tension, thus, is whether they should follow their "eyes" (and the multiplicity of sensual beauty thereof) or be faithful to the divine injunction despite the pull of the beauty of human body.

It is evident from the above extract (line 29-32) that they would rather violate the injunction than to forego the gratification of their passions inspired by sensual beauty. This is so much so that they choose tribulation in a postmortem existence instead:

ኣብ ሰማይ ንከሰስ
ደይብና ንወቕስ
ኢሎም ክዳዓሱ (line 33-35)

"Yonder in the sky
In the afterlife let our retributions be"
They cried comforting themselves;

This choice (so long as they believe in an afterlife damnation) could implicate two points. The first is the seemingly invincible power of carnal attraction that overrides the fear of damnation. The second, on the other hand, is their myopia implicated in their engagement with life with the view of immediate happiness without contemplating possible repercussions of such an attitude towards life.

Although the text is silent on the first proposition, it seems to accord with the second. The persona of the poem describes these subjects as being unperceptive (line 32). This portrayal has the implication that the subjects of the poem had to search for the meaning of the injunction (being perceptive) which commands them to behave against the unrestrainedness of sensual desire. The fact that the subjects have to be perceptive especially seems to require of the subjects an insightful relationship with sensual beauty. Here, Plotinus's (trans. 1930) contention that "once there is perfect self-control, it is no fault to enjoy the beauty of earth; where appreciation degenerates into carnality, there is sin" (p. 98) seems relevant. While appreciation per se suggests a selfless contemplation of an object, lustful and self-centered interest in whatever is perceived as beautiful is implied in its "degeneration".

Yet, it should be noted that such a selfless contemplation of material beauty is likely to call for a significant degree of psychic maturity. Selfless contemplation of beauty would also (in turn) lead to the mystical perception of beauty where one, unlike the usual perception of beauty in some specific physical forms, discovers it in all things (Plotinus, trans. 1930, p. 60). Incapable (perhaps because unwilling) of such perception, however, the subjects of this poetic text choose sexual indulgence- a decision that is met with disaster:

ሰማይ ቀዲዱ
ገሃነም ኣውሪዱ
ምድሪ ኮይኑ ፍርዱ
ንኤይድስ ሰዲዱ
ስቓይ ተወሊዱ (line 42-46)

He rend the skies open
Perdition, He brought down on them;
Damnation here on earth!
AIDS is come,
Misery has come forth,

As may be evident from this excerpt, unlike the subjects' assumption, God brings the punishment of disobedience down to earth. Doing so proves that His injunction has implication for this life too. The text ends the contradiction between divine injunction and sensual desire tragically as both parties (God as the law giver and human being as subjects torn between unrestrained sensual desire and divine injunction) lose:

ፍጥረቱ ኑዲዱ
ስኢኑ ዝስምዑ
ዘምህሮ ዘፅንዑ
ዝዘርአ ሓሪሩ
ባዕሉ'ውን ከሲሩ። (line 48-52)

Creation is in flames,
For He found not
One heedful of His words.
His yield is now set ablaze
His labor- wasted in vain.

It can be noted from this that the fact that the people are burnt is painful not to the subjects only but to God also who has lost what He had created. The plight thus occurs in tandem. In sum, the rejection of a divine call to rise beyond the immediacy of sensory reality, in the young's search for unitive experiences, is met with cosmic disaster where the creator loses his creation to the "flames" of sensory-reality-based existence.

4.1.4 *Timuy Nikibeli'a* (A Prey for the Hungry)

Similar to the foregoing texts, sex, in *Timuy Nikibeli'a* (a prey for the hungry), by Adera Tesfay, is the means the subject of the text attempts to connect with his object of desire. Unlike the preceding texts, however, this poem addresses the violence inflicted on others that might be tangled with the pursuit of the pleasure of sexual union.

To capture the sense of connectedness induced by the sexual act, this text draws analogy between sex and another desirable experience in life- food:

ፅባቐኣ ኣጉሊሆም- ነቲ ዝሃሰሰ
ድሌት ናታ... ፍቃድ ዘይሓወሰ፡
ግህፅህፅ ኣቢሉ- ጥሙይ ንክበልዓ
ኣውፂኦማ ዕዳጋ-ዘይበሰለት ቆልዓ። (line 1-4)

Enhancing her beauty that had gone pale
Against her desire against her will,
By the hungry to the bones to be devoured
They brought her to the market-an unripe child.

In this four-line poem, a young girl is portrayed as a vulnerable prey. Using food imagery, the text produces the picture of a helpless female that is reduced to mere sexual object to the utter exclusion of her emotional and psychological dimensions of being. As such, the type of unitive experience being aimed at is grounded in the other conceived of as mere morsel for the aggressive sexual appetite of a man. The image of a market in line three further compounds the dehumanization at work in the text. Together, the first three lines of this text suggest the conception of a female body as a carnal prey for voluptuous consumption stripped of her sexual autonomy and personhood.

It is perhaps the penultimate line of this poetic text, however, that seems to spell out the sinister signification of sexuality portrayed in the text. The use of images of predation in the phrases "to the bones" and "to be devoured" conjure up an act of eating that unmistakably involves aggression. The word used in the original text to describe this act is *"ግህፅህፅ"* (*gihits'hits*). Finding an equivalent of this image proved difficult perhaps owing to differences in the cultural impetus that produced the image. Although eating meat can be a shared cultural practice, biting off every bit from the bone of the animal may be specific to some cultures. The word in question signifies this manner of eating. In both the source and target languages, however, this manner of eating seems to be clearly attributed to carnivores. With this in mind, the word "devour" and the phrase "to the bones" are used to capture the spirit of eating described in the original text.

Furthermore, the object of this brutal sexual relation is pictured as "unripe" (line 4). This image, with connotations of a person who is not yet mature for sexual engagement, adds to the violence involved in the pursuit of instinctual union being envisaged. Using these images to describe a prospective sexual act, the text introduces violence into the

otherwise pleasurable act. Thus, unlike its usual associations with pleasure, these images bring to surface the bestiality and savagery sex might involve.

The imagery of predation, in addition to the aggression eating might involve, also implies a total dissolution of the other (the young girl) into the man's self. In such a description of a sexual relationship, the female is relegated to the status of an object that is made non-existent by the aggressive sexual behavior of the male subject.

Another point that seems to exacerbate the sexual violence being portrayed is the attitude of the people that made the young girl available for the "sexual trade": "Enhancing her beauty that had gone pale/…./they brought her to the market- an unripe child" (line 1 and 4). The text does not mention the identity of the individuals that took the young girl to the "market". With the assumption that children, are under normal circumstances, are under the care of their parents, one possibility is that these people are her parents. If this possibility is considered, the act suggests a disruption of the usual image of parents as caring and loving. Rather than striving to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their daughter, this act of "marketing her" seems to betray the parental involvement in the psychological and probably physical abuse of their own child.

What could be the reason for the young girl's parent complicity in this violent act? There could be a number of possible answers such as (1) to obtain or maintain interfamilial bonds, (2) being respectful of or submissive to a tradition that lies too deep in the making of their society, (3) disciplinary measure (i.e., to protect their daughter from the dangers of early sexual engagement and resultant unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases) or (4) to make money.

Out of these four possibilities, the first and the fourth seem most likely when read within the context of the word "market" in line four. In the first case, they are likely to have nonmonetary benefit. They, in other words, might be able to procure material (as well as emotional) benefits from the bond. In the second case, on the other hand, the idea of "marketing" seems to literally denote the financial benefits they might get by giving their child in marriage. Either way, this word is suggestive of the economics (literally or

metaphorically) involved in sexuality. Placing the young girl between sexual and economic forces, thus, the text bespeaks the operations of female vulnerability.

At this juncture, however, it seems noteworthy that the man himself, by virtue of his aggressive erotic appetite, is being equated with a beast (line 3). Hence, although he seems to be standing at a higher position in this sexual politics, he is also reduced to the status of a beast. What is more, as is suggested by the word "hungry" in title of the poem (A prey for the hungry) the perpetrator himself is an invisible sufferer of a "sexual hunger". This seems to suggest that he is suffering from the spell of the erotic beauty of the female body.

He is not to be excused for this, however. To retain his human dignity, the description seems to expect him to overcome his bestial proclivity by viewing the female subject in her entirety, i.e., as a physical but also psychological, emotional and social being. Put otherwise, in desiring sexual union with her, he should be aware that he is also engaging with the psychological, emotional and social fabric of the girl that are not immediately visible in her physical person. In so doing, he would have developed a mature apprehension of a person and be unlikely to do the damage he does when he is blind to these elements of being.

As a whole, the text, by elucidating the biological and socioeconomic forces that engender a one-sided sexual engagement estranged from emotional and psychological connectedness, pictures an unsettling scenario where sexuality and violence become congruent.

4.1.5 *Yibreheley Getsika* (Illumine Your Face)

Unlike the preceding poetic text, *Yibreheley Getsika* (Illumine Your Face) by Adera Tesfay, pictures a self/other relatedness where both parties seem involved. Fraternal or romantic could be the nature of the bond the text depicts. The word used in the source text to describe this relationship is *hawey* which would literally mean "my brother" (such as denotes a biological bond). On a metaphorical level, however, the word can have overtones of fraternity or romance. Out of these two connotations the latter might appear

unusual or a bit farfetched. However, in the context of Christianity, for instance, the word brother can connote the relationship between lovers (Ryken, L. et al., 1998, p. 464). This metaphoric meaning, hence, cannot be ruled out.

Be that as it may, the relationship is between two individuals and that the persona is addressing his or her beloved, seems to be indubitable. The image "food" in the extract below is suggestive of the strength of the bond in question:

> ምሳኻ ‘ተኾይነ-ኣይጠምየንን ፈዚሙ
> ነብሰይ ፍትሕ ይብል-ረሲዑ ድኻሙ ፤
> ሓወይ ሰሓቕለይ-ኣይትእሰር ግንባርካ
> ስንቀይ እዩ ምግበይ-ይብረሀለይ ገፅካ። (line 1-4)
>
> When I am with thee, hunger urges me not
> Oblivious of its weariness my body loosens up.
> Smile my brother your frowns let me not see;
> Illumine your face-for on it I feed.

Food, at its denotative level, is solid nourishment. As may be noted from the closing line of this text, however, the word has an extended semantic field as it refers to emotional nourishment the persona acquires from the cheerful face of his/her beloved. In its literal sense, the experience of feeding implies the consumption and assimilation of substance into one's body. Taken as a metaphor, this image, thus, suggests that the subject is constitutive of the persona's self. This emotional assimilation of the other into oneself seems especially palpable when it is considered within the context of the importance of food for existence.

The importance of food cannot be stressed enough. From inception to death, we depend on physical nourishment for our development and restoration. This fact stresses the indispensable function of food to life. By drawing analogy between this physical reality and the emotional reality of human existence, thus, the text places a significant value on emotional reality. In fact, as can be noted from the first two lines of the text, this dimension of life seems to have been given even more importance: "When I am with thee-hunger urges me not/Oblivious of its weariness- my body loosens up". These lines suggest that the presence of the beloved supplants physical needs. Although it is unlikely

that this emotional uplift will endure as to forever defy the persona's consciousness of hunger and tiredness, the fact that it can temporarily transcend bodily sensations bespeaks the supremacy of emotional connectedness over physical sustenance stressed in the text.

In the context of the possibility of a sustainable, all-inclusive unitive sense of self, such a scenario should immediately raise the question, "Does this emotional nourishment that has suspended physical needs come from a reliable source? The implicit answer of the text seems to be negative. The fact that the "illumined" face of the beloved on which the persona of the poem feeds on is intermittent is revealed when the persona urges his/her subject to brighten up his face (line 4). Although the persona enjoys this positive state of his/her beloved, this line is also indicative of the fact that the subject's face is not always "illumined", thereby betraying the impermanence of the desirable phenomenon. Hence, although the text is suggestive of the point that the sense of connectedness in romance can assume a value greater than physical sustenance, it is also suggestive of the fact that it is an experience that is difficult to sustain. Such fragility of romantic ties is also expressed in the next text.

4.1.6 *Atranos* (Lectern)

A fragile sense of self is a dominant image in *Atranos* (Lectern) by Mulu H. Slassie. Left on its own, the self in this poetic text is pictured as destined for collapse. Structure imagery that runs throughout the text is used to capture this phenomenon:

ኩለንተናይ ብፍቕሪ ሸፊቱ
ግምዕ ከይብል ከይተርፍ ከንቱ
እምነተይ ከይሸርሸር ቀልበይ ከይግፈፍ
ቆፀይፀይ ከይብል በኣኺ ክድገፍ
ተዓፂፉ ከይነብር ክተንብቢ ውሸጠይ
ደጋፊ ስኢኑ ከይግመስ ልበይ
ተስፋ ኣልቦ ኮይነ ከይነብር ብሕተይ
ፍቕረይ ከይዕፀፍ ኣትራፍስ ኩንለይ
ረይ ረይ ኣይትበሊ ሕድሪ ደልድልለይ (line 1-9)

Head over heels in love,
I fear lest I collapse into triviality;
Lest my faith eroded, I stand stripped of glory.

Shore me up, feeble I am rendered,
Open mine heart lest a closed book I remain.
For want of a buttress let my heart break not,
Despaired and in solitude let me live not.
Be mine lectern that my love won't cave in;
Be firm, be not flimsy.

As can be noted from this text, the relationship between the persona and his/her beloved is rendered in the imagery of supporting structures. The words or phrases *collapse* (line 2), *Shore me up* and *buttress* (line 4, and 6), *break* (line 6), *cave in* (line 8), *lectern* (title and line 8), and *flimsy* (line 9) depict images of supporting structures or the danger of disintegration for lack of one.

At the heart of this imagery is the image of a lectern (line 8). Serving as a stand, this image provides support for the book and makes it easier to read while one is standing. This text uses this concrete sensory reality to reveal the emotional relatedness of the persona and his/her beloved. The girl or woman that is being described as such is so important that without her the persona is destined to "…collapse into triviality" (line 2) and to be "…stripped of glory" (line 3).

More importantly, it is only this person that can "open" the heart of the speaker of the poem (line 5). If the heart is to be understood as the seat of emotions, the imagery of the opening of a heart can signify the emergence and expression of the persona's inmost feelings and/or desires. If the love of the persona fails to do this, however, s/he will remain "a closed book" (line 5). In keeping with the foregoing interpretation of the heart, this imagery (a closed book) may be understood as a state of being undisclosed or unexpressed. The persona believes that it is the bond he/she wishes to form that would bring this into being. By implication, it is only by rendering his/her self boundary permeable to the beloved that he/she can achieve a complete existential realization of him/herself.

The above two points (standing erect and being disclosed) are suggestive of the significant meaning the text accords to the experience of connectedness. This very same imagery, however, also seems to carry a negative affective tone. This is because the

whole imagery of support and the threat of disintegration bespeak of the perhaps unsettling experience of the incompleteness of the individual self. This is all the more so when the structure that is to support, complete and define one's sense of self is itself insecure. This negative overtone is what the closing line of the text seems to confirm: "Be firm do not be flimsy".

The fact that the persona urges his/her subject to be "firm" and not to be "flimsy" is indicative of the precariousness of the very supporting structure. At this juncture, this unsteadiness seems to nullify or at least downplay the very description of the other in the text (the persona's subject) as a supporting structure; how can one seek support from a structure that is itself threatened by the possibility of a collapse? Hence, notwithstanding the meaning the persona seems to have found in an experience of self/other connectedness, the last line of the text betrays the unreliability of the structure of this experience. This in turn, speaks to the unsustainablity of the experience of relatedness and the desired meaning thereof implicated in the self/other interconnectedness depicted in the text.

4.1.7 *Motn Hiywotn* (Life and Death)

The sense of self in "Life and Death", by Desta Cherqos" is expanded by copulation. Unlike, the previous texts, however, this poem does not end in the instinctive sensual euphoria which engenders a fleeting transcendence of the sense of separateness. It is rather extended into enjoying the fruition of the union in the child:

ንህይወት ንውልደት
ዘርኢ ዘቐፀረ
ንሞት ንስንብት
መሰረት ዘንበረ
ኩሉ ጭንቂ ኮይኑ
ተስፋ ዘፀልመተ (line 1-6)

For life and for pedigree
It knots the seed;
For death and parting
It lays foundation;
All rendering gloomy

It darkens hope.

The imagery of "knotting" (line 2) in the above extract, suggests an expanded sense of self that is embracive of one's immediate biological ties. This image of biological bond can also suggest biological immortality or continuity through one's "seeds". As such, the "knotting" in this imagery seems to challenge the apparent discontinuity of one's physical presence in death.

This implication, however, begs the question: is one's seed necessarily oneself? Although the child is literally a biological union of the parents, it seems inconceivable to picture her/him as the union of their consciousness or mind too. Here is perhaps the tragedy of the assumption of self-perpetuation via procreation. For the Darwinian Biologist Richard Dawkins (1995), such an assumption is downright absurd since human beings are mere "survival machines programmed to propagate the digital database that did the programming [DNA]" (p. 19). This seems to be indicative of the likelihood that nature's ultimate goal could be the preservation of the species (or even life in general) and not that of the individual. From an individual's point of view, however, the possibility that we are mere vehicles for nature's DNA which is "blind and pitiless" (Dawkins, 1995, p. 133) might sound painfully absurd.

Notwithstanding the biological understanding of life, the poem seems to assert that through procreation one is somehow immortalized as s/he has "knotted" her/himself with one's offspring. Of course, whether there is much to being human than mere "survival machines" does not seem to be provable at the physical plane of reality. At the level of sensory reality, it is perhaps naive to deny the dissolution of a person at death. At a non-sensory or intuitive level, however, one might have experiences that an aspect of her/him transcends the body hence death. This, for example, is one of the distinctive and sustained feelings of mystical experiences.

Yet, there seems to be a difference between the intuition of transcending one's physical body in procreation and in mystical union. While the former might, for instance, be based on such physical images as "seeds", which could literarily mean the semen and hence biological implications, the transcendence of the body in mystical experiences is based on

a profound apprehension of unitive consciousness that pervades and informs the material world. In the philosophy of Plato, Plotinus and his student Porphyry, for instance, death only marks the return of the "true" self or soul to its divine source "Nous". The mystical journey, in this respect, is experiencing this joyous return while still in flesh and blood (Uždavinys, 2009, pp. 30-33).

Contrariwise, when the biological agency of "self-perpetuation" is thwarted, as one becomes engaged in sex not for "knotting" the seed or for an emotional tie with one's child but for merely enjoying the pleasure it offers, its positive attributes are met with total effacement. This can be noted in the last four lines of the foregoing excerpt: "For death and parting/ It lays foundation /All rendering gloomy/ It darkens hope". The imagery of darkness (in the words "gloomy" and "darkens") reveals the negative connotation the text has attached to death that result from the pursuit of sexual pleasure. The individual's hope is said to be darkened as a result of the risky sexual behavior one is engaged in. The implicit reference here seems to be to the sexually transmitted terminal disease AIDS. The words "death" and "parting" also seem to reinforce this interpretation.

Thus conceived, this image suggests the negation of life and all that it may offer since once a person has contracted this disease, all that awaits her/him is death. The sexual ecstasy is, hence, negated by its undesirable aftereffects. The poem, in this regard, equates sex with death. In this juxtaposed depiction, sex becomes an experience imbued with two contradicting characteristics (life and death) representing its creative but also destructive force: ሞትን ህይወትን/ ክልተ ኮይኑ ባዕሉ (Life and death/ Two, the one has become) (line 9-10).

