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### **Illustrated literature for Ethiopian children**

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**ILLUSTRATED LITERATURE**

**FOR**

**ETHIOPIAN CHILDREN**

**BY**

**HELEN PAPWORTH**

**Submission for the degree of Ph.D.**

**BANGOR UNIVERSITY**

**2011**





## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation, and the supporting examples of creative writing, focuses on illustrated literature for children both in Ethiopia and in the Diaspora. The three illustrated stories, one without words aimed at young children in Ethiopia and two aimed at older children in the Diaspora, were developed over the period of the research and have undergone numerous drafts as the author identified issues relating to the context of writing for an Ethiopian audience as well as the problems faced in trying to get a children's book published in the U.K. and Ethiopia.

A brief critical analysis of the history of Ethiopian children's literature was followed up by a study of oral storytelling in Ethiopia and its impact on books for children. The author also explored the influences on illustrators of Ethiopian children's literature and on their book illustrations. The methodology included using practice as research and took account of post-colonial discourse and ethnology in an attempt to ascertain whether anyone, not born in Ethiopia or of Ethiopian descent, should write or illustrate books about Ethiopia for children from that country. By the end of this research the author had identified niche markets to target and strategies that writers and illustrators, whether Ethiopian or non-Ethiopian, should follow to produce good quality materials for Ethiopian children.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The completion of this thesis and the creative writing pieces included would not have been possible without the encouragement and support of many people: family, friends, colleagues and university staff.

Firstly I most grateful to my husband whose patience and understanding gave me the incentive to finish this research. I am also indebted to my Ethiopian friends and to those colleagues I worked with through the Writers for Ethiopian Children and in the Ministry of Education. Particular thanks go to Michael Daniel Ambatchew, Martha Hardy and Hirit Belai for their continuous guidance and feedback on my critical and creative writing.

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## **Introduction**

Do the books that a child is exposed to influence their ability to read, learn and succeed?

This was a question that the author considered when she was working in Ethiopia between 2004 and 2006 as a voluntary teacher advisor<sup>1</sup> in the Ministry of Education in Addis Ababa.<sup>2</sup> In many of the schools the selection of books available was minimal and sometimes made up of rejected books from the west with no relevance to the children, their lives and their cultures. Book shops were also rare, even in the capital city, and most had only a small stock of children's materials.

The author returned to work as a volunteer in Ethiopia on a publishing project in 2008 and, this time, saw more evidence of children's publishing in schools, libraries and bookshops but the market in children's literature was still small and restricted. The bookshop market appeared to be predominantly geared towards the more affluent families in Addis Ababa or children of foreign workers. During the next two years she researched the background to this development, talking to authors, illustrators, publishers and readers of children's literature as well as studying articles and books on this subject.<sup>3</sup> In addition to being involved as an advisor in the Ministry of Education, Addis Ababa, she became involved in writing and illustrating for the anthologies for Ethiopian children created by the Writers for Ethiopian Children's Group.

She also illustrated a storybook, *Tewodros II of Abyssinia*, for Hirit Belai,<sup>4</sup> editor of Ha Hu's *Bukaya* magazine<sup>5</sup> and completed *Amen at Home*,<sup>6</sup> a picture book aimed at Ethiopian children living with adopted families in the Diaspora for Fitsame Teferra, an Ethiopian writer and publisher.<sup>7</sup> This exposure and experience provided vital evidence of



the current situation and past history relating to illustrated literature for Ethiopian children.

The thesis combines creative writing with a critical analysis of the work and the focus of this study: illustrated literature for Ethiopian children. There are chapters on methodology, the history of illustrated literature for Ethiopian children, oral storytelling, context, influences on illustrators and illustrations and the background to the picture book *Ten Donkeys*. There are also commentaries following the two stories written for children in the Diaspora which include sample illustrations produced by the author. Further examples of supporting material are included in the appendices.

The next chapter, covering the methodology of research, writing and evaluation, focuses on issues such as post-colonial discourse, oral history, interviewing and ethnography which have influenced this work. It also notes the need for reflexivity in terms of constantly reviewing and questioning opinions and ideas as well as facts both within the creative artefacts and the critical commentaries.

While there may be some comparisons and, with modern communications and technology, parallel developments in this industry compared to the developed nations, observations indicated that children's access to relevant material is severely limited in Ethiopia. However, in the Diaspora, there is an increasing source of appropriate literature for all age groups. One chapter in this study focuses on the history of illustrated Ethiopian children's literature and its impact on children over the last hundred years. Changes in the sources and language of children's literature were identified, sometimes associated with the different political regimes. The current government has been in power for about twenty years and primary education for all children is a goal that it

strives to reach, but universal secondary education and adult literacy appear unlikely to be achieved.<sup>8</sup> Poverty impacts on education as well as economy. In spite of this gloomy prediction there are signs that children's books are becoming more widely available, and not just to the affluent section of the population in Ethiopia. One indication was the increase in bookshops opening in Addis Ababa including three within walking distance of the author's home in a residential and business area populated largely by Ethiopians. Each bookshop had a section for children's books including those published in local languages.<sup>9</sup> Literature produced specifically for children in Ethiopia or for Ethiopian children in the Diaspora is, however, still limited. In choosing to write for this audience, the author had to consider which market to write for. Despite there being a large population of Ethiopians living in Britain<sup>10</sup> and vast numbers living in the United States of America,<sup>11</sup> the availability of multi-cultural literature which they could relate to appears to be restricted, even in schools, as Yenika-Agbaw and Napoli noted in their research: 'Domestic and International Multiculturalism: Children's Literature about Africans and African-Americans'. One of their concerns was the lack of books that: '...reflect our diverse cultures.'<sup>12</sup> Similar issues had been raised in an earlier article by Atkins which reflected her experiences in publishing where 'white privilege' exists and as a consequence: '...it is difficult for people to know what drives editorial and marketing decisions.'<sup>13</sup>

The first story in this thesis, *Back in Time*, was aimed at children in the developed world and tries to provide a deeper awareness of Ethiopia's history and current situation. It also tried to fit a niche in the market for children of eight to twelve, including those among the Ethiopian Diaspora in Britain, who want adventure, fantasy and characters

they can relate to. This story attempts to raise awareness of the links between Ethiopia and Britain since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Illustrations were intended to enhance the text and provide contextual details for readers unfamiliar with the settings without resorting to long descriptions. The idea for the story came years earlier when the author was studying illustration,<sup>14</sup> working on the theme of 'flying' to produce an interactive computer game with a corresponding book aimed at older children learning about Ethiopia. This idea was developed into a novel with illustrations. To extend awareness of Ethiopian history and culture among English speaking children, she also intended to produce a factual book to complement this story, based on the project that the main character was working on and supplementing the existing non-fiction material in a different format. This was eventually resolved in the latest draft where the illustrations appear in a blog depicted as a student's project activity.

Within the story, *Back in Time*, there is a reference to oral storytelling and one example is given. This is the focus of the next chapter in the critical commentary. The chapter on oral storytelling describes how this activity still continues in Ethiopia, particularly among the less developed groups where the adult population have not accessed education but whose culture ensures that tales and proverbs are still passed on. Language, history, traditions and beliefs play a part in this phenomenon which barely exists in the developed world where publications and other media have replaced the storyteller. In writing this chapter the author began to identify the stories that were written down and published in books as well as some which were related to her by adults. Sources of tales from other parts of Africa and Asia provided some evidence of links and common themes making it difficult to accurately source many tales which are now in



print. The function of storytelling appears to be more than simply entertainment. Hamer identified the links between folktales and the local economy in the Sidama culture of Ethiopia<sup>15</sup> while the storytellers, or griots, in western Africa were expected to give advice on different issues.<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere in Africa: '[w]hether it is folktale, myth or fable, one is discussing strategies of remembering and recuperating viable values from the past in order to forge new relations between people in the present. Orality as a form of cultural memory is critical in restoring a sense of collective identity.'<sup>17</sup>

*The Storyteller* was written to provide a channel through which to share some of the tales from Ethiopia in a story for older children based in a western city such as London. It is set at a memorial service and employs the main characters to each tell their own stories and for each one to incorporate tales told to them by the character in the title. Although he is not present, his teachings and examples are intended to demonstrate the values of storytelling which appear to have been lost in the developed world.<sup>18</sup> The illustrations in this book are intended to separate the stories of the narrators from the tales they had been told. As the book is also aimed at readers over the age of ten, some might say that these illustrations are superfluous and could get in the way of a reader's imagination. However, it is also said that good illustration can: 'add to the reader's understanding, appreciation and enjoyment.'<sup>19</sup> This story is aimed at older children in the developed world including struggling young adult readers and those who have links with the Horn of Africa where part of the book is set. The issues it raises include gender and religion as well as trust and understanding people from different backgrounds. In both this story and *Back in Time*, getting the context right was vital since they include settings, issues and characters which the author did not experience from childhood.



Writing for children usually requires authors to create individuals whose lives differ from their own. Trying to recreate and remember life as it was at the age of the subjects is difficult enough when they live in a world that one is familiar with. When their characters live in, or visit, another period or country with alternative cultures and lifestyles, then that task is more complex. However, if the story is to be realistic and relevant to the lives of its readers, the author must be accurate in every respect. Melrose warned that: '[w]riting for children requires 'more' skill than writing for anyone else! & Master the craft of writing for children and you will write for anyone!'<sup>20</sup> Kroll also recognised the difficulties stating: '[c]hildren's and young adult literature is like an undeclared war zone.'<sup>21</sup> She cites the issues of literacy, technology, censorship and the gatekeepers who impact on writing for this market but accuracy is a paramount concern as it is for Michael Daniel Ambatchew who wrote:

Globalisation is leading to the hegemony of the North over the South in various spheres of life. In literature, writers from the North depict the South through their own norms and values without a thorough knowledge of the complex reality. This therefore, portrays Northerners' reality as the only reality in the world.<sup>22</sup>

In an effort to avoid such mistakes, the author requested regular support and criticism from Michael Daniel Ambatchew and others living in the country or familiar with the environment. Contextual issues include not only historical facts, but also gender awareness and cultural specifics. However there are some facts that are difficult to prove, such as identifying which specific oral tales emerged from different regions of Ethiopia. Also, with so many different cultures and different perspectives on history and religion, no one person could provide a definitive answer to some questions.

Many books written about Ethiopia and Ethiopians for the western audience, including the Ethiopian Diaspora, are produced by authors and illustrators whose experience of living in Ethiopia or even visiting the country appears to be short term. The chapter on the influences of illustration and the illustrators of Ethiopian children's literature focuses on the books that have been written for children living in Ethiopia with some reference to illustrators whose works are reproduced in books aimed at the Diaspora and western society. It goes back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when the earliest picture book<sup>23</sup> appeared through the missionary societies, and identifies later examples of illustrations in Ethiopian children's books, including work by contemporary illustrators.

To complement this chapter, the final piece of creative work is a picture book, *Ten Donkeys*,<sup>24</sup> aimed at the young Ethiopian audience. Recognising the gaps in the market and taking account of the culture and needs of pre-school children, the author has attempted to produce one book specifically for this group. It was important to avoid use of language and even numbers.<sup>25</sup> This was to ensure that it could be used in any part of the country, regardless of which of the eighty or more languages were spoken.<sup>26</sup>

One aim of this thesis was to identify and evaluate material that meets the needs of the diverse population of Ethiopian children living in Ethiopia or in the Diaspora. It explores the restrictions, particularly in terms of historical development and the present economy of the country, and identifies issues relating to context and the needs of Ethiopian children wherever they live, which determine what is appropriate illustrated literature for this diverse group.

To support this research, and display her potential creative writing skills and ability to produce illustrations, the author has produced three stories aimed at different

age groups and markets including children living in Ethiopia. Overcoming the language and other cultural issues was a consideration which the author faced and this factor determined which works would be suitable for the Diaspora, or a wider western audience, and what would be suitable for children born and living in Ethiopia to Ethiopian parents. A primary objective was to raise awareness of what part western authors and illustrators could play in the illustrated literature for Ethiopian children.

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<sup>1</sup> The author had worked in education since 1977, initially as a school teacher but later in adult and further education. She taught basic skills and other subjects including FE teacher training and eventually moved into quality assurance and became Chief Officer of the North Wales Open College Network. A year before going to Ethiopia she took a one year project management contract raising aspirations of young people who could attain higher education on the Reaching Higher Reaching Wider project.

<sup>2</sup> The author spent two years initially working as a VSO volunteer with the Ministry of Education in Addis Ababa from September 2004. During those years she was an advisor on the Continual Professional Development of teachers but also worked with the English Language Improvement Program, the Higher Education Strategy Center (American spelling is used in many titles and terms in this thesis) and the Civics and Ethical Education Department. She returned to work as a volunteer in this Civics and Ethical Education Department from June 2008 for one year helping to prepare for publication all the textbooks for students and teachers in Years 5 to 12. During the time she spent in Ethiopia she travelled across all the regions except Gambella to support the monitoring of teacher training and also visited many places for personal pleasure including the main tourist areas. She continues to visit the country and has maintained links with many of the work colleagues, people in the publishing industry and friends who she met there.

<sup>3</sup> See examples of notes and emails received in relation to this research in appendix 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ethiopian names comprise the given name followed by the father's name and sometimes the grandfather's name. This format will be used throughout the thesis and in the bibliography.

<sup>5</sup> See [http://www.hahubooks.co.uk/bukaya\\_E.html](http://www.hahubooks.co.uk/bukaya_E.html) 'HaHu Books' main project to date has been Bukaya, a magazine in Amharic for children and families.' It is produced in London by Hirit Belai and others to meet the needs of Ethiopian children in the Diaspora. Downloaded 5/11/2010

<sup>6</sup> See chapter 6.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.habtebooks.com/en/> Fitsame Teferra set up this publishing company and is an author of picture books.

<sup>8</sup> 2010 chart indicates that sub Saharan African countries do not show the progress to achieve universal primary education if prevailing trends exist. The Report also shows that gender disparity still exists in this part of the world. Source: [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2010/MDG\\_Report\\_2010\\_Progress\\_Chart\\_En.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2010/MDG_Report_2010_Progress_Chart_En.pdf) & <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG%20Report%202010%20En%20r15%20-low%20res%2020100615%20-.pdf> downloaded 1/11/2010

<sup>9</sup> From 2006 – 2011 Bookworld, a Shama Publishing subsidiary, had a large children's section with some Ethiopian books though the majority were imported. <http://shamaethiopia.com/bookaboutus.asp>. The other



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two shops which opened later each had a small section of children's books in local languages: Tigrinyan and Afan Oroma as well as Amharic.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/articles/2005/05/27/ethiopian\\_london\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/london/content/articles/2005/05/27/ethiopian_london_feature.shtml) In 2005 the BBC reported 'Today there are around 20,000 Ethiopian people living in the UK, with roughly 84% based in London' Downloaded 5/11/2010

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.enset.org/2006/10/what-is-size-of-ethiopian-population.html> 'According to the last US census in 2000, the estimated number of people in the US who were born in Ethiopia was 69,530. This figure does not include those persons who were born in the US.' Downloaded 5/11/2010

<sup>12</sup> Yenika-Agbaw, V. & Napoli, M. 'Domestic and International Multiculturalism: Children's Literature about Africans and African Americans' (2010) *Write 4 Children Vol 2 Issue 1*, <http://www.winchester.ac.uk/academicdepartments/EnglishCreativeWritingandAmericanStudies/publications/write4children/Documents/Dom%20and%20InterPrint.doc> Downloaded 4/11/2010

<sup>13</sup> Atkins, L. 'White Privilege and Children's Publishing : a Web 2.0 Case Study' (2009) *Write 4 Children Vol 1 Issue 2*, <http://www.winchester.ac.uk/academicdepartments/EnglishCreativeWritingandAmericanStudies/publications/write4children/Documents/White%20Privilege%20and%20Children's%20Publishing%20-%20Laura%20Atkins.doc> Downloaded 4/11/2010

<sup>14</sup> This undergraduate programme is delivered by Glyndwr University, in Wrexham. The author was a full-time student between 2006 and 2008 and obtained a diploma in 'Illustration for Children's Publishing.

<sup>15</sup> Hamer, J. 'Folktales as Ideology in the Production and Circulation of Wealth among the Sadama of Ethiopia' Bahru Zewde, Pankhurst, R. & Taddes Beyere (eds) (1994) *Proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ethiopian Studies Volume II*, Addis Ababa: IES p 135

<sup>16</sup> Hale, T.A. (2007) *Griots and Griottes*, Indiana: Indiana University Press p 18 & 317

<sup>17</sup> Bambe M.T. (2004) *African Storytelling Tradition and the Zimbabwean Novel in English*, South Africa: UNISA p7

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin, W. (1968 reprinted 2007) *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken Books In his paper entitled, 'The Storyteller', Benjamin, who died in 1940, identified how the 'art of storytelling is already coming to an end.' p83

<sup>19</sup> Salisbury, M. (2004) *Illustrating Children's Books – Creating Pictures for Publication*, London: A & C Black Publishers p94

<sup>20</sup> Melrose, A. (2001) *Storykeeping*, Cumbria: Paternoster Press p13. In this book Melrose outlines the importance of getting the context exactly right if the story is to be believed.

<sup>21</sup> Kroll, J. (2006) 'Writing for Children and Young Adults' in *Teaching Creative Writing*, (ed.) Harper, G. London: Continuum p47

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Daniel Ambatchew (2007) ‘Plausibility in Refugee Boy’ paper presented at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference Addis Ababa: The Institute of Language Studies: Addis Ababa University Michael was the winner of the II Chioistro di Toscana Fiction Writers’ Grant in 1996. He published over 30 stories in the Ethiopian Government’s high school English text books in the 1990’s and, while conducting his doctorate studies in the early 2000s, he identified a need for books at pre-school level.

As well as writing books for children he writes for different journals including Sankofa (Journal of African Children’s and Young Adult Literature) and was an advisor to Stories Across Africa Project. He has written a large number of books for children and has papers published in international journals. (Source Michael Daniel Ambatchew (2008) *A Dozen Contemporary Ethiopian Children’s Writers* Addis Ababa.

<sup>23</sup> The *Coloured Picture Bible for Abyssinian Children* was translated into Amharic by one of Emperor Theodros’s captives, the Reverend Martin Flad who had spent nearly sixty years living in Ethiopia. It was illustrated by Richard André (a pseudonym of English artist, William Roger Snow) and published by one of the missionary societies, The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, in 1886.

<sup>24</sup> *Ten Donkeys* is published by Shama Books. There is an explanation of the book in chapter 7.

<sup>25</sup> There are Amharic characters for numbers as well as text. Numbers were therefore left out to avoid confusion and also to allow the readers to first develop the concept of number before introducing either form of written number.

<sup>26</sup> There are over 85 languages spoken in Ethiopia. This information is widely available in student text books and relevant websites.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

The main methodology employed by the author was practice-as-research, a method used in recent years for performance based studies such as those highlighted by PARIP.<sup>1</sup> Biggs, in his paper for PARIP's 2003 conference, cites the UK Arts and Humanities Research Board's definitions of research, lists their three groups of characteristics and suggests that: '[m]ost humanities research offers interpretations rather than answers to problems.'<sup>2</sup> That certainly was the case in this study where the main question was whether anyone who was not born or raised in Ethiopia should write or illustrate a book for Ethiopian children. Biggs argued that the production of such artefacts is not enough because the importance of the research into this problem should also contribute: 'to the advancement of knowledge, understanding and insight.'<sup>3</sup>

When the author first started to write for this audience in 2005 she had neither developed the skills to write nor taken account of the full impact of context. Her first work was rejected by an Ethiopian publisher.<sup>4</sup> Her second attempt two years later led to a suggestion that it would be better to focus on subject matter which she was familiar with and write for an Ethiopian audience but tell it from a western perspective.<sup>5</sup> In spite of more than three years residency in Ethiopia the author is still daunted by the challenge of writing and illustrating for Ethiopian children, a concern shared by other foreign authors and illustrators of Ethiopian literature.<sup>6</sup> There was no issue about whether she could produce books for an Ethiopian audience but when the question asked here is, should



anyone write or illustrate a book for Ethiopian children, it raises a host of other issues relating to post colonial discourse, ethnography and other issues.

The first question one could ask is why write for this market? An acceptable answer could be to meet a growing demand and encourage wider readership which will pave the way for local writers and illustrators to earn a living from this profession. The study into the history of Ethiopian illustrated children's literature provided evidence of the dearth of material and the lack of Ethiopian writers and illustrators sufficiently skilled and able (both financially and physically) to meet this growing need.<sup>7</sup> There is no denying the talent and desire among Ethiopians, both in their own land and in the Diaspora, to fulfil this, yet relatively few can commit to such a mammoth task due to the economic restrictions and cultural restraints such as religion, language and other factors which vary across the regions of the country and throughout the Diaspora. Volunteers and those funded by charities or the sale of books to a wider audience can afford to produce publications, and even have them translated to local languages to meet some needs. In this respect the author was no exception. Her concern centred more on how such writers and artists can produce literature that is of a high standard and appropriate to that audience.

This unease is raised in essays by Maddy and MacCann who attempt: 'to call attention to the way many Western writers for children promote a damaged image of Africa and the African personality – an image that is not essentially different from the distorted picture presented by their journalistic colleagues.'<sup>8</sup> They suggest that: '[to] move into a post-colonial era, concepts such as power-sharing, coexisting cultures, and mutual respect must find their way into the fictions that appropriate Africa as their

setting.’<sup>9</sup> The author has attempted to include such ideas in the three stories. For example, the narrator of *Back in Time* is the ‘conscience’ of a white child who had, in an earlier existence, been the ‘conscience’ of a young Ethiopian prince. The setting is Ethiopia, past and present, but viewed through western eyes. In *The Storyteller* all characters are of African origin living in western society and exploring the culture and history of Ethiopia from which lessons could be learned. The illustrations in the picture story, *Ten Donkeys*, are taken from current observations of life in rural Ethiopia, respectfully showing a contemporary society relying on hard work, mutual support and family values. Would this be sufficient to satisfy the critics who rightly have concerns about the value and appropriateness of materials entering the African market? The likelihood that, in spite of thorough research, feedback and reflection, these publications would still be viewed as a post-colonial discourse is as strong as ever.

### **Post-colonial Discourse**

Post-colonialism is an issue in spite of the fact that Ethiopia is the only African nation that has never been colonised.<sup>10</sup> However, Ethiopia does share many characteristics with other colonised countries including strong reliance on western nations for development support which includes education and learning resources. The reign of Haile Selassie I was interrupted by the invasion of Italian forces in 1935 and their subsequent control of much of the country until 1941.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile the Emperor resided in Bath, England, and was supported by the British forces in the battle to regain control of Ethiopia. This possibly accounts for the strong links between these nations and the adoption of English as the language of learning which is still used in secondary schools and higher education



institutions. Yet an Anglo-Ethiopian agreement in 1942: ‘acknowledged Ethiopia to be “a free and independent state”, but reserved many British privileges and deferred territorial issues.’<sup>12</sup>

In the field of post-colonial arts and literature, some of the illustrators and writers who have gained international endorsement, such as Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong’o,<sup>13</sup> have lived, studied and produced literature in their later lives outside the country of their birth, yet they retain the culture from their roots.<sup>14</sup> There are others, like the author, who moved to new places, settled for a while, learnt about this different environment and its people which did not share the same culture and wrote stories about them. Michael Morpurgo is one such children’s writer who happily admits to this in his autobiographical book *Singing for Mrs Pettigrew - A Story-maker’s Journey*.<sup>15</sup>

When writing about another culture, language is one trait which can expose the author’s limited knowledge and understanding of a place, particularly in other countries including those colonised by Britain. Ngugi describes the use of English in Africa as: ‘a “cultural bomb” which aids not only in the blotting out of traditional customs, language, and history but also functions in the service of neo-colonialism...’<sup>16</sup> Many African countries have more than one written language and Gérard noted that: ‘the first half of the nineteenth century was the period when the verbal art of Black Africa began to develop a written form alongside oral output.’<sup>17</sup> In the same paper he commented on Europe’s contribution, first through ‘colonial imperialism’ which put an end to this phase, and the: ‘introduction of the alphabet.’<sup>18</sup>

Language issues can be partly overcome if access to translation facilities is available. In writing for children in Ethiopia, providing a version in Amharic<sup>19</sup> (or

Tigrinyan or any of the other major Ethiopian languages) might enable wider readership, yet the difficulties faced in trying to create believable characters and situations can still elude a writer who is not immersed in that culture, regardless of whether they live or were born in the same country.

How objective should a writer be? George Orwell noted: ‘that what one sees in the colonial world depends on the circumstances which allow one to be in the position of observer.’<sup>20</sup> Writers like Jane Kurtz, who spent her childhood in Ethiopia, no doubt have a different perspective to those whose first experience of the country is as an adult with a specific role such as the author, Elizabeth Laird, and illustrator, Eric Robson, who bring not only preconceptions based on received information about the place they are visiting, but also comparisons with their home and other places they have visited. Spurr wrote: ‘[t]he hiatus of perception is literally a matter of interest; one sees what it profits one to see, what one has a share or stake in, a claim upon.’<sup>21</sup>

Living in Addis Ababa and travelling around the country as an employee, as well as a tourist, particularly during periods of unrest when it was possible to have a glimpse behind the façade, helped the author to better understand the people but this was no substitute for being brought up in the language, and learning the other cultural traits of a place. Consequently, in drawing Ethiopian characters and putting them into a context which is still alien to her own life, the author accepts that she risks ‘negrophobia’ recognising that: ‘African ethics, norms, and behavioral patterns have been misused and misunderstood by Westerners – by observers who have never tried to comprehend the meaning of religious community, and domestic life practices.’<sup>22</sup> There is a danger of portraying the country and its peoples as: ‘less developed’<sup>23</sup> or describing it through what

might be seen as superior Western eyes.<sup>24</sup> It is difficult to portray Africans, or people of any race or culture which is different to that of the author, and describe their various characteristics and personalities as naturally as possible but with humility while avoiding being patronizing. It is another problem for which there is no easy answer yet many great children's writers such as Michael Morpurgo<sup>25</sup> may appear to have mastered the skill of writing about people from other countries or different races within our own country. An honest evaluation of such literature, however, must take account of feedback from those readers who come from the country or culture being depicted. There is scope for further research to be undertaken in this area of writing for diverse cultures.

Sprinkling in a few Amharic phrases was not a solution as Michael Daniel Ambatchew, one of a number of Ethiopians who read through the story texts and provided feedback, suggested in this comment on one draft of *Back in Time*: 'You really have to think about which language people are speaking with to each other; just adding a word like *behuala* sounds wrong. This is a big area you have to think about throughout the novel. No easy answers.'<sup>26</sup> In a face to face discussion Michael Daniel Ambatchew reassured the author and explained that Ethiopian illustrators have also misrepresented a different culture in their own country.<sup>27</sup> It would appear that, as long as writers and artists from other cultures do their research thoroughly, their work should be acceptable.

Could another solution to the problem of authenticity involve the use of local folk tales and myths? This was to be the focus of *The Storyteller* but it proved to have weaknesses. Michael Daniel Ambatchew's comments included this one. 'It felt like a contrived collection of stories whose relationship to one another and authenticity did not quite ring true. Moreover, most of them are the bare bones of the stories rather than the



fleshy and juicy elaboration story-tellers usually add to them.’<sup>28</sup> Reproducing authentic African folk tales in a new and exciting style for a different audience remains a challenge to those brought up in a different culture. Yulisa Amadu Maddy, a Sierra Leonian writer, raised awareness of the dangers of creating stereotypes of Africa and Africans and voiced his concerns about using folk tales.<sup>29</sup> But he also identified good practice including Frank P.Arauja’s *The Perfect Orange* which introduces: ‘the reader to that very special outgoing kindness of the African spirit: the spirit of giving.’<sup>30</sup>

### **Ethnography**

The author gathered information from Ethiopia through document research and by listening to people, questioning them and observing different aspects of their life. She was undertaking ethnographic research despite having no specific training in ethnography. Sangasubana identified the characteristics of ethnography as having: ‘certain distinctive characteristics... First it is conducted on-site or in a naturalistic setting in which real people live. Second, it is personalized since you as the researcher are both observer and participant in the lives of those people.’<sup>31</sup> Living and working among Ethiopians for almost three years including one year of more in-depth research, the author was able to collect data in a variety of ways, discuss the findings with local people and get feedback on the creative and critical writing from some of them. She was able to observe changes in availability of children’s literature over a period of nearly seven years and accessed a wider group of experts in the field. As well as simply observing life and keeping records (photographs, sketches, notes etc.), and doing archival research of materials located in Ethiopia, the author also carried out interviews and gathered oral

history. Between 2008 and 2009 interviews took place with the following writers for children: Michael Daniel Ambatchew, Tesfaye Gebre Mariam, Alula Pankhurst, Yohannes Gebregiorgis, Meron Feleke and Fikirte Addis; artists: Mulugeta Gebre Kidan, Atlabatchew Reda, Fikru Gebremariam, Yihenew Worku, Mihret Dawit, Zenah Asfaw, Assefa Gebre Kidan, Yodit Wolde Mariam, Abiyalew Assefa; publishers; Fitsame Teferra (Habte Books), Hishe Hailu (Kuraz International Publishers), and others with an interest in children's literature: Hirit Belai (HaHuBooks), Merga Yonas (The Reporter), Solomon Nigussie (student), Girma Alamayehu (Head of Civics and Ethical Education). The author also corresponded by email or telephone with non-Ethiopian writers and illustrators including: Jane Kurtz, Elizabeth Laird, Eric Robson, Frances Somers-Cocks and Martha Hardy. In 2011 the following writers, publishers and illustrators were interviewed: Mary Jaffer, Gassan Bagersh, Senayit Worku Mamo and John Kilaka. Some were interviewed on more than one occasion and the views of a number of other Ethiopians were taken into account. Examples of their correspondence and other notes are included in appendix 1.

### Oral History and Interviews

Both stories (*Back in Time* and *The Storyteller*) include historical information. In describing these events there was a dilemma in deciding which sources to choose in order to avoid errors, insinuation and patronisation. Each author or editor of history interprets primary and secondary evidence, analysing it and making judgements and conclusions which are no doubt influenced by their own knowledge, culture and position. The British expedition to free the prisoners of Theodros II, featured in *Back in Time*, has been well

documented but the sources used were all written in English.<sup>32</sup> When carrying out the research into this period the author made decisions about what to include and dismiss and how to make the selection palatable to the intended readers.<sup>33</sup>

The choice of what to include is essentially an interpretation of history perceived by white visitors or settlers in Ethiopia.<sup>34</sup> Even the rituals of storytelling, taken to be an aspect of life in Ethiopia in the past, may not have existed in the actual location and timescale described in *The Storyteller*.<sup>35</sup> To verify some of these issues the author tried to gather evidence from Ethiopians and people who had close links with that country. She spoke to students in Addis Ababa and colleagues working in the field of education, as well as to publishers, authors and illustrators. Contact with some of these individuals continued through email when she left the country.

When it comes to more recent history, such as the period of military government also referred to in *Back in Time*, oral and written sources are widely available in Ethiopia. Yet there are differences of opinion, particularly between the generations who witnessed and lived through the period as adults and those who were born during those times.<sup>36</sup> Among the positive points of gathering oral history one is the value of identifying what events meant to those involved in them, and yet, on the contrary, they can prove false, partly because people only remember what they want to remember and also because the interviewer can misinterpret their views.<sup>37</sup>

Oral tradition is associated with the telling of stories, tales and proverbs passed on orally through generations (as referred to in *The Storyteller*) although, with communication extending across regions and countries through trade, technology and travel, attributing stories to specific regions and groups can be problematic and, for this



reason, most of the stories listed in appendix 2 are not sub-classified although those selected for the website [www.ethiopianfolktales.com](http://www.ethiopianfolktales.com) are grouped according to regions. Nevertheless, some claim it is possible to identify the differences in the: ‘diverse storytelling traditions of regions such as Afar, Gambella, Oromiya, and Tigray.’<sup>38</sup>

Oral history according to UNESCO: ‘is a record of an event (an interview, a story-telling, the recitation of an epic poem, etc.) that took place in the recent past, not a surviving relic of that more distant past of which the narrator speaks ... a detached and academic process of inquiry into the memories of people who have experienced the recent past directly.’<sup>39</sup> Life under the three governments<sup>40</sup> falls into the experiences of many adults in Ethiopia. Although no formal interview techniques were used, over the period of seven years of living in and visiting the country the author was able to have conversations with different work colleagues and friends which influenced her own views of the country’s history. Having been involved in the publication of materials for teaching civics and ethical education for a year, the opportunities to discuss the past frequently emerged. Discussions on the military regime raised angry emotions, particularly among the generation who had been university students at the time of the Red Terror,<sup>41</sup> yet many acknowledged the problems which emerged in Haile Selassie’s reign. However, there was still a danger of assuming who supported a particular government and who was against it on the basis of their social situation and education. Thus, in writing both stories, the author took care to avoid trying to be rigidly accurate about the political past.

When it came to social conditions, the experiences shared by these colleagues proved useful though not comprehensive. Those interviewed generally lived in urban

areas yet they had come from different economic backgrounds. It was a common language, English, that acted as the main denominator thus restricting access to those who had completed secondary education. Gaps in knowledge therefore remain. If the author had the ability and opportunity to converse with people from a wider educational and social background, maybe the writing could have had broader acceptance and impact. This raises another issue that arises when working across a communication divide.

### The Issue of Ethics

In describing the main character in *The Storyteller*, there was no specific person who influenced the author, rather elements taken from different people she had met or seen. The characters in *Back in Time* were easier to visualize since they were based on real people who she lived and worked with, professional families who had aspirations and education. Gathering information from others raises the issue of ethics. In many cases the author explained that the purpose was to satisfy the need for authentic evidence for this thesis, particularly when gathering stories and questioning about the past. With the exception of the stories recorded, which are attributed to the sources, and specific interviews with artists and writers, the method used to gather information was simply by listening and memorizing the main facts then making notes after the event. When the discussions contributed towards the development of a character or story-line, such as Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Addis Ababa<sup>42</sup> in *Back in Time*, there was no written or even spoken acknowledgement. Kvale<sup>43</sup> poses a number of questions relating to the ethics of questioning and, in response to issues such as confidentiality and the consequences of the study for the participating subjects, the author's justification was that the characters in the stories were largely fictional and could not be identified as people even though the



situations were often very real and the historical characters depicted were based on research findings.

When asking questions of illustrators and writers for the theoretical sections of the paper, the same questions were asked of each and concerned the sources of inspiration to take up illustration, the education and training received, influences on their work and examples of published work. All were acknowledged in the references and, although contributors did not give formal consent,<sup>44</sup> they were aware of the author's intentions to publish the findings. In publishing this thesis the consequences for contributors will be negligible, any criticism being supported and explained. On the contrary, in raising awareness of the existence and quality of certain individuals and their work, the outcomes could be regarded as positive. One issue that had to be taken into consideration with the interview questions was the language. All questions and answers were in English which was the second (and possibly third) language of the majority of those interviewed. This sometimes required probing questions to generate responses and, in some cases, the interviewer was unable to gain the required information. Opportunism enabled the author to gather further information from unplanned sources, for example when attending a meeting of publishers with a representative from the Ministry of Education.<sup>45</sup> Use of email and telephone conversations enabled the author to gain first hand information from sources she could not meet in person and to verify facts following discussions. Feedback on the stories was provided in this format from colleagues and publishers<sup>46</sup> whose views and recommendations are taken account of in the editing and amendments which are ongoing.

Another source of information was through observation and capturing images in sketches, photographs and videos. The question of ethics arises again in this process. Whilst there are restrictions relating to taking photographs and film of children in the U.K., the current situation in Ethiopia is not controlled and, in some places where families expect payment by tourists for such images, it is actually encouraged.<sup>47</sup> Although photographic images of people were not included in this thesis, the issue of gaining permission and copyright for publications is contentious and is likely to be influenced by western legislature<sup>48</sup> and individuals' increased awareness of their rights.

The main reasons for gathering this type of information was to understand and relate to how people live and behave in their everyday lives. Viewing another culture as a tourist restricts one's access to real life situations. Living among a people of different cultures enables greater opportunity to witness and share in many cultural and daily activities. One example is the Ethiopian coffee ceremony<sup>49</sup> which the author first encountered in a hotel performed for the benefit of international guests. Later experiences of this cultural ritual provided evidence of its common application and format in the homes of many Ethiopian families and also in the work place and restaurants.

Gathering evidence by photographs enabled the author to have a resource which could be referred to at any time, was specific to different groups, individuals and their situations or actions (unlike photographs in books or on the internet) and provided a much more realistic picture of their culture. To achieve this, the camera was sometimes given to Ethiopians to take photographs which they found interesting, or images were taken from vehicles or other obscured viewpoints. If such material was then used without

asking permission there could have been an ethical issue but, in this case, it was used as reference material. Pink<sup>50</sup> has identified and described the value of using visual resources for ethnographic research and the experience of using it in this project was important. Consideration of what to use and include within the stories as well as the supporting papers had to take account of its value and factual correctness as well as preserving the dignity of the people that were involved. This required a process of reflection which will continue well beyond the publication of this thesis. Redrafting, rewriting and reviewing creative work on the basis of self evaluation and external feedback is a necessary process until it is either published or put aside.

### **Reflexivity**

One concern identified when writing the stories was the use of tales and proverbs identified in other published sources. The rewriting of such literature is not a plagiarism issue, yet, retaining the same message and voice with the appropriate element of performance without reproducing a tale word for word, proved difficult in *The Storyteller*. If a story is not taken direct from its source is it eligible? Finnegan wrote:

[i]t is true that many collections of African stories give the impression of fixity just because they have been written down and printed. But in fact, in most African cases that have been fully examined, this variability of tales according to the teller and the occasion is one of their most apparent characteristics. There is no one *correct* version or form.<sup>51</sup>

This on-going reflection on the content and style was important to achieve a piece of writing (or illustration) that was authentic, relevant to the audience and acceptable to those whose culture is described or spoken. To enable this reflection, discussion and debate with other writers, illustrators and those with a personal knowledge and awareness



of the context was important and led to reconsideration and the task of rewriting the texts of both the creative and the critical pieces as well as redrafting the illustrations. In spite of thorough primary and secondary research and the experience gained from living in Ethiopia, the author felt more rigour was necessary to ensure professionalism.

She relied on a number of sources of individual and group feedback including academic support in the university, writers' critique groups and email responses to the papers, illustrations and stories submitted within this thesis. She also checked many of the facts by gaining first-hand experience, visiting sites, meeting people and taking photographs, videos and notes for reference; and through documentary evidence from written and electronic sources gathered to verify most of the facts and opinions presented. One example of this was the research into Theodros which began in 2008 when reading Marsden's newly published *The Barefoot Emperor*.<sup>52</sup> *Back in Time* was at that time in its early draft stages but, with the discovery of this historic and well loved character, it took a detour. There followed deeper research into Theodros II through history books, on the internet and through discussions with Ethiopian historians and students. Although most documents were written in English by non Ethiopians, the author wanted to be more sympathetic to this character held in esteem by many past and contemporary Ethiopians as witnessed by books and artwork relating to him.<sup>53</sup>

The need for reflection, particularly with the stories, will continue in order to reach the standards required for publication. Although some of the papers have been distributed to journals and presented at conferences,<sup>54</sup> they need further work to ensure wider access. Two stories have been circulated to publishers and agents<sup>55</sup> but further work is necessary to meet the relevant markets' needs including amending *The Storyteller*

which was written as a short novel to meet the requirements of this submission. The processes and skills gained through this study have had a more wide reaching impact in preparing the author to write for cultural diverse groups in Britain.

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<sup>1</sup> PARIP — Practice as Research in Performance — was a five-year project directed by Professor Baz Kershaw and the Department of Drama: Theatre, Film, Television at the University of Bristol. Its 'objectives were to investigate creative-academic issues raised by practice as research, where performance is defined[...] as performance media: theatre, dance, film, video and television. As a result of PARIP's investigations and in collaboration with colleagues, educational institutions and professional bodies throughout the UK and Europe PARIP aimed to develop national frameworks for the encouragement of the highest standards in representing practical-creative research within academic contexts. Sources: <http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip/>, downloaded on 1/7/2011 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Practice\\_research](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Practice_research), downloaded on 8/2/2011

<sup>2</sup> Biggs, M. (2003) 'The rôle of 'the work' in art and design research' presented to 2003 PARIP National Conference Source <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/parip/biggs.htm>, downloaded on 8/2/2011 He listed these three characteristics from the AHRB's definition of research: 'it must define a series of research questions that will be addressed or problems that will be explored in the course of the research. It must also define its objectives in terms of answering those questions or reporting on the results of the research project; it must specify a research context for the questions to be addressed or problems to be explored. You must specify why it is important that these particular questions should be answered or problems explored; what other research is being or has been conducted in this area; and what particular contribution this particular project will make to the advancement of knowledge, understanding and insights in this area[; and] it must specify the research methods for addressing and answering the research questions. You must state how, in the course of the research project, you are going to set about answering the questions that have been set, or exploring the matters to be explored. You should also explain the rationale for your chosen research methods and why you think they provide the most appropriate means by which to answer the research questions.'

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Feedback from Gassan Bagersh, Managing Director of Shama Publishing in June 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Feedback from Michael Daniel Ambatchew in September 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Revealed in a discussion with Elizabeth Laird and through email correspondence with Eric Robson in Dec 2010.

<sup>7</sup> This will be referred to in the next chapter on the History of Ethiopian Illustrated Children's Literature.

<sup>8</sup> Maddy, Y.A. & MacCann, D. (1996) *African Images in Juvenile Literature – Commentaries on Neocolonialist Fiction*, Jefferson: McFarland & Co. Inc., p4.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid p13.

<sup>10</sup> Punter D. (2000) *Postcolonial Imaginings Fictions of a New World Order*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, wrote 'The whole of Africa, with the single exception of Abyssinia, was under European rule.' p1.



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<sup>11</sup> This period is described in Henze, P. (2004) *Layers of Time – A History of Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa: Shama Books, pp 216 – 237

<sup>12</sup> Ibid p 235.

<sup>13</sup> Although both authors were brought up in their home countries of Nigeria and Kenya where they studied and worked, political situations resulted in them later living elsewhere. ‘... in 1970 Nigerian government again took the region and Achebe got involved with prevailing political parties. Soon Achebe was frustrated by elitism and corruption and resigned from politics. Achebe lived for several years in United States during the decade of 70,s. In 1990 Chinua Achebe again came to live in U.S after a major car accident which made him partially disabled.’ Source <http://chinuaachebe.net/>, downloaded on 22/2/2011. ‘While Ngugi was in Britain for the launch and promotion of *Devil on the Cross*, he learned about the Moi regime’s plot to eliminate him on his return, or as coded, give a red carpet welcome on arrival at Jomo Kenyatta Airport. This forced him into exile, first in Britain (1982 –1989), and then the U.S. after (1989-2002), during which time, the Moi dictatorship hounded him trying, unsuccessfully, to get him expelled from London and from other countries he visited.’ <http://www.ngugiwathiongo.com/bio/bio-home.htm>., downloaded on 22/2/2011

<sup>14</sup> Ross, R.L. (1999) *Colonial and Postcolonial Fiction*, New York: Garland Publishing Inc.

<sup>15</sup> Morpurgo M. (2006) *Singing for Mrs Pettigrew A Story-maker’s Journey* London: Walker Books Ltd ‘...by the time I set pen to paper, I feel I am living inside that story. I must know the places; I must know the people.’ p27.

<sup>16</sup> Ross (1999) op cit pviii.

<sup>17</sup> Gérard, A. (1990) *Contexts of African Literature*, Amsterdam – Atlanta: Rodopi, p137.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid p137 - 9.

<sup>19</sup> This language uses Fidel – based on the traditional Ge’ez alphabet form.

<sup>20</sup> Spurr, D. (2004) *The Rhetoric of Empire - Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration*, Durham: Duke University Press, p191, referring to Orwell’s 1936 essay, *Shooting an Elephant* First published: *New Writing*,.GB, London. autumn 1936.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid p192. He also acknowledged Ethiopia’s legacy in creative writing: ‘While the written art was thus being securely established in Ethiopia, a second wave of literacy swept over vast areas of Sub-Saharan Africa with the Muslim conquest during the first few centuries after *hijra*.’ p48.

<sup>22</sup> Maddy, Y.A. & MacCann, D. op.cit. describe a character in Nancy Farmer’s book *Do You Know Me?*, ‘he is seen to have little capacity to deal with abstractations, to compare, analyze, predict, hypothesize, infer, deduce, or reason beyond what the concrete conditions of the moment suggest to him. This is one of many signs of Negrophobia in this text’ p64.

<sup>23</sup> Spurr, D. op cit p157.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. What we think we see may not be the full picture or may be misinterpreted by western eyes which have a ‘commanding view’. p15. The writer literally sees the landscape of the non-Western world in terms either of the promise for westernized development or of the disappointment of that promise.’ p19.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Morpurgo’s *The Kites are Flying* (Walker Books: London 2009) portrays children in Palestine and Israel through the eyes of a journalist. Morpurgo discussed this and his other works in the Richard Dimpleby Lecture on 15/2/2011, [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00ymf57](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00ymf57)., downloaded 13/7/2011.

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<sup>26</sup> Email received from Michael Daniel Ambatchew in June 2010 stated: You have a really winner in this one. Congratulations! Obviously, there is room for improvement and I have some comments; I'd like to see better descriptions of the principal characters so I can visualize them, but the main comments are about plausibility (see appendix 1)

Martha Hardy (children's book illustrator) included these comments: Great chapter length!

I am a little anxious about the interest in the queen....though it's a great and useful link...but would she really be that interested? It concerns me that I forget that she is interested in that....

Am anxious about making more comments as each time I think of something it gets sorted in the next chapter!

So far I would say it's a great page turner, the narrator needs something but think that's about to happen? Still a little unsure about the queen interest but she is so useful for the plot and doesn't seem contrived I'm just not certain. But it's taught me loads and apart from some of the earlier conversations between Teddy and Vicky over the 'phone' I haven't noticed I was learning, if you know what I mean! I like the characters too. Sorry this isn't much and the notes are so unsure, basically I like it so I am not sure I can suggest improvements but know that just saying its great isn't that much help!

Feel free to send me more anytime (asap - I want to know what happens)!

p.s looking forward to seeing pics - I think black and white line would be lovely but I also want to see eg her travel documents, the books they have been looking at, the photos etc. Like the scrapbook travel diary idea. I am keen on that!

<sup>27</sup> The author met Michael Daniel Amatchew in May 2011 and discussed issues relating to this thesis.

<sup>28</sup> Email received from Michael Daniel Ambatchew in June 2010 regarding *The Storyteller* about which he wrote: 'I'm afraid this didn't quite work for me. It felt like a contrived collection of stories whose relationship to one another and authenticity did quite ring true. Moreover, most of them are the bare bones of the stories rather than the fleshy and juicy elaboration story-tellers usually add to them

<sup>29</sup> Maddy, Y.A. & MacCann, D. op.cit. 'The issue of modern urban culture as a source of generating new tales as well as modernizing old ones has become the subject of folklore studies all over the world.' p131.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid p133. 'For the very youngest child, Wendy Harmann's wildlife counting book, *One Sun Rises* (illustrated by Nicolass Martitz; Dutton, 1994), and Ifeoma Ohyefulu's "*A" is for Africa* (Cobblehill Books, 1993) complement each other in a unique fashion.' p130.

<sup>31</sup> Sangasubana, N. (2011) 'How to Conduct Ethnographic Research', *The Qualitative Report* Vol 16 Number [www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR16-2/sangasubananat.pdf](http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR16-2/sangasubananat.pdf) ., last accessed 28/7/2011, p567. Sangasubana was referring to the work of Angrosino, M. (2007) *Doing ethnographic and observational research* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

<sup>32</sup> Henze, Stanley, Pankhurst, Marsden etc

<sup>33</sup> An early version of Chapter Three, *Back in Time* (September 2008) reads: 'It was here that archaeologists discovered the remains of early humans. Ethiopia was known as the 'cradle of civilisation'.' he told her. As Solomon pointed the mobile phone camera at the picture he took Vicky on a voyage of discovery, travelling back through space and time to see where Lucy, the earliest human, had been discovered. 'She was tiny and wore no clothes as she hunted for food with her family. The land was covered in plants and wild animals which also searched for food and shelter.' he explained. By October 2010 this was reduced to: "Here is where early humans were discovered. Their bones were found by archaeologists. Ethiopia was known as the 'cradle of civilisation'." he told her slowly, trying to use correct English. As Teddy pointed the mobile phone camera at the picture he took Vicky on a voyage of discovery, travelling back through space and time to see where Lucy, the earliest human, had been discovered. "She was little -she wore no clothes - she hunted for food with her family. The land was covered in plants and wild animals." he explained.



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<sup>34</sup> Maddy, Y.A. & MacCann, D. op.cit described the dangers of distorting history in their analysis of *The Year of the Leopard Song* (1992) by Eric Campbell, p20.

<sup>35</sup> Spurr, D. op cit raised the question of what is authentic, p 49.

<sup>36</sup> The author visited the museum dedicated to the 'Terror' in Addis Ababa in 2010 and discussed the period of military government (1975 – 1991) with Ethiopian colleagues and friends of different ages whose perspectives differed greatly.

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.sriettc.org/tah/Summer\\_Institute\\_Documents/Summer\\_Institute\\_2009/LessonPlans/Remembering%20Slavery\\_Revised%203-19-09.pdf](http://www.sriettc.org/tah/Summer_Institute_Documents/Summer_Institute_2009/LessonPlans/Remembering%20Slavery_Revised%203-19-09.pdf), downloaded on 13/12/2010. This document identifies the pros and cons oral history as in the interviewing of ex slaves in the US in 1930s.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Daniel Ambatchew (2002) 'From Oral Artifact to Written Literature: Reinventing Ethiopian Folktales' *Sankofa – a Journal of African Children's and Young Adult Literature* Baltimore: Sankofa, p10.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/webworld/ramp/html/r9006e/r9006e0k.htm>., downloaded on 13/12/2010.

<sup>40</sup> The Imperial period ended in 1974 with the imprisonment, and subsequent death of Haile Selassie I, followed by the military regime and the current federal democratic republic, the FDRE.

<sup>41</sup> The Red Terror, a campaign to eradicate Mengistu's opponents, is remembered in a museum situated in Meskel Square, Addis Ababa. The term was used by many people the author interviewed and appears in literature including this quote from Meredith, P. (2006) *The States of Africa* London: The Free Press: 'Mengistu next turned ruthlessly against his civilian opponents, embarking on what he referred to as a campaign of 'red terror', licensing civilian groups – the lumpen-proletariat of the slums – to act on his behalf.' p246

<sup>42</sup> This discussion led to a misinterpretation of events which was only resolved after two years when the author unearthed conflicting information which needed to be verified.

<sup>43</sup> Kvale, S. (1996) *Interviews An Introduction to Qualitative Research Writing* London: Sage Publications p119-120

<sup>44</sup> The author did not request signed permission to use stories, information or illustrations.

<sup>45</sup> The author was able to meet publishers and illustrators of school text books during her work with the MOE Civics and Ethical Education Department in 2008-2009

<sup>46</sup> The scripts of the two short novels were sent to Michael Daniel Ambatchew, Martha Hardy and Hirit Belai who each gave comprehensive feedback which was used to amend the stories. The story *Back in Time* was sent to a number of publishers including those who specialise in books for reluctant readers such as Ransom Publishing and Badger Publishing. It was also entered for competitions, including Chicken House 2010, and sent to agents. The author has established links with two publishing houses in Ethiopia: Shama Books is publishing *Ten Donkeys*, and Habte Books, has published *Amen at Home*, and both are discussing further contracts.

<sup>47</sup> In the South Omo Valley an agreed payment of 1Birr was made for each photograph to the various individuals in 2005. Other photographs and video clips used as resources for illustrations were taken by the author without payment and sometimes without permission.

<sup>48</sup> Particularly with external sources of loans such as World Bank Funding for children's book publications.

<sup>49</sup> The coffee ceremony is performed by women in many households across many different regions although it is not a universal practice in Ethiopia.



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<sup>50</sup> Pink, S. (2007 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) *Doing Visual Ethnography*, London: Sage.

<sup>51</sup> Finnegan, R. (1976) *Oral Literature in Africa*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, p329.

<sup>52</sup> Marsden, P. (2008) *The Barefoot Emperor: An Ethiopian Tragedy*, London: Harper Collins.

<sup>53</sup> The author has illustrated a bilingual storybook about Tewodros written by Hirit Belai.

<sup>54</sup> The history paper was presented to the International Ethiopian Conference, Addis Ababa (2009), the Anglo Ethiopian Society Conference, London (2010) and edited for the Sankofa journal (2011). The paper on storytelling was presented to the International Creative Writing Conference, London (2011).

<sup>55</sup> *Ten Donkeys* has been accepted by Shama Books Publishers.

## Chapter 3

### A Brief History of Illustrated Children's Literature for Ethiopian Children

#### Introduction

In Ethiopia, the earliest examples of illustrated books produced for children go back over one hundred years but the proliferation has not been as rapid as in other parts of the world. This study focuses on the relatively short history and background to the limited production of illustrated books for Ethiopian children.

The methodology has included gathering oral responses from people of different ages talking about their earliest memories of illustrated books and the stories that they heard as children. Although Ethiopia does not have a vast range of printed children's books, its oral storytelling tradition is huge and diverse across the different nations, nationalities and peoples. Some of these stories have now been put in print, sometimes produced for an audience outside Ethiopia. There have been a number of books and articles written specifically on children's literature in Ethiopia which have also been used, as well as a variety of actual Ethiopian children's books dating back to 1946. Early literature included Yaned Gebremichael's *Sile Insesat Agelgiot Lehisana Bereket*, Kebede Michael's stories<sup>1</sup> and *Afincho* (meaning with a big nose), the first illustrated Amharic translation of *Pinocchio*.

