

Chapter 5

Context in stories for Ethiopian Children

Introduction

I feel I had to write to you because in your stories for the first time I find moments that are like moments in my own life, though the background and material are so different. It does my heart a lot of good to think that out there all these years there was someone thinking and feeling like me.¹

This extract from V.S. Naipaul's *Half a Life* shows the importance of context. Although the book is not about specific countries, periods or situations, it shows an awareness of the context of the story, including an east African country, and it describes the people's experiences in school and home life to such an extent that the east African character who had read the work of the hero, Willie, was able to recognise that place. He had captured the 'spirit of the place' in his descriptions of those 'social obligations'² such as walking long distances without stopping to drink water which was drunk at the beginning and end of the day, eating nothing until the middle of the morning when they would only eat vegetables such as cassava, most of which was planted around their huts.

Relevance to Ethiopian Life

For each story written in this thesis, Michael Daniel Ambatchew and others from Ethiopia have provided feedback which has led to changes in the texts to ensure relevance to life in Ethiopia. This expertise and local knowledge is invaluable when writing about a country and people which, although fairly well documented and observed on visits and long periods of working in the country,³ can never be fully understood by an outsider. The dilemma probably faces all authors unless they are writing about a culture, age and country with which they are familiar. In one of his conference papers Michael

Daniel Ambatchew noted how lack of knowledge of context, even by the most revered writers, can pose a threat to literature:

Like most Europeans, Zephaniah also seems to have very exotic perceptions of Africa as a place of wild animals and mysterious practices, including slavery. We find that the moment Alem arrives in England, he is surprised by the lack of animal noises.⁴ Nevertheless, he is so accustomed to living with wild animals that even in England while spending the night in a shed, he makes sure his bed, “was high enough off the ground to make it difficult for any hyenas or snakes to get to.”⁵

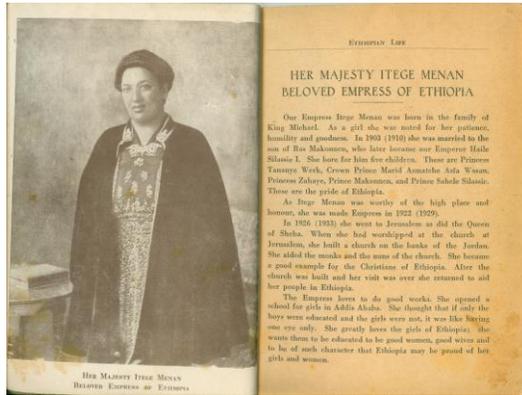
To a young person who is not living in Ethiopia, the story may appear plausible and may even serve to confirm beliefs that circle among westerners about ‘primitive Africa.’⁶

While it may not appear to be damaging, and may even enhance the excitement of the story, such ignorance can have the effect of misleading readers and annoying (at the very least) those who are aware of the misinformation. Benjamin Zephaniah justified and explained his choice of subject and media on Radio 4’s *Book Club*.⁷

Michael Daniel Ambatchew warns against: ‘surrogate authors, who consciously or unconsciously echo their own consciousness, desires and interests, rather than ours,’ and the threat of: ‘our literature being squashed out of the international arena by the more vocal and visible, though not necessarily better, literatures.’⁸

Prior to the current Ethiopian political regime, books for children were largely imported and often lacked significance to the lives of the intended audience. In the time of Haile Selassie I,⁹ apart from those scripts used in the church schools comprising the Amharic alphabet and set religious texts, books were often of English origin although some were published specifically for Ethiopian school children. One example was *Ethiopian Life*,¹⁰ an English reader in two parts published by a local printing company. It was a small book with no illustrations apart from photographs of the emperor and his

wife and a coloured plate of the Ethiopian flag. It provided examples of Ethiopian folktales, biblical stories, instructions and poems as well as praise for the Emperor and his wife, Empress Menen, who supported female education.¹¹



A page from *Ethiopian Life*, a school reader produced in the 1950s in Ethiopia.

This book was commended by Sylvia Pankhurst who, on her visit to Addis Ababa schools in 1944, wrote: ‘[t]ext books were very scarce when the schools re-opened, and there is still a scarcity though books have been obtained from abroad and the printing press in Addis Ababa has been at work producing books for the schools.’¹²

However, literature set in an Ethiopian context was rare and this was hardly surprising considering the education situation at that time and the events which were taking place. When Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1936 a number of church schools, state schools and missionary schools were operating across the country teaching through the medium of English or French. Many of these schools were forced to close, partly to protect the young people from bombing and possibly to enable Ethiopian teachers to support the defense of the country. When the war ended in 1941 and Haile Selassie I returned from exile in England, state schools reopened and the language of instruction became English. During his reign there was an increase in textbook production for schools which began to relate to the experience of Ethiopians.¹³ Haile Selassie I remained in power until 1974 when the military government took over.