Another element that induces a sense of interconnectedness for the subjects of the poem (parents) is the experiential or lived implications of procreation. At this level, the felt interconnection does not seem to be based on the fact that one has contributed something physical (the "seed") to the continuation of life in another person (one's child) but on emotional experience engendered by the sexual union. Procreation, in this regard, results in emotional nourishment. Important images employed to depict this emotional interconnectedness are "food" and the "eyes":

ሹሻይ ድራር ዓይኒ
ሕንጦይ ዘበርከተ
ሞትን ህይወትን
ክልተ ኮይኑ ባዕሉ (line 7-10)

Yet, a feast for the eyes
It also bestows a babe.
Life and death
Two, the one has become.

The new born child is depicted as "a feast for the eyes" (line 7). Portraying the child as the "food" for the eyes of her/his parents is suggestive of the emotional nourishment s/he gives to her/his parents. The fact that the word "**ድራር**" (*dirar*), in line seven, literally means dinner seems to give this idea of nourishment even more semantic weight. This is because, one, however poor s/he may be, expects to be blessed with at least the last meal of the day. To lose this also, on the other hand, would imply a moving spectacle of human misfortune. The word in question, in this sense (although its literal translation as "A dinner for the eyes" does not sound linguistically appropriate in the host language), possibly captures the idea of emotional nourishment more effectively.

Imaging the child as a metaphorical food, the text takes the processes of absorption and assimilation that is entailed in food from the level of the body to that of the mind. In this sense, not only does sexual intercourse yield a moment of unitive experience, but also marks the making of one person from two. The two, thus, become physically one in the body of the child and feed on this marvel. In addition to the dim intuition that one seems to achieve biological continuity through one's child, this "function" of the child (as the "feast for the eyes"), seems to be the central element in the emotional interconnectedness that may be experienced in familial bonds. Additionally, the fact that a person has to be emotionally nourished further implies that bodily gratification and growth alone cannot bring meaning into human existence.

In sum, sex in the two presumed phenomena of biological continuity and emotional nourishment is described as a desirable act that is equated with life. As an end by itself, on the other hand, it is depicted as a destructive engagement that is equated with death. The speaker of the poem regards the former as a merited act of the cautious while the

latter is regarded as a reckless engagement that leads to demise: “ንጥንቁቓት ኣድሒኑ/ንኻልኦት ቀቲሉ።” (It spared the cautious / The reckless - it destroyed” (line 11 and 12).

4.1.8 *Nimintay Alilen* (Why did they Ululate?)

The positive depiction of the experience of child/parent connectedness in the preceding text might appear unalterably constitutive of every parent’s sense of self. This, however, may not be always the case. As the child grows up, it is likely that s/he will be expected to fit into the personality mold designed by her/his parents. The usually cherished and seemingly unconditional familial tie, at this point, hinges on whether or not s/he fits the mold. Such is the picture painted in the text “ንምንታይ ዓሊለን?” (Why Did They Ululate?) by Muluworq Kidanemariam.

Presumably, birth is a phenomenon that elicits great wonder and excitement. It is, thus, no wonder if it is ushered in with great merriment. This poem contrasts this joyful event with another event in life which usually strikes an opposite feeling- death. These two events, marking the beginning and end of life (at least as regards terrestrial existence), are set against each other as two extreme experiences of human existence:

ብኣውያት ሰኒና
ንቅበል ዓሊልና
ዝሞቱ ንርስዕ
ወሊድና ንትክእ። (line 1-4)

We bid farewell in wails
And welcome in ululation.
The dead we forget
For we procreate and supplant.

The auditory images of “wailing” and “ululation” in the first two lines of the poem suggest these two extreme experiences of sorrow and happiness respectively.

As in the preceding poem, the biological tie created via procreation is the portal for transcending the separate sense of self in this poem also. Birth, as is seen in this poetic text, is depicted not only as an opposite but also as an antidote to the pain of separation caused by death. As can be noted in lines three and four, the subject’s pain of a broken

emotional bond and ensuing sense of separateness, which is being expressed in wailing, is assuaged by the arrival of the newborn.

How does birth assuage or make one "forget" (line 4) the pain caused by the loss of one's beloved? The text seems to offer two potential answers to this question. The first is the assumption that one is re-placed in the newborn. And the second is the experience that the lost bond is re-created by the newborn. In the first case, the text pictures procreation as a way of achieving some form of self-perpetuation or biological immortality:

ሰብ ወሊድና ንብል
ዘርእና ይቅፅል
ነበሩ ንበሃል
ሓቂ'ዩ ክንዕልል። (line 9-12)

We have procreated, we proclaim thus.
Our seed endures
For a trace we have left;
It is meet that we shout for joy.

The notion of biological self-perpetuation is evident in line ten and line eleven in the imagery of an enduring *seed* and leaving a *trace* in the above extract. This form of immortality is portrayed as deserving jubilation (line 12). In addition to suggesting the sense of interconnection engendered by procreation, the imagery of knotting in line twenty nine can similarly imply the biological continuity of one who has provided the seed:

መለቆሚ ዘርአን
ክዕብያ ፅዒረን
ፅባሕ ሰብኣይ ዝኾን
ሎሚ ዝሸነለን። (line 29-31)

A knot for their pedigree
In travail to rear.
Tomorrow a man;
Today, he wets them.

This imagery suggests that the apparent "breakage" of one's life at the end of physical existence is prevented by tying oneself with the body of one's child.

Further developing the experiential value accorded to familial biological connectedness and immortality, the act of procreation is presented as an injunction from God. To this effect, the text makes a Biblical allusion to Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and *replenish the earth* [emphasis added], and subdue it" (King James Translation). There is, however, a little alteration in the allusion. While the Biblical verse reads "replenish the earth" the phrase in this poem reads "replenish the generation":

ብዝሑ ተባዝሑ ትውልዲ ይሕደስ
መረባ ንመልኦ ፈሪና ንሕጎስ
እንተዘይወሊድና'ማ ገዳም እንዶ ክንኮን
ጫው ጭሩው ዘይብሉ ስፍራ ለመናንያን። (line 5 - 8)

Multiply; replenish the generation
We fill the yard, become fruitful and rejoice.
If we bear fruit not, we shall become a monastery
A place for eremites where no soul is to be heard.

This alteration seems to reveal the scope of biological interconnection and continuity stressed in the Bible, i.e. the whole world, and that of the speaker of the poem which appears to be confined to a specific group of people at a given time. The word "generation" (line 5) is suggestive of this connotation. The fact that this replenishment is also confined to one's yard (line 6) further accentuates the limitedness of the sense of interconnectedness and the idea of physical continuity depicted in the text.

A question to this idea of immortality or re-placement depicted here is, however, what good can biological continuity be if consciousness is lost? What meaning would this "replenishment" have to the dead who has lost consciousness? Or does consciousness survive death? If consciousness is believed to be lost, it does not seem to have any meaning. This seems to be the assumption the text conveys since it considers procreation as merely leaving one's biological *trace* in history (line 11). If this is the case, the notion of individual perpetuity suggested in the text seems to imply a mere scheme of appeasing temporal angst than some genuine non-sensory apprehension of transcendence.

In another instance, however, birth is portrayed as an event that has an important experiential dimension. While death seems to be depicted as the end of any conscious

experience, the emotional bond the bereaved had with the dead is somehow re-created by the newborn. It might, thus, be for this reason that living without procreating seems to inspire dread in the persona of the poem. This is expressed in the second stanza, lines seven and eight of the poem which read: “If we bear fruit not, we shall become a monastery/ A place for eremites where no soul is to be heard”.

The phrase *“ጫው ጭሩው”* (*Chaw’chiruw*) in the second line of the extract, which is rendered here as “where no soul is to be heard”, is an onomatopoeic word that is imitative of the sound of birds. As such, it seems to conjure up an image of utter solitude that is devoid of even the sound of birds. The image of the monastery is, within this context, suggestive of a place of solitude and loneliness where the warmth of bond and the hope of self propagation are apparently freezing cold.

The life of the anchorite devoid of social bonds appears to be an exception to the assumed essence of human existence that is relationship through and for procreation. This way of life, standing against biological predisposition and mental preoccupation, hence seems to be perceived as rather unnatural. This assumption is also emphasized when seen against the Biblical injunction to “multiply and replenish” mentioned previously. It seems evident, thus, the speaker confers great emotional meaning to relationship in human existence, specifically familial ties. This joy of assuaging a sense of separateness through birth, however, starts to degenerate as the poem unfolds further. Its favorable features are undermined by the hardship and uncertainty that characterize child rearing and the prospect of the ultimate demise of the child.

The hardship starts from the pain of child labor. This event is portrayed as painful and requiring the help of relatives during and after the child’s birth:

ጥምቐ ርሃፅ ኮይኑ ብፃዕሪ ኣዋሊደን
ሰንኪተን ጊዒተን ገለብ ሓፃፒበን
ዕልልልል… ኢለን ፅቡቕ ተመንየን
ካብ ማህፀን ዝወፀ ክሓዝላ ኣብ ዝባነን
ዕዳ ክሽከማ ኣብቲ ውሑድ ዓቕመን፡፡ (line 14-18)

Uttering supplications, aiding the pregnant,

Who is in labor and in sweats, they midwifed.
They cooked, backed and birthing clothes washed
And shouted for joy.
Out from the womb onto their shoulders
A debt to carry, on their enfeebled body.

As can be noted from this extract, the maternal care that is required for the upbringing of the child leaves the nursing mother physically debilitated. Owing to this, the newborn is pictured as a "debt" that has to be shouldered on the enfeebled body of the mother (line 18). Additionally, whether or not the travail imaged here will bear fruit is beyond certitude. Child rearing is a challenging task whose outcomes the parents cannot be certain about. The level of uncertainty and risk involved in undertaking this parental task is pictured in the following lines:

ይኸውን ዶ ይኸውን ሓድሽ ስዋ ጉዕሸ?
ወይ ድማ ዝመፅፅ ዘይጣዓም ንፉስ?
ፅጌረዳ ለይለይ
ካብ ማዕዶ ዝልለይ
ሰቲ ሰምሃል ምሩፅ
ካብ ሰቡ ዝበልፅ
ወይ ርጋፍ ዕምበባ ፍሪኡ ዝመርር?
ጠነግ ቆንጠፍጠፈ ኣምዐ እሾኽ ዳንዴር
ኣጉህዩ ዘሕምም ዘይብሉ ቁምነገር
ኣይናትናን ዝበሃል ዘዋርድ ዘሕፍር።። (line 45 -54)

May he grow up to be a newly brewed *Siwa*?
Or a sour one that is unpalatable?
A slender rose
That is a joy to behold,
Or a fragrant wild mint
A select of its kind?
Or a dislodged flower whose seeds are bitter
Or thorny as thistle, blackjack, redwing or stinging as nettle?
Or may he be insufferable and a good-for-nothing,
A shame to the family deemed an outsider.

The image of an "unpalatable sour *Siwa*" (local alcoholic beverage) juxtaposed with the newly brewed one, which is implicitly depicted as good unto the taste, suggests the possible undesirable results childbirth and rearing can entail. This suggested meaning is

further reinforced by the image of "a dislodged flower whose seeds are bitter" in line fifty one and the imaged of thorny (thistle, blackjack, redwing) and stinging (nettle) shrubs in line fifty two. The tragic side of experiencing a unitive sense of self through procreation, in this respect, is that if the child grows to develop these negative character traits, the previously maintained sense of connectedness is likely to be severed. This is implied in line fifty four which reads: "A shame to the family deemed an outsider".

In its positive vein, on the other hand, childbirth and rearing can confer on a person desirable personality traits. The imagery of a gorgeous flower and a fragrant wild mint (line 47-50) captures this positive signification. What will ultimately become of the child, however, is beyond the power of either the parents or the child. This fatalistic attitude is expressed in lines fifty five and fifty six: *"እንታይ ትፍለጥ ዓለም / ወትሩ ወለም ዘለም"* (what can be known of this world/ That is always in limbo). This uncertainty and powerlessness against fate works against the possible desirable implications of childbirth and child rearing. This is especially true as this negative overtone is carried further in the connotations of a "dislodged flower" which is evocative of the transience and decay of human existence.

Ultimately, childbirth seems to be overshadowed by the grotesque visage of death. The joy expressed for the newborn, thus, is not an unadulterated joy as it harbors the seeds of its own misery. This impairs the interconnected sense of self that was envisioned initially as it degenerates into a sense of disunion and fragmentation. In line with this, the text, finally, seems to reverse its previous approval that childbirth is a joyful event and thus "It is meet that we shout for joy" (line 12) and questions if welcoming the arrival of the newborn in jubilation and merriment is at all merited. The speaker's three questions in four lines that end the poem seem to work out this effect:

> እንታይ ድኣ ኣፍሊጡወን?
> እንታይ ተራእይወን?
> ቆልዓ ወሊድና ኢለን
> ንምንታይ ዓሊለን? (line 59-62)
>
> What knowledge have they then?
> What vision?

For the birth of a child
Why did they ululate?

As if this unknowableness summarizes the whole poem, this same question (Why did they ululate?) is also the title of the poem. In the end, procreation seems to have failed to alleviate the pains of a separate sense of self for it can only bring fickle happiness that ultimately morphs into suffering. As is evidenced in this poem, thus, assumptions of a sense of oneness in familial ties may not be always true. When such is the case, the family, instead of serving as a ground for nurturing the unitive lived experience of self, will probably turn out to be a condition for the manifestation of disunity and resultant suffering.

An alternative reading of these last lines that might reverse the negative affective tone of the text, however, does not seem to lie far off. These questions may also imply that the speaker is simply bewildered as to why they ululate. Within this context, these questions seem to betray the speaker's doubt as to the possibility of some meaning s/he has failed to discern. Read in this manner, the text still seems to contain grains of unconditional familial bond which defies logic (the child being loved despite growing to be a pain to the parents, for instance). Even if familial ties are unconditional (as in the ideal familial love), however, as an end by itself, it still aims to stand on the flux of the phenomenal world which is destined for collapse. The fourth poem *Zektam* (An Orphan) can help elaborate this.

4.1.9 *Zektam* (An Orphan)

An Orphan, by Muluworq Kidanemariam, addresses the precariousness of a sense of connectedness rooted in familial ties:

ስድራ ቤትኪ ኩሎም ሞይቶም ተወዲአም
ጫንቆም ሓሊፉ'ዩ ሓመድ ተኽዲኖም
ምስ መን ተዋግዒ ምስ መን ትዛረቢ?
ህልዋት ገዲፍኪ ዝሞቱ ክትሓስቢ።
ኣቦኺ እኖኺ ኣሕዋትኪ ሞይቶም
በይንኺ ተሪፍኪ ኣብዛ ዓለም ዘኽታም (line 9-14)

All your family members have departed;

Covered in dust, done is their worry.
Who do you talk to now? Who do you converse with?
In thoughts of the dead absorbed; oblivious of the living.
Your dad, mom and siblings are dead;
You are left alone, an orphan in this world.

Although the dead are pictured here as beings whose worries have ended, their absence in the temporal realm is imaged as an emotionally painful phenomenon for the bereaved. Death annuls the unitive sense of self of the subject of the poem. This emotional severance is so severe that she is, although literally among many, described as a lonesome orphan (line 14). This social disengagement has implication that the event has walled her off from the rest of the world. The imagery of cold is important in capturing the negative affective state of this experience:

ጫው ጭርው ንበይና ለይቲ ምስ መዓልቲ
ገዛኪ ጠምብዩ በረድ ማይ ኣትይዎ
ሃለውኪ ኣይሃለውኪ እንታይ ትርጉም ኣለዎ? (line 18-20).

Quiet and lonely night and day
Your home is clammy, permeated with icy water
What good is it whether you are dead or alive?

The image of home, which would usually connote warmth, is now "icy" after the subject of this poem has lost all her family members (line 19). This cold imagery can function both in a literal and metaphorical sense. In a metaphorical sense, it can describe the emotional state of the bereaved. Cut off from the presence of her parents, the subject now lacks the emotional warmth of this connectedness. Within this context, the image signifies the severely declining vitality of the orphan resulting from the emotional absence of her family.

In its literal sense, on the other hand, this image can signify the physical state of the individual in question. Being deprived of the physical presence and contact of her family, cold is a likely experience. Perhaps interestingly, this physical state can in turn evoke death by indexing the clamminess of a corpse. These images, thus, capture the state of grim loneliness created by the emotional and physical absence of the deceased's family.

What is perhaps most important, in this regard, is the existential implication of this aloneness. Deprived now of her family members, the subject of the text experiences a sense of separateness that renders her whole life meaningless:

ሓምቢሽኪ ግዒትኪ ለዊስኪ ሰንኪትኪ
ንመን ኢኺ ኢልክዮ መን ከ ክበልዐልኪ?
ፅራይ'ውን ፆሚቑኪ ብመዓር መይስኪ
ንመን ሒዝኪ ኢኺ መን'ዩ ክሰትየልኪ?
ፅቡቕ ተኽዲንኪ መን'ዩ ክንእደኪ? (line 1-5)
The meals you prepare
Who are they for?
The mead you brew
Who shall feast on it?
When gorgeously dressed, who is there to compliment?

As may be noted from these opening lines, left without any familial bonds, such things as food, clothing, and alcoholic beverages (the first two being basic for survival) are rendered meaningless making her life in general grimly empty. The compounded torment she is suffering, as a result, is, thus, so severe that the persona, in the closing line of the poem (line 20), questions whether her life is worth living: "What good is it whether you are dead or alive?".

The loss of bond that was caused by the loss of one's family members, thus, manifestly undermines the individual's need for life. This is suggestive of the existential precedence of emotional interconnectedness over mere subsistence. An interesting implication, at this point, could be that human existence is motivated not only by instincts of self-preservation (like eating, clothing, sex and shelter and the pleasure these instinctive acts entail) but by emotional and psychological fusion one experiences with others. In fact, without the former the latter are depicted in this text as stripped of meaning.

As is evident in this text, however, this meaningful experience of fusion (based as it is on familial ties only) does not endure. All the meaning that was found on the basis of this experience is annihilated by the inevitability of death. This is indicative of the transitoriness of a unitive sense of self grounded exclusively in familial ties. Put another way, so long as this meaning rendering bond is defined on the grounds of biological

or/and marital ties only, the joy it gives will be transient since it is always overshadowed by the embodied temporality of existence.

Hence, the only way the subject of the poem can remedy her suffering implicated in a separate sense of self and restore a sense of interconnectedness (and a more broadened one this time) is by venturing into the world beyond the confines of her family. In this sense, this doubtless painful experience becomes instrumental in creating a more sustained unitive sense of self that is rooted in a broader emotive core. In this sense, the pain engendered by the broken bond can itself be redeeming by calling attention to the inherent limitations of the unitive sense of self that is grounded in one's biological family alone.

4.2 The Sense of Self and Society

The foregoing nine poetic texts deal with the question of how a sense of self/other connectedness at the level of biological or physical relatedness bears on the phenomenon of human suffering. The next seven texts, on the other hand, extend the reaches of the sense of self to grounds that lie beyond biological relatedness. The affective core for the unitive sense of self addressed in these texts is social or political. These texts are: (1) *Rifer Nab Meqabir* (Referred to the Grave), (2) *Halyotu Yitrefeni* (Their Care I Want Not), (3) *Shih Gize Imine* (My Fervent Desire), (4) *Lidet* (Nativity), (*5) Kisab Meqabirey* (Unto my grave), (6) *Tehabeni Ayder* (Proud be Ayder), and (7) *Kihalif Ilu'yu* (To Behold the Daybreak).