This chapter will trace the history and the impact of children's illustrated literature on Ethiopian children. It will describe the current situation and, hopefully, indicate the future potential. The development from the oral storytelling traditions that still survive today to the access to printed materials from other countries is explored along with the introduction of illustrated literature for school children's texts. Currently there is a growing number of authors and illustrators from Ethiopia and elsewhere producing illustrated children's literature in a range of Ethiopian languages, as well as English, specifically for Ethiopian children both here and in the Diaspora.

## **The history of children's illustrated literature outside Ethiopia**

In Britain there is a history of children's publishing dating back to before the eighteenth century. The proliferation of books and other reading materials produced for children, however, did not happen until the last century. The earliest books for children were designed to inform, such as texts to teach them spelling. Children first learnt to read by studying their alphabet and the more affluent would have owned a 'hornbook' which was a printed board with the alphabet and part of the bible displayed. This appears little different to the way that Amharic speaking Ethiopians were taught their own alphabet up to relatively recent times.<sup>2</sup> The early religious tracts which appeared on both sides of the Atlantic from 17<sup>th</sup> Century aimed to teach the young to read at the same time as instructing them on the consequences of sin. In Ethiopia, where the Ethiopian Christian Orthodox and Muslim faiths have a strong following, there has been a link between literature and religion and church schools continue to play an important role in teaching children of some families to read.

There was a marked increase in Britain's population during the Industrial Revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The market for literature grew as schools developed to teach not only the affluent but also the labourers' children the basics of reading and writing resulting in literacy levels across the country rising during this same period. At the same time more families could afford to purchase reading material. Chapbooks were booklets distributed by peddlers in Britain between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century, published for all ages they included different genres including the popular folk tales. Publishing for children gained importance, particularly through entrepreneurs such as John Newbery who, during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, recognised the need to invest in this market.<sup>3</sup>

Illustrating books was considered when the authors identified that: '[c]hildren (even from their Infancy almost) are delighted with Pictures, and willingly please their eyes with



these sights.’ as Comenius, a seventeenth century German wrote.<sup>4</sup> The idea that children should enjoy their early years was beginning to be understood by others who recognised how important it was. Educationalists, such as John Locke and William Petty, identified the need for learning to be made more interesting and for books to be pleasurable. ‘The quality of illustration was poor, but the chapbook did provide them with illustrations which, although crude by modern standards, were graphic and boldly drawn...’<sup>5</sup> The development of reading material for children in Ethiopia also appears to have followed this progression at a later time.

As well as religious texts, early subject matter included writings on appropriate behaviour and fables. The subject matter then became more varied with popular classics such as stories by authors including Daniel Defoe, nursery rhymes, which originated from many sources including the barracks and were often crude and cruel, as well as the fables and fairy tales from across the world which were translated and illustrated. Norton describes how, through ‘migration, trade, and warfare’ oral traditions of the different cultures influenced each other from the earliest times.<sup>6</sup> While such traditions have almost disappeared from the so-called ‘developed world’, there is still a culture of oral storytelling in other countries such as Ethiopia. Many of these fables include a moral message, thus providing education as well as enjoyment. The published children’s literature which began emerge in Ethiopia in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was often based on the oral tales that had been, and continue to be, passed down generations and across families.

The emergence of books of fables in Britain and elsewhere in the developed world over two centuries earlier had led to an increase in illustrated books for children. Henry Cole, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, produced books of fables which were lavishly illustrated by artists such as John Linnell.<sup>7</sup> They were among the first books to have colour-printed illustrations. Fantasy writing also developed, with animal fantasies popularised through Aesop’s fables, Hans Christian Anderson’s imaginative tales translated from Danish and, in Italy, *The*

*Adventures of Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi. A translation of this famous story into Amharic was to be one of Ethiopia's first illustrated children's books.<sup>8</sup>

As the Industrial Revolution gathered pace in Britain, one genre that emerged was that of contemporary life in the country. Books described the conditions that the poor lived in and the punishments that young children endured – a life far removed from that of the middle class readers. Yet children in that period did not experience the comforts that are taken for granted today such as light and warmth in the home. Again the comparison with Ethiopia is evident because, as a result of the poverty experienced in the country, relatively few children have the benefits of electric lighting or access to books and space to study. Many children, while they may have the skills to read and some access to learning material through school, are denied a range of books through library services and, if they do find reading material, may have to read in unsuitable conditions. A large part of the rural population and many living in poverty in towns live in a windowless hut shared by the whole family and, for many, this lifestyle seems unlikely to change.

Until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when bookshops began to offer a range of children's literature and chapbooks, access to children's books in Britain had been through peddlers. They would offer slim volumes at a very low cost and publishers emerged across the country to meet local demand. Cost was always a major factor in limiting the publication of illustrated materials and remains a barrier to the development of a children's book industry in Ethiopia and other sub-Saharan African countries. Many literate adults in Ethiopia would be able to describe the book that they were first introduced to as such resources were generally inaccessible.

Fitsame Teferra recalled the first books she remembers being given as a child including an Amharic version of Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* and *Mushirawa Ayit* (The Mouse Bride). Yihenew Worku showed the author his collection of early Russian illustrated Amharic stories which included *Who Says Meeow* by Suteyev, *One Elephant* by Alexander Kuprin, illustrated



by Borovsky and published by Progress, and *About Lenin* written by Ulyanova and illustrated by Rakutin. Writers, such as Tesfaye Gebre-Mariam Hailu recalled reading Kebede Michael's stories.<sup>9</sup> Where countries use more than one written language and have relatively small print runs, the costs of publications are multiplied. Ethiopia has over eighty spoken languages and at least three major written languages apart from English, the language of secondary education. English is also used for a number of publications and for some primary school textbooks.

In the United States of America, during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the children's literature was predominantly that imported from Britain but, particularly following the war of 1812, more American written books emerged and the history of English media publishing diverged. The characters of American literature reflected the children living in that part of the world. The same was evident in Australasia during a later period. The importance of context and the need to provide stories that children could relate to was recognised in British colonies throughout the world at different times depending on their progress in economy and education. For example, Muir describes the situation in Australia where:

...as children's books flourished in nineteenth century England and were being produced cheaply and in large numbers as printing became more mechanised, they were widely imported into the colonies. There was, therefore, little incentive to write and publish Australian books. During the first hundred years of settlement Australia was occasionally the setting for children's books, but these were almost all published overseas, written and illustrated by English and occasionally other European writers and artists.<sup>10</sup>

In British colonies in sub-Saharan Africa the transformation is still taking place.

Ethiopia was a country that was never colonised although Britain had played a significant role in Ethiopian history. It experienced a few years occupation by the Italians between 1936 and 1941 but, during much of the long reign of its emperor, Haile Selassie I, any children's books which appeared were often imported from Britain. Prior to 1974, when he was deposed, Haile Selassie I personally presented English books as gifts to Ethiopian students



including, for example, *The Practical Encyclopedia for Children* published by Odhams in 1948.<sup>11</sup> During this imperial regime the Ministry of Education also produced school text books with support from UNESCO and the Ministry of Overseas Development in Britain.<sup>12</sup>

The British colonial past had an impact on the content of books in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century including children's stories. Land and peoples across Africa, Asia and Australasia had become subject to British rule and the exploits of adventurers such as David Livingstone and Henry Morton Stanley. There were newspaper items which had an influence on adventure stories by authors such as R.L.Stevenson, author of *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island* (which was produced initially as a serial in a boy's paper). Ethiopian children's literature shows some evidence of writing in this genre but it does not appear to have developed a tradition of adventure and fantasy novels or books focusing on school life which emerged in other parts of the world at the same time as the adventure stories. Parents and teachers in Britain and other countries in Europe and North America started to recognize the importance of entertainment through literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its sequel, *Alice through the Looking Glass*, by Lewis Carroll and *The Water Babies* by Charles Kingsley were among the earliest fantasy novels which were followed later by works such as the Narnia novels by C.S.Lewis.

The rise in educational opportunities in Britain, particularly following the Education Act of 1870 and the subsequent increase in the number of literate youngsters, and the rise in the number of boarding school students, resulted in a proliferation of books and magazines with school tales as the subject matter. These included *Tom Brown's Schooldays* by Dr Thomas Arnold and the 'penny dreadfuls' with serialized stories aimed at the less affluent. They continued in popularity with Enid Blyton's books for all ages and the content of the periodicals, *Boy's Own Paper* and *Girl's Own Paper* which emerged in the latter quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and ran until the mid 1960s. More recently J.K.Rowlings' *Harry Potter*

books, read in Ethiopia by accomplished readers as well as across the rest of the world, combine these three genres of fantasy, adventure and school. By the 21st century the number of books available for English speakers in the western world is enormous<sup>13</sup> but Ethiopia's contribution to children's illustrated literature is still small though no statistics exist to provide evidence of its resources.

In the rest of Africa the situation appears similar to Ethiopia with a dearth of publications in local languages and a history of imported books from the nations which had previously colonized them. Edwards and Ngwaru identified a limited number of books in South African languages and noted the alternative views towards translations of books for younger children, some seeing them as: 'likely to be at odds with the children's lived experience. Others feel that the main issue is to ensure that children have access to a wide range of reading material in African languages and that translation offers one means to this end.'<sup>14</sup> Another issue they raise is that of local language books being produced predominantly for the schools market, an issue that currently affects Ethiopia where recent World Bank Funding for textbook development has encouraged Regional Educational Bureaus to produce supplementary readers.<sup>15</sup> In a continent where very small incomes are earned by the majority of Sub-Saharan Africans and a culture of reading has yet to develop, the market for children's books is likely to remain small for the foreseeable future with the majority of publications aimed at schools.<sup>16</sup>

### **The history of children's literature in Ethiopia**

In a description of the lives of children today Dr Heather Montgomery stated that: 'children have few responsibilities, their lives are characterised by play not work, school not paid labour, family rather than public life and consumption instead of production.'<sup>17</sup> While this may be true of all developed countries and some families in the developing world, for the



majority of Ethiopian children it is not the case. The lives of many children there bear no resemblance to that of their contemporaries in Britain, the rest of Europe and North America. While school is now becoming accessible for the vast majority, many will not begin their education until they are seven and more than half will not proceed to secondary education, particularly females, as this report indicates:

According to the JRM (*Joint Review Mission Draft Report 2005*), the most current participation rates in Primary education in Ethiopia are 79.2% with secondary education (Grades 9 – 10) at 27% (34.2% for males and 19.6% for females). Obviously there are wide regional differences, particularly between urban and rural areas. There are still high drop out rates (22.8% for Grade 1 and across the primary sector higher for boys than girls – 14.8% and 14.2% respectively) but these are showing signs of decreasing.<sup>18</sup>

The Millennium Goal of full primary school participation by 2015 is still an aspiration for Ethiopia; childhood expectations in the developed world are far removed from those of Ethiopian youngsters. If children do not develop literacy skills or gain access to a range of books, literature cannot develop. Thus the children's publishing market in Ethiopia today is small and limited yet, when it started to develop back in the 1950s, educational opportunities for children were even more restricted and literacy rates were minimal. Sixty years on there appears to be some signs of progress and reasons for optimism.

Across Africa people have passed on their folk tales, songs, myths and poetry from one generation to the next by word of mouth, with no written sources. The oral storytelling tradition was, and remains, important in Ethiopian society particularly among certain cultures such as the Oromo. The common belief that when an old man dies a library is lost persists in this region of Ethiopia as in other parts of Africa. Sutherland and Arbuthnot recognized the oral tradition of Africa with: 'tales pertinent to contemporary life'<sup>19</sup> and Slim and Thompson identified how, in Africa: 'many communities have specialist narrators of local traditions... and descriptions of major events such as battles, invasions, famines and drought.'<sup>20</sup> In books such as Schlomo's *Ethiopian Folk Tales* and Laird's more recent compilations and her



contribution to the website [www.ethiopianfolktales.com](http://www.ethiopianfolktales.com), there is reference to the source of the tales. Schlomo explained how the stories were told by students from across the country. 'For generations, stories such as these, with their perceptive wit and useful lessons, have been used to entertain and instruct young children.'<sup>21</sup> In the introduction to Laird's collection of stories Wolde Gossa Tadesse wrote: 'The stories we have in this book... are as old as the societies that narrate them.'<sup>22</sup> In an earlier book Laird describes how: '...in Ethiopia great treasuries of stories still live in people's heads and have never been written down. Old people sit together in the evenings, when the day's work is done, and tell each other tales that were already old hundreds of years ago.'<sup>23</sup>

Seifu Metaferia studied the oral tradition in Ethiopia, identifying the age of seven as important as the age when: 'his fantasy enjoys tales most.'<sup>24</sup> It is at this age that the boy (there is no reference to girls) attends priest school, starts fasting, herds calves and lambs and takes on responsibilities for the family. The narrator of stories, often a grandmother according to Seifu, would sometimes sit with children under a tree during the day and at the end of the day storytelling. Many years earlier Enrico Cerulli had undertaken research into the folk tales and songs of the Oromo people (Galla) of Southern Ethiopia where the prose was handed down from father to son. Courlander and Leslau also considered the source of the stories they collected in their 1950 publication:

In the old days, perhaps, it was different. But now the tales you hear in the villages of the Amharas you may also hear among the Gallas and the Guragés, and even beyond the Ethiopian borders in the land of the Shilluks and Dinkas. For they have been carried back and forth for centuries in the migrations of cattle herders, by camel caravans, and by the traders who cross the mountains with bracelets, knives, and spears to sell.<sup>25</sup>

They question the source of the stories, suggesting that they may have come from Congo, the Sudan, India or Arabia. Their own anthology, published in America, was possibly the first written source of these stories.

Unlike many other African countries, Ethiopia has a long association with books dating back to the sixth century BC and the use of the Sabeian alphabet.<sup>26</sup> Henze points to parallels with South Arabian writing with evidence proving links between the South Arabian kingdoms and northern Ethiopia from 1000 BC.<sup>27</sup> It was Christianity, adopted by Ethiopia in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, which led to the development of literature with books recording hymns and beliefs. Although, according to Fogg, very little Ethiopian painting survives from before the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, there is a rich variety of illustrated manuscripts surviving from this period. In describing one 15<sup>th</sup> Century book of prayers written in Ge'ez in black and red ink and illustrated with: 'abstracted paintings in rich earth colours,' he explained that: '[f]ollowing an ancient tradition, Ethiopians used small, easy to carry books for spiritual and bodily protection.'<sup>28</sup> Ethiopian binding, dating from these early times, has survived till today and has spread across the world and influenced modern bookbinding techniques.

One of the earliest children's books to appear in Ethiopia was the fully illustrated *Coloured Picture Bible for Abyssinian Children*,<sup>29</sup> translated into Amharic by one of Emperor Theodros's captives, the Reverend Martin Fladd who had spent nearly sixty years living in Ethiopia. It was illustrated by Richard André (a pseudonym of English artist, William Roger Snow) and published by one of the missionary societies, The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, in 1886.

Books might have been owned by some of the relatively few literate people in the country but in Ethiopia, unlike the developed world, literacy rates were still low in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Henze surmised that by 1941 it had: 'probably not exceeded five per cent, primarily resulting from the work of traditional church schools.'<sup>30</sup> At this time, following the Italian occupation, the Emperor had decided that English was to be the official second language of the country, a decision that would influence the literature.



From this period onwards opportunities for education slowly increased. The HaHu website<sup>31</sup> describes the early history of children's illustrated books including those which appeared in schools from this time. It states that one of the first books to be published around 1941/2 was Kebede Mikael's volumes consisting of tales, fables and other texts in prose and verse. Later, *Enqilf Leminie* by Balamabaras Mahtmem-Selassie Wode-Meskel was published by the Ministry of Education in 1959/60 to be used as instructional material. Another of the earliest illustrated children's book to be published in Ethiopia in Amharic was Pinnocchio, produced in two volumes in about 1960 in the Western calendar and translated from the original by Lema Feyessa.

By this time Peace Corps volunteers had arrived from the United States and teachers from countries, including India, were hired to teach in secondary schools. Although there had been a small amount of fiction written in Amharic by Ethiopians prior to the Italian invasion of 1935, this increased during the 1960s with one author, Abbe Gubeny, who: 'wrote historical novels that were eagerly read by young people'<sup>32</sup> but who was reputedly sent into exile by the Emperor Haile Selassie after he wrote a novel, *Aliwelledim*, about a fetus that did not wish to be born in Ethiopia because of the shortcomings of the country.

The Oxford University Press published books in English for Ethiopian schools during the 1970s, some of which were written by Richard Sherrington and illustrated by Eric Robson whose illustrated works continue to be published in Ethiopia. Adventure stories, such as *Adventure in Addis Ababa* and *The Treasure of Lebna Dengel*, developed from a series shown on Ethiopian television and were printed in Ethiopia.

Geoffrey Last,<sup>33</sup> an advisor in the Ethiopian Ministry of Education in 1982, described Ethiopia in 1974, the year when the emperor was deposed by a revolution and replaced by a military government, as a:

...society which relied on memory for the accumulation of culture and on the spoken work for communications. In this year the total population was estimated at 26.6



million of these, 93% were illiterate...it has been estimated that a maximum of half a million, or less than 2% of the 10 plus population were equipped with at least a grade eight education...<sup>34</sup>

According to Last, under the new government a literacy campaign aimed to raise the educational standards of children to ensure that there would be a primary school place for every seven year old by 1987. It was intended that by 1992 all young people between the ages of 7 and 12 would be able to access six years of regular school. It was also expected to eradicate illiteracy among adults. He reported that from 1979, when the Literacy Campaign started, over 23 million booklets had been printed and the concept of Community Reading Rooms had been realized with over 4,000 being constructed across Ethiopia. He also added that: ‘...as far as I am aware, there is no book available in Amharic for the general market which reflects the interests of the young readers...’<sup>35</sup>

The Curriculum Department of the Ministry of Education at that time described children’s books prior to the revolution as: ‘...mostly imported ones and naturally inculcated in the child alien attitudes, values and norms. The acquisition of skills, competencies and basic knowledge, which the country desperately needed was given practically no emphasis.’<sup>36</sup>

Their educational objectives focused on production, scientific research and socialist consciousness. ‘In like manner, books which reflect the objectives set above have been prepared and disseminated to all schools.’<sup>37</sup> At that time a number of books printed in Russia and Germany were translated into Amharic for the Ethiopian audience.<sup>38</sup>

By the time their goal of full literacy and primary education for all seven to twelve year olds should have been realized in 1992, the government had been ousted and the regime was replaced by the current Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). The goals of the military government in respect of primary education and literacy had not been met and, in many respects, the country’s education was no further on than it had been in 1974.

Even after the change of government in 1992, publishing did not increase noticeably.

Michael Daniel Ambatchew wrote that:

In a recent survey of the challenges in publishing children's literature in Ethiopia, it was pointed out that the Ethiopian government's support to children's literature seems to have actually declined over the last fifteen years (quoting Tesfaye, *Challenges in Publishing Children's literature in Ethiopia* 2004)...Currently, Government, NGOs, individual authors and groups of authors have been involved in the production of storybooks, however, the total production of title of books has been estimated to be less than 100 (Tefsaye 2004) throughout Ethiopian history. In fact, due to the lack of information and publicity, the actual number could be higher. Still in comparison to the approximately 38,000,000 children in the country, these books will definitely be insufficient to cope with the variety of tastes of the children, assuming that the books are all currently in print and could be distributed all over the country.<sup>39</sup>

He also noted the concerns of Testa Abebe and Shibeshi Lemma in their 1997 paper, *Assessment of Children's Books in Addis Abeba: Needs and Prospects for Publication*, which highlighted the shortage of children's authors, illustrators and book designers. This was reiterated by Shibeshi in 2004.<sup>40</sup>

Yet there were NGOs working in the field to produce books including CODE, the Canadian Organization for Development through Education, which had over 60 reading rooms, produced books and helped train teachers and librarians. Another was the SCNE, Save the Children Norway - Ethiopia, which translated books and opened Alternative Basic Education Centres. Another active charity was EBCEF, the Ethiopian Books for Children and Educational Foundation, now known as Ethiopia Reads, which was founded by Yohannes Gebregiorgis with the support of Jane Kurtz. It continues to promote reading through an annual reading week and, since 2005, has presented the Golden Kuraz Award each year for a book written and illustrated for Ethiopian children. It also publishes books in English and Ethiopian languages but its main role is the development and support of libraries for Ethiopian children including a donkey library in Awassa.<sup>41</sup>

Michael Daniel Ambatchew describes the more recent history more optimistically identifying: 'a noticeable change in the quality and format of children's books. The



availability of modern printing machines, cheaper electronic devices and better transportation and communication to the outside world, are all beginning to impact upon the quality of children's books in Ethiopia.<sup>42</sup> There is an increased awareness as school libraries are recipients of a better range of quality materials, bookshops with sections devoted to children open up in different towns and textbook development recognizes the need for better quality, contextual resources. In June 2009, an Ethiopian newspaper, the Addis Fortune, reported on the bid for textbook revision to cover every subject for each grade quoting that:

The former textual and teacher-centred approach would be replaced by a teacher-directed and student-centred one that entails active role of the pupils.<sup>43</sup>

While this vast project may improve school textbooks and raise educational ability among Ethiopian students, it does not guarantee any improvement in illustrated children's literature or a change in reading culture. However, there is a growing number of organisations, authors and illustrators eager to expand this market and try new forms of publication including magazines and comic strips.

The existing authors include novelists like Shibeshi Lemma Debalkie, born in 1942, who was introduced to children's literature in his mid-teens but exposed to many oral stories in his childhood. Andarge Mesfin, who was born in 1951, was exposed to literature in his childhood in the traditional church school but did not start writing for children until his forties. Gebeyehu Ayele GebreMeskel, of a similar age, remembers reading Kebede Michael as a child as does Tesfaye Gebre-Mariam Hailu, who has written over thirty books and is now a lecturer in literature at Addis Ababa University. Samrawit Araya-Medhin Mersha was born in 1972 and brought up on Amharic translations of *Pinnocchio* and the *Arabian Nights*. Samuel Lijalem Hassan remembers reading *Mammo Killo*, while Yewoineshet Masresha Hailu, born in 1957, read biblical stories and prayers to her grandmother from the age of eight.



Michael Daniel Ambatchew, born in Moscow but brought up in Ethiopia, has well over thirty stories published and has delivered a number of papers on Ethiopian and African children's literature and other books including the compilation of biographies of twelve of the thirty plus Ethiopian children's authors who live in the country.<sup>44</sup> Alula Pankhurst, an anthropologist, has lived in Addis Ababa for most of his life and speaks fluent Amharic. He was one of the founding members of the Writers for Ethiopian Children and has written a number of stories for the bilingual anthologies which this group has produced.<sup>45</sup>

Yohannes Gebregeorgis, an Ethiopian who emigrated to the United States in 1981 but returned to Ethiopia in 2002, was responsible for promoting children's literature in Ethiopia in different ways including founding a children's library in Addis Ababa and publishing children's books in Ethiopia.<sup>46</sup>

There are others, not Ethiopian, who write about Ethiopia and for an Ethiopian audience, including those in the Diaspora. They include Jane Kurtz who moved to Ethiopia as a young child with her family and spent many years there. She has written a number of books including some about Ethiopia such as her own version of *Fire on the Mountain*. In her activities with Ethiopia Reads she continues to encourage reading in Ethiopia. Elizabeth Laird went to work in Ethiopia in her twenties and returned in the 1990s to travel round the country collecting folk stories from traditional storytellers for a British Council project. Frances Somers Cocks was another British visitor who discovered a link between a young slave and a famous Russian which led her to write the books on Abraham Hannibal illustrated by Eric Robson, the British artist who maintained a close association with Ethiopia.

As more children become literate<sup>47</sup> and as the quality of their education improves, a reading culture should emerge and stimulate a growing demand for story books including illustrated publications. There is a growing interest in writing for Ethiopian children and one would assume that, as more young people nurture a love of books, this would further develop

a reading culture but the situation in other African countries seems far from positive.

Edwards and Ngwaru cite the situation in South Africa where: '[a] question of particular concern is how to promote reading with pre-school children.'<sup>48</sup> A number of factors will determine this market growth including the part played by publishers who, according to Edwards and Ngwaru: 'need to look critically at the content of the materials they are producing, their methods of reaching huge untapped markets and their pricing strategies.'<sup>49</sup>

While public funding may enable more books to be published for the schools market, few publishers in Ethiopia can afford to produce good quality illustrated children's books in local languages for individual purchasers. Initiatives such as the Writers for Ethiopian Children's anthologies<sup>50</sup> and libraries supported by organisations like 'Ethiopia Reads' can begin to develop a reading culture among those children whose family circumstances often deny access to books. Good quality supplementary readers in local languages with relevant content should also develop their interest in books. As technology advances and publishing methods improve while, at the same time, electronic media enable the written word to be distributed through applications such as the e-book or Kindle, more good quality illustrated children's publications in local languages could be produced but cost will no doubt remain the major factor.

The increase in children's literature escalated in the developed countries as more children became literate, the economy improved and technology made it easier and cheaper to produce better quality products. Ethiopia appears to have followed the trend in literature development and will hopefully, over time, continue to build its market for children's publications.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Information provided by President of Ethiopian Writers' Association, Getachew Bellete.

<sup>2</sup> This was explained by a colleague, Girma Alemayehu, who worked with the author in the Ministry of Education. He and others explained how, in addition to state education, children sometimes attend a traditional school organised by the Ethiopian Coptic Church.



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<sup>3</sup> Kinnell, M. 'Publishing for Children 1700 – 1780' in Hunt, P. (ed.) (1995) *Children's Literature An Illustrated History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press p36.

<sup>4</sup> Avery G. "The Beginnings of Children's Reading to c.1700" in Hunt P. ed.1995, *Children's Literature An Illustrated History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press p7.

<sup>5</sup> Kinnell op cit, p42.

<sup>6</sup> Norton, D.E. 1999. *Fifth Edition Through the Eyes of a Child An Introduction to Children's Literature*, New Jersey: Merrill p63.

<sup>7</sup> Butts, D. 'The Beginnings of Victorianism' in Hunt, P. (ed.) (1995) *Children's Literature – an Illustrated History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. According to Butt, Cole: '...began issuing such stories as Jack the Giant-Killer and Little Red Riding Hood from 1843 onwards....Cole considered the visual quality of the books most important and he employed such artists as William Mulready and John Linnell to illustrate them.' p 88-89.

<sup>8</sup> See chapter 6.

<sup>9</sup> The author asked this question of different Ethiopians she met who each remembered specific Ethiopian books including Pinocchio. Fitsame Teferra and Yihenew Worku provided examples.

<sup>10</sup> Muir, M. (1982) *A History of Australian Children's Book Illustrations*, Melbourne: OUP p7.

<sup>11</sup> The author was shown a copy of this book presented to the father of Yihenew Worku, one of the Ethiopian illustrators that she interviewed in 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Information located in a report on Educational Materials Production in the Ministry of Education (1975 Ethiopia) by G.Eric Robson who was employed by the Ministry of Overseas Development as a graphic artist. A description of textbooks produced in 1967 was written by Edmund Murray and published in the Ethiopian Herald in 1967.

<sup>13</sup> 'According to Bowker, publishers in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand released 375,000 new titles and editions in 2004. Including imported editions available in multiple markets, the total number of new English language books available for sale in the English-speaking world in 2004 was a staggering 450,000. ... children's and young adult titles had a 12% share of new titles and editions, a 33% increase.' [http://www.bowker.com/press/bowker/2005\\_1012\\_bowker.htm](http://www.bowker.com/press/bowker/2005_1012_bowker.htm) downloaded on 9/11/2010.

<sup>14</sup> Edwards, V. & Ngwaru, J. M. (2011), 'African language books for children: issues for authors' *Language, Culture and Curriculum* <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07908318.2011.629051> downloaded October 2011

<sup>15</sup> The author was made aware of this from the director of Shama publishers and Fitsame Teferra (through the illustration work she was contracted to do in 2011 for supplementary readers in Amharic for Amhara Region Education Bureau).

<sup>16</sup> 'At the opening session of the 30th Congress of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), held in Macau (China) from September 20–24, 2006, plenary speaker Brian Wafawarowa outlined the state of publishing in Africa and in particular the many difficulties facing the publication of books for children. He informed participants (from fifty-four member countries) that "Up to 95 percent of books published on the African continent are education books[, mostly textbooks]," and that children's publishing has not reached its full potential because of significant challenges. Among the many challenges is the lack of purchasing power and institutional support for books intended for entertainment. Hence African publishers find it financially unprofitable to publish non-textbooks, especially in the mother tongues. Most of the leisure reading for African children is produced outside the continent, according to Wafawarowa.' Khorana, M.G. 'Editor's Introduction: African Renaissance through Children's Books: an Emphasis on African Languages in Print. *Sankofa* Vol 5 2006 <http://grizzly.morgan.edu/~english/sankofa/p2-4.pdf> downloaded 7/12/2011



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- <sup>17</sup> Montgomery, H. 2006, BBC Child's tale of Ethiopian slave prince  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/3212181.stm> downloaded July 2009
- <sup>18</sup> Papworth H. 2006, 'Retention of teachers in Ethiopian Schools' paper written for State Minister of Education Addis Ababa:Ministry of Education.
- <sup>19</sup> Sutherland, Z. & Arbutnot, M.H. (1991) *Children and Books Eighth Edition*, New York: Harper Collins, p204.
- <sup>20</sup> Slim, H. & Thompson, P. (1993) *Listening for a Change*, London: Panos Publications Ltd., p16.
- <sup>21</sup> Schlomo, B. (1967) *Ethiopian Folk Tales*, Addis Ababa: Oxford University Press, p56.
- <sup>22</sup> Laird, E. (2008) *The Elephant and the Cock*, Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Books for Children and Educational Foundation, p7.
- <sup>23</sup> Laird, E. (2001) *When the World Began – Stories collected in Ethiopia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p94.
- <sup>24</sup> Seifu Metaferia (1982) 'Oral Literature of Ethiopia as a Source of Material for Children's Books: sample study' in *Workshop on Children's Books*, Addis Ababa: The National Children's Commission and Italian Cultural Institute, p4.
- <sup>25</sup> Courlander, H. & Leslau, W. (1950) *The Fire on the Mountain and other Ethiopian Stories*, New York: Henry Holt & Co., p4.
- <sup>26</sup> According to the Ministry of Education report for the *Workshop on Children's Books*, Addis Ababa: The National Children's Commission and Italian Cultural Institute in 1982, p3.
- <sup>27</sup> Henze, P. (2004) *Layers of Time – A History of Ethiopia* Addis Ababa: Shama Books, p27.
- <sup>28</sup> Fogg, S. (2001) *Ethiopian Art Catalogue 24*, London: Sam Fogg Rare Books and Manuscripts, p12.
- <sup>29</sup> Tract Committee for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ed.) (1886) *The Coloured Picture Bible for Abyssinian Children*, New York: E & J.B. Young & Co. Translated into Amharic by Rev. Martin Fladd and illustrated by R André. The author studied this copy in the British Library and located different versions in English with the same illustrations published by Robert Frederick Ltd in 1994 under the title *Children's Bible Stories*. See illustration in chapter 6.
- <sup>30</sup> Henze, P. op cit p256.
- <sup>31</sup> [http://www.hahubooks.co.uk/Overview\\_E02.htm](http://www.hahubooks.co.uk/Overview_E02.htm) downloaded July 2009.
- <sup>32</sup> Henze, P. op cit p 267.
- <sup>33</sup> Geoffrey C. Last , a former head of Medhane Alem School, had written a textbook for Geography for the Ministry of Education (Ethiopia) in 1967. It was illustrated by Eric Robson and produced at the Berhanena Selam Printing Press. This was one of a series being prepared by the Ministry of Education 'designed to be more closely geared to Ethiopian life than texts used in the past.' according to Edmund Murray of the Ethiopian Herald, 1967.
- <sup>34</sup> Last G.C. 1982, "Books for Children in Ethiopia – The Current Environment and Future Prospects" *Workshop on Children's Books*, Addis Ababa: The National Children's Commission and Italian Cultural Institute, p3.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid p5- 6.

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<sup>36</sup> Curriculum Dept MOE 1982, "The Role of Children's Books in the Educational Development of Ethiopia" in *Workshop on Children's Books*, Addis Ababa: The National Children's Commission and Italian Cultural Institute, p3.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid p5.

<sup>38</sup> The author was shown copies of examples of such books by an Ethiopian illustrator. Examples of the illustrations are included in the chapter on illustrations but details of authors and publishers (possibly the Russian Progress Press) cannot be verified. See example in chapter 6.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Daniel Ambatchew, July 2005, 'Implications of the Convention of the Rights of the Child for Ethiopian Children's Literature' (paper presented at a workshop conducted by the Ethiopian Writer's Association held at The Russian Cultural Centre 2005).

<sup>40</sup> Michael Daniel Ambatchew, March 2007, 'Improvements in the Arena of Ethiopian Children's Literature' (paper presented at a Conference on Children's Literature organized by Forum on Street Children Ethiopia 2007).

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.ethiopiareads.org/> downloaded on 9/11/2010.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Daniel Ambatchew, March 2007 op cit.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.addisfortune.com/Heavyweight%20Bid%20for%20Textbooks%20Revision.htm> downloaded on 9/11/2010.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Daniel Ambatchew (2008) *A Dozen Contemporary Ethiopian Children's Writers*, Addis Ababa: self published. Details of these authors were gathered by the author from Michael Daniel Ambatchew's booklet (detailed above), and through discussions with them and/or from their biographies located in their published literature and on websites.

<sup>45</sup> Anthologies of bilingual (English/Amharic) stories for children appeared from 2002 and include: *Coocooloo*, *Alihoy*, *Alalihoy*, *Alnegam*, *Emma Gilgelay* and *Tikur Fiyelay*. Two new anthologies are currently being printed with illustrated stories by the author and other members of the Writers for Ethiopian Children.

<sup>46</sup> In 2002, identifying a gap in the market for Ethiopian children's literature, he rewrote a traditional folk tale in Amharic and English. *Silly Mammo* was illustrated in full colour by Bogale Belachew. Yohannes also founded EBCEF, the Ethiopian Books for Children and Educational Foundation, which promoted an annual reading week and presented the annual Golden Kuraz Award. Through EBCEF, twelve picture books, either bilingual or trilingual, were published for young children. In 2010, Yohannes founded a publishing company, Sololia Publishing, with *Tirhas Celebrates Ashenda: An Ethiopian Girls' Festival* as its first picture book for children.

<sup>47</sup> <sup>6</sup> In addition, significant differences in reading outcomes exist by region within countries. Such is the case in Uganda, where about half of students in Central Province are unable to read compared to more than 80% in Lango Province; in Ethiopia, there is a much lower percentage of nonreaders in Addis Ababa Region (Amharic, 10%) than in all the other regions in the country, where between 18% and 69% of students are unable to read a single word. ... In Ethiopia, between 0.5% and 13% of students could read with comprehension, depending on the language and region of the country.... Results from several successful interventions in Africa indicate that reading and learning outcomes can be improved if (1) teachers are trained to teach key foundational reading skills and have the necessary materials to do so (e.g., comprehensive, scripted lessons); (2) children have appropriate texts to practice reading; (3) time is devoted each day to reading instruction and practice; and (4) teachers continually assess students' reading skills. Providing students with an opportunity to gain reading skills in their mother tongue, or a familiar language, is also key. US AID Assessing Early Grade Reading Skills in Africa Education Data for Decision Making (EdData II) 2011 <https://www.eddataglobal.org/documents/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubDetail&ID=323> downloaded 7/12/2011

<sup>48</sup> Edwards, V. & Ngwaru, J.M. (2011) 'Multilingual education in South Africa: the role of publishers' *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2011.592192> downloaded 7/12/2011

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> A proportion of the anthologies are given away to schools and libraries and the remainder are distributed across Ethiopia and sold at a nominal charge to raise the income to produce the next anthology.

<sup>51</sup> The author presented the following papers based on this study: (Nov. 2009) 'A Brief History of Illustrated Literature for Ethiopian Children' paper presented at the International Conference for Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa;

(Sept. 2010) 'A Brief History of Illustrated Literature for Ethiopian Children' paper presented at the Anglo Ethiopian Conference, London; in September 2010.

'A Brief History of Illustrated Books for Ethiopian Children' edited paper published in Nov 2011 edition of *Sankofa – a Journal of African Children's and Young Adult Literature*, Baltimore: Sankofa.



## Chapter 4

### Oral storytelling in Ethiopian Children's Stories<sup>1</sup>

#### Background to oral storytelling

Before bedtime, as Lamin watched with wide eyes, Kunta acted out his favourite of all the stories – springing suddenly about with an imaginary sword slashing up and down, as if Lamin were one of the bandits whom their uncles and others had fought on every day on a journey of many moons, heavily laden with elephants' teeth, precious stones, and gold, to the great black city of Zimbabwe.<sup>2</sup>

In this short passage from the novel *Roots*, Haley describes how oral storytelling was passed from generation to generation. He retold the story told to Kunta as a child about the small boy and the crocodile with its message: 'It is the way of the world that goodness is often repaid with badness.'<sup>3</sup> This tradition of telling stories with a moral or an explanation dates back centuries. It still continues in some parts of the world, particularly where written literature is less available such as in certain areas of Ethiopia. *The Storyteller* was written to demonstrate the value of storytelling today. It is a form of entertainment, a means of passing on a message, sometimes in a subtle way, and incorporates skills usually passed down through generations to create a performance. Although the gist of a story can be written down and preserved in a book or on a website, it loses much of its impact when the oral element is removed as will be explained in this chapter and in the commentary following the novel in chapter 9.

However, the influence of the outside world, technology and education have impacted on this art and it is losing its importance in the local culture of the people, a theory shared by Anita Pandley who noted that: 'while this art form is not extinct, it is rapidly being eroded with the influx of popular culture.'<sup>4</sup> Will this accelerate with the modern

developments and increased communication as it has in Europe and other parts of the world where oral storytelling has all but vanished?

In Britain there are few tales that are retold orally through the generations without resource to printed materials. The nativity story from the Bible remains one of the few stories that are passed on orally through families, school and Christian communities.<sup>5</sup> Relatively few children could give an example of another story that was passed on to them by an elder person in the way that their ancestors experienced. Benjamin acknowledged this fact over fifty years ago when he wrote:

Familiar though his name may be to us, the storyteller in his living immediacy is by no means a present force. He has already become something remote from us and something that is getting even more distant. More and more often there is embarrassment all around when the wish to hear a story is expressed. It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences.<sup>6</sup>

He went on to explain that stories had to be assimilated and remembered, and how the activities associated with boredom, were already extinct in the cities and were declining in the country, causing the loss of the ability to listen:

For storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when the stories are no longer retained. It is lost because there is no more weaving and spinning to go on while they are being listened to. The more self-forgetful the listener is, the more deeply is what he listens to impressed upon his memory. When the rhythm of work has seized him, he listens to the tales in such a way that the gift of retelling them comes to him all by itself. This, then, is the nature of the web in which the gift of storytelling is cradled. This is how today it is becoming unravelled at all its ends after being woven thousands of years ago in the ambience of the oldest forms of craftsmanship.<sup>7</sup>

Travelling through the Ethiopian countryside today, observers will frequently see individuals or small groups of adults and children tending the family herds for hours on end. The tasks of ploughing, reaping, winnowing and grinding are still done manually in many parts of the country and children would also be involved in these repetitive tasks.

Spinning, weaving and other traditional activities continue to be carried out in many homesteads across much of the country, not just in rural areas. One could assume that such a lifestyle maintains this 'web' with its 'rhythm of work' and ample time and opportunity for stories to be remembered and developed. One could also ask whether increased communication and the access to technology and education has already impacted and led to a decline in storytelling even in the most rural parts of Ethiopia.<sup>8</sup>

### **History of storytelling**

Stories and folklore cover a number of formats such as the fairy tale, myth, legend, fable, song, riddle and the proverb. Their history goes back in time to days before people developed the ability to read and write. There is certainly evidence of fairy stories being written down in ancient Egypt<sup>9</sup> but Krappe believed that the Animal Tales are: '...the oldest that are known to-day.'<sup>10</sup> It is possible that such tales were told in Ethiopia though whether early examples could be proved to be the source of *Aesop's Fables* cannot be verified.

It is thought by some that this most famous among story tellers, Aesop, who lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC, was taken to Greece as a slave from Ethiopia - the connection being the similarity of his name and the country, Aethop.<sup>11</sup> At that time the name 'Ethiopia' would have referred to the whole ancient Nile civilization including modern day Ethiopia. The similarity of many of his fables to those told today in Ethiopia leads one to question whether such stories emerged in Africa, or further east where similar tales developed and influenced the writings of story tellers. Aesop is often wrongly acknowledged as the author of these tales whereas he was more likely to be responsible for the collecting and possible



editing of fables. Regardless of whether Aesop did come from Ethiopia, or if such a slave was responsible for telling these tales, in relation to storytelling in Africa they share the same characters, usually animals and birds, often with universal characteristics, and each story has a message that is relevant in different communities across the world and is just as significant for today's population as it was centuries ago.

The link between Ethiopia and Greece does not start with Aesop. The myths which were told in Greece from around 700 BC relating to the creation of the world include stories which specifically refer to Ethiopia, a land known to early Greeks. One such story is that of Perseus who, with the aid of winged sandals, passed through Ethiopia on his return from slaying Medusa. It is said he dropped some of Medusa's blood on Africa which resulted thereafter in the land being full of wild beasts. As he passed through Ethiopia he found Andromeda, daughter of the king of Ethiopia, Cepheus, and his wife, Cassiopeia, tied to a rock. In order to punish her mother, who said Andromeda was more beautiful than the sea goddesses, Poseidon sent a flood and a terrifying sea monster, the Ethiopian Cetus, to the country. Perseus, aided by his winged sandals, killed the sea monster and married Andromeda. Another myth relating to 'Aithiopia' concerns Benthesisicyme, goddess of the waves and a daughter of Poseidon, who was the wife of the first Ethiopian king Enalos (of the sea) who may have also been Triton.<sup>12</sup>

There appears to be little evidence of stories told in Ethiopia reflecting such myths but similarities with ancient Indian fables do exist. Many were written by Vishnu Sharma about 200 BC following a request by a king to teach his sons important morals.

Panchatantra<sup>13</sup> tales are divided into five manuals (panch means five) which contained

important guidelines for a future king. One story about a lion and a hare has the moral that nothing is impossible for those who are wise:

A lion goes around killing hapless creatures in a forest. The creatures get tired of living in fear all the time and gather courage to go to the lion with a solution. They tell him that daily one creature would be sent to him as food. The lion is pleased and agrees. The animals now decide that the creature whose numbers are the maximum shall be sent one by one. The hare turns out to be the biggest in number and is sent to the lion. Reluctant to go to the lion, he wanders in the forest and finds an ancient well. When the lion becomes impatient after waiting for a long time, he goes out in search of food. The hare tells him that he was going to come to him, but was stopped by another lion who claimed to be the king of jungle. The lion gets infuriated when he hears this and demands to meet the other lion. The hare takes him to the well and tells the lion to look inside. The lion sees his own reflection and in anger, jumps inside the well to kill the other lion and dies.<sup>14</sup>

There are similarities between this story and the Ethiopian *Greedy Dog* (used in the author's fictional work, *The Storyteller*) and Aesop's fable, *The Dog and the Shadow*, in the use of reflections to fool the greedy character.

Comparisons of myths, legends and stories across the world have been the subject of research by Okpewho, Finnegan, Krappe among others. Okpewho identified different approaches to the study of oral narrative in Africa and quotes Roscoe's findings on the Baganda traditions of Uganda where a history was created to 'explain the origin of their race, their kings and their gods' which emerged as different versions of legends but developed into 'a trustworthy account of the origin of man and beast.'<sup>15</sup> Okpewho also refers to Propp's 'functions'<sup>16</sup> identifying common motifs amongst fairy tales, and to Lévi-Strauss who identified that: 'a myth is still felt as a myth by any reader anywhere in the world.'<sup>17</sup> The use of the numbers two and three is common in tales reputedly from Ethiopia (such as in *An Act of Kindness*, *The Three Wise Men* and *The Clever Son* which are reproduced in *The Storyteller*) and in fairy tales<sup>18</sup> such as those which the Brothers Grimm collected and published in German.<sup>19</sup>

Whether or not similar stories emerged in different parts of the world or migrated with the movement of peoples, they were invariably subject to modification, elaboration and all manner of change while they remained in their oral form. Thus the role of the storytellers also has importance.

### **Storytellers and the art of storytelling**

Finnegan emphasised the: ‘significance of performance in oral literature [which] goes beyond a mere matter of definition: for the nature of the performance itself can make an important contribution to the impact of the particular literary form being exhibited.’<sup>20</sup>

Osayimwense Osa and Hale both described the importance and functions of oral storytellers in western sub-Saharan Africa, the griots, which not only involved words but also ‘advising, diplomacy, and instrumental music.’<sup>21</sup> Hale, who referred to Haley’s *Roots*, went on to explain that their:

...profession is as old as the civilization of West African Sahel and Savanna regions and it is apparent that these wordsmiths are not simply a caste of parasitic buffoons or minstrels clinging to ancient ways. They are instead a dynamic and distinct element of many West African societies.

Griots possess a kind of verbal power that links them inextricably to those who hold other forms of power in society – or who would like to appear as holding such power.

<sup>22</sup>

Lorentzon described how the griot was praised as both an entertainer and an educator stating: ‘the former instance can be understood as a narrating technique, where rhetoric as *persuasion* has precedence. The task of the historian is more concerned with motif, the content or moral to be taught.’<sup>23</sup>

While griots were to be found in western African countries like Nigeria and Ghana before spreading to the Diaspora, the *azmari* singers of Ethiopia continue to perform a similar function. Their role is to entertain through song and verse making up the content



based on the people in the audience, the current political situation and other factors. There is a particular form of verse in Ethiopia known as *sem-enná werq* (wax and gold) in which there are two layers of meaning: the literal meaning is the ‘wax’ while the hidden meaning is the ‘gold.’<sup>24</sup>

Famous among the African writers, Chinua Achebe used oral storytelling examples and techniques within his own works to get nearer to his people. In his novel, *Things Fall Apart*,<sup>25</sup> he links the traditions of the Igbo people with storytelling and language. He includes proverbs, folk tales and songs from their language to convey its quality. Achebe is a master of storytelling who has achieved recognition by both his own people and the world at large. Habila states: ‘...it is a mark of Achebe’s genius as a narrator that one could hear him many times on the same subject and never grow bored – a reminder that in the art of the storyteller, it is not content alone that matters, it is also the performance, the presentation and the passion.’<sup>26</sup> Achebe told the BBC in an interview that the oral tradition was not essential and Africans should not be ‘overly concerned’ if the art of storytelling was to die out although he saw the importance of maintaining his mother tongue, in spite of the fact that he actually writes in his colonial language, English, stating: ‘I hope I have shown it is possible to show respect to English and Igbo together.’<sup>27</sup> Okpewho describes the talent of Achebe in subtly exploiting ‘the material of the oral tradition’<sup>28</sup> and the inclusion of proverbs and selected short stories from his native Igbo in his books.

Whatever lies in the future for African storytelling, the rich resource of stories should live on through the efforts of researchers and writers who gather traditional oral narratives and write them down, perform them or use them as the basis for their own original works. Language and culture play a valuable part in this literature. The songs and

poems use a highly stylized form and, 'meter and rhythm are more important than conceptual coherence because in traditional society every word is charged with a particular force.'<sup>29</sup> Okpewho also described how traditional African songs rely on repetition which gives the writing a different flavour to that we recognise in European prose and poetry.

[...] such language exhibits artistic beauty in content and draws its power from specific linguistic features, such as alliteration, repetition, rhyme, rhythm, mnemonic, ideophone, euphemism, and synecdoche. These devices not only make the expression unusual but also make it appealing and therefore easily remembered.<sup>30</sup>

He identified clear differences between the oral narratives and the print versions in terms of the amount of description and the 'desire to incorporate certain elements (ideas, techniques, etc.) of modern culture into the material of an old tale if only as a way of stressing the immanence of the old ways.'<sup>31</sup> The content of the stories was thus important in their evolution and preservation.

### **Subject matter of African oral stories**

While the context of storytelling may differ considerably in different parts of the world, particularly Africa, the content of the narratives compares more closely to the myths, fables and stories found in other parts of the world. Finnegan cited scholars such as Chatelain who: 'could assert with confidence in his authoritative survey that many myths, characters and incidents known elsewhere also occur in African narratives, and that African folklore is thus a 'branch of one universal tree.'<sup>32</sup> Such poetry and prose can be based on beliefs, explanations of creation and why things are as they are. They may use common features and characters such as animals, mythical creatures as well as humans including the stepmother who is often as wicked as her Western counterpart in Hansel and Gretel or

Sleeping Beauty. Ethiopian examples include *Mamo the Fool*,<sup>33</sup> (reproduced in *The Storyteller*) the *Story of Jahiti and her Sister* from the Shinasha, in the Benishangul region and *The Wicked Stepmother*, an Arsi story from Oromia. In countries where polygamy still exists, although it may be unlawful, and where death may still take mothers at an early age, children may relate to such tales.

### **Animal Tales**

Many stories use animals that are common to or known about in the country where they are told. Although lions are rare sights, even in African countries, they are widely used to depict strength, sometimes cruelty and even stupidity. According to Knappert, in many African religions lions are ‘revered as a god’ and they are assumed to be so potent that ‘even one hair from the eyebrows of a lion is believed (in the Horn of Africa) to give a woman power over her husband so that she can have children from him by catching his mind.’<sup>34</sup>

The use of hares is also universal often depicting wisdom and cunning although in the story that Aesop wrote called the *Lion and the Hare* it is the lion’s greed rather than the wiliness of the hare that results in the latter surviving. The Ethiopian tale of the same name in *The Storyteller* depicts a different fable where the hare again outwits the lion. Another story used in *The Storyteller* explains why monkeys are found up trees. A similar African story has been used in one of the BBC’s animated stories for its acclaimed children’s television series, *Tinga Tinga Tales*.<sup>35</sup>

Hares are frequently seen in stories across the world and tend to carry the same characteristics. In the Panchatantra stories of India the hare is wily and cunning and further



north, in Tibet, its cleverness outwits the tiger. Often stories about hares are similar in different communities, particularly across Africa:

In one pan-African story, the Moon sends Hare, her divine messenger, down to earth to give mankind the gift of immortality. "Tell them," she says, "that just as the Moon dies and rises again, so shall you." But Hare, in the role of trickster buffoon, manages to get the message wrong, bestowing mortality instead and bringing death to the human world. The Moon is so angry, she beats Hare with a stick, splitting his nose (as it remains today). It is Hare's role to lead the dead to the Afterlife in penance for what he's done.<sup>36</sup>

Many stories about the hare, or rabbit, transferred to the west through the slaves who took their storytelling traditions with them and, combined with the stories of the native American Indians, this led to stories of Br'er Rabbit surviving to this day. It is the wise hare who wins the hand of a princess in the Ethiopian tale that was reproduced for a young British audience to solve the problem of how to win against strong competition.<sup>37</sup>

Hyenas also conjure up strong but often sinister images and in addition to stories about hyenas, there are also tales about hyena men and hyena women<sup>38</sup> across Africa which appear at night. Knappert identified one story of a hyena man from Sofara (Mali) who went hunting at night to provide his children with meat but, when he became old he changed his eldest son into a hyena then died suddenly. The son could not change back to human form so wandered around the village until the inhabitants felt sorry for him and fed him.<sup>39</sup>

The purpose of stories is partly for entertainment for adults<sup>40</sup> as well as children; sometimes they offer an explanation and sometimes education in the form of epics and also in proverbs. Vambe considers the 'complexity of the African oral storytelling tradition in its variety of forms such as songs, allegory, folktale, spirit-possession, fantasy and myth, ancestry veneration, ritual, legend, proverbs, fables and jokes amongst others.'<sup>41</sup> He agrees with Eileen Julien and notes that: 'whether it is folktale, fable, the fantastic or myth, there

is a desire to reveal that there is no single definition of the 'real' in the ways these narratives construct and represent reality. This capacity for orature/literature to say one thing and mean another is the allegorical dimension in art... (i.e. that the reality is made to appear as if it actually happened in another time or place with different people).<sup>42</sup>

### **Explanation Tales**

Explanations of why things are as they are and the search for meaning appear in many stories. Some relate to the creation myth. Jan Knappert cites a number of examples from different African countries including that myth held by the Efe tribe of Zaire which bears comparison with the story of Adam and Eve in the Bible. Their story explained how God created the first man, Baatsi, out of soil and when God had finished making him, told him that he and his children could eat any of the fruits except the *tahu* fruit which belonged to the spirits of the dead. The God created a woman and gave her to Baatsi. When she became pregnant she insisted that he gave her the *tahu* fruit to eat. God found out and punished them by taking their immortality away from them.<sup>43</sup> In Ethiopia Laird's retelling of the tale of *When the World Began* the focus is on why man became the master of cattle and the buffalo.

Tales from across the world have sought to explain why creatures act in such a way or have particular features or characteristics. From eastern Nigeria come the tales of *Why the Bush-Fowl Calls at Dawn and Why Flies Buzz* told by the Ekoi tribe and another tale from the same country but a different tribe, the Ibibio which explains *Why the Bat Flies at Night*.<sup>44</sup> In Ethiopia stories abound about why animals behave as they do including *Why Monkeys swing from Tree to Tree*.<sup>45</sup> Achebe also uses the stories passed down through

generations of Igbo Nigerians in an explanatory way, particularly in his book *Things Fall Apart*.

