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A Portrayal of Women in Ethiopian Poet Ephrem Seyoum's Selected Poems

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the portrayal of women in selected Amharic poems by Ephrem Seyoum. To that effect, three poetry works of the writer were selected and Marxist feminist literary critical perspective was used to frame the study. Besides, qualitative research design was employed to explore and identify the ways women are portrayed in the selected poems. Then, purposive sampling technique and textual analysis was used to identify extracts having feminist theme. Based on the analysis made, it is found out that women are portrayed as sex objects, prostitute, victim of aging and victim of institutional motherhood. Generally, the overall result of the study showed that women were predominantly depicted with little positive and more negative images.

Keywords: /Aging /Feminist/Marxist/Poetry/portrayal/

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2. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

According to Qureshi (2013), the relationship between women and men has always been a point of contention in different social and cultural constructions. Their relationship, dynamics of interaction, state and frequency of violence, the extent of patriarchal domination, and the degree of subordination often differs from time to time, culture-to-culture, and country to country. Women constitute about half of the world population, however, as Mills argues, the patriarchal power relation between women and men left women economically dependent, socially inferior, and politically powerless (Mills, 1995).

Gender issues play a part in every aspect of human experience, including the production and occurrence of literature whether we are aware of these issues or not. Gender studies examine how sexual identity influences the creation and function of literary works. Tyson (2006, p. 84) argues that patriarchal system oppressed women in different ways: economically, politically, socially, and psychologically. Moreover, Nnaemeka (1997) contends that every realm where patriarchy controls, woman is considered like 'Other'. She is treated like object and defined only by her dissimilarity from male rule and principles, by what she lacks and that men supposedly have.

Feminist critics such as Tyson (2006) distinguishes between sex and gender, where sex refers to our genetic or biological constitution as female or male whereas gender refers to our traditional or cultural programming as feminine or masculine. Therefore, according to their viewpoint, women are not born feminine, and men are not born masculine. Therefore, the feminine and masculine dichotomy is rather a cultural construction. Mills (1995) argues this cultural construction made women to be oppressed "Most feminists hold a belief that women as a group are treated oppressively and differently from men and that they are subject to personal and institutional discrimination. Feminists also believe that society is organized in such a way that it works, in general, to the benefit of men rather than women; that is, that it is patriarchal." (p.3) Also, this culturally imposed oppression of women can be maintained in various ways. For example, physical, mental, and/ or spiritual oppressions are among others.

Across different historical periods, especially in literary works, women and men have been assigned to different gender roles. In this regard, Teshome (2013) has summarized the findings of studies conducted by some scholars that men are labeled as rational, physically powerful, protective, and leading; women in contrast are casted as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive. As a literary work is strong in image construction, the trace these representations leave in those who read the works is not easy. Moreover, these gender roles have been used to justify inequality. For example, excluding women from leadership and decision-making positions (in the family, in politics, academia, and the corporate world) which exists even today is the manifestation of the inequality between men and women.

Moreover, Tyson (2006) asserts that in literary works, femininity, as a patriarchal notion has been linked to weakness, humility, and shyness, which is a way to disempowered woman in the real world. If she accepts her traditional gender role and obeys patriarchal rules, she is a

good girl if she does not, she is a bad girl. These two characters also view women only in terms of how they relate to the patriarchal mandate. These images of women are studied in various fields including literature. Hence, the aim of this study was to critically examine how women are represented in selected poems by Ephrem Seyoum (1998; 2005; 2008).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Feminist critics argue that literary texts play a vital role in image construction. It follows that females are constructed as one of subjects in written literature. Hence, female characters as subjects in the fictional world are assigned to roles which are dominantly related to negative behaviors. This is not an exception in Ethiopian literary works. Studies conducted so far in Ethiopia show the existence of such negative images of women. For example, Zerihun Asfawu's (1997), Mekonnen Zegeye's (2001), Napoleon Kifle's (2006), Mehret W/Michael's (2007), Eskinder Hailu's (2008), Molla Feleke (2008) and Tekle Tesfalidet's (2008), and Gebreyesus's (2008) studies found out that women were dominantly depicted negatively.

To the knowledge of the researchers, the aforementioned studies are but a few studies surveyed in Ethiopian literature. There can be other studies abroad and in Ethiopia. As far as the researchers' knowledge is concerned, feminist issues like ageing, prostitution, and their effects on women are not yet researched in selected poems of Ephrem Seyoum. This study, therefore, was designed to analyze these issues in the selected three poetry works namely: *Soliana* (ሶልያና), an album produced by mixing poem and music (1998) CD, *Fik'ir Ezih Bota Fegeg Bilo Neber* (ፍቅር ለዚህ ቦታ ፈገግ ብሎ ነበር) a narrative poem (2005), and *'Nu Gidigida Enafiris* (ኑ ግድግዳ ለናፍርስ) (2008) a poetry collection. Therefore, the study attempted to answer the following research questions.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question posed in this study was "How were the women portrayed in Ephrem Seyoum's Selected Poems?" The following, research sub-questions were then extracted from this main research question and finally answered accordingly:

1. Are socio-cultural constructs like female as submissive, weak, emotional and dependent reduced or reinforced in the selected poems?
2. Is there any hierarchy such as male/female, strong/weak, active/passive, in the selected poems?

1.4 Research Objectives

This literary critical study was conducted based on the following research objectives. It is to:

1. assess if the social and cultural constructs are either reduced or reinforced with respect to motherhood;
2. point out if there is any hierarchy such as male/female, active/passive, strong/weak in the selected poems and;

3. Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature

This section presents the theoretical framework that frames the study and related literature.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Patriarchy and traditional gender roles. According to Ruthven (1994), the term used by most feminist scholars to describe a symbolic order of representation, which is, also male-specific is 'phallographic' (Greek *kratos*, 'power'). And the social system which corresponds to such a phallographic order, a system which enables men to dominate women in all social relations, is known in feminist discourses as patriarchy. According to Tyson (2006), patriarchy is defined as any culture that privileges men by promoting traditional gender roles and this patriarchal ideology is a cruel obstacle to females' equality and growth for many generations. In this regard, feminist movement has played a very fundamental role in combating against these obstacles on women's equality and growth in divergent spheres of life. Furthermore, Mills (1995) defines patriarchy as a social organization, which produces and guarantees higher status for the men and inferior for the women. Such a society promotes the dominance of the male gender over the female gender and enables men to be powerful, rational, and strong.