4.2.1 *Rifer Nab Meqabir* (Referred to the Grave)

In the poetic text by Mulu H.Slassie entitled *Rifer Nab Meqabir* (Referred to the Grave), economic disparity serves as a separative force. The subject of this poem, a poor patient, is pictured as one whose desire for help is rejected for he has not maintained a social bond owing to his low economic status. After he had exhausted all possibilities within his power for recovery, death becomes his only sanctuary.

The notion that death is a dreadful fact of life may sound natural. This might especially be true within the context of human beings' unremitting instinctive struggle for self-preservation. As is shown in this poem, however, death might also be embraced as a refuge from a physical distress and social ostracism:

ከርተት ድሕሪ ምባል ናብቲ ናብቲ ኢሉ
ስኡን ብምኽኑ ተዓሪፉ ኣይብሉ
ሓባሪ ስኢኑ ምስ ፀንቀቐ ዓቕሉ
ፎስ ቃንዛ ክረክብ ሪፈር ተባሂሉ
ኣብታ ዘይትተርፍ ኣብኣ ሽኩዕ ኢሉ። (line 3-7)

After trudging hither and thither,
For needy he is without a penny,
And none to care, all his vigor was drained.
To remedy his pain he was, thus, to the grave referred;
Wedged, into that preordained abode.

As can be noted from line six, the usually dreaded shared reality of death is pictured by the image of a grave that has a positive import. Under usual circumstances, grave imagery can suggest the end of life or at least a place for the decay and dissolution of the body. In this poem, however, it is envisioned as a place where one can find relief from physical distress. As is conceived of by the speaker of this poetic text, death, for the subject of this poem, is his only refuge from the physical pain he could not relieve himself from. This poor patient did not own the needed financial standing that might have brought him relief from his disease. Also for this very reason, he could not create bond with the haves that might have saved his life. Hence, after his striving to find cure was exhausted, he is reconciled with the ultimate human destiny.

Implicit in the image of the grave in this text, is a reference to an afterlife. Had death been conceived of as a complete negation of life or final demise of the person (body and mind), it would not have been portrayed as an event that remedies pain. The fact that it remedies pain has the implication that sentience survives physical demise. The aspect of the individual that is assumed to survive death is, of course, not the body. The body is, according to this poem, reduced to dust. The image "wedge" in the closing line of the poem, "Wedged, into that preordained abode" pictures this reduction of the person into

mere matter that is destined to decay in the grave. The fact that the body is reduced to dust, however, does not seem to affect the individual. In fact, it is by leaving the vulnerable physical form behind that the subject of the poem is expected to enjoy a pain-free existence in an afterlife. The human self, within this context, is envisioned as having a permanence that survives the dissolution of the body.

The reconciliation with death and the notion of a pain-free disembodied existence afterwards, however, did not come effortlessly. Death was not accepted from the beginning. It was, in fact, feared. This fear is manifest in the apprehension and restlessness implied in the imagery in the third line of the text: "trudging hither and thither" (line 3). It was only after all means within the subject's power were exhausted that he was reconciled with death.

Had the vision of a pain-free postmortem existence been a longstanding lived experience, the subject of the poem would not have been pictured as one who restlessly tries everything within his power to avoid death and only embraces it when there is no hope of recovery. He would, on the other hand, have been pictured as one who calmly welcomes death from the start. This is suggestive of a deep-rooted attachment and identification the subject of the text had with the human body, despite its imminent demise.

Be that as it may, it is doubtless that even this last moment reconciliation can have positive existential implications. This is because, although the fact that the subject's condition (whereby his disease is compounded by social ostracism) is certainly extremely painful, it has also enabled him to experience a transcendental sense of self that assuages the absurdity of demise and the distress of terrestrial existence.

On the other end of the self/other interaction depicted in the text, the condition of the individual reveals the nature of societal unity at work in the text. It is on the apparent shared ground of social status that the sense of oneness comes into being. When there is no such perceived sameness, on the other hand, the text makes it evident that one would stand unmoved at the anguish of a fellow human being considering him/her a complete other.

4.2.2 *Halyotu Yitrefeni* (Their Care I Want Not)

Whereas the foregoing poem depicts suffering that is caused by social disunity, *Halyotu Yitrefeni* (Their Care I want Not) by Mulu H.Slassie deplores a feigned sense of societal unity. The speaker of this poetic text, on one hand, laments the absence of genuine social cohesion, while on the other, denounces the reception of what is presumed by the society to be an example of societal oneness.

It is likely that receiving affection and sympathetic concern from people, which are suggestive of felt connectedness, is a desirable experience. It is probably this element in human relationships that secures the experience of oneness. However, in a seemingly stark opposition to this notion, the persona of the poem rejects it. This rejection starts from the title "Their Care I Want Not" and is further developed throughout the poem.

What seems to have impelled the subjects of the poem to transcend their sense of separateness and enter into a unitary social interconnectedness is the shared reality of death. This event seems to offer a social platform for the experience of oneness. Positioning everyone on equal footing, this shared reality is likely to induce a sense of connectedness regardless of felt otherness that has been established on the basis of race, religion, socioeconomic status or politics. For the persona of this poem, however, such a sense of unity is simply nominal. It is important to consider the following lines to understand the reason behind such a contention:

እንተለኹ ኣብ መሬት ብጥሜት ቆርሚደ
ብሓሳረ መከራ ብፀገም ነዲደ
ቁሪ እንትጠፍሓኒ ዕርቃነይ ወዒአ
ንሞት እንትናፍቕ ትዕግስተይ ወዲአ
ዝፀልኣኒ ሰበይ ገፁ ዝመለሰ (line 1-5)

Alive yet by hunger consumed,
In affliction, in the furnace of ordeals,
Naked and flogged by cold,
I ached for death.
Yet my people turned their back on me.

The imagery in this extract reveals the situation before the nominal social unity. The imagery of fire in line two, and that of nudity and the exposure to the elemental force of nature thereof, i.e., cold, in line three are indicative of the severity and excruciating nature of the destitution that has stricken the persona of the poem. This condition especially seems to reach its apex in the image of fire. Being burnt in misery seems to epitomize the suffering the persona is undergoing. In all this, no sense of unity was expressed. In fact, the members of the society had rejected any sense of relatedness. This complete passivity at his/her misfortune is suggested in line five: "Yet my people turned their back on me"

There is, however, a dramatic turn of events when the persona dies. The society now stands in unison for the funeral ceremony and the commemoration of the dead. The images of *fattened cattle*, *mead* and a *beautifully decorated grave* in the following extract present a stark contrast to the privations depicted in the previous extract:

> ስቡሓት ኣውዲቹ ሜስ እንተመየሰ
> ሓወልቲ ሰሪሑ መቓብር እንተሃንፀ
> ሕብርታት ብምምራፅ መንደቹ እንተግየፅ
> እንታየይ እዩ ንዓይ እንታይ ይረብሓኒ (line 7-10)
>
> Even if they slaughter fattened animals and brew mead,
> And place a tombstone on my grave,
> Beautifully its walls decorating,
> What good will come of this now?

While the persona was lacking food and clothing, he had received no support from his society. For his commemoration, however, *fattened animals* are slaughtered, *alcoholic beverage* brewed, and his/her grave is *beautifully decorated*. All these three images speak not of want but of abundance and extravagance. While the condition of the poor individual was inability to meet his/her basic needs for mere survival, the ceremonial "farewell" of the individual's corpse captures a state of sensual indulgence.

Why did the individual's death attract more caring attention than his/her life did? An answer to this question might test the genuineness of the social cohesion in question. If care and support were missing in what is evidently important and practical, i.e. life, why

did it then occur in what is hypothetical (i.e., an afterlife)? There is, apparently, no way of figuring out whether or not this kind of "care" would help the deceased in any way. To this effect, the persona, in sardonic tone, asks of the beautifully decorated grave: *"ጋቢ ኮይኑ ድዩ ነብሰይ ከሙቐኒ"* (will it be a shawl and warm me up?) (line 11). Why did death attract more attention then?

Although the text does not address this question explicitly, the social reaction it depicts seems to imply a collective fascination with and/or fear of death. The extravagance manifested in the commemoration and decoration of the ground where the dead lies (which have no apparent use for the dead) might, thus, be a ritual of appeasing the "demon"; a symbolic way of suppressing their own fears of death. Alternatively, the act of slaughtering might give them a faint illusion of having (temporarily of course) an upper hand over this seemingly dreadfully absurd human destiny. The whole occasion could thus be conceived of as a symbolic expression of an illusory power over and anesthetizing themselves against the dread of death. Thus conceived, the social attention for the dead is merely a way of coping with existential anxiety inspired, in this case, by the physical finitude of human existence and not an expression of felt unity and respect for a fellow human being.

An appropriate response to death that would show a genuine social cohesion, on the other hand, would have been comforting the bereaved. Going back to the title of the poem, it is not, thus, a genuine bond and the sympathetic care therein that is being rejected but all the ingenious social schemes to feign it. When this is realized, it seems that the people of this society are distancing themselves from one another more in death than even in life. Having entrusted the issue of death to the care of God, the speaker thus finally voices a pragmatic stance urging for social cohesion among the living and not for the dead: *"ሓልዮቱ ይትረፈኒ ሓልዮት ድሕሪ ቕብሪ/ንህልው ይጨነቕ ኣለኒ ፈጣሪ"* (Care after death I need not/Let concern be for the living for mine is to the Creator entrusted) (line 12-13). Such a concern is the subject of the next poetic text.

4.2.3 *Shih Gize Imine* (My Fervent Desire)

Patriotism is a transcendental experience. It is one of the phenomena engendered by an understanding "that in the last resort, the destinies of mankind are invariably guided, not by the concrete "facts" of the sense world, but by concepts which are acknowledged by everyone to exist only on the mental plane" (Underhill, 1911, p. 18). In view of this, it is a realization that is captured when a person's sense of self transcends the experience of a separate self or, to use Underhill's (1911) words, when an individual "rises to spiritual freedom" (p. 18). In the following poetic text, the conception of self and its relation to suffering is placed within this context.

Eating is perhaps one of the most intimate and desirable connections we have with the "outside" world. It is a process where the "outside" world, through metabolic assimilation, becomes the "inside" world; one's body. In the poetic text *Shih Gize Imine* (My Fervent Desire) by Adera Tesfay, this intimate physical sensation is used to represent the hardship the speaker of the text is willing to bear for the betterment of his/her people's lives. The gustatory images of "bitter" and "sweet" are used in the second line of the text to evoke this patriotic sacrificial commitment:

እቲ ሕማቕ ናትካ - ንርእሰይ ይግበሮ
ናብራይ ኣምሩሩ - ናብራኻ የምዕሮ
ተሓጉስካ ሪኣ - ልበይ እንተቕሰነ
ወገነይ ሕልፊትካ - ሽሕ ጊዜ እምነ፡፡ (line 1-4)

May your ills upon me lie
May sweet become your life mine embittered,
That calm may be my heart beholding your joy
My people, unbounded my desire is for your deliverance.

The life of the people imaged as bitter suggests the intense harshness of their livelihood. The persona wishes that his/her life may be imbued with this bitterness that the life of the people may turn "sweet" (line 2). The subject of this text, which the persona of the poem is identifying him/herself with as "my people", could be the people of one region (probably Tigrai) or the country as a whole (Ethiopia). No explicit mention is made. Yet

one thing is evident. The sense of interconnectedness the text attempts to depict (as is signified by the word “my people”) goes beyond the confines of biological ties.

Instinctually, any experience that may put the individual in discomfort or threaten her/his well-being is to be avoided. This is perhaps especially true when the interaction between self and other is outside one’s family circle. Within this context, the usual trend is perhaps the pursuit of one’s own “happiness” and “well-being” at the expense of others (the other, for instance, in race, religion, country or the usually shared “other” the nonhuman environment). In light of this, the action of the persona is apparently an aberration. What then can be the motivation behind the desire to sacrifice one’s wellbeing to redeem that of others? In answer to this, the speaker of the poem in line three muses: “That calm may be my heart beholding your joy”.

As can be noted from this line, the “heart” has something to benefit from the sacrifice being made. This image is likely to symbolize the emotional state of the persona. In light of this, although the sacrifice might embitter a certain aspect of the persona’s well being (his/her economic or physical well being, for instance), it is hoped to benefit his/her emotional well being. The suffering implicated in the sacrifice, in this sense, is the precursor of the desirable experience of a serene heart.

By implication, the affliction of the people has caused a severely unpleasant emotional experience in the persona of the text that it has inspired him/her to endure and redeem the people’s affliction so that his/her emotional pain might be relieved. Hence, paradoxical though it may sound, the suffering s/he is willing to bear is not a negative experience for it is an antidote for an emotional pain. Indicative of the persona’s identification with his/her people, this reveals that what has become of the other has found its deep resonance in the heart of oneself. In taking over their affliction, the persona has thus lost individuality and has expanded his/her sense of self to be inclusive of his/her people.

This seems to be an excellent experience of an interconnected sense of self. It is relatively a much more inclusive experience of realty than those based on biological ties. At this level (national) of the speaker’s experiential purview there is a suspension of the self/other binary opposition. On a level broader than this purview, however, the self/other

dichotomy is still implicated. This is because patriotism might usually (but not necessarily) conflict with the more inclusive reality of the oneness of the human race. This is true when the experience of relatedness fails to go beyond a geographic phenomenon. The word *wogeney* which means "my people" in line four implicates the existence of an "other" that disallows an experience of similar interconnectedness with others who are (or rather happen to be) out of the radius of the persona's country (or even region).

The word "people", can signify a group of individuals united by shared nationality and/or shared culture and language. Hence, this word can refer to Ethiopia in general when the first (and to some extent the second) attribute is considered and specifically to Tigrai when the last two attributes are considered. As such, this word is suggestive that the persona has restricted his/her sense of interconnectedness to a particular geographic space.

Should this be the case, the serenity of heart that is achieved via felt connectedness can easily mutate into rage and aggression should any external force threaten the wellbeing of "one's" people. Thus conceived, this sense of interconnectedness, will ultimately fail to satisfy the desire for union sustainably and secure alleviation from suffering when his/her consciousness has to face the larger realities of humanity and the cosmos in general. The violence that could be implicated in such a limited sense of oneness is further spelled out in the next text.

4.2.4 *Lidet* (Nativity)

The sense of self depicted in *Lidet* (Nativity), by Sisay Hishe, hinges on a dualistic conception of human nature. This conception portrays a person as an embodiment of two polarized forces- good and evil. While the first force is attributed to the flesh, the second is described as an attribute of the spirit. As an embodiment of evil, the flesh, in the opening lines of this poem, is held responsible for the commencement of death in human life:

ኣዳም ንዘጥፎኣ ስጋ ነቢጥዎ፣

ድኽመቱ ፀገሙ ፈጣሪ ሪእዎ፣
እምነት ብምጉዳሉ ብሞት ቀፂዖ።
ጊዜ እንተይረኽበ ንዓርሰ ነቐፌታ፣
ምሒር ተቐጢዑ ቐፂዖ ነይታ።። (line 1-5)

By flesh subdued Adam sinned,
His failing, God beheld,
And for being of little faith by death punished him.
Before Adam could bemoan his deed
Upon him was the wrath of God.

As is implied in the opening line of this extract, although it was not yet expressed, the flesh was already "evil" prior to the fall of Adam. The flesh, thus, being originally evil, is the very first cause of divine condemnation humanity incurs. By implication, humanity (as the progeny of this Biblical person) is "forced" by its flesh to have a propensity toward evil. Ironic as it may sound, this assumption entails that humanity harbors the seed of its own misery. This fatalistic notion, however, seems to contradict the Bible's conception of human nature before the Fall (i.e. before Adam and Eve were banished from Eden and the consciousness of the presence of God therein).

According to the Biblical creation narrative, the Genesis, evil entered the world as Adam and Eve partook of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:6). Prior to this event, the Bible makes no explicit mention concerning the proclivity of the human flesh towards evil. In fact, it is likely that until the eating of the fruit, Adam and Eve were clean from impurities of any kind. This can be inferred from Gen.1:31: "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (King James Translation). By implication, the human flesh, as one of these creations, was also good.

Be that as it may, the assertion that the Fall marks the subjection of humanity to death and decay seems indubitable. In line six and seven of the text, this human phenomenon is described as a deeply disturbing phenomenon: "ምሟት ምስጀመራ ስግኡ ምስ ነብሱ/ ልቡ ተረቢሻ ሓዚኑ ተጣዒሱ።" ("When his flesh and his spirit began to die/ His heart was troubled and rueful he became).The image of the heart in line seven is suggestive of the depth of the undesirable experience Adam as the progenitor of humanity had to bear. Additionally, the

two dimensions the text attributes to death (the death of flesh and that of the spirit) is also evident in line six ("when his flesh and his spirit began to die").

Physical death could be easy to envision as the body is subject to dissolution at the time of death. The death of the spirit, however, seems to elude imagination. The speaker makes no explicit mention as to the nature of spiritual death or the death of the spirit. An inference can, however, be made. When a person is said to have recovered his divine image, through the revival of the spirit, the separate sense of self dissolves. This is indicated in the selfless devotion of the freedom fighters of Ethiopia (1974 -1991) which is being equated with the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ:

> እቲ ዝኸእላ'ምበር ካብ ልቢ ዝፍፅማ፣
> መራር ሞት ዝውሕጣ ምስ ክብራ ምስ ትርጉማ፣
> ልክዕ ከም እየሱስ ተላእከ ካብ ላዕላይ፣
> ወይ ከምት ወዲ ህዝቢ ከምት ተጋዳላይ፣ (line 19-22)
>
> Only the able can heartily accomplishes this,
> With all its glory and meaning swallow bitter death,
> Who like Jesus is sent from the Heavens,
> Or like the child of the people, like the freedom fighter,

Jesus Christ and the freedom fighters shed their blood to deliver their people from oppression (economic and political in the former and spiritual in the latter). In view of this, an equation cam be made between the two. To better understand the implication of this comparison, however, it seems useful to inspect the purpose of Christ's redemptive undertaking in the preceding lines of the text:

> ክብሩ ኣሕሊፉ ሂቡ ንናይ ደቁ ኸብሪ፣
> ሓጥያት ብደሙ ሓኺቡ ክስቀል ብፍቕሪ፣
> ሞት ስጋ ቀኺሉ ሞት ነብሲ ክቀሪ ፣
> ቃል ናብ ስጋ ተቐይሩ ኣብ ድንግል ሓዲሩ፣ (line 10-13)
>
> To glorify His children, His glory God forsook.
> To cleanse sin with His blood, in love to be crucified,
> To end the death of the spirit, while that of the flesh prevails;
> Flesh the Word became, in the Virgin He came to dwell.

As may be evident from the third line of this extract, this divine redemption is expressed in the revival of the spirit as the "death of the spirit" is brought to an end. As was noted in the first extract, Christ and the freedom fighters are portrayed as having comparable qualities that is being expressed in self-sacrifice. By extension, this comparison implies the revival of the spirit in the freedom fighters. This extension of comparison can also be reinforced by the last six lines of the text:

ንፍቕሪ ደቂ ሰብ ህይወት ብምኽፋሎም፣
ነይታን ተጋደልትን ኣማሳሲለዮም።
ንነገሩ'ማ... ብኣምሳልና ፈጢርናኩም እንድዩ ኢልና፣
ዋላኳ እንተሓልከሰት ስጋ ዓንቃፅ ኮይና፣
ንሕና ንኽንቅኒ ዝሓልፉ በይዛና፣
ንሓቂ ዝወድቁ ኣሕዋት መሊኦምና። (line 31-36)

For sacrificing their lives for the love of mankind
I compare them thus to the Lord
Yet, let this be no surprise, for in His likeness created we are
Though in its vice the flesh persists.
For our sake who their lives lay,
Plenty we have for the truth that die.