In a terminal report by the illustrator of textbooks in Ethiopia, Eric Robson described his work in Ethiopia over twelve years (from 1964 to 1972 on a local contract followed by a contract with the Ministry of Overseas Development, United Kingdom, until 1976) stating: '[t]he political, economic and social changes which have taken place in Ethiopia over the past year open up new horizons both in the area of educational publishing, as well as in the development of the book trade as a whole in that they have, to a large extent, provided the means for the removal of certain obstacles which have impeded progress in this field.'¹⁴ One of this new government's concerns was education of the masses and, in a presentation to the workshop on children's books paper in 1982, the Curriculum Department of the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia stated that existing textbook material: 'naturally inculcated in the child alien attitudes, values and norms.'

The paper continues:

The end objective of the educational pipe-line is to produce a productive citizen built upon socialist attitudes who is fully committed for the building of socialism. Accordingly, the new educational objectives focus on *education for production*, for *scientific research*, and for *socialist consciousness*. In like manner, books which reflect the objectives set above have been prepared and disseminated to all schools.¹⁵

It is worth noting that these textbooks set out to encourage the young person to be the: 'builder of socialist society in the future' with a 'fundamental knowledge of Marxism – Leninism, especially in the principles of social development, the political actions of the revolutionary leading forces of socialist Ethiopia and the revolutionary forces all over the world...'¹⁶

During the period of the Derg¹⁷ a number of children's books were imported, translated into Amharic with illustrations by eastern European and Russian artists. These were apparently treasured by some of the children who had access to them, but they did

not reflect their lives in Ethiopia. These works and their impact on Ethiopian illustrators will be discussed in greater detail in the paper on illustrations.

Language

There appears to be little evidence of books written or translated into Ethiopian languages other than Amharic until fairly recently.¹⁸ Endeavours have been made in some regions to provide literature and textbooks to support the teaching of languages and other subjects. Apart from Amharic, there are now story books published in the other main languages: Afan Oromo and Tigrinya, but they are still in a minority.¹⁹ Efforts have also been made to produce literature in other languages such as Somali with books being produced by non government organisations (NGOs) such as Save the Children and concerned with issues such as childcare and non formal education. The 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), through decentralization of the country linked to federalism, gave each region autonomy over the language of instruction in primary schools:

Ethiopians speak over 80 languages yet, during previous governments, the language of education and legal courts was predominantly Amharic. Article 39 of the FDRE Constitution lists the rights of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples and includes the “right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture, and to preserve its history.” (sub-article 2).²⁰

Although a story does not necessarily have to be written in the language of the speakers, literature would probably be starved if this were to happen; recognising the use of language in the context of the story is essential. Michael Daniel Amabatchew notes discrepancies in Zepheniah’s book, *The Refugee Boy* where:

...Alem's father, an obvious linguist, doesn't speak Oromiffa, despite having lived in Harar and bearing the typical Oromo name of Kelo. The same holds true of his mother as Alem states, "My father can speak six languages –Arabic, Afar, Tigrinya, Italian, English and Amharic. My mother can also speak these languages ...". This is highly unlikely, as an Oromo would first learn his own language before mastering others, while a linguist would quickly learn the language of his surroundings, especially when the local people bring their problems to him, ...

Next the actual use of language is dubious. Sociolinguists inform us that our innermost emotions are best expressed in our mother tongue and we do find Alem struggling to express his sorrow at his mother's death in Amharic, "he tried to shout some words in Amharic ... talking loudly to himself in Amharic..."²¹

Recognition of language or dialect appears to be one of the most important elements of any written story. Lorentzon justified the use of the former colonial languages quoting Chinua Achebe's words: "[b]ut for me there is no other choice. I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings."²²

This issue was also raised by Anita Pandley who quoted Meena Khorana's questions: "Are the indigenous languages and cultural groups being marginalized?" "Are African children continuing to be colonized through the literature being written and produced for them?" "Does using a European language mean that it is not an African voice?" She then provides one answer relating to how West African English has evolved in countries like Nigeria where "writers have exercised considerable latitude in their experimentation(s) with the English language."²³

In Ethiopia, the late Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin defended the use of African language in literature when he wrote:

...the work is more complete when recorded in the language of its original conception, even though it might appear limited in the extent of its expression...