Therefore, patriarchy is an ideology that oppresses women socially, economically, psychologically, and politically throughout history giving men greater authority in the public and private spheres. In patriarchal society, the decision-making position is given to men where men make all the difficult decisions in socio-economic and political affairs and women are likely to act in accordance with the decision that are made by man.

According to the feminist researchers, Evelyn, Grace, and Linda (2016), although gender roles limit both women and men, they generally have had more repressive impact on women. Women frequently have responsibilities related to their reproductive role, including childrearing and associated tasks such as maintaining family and household. Women and men are involved in productive labor, which includes wage employment and production of goods. However, their functions and responsibilities differ. Women's productive work is typically less visible and lower paid than men's. In some cases, work done primarily by men becomes lower paid and

less prestigious when women begin to do it, and women's work earns higher pay when done by men.

Nnaemeka (1997) contends that gender roles are not exceptions in Africa; definitely, these beliefs are inherent and familiar in the social structures and in 'our' languages too. In the traditional fairy tales, proverbs, oral poetries and other oral literatures in general, it is possible to read sexist expressions that express incompetence of women in socio-political, economic, and cultural activities. The role of African women in the traditional society is largely restricted around the family. These include her responsibilities as wife, home administrator, child caregiver and mother.

Marxist-feminist literary criticism. Marxist criticism and feminist criticism often share with a desire to challenge the power structures in contemporary society. For feminists, the issue is a marginalized gender. On the other hand, for Marxist, the issue is economic power, leading to political power. Marxist feminist criticism focuses on the relation of reading to social realities, refusing to accept the separation of art from life. Certainly, the establishment of women's studies programs, bookstores, libraries, political action committees, film boards, and community groups attests to the crucial connection between theory and reality offered by feminism (Gebreyesus, 2008). Guerin also points out that Marxist feminists attack the revealing capitalistic system of the West, which they view as sexually as well as economically exploitative. Marxist feminists thus merge study of class with that of gender. Marxist feminism gives emphasis to the existed cultural setting and criticizes the general ideologies of our culture. Furthermore, it suggests that men must understand the relationship of men and women as one of unequal power, specifically one of traditional suppression and domination of women.

According to Guerin (1994), personal identity is not seen as separate from cultural identity. As they emphasize historical and economical contexts of literary discourse, they often direct attention toward the conditions of production of literary texts. Wallace (1997) tries to relate materialist feminism as an explicit or implicit engagement with Marxism, with a view to analysis of the social structures. He further discusses that a materialist feminist critique examines the ways in which ideologies of history, class, race and the economy are implicated independently or together in the creation of gender individuality and prejudice.

Moreover, Feminism and Marxism struggle against oppression and both entail theories of oppression. It is often on the level of theory that Marxism seems most useful to feminism. As a theory, Marxism constitutes an elaborate model for explaining oppression synchronically and diachronically and how power works and changes. At this point, Marxism can treat gender inequality in its standard, seeing as a secondary to class oppression and class conflict. Wallace further maintained that, along with the withering away of the circumstances, once private ownership of the means of production is get rid of, male and female will be equally free (Wallace, 1997).

In Marxist terms, Hart Sock, as cited in Gebreyesus (2008), sees the material basis of women's existence as component of women's perception. While women also work for wages, their primary institutionalized activities are housework, child bearing, and this known as

production of use value in Marxism. Marxist feminist theory basically states that the class struggle is the feminist struggle. Marxism offers a way of finding historical evidence of women's oppression and can describe how writers consciously or unconsciously rearrange that evidence into their texts. The repression or misrepresentation of women can be methodically exposed and analyzed when you believe, as Marxism does, that discourse is a form of power.

Moreover, Marxist feminist such as Nelson (1981), argued that in a world in which domestic duties is unpaid, the economic dependence of a women upon her husband is what is left. Even house works done by members of a family in their own homes is not included in that description of the advantageously occupied, but works done by members of a family in helping the head of a family in his occupation is so included even though only indirectly paid. When individuals perform domestic works such as food processing or water carrying, they are not defined as workers; the rational beings that the former are assumed to be engaged activities while the later are not. In home production, unpaid family work is highly integrated with domestic activities.

Furthermore, Bryson (2003) claimed that present arrangements characterized above all by dishonesty-imposed monogamy for women accompanied by sexual license for men, while adultery and prostitution rather than fidelity and love were the basis of modern bourgeois marriage. Bryson added that marriage and sexual relations would also be transformed as they ceased to be based on economic needs. Some critics argued that the concepts of Marxist theory are not gender-neutral ones which happened not to apply to women, but that (like liberal ideas of reason, autonomy and composition) they are based on a male view of the world that excludes women's needs and desires.

Moreover, Chodorow and Zillah (1979) argues that Marxist feminist scholars focus on mothering as part of the oppression of male dominance. Given that both the idea and reality of motherhood define the activities of most women and they explain how motherhood as an institution is reproduced through mothering. Motherhood focuses not only upon the reproduction of children, but also on the reproduction of society. The society reproduces the relations of male supremacy and the hierarchical relations. Women's mothering is a central and defining structural feature of our society's organization of gender, one that it has in common with all other societies. The kind of work women do also tends to reinforce stereotypes of women as wives and mothers. In most societies, women not only bear children but also take primary responsibility for infant care, spend more time with infants and children than do men, and sustain primary emotional ties with infants.

Even though, Marxist is a complex theory, it offers feminists a number of suggestive insights. Ideas that Marx developed in relation to class and economic processes may be applicable to an analysis of relations between male and female, but they cannot be automatically transferred. Nevertheless, ideas claim to be a comparative theory, and a number of key points emerge which must form the basis of any coherent Marxist feminist position. In the first place, it is quite clear for Marxist question of sex equality cannot be understood in terms abstract principles but only in a historical context. Second, opposition to women's emancipation is not

simply a result of injustice; rather it reflects material interests and the structured economic needs of society (Nelson, 1981).

Moreover, according to Chodorow and Zillah (1979), the liberal ideologies claim that women become prostitute and surrogate mothers because they prefer these jobs to other available jobs. Nevertheless, as Marxist feminists see it, when a poor, illiterate, unskilled woman chooses to sell her sexual or reproductive services, chances are her choice has more compelled than free. In addition, many Marxist feminists believe women can gain a consciousness of themselves as a class of workers by insisting; for example, that domestic work has been recognized as real work, that is, productive work. The observation that wives and mothers usually love the people for whom they work does not mean that cooking, cleaning, and childcare are not productive work. At most, it means wives and mothers working conditions are better than those of people who work for employers they dislike.

