

**Major Themes In Ethiopian Poetry In English From  
1944 – 1967 E.C**

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Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts  
in Literature in English**

**By Tewodros Bogale**

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**Addis Ababa University  
School Of Graduate Studies**

**MAJOR THEMES IN ETHIOPIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH  
FROM  
1944 – 1967 E.C**

**Tewodros Bogale**

## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of submission: \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor            Dr. Berhanu Matthews

Advisor's signature \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**SCHOOL OF GRAGUATE STEDIES**

**MAJOR THEMES IN ETHIOPIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH FROM 1944-1967 E.C**

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Advisor

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Examiner

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Examiner

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Signature

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## ***Abstract***

The aim of this paper is to study major themes in the early works of Ethiopian poetry in English. The term early period is used in this paper to refer to the period 1944 to 1967 E.C. During this period, Ethiopian poetry in English appeared in different publications. Among the publications that featured many Ethiopian poems in English the prominent ones were the university students' newsletter, *News and Views*, and the university students' literary magazine, *something*. The other major publications were *Ethiopia Observer* and *The Ethiopian Herald*.

The reason for choosing this period is that it is during this period that Ethiopian poetry in English flourished. And the reason for discussing this topic is that this subject has not been given enough attention in research. So, this study has focused on the study of the thematic concerns of the poems. Moreover, this was the period when the pioneer Ethiopian poems in English emerged and this period is the time when established poets of later time appeared.

Different methods have been used to study the major themes of the English poems of the period. First, poems were collected. Then the poems have been read and classified under the major subject areas. Then the most recurrent themes were identified. After that through the analysis the most recurrent themes were identified and discussed.

The study has revealed that Ethiopian poems in English during the period in focus deal with two major themes. The two major themes are the theme of certain aspects of human life and the theme of praise (appreciation) and criticism. Poems that deal with aspects of human life reflect issues like death, laments for the dead, love, hope, and hopelessness. There are several poems that depict this theme and they are studied under this section.

The other major theme, the theme of praise and criticism, reflects issues like praise of Ethiopia and criticism of the educated African. Poems that deal with Ethiopia often praise the country as a whole or deal with the unique features of the country. The poems that concentrate on the theme of criticism, criticize the educated African and focus on the issue of Pan Africanism.

On the whole, Ethiopian poetry in English written during the period 1944 to 1967 E.C was concerned with certain aspects of life and issues related to the criticism of the educated Africa and Pan African concerns.

## **Introduction**

The aim of this paper is to study major themes in Ethiopian poetry in English. The main reason for focusing on Ethiopian poetry in English is that this area of literary practice has not been given enough attention to be studied in detail. Except two research papers and a few articles, we do not find other studies on Ethiopian poetry in English.

The other reason for conducting this study on Ethiopian poetry in English is the growing tendency of Ethiopians to write poems in English. English poems by Ethiopian writers are still being published in increasing number especially in recently developed magazines and newspapers. This study particularly focuses on the themes of the poems written from 1944 to 1967 E.C, which can be considered as the early stage of Ethiopian poetry in English. It is considered as an early stage because it is at this period that Ethiopian poetry in English appeared in publications.

Thus the study tries to discuss the major issues and concerns of the poems of this period by analyzing some selected poems of the time in English. The reason for choosing this period is that, first of all, this is the period when Ethiopian poetry in English appeared in significant number. So, the study can show at least one aspect and state of early stage of Ethiopian poetry in English. It is also during this period that established poets and writers of the country like Tsegaye G/Medhin and Baalu Girma emerged. Due to these reasons this study focuses on the stated period.

Moreover, this is also a period when a number of Ethiopian poems in English were published. The poems bring up various issues of national and international concern. The issues that the poems concentrate on gave an impetus to study the themes of these poems. And especially the recurrent subject matters that have been depicted through the poems invite one to focus on the major themes of the poems of this period.

The significance of this study is that it gives an insight into Ethiopian poetry in English and its thematic concerns of the early stage of the poetry. Moreover it could be a reference to those who want to do research in this area.

To study the major themes of pomes written from 1944 to 1967 E.C, various methods have been used. First of all, different poems written during this period were collected, read and classified according to their recurrence of themes. Then for the analysis of major themes, poems that are most representative under each theme were selected and analyzed. While analyzing the poems, in some cases lines of the analyzed poems that are believed to depict the central idea are quoted. In such cases the entire poem will be provided in the appendix. When the entire poem is necessary, the whole poem is included as part of the study.

This study has four chapters. The first chapter presents a general overview of the beginning of Ethiopian poetry in English. In this part an attempt will be made to make a survey of earlier poetic works and factors that contributed to the beginning of poetic literature in English in Ethiopia. The second chapter presents a review of related literature in the area of the study. In this section, the concept of theme in poetry will be considered and studies that have relationship with the present study will be examined. Chapter three and chapter four discuss the major themes in Ethiopian poetry in English. The concluding chapter will summarize the highlights of the study.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Ethiopian Poetry in English: Some Points About the Beginnings

In this study the term “Ethiopian poetry in English” is used to refer to poems written in English by Ethiopians. Ethiopian poetry in English is part and parcel of Ethiopian creative writings in English. English creative writings by Ethiopians include fiction, drama and poetry. But the production of literature in English is quite limited compared to literature in Amharic, the national language of Ethiopia. In Ethiopia when we think of written literature we find that the bulk of it is in the Amharic language.

It is after a long tradition of Amharic literature that Ethiopian literature in English came to the scene. Some researchers like Beer (1975), who looked into the English literary activity of this country argue that Ethiopian literature in English is an outcome of the past decade or so. And Huntsbeger (1970), in his, “Anthology of Ethiopian Literature in English”, says that this type of literature is a development of the sixties.

When did this literature appear in Ethiopia? Why is this literary tradition a recent development? What makes this literature come out at this time? What are the pioneering works? What are the dominant issues in this type of literature? These and other related questions will be considered in this chapter with special reference to poetry.

There are various factors that contributed to the beginning of Ethiopian literature in English. These factors can be put into three categories. These are historical, educational and publicity factors.

Historically the country's earlier relationship with foreign countries contributed to the development of literature in foreign languages. Due to Ethiopia's diplomatic contact with Italy, France, Britain and other countries, many young Ethiopians were sent abroad to study in these Western countries. This activity was specially intensified in the twentieth century during the reign of Emperor Haileselassie (1923-1966 E.C), who is sometimes called, " the modernizer of Ethiopia." Those Ethiopians who were educated in the Western countries

influenced the country's literary tradition. Most of the literary outcomes after this relationship have a sense of vision for a modern new Ethiopia. For instance, the first Amharic novel called "Tobia" was published after this interaction. The beginning of the printing press in 1863 (E.C) has also contributed to the development.

This historical factor brought about educational practice, which is another factor for the appearance of Ethiopian literature in English. Those countries, which had diplomatic contacts with Ethiopia, had also brought some form of educational strategy to this country. The opening of different missionary schools was a result of the diplomatic contact Ethiopia had with some foreign countries. Due to the introduction of a foreign system of instruction to this country, languages such as French, Italian and English were began to be taught at different grade levels.

When modern public education started in Ethiopia with the establishment of Minilik II School in 1900 E.C., more emphasis was given to the teaching of foreign languages (Tekeste, 1996). Most of the teachers were Copts from Egypt. The involvement of more foreign instructors was one basic reason for using foreign languages as a medium of instruction. As a result, language subjects started dominating the educational system. Tekeste (Ibid p. 10) in his study says, " During the first twenty years of its existence Minilik II School resembled a language institute rather than a proper school. " French, Italian and Arabic were the main subjects with Amharic as their prerequisite.

During the reign of Haile Selassie I, a more profound schooling system was established. Many Ethiopians also went abroad for higher learning. After the Italian occupation in 1941 a British staff came to Ethiopia and gradually the British became influential in the country. As a result, " the heads of schools in Addis Ababa and important advisors in the Ministry of education were British. " ( Girma, 1964E.C, 338) For this reason, the medium of instruction became English. After words English was accepted as, " the official foreign language of the country." (Ibid, 337). To encourage the teaching process, more educational materials used to come from Britain, and the secondary school leaving examinations were set by universities in Great Britain

Furthermore, when the country expanded its relationship with other countries most of the educational missionaries who used to come to Ethiopia were English speaking countries like Canada and USA. Owing to this, at that time, the proficiency of foreign language, especially English was markedly increasing. Because more emphasis was given to the teaching of this foreign language; " The modernization process which began to transform the public image of the state called for the rapid training of pupils sufficiently fluent in foreign languages." (Ibid, 1996,103).

One of the greatest achievements of the modern education in the history of this country is the establishment of the University College of Addis Ababa in 1950E.C. With the opening of the university tremendous changes came. Young Ethiopians found a chance of higher learning in their own country. The founding educators of this university were foreigners and the medium of instruction was English. So the University College was another factor for the emergence of Ethiopian poetry in English.

When we think of the earlier sources of Ethiopian poetry in English we find two major factors. These are the publication of the newspaper, " The Ethiopian Herald " and the students of the University College of Addis Ababa. Especially the students of the university seem to be the basic reason to intensify the literary tradition.

The publication of The Ethiopian Herald also gave an impetus for the beginning of Ethiopian poetry in English. For instance, in the early publications of " The Ethiopian Herald " (vol. 1, No 45, May 6, 1944 E.C, P.3) there is an English poem written by an Ethiopian poet, Engida Sige Hanna. This poem is entitled "Unconquerable Sovereign". This seems to be the first poem in English by an Ethiopian poet. The Ethiopian Herald is established in 1943.

In the earlier publications of the Ethiopian Herald, there was a column entitled "Poets corner", which was usually allotted for poetry. The contribution of foreigners to this newspaper seems to have given an impetus for Ethiopian poets to write poems. The second poem written by an Ethiopian was published in 1961E.C. The poem was, called "Deluded", by Alula Beyene (The Ethiopian Herald, July 12, 1961E.C P. 2). In fact before this poem in 1956E.C there was another poem by an anonymous. Since the poet is not known it is difficult

to say whether the poem is Ethiopian or a foreigner's poem. The poem is " Only a little thing, " (The Ethiopian Herald , March 24, 1956 , P.2). Between 1944E.C and 1961E.C many poems were published by university students, in their own publications.

During the early days of the university's establishment different movements used to take place in the university campus. The students' consciousness about the deteriorating condition of the peasantry and the urban masses provided objective basis to invite a movement (Bahru, 1995). But before all this, " The early years of the student movements were characterized by the struggle for a free press and free union" (Ibid, 222). This movement resulted in two things; the establishment of university students union in 1959 and a university students Newsletter, "News and view" (1959E.C) and "Struggle." (1967E.C). In this news letter political and other social issues appeared written by the then students. Student writers used different literary forms to express their ideas, one of which was poetry. The medium of these newsletters was English. The strong tradition that started with these media is a good ground for the flourishment of Ethiopian poetry in English.

In the early publications of " News and views ", we find some poems, which can be considered as pioneers of Ethiopian Poetry in English. This also includes the first published poem in The Ethiopian Herald. As far as the survey of different earlier publications reveal that, "News and views" was the prominent one to publish different Ethiopian poems in English. The first poems that appeared in this publication were, "Apes" by Baalu Girma (News and Views , vol. III, No5 P.3, 13th Nov 1959E.C), "Crows" by Baalu Girma ( Ibid) and " I cry for a soul" by Mekbib Ghebeyehou ( Ibid, No 6, P.4, 20th Nov. 1959E.C). The next poems were issued in the 1960s E.C.

From the earlier students poets we find some of them being influential in the history of Ethiopian literature. Among these the first to be mentioned is Baalu Girma, a well-read novelist throughout the country. From the earlier poets he was also the one who contributed a number of poems. His poems are, " Apes ", " Crows," " Photo-Frame," " Fountains of Nonsense", " Nocturnal Moods" " Greetings" and " Those Yonder Hills". Most of his poems deal with diversified aspects of human life.

The contribution of the literary tradition of university students was not only limited to "News and views". Its scope expanded and in 1962E.C another magazine, which was mainly dedicated to the publication of literary works began to appear. The title of the magazine was, "Something" published from 1962E.C to 1967E.C. In this university students literary magazine various works of literature in a variety of topics and subject matters appeared in short stories, poems and essays. In its period of publication in this magazine more than twenty poems in English were published. The first poem in this magazine was Eyasu Araya's, "Waiting for Something" (something, Vol1, No 1, P.28 1962E.C). The other poems of this magazine were, "The Rich and The Poor" by Tekle Tadesse and "Retrospect", "Darkness", "Trial", "Sleep" and "Time" all by Eshetu Chole. 'Something' came out of print in 1967E.C. Until today there is no literary magazine in English published in this country.

As some of the developments show, the student movement seems to be an impetus for the beginning of their own publications. But apart from this there is one basic factor which is worth mentioning here. It is the literary contest that used to be held among students every year. As Greenfield (1969) mentions, beginning from 1961 there was a poetry contest among the students of the university. The best poems in the competition were read out. This tradition could undoubtedly initiate the literary practices that were witnessed in "News and Views", "Something" and other publications.

The other factor for the appearance of Ethiopian poetry in English was Ethiopian writers' self interest to reach the international audience. The problem of publicity was felt on some Ethiopian writers. One of the known Ethiopian novelist in English, Sahlesellassie B. Mariam's articles, "Yegan Mebrat" is an utterance and invitation for the disregard of Ethiopian literature by foreign readers and critics. The very reason for this, as pointed by the writer of the article, was the fact that our literature is written in a language which the rest of the world does not know (The Ethiopian Herald, Oct 20, 1974E.C). Some Ethiopian writers who write in English and other foreign languages have got the chance of being read by outsiders. For this statement Tesgay G/Medhin and Solomon Deressa can be mentioned for their poetic and other works. In addition to Ahmaric, Tsegaye has written many poems in

English. Solomon Deressa, on the other hand, wrote in two widely known languages, English and French. He writes in Amharic too and is known for his collection of poems.

In the above part an effort was made to show that the main factors for the beginning of Ethiopian literature in English are historical, educational and the need for publicity. But the production of Ethiopian literature in English is still limited. However with its limited production we find works of different genres. These are some novels, short stories, plays and poems.

When we think of poetry, we find many poems that are published in a variety of magazines and newspapers. Among the publications which published Ethiopian poetry in English, *News and View*, *Something*, *The Ethiopian Herald*, *Ethiopian Observer*, *Ethiopian Review*, *Yekatit*, *African Arts*, *Link* and *Monitor* are the main ones.

There are also some English poetry books published by Ethiopians. Until this time there are eight Ethiopian poets who published their poems in books. These are G.E Gorfu, Wildoats (1974E.C) and Poems of Thought and Solitude (1974 E.C). Assefa GMT, The voice (1980 E.C), Hama Tuma, Of Spades and Ethiopians (1991), Lemleme Tesegaw, Unheard Voices (1994) and A Mother's Eye View (1997) Biruk Kebede, The Son of Themba (2001) and Africa Distracted by Daniel Legesse (2001). Some other poems are issued in different anthologies of poetry like Poems of Black Africa (1975). In addition to this, Tsegaye's poems are published in Afro-Asian poetry (1971) and African Assertion (1976). Several of his poems also appeared in the local magazine, *Ethiopia Observer* and a French publication, *Presence African*. Solomon Deressa also published his poems in the American art journal, *African Arts*.