As may be noted from this extract, all humanity is made in the image and likeness of God (line 33) which is challenged by the "evil" of the flesh (line 34). When one is unrestrained by the flesh thus, s/he begins to act in accordance with the spirit which is being typified in the acts of Jesus Christ and the selflessness of the freedom fighters. With these points in mind, it seems fair to suggest that the revival of the spirit entails the restoration of selfless mode of perception and the end of estrangement from divine identity.

Contrariwise, the dominance of the "flesh" and the ills of egocentric mode of perception it engenders is described by disturbing images of blood and skinning:

እኳ ዳኣ ይሻኮት ብደም ሓው ይሸቅጥ፣
ብእኡ እናማሓለ ቆርበት ድኻ ይቀ'ልጥ፣
ካሊእ'ማ ኣይፈልጣን ከፈልጣ ኣይደልን፣
ምእንተ ብዙሓት ሞት ኣይቕበልን፣ (line 23-26)

None else knows it, nor does anyone desire to
For the good of many, none would embrace death.
Instead some draw lots and trade with the blood of their brother,
Swearing in his name they skin off the poor,

Contrasted with the selfless deed of the freedom fighters, the last two lines of this extract suggest the extreme brutality of those in power who are inclined to the "flesh". In keeping with sense-experience, the flesh is here associated with egocentric consciousness.

Since the revival of the spirit is realized in Jesus Christ and then in the freedom fighters, however, this poetic text does not excuse egocentricity. Adam is not depicted as all-flesh. He is also a spirit that is imbued with a divine image. As such, the spirit is associated with the transcendence of egocentricity. Hence, the text seems to assert that owing to the spirit, the human condition which is replete with selfishness and resultant greed, brutality and suffering is not beyond redemption.

The transcendence of the separate sense of self as a point of convergence between the redemptive undertaking of Jesus and the freedom fighters, however, should not overshadow the difference entailed in the comparison. Firstly, it should be noted that while the fighters carried out this redemptive act through violence (however unavoidable it might have been), Jesus was a pacifist to the core (Ryken, L. et al. 1998, pp. 137, 1743-1744). Secondly, the revolutionists aimed at political and economic redemption while Jesus' focus was spiritual redemption (although such freedom might not be without socioeconomic and political implications) (Ryken, L. et al. 1998, p. 2351). Thirdly, while the freedom fighters had the people of Ethiopia as a goal, Jesus had all humanity, conceived of as a community of "one body consisting of many members" (Ryken, L. et al. 1998, p. 90) in view. Hence, unlike the nonviolent and all-inclusive selfhood of Jesus Christ, that of the freedom fighters involved violence and is limited to a specific society.

4.2.5 *Kisab Meqabirey* (Unto My Grave)

In keeping with the foregoing four texts, the identification of self with the other in *Kisab Meqabirey* (Unto My Grave) by Desta Cherqos, extends beyond biological bases to

embrace larger levels of reality. In this conception of self, a person seems to be portrayed not only as a biological product of her/his parents but also as a product of the cultural and environmental forces of her/his country; a microcosm of his/her biological and cultural environment, as it were. This felt identification is so overwhelming that, for the persona of the text, the dread of either pain or death, pictured in images of beasts and fire, is nullified:

ኣራዊት ናይ መሬት…
ቀለበት ሰሪሖም
እንተዝኸቡኒ
ንኽብረይ ደፊሮም…
ኣካለይ መንጭቶም
ሽግር እንተዝህቡኒ
..... (3 lines skipped)
ከዋክብቲ ሰማይ…
ነበልባል ሓዚሎም
እንተዝነጥቡኒ
ንዓኽስ ሃገረይ
እስካብ መቓብረይ። (line 1-14)

Even if wild beasts,
In circles
Enclose me;
Even if they, tramping on mine dignity,
To pieces my body rending,
Afflict me;
……. (Three lines skipped)
Even if the stars of the sky,
Carrying blazes of fire,
Rain on me;
For you motherland, I shall
Unto my grave travail.

A person might survive an assault by beasts (line 1-6). Being burnt by blazing stars (line 10-12), however, can only have metaphorical significance (stars carrying blazes dropped on a person can only mean death). The fire imagery in the above extract, thus, can only be used to emphasize the magnitude of the ordeal. As such, this metaphorical signification seems to effect an envisioning of the highest form of suffering imaginable.

The fact that the speaker of the poem is willing to endure this suffering as a form of devotion for his country implies the strength of the bond s/he has with her/his country. The persona's love for her/his country invalidates all the pain and misery in life. Suffering, as such, cannot bar the persona from a sacrificial devotion to her/his beloved country. As can be noted from the last two lines of the extract, this felt bond is described as an enduring experience that only death can put an end to.

Notwithstanding the strong identification it might engender, the emotive core of such patriotic zeal appears to foreclose a sense of interconnectedness at a larger level of reality. This is because this experience of bond seems to reveal a worldview that is strictly grounded on national boundaries. Put otherwise, the expanded sense of self depicted in the text does not implicate the transcendence of national bounds. This in turn, could implicate a sense of narrow national consciousness that may be channeled into gruesome armed conflicts. Such implication seems especially relevant when the speaker's willingness to die is brought into view in the closing line of the text: "For you motherland, I shall/ Unto my grave travail". In view of this, patriotism seems to engender a militant posture and restrictive bond that stifles the consciousness of an organic cosmic unity.

The speaker's conviction that he is devoted to his country up to death might, however, also mean until his/her life ends naturally. In this second sense, dying for one's country does not necessarily foreclose the possibility of developing amenable nationalistic consciousness that is contained within an overall unity of mankind or life in general. As is depicted in the next poem, however, nationalistic unity mostly seems to be blind to more inclusive experiences of reality.

4.2.6 *Tehabeni Ayder* (Proud be Ayder)

Tehabeni Ayder (Proud be Ayder) by Sisay Hishe is a poetic account of an air attack in Mekelle at Ayder Elementary School in 1998. This poem paints a picture of nightmarish world through fire and blood imagery. Fire imagery is used to suggest the means this horrific scene was created; the air raid:

ዓይደር ከም ሰዶም ዓይደር ከም ገሞራ፣

ናይ ነበልባል ዝናብ ካበይ ተማሂራ?
ዓይደር እንተትሕተቲ ብዝዝከር ትማሊ፣
ከምዙይ ዝበለ ቕዲ ካበይ ኣምጺኽዮ እንተትባሃሊ፣
ካብ ውቕሮ ዶ ካብ ዴስኣ ክትብሊ? (line 1-5)

Like Sodom Ayder, like Gomorrah,
Where did you learn to rain fire?
If I ask of yesterday Ayder,
Where you learnt such an atrocious scene
Would you say from Wuqro or Desse'a?

In these opening lines of the text, the bombs dropped from the aircrafts are compared to rain of fire. This imagery implicates a Biblical allusion to the fire and brimstone that rained on Sodom and Gomorra (Gen 19:24-28). Although a hyperbole (the air raid did not kill all the residents of the town, as did the fire and brimstone in the biblical story, with the exception of Lot and his children) this analogy underscores the dreadfulness of the air raid. The fact that this air raid is further connected to numerous bombardments the region had suffered in different parts of its territory during the civil war from 1974 -1991 seem to further compound this tragic event (line 5-18).

Blood imagery, on the other hand, is used to portray the human casualty this bombardment caused. The fact that this imagery is juxtaposed with the image of mud helps to picture the magnitude of the massacre. The image of a school yard as "muddied with blood" (line 24), suggests that blood was almost everywhere trickling from the body of dead students scattered throughout the school:

ወሪድዎም ቆልዑት እቱይ እቱይ ኣይብሉ፣
ሙህሮኣም ተማሂሮም ምስ ኩዕሾኣም ክዘሉ፣
ደወል እንዳሙህሮ ብሃንቀውታ እንትፅበዩ፣
ዓይደር መረባኺ ብደሞም ጨቕዩ። (line 21-24).

While the innocent children,
Playful in the schoolyard,
Were eagerly awaiting the bell,
Ayder, your yard with their blood was muddied.

Blood has strong connection to life. The shedding of this element, hence, suggests a rupture in the fabric of life. Fire and blood imagery in this text thus capture the horrific scene of the air raid. This tragic incident is what induces the sense of oneness in this poetic text.

This incident caused a unified reaction from all parts of the country. Owing to this, all the people in the country are depicted in the poem as interconnected. A striking imagery is used to depict this unity. The corporeal unity of the human self is brought here to bear on the spiritual unity of the people of a country as a whole. While Mekelle is pictured as the "nose" of this incorporeal body, the rest of the country is conceived of as the "eye" that tells every hurt the body experiences in the form of tears:

ቅሒሩ ተሲኡ ህዝቢ ኢትዮጵያ ምስ ፈደይቲ
ሕነ ክስራዕ፣
ዘይተርፍ ኮይኑ ዓይኒ ምንባዑ ኣፍንጫ
እንትውቓዕ። (line 51-54)

Wrathful, the people of Ethiopia arose
Seeking vengeance,
For it is natural for the eyes to shed tears,
When the nose is hit.

In addition to the interrelation of the eyes and the nose depicted in the text, the proximity of these two orifices of the body also seems to imaginatively capture the experience of interconnectedness even more. At this point, it is noteworthy that such forms of transcending the separate sense of self have been very common, albeit unfortunate, instances throughout human history (Fromm, 1976, p. 85). This sense of oneness is unfortunate for the simple reason that it is tailored for aggression.

A critique of such a militant patriotic sentiment should not translate into an assertion that an attack on one's country should be received with passivity. It does mean, however, that the matter be carefully deliberated upon and treated as peacefully as possible before taking recourse to physical coercion by inspiring unity in the people. True, physical coercion is the immediate reaction (in accordance with our instinct of fight or flight) to aggression. But it is also true that armed conflict mostly fails to bring about the desired

peace and prosperity and instead causes too many human and material casualties. War, in light of this, might simply be the failure to produce a more effective way of handling conflicts. At this juncture, Whitehead's (as cited in Gregg, 1960, p. 14) contention that "The recourse to force, however unavoidable, is a disclosure of the failure of civilization, either in the general society or in a remnant of individuals" seems fitting.

Notwithstanding such implications, the text explicitly encourages retaliation. Blood is an important image in this unified spirit of retaliation being endorsed. The poem animates blood by endowing it with a force of retaliation. It is pictured as an energy that stirs a profound emotional reaction in people. This reaction is anger that lead to the retaliation of the bloodshed of the innocent children by shedding the blood of the offender:

> ማስቃኪ ዓይደር ማስቃ ተማሃሮ፣
> ዋጎአም ረኪቦማ ኣብ ባድመ ኣብ ሸራሮ።
> ኣብ ደም ሰብ ተኣልከ ከሪሙ ከምዘይሓጊ፣
> ክማሃሩ ነይርዎም ካብ ፋሽሽቲ ደርጊ። (line 55-58)
>
> Your vindication Ayder and the vengeance of your students,
> In Badme and in Sheraro, is consummated.
> Whosoever is steeped in human blood soon perishes,
> This, they had to learn from Derg.

From the above lines, the third line especially seems to work out this effect: "Whosoever is steeped in human blood soon perishes". Worth noting in this line is the specific reference to human blood. The power accorded to blood only works in the context of human beings. Implicit in this statement is an anthropocentric view of life. The assumption appears to be that blood of animals, unlike the blood of human beings, does not retaliate its killers. It is only the blood of human beings, thus, as suggested by the poem, that has the power that transcends its physical properties.

Be that as it may, the fact that the blood of the innocent is retaliated does not mean bloodshed has ended. This is because the so called offender is attracted, as it were, to kill. Although it is perhaps unquestionable that bloodshed causes pain and misery to some, it is also, as depicted in this poem, a fluid that quenches evil thirst. Issayas (the president of Eritrea) is pictured in this poetic text as such:

ብደም ዕሸላት ዝረዊ መንፈሱ ዝህድስ፣
ጋኔን ብሱም ቅዱስ ኣብ ጥቓና እንትነግስ፣
ድሕሪ ክልተሽሕ ዓመት ተፈጥረ ሄሮድስ፣
ኣድንጊቱ ደቅኺ ቀቲልልኪ ኢሳያስ።። (line 29-32)

When he who replenishes his spirit with the blood of children,
A devil incarnate, in name holy, is enthroned near to us,
A Herod who came after two thousand years,
Issayas, massacred your children.

This proclivity toward evil ascertains a vicious cycle of violence; the blood of the innocent to retaliate and the urge of the living (only the "evil" ones, of course) to draw pleasure from the shedding of blood. The poem seems to be self-defeating at this stage. By advocating the bloodshed of the "evil", does not it itself perpetuate the violence, bloodshed and thus, suffering it portrayed as dreadful initially? And can the retaliative attack be free from a collateral damage where the usual victims are children and the elderly? And would not perpetuating these conditions by itself be evil? In propagating such assumptions, thus, it may merely keep the fire of violence and suffering flaming in the name of extinguishing the "evil". This seems especially evident when considering the fact that, Issayas, which the text depicts as *ganen* (a devil incarnate) (line 30), is not exterminated by the retaliation. Sadly enough, it is ultimately the people at the grassroots- children, women, and the elderly in both sides- that have to shoulder the physical and economic pressures of the conflict.

What can be noted from this text, thus, is that even a strong sense of interconnectedness among the people of a country can sadly be tailored to the perpetuation of suffering. On the contrary, if such unity was realized and maintained when there was no call for war, it does not appear difficult to imagine the scale of social and economic ills of the country that would be remedied. In a way that suggests the transitoriness of a sense of unity induced by a call for war, the next text depicts a phenomenon where such a sense of oneness disintegrates as the spirit of the call subsides with the end of the war.

4.2.7 *Kihalif Ilu'yu* (To Behold the Daybreak)

According to the poem *Kihalif Ilu'yu* (To Behold the Daybreak), by Muluworq Kidanemariam, three shared grounds yield a sense of oneness in the people of Tigrai during their fight against the Derg regime. These are (1) political subjugation and the social ills thereof, (2) a redemptive goal, and (3) the means for political redemption (i.e., war). The images "yoke", "darkness" and "light" are invoked to describe these three shared grounds:

ፀሊኡ'ዩ እምበር ኣርዑት ናይ ባርነት
ህይወቱ ዘሕልፍ ክረክብ ናፅነት
ኣይፋለይን ዝብል ግፍዒ ጠንጠነለይ
ጨኪኑ ዝጋደል ሕንግድ ኢሉ እምብለይ (line 1-4)

The yoke of slavery off their neck to break
Freedom to find their lives they laid.
In protest against atrocity
Arms, audaciously they took up.

The people portrayed in this text went into war because they were under oppression. This oppression is represented by an image of a yoke in the opening line of the poem. This image, placed in a society the majority of which belongs to an agricultural community, brings the condition of the animal to bear on that of humans. The yoke might even be painful to the ox whose faculty of reflection is perhaps low. By invoking this image, the text, thus, captures the harshness of enforced political subservience the people suffered under the tyranny of the Derg.

Darkness, on the other hand, is the image used to describe the harrowing experiences the people of Tigrai faced during the fight against the regime:

ህይወት ደልዩ እዩ ዕብየት ምስ ቅሳነት
ውርደት ክተርፈሉ ክወሃቦ ክብረት
ክመሃር ክፈልጥ ክወፅእ ካብ ጥምየት
…… (two lines skipped)
ምስ ፀልማት ዝጓነፅ ክብርህ ክውግሕ (line 9-14)

Seeking life, growth and serenity;

Seeking to shake off disgrace and restore dignity;
Seeking knowledge and liberty from the jaws of hunger;
……. (two lines skipped)
Into darkness they ventured, expectant of the light of daybreak.

Paradoxical though it may sound, the darkness of war is considered the necessary adversity or "evil" should one enjoy the desirable experiences that are connoted by light (line 14). In contrast, light is depicted as the absence or elimination of all predicaments the tyrannical governance entailed. It is an image, in other words, that is used to picture a scenario of redemption characterized by a livelihood of freedom, knowledge, peace and abundance. Consequently, the people went into the "darkness" of war in the hope that they will ultimately come out to "light".

As if encapsulating these grounds that have induced a sense of oneness amongst the people, the pronoun "he" is used to represent the people throughout the text (The rendering here, however, uses the pronoun "they" instead since it seems grammatically inappropriate to address a group of people as "he" or "she" in the host language). This sense of oneness, however, disintegrates as their shared political and socioeconomic reality changes after the Derg regime was overthrown.

Before the "victory" the people in question shared the same political and socioeconomic predicament and the same goal of achieving political and economic freedom. After the "victory", however, they have no common ground for the simple reason that they now stand on different social and political footings. The assumption that they shall see "light" at the end of the "darkness", thus, largely proves an illusion. The expected light does not materialize since after overthrowing the regime those who came to power turn out to be corrupt and the social ills remain unresolved. All the hardship the people faced to overthrow the Derg regime- death, lifelong disability and material casualty- seem to be in vain. War, it seems, could not free them from the jaws of greed and selfish preoccupations that have manifested themselves in corrupt governance.

Could there have been another way of securing peace, freedom and abundance without going into war? The poem does not say. But it does assert that the war has not rescued the people from the jaws of hunger that had resulted from the misrule of the previous

government and still continues unabated. The egotistic human tendencies which in the first place necessitated the war persist in those who have “overthrown” the unjust regime making it impossible to relieve social suffering. The following two lines work out overtones of this disillusionment: እምበር ደልዩ ኣይኮነን መብረ ቀታሊኡ/ ፍርፋር ዝድርብየሉ ጠጥዑም በሊዐ። (line 15-16) (Yet they found a substitute of their murderers/Who at them throw crumbs, while delicacies they enjoy).

These two closing lines of the text seem to reveal that the war (the necessary darkness) remains merely a darkness that could not leave its place (unlike the natural cycle of darkness and light) to light. Ultimately, the majority enervate in the recesses of ordeal merely surviving on the "crumbs" that are "thrown" at them while only few indulge in the resources that should have belonged to all. The contradiction portrayed here between “crumbs” and “delicacies” is suggestive of the unfortunate fact that instead of using their higher political platform to serve the public, the ones now in power are merely concerned with their personal gains at the expense of the good of the majority. As such, this condition betrays the fact that the sense of oneness witnessed in the revolutionary war did not have a foundation deep enough to survive the change in sociopolitical status of its members and supporters.

4.3 Communion with Darkness

All the texts analyzed so far (sixteen texts) are portrayals of the dissolution or formation of self/other dichotomies centered on relationships between individuals or among groups of people. The elasticity of the sense of self, however, is not confined to human-to-human relations as it may also be inclusive of the environment or the nonhuman nature. In this connection, the prominence of such an experience of interconnectedness accorded to in Romanticism is noteworthy. Nature, according to this literary movement (early nineteenth century), is a unifying force, while the material progress of human civilization is a separative force that forecloses the sense of unity (Habib, pp. 415-416, 430-431). The text under this (third) category concerns itself with such an experience.

4.3.1 *Tsibaqe'lo Leyti* (Beauty in the Dark)

Beauty is the principle of attraction. Drawing the other into one's experiential orb, it renders the self inclusive of the other. As such, it serves, as Plotinus (trans. 1930, p. 67) maintains, to engender mystical experiences while whatever is perceived as lacking this quality is dissociated. Spurgeon (1913, pp.16, 24) also notes that beauty has long been one of the ways poets have sought the experience of a unitive sense of self. Consistent with such contentions, the harmonious connectedness between the self and the other that is realized in the poem *Tsibaqe'lo Leyti* (Beauty in the Dark) by Adera Tesfay is also engendered by beauty. Quite surprisingly, however, in this poetic text, this beauty is found in one of the most "negative" phenomena in life- darkness.