All of the birds have been invited to a feast in the sky and Tortoise persuades the birds to lend him feathers to make wings so that he can attend the feast as well. As they travel to the feast, Tortoise also persuades them to take new names for the feast according to custom. He tells the birds that his name will be "All of you." When they arrive, Tortoise asks his hosts for whom the feast is prepared. They reply, "For all of you." Tortoise proceeds to eat and drink the best parts of the food and wine. The birds, angry and disgruntled at receiving only scraps, take back the feathers that they had given to Tortoise so that he is unable to fly home. Tortoise persuades Parrot to deliver a message to his wife: he wants her to cover their compound with their soft things so that he may jump from the sky without danger. Maliciously, Parrot tells Tortoise's wife to bring out all of the hard things. When Tortoise jumps, his shell breaks into pieces on impact. A medicine man puts it together again, which is why Tortoise's shell is not smooth.<sup>46</sup>

Another tale of the *Tortoise and an Eagle* by Aesop concludes with the tortoise, who has begged the eagle to teach him to fly, falling to earth and crashing to his death. A different tale of these same two characters, this time from Central Africa, shows how their friendship is tested when the eagle tries to deny the tortoise the same hospitality. Once again the tortoise is threatened with falling to his death but he clings onto the eagle's talons and is safely returned, a lesson having been learnt by the eagle.<sup>47</sup>

Such use of oral stories is common across most African countries. Mende, the Sudanese subject of a book about her cruel abduction and experience of slavery, described how her father would tell her family stories around the fire explaining beliefs among their own people.

My father was telling the story of why the Nuba never hunt monkeys. .... Lots of black, hairy monkeys lived in the forest around our village, but we never hunted them. My father said that the reason they looked so human was that they had once really been people, but they had been bad during their lives and so Allah decided to turn them into monkeys. And that's why we never killed them and ate them.<sup>48</sup>



## Proverbs

Proverbs are also important in that they too are rooted in the culture and: ‘are interwoven in local languages. At the same time, they constitute a sub-language of their own.’ according to Cotter who wrote:

Proverbs that deal with ethical and moral issues reach not only the head but also the conscience. They stir the conscience, they give assurance, they help in the exercise of deciding between good and evil, justice and injustice, right and wrong. Many are highly pregnant with religious content accumulated over the generations. They address themselves to all parts of society [...]<sup>49</sup>

Finnegan’s research into the African proverb identified a general agreement that: ‘[i]t is a saying in more or less fixed form marked by ‘shortness, sense, and salt’ and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it.’<sup>50</sup> She noted that, as with other oral forms of literature, they were widespread across the continent (yet absent from some regions) and were ‘interwoven’ with other forms of verbal art such as music.<sup>51</sup>

Benjamin wrote: ‘[a] proverb, one might say, is a ruin which stands on the site of an old story and in which a moral twines about a happening like ivy around a wall.’<sup>52</sup> He further explained:

... the storyteller joins the ranks of the teachers and sages. He has counsel – not for a few situations, as the proverb does, but for many, like the sage. For it is granted to him to reach back to a whole lifetime (a life, incidentally, that comprises not only his own experience but no little of the experience of others; what the storyteller knows from hearsay is added to his own). His gift is the ability to relate his life; his distinction, to be able to tell his entire life. The storyteller: he is the man who could let the wick of his life be consumed completely by the gentle flame of his story....The storyteller is the figure in which the righteous man encounters himself.<sup>53</sup>

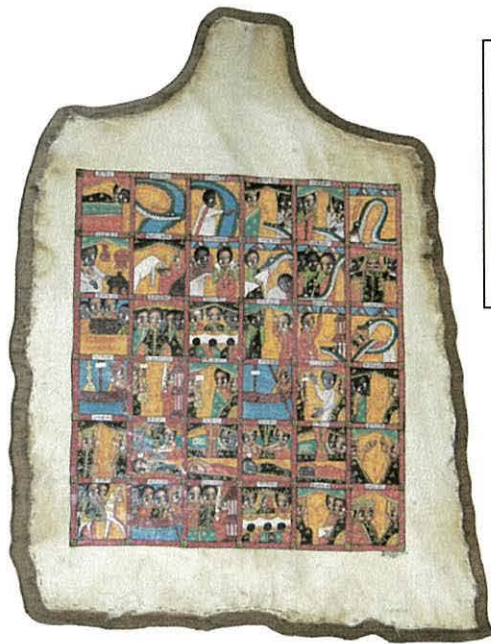
Lorentzon quotes Solomon Olyaseres’ work in describing the tradition of evaluation within African oral literature where: ‘every recital was followed by an analysis and appraisal by the audience, particularly by the elders, who were themselves skilled in the

arts of story-telling and rhetoric.<sup>54</sup> In Ethiopia, in particular, the importance of oral storytelling traditions is evidenced in this next section.

### **Ethiopian oral literature and the emergence of written stories**

Ethiopia is a country with a long history of writing. Even though literacy is still far from universal, storytelling remains important in many parts of the country. Evidence of the stories told for centuries appears in the Christian literature which survives. Some of the oldest stories told in Ethiopia are located in the *Kebrā Nagast*, (The Glory of Kings of Ethiopia) which, according to Budge, was probably compiled by a Coptic priest and dates back to about the 6<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. It was then translated into Arabic with additions and transformation and subsequently translated into an Ethiopian language and, even as far back as the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Bruce had produced an English summary of the document. The content of this document includes: ‘legends and traditions, some historical and some of a purely folk-lore character, derived from the Old Testament and the later Rabbinic writings, and from Egyptian (both pagan and Christian), Arabian, and Ethiopian sources.’<sup>55</sup>

One of the most important myths<sup>56</sup> is that of the Queen of Sheba and Solomon which supposedly justified the Solomonic Dynasty ending with the reign of Haile Selassie I. The British Museum has a 1971 painting of this tale by Afewerq Mangesha, a type of cartoon illustration that is commonly available across Ethiopia.



The story of King Solomon and Queen Sheba, painting by Afewerq Mangesha AD 1971 from Ethiopia (112.00 cm x 84.00 cm Donated by Lady Margaret Jean Campbell to British Museum 1991 Af8.25)

The main theme of this story is the visit by the Queen of Sheba (believed to have been an Ethiopian in that part of the world) to King Solomon in Jerusalem. As described on the British Museum site:

It begins by explaining how Ethiopia was terrorised by a serpent called Wainaba who demanded a sacrifice in exchange for water... Hearing of Solomon's great wisdom, Queen Sheba decided to visit him, taking with her gifts of gold, sapphires and ivory. Although she was received with honour, on the last night of her visit Solomon tricked her into sleeping with him and she returned to Ethiopia pregnant with a son... and when he grew up he went to seek his father in Jerusalem. Solomon recognised and acknowledged him as his son and educated him in the art of kingship... he ruled as Emperor Menelik I, becoming the first in a long line of what became known as Solomonic kings. He is also believed to have brought the Ark of the Covenant from Jerusalem to Ethiopia along with the first born sons of Solomon's court.<sup>57</sup>

This story is told across Ethiopia and, along with other tales from the *Kebre Nagast*, appears to be still believed by some. As Budge wrote in his preface:

It must be said at once that we shall never know whether the queen who visited SOLOMON was a pure-blooded ABYSSINIAN or an Arab queen from YAMAN or HADRAMAUT or some other part of the great Arabian peninsula. But the tradition that some "Queen of the South" *did* visit SOLOMON is so old and so widespread, that a kernel of historical fact, however small, must be hidden somewhere in it.... As Christianity spread southwards the idea of the Solomonic ancestry of the kings of



ETHIOPIA in the period between the sixth and the thirteenth centuries gained ground everywhere.<sup>58</sup>

Oral storytelling ensured that this story, just like the Christian nativity story, was recognized and accepted by Ethiopians as part of their culture. Although acknowledged for its long history of writing, Ethiopia was not a literate nation and there continues to be a high level of illiteracy, particularly among the adult population. However, the stories such as those in the *Kebre Nagast* also survived because they were compiled and recorded in books and manuscripts. It is still a matter of contention that a large number of these old documents, including two copies of the *Kebre Nagast*, are in Britain, located in the British Museum, the Windsor Collection, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Library. They were collected by Napier's troops following the death of Emperor Theodros II at Maqdela, the subject of the author's story, *Back in Time*.

The Maqdela Collection, as it became known, was a library of manuscripts and books gathered by Theodros from churches in Gondar and his other domains. Rita Pankhurst quotes from the missionary Waldmeier's description of the sacking of Gondar in 1866: '...houses were plundered, hidden treasures sought out and stolen, churches robbed of their holy relics, their prayer books, their other old documents.'<sup>59</sup> Richard Pankhurst said: '[t]he quantity of books and manuscripts taken amounted to the equivalent of both Ethiopia's national library and national archives.'<sup>60</sup>

When Courlander and Leslau collected stories during the 1950s, they attributed the wealth of literature to the Christian and Muslim influences overlying older traditions and the European invasions. They were able to identify regional differences with stories told in Muslim areas (such as Somalia and Harar) tending: 'towards the episodic and heroic' while

the characteristics of stories from strong Christian communities were: ‘sharp and often poignant.’<sup>61</sup>

In 1982 Seifu Metaferia wrote a paper based on his study of oral literature in Ethiopia. He noted that the oral telling of tales was often done during daytime when the cattle were being herded and children would sit under a tree. On such occasions the narrator would often finish the tale with the saying: ‘*tarateen mallis, afeen badaabbo abbis*,’<sup>62</sup> which, according to Michael Daniel Ambatchew, means now it’s your turn; nourish my mind with a story and my body with bread. Seifu stated that a number of Amharic proverbs reflected adult prejudice towards children. He wrote: ‘*lij acaawaachinna atint yammigit and naachaw*. He who amuses a child, and he who eats meat from a piece of bone, especially show ugly faces.’<sup>63</sup> He also explained the characters in the tales told in Ethiopia, for example, the gabaree, or farmer, was hard working but was mistreated or deceived by his wife against whom he used a stick. The donkey was often ‘hyena prey’ and therefore an unfortunate character while the goat symbolized profanity and the baboon was foolish and paid for his folly.

Amhara region provides only part of Ethiopia’s rich store of oral folk tales, poetry, proverbs and other literary forms. There are thousands of Amharic proverbs (in 1980 a collection of 3878 was noted in *Journal of Semitic Studies*)<sup>64</sup> written in the language of Amhara region which is also taught and used nationally. One commonly heard proverb translates roughly as ‘little by little an egg will walk’, meaning things take their own time. Conversely, one is now less likely to hear the saying, ‘women and donkeys need the stick.’

Poems and songs also contribute to the literary culture of the region created and presented for occasions such as war, death, weddings, hunting and work, sometimes

directed at children. Getie Gelaye gathered information on Amharic oral literature, one of many involved in this area of research. His study of children's songs in Amharic acknowledges the work of others including Seifu Metaferia and a German, Eugen Mittwoch, who was the first to deal with the subject of children's songs and games in Amharic in his article in 1910. As Getie noted from his own field research: '... the most common occasion for the performance of children's songs is while looking after the cattle and watching the harvest ... In their songs, children raise matters related to the interrelationship of individuals residing in their own community such as hard working and lazy peasants, husband and wife affairs, etc., and comment on issues related to local politics and administration.'<sup>65</sup> He also provided examples of verse composed after the Derg government fell in 1991 when children were no longer sent to the war front including: '[h]ere comes a donkey loaded with cow dung, There is no longer military recruitment.'<sup>66</sup> According to Fekade Azeze, the first line does not necessarily connect to the second line but provides the rhyming syllables. Such examples support the statement that: 'unlike written literature, orature has unfixed boundaries, which gives it greater freedom in its execution and interpretation – it can thus be used to praise and criticize those in power.'<sup>67</sup>

In the 1920s an Italian, Enrico Cerulli, made an in-depth study of the Oromo, a people covering much of southern and central Ethiopia, extending into Kenya, with their own language and the largest share of the Ethiopian population. Melbaa refutes the belief that the Oromo came to Ethiopia after the Amhara people, first quoting Bates who said in 1979: '[t]he ... (Oromo) were a very ancient race, the indigenous stock, perhaps, on which most other peoples in this part of eastern Africa have been grafted.'<sup>68</sup>



Cerulli located and translated many of the Oromo songs, stories and proverbs,<sup>69</sup> often passed down from father to son. This may have changed in more recent times as Boki Tola, a lecturer in Oromia, told the author that in his experience it is grandfathers who tell the stories – fathers being too busy. Among Cerulli's sources was a *Galla Spelling Book* by Onesimos Nesib, a native Oromo, printed near Massowah, in 1894. Among the many examples included, transcribed in the local language alongside the English translation, are a number of proverbs including: '[w]ith one wife, the heart is warmed; with the other wife, the kettle is warmed,'<sup>70</sup> reflecting the practice of polygamy which would have been acceptable among the mainly Muslim population in earlier times. This and other proverbs, verses and folktales on the subject of the role of women are further discussed in the next chapter on the context in Ethiopian children's literature. Cotter also describes how the Oromo were fond of their proverbs, *mamaska*, and used them wherever the context allowed, their being particularly effective in groups, requiring a: 'reflective pause and then a response.'<sup>71</sup>

John Hamer in his studies of folktales among the Sidama people of the southern region of Ethiopia found that they often had an impact on the production and circulation of wealth. The area where this people live is one where the cultivation and preparation of crops - enset (false banana) and maize - and cattle rearing, are the main family occupations. Hamer's research in the 1960s included collecting over eighty tales of two types: one was said to have originated as mothers attempted to distract children during the long meal process so that they forgot their hunger; the other, often told by men in groups, had a moral and was used to settle a dispute or make a point.<sup>72</sup>

He provides an example of tale about a lion meeting a wild sheep and their mutual agreement to watch over each other and ensure that no harm came to them while they ate. As the sheep became fat the lion wanted to eat it but the sheep warned that if that happened nothing would happen to the lion but it would destroy any descendents. The lion wasn't bothered and lunged at the sheep which caught the lion on its horn, fatally wounding it. As it lay dying the lion asked why he, and not his descendents, should have suffered. The sheep responded that the lion was paying for what its father or father's father had done. This story had apparently been told at a meeting of elders where the relatives of a recently deceased villain wanted the memory of the man's crimes to be excused. 'Then the old elder says, "In like manner we must protect the children of the deceased who are blameless, by accepting the fine."'73

Elsewhere in Ethiopia there is evidence of the oral storytelling tradition among the different ethnic groups. In the Omo Valley region, part of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), there are agriculturalists such as the Basketo group which has a tale of the *Lion King, Hyena and Clever Monkey*, pastoralists such as the Banna people, highland agriculturalists including the Yem people who tell the tale of the *Selfish Baboon and the Clever Monkey*<sup>74</sup> and Gamo people who tell a tale about the *Verdict of a Serpent*. These stories all use fantasy to offer hope and justice as well as fostering self-confidence, growth and development. 'The characters of the tales are everyday people or animals using minds, skills or cleverness to achieve objectives – success does not come from supernatural actions, or unexplained events, but from the wise use of reason and common sense.'<sup>75</sup> Wild animals are portrayed but there is no reference to religion or money.

Research into this subject has developed in Ethiopia with a course in oral literature included in the Addis Ababa University Department of Languages and Literature in 1979 and a graduate programme in Folklore and Ethiopian Literature in 2003.<sup>76</sup> Field research has been undertaken across Ethiopia for decades, studying evidence in many of the different languages and the range of Ethiopian oral literature, including the role of the *asmari* (minstrel) and the impact of more recent historical and political events on poetry and songs in different languages such as Afan Oromo, the language used by the character Abraham/Ibrahim in *The Storyteller* by the author.

Oral literature has a number of functions for different audiences, including entertainment and teaching. Finnegan wrote: '[s]tories, for instance, are told to educate and socialize children, or, by drawing a moral, to warn people not to break the norms of the society.'<sup>77</sup> In addition to the stories which have become part of the Ethiopian culture, a large number of which are now available on the website [www.ethiopianfolktales.com](http://www.ethiopianfolktales.com), as well as in written children's literature, Ethiopian writers and illustrators have also captured stories from other parts of the world and translated them into Amharic. Alem Eshetu has produced illustrated books using stories such as *One Greek Slave and a Lion* (possibly based on Aesop's tale), *The Truthful John* and *The Three Soldiers* (possibly from Grimm) which appear in a compilation under the title translated as *The Old Witch*<sup>78</sup> using imported illustrations, possibly from original volumes of these tales.

Seifu recognised that oral literature is: 'between a state of agedness and that of rejuvenation.' and stated that: 'the popularizer will attempt to take every oral literacy piece he collects, in this case, tales, stories etc. to freely work on, so as to make them appealing reading material to kids.'<sup>79</sup> That task continues in Ethiopia with the purpose of making



literature relevant to the young people of and from a nation, preserving the rich legacy of oral resources from the different regions and cultures and creating a vast library of fascinating tales that will continue to enthrall young and old from across the world for generations to come. This will require care for as Melrose wrote: '[i]t is a myth that somehow the fantasy of a pure story exists in any represented form. Nonetheless, despite cultural shifts and historical scholarship, a storyteller must, by necessity, take certain precautions in presenting a translation.'<sup>80</sup>

To preserve the oral storytelling tradition may be a lost cause in a world where technology and education have moved people away from such a culture. What seems more important now is to fully appreciate this art form while protecting as many as possible of the stories, rhymes, riddles and proverbs in a retrievable format and sharing them.<sup>81</sup> Laird and Sargent explained how the Ethiopian folktales were gathered and made available digitally in English and explained some of the stories and their comparisons with other fables in different parts of the world.<sup>82</sup> The question of who was to use this collection and what for led to a suggestion that, as computer access increases in the country, the educational role for which the stories were originally compiled would be realised.

In Ethiopia modern technology is also playing its part in preserving this tradition:

Ababa Tesfaye is a renowned children story-teller on Ethiopian national television. Every night at the beginning of the popular children's show, he presents folk-tales to children accompanied by his hallmark conspicuous passion and enthusiasm. He is a fascinating character for generations of Ethiopian children and his unique zeal is always intact. He has been putting smiles on the faces of children while providing them with complete grounding in Ethiopian history, cultural practices and etiquette. His stories and the way they are told are among most Ethiopians' favorite childhood memories for they are unique, quite telling, and most of all, enjoyable.<sup>83</sup>

With the growth in use of electronic readers such as Kindle and iPad, technology could help preserve and develop oral storytelling for children in Ethiopia, as in the rest of the

world. Access to mobile phones and computers is increasing among a young population already familiar with the TV screen in the classroom;<sup>84</sup> the electronic book may prove to be one solution to publishing problems in this vast country. The internationally broadcast *Tinga Tinga Tales*<sup>85</sup> have brought African folktales including those collected by the children's story writer and illustrator, John Kilaka from Tanzania, into the homes of a wide audience. Yet they have yet to reach many of the places in Africa where these stories originated. In John Kilaka's own words:

Every day at dawn I was walking by foot, some hours, looking for people who know the stories. To walk by foot for hours is hard if you want to work well, later I rented bicycle from my host so that I could be able to get in some places where I wanted to go for finding story tellers.

The culture of story-telling is disappearing, so not many people knows the stories anymore. But on lucky day, you will find a story-teller, and then you will enjoy listening to amazing stories.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Papworth, H. (June, 2011) 'Oral Storytelling and its Importance in Ethiopian Children's Stories' paper presented to Great Writing Conference, London, June, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Haley, A. (1976) *Roots*, New York: Doubleday & Co Inc., p61.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid p9.

<sup>4</sup> 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, p14.

<sup>5</sup> Melrose A. (2001) *Storykeeping – The Story, the Child and the Word in Cultural Crisis*, Carlisle UK: Paternoster Press, p46.

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin, W. (1968 reprinted 2007) *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken Books, p83.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid p91.

<sup>8</sup> Yet Berger and Quinney (2005) refute this writing: '... since the last quarter of the twentieth century, we seem to have undergone a storytelling revival. The writing and reading of autobiography and biography are more popular than ever.' *Storytelling and Sociology Narrative as Social Inquiry*, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p8.

<sup>9</sup> Bettelheim, B. (1976 reprinted 1991) *The Uses of Enchantment*, London: Penguin. 'The motif of the two brothers is central to the oldest fairy tale, which was found in an Egyptian papyrus of 1250 B.C.' p91.

<sup>10</sup> Krappe, A. H. (1962) *The Science of Folklore*, London: Methuen, p60. 'The animal tale in its most primitive form is essentially an aetiological story, i.e. a tale purporting to explain a cause...From the very childhood of the race Man may be presumed to have shown considerable interest in the animal world around



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him, for reasons of pure self-interest, if not from intellectual curiosity. But even the savage is a keen observer and is struck by the zoological peculiarities of each animal form.' Krappe was sceptical as to the African origin of certain folklore (fairy tales). 'It may...be seriously questioned whether either Ethiopians or American Indians are at all capable of the sustained interest required by the ordinary fairy tale with its string of various adventures.' p3 While his language borders on naïve racism, his apparently prejudicial attitude towards African mythology compares to that of Finnegan who Okpewho quoted in the preface to his 1983 book, *Myth in Africa* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, '...myths in any strict sense do not seem, on the evidence we have, to be a characteristic African form at all' p1x. This thesis does not, however, claim to prove the origin of the stories, myths and other tales which claim to be Ethiopian.

<sup>11</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesop%27s\\_Fables#Aesop\\_and\\_Ethiopian\\_Traditions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aesop%27s_Fables#Aesop_and_Ethiopian_Traditions) and <http://www.aesops-fables.org.uk/> include suggestions of links between Aesop and Ethiopia, downloaded on 9/11/2010. Krappe, (op cit p65) wrote '...Aesop of doubtful historicity, whom tradition credits with the invention of the Greek fable, was probably no Greek at all, ... but in all probability a Semitic slave writing in Ionia.'

<sup>12</sup> Servi, K. (2006) *Greek Mythology*, Athens: Ekdotike Athenon S.A.

<sup>13</sup> An explanation for the source of these tales according to Krappe (op cit p41) is that they came to Europe from India after Alexander the Great's India campaign and then became part of the Arabian Nights before becoming certain Panchatantra stories. They had therefore migrated twice.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.iloveindia.com/literature/sanskrit/panchatantra.html>., downloaded from web site 11/1/2010.

<sup>15</sup> Okpewho, I. (1983) *Myth in Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p5. Okpewho also noted here how the 'need to impress in men the moral truth that wickedness and cruelty in the long run meet with their due reward' led to a vast increase in stories and proverbs. Comparisons could be made with origin of the myths and proverbs in Ethiopia. The question of where myths originated is also raised; the Aryan hypothesis p3, the Egyptianist theory p238 and the Abyssinian movement p286, the latter a reaction by those Africans who saw the black race as the descendents of the lost tribes of Israel which came to Ethiopia and established their Coptic Christian faith rather than deriving from 'Egypt with its Islamic implications'.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid p 53

<sup>17</sup> Ibid p39

<sup>18</sup> Krappe, (op cit p4), inferred that, until non Aryan variants appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, fairy tales were assumed to be of Aryan origin.

<sup>19</sup> Bettelheim, (op cit p 102), makes reference to the Brothers' Grimm use of three in *The Three Feathers*. 'The number three in fairy tales often seems to refer to what in psycho-analysis is viewed as the three aspects of the mind: id, ego, and superego.' Krappe, (op cit p31), wrote, 'In the technique of the fairy tale the observation of certain customary rules or 'laws' is clearly noticeable. Thus the numbers two and three prevail almost throughout.'

<sup>20</sup> Finnegan, R. (1976) *Oral Literature in Africa*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, p2.

<sup>21</sup> Hale, T. A. (2007) *Griots and Griottes*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, p18.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid p317.

<sup>23</sup> Lorentzon, L.(1998) *An African Focus' A study of Ayi Armah's Narrative Africanization*, Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell Int., p17.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.wax-gold.com/> provides further information, downloaded 28/3/2011.



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<sup>25</sup> Achebe, C. (1958) *Things Fall Apart*, Oxford: Heinemann International Publishing.

<sup>26</sup> Habila, H. 'Pride and Passion; Sunday Guardian Review, 13/02/2010, p 9, referring to Achebe C. (2009) *The Education of a British-Protected Child*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Okpewho, I. (1983) *Myth in Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, also comments on translated collections of folk tales. 'The principal mark of these efforts at preservation by Africans is the sheer joy of wading in the lush legacies of the race.' p161

<sup>27</sup> BBC NEWS <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/africa/4380400.stm>., downloaded on 2/1/2010.

<sup>28</sup> Okpewho, I. (1992) *African Oral Literature*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p315 He also quotes Achebe in *Myth in Africa* telling us that among the Igbo 'proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten'. p 161,181-2.

<sup>29</sup> Okpewho (1992) op cit p9

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Gikandi, S. (ed.) (2005) *Encyclopaedia of African Literature*, London: Routledge [www.infomar.org/files.php?file=EnglishDictionaries/...pdf](http://www.infomar.org/files.php?file=EnglishDictionaries/...pdf) ., downloaded on 3/3/2010.

<sup>31</sup> Okpewho, I. (1983) *Myth in Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p 187 & 215. 'In the contemporary creative writing of Africa, the element of performance can be seen in terms of the freedom which the artist is willing to assume from the received material of the oral tradition;...' p263

<sup>32</sup> Finnegan (1976) op cit p29.

<sup>33</sup> The format of this fairy tale fits with identified criteria e.g. 'There is a good deal of humour also in the types centring the adventures of a 'fool', often enough likewise a 'widow's son', Krappe (op cit p25) wrote: 'The innumerable fairy tales in which the hero is at first depicted as a simpleton...' 'There are many fairy tales in which an all-too-serious princess is won by the man who can make her laugh...' Bettelheim op cit p103 & 186.

<sup>34</sup> Knappert, J. (1995) *An Encyclopedia of Myth and Legend - African Mythology*, London: Diamond Books, p141. The moral of this story, Michael Daniel Ambatchew explained, is that if a woman is wise and careful enough to tame a lion to pluck a hair from its eyebrow, she would easily be able to do the same with her husband.

<sup>35</sup> 'You see there was a time when Monkey used to play on the ground and he loved to wind up Crocodile. One day the big rains came and Monkey became stranded up a mango tree. Nasty Crocodile promised to take him to dry land but only in exchange for his heart! So Monkey tricked Crocodile, and when Crocodile found out that Monkey swapped his heart for a measly mango, he chased Monkey up a tree. From that day on Monkey swings in the trees keeping well clear of Crocodile's angry snaps.' <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00qzkwq>., downloaded on 11/4/2011.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.endicott-studio.com/rdrm/rr/Rabbits3.html>., downloaded on 11/1/2010.

<sup>37</sup> King, J. (2002) *The Tales of Grampa Sea*, Shropshire: Grampa Sea Publishing, p30.

<sup>38</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>39</sup> Knappert (1995) op cit p114.

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<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Laird, who made five trips round the regions to gather tales for Ethiopian school reading books, emphasized the fact that Ethiopian folk tales were originally intended for adults. (telephone conversation on 8/12/2010) Other experts such as Finnegan acknowledge this fact.

<sup>41</sup> Vambe, M. T. (2004) *African Storytelling Tradition and the Zimbabwean Novel in English*, S.Africa: UNISA, p4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid p4.

<sup>43</sup> Knappert (1995) op cit p58.

<sup>44</sup> Arnott, K. (1962 reprinted 2000) *Tales from Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press p 152.

<sup>45</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/things/canalysis.html> - Summary of Chapter 11, downloaded on 11/1/2010.

<sup>47</sup> A version of this story is located on <http://www.angelfire.com/ma3/mythology/friendship.html>., downloaded on 9/11/2010.

<sup>48</sup> Nazer M. & Lewis D (2007) *Slave*, London:Virago, p90.

<sup>49</sup> Cotter, G. (1997) *African Proverbs Series Vol 1 Ethiopian Wisdom – Proverbs and Sayings of the Oromo People* South Africa: UNISA, pvii and x.

<sup>50</sup> Finnegan (1976) op cit p393.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid p392.

<sup>52</sup> Benjamin (1968) op cit p108

<sup>53</sup> Ibid p108-9.

<sup>54</sup> Lorentzon (1998) op cit p35.

<sup>55</sup> Budge, Sir E.A.W. Preface to present edition of Kebra Nagast <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/kn/kn000-1.htm> p iii, downloaded on 2/3/2010

<sup>56</sup> Finnegan (1976) op cit p362 -3, cites Bascom's description of myths as 'often associated with theology [...] set in an earlier world' which she notes are not common in African oral literature.

<sup>57</sup> [http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://www.britishmuseum.org/images/solomonseba\\_m.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight\\_objects/aoa/s/the\\_story\\_of\\_solomon\\_and\\_sheba](http://images.google.co.uk/imgres?imgurl=http://www.britishmuseum.org/images/solomonseba_m.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aoa/s/the_story_of_solomon_and_sheba) , downloaded on 2/3/2010.

<sup>58</sup> Budge, Sir E.A.W.(2000) downloaded on 2/3/2010.

<sup>59</sup> Pankhurst, R. (1973) 'The Library of Emperor Theodros II at Maqdala (Magdala)' <http://www.jstor.org/pss/613105>, downloaded on 2/3/2010.

<sup>60</sup> Independent Newspaper reporter, Terry Kirby (19/10/2004) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/hidden-in-a-british-museum-basement-the-lost-ark-looted-by-colonial-raiders-535318.html>., downloaded on 2/3/2010

<sup>61</sup> Courlander, H. and Leslau, W. (1950 reprinted 1995) *The Fire on the Mountain and Other Stories from*

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*Ethiopia and Eritrea*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, p121.

<sup>62</sup> Seifu Metaferia 'Oral Literature of Ethiopia as a Source of Material for Children's Books: sample study (1982) *Workshop on Children's Books*, Addis Ababa: The National Children's Commission and Italian Cultural Institute, p4.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid p7. According to Michael Daniel Ambatchew, it is disputed whether 'especially show ugly faces' is the actual translation.

<sup>64</sup> *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1980 [http://jss.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/pdf\\_extract/25/1/85](http://jss.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/pdf_extract/25/1/85), downloaded on 3/3/2010.

<sup>65</sup> Getie Gelaye 'Text Analysis of Children's songs in Amharic' (2002) Hamburg University [http://web.missouri.edu/~asfawa/childrens\\_songs.pdf](http://web.missouri.edu/~asfawa/childrens_songs.pdf). p293, downloaded on 3/3/2010.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid p296.

<sup>67</sup> Gikandi, S. (ed.) (2005) *Encyclopaedia of African Literature*, London: Routledge [www.infomar.org/files.php?file=EnglishDictionaries/...pdf](http://www.infomar.org/files.php?file=EnglishDictionaries/...pdf)., downloaded on 3/3/2010.

<sup>68</sup> Melbaa, G. (1988) 'Oromia: an Introduction' Khartoum, Sudan <http://www.gadaa.com/thepeople.html>., downloaded on 6/1/2010.

<sup>69</sup> Cerulli E. (1922) *Folk Literature of the Galla of Southern Abyssinia*, (reprint from Harvard African Studies III). Copy located in the IES Library in Addis Ababa and on <http://www.samizdat.com/cerulli2.html>., downloaded 11/6/2011. NB The term, Galla, is now regarded as a derogatory description for the Oromo people.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid no page

<sup>71</sup> Cotter op cit (1997) pxvii

<sup>72</sup> Hamer, J. (1994) 'Folktales as Ideology in the Production of Wealth among the Sadama of Ethiopia' *Proceedings of 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Bahru Zewde, Pankhurst, R. Taddese Beyere (eds.) Addis Ababa: IES (Sadama is more widely recognised as Sidama)

<sup>73</sup> Ibid no page

<sup>74</sup> See appendix 2

<sup>75</sup> Copied from a caption in the Museum of Ethnographical Studies, Addis Ababa

<sup>76</sup> Getie Gelaye 'Ethiopian Contributions to the study of Amharic Oral Poetry' (2005) Hamburg University <http://web.missouri.edu/~asfawa/gelaye5.pdf>., downloaded on 3/3/2010.

<sup>77</sup> Finnegan (1976) op cit p330.

<sup>78</sup> The book, published in 1999, is in Amharic.

<sup>79</sup> Seifu Metaferia (1982) pp15 -16.

<sup>80</sup> Melrose (2001) op cit p63.

<sup>81</sup> Ethiopian Folktales <http://ethiopianfolktales.com/> downloaded on 26/11/2010. 'The stories were originally collected in order to provide material for the production of simplified English language readers, so that



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schoolchildren in each part of Ethiopia could read stories from their region's particular cultural heritage while practising their English. In all, eight such readers were produced.

This web-site has been set up to allow the rich and varied folk stories collected during the project to be available to a wider audience. It's a treasure trove of the tales which Ethiopians have told to each other since time immemorial, many of which had never before been written down or translated into English.'

<sup>82</sup> Diggle, T. 'Ethiopian Folktales Online: Creating a Resource' report on lecture of 16 March 2011 at SOAS, The Anglo-Ethiopian Society News File Spring 2011

<sup>83</sup> Hassen Seid <http://www.ethiopianmillennium.com/education.html>., downloaded on 25/11/2010.

<sup>84</sup> Broadcasts for most secondary school subjects reach students in every part of Ethiopia via satellite TV in the schools. The author observed broadcasted sessions in schools and visited the broadcasting centre in 2008.

<sup>85</sup> Claudia Lloyd explains her role in developing Tinga Tinga Tales for television and video broadcasts on <http://www.wegivebooks.org/news/origins-of-tinga-tinga-ales-show-and-books>, downloaded on 10/6/2011. John Kilaka, the author and illustrator of many of the original stories from which TV and film programmes, explained to a seminar on writing and illustrating children's books in the National Library, Addis Ababa, in May 2011 how he found the stories and developed them as illustrated books. He said he had interviewed people in his native Tanzania and gathered their stories which were illustrated in oils using the 'Tinga Tinga' style of art founded in Tanzania.

John wrote: 'I was one of five Tinga Tinga artists from Tanzania who were working for Tiger Aspect, one of the biggest film production companies in UK. Tiger Aspect was commissioned by BBC and Walt Disney to illustrate animation series called after our master painter Edward Saidi Tingatinga – Tinga Tinga Tales. The studio was set up in Kenya, the neighbouring country to Tanzania. My illustrations are used not only in the films but also used in books by Penguin Publisher, on packages for toys made by Bandai, on the Classic Media's website called [www.tingatingatales.com](http://www.tingatingatales.com) etc.' <http://www.kilaka.org/books.htm>., downloaded on 10/6/2011.

<sup>86</sup> [http://www.tingatingastudio.com/artist\\_kilaka1.html](http://www.tingatingastudio.com/artist_kilaka1.html)., downloaded on 10/6/2011.

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

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'<sup>2</sup> 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,<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.”<sup>5</sup>

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.’<sup>6</sup>

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*.<sup>7</sup>

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.’<sup>8</sup>

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,<sup>9</sup> 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*,<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup>



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.’<sup>12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup> 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.'<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>

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...'<sup>16</sup>

During the period of the Derg<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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).<sup>20</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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.'<sup>27</sup> Ethiopia has shared this sad experience with women facing high illiteracy rates, HIV AIDS<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup>

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...<sup>30</sup>

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,'<sup>31</sup> 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.'<sup>32</sup>

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.'<sup>33</sup> 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.'<sup>34</sup>

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*,<sup>35</sup> 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).<sup>36</sup>

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.’<sup>37</sup>

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.’<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup>



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.’<sup>40</sup>

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.’<sup>41</sup> 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.’<sup>42</sup> 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.’<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup>

## 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."<sup>45</sup>

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.<sup>46</sup>

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 Meqdela was partially solved after reading Rubenson's account of journeys made by himself and Tewodros:<sup>47</sup>

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.<sup>48</sup>

Descriptions of Meqdela at the time of Tewodros by H.M.Stanley,<sup>49</sup> 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*,<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup>

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.<sup>52</sup> 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.’<sup>53</sup>

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 stellae (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.<sup>54</sup> 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.



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

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p151 (both quotes).

<sup>3</sup> 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.



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

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

<sup>6</sup> '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.

<sup>7</sup> 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.'

<sup>8</sup> Michael Daniel Ambatchew (2007) op cit, p12

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

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> The first girl's school was opened in 1931.

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

<sup>13</sup> 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*.

<sup>14</sup> 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).



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<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p7.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>18</sup> The author found a few examples of books written in Tigrinya (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. '

<sup>19</sup> 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.

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

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

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

<sup>23</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>26</sup> 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.

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

<sup>28</sup> 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.

<sup>29</sup> '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.'

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26.02.2006 <http://www.danchurchaid.org/projects/africa/ethiopia/read-more/women-moving-into-the-parliament> downloaded on 30/11/2011

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

<sup>31</sup> Cotter, G. (1997) *African Proverbs Series Vol 1 Ethiopian Wisdom – Proverbs and sayings of the Oromo People*, South Africa: UNISA, p xv.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid p xv.

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

<sup>34</sup> Ibid p142.

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

<sup>36</sup> 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.

<sup>37</sup> 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.

<sup>38</sup> 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.

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

<sup>40</sup> Ibid p17.

<sup>41</sup> 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.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid p87.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid p87.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid p88.

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

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

<sup>47</sup> Alternatively spelt Theodros in *Back in Time*.

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<sup>48</sup> 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

<sup>49</sup> 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)

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

<sup>51</sup> 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.

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

<sup>53</sup> Ibid p62.

<sup>54</sup> 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](http://etd.ohiolink.edu/view.cgi?acc_num=toledo1260473876) last accessed: 2/7/2010.



## Chapter 6

### **The Influences on Illustrations and Illustrators of Ethiopian Children's Literature**

#### **Introduction**

In the stories included in this thesis, illustrations have been used for different reasons. First to illustrate and separate the traditional Ethiopian tales from the stories of the characters in *The Storyteller*, to provide clues and references to enable children to understand the context in *Back in Time*, and to tell a story and teach number concepts without text in *Ten Donkeys*. In each story the illustrations intimately consider the Ethiopian context for characters and place, but the style and medium belong to the author. In saying that, the influences on her work have emerged from various sources: her education and training in illustration, a vast range of books and publications, writers and artists whose work she respects and a wide resource of reference material that she has gathered from Ethiopian and other African sources.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Sources of inspiration for illustrators of Ethiopian Children's Literature**

A well illustrated book can influence and be influenced by other illustrators. The author, in her two years studying illustration for children's publishing, came to appreciate and was influenced by the illustrations of many artists including E. H. Shepard, Arthur Rackham, C.F. Tunnicliffe and Shaun Tan. When the author spoke to a number of Ethiopian illustrators she discovered some of the influences on their work.

Yihenew Worku<sup>2</sup> said his early inspiration came partly from the books he had seen as a school student, some of which were illustrated in Russia and some by a British illustrator, Eric Robson, who worked for the Ethiopian Ministry of Education as a graphic

artist.<sup>3</sup> Robson described the inspiration for his own work which included the work of Arthur Rackham.<sup>4</sup>



Two examples of Yiheneu Worku's sources of inspiration: a Russian illustrated book, translated into Amharic before 1991; a pen and ink illustration by Eric Robson for *Adventure in Addis Ababa* by Richard Sherrington (1972)

Other Ethiopian illustrators described their sources of inspiration including works by Ethiopian artists such as Afewerk Tekle<sup>5</sup> and their teachers at art school, many of whom had studied in Eastern Europe and Russia.<sup>6</sup> The Emperor Haile Selassie I, who awarded important commissions to Afewerk when he returned from studying in London (including the stained glass window for Africa Hall in 1961), helped to establish the Addis Ababa School of Fine Arts in 1957/8. The first director was Ale Felege Selam who came from a family of traditional painters before studying art in Chicago.<sup>7</sup>

According to Biasio, between the 1920s and 1960s some Ethiopian artists were commissioned by the state to: 'produce portraits of the emperor and designs for street signs, bank notes and stamps, or they were employed as art teachers... During the 1960s a fundamental social and cultural change took place that fostered an acceptance of modern art.'<sup>8</sup> Contemporary African art was introduced by Skunder Boghossian who taught at the School of Fine Arts until 1969 when he moved to Washington DC followed by other painters including Wosene Worke Kosrof and Achamyelch Debelu, who both maintained

links with Ethiopia and Africa through their works. Biaisio wrote: '[t]he interest in African art led to the introduction of motives of Ethiopian manuscripts, of magic scrolls, of the stelae of Aksum, of the windows of Lalibela, African textile patterns, African masks and the Amharic writing into Ethiopian modern art.'<sup>9</sup> By the end of the imperial regime three main styles were popular. First the realistic or naturalistic and "naïve" style, then: 'abstractionism, expressionism and surrealism'; and finally an: 'impressionist, expressionist or social-realistic style' which was, Esseye Medhin wrote: '[i]ntended to be sentimental and political in nature, it depicted the cluttered shabby streets of the cities, urban scenes and the downtrodden masses.'<sup>10</sup>

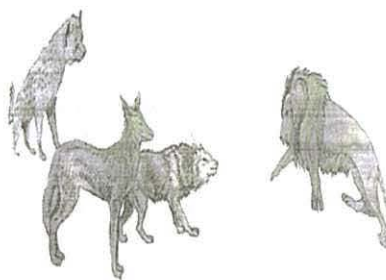
When the military government took over: 'socialist realism became the official and exclusive style taught at the Fine Arts School.'<sup>11</sup> Artists who stayed in the country during this regime were often employed producing propaganda.<sup>12</sup> Esseye described how the: 'Ethiopian Artists Association's last exhibition was held in March of 1991 ... The show closed the first chapter of Ethiopian modern art.'<sup>13</sup> After Colonel Mengistu and his government were overthrown in that same year there was liberation in work produced by newly trained artists, some of whom were trained overseas, and those artists, such as Zerihun Yetmgeta, who had already deviated from the approved style. Esseye wrote: '[u]pon their return to the post-Derg Ethiopia of the 1990s they experienced a stimulating but disorienting, sometimes chaotic, artistic freedom.'<sup>14</sup>

New groups of artists emerged including FOFW (Friendship of Woman Artists) which had amongst its members the illustrator Mihret Dawit, and the Dimension Group which Esseye Medihin explained: '... was formed to overcome an artistic trend that has



been going on in Ethiopia for quite some time: an artistic style which is largely interested in representing the traditional icon-like Christian Ethiopian figures.<sup>15</sup>

Students at the Addis Ababa School of Fine Art were also given some training in illustration including children's book illustration.<sup>16</sup> Gaining inspiration from illustrations and illustrators is not so easy in Ethiopia where a number of the limited books available to children in Ethiopia have illustrations which lack artistic skill and/or are poorly reproduced within the texts.



Illustrations for *Sorry* by Yezina Werku (2000) on the left and *The Blind Lion* by Fasil Asmamaw (2002) – even with modern reproduction techniques and computer art packages there can be disappointing results, especially with lack of training and poor quality paper.

Considering the dearth of children's literature in this country, it is debatable whether such publications are of any value, yet Sutherland and Arbuthnot claim that: '[c]hildren... respond to a wide variety of book illustrations – even crude or saccharine drawings if they help tell the story. Their visual sensitivity can open their lives to positive early experience with books as well as enlarge their experience with art...'<sup>17</sup>

Ardizzone was more sceptical and felt that: '[l]ittle children should have the best possible pictures to look at...'<sup>18</sup>

The state of illustrated literature during the period of the military government was discussed in a workshop on children's literature in Ethiopia<sup>19</sup> for which one participant, Abdul-Rahaman M. Sherif, a lecturer at the Addis Ababa School of Art, wrote: '...there has been no continuous tradition of producing children's books in our country. Before the beginning of modern schooling, the few books that were printed in Amharic abroad had no illustrations as they were mainly religious books... One could not find books which were specifically meant for children.'<sup>20</sup>



R André illustrator of *The Coloured Picture Bible for Abyssinian Children* (1886)  
This illustration appears in *Children's Bible Stories*  
Robert Frederick Ltd published André's illustrations in 1994 in this series of books

There had been one book produced in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, *The Coloured Picture Bible for Abyssinian Children*,<sup>21</sup> which was illustrated by R André. The artist took this pseudonym in 1880 or 1881 after living under the alias of Clifford Merton for a number of years following some scandals and a period of disgrace. He was actually born William Roger Snow in London in 1834 to an affluent family.<sup>22</sup> The illustrations in the above book are decorative and are reproduced in both colour and sepia ink.<sup>23</sup> They seem to be intended for a mass international audience and it would be unlikely that Snow ever visited Ethiopia himself.

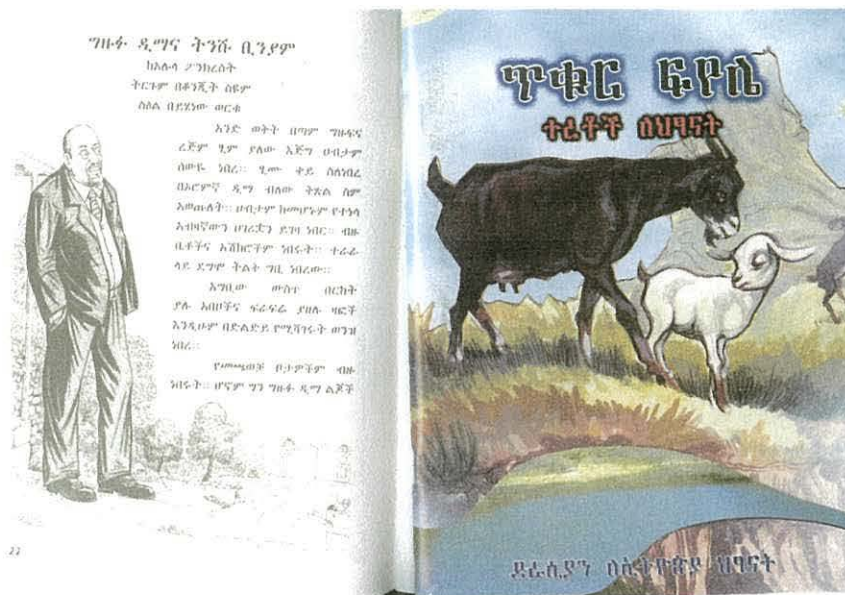
Abdul-Rahaman described some books which had been available during the 1960s as being: 'generally of a very low level often oriented to sentimental drawings or

copying from European models,<sup>24</sup> but he did draw attention to the early Amharic translation of *Pinocchio* and some Russian books translated into Amharic. He explained how books were created by artists working under the former Ministry of Education and Fine Arts, identifying artists such as Agegnehu Ingida and Ale Felege Selam, but noted that: ‘books for children of pre-school age or for those between the age of 6 and 14 were hardly produced at all.’<sup>25</sup> It is clear from his paper that there was awareness of what constituted good illustration and illustrators.<sup>26</sup> This influence extended to the teaching which took place in the only state school of art offering higher level qualifications in Ethiopia.<sup>27</sup>

The 1985/6 (1978 Ethiopian Calendar) publication of *Pinocchio*, one of the earliest illustrated children’s books to be translated into Amharic,<sup>28</sup> was illustrated by one student of that school, Sable Gebre Hiwot. When Ethiopia Reads first published the folk tale *Silly Mammo*, which was retold by Gebregeorgis Yohannes and illustrated by Bogale Belachew who is well known for his illustrations on Ethiopia’s postage stamps, it was impressive for being one of the first full-colour children’s books published in Ethiopia as well as the first written in two languages for the Ethiopian market.<sup>29</sup>

More recent developments have apparently led to an increase in the ‘number and quality’<sup>30</sup> of Ethiopian children’s illustrators with Abiyalew Assefa,<sup>31</sup> Andargachew Bogale,<sup>32</sup> Atlabachew Reda<sup>33</sup> and Yosef Kebede<sup>34</sup> identified by Michael Daniel Ambatchew as among the most prominent, some with international publishing experience. He listed fifteen but noted that many more were not acknowledged by publishers, and some others were: ‘simply downloading illustrations from the Internet rather than going for original illustrations.’<sup>35</sup>





Illustrations by Atlabachew Reda (cover) and Yihenew Worku for the bilingual anthologies, *Tikur Fiyelay* (2008) and/or *Ema Gilgelay* (2009).

Michael Daniel Ambatchew’s list included Mulugeta Gebre Kidan, an artist who also paints in oils, creates installations and who exhibits in different parts of the world as well as illustrating textbooks and publications.<sup>36</sup> His experience of getting into art school appeared similar to other artists interviewed. He described how there were over five hundred applicants for relatively few places in the only institution offering degrees in art so competition was intense. In college he was influenced by teachers who often had training in the eastern European countries and Russia.

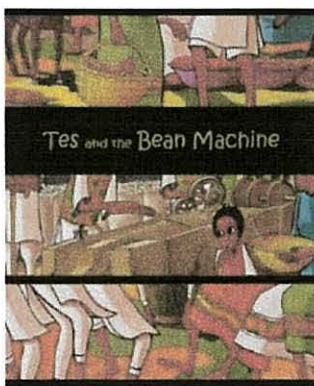
In addition to this list of Ethiopian illustrators, the author identified and worked with others in 2008 and 2009 including Yihenew Worku, Assefa Gebre Kidan and Yodit Wolde Mariam whose illustrations appear in the WEC anthologies *Tikur Fiyelay* and/or *Ema Gilgelay*. She also met Mihret Dawit, another female illustrator inspired by her father who recognised her talent and encouraged her to apply to be a student at the School of Fine Art. Mihret now combines painting with illustrations of books and magazines for children. Another young female illustrator, Senayit Worku Mamo,<sup>37</sup> whose work was

used to illustrate the story which won the second Golden Kuraz award, is the daughter of Worku Mamo, a famous Ethiopian painter.

In recent years there have been other artists from Ethiopia who are using a variety of media including oils, watercolours, pen and ink and mixed media to illustrate books for Ethiopian children.<sup>38</sup> There are also a significant number of non-Ethiopians who have illustrated children's books which are sometimes written for an Ethiopian audience as well as the international market.<sup>39</sup> When looking at these illustrations the author attempted to identify the sources of inspiration and influence.

### **Influences on illustrations in books for Ethiopian children**

Of the different styles and media now used in books produced for children in Ethiopia and the Diaspora, one which stands out as unique to this country is the use of figures, decoration and style based on the traditional religious iconography. Famous Ethiopian artists such as Zerihun Yetmgeta,<sup>40</sup> Qes Adamu Tesfaw,<sup>41</sup> Gelachew Gebre Hiwot and Afewerq Mangesha, (who both illustrated the story of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon)<sup>42</sup> and Belachew Yimer<sup>43</sup> developed such styles in their paintings. Some contemporary illustrators who use this style are not actually Ethiopian; in fact there appear to be relatively few Ethiopian children's book illustrators who adopt this style.<sup>44</sup>



Traditional style figures are used by Nebiyu Assefa in Joanna Brown's story published by Jozart Press.



Access to Orthodox Christian art in most parts of Ethiopia (where local people would see examples in their churches in wall paintings, on the elaborate crosses and in the religious books, manuscripts and icons) is not restricted and can thus be identified as a familiar style.<sup>45</sup> Icons date back to the fifteenth century<sup>46</sup> and the early decorated rock-hewn churches were possibly built in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries though locals believe they were earlier since Christianity has existed in northern Ethiopia since the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>47</sup> There are distinctive features such as the forward facing oval shaped eyes of the figures, the brown skin colours, the strong lines and the elaborate borders. Rich reds, blues, yellows and greens are used and many retain their strong hues although the pigments were natural.<sup>48</sup>



Illustrated covers of two of the early Pinocchio books II translated into Amharic by Lema Feyessa and published by Ethiopian Printing Press (1952 Ethiopian Calendar) and Part I published by Kuraz (1978 E.C.)

Of the earliest books for Ethiopian children translated into Amharic, *Pinocchio* appeared to be one of the most popular and there were a number of reprints. The illustrations of the earliest book are not attributed to any artist but the style of this cover is cartoonlike while inside the line drawings are more realistic but fairly simple. Compared to the illustrations used elsewhere in the world or in early European editions, these appear similar in some respects (the earlier versions are printed in single colours)

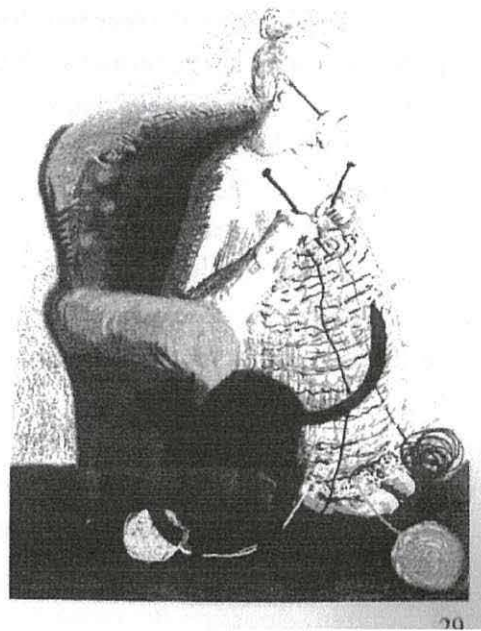
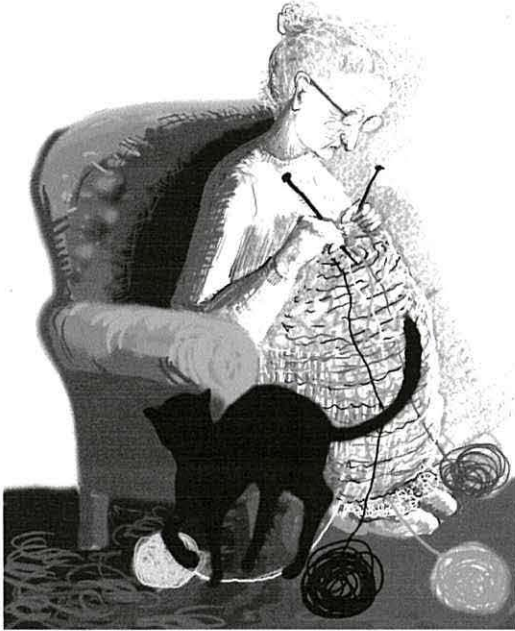


but the author was unable to identify the sources.<sup>49</sup> In the 1978 (Ethiopian Calendar) version the cover illustrations are attributed to Sable Gebre Hiwot.