In its young age Ethiopian poetry in English has shown some poems published in different publications. Having made this primary surveys this paper studies the major themes of Ethiopian poetry in English. This paper in particular studies the earlier period of Ethiopian poetry in English. The earlier period is a time when the major poets appeared and this period also showed many poetic productions.

Before going directly to the thematic study in the next chapter, previous research works that are related to the concern of this paper will be reviewed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. Review of Related Literature

This chapter discusses the concept of theme in poetry and reviews previous related works on Ethiopian poetry in English. The review considers critical comments (articles), anthologies, bibliographies and MA and Ph. D theses that have direct and indirect relationship with Ethiopian poetry in English.

#### 2.1. The Concept of Theme in Poetry

Poetry is an expression of emotion. The reasons to create emotional sense for its subject matter is just to create images of real appearance. It expresses concrete things and abstract ideas equally by giving emotional appearance.

Theme is the central point of a work. Different definitions by scholars in the field assert that theme is the central idea, subject or topic of a discourse. Preminger and Brogan (1993, p, 1281) say the following about the concept of theme, " In common usage theme refers simply to the subject or topic treated in a discourse or a part of it. Thus to speak of the theme of a poem may be only to give a brief answer to the question. " What is this poem about? "

Another definition of theme states that theme is a central idea of a literary material. According to Cuddon, (1977, p. 679- 680), "properly speaking the theme of a work is not its subject but rather its central idea." Harry Shaw too (1972, 377), points out that theme is, "The central and dominating idea in a literary work." Abrahams, on the other hand, mentions, that theme is an abstract idea which is made persuasive for the reader. "... the term is more usefully applied to an abstract claim or doctrine, whether implicitly or assented, which an imaginative work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader." (1981,111). According to these definitions, we understand that theme is a basic element of a literary work.

A literary work usually has a subject matter it conveys. But the way of conveying its idea differs from one piece of literature to another. The theme of a non-fiction prose can be the general topic of the discussion, the subject of the discourse or the themes. On the contrary, in creative writing theme is the abstract idea that is made concrete through representation. This is a point which works in poetry too since poetry is a creative form of writing. But different to the other literary genre poetry has its own way of developing theme. Theme in poetry, though a central idea, has its own way of appearance. Poetry develops its theme through imaginative representation of the idea. In the first case theme in poetry is abstract. That is to say poetry does not tell its central idea plainly like the message of a newsletter. Poetry creates its central point through the representative of other correlatives. Holman (1992) including poetry with other creative works says, the following about the concept of theme. "In poetry, fiction and drama it is the abstract concept that is made concrete through representation in person, action and image" (p.475). Poetry uses dramatizing and concrete making mechanisms to convey its theme. It uses different experiences or it creates different experiences that make the idea an experience, which grows through emotional perception. "The term thought is used to mean that which, in the poem, brings into activity the reader's brain, resulting in the process of ideas and /or feeling/or sensory responses and/or visceral responses" (Kruzer, 1955,18). So, in poetry it can be said that theme develops through the whole process of the poem. "There may be many patterns. Patterns of action, characterization, language or metaphor-within a single work. Sometimes each will work separately; sometimes several will be intertwined to bear on a single theme."(Landy 1984 p.6)

Poetry uses emotional experiences to convey its message. It does like this because poetry gives its values through dramatic effect making concrete experience. Thus the study of poetic theme is the study of all poetic techniques employed through the entire poetry. " A theme is coherently developed thorough a poem . . . it flowers from the whole process of the poem."(Brooks and Warren, 1960, p.343) Therefore, the study of theme can be the interpretation of the whole poetic experience, which develops the idea or theme.

## 2.2. Critical Articles

There are two critical articles that are relevant to the theme of Ethiopian poems in English. One of them is William Prouty's, "Look in, Look out the poetry of Tsegaye Gebremedhin" (1967). This article was published in the literary magazine called *something*.

William Prouty in his article gives critical comments on the theme, style and forms of Tsegaye's poetry in English. The critic asserts that Tsegaye is Ethiopia's foremost writer in English for the variety and steadiness of his publications.

He points out the predisposition of the themes of Tsegaye's poetry dwelling upon poverty, modernization and being African or being Ethiopian. But having various themes Prouty says the subject matters of the poet have little link with the state of the world, rather, the critic says that they are related with the mind of the poet.

Considering the thematic concerns of the poems he takes excerpts from Tsegaye's poems. Taking samples from "Prologue to African Conscience" and "Tomorrow's sit-in-ers?" the critic shows how the idea of self-seeing is emotionally dominant. He also says that the same idea is articulated more emphatically in the poem, "Death in me". From this poem taking sample lines the critic shows how the death of a vision is symbolized.

In his thematic commentary Prouty forwarded some statements about the general mood of the poet. He mentions the poem, "Vow" for its positive statement on the theme of the lost world. He also remarks that the note of triumph is sounded in this poem. And for its conviction of victory Prouty mentions the poem, "Fear shall fail".

The other critical material on Ethiopia poetry in English is, "The Tone of Silence" (1969) by Innes Marshal. Innes scrutinizes the themes, application of language, technical feature, images and French poems of Solomon Deresa. Some of the poems that are critically assessed in this article are "Prayer", "Lost Song", "To Sweat the Hallucination" and "Death like Life."

In this article the critic gives more attention to the poet's use of images. The only comment she gave on the theme of the poet is that the themes of Solomon's poems are more of personal or self concerns though he mentions Africa many times.

Prouty and Inne's works were given on Ethiopian poetry in English. As the articles showed they have presented some comments on the themes of the poems especially dealing with some points. The other works that are relevant to Ethiopian poetry in English are literary anthologies.

### **2.3.Literary Anthologies**

There are some literary anthologies of Ethiopian poetry in English. However, the only one with thematic concern is Paul Huntsberger's Highland Mosaic: A critical Anthology of Ethiopian Literature in English (1973).

Huntsberger in his work included Geez Chronicles translated into English, Creative works written in English by Ethiopian writers, some translations made from Amhaire creative works in to English and English translations of some oral poems. He considers Solomon Deressa's and Tsegaye Gebremedhin's poetry in English. Moreover he gives strong recognition to these two poets for being, "better known Ethiopian writers using English as a literary medium."(Ibid P. 32).

In talking about the themes of Solomon Deressa's poems Huntberger says that the poet speaks for universal humanism. He mentions the works of Solomon Deressa which are published in African Arts under the title The Tone of Silence a mid century African Portrait. (African Arts, 2, spring 1969, Pp 58-69). But, Huntsberger's says this poet is "least insistent on emphasizing his Ethiopian background" (Ibid, 44).

In the book, Highland Mosaic, the writer has given more emphasis to poet Tsegaye Gebremedhin than Solomon Deressa. The reason seems to be that Tsegaye deliberates more on his Ethiopian issues than Solomon Deressa does. He says that Tsegaye is noted for his thematic power. In his book, Huntsberger studied the poems of Tsegaye entitled, "Homecoming

Son”, “Also of Ethiopics”, “Self-Exile”, “Fear Shall Fail”, and “Ours”. Concerning the theme of “Homecoming Son” Huntsberger says that it is a poem which views the “Friction between a traditional family and a returning educated son”(Ibid. 41).

The dominant issue Tsegaye raises in his poems, according to the critic, is a “critique of the educated elite” (Ibid). This theme is constantly harped on in his poems “Homecoming Son”, “Also of Ethiopics” and “Self-Exile”. As Huntsberger points out these poems speak to the intelligentsia for isolating themselves from the contemporary concerns of Ethiopian society. The poet’s Pan-African concern is also touched upon with reference to the poem, “Homecoming Son”. Huntsberger has also included a protest poem, “Submit to Cross Examination”. This is a challenge poem to the status quo. It is composed by an anonymous (by choice) Addis Ababa University student. Commenting on the theme of this poem the critic states that this poem reveals the, “evils of modern Ethiopia: fatuous freedom, rampant censorship, widespread and demeaning prostitution, improvident urbanism, sterile elitism, corrupt and preposterous clericism, insidious poverty and illiteracy and much more” (Ibid, PP. 46 – 77).

There are different anthologies that include Ethiopian poetry in English. However the only one which examines their theme is Huntsbeger’s anthology. This anthology also gave attention to two Ethiopian poets in English who are well known for their poems. It does not consider other poets of the same period.

Ethiopian poetry in English has also been considered in some annotated materials. The next section will look at these materials.

## **2.4.Reviews and Annotated Bibliographies**

With reference to Ethiopian literature in English, including poetry in English, two researchers have done annotations at different times. The earlier one is David F. Beer's Ethiopian Literature and criticism in English; an annotated Bibliography ( 1975).

Beer in his work presented a bibliography which consists of works of literary interest written in English by Ethiopians, English translations of works originally in Ethiopian Languages and criticisms in English of written and oral Ethiopian literature.

Beer annotated sixteen poems. Out of these poems two are translations from Amharic while the other are original works in English.

In the annotation, in addition to including the sources and authors of the poems some short notes on the subject matter of some of the poems has been given. This makes the annotation related to the major target of my study. But the points given about the subject matter of the poems are not detailed.

The other literary annotation is, Ethiopian creative writing and criticism in English, A review and Bibliography ( 1985) by Fekade Azeze.

The writer of this review and bibliography has annotated different Ethiopian literary works in English , classifying them into novels , short stories, poetry and drama.

In the section that considers poetry, the researcher has annotated around ninety poems. In this annotated bibliography the writer does not give analysis or commentary on the poems. He only gave one point on the poems of Tsegaye. The general comment he gave about Tsegaye's poems deals with their theme. According to Fekade, Tsegaye deals with the African predicament, which is a result of colonialism.

Except the above comment on the poetry of Tsegaye, the rest of Fekade's work is only annotation.

The other research works which have some degree of concern with Ethiopian poetry in English are theses. The next part of this review looks into these works.

## 2.5. Theses

There are two research papers on Ethiopian poetry in English. The first one is Debebe Seifu's MA. thesis, Ethiopian Literature in English (1980). Debebe has made an exhaustive study on selected Ethiopian Literary works in English, which include novels, poems and plays. The overall approach of this thesis is thematic. But in some cases technical aspects are also analyzed.

In considering the thematic preoccupation of Ethiopian poetry in English, the researcher examined sample poems from the works of Tsegaye Gebremedhin and Eyasu Gorku.

Concerning the themes of Tsegaye's poems Debebe points out that the poet reveals African oppression which results in the loss of so many values. He says, "In a number of poems, he recurrently harps on and bemoans the loss of African identity, ravishment of black culture, estrangement of the educated ones from their African root." (Ibid, P.89). Especially, the researcher gave more attention to the poet's emphasis on the black educated African loss of sense for his land. In this respect the researcher says that the educated African is characterized in the poems of Tsegaye as a man exile of two worlds who develops a feeling of belongingness to neither of them. For this idea Debebe mentions the poem "Hold my Hands." By this very poem also the researcher shows that Africa has a good potential.

On the basis of "Home Coming Son" also the researcher states the poet's motif which says, "it is only with an unwavering communion with his own land and culture that the African feels free and healthy." (Ibid, 90) With this poem the idea of blackness is also identified. Despite the pejorative meaning of so many literatures the poet exemplified the term black to mean light and beauty.

Debebe, concerning Tsegaye's poem "Addis Ababa" shows the effect of transitional period which is a juxtaposition and overlapping of the old and the new, the traditional and the modern.

The other theme that has been pointed out by the researcher is the ancient historical background of Ethiopia. Concerning this theme Debebe refers to the poems, "Self- Exile" and " Ours" . The researcher says that the poet glorifies his country Ethiopia and people of the past times for what they did to make the country as it is now.

Generally, Debebe Seifu with his study on the theme of Tsegaye Gebrmedhin shows that Tsegaye's poems deal with various themes that are mostly topical and significant.

The other poems that are considered in this research are the poems of Eyasu Gofu , when giving a general comment on the themes of Eyasu, Debebe says, " His two very slim collections of poems are replete with theme, of unhappiness and dissatisfaction and there by strike a note of pessimism. " (Ibid, 100) . The researcher points out that the motif of the poet is of life's nature of dissatisfaction and unhappiness. To show this theme Debebe has taken lines from the poem , " Thoughts and solitude". Based on this poem also the researcher states that the poet has a strong dread to nature itself.

From the poems of Eyasu, the researcher says that the absence of truth and love are the dominant themes. Concerning these themes, Debebe examples the poems, " We Live Alone," and " Aimless I".

While giving an overall comment on Eyassu's poems , Debebe states that Eyasu deals too much with abstract notions such as truth, beauty, love good and evil.

The second research that deals with Ethiopian poetry in English is Yimer Kifle's Ph. D thesis Stylistics, Pedagogy and Ethiopian Writing in English. An activity based approach to teaching literature in EFL (1990) . The general aim of this research, as stated by the writer is to develop student's ability of understanding and interpreting literature through the use of pedagogically oriented stylistics. The researcher believes that if students are oriented with stylistics knowledge and practice they can build the ability to interpret a work, " In an especially systematic and principled way. " (Ibid, P.220). He demonstrates this approach by taking sample materials from Ethiopian novels , plays and poems in English.

With reference to practical stylistics analysis of Ethiopian poetry in English, he takes Tsegaye's poem, "Guilty". The researcher gives the central message of this poem and relates the poem's thematic concern with other poems of Tsegaye. With regard to "Guilty" Yimer states that its theme has a broad appeal to a cross-section of society. He says, "The theme of 'guilty' can be summarized as a war in the conscience of a person who strives to fulfill his desires at the expense of the lives of others. It refers to a rigorous self-examination and a cry of lamentation for justice." (Ibid, 218). And while talking about the overall themes of Tsegaye, the researcher says that Tsegaye's themes range from personal observation of local and national concern to continental and International issues.

As attempted to review previous works that have relationship with the concern of this research, there are some studies which studied themes of some Ethiopian poems in English. Most of the studies saw theme not as a major target of research. But they took it as part of their major studies. On the other hand there is an MA thesis by Debebe Seifu which deals mainly on the themes of some Ethiopian poems in English. His thesis studied the themes of Tsegaye Gebremedhin and Eyassu Gorfu. What makes my study different to Debebe is that mine studies themes of poems in a particular period. Hence, it includes poems of more than one poets in the period under study. In this respect it expands the concern from poems of a particular poet to many Ethiopian poems in English composed by different poets.

Upto this is review of studies that have some degree of attachment with this research. In the next chapter an analysis will take place on major themes that have been identified in Ethiopian poems in English of the earlier period.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. The Theme of Certain Aspects of Human Life

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter will be devoted to the discussion of the theme of some aspects of human life in Ethiopian poetry in English. The study focuses, as stated earlier, on poems written during the period 1944 – 1967 E.C, which is considered as an earlier period in Ethiopian poetry in English. This time can be considered as the early period for Ethiopian poetry in English because it was the time when the first poems in English by Ethiopians appeared. After the year 1967 E.C came a new poetic theme that is mainly devoted to the then ideology. Therefore, due to the ideological change and the influence of the ideology observed upon post 1967 poems, these poems are not taken into consideration.