By stressing on all authentic African settings and the everyday realities originating in an African experience to be first recorded for the African in his own language, is not to set any form of an imaginary boundary between the basic and universal human nature expressed in all sorts of literatures, but to once more underscore the fact that there can be no true African Literature without the use of her own language.²⁴

The Amharic language is used by the group, Writers for Ethiopian Children, who produce Amharic short stories with English translations, and English medium children's literature translated into Amharic.²⁵ These short tales include many based in Ethiopia with cultural and social factors taken into account, particularly in stories written by and for Ethiopian residents. One short story in the 2009 anthology, *Tikur Fiyelay*, is about a lemon vendor, a young girl selling the fruit to passing motorists. Such a character may exist in some other African countries but has been a common sight on the roads of Ethiopia. This story by Michael Daniel Ambatchew also illustrates some aspects of the life of men, women and children in this country.

Gender

The role of women in Ethiopian society has changed for some but, out of a population of over 40 million women and girls, life for many has remained the same as it was generations ago.²⁶ It would appear that it is only through education that their position in society can change for the better. Ironically it was a female whose life, although mythical, was to have had possibly the greatest impact on Ethiopian life, society and culture throughout the ages. The Queen of Sheba is reputed to have ruled this land and visited Solomon of Jerusalem back in the 10th Century B.C. resulting in the birth of Menelik, the first in a line of emperors whose dynasty ended in 1974 with Haile Selassie

I. Her story is immortalised in works mainly originating in the *Kebre Negast*, described in the previous chapter on storytelling, and through oral and pictorial representations.

Yet women's achievements can be overlooked across Africa according to Sheldon whose study of their achievements noted their invaluable role in the agriculture of the continent which went unrecorded. She wrote: '[it] sometimes seems that women are stagnating in African societies, continuing as the family members primarily responsible for agricultural labor and facing ongoing hindrances to gaining education and employment equal to African men.'²⁷ Ethiopia has shared this sad experience with women facing high illiteracy rates, HIV AIDS²⁸ and diseases caused by the poverty they exist in. Yet women such as Empress Zewditu, who ruled Ethiopia from 1916 to 1930, have had a share of power with men in the past and the increase in democracy appears to have led to more women gaining status. In Ethiopia, Senedu Gabru was the first woman elected to Ethiopia's parliament in 1957. More recently, Genet Zewdie became the FDRE Minister of Education until 2005 and, following the elections in 2005, one hundred and sixteen women were voted members of the parliament taking more than twenty per cent of the seats.²⁹

Many Ethiopian children's stories about their country would probably still relate to the more traditional life of women prevalent fifty years ago when, particularly in rural areas, female circumcision was widely practiced and other rituals were common. Lord describes the expectations following childbirth: '[t]he fortieth day is the last and the grandest. New dresses are bought for the mother and baby... On entering the gate of her husband's house she passes over the blood of a sheep killed by her husband for the

occasion... As she goes around her home, one of her husband's relatives... puts butter on her head...³⁰

While some of these rituals are dying out, particularly in the urban centres, many of the extended families, with grandparents in the family home, ensure that memories of these traditions are kept alive. The importance of butter in such rituals and old wives tales still exist, as witnessed by the author in discussions with younger people living in Addis Ababa. Proverbs persist such as: '[a] woman gives birth to a wise man but she herself knows nothing,'³¹ from the Oromo. Cotter provided the accompanying description of women and girls: '[t]hey keep to their daily chores of gathering firewood, drawing water, cooking and taking care of the children, occasionally minding the cattle and helping with cultivating the fields. Women were not given a very high place in traditional society.'³²

Hamer also witnessed the traditional role of women among the Sidama people in describing the way they are portrayed in folktales. He identified the conflict between men and their wives and the expectations of women in this society. In one tale he describes the actions of a stepmother who repeatedly sends her stepson on: 'difficult missions, hoping that he will not return and her sons will acquire his inheritance. But he accomplishes these missions and the co-wife and her sons are so embarrassed that they commit suicide.'³³ Hamer goes on to describe other tales which demonstrate the ideal roles of women, particularly in relation to child rearing: 'domestic chores and respect for elders.'³⁴

In Ethiopia, if a child cannot relate to the language, traditions and other cultural traits that are described or used within a story or if these facts are incorrect, there is more

chance that it will be unsuccessful regardless of the plot and characters or the quality of the writing. More recently, efforts have also been made to raise aspirations among young people through their literature, both educational and fictional. In a picture book aimed at pre-school children, *Abeba goes to Bed*,³⁵ the illustrations include a young woman using a laptop computer – a sign of modern times. Each grade of the Civics and Ethical Education textbooks includes a section on gender equality and examples of women who have achieved respect for their patriotic role in the country. These include athletes such as Tirunesh Dibaba, founders of charities like Abebech Gobena, the ‘Mother Theresa of Ethiopia,’ and historical figures including Shewareged Gedle who was tortured and imprisoned by the Italians in the Italo-Ethiopian war (1936-41).³⁶