Realistic drawings were included in the early English readers illustrated by Eric Robson.<sup>50</sup> Similarly other artists such as Atlabatchew Reda , Yihenew Worku and Yosef Kebede use realism in their illustrations. Capturing the characters and settings is crucial if they are to be recognised and accepted by the children who look at them. Clothing, buildings, household effects, facial features and landscapes are clues to location and period. The skills of illustrating them within a text often requires more than accurate drawing skills, a factor which led to the training of a small group of artists in educational illustration in 2007.<sup>51</sup>

Illustrators including Abiyalew Assefa and Elias Asegahgne have adopted a more comic approach to illustrations and the illustrations by Daniel Taye, like those of Behailu Bezabi, sometimes appear naïve or possibly, as Esseye states, they reflect an: ‘honored Ethiopian tradition of simplication.’<sup>52</sup> Each of these artists is internationally renowned for their paintings of subjects such as landscapes and portraits.<sup>53</sup>

More recently artists and illustrators with no specific training have combined computer images, photographs and multimedia effects created on Adobe Photoshop and other packages which have mixed results as can be seen overleaf. The author’s illustrations for *Amen at Home* (overleaf) and *Ten Donkeys* (see Chapter 7) were produced using mixed media with Adobe Photoshop and printed on good quality paper but printing results do not always reflect the screen images as is evident in the illustrations for *Lucky Black Cat* (overleaf). Unfortunately a significant number of books published in Ethiopia suffer poor printing or paper quality in an effort to reduce costs.



Illustrations for *Lucky Black Cat* by the author published in the anthology, *Tikur Fiyelay* (2009). On the left is a jpeg copy of the original; the illustration which appeared on the book (shown on the right) indicates the outcome of printing on thin paper and not having sufficient tonal range.



Cover illustration by the author for *Amen at Home*, published in 2011 by Habte Books and printed in Germany

### **Influences on the illustrations for the stories included in this paper**

The author's illustrations for *The Storyteller* and *Ten Donkeys* combine traditional drawings and paintings developed into finished works using Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator. The pencil sketches for *Back in Time* were drawn using reference material gained from books, photographs and sketches drawn on site and manipulated electronically. Her aim was to provide additional graphical information to supplement the written imagery and avoid lengthy descriptive text. An early decision to use monochrome illustrations was to keep publishing costs low, an issue that would need to be addressed for books that are to be published in Ethiopia. She eventually elected to use an electronic means to display the illustrations which can be seen in the commentary after the story.

Illustrations for *The Storyteller* were also taken from the author's sketches drawn with the aid of reference materials and finished and coloured in Photoshop. Two alternatives were considered for this book which is aimed at older children for whom illustrations are sometimes seen as superfluous. The traditional realistic drawings of characters from the stories were inserted partly to separate the folk tales from the dialogue of the main characters portrayed in the book as well as for decoration. However, Bettelheim believed that illustrations do not: 'serve the child's best needs. The illustrations are distracting rather than helpful.'<sup>54</sup> Therefore another approach would be to illustrate through the actual telling of the stories and emphasise the performance element, so important in storytelling.



For *Ten Donkeys* considerable research material was used to gather accurate images of village life in Ethiopia which were traced or sketched to produce line drawings which were coloured in layers using Photoshop to create a soft atmospheric image. A number of figures in *Ten Donkeys* are neither lifelike nor cartoon images; their features are merely suggested. The donkeys are individual, each a different colour and with other clues, such as the flowers on the first donkey's head, to identify them throughout the book and on the cover. How realistic to be and how far to go in creating scenes that reflect life is a dilemma for authors and illustrators.

Books need to be appropriate to a child so they can recognise concepts but they can also raise aspirations, such as adding a female at a laptop in *Abeba goes to Bed*.<sup>55</sup> For this reason the illustration on page two of *Ten Donkeys* was changed following debate to avoid showing the man hitting the donkey. In reality, abuse of donkeys and other animals persists but there is growing pressure to change this and books for all ages are a source of education.

The future of illustration in books for Ethiopian children is positive in respect of the talent available and the enthusiasm as witnessed at a seminar and workshop held in 2011.<sup>56</sup> Those attending were made fully aware of the problems to be overcome including the low returns illustrators can expect for their work resulting in them needing other employment to make a living. The limited opportunities to develop their skills and display their talents may increase but most illustrators will continue to suffer from restrictions in materials and the appropriate software that will reproduce their work to the highest standards.

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<sup>1</sup> As explained in the Introduction, page 1, the author spent periods working and travelling in Ethiopia and other African countries from 2004. She had already visited Swaziland and South Africa during a holiday in

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2002 and toured parts of Kenya in 2003. Photographs, sketches and other reference materials were taken and gathered during these visits to supplement a range of internet resources and publications relating to this continent.

<sup>2</sup> Yihenew Worku is an artist working in pen and ink, oils and watercolours. He is employed as an illustrator of comic strip cartoons for an NGO, ARC, producing comics for police and armed forces to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS. He has contributed illustrations to short stories by Alula Pankhurst for WEC anthologies and told the author that he also wished to write stories for children. (Interview in 2008)

<sup>3</sup> Robson, G.E. (1975) 'Educational Materials Production in the Ministry of Education' Terminal report to Ministry of Education, Addis Ababa and Ministry of Overseas Development (England). See appendix 5.1.

<sup>4</sup> In an email sent Dec 2010, Robson wrote: 'My thesis was illustrated with my own wood engravings, a technique I loved because of the inspiration I got from such great exponents as Gustave Dore... I had great respect also for the engraved work of the Dalzeil brothers who for years did the most magnificent work for The Illustrated London News and many other beautiful books. Eric Ravilious, and Eric Gill, and of course Arthur Rackham, were among my favourites.'

<sup>5</sup> Maitre Afewerk Tekle is one of Ethiopia's most famous and influential artists/illustrators. Born in 1932, he was a student at the Slade School of Art in London. <http://www.ethiopianart.org/contents.html>, downloaded on 25/11/2010.

<sup>6</sup> Mulugeta Gebre Kidan said he was influenced by such teachers and later visited Germany. Zenah Asfaw was also influenced by such teachers and he later studied in Sofia in the 1980s.

<sup>7</sup> Rebecca Martin Nagy (2007) 'Continuity and change: three generations of Ethiopian artists' [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0438/is\\_2\\_40/ai\\_n19328625/?tag=content;coll](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0438/is_2_40/ai_n19328625/?tag=content;coll), downloaded 15/2/2008.

<sup>8</sup> Biaisio, E. (2004) 'Magic Scrolls in Modern Ethiopian Painting' *Africana Bulletin* [www.wgsr.uw.edu.pl/pub/uploads/abo4/3Biaisio.pdf](http://www.wgsr.uw.edu.pl/pub/uploads/abo4/3Biaisio.pdf), downloaded on 2/3/2010 p31.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid p32 – 40.

<sup>10</sup> Esseye Medhin 'Twentieth Century Ethiopian Art' <http://lissanonline.com/blog/?m=200801>, downloaded on 29/2/2008.

<sup>11</sup> Rebecca Martin Nagy op cit.

<sup>12</sup> 'It was only during the Ethiopian revolution that instructors, as well as students of the Addis Ababa School of Fine arts, were expected to be part of the propaganada machine for the government.' [www.ethiopianart.org/articles](http://www.ethiopianart.org/articles), downloaded on 2/3/2010.

<sup>13</sup> Esseye Medhin op cit.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Esseye Medihin 'Addis Ababa Art Scen' <http://lissanonline.com/blog/?p=100>, downloaded 4/2/2008.

<sup>16</sup> The author visited the art school on a number of occasions between 2008 and 2009 to discuss the curriculum with the director, Muzie Awol, and his staff and see examples of work and tuition. She observed a life drawing class and saw examples of illustration work and exhibitions of final students' work.



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<sup>17</sup> Sutherland, Z. & Arbuthnot, M. H. (1991) 8<sup>th</sup> Ed *Children and Books*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., p134.

<sup>18</sup> Ardizzone, E. 'Creation of a picture book' Egoff, S., Stubbs, G.T. & Ashley, L.F. (1980 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) *Only Connect readings on children's literature*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, p291.

<sup>19</sup> The National Children's Commission and the Italian Cultural Institute in Ethiopia organised a workshop on children's books between May 4<sup>th</sup> and May 6<sup>th</sup> 1982 to 'exchange ideas, promote awareness of the value and importance of books, explore and discuss problems and make recommendations' for the future of children's literature in Ethiopia.

<sup>20</sup> Abdal-Fahaman M. S. (1982) 'Illustration in Ethiopian Children's Books' *Workshop on Children's Books*, Addis Ababa: National Children's Commission & Italian Cultural Institute, p1.

<sup>21</sup> Tract Committee for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ed.) (1886) *The Coloured Picture Bible for Abyssinian Children*, New York: E & J.B. Young & Co. Translated into Amharic by Rev. Martin Fladd..

<sup>22</sup> 'Although he had a career in the army, he was also an artist, illustrator and writer. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century he produced a large number of books and illustrated many others which continue to be reproduced today under his pseudonym.' Richard André Papers, *The Secret Lives of Richard André, (1834-1907): A Lecture Given at the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, November 2, 1989*, by Thomas E. Blom (Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 1990)  
<http://www.lib.usm.edu/~degrum/html/research/findaids/DG0028f.html>., downloaded on 2/6/2010.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Frederick Ltd published his illustrations in 1994 in the series of books, *Children's Bible Stories*

<sup>24</sup> Abdal-Fahaman M. S.(1982) op cit p2.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid p3.

<sup>26</sup> 'Future Ethiopian children's books should have to develop a tradition which looks for the kinds of new merits in the visual arts that will create maximum harmony between the illustration and the text, that will emotionally correspond to the Ethiopian child's way of looking at things and yet consistently respect the determining characteristics given in the text of the book.' Ibid p6

<sup>27</sup> This continues to be an important element of the undergraduate programme as noted from observations made by the author on visits to the Addis Ababa School of Art and discussions with staff and students in 2008/9.

<sup>28</sup> The author saw Part II translated into Amharic by Lema Feyessa and published by Ethiopian Printing Press (1952 Ethiopian Calendar) and Part I published by Kuraz (1978 E.C.)

<sup>29</sup> Email from Jane Kurtz on 31/12/2008. See appendix 1.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Daniel Ambatchew (March 2007) 'Improvements in the Arena of Ethiopian Children's Literature' (paper presented at a Conference on Children's Literature organized by Forum on Street Children Ethiopia 2007).

<sup>31</sup> Abiyalew's illustrations appear in the WEC anthologies and he illustrates books written by Tesfaye Gebre Mariam including *Chuchu and Shasho & Baby's Lost Hen* and *Baba the Fool* (2007). He also paints in oils with exhibitions in The Hilton, Addis Ababa (2008) etc. When the author spoke with Abiyalew she learnt that his father was an architect and both he and his brother had taken up art and illustration. His brother, Nebiyu Assefa, illustrated the book, *Tes and the Bean Machine* written by Joanna Brown.



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<sup>32</sup> Andargachew illustrates for educational publications including the primary grade Civics and Ethical Education textbooks (2009)

<sup>33</sup> Atlabachew produced illustrations for Michael Daniel Ambatchew's books including *Cheray's Great Run* and *Adey's Pigeons* (2004) and the WEC anthologies. He worked for the Transport Authority as a graphic designer according to Taye Tadesse (1991) *Short Biographies of Some Ethiopian Artists 1869 – 1957 Part One*, Addis Ababa: Kuraz Publishing Agency p116.

<sup>34</sup> Yosef's works appear in Oxford University Press publications by Elizabeth Laird including *The Garbage King* (2003) and *When the World Began* (2000)

<sup>35</sup> Michael Daniel Ambatchew Ibid p5. In addition to the five referred to in the text he added: Daniel Taye (*Diving for Honey* by Meskerem Assegued); Elias Assegahegn (whose beautiful colour illustrations are in an Amharic book by Samrawit Araya Mersha *Alena Tenchlw*); Eshetu Tiruneh; Haile Haileyus; Lucas Amare; Samuel Tesfaye; Sari Nordenburg (illustrator of *A is for Addis Ababa* by Sauda Mdahoma); Teninet Setegn; Terefe W/Ageneghu and Yohannes Dagne.

<sup>36</sup> Mulugeta told the author about his early desire to be an artist from watching a friend's brother drawing when he was in Grade 9. Mulugeta succeeded in getting into Art School after a second attempt when he was in Grade 11. See notes in appendix 1.

<sup>37</sup> The author met Senayit at a Seminar and Workshop for Writing and Illustrating for Children in the National Library, Addis Ababa in May 2011.

<sup>38</sup> The author found examples in Addis Ababa bookshops including illustrations by: Bogale Belachew (who illustrated the traditional tale *Silly Mammo* published bilingually by Ethiopia Reads); Eneyew Tsegaye (who illustrated *My Father Sold me for Adoption* by Sahle Tilahun in 2004); Yohannes Fitsumbirhan (who illustrated Jane Kurtz' book, *Fire on the Mountain* which was translated into Amharic 1994 – a later version was illustrated by E.B.Lewis, an African American, in 1998); Kibrom Gebremedhin (who illustrated an Amharic version of *The Lady and the Lake* by Piers Elrington and Selam Neggusie); Wegayehu Ayele illustrated two books for Fitsame Teferra, *Abeba Goes to Bed* (2009) and *Little Lion's Bed Time* (2010); and Anteneh Fisseha who illustrated another book by Fitsame, *Counting Addis Ababa* (2010). Getaneh Takalign illustrated *Peter Gets a Letter* by Helena Nicholai (2008) with cartoon type figures and greater evidence of computer aided art. In *The Elephant and the Cock* a compilation of Folktales by Elizabeth Laird (2008) the illustrators were Muluken Hailu, Adamseged Michael, Abraham Gebre, Senait Worku and Endale Solomon did the graphic design. Lara Deguefe's book *Korkoro Boy and Other Stories* (Shama Books 2005) was illustrated by Seifu Abebe. There were other books including some where illustrations were included but were of poor quality or the illustrators were not acknowledged.

<sup>39</sup> Examples of non Ethiopian illustrators of children's books include: Christine Price who illustrated and edited *The Rich Man and the Singer – Folktales from Ethiopia* told by Mesfin Habte-Mariam (1971); Robert Kane illustrated *The Fire on the Mountain and other stories from Ethiopia and Eritrea* by Courlander and Leslau (1995 version); Emma Harding, Grizelda Holderness and Lydia Monks provided illustrations for *When the World Began – Stories collected in Ethiopia* by Laird (2001 version)

<sup>40</sup> Video clip of his studio <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SoFFdOL2JQg&feature=related>, downloaded 13/7/2011.

<sup>41</sup> Silverman, R.A. (2005) *Painting Ethiopia The life and work of Qes Adamu Tesfaw*, Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum.

<sup>42</sup> According to various sources including the British Museum.

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<sup>43</sup> Taye Tadesse (1991) *Short Biographies of Some Ethiopian Artists 1869 – 1957 Part One*, Addis Ababa: Kuraz Publishing Agency, p6.

<sup>44</sup> Christine Price's illustrations for *The Rich Man and the Singer – Folktales from Ethiopia*; Robert Kane's illustrations in *The Fire on the Mountain and other stories from Ethiopia and Eritrea* and, to a certain extent, Katherine Hunter's illustrations for Kebede Michael's Enkkulal Teret Begitimena Beseel. Elizabeth Laird's story of *The Miracle Child* (2000 Macmillan) used reproductions located in the British Library of *The Life and Miracles of Takle Haymanot in the version of the Dabra Libanos*.

<sup>45</sup> Friedlander, M. J. (2007) *Ethiopia's Hidden Treasures – A guide to the paintings of the remote churches of Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa: Shama Books, and Fogg S. (2001) *Ethiopian Art Catalogue 24*, London: Sam Fogg Rare Books and Manuscripts include many examples. The author saw others on her visits to churches and museums in Ethiopia.

<sup>46</sup> Fogg S. op cit p10-11.

<sup>47</sup> Friedlander M-J op cit p14-16

<sup>48</sup> Research into pigments and dyes has been carried out by Anne Parsons and John Mellors (Anglo Ethiopian Society, London)

<sup>49</sup> Enrico Mazzanti illustrated the first book (1883) in a pen and ink drawing <http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/2/72810000/> Downloaded 2/12/2010.

<sup>50</sup> *The Treasure of Lebna Dengel* (1970) has pencil drawings and *Adventure in Addis Ababa* (1972) includes pen and ink drawings, an example of which is reproduced in this chapter. Other illustrations are in colour. In recent years (2003) he has illustrated the *Abraham Hannibal* children's books based on Ethiopia but written for English speakers by Frances Somers Cocks.

<sup>51</sup> Martha Hardy led this workshop and provided a copy of some the illustrations by the artists and the report on the outcomes which stated, *Illustration in schoolbooks provides a bridge for the child's learning. The image invites and engages the child, encourages the child, encourages the relationship with the text and their education. It motivates, communicates, instructs, explains, makes learning magical, memorable, real.*

<sup>52</sup> Esseye Medihin Towards the New Realism <http://www.the3rdman.com/ethiopianart/articles/behailu1.html>., downloaded on 29/2/2008

<sup>53</sup> Behailu Bezabih founded 'Dimension, a group of artists concerned with moving beyond the bounds of traditional iconic art inspired by the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition' Source: [http://addis-ababa.wantedinafrica.com/events/show\\_event.php?id\\_event=7075](http://addis-ababa.wantedinafrica.com/events/show_event.php?id_event=7075)., downloaded 27/1/2011. [http://wn.com/Ethiopian\\_Art\\_Behailu\\_Bezabih\\_Kine](http://wn.com/Ethiopian_Art_Behailu_Bezabih_Kine) 'Behailu Bezabih opted to teach art in a school instead of going to one of the socialist countries like many of the artists and art school graduates of his time. Slowly he opened himself to children's forms of expressions and their art and let his work absorb their playfulness that unceasingly gives his critical perspectives of the world he lives in and his understanding of the human predicament a whole new depth and angle. Over the years his use of collage, acrylic, wood, metal, used materials and multi media in the art work has widened his range of expression and creativity. Perhaps this is why Behailu Bezabih is one of Ethiopia's and Africa's most important artists, having done over 30 independent exhibits and several group exhibits in Ethiopia, Paris, Kenya, South Africa, Berlin, Ireland, New York and Ohio.' Chowbury, M.R Wodi Enna Wedih. Here and There (2010) [http://www.capitalethiopia.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=12571:wodi-enna-wedih-here-and-there&catid=18:arts-and-culture&Itemid=10](http://www.capitalethiopia.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12571:wodi-enna-wedih-here-and-there&catid=18:arts-and-culture&Itemid=10)., downloaded 27/1/2011.

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<sup>54</sup> Bettelheim, B. (1976) 1991 edition *The Uses of Enchantmen*, London: Penguin, p59. Bettelheim added: 'if we let an illustrator determine our imagination, it becomes less our own, and the story loses much of its personal significance.' p60.

<sup>55</sup> Fitsame Teferra, Meron Feleke & Fikirte Addis (2009) *Abeba goes to Bed*, Addis Ababa: Habesha Tales.

<sup>56</sup> The 'Children's Books Writers and Illustrators Seminar' was held in Addis Ababa on 17/05/2011 and was followed by a workshop. Both were organised by The International Library (Sweden), Bokspindeln (Sweden) and Sololia Publishing/Tigray Libraries (Ethiopia) with funding from The Swedish Institute.



## Chapter 7

### Ten Donkeys

The author's final story is in the form of a picture book with no text apart from the title. Although the other novels written and illustrated for this thesis by the author are aimed at a wider British audience including Ethiopian children living in the Diaspora, this book fills a gap in the Ethiopian children's book market and was designed specifically for young children in Ethiopia.

Picture books are available across developed countries for babies and children. McCannon, Thornton and Williams categorized them as: '0 – 3: years: board books, novelty books, 3 to 5 years: picture books, ABC books, 5 – 7 years: picture books, reading primers, colour storybooks.'<sup>1</sup> Picture books date back to the mid-nineteenth century when *Struwwelpeter* by Heinrich Hoffman was published which, at that time, would have only been enjoyed by the relatively elite.

Ethiopia appears to be in that same position today regarding availability of such material for pre-school children. The author identified a relatively small number of books aimed at Ethiopian children and available in Ethiopian bookshops on visits in 2010 and 2011. Habte Books<sup>2</sup> is developing a selection of picture books for the youngest of children which, although available for the Ethiopian market, is also aimed at families with adopted Ethiopian children and Ethiopian families living in the Diaspora. Michael Daniel Ambatchew produced a series of large scale (A4) picture books illustrated by Atlabachew Reda from 2004.<sup>3</sup> In 2002 an ABC book, fully illustrated with line drawings, appeared with Amharic words in the order of their alphabetical pronunciation. *A is for*

*Addis Ababa* is, according to its introduction, aimed at: ‘young readers and adults who want to begin exploring Ethiopia’s fascinating culture and heritage through some basic Amharinya words...’<sup>4</sup> Other overseas sources of alphabet books for Ethiopian children include *The ABGD Ethiopian Alphabet: Amharic-English for Beginners*,<sup>5</sup> *An African Alphabet*, produced by a British based charity,<sup>6</sup> *E is for Ethiopia*, produced by two Canadians who did voluntary work in Ethiopia<sup>7</sup> and *Our First Amharic Words* by Stacy Bellward.<sup>8</sup> The alphabet books which were located are in English rather than other Ethiopian languages and, while there appears to be a number of books based on the Ethiopian alphabets emerging through internet book sales such as Amazon, picture books on numbers and counting specific to an Ethiopian audience do not appear to be so widely available. Only one picture book, *Counting Addis Ababa*,<sup>9</sup> was located which uses more than one Ethiopian language.

In 2006 a directory of children’s picture books listed over 28,000 English medium sources from across the world aimed at preschool children. *A to Zoo*<sup>10</sup> describes the scale of publication of such materials and reflects on the trends and scope of such materials. Lima and Lima wrote: ‘[t]oday the picture book is a part of growing up, a teaching tool, an entertainment medium, a memory to treasure... Professionalism, curiosity on all subjects, and freedom of expression have brought the children’s picture book into the twenty-first century with a bewildering array of materials from which to choose.’<sup>11</sup> However, within that directory there are only six books listed for picture books related to Ethiopia. They are written by four authors including three by Jane Kurtz whose works have previously been referred to in this thesis. At a seminar and workshop on writing and illustrating for Ethiopian children held at the National Library in Addis Ababa in May

2011 the Swedish organisers (from the International Library in Stockholm and a children's bookshop specialising in books in many languages) informed the audience of the lack of materials available in Ethiopian languages.<sup>12</sup> The author's own research into picture books in Ethiopia noted wider issues relating to context and language which was discussed in the chapter on context.<sup>13</sup>

The purpose of picture books can be more than just a story with pictures.

Nikolajeva wrote: '[e]mpirical research shows that even infants respond adequately to shapes, for instance, of human faces. This means that they are capable of decoding iconic signs.'<sup>14</sup> Thus there is no lower age limit as even babies can relate to books. The relatively small numbers of children who attend kindergarten in Ethiopia are exposed to books from as young as the age of three and plans to increase pre school education appear to continue to be a government objective.<sup>15</sup> McCannon, Thornton and Williams identified that, '[f]rom an early age, children learn what a book is, how to hold it the right way up, the order in which to turn the pages and how to read – first the images and then later the words.'<sup>16</sup> The 'concept' of a picture book, according to Shulevitz, is closer to a 'silent film' with the pictures telling the story as illustrated by: 'Caldecott's picture books, created between 1878 and his death in 1886, ... probably the first fully developed examples of the true picture book.'<sup>17</sup> Duvoisin expounds the importance of illustration and how it can tell a story without text: 'pictorial literature.'<sup>18</sup>

'For picture books to be understood by children, you must know how to communicate clearly. And to do this, you must understand the rules governing the use of pictures in picture books.'<sup>19</sup> The author undertook a two year course in Illustrating for Children's Publishing<sup>20</sup> prior to commencing her postgraduate research for a PhD. She

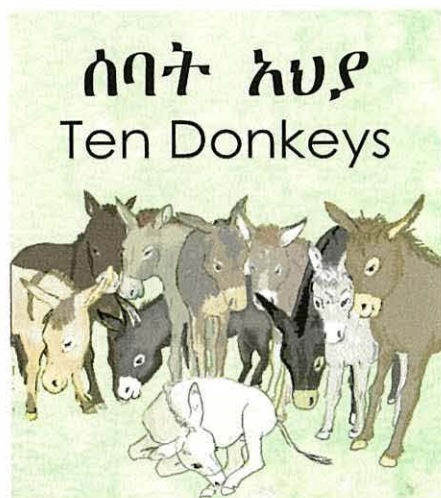


learnt that, not only is the ability to execute effective artwork important but, to achieve a successful product, it is also necessary to understand the context of the audience and to create elements of surprise, suspense and drama at key points to maintain the child's attention. The development of a picture book is usually no more than 32 pages in length and requires detailed planning. *Ten Donkeys* is half that size yet still required a storyboard approach to plan the action and identify the details. If a story is to be of interest to the child there has to be more than action according to Shulevitz who identifies the need for detail in the actions to stimulate a 'vivid' imagination with a conclusion which satisfies the reader.<sup>21</sup> Sendak compared a successful picture book to a good poem. 'A picture book has to have that incredible seamless look to it when it's finished.'<sup>22</sup>

In a picture book with no text this action has to be created through images alone, the story emerging through the locations and gestures/expressions of the characters possibly assisted by symbolic content (letters or numbers) and other artistic elements such as the viewpoints of the reader and the atmosphere created by the illustrator. Perry Nodelman acknowledged that images are necessary to replace words which would be too complicated for young readers to understand.<sup>23</sup> In the case of *Ten Donkeys*, the author takes the reader on a journey through a familiar landscape – a typical Ethiopian rural scene which includes: circular straw-roofed *tukuls*, shiny corrugated iron roofs on mud walled painted buildings used as shops, a larger concrete block house with a garden and a school near a football pitch, wooded areas and bare hillsides, a stream where locals are washing their clothes, a cultivated and ploughed field and a marshy area.

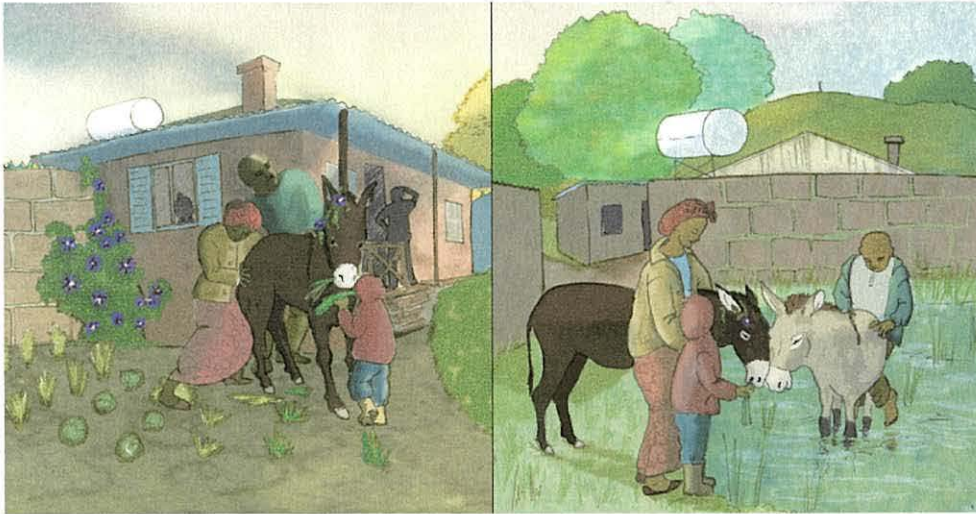
As the story opens, the scene is viewed from raised grassland where three figures, a woman, man and child, are searching the distant landscape. A single post gives a clue

as to what they are looking for. It is early morning and the sun is just rising. It is cold but dry and people are beginning to emerge in a few distant locations – youngsters on the football pitch and women by the stream carrying their washing in bowls on their heads.

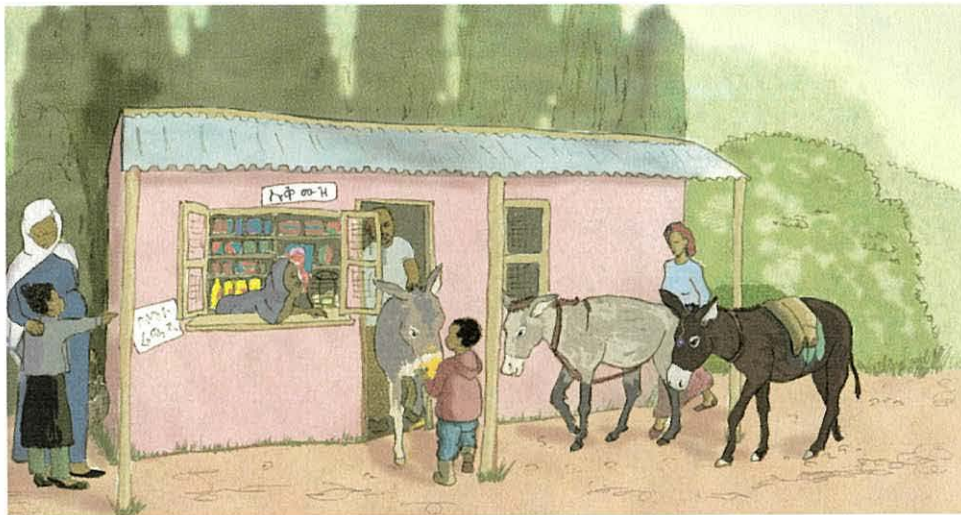


The next image, an hour or so later as the day is getting warmer, is in the garden that was previously viewed from above. Here the man is pushing a donkey which is eating the vegetables. It stubbornly refuses to move as the woman leans against it and the child tries to offer a tempting handful of grass. In a corner a morning glory bush clings to the wall and one strand hangs from the donkey's ear. By the next scene, on the same double page, the first donkey (recognised by its colour and the morning glory flower) is nudging the second donkey which is being pushed by the man as the child holds his mother's hand. In each scene, some double page spreads and others covering single pages, there is a gradual progression. The man appears less angry towards the donkeys and the woman keeps the group together, each donkey a different colour and some with evidence of where they were found.



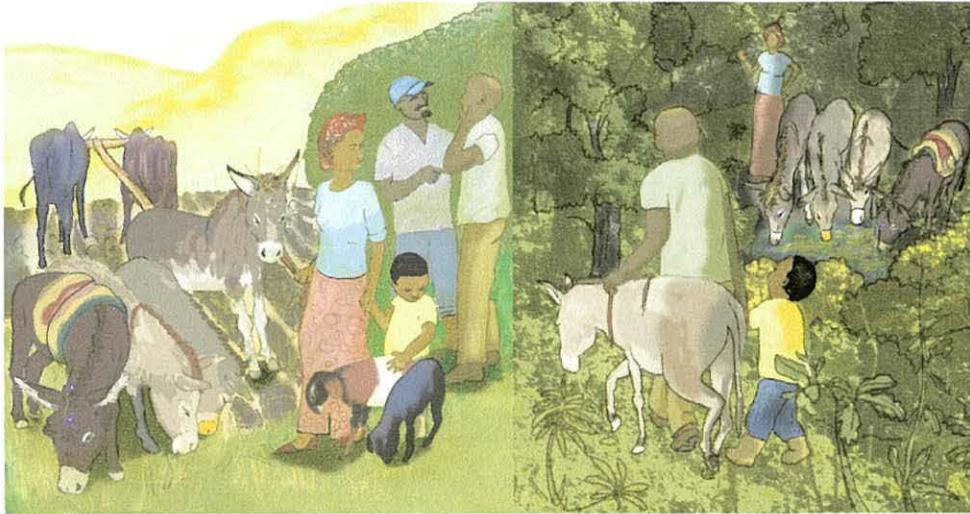


The third donkey is discovered emerging from the shop pushed by the man and encouraged by the little boy. They are watched by the shopkeeper and a pregnant woman with her daughter. The other two donkeys are now on leads held by the mother.

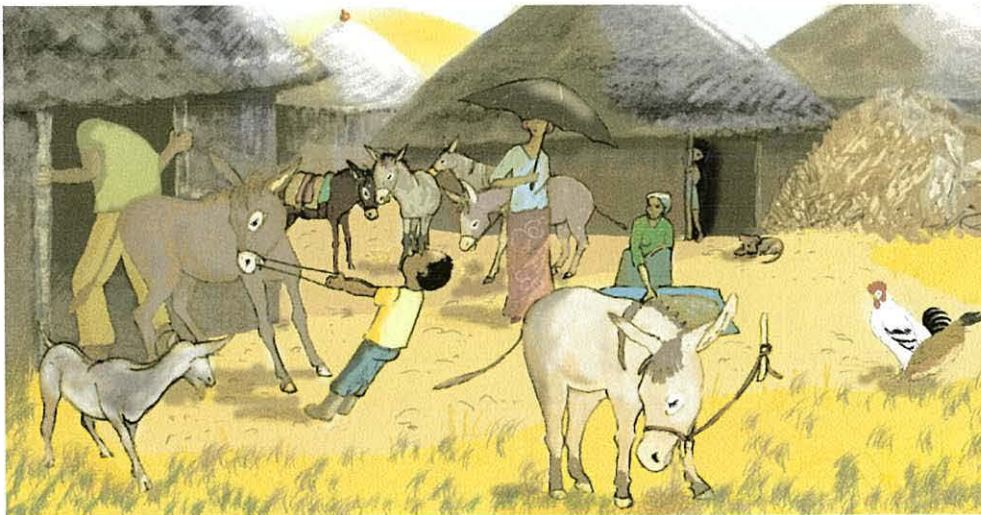


The following pages look down on the field where the fourth donkey is located and the woodland where they encounter the fifth donkey, hiding among the eucalyptus trees.





With each new picture the day moves on, light changes and, by the time they find the sixth donkey in the village, it is hot and sunny.



Later in the day, as the sun disappears behind a cloud, the seventh donkey is discovered in the school, much to the amusement of the children and the annoyance of the teacher. Nearby, on the muddy field used as a football pitch, the eighth donkey has the father on its back, returning through the pouring rain.

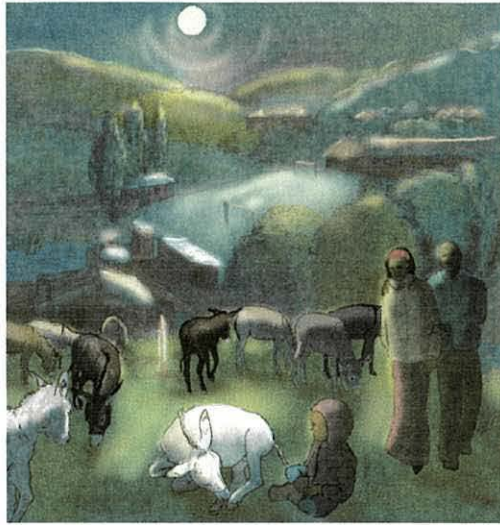


By evening, as the light begins to fade and the sun drops in the west, the eight donkeys and their owners reach the stream where the ninth donkey is biting a woman's washing as others watch.



Finally, in the moonlight, the nine donkeys return to the hillside where the little boy, followed by his mother and father, discovers the tenth and youngest donkey, fast asleep by the post from which they had all escaped the night before. The book cover shows all ten donkeys (front and back) with the title in English.<sup>24</sup>





When identifying which images to use the illustrator/author has to ensure that they will be recognised. More importantly, the images need to be familiar to the readers as previously explained in the chapters on context and illustration. Buildings, animals, dress and landscape were taken into consideration and research included images from the internet when the author's own library of photographs and film clips failed to provide accurate imagery. Finally, the draft document was shared with those who are familiar with the country to ensure the pictures were appropriate and the message clear and suitable for the target group.

This book was accepted by Shama Book Publishers for publication in February 2011 and layout was completed in preparation for printing when the author visited Addis Ababa in May 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> Mc Cannon, D., Thornton, S., Williams, Y. (2008) *The Bloomsbury Guide to Creating Illustrated Children's Books*, London: A& C Black, p12.

<sup>2</sup> Since 2009 Fitsame Teferra has written and published a small range of books through Habte Books (<http://www.habtebooks.com/en/>) They include *Counting Addis Ababa* (illustrated by Anteneh Fissehah) *Little Lion's Bedtime* and *Abeba goes to Bed* (both illustrated Wegayehu Ayele).



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<sup>3</sup> This ABCD series consists of four titles and provides pre-school and primary school students in Grades 1 – 4 with culturally appropriate reading materials.

<sup>4</sup> Sauda Mdahoma (2002) *A is for Addis Ababa - Ethiopia through the Alphabet*, Mombassa: Ken Fin Publishers, Introduction page.

<sup>5</sup> Gebregeorgis Yohannes formed a small publishing company in the United States, where one of his books was *The ABGD Ethiopian Alphabet: Amharic-English for Beginners* was produced according to this source: <http://www.janekurtz.com/ethiopiareads/yohannes.html> downloaded on 28/10/2010.

<sup>6</sup> This Alphabet primer in English and Amharic has colour illustrations by various young artists of the Ethiopian Gemini Trust. It is published in the UK by the Baquis Press.

<sup>7</sup> Lori Prodan and Keith Holmes lived in Awassa, Ethiopia for two years then self published this book in 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Stacy Bellward is the American author of picture and story books aimed at adopted Ethiopian children and their families. She is also president of the Ethiopian Kids Community. Source [www.ethiopiankids.com](http://www.ethiopiankids.com) downloaded on 28/10/2010

<sup>9</sup> Fitsame Teferra (2010) *Counting Addis Ababa*, Germany: Habtebooks.

<sup>10</sup> Lima, C.W. & Lima, J (2006) *A to Zoo - Subject Access to Children's Picture Books 7<sup>th</sup> Edition*, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, p ix.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p6.

<sup>12</sup> Matilda Wallin, Helena Erisson Berhan and Nina Suatan explained that it is Swedish policy to make books available in the mother tongue languages of all its citizens. Although some books had been identified they were keen to encourage local writers and illustrators as well as publishers to develop a greater variety of books for children in the Ethiopian languages both for children in Ethiopia as well as in the Diaspora.

<sup>13</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>14</sup> Nikolajeva, M. 'Interpretative Codes and Implied Readers of Children's Picture Books' Colomer, T., Kümmerling-Meibauer, B. & Silva-Díaz, C. (eds.) (2010) *New Directions in Picturebook Research*, New York: Routledge, p 28. In this paper the author identifies different codes which children need to connect the picture with the real world.

<sup>15</sup> 'Early Education in Ethiopia: Progress and Prospects' by James L. Hoot, Judit Szente and Belete Mebratu was written in 2004 <http://www.springerlink.com/content/mr4264j406415x0j/>, downloaded on 8/11/2010. The author was present at meetings with Ministry of Education staff to discuss the future of early years education in 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Mc Cannon, D., Thornton, S., Williams, Y. (2008) *The Bloomsbury Guide to Creating Illustrated Children's Books*, London: A& C Black, p11.

<sup>17</sup> Shulevitz, U. (1985) *Writing with Pictures*, New York: Watson-Guption Publications, p16.

<sup>18</sup> Duvoisin R. 'Illustration' Egoff, S., Stubbs, G.T. & Ashley, L.F. (1980 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) *Only Connect readings on children's literature*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, p305.

<sup>19</sup> Shulevitz, U op cit p18

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<sup>20</sup> This undergraduate programme is delivered by Glyndwr University, in Wrexham. The author was a full-time student between 2006 and 2008 and obtained a diploma. Her tutors produced a comprehensive book (Mc Cannon, D., Thornton, S., Williams, Y. (2008) *The Bloomsbury Guide to Creating Illustrated Children's Books* London: A& C Black) including sections specifically dedicated to picture books.

<sup>21</sup> Shulevitz, U. op cit p33 'Only when the reader cares and likes the actor does the story's ending matter to the reader.'

<sup>22</sup> Lorraine, W. 'An interview with Maurice Sendak' Egoff, S., Stubbs, G.T. & Ashley, L.F. (1980 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) *Only Connect - readings on children's literature*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, p327

<sup>23</sup> Nodelman, P. 'Picturebook Narratives and the Project of Children's Literature', Colomer, T., Kümmerling-Meibauer, B. & Silva-Díaz, C. (eds.) (2010) *New Directions in Picturebook Research*, New York: Routledge, p13

<sup>24</sup> Although other Ethiopian languages could have been added, the publisher and author decided to use English and the introduction is also written in English. This may limit the readership although all teachers have to learn English which is compulsory from primary school, including in non-formal education.

# **Back in Time**



## Chapter 1

Vicky looked at the monitor in the Istanbul departure lounge. The flight to Manchester was delayed. Then she noticed that there was a flight to Addis Ababa due to take off in fifteen minutes. I made sure she read it again then put the idea in her head.

“Go on.” I encouraged her. “Here’s your chance. You know you want to go and meet Teddy and this is probably the only opportunity that you’ll ever get to see that mobile phone.”

Vicky put a finger to her mouth as she considered the consequences of such an action. She knew it would be wrong but her conscience was easily overcome. This was fate. Little did we realise then how it would change her life and what an impact it could have on her future - and my past.

“No. You’d better not,” I told her. “You know it would be wrong. You could get caught and just think of the trouble you’d get into. And what about your mum and dad? They’d be terribly worried. Anyway, your luggage has already gone through the check in desk so you’ve only got that small bag and the present dad’s just given you.”

Vicky looked round the departure lounge to see if anyone else was watching her. As she hesitated I changed her mind again. “Look Vicky, your plane’s delayed at least half an hour. That means you’re going to get home later than expected. You can ring your mum from the airport in Addis Ababa and tell her you got on the wrong plane by mistake. That would give you time to find Teddy (if he really exists) and then catch another flight back to Manchester and no one would ever know it was deliberate – except us of course.”

She made her mind up then and walked fairly confidently down the long corridor to the departure gate where a crowd of people were beginning to queue to get on the flight to Addis Ababa. Her self-confidence suddenly disappeared.

“We may have a bit of a problem here,” I said. “Why not wear that scarf dad’s given you? Wrap it round your head like that woman over there. That will hide most of your face. Now, if you tag along with one of those large families, you could sneak through.”

She hesitated and, just when I was about to suggest she forget that idea and go back to the main departure lounge and wait for the flight home, she tore open the fancy bag and pulled out the pink pashmina. Wrapping it round her head and shoulders, as she’d seen many women in Turkey do, she waited nervously in the final departure lounge until the time came to board. She glanced round the waiting passengers then joined a group of tired children who were arguing while their parents tried to find the boarding passes for each member of the family. One sleeping child was being carried by the father while the mother held a screaming baby in her arms and struggled to find something in her handbag. The three older children each carried bags and trailed their coats. As one child’s plastic bag burst open, and the contents of books, pens, toys and gifts spilled onto the floor, Vicky quickly bent down to help pick the items up.

In all the confusion, the airport staff and parents didn’t notice her slip past the desk holding the child’s hand and she was soon walking quickly down the tunnel to the entrance and the queue waiting to board the aircraft, staying close to the family. As the steward dealt with their enquiries, Vicky passed them and walked on up the first aisle to the far end of the plane then hid in the narrow gap behind the last seat.

We couldn't believe how easy it had been. On her flight to Turkey she had shown her tickets to at least two people before she even got onto the plane.

"We'll be safe here till the plane takes off," I reassured her. "Then you can wander back down the aisle to see if there are any spare seats. You're not going to be thrown off now."

"This is wrong," Vicky said to herself.

"Yes," I agreed. "Oh you are so bad." I added, knowing she wouldn't change her mind at this stage.

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You're probably wondering who I am. Well I'm what you might call Vicky's inner voice. Everyone's got one. Some people might call us their 'soul' but I think that only fits when we're suggesting nice things like helping people and doing as you're told. We sometimes (quite often in fact) recommend doing something which may be wrong, even bad. If the person isn't strong willed, and the outcome seems attractive, they take that advice and then have to deal with the consequences.

My last body was a man who loved food. I had no problem suggesting to him that he eat another cake or biscuit or put more on his plate than he needed. I would tell him he was too tired to exercise so he got very fat and didn't live to old age. Then it was time for me to move on to a new person. Vicky's young, fit and healthy but she's got her weaknesses, like her temper, and she can be stubborn and doesn't know how to occupy herself. Her favourite expression is, 'I'm bored.' That's how she came to discover Teddy – but more about that later.



One thing I could guarantee about Vicky was her determination to see something through when she'd set her mind on it. For example, she had encouraged her father to buy those shoes she's wearing. She thought they made her look so grown up even though she'd only just turned thirteen.

Vicky only saw him once a year, usually at Easter when she visited his hotel in Turkey, and he always wanted to spoil her while she was there. When he'd met her mother he was only a waiter in the hotel where she was staying but, in the last twelve years he'd worked his way up and was now the manager. He wasn't rich but he was no longer hard up so he could pay for Vicky to fly out from Manchester, as long as her mother made the arrangements for travel from her home. Her mother doted on Vicky, her only child, but she couldn't afford luxuries like holidays in the Mediterranean so she always agreed to Vicky visiting her dad each year. This was the first time she'd allowed her to go unsupervised.

"What do you think she'll do when you don't turn up at the airport?" I asked Vicky. "She'll be really worried." Vicky briefly considered that but the alternative was too tempting and it was too late to turn back now.

As soon as the plane was in the air and the stewards were busy in the galley, Vicky crept out from her hiding place and wandered down the aisle. The plane was half empty and most people were tired and trying to get to sleep so no one took any notice of a young girl wandering along the aisle. She found a row of seats that were unoccupied and settled down, hiding herself under the blue airline blanket. The stewards wandered past but took no notice and eventually she fell asleep, despite my suggestions.

Inner voices are at their most active late at night when people want to sleep. We don't have any competition then – no teachers or parents trying to influence the children, no

husbands or wives giving their advice – so we try to make up for lost time by filling peoples' heads with all sorts of ideas. That's why some people can't sleep. There are those who take advantage of these thoughts – particularly authors looking for inspiration – but most block us out of their mind and we rest while they dream. Then there are those who listen to us all night; they claim they are insomniacs, take sleeping tablets, do meditation or seek medical help. Vicky is still young enough to control me when she's had enough.

I've been around for centuries. I remember some of the people, particularly those who lived a long time. One woman, I think she was Japanese, lived to be a hundred. I got bored in her last twenty years and kept suggesting she was ill but she refused to listen to me.

Vicky is an interesting person to be with. She's got a good idea of what is right and wrong but she's still prepared to take some risks and be adventurous. She wouldn't want to hurt anyone but she's quite selfish so I can tell her to do things other children would refuse to consider. I think it's partly due to her upbringing. When her mother discovered she was pregnant, after the holiday in Turkey, she swore she'd give the child everything she wanted. So, ever since Vicky was born she's been well looked after but she has got used to having her own way. She knows the limits; her mum's never going to be able to afford to buy her a horse or expensive holidays but that hasn't stopped Vicky trying to impress her friends at school with her stories of their 'house in the country' and their 'yacht in the Mediterranean'. She's good at telling tales.

Hours later the lights in the cabin came on and the captain's voice said, "We are about to land in Addis Ababa; fasten your seatbelts." Vicky sat up and did as she was told. The next part of her journey was going to be quite an adventure. She recalled the dream she'd just had about meeting up with Teddy and seeing his uncle's mobile phone. She leaned back in her seat and let me plan her next move.

## Chapter 2

The immigration hall at Addis Ababa airport was chaotic. People were queuing for visas or waiting in rows leading to cubicles where officials were taking each person's passport and other paperwork and scrutinising the documents carefully before giving them a purple stamp and permission to enter Ethiopia.

Vicky looked round, bewildered by the situation and not sure what she should do next. I gave her a few suggestions like, "Why not try fainting or bursting into tears?" Both tactics would draw attention to her and she would be taken care of quickly. However, Vicky spotted an easier option that would avoid any conflict. She was small enough to sneak through with that large family who had helped her get onto the plane. They all stood at one exit cubicle as the official scratched his head and looked at a computer screen. Then one of the youngsters started crying. Vicky joined the end of their line, bending down to help the tired child who struggled to put his coat on. Then she followed them through as the man in uniform stamped their passports and impatiently waved them on.

They parted in the big hall where items of luggage from previous flights still rode around the carousels and other cases and boxes were heaped, unwanted, at the far end of the room. Staff and passengers took no notice of her as she looked round, trying to locate the way out. When she walked out of the baggage hall into the arrivals lounge she was faced by a queue of faces searching for the passengers who had landed with her.

"Stay calm," I told her. "We'll find a phone or someone who can help."

Vicky walked across the arrivals area, a huge hall which, at this early hour of the morning, was quiet with a few people stood by a coffee stall and taxi drivers waiting for their



passengers to arrive. She was feeling apprehensive, ready to give herself up to anyone in authority, when she was approached by a hotel representative.

“Hilton Hotel!” he said in recognisable English. “Do you need the courtesy bus?”

Vicky looked at him, surprised that she could understand him.

“Take it,” I advised her. “At least there will be someone there who can understand you and you won’t be put back on the next flight to Turkey or Manchester.”

Vicky didn’t hesitate. “Yes. I haven’t any money though,” she admitted.

“Where are your family?” he enquired.

“They are coming on a later flight,” she lied.

“Do not worry. We will charge it to their bill at the hotel,” he replied with a smile.

“The worst that can happen is that they send the bill to your mum or dad. You’re too young to be sent to prison,” I said to reassure her. Vicky followed the driver and a few other passengers outside to the waiting minibus in a vast car park on the edge of the city. It was quite cold outside the terminal building, certainly much colder than it had been in Turkey. She climbed into the vehicle and sat near the back then, with their luggage stowed behind her, the others joined her and they were driven towards the city centre.

Although the streets were lit, there was very little traffic – hardly surprising since it was only four o’ clock in the morning. While we passed hotels, shops, churches and other buildings, interspersed with what looked like corrugated iron shacks and open spaces, I gave her more advice. “Now when you get there ask to see the manager and admit that you haven’t got a room booked and your parents aren’t coming. Tell him the truth – well our version of it

– that you mistakenly got on the wrong plane and got scared. He’ll probably call your mum or dad. Tell him you know someone in Addis Ababa who may be able to help until you get a flight home. You remember his name, Teddy, but don’t know his address. Now try to remember what he told you. What was his second name or his uncle’s name? Have you got any other information?”

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Vicky thought back to that day when she had seen Teddy. It was only three weeks earlier at the end of Spring Term, just before the Easter holidays. Vicky had been bored. School was boring and citizenship was the most boring lesson as far as Vicky was concerned. She had been told to read about a developing nation such as an African country and write a small project which would be handed in after Easter.

“Why?” she had asked her teacher.

“Because it’s part of the course.”

“Well, which country should I study?”

“Whichever one interests you.”

“I’m not interested in any country. They’re all boring.”

“Vicky. Go and look for information on an African country on the computer,” her teacher had insisted and sent her to the back of the library.

Vicky liked using the internet to find out about famous TV and music celebrities so she agreed. She typed ‘Africa’ into the search engine and within seconds it had found 306 million sites. There was no way she was going to look at them all so she clicked on the first site and a map of all the African countries appeared. She had never heard of most of them. She thought this was going to be just as boring as reading the text books.

Then, as she stared at the screen she noticed that a dark face kept appearing in one country. At first it was very small and faint. She thought she saw it move, then it disappeared. She moved the mouse till the arrow sat on that country – Ethiopia. She had never heard of Ethiopia. The face suddenly appeared again and it was moving. The eyes shifted and the lips parted into a smile.

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At that precise moment in his uncle's study in Addis Ababa, Teddy had been holding a mobile phone in front of him and taking photographs of himself. He'd never used a mobile phone with a camera before – his father's phone was very basic and could only be used for phone calls and text messages. Uncle Daniel's phone was much more modern with lots of different keys and functions.

Teddy looked at his picture on the small screen. Then he found a button which made a movie image. Holding down the button he started to move his head from side to side and laughed revealing his white front teeth with a gap between them. Then he played back the image but this time, when it stopped, he noticed another face on the screen. It was a girl with light brown skin, dark brown eyes and long straight black hair. He looked at the screen in astonishment. It wasn't anyone he recognised.

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Vicky kept the arrow on 'Ethiopia' and clicked the enter button on the computer. Suddenly she found herself looking at the boy's face which now filled the screen. He had been laughing but then he stopped and looked shocked. She started laughing, thinking to herself that maybe this wasn't such a boring site.



The boy seemed to say something but she couldn't understand it. She shook her head and continued giggling. Then he spoke in English, "Who are you? Why are you laughing?"

Vicky stopped, surprised that the boy on the computer actually appeared to see and hear her. "Are you talking to me?"

"Who are you? Where are you?" the boy asked. He appeared quite distraught.

"I'm Vicky. I'm in school, in Manchester. Who are you?"

"Teddy. Teddy Tadesse."

"Where are you?"

"In my Uncle Daniel's office - in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia."

"I've got to study an African country. What can you tell me about Ethiopia?"

"Many things - but I don't think my uncle would be happy if he knew I was telephoning you."

"I'm not on the phone. I'm on the computer."

"What are you doing?"

"Well, I'm supposed to be learning about another country. So, can you help me?"

"How?"

"Well can you tell me a bit about Ethiopia? Show me some pictures of your country and describe them then I can show my teacher that I've been doing some research."

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That was how she discovered Teddy. By the time she'd recalled this, the car had reached the front gates of a huge hotel in large gardens. It was much bigger than her dad's hotel and she began to feel nervous.

“Don’t worry,” I told her. “Soon you’ll meet Teddy again and then you’ll be able to see his uncle and that amazing mobile phone.”

Vicky climbed out of the minibus and thanked the driver. Then she entered the wide glass doors and was confronted by a tall man in a uniform standing beside an x-ray machine. “Put your bag on there,” he ordered. Vicky lifted her small bag onto the moving rubber mat and watched it vanish through the machine. “Okay,” he said, more kindly, giving her back her bag. “Where is your family?”