During the period 1944 – 1967, many poems, which treat a range of issues from personal to universal concerns, were written. This paper focuses only on some of the recurrent issues reflected in the poems. Thus, this chapter deals with one major theme of the stated period that is the theme of certain aspects of human life. There are different poems, which deal with issues related to certain aspects of life. The central ideas depicted through the poems include death, lament, love, hope, and hopelessness.

The paper analyzes some representative poems to show the theme. In the analysis when necessary some lines from the analyzed poems will be quoted giving the whole poem in the appendix. In certain cases the whole poem will be analysed.

The research considers different poems of Ethiopians in English. But the works of some Ethiopian poets in English are dominantly used for illustration. For instance, the poems of Tsegaye G/medhin, Baalu Girma, Eshetu Chole, Tecola Hagos, Hogos Tsehay and Shiferaw

Asfaw have been used repeatedly. This is because, these poets were most actively writing during that period.

The poems under this section deal with aspects of human life written by Ethiopian poets. The poems deal with love, hope and hopelessness. One of the major issues that have been recurrently dealt with is death.

### 3.2 Poems that Depict Death

One of the major aspects of life in the early works of Ethiopian poetry in English is the issue of death. One good example is the poem entitled “The Traveller” by Eshetu Chole (1962). “The Traveller” is not a reference to a man on a journey; rather it indicates that human beings are mortal or passing creatures. The following lines from this poem reflect the central point of the poem.

Amidst the blaze of the heavenly stars  
5 I felt at loss  
The loss of a traveller in a strange land  
A sudden fear flashed across my heart,  
Thought of things long-gone and things to come  
And my weary body shook and froze.  
10 For I know the world was no man’s land,  
Strange, unexplored, and always young.  
I thought at once of the distance I had gone  
And the distance yet to come,  
And with the sigh of a tired traveller  
15 I let these words go forth.  
“I am a traveller in a very strange land  
A traveller without a guide,

## A land without a path.” (Appendix 1)

According to this poem, the speaker asserts that he is a traveller without a guide in a land where there is no path (lines 17-18). This puzzling statement indicates that the passage of life has its own various ways.

Before asserting the last statement the poem in its different lines indicates the idea of death. For instance the expression “I felt at loss” (line 5) indicates the fact that resulted in his fear. In line 7 the speaker of the poem tells us that he feared something. The thing which made him fear is stated, “ A thought of things long-gone and things to come” (line8). This thing that is vital to happen is death. The poem in lines 10 – 11 asserts this as follows:

For I know the world was no man’s land,  
Strange, unexplored, and always young. (Ibid)

In these lines, the idea that the world is no man’s land shows that no one can possess the world where he lives because every one dies.

It is after analysing things like this that the speaker said he is a traveller. In line with this, the distance covered and the remaining one (lines 12 and 13) refers to the age he has come across and that remains until his death.

The same theme is reflected in another poem by Eshetu Chole (1964) called, “Sleep”.

### **Sleep**

Day in ...day out  
Just for some time  
We all retire... in death

(Sleep at it is called)

5 Refreshing death.  
     Comforting death  
     If only that final rest  
     Could also be like this.

Oblivious of worries, we sleep

10 Rather we die...yet temporarily.  
     Waiting for that eternal sleep  
     From whose grip  
     We can't escape alive  
     Or could it be

15 That this is yet another nap  
     After whose end  
     (As we are told)  
     We do wake up?

This poem reflects the nature of death comparing it to sleep. The poem considers sleep as a way of death where we can wake up,

5. Refreshing death  
     Comforting death  
     If only that final rest  
     Could also be like this (Ibid)

In the above lines sleep is compared to death. However sleep is not considered real like death (line 5), but it is something of which we wake up. The poem compares sleep saying it is refreshing death, to the real death and says that the real death which is expressed by “final rest” (line 7) is not a type of sleep that we can refresh or wake up. In the following lines of the same poem also the poet expresses sleep by death.

Day in ... day out  
Just for some time  
We all retire ... in death  
(Sleep as it is called) (Ibid)

In these lines the poem describes sleep through death. According to these lines sleep is a short time rest. Though he referred to it by death, he states its name as sleep. But the description of sleep through death is depicted and highlighted in detail in other lines of the same poem.

Oblivious of worries, we sleep  
Rather we die ... yet temporarily (Ibid)

From these lines we can see the poet states that sleep is a temporary death where we wake up. But the real death is not like sleep. The following lines indicate that death is not a temporary sleep.

Waiting for the eternal sleep  
From whose grip  
We can't escape alive (Ibid)

From these lines we know that there are some ideas about death. One of the ideas is, it is a real essence that happens to every human being. And the other idea is it is not like sleep, which we wake, rather it is eternal. In this poem the poet compares death to sleep and creates the eternal nature of death that affects all human beings.

Just as “sleep,” indicates that man cannot escape from death another poet, Tecola Hagos, in his poem, “Born to Die” (1962E.C) depicts the idea that men are mortal. Here is the poem.

### **Born To Die**

These men, that moves back and fro  
Know not their goal, nor where they go  
But like actors who do play their part,  
Vanish like mirage and become the past.  
5 All this grace, beauty and love  
Fated to die, and their spirit a dove  
Might feel free, might scorn the dust;  
Decay will find it, fermented like rust.  
Nothing is unusual, but a natural course  
10 Lips that once kissed, hearts that once loved,  
Like the tombstone will forever be cold.  
When I reflect, all my struggle were naught.  
Regret and sorrow eat away my heart.  
But to man I have a word  
15 Live your way and change not for good  
Lovers sucking each other’s tongue  
Are not aware of death’s approach.  
Lips that once kissed, hearts that once loved,  
Like the tombstone, will forever be cold.

The following lines of this poem in a concluding manner generalize this idea

These men, that moves back and fro  
Know not their goal, nor where they go.

But like actors who do play their part,  
Vanish like mirage and become the past. (Ibid)

According to these lines men will pass away after living in the world for some time. Tecola says men's striving is meaningless because they do not have a goal and do not know where they go (line2). The poet says the fact is that men vanish; he especially intones this strongly in the next lines of the same poem. According to the poem all the beauty of human life is something which vanishes. Using the following lines the poet figuratively exclaims the subject matter that death makes all the beauty, cast away and cold. The simile "like the tombstone" refers to death that it is cold and silent.

Lips that once kissed, hearts that once loved,  
Like the tombstone will forever be cold. (Ibid)

Tecola Hagos (1962) in his poem, "poem iii" expresses the same theme personifying death as if it is something which controls everything.

Death reared his throne in the city of the dead (Tecola Hagoes, Poem iii, (Appendix 2)

This line shows that death has its own city. The poem extends this idea by saying,

Here sorrow is happiness, decay is life  
Arching down through the centuries,  
But stillness Hangs where Blackness is light (Ibid)

As can be witnessed in these lines, paradoxical terms are used to create the image of death having its own world. The terms, "sorrow", "decay", "stillness" and "blackness" refer to the characteristic nature of death.

According to the poet death destroys man. The next lines of the same poem show this.

Blood and molten men's flesh  
Rotten in the shade, vanishing like the mist.  
Not a trace is left, only a timeless ash (Ibid)

From these lines we see that the only thing that remains of man is ash. The other parts will disappear. Using this poem the poet portrays the features of the human body and what shape it takes as a result of death and its effect.

Generally the poems that deal with death show that death is an attribute which exists any time, that man is fated to die no matter how long he lives. Death is coldness, blackness, and rot that changes the human body into either ash.

Since death destroys men, one of its effects to the remaining relatives and friends is sorrow. In the collection of Ethiopian poetry in English, there are poems that express their condolence to the dead ones. The next section will look at this theme.

### **3.3 Poems that Lament the Dead**

Some poems in Ethiopian Poetry in English lament the dead. Most of the poems under this subject lament the death of well-known people, humanists and leaders like Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy and Empress Menen. Other poems express their sadness to their friends. All the poems in common mourn for those whom they lost and mention their good deeds.

The poem "I cry for a soul" by Mekbib Gebeyehu (1959) demonstrates the writer's feeling of sorrow after having lost his friend.

## I Cry For a Soul

There sways in my eyes a massy glow  
A red-blue-black and a dusty hue  
I can't see a head I stand very low  
I am at the rear yet long is the queue.

5 I cry for a life for a hollow soul,  
For a dying candle and a dying voice  
I can't see a head and I can't reach my goal  
Lost by my own by a single choice.

But above on a rainbow on a golden cloud  
10 The tongue of ancestors a father's pride  
Set fire in my soul; it shouted aloud.  
"Abide by your choice and then lose your guide"

The poem says that the loss of his friend is something, which confuses his life. The following lines of this poem illustrate this idea,

I cry for a life for a hollow soul  
For a dying candle and a dying voice  
I can't see a head and I can't reach my goal  
Lost by my own by a single choice (Ibid)

From the above lines we understand that the poet considers his friend as a life and light giving man. And now he is crying for he is dying. The reason for his cry is because he relies on his friend. In line 7 he states that he cannot do any thing further for the death of his friend.

So we imagine his death brings about darkness to the speaker when he knows that his friend has gone away.

There are other poems, which have similar laments for their lost friends. The poems, “So soon, friend” by Hagos Tsehay (1962) and “Oh ONCE ACTIVE MAN” by Amdetsion Kidane (1961) express their heart felt sorrow for another student of the university who passed away suddenly.

Hagos Tsehay in his poem “So Soon, friend” (1962) expresses the unexpected death of his friend. He also says that sadness remains with him. The following lines show this subject.

Nobody thought it would be so sudden  
But so were you forced to make it.  
We're left with the heavy burden...  
Agony... which drives one into a fit. (Appendix 3)

The phrase ‘so sudden’ indicates the death of his friend is fast and unexpected. This sudden death of his friend on the other hand brought about heavy responsibility, which is referred to by ‘burden’ (line 4) and ‘agony’. In addition to the feeling of agony, the poet tells the dead one that all his friends have wept strong by saying,

5      What a gruesome misery  
They would tear their hair and tumbles,  
When deprived mercilessly  
Of you, friend, beloved and humble (Ibid)

According to these lines we understand that the friend of the dead one faced misery (line 5). For their strong pity they tear their hair. They cry for their friend because he was beloved and humble.

The other poem, “Oh ONCE ACTIVE MAN” (1961) by Amdetsion Kidane also praises the dead one’s good nature. The poem says that their dead friend was an active man full of hobbies (line 14), a man of co-operation (line 9), a man of struggle (line 19) and a man of ideas. (Lines 17-18) His death with his good nature seems a reason to make them sad. The following lines reflect this:

Oh once active man of value

Where are you hidden now? (Appendix 4)

The term hidden (line 2) refers to his disappearance. When the poet says “once active man” it is to mean a man who was strong and hard working.

This poem in addition to telling the good side of their friend, considers his death as if it is a deliberate action to leave his friends. The following extracts from the poem depict this.

May I ask you again man of co-operation?

10 To tell the reason why you abandoned

Your friends and people of relation, (ibid)

You ignored me man of benevolence,

Refused to reply Oh once active creature; (Ibid)

From these lines we understand that the poet asks his dead friend as if he is near him. From the words of the poem when he says abandon and ignore we understand the poet considers his friend's death as a deliberate action to leave his friends.

The other poem by Hagos Tsehay, (1961) "Rest You, Man, and Forever Rest, In Memory of Baye Kebede", (1961) states that his friends all were there to accompany his body to the grave. And as the poem they all were sad crying heavily.

5        When you go to your eternal bed,  
             Accompanied by friends who cry and sob,  
             Do you realize that you are led?  
             To a place where there is no mob (Appendix 5)

As we can see from the first two lines, friends of the dead one were sad for he is leaving them forever. This poem like the previous two poems does not praise the one who died; rather, it says that the world where the dead friend has gone is a peaceful one. The last line in the above extract states this idea. There are other lines of the same poem, which mention this theme. The following one demonstrates this theme.

             But sleep, lie, forever blest,  
             For none will stir you from our race (Ibid)

From these lines we see that the poem considers the death of their friend is sleeping or lying forever without disturbance.

The poem also asks the one who died if there is any thing that he feels after his death. The following stanza pinpoints the writer's desire to know whether there is noise or not in the place of the dead people.

But where you sleep and sleep forever,  
Never awakening, never stirring  
And without sharing the sleep, never  
With one of our mortal being (Ibid)

This poem after expressing its condolence to a friend who died, concentrates more about the peaceful nature of the dead world that exists forever.

The other tribute poems are poems that express their sympathy to great and known people like John F. Kennedy, Abraham Lincoln and Empress Menen.

Two poems, "A tribute to the late president Kennedy" (1963) by Kebede Shume and "O Lincoln! O Kennedy! O America!" (1963) by Abebe Worke express their sympathetic feelings for the death of the American president J.F. Kennedy. Kebede Shume's poem reads like this:

### **A Tribute To The Late President Kennedy**

Why in a hurry to rest so early,  
When the world wants your service very badly?  
The whole world is mourning bitterly  
For your death is untimely.

5 Americans lost a great leader

The world lost a good brother  
 World-peace lost its partner  
 East and West lost their negotiator  
  
 He was a firm believer of equality and liberty  
 10 He was a striver to eradicate poverty  
 He was a man of sympathy and generosity  
 His assassination is far from reality.  
  
 Strength and condolence to the family  
 And relatives of president Kennedy  
 15 In this unforgettable and terrible tragedy.  
 Cherishers of peace are grateful for the  
                     Services you rendered  
 Your name, effort and all shall forever  
                     Be remembered.  
  
 20 The world is lamenting for you in tears  
 May your soul rest in peace.

The poem in its first lines states that Kennedy's death is so sudden, something that creates deep sorrow and bitterness.

Why in a hurry to rest so early?  
 When the world wants your service badly?  
 The whole world is mourning bitterly  
 For your death is untimely (Ibid)

These lines pinpoint many things about the late Kennedy. One of the points we know about Kennedy's death is that it is untimely; he died in his young age. The other thing mentioned is that he is a man of good service for the whole world. Like the previous poems,

this poem also praises the dead one. The following stanza is about the great and good side of Kennedy,

Americans lost a great leader  
The world lost a good brother  
World-peace lost its partner  
East and West lost their negotiator (Ibid)

According to these lines John F. Kennedy was a man of many activities. He was a great leader, a man of good nature, peacemaker and negotiator. So, his death is, as the poem tells us, a loss of these great talents. In addition to these great activities the poem indicates that Kennedy is , “ a firm believer of equality and liberty” (line 9), “a striver to eradicate poverty” (line 10) and “a man of sympathy and generosity” (line 11). So, his death is a loss for the world.

The poem after having mentioned the good sides of the man indicates that the world cries badly for it lost a man of many good tasks.

The world is lamenting for you in tears  
May your soul rest in peace (Ibid)

The other poem “ O Lincoln! O Kennedy! O America” (Abebe Worke, 1963) is a tribute poem for two American leaders Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy.