The role of men has probably changed less in the rural areas where men have to work on the land to earn a living, but as more young people are gaining access to education, so aspirations seem to have increased and opportunities to go on to further and higher education are having an impact on such families. Talking to students in Addis Ababa, one is made aware of the different regions they come from, including places which still practice many cultural traditions. Likewise many of the street children and other migrants can be found in the cities, far away from their homes. The Ethiopian government is instrumental in encouraging the mixing of its population, particularly in universities where students are allocated places which can be far away from where they were born or would choose to live. Communication has altered the lives of many within a relatively short time period, particularly with the increase in mobile phone usage and the internet. Even in some of the most remote areas of Ethiopia, a literate person could have access to the World Wide Web and the information and network opportunities that it

can provide. Television has provided a source of information as well as entertainment and British premier football teams are supported in roadside bars and other venues by enthusiastic males and a growing number of females.

The stereotypical male in Ethiopian school textbooks, according to Muluembeat Kiar, is employed in roles such as working at computers or doing manual work and, in the home, the father was seen as the person with knowledge. She refers to Hollins stating that: 'stereotypes can bias children's beliefs as to what kind of roles and activities they can take part in the future and they can give children stereotypical perceptions of men and women, ethnicity, age, class and religion.'³⁷

Children's lives continue to change but, according to research in Ethiopia by Nardos Chuta, some aspects of life in rural areas differ from the towns and cities. 'Rural girls said that if they were seen walking or playing with a boy their parents did not know, the girl was considered to be *balege*, meaning rude or bringing dishonour to the family.'³⁸ She goes on to describe how women rarely share in physical activities in their play although in the cities, observations of girls playing football in schools indicate that this is not a widespread belief. Yet in the many Ethiopian households visited by the author, it was the girls who performed the coffee ceremonies and carried out the household duties. Life does not appear to have changed too much for a significant number of children.

In her paper, Mimi Mersha, describing characters in Amharic short stories, writes of the feeble child in the Kuraz publication, *Ineho*:

The father drinks daily with whatever meagre income he earns by toiling for the whole day. He comes back to the house only for the night's sleep... Likewise, Mititi's mother pays no heed about her children's wellbeing. She has been depressed by the burden of bearing a number of children, 'full up to the brim' in the words of the narrator.³⁹

She goes on to describe the short stories, *Y Aradda Lijoch* and *Shibow* which tell the story of street boys in Addis Ababa. She describes in her own terms how the characters are depicted: ‘to show the cause of ‘streetism’ and its consequences’ describing how one character new to street life: ‘[w]hen unknowingly entered the Cinema House and was caught by the neck, he singly accepted the blows with[out] knowing why. He had not yet adapted the loquacious behaviour of the street children.’⁴⁰

Children in Ethiopia vary depending on the culture and society that they have been brought up in. Even today, the difference between urban and rural life is evident in how children are brought up and their perceptions and experiences as the research carried out by Children in Need and other studies have indicated. ‘In the Gurage culture, children are needed for purposes of production, and continuation of lineage.’⁴¹ Consequently there is a difference in many parts of the country in how boys and girls are brought up such as in the Gurage culture where: ‘[a] father whose children are all girls is regarded as unfortunate.’⁴² The expectations persist for children to be: ‘seen and not heard’ and many are still not ‘allowed to eat from the same table or dish with their parents or adults.’⁴³ Social practices include female genital mutilation in a number of areas, particularly in rural Ethiopia and early marriage, abduction, scarification, abuse of certain traditional medicines and practices are still observed and reported in the media and reports:

The mass media are in fact in the process of waging a gruesome battle against reactionary cultural practices. Government organisations are also playing a very important role in the fight against backward cultural practices that particularly affect the health of mothers and children.⁴⁴

Location

The impact of such life expectations among some children may need to be reflected in the literature that they read and the images they see. While raising aspirations is one function of literature, the problems of presenting children with media that do not reflect their own experiences has already been documented. If literature should attempt to capture the author's image of real characters, then it is assumed the same applies to location in a story. Stein's paper quotes Alvermann and Phelps findings in 2002 that: "readers' social and cultural identities influence their reading and play a role in determining how difficult a particular text is for individual readers."⁴⁵

While it is possible to sketch a scene that is unfamiliar, it requires a good knowledge of a place to do it justice. The descriptions that Haley used in *Roots* are still resonant and his narrative of the village after a rainstorm could fit almost any rural location in sub-Saharan Africa today or a hundred years ago:

The rains had ended, and between the bright blue sky and the damp earth, the air was heavy with the fragrance of lush wild blooms and fruits. The early mornings echoed with the sound of the women's mortars pounding millet and couscous and groundnuts – not from the main harvest, but from those early-growing seeds that the past year's harvest had left in the soil...
And the village rang again with the yelling and laughing of the children back at play after the long hungry season. Bellies now filled with nourishing food, sores dried into scabs and falling away, they dashed and frolicked about as if possessed.⁴⁶

Describing a place that exists (or existed) accurately is achievable if it is possible to visit the place or alternatively the writer can resort to videos, photographs, maps and so on to build up a picture. In writing the story *Back in Time*, being able to convincingly describe the final part of the journey to Meqdele was partially solved after reading Rubenson's account of journeys made by himself and Tewodros:⁴⁷

I approached the mountain fortress from the “wrong” direction: by Land Rover from Dese to Tenta, then by mule up the steep south wall and through *Kaffir Berr*. The normal and easier approach from Tewodros’s capital Debre Tabor to the northwest is through *Kokit Berr* at the other end of the *amba*.... I too, should have come from the Lake Tana region.⁴⁸

Descriptions of Meqdela at the time of Tewodros by H.M.Stanley,⁴⁹ who was present as a journalist when Britain sent troops to relieve her captives held by Tewodros, and by G. Macdonald Fraser, in his fictional account, *Flashman on the March*,⁵⁰ as well as photographs and accounts by other historians helped build up a picture of this remote fortress site. Another invaluable source was the *Diary of a Journey to Abyssinia 1868*, an illustrated account for the Illustrated London News by William Simpson which was edited and annotated by Richard Pankhurst.⁵¹

Ensuring historical facts are correct is just as important in fiction as in factual writing. Melrose described how a Hollywood director mistakenly used a Roman aqueduct for a scene with horses racing along it.⁵² He stressed the need for vigilance and checking information to ensure facts are true in storytelling. Referring to Walter Benjamin he writes: ‘[t]hat which is foreign to the original, if only the difference between storyteller’s performance, cultural, racial or otherwise, erodes the original’s structures of reference and discourse. Storytelling relies on a certain dexterity, though even at its most perfect it cannot fail to reveal its own flaws and improvisations when faced with the imperfect traces and horizons of historical memory and metaphoric translations.’⁵³

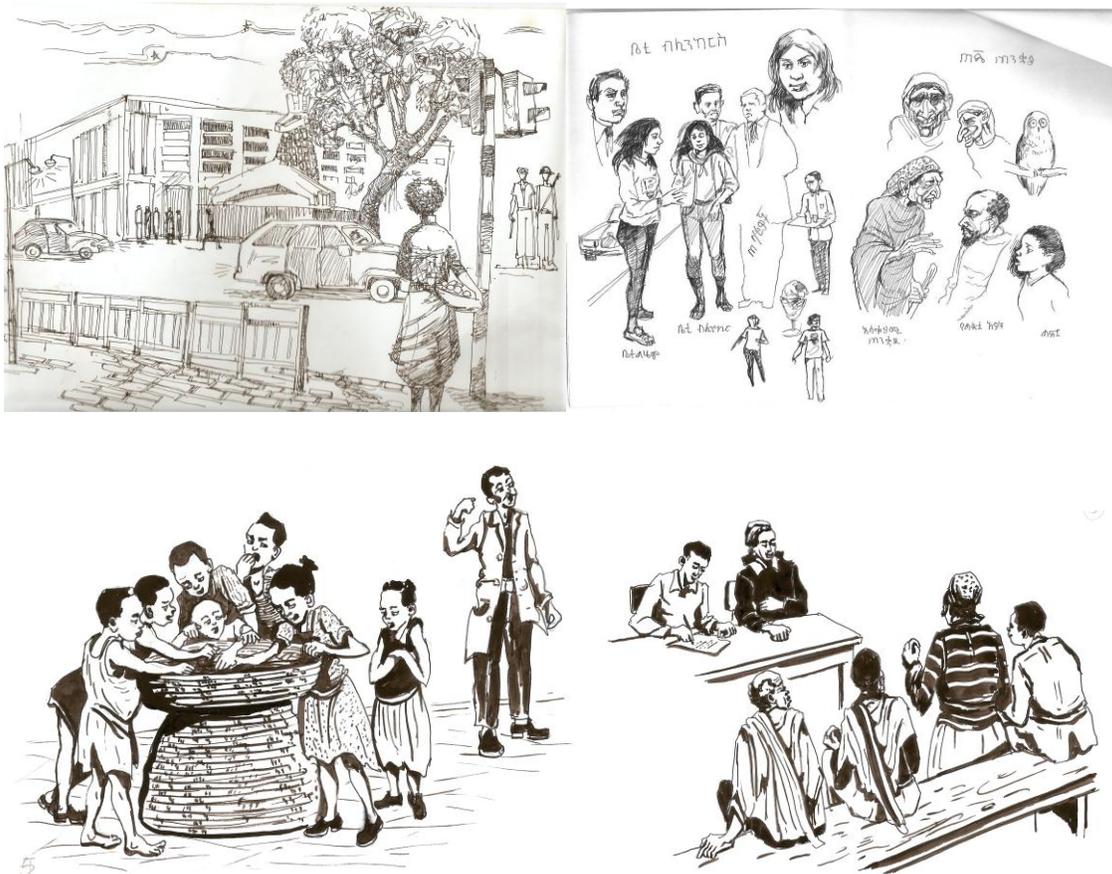
A significant part of Ethiopia’s early history contains a mixture of myth and empirical facts, the tale of the Solomonic dynasty (previously related) being one of the most well known. Proof of the importance of the Axumite kingdom is verified by abundant evidence of the huge stelae (stones) erected at that period and the coins minted