“This may be a good moment to burst into tears and get some sympathy,” I suggested. Vicky didn’t need much encouragement. She was already sniffing and tears filled her eyes as she looked up into the kind brown eyes.

“I’ve lost them,” she blubbed. “I got on the wrong plane and now I don’t know where I am.”

“Ask to see the manager,” I told her.

“May I see the manager,” she quietly asked, wiping her nose on the new scarf.

“I think that can be arranged.” the man agreed adding under his breath, “but I don’t think he’ll be pleased to be woken in the middle of the night. Why don’t you come and sit in the lounge. I’ll get you something to drink.”

Vicky smiled and followed him, clutching her bag. She tried to stop listening to me telling her what she should do next. I tried cheering her up one minute, and then the next minute I was telling her off for being such a bad girl. I’m good at that. When the manager arrived half an hour later he found Vicky, on one of the sofas with her eyes closed. He spoke quietly to the guard then disappeared to his office, leaving Vicky to eventually fall asleep.

### Chapter 3

Before she went to sleep, Vicky tried to remember everything she could about Teddy. They had both been astonished when they realised that Vicky could see the same images he pointed to with the mobile phone. She had urged him to share some information with her and he realised that he could show her more of his country from the pictures in his uncle's many books on Ethiopia. She now remembered some of the images she'd seen on the school computer screen on that day.

The first picture was of a desert. "This is in the east of our country. Here is where early humans were discovered. Their bones were found by archaeologists. Ethiopia was known as the 'cradle of civilisation'," he told her slowly, trying to use correct English. As Teddy pointed the mobile phone camera at each picture he took Vicky on a voyage of discovery, travelling back through space and time to see where Lucy, the earliest human, had been discovered.

"This is incredible," Vicky said. "Can we go somewhere else?"

He quickly turned the page and found a photograph of huge stone carved pillars in a place called Axum, in the north of Ethiopia.

"This was a city - centre of a great civilization - two thousand years old. The Queen of Sheba lived here too - a thousand years before Christ. It is where the Ark of the Covenant is."

"What's the Ark of the Covenant?" Vicky asked.

"King Solomon lived in Jerusalem - about three thousand years ago - and he looked after the Ark of the Covenant - it held the Ten Commandments."



“The same ones that Moses was given?” Vicky remembered learning about that in junior school.

“Yes. Now it is in Ethiopia.”

She didn’t remember learning that. “What else can you show me?”

Teddy turned the pages of the book and found a photograph of a building carved out of rock. “Here is a famous religious place - Lalibela.”

“You have a lot of church stuff, don’t you?” Vicky commented, starting to lose interest.

“We do. Ethiopia was the first Christian country in Africa. Lalibela is very special. People come from all over the world to see this.” Teddy had pointed the mobile phone at one image of a church carved out of solid red rock.

Even Vicky couldn’t believe what she saw. “How did they do that?” she had asked, looking at the walls, doors and windows all carved out of a solid block of stone.

“No one knows. Some say angels did it.” Teddy found more pictures of churches and religious festivals.

“Wow. Your country must be really peaceful.”

“Not always.” Teddy told Vicky about the battles for power and the problems that his country faced. As he turned the pages of the book he told her about the famines and the poverty. “That was when the rest of the world heard about Ethiopia. People saw pictures of starving children and wanted to help.”

“I’m sorry. Do you think things will get better?”

“I hope so. We have a beautiful country.”

“I want to visit it.”

“You must come. I will write down our telephone number for you. It is 0112 393205.”

Then the screen started to dim.

“I can’t see anything.” Vicky complained.

“I think the battery died. I must stop.”

“Oh no! I wish I could see more.”

“You must come and visit me and my country.” Teddy had said.

“How can I do that?”

“You’ll find a way. Remember 0112 393205. I have to go now. Good bye.”

“Please don’t go,” Vicky had called, but it was too late.

The screen had gone blank.

Vicky had quickly written down his number and everything she could remember then went back to her desk to start her project. She was even motivated enough to look for some books on Ethiopia and asked her teacher where she could find them.

“Goodness me Vicky, you’re enthusiastic all of a sudden. What’s got into you?”

“I just want to know more about Ethiopia, miss.”

She worked quite hard after that lesson, finding out more about some of the places and people that Teddy had introduced her to and writing about them with pictures she found from the internet and in library books.

## Chapter 4

“So you are lost?” the manager asked Vicky. He was a very tall bearded man in a dark suit and he had an angry look on his face when she was shown into his office.

“Don’t let him upset you,” I told her. “He’s bound to soften if you’re polite and tell him you’re frightened.” Vicky took a deep breath and started to tell the manager everything that had happened. Well nearly everything. She didn’t tell him she’d deliberately got on the wrong plane. That would have been stupid and she was in enough trouble already.

“I will telephone your father and leave a message at Manchester airport but I will also have to inform the British Embassy. You have no visa so you are an illegal immigrant,” he said sternly.

If she wasn’t scared already, this last fact really worried her. She’d seen on TV the way that such people were treated in her own country. She waited for her inner voice to reassure her but I kept quiet. I’d nothing to say that would help. I’d already said too much and got her into this situation. Then the manager’s features began to soften and he smiled at her.

“Now you’re not to worry. We will sort this out. I will try to find out who this ‘Teddy’ is and see if I can contact his father or uncle. Have you told me everything you know about your friend?”

“I’ve got his telephone number. I keep it in my purse.”

“That will be very useful. It’s not that easy to find people in our country. However, I will see what I can do. Meanwhile you must stay here in the hotel. Would you prefer to stay in my office or can I trust you to stay in the lounge?”



“I promise I’ll stay in the lounge.”

“Good. I’ll get my assistant to bring you some food and a drink. You must be hungry after all that travel.”

“This sounds good,” I told Vicky. As a well brought up girl, Vicky knew how she should behave and the staff seemed happy to help her. After settling in the lounge she was given a book to read, a plate of cake and a bottle of fizzy drink. All she had to do was sit and wait to hear the outcome of the phone calls that the manager was making. I tried to convince her that everything was going to be fine while making her aware that things might still not go to plan. They may never locate Teddy. He might not even exist.

Vicky watched the people wandering through the lounge and wondered where they had come from. There were all kinds of nationalities wearing different types of clothes. Some wore long flowing robes and matching headgear while many wore western dress or casual clothes. When she looked out to the gardens it was bright sunshine and she was eager to get out of the hotel. She was looking at a guide book for the country which had photographs of many of the places Teddy had introduced her to when the manager reappeared.

“We have good news for you,” he announced, smiling at Vicky. “I have managed to get a message to your mother to say you are safe and I have located Ato Daniel, your friend’s uncle. He is a well-known scientist from the university in Addis Ababa and he does have a nephew called Teddy.”

“So he really does exist,” Vicky exclaimed in relief.

“Yes Ato Daniel is going to come later, with Teddy and his father. Oh, he has some questions for you,” the manager added, shaking his head.

“I bet he has,” I murmured to Vicky. “Your arrival here could get Teddy into big trouble.”

“I have also spoken to the British Embassy and they will need to interview you. I cannot get your father – he is not answering his mobile phone.”

“He’s probably working,” Vicky answered. “He’s also a hotel manager so he’s very busy.”

“Really. Well he must be a busy man but I will keep trying. Meanwhile are you okay?”

“Yes thank you. Can I go into the garden until the people arrive?”

“Of course. You are our guest.”

As the manager disappeared round the corner, I told Vicky she was going to be okay. As she wandered out into the early morning sunlit gardens, I helped her to plan what she would say when questioned. By the time the British Embassy official arrived she was prepared.

“Well young lady, you’ve been very lucky. If you hadn’t been brought here, you could have been lost forever,” the woman said. “Now we need to arrange for a temporary visa and a flight back to England.”

Vicky acted shy and grateful, giving the impression she was very upset at the mistake she’d made and wanted to get home to her mother. When the next visitors arrived, however, she behaved completely differently. When she saw the boy, who was about her own age, accompanied by two men, one tall and thin, the other short and plump, she felt excited. She

recognised the face she had seen on her school's computer monitor. Meeting Teddy in person and seeing his family confirmed her decision to try and stay in Ethiopia a bit longer.

“Vicky. It is so good to see you. I recognised you immediately,” Teddy cried, running across the lounge towards her and sitting next to her on the huge sofa. I told Vicky it was possibly due to the fact that she was the only Western teenager in the room rather than his memory of her face on a mobile phone but she quickly put that out of her mind. The young man who joined them turned out to be Daniel, Teddy's uncle while Teddy's father, was the smiling older man with a shiny bald head and trim beard.

“Aah! So this is the child,” he said in a deep voice as he came over to sit next to her. “I think you already have spoken to my son.”

“Yes,” Vicky answered, still worried that she was going to get into serious trouble. “I was using the computer at school and, when I clicked on Ethiopia, Teddy appeared. I thought it was a website until he started talking to me. I'm sorry – he did tell me it was his uncle's mobile phone that he was using – but it was just so amazing I didn't want him to stop.”

The younger man looked at her then smiled. “Don't worry. Teddy admitted everything after it happened. I should never have left it out in my study. It was far too tempting for a young boy,” he said as he patted Teddy's short wiry black hair.

Teddy's father, Ato Tadesse, took his son's hand. “My son was very naughty. He has admitted to using the mobile phone and has been punished. You were not to blame.”

The manager had now joined them and they started to discuss the possibility of Vicky going to their house for a meal. The conversation switched from their native language to English as the manager announced, “So long as the Embassy knows where she is, I don't



think there will be a problem. She has her parents' phone numbers to inform them where she is going."

"Can she stay with us?" Teddy asked, finding the prospect of a new friend really exciting.

"I think we had better speak to her parents first," his father replied cautiously.

"Oh, I think we may be able to convince them it would be okay," I told Vicky. "This could be fun."

Outside the hotel they walked through the grounds and car park to a big 4 by 4 white car. Teddy had grabbed Vicky's hand and was asking questions. "Where have you been? Did you get a good mark for your project at school? When do you have to go back to school?"

She tried to answer his questions but she was also looking out of the car window at the amazing scenery. They drove out of the sanctuary of the Hilton Hotel into the real city with its beggars and poverty, and turned right up a hill towards the presidential palace grounds where armed soldiers scanned the area from their watchtowers. The wide road was busy with orange buses, blue and white painted minibuses and taxis, and big white cars, like the one they were in, all belching grey smoke. They continued to climb, passing roundabouts, government buildings and shops until they reached the impressive stone gates of the university campus where Daniel worked. Vicky looked in amazement at the hundreds of people and many buildings including large modern structures, some of which were unfinished and seemed to be held up with tree trunk scaffolding. There were elaborate churches and corrugated iron shacks selling fruit and drinks. They drove further on towards the high forested hillside then Daniel turned left off the main road down a rough stony lane with high walls on either side and parked the car outside a pair of tall metal gates.

He blew the car horn and soon the gates opened into a large courtyard area with a garden in front of a big single storey house of red bricks under a green metal roof. A big black dog bounded over to them from the grass as Vicky climbed out of the car.

“Don’t worry about him. He’s our guard dog but he doesn’t bite,” Teddy assured her. “Come and meet my mother and my little sister. We all live here.”

Vicky followed him up the steps to a cool veranda. It was quite hot now with clear blue skies. Beautiful climbing plants provided some shade and dropped their pink, purple and red petals on the tiled patio. A tall woman came out to meet them with a small girl of about two or three clutching her long skirt.

“Mama, this is Vicky. She’s the friend from England I told you about. Vicky this is my mother and my little sister, Esther.”

“Hello Vicky. You are welcome here,” his mother said and took hold of Vicky’s shoulders then kissed her on either side of her head. “Come Esther, don’t be shy. Say hello to Vicky.”

The little girl peeked from behind her mother and looked at Vicky. She had beautiful big brown eyes and a little turned up nose. Her tight curls were gathered into little bunches with yellow pompoms to match her dress and slippers.

“Now we are ready to eat lunch so I hope you are hungry. Go and show Vicky where to wash her hands, Teddy.”

The ritual washing of hands and eating with her fingers was a very different experience for Vicky. The food was strange but tasty. The *injera*, which was a bit like a large cold grey pancake, had to be torn into pieces which were used to scoop up different types of

spicy meat and vegetable sauces. They all sat down together and Vicky watched in surprise when another woman, a servant, cleared away the food. Then the servant brought in a tray of tiny cups, a small box filled with hot charcoal and other utensils and squatted on a low chair to prepare coffee. She roasted the beans on a metal plate over the coals adding some incense which gave off another aroma. Then she ground the beans with a pestle and mortar and put them into a round pot with one spout. After adding some water she heated the pot over the hot coals. Then she poured it into the cups and stirred sugar in.

When Vicky went with Teddy to wash her hands, still sticky from the food, she had loads of questions. “Don’t you ever use a knife and fork?” she asked.

“Sometimes. Especially if we have foreign food. Did you like our food?”

“Yes. It’s a bit like the spicy food I get when I’m staying with my dad in Turkey. Mum doesn’t cook much unless we’ve got guests or my nan staying.”

“Our *serategna*, Tigist, does most of our cooking.”

“Is she your servant?”

“I suppose so but she is paid and lives in a small house at the back of our compound. She has been here all my life so she is more like a member of our family.”

“What about the coffee? Do you always go to that trouble to make a cup of coffee? My mum buys it in jar.”

“When we have guests, Tigist likes to do a coffee ceremony. Today she did it for you. Did you like our coffee?”

“Yes but I usually have milk in mine and not as much sugar.”



“That is how we drink it here. Now, are you going to try and telephone your parents again and tell them where you are?”

“Yes. Dad will have finished work for the afternoon and mum should be back home by now.”

“My father says he wants to speak to them too – he’ll reassure them that you are okay and can stay with us.”

“That would be great – much better than going back to the hotel.”

Vicky managed to speak to her father first. He was not angry but surprised that she had managed to get on the wrong plane. In previous years she had been accompanied so he blamed himself for not arranging for someone to look after her. Her mother was more cross even though Vicky explained it was a mistake. She pleaded to stay with Teddy and his family until a flight could be arranged. “I’ll be much safer here than in the hotel and it will be cheaper. Please let me stay. Teddy’s dad says it will be okay and his mother will look after me.”

Eventually, after a brief discussion with Teddy’s father, Vicky’s mum consented and promised to repay any expenses. Her final words to Vicky were, “I know you too well, Vicky, and I wouldn’t be at all surprised if you hadn’t partly been responsible for getting the wrong flight. Just be careful. You may get into real difficulty one day if you try to get your own way. Now, be a good girl for Teddy’s mum and dad and don’t get into any more trouble.”

As Vicky put the phone down she looked at Teddy and grinned.

## Chapter 5

After Vicky had made the phone calls, Teddy's uncle invited them into his study. It was a small room, dark with old books, journals and newspapers almost covering two walls and piled high from the floor to the ceiling on shelves and cupboards. Facing the small window, which looked out onto the garden, was a large old desk covered in papers and pieces of wire and metal. Silently, Daniel opened a desk drawer and took out a mobile phone.

Sitting in the desk chair, he gestured for them to sit on a small wooden bench next to him. They watched and waited, impatient to see what the mobile phone could reveal.

“Unfortunately I don't have a computer at a home so I will have to show you what this can do on the phone screen. When Teddy sent those pictures to you over the internet he was using the early version of this instrument. Since then I have been working on it and I have developed something more advanced.”

Teddy and Vicky looked at him, eager to see what he had invented. I have to admit that I, too, was intrigued so kept silent in Vicky's head.

“The previous version could show pictures on the screen, and even transfer those pictures to a bigger screen. This phone can do the same. Look.”

He opened a book of Ethiopian history and pointed the phone's camera at an illustration of one of the country's rock hewn churches. Vicky yawned. She'd already seen this. He then showed her the image on the screen. She looked at the small picture of the building she had previously seen in the book Teddy had shown her, then gasped as she realised that the people in the picture were moving, chanting and praying. Teddy peered over

her shoulder to see what had surprised her. He couldn't believe what he had seen on the mobile phone's screen. The photographs in the book had suddenly appeared to come to life.

"That's amazing," she cried. "Can it take any picture back to life?"

"I think so. I've only experimented with photographs that I've taken from Ethiopian sources. The photographs captured a split second of the event that was taking place. The camera in the phone picks up that moment and then takes it forward. Let me show you another photograph."

Daniel opened a book on the Emperor, Haile Selassie I, who had ruled the country until 1974. Although the image of the bearded man was an old black and white photograph, when the phone's camera was pointed at it, the figure moved turning away from the camera and waving his hand. The moving image lasted no more than a few seconds but it had taken them back to a period over thirty years ago.

"I'm now working on the next model," Daniel explained. "If I can release the image of a photograph on the screen of this phone and it can be picked up by the internet, there must be a way of creating a hologram. You know – a picture in space. One system has already managed to project a life-size, three-dimensional image of your Prince Charles onto a conference stage the United Arab Emirates. They used a living person but I think I can combine the technologies and transfer a hologram of the past."

"Wow, that's amazing," Vicky said and watched as Daniel turned the page of the book and pointed the camera at another photograph of the Emperor sitting in a horse drawn coach with a young Queen Elizabeth II sat beside him. For a few seconds the coach moved through the streets and both members of royalty waved at the crowds.



“She’s your queen,” Daniel said.

“Never! Our queen’s old and grey.”

“Yes,” Daniel agreed, “but the photograph was taken in the 1960’s when she visited Ethiopia. My father remembers seeing her but he died a few years ago.”

“I’ve never seen her,” Vicky admitted. “It would be amazing to be in that crowd.”

“Maybe we can recreate that experience. I’ll just have to work quickly so that you can see her before you return home.”

“Me too?” Teddy asked, afraid of being left out.

“Of course! But you’d better be good, young man. Now what else can we look at before the battery needs recharging?”

“Have you a photo of the Emperor Theodros?” Teddy enquired. “He’s my hero. I was named after him,” he told Vicky.

“No photos, I’m afraid, and illustrations won’t work. You’ll have to just imagine what it was like in his company. What about this photograph of one of our cultural groups from the south?” Daniel pointed the phone at a colourful page with men and women in unusual white costumes captured in the middle of a dance. For a few seconds the dancers moved energetically, then the screen faded. “That’s all we can see. Now if you want to do something useful, start putting these books back while I work on the new mobile phone.”

I reminded Vicky to thank Daniel and help Teddy. He was already turning the pages of one of the old books, looking for his favourite emperor. Vicky was more interested in the photograph of her queen’s visit. “We’ve got to stay long enough to see a hologram of this,” I told her.

“Who was Emperor Theodros?” Vicky asked Daniel, looking at the picture Teddy had found of a barefoot man with long hair and dressed in white. “He doesn’t look like a king.”

“He was a famous ruler of our country about 150 years ago,” Daniel replied. “He had links with your country, but he met a sad end.”

“How?”

Daniel was about to reply when Teddy closed the book and interrupted them, “Let me show you the rest of the house and garden.”

“Good idea. You don’t want a history lesson on your first day here,” Daniel agreed.

“Come!” Teddy urged. “Can I borrow this book, uncle?”

“Of course, if you look after it. I’ll see you both later.”

Teddy led Vicky out of the study leaving Daniel sat at the desk, scribbling notes and diagrams on his notepad.

“First I’ll show you my room.”

Vicky followed, her mind reeling with the images she had seen. In his small room she sat on the bed while he sat on the floor and opened the book. Vicky closed her eyes and I didn’t protest. We were ready for a rest. She put her head on the pillow and sleepily glanced at Teddy who was totally engrossed. The next thing we knew was Teddy’s mother entering the room. By then it was almost dark. Vicky had been asleep for over three hours and Teddy had gone out. It was now seven in the evening – or, to be more accurate, one o’ clock Ethiopian night time. Their day starts when it gets light instead of after midnight. It was time for the evening meal.

## Chapter 6

By the next day Vicky was back to normal. She was wide awake before dawn as a heavy rainstorm hammered on the corrugated iron roof of the outbuildings and flashes of lightning lit up the sky and her small room. It was nothing like the rain she experienced back at home. The first loud rumble of thunder had shaken her awake. Then she heard the rain which hit the ground outside her room with such force that she thought someone had turned a hosepipe on full. She knelt up in bed and pulled the thin curtain aside to watch the scene.

“We won’t be going far today if this keeps up,” I warned her.

“I thought Ethiopia was supposed to be hot and dry. I can’t believe this country suffers from drought,” she muttered to herself.

“Maybe we should ask Teddy if it’s unusual,” I suggested.

Vicky got out of bed and put her clothes on. She didn’t like getting back into dirty underwear but had nothing else to change into. She crept out of her room and along the passage to Teddy’s room. There was nobody moving inside the house, the dim interior of which was lit by the receding lightning flashes. There was no answer when she knocked on Teddy’s door.

“Probably still asleep. Why not see if there’s anyone in his uncle’s study?” I suggested. Vicky didn’t need a second prompt. She crept across the hallway and tried the door. It was unlocked and she started to enter.

“What are you doing?” a voice suddenly called behind her. She turned to see Daniel stood in the hallway with a torch.



“I was awake and wanted something to read. I’m sorry, I know I should have asked but no one was up,” Vicky admitted. I suggested she ask to look again at the book with the queen in it.

Daniel ushered her into the room and turned on the light switch. Nothing happened. “Power cut again. The rains were late this year so there’s been a water shortage and, consequently, a lack of power – hydroelectricity. Let me see if I can find a book for you.”

“So you have wet weather too?”

“We do. Two wet seasons a year in most places apart from the desert areas. Here in Addis Ababa we have long rains from June till Meskel – that’s near the end of September in your calendar. It’s a celebration day here as our spring begins. Then it will be dry till after Christmas when there is the period of the short rains; they should have stopped by now. Ah, I think this is the book you wanted to look at.” Daniel handed her the heavy book full of photographs and led her out of the study.

“Thanks. I promise I’ll be careful with it.”

“Just let me have it back when you’ve finished with it. Breakfast will be ready in about an hour but you can get a drink of water from the jug in that room where you had dinner if you’re thirsty. I’ll see you later.”

“We may as well sit in that room to read this,” I told her. “At least there will be a bit more light from that big window.”

Vicky turned over the pages of the book, photographs from another era showing a small bearded man posing with people from across the world. Haile Selassie seemed a commanding figure despite his size. Vicky read small extracts from the book about his palace

in Addis Ababa where lions wandered in the grounds. Then she found the photograph with Queen Elizabeth. “Wouldn’t it be fantastic to be there, in that crowd?” I said. “We must convince Daniel to work on the mobile to create a hologram of the scene. You could describe it and add it to your project when you return to school.”

Vicky didn’t need any further persuasion. Over breakfast of eggs scrambled with onion and peppers (which she usually wouldn’t eat), she asked him how long it would take him to finish his work on the new mobile phone.

“If I get power today I should be able to work on it. I’m hoping to try it out this afternoon. I suppose you’d like to see if it works?” he added looking at Teddy.

“Definitely! Then I’d like you to experiment with pictures rather than photos. I really want to see the Emperor Theodros.”

“I’ll see what I can do. Now what have you two got planned for today?”

“I’m taking Vicky to get some more clothes this morning,” Teddy’s mother said, pouring juice into cups for the children. “She won’t fit into my clothes and Esther’s are far too small,” she added, holding the cup for her daughter as she drank.

“Thank you,” Vicky replied. “Will Teddy be coming too?”

“Yes, I think he can join us. Our *seratenya* will look after Esther. Tadesse, are you taking the car to work?”

Teddy’s father looked up from the paper he was reading and nodded.

So, after breakfast they boarded a minibus which stopped at the end of their road. They all squeezed onto one double seat and then it set off with a young boy leaning out of the

door window calling 'Arakilo' or something like that. The rain had stopped but the sky was grey with menacing clouds. As they set off down the hill Vicky stared out of the window at the people, and those who noticed her stared back and smiled when she waved. There were people sitting or laying down on the footpaths while others weaved between them, as if they didn't exist. The taxi stopped frequently to let people on and off.

"That's the university. Part of it was once Haile Selassie's palace," Teddy said pointing to stone archways where there were many young people talking. They went round a big monument and continued down the tree lined hill passing a museum, shops and cafes before Teddy's mother called out a word that sounded like, 'woraj' and the taxi stopped.

They walked down the road which was full of people selling everything from underwear to CDs from mats on the floor. Young shoeshine boys, some in ragged clothes, tried to catch her eye and she almost tripped over a beggar with distorted limbs lying on the ground as she watched another blind beggar being led by a young girl. People were reading newspapers, some children and women were selling tissues and biscuits from makeshift stalls, others were wandering hand in hand along the street oblivious of those around them. Vicky held onto Teddy's mother's hand, nervous of her environment.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," I told her, unconvincingly, as all around us people seemed to be pushing and jostling, staring at Vicky, laughing and pointing. Meanwhile, Teddy kept up a running commentary on the places we passed.

"That is the café where we sometimes stop for a Fanta or Coca Cola. We get juice in that place – they make it with papaya, mango, banana and avocado. Can we get one Mama?"

"Later, Teddy. Later! Vicky needs some clothes first."



By lunch time Vicky had been kitted out with some new underwear, a sweater, tee shirts, jeans and a pair of more sensible shoes. Then they went back to the juice bar, to have the multi-layered drink which was so thick it needed a long teaspoon. Vicky, who usually had to be forced to eat fresh fruit at home, was surprised how good it tasted.

The whole morning had been an adventure but the sky was darkening again and Teddy's mother urged them to hurry so they could get home before the rain started. They caught another minibus and, just as they set off, the first drops fell. Soon the water was pouring down the side of the road, umbrellas went up everywhere and the windscreen wipers swished back and forth as the cars, lorries and taxis sprayed unlucky pedestrians. When they reached their stop, rain was still falling, but not so heavily, so they walked to the house sheltering under a big umbrella and trying to avoid the puddles.

Daniel was sat in the main room, waiting for them with a smile on his face. "I have something to show you. Follow me."

They all followed him into his study. He picked the mobile phone up from his desk and keyed in some numbers. "We need to have physical contact for this to work. Hold hands with each other."

At first nothing seemed to happen. Then they noticed that the shelves on one of the walls seemed to disappear and the wall behind appeared. They looked at each other in surprise. All the books and papers had gone from the desk and other materials replaced them – an old inkpot and pens and a heavy leather-bound book. Then they noticed a picture on another wall.

"Daniel! It's your father's portrait!" Teddy's mother cried, her hand clutching his arm. "Where did that come from?"

Daniel pressed the keypad of the mobile phone again and everything returned to normal. He looked at the astounded faces and laughed. “So it worked,” he said. “I wasn’t sure if it would. I knew it could work for me, but now I know I can take others with me.”

“Take others where?” Teddy asked, looking round in confusion. “What happened?”

As the family started talking to each other in their own language, I started putting questions in Vicky’s head. “Wow! That was incredible. Did you see how the whole room change? I think we went back in time. I wonder if we could go back anywhere to any time. Just think, we could go back to the Queen’s visit if we knew when and where she was passing with the Emperor. Ask Daniel if that’s possible?”

Daniel started to explain to us in English what had happened. “I knew that it would be possible to create a hologram of an image if the conditions were right. I needed to find a way of picking up that image from the past. So I put a tracking device into the mobile that would pick up the image of the location where the mobile was situated. Then I worked out a way of resetting the time to another date. If it worked for a few seconds earlier I knew it would also work for any time in the past. So I just set the date ten years ago to the day. This room used to be my father’s study – your grandfather, Teddy.”

“Yes, I remember. He died a few years ago. I was sometimes allowed into his study when I was very young.”

“But your father’s portrait hangs in the hall now?” Teddy’s mother asked. “I’d forgotten how this room used to look before he died. You’ve been using this as your study for many years.”

“I couldn’t believe what memories it brought back. I was careful to choose this date as I knew he was away at the time. I don’t think I could have coped with seeing him as well.”

“So you can bring people back as well?” Vicky asked.

“Well not exactly. What happens is you see whatever was in the location whether it is an object, or people. I’m not sure what would happen if I keyed in the same time yesterday, when we were sitting here. I imagine we would see ourselves but we wouldn’t be able to interact. I’ve not mastered how to achieve that yet.”

“But will you?” Teddy asked.

“I’m working on it.”

“We could see people in history though?” Vicky enquired.

“Yes. As long as we’re in the exact location they were in at a given time and date.”

“So could we see my Queen again if we were in the place they passed on that day?”

“I don’t see why not. Why don’t you both look through the book again and find out the exact time, date and location that she was here with our emperor. If it’s feasible, I’ll try to take you back there one day.”

Are you sure that’s a good idea, Daniel?” Teddy’s mother warned.

“No harm will come to us. They will get a fleeting glimpse then they will be back in the present. Don’t worry,” he reassured her, leading her out of the study and past his father’s portrait in the hallway.



## Chapter 7

Later that same day both Vicky and Teddy were excited as Daniel led them out of the house and down the road on the long walk to the Jubilee Palace. The sun was shining between the clouds building up in the sky. They were all excited as they hoped to see a brief image of the Emperor of Ethiopia in the Imperial carriage with the Queen of England.

“Now are you sure you have found the date and time of the procession?” he asked them.

“Yes, Vicky found it in the book with the photograph. It may not be the exact time as that information wasn’t written down,” Teddy explained. He was wearing a white tee shirt with a print of the Emperor on the front.

“Well, I know my father was there during school time so we’ll have to assume that it was some time in the late morning. We’ll know as soon as we’ve keyed in the details. If there are no crowds then we’re either too early or too late.”

“I just hope we see them,” Vicky sighed, running to catch up with Daniel and Teddy who were both taller than her. Teddy grinned at her revealing the gap between his front teeth.

They had not told Teddy’s mother that they were going to the palace that afternoon, afraid of her reaction. Tadesse had gone to work so wouldn’t find out until he arrived home in the evening.

“Didn’t you bring an umbrella?” Daniel asked Teddy.

“No, I forgot. Don’t worry. It’s not going to rain,” he added confidently.

Vicky glanced up at the sky and wasn't so optimistic but she had her new shoes on and wouldn't get such wet feet. Her other shoes were now ruined.

As they got closer to the palace entrance, a stone gateway set back from the main road, Vicky worried that maybe this was a bit too adventurous. After all, she had only met Daniel and Teddy the previous day. If something went wrong, how would her parents find out?

I reassured her. "He's a scientist. He's hardly likely to lead his own nephew into danger." Vicky breathed a sigh of relief and took Teddy's hand as they watched Daniel take the mobile phone out of his pocket.

"Now we know that the carriage must have left the palace in the morning and so I think it was bound to go down the main road towards the rest of the city. If we stand near the kerb we should get a view. Are you both ready?"

Teddy and Vicky looked at each other, their hands gripped tight and they nodded.

"Okay. Give me the date and time."

Vicky gave him the date she'd found in the book, February 1965 and they guessed the time. They watched as Daniel keyed in the numbers and waited for the view to change.

At first nothing seemed to happen then they were aware of the traffic disappearing. They saw figures around them fade and others appeared dressed in different clothes and with longer hair, like the Afro style Vicky had seen in pop group pictures. She held onto Teddy with one hand and Daniel kept a hand on her shoulder. There was no sign of flag-waving crowds or any royal procession. Although they spoke in a language she didn't understand, Vicky heard the people nearby talking excitedly. They were all male and the reactions of

some were angry. Then a group of police wandered over and started to break up the groups. For a moment it appeared as if it would become violent and Vicky felt Daniel's hand tighten as he held on to her.

"I think there's a problem," I told her. "We need to get out of here."

Within a few minutes the images began to disappear and she noticed Daniel frantically pressing more numbers into the mobile phone. Within seconds they were back in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The blue and white taxis and minibuses reappeared on the road and all around her people were gathered in groups talking as if nothing was happening, apart from a distant rumble of thunder which predicted another downpour.

"What happened?" Teddy asked as Daniel quickly led them up a tree lined road towards the main highway.

"We got the wrong year."

"The wrong year?" Vicky exclaimed. "But I was careful to check the date and it was 1965. I found two books and the visit was definitely in 1965."

"Yes. It was 1965 in your time. But in Ethiopia our calendar is different to the rest of the world," Daniel explained.

"Of course," Teddy agreed. "I completely forgot about that. So does the mobile only recognise the Ethiopian calendar?"

"Yes. I should have checked first. I know most books use the western calendar but I still use the Ethiopian calendar which is about eight years different."



“So we did go back in time?” Vicky asked. She was confused to discover that, not only was the clock different here, but the year was as well.

“Oh yes. It took me a while to work out when we had arrived but I know it definitely wasn't 1965 in your calendar.”

“How can you be certain?” Teddy asked.

“Let me take you to the museum. It's going to rain soon so we'll be sheltered and you can see something of our history,” Daniel said, hurrying us across the road.

“You'll enjoy that,” I said to Vicky in a sarcastic voice. “Maybe we should try to get back to Britain before this turns into a long history lesson.”

“Will we be able to see the Queen's procession now you know what went wrong?” she enquired. “I don't really like museums. They're boring.”

“Oh this one isn't.” Teddy told her as Daniel stopped a minibus taxi and pushed them onto the crowded back seat.

“I want to show you a few pictures that I haven't got at home...” Daniel began.

“And you can see the Emperor's bedroom and his bath,” Teddy added enthusiastically.

“Looks like we've got some opposition,” I told her. “It may be better to agree and go with them. You never know, it may be interesting.”

They got off the minibus at the university gates then walked through the grounds to the museum. As they entered the large stone doorway Vicky saw a wide hallway with

information boards along one wall. She wandered along looking at the paintings and photographs of previous emperors and Haile Selassie I as Daniel and Teddy disappeared round the corner at the end. She felt the air chill and as the rain started, people darted into the hallway to avoid the downpour. When she reached the others, Daniel was sat on the wide stone stairs talking to Teddy.

“Can you tell Vicky what you heard?” Teddy said.

“Tell me what?” she asked, sitting on the step next to Daniel.

“Okay. The reason I knew we had arrived in the 1970s was because I heard the students around me talking about the famine.”

“I see,” she said, unconvincingly.

“Have you heard of the big famine in 1984? I believe Bob Geldof made a record and had concerts in Britain to raise money.”

“I’m not sure. I wasn’t born then.”

“Well that wasn’t the first time there had been a famine in Ethiopia. There was another serious drought in the early 1970s when Haile Selassie was still the ruler. In February the people in the north of the country, hundreds of kilometres from here, were starving and some marched to the capital to make the government aware of their problem. They never made it through the police blockade on the edge of the city and had to return home without the Emperor hearing their story.”

“So what did you hear today?”

“Well rumours spread quickly, particularly among students. They are, after all, intelligent young people, and they were aware that things were not going right in the country.

I heard them discussing the fact that the protesters had been turned away and their Emperor had been informed. They questioned why he was refusing to accept the problem. Some believed that he didn't know what was going on but others felt that he was very much aware.

People in the rest of the world didn't find out what was happening until months later when one of your journalists made a visit to that area in the north and made a film which told the world what had happened. Haile Selassie had to accept there was a problem then but it was too late - too late for all the people, including children, who lost their land, their possessions and faced death and starvation with no support from the government or the rest of the world."

"That's horrible," Vicky cried.

"It was awful. I remember as a young boy being told at school how people even tried to eat the rotting animals – something they would never do unless there was nothing else. Thousands died in a relatively short period - too many for families and friends to bury."

"How awful!"

"The impact on Ethiopia was devastating. In 1974 Haile Selassie was overthrown by a military group which took over the country and killed many students and people who threatened their rule. They stayed in power until 1991 when the present government took power. However, that's too simple an explanation. Look, we'll have a look round some of the more interesting exhibits here and, when the rain stops, we'll go home and I'll recharge the phone. If I think it will work, we'll try to see your queen's visit tomorrow."

"Thank you. Okay, Teddy, now you can show me the Emperor's bathroom."



Teddy led her up the stairs while Daniel talked to one of his university colleagues. When they returned an hour later, Daniel was still deep in conversation and promised to meet them outside where the sun had emerged and the air was warm. Steam rose from the stone steps and bird song came from the rich green foliage. A strange monument – a stone spiral staircase leading nowhere – stood in front of the museum and Vicky had the urge to climb it.

“Go on,” I told her. “You won’t get hurt and you can’t damage it.”

As Vicky started to climb the steps, Teddy called after her. “Vicky, get down. You aren’t allowed to do that. You’ll get shot.”

Vicky turned, laughing at his reaction. “They can’t shoot me for playing.”

Teddy looked annoyed. “You are a silly girl. The guards here all carry guns and aren’t afraid to use them. You need to be more sensible.”

“I think you’ve upset him,” I told her as she climbed down and went over to him.

“How can you make it up to him? You need him as your friend.”

“I’m sorry, Teddy,” she said, trying to suppress a giggle as he stared at her fiercely, his hands clenched.

“Seriously Vicky, you need to realise that this country is different to yours. I remember how the police reacted after one election. Some students were shot and our school had armed police outside to prevent uprisings. I was scared,” he admitted.

“You were scared of what, Teddy?” questioned Daniel who appeared at that moment.

“I was telling Vicky about the riots after one of the elections.”

“Oh, that. Yes it was a dangerous time but it’s safe now. You’re not to worry, Vicky. Now let’s get you both home before Teddy’s parents get worried. My friend here has a car and will drive us back.” They followed Daniel and his colleague to a car park and climbed into the back of an old VW.

Later that evening, as they all sat round the big table sharing a meal, Daniel admitted to Teddy’s parents what had happened that day.

“Were you in any danger?” Tadesse asked.

“No. We were observers but no one could see us. I know it seems crazy but it did seem that, for those few minutes, we were really there. I was talking to a colleague who had been researching that period. He was aware that information about the march had reached the palace but had never seen any written evidence of students discussing it before now.”

“You told him what you’d done?” Tadesse exclaimed. “Isn’t that dangerous?”

“My close colleagues in my department are fully aware of what I’ve been working on. I don’t think I’ll cause any problems by putting my trust in colleagues elsewhere. I can use this tool to gather information that will help to gather historical facts with no risks. Not everything has been accurately recorded – as you well know. Now we can observe history and see what is happening.”

“So will you be able to visit the Emperor Theodros?” Teddy asked, his face suddenly lit up with excitement.

“I suppose we could but we can only see into the past if we are in the actual location. He didn’t come to Addis Ababa and his lands are a long way from here, even by car.”

“But it would be possible to go that far back.”

“Of course it would. I suppose we could go back to the time of Lucy if we had an exact date. However, I wouldn't recommend it.”

“Will we get to see the visit of Queen Elizabeth?” Vicky asked, drawn into the conversation that was being conducted in her language for her benefit.

“I promise I will try to arrange that but I will check the time and date next time. Now, please excuse me. I have some important work to do.”

Later, when Vicky got up to use the bathroom, she noticed a light coming under the door of Daniel's study. It was past midnight but he was still working. She knocked on the door but there was no answer.



## Chapter 8

Daniel was missing at breakfast the next day. When asked where he was, Tadesse put his newspaper down and told Vicky that he had worked late and was tired. Vicky was impatient to see the queen but I told her to remain calm. “You won’t achieve anything by being sulky or angry.”

Teddy was also eager to see his uncle. He brought another book about Theodros to the breakfast table and was absorbed in it, taking no notice of anyone else.

Vicky felt lonely until Esther toddled in with her mother and they sat down next to her. Esther hid behind her mother and looked round at her, shyly at first, but soon she seemed more confident and then giggled as Vicky played hide and seek with her. Her chubby hands stuffed bread into her mouth and picked up her mug of weak tea and milk. By the time the meal was finished, she was trying to grab Vicky with sticky fingers. Vicky encouraged her until her mother sat Esther on Vicky’s knee and wiped her hands and face with a damp cloth.

“You have a friend to play with now,” she told Esther. “But you have to be a good girl.” Esther looked at her mother and smiled. She hadn’t understood the words but that didn’t seem to matter as the meaning was communicated. Vicky had only been in their home for two nights and she was already able to recognise a few words of their language. *Shy* meant tea and *ow* was yes. She had asked Teddy how to say ‘thank you’ but couldn’t pronounce it yet – it was a huge word.

While she was playing with Esther, Daniel entered the room. He was clearly excited, despite being tired and was still wearing the clothes he’d worn the previous day.

“Good morning everyone,” he announced and poured himself some tea and heaped three teaspoons of sugar into it. “I have something to tell you. Where’s Marta?” he asked calling for Teddy and Esther’s mother.

“She’ll be in the kitchen,” Tadesse replied and went to get his wife.

“Where were you last night?” Vicky asked. “I went to your study because the light was on but you didn’t answer.”

“That’s what I want to talk to you about. I’ve made an amazing discovery.”

Teddy had closed his book and was eagerly awaiting the news. When his mother and father returned he urged his uncle to tell them what he’d found.

“After I left you last night I tried to use the mobile phone to go back in time. Now when I did that before I was able to go to a particular time and observe whatever was happening for two or three minutes. Then the battery would weaken and I would have to return to the present. I’ve always wanted to know what would happen if I did not key in the present time and date and the battery went dead.”

“Well you’re here now so I assume it wouldn’t matter,” Tadesse commented.

“That’s what I thought, but something else happened.”

“What?” everyone asked.

“I thought I would go back in time to see if I could observe my father working in the study. We’d gone back ten years to that time when he was away, hadn’t we?”

“Yes.” Marta replied, cautiously.

“I knew father had been working in this study just before he died eight years ago. So, I decided to set the time and date to when he would have been here...”

“You saw our father here, last night?” Tadesse interrupted his brother.

“Yes. I watched him writing at the desk. It was strange. I really felt I was back in that time. I was so absorbed looking at him that I forgot to key the current time and date into the mobile. Now I had assumed that the battery would simply run down and I’d either be stuck in that time or I’d automatically be returned to the present.”

“Is that what happened?” Teddy said.

“No. Not exactly. For some time my father just sat there, writing, absorbed in his work. I stood behind him for ages, just watching him working. Then I moved towards him and he turned and looked at me. It was strange. It was as if he could see me. I even spoke to him. I just said “father” but I don’t think he heard. He just scratched his head then turned round and went back to his writing. I hadn’t realised until that point that he was writing his diary.”

“I knew he kept a diary,” Marta confirmed. “There were quite a number of his journals in that box we put in the storeroom. I assumed he was keeping notes for his work.”

“My grandfather was a teacher of English,” Teddy explained to Vicky. “He worked right up to the time he was ill. He taught me to speak English.”

“Yes,” Daniel continued. “I knew he kept a diary but didn’t think it would be interesting. After watching him last night I searched for his last diary in the study but couldn’t find it. Now you’ve told me where it is, Marta, I must read it.”

“But what happened next? How did you get back?” Teddy questioned. He was impatient to know the outcome.



“Well, I looked at the mobile phone in my hand and realised that time had stood still. When I checked my watch I knew I’d been there for over fifteen minutes. The mobile was not using any power at all while I was in away in another time. This means that I can spend any length of time away and know that I will return to the present without losing valuable battery power.”

“I’m not sure I understand,” said Tadesse. “Do you mean that when you return anywhere the time will be the same time as when you left?”

“Yes, if that’s the time I key in. If I were to key in an earlier time and date I would arrive then. I’m not sure what would happen if I keyed in a future time,” he added, a look of curiosity on his face.

“Don’t try it,” Marta insisted. She was looking confused and worried by the implications of Daniel’s discovery.

“So let me get this clear, you can be away for any length of time and the battery won’t go flat?” Teddy now asked.

“It would appear so. The battery is not used when we’re in a different time. This is a brilliant discovery. Recharging a mobile phone isn’t always easy, even today what with frequent power cuts and trying to find a socket. It would be impossible to recharge one in the past.”

“Just think,” I said to Vicky, “when we do get to finally see the Queen, it won’t just be a fleeting glimpse. We’ll be able to have a long look at her and the Emperor. Remind him that he promised to take us to see her today.”

“So will we be going to see the Queen this morning?”

Everyone turned to look at Vicky.

“I’m not happy with that. I promised your mother and father that we would look after you,” Marta said, putting a hand on her arm. “We’ll take you to see another museum which will have photographs of the event.”

“Doesn’t she realise how boring that sounds?” I commented. “As if a collection of old relics and photographs can compare with a living museum.”

“I know you must be worried about me and I’m grateful but this is such an exciting discovery. Please let me have one more opportunity to experience it. I don’t care what you show me. There’s so much about your country that I want to learn and this is like being in a ...a living museum.”

“Yes please can we have another try, uncle?”

“What do you think, brother? Do you trust me?”

Tadesse appeared torn between upsetting his wife and annoying his brother. He finally agreed to let them have another experience, as long as he too could be present.

“Okay. Then we will go back to the palace later today. First I want to find those diaries that father wrote, particularly the last one, the one he was writing before he died.”

“I’ll get it for you,” Marta said, giving her husband a look that clearly showed her annoyance. Esther ran after her mother and Tadesse followed, trying to make amends.

“Now you two must search all the books. I have to find out where and when we will get the best view of the Imperial coach. And don’t forget to use the Ethiopian calendar.”

By lunchtime they had all the facts they needed and outside there was a blue sky with hardly a cloud in sight. Tadesse, who had gone to work in the morning, returned early to join them. When Daniel appeared at the table, he seemed distracted. Everyone filled their plate and started to eat in silence, waiting for Daniel to say something.

Eventually Teddy spoke. “We’ve got the information uncle. We think we’ve got the exact time and place.”

“Good. I hope you’re correct. We can’t afford to make a mistake again.”

“Did you read grandfather’s diary?”

“Yes.”

“Did you find anything interesting?” Marta asked, trying to feed Esther who had become tired and irritable and kept crying and trying to escape.

“Actually, yes. Let us eat first then I’ll tell you.”

The meal was eaten in virtual silence apart from Esther’s cries and Marta’s words of encouragement. At the end of the meal, as coffee was served by Tigist and Esther lay asleep in her mother’s arms, Daniel started to speak.

“Father’s diary entry for 1992 in the Ethiopian Calendar. He wrote in English, which is probably why I never bothered to read it before now. This is the June entry: ‘Peace at last. The war with Eritrea has come to an end with a peace plan. Will it last? It was such a crazy war that never should have started. I have just spent a couple of hours looking through the books trying to find a justification for Ethiopia’s position. I failed.’ He then stopped and wrote this: ‘I feel that I am being watched. It’s strange because I do not feel afraid of this presence. I can’t see or hear anyone but I know I am not alone. I must tell my sons.’ He then continued writing his thoughts on the war.”



“Did father say anything to either of you?” Marta asked.

“If he did, I don’t remember, do you?” Tadesse said to Daniel.

“No. I didn’t even know he was keeping such a detailed journal. It’s fascinating. He must have fallen ill soon after this was written because he died later that year. He was only in his fifties. I’d just returned from doing my doctorate in the States when he fell ill.”

“We’ve always lived at home,” Tadesse explained, “but I don’t remember talking much about his writing. After mother died he seemed to absorb himself in his work and spent long hours at his school. He was an excellent teacher.”

“When did my grandmother die?” Teddy asked, mainly for Vicky’s benefit as he’d been told many times that she died the day he was born thirteen years ago. Vicky however took little notice of what Teddy was saying. I was planting thoughts in her head and she was eager to question Daniel.

“Do you think he thought you were a ghost?”

“I suppose in a way I do. He was aware of some form of spirit though nothing visible.”

“Do you think those people yesterday might have been able to see us?”

“I doubt it. They were engrossed in their own company and probably wouldn’t have noticed us, even if we’d been visible. We always assume that a ghost or spirit comes back from the past. It is strange to think that we could be visited by something from the future.”

“I don’t like it,” Marta said, carrying the sleeping Esther out of the room.

“I think it’s spooky,” Vicky said.

“Spooky? That’s a strange word,” Teddy said, breaking the formal atmosphere with a snigger.

“So are you still happy to experience the procession of our Emperor and Queen Elizabeth?” Daniel asked them.

“Oh yes,” Vicky and Teddy exclaimed while Tadesse nodded, not completely certain, but clearly not wanting to be left out.

## Chapter 9

They were standing in the same place as before, by the gates to the palace, with the few people around taking little notice of the rest of the group though Vicky was subject to stares. Children selling tissues and chewing gum came over to her urging her to buy '*soft*', as tissues were appropriately named, and '*mastica*'. She shooed them away, impatient for Daniel to set the mobile back to the date in the Ethiopian calendar when her Queen came to visit the Emperor Haile Selassie I.

“Hold hands,” Teddy reminded her, “Or you won’t see your Queen.”

Vicky took his hand and Tadesse’s hand while Daniel held on to Teddy.

Just as before, the traffic started to fade away and the people around them disappeared, replaced by a large crowd. There were all age groups, some waving flags and others peering towards the drive from the palace. They were stood by the edge of the road where policemen were holding the people back.

Then the coach appeared, pulled by white horses and everyone cheered and clapped. Vicky spontaneously joined in, letting go of Teddy’s hand yet remaining in the same place and time. The carriage shone and the coachman and attendants were all dressed up. Soon she caught a glimpse of her young looking Queen looking through the carriage window and waving at the bystanders. Opposite her was the Emperor in his splendid uniform. The crowd around them shouted loudly and someone pushed her. She quickly took hold of Teddy’s hand again and Tadesse took her other hand, more firmly this time.

The procession seemed to last for ages but Vicky then became aware of everything fading as the carriage and horses went past. She glanced at Daniel who was keying something



into the mobile, a smile on his face. Teddy and Tadesse were also grinning but Vicky felt elated.

“How can we ever forget this?” I asked her. “Your mother and friends in school will never believe what you’ve seen.”

Vicky knew that the only people she could share this experience with were Teddy’s family. She wished she had brought a camera to capture that moment.

“Did you see the Queen wave at you?” Teddy asked as they returned to the present.

“She was looking at everyone, not just me.”

“No,” Daniel agreed. “She did see one European face in the crowd. She gave you a special wave.”

“Really,” Vicky exclaimed, suddenly excited to be the centre of attention.

“Oh I’m sure she didn’t see us,” Tadesse commented, deflating the situation and bringing her down to earth.

Daniel, however, did not agree with his elder brother and winked at Vicky. “I think she did see us. Now let’s go back and tell Marta. I’m sure she’s worried about us.”

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The following evening Vicky and Teddy went to find Daniel but he was not in his study. Teddy started to look at the books on his shelves. Vicky saw the mobile phone on his desk and picked it up.

“Go on,” I urged her. “Key in a date and see what happens.”

Vicky was tempted but cautious. “What was the date yesterday?” she asked Teddy. He told her and she keyed in the details with the present time – guessing the Ethiopian clock

which was six hours different to that shown on her watch. Suddenly she found herself standing in the same place, by the desk, but there was no sign of Teddy. Then she heard Daniel enter the room and turned to see him pick up the telephone and dial a number written on a piece of paper, completely ignoring her.

“It appears he cannot see you,” I remarked. “Let’s get back to Teddy.”

She quickly dialled the time and date she had left and was returned to the present.

Teddy seemed not to have noticed her disappearance.

“I’ve just been back to yesterday,” she informed him, proudly.

“No you haven’t. You’ve been here all the time.”

“That’s because I returned at the same time as I left. You didn’t see me go.”

“Where did you go? What did you see?” he asked, clearly inquisitive.

“I went back exactly a day and saw your uncle enter this office and make a phone call.”

“What did he say?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t wait to find out. Besides, he’d probably talk in your language so I wouldn’t understand. Hey, there’s the paper with the number on,” she exclaimed, pointing to a letter on the desk.

Teddy looked at the letter, written in Amharic, then his face lit up. “We must go back and listen to his conversation.”

“Why?”

“Because this letter is from the head of his department and requests details of his trip to Meqdela.”

“So?” Vicky was getting concerned that Daniel might suddenly walk into the room and hear their conversation. I was eager to find out more. There was something familiar about that place name.

“Meqdela is the site of Theodros’s final battle. It is the site of the fortress he built and where he imprisoned lots of British people.”

“Really!” Vicky exclaimed. “Why?”

“It would take too long to explain. Look are you coming with me or not?”

I know we should have felt uneasy. Not only was it wrong to use Daniel’s property without his permission, but listening into a private phone conversation was not right. Vicky was about to refuse. She was clearly torn between what was morally correct and what might offer an exciting challenge. I planted a seed of courage in her mind and she immediately took hold of Teddy’s hand as he keyed in the time of the previous day when Daniel had entered the office.

After ten minutes spent observing his uncle, they came back in the present. Teddy was silent for a few minutes until Vicky urged him to translate what he’d overheard.

“He’s planning a visit to Meqdela to do some research using his new mobile phone. He’s been given leave to go north for a week.”

“When will he go?” Vicky asked, still not completely sure why Teddy was so excited.

“Tomorrow!”

“Oh what a pity. That means we’ll miss going into the past with him.”

“No it doesn’t.”

“What do you mean?” she enquired.

“We will go with him,” Teddy decided, his brown eyes flashing with excitement.



“Did he say that?”

“No, of course not. But we’ll convince him that we should go too.”

“You’re crazy.”

“Let’s get out of here before he returns. We’ve got to think of a plan.”

“I’m not sure I want to go with you,” Vicky said. I couldn’t believe she was turning this opportunity down. There were limits to how far I would let her go but here was a chance to have a real adventure. After a brief silence she changed her mind and added, “but I’m not going to be left here on my own.”

“Good. Come to my room and we’ll work out what to do next.”

## Chapter 10

Later that evening, while the family were sat watching the television, Teddy asked his uncle if he could borrow his books on Theodros as he was planning to write an essay on him for school.

“Sorry, Teddy, but I need them. I’ll let you borrow them in a week’s time.”

“Surely you don’t need them all,” Tadesse said. He seemed to be pleased with his son’s interest in doing school work in the holidays.

“Maybe I could read them in your study.”

Daniel looked at his nephew, then he turned to his brother and admitted that he would need all these resources as he was going to set off to travel north to Meqdela the following day to carry out research.

Marta, who had been busy feeding Esther, glanced up. She appeared concerned. “Is this anything to do with that mobile phone?” she questioned.

“Well, actually, it is.”