4. Review of Related Literature

Since gender issue is one of the crucial issues that require persistent studies, many studies have been conducted in examining the representation of female characters in literary works. Though it was found difficult to access all the research works conducted under the issue, some MA thesis and a PHD dissertation conducted using feminist critical theories have been reviewed and discussed in this section.

Rahel Itana (2007) examined how women are depicted in *Osmane Semben's 'God's Bit of Wood' and 'Ekewens Jange'* and comes to the conclusion that women are not depicted in their own nature as themselves, but in relation to men. Making use of this work, an attempt has been made in this study to analyze the portrayal of women in relation to their socio-economic and political roles and contributions in two male-authored texts.

In addition, Yodit Admasu (2004) analyzed the depiction of female characters and figures out that women are represented as cruel, shallow, and treated as only sexual objects. In the analysis, she has found out that the portrayal of women in African societies is quite different from that of western society. African societies acknowledge the role of women in their respective societies. The portrayals of women in the selected works indicate that women in the described societies are given a significant part. Moreover, Thomas Abebe (2009) investigates the image of woman in Ethiopian Amharic fiction. Amharic fictional novels published within the last thirty years are included in his study. The overall research findings indicate that women have been predominantly depicted in the Ethiopian Amharic novels negatively accompanied slightly; however, by a few positive images. While the negative images include portraying women as institutional mothers, wives and daughters confined to the household as well as viewing them as sex objects, the positive images present women as college students and professionals who are engaged in the public life.

Furthermore, Teshome Egere (2004) has studied *The Portrayal of Women in Dhaabaa's Selected Oromo Prose Fictions*. In the study, three Oromo prose fictional narratives were selected

for analysis. The study found out that most women character in the study have been depicted to be victims of male violence, homelessness, poverty and subordination. In contrast, some of those women characters have been portrayed as agents that exercise their power, determination and courage to either overcome or get rid of oppressions or burdens imposed on them. Teshome (2013) also conducted a PHD study *A Feminist Reading of Selected Oromo Novels in Afan Oromo: Deconstructionists in Focus*. The novels selected include *Hawwii, Kusaa Gadoo, Illaa, and Dhoksa Jiregna*. Textual analysis was employed to critically examine the texts. Feminist deconstructionists' approach is used to analyze the selected novels. It is used to examine female characters in the selected novels with regard to notions of women's body, subject/ object, motherhood, and knowledge. Finally, he concludes that, the life of female characters and the social and economic space are the cause for the female characters to be the center of multiple contending forces.

To conclude, the above reviewed studies have relevance to this study in that they reveal the ways in which different writers portray female characters in different genres. What makes this study different from most of them is that it takes into consideration only poems written by male writer, and attempts to investigate the ways in which the male authors portray female characters. In addition, feminist issues like ageing, prostitution, and their effects on women are not yet efficiently discussed. Therefore, the researcher attempted to clearly discuss these issues in the selected poems. What makes this study similar to the studies reviewed above is that it deals with investigating how the female character has been portrayed. However, feminist approach is used in this study; Marxist feminism literary approach has not been used in any of the above reviewed theses.

3. Materials and Methods

The researchers used a qualitative research design. As we know one of the major purposes of a qualitative research design is to discover phenomena and experiences from the perspective of the subjects experiencing them. Moreover, qualitative researches properly seek answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. To this end, as characters are fiction beings in the fictional world, the social, cultural, economic and other settings they are either constricted in or marginalized by can be a focus of analysis. Characters have moral and psychological features that make them human in some way or another. In other words, they are subjects in a given text. Therefore, since characters are subjects in a given text, it is helpful to investigate their speech actions and experiences. In addition to that, exploring their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors would be important to make literary criticisms like feminist literary criticism to be scientific study. As we know, the major goal of qualitative research design is forming information in to a meaningful format. Therefore, the researchers reduce information from the selected texts in to a meaningful set of forms, classes

and central ideas. In this study, therefore, words, phrases and non-verbal communications are major areas of focuses.

Textual analysis has been employed as it best fits to this study for the main objective of this study is to examine the portrayal of female characters in the selected poems. Because, a central question that textual analysis addresses is how characters in the fictional world come to make sense of the world and carry out their everyday lives. To explore this, this method of analysis focuses on behaviors, interactions, feelings, and symbols to uncover the meaning embedded in them. In other words, one of the major uses of textual analysis is to explore phenomena and experiences from the perspectives of characters experiencing them. In view of these, examining the experiences, speech actions, and exploring their “thoughts”, “feelings” or “behaviors” of characters could make literary criticism a scientific study (Somekh & Lewin, 2005).

Textual analysis properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. It is also mostly interested in how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols. Therefore, the researchers classified, analyzed and interpreted facts and events in the poems against the data collected and theories of criticism selected for the study. The basic theoretical concept selected as a framework for the analysis is Marxist-feminist literary criticism. The critical analysis is from the perspective of female preference, based on female experience as a reader. The researchers believe that such a type of investigation is very important to discover the attitudes towards women and to share their experiences.

4. Results

As mentioned in the background of the study, theoretical framework, and literature review, critical analysis is made based on feminist approach. More specifically, aging, the depiction of prostitution and stereotypes to which female characters are assigned to are examined.

4.1 Description of the Author

Ephrem Seyoum is one of the contemporary Ethiopian poets. He was born and grew in Addis Ababa. He has more than four published works alone and with other poets. ‘*Soliyana*’ (1998), (combination of music and poems), ‘*Muzik’ ali weyim Yebirihān Kinifoch*’ (2004), (experimental) (combination of music and poems) are his previous works whereas ‘*Fikir Ezih Bota Fegeg Bilo Nebere*’ (2005), (collection of poems), ‘*Tewaneyi*’ (2006), (translation of the geez riddles in to Amharic), ‘*Yeyihuda Dilidiyiina Lēlochi Hāsaboch*’ (2007), (a collection of the poets thoughts), ‘*Git’imi be Mesenik’o*’ (2007), (with other poets) are his recent works. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate how the female characters have been portrayed in the three selected works of the author namely ‘*Soliyana*’, ‘*Fik’iri Ezīhi Bota Fegeg Bilo Neber*’ (Love was grinned Right Here) and ‘*Nu Gidigida Inafirisi*’ (Come! Let us demolish the Wall).

4.2 Women as a Sex Object

One of the ways in which female characters depicted in the selected poems is considering them sex objects. In patriarchal oriented creative writings, female characters are reduced to the level of sex objects. This has got a devastating effect in that it affects the psyche of female readers and it dehumanizes them as it serves as a representation. This is depicted in the Poem 1 and Poem 2.