It is perhaps not difficult to imagine why darkness would "naturally" seem to be the most unlikely phenomenon to induce a sense of connectedness. Human being's fearful predisposition is likely to be exacerbated in darkness. And surely, danger might usually lurk in the dark. This time of the day is usually conducive for violence of every kind- robbery, murder, rape etc. It is thus no wonder that it mostly caries (both on its literal and metaphorical sense) negative overtones.

In its literal sense, this image is usually perceived as an abhorred phenomenon characterized by peril and horror. In a metaphorical sense, on the other hand, it is the antithesis of light (which connotes every conceivable form of good) that stands for evil or/and ignorance, deprivation and loss (Ferber, 2007, pp. 115-116,137-138). In view of this usual representation of darkness, it appears implausible that it can serve as a portal for an experience of self/other interconnectedness. In this text, the usual binary opposition between darkness and light is, however, destabilized enabling the realization of such a possibility.

The negative associations, such as violence, chaos, horror and unknowingness or ignorance, that often accompany this image are absent in this text. Unlike what might be expected, darkness, in its literal sense, is conceived as a delightful phenomenon imbued with beauty. The persona of this poem, hence, embraces an aspect of nature that is usually rejected. The poem reads:

ዝወሳወስ ፍጡር-ገዝኡ ምስከተተ
ድኻም ስዒርዎ-ዓይኑ ምስ ዓመተ፤
ሩፍታ ምስ ነገሰ-ምስኮነ ዕረፍቲ
ኣብቲ ድቅድቅ ፀላም-ፅባቐ'ሎ ለይቲ። (line 1-4)

When moving creatures in their homes take refuge,
Vanquished by fatigue when they close their eyes,
When serenity is crowned; when restful it becomes
Beauty is set in that pitch darkness.

The beauty that is being described in this poem is in "pitch darkness" (the closing line). This beauty does not refer to the visual aspects of the night. This can be inferred from the phrase "pitch darkness" which indicates that the night was extremely dark and not one lit by the silvery light of the moon or twinkling stars. The fact that beauty is usually considered a visual experience seems to make this description strange. This beauty the persona of the poem has perceived is something felt rather than seen- a kind of subtle tactile sensation of the serenity in the darkness. The fact that the night is "pitch dark" and "moving creatures" (line 1) have retired to their homes is suggestive of a time of total quietude. This factor, in turn, seems to confer on darkness a contemplative aura that induces peace and beauty.

As is tacitly evident in the poem, the day time, on the other hand, is portrayed as a time of restlessness. This is implied in the poem's statement that the reign of serenity begins as darkness descends (line 3). This poem, hence, accords the image of darkness a desirable signification while the day time, devoid of the beauty yielded by the serenity of the dark night, carries connotations of undesirability.

Because darkness usually poses danger, however, this beauty of serenity or quietude will probably go unnoticed. The persona, in this respect, can be said to have experienced beauty to which most would be blind. As such, this poem resonates well with such poems as "I love the dark Hour of my Being" by Rainer Maria Rilke, "Youth, Old age-Day, Night" by Walt Whitman, "Black-out" by Robinson Jeffers, "In a Dark Time" by Theodore Roethke, "From the Dark Tower" by Counteen Cullen, "In the Friendly Dark" by Dennis Brutus, "Dream variations" by Langston Hughes, in depicting one of the most marginalized experiences in life as most agreeable to human desire both as an external

phenomenon and as a symbolic representation of the depth of the unconscious mind or the human spirit (Yohannes, 2005). As is noted by Ferber (2007, p. 138), such valuation of darkness also has a literary niche in Romanticism in the poet's experiences of communion with nature.

In addition to being an unusual form of relatedness, the experience depicted in this poem seems to represent a broader way of transcending the separate sense of self. This is because the persona has been able to be in touch with an aspect of life with which s/he shares neither blood nor soil (unlike the preceding texts). This implicates the universality of the phenomenon. The fact that the "pitch darkness" and the stillness that usually permeates it is a recurrent phenomenon also seems to make this way of healing the anxiety of separateness in life relatively reliable. A question, however, still remains as regards the degree of the inclusiveness of the experience.

Although the speaker of the poem has found a harmonious connection with darkness via disengagement from the light of the day, life also comprises of the daytime and the usual commotion it entails. It is in retiring into the stillness of darkness that the implicit unrest implicated by the commotion of the daytime is redeemed. The daytime, hence, is not embraced. As a result, a sense of otherness is still implied in the text. Unless some form of stillness or some kind of beauty is discerned within the chaos and commotion of life, thus, the desirable experience the persona of the poem has found cannot be enduring.

Nonetheless, the fact that this experience is induced by an aspect of nature that is usually resisted, and that it transcends the sense of oneness rooted in both biological and national ties suggests the progressive inclusiveness of the sense of self. It might, thus, be argued that this text reveals a promising direction towards the ultimate goal of the mystical way of seeing the self as progressively connected to life in all its various forms.

4.4 The Self in Full Bloom

All the preceding texts provide ample instances that demonstrate the dissolution of self/other boundaries to varying degrees. None of these texts, however, offers a portrayal of an all-inclusive unitive sense of self. Consequently, while they portray a certain aspect

of life being embraced, they also suggest the dissociation of another. The following texts, on the other hand, seem to offer glimpses of an all-inclusive sense of connectedness.

4.4.1 *Fiqiri Demegna* (Loving the Nemesis)

Love is the subject of Sisay Hishe's poem entitled *Fiqiri Demegna* (Loving the Nemesis). The love depicted in this poem, however, exhibits a remarkable peculiarity. The unitive sense of self that characterizes this popular emotion is likely to be mostly associated with gentleness and caring. In this text, however, something that could be deadly is loved. This object of love is alcohol which is usually detrimental to one's wellbeing.

To spell out this anomaly, this emotion of tenderness is juxtaposed with blood imagery that is evocative of death:

ንሓንቲ ማዓልቲ ትፅየፎ ትፀልኦ
ኣብ ሳልስቲ ድማ ከም ሓውካ ትሪኦ።
የገርም የደንቕ ናይ ሰተይቲ ነገር
ብምንታይ ምኽንያት ደመኛኻ ይፍቀር? (line 11-14)

After all this, only for a day you abhor it
But on just the third day as your brother regard it.
The life of drunkards, how disconcerting!
How can one's bloodthirsty foe be loved?

The fact that this juxtaposition appears in the closing line of the poem seems to underline the utter incompatibility between the usual notion of love (as a gentle interaction and fusion of self and other) and blood (with its connotations of violence) stressed in the text.

In the beginning, this complex self/other connectedness was not so stark. The subject of the poem was safely enjoying the pleasure of the substance while still maintaining control over the situation. The situation is, however, reversed as the relationship progresses:

ድሕሪኡ ይጅምር ኣዛዚኻ ሙኺን
ጁባኻ፣ ውነኻ፣ ነብስኻ . . . ምውናን።
ኣብዘይኮነ ቦታ ስጥሕ የብለካ፣
ታርኡ ብንዕቐት ቁልቁል ይሪኣካ፣
ንዒቕ ንናዓቕ ስሒቕ ንሳሓቕ
ኣሕሊፉ ይበካ። (line 5-10)

It begins afterwards to order you around,
To own your pocket, your fancy and your soul,
In despicable places to fling you down.
With disdain it looks at you;
An object of ridicule
Now that it has made of you.

In the above extract, the alcoholic is portrayed as someone facing economic and social predicaments over which s/he seems to have lost control. Her/his money is now under the control of the addiction and her/his social image is also being tarnished as s/he is made "an object of ridicule" (line 9).

The immediate effects of the intoxication on the body are also apparent as the drunkard fails to hold her/himself in balance and is tossed down. This image of the effect of the substance on the body can further be accentuated when viewed in light of the image of blood (in line 14). In view of this, alcohol is depicted in the text, not only as a cause of social and economic adversities, but also, and perhaps more importantly, as a substance that can even endanger one's very existence. Working out overtones of death, the speaker thus describes it as *demegna* (a bloodthirsty foe) (line 14).

Considering the fact that this detrimental bond was initially a benign engagement, it appears that the subject is caught unaware; an unwilling victim being thrown in "despicable places" and made a laughingstock. However, working out the paradoxical character of this relationship, line eleven and twelve read against this assumption: "After all this, only for a day you abhor it/ But on just the third day as your brother regard it". In line eleven, it can be noted that because of the negative social and physical impacts of the alcohol, the subject in question develops a strong dislike for the object. This hatred, however, assumes a problematic posture since it is also alternated with the desirable emotion of brotherliness (line 12) that suggests a sense of relatedness. Hence, a victim the individual may be but not an unwilling one.

The question then is what might be the reason for the love that has overridden the life threatening effects of alcohol that it has made the subject a willing victim? The answer is

not explicit in the text. In fact, it appears that it is the failure to discern the answer to this seemingly unmerited love that has caused the speaker to end the poem with a question: "The life of drunkards, how disconcerting!/ How can one's bloodthirsty foe be loved?" (line 13-14). These two lines are suggestive of the fact that the seeming incompatibility between the negative impacts of alcohol and the drunkard's love of it nevertheless, excites a feeling of astonishment in the speaker of the poem. This love is "disconcerting" in the sense that it seems to be as good as loving one's own destruction.

A potential answer, however, might still be implicit in line twelve: "But on just the third day as your brother you regard it". Alcohol is regarded as one's own brother seems to suggest a positive emotional state the subject enjoys during intoxication. The alcohol might bring a momentary alleviation of a sense of aloneness experienced when the subject is not intoxicated. Alcohol, put otherwise, might be the drunkard's sanctuary from the pain of separateness. This destructive engagement at the level of physical, social and economic well-being, thus, can have a palliative value at the level of emotional or psychological well being (however hard it may be to sustain).

What is the nature of the sense of connectedness that may be induced by alcohol? Does it mean that during the intoxication the drunkard experiences a sense of connectedness to everyone (even perhaps to everything) s/he encounters? Or does it mean that the alcohol effects a contemplative state of mind that s/he feels connected to whatever idea or image that enters the orb of her/his imagination? In short, is the unitive experience being experienced at the level of the psyche or that of the sense world (or both)?

Although an answer for this question does not seem explicit in the text, the fact that s/he enjoys and pursues a "brotherly" connection with alcohol implies that the chemical alteration induced by the substance must have been rendering her/him more receptive to any form of interconnectedness available (physical or mental). Should this be the case, the unitive sense of self experienced may be equated with the all-inclusive experience that lies at the summit of mystical consciousness. The problem with this way of engendering unitive sense of self, however, is its transience. This unitive experience is unlikely to be sustained when the alcohol is excessive (which would likely be tantamount

to clouding mental acuity) or when the effect is over and the usual brain chemistry is restored.

Another problem is the difficulty involved in integrating the experience into everyday life and maintaining it over time. In this regard, Shoshanna (2002) observes that "for those brief moments [during inebriation] they walk through the gateless gate and taste their original nature. But…depending upon how they integrate the experience, the return back [*sic*] to "everyday reality" can take a toll" (p. 201). If the person fails to sustain the "taste" of her/his "original nature", the sense of separateness that follows the end of the manipulation of brain chemistry might, thus, be even more painful than it was before the intoxication.

Within this context, the subject of the poem seems to be engaged in an elusive struggle to remedy her/his existential pathology that is lacking in felt connectedness. What is more, the desired effects of alcohol will grow to be elusive as her/ his body adapts to the chemical effects of the substance. Why would the subjects of this poetic text then pursue this experience of connectedness which is insubstantial (in addition to being imbued with negative physical, social and economic repercussions)? This instance seems to further reinforce the fact portrayed in *Meqabir Meritsu* (The Gloomy World) and *Kesiru* (Crisis in Tandem) that the seemingly basic principle of life (self preservation) can be negated by the aggressive pursuit (in these cases) for experiences of connectedness however fleeting they might be. This in turn seems to speak to the prominence of the desire for the experience of self/other connectedness.

4.4.2 *Anes Zimereni* (What Embitters Me)

As in the foregoing text, the possibility of an all-inclusive sense of connectedness also seems to be depicted in *Anes Zimereni* (What Embitters Me) by Desta Cherqos. Money and love are subjects that reveal the text's implicit conception of self. The notion that want renders life unbearable is probably a common assumption. According to the text, this assumption is held by "all" people:

መሪር እዩ ኢሉ°ም'ኒ

ናብራ ብዘይ ገንዘብ
ሕሱም እዩ ኢሎምኒ
ክትነብሮ ዘይሕሰብ
መሪር እንተበለኒ
ኩሉ ሰብ ብሓባር (line 1-6)

They say bitter
Is a life of want;
Miserable,
Utterly unlivable;
Bitter, all declare in unison.

The text's conception, that a life of want is bitter for "all", leaves no room for individual variations. Indeed, money (as a means of securing material needs) occupies a pivotal role in human life. It would, for instance, mean the satisfaction of basic human needs such as food and shelter. Lack of it would, on the other hand, mean frustration of these needs and therefore misery or even the threat of death. Material abundance money can buy might also create a sense of security by creating an illusive shield against the inherent vulnerability of embodied existence. Hence, there is ground, in giving money an important role in securing livelihood and some degree of happiness on one hand, and in portraying economic poverty or lack of money as an unbearably painful experience on the other.

The categorical word "all" in the last line of the foregoing extract, however, is likely to work against the truth value of the statement. If this statement is regarded as a hyperbole, much in the tradition of the literary arts, on the other hand, its implication can be safely toned down to mean most people accord money high value that its absence or deficiency is believed to make life miserable. The persona of this poetic text challenges such popular assumption arguing that it is not the absence of money but the absence of love that embitters life:

ኣነስ ዝመረኒ
ብዘይ ገንዘብ ዘይኮነስ
ብዘይ ፍቕሪ ምንባር። (line 7-9)

What embitters me yet
Is not a life want of money

But a life want of love.

In view of the above extract, it is only when life is lacking in love that it becomes intolerably painful. In other words, what makes life painful is not economic ordeal, and the endangerment of physical sustenance it entails, but the absence of affection. This, in turn, seems to imply contrasting characteristics implicated in money and love regarding the text's conception of self.

Money, as was previously mentioned, by securing economic well-being plays a pivotal role in self-preservation. In so doing, it obviously underscores individuality. Love, on the other hand, implies an element of sacrifice thereby privileging emotional oneness over individual well-being. As such, love emphasizes a sense of inclusiveness.

The metaphoric representation of a livelihood lacking in love as the disagreeable taste (a frequent and intimate sensation) of bitterness implies the unbearably painful nature of such an existence. Hence, according to this text, what embitters human existence is not the deficiency of needs that are important for individual survival but the absence of a unitive experience of self that is characteristic of love. Love, thus, is conceived of as existentially more important than money and the physical wellbeing it entails.

What kind of love is accorded such an overwhelming significance? This question is important in revealing the scope and ground of this unitive emotional experience. The text makes no mention regarding the nature of this love. Consequently, it is not clear whether it is romantic or familial love, or the love of God or an idea that is being addressed. The fact that love, without any specificity, is the subject of the poem, however, seems to invite a consideration of this emotion as a unity expressing itself in various forms (romantic, familial, cosmic, the love of God, etc.).

Such a consideration also seems to be merited in view of the persona's conception of it as an experience so meaningful that its absence is more painful than the lack or absence of money and the ordeals entailed therein. Such an all-inclusive conception of love is in keeping with the conception of this emotion as "a cosmic force, a divine ray that permeates the universe…the essence *upon which all life, subtle and manifest, depends*

[emphasis added]" (Goodchild, 2000, p. 197). The fact that love is conceived of as the basis for all forms of life confers on the emotion a generic identity that is inclusive of unitive self/other experiences in various forms and degrees. There is, as such, a possibility that a cosmic experience of connectedness could be the subject of the text. The persona of the text, in this sense, could be referring to love as a general principle of inclusiveness- an opposite of hatred which implicates divisiveness. The fact that the persona is embittered when love is absent, however, seems to suggest that the persona's consciousness of such a cosmic experience is not yet stable.

4.5 Introspective Gaze

In all the preceding texts, different factors (such as sensual pleasure, family, society, politics, beauty, alcohol and nature) that allow or disallow the experience of unitive self and their bearing on the poetic representation of human suffering have been analyzed. What all these factors have in common is that they are characteristic of self/world connectedness, i.e., a person's relatedness to the sense-perceptible world. Yet, what is perhaps most fascinating about human potentiality is that one can also relate to oneself by either developing a bond within him/herself or by dissociating an aspect of him/herself. Such is the nature of the sense of self addressed in the next poetic text.

4.5.1 *Lomi'win Alena* (Unremitting War)

The poetic text *Lomi'win Alena,* by Mulu H. Slassie, opens up a new and perhaps striking vista into the experience of self than have been explicated in the study thus far. While the previous texts express various experiences of unitive self that violate the sensory experience of self/other separateness, this text portrays a sense of separateness that violates the sense-experience of a unified biological entity. Put otherwise, what appears to be a unified self to human sense-experience is pictured in this poetic text as a divided self experientially. Hence, while the preceding texts portray the self as a physical entity with porous self-boundaries, this text portrays it as a psychic entity divided against itself.

In the first four lines of this poem, it can be noted that the consciousness of such an experience seems to be a recent phenomenon to the persona of the speaker:

ዓሚ ቅድሚ ዓሚ ኢና ጀሚርናዮ
ሓዝ ክሕዝ ጥምጥም ቃልሲ ወሊዕናዮ።
ይኸውን ኣይኸውንን ዝብል ዛዕባ ኣልዒልና
ወግሐ ፀብሐ ባእሲ ስኒት ሓሪሙና (line 1-4)

A year or two it has been now
Since we waged war in a grip of death.
Rived by rival views,
War; day in, day out, serenity has fled.

The fact that the fight is a recent phenomenon is suggestive that the sense of a unified self usually accords well with sensory perception. As can be induced from the above excerpt, however, one can also be conscious of an experiential reality that challenges such a perception of self. Once brought to his/her awareness, this sense of a divided self has now become a constant experience that has driven peace away from the persona. The unsettling effect of this awareness is spelled out in the following lines:

መሬት ብገፊሑ ኣብ መፃብብ ኮይንና
ንቋሰል ንዳመ ደደንበርና ሒዝና
ዛሕ ንብሃሃል ሎሚ እውን ኣለና
ምስቱ ፅርዲ ናተይ ምሰዮ ሕልና። (line 6-9)

In a cranny while wide open the land is,
Inflicting wounds on each other from within our frontiers,
To death we fight; even to this day
With my foe with my own conscience.

It should be evident from the above extract that the image of blood plays a central role in depicting the sense of psychic disintegration the persona has faced. Coupled with other battle imagery such as *frontier*, *wounds* (line 6) and *foe* (line 9), this image captures an emotional world assailed by chaos and violence.

Needless to say, the blood in this text has no material reality. The image of pain resulting from bloodshed, thus, is used to describe the mental anguish engendered by being resistive of an aspect of him/herself (i.e., his/her conscience). Put differently, the fight seems to animate an immortal war (at least so far as the life of the psyche on the physical place of existence is concerned) one is engaged in to dissociate a certain aspect of

him/herself. By extending the reaches of war and antagonism into a self that is assumed to be a unified whole, this experience seems to give war and enmity a deeper semantic dimension.

The image of a war within physically small confines "in a cranny" (line 6), seems to render this psychical war even more gruesome than the physical war. The spatial imagery in the above line suggests the feeling of being trapped in an intrapsychic or intrapersonal war where escape seems to be out of the question. What seems to make the pain of this war even worse is the statement that this war is unremitting. This is suggested in the title of the poem which reads *Lomi'win Alena* which literally means we are still the same way. This meaning can also be inferred from the penultimate line of the text: "To death we fight; even to this day" (line 8).