“Can we go too?” Teddy asked, clearly pleased to hear the purpose of the visit being discussed.

Both his parents looked at him in amazement. “You are definitely not going there. Now look what you’ve done,” Marta accused Daniel.

“Why not? Is it going to be dangerous, uncle?”

“Of course not,” he replied, trying to make it appear innocent. “I just wanted to see if it was possible to get a picture of what happened there at a specific time on a particular day. You know I would take you along with me if your parents agreed but they are clearly worried about you. Besides, you have your guest to consider. I’m sure Vicky wouldn’t be happy if you disappeared.”

“Could I come too? I would be good and it would be so interesting to find out more about your history,” Vicky asked. Everyone looked at her as if she’d appeared from nowhere.

Even Teddy was stuck for words for a few seconds before agreeing with Vicky. “Yes, that would be great. We promise we’d do everything you told us. We would behave. And you and dad would have a break,” he added looking pleadingly at his mother.

“I forbid it,” she said.

“Hold on a minute,” her husband put in. “I was reassured by the experiment the other day, when we saw the Queen Elizabeth with Haile Selassie. There was no harm in watching the events but not being there. It would be a good experience for Teddy to visit that place. He’s always been fascinated by that period and, if it means he’ll settle down to some study, I have no real objection.”

Marta looked at her husband and shook her head. She picked up Esther, who was tired and started to cry, and left the room.

“I’ll speak to her and reassure her that it will be safe,” Tadesse told them. “Now I think you two should go and pack some things. Daniel, how long do you expect to be gone?”

Daniel now appeared to be regretting his words as he answered his brother. “No more than three days. It will take over a day to get there and maybe two days to get back. I planned



to find accommodation in Bahir Dar and take a tent in case there was nowhere to stay near Meqdela.”

“Good. We’ll keep in contact by mobile phone – your real phone I mean. But remember, brother, you are responsible for my son and Vicky. If anything should happen to either of them you will have to explain it to Marta - and Vicky’s parents. We’ve just had confirmation that she’s due to fly to Manchester at the beginning of next week so you mustn’t be late back.”

“We’ll be back. Okay kids, go and pack and get some sleep. We will be leaving early tomorrow morning. Tadesse, I want a word with you.”

“Great!” Teddy and Vicky rushed for the door, eager to pack and get some sleep before their great adventure. I was pleased that our scheming had been successful and told Vicky she could be proud of the part she’d played.

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Very early the next morning, before it was light, Vicky was woken by heavy rain bouncing on the roof and the stream of water pouring from the corrugated roof onto the concrete path. She wanted to go to the toilet so crept out of her room into the dark corridor to go to the bathroom. She saw a light on in Daniel’s study and heard him talking with Tadesse in Amharic. She was only wearing an oversized T shirt so hid behind the bathroom door, leaving it slightly ajar as she watched them both emerge. They were carrying bags and heading for the outside door.

“It looks like they’re packing the car already,” I suggested. “Maybe you and Teddy should get up now or they might go without us.”

Vicky locked the bathroom door and, when she had finished washing, returned to her room and quickly put on her clothes. Then she rushed to Teddy's door and knocked on it.

"Come on, Teddy. Daniel's ready to leave."

Seconds later he was facing her, rubbing sleep from his eyes. "But it is only half past ten – that's half past four in your time. It's too early."

"But I saw them take the bags out to the car."

"Okay. I'll get dressed. Tell them I won't be long."

Vicky picked up her bag containing a few changes of clothing – in fact all the clothes she now possessed apart from those she'd arrived in. The shoes she had been so proud of now lay neglected under the bed. When she reached the outside door she heard the engine start so she ran through the pouring rain towards the driver's door. Tadesse stood by the compound gate under a big umbrella. He was unlocking it when he heard her shout at his brother.

"Hold on. Don't forget we're coming too."

Daniel wound down the window of the big vehicle and looked down at her, clearly exasperated. "Don't be intimidated by him," I told her. "Remember, they promised to take us."

"Sorry, we didn't expect you to leave so soon. Teddy's on his way. Shall I get in the back?" she asked.

Daniel appeared stuck for words but Tadesse, who really looked annoyed, ran to join them and said, "You can't go. It's far too dangerous. I promised the British Embassy that I would look after you."

“But you said it was okay last night.”

“I know, I’m sorry. My wife and I discussed it and, I agree with her, it is not a good idea. It’s a long journey and I cannot guarantee your safety and well-being.”

By now, Teddy had joined us, carrying his bag and wearing his jacket over his head.

“What’s happening? Are we going now?”

His father looked at both of them and sighed, then looked at his brother and gave in. He suggested that, if they took great care, they could go but told his brother that he must return after three days. Daniel appeared really angry but he didn’t argue with his elder brother. He just unlocked the back door and told the children to get in. They didn’t need a second invitation to get out of the downpour and start their adventure.

Tadesse returned to open the compound gates and Daniel started the engine and switched on the headlights and windscreen wipers. Vicky and Teddy fastened their seat belts, waved at Tadesse and then looked at each other and smiled but remained silent. They would have to wait a long time for Daniel to calm down before they could talk again.



## Chapter 11

As the sky began to lighten and the rain stopped, Vicky woke up and looked out of the car window. Although there were few buildings, there were many figures wandering along the road, some herding cattle with huge horns and humps on their backs, small flocks of sheep with thick woolly tails and donkeys tip-tapping daintily on their tiny hooves. Other people carried bundles and most were wrapped in white shawls – even the men.

Teddy was fast asleep, his head lolling forward and saliva dribbling out of the corner of his open mouth. Daniel was concentrating on driving and avoiding the potholes, people and animals. There was very little traffic on the road apart from a few buses, their roofs piled high with baskets, and packages, and wagons including a long red Coca Cola lorry which Daniel had trouble overtaking. Every time he pulled out to the left there would be a blind corner ahead or another vehicle coming towards us.

Everything was new and I kept saying to Vicky, “Look at this! Did you see that?” as we saw a different view of the countryside or passed through a built up area where people bustled round shop entrances. Unlike the brown thatched roof circular *tukuls* which they saw in the countryside, the town buildings had painted walls in a variety of colours and roofs of corrugated iron which reflected the recent rain in the early morning sun. People in mud coloured clothes wandered along the edge of the dirt road avoiding puddles and rocks, busily engaged in conversation with each other or concentrating on where they were going.

Eventually we reached the edge of a plateau. Daniel pulled off the road and stopped the vehicle at the top of a huge gorge, so wide it was difficult to see the other side which was obscured by low cloud.

Teddy woke up and looked around him in surprise. “Where are we?”

“The Blue Nile gorge. This is the *Abbay* which takes the water from Lake Tana to the River Nile in Sudan and eventually to Egypt,” Daniel explained.

“Wow! This is amazing,” Vicky exclaimed, relieved to be able to speak at last.

“Let’s get out and have a better look,” Daniel suggested.

For as far as the eye could see the brown river in the bottom of the deep wide chasm snaked its way in both directions. The valley sides were steep with tall trees between bare rocky patches. Overhead, vultures and other big birds soared, occasionally crying but, apart from that, there was no sound. Then two ragged clothed children emerged over the brow of the summit herding their family’s two cows and small flock of sheep. They were busy chatting to each other, cracking their whips and shouting at the animals so didn’t notice us until they were almost level with the car. Daniel shouted a greeting phrase we’d heard frequently over the last few days. The boys stopped and responded, suddenly more interested in watching us while their animals continued on their familiar route. The sound of a bus horn alerted them to the possible danger and they ran off shouting, “Ferenge, ferenge!” By now Vicky and I recognised this term for foreigner. I felt a familiarity with the scene and suggested to Vicky that it was like stepping back in time.

The air was still cold and Vicky began to shiver. “Come on, let’s get back in the car and move on,” Daniel said, adding, “Which one of you wants to sit in the front?”

“Me!” they both shouted but Vicky got to the door first.

The journey down the winding road to the bottom of the gorge took over half an hour but, as they drove round each hairpin bend, the views changed and she never got bored.

Teddy kept asking questions of Daniel, who appeared to have forgiven them and was his usual friendly self. At the bottom they came to a wide bridge over the fast flowing brown waters, swollen with the recent rains. “Many people are surprised to see so much water in Ethiopia. Unfortunately, most of this water serves no useful purpose here but feeds the crops and the people in Sudan and Egypt, taking much of the soil and nutrients to their lands.”

Then we started the long, slow ascent up the other side of the valley, finally reaching the plain and the tarmac road that took us between larger cooperatives of farms, some using modern tractors, towards the town of Debre Markos where we finally stopped for lunch. Vicky and Teddy were starving but, in an attempt to appease Daniel, they kept quiet. Now they jumped out of the car when he parked in front of a restaurant and almost ran inside, stopping briefly to wash their hands at the sink outside. Vicky was now getting used to people staring at her and smiled at them, using the phrase she’d learnt from others. “*Tenaystilign, dehna nachoo?*” They either responded politely or burst into spontaneous laughter at the sight of a white girl using their language to greet them.

Inside the dark spicy smelling restaurant they sat at a small metal table still bearing the fly covered remains of a previous occupant’s meal, and Daniel ordered food and drink for them. When the bottles of Pepsi and fizzy water arrived he shared it out between their glasses and then blessed the food that was served on one tray for all three. This wasn’t the first time Vicky had been exposed to traditional ways of eating and drinking in Ethiopia but she waited to see what the others did before taking a piece of the *injera* and parcelling a small amount of sauce or vegetables in it and eating it. This was fun. Her mother would have been shocked to see her eating with her fingers off the same plate as others in public but, everywhere she looked, others were doing the same. She was so hungry she didn’t even notice what the food



was – cabbage, beetroot, potatoes, carrots and mixtures of spicy pulses - things she would have turned her nose up at back home.

“The sauce is called *wat*,” Teddy told Vicky.

“What?”

“Yes, *wat*,” he confirmed.

Vicky didn't understand and shook her head. Soon they were back in the car, with Teddy sitting in the front. He stayed there for the remainder of their journey to the town of Bahir Dar where Daniel planned to spend the night. Vicky continued to look at the sights and the scenery before she started to doze, in spite of my encouragement to see what was going on, and she eventually fell asleep. She woke up when we reached the large town on the edge of Ethiopia's largest lake, Lake Tana. The car pulled into a small hotel car park near the lakeside and Vicky was given a room with a shower facing onto a small courtyard.

Back in Turkey, her father would have been appalled at the facilities compared to his own hotel. While there was a single bed with clean sheets and a blanket, the 'facilities' included a toilet with a broken seat, a cracked sink and a shower by a water heater with loose plug wires. Vicky decided a cold rinse would do. She was relieved when Teddy knocked on her door and invited her to walk into town with Daniel and himself.

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The following morning, before daybreak, Daniel knocked and woke her from a heavy sleep. “Come on, Vicky. We're setting off for Meqdela,” he whispered.

Although still tired, she quickly got out of bed and, within half an hour, they were on the road out of Bahir Dar towards their destination. As the sun rose, brushing the distant mountains with a pinkish hue, Vicky looked around in wonder. The road was bumpy so, though she was still tired, she couldn't sleep. Besides, there were too many interesting sights to see as the monochromatic view gradually became a full colour movie picture. As he drove, Daniel started to tell us a story that he had read as a child in school.

“During the reign of Emperor Theodros several visitors arrived from Europe. They travelled across the country, taking notes and making diagrams. They journeyed from the north to the south, from the east to the west. They crossed streams and rivers, travelled through deep valleys and over high mountains. They went across hot dry deserts and round the edge of enormous lakes. After weeks of exploration, making maps of the rivers, mountains, lakes, deserts and roads, they went to see the Emperor.

Theodros studied the maps carefully and was pleased with their work. ‘Here we can find all our rivers and mountains and see that the source of the Nile is Lake Tana.’ He gave the Europeans a feast with *wat* and *injera* to eat and *talla* and *tej* to drink. Then, after the feast, the Emperor gave the guests gifts of silver and gold.

Then they prepared to return to Europe with their new wealth and maps. Emperor Theodros sent several of his servants with them on their journey to the port. When they reached the sea they put all their belongings on the boat and were about to leave when one servant stopped them.

‘Give me your shoes,’ he ordered.

‘What for?’ they replied.

‘I must wash them.’

So they removed their shoes and gave them to the servant who washed them carefully. After they had dried in the sun he gave them back and wished them a good journey. But the Europeans were puzzled. ‘Why did you wash our shoes?’ one asked.

The servant answered, ‘You have seen all of our country, Ethiopia. You know what a beautiful place it is and you know how much we love our land. We plant our seeds and grow our food in this earth. All the roads that you saw were made by the feet of our parents and their parents. They are buried in this soil. The earth is our father and mother. The Emperor has given you gold and silver, but we will not give you our land. That is why he told me to wash your shoes before you leave our country.’

For a while after Daniel had finished the story Teddy and Vicky were quiet. Even I could not think of anything to say as I pondered on the pride that the people felt for their country. I felt a sense of nostalgia that had been growing since we set off north and tried not to disturb Vicky’s mind with my thoughts and ideas.

Through Vicky’s eyes I saw the view outside and had a strange feeling – had I been here before or was it simply because I’d seen so much similar action the day before? Only the scenery seemed different as we headed towards the high mountains through villages and past small farmsteads with grey straw-topped *tukuls* smoking in the early light as the morning *wat* and *injera* were cooked inside. Men and boys with sticks and whips took their oxen and wooden ploughs to the fields while others herded cattle and sheep to the grazing lands and water. Donkeys laden with yellow plastic water carriers, or eucalyptus branches, trotted ahead of their owners who were wrapped up against the cool morning air in layers of muddy green, brown and white garments.



Teddy broke the silence. “I hadn’t heard that story before. Were they the same Europeans who Theodros captured?”

Vicky looked at him in surprise. “Captured? What had they done?”

Daniel looked in the car mirror at his nephew. “I think you had better explain to Vicky the story of Theodros before we arrive in Meqdela. She needs to be prepared for what we might see if we are able to go back in time.”

So Teddy began the long story of his hero.

## Chapter 12

When they stopped for lunch in a small village café, Vicky was exhausted. Not only was the journey long and sometimes the road was so rough that she kept bouncing out of her seat, but listening to Teddy's enthusiastic retelling of the story of Emperor Theodros had been hard work. Although his English was good, it was still difficult to understand his accent and he had to repeat most sentences. By the end of the story she was yawning and beginning to feel nauseous. It was a good time to stop.

After the ritual of washing hands, being stared at by the locals, eating the food and drinking Pepsi mixed with water, Vicky was ready to move again. Daniel was in deep conversation with one of the men who pointed up the valley to the grey clouds which hung above the mountains. "What is he saying?" she asked Teddy.

"There may be rains later and the road will be difficult. No problem! *Chigger yellum!*" he added cheerfully.

Vicky had heard the phrase a few times but couldn't work out what it meant.

"No problem," he explained. "If there's a problem we say, *chigger alle.*"

"*Ishee,*" Vicky answered, using an Amharic phrase she'd learnt meaning 'okay'.

They changed places and Vicky climbed into the back seat among their bags and made herself comfortable. However, the bumps from potholes in the road kept dislodging the bags and she spent most of the time trying to keep them on the seat. Sleep seemed impossible. I encouraged her to stay awake, keeping an eye on the scenery which was becoming more mountainous and dark as the clouds gathered together blocking out the blue

sky and sun. Daniel and Teddy chatted in Amharic and, apart from the odd phrase, we didn't understand what they were discussing. I reminded Vicky of some of the interesting parts of the story of Theodros like the huge cannon he had forced some Europeans to build and had then had it transported up to Meqdela with hundreds of men pushing and pulling it. Although she was eager to see this impressive fortress that Teddy had described, Vicky was unable to remain awake.

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She woke up suddenly as the car screeched to a stop on a sharp steep bend in the road on the edge of what appeared to be a huge chasm, the base covered by mist. The rain beat down on the car. There was a small group of cattle with their huge humps and long horns struggling to pass the car. They were followed by a young boy dressed raggedly holding the remains of an umbrella over his head to divert some of the deluge that rained down on him. His feet slogged through the muddy puddles of water as he passed the car, stopping briefly to look at us and wave.

Daniel tried to drive on but the wheels spun and the car started to slide on the muddy surface between rocks and grass. Vicky looked out of the window as the back of the car skidded nearer to the edge of the drop.

“Stop!” she shrieked in panic. “You’re too close.”

Daniel left the engine running, pulled on the brake and climbed out of the car. Teddy turned round to look at Vicky and grinned. “Exciting, yes?”

“No! Scary!” Vicky responded, turning to see Daniel looking at the back of the vehicle.



He climbed back in and announced that there was plenty of room, pulled the handbrake off and accelerated again. Mud spattered behind as the back wheels slid from side to side then inched forward. They were back on the road which now was nothing more than a stony deep-rutted track. Vicky wanted to close her eyes but I forced her to stay alert. The mountains on the side of the pass were sheer and high, the exposed rock cliffs at the top rose above steep scree slopes with very little vegetation apart from the occasional stunted tree and twisted bushes. They continued to rise towards the dark grey clouds, Daniel pointing out the site of Meqdela in the distance, looming high above the valley like an impenetrable fortress. Waterfalls cascaded down between vertical stone slabs, washing away the red soil and carrying it into fast running ravines which sought out the fastest way to the river far below. Some streams cut across their road and disappeared into the gorge, while others zigzagged under the car and ran downhill. There were no people or animals in sight and it was getting dark. The mountain of Meqdela with its plateau summit was silhouetted against the dirty purple sky.

“We need to find somewhere to camp,” Daniel told them. “Look out for some level ground.”

“We’ll be lucky!” Vicky snorted, but, at that same moment, they came round a corner and found a wide ledge sheltered by precipitous rocks.

“This will do. Now I’ll get the tent out of the back if you two can get the food ready in here. There’s no need for us all to get wet. You’ll find plenty to eat in that box with some bottles of drink.”

Later, sat inside the small tent with a lamp, he told them what he planned to do.

“If my calculations are correct, this was one place that Theodros and his followers passed through to reach Meqdela. A British army, led by Napier, was also marching there to gain the release of the British consul and other prisoners who were being kept by Theodros.”

“Can we go back in time to see them?” Teddy asked eagerly.

“Oh please say yes.” Vicky added enthusiastically. She’d soon recovered after eating a dish of cold spaghetti with tomato sauce and a bottle of tangerine pop.

“Well there is a problem getting the date and time exact. As we can only use the phone once without recharging it, I want to be sure that we are successful. Tomorrow we have to set off back as we need to be in Addis Ababa the next day. We should have some time tomorrow morning to experiment but I want you both to promise to go to sleep tonight while I do the calculations.”

“We promise,” both Vicky and Teddy shouted simultaneously.

“Okay. I’m going to work in the car so I’m taking the light with me. If I hear any noise you won’t be going with me tomorrow.”

Vicky and Teddy looked at each other – then nodded to Daniel. I wanted to put all sorts of ideas in Vicky’s head but decided that it was pointless getting her any more excited. For some reason I had doubts now and I was afraid to influence her thoughts. I just let her sleep and dream.

## Chapter 13

At daylight, just before six in the morning, the sun was shining and Vicky could hear birdsong. Teddy was still asleep but Daniel was moving around outside their tent. Vicky climbed out of the sleeping bag and pulled some warm clothes on then opened the flap of the tent. It was freezing cold but the sky was blue, not a cloud in sight.

“Good morning, Vicky. Did you sleep well?” Daniel asked. He was squatting in front of a pile of stones on which a kettle was balanced with smoke curling round from the fire beneath.

“Not bad. I had some weird dreams,” Vicky admitted. “Did you do the calculations?”

“Yes. I think we’re going to be successful. But first we must have breakfast. Help yourself to bread and honey over there,” he said, pointing to a tray set out with food and utensils. “As soon as this boils I’ll make some tea. Any sign of Teddy waking up?”

“I’ll tell him we’re ready to go. That should make him move.”

“I am awake and I can hear you,” Teddy called from within the tent. “What did you dream about, Vicky?”

“Oh, just about your Emperor Theodros and his family. After everything you told me about him yesterday I couldn’t get him out of my mind. Did he really force his men to jump to their deaths off the edge of a cliff? That’s ghastly.”

“Yes and we may be able to see the chasm that they fell into. He was cruel at times and did some terrible things to his own people if they opposed him – burning people in their own homes and mutilating them. However, he was also very humane according to some



historians. He was strong and never seemed to tire but he was also known to be a very loving person with a great deal of charm. He was a mixed personality,” Daniel explained.

“He sounds horrible.” Vicky exclaimed.

“He was a great man.” Teddy responded.

“And today, hopefully, we may catch a sight of this sad person,” Daniel concluded.

“Now, get everything tidied away, fold up the tent and sleeping bags and get yourselves ready for our next adventure.”

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Within half an hour the three of them were stood by the car, Daniel in the centre with the phone in his hand, Vicky on his right, Teddy on his left, both holding tightly onto his arms as he dialled in a date and a time. They were all nervous but committed.

Within seconds the car disappeared and they found themselves surrounded by a mass of people, horses, heavily laden donkeys and mules and dogs. The air was filled with the smells of unwashed bodies, smoke and dung that shocked their senses. Then there were the noises: shouting, crying, braying and barking. But it was the sight of the filthy men in their tattered clothes, woollen cloaks and weapons, some walking, some on horseback, which really scared them. They were talking in a language that even Daniel did not seem to recognise. Vicky glanced at him and saw fear on his face. She turned back to the frantic scene before her. Not only were there men carrying swords and spears, but behind them were women and children. She could not believe how many people there were. Thousands, stretching back down the valley as far as she could see. One large group of men could be seen hauling a huge iron cannon up the slope towards her.

“Hey is that the cannon you told me about?” she asked Teddy.

Suddenly a horse came directly towards her and she jumped aside, letting go of Daniel’s arm in her panic. “No!” I screamed in her head, but it was too late. From behind something hit her and that was the last thing we remembered.

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When Vicky eventually opened her eyes we were in the gloomy light of a stone building. It was full of smoke and the strong smell of animal hides, cooked meat and fat. She looked around in distress. A middle aged woman was sat beside her, wiping her face, her dark skin glistening with sweat beneath the shawl that covered her head and shoulders. Her cracked lips moved as she murmured, “Sshh.” saying a few strange words quietly to calm Vicky.

I looked into the woman’s eyes. The shock of recognition was strong enough to take Vicky by surprise. She stared at the woman and, as she gasped, trying to regain her breath, I realised that we were in immense danger. The image of the woman went hazy and disappeared as Vicky lost consciousness again.

I had to keep her alive. I had to protect her. I had to help her recover. But I was in turmoil. Here I was, in the head of a young girl of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and also back in a time, in a place and close to a person that I had previously inhabited. The clues should have alerted me. The mountains and the scenery that had seemed familiar. Even the stories about Theodros had stirred memories that I had tried so long to forget.

I had to work out how we could escape disaster before the fighting and carnage started, as I knew it would in the next few hours or days. Until Vicky opened her eyes again, I could not assess the situation or guide her. If she was badly injured we might be unable to

move and would have to wait, hoping that Daniel and Teddy could rescue us before battle commenced. I recalled the fear, the panic, the sight of blood, the smell of seared flesh and burning timber, the sound of screams and the crackle of the straw and flaming wood. I visualised mother's look of horror when she knew what had happened and the way she seemed to lose her grip on life from that moment. I could not survive that another time but what could I tell Vicky?

How could I make her understand that, in a former life, I had been the voice in the head of Alemayehu, the Emperor Theodros's son. He must be near at this very moment, eager to see the strange white girl who had been brought to his own bed and was being cared for by his grandmother. What would I do if, when Vicky opened her eyes, I was to face myself in that child's eyes? I had an obligation to protect her. If history were to change direction now, Vicky's own existence would be placed in jeopardy. I could not explain my predicament to her.

Nobody realises that their inner voice has a past. Some people believe that they are the reincarnation of a famous person but that can never be proved. Most of us quickly forget our past lives and concentrate on the present. Life moves on and we never go back – well not till now. It is incredible that, in going into the past, we should have returned to a time and a place I had lived in previously. I wonder if it was fate or destiny that delivered us here. Whatever it was, I had to be strong for Vicky.

I felt her shiver and heard the sound of voices around us. Gradually darkness receded and bodies emerged, their faces staring down at her in concern. Among them was Alemayehu, his wide brown eyes looking at her in astonishment. He was almost seven years old, dressed in a long white robe tied at the waist with his long hair pulled back from his face and glistening from the butter that had been rubbed over it. Behind him, grasping his



shoulders with her fingers, was his mother, Terunesh, her head covered by a shawl. I heard him ask her who the girl in the strange clothes was. I understood the language and his dialect but I could not translate this to Vicky. As she awoke she tried to sit up but the pain was too much and she slumped back on the hard straw filled mattress. Tears filled her eyes and Alemayehu disappeared in the watery haze.

“Where am I?” Vicky cried an hour or so later.

“Ask Theodros if we can fetch one of the prisoners. He may understand her.” I heard Terunesh say quietly in the language I had once known. She was still young, in her twenties, but already weakened by the events which had brought her to Meqdela with her husband, the Emperor. As Vicky closed her eyes, I caught one last sight of my grandmother and mother, and the child whose mind I had once inhabited.

## Chapter 14

“What is your name? Do you speak English?” a woman’s voice asked. Vicky looked up at the woman, her flushed pink face framed by mousy coloured hair, parted in the centre and brushed back into a neat little bun. She was wearing a long drab brown coloured dress, buttoned down the front over her narrow chest, the skirt covered by a long dirty apron. Behind her the Empress’s mother and other women waited apprehensively. They seemed nervous of their new prisoner in her strange clothes.

“Vicky. I mean, Victoria. Yes I’m English. Are you?”

“I speak English. What are you doing here?” she asked brusquely.

“I don’t know. I lost my friends. Where am I?” Vicky responded weakly.

“This place is known as Meqdela. It is the capital of Ethiopia. We are imprisoned here by the Emperor, Theodros. Where have you come from?”

“I live in Manchester but I was staying with my Ethiopian friend in Addis Ababa. We travelled here with his uncle.”

“I’ve never heard of Addis Ababa but I know of Manchester. Oh I just wish I could leave here and go back to Europe.”

“Why are you prisoners here?” Vicky asked, warming to this strange woman.

“We don’t really know. The Emperor took it into his head to keep us captive with our men and children. It is now Easter and we have travelled a long way in the last six months,

sometimes in chains. We hear a rumour that a British force is coming to rescue us but we have no idea if that is true.”

Vicky was about to respond, knowing the historical outcome of events, but I convinced her to stay quiet. “They do not realise that you actually live in the future. Imagine the problems that might emerge if you let it be known that you know their fate. Stay quiet and hope that Daniel and Teddy reach us soon and take us back.”

“I hope they come and save us,” Vicky whispered adding, “Thank you. These people scare me.”

“Most of them, particularly the women, are very hospitable. They will look after you. I have to return to my prison hut now. You will be safe, Victoria,” she finished as she was led out of the hut by a man armed with a sword. She listened to the women left in the hut talking amongst themselves. Although Vicky did not understand their language, I remembered enough to know that they were discussing her name, Victoria.

“Do you think she is the British queen that Theodros has been corresponding with?” Terunesh asked her mother. “She looks far too young and, well, she’s hardly regal looking.”

“Yes, I think she is Queen Victoria,” Woziro Lakiyaye replied. “Her garments are very odd but beautifully stitched and we now know she is English.”

“Do you think I should tell Theodros?”

“No. He is too anxious at present. He could do something foolish. I will care for her and protect her.”



As Vicky closed her eyes again, I felt relief at their words. I urged her to pray for Daniel to come and rescue us before the battle commenced.

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The sound of cannons woke us later that day. They were close, near enough to be terrifying. Outside the hut people were running around shouting, some crying and children could be heard screaming. Gunfire followed, each burst jerking Vicky up from the bed, her eyes wide open. Next to the bed Lakiyaye sat. She was calmly hand spinning a fine thread from a wad of wool. She sometimes smoothed Vicky's hair back from her forehead, damp with perspiration, and murmured consoling words which Vicky did not understand. Occasionally another woman would enter the hut and provide an update on the events.

The gunfire, rockets and cannons were spasmodic at first, then they were relentless. I knew the Battle of Aroge was now well underway. As news of the fighting reached those left in the fortress, women could be heard loudly wailing in distress, having heard of the death or injury of their loved ones. Others were packing their belongings onto mules and horses, or onto their backs, and abandoning their mountaintop homes to surrender to the British. I remembered seeing it the first time, puzzled by what was happening and by the concern showed by my mother who was distracted and distant as people abandoned her.

During the afternoon the heat of the day gave way to thunder and lightning, as if the heavens were trying to outdo the mayhem on earth. The rain lashed down and the sky went dark but the booming of cannons and crack of bullets persisted until the storm ended and the sun tried to reappear.

Finally, after about three hours, the news that the battle was lost reached her and the others at the end of a long wretched day.

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The following morning Vicky was woken by the female prisoner wearing a coat over the same dress. “We’ve been released,” she announced. “We are going to find the British army and they will take us home. I would take you too but I think you are still too sick.”

“No!” cried Vicky. “Take me! Please, I want to go with you.”

The woman stroked her head, still bruised from the fall days earlier. “No, dear child. You will be safe here. There are still some prisoners left, those too weak to travel. The British will not go without them. God will be with you.”

Vicky grabbed her hand and pleaded, “Please don’t go without me.” But the woman was strong and removed her fingers. Then she turned and left through the narrow doorway into the bright sunshine. Vicky cried aloud then turned her face to the stone wall. While Vicky spent the morning sobbing, I listened for news. At one point there was a pistol shot and shouting.

Later Tirunesh came to her mother in tears. “He tried to kill himself. He doesn’t know whether to admit defeat or pursue this war. He’s released the prisoners and now wants to send a gift of a thousand cattle and sheep to the head of the British army,” I heard her cry. Lakiyaye comforted her as she knelt on the earth floor, her head on her mother’s lap.

During the day Vicky ate a small amount of food prepared by the women. The roasted meat, *injera* and bread helped restore her spirits and I encouraged her to see the positive side of life. “You wouldn’t be enjoying an adventure like this if you were in Manchester now. Chances are it would be pouring with rain and you would be sat in front of the TV watching a soap opera or movie. This is real life. You are part of the drama.”

She tried to stand but was still unsteady on her feet. Lakiyaye supported her as she took a few steps from the bed towards the door then sat down on the low stool near a small fire on which a pot bubbled. The smoke curled out of the door where dark clouds were massing above the thatched roofs of the stone huts.

“How long have I been here?” Vicky asked herself. I knew it had been a number of days, possibly over a week. I also knew that the danger was not yet over. Theodros was unstable. He knew he had lost this battle but was not ready to surrender everything.

On the following day, Easter Sunday, the remainder of the prisoners could be heard joyfully leaving the camp to join their other friends who had been captives, and the British army. Vicky sat by the doorway watching them go, but not one of them glanced in her direction. She was wrapped in a thick creamy coloured shawl called a *gabbi*, which almost covered her from head to foot. A huge flock of animals, cattle and sheep, was herded down the steep slope behind the prisoners. Later in the day they returned. I heard a despondent cry from the man who had sent this peace offering. His voice echoed round the houses, “Why have they done this to me?” No reply came. The thunder ripped loudly across the sky behind the mass of granite coloured clouds. Then it started to rain and a deluge swept across the mountain.

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Early the next day, Easter Monday, Vicky woke. She felt stronger and, without waiting for the Empress’s mother to tend to her, she climbed out of bed and walked unsteadily towards the door. The morning sunshine glistened on the remains of frost and dew on the ground. A hare disappeared behind the building. A sheep bleated and its young lamb ran to feed from it. By one of the lower houses a dog started barking then another responded and soon their yaps



filled the air. Vicky wandered across the stony ground of the summit between the many thatched stone buildings to the edge of the escarpment.

In the distance below she could see a large group of men, numbering a few thousand, wearing cloaks, fur skins and carrying shields, spears and guns. They seemed to reach a decision for a huge number then turned towards us and started climbing back up the steep slope towards their tents and houses. We watched the remaining troop of Ethiopian soldiers facing what appeared to be a massive army that must be the British force. White tents in the distance stood out against the dark rock and metal weapons and uniform decorations reflected the sun.

Then one figure climbed on his horse and advanced towards them. I knew it must be Theodros. Holding her breath, Vicky waited to see what would happen. Then he too retreated with the remainder of his men and they started their ascent to Meqdela. Vicky wandered back to the house and sat outside on a boulder with a view of the distant British army now pursuing the Ethiopians and their leader. She felt desperate. She had no idea where Daniel and Teddy could be. They might have abandoned her and returned to Addis Ababa. They may have been captured by either side or possibly even killed.

Within half an hour the first shells landed, their blasts shaking the earth and throwing up turf and soil with the smoke. Gunfire spattered and bullets ricocheted off the stone walls and rocks. At the far end of the summit plateau, the warriors, their shields and spears held high, swarmed through the open gates into the compound, seeking shelter and running towards their family homes. Lakiyaye found Vicky and urged her to go into the main thatched house, the palace, where Terunesh was comforting Alemayehu.

When I was here before, had I been aware at that moment of this other person in strange garments entering the main room? I don't think so. My memory was hazy. I urged Vicky not look at Alemayehu. I could not bear to see his eyes again. Terunesh too was weeping hysterically and Lakiyaye went across to them and put her arms round them.

Suddenly, in a lull in the fighting, a single pistol shot rang through the air. There was a moment's silence when only the caw of a crow could be heard. Then the shrieking and wailing of women started, and the cries, shouts and even cheers of men echoed across the mountain. I knew that was the moment that the Emperor had shot himself with the pistol that had been a gift from Queen Victoria. Alemayehu's father was dead.

## Chapter 15

“We’ve got to get out of here,” I convinced Vicky. “The British army will arrive soon. They will look after us.”

Leaving the small family group to their grief, Vicky crept out of the palace and looked around her at the chaos and mayhem. British soldiers in their dark uniforms and white helmets stormed into the houses, huts and tents, ignoring the distraught Ethiopians whose only wish was to surrender and leave the fortress. As they gathered together their meagre belongings, the soldiers looted the treasures in the church and elsewhere and one group pushed past Vicky to enter the Emperor’s palace. Among them was a distinguished looking man, not in uniform, but clearly with authority.

“Look after the family. They are now in our care,” he ordered as he reached the door. He glanced back at Vicky, still shrouded in the *gabbi*.

She looked up at him and said, “Thank you.”

“You speak English?” he asked, stopping to look at her as the soldiers disappeared into the dark interior of the palace.

“I am English,” she weakly replied.

“But you were not among us prisoners. Wait, I think I heard about you from the wife of one of the prisoner’s. What is your name?”

“Vicky – short for Victoria.”

“Yes, you’re the one. So you survived. She was afraid that you were too weak to travel. These soldiers will look after you,” he announced and called over two young uniformed men. “I will see you later.” He then entered the palace as she followed two Asian looking men through the streets between the houses, churches and store buildings. Many



were now on fire, the thatch catching light quickly, crackling and spitting burning straw into the smoky air. Bodies of those Ethiopian warriors who had not escaped the bullets and had not been rescued by their families lay on either side of the main track.

Near the main internal gate she saw a small group surrounding the body of one already wrapped in white cloth, a makeshift stretcher at his side. “The Emperor,” I told Vicky and she looked away then shrieked aloud.

“An elephant!”

The animal, equipped to carry away a mass of items, lumbered through the huge stone gateway with an Indian soldier perched above its head precariously swaying from side to side as it stepped over the uneven ground.

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Among the many soldiers, mules and elephants were two Ethiopians, hand in hand, one dressed in the uniform jacket of the British army but without the helmet of the others. Their heads were down, the black curly hair visible to Vicky looking down on them. As they came closer I told her to look at the object in their joined hands, glinting in the afternoon sun. “Is that a mobile phone?”

“Teddy! Daniel!” she hollered – her voice no longer weak. “I’m here! I’m safe!” She started to run down the steep slope, passing the leading elephant so close she brushed its rough grey skin and caused it to bellow loudly. The soldiers who had been ordered to look after her jogged down the slope after her, holding their helmets with one hand and their rifles in the other. Soon she had left them far behind in her eagerness to join her friends.

Teddy now looked up, obviously aware of commotion higher up the precipitous route. When Vicky saw his face she squealed in delight. “Teddy! I’m coming!”

Within a few minutes, having negotiated the hundreds of soldiers and animals that were climbing past her to their final destination, she reached her friend and Daniel. Without letting go of the phone, they hugged her and cried. “We didn’t think we’d see you again. We’ve so much to tell you. Are you alright? It’s been days, even weeks, since we lost you,” Teddy babbled, gripping Vicky’s hand in his.

Daniel looked at Vicky, took her other hand, and smiled in relief. “I was so worried. I could not return without you but I was afraid we’d never see you again. It is so good that you are safe. Now we need to get home.”

“Please. Let us go now,” Vicky urged. I’m so homesick. I can’t wait to leave this place.”

“I’m sorry, we can’t do that. If I was to dial in the time and date we left we’d arrive back in the present miles away from our vehicle. It’s too dangerous. We have to return to the same place we arrived at.”

“Is that far?” Vicky asked.

“I don’t really know,” Daniel admitted. “The British army approached Meqdela from a different direction to that taken by Theodros and his troops. When we lost you, Teddy and I had to walk for about a day before we met these troops.”

“How did they see you?”

“I let go of the phone every so often and could be seen but I knew uncle was there to rescue me.”

“It’s too complicated to explain now. Just remember what happened that night I went to my father’s study. I know he saw me – or a ghostly image of me. We’re safe now. We need to find a way back from this plateau. The easiest route will be to return the way you came and drop down west, towards the Bashilo River. I have the map of the area so, providing we meet no obstacles, we should get back before nightfall.”

They started the climb back towards the summit, their ghostly figures wandering between the baffled soldiers and startled mules and elephants. They also had to avoid the multitude of Meqdela people passing them, exiting the capital with all their worldly possessions.

I was relieved that we did not meet Alemayehu, with my mother, grandmother and their new guardians. I knew too much about the fate of the child I had belonged to. I could have faced him and challenged him to change his direction in life. Although young, he might have become the next Ethiopian Emperor. That could have altered not only his history and destiny, but the future of Ethiopia. It could also have meant that I may not have become the inner voice of Vicky. That was too great a risk.

I remained silent for much of this journey, leaving Vicky to concentrate for the next few hours on the arduous trek back to the vehicle. Above us the sky darkened with clouds of black smoke as the rooftops and buildings of Meqdela blazed.

Charred remnants of fabrics and furnishings rained down on us with pages of manuscripts discarded by those soldiers looting the treasures of the capital. We walked in silence. Each had a lot to ask and say but they were all too exhausted by the events and the



effort to escape. As darkness quickly fell, they were still on the rough road leading away from Meqdela. By the weak light of Daniel's torch they struggled on, expecting to see the car round each corner of the road but then facing disappointment. They had left the people and events of 13<sup>th</sup> April 1868 a long way behind but still had not reached their present time.

## Chapter 16

The sky was now dark except for a red glow behind the black silhouette of Meqdela. The only sounds, apart from their breathing and footsteps on the rough stones, were those of the river rushing through the valley far below and then there was the screech of a bird. It flew up from the road ahead of them, flapping its splayed inky wings and rising into the indigo sky, circling above them. Then, they noticed that the track skirted a small level area and there, by the rocky cliff, was the place where the car had been parked. With no moon visible they could easily have missed it.

“We’ve made it,” Daniel sighed.

“Can we rest?” Vicky asked, slumping down to her knees on the ground while still holding firmly onto his hand.

“No. There will be time to rest when we get back to the present. Now take one last look behind you and keep hold of me.”

Teddy and Vicky stood in awe, looking up at the burning fortress on top of the plateau, the sky behind it pulsating with hues of crimson, amber and gold beneath the cloud of thick black smoke in the dark blue sky. As they watched the sky lightened, sunlight caught the red rocks in the east and smoke gave way to white wispy clouds, brushing the summit, now bare of any buildings.

“We’re back,” Daniel announced and they both turned to look at him and saw the car behind him. “We’re safe.”

“Great! Can we go home now?” Vicky cried, still holding onto Daniel’s arm as she steered him towards the car.

“Please uncle. Let’s go. I’m tired,” Teddy added.

“It’s still early morning here. The exact time we left. We have been away for over a week but it is still only seven in the morning in your time, Vicky. I suggest we set off towards Dessie so that we can be home tonight. That will please Marta and Tadesse. They don’t expect us back till tomorrow.”

I suggested to Vicky that it might be dangerous driving after such a long walk.

“Aren’t you tired?” Vicky asked, yawning.

“Yes, but I want to get back to a good road. I’ll stop somewhere later and have a short sleep while you two catch up on your stories. I expect you both want to sleep now.” They both agreed to that and climbed into the back of the car pulling the sleeping bags over them.

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“Where are we?” Vicky asked, waking as the car pulled up at the side of the road. Outside the window we could see cultivated land with fruit trees growing: bananas, papayas and mangoes. In the distance the mountain peaks were grey against a bright blue sky with no sign of clouds. “Oh look, camels!” she exclaimed, waking Teddy with her hand.

“We’re now on the plains between Dessie and Karakore,” Daniel announced. “I need to sleep but you two can talk. Nothing will keep me awake. If you leave the car, don’t wander far.”

“Okay!” Vicky agreed. “Is there any food left?”



“Not much. Here’s some money,” he added, pulling out some notes from his pocket and handing it to Teddy. “We’ve just passed an eating place where you can get fresh fruit and juice. I’ll sound the horn if you’re not back when I wake up. Now let me sleep.”

Teddy and Vicky wandered along the road, passing a few local people with donkeys and camels who nodded politely but were clearly surprised to see a white girl with a young Ethiopian boy. When they reached the small restaurant, situated on the edge of the road overlooking the fertile valley and surrounded by fruit trees, they were welcomed by the owner. He took them to the terrace where they waited for fresh papaya with limes and orange juice. They avoided talking about their adventure till they had finished their meal.

“I can’t believe how good that tasted,” Vicky sighed. “I think the last meal I had was stale bread and some tough meat which I don’t think had been cooked.”

“You were lucky. We had to share what I could beg from the soldiers. They were suspicious of me but gave me some of their food. We drank water from the streams.”

“I don’t remember the first few days. I must have been unconscious.”

“You fell over and then a horse kicked you. We tried to get hold of you but others saw you and dragged you off the track and put you on a mule and then you disappeared in the crowd.”

“So what happened to you? Did you follow me?”

“We tried. For over a day we searched for you. There were thousands of people. We did not know if you had left the camp and gone to Meqdele. Many had moved on, following the cannon which Theodros wanted in his fortress. Others waited below on the lower plateau. When news came that the British force was coming they moved. We knew the outcome of the

Battle of Arogi. We knew that we could be in danger if we stayed with Theodros's army. If you were taken prisoner, we would be able to rescue you when they raided Meqdela on Easter Sunday. If we tried to come sooner we were afraid that we would put your life at risk as well as our own."

"I see. So you joined up with the British forces. What was it like?"

"Amazing. There were thousands of soldiers from India and many from Britain. They had many horses, mules, camels and elephants as well as sheep and cattle. They brought guns, swords and huge cannons. I was worried that they might kill me when I made myself visible but they believed I was a local who had escaped Meqdela and Theodros's army. They did me no harm, though some seemed suspicious."

"So were you free to wander among the troops?"

"Of course. I never carried a gun or sword so I was not a threat to them. Daniel stayed close to me and I would be aware of his ghostly image sometimes. It was very strange. When we were in contact, when I held onto him, we seemed to be invisible to those around us yet we could still wear their clothes and eat their food."

"Who did you get the jacket off?"

"One of the soldiers was very sick. He was hot at first so he removed his coat. Then, when he felt cold, someone put a blanket over him. I too felt cold so I took the jacket. No one stopped me and, after that, the soldiers accepted me when I was visible."

"It is strange how the coat and my *gabbi* have disappeared. I wanted to take it home."

“Uncle Daniel may be able to explain what happened to them. They were made over a hundred years ago. Maybe they just ... What is the word?”

“Disintegrated,” Vicky suggested. “Your English has improved since we were separated. Were you practicing with the soldiers?”

“With the English ones, yes. They were amazed that an Ethiopian could speak their language. Sometimes I tried to act as interpreter when they were trying to question the other natives who were fleeing from Meqdela or who were from other parts of Ethiopia and were against Theodros. I think most spoke Tigrinyan, another Ethiopian language, whereas I only speak Amharic.”

I listened to their conversation, fascinated by the account provided by Teddy of life among the British army. From my own previous experience, I had found them to be kind and helpful when Alemayehu and his mother and grandmother were placed in their protection. I recalled the day, almost a month after we had left Meqdela, when mother’s health declined further and she died. She was buried and her mother, Lakiyaye, gave the leader of the expedition a letter for Queen Victoria requesting her to take care of Alemayehu.

Vicky was unaware of my own memories and continued to press Teddy for more information. “Where were you when the fighting took place?”

“We had followed one group of Indian soldiers in the morning down the ravine to the main river. Some rode across and, while we were there, many other animals, including the elephants, were brought down. It was hot and we were all dry and thirsty. Then we had to climb up the steep slope to the flat land below the Arogi plateau. A large group of soldiers on horses were on the top. Ahead, all we could see were the two peaks in front of Meqdela. It was silent.”



“What happened next?”

“We waited. The mules with all the stores were lined up with their drivers. Different groups of the army were in different places. Everyone just lay or stood or sat waiting. Flies buzzed around us and the horses and mules shook their heads and tails and stamped their feet but most of the men were quiet and still. I think they were scared.”

“Were you scared?”

“We both were. I clung to Daniel during the Battle of Arogi. I hoped that we would be safe if we were not visible but I was afraid that the cannon shots might blow up the ground where we were or a bullet might hit one of us. It was the worst experience of my life. It was like being in a movie film but knowing that the guns were real and the blood was real. In the afternoon we watched the first mass of warriors come down from Meqdela towards the British army which stood behind the mules. From the top of the mountain we could hear the boom of Theodros’s cannons and some of the warriors aimed their rifles at the troops and shot. Then thousands of them came down the hillside on horses or running with spears and guns in their hands. It was terrifying. I thought we were going to be killed. All the men around us waited. We could hear the singing of the warriors, their shouts and their feet on the earth. But the army just waited.

Then, suddenly, an order was given and the British started firing guns and rockets. They had fast loading rifles so the sound was deafening and went on and on and on. They fired at the warriors as they ran down towards us. I saw men stop and stare before they fell; they jerked and jumped and rolled to their deaths. Some lay screaming and crying but the gun shots and cannons boomed and spattered and made us deaf to them. Blood poured from them and covered the clothes of those who still wore them. Their swords, shields and other

weapons lay near them as others jumped over them or ran round the bodies. I can't get the sounds out of my head or the smell of burning and smoke and gunpowder. I kept closing my eyes to stop seeing the bodies and the blood but, when the ground shook with a blast I had to look. Then I saw the Indian foot soldiers with swords on their guns march on the Ethiopians who were still fighting but it was hopeless.

Above us, high in the grey sky, vultures were watching them as they flew round and round. Then the sky got darker and thunder rattled the air. When the rain came it was heavy and washed blood from the bodies onto the grass and into the streams. There were hundreds of dead men yet hardly anyone among the British army seemed to be injured. They looked strong but did not seem to have feelings. The battle went on for hours, even after the rain stopped and the sun started to light up the ground. By the end both uncle and I were crying and holding each other."

Both Vicky and Teddy sat in silence, visions of the scenes they had both witnessed clear in their minds. Teddy put his hand on Vicky's shoulder, "I'm sorry you were injured. Are you okay now?"

Vicky touched her head, which had been badly bruised. There was no sign of the bump or any evidence left of the scratches and cuts to her arm. Her skin was clear, as if nothing had happened. "I'm perfectly fine. It's as if it was all a terrible dream and never really happened."

"I know. What do you think I should tell my parents? They will be furious with us if they find out the truth."

“I agree. There is no way I could even start to explain this to my mum. She would ground me for months. Let’s see what your uncle suggests. We’d better go. I can hear the horn sounding.”



## Chapter 17

The journey back to Addis Ababa was long and varied but tiring. Vicky and Teddy, still exhausted from their ordeal and the arduous journey they had already taken, dozed and slept much of the time. They also talked with Daniel about their experiences and memories of the events that they had witnessed.

“What will you tell your colleagues at work?” Vicky asked after I planted the question in her mind. I was still afraid that history may have been changed and worried about the consequences.

“I’m not sure. I need to think about it. I don’t think Teddy and I saw anything that the textbooks haven’t recorded. We saw it brought to life. You, however, saw something which has not been found in any textbooks. What do you remember?”

Vicky had briefly told both Teddy and Daniel her story - about how she found herself in the hut on the top of Meqdela recovering from her fall and being kicked by a horse. She had mentioned Theodros’s family and had known that it was the mother of his wife who had cared for her.

“When I woke up once I saw a small boy. I think he was the Emperor’s son.”

“Alemayehu,” Teddy put in.

“Yes. He was talking a woman who must have been the mother.”

“Empress Terunesh.” Daniel added. “Did they appear well?”

“Yes. His grandmother was very strong. She gave up a lot of her time to looking after me. It was only after the battle, and particularly on my last day when they must have been

told that the Emperor had shot himself, that the mother was upset and seemed to grow tired and weak. I only saw her twice after that first time when I saw them in the hut. The last time I saw her she was consoling Alemayehu. He was really upset and didn't even notice that I was stood there, in their palace."

"What was the palace like?" Teddy asked her.

"Quite basic though there were rugs on the floor and things on the stone walls. I didn't really take much notice. I only went into the first room and left as soon as I could. There were lots of other buildings as well as tents on the top plateau. As well as all the people, there were horses and mules and huge numbers of cattle and sheep."

"What about the sounds you heard when you were in the hut?" Daniel enquired.

"I didn't understand anything that was being said until one of the prisoners came to see me. She wasn't British but she could speak some English. She didn't stay long but she did come back the next day to tell me that they had been released. I begged for them to take me too but she refused."

"She must have been one of the missionary wives," Daniel observed.

"Well she wasn't acting very Christian when she spoke to me. When the British arrived on my last day, one of them who wasn't wearing uniform like the others, well he mentioned that she'd visited me. Who was he?"

"Possibly Rassam. He wasn't English but he had been working for the British government to release the consul when he was imprisoned by Theodros. I think that, with everything else going on that weekend they would soon forget seeing another English person. It's unlikely to have been reported. If we return to Addis Ababa and discover that, for the last

hundred and thirty years or so, history was completely different to that we knew when we left, we'll know that your presence in Meqdela did make a difference to the destiny of our country.”

I worried that this might be the case. I did not wish to make Vicky panic so I kept quiet in her head. We would have to wait until we returned to the city to find out what fate had in store for us. There was silence for a while then I suggested to Vicky that she pose a question. “If your presence has made a difference, ask him if there is any way that we could put things back to how they were.”

Vicky's question made Daniel laugh. “If things had changed that much we'd have known by now. I wouldn't have found the car and you wouldn't have enjoyed that breakfast with my money.”

“Yes. I suppose so,” Vicky responded, though she wasn't entirely convinced as I still silently voiced my own worries.

“Look. There is a way we can make sure none of this took place,” Daniel announced.

“How do you mean?”

“Well, when I recharge the mobile phone we could go back to any point in time. The only limitation is that we must go to the location. If we were to go back to the airport at the same time that your plane arrived, adding about half an hour for immigration, you could tell the airport staff that you'd accidentally got on the wrong plane. The events of the last week would never have happened – for you – and for us.”

“Oh, no! You cannot do that!” Teddy exclaimed.



“It’s not for you to decide. What do you think, Vicky? It would avoid all the problems that you will face when you get home. It will mean that you would not remember seeing any of us and would never even know that we had met. You would be able to live the rest of your life without the memories of the last few days. It is your choice.”

Vicky sat in silence. “It’s a possibility,” I suggested. “It would solve a number of problems. You wouldn’t get in trouble from your mum and dad. You wouldn’t have nightmares from what you’ve seen and heard over the last week. It’s not often we can turn the clock back and start again.”

Outside the sky was darkening. Daniel had stopped at road works and the rain started. Traffic was building up behind us as we waited. Big lorries, a bus and four wheeled drive cars drove towards us, their lights illuminating the rain drops on the windscreen as they ran jerkily down the glass. Vicky stared at them. Then Daniel switched on the wipers and the race between the rain drops started again. Vicky knew they were waiting for her response and didn’t know what to say. She argued with her inner voice. “I’ve had so much fun with Teddy and his family. I don’t want to forget that. I’ve grown to like him a lot. I know that the days since we left Addis Ababa have been horrific at times, especially when I was on my own, but do I want to wipe them from memory? Haven’t I changed since I came here – I’m not as spoilt and boring as I used to be, am I? If I return having never experienced the bad times, as well as the good times, I’ll just be the same Vicky.” Still she said nothing.

Daniel put the car in gear ready to move forward. He pulled the handbrake off and turned to look at Vicky in the mirror, “So, what’s your answer?”

## Chapter 18

“I’ll continue with the arrangements that the British Embassy have made. I will go home the day after tomorrow,” Vicky said.

Teddy cheered and hugged her and Daniel smiled at them in the mirror. Vicky grinned. She had made the right decision. She took hold of Teddy’s hand. “I couldn’t go back and forget you,” she admitted quietly then leaned back and fell asleep again.

An hour later they were driving through Addis Ababa, its busy streets lit with traffic headlights, shop fronts and street lamps. Then they left the lights as they climbed the hill and reached their own house. Daniel stopped outside the gate and pressed the horn. The dog barked, a light came on inside the yard and the gate opened.

Within a short time they were sat with Marta and Tadesse, relating their stories – or rather, the parts they believed were appropriate for them to hear. They were all exhausted and were relieved when Marta suggested they went to their beds and finished their stories the next day.