Sample Poem 1:

ቀሚሱቅ ከፍ አለ ጭኑቅ በጣም ጎላ

Her thigh magnified as her dress rose

የርሱ ወንድነቱ ሞቀ ጉንጨፎ ከፍም ቀላ(47)

He got hot and his check became fiery (47)

Sample Poem 2:

የፀጉሯን መዘናፈል የጡቱዋን መኮፈስ

Swayed hairs boasted breasts

የረጨቸው ሽቶ ካደባባይ ሲነፍስ

Her sprinkled perfume blowing on the square

አሱዋን ያየ ሁሉ ወንዳ ተጨነቀ

Everman who saw her perplexed

ያስተዋላት ሁሉ ዓይኑ መንገድ ሳተ

Who gazed at her missed the way

ከዳሌ ከጡቱዋ ሄደ ተከተተ (67)

He encapsulated between her buttock
and breasts (67)

Since literature is the reflection of the actual world, these stereotypical viewpoints have been observed in the selected poetry works. For instance, from the above extract “ኑ ግድግዳ እናፍርስ”, it is possible to witness that the male author sees females as sex objects. Especially when women become attractive in appearances, they become center of attention by man. Moreover, the character is portrayed as an incredibly beautiful woman who owns a sway backed hair, erected breasts, who sprinkled a very expensive perfume, and who is waiting for her fiancé on the open place. Because of the woman’s extreme appeal, every man who sees her has gone out of his path. All of them are lusting after her even without identifying whether she has got

married or not or she has a boyfriend or not. Moreover, in the poem it is depicted as if the female's body parts add a life span to those males who gaze at her.

Another example in which a female character is depicted as sex objects is given in Poem 3.

Sample Poem 3:

አልፍ መግት ወንዶች በበሯ አልፏል	Thousand males passed by her home
ባይተኝትም እንኳን	Though they did not sleep with her,
አይኗን አይተው ብቻ እድሜ ቀጥለዋል	Gazing only at her eye, they got extra life span
ግን...	But,
ያሳዝናል...	The pity is,
እድሜ የጠገቡ ጉልበተኛ ወንዶች ቤቱዋን አፍርሰዋል (84)	Aged and bullymen destroyed her home (84)

This extract (Poem 3) is one of the instances in which a woman is portrayed as a sex object. It is possible to examine with how many body parts a woman is depicted, only her eyes. She is reduced to one body part. What is common in fictional narratives is either fragmenting a woman's body or to the worst reducing her to one body part as it is the case in the above extract. What is more, even though she is one part of the society, she is marginalized and she cannot live on her own home and she cannot even get the right to reassure her ownership. On the other hand, the phrase "destroyed her home" is hyperbolic in the sense that bully men are striving and even violently attacking her privacy to the extent that she can never feel safe. This depicts to what extent women suffer from homelessness.

Furthermore, in a context where a woman is depicted as an object of sex, no other values such as her mental capacity and leadership qualities are described. What are visible to a man who gazes at her are her external body parts. This is what portrayed is in the following extract (Poem 4).

Sample Poem 4:

አጭር ቀሚስ ለብሳ ዘፋኝ ዳንስ ላይ ናት	A singer wearing a short skirt is on dance
በልቡ ተመኛት፤	Lust for her in his heart;
በባቷ ጎመኛት፤	Desired eagerly after her leg;
በህሊናው ተኛት (95)	Slept with her within his heart (p. 95)

According to Eagleton (1996), patriarchy is an ideology which oppresses women in different dimensions. It can be institutional or individual. Institutionally, religious organizations such as churches can be mentioned and individually, it can be the church leaders. Marxist feminist literary critics focused on how patriarchal or the sexist ideology oppresses or discriminate women. We can illustrate this idea from Poem 5.

Sample Poem 5:

ከቤተሰኪያን አፀድ፣ቆማ ከዋርካው ስር፤	Standing out in the church under oak tree;
አንዲት ምስኪን ባልቴት ትለማመን ነበር፤	A destitute widow was begging
ተስፋዋ ማርያምን ትለምናት ነበር(133)	Calling the name of her hopeSt. Mary (p. 133)

What we can suppose from Poem 5 is how the poor woman was ignored and was disregarded by the church leaders. Instead of helping her, they were asking money from the rich people to build a house, and then they do not even consider that she is out there. Because the woman was extremely underprivileged or poor, she had not even a food to eat, a cloth to wear, but she was pleading Marry to help her. Therefore, what we can understand from this explanation is that how the patriarchal ideology tends to oppress under class women. One may argue that the church and its leaders may not be accountable for the destitution of the woman. However, the question worth mentioning is as long as the church is there to teach one of the core values of religion, which is the sharing of, a woman would not have been poor, homeless, and suffer from abject poverty. In view of this, Ruthven (9194) writes Marxist feminist merge the study of class with that of gender. In addition, they give emphasis to the existed cultural sets and criticize the overall ideologies of our culture. We can consider further illustrations from the selected extracts.

Sample Poem 6:

አዳፋ ለባሾች የቀን ሰራተኞች	Poorly dressed daily workers
ንቃቃታም ሴቶች ጉሊት ቸርቻሪዎች	Destitute and cracked female merchants
ያልፈኩ አበቦች ከሚቆረጡበት	Where unblossom flowers are cut
ለዐይን የሚያሳሱ እንስቶች ካሉበት	Where eye catching ladies found
ከውስኪ ቤት አልፎ ከመግባት ውስኪቤት	Passing from a whiskey grocery in to another whisky grocery
አንዱዋን ቆንጆ ትቶ ከማቀፍ ሌላ ሴት	Instead of letting a beautiful lady and hugging another one
አይምሯቸው ሄዶ ደርሶ የሚያርፍበት	The place where their mindgoes and rests
አዲስ ኬላ የለም ሰርተው የሚፈጥሩት (03)	There is no new tollthey can work to create (03)

From the preceding extract (Poem 6), we can understand two things. The first one is how the poet tries to expose the class difference between the poor women and the rich one in the community. However, we can understand the fact that the existence of a few rich, economically developed, politically dominant women do not guarantee the existence of equal and fair share of resources between men and women. Therefore, because of the recentness of the work, we can conclude that a class difference among the poor women and the rich is still present.