### **O Lincoln! O Kennedy! O America!**

Wake up to see your American Abraham Lincoln,  
What a backwardly moving nation it has become,  
The same bloodthirsty murderer your opera box witnessed  
Hath secretly stolen to snatch America

5 Of her dynamic and disinterested child.

O Lincoln, what bad had you done to deserve that?  
History witnesses, there is nothing  
Anyone could talk about.

O then a shameful deed,  
10 In such a nation, with such a man  
As Kennedy to be repeated.

Alas America – I woe thee, pity- pitiable.  
What a civilization! What progress!  
For the world in thee  
15 Such bloodshed to witness.

Africa, for Kennedy it weeps and at thee, America,  
It laughs.  
As each and every colored in thee does.

This poem gives more attention to Kennedy. And the reason to mention Abraham Lincoln is to remind us that the same thing happened to Kennedy like Abraham Lincoln. This poem to remind the murder of Kennedy first of all expresses its sympathy to Lincoln.

O Lincoln, what bad had you done to deserve that:  
History witnesses, there is nothing  
Any one could talk about ((Ibid)

Here the poem indicates Lincoln's assassination is without any basic reason. He is not a bad man. This poem with its stanza tells us that Lincoln has been murdered like Kennedy and suggests that Kennedy was also murdered.

O then a shameful dead,  
In such nation, with such a man  
As Kennedy to be repeated (Ibid)

The poem indicates that in the nation America, murder took place to Kennedy and Lincoln.

This poem after showing Kennedy's assassination is like Lincoln's, curses the nation American for it witnessed a murder in two beloved leaders.

Alas America – I woe thee, pity-pitiable.  
What a civilization! What progress!  
For the world in thee  
Such bloodshed to witness (Ibid)

These lines in addition to blaming America for the act of murder, also questions their civilization and progress if it is only a result of bloodshed.

Another poem, "Sympathy" (1962) by Zewdu Truneh is also a tribute poem. This poem expresses its sympathy for the late queen Mennen.

### **Sympathy**

Gone are all to death's camp,  
Children of God sitting on earth's lap.  
Weak or strong, young or old,  
Rich or poor, coward on bold,

5                    Mercy vanishes form death when we are called.  
If gone are many and still more to leave,  
Why should we mourn and weep as we live?  
Though a pilot, he rode a cannon,  
To reach queen Mennen in her quiet saloon.  
10    Oh men! Wear your helmets and let your sword unhealthy,  
To protect the sleeping buds lying beneath.  
Prey I to king to give him endurance,  
Prey I to his family to give them endurance,  
Prey I to Ethiopia to give us resistance  
15    For this intolerable continuous grievance

The poem in its first lines asserts that every body is mortal and then states that if the fate of a human being is death there should be no mourning.

If gone are many and still more to leave,  
Why should we mourn and weep as we leave? (Ibid)

By these lines the poet says that we should not cry when someone passes. The reason to say so is every one dies.

The poem expresses the queen's death as if it is going to a quiet place. The following lines show this.

Though a pilot, he rode a cannon,  
To reach queen Mennen in her quiet saloon (Ibid)

According to the poem, the poet considers the queen's passage like a transfer to a peaceful place.

This poem, considering the queen's death is getting peace, does not express condolence to her, rather it expresses its sympathy to the king who lost his queen, the queen's family and her country Ethiopia. This is presented in the following lines.

Prey I to our king to give him endurance,  
Prey I to his family to give them endurance,  
Prey I to Ethiopia to give us resistance,  
For this intolerable continuous grievance (Ibid)

As can be witnessed from these lines, the poet refers those who lost the queen, the king, the queen's family and Ethiopia. And wishes them endurance for it is a terrible condition to lose someone who is loved.

On the whole the poems categorized under this part, have major issues of the sad effect of death for those who lose their partners. The lament poems express their sad feeling to their lost friends, family or beloved man. These poems mostly mention the good nature of the dead ones.

### **3.4 Poems that depict Love**

This section will examine poems that deal with the emotion of love. One of the poets who wrote many poems on love is Tsegaye G/medhin. One of the poems of Tsegaye that deals with love is " Gladiator's Love" (1965). This poem discusses about the undying, rather existing sense of the speaker's love to his lover.

#### **Gladiator's Love**

While the air no more refreshes

And the wind no more blows,  
Memories are still charming  
And your love still glows.

5 My dreams stay as haunted  
And my heart as you have tore,  
Though the skies are no more blue  
And the seas do no more roar.

Yet Your Love Is

10 And blossoms as a bine.  
While the lilies cease blooming  
And the sun does no more shine.

Though the stars no more glitter  
And the cloud does no more rain,  
15 Though the moon shall not be borne  
Yet your love is not in vain.

Though I bid fare-well to life  
Where you too are included,  
Breaking the law of nature  
20 Your loving has intruded

This poem, in its first stanza states that the memory of the speaker's love is still alive even in an unfavorable natural appearance.

While the air no more refreshes  
And the wind no more blows,  
Memories are still charming  
And your love still glow. (Ibid)

According to these lines we understand that the poet has strong memory of love for his lover. The first two lines indicate an uncomfortable natural condition. The air, which no more refreshes and the wind, which no more blows, create a somber sense. This on the other hand has an unimaginative feeling. But with this uninspiring condition the speaker says that his lover's memories are still with him to charm him, and the poem in its second stanza also indicates that an uninspiring condition has not hindered his sense of love. He says, " My dreams stay as haunted". (Line 5)

On the whole this poem says the sense of love has a strong root to overcome any dreary and uninspiring conditions. When it concludes the poem at the last stanza it informs this truth like the following .

Though I bid fare-well to life  
Where you too are included,  
Breaking the law of nature  
Your love has intruded (Ibid)

Another poem by Tsegaye, " Many A Cold Season" too has the same subject matter with the previous love poem. This poem shows the existence of earnest love for one another even though the lovers parted. The speaker of the poem in the following lines indicates that the memory of the past is still alive, which is driving the lovers for one another.

Though many a moon has been borne and gone  
Many a dreary summer returned and passed  
10. Whatever visions we have had of others  
Are visions reflected on the mirror of our past  
Whatever warmth we shared with others  
Is warmth evoked in memory of our past...  
No, it is not the big loss that hurt

15. But our unforgotten eyes  
 Who, across the shoulder of those nearer us  
 In vain, searched for one another,  
 No, it is not the lingering relapse that hurt  
 But our unyielding hearts
20. Who, condemned to remain faithful to our past  
 Betrayed the hearts of those now closer to us (Appendix 6)

These lines show that the lovers are still in search of one another though there are other possible to be lovers. In line 12 the poet says that there are people who are sharing with them love, but what they feel is their past love time in the mirror this time's happening (line 13). The same thing is also reflected in line 16. There the speaker says that their eyes are looking for one another across the lovers of the present time. Some words like "share warmth" (line 12), "Shoulder of those nearer to us" (line 16) and "the hearts of those now closer to us" (line 21) indicate the people who are around them for love affair. But the speaker says that they are faithful to their past love (line 21).

In general this poem shows the intensity and endurance of innocent time love that is already past. The poet repeats the enduring memory of past love in lines 11 and 13. This is to show that the past love is strong and lively.

The other poem by Tsegaye, "Cold Shoulders" (1965) shows the feeling of hostility between two lovers who are sleeping in one bed. The following lines indicate the internal state of disagreement between two lovers.

The heart dribbles against the chest  
 Recording each sore experience we had  
 The mind stands aloof  
 Being the cold sensed judge of self (Appendix 7)

These lines show that the lovers are not having a good sense for one another. So, as we can read from the lines the mood of the lovers is so cold. According to the poem the two lovers are not in good terms with. The speaker says that their heart is beating in memory and record of their bad experiences. The phrase 'sore experience' indicates that some distressing thing separates them. The term 'cold sense' alludes to their loss of love. But whatever problem is there, in the next lines we see that they still love one another.

From either distant ends of the bed  
Our breath draw in and out calls for peace  
Beneath the cool space of darkness  
Two scout fingers creep from either end  
They touch. (Ibid)

According to these lines we understand that the lovers who had not been in good terms with, are getting together. In these lines the 'cool space and darkness' indicate the unhappy disposition between the two lovers. And the personified fingers, which are considered like messengers, play the role of bringing up peace and love. Their 'touch' seems a sign of unison of the lovers. At the end the poet too states this condition with the following lines.

The wall of hostility is snapped between them  
Though dark, it is now sunshine. (Ibid)

In these lines the term 'dark' refers to the natural night. On the contrary the 'sunshine' is not natural phenomenon. Rather, it is the ecstatic condition that happened due to the breaking of hostility and togetherness.

Generally speaking, 'Cold Shoulders' shows a problem created between two lovers, which resulted in differences. Though this is the condition, still there happened a chance for peace and unison for each of them are in need of the other.

Compared to the previous two love poems of Tsegaye, this one has a different concern. The previous poems, "Gladiator's Love" and "Many a Cold Season" indicate memory of love that still remains inside the speaker's mind. On the other hand the poem "Cold Shoulders"

shows a problem created between two lovers and the chance of overcoming that gap since there is still love for one another.

Another two love poems written by two Ethiopian poets discuss about the essence of falling in love. These poems are, " Apes" by Baalu Girma (1959) and " The Lovers" by Abdella Adem (1960).

Abdella Adem in his poem, " The Lovers" describes two lovers who meet and fall in love. The poem indicates that the power of love controls every feeling of persons. The poem is the following.

### **The Lovers**

There they meet and exchange greeting,  
Common and timid is the question posed,  
To lighten the tension and enjoy the meeting  
Yet despite this it remains undozed.  
5 Tension is the victor and starts to rob  
Every faculty speech included,  
The surviving eye does heavy job.  
Why interested opposites to this be secluded,  
Why they prefer poverty amidst plenitude,  
10 Why celebrate with dead silence.  
The meeting of souls in habitude,  
Instead of gaiety, and eloquence.  
Instead of exposing best qualities doubled  
I know not and I am very much troubled

The poem in its first lines shows the change of feeling between the lovers. With its first lines we see the uncontrollable force of love driving the lovers. The poem shows normal sense of appearance in the last lines, the poet states that the hidden feeling for one another which is referred to by " Tension" is the pressure to control them (line 5). So, as the poem

says, every faculty of the lover loves his partner. The poem in its next lines also states the idea of love's power through question.

Why they prefer poverty amidst platitude,  
Why celebrate with dead silence ... (Ibid)

According to these lines we understand that since they are in love no matter how plenty wealth is there, it seems meaningless to them for they love each other. This in other words indicates that their love is not for the sake of material need.

In general this poem shows the intensity of love to control every faculty of human feeling. The lovers who fall in love are without any hindrance running for their devotion of love.

The other poem, which shows lovers fall in love, is Baalu Girma's " Apes" (1959). This poem uses a setting in a night club where two people a man and a woman are dancing exchanging some praise words. In this poem the music, the smoke and their dance drive them for love. The whole poem reads like this.

### APES

#### "I like the way you dance

The way you move about,  
It takes one but a glance  
To tell you so-no doubt"  
5 The smoke curled up in the air  
The hall stale and lown  
They swayed here and there  
The music went on and on  
"You're an angel  
10 From heavy above  
Break this cloudy spell  
This spell love".  
She met his eyes and curled her lips,  
Red as embers her mouth agape,

15      Words alone have done the tricks,  
          An ape alas! Conquers another Ape!

The first lines of this poem show the general overview of the night-club. We see smoke. And the hall is stuffed; so it seems hot without fresh air. In this condition they dance following the music. The situation has influencing effect to motivate the opposite partners towards another feeling. This seems a reason to drive them first to share love words in the first and third stanza. After this condition the poet shows their fall in love through the following way.

          She met his eyes and curled her lips,  
          Red as embers her mouth agape,  
  
          Words alone have done the tricks,  
  
          An ape alas! Conquers another Ape!(Ibid)

From these lines we understand that they fall in love. The poet says ‘words alone have done the tricks’, it is not only the words but the situation too which resulted in this condition. The title of the poem, “Ape” too seems to refer to their deep emotion, which causes an animal like sexual feeling.

The two poems, " The lovers" by Abdella and " Apes" by Baalu in common show the strong power of love to control every faculty of human emotion. Through their lines they have demonstrated how lovers get in touch and fall in love. Another poet, Shiferaw Asfaw in his poem " Love is my Shelter" (1967) shows another aspect of love. This poem says love gives me dedication and strong courage. The entire poem reads like this.

**Love is My Shelter**  
When the sun sinks in the west,  
And the world becomes a blank desert,

Birds, men and other daylight animals,  
 Enter their houses and peacefully sleep

5            But I, whose door is locked,  
               Stay out late in the chill night wind  
               Until I see my love's eyes  
               And make merry with her  
               For love is my shelter

10        I love and am devoted  
               To it until I sleep in my last bed.

The speaker of the poem in the first stanza indicates that every natural part the sun; birds, men, and other day light animals have shelter. And in their shelter they peacefully sleep. But the speaker is a poor man; he does not have peace to sleep well for he is eager to see his lover. He says that he would feel happy and have peace like the other creatures, which go to their shelter, when he finds his lover. So he states that love is his shelter. Because he finds peace and happiness after finding his lover. And he believes that upto his death he remains in love.

In general in this section poems that commonly deal with love are analyzed. The love poems in their respect have common points. Some of the poems discuss about the memory of love and the others show the strong power of love to control the lover's emotion.

The next section of this sub-chapter will discuss another emotional aspect of a human being, which is hope.

### **3.5 Poems that Depict Hope**

One of the issues that has been recurrently expressed in Ethiopian poems in English in the period under study is hope. The poems, which talk about, hope show that their hope does not stop. Eshetu Chole in his poem, " Darkness" says that his hope in the darkest condition is helping him to stay strong.

I sat there silently,

Waiting, hope ever increasing  
For light to replace darkness  
And relieve me of my pains. (Appendix 8)

In this poem we find the persona sitting in a dark place. The dark place is a phrase, which refers to a worst condition. The persona says that his hope is increasing and making him to stand firm never to give-up. He believes and hopes he would find what he wants and will be free from his tension.

Assged Hagos (1967) too, in his poem, " Still , He Hoped" States the same idea stated by Ehsetu Chole.

### **Still, He Hoped**

It was a long night  
-So were all nights.  
The cold surface shrunk his skin;  
His stomach empty, itching, aching,  
5 Emptiness. Hunger. His wracking pain  
All kept open his eyes glistening.  
  
Surprisingly enough, he woke up,  
-And woke up with hope,  
And so with hope the day dawned.  
  
10 It was like all days: Empty.  
With his box, he drudged to the street.  
Looking at the shoes of passers-by,  
Hoping to get a coin, he muttered,  
"SH-A-LL...I... 'SHIDO'?"  
  
15 There was no reply.  
-Still, he hoped.

The poem shows a man who is hungry, suffering from poverty caused pain and filling the fierce cold of the long night.

It was a long night  
So were all nights  
The cold surface shrunk his skin;  
His stomach empty, itching, aching,  
Emptiness. Hunger. His wracking pain  
All kept open his eyes glistening (Ibid)

This stanza shows the man is in a difficult condition. His shrunk skin caused by the cold in the night, his hunger, his itch perhaps resulted because he can not have the chance to clean himself and all the pain he feels indicate the man's complication of life. But under this melancholy the poor man hopes to keep himself awake and right.