With only one day left before she was due to fly back to Manchester, Vicky lay awake as I posed questions such as, “How will you keep in touch with Teddy?” She was aware of the gap that would be in her life when she left Addis Ababa. She had school friends back in Manchester but Teddy had been different. In spite of all their cultural differences, Vicky enjoyed his company more than anyone else she could think of, even her best friend who’d she’d all but forgotten about since arriving in Ethiopia.

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On their last day together, Marta suggested that they buy a present for Vicky's mother.

"But I've no money," Vicky said.

"We know that. It will be our gift to your mother for giving us the pleasure of your company this week," Tadesse replied.

"Do you think she would like a traditional Ethiopian dress, or maybe some jewellery?" Marta asked.

"She loves bangles."

"In that case, we will go to Piazza where there are many jewellers. Tadesse, I will leave Esther with the *seratenya* and we will meet you at the restaurant for lunch. Do you like pizza, Vicky?"

"I love pizza."

"Good. Then we will eat in our favourite restaurant. Let us go."

So Vicky spent the morning shopping and had lunch with the whole family in a restaurant in Arat Kilo. When they returned Teddy told Vicky that he had a present for her.

"What is it?"

"A surprise! Come and see. It's in my room."

Vicky followed him and there, on his bed, was an envelope full of sheets of paper and pictures. 'Our adventure in Ethiopia' was written across the cover and inside there were photographs, drawings, photocopies and simple notes on everything that they'd shared since he first contacted her through his uncle's mobile phone while she was in school.



“How long have you been working on this?” she asked, looking with interest at the variety of material which now had so much relevance to her life. There were sketches of the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to the Emperor and photographs of the rioters outside the palace. Prints of images of Meqdela were accompanied by written notes to remind Vicky of the historical events that they had witnessed. There was even a photograph of Alemayehu, Theodros’s son, the child whose mind I had occupied so long ago. I now looked back at him through Vicky’s eyes.

“My mother did some of those drawings. Did I tell you that she studied art when she was at university? Since I first spoke to you, when you told me that you were doing a project on our country, I’ve been collecting information. What do you think of it all?”

“It’s amazing. It’s brilliant. Look, you’ve even managed to get pictures of your food and these people dancing. Oh, and here’s a photo of you and your family. Wow, I am so impressed.”

They sat on the bed together going through the documents, discussing some of historic places that he had originally told her about and reminiscing about those sights they’d seen for themselves. “Look, you’ve got a photograph of the student riots. Where did you find that?”

“Daniel found it in my grandfather’s diary. He said you could put it in your project. He also sketched some pictures on our trip so they’re included. There are no photos of Theodros, of course, but I hope you like the drawing I did of him.”

“It’s fantastic. You are so clever. This is far better than the project that I was doing at school. I must show it my teacher when I get back.”

“Will you tell her what you saw?”

“Only what I saw in the present. The rest is our secret. What about you and Daniel?”

“Well I’ve been warned by dad not to say a word to anyone. Uncle Daniel will report to his department what he saw. I don’t think he’ll tell them everything though.”

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Vicky’s journey back to Manchester was, as might be expected, quite boring. Every time she thought about Ethiopia she got a lump in her throat. I had warned her that she had to get on with a normal life. “It may be years before you can return to Ethiopia.” I know it was cruel but, well we sometimes have to be realistic. “You’ll go there again one day and will keep in touch with Teddy and his family,” I reassured her when she threatened to cry.

She had to fly to Heathrow and get a train the rest of the journey. Her mother was waiting for her at the airport and ducked under the barrier as soon as Vicky appeared, running over to her and giving her a big hug, causing a hold up for the passengers behind.

“My goodness, Vicky, you’re looking well. I was worried you’d come back stick thin.” She hugged Vicky, both of them emotional and grateful to be back together. “Come and have a cup of tea. Our train’s not for at least another hour. I want to hear all about your adventures. Oh you are a naughty girl. But I’m so pleased to see you again.”

“Yes mum. I’m happy to be home. Let’s get out of here. Sorry,” she said, turning to the red faced people with their trolleys piled high with suitcases returning from holidays. “I’m shattered. I didn’t get any sleep on the plane and the film was rubbish.”

“Is that all your luggage?”

“Yes. Teddy’s mum bought me a few clothes, oh, and a present for you.” She fumbled in her bag and pulled out a paper bag. “Here mum. This is for you. I’m really sorry mum,” Vicky started to cry.

“Hey, stop that dear. I’m not angry with you. Not now. I was mad when I first realised that you’d got the wrong plane but, when I spoke to the family who were looking after you, I knew you’d be okay. Come here, love.” She pulled Vicky to her and gave her another hug, then, after wiping her eyes, she put the silver bangle on her wrist. “It’s beautiful. You must ring her and thank her for me. Now we’d better get to the station. I’m parched and need a cuppa. You’ve got a lot to tell me about and I don’t want you to miss anything out.”

“You will not tell her everything,” I warned Vicky as she blew her nose and followed her mother out of the airport. She now had to adjust to her life back in Britain. It wasn’t going to be easy. One of the first things I wanted her to do was find out about Alemayehu and his life after leaving Ethiopia. Teddy had told her that he was taken back to England but wasn’t sure what happened to him after that. Vicky promised to find out and tell him. Of course I already knew his fate.



## Chapter 19

“Well done Vicky,” her teacher said when she handed back their marked citizenship projects.

“This is exceptional work, especially for you. I didn’t expect you to complete such an excellent project. It’s almost as if you know the country intimately.”

“Well I did have a few days there over Easter on my way back from seeing my dad in Turkey,” Vicky admitted. “That’s why I wasn’t back until last week.”

I think her teacher thought Vicky was fantasising again but she was prepared to let it go. “Now I want you to present your project to the Lower School Assembly this Friday, then we’ll put your work on display outside the Head Mistress’s office.”

“Really, miss?”

“Yes, Vicky. You have done well and will be rewarded for that.” She handed out the rest of the workbooks while talking to the whole class. “Now students, we’re going to move onto another project this term. Substance misuse! For this I want you to work in groups to produce an awareness raising campaign.”

As the teacher continued explaining the topic to the class I bombarded Vicky’s mind with thoughts and ideas. “You could tell them part of the story – how you were actually present at the place where the Queen visited the Emperor. You don’t have to tell the full truth. They’d never believe you anyway.”

At the assembly Vicky gave a confident talk about life in Ethiopia, mainly based on her own experiences rather than what she had included in her project. The students and teachers were silent as they listened to her enthusiastic descriptions of the way the people eat, how they manage to farm the land, the different costumes that people wore and their dances,

the climate and the scenery. She avoided telling them about the history of the country apart from briefly explaining how an Ethiopian Emperor had imprisoned a British consul in the time of Victoria and an army was sent to rescue him and the other prisoners. In relating this story she finished it with a question.

“Our countries are connected. Theodros killed himself with the pistol that our Queen had sent as a gift. His son, Alemayehu, then came to England and went to school here. He died here.”

Vicky could not speak any more and the headmistress stood up and started clapping. The whole school joined in and Vicky turned to receive her certificate with tears in her eyes.

“Well done Vicky! I think you have just identified your next project. Why don’t you investigate what happened to Alemayehu? I’m sure we can support you in that project.”

“Yes miss. Thank you miss,” Vicky said as she left the stage and returned to her seat.

“Well!” I urged. “When are we going to start researching Alemayehu? I suggest you get in touch with Teddy and see if he and his uncle are interested in helping you.”

## **Commentary on Back in Time**

The idea for this novel emerged a year before the author commenced her PhD studies but it has changed considerably throughout the period since the original concept. The need to produce a publication or product for children based on the theme of flying led to the design of a Flash interactive game taking students on a virtual trip to Ethiopia. This was supplemented by a short illustrated novel to incorporate factual information needed to play the game.

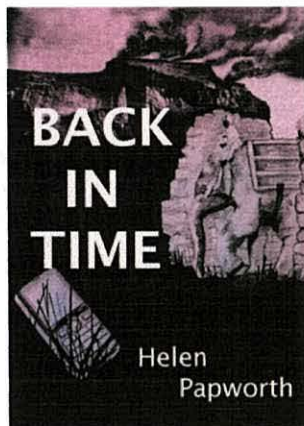
On commencement of the PhD this idea was revised into a novel for children aged eight and above to create an awareness of Ethiopia and its culture as well as its historical links with Britain. The audience was never intended to include Ethiopian children living in Ethiopia although the author hoped that it would be of interest to children whose roots were in that part of the world. To this end the author made an effort to ensure that the context was accurate when describing events in Ethiopia.

The early drafts of the novel were shared with a number of people who had links with Ethiopia and their comments provided confirmation that the story was of interest and had potential. Those providing feedback included: Hirit Belai of HaHuBooks, her husband and teenage daughter, Michael Daniel Ambatchew (whose comments are included in appendix 1), Martha Hardy and Girma Alemayehu. The novel was submitted to an agent<sup>1</sup> and publishers<sup>2</sup> and following their rejections the decision was made to self-publish. A substantial amount of editing would have been necessary to resubmit to a publisher for consideration since it clearly did not meet the current market needs and, on reflection, lacked the pace of many modern children's books for eight to twelve year olds. Nor did it meet the requirements for the non-fiction genre.

Numerous edits were carried out to make it more suited to the target audience. One concern that was addressed in the text was reducing the information and concentrating on



more action in the early chapters. This coincided with the development of a blog site for the main subject of the book, Vicky, to include her illustrations (including photographs and sketches) and associated comments for a school project on Ethiopia. This negated the need for the pencil sketches that the author had produced to be inserted within the text. It also enabled the author to publish the final draft as a Kindle book which enabled her to sell the book through Amazon. Although sales were small (five to date) there were no charges for this service and the author has the flexibility to change the price, increase marketing and remove the product if necessary. There also remains the option to review and revise the book at a later date. The cover page is displayed on the Amazon websites as well as the author's own website which has links to other sites including her blog sites. The book is also included on the new HaHu website and there are links from an Ethiopian charity 'Project Pencil Case'.

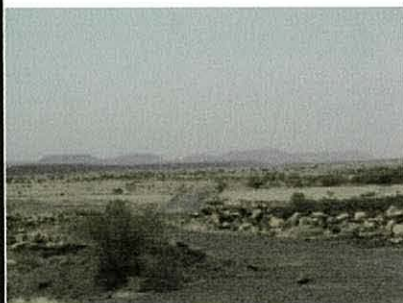
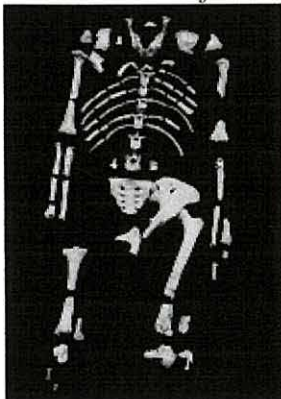


Cover of *Back in Time* on Kindle  
([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com))

Vicky's Project. The sample pages below were edited and copied onto a blog site <http://helen-outofafrica.blogspot.com/> to provide the illustrated project which is linked to the story.

### ***Ethiopia In the past***

*The country has a long history going back to the earliest human, Lucy. She was discovered in the north east of Ethiopia, an area which is now a hot and dry place.*



Thousands of years later, at about the time of Jesus, the country became an important trade centre. Axum, in the north of the country, was also important because this is where the Queen of Sheba lived. She apparently went to see King Solomon in Jerusalem and their son, Menelik, brought the Ark of the Covenant back to Ethiopia. Whether or not this is true, every year in January all the Orthodox churches across Ethiopia bring out their copies of the Ark and celebrate Timket. Axum is also famous for the tall carved stones called stelae.



Another famous place is Lalibela where the churches are not built up from the ground but down. They were carved out of the soil and rock. This is the roof of one.

One of the most interesting rulers in Ethiopian history was Theodros II. He wasn't born a prince but studied hard and became popular with the people. He wanted his country to be strong but peaceful so he took the money from the rich and gave it to the poor. The people liked him and he grew more powerful until he became emperor of the whole country of Abyssinia (which is what they called it then). He built his capital on a hill at a place called Meqdela. He knew he needed weapons to defeat his enemies so he sent a letter to Queen Victoria asking her help. She had already given him a gun as a present.

When he didn't get a reply he took some Europeans as prisoners. He was a bit mad by then as both his wife and his best friend had died. By the time the Queen read the letter he'd imprisoned the British consul. So, instead of sending weapons, she sent him a letter ordering him to release the prisoners. When he didn't reply, she sent an army to rescue the European prisoners.



The British army was enormous with modern weapons and even elephants. Theodros and his men had some cannons as well as swords and spears. They fought bravely but they were defeated in Easter 1868. Then an awful thing happened. Theodros used the same gun that Queen Victoria had given him to shoot himself. His wife and son were looked after by the



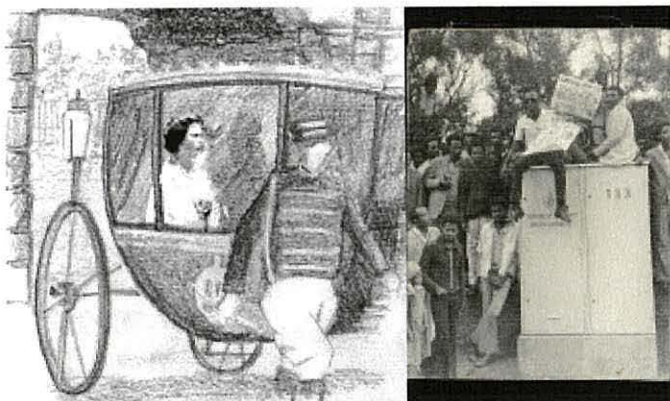
*British army but his wife died on the way back to England. His son, called Alemayehu, returned to live and study in England.*



*Years later Menelik II became the emperor and moved the capital to Addis Ababa. He was famous for saving the country from the Italians in 1896. The Italians wanted African land (just like Britain, France and Portugal) so they tried to invade. Even though they had modern weapons, the Ethiopian army defeated them at the Battle of Adwa.*



*Then in 1936 the Italians decided to have another go at colonizing Ethiopia. Haile Selassie I was the Emperor then and he tried to get help from the rest of the world (he made a speech at the League of Nations) but they did not listen. He had to leave his country and move to England. In 1941, when Britain was fighting the Second World War against Germany and Italy, its army helped the Ethiopians to get rid of the Italians. (They left some things behind like Pizza). One of the really interesting things that happened in 1963 was a visit to that country by our Queen Elizabeth. She was paraded through the streets in a beautiful coach with the Emperor.*

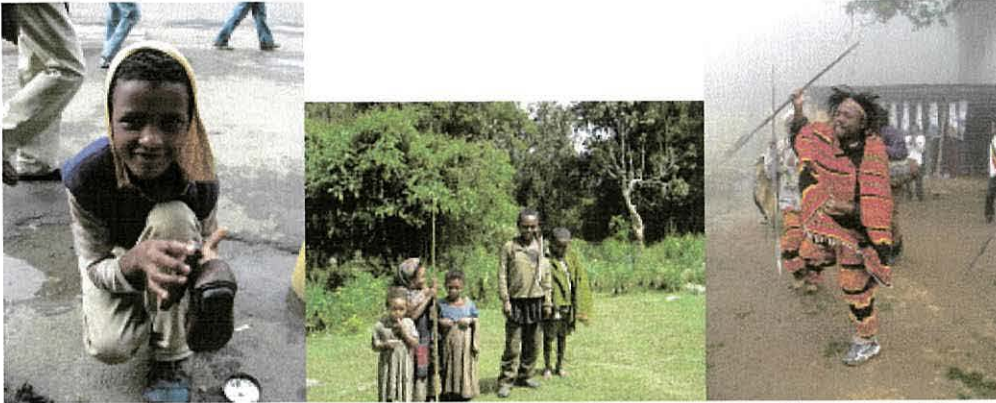


*In 1974, after riots by students and terrible poverty, Haile Selassie was forced to give up power and he later died (some still believe he was killed). Instead of being ruled by an*



*Emperor, the people had a military government but things did not work out well. There were droughts, many people died and in the end they were defeated and the country became a federal republic. I think that means that all the regions have power but there is one central government. Anyway, things are okay at the moment though there is still a lot of poverty.*

**Ethiopia today**



*Children often have to work to earn money if they are poor. Some sell things on the street and some clean shoes. In the countryside the children have to help with the farm. Some make money by dancing for tourists.*



*There are some modern buildings in Addis Ababa such as Bole Airport, but this country has some older buildings, some built by the Emperors of Ethiopia when the capital was Addis Ababa such as the palace which is now part of Addis Ababa University. People live in different types of buildings - some have mud walls and some are built of stone or concrete.*



*The people travel round the city on buses and minibuses which carry twelve people as well as a driver and a boy who takes the money. Some people have cars which have to cope with very bumpy roads, especially when it is raining.*



*People eat spicy sauces called 'wat' on a type of pancake called 'injera'. They also eat lots of fruit and vegetables. After their meal many people have a coffee ceremony. Coffee is grown in Ethiopia.*

*There are over eighty languages spoken in Ethiopia but in most areas people understand Amharic. Here are some words in Amharic with their meanings in English.*

*chigger yellum - no problem*

*chigger alle - there's a problem*

*ishee - okay*

*woraj - there's a stop (when you want to stop the bus)*

*amesegenalu - thank you*

*tenaystilign - hello*

*dehna neh - how are you? (used when talking to a male)*

*dehna nesh - how are you? (to a female)*

*dehna nachoo - how are you? (to a group)*

*shy - tea*

*buna - coffee*

*ow - yes*

*ay - no*

*serategna - house help*

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<sup>1</sup> Gillie Russell of Aitken Alexander Associates wrote: 'I'm afraid that we're not able to offer to represent you at this time, but we wish you every success with your writing in the future.'

<sup>2</sup> Oxford University Press and Scholastic Children's Books

The Storyteller

**Chapter 9**

**The Storyteller**



**It is said that when a man of Oromia dies another library is lost.** (*Ethiopian Proverb*)

His eyes stung with the acrid smoke which scorched the back of his throat as he struggled to rescue the pieces of paper on which the stories were written. Sparks burnt his fingers and caught one sheet, which smouldered and scorched its tale. Then a new page succumbed to a flickering flame which danced over another fable, quickly devouring it in its black mouth and destroying the words, leaving behind nothing but grey ash. He collapsed, wheezing in pain, a life's work disappearing as the inferno swallowed it and came for him.

### *Chapter One*

Young Said stood at the entrance, watching the people entering the community hall. Some, who knew him, nodded. Some even embraced him. Many others ignored him. A few looked at him irritably. He just looked away, pushed his hands deeper into his pockets and waited for the rest of his family. He was still angry.

People from different cultures filed into a room that served as the social meeting place for the residents of this housing estate. The familiar faces welcomed each other and quietly chatted. A cool breeze pulled the dying yellow leaves from the trees and blew them along the mossy flagstones down which a stream of colourful figures slowly walked towards the entrance. The afternoon rays of the sun broke through the clouds in the grey sky, illuminating the red bricks and reflecting on the window panes behind their iron grilles. Its autumnal warmth touched the heads of those queuing in the doorway, some draped in shawls, some covered by hoods or hats.

Said's twin sister, Fatima, was at the back, her head covered by a bright coloured *hijab*. At fifteen she was attractive with dark eyes outlined by thick black lashes. She left her mother to join him and, when she finally reached him, her sad eyes looked solemnly up at her brother.

"Ready?" he asked in his birth language.

She nodded, took his hand, and together they entered through the wide door and walked down a central aisle between rows of occupied seats until they reached two empty seats at the front facing a small raised platform. Vases of yellow flowers: daisies, roses and chrysanthemums, decorated every available space.

A youth who was sat behind Fatima put his hand on her shoulder. Said clenched his fist until Fatima glanced across at him, her eyes pleading. She then turned round to face the youth who squirmed nervously in his seat.

"Are you okay?" he said.

"I'm fine, Daniel. What about you?"

"Not bad." He looked uncertainly at Said's back then pulled his hood over his shorn head and stared down at his trainers.

Two women, shrouded in their fine white *netela* shawls edged with embroidered silks, were sat next to Fatima. She turned to them and placed her hands on theirs. The older woman's gnarled brown fingers clasped her hand and her weak eyes, reddened from her tears, acknowledged Fatima. The other woman stared ahead, her hands clutching a sheet of paper. She did not visibly respond.

The outside door closed and a tall dark bearded man, smartly dressed in a suit and tie, walked down the aisle between rows of chairs and stepped onto the low stage. The congregation fell silent as he turned to face them, raising his hands and saying,

“*Selam*. Peace. My name is David and, as you all know, I am a councillor in your community.

Welcome to our neighborhood hall and to this meeting, the aim of which is to remember two Ethiopian friends from our community. These two men were well known to most of you, but the life of one has already ended. Their lives were joined by stories. I hope you are sitting comfortably as I am going to tell you their stories, helped by a few of their friends and family.

First let me tell you Ibrahim’s story.”

### **Ibrahim’s Story**

In the south of Ethiopia there is a mountainous region with many groups of small settlements where poor families have farmed the land and looked after their animals for many generations. About sixty years ago a baby was born to one of these families and he was named Abraham. Later he became known as Ibrahim.

He was born at the time when Emperor Haile Selassie I ruled the country. He was believed to be destined to rule the country as a direct descendent of the offspring of King Solomon of the Holy Land and the Queen of Sheba - but that is another story.

Now Abraham was the tenth child of Bayush and her husband, Yosef. However, only four of their children survived the disease and poverty, hardship and famine that the people in this country faced. Abraham grew up to be a fighter and soon followed his two



brothers and big sister into the hills surrounding their home; a single room in a mud-walled hut with a roof of straw. Each day they looked after their family's small herd of sheep, two cattle and donkey, taking them to find grass and water. When he was old enough his father taught him to plough their small plots of land with the cattle and here they would grow *teff*, a grain from which his mother would make *injera* (a kind of flat bread as some of you from that part of Africa probably know). They ate it nearly everyday, sometimes with sauce made from the beans they grew and, very occasionally, from stewed or roasted meat.

Unfortunately a large portion of everything they grew or looked after went to the noblemen who the Emperor had appointed to rule their land. Abraham often heard his father complain about how unfair this tax was but he was afraid to argue with the nobleman's collectors when they demanded payment.

Abraham never went to school but he was inquisitive from an early age. He asked his brothers and his sister many questions. However, as they hadn't been to school, they could neither read nor write. So he learnt by listening. First he listened to his mother singing songs while she made the *injera* which she cooked it over the open fire outside their house. His mother sang in the language of her own parents who had come from the south east of the country, an area called Ogaden where the Somali people lived.

He also heard stories told by his father and his grandfather who spoke the language of their region, Oromia. These stories told Abraham everything he needed to know about what was good or bad and how to find solutions to their many problems. Although many stories and sayings were overheard, some were told to the children as

## The Storyteller

they sat under a tree at the hottest time of the day, or after they had eaten at the end of the day.

Abraham began to hear and understand more stories as he grew older and started to repeat them to the children of other families. He became known as the storyteller even then and, in addition to retelling the stories he heard in his village, he also invented new stories to suit their circumstances.

After a long drought, when the nobleman's tax collectors had demanded the last of their beans, Abraham told this story to the starving children in his village.

### **The Greedy Monkey**



A greedy monkey lived in a small forest surrounded by land where the farmers grew a few vegetable crops to feed their families. Each night the greedy monkey sent other monkeys to steal the vegetables from these farmers. They would go out

in the dark and return as the sun rose with beans, potatoes, tomatoes and carrots and store them in the hollow of the large tree where the greedy monkey lived.

Every morning the farmers would scratch their heads and ask each other, “Have you seen who is stealing our vegetables? It must be the rats.” At night the dogs would bark when the monkeys arrived. But, when the farmers came out with their candles and torches to catch the thieves, the monkeys hid.

One day the greedy monkey decided to have a great feast to impress all the other animals in the forest. He sent his monkeys down the tree to bring out the stolen food and prepare it. When they looked into the hollow of the tree they could not find anything. They looked at one another in confusion. “Where has all the food gone?” They never found the small hole leading to a long tunnel in the base of the tree.

A large family of rats had discovered this source of food not long after the monkeys started to hide it in the tree trunk. It tasted much better than the grain they used to steal from the farmers, so they stole it and left the stores of *teff* untouched. The chief rat, hearing that the greedy monkey could not put on the great feast he had promised, invited all the animals in the forest to a lavish meal of stolen vegetables. They were impressed. The greedy monkey was angry and threatened the monkeys who had stolen the food. They were afraid to go back and disappeared into the forest.





The children who heard the story must have laughed. They knew that the greedy monkey was the nobleman and the monkeys were his tax-collectors, cowardly men who only served their master to live a comfortable existence, unlike the farmers and their families.

When Abraham was a young man there was an air of discontent in the country and he heard from visitors about the uprisings against the nobles in the north and the east. He realized that there was no advantage to be gained by using force. The families of those who protested against the nobles were punished by the Emperor's own soldiers. So he stayed working on his father's farm.

Then one day a horseman rode into the village and told the elders the news that Emperor Haile Selassie had been arrested and his government overthrown by his own army. For people like Abraham life did not change much at first. Although the nobles no longer ruled over their land, they were still paying taxes. Then news arrived that the Emperor had died and things began to alter in the countryside. Many young men, including Abraham's two older brothers, were told that they had to fight for the new government. Abraham was left at home with his sister and his parents. He had always felt disadvantaged by being unable to read and write so, when the new government organized classes to teach the peasants *Amharic*, the government language, he was eager to start.

A young scholar from the capital, Addis Ababa, arrived in the village with a few books and some writing materials and started a class. Abraham was a good student and attended whenever he could in between farming his father's land and helping the elders with other village matters. Once he had learned to read and write in *Amharic* he started to translate the stories he had gathered in his head from his father's language and also the

songs his mother had sung in her language and wrote them down on any scrap of paper he could find. For a while, life began to improve for Abraham. As one of the few people in the community who could read well, he helped the younger boys to practice their reading and writing. But peace did not last in this disturbed land.

In the capital the government leaders fought for power until one man took control. Colonel Mengistu had no scruples and was responsible for the murder of many others. A period of terror spread across the land and his army forced many men to join their cause and show no resistance to their brutal methods. Abraham never saw his brothers again. What was worse for him, however, was leaving his village, his parents and his sister to fight against the government troops.

He joined a Somalia-backed opposition group. Somalia, as many of you know, is a country south east of Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa. It was run by a man whose aim was to take over the Somali region of Ethiopia, the Ogaden, with the rest of Somalia. By the summer of 1977 a Somali invasion was underway and large parts of the Ogaden were seized. The battles were cruel and the landmines, left by troops, resulted in many innocent people being injured, mutilated or dead.

Abraham soon realized how wrong it was to fight his own countrymen. He knew that he could not stay with them. Nor could he change sides and fight for Mengistu. His only option was to flee the country. So he headed south for Somalia and became a refugee.

He did not talk much about this time – a period when he changed his faith from being an Orthodox Christian to becoming a Muslim. That was when he changed his name to Ibrahim.

## The Storyteller

I believe he never married but I heard that he had been in love. He would fall silent when asked questions about his period as a soldier, a deserter and finally a refugee. He would sometimes answer with a proverb or a story such as this one that he must have heard in his homeland.

### The Dog Fight



A wise man was wandering through a village when he saw two dogs fighting over a bone that someone had thrown out. Nobody seemed to bother about them but the man called out a warning.

“If you don’t stop those dogs fighting then your sons will fight too.”

The people ignored him. Soon a boy arrived and picked up a stick and started to beat the dog which was biting his scruffy mongrel. The dog yelped. Its owner, another young boy, picked up a stick and ran to hit the other child. They started beat each other with the sticks while the dogs watched. The wise man also watched and warned everyone.

“If you don’t stop those boys fighting then your mothers will fight too.”



Nobody listened to him. Then the mother of one of the boys heard the noise and tried to stop the fight, pulling off the other boy and hitting him. “Stop hitting me!” he cried so loud that his mother heard him. She came running over and started to pull the hair of the other mother.

“If you don’t stop those mothers fighting then their husbands will fight too,” the wise man told the villagers.

It was too late. The screams of the women could be heard by the men working on the land. One of them heard his wife’s cry and left his plough and oxen to run to the village where he saw another woman scratching her and kicking her. He grabbed hold of her and tried to pull her off his wife. Her cries reached her own husband who was returning from the river with his sheep. When he saw the man holding his wife who was kicking and screaming, he rolled up his sleeves and marched over to thump him.

The wise man shook his head and warned, “If you don’t stop those men fighting then their friends and family will fight too.”

Can you guess what happened? Yes, the men fought over their wives and their own supporters started to fight each other, hitting them with their fists, then using weapons and eventually some from each side were unfortunately killed. They stopped fighting to care for the injured and bury the dead. They were all upset and couldn’t agree how to end the war. In the end they went to the wise man.

“If we take a life for every man killed we will lose more men,” they said, adding, “and, if we pay for the dead men by giving up our cattle we will have no cattle for ourselves and we will all be poor. What can we do?”

The wise man sat down with the two groups and their leaders. “There is a solution to your problem but it means giving something up.”

“What is it? Anything!” they cried.

“Both of you own a precious necklace, yes?” he asked.

“Yes!”

“Then you must take that necklace to the river and throw it in with all your anger and hate. Then you must forgive each other.”

“We will do that,” they agreed and so they did. From that day on they lived together in peace. They solved arguments through discussions and never again allowed their dogs to fight.

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By the early 1990s he had arrived here as an asylum seeker. He never returned to his homeland and he eventually gained citizenship here. He worked as a labourer, sometimes sweeping the streets, sometimes cleaning public places and, when he was made unemployed (which happened more than once) he spent his time working as a volunteer while trying to find paid work. He was not an idle man and, given the right education and opportunities, would probably have gained qualifications and a good job.

His last job was caretaker of this centre, a role he performed with his usual pride. I often met him here but I had also known Ibrahim from his early days in Britain when he

## The Storyteller

was still seeking asylum here. He came to my English class for speakers of other languages. It was a job I used to do before I became a councillor here. Ibrahim put all his effort into learning this language. Because he was so reluctant to talk or write about his past, I encouraged him to tell stories like the one I've just told you. He gladly obliged and entertained our group and myself. I have kept all the stories that he wrote for his homework. Stories helped Ibrahim to make friends and help others including a group of youngsters who he befriended here. Daniel is one of those youngsters and he is going to tell you his own story.



## *Chapter Two*

### **Daniel's story**

Daniel, clutching a scrappy piece of paper, reluctantly got out of his seat and wandered to the lectern, dragging his feet and shrinking into his hoody. He kept it on when he turned to face the audience. He tried to speak but no words came out. He coughed.

“Hello,” he whispered.

“You’ll need to speak a bit louder,” David gently told him. “We don’t have a microphone but I’m sure you have a good strong voice. Tell them who you are and how you got to know Ibrahim,” he added before leaving Daniel and moving to a spare seat on the front row.

Daniel opened up the piece of paper and put it on the stand, looked up again then started to speak in a croaky voice.

My name is Daniel and I’m nearly fifteen. My friend is Yonas but he’s not here. My mum and sister are here. Hi mum! (Daniel looked for her face in the sea of people. When he saw her wave and smile at him he was encouraged and started to talk more confidently.)

I first saw Ibrahim this time last year. I’ve lived here all my life but never took any notice of him before. Well, this time I was with my mates and, well, we were being a bit of a pain.

(A murmur of laughter rippled through the younger members in the audience which made him feel better and he grinned then continued his story.)

I was part of a group of kids and we'd lost our football. It was confiscated. We were bored so we were kicking an empty can down the path in the garden outside. Ibrahim was trying to sweep up leaves and we just ignored him, kicking up the piles he'd made. We were fed up of grown-ups telling us what to do but Ibrahim didn't say anything. He just carried on sweeping the leaves into heaps. He looked at us but didn't show any sign of caring what we were doing. That annoyed us so we wandered off, leaving the can on the floor in the middle of the path.

"Hey boys. You left something!" Ibrahim called after us.

I turned to see him pointing at the can and I remember giggling. We all did. Yonas even shouted, "Keep it!" and we laughed even more. Then Yonas walked out of the garden and we followed him. I glanced back and saw Ibrahim go back to work, bagging up the leaves and rubbish but he didn't touch the can.

Later that evening we came back. It was dark and we didn't notice the can till Yonas, always in front, kicked it and swore. I felt a bit embarrassed. My mum had brought me up to clear up after myself and if she'd seen what we'd done she'd have hit me. I know Yonas must have felt a bit guilty too 'cause he picked up the can and threw it in the bin. We then heard a voice say, "*Amesegehallu*," and it made us jump. We then realized that Ibrahim had been sat there, in the dark. As Yonas and I were from Ethiopian families, we both understood their word for 'thank you'. We all left without saying anything, but it made us a bit nervous.

The next time I saw him I was with my mum and he said, "*Selam*" to me. Mum responded and nudged me to reply. When he'd gone she gave me a smack and said I was

rude. (Daniel glanced over at his mum who was sat with his younger sister shaking her head but smiling.)

So after that, when I wasn't with Yonas, I used to nod and even speak to him with the few words I knew in Amharic. One day he invited me back to his small flat to show me a book of Ethiopian history and I was amazed by what I saw. He had shelves of books, a big desk and a typewriter. The walls had photos of Ethiopia which he'd cut out of magazines or bought. Like in our flat, there was a smell of fresh coffee and incense.

Yonas saw me coming out of Ibrahim's flat and asked what I'd been doing there. I told him I'd been looking at the book and he laughed at me. That really hurt as I valued Yonas as a friend. In school he would protect me from other boys in different gangs. (Daniel glanced at Said who was staring at the floorboards.)

Ibrahim was stood in his doorway watching us and he called out to us. "I have forgotten to give you something."

Both Yonas and I wandered back, trying not to look eager but both of us were keen to know what he might offer us. He showed us both into his room and asked us to sit down on the big cushions on the floor. We looked up at him waiting for something to eat or drink, or maybe a book, but his hands were empty. Then he said, "You are very close friends."

We weren't sure if he was asking us a question or what so we kept quiet.

"I'm going to tell you a story about two loyal friends, a story I first heard in Ethiopia."

Ibrahim took a photograph from the wall and then sat down on a little stool with three legs, a bit like the one my little sister has. The picture showed a wide fast flowing



river at the bottom of a deep gorge. Its sandy bank was overshadowed by high trees, very different to those we were familiar with in the local parks.

### The Crocodile and the Monkey



“This is the Awash River in Ethiopia where there once lived a huge crocodile and a small monkey. They were great friends and would play together in the river, the monkey riding on the back of the crocodile because he couldn’t swim. In return the monkey would bring his friend bananas from the trees.

Now one day the chief of the crocodiles became very ill. A crocodile doctor visited him and told him that the only cure was a monkey’s heart. The chief knew that the young crocodile was friends to a young monkey so he told him to fetch the heart of his friend.”

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Ibrahim looked at us and asked, “What would you do?”

I looked at Yonas who was still a bit surprised to find himself sitting there listening to a children’s story, like a small boy, then I answered. “I don’t know. Tell him to get stuffed or something.”

Ibrahim smiled. “If the person asking you to do something that would hurt your best friend was someone you respected, a member of your family for example, would you tell them to ‘get stuffed’? What would you do, Yonas?”

Yonas was surprised that Ibrahim even knew his name. “Don’t know. It’s not likely to happen so I don’t really care,” and he started to move.

I was a bit upset as I thought Ibrahim was simply going to ask us to leave and I wanted to hear how the story ended. I had never been told a story since primary school and I couldn’t remember those. I knew that my mum would tell my younger sister stories before she went to sleep but I was never encouraged to stay and listen. I pulled on Yonas’s sleeve and he sat down again without another word. Ibrahim continued his story.

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“Well that young crocodile knew that he had to be loyal to his chief but he was very sad and didn’t want to harm his best friend. He was torn. In the end he decided to tell the monkey but first he said, ‘Come for a ride,’ and the monkey jumped on his back. The crocodile swam into the middle of the river knowing that the monkey would not get off for fear of drowning. ‘My chief is very ill and I’ve got to take a monkey’s heart to him to cure him. I’m sorry to have to ask you, but I must take yours, now.’

The monkey was wise and understood what was happening. He had trusted his friend. Now he devised a plan. ‘You know that we monkeys don’t carry our hearts with us when we go out.’ The crocodile, not the brightest of creatures, shook his head. ‘We always leave them at home so if you will swim with me back to the shore I will go and fetch mine.’ The crocodile agreed and

took the monkey back. When they reached the edge of the river the monkey jumped off and ran to the trees shouting, 'You tried to trick me, my friend, but now you are the one who is tricked.' The crocodile looked surprised but then relieved as he didn't have to kill his friend and so he swam away."

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Ibrahim looked at us both of us, a smile breaking across his brown face making his dark eyes light up. I smiled back and then looked at Yonas. He wouldn't make eye contact with Ibrahim but muttered something like, "Stupid story."

"The first aim of any story is to entertain," Ibrahim said as he stood up, "but sometimes a story may have a message. Would you trust your friend?" he asked me. I felt a bit nervous 'cause at that moment I really didn't trust Yonas and he knew it. They both knew it. Before things got uncomfortable Ibrahim handed us both a pencil. "Now go away and bring back a new story."

I wasn't going to bother at first. Yonas had said it was a stupid idea. However, I overheard mum telling my younger sister a story later that week and sat outside her bedroom listening. It was really good. Then I went to my room and wrote it down. I wanted to go back to Ibrahim and tell him the story but I didn't want to go with Yonas. Then I thought about the crocodile and the monkey and realized that I still didn't trust my best friend so I decided to confront him. Now you know Yonas is a bit older and a bit taller than me (a few youngsters in the audience sniggered) - okay, he's a lot taller than me. You have to admit it took guts for me to stand up to him but I didn't want to be forever frightened of upsetting him. So I asked Yonas if he'd found a story.



“What?” he asked, as if he’d never been at Ibrahim’s house and been given a pencil. I repeated the question, then added that I’d got one and I was going to go and tell it to Ibrahim. “Are you dumb or something? Why do you want to bother with that old tramp? He’s probably a pervert.”

That really angered me because he’d been willing to go into his flat when he thought he was going to get something and you couldn’t really call him a tramp ’cause he was always clean and his flat was spotless so I told Yonas I was going anyway and left him standing there. I half expected Yonas coming up behind me and thumping me but he didn’t. He just stood and watched me go.

Later that day I made my way up to Ibrahim’s flat with my story and guess who was already there? (Daniel looked at his friends sitting in the hall and beamed.) Yes, Yonas. So I sat down on the cushion again, next to him, and we showed Ibrahim our stories. Mine was a bit babyish but Yonas had found one in a book of fables he had found in the local library.

Ibrahim recognized it. “That’s one of Aesop’s fables. Now, it is said that he was a slave, possibly from Ethiopia from where he got his name ‘Aethop’. Some of his stories are almost identical to those I was told as a boy. I didn’t realize that until I read Aesop’s Fables in the library. Probably the same book you found. Let me tell you the one I remember most. It was about a greedy dog.”

### The Greedy Dog



A shepherd in the hills near where I lived in Ethiopia had a dog that was a great help. He would take the dog with him when he moved his sheep to new grassland or to drink from the streams. The dog was eager and ran all over the countryside so it was always hungry.

One day it discovered some meat in the shepherd's house and stole it. It ran to the bridge over the river and looked back to see if the shepherd had seen it. Then it looked down into the river and was surprised to see another dog with a piece of meat in its mouth.

Now the other dog's meat looked even bigger and, being greedy, it decided to get it. So it jumped into the river, dropping its own meat in the water. The other dog, however, had disappeared. The dog gave up looking for it and decided to get its own meat. But that too had disappeared downstream. The dog swam to the side of the river and climbed out. It was disappointed but it had learnt a lesson – not to be greedy in future.

Yonas and I both laughed. We'd heard grown ups complain that people were greedy and 'their eyes were bigger than their bellies.' We had both been guilty of taking too much to eat and not being able to finish what was on our plates. My mum hates to see food wasted so she's always going on at me (again he glanced across at her and smiled).

For a while after that Yonas and I went to visit Ibrahim fairly regularly, once a fortnight or so. Sometimes we'd take him stories that we'd heard at home but usually we went to listen to his stories. I'd often tell them to my little sister when I got home. Then things started to go wrong. We still went to see Ibrahim but the visits started to have another purpose. I'm going to ask Said to speak next - but that's only because of my respect for Ibrahim. He's not my friend.



### *Chapter Three*

#### **Said's story**

Daniel went back to his seat as the congregation clapped in appreciation of his talk. He had to stand aside as Said walked past him. They paused briefly to stare at each other but did not speak. David smiled in relief as Said started to speak slowly and carefully to everyone in the hall in his second language.

My English is not very good. My twin sister, Fatima, has helped me to write this as she's the educated one.

We came to live here a few years ago when I was ten. We are from Somalia and we are Muslims. When we first came here we had very little English and needed extra lessons at the school where we were placed. We're the eldest of four children and needed to work hard to prepare for secondary school. Fatima loved school and made friends who helped her to learn the language and the rest of the culture of this strange country. In our community there are many other Muslims, and some are from Somalia, so we don't feel too isolated. My mum was a widow but had re-married a Somali refugee who had gained citizenship so we didn't feel threatened. However, I had quite a lot of abuse at school and even in the neighbourhood where we live.

I found it harder to settle here. I'd left behind good friends in Mogadishu although I couldn't wait to leave that place as we were often afraid. But I found life in this city much harder at first. My earliest memory of school here was of Miss Jones, our Year 6 teacher, standing at the front of the class with me. I was tall for my age but I was nervous

and could not understand what was happening. However, I would not let the other children know that. I vowed I would be strong.

“This is Said.” Miss Jones said, saying my name correctly - Siyeed. Then turning to the board she spelt my name - S A I D.

“That spells said!” one of the other boys shouted out and the rest of the class laughed.

“Yes it is the same spelling but it’s not pronounced the same.”

I did not feel happy in the class. I had no friends. I did not understand the teacher. I wanted to be with my sister who was in another class or with my younger brothers and sisters in the flat where we all lived - but I had to go to school.

At playtime I felt cold, lonely and very unhappy but I followed two boys out of the classroom. By the boy’s toilets a group of three other boys were waiting. The boys from my class called to them, “We’ve got this new boy in our class. His name sounds like Siyeed but is spelt S A I D.”

They laughed and talked to each other but I did not understand them. I just wanted to run back home. In the playground they all turned to face me. At first he thought they were going to say something nice to me. They smiled and grinned as an older boy started to chant words which made no sense. They all laughed aloud. I did not understand what they were laughing at so I started to laugh. Then the boy spoke again.

Suddenly I realised that they were laughing at me so I got upset then angry. Just as the biggest boy started to use those words again I hit him. I didn’t hit him hard but the boy wasn’t expecting it. He fell backwards and landed on the ground. The others stopped and looked at him and back at me. They were not good fighters; they punched

and wrestled with me, trying to force me to the ground but I had learnt to fight back in my own country, although usually with friends. I was not afraid and I was taller than the boys so I hit them hard, catching one boy on the nose. Others in the playground started shouting, "Fight, fight."

A teacher stopped the fight and took me to the head teacher. I felt angry and embarrassed. I wanted to cry but did not want anyone to see me weaken, particularly not my sister who found me outside the head's office. After that I made sure that the boys knew they would not beat me.

(Said looked round the hall at the people who had never before seen that side of him. He knew that most regarded him as a tough and sometimes arrogant youth, used to getting his own way. They seemed to have overlooked or forgotten the problems he had faced as a young boy arriving in a foreign country.)

By the time I joined secondary school I had a small number of friends, all Muslims, and together we helped each other to get by. We formed a gang to protect each other, and to have some fun. I live in the same flats as Yonas and Daniel but we had no reason to fight them until I saw Yonas talking to my sister about six months ago.

I love my sister and wanted to stop her making friends with anyone who wasn't worthy of her. I did not think Yonas was a worthy person. I'd seen him hanging round with his mates and watched him at school messing about. I wanted to stop him talking to my sister so I watched him and saw him going into Ibrahim's flat with Daniel.

I knew Ibrahim because he attended our mosque. I had never spoken to him but my step father was friendly with him. (Said glanced up at the rest of his family sat in the middle of the hall. His step father nodded and his mother smiled at him).



I was jealous of Yonas being his friend too. I never did anything though but one day, as Ibrahim passed me on the stairs, he said something like, “He looks for quarrels; the dog goes to the market.”

I remember stopping and looking at him. He must have known that I didn’t understand what he’d said so he explained the proverb.

“Did you know that in some other countries Muslims hate dogs? Well in my country when a dog went to a place where there were many people, like a marketplace, it was bound to get kicked. So it is with someone who looks for a quarrel. Take care, my friend.”

I replied, “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” to which he answered, “I think you do but why not talk about it over some tea. My flat is close and I have some nice biscuits.”

Now I know in this country such an invitation could be misunderstood. I could have got the police onto him or told the newspapers, but I had been brought up in a different culture. First we respected our elders and secondly, we’d grown up in a society that shared food and drink as well as stories. So I accepted his offer.

While he made some tea and brought out some biscuits I looked at the books and objects on his shelves. He had some amazing pieces of African pottery and woodwork that he must have been given as he told me he’d come to this country with nothing but the clothes he wore. The first time I went to his flat he pulled out a book of stories with beautiful pictures. I’d never really learnt to read and write properly at school and hated English lessons but Ibrahim started to explain the stories as if we were discussing a football review in a newspaper. I don’t mind reading the sports pages – especially about

The Storyteller

Arsenal. (There was giggling in the audience and muttering between some of those who supported the rival teams: Manchester United, Chelsea, Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspurs)

The first story that Ibrahim told me was about the lion and the hare. It's a long story but I think you will like it. I always imagined that I was like a lion but Ibrahim taught me to see how strength is not everything.

### **The lion and the hare**



A lion caught a hare and was about to eat him but the hare, a clever animal, stopped him saying, “You don’t want to eat me. I’m small and thin. You’ll still be hungry when you’ve finished eating me. Why don’t we go hunting together?”

The lion dropped the hare and looked at him in surprise. “What could you catch?”

The hare scratched its ear with its hind leg and said, “Okay. If we go to the village and you don’t find something fatter than me, I’ll let you eat me.” So they went to the village.

The lion caught a fat young bull and the hare found an old thin donkey which had been rolling in the dust. As they returned with their new possessions the hare looked at the lion and said, “I’m sorry you’ve had such bad luck.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well your bull is so thin and scrawny. You might as well eat me.”

“My bull isn’t thin. Just look at your skinny donkey.”

“I bet if you hit it with a stick it wouldn’t give off steam.” the hare said, picking up a big stick and smacking the young bull.

“That’s because my bull is fat.”

“Oh no! Look what happens if I hit my donkey.” He said and hit the poor beast so much that a cloud of dust filled the air. “Now that’s a fat animal. You’ll just have to eat me.”

“No, I refuse. Give me your donkey and I’ll give you my bull.”

“But I caught the donkey. It’s mine.” the hare cried.

The lion started to get angry and roared so the hare gave in and let him have the old donkey in return for the big fat bull. They continued walking and the hare, seeing eight feathers on the ground, picked them up. Seeing the lion’s knife in his belt, he put them into a belt round his waist. Then they stopped to rest.

“I have eight knives,” he announced. “If I lose one I still have seven left but you have only one knife. What would you do if you lost it?”

The lion thought about this. He was not happy that a creature that was so much smaller and weaker than him could have such an advantage. “I am a mighty warrior and you are a mere small animal. You must swap your weapons with mine.”

“Oh, no! I couldn’t do that.”

“Are you arguing with me?” the lion roared.



“No. No I would never do that. Here you are.” The hare handed over the eight feathers and took the big knife off the lion.

Then they got up and continued on their way. When they reached the door to the cave where the lion lived the hare stopped and pointed at it. “It’s a trap!” he cried. “Aren’t you afraid?”

“Afraid of what?”

“Of men! Look at my house,” and the hare pointed to the holes in the ground. “I have many doors to escape if men come after me.”

“Then we shall trade.” the lion insisted.

The hare was about to protest but the lion bared his teeth so he reluctantly agreed. Therefore, the hare moved into the lion’s cave with the big fat bull and the sharp steel knife with which he killed the bull. He ate it and grew fat.

The lion moved into the hare’s underground home and tried to kill the donkey. He took out his first feather and stabbed the donkey but the feather bent and only tickled the donkey. It laughed. The lion took another feather and stabbed harder. This tickled the donkey even more and it laughed louder still. Each feather tickled the donkey until it could stand no more and it escaped from the lion and found a field to live in.



The Storyteller

So if you listen to a donkey braying you know how it sounded when the lion tickled it.



The congregation were still laughing at this story as Said went back to his seat. David patted him on the shoulder and the hall gradually fell silent as his sister walked up to the lectern.

## *Chapter Four*

### **Fatima's story**

I met Yonas when I was walking home from school one afternoon in the summer. My brother, who usually escorted me, was staying behind for a football practice and Daniel and Yonas were walking in front of me. I had seen them round our flats with their friends and noticed them in school. Daniel is in my year group but we don't have any lessons together.

On that particular day they turned to see me then laughed. I thought they were laughing at me so I walked faster to overtake them. I was not afraid of them and actually thought they were good looking, though not as handsome as my brother of course (she added, smiling at Said).

As I was passing them I heard Yonas ask Daniel, "Have you heard the story of the 'Woman and the Lion'?"

I thought they were trying to insult me so I stopped and said to Yonas, "No, tell me that story."

Yonas just laughed but Daniel looked more serious. "Go on, Yonas. Tell us that story." So Yonas began to tell us both this story.

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### **The Woman and the Lion**

Once long ago in Ethiopia, a woman lived with her husband. She was sad because he did not love her. He never spoke to her when she woke in the morning and made his breakfast or in the evening when he ate the meal she had prepared. He never said anything to her. He never even looked at her.



So she went to see a wise man and asked him what she should do. He listened to her and then said, “I will tell you what to do but first you must bring me some hair from the tail of a lion.”

She was very upset. How could she get a hair from the tail of a lion? She thought about it and decided to try. There was a lion’s cave near her home and she went there with some meat to tempt it. When the lion came near, though, she ran away because she was afraid.

The next day she tried again. She took more meat and left it outside the cave entrance. Then she hid behind a tree and waited. Before long the lion came out of the cave and ate the meat.

The following day she took a sheep and stood nearby as the lion greedily ate it. On the fourth day she actually held the meat in her hands as the lion ate it. Slowly they learnt to trust each other until she felt brave enough to pull a hair from the lion’s tail while he ate. He took no notice so she pulled more hair from his tail. The lion didn’t seem bothered.

The woman took the hair back to the wise man and asked him what she should do. “You have learnt to be friends with the lion. That took some time and you had to be very careful. You had to learn to trust each other. Now you must do the same with your husband. You must become friends in the same way.”



Fatima looked at the audience and then at Daniel. "I remember how Yonas looked from Daniel, who was still grinning, to me and I didn't know what to say. I was surprised. It was such an unusual story. I think I asked him where he'd found the story.

"That's a secret. Meet me tomorrow and I'll tell you another," was all he said. Then he and Daniel ran off back to the flats leaving me still thinking about the story. I knew I couldn't tell Said what had happened but I did want to hear another story from Yonas so I looked out for him at school the next day and passed him a note asking where we could meet. I watched him walk away reading it then he put it in his pocket and wandered over to his friends. I felt a bit cheated. I thought he'd made been making fun of me in front of Daniel.

That afternoon, after school, I was walking home from school with Said and I decided I was going to tell him everything but one of my friends came running up to me. "You've forgotten your homework," she said, giving me a book I didn't recognise before running off. I pushed it in my bag and didn't open it till I was home in the room I share with my sisters. It was a French text book covered in some tatty brown paper but inside was a piece of paper on which was written,

'Have you heard about the clever son? 7.30 the seat - community hall garden'. I couldn't wait to finish my meal and go.

It was still summer so there were a few people walking in the garden and Ibrahim was there, brushing up leaves. There was no sign of Yonas or Daniel. Then Ibrahim came over to me and handed me a note. "I think you are the young girl who this is intended for."

I read it and looked at Ibrahim, still brushing the leaves. He stopped work and took me to his flat where Yonas was waiting with Daniel.

“We thought it best to meet here so no one would see us talking to you,” Yonas said, inviting me to sit next on Ibrahim’s stool. “I know you would be in trouble if anyone saw you alone with Daniel or me so Ibrahim invited us here.”

“I’m not sure my family would be happy with this arrangement either,” I admitted, “but, now I’m here, I’ll stay to hear your story.”

“Good. You’ll enjoy this.”

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### **The Clever Son**

An old man had three sons. The old man knew that he had only a short time left to live so he called for his sons. He wanted to find out which one was the cleverest so that he could leave everything to him.

He gave each son a small amount of money and said, “I want to know which of you is clever enough to find something to fill this dark room.”

So each boy took the money and thought about how best to spend it. The eldest boy decided it wasn’t a big problem. He went straight to his local market and bought some straw. The second son scratched his head and tried to think of something cheap that would fill the room. He finally decided to buy feathers. The youngest son sat down and considered the problem. ‘What can I buy for this small amount of money that will fill a dark room?’ Eventually he went to the shop and bought a candle and a box of matches.



The following day the sons returned to their father's room. The eldest son dragged in the straw he had bought but it only filled a corner of the room. The second son emptied the sacks of feathers that he had bought but they only filled half the room. Then the youngest son pulled out of his pocket the candle and the matchbox. He lit the candle and the light from it filled the dark room.

The old man clapped his hands in praise. "Well done, my young son. You've proved to be the cleverest so I will leave you all my land and money."

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Fatima paused then continued. Yonas looked at us with a big grin on his face and smirked, "Great story, eh?"

I remember the look of pride on Ibrahim's face as he watched Yonas telling the story. As I didn't know their backgrounds then, I assumed that Ibrahim was a close relative. After that I did return to the flat with Yonas, often accompanied by Daniel, but sometimes I went on my own.

Ibrahim once said something to me in his own language that meant, 'The foolish grasshopper burns while it watches.' He explained how a foolish person considers something dangerous as fun. I didn't really understand the proverb at the time but later it made sense."