The sense of self/other separateness in the realm of sensory reality is not so surprising since this illusion is endorsed by the limitedness of sense perception. This feeling within oneself, however, is likely to be disorientating. How can one have a sense of otherness within him/herself? As such, this experience of violence and pain within a person seems to pose a disquieting challenge to the naive conception of self as a unified and organized entity. More importantly, this condition of experiencing an "other" within oneself has significant implications for the conception of the self/other dichotomy in the sensory world.

In a consideration of the self as unitarily interconnected with the world, the individual mind is reflective and constitutive of the world. The individual and the world are implicated in each other. In a sense, thus, the mental fragmentation of the individual described above is a microcosmic psychic reflection of the fragmentation experienced in his/her relation with the external (physical) world. Thus conceived, an insight into one's own psyche can help to diagnose and remedy the illusion of self/other separateness from within. The focus of such consciousness would be more on the psyche than on the sense-perceptible world.

Such an insight into oneself, according to mysticism, is the gateway to the realization of unitive consciousness. Barry (1983) in this regard writes:

> Above everything else, the inner way leads to an understanding that all is one and one is all; that the self is one continuous process with God, the cosmos or whatever term a particular culture or individual chooses to call ultimate and eternal reality. (p. 462)

Within this context, realizing the experiential manifoldness of apparent physical oneness is a prerequisite for the realization of the experiential oneness of apparent physical manifoldness. The poetic text, thus, presents us with a miniaturized form of the world whose increased comprehension and management can lead to an expanded consciousness of self that is inclusive of all reality.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

In the first four texts of the study, *Meqabir Meritsu* (The Gloomy world), *Neqefeta* (A Reproach), *Kesiru* (Crisis in Tandem), and *Timuy Nikibeli'a* (A Prey for the Hungry), sex is a means through which the unitive sense of self is pursued. These texts demonstrate the desire for this experience is overwhelming. This is so much so that the fear of pain and/or death is rendered invisible. This, in a sense, seems to explain, if not justify, the self-destructive behavior of the subjects of the first three of these poetic texts. In the fourth text (*A Prey for the Hungry*), on the other hand, the disconcerting psychological, physical and economic violence against women that could be involved in a blind pursuit of the sexual desire is portrayed.

The dissolution of separateness in an instance of sexual ecstasy, however, is elusive as the self/other dichotomy is suspended only temporarily. What is more, the suffering that accompanies this means of inducing the unitive sense of self overshadows its fleeting ecstasies. Hence, these texts demonstrate that conceived as an end, the sexual experience is only a symptomatic treatment to the problem of separateness and that it is fraught with physical, psychological and socioeconomic repercussions.

The sense of self/other separateness is also blurred in romantic ties. The significant meaning that is accorded to romantic ties, which are usually predicated on prospective sexual engagements, is expressed in the fifth and sixth texts, *Yibreheley Getsika* (Illumine Your Face) and *Atranos* (Lectern). While this emotional connectedness dislodges the preoccupation with self-preservation in the fifth text, it is given the power to support and complete the selfhood of the persona of the poem in the sixth. These positive experiential significances are, however, overshadowed by the shiftiness of the objects of desire in both texts. This condition seems to leave both speakers of these poetic texts apprehensively urging their beloved to remain unchanged.

This unsteadiness of the sense of oneness induced by sexual or romantic relationships seems to reveal a tragic story of human existence that our easily accessible source of solace is also, paradoxical enough, our very source of misery. In view of this, unless otherwise overpowered by or/and integrated into other means of transcending the separate sense of self, "genital love", to use Freud's (1961, p. 101) term, can be an extremely destructive way of suspending the dread of separateness.

It should be noted, however, that unlike Freud's contention, the detriment of sex does not seem inherent to the very act. Its undesirability seems to be true only when it is perceived as an end by itself. However, when unthwarted, sex becomes an integral part of larger fabrics of human existence where the transcendence of a separate sense of self can be experienced in an increasingly sustained manner. Sex, in this respect, is realized in its totality as a matrix from which the family, society, the human race and every other form of life at large issue. In keeping with this, a more inclusive view of sexuality is discussed in the seventh poetic text entitled *Motn Hiywotn* (Life and Death).

Unlike the preceding texts, this poem presents the positive attributes of sex. It portrays a healthy (both physically and emotionally) way of dealing with the sexual urge with a relatively sustainable unitive sense of self. In this text, sex as a means of pursuing a fleeting desirable sensory experience is denounced as being deadly while in its procreative function it is depicted as meaningful and joyous. In this respect, the experience of self transcendence that began with the sexual act is further sustained with the emotional interconnectedness the parents experience with their offspring. Hence, through these two conflicting characteristics (portrayed as death and life), this text portrays the double-edgedness of human sexuality.

The positive image of sex, however, does not necessarily translate into a conception of an immaculate familial sense of interconnectedness. The sense of oneness within a family may be fractured when, for instance, the experience is predicated on whether or not the child grows into a behavioral mold designed for him/her by the parents. Such is the case with the child-parent relatedness discussed in *Nimintay Alilen?* (Why did they ululate?).

Even if the sense of connectedness within a family is characterized by unconditionality, however, this social unit cannot secure a sustained unitive sense of self. This is true because, although family-based unitive sense of self is more inclusive and more sustainable than sex induced unitive experiences, this too can have a fissure that gives rise to a dualistic interpretation of life at larger levels of reality (such as national, international, cosmic).

This possibility is portrayed in the last text (ninth) in the first section of the analysis (i.e., Biological Bond). In this poem entitled *Zektam* (An Orphan) it does not seem difficult to infer that the subject of the poem had enjoyed a strong sense of oneness with her family members. This sense of connectedness was so strong that its severance by the death of her parents renders the life of the subject of the poem bereft of meaning that death seems to be a welcomed refuge.

In sum, all the texts in this section exhibit the desire and experience of unitive sense of self informed by biological drives and ties and the affective states thereof. The desirable experience they induce thus suffers from the precariousness and exclusivity of biological ties. As such, they are unfinished voyages on the road to the sustainable and all-inclusive unitive consciousness which is a state redeemed from the suffering entailed in a sense of separateness.

This leads us to a discussion of a conception of self that is not confined to and predicated on the body. The first two of the seven texts treated under the second category (The Sense of Self and Society) picture the sense of self/other separateness within the context of a society. In the poetic text entitled *Rifer Nab Meqabir* (Referred to the Grave*)*, how economic disparity may disallow a unitive sense of self is discussed. In *Halyotu Yitrefeni* (Their Care I Want Not), on the other hand, the cultural scheme that could feign a sense of societal oneness is elaborated.

The remaining five texts deal with unitive experiences of self based on a more inclusive experience of reality that embraces one's people as a whole. In *Shih Gize Imine* (My Fervent Desire) and *Kisab Meqabirey* (Unto My Grave) the sense of connectedness is expressed in sacrificial postures the patriot assumes for his/her people. In both these

texts, the willingness to bear adversities for the good of the people is stressed. This selfless sacrificial devotion to one's people is valued so much so that it is equated with the divine mission of Jesus Christ in Lidet (Nativity). This poetic text asserts that selflessness (animated in the freedom fighters) is the original nature of humanity and is only precluded when one is estranged from her/his divine likeness to God. The text's equation of the freedom fighters and Jesus Christ, however, overlooks the difference in the means and scope of these redemptive acts i.e., while the former is carried out by war and is confined to Ethiopia, the latter was fundamentally nonviolent and universal.

In the sixth text in this second section, entitled *Tehabeni Ayder* (Proud be Ayder), a sense of societal oneness is inspired by a retaliative war. By overlooking nonviolent means of resolving the conflict, this text displays the channeling of the dissolution of self/other separateness within a country for violent ends. Instead of calming the situation, this unity is used to further perpetuate the horrors of war. The text, hence, exemplifies the possible danger of the unitive sense of self that is confined to national bounds. Similarly, the last text in this section, *Kihalif Ilu'yu* (To behold the Daybreak), is a depiction of an instance where the sense of oneness that is based on the flux and limitedness of socioeconomic and political factors transmutes into social disparity. These grounds collapse as the war ends and the people find themselves at incompatible sociopolitical positions where they are left to enervate in the recesses of poverty.

Since the unitive sense of self in these texts is based on immaterial ideals, the exclusivity and ephemerality entailed in body-based unitive sense of self are diminished. These lived realities are rooted in a broader ground for unity, such as the society or nationality, than body-based unitive experience, which is rooted in a given opposite sex or familial ties. For this reason, they present the dissolution of self/other category anchored on grounds that transcend biological ties. Still, on a scale broader than one's society, these poetic texts implicate collective self/other separateness. They are, put otherwise, depictions of a sense of oneness that is not yet marked by the transcendence of race and nationality. Nationalism, as is depicted in these texts, seems to suggest the extrusion of full humanity and the rest of life (other forms of life). In this regard, they are expressions of dualistic conceptions of reality. Hence, unless this sense of collective self/other dichotomy is

further transcended, the unitive sense of self experienced cannot be sustained within the various strata of reality.

This is not to downplay the fact that the unitive sense of self represented in the above texts, as being one with one's whole society or country, is perhaps one of the most cherished traits in human history. Not many appear to raise their sense of self as far as this point on the trajectory of the unitive consciousness. Hence, those who achieve such an inclusive sense of self are likely to leave their unmistakable marks in history as epitomization of greatness. As noble as this unitive sense of self may be, however, if its progression ends here, it would not be difficult to see its potential for violence entailed in collective polarized self/other separateness such as swarms the world.

In the text in the third category (Communion with Darkness) a universally shared aspect of reality, exemplified in the silence and stillness of darkness, is the portal for the experience of connectedness. In comparison to the first two categories, it may be argued that this text seems to disrupt the usual grounds for connectedness. This text portrays a realization of kinship between a human being and the nonhuman darkness via the harmony of the speaker's desire for stillness and its consummate exemplification in darkness. This suggests the possibility for the perception of relatedness in phenomena deemed disagreeable, thereby pointing at how the all-inclusive sense of interconnectedness can unfold in different (and often unexpected) ways. Should creativity be conceived of as a "new" way of engagement with life, it may be argued, in this respect, that this realization of unusual sameness is a mark of this quality.

Although this text expresses a striking experience of self/other connectedness, the dissociation of the day time and its concomitant commotion is also evident. This dualistic consciousness reveals the fact that the persona of this text is not fully in harmony with reality as a whole. As such, the alleviation of suffering implicated in the sense of self/other connectedness between the persona of the poetic text and the darkness cannot be sustained through the flux of phenomenal reality (in the cycle of darkness, and the stillness implicated therein, and daytime, and its usual concomitant commotion).

The only texts that seem to transcend any form of dualistic consciousness are *Fiqiri Demegna* (Loving the Nemesis) and *Anes Zimereni* (What Embitters Me). In the first of these texts this possibility is realized by chemical manipulation of the human brain (alcohol). In the second text, on the other hand, the sense of an all-inclusive oneness seems to be suggested in its celebration of love as a cosmic principle whose meaning in life supersedes the value of physical subsistence. Yet, the difficulty of sustaining the experience is evident in both these texts. This is revealed in the transitory effects of alcohol, in the first text, and in the discontinuous experience of the speaker (implicated in the embitterment of his/her life when this desirable experience is missing) in the second text. Hence, although these two texts seems to show glimpses of a sense of cosmic interconnectedness, these desired experiences of oneness do not suggest the alleviation of suffering implicated in sustained nondual consciousness.

The last text, *Lomi'win Alena* (Unremitting War), treated in the fifth category (Introspective Gaze), appears to be a demonstration of an unusual aspect of the sense of self. This text presents a conception of self from an uncommon vantage point. While most of the texts present instances whereby the self/other boundary of sensory experience is challenged to varying degrees, here the sensory experience of a unified bounded self is met with fragmentation at the psychic level.

Consistent with the mystical interpretation of self, this psychic fragmentation is reflective of an individual's fragmented self/other experience at the phenomenal world. By implication, a sense of oneness within one's psychic world is reflective of a unitive sense of self in the sensory world. Within this context, an insight into one's psychic realm is indispensable in expanding one's sense of self. Hence, although the text expresses the excruciating pain of a fragmented psychic identity, it helps us, in its implication, to see the existential libration that may be obtained if this psychic fragmentation is brought to an end. Self-knowledge, within this context, would be the precursor of and equivalent to an existential comprehension of reality in general which would have profound implications for a sustained nondual consciousness and the alleviation of suffering therein.

5.2. Conclusion

In contradistinction to the self/other separateness of sensory perception, the Tigrigna poetic texts studied provide ample emotional experiences that demonstrate the disruption of this perception. Seventeen out of twenty texts portray unitive conceptions of self that elude a dualistic interpretation of reality to varying degrees. This is evidenced in the progressive unfolding of unitive consciousness from body-based unitive experience in sex and/or romance and familial bonds to psychological bond in patriotism, communion with an aspect of nature and finally the glimpses of an all-inclusive sense of self.

Hence, these literary texts present portrayals of the experiential elasticity of self whose consummation is realized in an all-inclusive unitive sense of self. Corollary to this, the fact that the urge to be inclusive of the "other" can be traced in most of the texts seems to reveal that the desire and experience of transcending the separate sense of self is an innate human striving animated in different contexts. As such, these texts can help us to conceptualize a sense of self that extends beyond the confines of the physical body.

With the exception of two texts in section four, all the unitive experiences portrayed in these texts, however, suggest a dualistic interpretation of reality in relation to an all-inclusive self/other oneness. A biologically rooted sense of oneness is manifestly exclusive of other persons that lie outside this ground. The sense of inclusiveness rooted in national bounds is likewise exclusive of people of other nationalities. Finally, the sense of connectedness with darkness explicated in the third category of the analysis is dissociative of the daytime and its concomitant commotion. Hence, although these texts demonstrate the progressive transcendence of the separate sense of self, they do not express the optimum potentiality of this mystical urge as an all-inclusive unitive consciousness. As regards the two exceptions, a self/other dichotomy of any sort is not implied. Hence, these texts seem to suggest a sense of all-inclusive oneness. The unsustainablity of this experience, however, can be observed in both texts.

Taking these points into account, all the above seventeen texts assume a complex relationship with the question of human suffering. They result in the alleviation of

suffering, implicated in instances of the dissolution of self/other separateness. However, they also result in its perpetuation when the portrayals of unitive experiences suggest dualistic consciousness at larger levels of reality (social, universal etc.) or when they fail to be sustained.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the suffering experienced or the prospect of one implicated in the frustration of the unitive sense of self, could in a certain sense be redemptive. This is because when denied sustained satisfaction of the desire for union, the experiencers may be urged to displace their means of yielding the sense of connectedness to broader or deeper grounds that could secure more sustainable unitive experiences. Suffering, in this sense, becomes salutary as it may open up the self in the direction of more inclusive experiences of reality whose consummation, according to the mystical conception of self, is marked by the transmutation of suffering in nondual consciousness of self.

In like manner, the suffering depicted in one of the three texts that focus on instances of self/other separateness (*Lomi'win Alena* (unremitting war)) has a positive implication for a fundamental comprehension of the operation of self/other connectedness. Rooting itself in the issue of intrapsychic relatedness, this text brings to our attention the existential insight that the individual and the cosmos implicate each other.

In view of this, it may be concluded that the experiential insights embodied in the Tigrigna poetic texts studied demonstrate an inextricable and complex interrelation between the phenomenon of human suffering and the sense of self. By demonstrating the elasticity of self, the texts reveal that suffering is not a phenomenon that is inherent to life but the making of a constrictive interpretation of reality that is bounded by the duality implicated in sense-perception. They also demonstrate that this mode of perception can be disrupted and the suffering implicated therein alleviated in the progressive unfolding of the unitive sense of self that defies the self/other boundedness of sensory reality. By implication, the texts indicate the potential of poetic texts for the destabilization and transformation of the deep-seated illusion of a separate sense of self and the alleviation of suffering entailed therein. Poetry, in light of these points, can enhance a much deeper,

more inclusive and harmonious engagement with the world than is usual in the sphere of everyday life.

5.3 Recommendations

The current study explored poetic representations of human suffering as they relate to experiential conceptions of self. The results indicate that the progressive transcendence of a separate sense of self has an alleviative effect on the phenomenon of human suffering. On the basis of this positive evaluation, the study has the following recommendations:

Since poetry, as demonstrated in the study, offers ample instances of the creative representation of the unitive urge and the transcendence of sense-bound conceptions of self, this literary genre should be regarded not for its own sake but for its positive contribution for the progressive transformation of human consciousness with redemptive implications. Poetry, in this sense, could be said to fulfill a great existential purpose that animates and satiates humanity's longing for enlightenment (as in freedom from the plight of existential ignorance) and its cherished ideas of harmonious existence.

With this in mind, encouraging research into this aspect of poetry can help in the exploration and nurturing of consonances of the self/other dyad beyond that which is based on sex, family or country. In this respect, future research could profitably focus on intrapsychic consciousness which provides a specific vantage point from which to inspect the interrelatedness of the individual and the cosmos.

Such poetic elements could also be meaningfully included in studies of non-dual consciousness in philosophy and religion. Alternatively, the mystical aspects of poetry could be engaged in dialogue with disciplines such as theology, philosophy and psychology that are interested in lived human experiences. Existential insights gained from such scholarly endeavors would in turn help to create a space within the public consciousness for ways of interpreting reality that destabilize repressive conceptions implicated in self/other dichotomies.