The second issue related with the above extract is the portrayal of women who appear to be better in terms of their body than those who are “poorly dressed” and “cracked ladies”. Though they appear to be better, their beauty remains committed to delivering services to men of high status. From this, it is implied that though there is a difference of status between women, each are there to serve the interest of man. Here from the above extract women of the above aforementioned status are portrayed as having nowhere to go, nothing to do, nothing to create and having poor attitudes towards creativity. We can see negative portrayals from the above extract as it attaches stereotypic characteristics like weak, poor in creativity, pessimist, submissive and loving whisky houses.

Sample Poem 7:

ጠዋት በማለዳ ተነስተሽ ነው አሉ

It is said, you wake up early in the morning

ለማይረባ ባልሽ ሽንኩርት የምትከትፈው

and cook breakfast for your good-for-nothing husband

ቁርስ የበላችሁበት ሰሃን ሳይታጠብ

Before washing your breakfast dishes

ለማይረባ ባሏ...ምሳውን ለመስራት ጉድጉድ ትላለች(24)

She wanders here and there to make a lunch
For her useless husband (P. 24)

Most Marxist-feminists argued that in a world in which domestic duties are unpaid, the economic dependence of a woman upon her husband is what is left (Banerjee, 2017). Even house works done by members of a family in their own homes is not included in that description of the favorably occupied, but works done by members of a family in helping the head of a family in his occupation is so included even though only indirectly paid. When individuals perform domestic work, such as food processes or water fetching, they are not defined as workers, the rational being that the former have

been assumed as engaged activities while the later are not. Moreover, in home production, unpaid family work is highly integrated with domestic activities. This is what we see in the above extract. The woman wakes up early in the morning to cook for her husband and this is her obligatory action that she is expected to perform every day. However, she is not considered a worker. We can see another illustration for this from the text (Sample Poem 7).

After she prepared a breakfast for her husband, she then goes to prepare his lunch and his dinner. She does these things throughout the day and throughout her life. According to Tyson (2006), the gender roles have been used very successfully to justify inequalities between male and female and this justification still occurs today. Moreover, what we can witness from the previous two extracts is that how the female is associated only with the kitchen works and we can see the power difference. The economic dependence of women is further depicted in the following extract.

Sample Poem 8

ከባለ ሀብት ጋር	With a rich man
ተፋቅራ ምናያት የቷም አይነት አንስት	Any woman whom we see falling in love
ምን ትሁንም ምንም	What so ever or who so ever she is
የሀይወት ታሪኳን ወደ ኋላ ሄደን ጥቂት ብንገመግም	If you go back and recount her history
አንድ ቡና ለሁለት አብራ የጠጣችው አንድ አፍቃሪ አታጣም (33)	She has had a lover with whom she shared a cup of coffee (33)

From the above extract (sample Poem 8), we can see the impact of women's economic dependence on men. It depicts women living with investors and rich people as having previous life story. This extract also attempts to reinforce the existing negative connotation towards women. Women here are portrayed as materialists and money chasers. As a result of economic deprivation, women remain dependent on men and this in turn leads them to live with those having the political and economic power. The result of this economic dependence leads people as portrayed in the above extract to generalize that women in love with the rich individuals are always connected with money.

4.3 Women as Aged

When it comes to women's life the portrayal and discrimination gets worse and worse. The development of human life can be displayed by different developmental ages, and this development scenario can be reinforced or demoted by art and philosophical assumptions. However, if aging is related with men's life it ends up with being promoted, flourished, and acknowledged.

Sample Poem 9:

ሴትነት ውበትሽ አበል ቡና እያለ ነግራሽ ነበረ(14)

While your feminine beauty was enjoying coffee, I told that you were so beautiful and feminine(P.14)

From the above extract (Poem 9), we can identify and witness the attachment of the so called ‘it is over’ if women are to age. Here the existing societal and political structure has predetermined age grouping, behavior and characteristics for women to be valued in the community. Unless women are in the age where everyone gazes at it means that their life is over. There will not be life after the end of the so-called attractive age, adolescent age and an age where a woman attracts the sexual interest of men. This reduces women to a material level where this is best described with a phrase “use and throw”.

In addition to the above explanation, we can also understand the other dimension of women's subordination due to age. The extract attempts to create a boundary that isolates women from the participation in the buildup of political, social and economic structure of the society. Women are expected to be beautiful and stay tuned with satisfying the sexual needs of men. And if not possible to meeting the interests of men, women are discriminated, stereotyped and alienated from the society through nomenclatures associated with the threat of aging.

Sample Poem 10:

ተነቦ ያለቀ ምርጥ አሮጌ መፅሀፍ

Like an old book the reading of which is over,

ማንም በተው ሰሲገልጠው የኖረ
ምርጥ አሮጌ መፅሀፍ ሽፋኑ ያለቀ
የመፅሀፍ ሽፋን ያንቺን ህይወት
መስሎኝ እንባዬ ጠብ አለ (18)

The one everybody borrowed and turned the pages right to left,
A best old book the cover of which is ragged,
Thinking that your life is the cover of a book,
I wept and wept.

The above extract (Poem 10) which compares women with the cover of the book attempts to declare a statement which is perfectly the manifestation of the existing community. It depicts the fact that woman cannot live, work and function once she is about to age.

The other point related with the above extract which compared women with the old advanced cover of the book is the portrayal of women in complements. The society for the matter of continuing its existence attaches complimenting roles for women. Reproductive role of women in the society is the major breakthrough for women to remain unchallenged, served

and respected. Here we can understand that the extract complements women with the assumption that women after a long struggle with men and the society get old and their being aged is linked as having broad experience of prostitution, love, and life experience.

Sample Poem 11:

ትላንት አልፎብኛል
ዛሬ መሽቶብኛል
ባለፈብኛ ትላንት በመሸብኛ ዛሬ
ነገ ያስፈራኛል(24)

Yesterday surpassed you
The evening overcast you today
For the yesterday that escaped you and today
that is dark to you,
Tomorrow scares you (p.24)

Sample Poem 12:

ምክንያቱም ባክነኛል

Because you are torn

ፍቅሬን አረግጠኛል

Stepped over my love

ያላንዳች ፈጠራ ጊዜሽን በልተኛል(31)

And you wasted your time without any innovation
(p.31)

As have been discussed previously, aging gets serious attention when it comes to women. From the above extract (Poem 11), we can produce a conclusion that women who spend their life on accomplishing routine tasks are considered wasted and irresponsible. Women as a part of the population play different roles ranging from reproduction, production to community work like arbitration, mediation. The fact that women's role of reproduction remains natural pave the way for the subordination of women and limitation of their role in the community.