Surprisingly enough, he woke up,  
and woke up with hope,  
And so with hope the day dawned. (Ibid)

From these lines we understand that the reasons for the man's strong appearance to wake up always and to stay all right all the day is because he hopes. His hope is his expectation that he would find a coin on the road.

Looking at the shoes of passers by  
Hoping to get a coin, he muttered  
" Shall I " SHIDO?" (Ibid)

This man remains in life with the hope of finding money on the street. The poet with this condition seems to say that even this type of hope keeps some people safe from frustration. The poem shows the extent of hope, which prevents some men from discontent. And on the other hand we understand that hope is an eternal aspect of human nature. To state this reality another poet, Hailu Habtu (1962) also wrote a poem entitled, "Eternal Hope".

## Eternal Hope

Thou guiding chord, eternal hope!

Thou art the course of man,  
And long is thy strong rope,  
Infinite in its span.

5 Who would have stood love's blow,  
Who would have stood ill chance,

Who would have stood harsh laws,  
None but hope's eternal dance.

Dance it does even in gloomy times;  
10 Dance it does even in prisoner's cell,  
And life it gives unto dead, mournful chimes,  
For hope's limits who can ever tell?

Young men hope for success;  
The old for peace and vest,  
15 Women for beauty's grace  
And all hope for the best.  
When you have lost true friends,  
And things fare rather bad;  
Think not of life's few friends;  
20 Let not things make you sad.

When kins and enemies  
Do scron and torture thee;  
In hope lie remedies,  
So hope in what will be.

25 Hope when life is dazzling bright;  
Hope when life is bleak and dark;

Hope even when you've lost your might;  
    Hope and make hope your heart's mark.  
Then live with earnest hope  
30               Your day and you dark night,  
And hope's infinite rope  
                  Shall lead you in the right.

The poem, "Eternal Hope" shows that man can resist and exist strong because there is an infinite hope to drive him strong. And the poet says hope stays with every one in any situation.

Who would have stood harsh laws  
    None but hope's eternal dance  
Dance it does even in gloomy times;  
    Dance it does even in prisoner's cell,  
And life it gives unto dead, mournful chimes,  
    For hope's limits who can ever tell? (Ibid)

According to this poem hope does not have any prohibiting condition. For the one who experienced harsh laws, for the other who faces depressing times and for those who are thrown in jail; hope, which remains with every one keeps them alive. And as the poem the type of hope differs from man to man according to age and sex. The poem in another line says that the young usually, hope for success (line 13), the old for peace and security (line 14) and women for beauty (line 15). But whoever the person is there is hope which dreams for the best.

The poem, after stating the existing nature of life, in its last stanza advocates people to hope for hope gives a solution.

When kins and enemies  
    Do scorn and torture thee;  
In hope lie remedies,

So hope in what will be. (Ibid)

These lines give an advice to hope under any condition. According to the lines life can have solution through hope. The poet in its forgoing lines too says the same thing. The poem says that through hope any body can attain the right thing. Because, as the poem says,

Hope's infinite rope  
Shall lead you in the right. (Ibid)

Generally the poems under this portion discuss about hope. Concerning hope the recurrent idea, which the poems state, is the eternity of hope under any conditions. To show the extent of hope's existence the poems create difficult settings and show that man remains strong in bad situations too because he hopes.

Like hope, hopelessness is another major theme, which is written by Ethiopian poets in English. The next part of this chapter looks into this topic.

### **3.6 Poems that Depict Hopelessness**

A number of English poems composed by Ethiopians during the period deal with the notion of hopelessness. One of the poems that reflect this theme is Tsegaye Gebremedhin's "Death In Me" (1965).

The whole poem reads like this

#### **Death In Me**

I no more hope for a moonshine walk  
To nurse a shrunken memory of bye-gone happy days,  
I only wait absorbed by emptiness  
Under a clouded over rock of emptiness  
5 I no more dream  
Of Michelangelo's well-fed baby angels

Alluring me like the dead feelers of God  
Form the golden walls of the Vatican,  
I only dream  
10 Of the thick white pus I saw  
Ejecting out of a leper's distorted eyes.

I no more fly  
On the wings of the sweet bird of youth,  
I only toss and turn  
15 Under the cold blankets of reality,  
For the wounds of life received at day light  
Glow wilder in the dead of night.

I no more watch the evening sun  
Waving good-night kisses at the distant horizon,  
20 I only contemplate my naked soul  
Being pitted against a trial of dry measure.

This poem shows the foil of hope in the speaker of the poem. The speaker states that he no more expects good things. Rather he says that his dream is empty. In one of the stanza he says like this.

I no more hope for a moonshine walk  
To nurse a shrunken memory of by-gone happy days,  
I only wait absorbed by emptiness  
Under a clouded over rock of emptiness. (Ibid)

The speaker in the first line says that he has stopped expecting inviting and artistic things. Even he states that he no more thinks of the past happy moments. This shows that the speaker definitely professes he is in a hollow condition. He repeated the term emptiness two times to manifest the extent of his blank and dark feeling. Even he says the dark and hollow

sense is strong with the expression "... a clouded over rock of emptiness" (line 4). In other lines too the speaker affirms his hope has died; rather he thinks of the worst sides of life.

I no more dream  
Of Michelangelo's well-fed baby angles  
I only dream  
Of the thick white pus I saw  
Ejecting out of a leper's distorted eyes. (Ibid)

In these lines also the speaker shows his frustration. Rather than the best things like the great works of Michelangelo, he thinks of rotten things. The "... thick white pus" refers to any deceased thing. And his dream of these things is a sign of frustration, the loss of his hope.

In many lines the speaker maintains his frustration with the opening phrase, "I no more". In the following lines too he proclaims his frustration with the phrase, "I no more".

I no more watch the evening sun  
Waving good-nigh kisses at the distant horizon, (Ibid)

His many a time saying of , "I no more..." indicates his termination of something that has been going on constantly. And actually he stopped thinking of good things. So, we understand from the lines that he has developed frustration.

Another poem, "I" by Shiferaw Asfaw (1967) too expresses despair. In the previous poem by Tsegay we find the speaker had a good life before arriving at a depressed condition. On the contrary in the poem "I" the speaker indicates that he had a desperate life and his future life is also dejected. The entire poem reads like this.

**"I"**  
Yes , between today's dim light  
And tomorrow's complete darkeners  
I am  
Rolling naked on a cold wave

5 of a vast indifferent ocean  
I live  
To observe  
My fellow man drowns.

According to the first two lines, we understand the speaker's disposition grows sever. In the time he referred "today" (line 1) his state of mind was "dim". The phrase " dim light" (line 1) shows the existence of faint light though indistinct. On the other hand by the time "tomorrow" (line 2) the next line says "complete darkeners" (line 2). This removes the faint light and becomes black. This indicates his hopeless state of mind. In the condition which he shows his life is also full of misery, the "cold wave" (line 4) refers to many affecting things like poverty, hunger, imprisonment and etc. And this miserable condition seems ceaseless as indicated in line 5 with the expression "vast indifferent ocean". Since (vast) ocean is wide, it seems endless when it is seen form one point. The speaker voices his endless sense of frustration by the image of an ocean. And the continuity of the same felling is stated by the term "indifference". This poem in general indicates the depressed situation of the speaker and the continuity of this felling without an end.

Eshetu Chole (1964) shows another aspect of hopelessness in his poem "Dilemma".

### **Dilemma**

Into the darkness we sped  
Past the innocent beauty  
Of the rude countryside  
Past the life of the country  
5 We drove far into the night.  
  
Behind-Civilization  
With all its noise  
Its gossip and boredom  
And the weary heart seeks escape  
10 From the tasteless colorless

Life of the town.

And yet there is no peace  
No escape from life  
For farther as you plunge  
15 Into the night  
Deeper you forge forward  
Into the dark

Forward there is no light  
Backward there is no hope

This poem shows the passage of a good time after leaving the countryside to the city. The speaker of the poem indicates the condition of leaving the countryside as a serious mistake, which throws them into despairing situation.

Into the darkness we sped  
Past the innocent beauty  
Of the rude countryside  
Past the life of the country  
5. We drove into the night. (Ibid)

From these lines we feel the speaker's despondency. In the first and fifth lines the speaker states the idea of his lack of good sense by darkness (line 1) and night (line 5). The reason for all this dark sense is the city life. The speaker in the next stanza indicates that life in town is noisy, full of boredom, gossip and weariness. He generalizes life in town with the following two lines.

10. From the tasteless colorless  
Life of the town (Ibid)

And according to the poem the reason for hopeless sense of the speaker is the lack of decision to escape from this life. The poem in the following lines indicates that the efforts he made to escape from his unhappy town life resulted in more frustrating conditions.

No escape from life  
For further as you plunge  
15 Into the night  
Deeper you forge forward  
Into the dark (Ibid)

These lines show the growth of his despairing situation after his effort for good change of life. The poem indicates the hopeless situation with the redundant terms night and dark. Generally the poem refers to life in town by night (lines 15) and its extent of severity is shown by the term dark (line 17). When he concludes showing his state of mind, the speaker says that he is hopeless with the following lines.

Forward there is no light  
Backward there is no hope (Ibid)

According to these two lines the speaker seems in Dilemma. The reason for his problem of choice is the entire situation where he wants to speed is not inviting. Rather it is frustrating.

On the whole in this part poems that depict hopelessness or frustration have been studied. Among different poems with this theme those that have been selected here communicate the death of hope and the extent of disparity in different manners.

Tsgaye's poem "Death in Me" shows growing from better life to the complete portrayal of pessimistic view. Shiferaw Asfaw's poem, "I" on the other hand indicates the continuous depressed life of the speaker and his hopeless feeling to recover from where he is in. And Eshetu Chole's "Dilemma" reveals his difficulty to decide where to go and what to do for every quarter of his effort is filled with hopeless situation. But one way or another the poems show hopelessness. In this section an attempt is made to show poems with major

themes of certain aspects of human life. In this sense the poems give major concern to issues like death, laments, love , hope and hopelessness. Each theme has been shown through different poems. The poems develop the central idea through different experiences. But all direct to indicating the major theme. The next chapter looks into another major theme in Ethiopian poetry in English.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## 4. The Theme of Praise and Criticism

### 4.1 Introduction

Another major theme in Ethiopian poetry in English is the theme of praise and criticism. In the period under study there are some Ethiopian poems, which praise or criticize certain issues. These poems concentrate on the state of the country and the continent. Based on the focus of the poems, the chapter is divided into two major parts; a theme of praise and criticism. Under each major class of themes there are different sub topics that represent the chapter. Under the issue of praise there are poems, which praise Ethiopia as a whole and poems which praise unique features of Ethiopia. Under the issue of criticism there are poems that criticize the educated African and poems that have a Pan-African concern.

This chapter focuses on these two major concerns.

### 4.2 Poems of Praise

The other major theme in the early periods of Ethiopian poems in English is praise. Under this major point there are two aspects of poems, which develop the theme. Some of the poems praise Ethiopia as a whole. This is to mean the poems praise the country in general. The other group of poems express their feeling for the country through specific references of the country's attractions mainly nature. We shall see each in this part.

#### 4.2.1 Poems that Praise Ethiopia as a Whole

Some group of poems in Ethiopian poetry in English praise Ethiopia. The way they praise Ethiopia is not with reference to specific points; rather they praise Ethiopia in general.

One of the poems that praise Ethiopia is Girma Habte Selassie's poem "Ethiopia" (1962). This poem gives the country a faithful and divine nature. The poem reads like this:

### **Ethiopia**

Ethiopia,

Country of faith,

Judas and Satan invaded you

But, Mary and her Son redeemed you

5 Let's study and leave folly behind

Ethiopia,

You big mountain

Fat of the psalms of David

So you will not grow thin,

10 So you won't break the strength of your fathers.

From this poem we understand that the country is considered as a land of Coptic faith. This is shown with the expression that Ethiopia is saved from Satan and Judah by Mary and her Son (lines 3 and 4). The poet seems to appreciate this idea and says that it is her belief that saves her from enemies.

The poem, in order to give the country a divine appearance, uses figurative expressions like symbol and metaphor.

When the poem in the 3<sup>rd</sup> line says. "Judas and Satan invaded you", it creates the image of Ethiopia's enemy to be so terrible and harmful like Judas and Satan who were strong antagonists of Jesus Christ in the Bible.

In the same way the poem uses metaphor and says “you big mountain” to glorify the greatness of the country like a mountain which stands high. The poet also asserts that the country’s great nature is due to her prayers of psalms of David.

On the whole, this poem says that Ethiopia is a land of Christian faith with which it is saved. It also states that this religion makes the land a great country.

Another poem that praises Ethiopia is Takele Taddeses’s, “The High Africa”. (1962) .It reads like this.

### **The High Africa**

Reflecting the Divine Art

In the living and non-living

On the northeast African part

There is something life giving.

5            Dissected and up-lifted  
              Unique within a unique  
              There lies God-gifted  
              The proud African physique  
              For those who possess it.

10           Encircled by nature’s furnace  
              In the center pleasant and cool  
              Beauty in rugged surface  
              Is shown even to a fool.

              With treasure yet untouched  
15           In her heart of hearts hide

By natural beauty unmatched  
Forever lives with pride.  
  
Speedily forward marching  
With proud insignia  
20 Her ready eggs hatching  
This is the High Africa  
The country-Ethiopia

This poem honours Ethiopia for its beautiful spiritual art, attractive and high landscape, conducive weather and rich natural resources.

Like the previous poem by Girma Habte Selassie, in this poem we see Ethiopia being considered as a land of Christianity. This theme is demonstrated with the following stanza.

Reflecting the Divine Art  
In the living and non-living  
On the northeast African part  
There is something life giving (Ibid)

In the above stanza, the phrase “Divine Art” indicates the country’s Christian faith, which can be seen through artistic reflections on the walls of the churches. In this stanza we also find the poet mentioning the geographical location of Ethiopia that is northeast part of Africa. The poet says that the country’s location is a God gifted natural appearance, which is also a pride for Africa,

Dissected and up-lifted  
Unique within a unique  
There lies God-gifted

The proud African physique  
For those who possess it. (Ibid)

This poem in general says that Ethiopia is the greatest land in Africa for its divinity, attractive landscape, beautiful natural appearance and natural treasure.

Another poem that praises Ethiopia is Tsegaye Gebremedhin's "Ours" (1965). But this poem is not only a praise poem it also comments on the country. There are only some points that account for their praise of nature. For instance the following lines indicate that Ethiopia is a land of ancient history with various records, and a land of high mountains.

Time-old  
Highland of highlands  
Ancient  
Where all history ends  
Where all rainbows meet (Appendix 9)

In the above poem some terms indicate that Ethiopia is an ancient country. The expression 'Ancient' and 'Where all history ends' (lines 3 and 4) tell about the country's very old historical record. If all the historical references come to an end it is in this country, this means that the country is a source of history for its long age.