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Appendix A. Source Texts

(For easy reference, the texts in this appendix are placed in the order of their appearance in the analysis section of the study (chapter four))

1. መቓብር መሪፁ

ብርሃን ናብ ዘይብላ...
ፀልማት መፈጠራ
ሓዘን ምስ ትካዘ...
ስቓይ ዝሓፀራ
ይኸድ ኣሎ ወገን...
ኣብ ሓዊ ረጊፁ
ዝፀልመተት ዓለም...
መቓብር መሪፁ።።

2. ነቐፌታ

ቀደም ደቅሰባት እንትታሃራረፉ፣
ብፍቕሪ ብመውሰቦ ፀገሞም ይቐርፉ፤
ብውሑድ በቋራጭ ቀልባቶም የዕርፉ።።
ሎሚ ግን ሓልኪሱ ዘመን ተቐይሩ፣
ንፍቕሪ ደቂሶም ብሞት ይበቕሩ።።
ብኣዋጅ ከፊቱ ናይ ህይወት ዕዳጋ፣
መናእሰይ ወዲእዎም ሓይኹ በድራጋ።።
ቀለም ኣይፈሊ ወይ መነባብሮ፣
ማሃይም ኣይብል ስልጡን ባዓል
ሙህሮ፣
ከም ሓራዲ በጊዕ ካርኡ ብምስሓል፣
ከም ብዋዛ ቐሪቡ ዝንጉዓት ብምቕታል፣
ነ'ዛ ነቓዕ ዓለም ኣብዚሕላ ነኺል።።
ኣመሉ በብግዚኡ እናቐያየረ፣
ንምእላይ ዘይጥዕም ዓንቃፅ ጎበጨረ፣
ኮይኑ ሕማም ኤድስ፣
ወለዶ እንትድምስስ፣
ንዑኡ ንምጥፋእ እንተዘይተሪርና፣
ከንቱ ምትራፉ'ዩ ናይ ዕብየት ትልምና።።
ተግባር እንተዘይስዒቡ ደድሕሪ ዘረባ፣
ጭርሖ ንበይኑ ዳኣ ማዓዝ የሳግር ሩባ።።

3. ከሲሩ

“ነባህነ ነባህነ
ኮነ ንበይነ”
ኢሉ ነይሩ ኑብይ
ዘይብሉ ሰማዓይ
ዘቃልብ ስኢኑ
ምስ ተረፈ በይኑ።።

“ነብይ ኣብ ሃገሩ
ላሕ ኢሉ ፅሚሩ
ሓሲቡ ኣስተብሂሉ
ይስምዑኒ ኢሉ
ዝዛረቦ ኩሉ
ሰማዒ ዘይብሉ
ቆላሕ ዘይብልዎ
እዝኒ ዘይህብዎ
ዘይረክብ ናእዳ
ዘይድኻም ዘይፍዳ”
ኢሉ ቃል ኣምሂሩ
ብፍጥረቱ ኣምሪሩ።።
* * *

ብሓቂ እብለኩም
ኢሉ ዝነገሮም
ሓደ ንሓንቲ ይሓዝ
ሓንቲ ሓደ ትሓዝ
ዓይኒ ኣይተምፅእ መዘዝ
ኢሉ ኣሕሊፉ ትእዛዝ
ቆናጁ ምልኩዓት
ፅቡቓት ጉልቡታት
ገይሩ ፈጢሩዎም
ዕምበባ ኣምሲልዎም።።
ግን ልቦም ሸፊቱ
ሕጊ ምስ ሰሓቱ
ምስማዕ ከቢድዎም
ውነ ምግባር ኣብዮም
ኣብ ሰማይ ንከስስ
ደይብና ንወቕስ
ኢሎም ክዳዓሱ
ኣብዮም ክምለሱ
ሕዚ ግን ቀይሩ
ዘይነበረ ገይሩ።።
ሓደ ንሓደ ኢሉ
ካብኡ ንዝዘልሉ
መቕፃዕቲ ኣንጊዱ
ሰማያት ቀዲዱ
ገሃነም ኣውሪዱ
ምድሪ ኮይኑ ፍርዱ
ንኤይድስ ሰዲዱ
ስቃይ ተወሊዱ
ናብራ 'ውን ከቢዱ
ፍጥረቱ ኑዲዱ
ስኢኑ ዝስምዑ

ዘምህሮ ዘፅንዑ
ዝዘርኡ ሓሪሩ
ባዕሉ 'ውን ከሲሩ፡፡

4. ጥሙይ ንክበልዓ

ፅባቐኣ ኣዑሊሆም - ነቲ ዝሃሰሰ
ድሌት ናታ - ፍቓድ ዘይሓወሰ፡
ግህፅህፅ ኣቢሉ - ጥሙይ ንክበልዓ
ኣውፂኡማ ዕዳጋ - ዘይበሰለት ቆልዓ፡፡

5. ይብረሀለይ ገፅካ

ምሳኻ 'ተኾይነ - ኣይጠምየንን ፈሚሙ
ነብሰይ ፍትሕ ይብል - ረሲዑ ድኻሙ፤
ሓወይ ሰሓቐለይ - ኣይትእሰር ግንባርካ
ስንቀይ እዩ ምግበይ - ይብረሀለይ ገፅካ፡፡

6. ኣትራኖስ

ኩለንተናይ ብፍቕሪ ሸፊቱ
ግምዕ ከይብል ከይተርፍ ከንቱ
እምነተይ ከይሸርሸር ቀልበይ ከይግፈፍ
ቆፀይፀይ ከይብል ብኣኺ ከድግፍ
ተዓፂፉ ከይነብር ክተንብቢ ውሽጠይ
ደጋፊ ስኢኑ ከይግመስ ልበይ
ተስፋ ኣልቦ ኮይነ ከይነብር ብሕተይ
ፍቕረይ ከይዕፀፍ ኣትራኖስ ኩንለይ
ረይ ረይ ኣይትበሊ ሕድሪ ደልድልለይ

7. ሞትን ህይወትን

ንህይወት ንውልደት
ዘርኢ ዘቐፀረ
ንሞት ንስንብት
መሰረት ዘንበረ
ኩሉ ጭንቂ ኮይኑ
ተስፋ ዘፀልመተ
ሹሻይ ድራር ዓይኒ
ሕንጦይ ዘበርከተ
ሞትን ህይወትን
ክልተ ኮይኑ ባዕሉ
ንጥንቂቕት ኣድሒኑ
ንኻልኦት ቀቲሉ፡፡

8. ንምንታይ ዓሊለን?

ብኣውያት ሰኒና
ንቐበል ዓሊልና
ዝሞቱ ንርስዕ
ወሊድና ንትክእ።።
* * *
ብዝሑ ተባዝሑ ትውልዲ ይሕደስ
መረባ ንመልኡ ፈሪና ንሕነስ
እንተዘይወሊድና'ማ ገዳም እንዶ ክንኮን
ጫው ጭሩው ዘይብሉ ስፍራ ለመናንያን።።
ሰብ ወሊድና ንብል
ዘርእና ይቐፅል
ነበሩ ንበሃል
ሓቂ'ዩ ክንዕልል።።
* * *
ጥኑሳት ደጊፈን እግዚኡ ተማህሊለን
ጥምቐ ርሃፅ ኮይኑ ብፃዕሪ ኣዋሊደን
ሰንኪተን ጊዚተን ገለብ ሓፃፂበን
ዕልልልል... ኢለን ፅቡቐ ተመንየን
ካብ ማህፀን ዝወፀ ክሓዝላ ኣብ ዝባነን
ዕዳ ክሸከማ ኣብቲ ውሑድ ዓቕመን።።
ዓሊለን ኣንስቲ
ቀቢረን መዳሕንቲ
መኽፈቲ ኣፍ ሓራስ
ክልወስ ክሕምበሽ
ንሓራስ ከፅንዓ
ጊዚተን ከብልዓ።።
* * *
ቦኳሮ ደጋሞ ቁፅሪ ሰብ ወሲኽን
ዓው ኢለን ዓሊለን ፈጣሪ ኣሚነን
ትኩስ ሓዱሽ ህፃን ጋሻ ተቐቢለን
ዝሕዘል ዝቕለብ ዘፅዕረን ዘድክመን።።
መለቆሚ ዘርኣን
ክዕብያ ፅዒረን
ፅባሕ ሰብኣይ ዝኾን
ሎሚ ዝሸነለን።።
* * *
ዕልል ኢለናሉ ከም ንቡር ከም ባህለን
ቆልዓ ወሊድና ኢለን ምሒር ተሓጉሰን
ዳሕራይ ምስ ባፀሐ እንታይ ከምዝኸውን
ሎሚ ዘይፍለጥ ፈለኽ ዝብል ርእየን።።
ክሓቑሩ ክሓዝላ
ብጡብ ክዕንግላ
ብኽያት ክጥብራ

ኣፅጊበን ከሕድራ
ንሰብ ሰብ ክገብራ
ኣዕብየን ከምህራ።።
* * *
ግን ኣበይ ይፍለጥ ናይ ሰብ መወዳእታ?
ህይወት ጎደና'ዩ ምስ ጓሂ ምስ ደስታ
ክኸውን ዶ ይኸውን ሓድሽ ስዋ ጉዕሸ?
ወይ ድማ ዝመፅፅ ዘይጣዓም ንፉስ?
ፅጌረዳ ለይለይ
ካብ ማዕዶ ዝልለይ
ካብቲ ሰምሃል ምሩፅ
ካብ ሰቡ ዝበልፅ።።
ወይ ርጋፍ ዕምበባ ፍሪኡ ዝመርር?
ጠነግ ቆንጠፍጠፈ ኣምዐ እሾኽ ዳንዴር
ኣጉህዩ ዘሕምም ዘይብሉ ቁምነገር
ኣይናትናን ዝበሃል ዘዋርድ ዘሕፍር።።
እንታይ ትፍለጥ ዓለም?
ወትሩ ወለም ዘለም
ቀጥ ትብል ትዝምብል
ትመልእ ትነድል
እንታይ ድኣ ኣፍሊጡወን?
እንታይ ተራእይወን?
ቆልዓ ወሊድና ኢለን
ንምንታይ ዓሊለን?

9. ዘኽታም

ሓምቢሽኪ ግዒትኪ ለዊስኪ ሰንኪትኪ
ንመንኢኺ ኢልክዮ መን ከ ክበልዐልኪ?
ፅራይ 'ውን ዖሚቑኺ ብመዓር መይስኪ
ንመን ሒዝኪ ኢኺ መን'ዩ ክሰትየልኪ?
ፅቡቕ ተኸዲንኪ መን'ዩ ክንእደኪ?
መን የጥዕመላ ይብል መን ይዛረበልኪ?
ቆረርኪ ከፍኣኪ ሓመቕኪ ዓረቕኪ
መን'ዩ ክፈልጠልኪ መን ከ ክሓዝነልኪ?
* * *
ስድራ ቤትኪ ኩሎም ሞይቶም ተወዲኦም
ጭንቆም ሓሊፉ'ዩ ሓመድ ተኸዲኖም
ምስ መን ተዋግዒ ምስ መን ትዛረቢ?
ህልዋት ገዲፍኪ ዝሞቱ ክትሓስቢ።።
ኣቦኺ እኖኺ ኣሕዋትኪ ሞይቶም
በይንኺ ተሪፍኪ ኣብዛ ዓለም ዘኽታም
ጭንቂ መከራኺ ባዕልኺ ክኣሊ
መን ኣሎ ኣብ ጎንኺ ዝሕብሕብ ዝኣሊ?
ኣልቦ መፋጥርቲ ኣልቦ መጓዝምቲ

ጫው ጭሩው ንበይና ለይቲ ምስ መዓልቲ
ገዛኺ ጠምብዩ በረድ ማይ ኣትይዎ
ሃለውኪ ኣይሃለውኪ እንታይ ትርጉም ኣለዎ?

10. ሪፈር ናብ መቓብር

ጥዕና ክረክብ ኮሊሉ ኮሊሉ
ውሕጥ እናበለ ስቓዩ ክኢሉ
ከርተት ድሕሪ ምባል ናብቲ ናብቲ ኢሉ
ስኡን ብምኺኑ ተዓሪፉ ኣይብሉ
ሓባሪ ስኢኑ ምስ ፀንቀቐ ዓቕሉ
ፎስ ቃንዛ ክረክብ ሪፈር ተባሂሉ
ኣብታ ዘይትተርፍ ኣብኣ ሸኩዕ ኢሉ።።

11. ሓልዮቱ ይትረፈኒ

እንተለኹ ኣብ መሬት ብጥሜት ቆርሚደ
ብሓሳረ መከራ ብፀገም ነዲደ
ቁሪ እንትጠፍሓኒ ዕርቃነይ ወሚአ
ንሞት እንትናፍቐ ትዕግስተይ ወዲአ
ዝፀልኣኒ ሰበይ ገፁ ዝመለሰ
ተስካረይ እንተበልዐ ዳስ እንተደስደሰ
ስቡሓት ኣውዲቑ ሜስ እንተመየሰ
ሓወልቲ ሰሪሑ መቓብር እንተሃንፀ
ሕብርታት ብምምራፅ መንደቐ እንተግየፅ
እንታየይ እዩ ንዓይ እንታይ ይረብሓኒ
ጋቢ ኾይኑ ድዩ ነብሰይ ከሙቐኒ
ሓልዮቱ ይትረፈኒ ሓልዮት ድሕሪ ቐብሪ
ንህልው ይጨነቐ ኣለኒ ፈጣሪ

12. ሽሕ ጊዜ እምነ

እቲ ሕማቐ ናትካ - ንርእሰይ ይግበሮ
ናብራይ ኣምሩሩ - ናብራኻ የምዕሮ
ተሓጉስካ ሪኣ - ልበይ እንተቐሰነ
ወገነይ ሕልፈትካ - ሽሕ ጊዜ እምነ።።

13. ልደት

ኣዳም ንዘጥፎኦ ስጋ ጎቢጥዎ፣
ድኽመቱ ፀገሙ ፈጣሪ ሪእዎ፣
እምነት ብምጉዳሉ ብሞት ቀፂዖ።።
ጊዜ እንተይረኽበ ንዓርሰ ነቐፌታ፣
ምሒር ተቐጢዑ ቐፂዖ ጎይታ።።
ምሚት ምስጀመራ ስግኡ ምስ ነብሱ፣
ልቡ ተረቢሻ ሐዚኑ ተጣዒሱ።።
ክስርዝ ክድምስስ 'ት ኽቢድ ውሳነ፣

“ፍረ” ጥፍኣት ኣዳም ናይ ውሉዱ ሕነ፣
ክብሩ ኣሕሊፉ ሂቡ ንናይ ደቁ ኽብሩ፣
ሓጥያት ብደሙ ሓኺቡ ክስቀል ብፍቕሪ፣
ሞት ስጋ ቀኒሉ ሞት ነብሲ ክቐሪ፣
ቃል ናብ ስጋ ተቐይሩ ኣብ ድንግል ሓዲሩ፣
በዙይ ክልተ ሽሕ ዓመት 'የሱስ መፅዩ ነይሩ።።
ዓዓመት ነኽብሮ ብፀሎት ብስግደት፣
እዙ'ዩ ምሽጥሩ ናይ ክርስቶስ ልደት።።
ሓያል ቅዋም'ዩ ደም ብደም ከካሓስ፣
ምእንቲ ህይወታት ሓንቲ ህወት ምፍሳስ፣
እት ዝኽእላ'ምበር ካብ ልቢ ዝፍፅማ፣
መራር ሞት ዝውሕጣ ምስ ክብራ ምስ ትርጉማ፣
ልክዕ ከም እየሱስ ተላእኸ ካብ ላዕላይ፣
ወይ ከም'ት ወድ ህዝቢ ከም'ት ተጋዳላይ፣
ካሊእ'ማ ኣይፈልጣን ከፈልጣ ኣይደልን፣
ምእንተ ብዙሓት ሞት ኣይቐበልን፣
እኳ ዳኣ ይሻኾት ብደም ሓው ይሸቅጥ፣
ብኡኡ እናማሓለ ቆርበት ድኻ ይቐልጥ፣
ዘይናትካ ከምስል ይበኪ ዝሕንዝሕ፣
ቅድሜኻ ከይኮን መኽነይነይ የብዝሕ።።
ከምኡ እንትብል ድማ ምስ ፀላእቲ ይውግን፣
ስብራት ወገኑ ከክንዲ ዝፅግን።።
ንፍቕሪ ደቅ ሰብ ህይወት ብምኽፋሎም፣
ጎይታን ተጋደልትን ኣማሳሲለዮም።።
ንነገሩ'ማ... ብኣምሳልና ፈጢርናኩም እንድዩ ኢልና፣
ዋላ'ኳ እንተሓልከሰት ስጋ ዓንቃፅ ኮይና፣
ንሕና ንኽንቅኒ ዝሓልፉ በይዛና፣
ንሓቂ ዝወድቁ ኣሕዋት መሊኦምና።።

14.ክሳብ መቓብረይ

ኣራዊት ናይ መሬት...
ቀለበት ሰሪሑም
እንተዝኽቡኒ
ንኽብረይ ደፊሮም...
ኣካላይ መንጭዑም
ሽግር እንተዝህቡኒ
ዓለም ዕንቀጹ ኮይና...
በሪ ኣፍደገኣ
እንተዝፀበኒ
ከዋኽብቲ ሰማይ...
ነበልባል ሓዚሎም
እንተዝነጥቡኒ
ንዓኽስ ሃገረይ
ክሳብ መቓብረይ።።

15. ተሓበኒ ዓይደር

ዓይደር ከም ሰዶም ዓይደር ከም ገሞራ፣
ናይ ነበልባል ዝናብ ካበይ ተማሂራ?
ዓይደር እንተትሕተቲ ብዝዝከር ትማሊ፣
ከምዙይ ዝበለ ቕዲ ካበይ ኣምፂኽዮ እንተትባሃሊ፣
ካብ ውቕሮ ዶ ካብ ዴስኣ ክትብሊ?
ወይስ ካብ ዓዲ ታህሰስ ደንደስ ዳዕሮተኽሊ?
ካብ ሓውዜን ዶ ክኾን ካብ ክልተበለሳ?
ወይስ ካብ ሓሙሲት ካብ ከተማ ማርሳ?
ርኢኺ ከይንብል ወሰን ወሰን ሸረ፣
ኣብ ጥቓኺ እኒሃ ማእኸል ዋዕረብ ሳምረ።።
ልዕሊ ዕስራ ጊዜ ብጀት ተደብደበት፣
እዙይ ዘይባሃል ግፍዒ ተፃወረት።።
ካብ ዛና ዶ ዳኣ ዕዳጋሰሉስ ዓዴት?
ወይ ካብ እምባላጀ ካብ ሳሓርቲ ግጀት?
ካብ ዕዳጋ ዓርቢ ድዩ ካብ የጭላ?
ወይስ ካብ ዓሊተና ገማግማ እገላ?
ዓሊብኪ ዶ ንበል ካብ ወርዒ ዝነጠረ?
ወይ ካብ ሃገረ ሰላም ወይ ካብ 'ዳ ዓረ?
እንታይ ከ ንሕተት ዓይደር መዓት እንትወርደና
ልቢ እንተይጠርጠረ?
ወሪድዎም ቆልዑት እቱይ እቱይ ኣይበሉ፣
ሙህሮኣም ተማሂሮም ምስ ኩዕሾኣም ክዘሉ፣
ደወል እንዳሙህሮ ብሃንቀውታ እንትፅበዩ፣
ዓይደር መረባኺ ብደሞም ጨቅዩ።።
ኣየ ዓይደር!
ደቅና ክተምህሪ 'ትንብለኪ ዓይደር፣
ጉንበት ዒስራን ሸሞንተን ውዒልኪ ነገር፣
ለከ እስኽስ ናይ ሰማእታት መንደር።።
ብደም ዕሸላት ዝረዊ መንፈሱ ዝህድስ፣
ጋኔን ብሱም ቅዱስ ኣብ ጥቓና እንትነግስ፣
ድሕሪ ክልተሽሕ ዓመት ተፈጥረ ሄሮድስ፣
ኣድንጊቱ ደቅኺ ቀቲልልኪ ኢሳያስ።።
እዙይ ምስኮነ እምባኣር ክነግረኪ ዓይደር፣
ብኹራ ተሓሕያ ካብ ጫፍ ናብ ጫፍ ሃገር።።
ከም ኣሙ እተቕርፆ ቁጡዕ ዓርዓር ነብሪ፣
ህዝብኺ ተሲኡ ምስ ካልኦት ክዕሪ፣
ንኽቃላጥፎ ናይ በደልቱ ቀብሪ።።
ዓፋር ከምኣመሉ ካርኡ ስሒሉ፣
ደቁ ንኽ ሰልፍ ኣብ ምፍዳይ ሕነ ክውዕሉ፣
ሶማል'ውን ተሲኡ ብዘይ ዋዓል ሕደር፣
ምስ ጀጋኑ ሃረሪ ኣብ ጀጎል ክፀምበር።።
ደቡብታይ ወፈሩ ፀላእቱ ክገንዝ፣
ምስ ደቅ ጋምቤላ ቤንሻንጉል ጉሙዝ።።

ጌረሪ ጌረሪ ኢሎም ጀጋኑ ኦሮሞ፣
ኣምሓሩ ተሲኦም ጨቢጦም ጎዞሞ፣
ፈራዕራዕ ከብሉ ናይ ፀላኢ ህድሞ፣
ሻዕቢያ ዝሃደሞ ተሳጊሩ ዓርሞ።።
ዓይደር ኣብ ማማያትኪ ምስ ወረደ መዓት፣
ሆ ኢሎም ተስኦም ብሄር ብሄረሰባት፣
ጥቕዓቶም ዶ'ይኮነይ ናይ ትግራዋይ ጥቕዓት።
ቅሒሩ ተሲኡ ህዝቢ ኢትዮጵያ ምስ ፈደይቲ
ሕነ ክስራዕ፣
ዘይተርፍ ኮይኑ ዓይኒ ምንብዑ ኣፍንጫ
እንትውቓዕ።
ማስቃኪ ዓይደር ማስቃ ተማሃሮ፣
ዋነኦም ረኺቦም ኣብ ባድመ ኣብ ሸራሮ።።
ኣብ ደም ሰብ ተኣልካ ከሪሙ ከምዘይሓጊ፣
ክማሃሩ ነይርዎም ካብ ፋሽሽቲ ደርጊ።።
ደርጊ ወግሐ መሰየ ንፁሃት እናደብደበ፣
እዩ ቅልጥፍ ኢሉ ዋግኡ ዝረኸበ።።
ሎም 'ውን ሰራዊት ሻዕቢያ ድፋዑ ተሰይሩ፣
ብግፍዒ መራሕቱ ተሳሊጡ ቀብሩ።።
ሕነ ዓይደር ማዓዝ ጥራሕ ኣብ ባድመ፣
ኣይ ንሱ'ንዶ ኣብ ሳዋስ ዘጉዘምዘመ፣
ኣብ ሻንበቆ ዛላምበሳ ምፅዋዕ ተደግመ።።
እን ኢሳያስ መሬትና ምውራሮም ከየሕፈሮም
ኣብ ዝባን ደቅና ግፍዒ ውዒሎም
ቀሲኖም ክሓድሩ? ብምንታይ? ከመይ 'ሎም?
ዓድን ኣግኣዚ ዶ ኣይኮነን ግዒ ዓድ'ን ሓየሎም።።
ዓይደር እንኳዕ መበቆልኪ ዓዒ ኣናብስ ኮነ፣
ኣብ እንዳ ጀጋኑ ኣብ ኣንዳ ፈደይቲ ሕነ።።
ዓይደር ሰማእታትኪ ወትሩ ይዘከሩ፣
ግድያት ፋሽሽቲ ምኂኖም ይንገሩ፣
ግፍዐኛ ከምዝጠፍእ ብግልፂ ይመስክሩ።።
ነቶም ዝተረፉ ኣዕብዩ ሓብሒብኪ፣
ንገሪ ዘሕብን ወገን ከምዘለኪ፣
ዓይደር ስፍራ ሰማእታት ሓድግና ዝብለኪ።።

16. ክሓልፍ ኢሉ'ዩ...