and since located outside the country which provided proof of the scale of commerce. Yet within Axum, the town at the centre of this ancient civilization, is the Church of St Mary. Here the original tabot, containing the stones with the commandments which had been presented to Moses, is presumed to be located after being brought back to Ethiopia from the Holy Land. For a number of Orthodox Christians this is a part of their history which they firmly believe in.

The rock hewn church structures in Lalibela to a certain extent appear to defy logical explanation; however, the belief that they were constructed by angels is treated by most people today as a myth just like the stories of Prester John.⁵⁴ In writing about the country, whether for its own people, the Diaspora or the rest of the world, awareness of these myths and legends and the extent to which they are still valued, is important in setting the context for any literature, fact or fiction.

As the focus of this study is illustrated children's fiction, just how far illustrations also have to be contextually correct is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. While it is possible to achieve an atmosphere and accuracy through appropriate use of pictures within a story or book aimed at the Ethiopian child, continued training of Ethiopian artists as illustrators will ensure that future publications are not only more professional but become precious treasured items. More than one illustrator of Ethiopian children's books admitted to the author that his work improved following a short training course on illustration techniques. Such training alone, however, does not provide artists with the necessary knowledge, insight or experiences which can enhance or explain the text or capture the child's imagination. Foreign illustrators, with training and resources at hand, may provide beautiful pictures and original ideas for Ethiopian publications. However,

local illustrators, and those with considerable experience of life in Ethiopia, can often accurately capture a location, character or other local context which children can recognise. The author was shown the preparatory sketches below by Assefa Gebre Kidan and Atlabachew Reda for the anthologies by Writers for Ethiopian Children and examples in pen and ink illustrations produced by Andargachew Bogale for the Civics and Ethical Education primary textbooks.



¹ Naipaul, V.S. (2002) *Half a Life*, London: Picador, p124.

² Ibid p151 (both quotes).

³ See Introduction p1 endnote 2. The author lived and worked in Ethiopia as a VSO volunteer from 2004 to 2006 and returned to work for the Ministry of Education from 2008 to 2009 on a publishing project. She continues to visit Ethiopia for research, work and leisure and has travelled across the whole country for both work and pleasure.

⁴ Referring to Zephaniah B. (2001) *Refugee Boy*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., p26.

⁵ Michael Daniel Ambatchew (2007) 'Plausibility in Refugee Boy', a paper presented to Conference of Institute of Language Studies, Addis Ababa, p10

⁶ 'Primitive Africa' is a phrase used by a number of writers such as Laurens Van Der Post in his book, *The Creative Pattern in Primitive Africa*, and a paper on 'Primitive African Medical Lore and Witchcraft' by Ethel Thompson. The author believes that the term, primitive, is still widely associated with the lifestyles associated with many Ethiopians whose culture has changed little over hundreds of years.

⁷ Book Club broadcast with James Naughtie 4/3/2011, included this description on the website <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00z53v0>, downloaded on 11/4/2011: 'Benjamin is perhaps best known for his performance poetry with a political edge, but he has also written novels for young people. Benjamin is interested in international affairs and travels extensively throughout the developing world. He has visited refugee camps in places like Gaza and Montenegro and in *Refugee Boy* he borrows from many of the stories he heard, to create a tale that many refugees would recognise. ... *Refugee Boy* is the story of Alem, whose mother is Eritrean and father Ethiopian. With both countries at war, his family are neither safe nor wanted in either country. Alem's father brings him to the UK for a better life.'

⁸ Michael Daniel Ambatchew (2007) op cit, p12

⁹ Emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 until 1974 when he was deposed by a military government.