In addition to this, the poet refers to the country as a land of high hills and mountains where even a rainbow can be seen touching each extremes of her mountains (line 5). Again

here, the reason for the rainbows to meet at one place is because of the high hills and mountains of the landscape.

Tsegaye develops the previous theme by adding more ideas in other lines of his poem. He denotes that Ethiopia is a country of high mountains, a symbol of African liberty, a land of various landscapes and a land of warriors. The following lines demonstrate this theme.

Roof of mother Africa  
Worshipped idol of liberty  
Whose age-old freedom  
Cost overwhelming blood  
10 Cost rituals of war  
Ancient highland  
With your feet  
In the sea  
Your head  
15 In the clouds,  
Feature of volcanoes  
Of erosions, valleys  
Green, deserts  
Land of landscapes  
20 Of labouring peasants  
Land of warriors  
Of churches kings, history (Ours )

According to this poem Ethiopia is the highland area of the whole of Africa. It is also stated that the country has never experienced colonial power like the other countries. Rather the history of colonial struggle made Ethiopia a symbol of freedom. The poet also states this. This is in other words intoned by saying that Ethiopia is a, “land of warriors” (line 21). The statement that says Ethiopia is a land of warriors is emphasized by other lines like ‘Worshiped idol of liberty’ (line 7), ‘cost overwhelming blood’ (line 9) and ‘cost rituals of war’ (line 10). Due to the age-old struggle to remain free from colonialism, the people have shed their blood. And the long tradition-like war history also left so many stories of war. Whatever happened, since the country kept its freedom it is considered as idol of liberty (line 7).

Tsegaye in another line of the same poem glorifies the variety of Ethiopia’s landscape through figurative expression like personification. To show the towering nature of the country he uses personifying terms like feet and head. When the poet says,

With your feet  
In the sea  
Your head  
In the clouds (Ibid)

We understand and imagine that the country has the lower land and at the same time the highest landscape which made it to be called, “Roof of Mother Africa.”

Though the poet praises the country in the above way by glorifying its natural appearance, he also comments on some points. The comments forwarded about Ethiopia are interwoven with the praise lines. The things mentioned on the limitations of the country are more or less related to the ancient history. The poet seems to say that except the past glorious ages and deeds, nothing is done now.

In one of his lines Tsegaye acclaims the country’s past history and touches the limits like this,

Admire you  
For your past  
Fear you  
For your injustice (Ibid)

In the last line of this stanza the poet writes against lack of justice. Here what the poet mentions as a good point is the ancient time only. The essence of the past time is given more places in most lines of the poem. In another line also Tsegaye raises the country's ancient time to comment on another issue.

Love you  
For what you are  
Time old  
Slow  
In change (Ibid)

Here we read the poem saying the country is time old. But, even though the country is a land of long history, as the next lines say this country has slow change. This shows that age has no effect on the contemporary situation of Ethiopia.

In other lines Tsegaye refers the country's geophysical nature to symbolize it as a sign of Ethiopia's strong defence power. But in a parallel way with the chains of cliffs that characterize defence the poet puts a chain of anarchy to signify the lack of organized work and lawlessness. And he points out it is one factor for the fall of the country,

Imposing cliffs  
Characteristic

Of your defence  
Chains of anarchy  
Symbolic  
Of your decadence. (Ibid)

From these lines we understand that though the country is time old with proud deeds, it does not have that glory at this time due to the problems that affect its development. The ‘chains of anarchy’ are taken as a sign of inability to do things in a normal and systematic way. The poet asserts this in another line of the same poem:

With your eyes  
In today’s date  
Your feet  
In pre-historic (Ibid)

By these lines the poet indicates that the country has not yet developed. Rather, Ethiopia is still in the pre-historic time. The personified expression “feet” shows the country’s slow or inactive state of development.

On the whole Tsegaye, acclaims and expresses Ethiopia in different ways, he has also pointed out some of the situations that have hindered the country’s development.

Generally the poems in this section talk about Ethiopia. As attempted to show mostly the poems demonstrate Ethiopia as a land with beautiful natural attractions and old historical civilizations; the poems also talk about the whole appearance of Ethiopia.

The next part of the analysis looks into poems that verse on specific nature of the country.

#### 4.2.2 Poems that Praise the Unique Features of Ethiopia

This section studies poems, which have a major theme on different natural attractions of Ethiopia. The difference between this section and the previous one is, in the previous one the poems deal with the general appearance of the country. Though they mention some points, on the whole they refer to Ethiopia. In this part, on the other hand, the poems have major topics of specific and unique nature of Ethiopia. The poems under this category, refer to particular things of the country to praise Ethiopia.

One of the poems that appreciate the country's natural attraction is "Lake Langeno" by Tsegaye Gebremedhin (1965). The poem reads like this:

##### **Lake Langeno**

Isn't that beauty herself?...

She danced to the caress of the silent breeze

To the shimmering sun beam pitted in her womb.

While the skeleton rocks above

5 Gazed at her with a lifeless lust

And the dying shrubs held to their roots for life

She seems to lure with hue and cry

Obsessed with an important gusto for temptation

To leak and wet the edges to the desert

10 To arouse a cruel desire of dead silence,

To transfix a pestilential hunger

In the burnt-out bosom of a scorched earth.

Isn't that beauty herself?

This poem demonstrates the appealing appearance of Lake Langeno. To show the beauty of the lake the poet uses figurative expression mainly personification. In the second line the poet expressed the waves of the lake as a dance to give it emotional sense. In the third line too the reflecting sun ray over the centre of the water is reflected in the word 'womb' to create a human feeling for the lake.

The poem, creates a beautiful image of the surrounding area of the lake too. These are the rocks by the side of the water and the shore. The rocks are personified as if they watch the moving and shimmering water (line5). On the other hand the shore is a tired land scorched by the hot sun.

In general, the poem shows the beauty of lake Langeno and its surroundings. The poem says that the movement of the water, the shimmering sun beam, the rocks on shore, the shrubs on the shore, the silent edge of the lake... are all alluring parts of nature.

Another poem that applauds fascinating natural appearance is "One More Poem" by Baalu Girma (1967 ).

### **One More Poem**

When Meskerm dawns  
At the heels of rian  
Qatemas on river banks  
And Meskel-flowers that glow with sheen  
5 Paint the smiling world with gold and green  
A million dew-drops that shimmer in the sun  
On swaying glossy blades  
The rays of light that filters through forest green  
And point a thousand shades

10 The dance of the lilies to the tune of humming bees  
The joyous songs of Meskel birds on nearby trees,  
Are all part of nature's sweet refrain  
When Meskerem dawn at the heels of rain.

This poem uses different natural features. "One More Poem" expresses an inviting natural appearance that happens in the landscape when a new season "Meskerem" comes. To show all the changes first of all the poet indicates the name of a month which comes at the beginning of the Ethiopian new year.

When Meskersem dawns  
At the heels of rain  
Qaetemas on riverbanks  
And Meskel-flowers that glow with sheen  
Paint the smiling world with gold and green (Ibid)

These lines reflect the beauty of the landscape in the month of Meskerem. According to this poem "Meskerem" is a month which colours the land with attractive flora. As we can see, the new season comes with the appearance of a flowering plant which appears when the rain ceases. Qaetema grows around the riverbanks. The other appealing thing is the blossoming of a flower which is typical only on the new season. This flower called "Meskel – Flower" is imagined painting the land with golden colour.

In addition to the "Meskel-Flower" other flowers come too at this period of the year. These flowers are represented with the flower lily (line 10). And due to the flourishing of flowers, flying creatures too, like bees, would come (line10). These all are the results of a change of season.

The other thing that has been shown by the coming of the New Year is the clearing of the sky to let the sun shine. The poem puts it like this.

A million dew drops that shimmer in the sun  
On swaying glossy blades,  
The rays of light that filter through forest green  
And point a thousand shades (Ibid)

Like the colourful shade of flowers, the rays of the sun and its reflection through dew and trees are another fantastic features at the new year. The shades too have a glamorous look to create an artistic feeling.

In general Baalu Girma, with the poem “ One more Poem” indicated what happens when new season comes after the end of a rainy season. According to the poem the land looks attractive with flowers, insects and the sun.

Baalu Girma, in his another poem, “Those Yonder Hills” (1962) too shows interesting aspects of Ethiopia’s mountains. The poet creates the image of the hills as a high part of the land, a place where the sun sinks with colourful light shading, a place never attacked but stood with honour, a sing of Ethiopia’s sovereignty and areas of foreigners attraction. The whole poem is the following.

### **Those Yonder Hills**

The dying sun  
Shading tears of beams  
Sunk in splendor down  
Below those yonder hills.

5      Smoke from cottage roofs  
          Like vapor form torrid sea  
          Meander's up the skies  
          Across the yonder hills.  
  
          Tell me the mysteries  
 10     Of those yonder hills  
          Which in battle and peace stood  
          Honour'd and never stoop'd in shame.  
  
          Tell me those yonder hills  
          Whose roof's the shrine of awe  
 15     Untouch'd by foreign yoke  
          And soaring up the stormy sea  
  
          Tell me of younder hills  
          From whose basement the sea  
          The jealous eyes of Europe  
 20     Look'd up the walls in vain  
  
          There! In the heart of yonder hills  
          Totour'd in taintless pride  
          Wanting none but jealous of their own,  
          Dwell my sturdy kins- the Ethiopia Race!

The poem in the following lines demonstrates that at dawn the sun goes down behind the hills with inviting light.

The dying sun  
 Shading tears of beams

Sunk in splendour down

Below those yonder hills (Ibid)

According to this poem the dying sun is the sun which sets in the evening. And the place where this sun goes with excellent show is the hills. In another lines of the same poem, the poet says that the hills are attractions of foreigners.

Tell me of yonder hills

From whose basement the sea

The jealous eyes of Europe

Look'd up the walls in vain (Ibid)

From these lines we understand that the Europeans are attracted by the high and excellent nature of the hills. The term “jealous” indicates that the European’s are very much interested by the country. But the poet states that they are protected lands in the following lines,

Tell me the mysteries

Of those yonder hills

Which in battle and peace stood

Honoured and never stood in shame. (Ibid)

These lines question that the hills are places of honour. The implication of the question is that the country is sovereign. They are never been touched by those people who look them with jealous eyes. The last line says that nothing has happened to shame the country. ‘Shame’ in this sense denotes defeat. But the place-a representation of the country never faced this fate.

In the last stanza of this poem the poet indicates the people who live among the hills are Ethiopians.

There! in the heart of younder hills  
Tutour'd in taintless pride  
Wanting none but jealous of their own,  
Dwell my sturdy kins- the Ethiopian Race! (Ibid)

According to this stanza, there are people who live in the center of the hills. As we have seen from the previous stanzas of this poem, the hills are honoured and have never stood in shame. The poet says that they are honoured. (line12) So, we understand that the people of these hills are honoured. From these lines we see they live in peace. The poet says that the people of these hills are proud when he says 'taintless pride' and this also implies that nothing has happened to shame them for the Ethiopia people fought and had those hills protected. So they live in pride.

In general Baalu Girma's poem "Those Younder Hills" indicates the hills (mountains), which represent Ethiopians life. At the same time these mountains are signs of Ethiopian pride and honour for the fact that they stood honoured without shame.

On the whole the poems in this section, have specific attention to some natural phenomenon of the country, and patriotism of the Ethiopians. The poems praise and glorify nature, and indirectly praise the place or country where their subject of emphasis is found. Most of the lines in the poems under this section personify Ethiopia. This is to give a real appearance for the country.

Another major point in the early productions of Ethiopian poetry in English is the theme of human emotions in general. The next part will study this.

### **4.3 Poems of Criticism**

In the works of Ethiopian poetry in English the other major theme is criticism of the educated African. The poems deal with the state of Africa, the dark shadow of colonialism, the

position of the educated African for his continent and other related points concerning Africa. To study this major issue the subject matters are classified into two topics, the criticism of the educated African and pan-Africanism. This section will study both aspects.

#### **4.3.1 The Criticism of the Educated African**

With the concern of the educated African the only poet who wrote many poems is Tsegaye Gebremedhin. Tsegaye in his different poems condemns the educated African for the denial of his country's reality. One of the poems with this theme is "Home Coming Son" (1965).

##### **Home-Coming Son**

Look where you walk unholy stranger  
This is the land of the eighth harmony  
In the rainbow: Black.  
It is the dark side of the moon  
5 Brought to light  
This is the canvas of God's master stroke.

Out, of your foreing outfit unholy stranger  
Feel part of the great work of art  
Walk free, walk naked  
10 Walk in peace, walk alone,  
Walk tall  
Let the feelers of your motherland  
Caress your bare feet  
Let Her breath kiss your naked body.

15 But watch, watch where you walk forgotten stranger  
This is the very depth of your roots: Black  
Where the tom-tomes of your father vibrated  
In the fearful silence of the valleys

Shook, in the colossus bodies of the mountains  
 20 Hummed, in the deep chests of the jungles.  
 Walk proud.  
  
 Watch, listen to the calls of he ancestral sprits prodigal son  
 To the call of the long-waiting soil  
 They welcome you home. In the song of birds  
 25 You hear your suspended family name  
 The winds whisper the golden names of your tribal warriors  
 The fresh breeze blown into your nostrils  
 Floats their bones turned to dust  
 Walk tall. The sprits welcome  
 30 Their lost-son-returned.  
  
 Watch, and out of your foreign outfit brother  
 Feel part of the work of art  
 Walk in laughter, walk in rhythm, walk tall  
 Walk free, walk naked  
 35 Let the roots of your motherland caress your body  
 Let the naked skin absorb the home-sun and shine ebony.

This poem portrays an educated African who returned from abroad and who feels a guest for his land. The poem seems to advice the 'lost-child' to feel part of his culture:

Out, of your foreign outfit unholy stranger  
 Fell part of the great work of art  
 Walk in peace, walk along. Walk tall,  
 10 Walk free, walk naked  
 Let the feelers of your motherland  
 Caress your bare feet  
 Let her breath kiss your naked body. (Ibid)

As can be witnessed from these lines the poem invites the strange African child to be part of his people. The tone of the poem has some degree of advice to bring the coming African son to the cultural root. With the above polite statements the poem encourages the African stranger to advance so that he can accept his people. He repeatedly uses motivating terms like 'Feel' (line 8) and 'walk' (line 9, 10). After giving advice the poem tells and introduces the African guest where he is.

But watch, watch where you walk forgotten stranger  
15. This is the very depth of your roots. Black,  
Where the tom-toms of your fathers vibrated  
In the fearful silence of the valleys  
Shook, in the colossus bodies of the mountains  
Hummed, in the deep chests of the jungles.  
20 Walk proud. (Ibid)

This poem introduces the 'stranger' African about the roots where he is disintegrated. According to this the natural appearance is stated as if it is still there without any change. And the poet seems to balance the 'difference' between the strange African and his country. The overall sense of these lines have some form of introducing his own culture which he denied. In the other lines too the poet tells about the cultural varieties of his country. And he seems to tell him how inviting nature and culture he has. With all telling of his culture the general aim of this poem is earping the African elite to accept the reality of his country without fear.

