



character who appears on many of the 32 pages. The last two pages include a full vocabulary in alphabetical order – useful for young students.

This book is also available in other Ethiopian languages (Tigrigna and Affan Oromo) and *Mein Erstes Amharisch Bildwörterbuch* is available in German. Details of these books can be found on the website www.habtebooks.com which also has information on other children's books by the same publisher.

Helen Papworth



Michela Wrong, *Borderlines*, (London: 4th Estate), 2015, £12.99, ISBN 978-0008147402

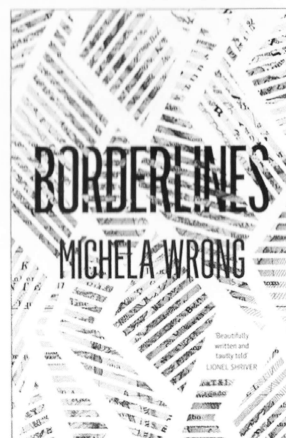
Journalist Michaela Wrong already has three successful non-fiction books under her belt, including *I Didn't Do It For You*, a history of modern Eritrea. This time she has turned her hand to fiction, knowing – she says – that there are many people who seldom if ever read non-fiction, and who would certainly never read a non-fiction book about an international border dispute, however lively or well-written.

Borderlines tells the story of the story of a dispute between two nations in the Horn of Africa – Darrar and North Darrar – through the eyes of an American woman lawyer who, apparently on a whim, is offered and accepts a job on the North Darrar legal team preparing their case to go to arbitration in the Hague.

To call North Darrar a thinly disguised version of Eritrea is hardly fair; apart from a change of name for the country and its capital (Lira) the two are identical. Lira, perched on the edge of the escarpment, has modernist Italian architecture and dark cafes frequented by ex-fighters still adjusting to peacetime life. The president is charismatic but increasingly authoritarian. Young men face forced conscription. People are desperate to emigrate.

Borderlines is sharp and funny. Wrong neatly skewers the diplomats and aid workers of the expatriate community, the initial enthusiasm and later disillusionment of the newcomer, the politically correct but dusty airport shop – “Biography of Julius Nyerere anyone? Copy of the Ministry of Health's five year plan?”

The book weaves together Paula's own story, as she gets to know North Darrar and tries to come to terms with the recent death of her lover back in the States, and the legal detective story of the case to establish the international border. Here Wrong departs from the historical dispute between Ethiopian and Eritrea. The flashpoint for Darrar's border war had been a steamy seaport on the Red Sea, nothing like the Badme triangle. Anyone who complains that it didn't really happen like that, or that the author has been unfair to either the Ethiopians or Eritreans should bear in mind that this is, finally, fiction.



The detective work to prove North Darrar's case and the courtroom drama in the Hague are absorbing and also instructive about the way that these disputes are resolved. For anyone already interested in the Horn of Africa they may be more absorbing than the flashbacks to Paula's romantic past, but the love story should serve the author's purpose of attracting in new readers to a highly enjoyable book.

Elizabeth Blunt

Forthcoming Society Events

LECTURES

All of the Society lectures are open to the public and are free of charge. They are held, unless otherwise specified, at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG. The Anglo-Ethiopian Society is affiliated to the University of London's Centre of African Studies (CAS) and all of our events at SOAS are co-hosted with CAS.

Mursi Ox Modification in the Lower Omo Valley

Professor Timothy Insoll

Thursday 28 January 2016, 7:00pm

Room G3, Main Building, SOAS, Russell Square, London, WC1H 0XG

The Mursi of southwest Ethiopia transform favourite oxen in various ways. These include horn alteration, ear cutting, the wearing of secondary ornaments, and through the process of decorative pattern branding. Ox pattern branding also seemingly relates to another dominant domain of Mursi materiality, the human body itself, as evident in certain parallels between elements of male scarification and the patterns branded on oxen. Symbolic references to ox pattern branding have also been transferred to other aspects of Mursi material culture such as the Kalashnikov rifle, and to stylized clay figurines made by Mursi women. These ox modification processes have been the focus of recent research by Timothy Insoll, Timothy Clack, and Olirege Rege and will be discussed in the first part of the lecture, and contextualized with reference to other cattle modification practices in northeastern and eastern Africa.

Cattle imagery is also relatively common in Ethiopian rock art. The possibility that cattle modification via horn alteration and, particularly, decorative pattern branding is depicted in some cattle engravings and paintings in the region will then be explored. It will be suggested, based on Mursi pattern-branding practices that in some instances the abstract or non-realistic symbols depicted on cattle coats in Ethiopian rock art could be read more literally as signifying actual processes to modify, alter, or beautify cattle. This idea will also be explored, time permitting, in relation to research completed on cattle depictions in Saharan rock art, and animal figurines from southwest Nigeria.

Timothy Insoll is Professor of African and Islamic Archaeology at the University of Manchester.