The other claim related with Poem 12 is the production role of women. Here, from this extract, we can understand that women are blamed, criticized and misjudged as they age. Women participate in the production of goods and services in the community but they usually remain at home and unpaid which in turn leads to the conclusion that women spend their life wasting time, doing nothing and producing only domestic products.

Sample Poem 13:

የበዓሉ ለታ ያየነው አረንጓዴው ሁሉ
በበዓሉ ማግስት ሲረገጥ ያየነው ግራጫው ሳር ሁሉ

The whole green we have seen on the feast day
The pale grass we have seen being swiped the day
after the festival

ያንቺን ወጣትነት ይወክላል አሉ (34)

Is said signals your youth age (p.34)

In the above extract (Poem 13), the author symbolizes the life of the character by nature. He symbolizes her youth by a green grass and her old age by pale grass which has been swiped away from home. When a grass becomes pale, then it does not have any function. Therefore, the same is true to the life of the women too. When she was young, beautiful, and attractive

everybody wanted to have fun with her but when she becomes aged, no one wants her, and she is considered something unwanted like that of the paled grass and this is what we can understand from the above extract.

Sample Poem 14:

ውስኪ ቤት ለቀረ
በየወንድ አልጋ ለተመነዘረ
ላንቺ ነበር ውበት
ምን ብሎ ያወራል?
“እርሷን የተረፋት ግድግዳ ላይ ያለው

Left at a whisky grocery
Adulterated in every man's bed
That was a beauty for you
What does it tell?
“The one she is left with: a picture on the wall

የወጣትነቷ ፎቶዋ ነው“ ይላል

Which was captured during her youth age.”

ፎቶሽ አጠገብ ግን... ሰዓቱ ይሮጥል (43)

But nearby the photo... the clock chimes (43)

Here, from the above extract (Poem 14), women's role as prostitute is clearly manifested. It is depicted that to survive, a woman has to serve as prostitute. The more she stays in the life of prostitution, the worse she deteriorates. The chiming of a clock signals that time is running against her where as she is gaining nothing out of the business of prostitution rather than getting crashed in many directions: psychologically, physically, and socially.

Sample Poem 15:

አንቺ ስትቆሚ መስታዎት ፊት ለፊት
እግዚአብሔር ከሰማይ ይነግርሻል አሉ
የዕድሜሽን ስንትነት
መዳፈሽ ላይ ባሉት በፀጉሮችሽ ንጣት (43)

While you stand in front of a mirror
God of heaven tells you how old you are
Through the witness of hairs of your palm

It is common to live in a predetermined structure of a certain community so that each member of the community can play its responsibilities based on those predetermined rules and regulations. From the above extract, we can see the above age limit for women to function, make moves, remain beautiful and to be accepted by cohort groups. In addition to this, the extract (Poem 15) attempts to predict how women of this age become harassed, threatened with pretending to be normal in the community.

Sample Poem 16:

ይህን እና ያንን እያስተናገደ

ያንቺም ውብ ሴትነት ጊዜው እረፈደ

የአራት ሰዓት ፀሃይ ትመስይ ነበር

እንደ ትኩስ ቡና ትፋጂ ነበረ

ጡት፣ ዳሌ እና ባትሽ እሳት እንዳልሆነ

እንዴት ጊዜው ፈጥኖ አሁን ነበር ሆነ (48)

Hosting this and that

Your feminine beauty has passed away

You were looking a morning sun

Used to be sizzling as hot coffee

As your breast, hip and thigh were not fiery

How speedily expired now (P. 48)

Usually the problem of women starts at the meaning of being women. From the extract (Poem 16), the meaning of being women is misinterpreted. Based on the above extract, women in their earlier life are expected to prepare themselves to sleep with different men, to be as beautiful as the time requires being smart as the men want which might be over after a certain period most importantly after aging. We can understand that as she gets old, old and old, she is no more beautiful and wanted by the society. Here an intervention requires the redefinition of beauty as aging bound.

From the extract (Poem 16), someone can see the roles women are expected to play in the community. Women are expected to be modest, gentle, and excitable as the extract attempts to compare women with the aforementioned attitudes, but those attributes are directly related with age. When they age, all those attributes are gone with it. This shows, (as the extract implies) the society's appreciation and respect to women are expired.

Sample Poem 17:

ቅጠሎች አይተሻል አበቦች አይተሻል

ማንን ይመስላሉ ምንን ያወራሉ

የእርጅናን ስጋት ለማን ይነግራሉ

ጊዜ ዋርካ ላይ ተገፍተው ሳይወድቁ ሳይሰበሩ

እንዳንቺ አልነበሩ? (51).

Have you watched leaves?

Have you watched flowers?

Whom do they look like, what do they speak about?

To whom will they tell the fear of aging?

Before being washed out and broken by judgment of time

Have they not perfectly been like you? (P. 51)

According to different scholars aging is the place where individuals see themselves, reality, life, and experience from the highs of the world. Aging is as productive, impressive, and beautiful as it was the earlier times. However, from the above extract, one can identify the threat of aging from the negative consequences. The extract attempts to compare the life of flowers and leaves with the life of women after aging. We can conclude that the society's implication of aging with women is stereotyped and discriminatory as life can go as usual during old age. We can agree with the fact that there is more to aging than the earlier times when it comes to becoming productive and beautiful.

4.4 Women as Prostitute

Prostitution is one of the various issues that existed inside the feminist literary criticisms. Some of the feminist scholars that are in contradiction of prostitution argued that prostitution is a practice, which is the outcome of the existing patriarchal social construction, male dominance over women and a form of exploitation of women. Feminists have long differed in their view of prostitution. While some regard it as a classic form of exploitation and degradation, others offer a more sympathetic interpretation of women's involvement in the sex industry. Below are some illustrations.

Sample Poem 18:

ሴቶችን ባንቺ ውስጥ እያሰብኻቸው ነው
 መቼም የምትባል ጓደኛሽን ሳይቀር
 ውስኪ ቤት ያለቀ
 በየወንዱ አልጋ የተለቃለቀ
 ውበትሽን ሳይቀር (20)

I imagine all women in you
 Even your friend named hardly ever
 Used at whisky house
 Even your beauty which is consumed in
 every man's bed (P. 20)

What we can understand from sample Poem 18 is how the poet depicts the female character as prostitute. The author portrayed a woman character whose beauty pattered in every man's bed. She is also portrayed as a woman who commits a sexual intercourse with different men. Based on the Marxist feminists view point, prostitution has been seen as the result of a patriarchal social order that subordinates women to men and where the inequality between genders is present in all parts of life (Stratton, 1994). Feminists believe that prostitution is very destructive to society as it supports the idea that women are sex objects that exists for men's enjoyment and used only for men's erotic pleasure.