Watch, and out of your foreign outfit brother  
Fell part of the work of art. (Ibid)

These lines tell the educated African to renew his roots with his society so that he can be part of his culture.

Another poem with the theme of critique of the African elite is "Also of Ethiopia" by Tsegaye Gebremedhin (1965). The poet with this poem condemns the intelligentsia for

forgetting its culture occupied by western values. The following lines from the poem indicate this idea.

We, the wonder plants of cinema screens  
Generations of car-hooters and time-hooted  
Children of past ruins and present insecurities  
We, of hollow-hearts and jazz-minds  
5 Mockeries who seem to know what we don't care for  
And giants who do not know where we step  
We, the intellectual brain disease cases  
The gogmagos waiting to scratch  
Each other's eyes out (Appendix 10)

According to these lines the African elite is completely drawn by western ideas. And its influence by the western values is without any strong base. The poet says presently the generation is without any security (line3). And the idea that makes him to forget his own values is without full understanding (line 4). The poet, also criticizes the African intelligentsia, through the representation of the Ethiopian, for denying his historical roots.

We who cry  
"What of the days of historic showdowns?"  
30. Of the marvel walls of Lablbella  
Of the tours of queen Sheba  
Of king kaleb and his will of iron  
Of the wonders to the Aksumites  
Of Tewodros and his short lived, fast fallen lightening  
35. Of Allula and his military art  
Of Habtegorigis and his army of faith  
Of Menelik and his rare wisdom  
We are to know. (Ibid)

These lines witness the history of Ethiopia. The poem with these lines shows that the educated elite is absolutely unaware of his heritage. The reason for this, as pointed out by the poem is because the educated one is estranged from his roots. So the poet strongly tells the African (in the sense of this poem the educated Ethiopian) to accept his heritage and renew the roots . The following lines strongly voice this idea.

We are to know  
Of the fears that undermine the patriot's sleep  
Of the belly that rules the will of the underfed  
Of the seeds that toss within the womb of the black soil  
Of the chill that peels the labourer's bare skin  
We are to know. (Ibid)

With these lines the poem advises the educated generation to renew his cultural roots. From the sense of the poem, it seems a must for the African to know his country's cultural and historical heritage.

In "Self-Exile" too Tsegaye (1965) voices the same problem of the African child. With this poem also the poet signifies that the Africa elite is isolated from its contemporary concerns.

Seeking asylum  
In the bosom of an ailing world,  
Ever remaining  
Preys of our own shortcomings  
5 focused by the narrow chapters  
Of private ends,  
Prostituting greater causes  
For which the past heirs died to keep aflame,  
Cashing principles  
10. In favour of tin-gods  
At the cost of blighted hopes,  
Scared of total death

Unlike the hard old days

15. Now, one prefers to move half dead

In the shades of a doomed era. (Appendix 11)

In these lines, like the previous poems of Tsegaye, the speaker indicates that knowing the past events is a key point to accept and be part of the culture. Because of confused personality the generation seems without any guide. This is shown in line 15. And the remedy for this, as pointed by the poet, is to know and accept the past values. And to act for the better future.

In general the poems under this section indicate the educated African elite is separated from the concerns of his country. Mostly the poems show that the western value is impeding the African to isolate himself from the concerns of his country. And the poems advice the African to break the isolation and accept his country's situations.

While some of the Ethiopian poems in English discuss about the educated African, the other poems have a major point that deals with the recent situation of Africa. The next part looks into this.

#### **4.3.2 Poems that Depict Pan Africansim**

There are some poems that deal with Africa. The Poems are categorized here under the topic, Pan-Afircansim. The reason for putting these poems under this topic is because the concept of Pan-Africansim incorporates any idea of African concern. And the poems that have Pan African sense in a way have critical concerns for the situation of Africa. In this respect there are different poems which discuss various experiences of Africa and the African. One of the poems with serious concern for Africa is "Hold my Hands" by Tsegaye Gebremedhin (1965). This poem shows the self-searching of an African to make himself free from the western influence and revive pride. The speaker of the poem in the first lines utters to rise up and overcome the impeding force that dismantled him from his African root.

Hold my hand black mother hold

I need to rise, I need to stand on my feet

To rise, to stand, and to accuse. (Appendix 12)

According to these lines we see the interest of the African child to renew his African identity. The speaker seems without any power to depend on himself. So he asks his mother Africa for help. He says this idea in the following lines too.

Though I were forbidden to suck your breast black mother  
Though the wings of my sweet bird of youth are crippled  
I need to draw courage from your stretched arms  
To draw life, to draw strength  
To draw hope from what flows in the view of your stretched arms (Ibid)

According to these lines we see the African is not in a position to be free from his problems without the help of his mother country. So, he begs for the acceptance of his land. On the other hand, we understand from the poem that the African can have freedom, confident identity and secured life only from his land.

The speaker of the poem says his effort is in search of his identity. It seems that the African has understood he had ravished his black culture, estranged from his African root and carried away by the western value. And his long while separation from his African background resulted in insecurity of this life for he never feels at home, rather an exile of someone's world. With this condition the African is motivated to accept his pride which he ignored. He remembers and accepts his African pride of the past with the following lines.

But once I had a true name black mother  
A name like the mighty spirit of chaka  
A name like the spirit of Herrera of Namaqua  
Of Zuluand, of Matabelee...(Ibid)

All these statements are remembering his lost identity and lost glory. Now he believes he has lost all.

Shame no more glory now ... it is raped with you  
black mother (Ibid)

The speaker also believes that some force perhaps the colonizers have destroyed the African great identity. And his loss is a result of this. But whatever it is now he is in a position to renew his roots with Africa so that he can manage his case freely. And he also understands and gives a message that the African can have courage and life only through the understanding of his culture and acceptance of black identity.

Another poem with the concern of Africa is Hailu Gebre Yohannes's "Poem on Objectives Of Summit" (1963). The poem reads like this.

### **Poem On Objectives Of Summit**

To advantage individual Africans,  
Here is the leader's conference  
Echoing aims of this conference are:

5     Genuine unity, liberty, and education,  
Rights of Africans, and their desire  
Enriching the journey towards civilizations,  
Africa has innumerable problems,  
The first-the colonialists' flame

10    Condemning the existence of colonialism,  
Opens the conference on Africanism  
Not imperialism but continentalism  
Fits the welfare of Africanism  
Eminent sacrifice is needed now,

15    Enabling us to strike freedom's blow,  
Nullifying the power of imperials.  
Capitulating the continent's needs,  
Ensure these days the leader's deeds  
Other aims of the summit conference,

20    Focus on illitaracy and ignorance  
Also the perfection of African peace

Fifty-four states, but here are thirty-two;  
 Resurrecting the other identifying too,  
 In our help to make them the same  
 25   Consciously we play the political game.  
 According to African ambition,  
 Neutral states are to be discouraged  
 Liberalism to defeat subjugations  
 Every where Africanism encouraged  
 30   Africa, my home continent, I wish you luck,  
 Degrading colonialism which came to pluck;  
 Each leaders has come with an idea in mind  
 Readily to elaborate in greater design  
 Subscribing to create African criteria  
 35   Friendly atmosphere has grown in Africa,  
 Organizing unity like America,  
 Reflecting liberty's light like Mica.  
 Antique ides of our continent,  
 Failed in the past to our dreadful detriment  
 40   Realizing the fact that we are backward,  
 Individual Africans must work hard.  
 Cooperation is necessary for African union  
 And also to abolish anti-African opinions.  
 New filament of light is sighted,  
 45   Indigestible problems are to be digested.  
 Seeing that "unity" is declined,  
 Means brightest Africa has appeared.

This poem is written on the bases of African Leaders' conference and indicates the aims of the conference. The poem says that the African leaders' conference aims at bringing

about unity, liberty and education for Africa (Line 4). And also echoes what the participants of the conference have taken into consideration.

Condemning the existence of colonialism,  
Opens the conference on Africanism  
Not imperialism but continentalism,  
Fits the welfare of Africanism. (Ibid)

According to these lines all the African leaders have developed a bad feeling for colonialism. The speaker of the poem says it like this,

Africa has innumerable problems.  
The first- the colonialists flame (Ibid)

These lines show that colonialists affected Africa. The term 'flame' here indicates the severity of the pain caused by the colonial power. So, the poet says the first thing the African leaders did is condemning colonialism. The other thing that has been stated clearly is the need to have unity and one concern for Africa -'Africanism' and 'continentalism'. These terms transfer the idea of African unity for the, "Rights of Africa", "towards civilization" (line 5 and 6). And in order to be successful of this goal the poet says there must be sacrifice (line 20).

The other point stated by the poem is the idea of illiteracy and ignorance. It says this stating that illiteracy and ignorance are one of the aims of the conference.

Other aims of the summit conference,  
Focus on illiteracy and ignorance. (Ibid)

The poem, after stating the points of the African leader's summit using his own words, points out the need to have one Africa and the way to attempt the goal. It says that the first thing to do is breaking colonialism in Africa. After this the goal to Africans unity can be practiced.

Liberalism to defeat subjugation,

Every where Africanism encouraged  
Africa, my home continent, I wish you luck  
Degrading colonialism which came to pluck; (Ibid)

The poet when completing his poem about the need for the unity of Africa says that Africans must cooperate and work hard.

Realizing the fact that we are backward,  
Individual Africans must work hard.  
Cooperation is necessary for African union (Ibid)

In general the poem “Poem on Objectives Of Summit” based on the African Leader’s conference says that Africa should unite to overcome its problems. Addressing the words of the conference the speaker advises Africans to pay sacrifice, co-operate and work hard.

The other poem with African concern is, “The Year Africa” by Mossa Gore (1969). The entire poem reads like this.

### ***The Year Africa***

Bright in the ring of the year  
Pos’d molded Africa of to-day,  
With patience and perseverance ere  
Nature, blew an air of glory,  
5 For nature, the only mother to all  
Responds to the harsh Africa’s call.  
If not ignored, it is well know  
That mortals on this earth freely were born,  
But human rights were usurped and taken  
10 By unrightfully, unjust buffoons  
Who in Africa enjoy’d the ends of their means.  
But now they sicken and decay  
For there remains not a single prey.

15      Regard them exhausted and weary  
           And dying for other man's property  
           Out! out! you suckers of our blood  
           For time and tide has awakened our minds.  
           Ladies, gentlemen though being young  
           Look at the young African glaring,  
 20      The tide of glory flowing  
           Look at him also listening  
           The clock of freedom striking  
           So happy healthy fruitful year  
           Thou foretold glory and power  
 25      For foretold glory and power  
           For Africa in the years to come  
           Gladly we accepted thee with reverence  
           Tough we are arching against time

This poem like the previous poem condemns colonialism for it is the one which caused a serious problem in Africa.

          If not ignored, it is well known  
           That mortals on this earth freely were born,  
           But human rights were usurped and taken  
 10.      By unrightful, unjust buffoons  
           Who in Africa enjoyed the ends of their means( Ibid)

These lines indicate that African people were deprived of their rights by colonizers. And in their colony other than oppressing Africans they have used African wealth for the rest of their lives (line 11).

This poem indicating that Africans suffered more from ruthless people says that now is the time for Africa to be free from all the influences.

Out ! Out! You suckers of our blood  
For time and tide has awakened our minds.  
Ladies, Gentlemen thou being young  
Look at the young African glaring,  
20. The tide of glory flowing  
Look at him also listening  
The clock of freedom striking (Ibid)

These lines assert that Africans are now conscious of their right and the need to struggle. It also affirms serious appearance of the African child for his right since the time for Africa to be free is coming.

This poem in short announces that now is the time for Africa to be free with its young and strong children. It puts into words about the usurpation of African rights and the development of strength through the harsh reality. So, according to the poem Africa has bright hope to be glorious and powerful again.

Thou foretold glory and power  
25. For Africa in the years to come (Ibid)

On the whole the poems under this topic deal with the problems created by colonial powers. For this reason, these poems condemn colonizers. On the other hand, these poems indicate that now Africa has a good future and this can be practical only if Africans cooperate or unite.

## Conclusion

Compared to the Amharic poetic tradition, Ethiopian poetry in English is a much later development. This is because it appeared only in the early 1940's. In the course of this research it was found out that the first poem entitled "Unconquerable Sovereign" appeared on May 6, 1944 in The Ethiopian Herald. But the production of poetry increased in the late 1950s. Four main factors contributed to the rise of this form of literature. These are the country's external relationship that brought about the coming of foreign intellectuals, training opportunity for young Ethiopians, the establishment of modern education and the writers' interest to reach an international audience.

The establishment of modern education and the opening of the University College are major factors for the development of poetic writing. The students' freedom of press gave rise to publications like *News and Views*, *Struggle* and *Something*. Among these publications, *News and Views* and *Something* have published a number of poems which can be considered as pioneers of Ethiopian poetry in English. With these poems it can be said that writing poetry in English was the tradition of students at that time. From that period of time onwards we find different publications having some Ethiopian poems in English. But the number of poems that appeared is very limited compared to the previous period. In the early period there was also a literary medium which created possible conditions for the writing of poetry. This medium was the magazine *Something*. After this literary magazine we find no other publication that is mainly dedicated to literature. One different thing that we see in the recent times is publishing of collection of poems. These are also very few in number. Until the present day only eight anthologies of poems by Ethiopians in English have been published.

Research done on Ethiopian literature in English is also very limited. There are only two articles that studied the poetry independently. Most researches have touched upon Ethiopian poetry in English while studying other genres. The reason for this seems to be the availability of the poems in different publications.

This study has examined major themes of the earlier periods of Ethiopian poetry in English. The period which is referred to earlier, includes the years 1944 to 1967 E.C. This period is regarded as early for Ethiopian poetry in English because it is a stage at which Ethiopian poetry in English began and flourished. A number of poetic works were witnessed during this time. The poems have different subject matters. Among their different thematic preoccupations the most recurrent are the major concern of this research. These are the theme of certain aspects of human life and the theme of praise and criticism. These are major themes of Ethiopian poetry in English in the years 1944-1967 E.C, which have different classes of recurrent themes.

Under the major theme, the theme of certain aspects of human life there are five recurrent issues. These are poems that depict death, poems that lament the dead, love, hope and hopelessness. Different poems have developed these themes.

The other major theme, the theme of praise and criticism concentrates on different issues related to the subjects. This major theme is classified into poems of praise and poems of criticism. In the section that studies about poems of praise there are two recurrent issues developed through different poems which are poems that praise Ethiopia as a whole and poems that deal with the unique features of Ethiopia. And in the other section of major theme there are two recurrent issues that are poems that criticized the educated African and Pan-Africanism.

Generally, English poems written by Ethiopians during the period 1944 to 1967 E.C deal with themes related to certain aspects of life and to the issue of praise and criticism. Poems related to certain aspects of human life concentrate on notions like death, love, hope and hopelessness. And the poems related to praise and criticisms concentrate on natural attractions and criticize the educated African and colonialism.