It was on one of my visits to his flat that I learnt about his past life – the period he spent in Somali before escaping Ethiopia. I think I'd mentioned that I really liked Yonas. I also understood how dangerous it could be for both of us if it developed into friendship. I'm still very young but, back in my own country, girls who are just a bit older than me are already betrothed or even married, often to men much older than themselves but

always to Muslims. Apart from my brother, I didn't know any Muslim boy here who I really liked. Yonas was different.

Anyway, Ibrahim told me how he'd met the woman he loved one day when he was fleeing Ethiopia.

"I was still in the Somali part of the country when I saw this beautiful girl sat outside her parent's home. She was sitting in the shade of the house, sewing the hem on a tunic that her father had made. He was the local tailor. When I asked for a drink of water she looked up at me and smiled. She put down the garment then reached for a stick and pulled herself up then, leaning on it, limped on her one foot into the dark doorway. I waited outside until she returned with a drink and gave it to me. She remained standing, leaning on her crutch, and waited for me to finish. She then asked where I was heading. I couldn't tell her that I was escaping so I said I was looking for work. It wasn't a lie as I needed to find food and shelter before I trekked to the Somalia border.

I asked her what had happened to her foot. She explained that it was a landmine from the war. She'd stepped on it while walking to the mosque. Luckily her life was saved but her leg wasn't. Since then she'd had to stay at her home helping with the housework, cooking and sewing. She knew her father would be grateful for help with their land as her only brother had gone to fight. All her older sisters had married and gone away. So I stayed there helping to grow some crops and looking after the goats and cattle.

I became comfortable and made no real effort to contact my family or to escape. No one in the village seemed concerned and there were no soldiers from either side. One day I asked her father if I could marry her. I knew that we were of different faiths but I really loved her. Her father told me he would only let her marry a Muslim. So I changed

my religion. It was easy for me as I had lost my Christian faith watching the fighting and seeing the greed of many of the people I had once admired. However, her father was not satisfied with me simply professing to be a Muslim. I had to practice that faith for a full year before he would consider allowing me to be engaged to his daughter. So that was how I became a Muslim.

Then, almost a year later, we were woken by gunfire and realised that our village had been attacked by the Ethiopian troops trying to flush out any soldiers from Somalia. I knew that I would be taken prisoner, even though I was Ethiopian, as I had fought against my country's army. I was a traitor so I was forced to escape and had to leave my beautiful fiancée and her father. I promised that I would return but, once I reached Somalia, there was no way that I could go back. I went into a camp over the border and stayed there until the opportunity to seek asylum in another country came."

Ibrahim was then silent but I saw a tear run down the side of his face. He then turned to me and told me a simple proverb in his own language. He then translated it. "After you throw the spear, you cannot catch the end of it." I looked confused so he explained. "You cannot undo something that you have done, no matter how much you regret having done it." I then understood what he meant."



## *Chapter Five*

### **Birtukan's story**

Fatima could not say any more. The hall was so quiet that every breath could be heard. Her lips quivered and tears filled her eyes so she could not continue her story. She looked at Yonas's mother and grandmother, then said, in a weak voice, "Before I go on with my story, I think it would be nice for you to hear from Yonas's own family."

Birtukan, his mother, nodded and stood up as Fatima returned to her seat. They did not make eye contact as they passed each other and Fatima slumped into her chair. Yonas's grandmother reached across to hold Fatima's hand in hers as her daughter proudly stepped onto the stage and faced the people she had grown up with. She spoke quietly at first then gained confidence as she told everyone in the hall her story.

I was born here, just like my only son, Yonas. I've never visited Ethiopia but I consider myself an Ethiopian. I wanted my son to grow up proud of his background and the culture of my parent's homeland but as he grew older he seemed to rebel against his family and community. I have learnt so much about him today that I didn't know. My mother speaks very little English but we have talked about these recent events and tried to understand what happened to our child. Now I am ready to tell you our story.

Genet, my mother, knew Ibrahim well when she first arrived here after the Red Terror in Ethiopia. She was married to a young architect student who had a promising future under Haile Selassie but was seen as a dangerous rebel by the Derg led by Colonel Mengistu. He refused to join the government troops. His life was threatened and, with my grandmother, they escaped and eventually settled here.

My father could not continue his studies or find work in his profession so he worked as a labourer on a building site. My mother gave birth to me shortly after they left Ethiopia and I was brought up near here in a block of flats. For the first few years of my life we had very little money but we were very happy. My parents felt safe.

Among their small group friends was Ibrahim who arrived here when I was about twelve years old. He became close to my father and I remember them spending evenings in the flat, talking Amharic and playing *Gebeta*, you know that game with the pebbles and a board with hollow pockets? (Some of the older people in the hall nodded and smiled.)

Ibrahim became like an uncle to me when I was a young child. I remember him telling me stories. His English was better than my father's and, although I could speak some Amharic, for both of us it was our second language. When I was young, Ibrahim told me a story about the *gebeta* board.

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### **The Game Board**

A young boy had a beautiful *gebeta* board that was carved by his father. He took the board wherever he went. One day, while he was grazing his cattle by a river, he met a group of Somalis with their camels. They wanted to light a fire but had no wood.

“Where can we find wood?” they asked him.

“You can have this.” he offered, handing them his *gebeta* board but, when they set light to it he began to cry.

“Don’t cry. You can have this.” one of the Somalis told him, handing him a new knife. The boy took it and went off to find new grazing with his cattle. He met a man who was trying to dig a well in the dry riverbed for water to give his goats.

“Can I borrow your knife? This ground is hard”

The boy gave the man his knife but he snapped it when he tried to dig.

The boy was so upset he started to cry.

“Don’t carry on like that,” the man said. “Here, take my spear.”

So the boy took the spear, a lovely object inlaid with silver and gold, and went away with his cattle. He met a party of hunters. One of them saw his spear and said, “Let us borrow your spear to kill this lion we’ve been following.”

The boy, fearing for his own life, lent the hunters the spear. He watched them hunt the lion and kill it but his spear was damaged.

“What have you done to my spear? The shaft is broken.” he cried.

“Look, we’re sorry about your spear. Take this horse in place of it.”

The horse, with leather saddle and bridle, followed the boy back to his village. As he approached he saw a group of workers repairing the road. They made such a noise that the horse reared up then ran away. The boy watched in surprise then turned to face the workmen. “Why did you do that? Now I’ve lost my horse,” and he started to cry.

A workman came over to console him and handed the boy his axe. “Here, take this. We’re really sorry about the horse.”



The boy continued to walk towards his village and came across a woodcutter trying to cut a tree with a small axe. “Hey boy, lend me your axe so I can chop down this tree.”

The boy handed over the axe and the woodcutter lifted it up then brought it down on the tree trunk. The axe broke. To stop the boy crying the woodcutter gave him a branch from the tree. As he wandered through the village with the log under his arm he was stopped by an old woman.

“Let me have that log for my fire as I’m very cold.” she pleaded. He couldn’t refuse and gave her the wood.

“Now I have nothing,” he said to himself.

The old woman looked at him and went to her shelf. She lifted down a beautiful *gebeta* board and handed it to him. He smiled and took the board. When he arrived at his home, with the *gebeta* board under his arm, his father greeted him.

“Son, it is good to see you safely back with the cattle. What could be better than a *gebeta* board to keep you out of trouble?”

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We’ve still got our board but no one taught me how to play it after my father died. Unfortunately, when I was about fourteen, he was killed in an accident on a building site. My mother was left to bring me up alone on benefits.

Ibrahim continued to visit our flat. He knew that I didn’t enjoy school because I struggled with my lessons and was the only child of immigrants in my class. I used to cry because I was unhappy when children made fun of me, calling me names and telling

me I was foolish. My mother could not go to the school to complain because she couldn't speak English.

It was Ibrahim who told me the well-known Ethiopian tale of Mammo the Fool. You probably all know it but I will tell you it anyway.

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### **Mammo the Fool**

An old woman lived with her only son, Mammo, in a small house near a village in Ethiopia. They were poor but she made enough to live on by baking *injera* and brewing beer.

His mother used to get annoyed with Mammo because he was foolish. He could never remember what he was supposed to do and the children in the village would laugh at him and call him a fool. They made fun of him and one day, when he had been to the market to buy butter, they told him that the best way to carry it was to put it on his head. Now it was a very hot day and the butter, wrapped up in a leaf, began to melt and pour down his face. When he got home his mother was angry.

“Why did you put it on your head, you silly boy?”

“Because the children told me that is how you carry it.”

“You should have carried it in your hands,” she told him and sent him to bed.

The next day she sent him to fetch a cat from a neighbour's house to catch the mice. He remembered what she told him and carried the cat home in his

hands. The cat struggled and bit him and scratched him but he kept hold of the animal. Then the cat escaped and he had to tell his mother.

“What made you hold it in your hands you silly fool?”

“You told me to.”

“You should have tied it on a piece of string and pulled it,” she cried and sent him to bed.

The next day Mammo’s mother sent him to get meat from the butcher. Of course Mammo wanted to please his mother so, remembering her advice about the cat, he took some string and tied the meat up then dragged it back home. The people he passed laughed at him. The dogs followed him licking at the meat and picking up pieces that fell off. His mother was furious.

“What made you tie it on a piece of string, you silly thing?”

“I thought that would please you. I didn’t lose it this time.”

“There’s nothing left but bone. You should have carried the meat on your back.”

When his mother asked him to take the donkey to the field later that week, Mammo remembered the last thing she’d told him. He went out and picked up the donkey and struggled to put it on his back. Then he carried the donkey to the field. It was very heavy and he was bent double.

On the way to the field there lived a young girl who was very unhappy. Nothing that her parents did could make her smile. She sat at the window of her room looking out over the fields and saw Mammo with the donkey on his back. She started to giggle. Then, as she watched the donkey kick and Mammo struggle



to keep it in place she laughed more loudly. Soon she was crying with laughter, tears rolling down her cheeks. Her parents came running to see what was wrong. “Look at that silly boy carrying the donkey on his back.”

Her father looked and saw Mammo. He ran over to the boy, who dropped the donkey, and asked him to come back to the house. Mammo did as he was told. Then the man asked Mammo to marry his daughter because he was the first person who had made her happy. And so Mammo was married, and lived happily ever after.



“By the time Ibrahim had finished telling me this story I was crying with laughter,” Birtukan admitted. “I went back to school with more confidence. I made friends and started to enjoy lessons. I believed it was because of Ibrahim’s story. Years later I heard he had been to visit the school and told them that I was unhappy so it was probably a bit of both.

However, I left school early to get a job in a café and, as some of you may know, I became pregnant with Yonas. His father was also Ethiopian but he was already married. I was a fool. Anyway, Ibrahim helped me to get me a flat here and kept watch

over us but he did not interfere. I should have taken more notice of him and encouraged Yonas to get to know him. I didn't know that they had become so close.”

Birtukan began to silently weep but did not move. Her mother squeezed Fatima's hand and gestured for her to join Yonas's mother. Fatima took strength from her and returned to face the congregation at Birtukan's side. They hugged each other then Fatima told the people in the hall that she was going to tell Yonas's story but first she held onto Birtukan's hand and faced her.

“I do not think you were a fool. You are a wonderful mother to a lovely son who is lying in a hospital bed because of his bravery. Now I'm going to tell you all what happened to him.”

## *Chapter Six*

### **Yonas's story**

“Yonas and I continued to visit Ibrahim, sometimes with Daniel, sometimes on our own and occasionally individually. I knew it was risky to be seen to call at his flat on my own but I trusted him and enjoyed his company. He continued to tell me, and the others, stories and proverbs which related to our lives and the situations we found ourselves in. The last time all three of us visited him together he told us a story which we thought was aimed at making us a bit more cautious. See what you think.”

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### **The Three Wise Men**

Once there were three wise men who spent all their time studying and trying to find out new things. They read books and discussed what they had learned. They asked their king if they could go further afield to discover more. The king agreed. So the three wise men travelled to a far-off place and there they found a dead lion. They all agreed that they could make the lion return to life. The first said he would put the flesh back on his bones. The second said he would make him breathe and the third said he would make him move again. They hadn't realised that another man had been listening to them.

“Don't you realise,” he said, “that if you give this dead lion life, he will eat you?”

The three wise men turned and laughed at him. “You foolish man! How could a lion that has been restored turn against those who brought him back to life? We three are clever and know what we are doing.”



So the man went away and hid. He watched as the first put the lion back together, the second breathed life into it and the third made it move. Then he watched the lion turn and face the three wise men. Their smiles disappeared as the lion roared then pounced on them, killing each one and started to eat.

When the lion had finished his meal and disappeared, the man returned to the remains of the bodies. He looked down sadly and said to himself, “When a knife is too sharp, it cuts its own case; when a man has too much wisdom, it leads him to his death.”

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I think Ibrahim knew that he had not only made new friends, but also some enemies. He not only befriended the three of us, but also my brother. Many of you here think that what happened to Ibrahim was as a result of Said’s hatred towards Yonas and his protection of me. I can tell you that you are wrong. I know you saw the police come to our flat yesterday to interview Said but he is not under suspicion.

Before this memorial service, I visited the hospital where Yonas is still recovering. He asked me to tell you the following in his own words.

“Hello friends. Sorry I can’t be there with you to remember my friend Ibrahim. I want you to know what happened to that great man so that his family and friends can live in peace. You all know Ibrahim did not survive the fire in his flat last week. We had our suspicions about who tried to scare Ibrahim after a burning rag was pushed under his door the day before the fire. I admit I suspected Said but Ibrahim assured me that it was not him. I spent that evening alone with Ibrahim and he told me how Said had been a

regular visitor at his flat and that he'd helped him to understand that my friendship with Fatima did not necessarily mean there was anything to worry about. We are all still young and it is too soon to say we are anything other than friends.

I trusted Ibrahim but the following night, when I saw the black smoke seeping under the door and the flicker of orange through the glass, I immediately thought Said had some part in it. After shouting for Daniel to phone the fire brigade, I decided to go straight in, smashing the glass on his door to undo the lock. I never thought about the effect of this and was knocked back by the sudden explosion. By that time other neighbours were on the stairs and the balcony as thick dirty choking fumes belched out.

I didn't listen to them trying to stop me and went inside to find Ibrahim. I guessed it was probably too late to save him as the smoke had probably killed him, but I didn't give up. I crawled along the floor where the smoke was less dense, I'd pulled my jacket over my head but it was impossible to see and I started to cough and choke. When I reached his living room he was lying on the floor, the chair was blazing and his curtains were smouldering.

The next thing I remember was waking up in this bed in hospital. The police were waiting to talk to me but I'd inhaled so much smoke, I couldn't speak. I think they suspected me at first but Daniel and the neighbours told them I'd discovered the fire. When they did speak to me I told them about Said.

I'm sorry, I should have trusted Ibrahim. Something happened to me last night which confirmed this. I had fallen asleep and thought I'd woken up as I was laid in the hospital bed and had a visitor. It was Ibrahim. He was sat in the chair in his usual

working clothes and he was watching me. When I opened my eyes he smiled and then he spoke.

“I want you to get well and go home. You must trust your friend and believe that what happened was nothing to do with Said. He is a good young man and you should talk to him. The police will find the people responsible for this cowardly act. They left clues and they do not deserve to escape this crime. Nobody in the flats knew them. You certainly don’t know them. Having said that, forgiveness and trust are two values which you need to develop. This is the last story that I will tell you but it won’t be the last you hear. Now close your eyes and listen.

\*\*\*

### **An Act of Kindness**

An old man lay in his bed. He knew he was dying and he called his three sons to him so that he could divide his estate equally among them. They were all good young men but he wanted to find out which of the three was the kindest so he set them a task. Taking the jewelled ring from his finger he said, “This ring will go to whichever of you can tell me of a kind act that you’ve performed.”

The eldest son stood by his father and took his hand. “Father, once a man left a large amount of money in my care. He then went away for a long time and when he finally returned I gave him all the money back. He wanted to pay me for looking after it but I refused to take anything. Isn’t that kindness?”

“No that is honesty, but it is not kindness.”

The second son pushed past his brother and started to tell his father about his own good deed. “I was passing a deep pool and heard a cry from child who



was drowning in the water. I was so concerned, I jumped into the water and swam over to the child and saved her. I carried the little girl to her parents and they were overcome with relief. That is kindness, isn't it father?"

"No son, that is brave and you showed sympathy, but not kindness."

The youngest son stood before his father and admitted that, one night, while walking along the top of a steep ravine he saw his enemy staggering on the edge of the gorge. "He was drunk and I could have left him but I was afraid he would fall to his death. I took him by the hand and led him away then left him in a safe place to recover. Is that an act of kindness?"

"Yes my son. To be able to help your enemy in their time of need is the greatest act of kindness." He took the ring off his finger and gave it to his youngest son. Then he closed his eyes and passed away peacefully.

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Fatima and Birtukan went back to their seats. Everyone watched in silence. David, the councillor, who had welcomed them over two hours earlier, went to the front and, after a short conclusion and a blessing, told them to go in peace.

Once outside, the people began to chat and share their recollections of Ibrahim. People seemed reluctant to go back to their homes. The last to leave the building were those who had spoken. Fatima walked out with Birtukan and her mother, one on each side, hand in hand. They were followed by Said and Daniel. When they reached the doorway the congregation stood back and applauded them. Daniel turned to Said and grasped his shoulders then pulled him towards him in an embrace. Fatima went over to

them and put her arms round them. The crowd cheered and clapped as Said responded to both his sister and his new friend.

“Mother and I are going to visit Yonas,” Birtukan announced to the three youngsters. “Will you come with us? I know that is what Ibrahim would have wanted.”

“We’re coming,” they enthusiastically replied.

### **Commentary on The Storyteller**

Storytelling is one facet of oral literature and Ethiopia shares this culture with the other African nations as explained in chapter 4. The author wanted to illustrate (in story form as well as pictures, a sample of which are included ) some of the stories that have been retold among Ethiopians for generations and are now preserved in writing. Most of these Ethiopian stories retold in this novel are traditional and were adapted from published versions including Schlomo Bachrach's 'Ethiopian Folk-Tales' and 'The Elephant and the Cock Folktales from Ethiopia' retold by Elizabeth Laird.

Although the author never had the good fortune to be told stories in a traditional way she was the recipient of a number of original tales which are included in appendix 2. She also witnessed occasions when asmari singers performed both formally at functions and informally.<sup>1</sup> Despite never being present at storytelling under a tree or round a fire the author was aware that this function was not restricted to a specific person but was undertaken in the home by parents or grandparents as well as by elders in the community. According to the home page of the website, [www.ethiopianfolktales.com](http://www.ethiopianfolktales.com), storytellers: 'included farmers, teachers, health workers, government officials, students, shopkeepers, old soldiers, an Ethiopian Orthodox nun, a priest and a retired diplomat, among many others.'<sup>2</sup>

The choice of a man from Oromo region as the main character was prompted by a number of issues including the popular proverb, *It is said that when a man of Oromia dies another library is lost* which prefaces the novel. There were many stories, proverbs and other forms of oral literature which were told in this large region of Ethiopia which borders the region of Somalia in the east. Between 1950 and 1990 many young people



## The Storyteller

and workers would have been exposed to a variety of stories which would be passed from generation to generation orally. One possible function of storytelling in this part of Ethiopia might be the association with activism against the ruling power as was evident among people in parts of this region.<sup>3</sup> During the period of the military government, when the main character of this novel lived in Ethiopia, the country aimed to increase adult literacy but the language predominantly used for teaching was Amharic.<sup>4</sup> The Cushitic language, Afan Oromo, is written in Latin script unlike both Amharic and Tigrinyan which use fidel characters.

Although the author chose to make this character literate, to encourage him to write down the stories in Afan Oromo, his own language, Amharic and later English, it is the telling of the stories to the young people in the city that is more important. In retrospect this could have been emphasized through intensifying the wording in each story with greater emphasis on repetition and rhythm, and relating each tale to the lives of the audience rather than concentrating on the theme. Another method would be to relate the story orally, expressing the content differently depending on the location and spectators, delivering it in a traditional format. The author felt that she was not qualified to do this having not been immersed in this oral ritual in her own culture let alone that of an Ethiopian.

The audience she was writing for included both non Ethiopians in Western society who, in addition to learning about other cultures and receiving a moral message, would hopefully enjoy the traditional tales within the modern stories which make up the novel. This audience was intended to include the Diaspora, both in Britain and other Western nations, with the hope that it would encourage young people to discover more about their

## The Storyteller

traditional roots as well as their country's history and cultures. The other possible audience could be Ethiopians either reading the book in English or possibly translated into one of the local languages. This would again provide a resource which raised awareness of the culture and history of their country, and in particular of the region of Oromia, but would have the added element of describing life in a western city, where issues such as racism and bullying can occur, and posing the question of whether it is better than life in Ethiopia.

Although the author considered submitting the story to publishers and agents she decided to review this novel first. It is only a short book and yet the language is too complex for struggling teenage readers. The content is not suited to younger readers despite the inclusion of the tales which have appeared in children's books. The possibility of reviewing the novel with the support of a person from Oromia is being considered by the author. This would hopefully make it more appealing to an Ethiopian audience.

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<sup>1</sup> On one occasion the author met an asmari minstrel who was returning over the mountains from a function in a village and he promptly made up a song about the 'white' group members which was translated by their Ethiopian guide.

<sup>2</sup> [www.ethiopianfolktales.com](http://www.ethiopianfolktales.com) 'The stories were collected by Elizabeth Laird under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and the British Council with the collaboration of the Ethiopian Regional Cultural and Educational Bureaux.'

<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this study is to examine closely the nature of (Salale) Oromo folklore as the art of resistance against domination in Ethiopia and to explore conflicting local political attitudes and the problem of activist (folkloric) research. <http://oromofolklore-resistance.blogspot.com/2011/04/ethnographic-mystique-self-in-folkloric.html#comment-form>

<sup>4</sup> Getachew Anteneh & Derib Ado 'Language Policy in Ethiopia: History and Current Trends' [www.ethiopia-ed.net/images/257055575.doc](http://www.ethiopia-ed.net/images/257055575.doc) downloaded on 7/12/2011

## Chapter 10

### Conclusion

Should anyone write or illustrate for Ethiopian children if they are not Ethiopian? On a broader scale, can a writer, whether an author or journalist, write about a society that they do not belong to and have their work accepted by members of that culture? Having researched the literature available for Ethiopian children,<sup>1</sup> in particular those living in Ethiopia; having also considered the issues of context in illustrating and writing for different ethnic groups<sup>2</sup> and produced creative materials for these markets, the author believes it is not only possible but may be important, in view of the dearth of books currently available, yet such literature must be of good quality, a high standard and fit for purpose.

Historically speaking, the problem of meeting the needs of this growing market, that is children living in Ethiopia and those of Ethiopian descent living in the Diaspora, seems to be slowly disappearing but the barriers remain immense. The dimensions of the country,<sup>3</sup> cultural differences in terms of language alone,<sup>4</sup> the size of the population, lack of education and poor reading skills particularly among adults,<sup>5</sup> poverty, and minimum access for many to a range of reading materials, all have an impact. In such a climate it is difficult to imagine how this country can ever produce suitable and adequate resources for all ages. At a meeting with the managing director of Shama Books<sup>6</sup> the author learned that there was an aspiration to produce a large number of English supplementary readers<sup>7</sup> for all school grades and a desire to develop a reading culture by producing low cost books which more families would be able to afford. The market is there but the number of Ethiopian writers and illustrators with skills, experience and resources is still



relatively small.<sup>8</sup> Although not lucrative, the opportunity to increase the range of materials for this audience and at the same time improve standards in publications does exist. Whether non Ethiopians are willing and able to take on this challenge is debatable; it largely depends on whether they are willing to give their time and expertise for a smaller financial reward than would be expected in the developed world. Those who currently produce work for Ethiopian children<sup>9</sup> tend to be those with close personal links to the country (many having lived and worked there) and their work is either subsidized (voluntary or project based and funded from outside) or sold for profit to a wider market through international publishers. The criteria for such material being accepted for publication include the need to get the context right.

Children in Ethiopia have relatively little choice in literature compared to children in the developed world yet their interests still need to be considered if they are to gain the same enjoyment and benefits from reading. The perspective and environment of any story have to be accurate and the characters credible and pertinent to the audience. School libraries and some bookshops do provide books produced for different audiences in the developed world and, while they may provide some quality reading material and are better than nothing, Ethiopian children deserve books that they can relate to.<sup>10</sup>

The author acknowledges that her early writing did not take full account of the places and people she was writing about and for; she recognized the need for broad and deep research, reflection and editing based on feedback from Ethiopians as well as those familiar with children's literacy, and a better understanding of the market helped by living among the different cultures. She still recognizes the many weaknesses in her work and continues to seek help through workshops, critique groups and sharing work with

Ethiopian friends and experts. The question of how and why to write or illustrate for children of another culture is one which has not been fully answered through this thesis and prompts further research. In both stories (*Back in Time* and *The Storyteller*) the discerning reader may find evidence of post-colonial discourse and a white middle-class viewpoint despite attempts to avoid such a situation by writing for an Ethiopian audience living in the Diaspora and undertaking extensive research.

One area of investigation which influenced the author's writing was the study of those myths and tales which are familiar to Ethiopians.<sup>11</sup> Storytelling was and is a way of life for many Ethiopians and published examples are a small part of such literature. While these written examples do not replace the performed works in the language of the listeners they can, with illustrations, spread such tales across the whole of the country and the world, providing entertainment and possibly moral training and education. The art of storytelling needs further consideration and can provide opportunities for publishing literature electronically as well as in books (the author's story *Back in Time* emerged from an idea for an electronic game and was self-published in 2011 as a kindle book on Amazon.com).<sup>12</sup> Such media will also provide the opportunity for visual display in the form of illustrations and video including user-participation and interaction.<sup>13</sup>

The author has a background training in illustration for children's publishing and a desire to create books with pictures that can tell stories without words, or incorporate drawings and art work to help readers better understand the text and enhance the appearance of a book. Although there are relatively few illustrators of children's books in Ethiopia,<sup>14</sup> the increasing quality and quantity of their work and improvements in publishing are promising. However, it seems apparent that there is still a market for

books illustrated by local artists who are not trained but whose work is vibrant and contextually accurate as well as trained illustrators of other nationalities whose professionalism advances the quality of literature for children in Ethiopia and the Diaspora.<sup>15</sup>

Self-analysis of the work, both creative and critical, was an important process which has helped the author to develop and refine her writing skills and illustration techniques and explore, through research, children's illustrated literature in an Ethiopian context. It is an ongoing process, hopefully leading to positive results in terms of publication but also laying the foundations for future academic and creative writing.

One question it has raised is that of learning how to write in other voices. Developing the skills of listening and observing is crucial, as is reading works by writers from the different cultures depicted in stories. In isolation the author knew that she could produce acceptable work that received compliments from family and friends, but for it to progress and be suitable for publication and distribution, she became aware of how much she needed the support and criticism of others, particularly those from other diverse cultures. One source was SCWBI, the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, which has a British arm active in supporting writers and illustrators of children's books, offering local workshops, critique groups and other mechanisms to help writers. Another group in Manchester helps writers produce materials which focus on cultural diversity, encouraging black and Asian writers as well as white authors to include more non white protagonists in children's literature.<sup>16</sup>

When the author's book *Ten Donkeys* was accepted by a publishing company<sup>17</sup> she realized that she had found a niche market in Ethiopia by focusing on small



supplementary books and avoiding a specific Ethiopian language or use of English.

Another book illustrated by the author, *Amen at Home*,<sup>18</sup> has been published and distributed through the major bookstores of Ethiopia and Amazon.com for the international audience, including families adopting Ethiopian children in the Diaspora.

The question of whether she should continue to write and illustrate for this Ethiopian market also depends on how well the books are distributed, an evaluation of their success and how much is earned by this exercise will also inform future decisions. This raises another consideration. Should anyone write or illustrate for a specific market if it prevents others living in that country from benefitting from such work? Although the earnings from sales of books in Ethiopia are low compared to those expected elsewhere in the developed world, they still have some value to the writer or illustrator. The research identified publishers who are looking for new material that would appeal to Ethiopian children, and recent discussions with other writers and illustrators from Ethiopia provided evidence that there is room for both indigenous artists and outsiders. Thus a joint effort to stimulate a market and encourage the emerging educated population to recognize the significance of children's books might help create a reading culture and encourage greater demand. An evaluation of the impact and the value of developing such literature would appear to be of benefit to all involved. Also, to achieve better quality books for all children requires good quality training, preparation and practice in writing and illustrating for diverse cultures. This could be the focus of wider research.

This study has highlighted many opportunities for writing and illustrating publications for Ethiopian children both in their own country and in the Diaspora, as well as producing books to raise awareness of this country and its culture to a much wider

population. It has also raised issues including the dilemma of who should produce these books and whether they should expect to do it for profit or to generate resources and expand the relatively small market which shows some sign of expansion as efforts are made to develop a culture of reading among all Ethiopian children. The study has provided answers to some questions and raised awareness of the many problems which continue to restrict the expansion of illustrated literature for Ethiopian children.

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<sup>1</sup> Since first visiting Ethiopia in 2004 as a voluntary teacher advisor, the author has visited libraries, book shops and schools in that country as well as exploring the internet for literature available for the Diaspora.

<sup>2</sup> The author used a variety of methods including research of academic documents and creative materials and practice as research.

<sup>3</sup> Population: 85,237,338 note: estimates for this country explicitly take into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality, higher death rates, lower population growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected (July 2009 est.) source <http://www.economywatch.com/economic-statistics/country/Ethiopia/> (last updated 14/2/2011) Size of country 1,127,127 square km - source <http://www.ethioworld.com/CountryInformation/geography.htm> downloaded 23/2/2011

<sup>4</sup> Recent studies report that 99 languages are spoken in the country. Amharic and English are the de facto languages of the state, with greater emphasis being placed on other languages in the official media and the educational system. The working languages of the national/regional government may differ according to regions. The other major local languages are Guaragigna, Oromigna, Somali, and Tigrigna. Source <http://www.ethioworld.com/CountryInformation/geography.htm>

<sup>5</sup> The author observed such problems among primary teachers many of whom had weak English skills during monitoring exercises in 2004/6. Many parents are illiterate in their own language thus unable to support them at primary school. English is the medium of education for all students from Grade 8.

<sup>6</sup> Gassan Bagersh discussed the future aims of the company with the author in September 2010. *Ten Donkeys* which was partly designed for this market. More details of the company can be found on their website: <http://shamaethiopia.com>

<sup>7</sup> One of the issues identified in a paper by Michael Daniel Ambatchew was the need to 'measure the effectiveness of the provision of supplementary readers to primary schools with the intent of improving students' reading skills in English Ambatchew (2003) 'The Effect of Primary English Readers on Reading Skills in Ethiopia' (submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for degree of Doctor Litterarum in English in the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria) This thesis examines if there is any tangible effect on the students' reading skills by conducting a comparative study between two government schools that received a donation of primary readers through the Primary Readers Scheme of the British Council and two schools that did not.

It was found that there has been no significant increase in the students' reading abilities because government schools lack the capacity to utilise supplementary readers. Most of the librarians are not



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qualified, while the teachers, though qualified, lack training in how to use supplementary readers and also tend to be demotivated. Moreover, the administration and running of most of the schools libraries limit the books' accessibility. It is also very likely that the country's socio-economic situation in general and the children's backgrounds do not encourage the habit of reading for pleasure.

Consequently, modifications are necessary to maximise the benefits of extensive reading in the future, such as training teachers and librarians as well as encouraging supplementary reading amongst the students. It concludes that though extensive reading schemes produce impressive results in experimental situations, care should be taken in actual implementation of such schemes in real life.

<http://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=9065068> Downloaded on 28/11/2010

<sup>8</sup> A full list of Ethiopian authors within Ethiopia does not exist but Michael Daniel Ambatchew identified *A Dozen Contemporary Ethiopian Children's Writers* in Addis Ababa in 2008 in which he observed, 'The lack of visibility of Ethiopian children's authors has led many to conclude that we do not exist at all. This invisibility has probably arisen from a multitude of factors including the Ethiopian value of modesty, the writers' preference for solitude, and a lack of publicity and awareness of the importance of children's literature... this booklet aims at beginning to fill this gap by providing some bibliographical information about a few contemporary Ethiopian authors.... Actually, Ethiopia has over 30 children's writers currently residing in the country and producing stories.' p5-6

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Laird, Jane Kurtz and Eric Robson are among the best known writers/illustrators from the west whose work has reached the Ethiopian audience as well as the Diaspora and a broader international market through publishers such as Macmillan, Oxford University Press and Simon & Schuster. Shama Books have published non Ethiopian writers such as Lara Deguefé (*Korkoro Boy and Other Stories* 2005) who lived in Ethiopia and married an Ethiopian then returned to Canada. This book, like many others published by Shama Books, has a wider market than just Ethiopia and most are available through on-line distributors such as Amazon.

<sup>10</sup> [www.ethiopiareads.org](http://www.ethiopiareads.org) has a mission '[t]o create a reading culture in Ethiopia by connecting children with books. By planting libraries for children, creating culturally appropriate reading materials and training educators to nurture a love of books, Ethiopia Reads brings hope and educational skills to this generation of Ethiopians.' Donations of books directly to the Ethiopian Reads libraries have reduced since 2008. At that time the author was guided on the type and quality of material they would accept from overseas sources. Now, with access to substantial financial contributions through the United States offices of Ethiopia Reads, the growing number of libraries it supports no longer rely on book gifts.

<sup>11</sup> This was covered in greater detail in the chapter on the importance of storytelling.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Back-in-Time-ebook/dp/B005ELNVEW>

<sup>13</sup> Children's I Pad Apps (applications) are emerging and this market appears likely to increase based on experience of Kindle sales to adults. An example is: <http://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/childrens-books/appyzoo/aesops-wheel-fables/> a different way of reading/exploring Aesop's Fables. 2010 sales of Kindle vastly exceeded expectations according to Amazon .com <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2010-12-23/amazon-com-kindle-sales-are-said-to-exceed-estimates.html> (both downloaded 11/2/2011)

<sup>14</sup> There is no organisation of children's book illustrators and writers/publishers use artists who have not been trained or a specific qualification in this discipline. In appendix 2 there are a number of illustrators of the folk tales published and the section on the influences on illustrators has further names. A comprehensive list has not been published but it appears that they are small in number and have other roles. This was confirmed by illustrators who the author met in Addis Ababa such as Yihenew, Andargachew and Abyalew.

<sup>15</sup> This followed discussions with publishers (Shama Books (2010, 2010), High Profile (2009, 2011) and Habte Books (2010, 2011)).



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<sup>16</sup> 'Britain's cultural diversity is bringing about an ever-richer mix of creativity in all fields of the arts. The country's ethnic and religious make-up is already making a vivid mark on our literature, and The decibel Penguin Prize will help take this further by recognizing new talent. I am proud and delighted to be its patron' David Lammy MP Source

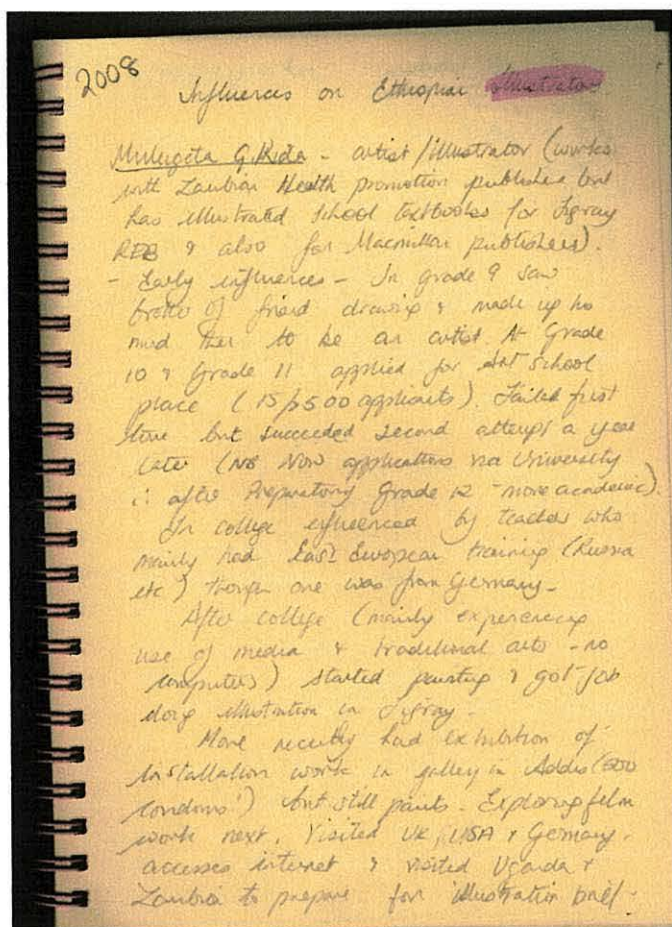
<http://www.penguin catalogue.co.uk/hi/general/title.html?catalogueId=18&imprintId=108&titleId=2849>  
downloaded 23/2/2011 Commonword, Puffin Books and Rogers, Coleridge & White Literary Agency (RCW) are pleased to announce a partnership for the Commonword Children's Diversity Writing Prize, to be awarded annually from 2012. The prize will be the culmination of fortnightly Commonword writing workshops in Manchester and an annual Puffin and RCW-sponsored masterclass for budding writers who exhibit potential in children's fiction writing for 7+ to teenage. The winning writer must embrace ethnic diversity either through their own ethnicity and culture and/or within their writing. Source  
<http://www.cultureword.org.uk/partnership-and-prize-to-encourage-diversity-in-children%e2%80%99s-fiction>

<sup>17</sup> Gassan Bagersh, managing director of Shama Books, agreed to publish the work. An email from the MD on 13.2.2011 read, 'Thank you for your message. I love the illustrations and the concept behind "ten donkeys". I think we have a book that will ignite are collaboration. I would like to publish it ASAP. How long do you need to finalize it?'

<sup>18</sup> *Amen at Home* by Fitsame Teferra (2011) Addis Ababa: Habte Books ISBN 9789994485208 initial print run 1000 copies - retailing in Ethiopia for 52 Birr (15 Birr to £1) 'I buy your book from Book world. It is interesting. I like it. It is good to children to teach words with pictures. I hope you will make additional educational books in the next time. But, I am not sure about the price for Ethiopian children, it is 52 eth.birr. I think it is expensive for many Ethiopian.' (facebook message from Yihenu Worku 23/2/2011)

## Appendix 1

### Extracts from notes, emails and correspondence



June 2008 Addis Ababa  
Notes made following  
interview with Mulugeta  
Gebre Kidan.

Wed, 31 Dec 2008 08:57:59 -0600

> From: janekurtz

> Hi, Helen. I'm happy for whatever help I can give-- Ethiopia Reads has had trouble characterizing the publishing of SILLY MAMMO in a way that communicates how big a feat it was...first children's book (no...although close, I think), first bilingual children's book (doesn't sound impressive), first full-color children's book (somewhat better) :

09/12/2010

Dear Helen,

A brief P.S. as a result of yours. I agree that as aliens to Ethiopian culture we hesitate to impose our concepts on them. However they themselves are always anxious to know about and to adapt their thinking to know and progressive ideas, so I don't think we should worry too much! I just think they should be careful not to lose the uniqueness and beauty of their own, particularly the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian artistic traditions.



In fact Ethiopia definitely benefitted from the imports of childrens' books from India, China, and to a lesser extent Russia, when local production was at a low ebb. These countries produce the most beautiful, colourfully illustrated educational books - I made a small collection of them - very adaptable to the Ethiopian culture and retailing at a very low cost because of the enormous editions they can print as a result of their own demography.

As far as printing technology is concerned I find it better to exploit the new digital technology now, and usually scan artwork into an application where you can modify and edit it, then send it to the printer electronically when you're satisfied with it -  
Eric

Notes taken from email sent from Michael Daniel Ambatchew in June 2010

### **Back in Time**

You have a really winner in this one. Congratulations! Obviously, there is room for improvement and I have some comments; I'd like to see better descriptions of the principal characters so I can visualize them, but the main comments are about plausibility;

Page 1 = Get her onto the plane in a more plausible manner you can't just walk through especially nowadays, work on another way.

Page 4 = Same with walking through Ethiopian customs. Hello this is Ethiopia!

Page 4 = a hotel shuttle bus might be more convincing than a taxi

Page 8 = locating Teddy and his uncle Tesfaye needs more working on in a country that lacks family names and all.

Page 10 = if we have pizza at home ☺

Page 14 = Father asked to look after baby rather than maid or babysitter is not common.

Page 14 = They prefer to take a minibus than the car, must be Brits!

Page 15 = You really have to think about which language people are speaking with to each other, just adding a word like Behuala sounds wrong. This is a big area you have to think about through out the novel. No easy answers ☺

Page 17 = huge stone gateway repeated

Page 18 = a CD which made lots of money for Ethiopia is unknown by most Ethiopians as government used to pretend they were dealing with the famine by themselves.

Page 20 = Black tea or tea with milk? ☺

Page 23 "What can either country gain from fighting" is not a reflection of Ethiopian mentality, as returning the Falklands to Argentina wouldn't sound logical to a Brit. ☺

Page 23 = Eritrea annexed by Haile-Selassie again is not a reflection of Ethiopian mentality, as Britains annexing of Wales, Scotland and Ireland. ☺

Page 29 = Ferenge not Ferengi

Page 31 = the word "Lasslassa" rings false, I know you are adding it to give local colour, but this relates to the whole language issue, why do you say food and not megib?

Page 32 = typo omit a in " he was a known to be"

Page 37 = did they have rockets then?

Page 37 = to do instead of go

Page 38 = were their serious shells then?

Page 39 = more Indian soldiers than British if the truth be known!



Page 43 = his English improved in such a short time speaking with Indians ☺  
Page 44 = fast loading rifles in those days (double check)  
Page 44 = hardly anyone among the British army got hurt. Likely? They were on a picnic ☺  
Page 47 = “Vicky realized she was too young to have a boyfriend” I doubt it kids always consider themselves grown up.  
Page 47 = Again father used to baby-sit.  
Page 47 = Teddy writes a book in a couple of days? Unlikely  
Page 49 = the ending is too abrupt as if you realized that dinner needing cooking and suddenly wrapped in up ☺

### **The Storyteller**

To start from the first quote this is a saying plagiarized whose original source you might be able to trace. Here are some other points you might wish to reconsider.

Page 2 = teff is not pounded between stones

Page 2 = Haile is a name and Haile Selassie was born as Teferi and was later given the name at his coronation

Page 3 = farmers don't grow much vegetables traditionally

Page 3 = life changed for farmers immediately as they were told the land belonged to them and they no longer had to pay taxes to landlords

Page 3 = literacy was the job of priests and not young scholars

Page 5 and 6 = Sounds too much like Sholmo

Page 7 = Yonas usually spelt with one n

Page 7 = dog running circles round sheep sounds to British sheep doggish!

Page 7 = dog barks at reflection and loses meat in original

Page 9 = Haile attending mosque name too Christian ☹

Page 13 = if he changes religion he would also change his name in Ethiopia

Page 14 = anti-revolutionary would have been the language of the day rather than rebel!'



Michael Daniel Ambatchew reading from a Little Hands book at the launch of the 2009 anthologies.

Michael provided the author with constructive criticism on her work throughout the period of her research and writing for Ethiopian children.

## Appendix 2

### The Story of the Beans

Written by an Addis Ababa student in March 2009 (Tarikena Gebre Senbet)

Once upon a time, a man was extremely very hungry. He went around in a village until he found a bean-farm of an ordinary dweller. He started eating the beans like an animal without even peeling the skin; he was too hungry to notice.

After a while, when he calmed down, he started peeling the skin off and eating the beans properly like a normal human being.

At last, he was extremely very full that he even began to peel the seed coat of the beans and ate the internal small structures. Then, suddenly out of the blue, the farmer and owner of the farm approached him with a dumbfounded look on his face. Little did the poor hungry man know that the farmer was watching him the whole time.

The farmer cleared his throat and said, "I have been observing how you eat my beans since the second you laid eyes on them. But my dear friend, I tell you, eat not in the first manner, eat not in the last manner, do eat in the second one!"

(copied exactly from the handwritten script)

## **The Bat**

Told to the author by Girma Alemayehu, 2009, and located in Civics and Ethical Studies Textbook Grade 7

Long ago there was a famine in the place where the bats were living. All the birds and animals living in the area were victims of hunger. To resist it, they started to borrow food from one another. One of the borrowers was a bat. It had borrowed a lot from many of the birds.

When all the other birds were able to pay back what they had borrowed, the bat was unable to do that, even after the bad days had passed. All the birds searched for it but it escaped by hiding itself. Because of this it changed its flight from day to night. Since then it has been known as “ጠጠጠጠ ጠጠ” (nocturnal bird).

Based on a traditional oral story

## **The Monkey and the Tortoise**

(or why monkeys swing from tree to tree)

Retold by Girma Alemayehu 2009

A monkey lent a tortoise some money for food and the tortoise promised to repay him. The monkey waited but the tortoise didn't pay so one day the monkey went to collect his money. The tortoise saw him coming and lay on his back pretending to be a grinding stone. The angry monkey picked up what he thought was a stone and threw it high into the trees. Later he met the tortoise who told the monkey he'd put the money safe in the grinding stone but now it was lost. The monkey climbed up the trees to find it.



### **Why Dogs chase Cars**

Retold by Girma Alemayehu 2009

One day a dog took a ride in a minibus but he had no change so when the bus stopped he asked for the change of a Birr note. The taxi drove off without giving it the change so the dog chased after it.

### **The Boy and the Train**

Retold by Girma Alemayehu and Solomon Nigussie and located in Civics and Ethical Studies Textbook 2009

Everyday, as the train passed by, a boy waved at the driver who always waved back. One day the boy saw that the bridge ahead was broken. He waved his shirt to get the train driver's attention but the driver just waved back. He couldn't understand why the boy was waving his shirt so frantically. Then he saw the broken bridge but it was too late to stop the train. The train crashed.

### **The Human Hyena**

Told by Solomon Nigussie 2009

On a night, Solomon's father used to tell this story to his wife in their own language Afan Oromo. Solomon and his sisters used to hear it told but couldn't understand it so they would ask him to tell the story to them in Amharic.

His father would start by telling them that, in the village where he lived near the Blue Nile Gorge there was a woman who had the ability to change into the character of a hyena at night. His father's friend loved the woman but everyone in the village knew she turned into a hyena at certain times and advised him against falling

in love with her. He refused to accept this and would not believe that she turned into a hyena as he had only ever seen her in her daytime form.

Eventually Solomon's father planned to do his friend a favour. After the harvest of teff they had to enrich the soil with dung and flail the teff to separate the grain from the straw which was used for their animals. Solomon's father hid on the top of the pile of straw which was stored at the hyena woman's house. He then watched her as night fell and the hyenas began to call. He saw her remove her hair, turn into a hyena and disappear outside into the dark. His father took the hair she had removed and hid it. As soon as it was daylight she returned exhausted to her home and tried to find her hair. She could not find it so she covered her head with a shawl and went to sleep.

She continued to have a social life with the neighbours but always kept her head covered by the shawl. Solomon's father had told his friend everything that he had seen. He went to see the hyena woman and confronted her. She then removed her shawl to reveal the bare head. She admitted what had happened, explaining how one evening while she was out someone had taken her hair and hidden it. She told the friend that her condition was hereditary but promised to behave when she became a hyena in the night. Solomon's father agreed to give her back her hair.

### **The Selfish Baboon and the Clever Monkey**

A Yem Tale located in the Museum of Ethiopian Ethnographical Studies

A baboon and monkey were good friends until one day. When searching for food, the baboon offered to eat the food and let the monkey eat what was left over when he was full. The suspicious monkey suggested they share equally but agreed to the baboon's suggestion as long as he could pierce the baboon's tail. He had found a dead leopard

and he stitched its tail to that of the baboon. The baboon, unaware of this, let the monkey finish the meal while he went home. On his way the other animals were scared and ran away. The baboon was left all alone.

**List of Traditional Ethiopian stories found in print by the author**

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Located</b>
1	Sunrise and Sunset	Elizabeth Laird (1)
2	The Old Man from the River	“
3	The Landlord and the Ostrich	“
4	Achok goes Fishing	“
5	Ngap and Nyakwi	“ (1 & 2)
6	When the World Began	Elizabeth Laird (2)
7	How the Tortoise got her Shell	“
8	The Best Home	“
9	The Day the Sky Fell	“
10	The Enchanted Flute	“
11	The Best Dream	“
12	The Bull who gave birth to a Calf	“
13	The King of the Forest	“
14	Abba Bollo and the Necklace	“
15	The Jackal and the Rabbit	“
16	The Baboon’s Headband	“
17	The Rat King’s Son	“
18	The Shield of Kindness	“
19	The Shepherd Boy at School	“



20	The Man who grew Feathers	“
21	The Monkey’s Birthday	“
22	The Fox and the Crow	“
23	The Clever Wife	“
24	Everything Changes, Everything Passes	“
25	The Baboon Child	Elizabeth Laird (3)
26	The Elephant’s Head	“
27	The Two Travelers	“
28	The Ungrateful Snake	“
29	The Pot of Honey	“
30	Jahiti and her Sister	“
31	The Father’s Plan	“
32	How the Dog lost her Voice	“
33	The Song from the Tree	“
34	The Elephant and the Cock	“
35	Obang and his Dog	“
36	Why the Hyena never runs Straight	“
37	The Landlord and his Ostrich	“
38	Fine Red Feathers	“
39	The Dog Fight	“
40	The Rat King’s Son	“
41	The Mother in Law	“
42	The Grateful Animals	“
43	The Wicked Stepmother	“

44	Nine and One make Ten	“
45	The Longest Pole in the World	“
46	The Father’s Shield	“
47	The King’s Birthmark	“
48	The Lazy Family	“
49	Three Boxes for Three Sons	“
50	The Miracle Child	Elizabeth Laird (4)
51	The Story of the Beans*	Students in Addis Ababa (5)
52	Anko the Monkey	“
53	The Envious Neighbour	“
54	Life	“
55	Be Wise, Don’t be Silly	Merga Yonna (5)
56	The Wise Monkey (also known as The Crocodile and the Monkey)	“
57	The Bat*	Girma Alemayehu (6)
58	The Monkey and the Tortoise*	“
59	Why Dogs chase Cars*	“
60	The Boy and the Train*	“ and Solomon Nigussie
61	The Human Hyena *	Solomon Nigussie (6)
62	The Hare and the Princess	Jon King (7)
63	The Clever Son	Schlomo Bachrach (8)
64	The Thief and the Chair	“
65	The Greedy Dog	“
66	The Crocodile and the Monkey	“

67	The Foolish Servants	“
68	The Women and the Pot	“
69	The Wise Father	“
70	The Visitors	“
71	Mamo the Fool	“ (also Shama Books)
72	The Woman and the Lion	Schlomo Bachrach (8)
73	Nine Brothers	“
74	The Donkey’s Tail	“
75	The Young Lion	“
76	The Two Travellers	“
77	Abayneh and Abaynesh	“
78	Do Monkeys wear Hats?	“
79	Salt and Earth	“
80	The Singer and his Gold	“
81	Bogale’s Colt	“
82	An Important Lesson	“
83	Fire on the Mountain	Jane Kurtz (9) & (13)
84	The Rich Man and the Singer	Mesfin Habte-Mariam (10)
85	The Farmer and the Leopard	“
86	Mammo the Fool (see above)	“
87	The Clever Baboon	“
88	The Husband who wanted to mind the House	“
89	The Women who wanted to govern the Land	“
90	The Farmer and the King	“



91	The Three Thieves	“
92	The Wise Father	“
93	The Adventurous Mouse	“
94	The Clever Wizard	“
95	The Quarrel between the Hyena and the Monkey	“
96	The King’s Questions	“
97	The Faithful Servant	“
98	The Divided Students	“
99	The Meeting of the Young Mice	“
100	The Coward and his Luck	“
101	The Man and his Daughter	“
102	The Two Thieves	“
103	Billichio and the Cannibal	“
104	The Man and the Snake	“
105	An Act of Kindness	“
106	Too Much Praise	“
107	The Clever Temari	“
108	The Puzzle	“
109	The Farmer and the Merchant	“
110	Sinziro	“
111	The Three Wise Men	“
112	Two Tales of Aleka Gebrehanna	“
113	The Hair of the Lion	“
114	The Woodcutter of Gura	<a href="http://www.afro.com/children/myths/myths.html">http://www.afro.com/children/myths/myths.html</a> (11) (12) (13)

115	The Jackal's Lawsuit	“
116	The Game Board	“
117	The Marriage of the Mouse	<a href="http://www.1-language.com/library/africatales/mousemarriage.htm">http://www.1-language.com/library/africatales/mousemarriage.htm</a> (12) (13)
118	The Donkey who Sinned	Courlander H. and Leslau W. (13)
119	The Goats who killed the Leopard	“
120	The Contrary Woman	“
121	The Messenger Donkey	“
122	The Hero of Adi Nifas	“
123	The Judgment of the Wind	“
124	The Goat Well	“
125	Dinner with Tota	“
126	Justice	“
127	How Abunawas was Exiled	“
128	Tecele's Goat	“
129	The Storyteller	“
130	Ojje Ben Onogh	“
131	The Lion and the Hare go hunting	“
132	May it not Happen	“
133	The Farmer of Babbia	“
134	Fire and Water, Truth and Falsehood	“
135	The Battle of Eghal Shillett	“
136	The Golden Earth	“
137	The Over Confident Donkey and the Rooster	Meskerem Assegued (14)
138	Why Hyenas are found all over Ethiopia	“

139	Diving for Honey	“
140	The Mountain with Fiery Eyes	“
141	The Lion and the Goat	“
142	The Turtle’s Burden	“
143	Degu, the Lion	“
144		

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<sup>1</sup> All Ethiopian names are written with the author's given name followed by the father's name and occasionally the grandfather's name.