Sample poem 19

<p>ከባላሁብት ጋር ተፋቅራ ምናያት የቷም አይነት እንስት ምን ትሁንም ምንም የህይወት ታሪኳን ወደኋላ ላሄደን ጥቂት ብንገመግም አንድ ቡና ለሁለት አብራ የጠጣችው አንድ አፍቃሪ አታጣም (33)</p>	<p>Any women who is in love whoever she is with a rich man, If we go back to her life story and rehears She might have someone who drunk with her A coffee for two(p. 33).</p>
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Sample Poem 20:

<p>አንቺም በውበትሽ የምትፈልገው የቡና ቤቷም ሴት የምትፈልገው ቪላ እና ገንዘብ ነው</p>	<p>What you looking for What the prostitute too Is villa and money</p>
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Due to the existing economic structure of the society, women are made weak, economically exploited, socially marginalized and politically disempowered. Here, the samples Poem 19 and Poem 20 reflect the fact that women go for prostitution for the sake of gaining sufficient money, service, and financial benefits. It, on the other hand, reinforces men’s dominance as superiors in terms of finance and power. According to Marxist feminism, women remain subordinate in their status as long as the economic structure is mainly dominated by men and the men society. Based on this claim, the above extract attempts to declare that women’s interest is only for money and villa. This implies that if women’s contributions in the community are not acknowledged and unpaid, if the system continues to avoid women from benefits as it does, and if the society’s reaction to women cannot go beyond motherhood and care, to survive, prostitution will be the easiest and the most affordable way for women. As the extracts show, with the existing system women would only go for money and villa if not restructured and redressed.

Sample Poem 21:

<p>ከመኝታ ቤትሽ ብቻሽን ተቀምጠሽ ወይም ጋደም ብለሽ ትቅበጠበጫለሽ ትበሰጫጫለሽ(42)</p>	<p>Sitting or lying down alone on your bed room You wonder here and there Being irritated (P.42)</p>
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Sample Poem 22:

<p>ደረቅ ፈገግታዎች ማድያትሽ ነበር ትንሽ ቀልብ ማጣት እግሮችሽ ነበር ደም ተላብሶ ነበር ፊትሽ እንደጀምበር (11)</p>	<p>Lifeless smiles blemished your face Lack of smartness were your feet Your face was tailored blood as the sun(P.11)</p>
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Prostitution has a diverse effect on the prostitute and people around in the following ways. Firstly, the stresses of living with prostitution cause individuals who are practicing it a major disorder and depression which again leads to some other negative consequences. The stress related with being free from sexually transmitted disease, avoiding physical and sexual harassment and societal disapproval are the major cause of stress. This in turn, leads to negative consequences like homicide, suicide, self-hate, self-disapproval, and depression.

Secondly, according to psychiatrists and human service workers, the stigma and discrimination related with prostitution is the most depressive issue than the practice. Here we can see from Sample Poem 21 as a reflection of prostitutions impact on the physical feature of the prostitute which in turn negatively affects women's relationship and interaction with their family and the society. After engaging in prostitution, women face problems like social disapproval, negative connotations, discrimination, and denial of opportunities in education and employment, and loneliness.

From Sample Poem 22, we can understand the impact of prostitution on the physical, biological and spiritual aspect of the victim. Extensive bleeding, sexually transmitted diseases like HIV, Gonorrhoea, leprosy, cancer, hepatitis B, pelvic inflammatory disease are the most apparent negative consequence on prostitutes.

4.5 Institutional Motherhood

Motherhood has been one of the issues that have divided the feminist movements. Feminists argued that the issue of institutional motherhood has also been one of the anchor points for denying women rights and equality and for discriminating against them. For example, Rich (1977, p. xv) differentiates between "two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed over the other: the potential relationship of any woman, to her powers of reproduction and the children; and the institution, which aims at ensuring that potential –and all women- shall remain under male control". Starting from this observation, the majority of the feminist discourses took a critical approach to motherhood and regarded the rejection of motherhood as a prerequisite for overcoming women's subordination and for achieving equality. Clearly, according to the feminist researchers, institutional motherhood has been seen as a mode which is implemented by the traditional gender roles on women to exploit and/or miss-treat them. Therefore, we can observe this thing in literary products such as poems. Let us see some examples on which women are portrayed as a mother in the selected extracts from the poems.

Sample Poem 23:

እንደ እየሱስ የሴት ልጅ መባልን ትንሽ ድፈር

Just like Jesus be confident to say that you are a son of a woman

የሴት ልጅ ነኝ ብለህ የሴት ልጅ መባልን ክብር አድርግላት
(19)

Let respect be given to her
Acknowledge her saying that you are a son of a woman (Track 19)

Form Sample Poem 23, it is possible to observe that if due attention is given to womanhood, a society can accept it and a burden imposed on single mothers would be eased. The voice of the implied author encourages sons to be called by their mothers which would in turn help single mother get acceptance in the society. The dramatic persona is envisioning such society to be created.

The other thing is that, even though she carries the child for nine months inside her womb, then she gives birth, then she feeds her breast to the baby, she carries it on her back, she pays extreme sacrifices, these things are not considered for her. In addition to the first interpretation, the other perspective related with this extract is the assumption that gender discrimination, women's subordination, men's dominance over women has been supported by the existing social, political, and economical structure of the wider society. Here, we can understand the fact that the society has attached women stereotypic nomenclatures that are socially discriminatory, derogatory, offensive, and discouraging. The concept that the extract is trying to voice out is to reconstruct, redress, and redefine the past discriminatory societal constructions against women. Through the redefinition of nomenclatures like "Unmannerly Child", the extract exemplifies the manifestation of women as capable of challenging the already established system which is institutional motherhood.

According to Marxist feminists, the existing patriarchal system, social, political, and economical structure of the society paves the way for the subordination of women and enhances men's dominance. The major solution for solving this problem should be towards restructuring, redefining, and revolutionizing the existing system. Radical feminists promote the establishment of new and redefined socio economic and political system. In relation to this principle, the above-mentioned extract attempts to restructure and redefine the already established traditional view against women's capacity to rare, bear children as mannerly as they should be.