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## Appendix 1

### The Traveler

It was a cool and starry night  
As I lay back upon the dark grass  
That a thought passed through my mind.  
Amidst the blaze of the heavenly stars  
5 I felt at loss,  
The loss of a traveler in a strange land.  
A sudden fear flashed cross my heart,  
A thought of things long-gone and things to come  
And my weary body shook and froze.  
10 For I knew the world was no man's land,  
Strange, unexplored, and always young.  
I thought at once of the distance I had gone  
And the distance yet to come,  
And with the sigh of a tired traveler  
15 I let these worlds go forth  
"I am traveller in a very strange land"  
A traveller without a guide,  
A land without a path.

Eshetu Chole, 1962

## ***Appendix 2***

### **Poem iii**

Death reared his throne in the city of the Dead.  
Here sorrow is happiness, decay is life  
Arching down through the centuries,  
But stillness Hongs where Blackness is light.  
5 Dripping drop by drop,  
Blood and molten men's flesh  
Blood and molten men's flesh  
Rotten in the shade, vanishing like the mist-  
Not a trace is left, only a timeless ash.  
10 Death in this domain laughs heartedly,  
Look you tiny, petty men, crawling like snails  
Here is my city of rest, and forget  
That you being to your Damn world

**Tecola Hagos, 1962**

### Appendix 3

#### So Soon, Friend!

(in memory of Benyam Wuhib)

Nobody thought it'd be so sudden,  
But so were you forced to make it.  
We're left with the heavy burden—  
Agony—which drives one into a fit.  
5           What a gruesome misery,  
              \*They'd tear their hair and tumble,  
              When deprived mercilessly  
              Of you, friend, beloved and humble.  
Are you really no more?  
10          But yesterday, only yesterday, you were.  
            Oh ! you made many a heart sore.  
            Now, who'd dare to live? Who'd care?  
              Truly, we are benumbed.  
              Should we believe it or not,  
15          Through all our hopes have crumbled,  
              That untimely departure is your lot.  
You are but one in the train  
Of those who wanly and silently  
Move on infinite plain,  
20          And who pass by endlessly.  
              You never had time to bid us adieu  
              All the same, farewell, till we come to you.

\* Relatives and friends

Hagos Tsehay, 1960

## ***Appendix 4***

### **Oh Once Active Man**

(in memory to the later Benyam Wuhib)

Oh once active man of value,  
Where are you hidden now?  
Tell the truth Wait for answer;  
Who'll seen or later follow you somehow.

5            You were a baby as I was,  
              A man as at present I am;  
              Grew up as normal being goes  
              To complete the cycle of life given to Adam

              May I ask you again man of co-operation

10          To tell the reason why you abandoned?  
              Your friends and people of relation;  
              That need your company eagerly and concerned?  
                  Are you fed up of the world,  
                  Of all your hobbies that kept you active?

15          Asks someone doubtful of life's mold,  
              Perishable in death's command of "leave!".

              Are there people to accept your suggestion  
              Of unity, fraternity and liberty?  
              Your struggle and willing participation,

20          Covering ideas of citizens' necessity?  
              You ignored me man of benevolence,  
              Refused to reply oh once active creature;  
              May be, you are in complete silence,  
              Lullaby, lie in peace till we meet in unknown further

Amdetsion Kidane 1959

## ***Appendix 5***

**Rest You, Man And Forever Rest.**



Since we last said good-bye  
Many a cold season has come and gone...  
No, it was not the good-bye that hurt  
5 Not the under breath curse we parted with but he question  
Whether or not we had parted at all.

Thought many a moon has been borne and gone  
Many a dreary summer returned and passed  
Whatever visions we have had of others  
10 Are visions reflected on the mirror of our past  
Whatever warmth we shared with others  
Is warmth evoked in memory of our past...  
No, it is not the big loss that hurt  
But our unforgotten eyes

15 Who across the shoulder of those nearer us  
In vain, searched for one another,  
No, it is not the lingering relapse that hurt  
But our unyielding hearts  
Who, condemned to remain faithful to our past  
20 Betrayed the hearts of those now closer to us.

Thought, from the four distant corners of mother earth  
Many a wild wind blew and appeased  
Many a wild dream fulfilled or misfired like ours  
We still search in the souls of those now nearer us  
25 For pieces and parts that may resemble our past  
Stubbornly hoping against dead ends  
Playing both ours and others' lives false  
Eating life with gusto lest she eats us sooner than we thought  
Thought, many an early dawn has been shaded by many a latter dusk  
30 Many a bright day swallowed by many a dark night  
Our past never really changes in us  
Like the nature of earth never really changes in her  
Like our first love is never really disfigured in our hearts

Like our past still really prevails in our present.

Tsegaye GebreMedhin, 1965

## ***Appendix 7***

### **Cold Shoulders**

It is now dark in darkness  
The water balls clatter on the tin roof  
Lulling our tense nerves to sleep  
The heart dribbles against the chest  
5 Recording each sore experience we had  
The mind stands aloof  
Being the cold sensed judge of self  
For either distant ends of the bed  
Our breaths draw in and draw our calls for peace  
10 Beneath the cool space of darkness  
Two scout fingers creep from either end  
They touch  
The wall of hostility is snapped between them.  
Thought dark, it is now sunshine.

Tesgay G/Medhin, 1965

## ***Appendix 8***

### **“Darkness”**

Dark was all-  
Darkness I fear  
Evil thoughts it evokes  
Sad memories it recalls.  
5           I sat in a dark room  
              Seeing images of things that never were  
              Hearing sounds that were not made  
I sat there silently,  
Waiting, hope ever increasing

10 For light to replace darkness  
And relieve me of my pains  
Eshetu Chole, 1964

## ***Appendix 9***

### **Ours**

Time-old  
Highland of highlands  
Ancient  
Where all history ends  
5 Where all rainbows meet  
  
Deep-throated giant  
In whom  
Forever is buried  
Duplicates, of  
10 The ten messages of Moses-  
Mighty earth  
Highland of highlands  
On your head  
Wind blew  
15 In your chest  
Life fluttered  
In your belly  
Progress rotted  
Under your feet  
20 Peasants died-  
Hail  
Roof of mother Africa  
Worshipped idol of liberty  
Whose age-old freedom  
25 Cost overwhelming blood  
cost rituals of war-  
Ancient highland  
With your feet  
In the sea

30 Your head  
In the clouds.  
Feature of volcanoes  
Of erosions, valleys  
Greens, deserts.

35 Land of landscapes  
Of laboring peasants  
Land of warriors  
Of churches, kings, history  
Of reviving intrigue

40 Like fangs of serpents-  
Highlands of highlands  
Man cannot unmake  
What you were  
Unlearn

45 What he knew of your glory  
Unfeel  
What he lived in your shame.  
Time-old.  
Alone, aloof

50 Shading the desert  
Dusting the heavens-  
Ancient.  
Your mother-guardian  
“Stretching her hands

55 In supplication to God”  
Since time unheard of.  
Your valiant sons  
Sharpening their swords  
Since time unheard of.

60 Your priests chanting  
In prayers and curses  
Since time unheard of-  
Highland of highlands

We, your children  
65 Admire your  
For your past.  
Fear you  
For your injustice  
Nag you  
70 For what you could have been/  
Serve you  
For better ends  
Respect you  
For you are ours  
57 Love you  
For what you are-  
Time-old.  
Slow  
In change  
80 Sure  
In your steps  
Cunning  
In your freedom  
Courage  
85 Is your challenge  
Patience  
Is your pass-word-  
Ancient.  
Rugged  
90 Imposing cliffs  
Characteristic  
Of your defiance.  
Chains of anarchy  
Symbolic  
95 Of your decadence  
Time old  
With your eyes

In today's date  
Your feet  
100 In pre-historic  
Home of buried walls  
Symbolic  
Of your age.  
Home of  
105 Songs of war  
Characteristic  
Of your lonesomeness.  
Time-old  
Highlands of highlands  
110 Ancient  
Where all history ends  
Where all rainbows meet.

Tsegaye GebreMedhin, 1965

## **Appendix 10**

### **Also Of Etiopics**

We, the wonder plants of cinema screens  
Generation of car-hooters and time-hooted  
Children of past ruins and present insecurities  
We, of hollow-hearts and jazz-minds  
5 Mockeries who seem to know what we don't care for  
And giants who do not know where to step

We, the intellectual brain disease cases  
 The gogmagogs waiting to scratch  
 Each other's eyes out  
 10 We, who eat your days smothering others' systems  
 And our evenings smothering our own  
 We, who on hearing lamenting church chants  
 Experience a belly-ache right through our spinal systems  
 We, the smart smiling sons of smarter sad fathers  
 15 We, the odd misfits among your own folk  
 Who aimlessly drift from day to day  
 We, with heads as fat as ant soldiers  
 With pocketed hands that refuse  
 To touch the earth our mothers bent to till:  
 20 We are to know.  
 Condemned to know.  
  
 We are to know  
 Of the fears that undermined the patriot's sleep  
 Of the belly that rules the will of he underfed  
 25 Of the seeds that toss within the womb of the black soil  
 Of the chill that peels the labourer's bare skin.  
 We are to know  
 We who cry  
 "What of the days of historic showdowns?"  
 30 Of the marvel walls of Lalibella  
 Of the tours of Queen Sheba  
 Of King Kaleb and his will of iron  
 Of the wonders of the Aksumites  
 Of Tewodros and his shortlived, fast fallen lightning  
 35 Of Allula and his military art  
 Of Habtegeorgis and his army of faith  
 Of Menelik and his rare wisdom:  
 We are to know.  
  
 We who think

40 That these living monuments of “decadence” archaism  
Are fit only in a national museum  
Only for the benefit of the ethnological research student  
(As mines of invaluable human study)  
Yet to be claimed only by the angle of death:

45 We who dream  
Of sacred words that flutter in dark hopes  
Of the codes that are hardly whispered:  
We who declare that in the past  
Whatever was of sacred was of taboo

50 Whatever was of Truth was of tin-gods:  
We who think you can shout “Murder!”  
Shout “Stop thief”  
Cry” Hell”  
And get away with it:

55 We are to know.  
Condemned to know.

We are to know  
Of the days when form the village dirty ponds  
The ugly frogs sang their last days of winter

60 Of the days when we tottered and paddled on our fours  
While our little legs were yet playing us false  
Of the songs of the past our elders taught us  
The songs when time was of little or of no concerns  
When these giant mountains swallowed in

65 The deaf pride of antiquity  
And frowned away at the winds of change:  
Of the proud peasant fathers  
Who stood aloof and forbearing  
While the living daylights were milked out of them

70 By the petty chiefs, priests, clerks and demagogues:  
We are to know.  
Condemned to know.

We whose fathers inherited centuries of yoke  
 Fought and bled in centuries of battles  
 75 We, how to-day roll and scream  
 Rise and fall on the soil of ages  
 We, whose wake is rooted  
 In the moaning groins of yesteryears  
 In the obsessive mist of past ballads  
 80 We, the strange fruits of present chaos  
 Whose dreams are occupied  
 In tales of historical etiopics  
 We, who like an abandoned ship  
 Drift in the angry waves of time  
 85 We who cry "who am I mother!"  
 We are to know.  
 Condemned to know.

Tsegaye GebreMedhin, 1965

## ***Appendix 11***

### **Self exile**

- (I) Seeking asylum
- In the bosom of an ailing world,  
 Ever remaining  
 Preys of our own shortcomings,  
 5 Focused by the narrow chapters  
 Of private ends,  
 Prostituting greater causes  
 For which the past heirs died to keep aflame,  
 Cashing principles  
 10 In favor of tin-gods

At the cost of blighted hopes,  
Scared of total death  
Unlike the hard old days  
When many had faith;  
15 Now, one prefers to move half-dead  
In the shades of a doomed era

(II) They say:

Where the growth of weeds  
Is cultivated  
20 To undermine the plant  
(Lest it may yield a surplus)  
One must learn  
To befriend not for friendliness  
But to uproot  
25 While the friend is unaware

They say:  
Where the choking smokes are let out  
To eclipse heaven's sunshine  
(Lest the earthlings are over-brightened)  
30 One must learn  
To love to walk the earth  
Not to enjoy it  
But to exist in spite.

They say:  
35 Where the breed of rats  
Are raised  
To nibble at healthy bodies  
(So as to keep them dependently docile)  
One must learn  
40 To develop hard skin covers  
Not to be secured

But to protect oneself from life

They say:

Where the shadow of fear

45 Is spreaded

To over-cloud spring flowers

(Lest they escape weather disillusionment)

One must learn to look contented

With the naked layers

50 Of his white shining teeth

Without the heart's consent

(III) Then, alas, it is fear

With its shame-spiriting nozzle,

It is like you are suddenly unborn

55 Undelivered

Unconceived

It ravages the brain

Gnaws the spirit

Saps the hope

60 It leaps up

From the dark corners of ill-fate

Dimming your light of day

Lurking in your innermost

Clinching your *raison d'être*,

65 It catches to consume

Like a strange disease in the wilderness

It runs deep

Like the cult of inherited sin.

There is no shame like despair

70 No sin liked fear

No death like self-exile

Tsegaye G/Medhin, 1965

## ***Appendix 12***

### **Hold My Hand**

Hold my hand black mother, hold,  
I need to rise, I need to stand on my feet  
To rise, to stand, and to accuse.  
Though I were forbidden to suck your breast Black  
5           Mother  
Though the wings of my sweet bird of youth are crippled  
I need to draw courage from your stretched arms  
To draw life, to draw strength  
To draw hope form what flows in the veins of your  
10           Stretched arms.  
Am I the lost child of your womb Black mother

The abortive fetus of a false love  
 Being dawned in the depths of obscurity  
 Am I a fading page in he dead-eye of History  
 15 Is anonymous now my name.

But once I had a true name Black Mother  
 A name like the mighty spirit of Chaka  
 A name like the spirit of Herereo, of Namaqua  
 Of Zululand, of Matabelee...

20 I was not the abortive fetus of your rapid womb then  
 I was one of the strongest sons of your tribes, then  
 I was the home of the glory of your age-old rituals  
 The home of the glory of your tribal dances, of your  
     Wars

25 Of the mystery of your witchcraft  
 The home of the glory of your free laughter that you are proud of.  
 ...only yesterday I had a name, a true name.  
 Shame. No more glory now... it is raped with you Black Mother  
 No more laughter but the echo of its mock...

30 Free laughter Is dead in me.  
 Only hatred is victories... how can I NOT hate  
 Isn't that the last passion left in me  
 To help me survive in the claws of those who raped you

Do I sound a stranger to you my Black Mother

35 ...A passion for hatred in place of the glory of free laughter...  
 But what else should one expect  
 From the wrong up-bringing of a false love with a false root...  
 Yet, only to-night I dreamt a dream Black Mother  
 Is it a dream to be realized

40 I dreamt that all the elder-shepherdes of your tribes joined hands  
 That my fellow elders have joined hands, have joined heads  
 Have joined hearts...to raise a question...  
 ... "Who is the lost one from among us...who".

Hold my hand Black Mother, hold,  
45 I need to rise to give an answer.  
I need to give my fellow elders my true name.  
I am the lost sheep my ninety-nine brothers are searching for.  
Hold my hand, I need to stand on my feet, I need to rise  
I need to accuse the World, Black Mother, hold.

Tsegay GebreMedhin, 1965