¹⁰ An Ethiopian school reading book written in English in 1950s and printed by the Berhanena Selam Imperial Ethiopian Government Printing Press, it included folk tales and bible stories with spelling lists and information. Some of this was inappropriate, such as the list of months on page 25, and did not reflect the culture of Ethiopia which has a different calendar.

¹¹ The first girl's school was opened in 1931.

¹² Pankhurst, S. (1955) *Ethiopia – a Cultural History*, London: Lalibela House Sidgwick & Jackson, p555.

¹³ Murray, E. was a journalist with the Ethiopian Herald in 1967 and wrote the article, 'Modern Ethiopian Geography Book Published Here' describing the new textbook aimed seventh and eighth grade students with colour pictures and a print run of 63,000. Another book he mentioned which was published at that time was *Modern Mathematics for Ethiopia*.

¹⁴ Robson, G. E. (1975) 'Educational Materials Production in the Ministry of Education' p2 This was an unpublished terminal report by the graphic artist Eric Robson, contracted to the Ministry of Education in Addis Ababa by the Ministry of Overseas Development, United Kingdom. This comprehensive report includes information on a) The developments and future prospects in educational publishing at that time, b) a summary of educational materials production and related activities between 1954 and 1975, and c) materials produced by the Ministry of Education between 1966 and 1975. In his introduction he notes his 'sincere belief in the value of quality publications in any educational system, as well as in the general, social, cultural, economic and political development of any nation, and therefore have a genuine concern for the progress of educational publishing in Ethiopia.' Eric continued to play a significant role in Ethiopian publications from 1992 when he returned to the Ministry of Education with UNICEF as a tutor in book design and illustration. He continues to be a freelance illustrator with publications including *In Search of Punt*, *Queen Hatshepsut's Land of Marvels* (published by Shama Books 2007) and *A History of Ethiopia in Pictures*, produced with Last, G. and Pankhurst, R. and published by the OUP in 1969 (reprinted by Arada Books, Ethiopia, in 2008).

¹⁵ MOE Curriculum Department (1982) 'The Role of the Children's Book in the Educational Development of Ethiopia' in *Workshop on Children's Books*, Addis Ababa: The National Children's Commission and Italian Cultural Institute, p5.

¹⁶ Ibid, p7.

¹⁷ The Derg (Dergue) is the term applied to the Military Government which came to power in Ethiopia in 1974. 'The Ethiopian Revolution ended the imperial regime but replaced it with military rule. The constitution was suspended and parliament was dissolved; the people found they had no power as all strikes and demonstrations were banned and many opposition supporters and potential threats executed. Reforms were introduced which gave the state greater power as land, finance and other institutions were nationalized.

By 1977 Colonel Mengistu had gradually taken control by force and had gained unlimited power. It was not until 1987 that a new state structure was formed, the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) with 'ritual elections' including that of Mengistu Haile Mariam as its president. ... ' Civics and Ethical Education, Teacher's Guide Grade 8 (2009) p9.

¹⁸ The author found a few examples of books written in Tigrinyan (one by Birhane Achame published by Macmillan) and Afan Oromo in bookshops in Addis Ababa from 2008 and was made aware of attempts to produce more books in local languages through contacts in other parts of the country.

¹⁹ Yohannes Gebregiorgis opened a publishing house in Tigray in 2011 – Sololia Books. He was a presenter at the Seminar and Workshop on Children's Literature and Illustration in the National Library, Addis Ababa in May 2011 where the subject of availability of books in local languages was discussed.

²⁰ MOE Dept of Civics and Ethical Education (2009) *Teacher Guide Grade 12* Addis Ababa: MOE, p23.

²¹ Michael Daniel Ambatchew (2007)op cit, p6 referring to Zephania (2001)op cit pp38,39 & 159.

²² Lorentzon, L. (1998) '*An African Focus*' *A study of Ayi Armah's Narrative Africanization*, Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell Int. pp18 & 32.

²³ Pandley, A. (2002) 'Kaki No Be Leda: The Oral Bases of Children's and Youth Literature in West Africa' *Sankofa – a Journal of African Children's and Young Adult Literature*, Baltimore: Sankofa, p15.

²⁴ Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin 'Literature and the African Public' <http://tezeta.net/18/literature-and-the-african-public>, downloaded on 6/1/2010.

²⁵ See chapter on History of Ethiopian Illustrated Children's Literature, endnotes 41 and 42.

²⁶ Visits to the rural areas of Ethiopia provided evidence of contemporary women's lives, particularly in the Omo Valley where the author heard from locals and the local education office in Awassa that, while male youngsters were attending primary school, it was taking longer to encourage equal female participation in education.

²⁷ Sheldon, K. (2005) *Historical Dictionary of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, pxi NB labour is spelt with the American spelling.