Sample Poem 24:

ምን አለች እናትህ አንተን ሲጠቁምህ ምልክት ሲያደርግህ

What did your mother say when he pointed at you and made you a sign

እንደ ማርያም አለቀሰች፤

She wept like Mary

ለእኔ ስትል ብላ ወድቃ ተማፀኝች

Fell down and pleaded saying let it be for me

እንድወልድ እናቱ እንድሰኝ

To deliver and to be pronounced his mother

ማህፀኔን ብትፈታው

If you fertile my womb

የውለድኩት እኔ የፈጠረው ማን ነው? (21)

It is me who begot him but who created him? (P. 21)

Most of the feminist critics of institutional motherhood shared the perception of maternity as a means to maintain women's inferior social and economic status as object and to deny them the right to determine their position. According to feminist critics such as Julia Kristeva(1982), the subordination of women to men, men's dominance over women, class difference and poverty are reinforced by different institutions that work for the benefit of the upper class where one of the institutions is institutional motherhood. Among institutions that reinforce gender inequality and women's subordination, religion is the most dominant as discussed from Sample Poem 24. From the poem we can see the stereotypical characteristics of women against their natural roles of being mother. From the perspectives of institutional motherhood, women playing the role of motherhood are perceived weak, fragile, and are made submissive and weak to challenges.

The other issue from the above extract that supports the Marxist feminism view is women's question against the existing system. The woman playing the role of womanhood described her disappointment and questioned who created her son. This implies that the above extract attempts to challenge the already established system.

Sample Poem 25:

አንቺም ብትወልጁ ያንቺኑ ቢጠኑ ነው(38)

Perhaps what you deliver is a bit like you (P. 38).

The most important issue to rise from sample Poem 25 is the issue of women's status in the community. Women's status is predetermined in the society as they work, get employed, function as a part of the community, and get and rear children. The poet attempts to describe the society's assumption that women are naturally subordinate to men. From the extract the poet is attempting to predict the woman's children as not improve from the mother. It is because of the existing structure the life a woman is leading.

Sample Poem 26

ባትወልጁም ባትከብጁም እናት ግን መስለሻል

You pretended to be a mother even if you are barren and not pregnant (p.30)

From the above extract (Sample Poem 26), we can see the redefinition and restructuring of motherhood. Women have predetermined roles to play. Among those roles, motherhood is the major one. If a woman fails to deliver the role of being motherhood, the consequences are devastating like disapproval, disdain, social stigma, poor social contact, alienation, and deprivation of opportunities. However, from the above extract the poet tries to acknowledge the woman despite failing to fulfill the predetermined role of being motherhood.

5. Summary

One of the capitalist agenda is objectifying women. Patriarchal ideology systematically promotes the notion that a woman's worth is associated to her beauty. Kessleman et al.(1999), borrowing Naomi Wolf's phrase "The Beauty myth", contends as it refers to "...the belief that women must possess an immutable quality "beauty" in order to be successful. Our culture is permeated by the conviction that beauty is the central measure of women's worth". This is promoted because woman's body is one of the major sources of accumulation of wealth. Such notions are produced in different mode of productions one of which is literature. To this end, the woman's body is portrayed in a way it entices sexual desire in men. The sample extracts analyzed in this study showed that the author in his poems depicted women in similar way. Tyson (2006) points out that those issues of gender can play a part including the production and occurrence of literary products. Therefore, in literary works woman's body is depicted as object of gaze.

The other issue which captures the attention of the feminist intellectuals in relation to woman is aging, and they defined it as a life altering injustice that affects women in ways that are distinct from men (Levy & Banaji, 2002). To illustrate, when a woman becomes aged and mother, then she becomes not as much as sexier than as she was young. When women get older and cannot give birth, they are considered sexually not worthy. In this regard, feminists argue that patriarchy is the foremost offender in ageism. In relation to this issue, the sample extracts indicated aging for women is the worst time when they lose their beauty, fertility and acceptance by men for sex. It is considered as a demotion time for them.

Among the negative depictions of women in the author's poems, the prostitution character is one. The sample extracts taken for this purpose showed that women are depicted as prostitute, and they, according to some of the extracts, do it for the sake of getting money. According to feminist scholars such as Stratton (1994), prostitution is an exploitative practice, which implicates a woman who has sexual intercourse with customers to whom she is not attracted, and which routinely exposes the woman to psychological, physical, and sexual violence. Moreover, prostitution is a practice that leads the prostitute to serious negative effects. For example, she can be affected by trauma, stress, depression, anxiety, self-medication through alcohol and drug use, eating disorders and a great risk for self-harm and suicide. This is the result of extreme poverty and lack of opportunity, or of serious fundamental problems, for instance, drug addiction, past trauma (such as child sexual abuse), and other disastrous conditions.

Rich (1977) differentiates between "two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed over the other: the potential relationship of any woman, to her powers of reproduction and the children; and the institution, which aims at ensuring that potential –and all women– shall remain under male control". The latter notion reinforces the perception of maternity as a means to maintain women's inferior social and economical status as object and to deny them the right to determine their position. This means women tend to be socially and economically inferior because of their maternity and because of this, they are denied their right to determine their positions in the society. Among the feminist scholars, it has believed that the devaluation of motherhood and women is a consequence of the patriarchal construction of sexual difference. However, the poet in his poem attempted to challenge the already established system about motherhood and depicted women's status as predetermined in the society to work, get employed, function as a part of the community and get and rear children.

6. Conclusions

In different cultures, religions and eras, women perform domestic activities in the kitchen such as preparing food, caring for children, and cleaning the house, whereas men have played a central role in the societies political, economical, and other sphere. These realities are also portrayed in different genres of literary works. Since poem is one of the common literary genres of literature, it is very useful to discover the feminist issues on it. By analyzing these genres, it is helpful to minimize the cultural, traditional, social and economical troubles on which women face in their respective societies. Importantly, the final

result of this study showed that female characters in the selected poems have been portrayed as aged, agent of birth or mother, and prostitute. In addition to that, they are also portrayed as emotional, dependent, homemaker, weak, submissive etc... on which female readers would identify themselves with them. Hence, all stakeholders need to work hard to change the current negative attitude found in different cultures against women so that they will be considered equal with men.

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Authors' contributions

¹The first author designed the study and defined its research problems in consultation with the second and third author. She conducted fieldwork and analyzed the data. The study was originally in partial fulfillment of her MA degree in Literature, Jimma University.

²The second author advised the first author to design the study and define its research problems. Later, he restructured the paper into an article with additional literature review and analysis. He made ready the paper for publication and accommodated all comments from reviewers.

3. The third author was a co-advisor who assisted the first author and he also worked with the second author in restructuring the paper into an article.

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