ፀሊኡ'ዩ እምበር ኣርዐት ናይ ባርነት
ህይወቱ ዘሕልፍ ክረክብ ናፅነት
ኣይፋለይን ዝብል ግፍዒ ጠንጠነለይ
ጨኪኑ ዝጋደል ሕንግድ ኢሉ እምብለይ
ዕላማ ዓቲሩ ቅልፅሙ ዝጠምር
ሞት ፀገም ዝቕበል መከራ ዝፀውር
ከም ንህቢ ሓቢሩ ዝጠጉግ ጠኒኑ
ስዒሩ ክወፅእ ዝቃለስ ኣሚኑ።

* * *

ህይወት ደልዩ እዩ ዕብየት ምስ ቅሳነት
ውርደት ክተርፈሉ ክወሃቦ ክብረት
ክመሃር ክፈልጥ ክወፅእ ካብ ጥምየት
ናፃ ሰብ ክኸውን ክጠፍእ ድኽነት
ክሓልፍ ኢሉ'ዩ ብርሃን መሚኡ ፅባሕ
ምስ ፀልማት ዝጓነፅ ክብርህ ክውግሕ
እምበር ደልዩ ኣይኮነን ሙብረ ቀታሊኡ
ፍርፋር ዝድርብየሉ ጠጥዑም በሊዑ።

17. ፅባቐሎ ለይቲ

ዝወሳወስ ፍጡር - ገዝኡ ምስኽተተ
ድኻም ስሚሩዎ - ዓይኑ ምስ ዓመተ፤
ሩፍታ ምስ ነገሰ - ምስኮነ ዕረፍቲ
ኣብቲ ድቐድቐ ፀላም - ፅባቐሎ ለይቲ።

18. ፍቐሪ ደመኛ

መጀመርታ መስተ ባዕልኻ ትኣልዮ፣
ከም ንእሽተይ ነገር ኣቐሊልካ ትርእዮ።
ሰልድኻ መዚዝካ ብድልየት ትዕድነ፣
እናደጋገምካ ትሰትዮ... ትሙዕነ።
ድሕሪኡ ይጅምር ኣዛዚኻ ምኽን
ጁባኻ፣ ዉነኻ፣ ነብስኻ... ምውናን።
ኣብዘይኮነ ቦታ ስጥሕ የብለካ፣
ታርኡ ብንዕቐት ቁልቁል ይሪኣካ፣
ንዒቔ ንናዓቐ ስሒቔ ንሳሓቐ
ኣሕሊፉ ይህበካ።
ንሓንቲ ማዓልቲ ትፅየፍ ትፀልኦ፣
ኣብ ሳልስቲ ድማ ከምሓውካ ትሪኡ።
የገርም የደንቐ ናይ ሰተይቲ ነገር
ብምንታይ ምኽንያት ደመኛኻ ይፍቀር?

19. ኣነስ ዝመረኒ...

መሪር እዩ ኢሎምኒ
ናብራ ብዘይ ገንዘብ
ሕሱም እዩ ኢሎምኒ
ክትነብሮ ዘይሕሰብ
መሪር እንተበለኒ
ሰብ ኩሉ ብሓባር
ኣነስ ዝመረኒ
ብዘይ ገንዘብ ዘይኮነስ
ብዘይ ፍቐሪ ምንባር።

20. ሎሚ ‘ውን ኣለና

ዓሚ ቅድሚ ዓሚ ኢና ጀሚርናዮ
ሓዝ ክሕዝ ጥምጥም ቃልሲ ወሊዕናዮ።
ይኸውን ኣይኸውንን ዝብል ዛዕባ ኣልዒልና
ወግሒ ፀብሐ ባእሲ ስኒት ሓሪሙና
ሕደጉ ኢሉ ዝኹሪ ዓራቒ ስኢንና
መሬት ብገፊሑ ኣብ መፃብብ ኮይንና
ንቋሰል ንዳመ ደደንበርና ሒዝና
ዛሕ ንብሃሃል ሎሚ እውን ኣለና
ምስቱ ፅርዲ ናተይ ምሰዮ ሕልና።

Appendix B. Rendered Texts

(For easy reference, the texts in this appendix are placed in the order of their appearance in the analysis section of the study (chapter four))

1. The Gloomy World

Void of light;
An abyss of darkness.
Enfolded in misery,
Sorrow and melancholy
Yonder my people troop;
On fire treading,
The gloomy world
The grave, for they have chosen.

2. A Reproach

When people hungered for one another of yore,
Wedlock would appease it;
Their desire would repose as easily.
Time has gone ill now.
United for love, in death they part.
In an open market of life,
It devours the young in a raw,
Indifferent to color or livelihood
Indifferent whether one is literate
Or illiterate,
Sharpening its knife, as if to slaughter sheep,
Beguiling the unwary it slays,
Cavities it adds to a world already in cracks.
Always altering its visage,
Unyielding, unbreakable,
Such is AIDS;
It annihilates a generation.
If we travail not to put an end to it,
Our dreams of growth in vain shall be.
For when action accompanies not speech,
Slogans are of no limbs.

3. Crisis in Tandem

“We shout and shout
Yet alone”
Said the prophet
When he found no one
Who heeds his words.
Deserted thus,
“A prophet in his land
travailed
Thoughtful and discerning
Hoping they would listen
All he had to say.
None yet listens
None takes him seriously
None gives ear;
No praises he gets
Only fatigue and affliction”
He spoke
Regretful of His creation.

“Verily, verily
I say unto you
One man shall to one woman cleave
And one woman to one man
Let not thine eyes bring thee misery”
He decreed.
Comely and charming,
Fair and Hearty,
Colorful as flowers
Having fashioned them.
But their heart strayed
And transgressed.
Ears hard of hearing,
Being perceptive they resisted.
“Yonder in the sky
In the afterlife let our retributions be”
They cried comforting themselves;
They would submit not.
He thus changed His ways
He did what before was done not

To those that His
Decree transgressed
Retribution He brought.
He rend the skies open
Perdition, He brought down on them;
Damnation here on earth!
AIDS is come,
Misery has come forth,
Unbearable life has become,
Creation is in flames,
For He found not
One heedful of His words.
His yield is now set ablaze
His labor- wasted in vain.

4. A Prey for the Hungry

Enhancing her beauty that had gone pale
Against her desire against her will,
By the hungry to the bones to be devoured
They brought her to the market- an unripe child.

5. Illumine Your Face

When I am with thee, hunger urges me not.
Oblivious of its weariness my body loosens up.
Smile my brother your frowns let me not see;
Illumine your face-for on it I feed.

6. Lectern

Head over heels in love,
I fear lest I collapse into triviality;
Lest my faith eroded, I stand stripped of glory.
Shore me up, feeble I am rendered,
Open mine heart lest a closed book I remain.
For want of a buttress let my heart break not,
Despaired and in solitude let me live not.
Be mine lectern that my love won’t cave in;
Be firm, be not flimsy.

7. Life and Death

For life and for pedigree
It knots the seed;
For death and parting
It lays foundation;
All rendering gloomy
It darkens hope.
Yet, a feast for the eyes
It also bestows a babe.
Life and death
Two, the one has become.
It spares the cautious;
The reckless- it destroys.

8. Why Did They Ululate?

We bid farewell in wails
And welcome in ululation.
The dead we forget
For we procreate and supplant.

We multiply; replenish the generation;
We fill the yard, become fruitful and rejoice.
If we bear fruit not, we shall become a monastery
A place for eremites where no soul is to be heard.
We have procreated, we proclaim thus.
Our seed endures
For a trace we have left;
It is meet that we shout for joy.

Uttering supplications, aiding the pregnant,
Who is in labor and in sweats, they midwifed.
They cooked, backed and birthing clothes washed
And shouted for joy.
Out from the womb onto their shoulders
A debt to carry, on their enfeebled body.
Women ululated,
Buried the placenta,
Kneaded dough, made bread,
And prepared porridge
That the nursing mother may breakfast

And be replenished.
.
A mother of one, a mother of two…their number grew.
They shouted for joy, faith on God reposed.
A new born; a fresh guest is delivered
Who shall be carried and fed; who shall leave them weary;
A knot for their pedigree
In travail to rear.
Tomorrow a man;
Today, he wets them.

They ululated, as befits their tradition,
Overjoyed for the birth of a child
Seeing him jerk. They know not yet what
In time shall become of him.
In their arms, on their backs they shall carry him;
Suckle him full,
Soothe his whines,
Nourish him,
Make a man out of him.
And send him to school.

What is yet known of the destiny of a human being?
Life is a journey traversed by joy and sorrow.
May he grow up to be a newly brewed *Siwa*?
Or a sour one that is unpalatable?
A slender rose
That is a joy to behold
Or a fragrant wild mint
A select of its kind?
Or a dislodged flower whose seeds are bitter
Or thorny as thistle, blackjack or redwing or stinging as nettle?
Or may he be insufferable and a good-for-nothing,
A shame to the family deemed an outsider.
What can be known of this world
That is always in limbo?
Now straight, next askew
Now filled next drained.
What knowledge have they then?
What vision?

For the birth of a child
Why did they ululate?

All your family members have departed;
Covered in dust done is their worry.
Who do you talk to now? Who do you converse with?
In thoughts of the dead absorbed; oblivious of the living.
Your dad, mom and siblings are dead;
You are left alone, an orphan in this world.
Bear alone then your anguish and distress
For succorless you are left.
No companion to trek along,
Quiet and lonely night and day
Your home is clammy permeated with icy water
What good is it whether you are dead or alive?

9. An Orphan

The meals you prepare
Who are they for?
The mead you brew
Who shall feast on it?
When gorgeously dressed, who will pay you a compliment?
Who will praise and honor you?
When cold, naked and desolate,
Who will know of you; who will pity you?

10. Referred to the Grave

To find a cure he wandered
Stomaching all his pain.
After trudging hither and thither,
For needy he was without a penny,
And none to care, all his vigor was drained.
To remedy his pain he was, thus, to the grave referred;
Wedged, into that preordained abode.

11. Their Care I Want Not

Alive yet by hunger consumed,
In affliction, in the furnace of ordeals,
Naked and flogged by cold,

I ached for death.
Yet my people turned their back on me.
Even if with lavish feast they now commemorate my departure,
Even if they slaughter fattened animals and brew mead,
And place a tombstone on my grave,
Beautifully its walls decorating,
What good will come of this now?
Will it be a shawl and warm me up?
Care after death I need not thus.
Let sympathy be for the living, for mine to the Creator is entrusted.

12. My Fervent Desire

May your ills upon me lie
May sweet become your life mine embittered,
That calm may be my heart beholding your joy
My people, unbounded my desire is for your deliverance.

13. Nativity

By flesh subdued Adam sinned,
His failing, God beheld,
And for being of little faith by death punished him.
Before Adam could bemoan his deed
Upon him was the wrath of God.
When his flesh and his spirit began to die,
His heart was troubled and rueful he became.
To absolve this grave verdict;
To redeem the fruit of Adam's damnation;
To glorify His children, His glory God forsook.
To cleanse sin with His blood, in love to be crucified;
To end the death of the spirit, while that of the flesh prevails;
Flesh the Word became, in the Virgin He came to dwell;
Two centuries ago Jesus was thus born.
Yearly we celebrate, in prayers and prostrations,
This mystery of Nativity.
What strong stance it is by death to tramp death;
A life to sacrifice for the lives of many!
Only the able can heartily accomplishes this,
With all its glory and meaning, swallow bitter death,
Who like Jesus is sent from the Heavens,
Or like the child of the people, like the freedom fighter.

None else knows it, nor does anyone desire to
For the good of many, none would embrace death.
Instead some draw lots and trade with the blood of their brother,
Swearing in his name they skin off the poor,
Crocodile tears they shed,
Have excuses plenty to evade sacrifice,
With the foe they might even cleave,
Than to nurse the wounds of their people.
For sacrificing their lives for the love of mankind
I compare them thus to the Lord.
Yet, let this be no surprise, for in His likeness created we are
Though in its vice the flesh persists.
For our sake who their lives lay,
Plenty we have for the truth that die.

14. Unto my grave

Even if wild beasts,
In circles,
Enclose me;
Even if they, tramping on mine dignity,
To pieces my body rending,
Afflict me;
Even if the world is rendered indecipherable,
And to its gates
Lost I stand;
Even if the stars of the sky,
Carrying blazes of fire,
Rain on me;
For you motherland, I shall
Unto my grave travail.

15. Proud be Ayder

Like Sodom Ayder, like Gomorrah,
Where did you learn to rain fire?
If I ask of yesterday Ayder,
Where you learnt such an atrocious scene
Would you say from Wuqro or Desse'a?
Or from the town of Tahses near Dae'ro Tekli?
Was it from Hawzen, From Kilte Bellesa?
Or from Hamusit from Marsa?

How can I say it could be from the borders of Shire
While closer is Wae'reb Samre,
A town over twenty times raided,
Untold atrocities that incurred.
Was it then from Zana Idaga Selus Adet?
Or from Imbalege from Sahharti Giget?
Or from Idaga Arbi from Yechila?
Or from Alitenna that borders Iggela?
Or was it a misfire from Were'ee?
Or from Hagereselam or from Aarre?
What then shall we ask Ayder, when doom befalls
Unbeknownst to us?
While the innocent children,
Playful in the schoolyard,
Were eagerly awaiting the bell,
Ayder, your yard with their blood was muddied.
Alas Ayder!
Our children when we expect you to school,
Misfortune, the twenty eighth of March, bore
For a village of martyrs you were destined to be.
When he who replenishes his spirit with the blood of children,
A devil incarnate, in name holy, is enthroned near to us,
A Herod who came after two thousand years,
Issayas, massacred your children.
Ayder, when this was unto you done,
The whole country flew into a rage.
Like a leopard angered at the cutting of its tree,
All arose
To hasten the burial of their offenders.
Afar, in a customary posture, his knife filed,
And set his children for vengeance;
Quick was also the Somali
To line up with the heroes of Jegol;
The southern, together with the children of Gambela and Benshngul Gumz,
Charged to slay their enemies;
Gereri Gereri cried the heroes of Oromo;
The people of Amhara machetes drew
A heap of rubble to render the abode of foe
Sha'ebia built across A'rmo.
When atrocious gloom befell your children,

People of all ethnic origins arose
For every hurt of the Tigriyan is as good theirs.
Wrathful, the people of Ethiopia arose
Seeking vengeance,
For it is natural for the eyes to shed tears,
When the nose is hit.
Your vindication Ayder and the vengeance of your students,
In Badme and in Sheraro, is consummated.
Whosoever is steeped in human blood soon perishes,
This, they had to learn from Derg.
Derg raided the innocent night and day
And thus quick was his retribution.
Today also the barricade of Sha'ebia is shattered,
Because of their evil leaders, their demise is hastened.
The vindication of Ayder was also fulfilled beyond Badme
For it was they who groaned defeat in Sawa.
Such was in Shanboqo, Zelambessa and Mitsiwa'e also!
Issayas and his accomplices, unashamed of the invasion of our land,
Also massacred our children.
How can they find a quiet sleep then?
Isn't our land the land of Agazi and the land of Hayelom?
Rejoice Ayder for you are the land of lions
The land of heroes; the land of avengers.
Let your martyrs always be remembered;
Let them declare they are victims of fascism,
Let them attest also annihilation sure awaits the iniquitous.
Nurse thus those who have survived,
And declare that you have a people to be proud of;
A people to call you "our legacy; the land of martyrs".

16. To Behold the Daybreak

The yoke of slavery off their neck to break
For freedom their lives they laid.
In protest against atrocity
Arms, audaciously they took up.
With a vision and arms flexed,
Shouldering death and distress,
Like the bee swarm and surge
In faith- victorious they would be.

Seeking life, growth and serenity;
Seeking to shake off disgrace and restore dignity;
Seeking knowledge and liberty from the jaws of hunger;
Seeking redemption from poverty.
Hoping to behold the dawn
Into darkness they ventured, expectant of the light of daybreak.
Yet they found a substitute of their murderers
Who at them throw crumbs, while delicacies they enjoy.

17. Beauty in the Dark

When moving creatures in their homes take refuge,
Vanquished by fatigue, when they close their eyes,
When serenity is crowned; when restful it becomes,
Beauty is set in that pitch darkness.

18. Loving the Nemesis

At the start you call the tunes;
As a thing trivial you engage with it.
All it takes is money, and happily you drink;
A gulp now and again you take.
It begins afterwards to order you around,
To own your pocket, your fancy and your soul,
In despicable places to fling you down.
With disdain it looks at you;
An object of ridicule
Now that it has made of you.
After all this, only for a day you abhor it,
But on just the third day as your brother regard it.
The life of drunkards, how disconcerting!
How can one's bloodthirsty foe be loved?"

19. What Embitters Me

They say bitter
Is a life of want;
Miserable,
Utterly unlivable;
Bitter, all declare in unison.
What embitters me yet
Is not a life want of money
But a life want of love.

20. Unremitting War

A year or two it has been now
Since we waged war in a grip of death.
Rived by rival views,
War; day in, day out, serenity has fled.
None to reconcile us
In a cranny while wide open the land is,
Inflicting wounds on each other from within our frontiers,
To death we fight; even to this day
With my foe with my own conscience,