²⁸ The charity Avert estimates that of the 980,000 (2.1% of the adult population at time) suffering from HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia in 2008, 530,000 were women. <http://www.avert.org/africa-hiv-aids-statistics.htm>., downloaded on 9/11/2010.

²⁹ ‘The 2005 national election in Ethiopia witnessed 116 women voted into parliament, thus implicating that women now hold more than 20% of the seats. That is three times as many compared to previous elections and a higher female proportion than in many European parliaments.’ 26.02.2006 <http://www.danchurchaid.org/projects/africa/ethiopia/read-more/women-moving-into-the-parliament> downloaded on 30/11/2011

³⁰ Lord, E. (1960) *Cultural Patterns in Ethiopia*. Washington: Department State Agency for International Development, p51

³¹ Cotter, G. (1997) *African Proverbs Series Vol 1 Ethiopian Wisdom – Proverbs and sayings of the Oromo People*, South Africa: UNISA, pxv.

³² Ibid pxv.

³³ Hamer, J. (1994) ‘Folktales as Ideology in the Production and Circulation of Wealth among the Sadama of Ethiopia’ *Proceedings of the 11th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, (ed Bahru Zewde et al) Addis Ababa: AAU IES, p141-2.

³⁴ Ibid p142.

³⁵ Fitsame Teferra, Meron Feleke & Fikirte Addis (2009) *Abeba goes to Bed*, Addis Ababa: Habesha Tales illustrated by Wegayehu Ayele.

³⁶ The author was involved in the preparation of illustrations for all the Civics and Ethical Education textbooks for students and teachers between 2008 and 2009. The Ministry of Education published a limited number for circulation to schools in 2009. The final versions were printed in India in 2010 and distributed in 2011.

³⁷ Muluembeat Kiar (2007) ‘Children in Ethiopian Media and School Textbooks’ Poluha, E (ed) *The World of Girls and Boys in Rural and Urban Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa Forum for Social Studies & Save the Children, p164, referring to Hollins’ 1996 research.

³⁸ Nardos Chuta (2007) ‘Conceptualizations of Children and Childhood in Bishoftu, Oromia’ Poluha, E (ed) *The World of Girls and Boys in Rural and Urban Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa Forum for Social Studies & Save the Children, p138.

³⁹ Mimi Mersha (1996) *Children’s characters in four Amharic Short Stories*, Addis Ababa University (Paper for consideration towards degree), p14.

⁴⁰ Ibid p17.

⁴¹ Kristiansson, B. (ed) (1986) *Proceedings of International Seminar on Children in Need with Special Focus on Revolutionary Ethiopia Children’s Amba Experience*, Addis Ababa: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Radda Barnen Stockholm), p85.

⁴² Ibid p87.

⁴³ Ibid p87.

⁴⁴ Ibid p88.

⁴⁵ Stein B.D. (2005) ‘Book Leveling and Reading’ <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/9560>, downloaded on 6/1/2010.

⁴⁶ Haley, A. (1976) *Roots*, New York: Doubleday & Co Inc., p19.

⁴⁷ Alternatively spelt Theodros in *Back in Time*.

⁴⁸ Rubensen, S. (1990) 'Meqdela Revisited' in Tadesse Beyene, Pankhurst R. & Shiferaw Bekele (eds.) *Papers on the Lives, Times and Images of Tewodros II and Yohannes IV (1855-1889)*, Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, p11

⁴⁹ Stanley, H.M. (2006) *Comassie and Magdala: The Story of Two British Campaigns in Africa*, East Sussex: Rediscovery Books provides a detailed description of the campaign which he accompanied to rescue the captives from Magdala (Maqdela) and which resulted in the suicide of the Emperor Theodros (Tewodros)

⁵⁰ Frazer, G.M. (2005) *Flashman on the March*, London: Harper Collins.

⁵¹ Pankhurst, R. (ed.) (2002) *Diary of a Journey to Abyssinia 1868 The Diary and Observations of William Simpson of the Illustrated London News*, Hollywood: Tsehai Publishers. Dr.Richard Pankhurst is the son of Sylvia Pankhurst, the suffragette. He lives in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he was the first director of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies at the Addis Ababa University from 1963. He has published many books and articles relating to Ethiopian history and society.

⁵² Melrose Andrew (2001) *Storykeeping The Story, the Child and the Word in Cultural Crisis*, Cumbria: Paternoster, p28-29.

⁵³ Ibid p62.

⁵⁴ There are many stories of Prester John who was reputed to live in Ethiopia e.g. Brooks, M. E. (2009) *Prester John: A Reexamination and Compendium of the Mythical Figure who helped Spark European Expansion*, University of Toledo http://etd.ohiolink.edu/view.cgi?acc_num=toledo1260473876 last accessed: 2/7/2010.
