

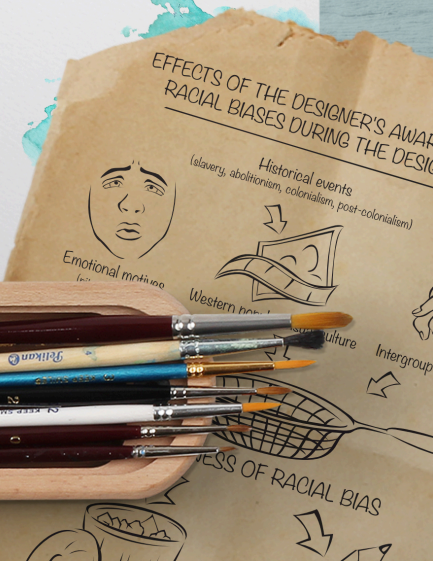
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Autoethnographic Study on Racial Bias in the Design Process



Laura Susanna Doku
Master's Thesis
January 2018
Design Making



SAVONIA
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES



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Abstract

This study seeks to find out how the awareness of the designer's racial biases affects the design process and this can help to reduce the unintended recycling of racial stereotypes when portraying out-groups. Furthermore, the study concentrates on the role of surrounding visual culture, history and personal experiences when a European designer illustrates African characters.

The study uses autoethnographic method. A micro level approach is taken to deepen understanding on the role of racial and ethnic bias in the design process by going through personal experiences from the perspective of a design student.

A series of illustrations of West African characters for microstock image banks was produced as a case study. The design process was recorded in field notes accompanied by memories of events in the past that had led to the designer's present perceptions. The field notes and memories were re-constructed as an evocative autoethnographic narrative. Through this process the designer was able to identify and reject some of the most racially biased concepts, make conscious choices regarding representation, and to claim responsibility over the decisions she made.

The identified stereotypes were found to be paternalistic and envious in nature. The influences identified were the designer's personal encounters and the Finnish and Western popular visual culture. Connections to the stereotypes of the colonial era, slavery and abolitionism were noted.

It was noted that though paying attention to one's racial biases during the design process could be beneficial in order to avoid racial stereotypes, given too much attention it could hinder the creative process.

Keywords:

Racial bias, ethnic bias, design process, out-group, autoethnography, stereotype.

Tiivistelmä

Tämä tutkielma pyrkii selvittämään miten rotuennakkoluulojen tiedostaminen vaikuttaa muotoiluprosessiin, ja voiko rotustereotypioiden kierrätystä ulkoryhmiä kuvatessa vähentää tiedostamalla omia rotuennakkoluulojaan. Erityisesti tässä tutkimuksessa keskitytään ympäröivän visuaalisen kulttuurin, historiallisten tapahtumien ja henkilökohtaisten kokemusten vaikutukseen, kun eurooppalainen muotoilija kuvittaa afrikkalaisia hahmoja.

Tutkimus hyödyntää autoetnografista menetelmää. Mikro-tason lähestymistapaa käytetään syventämään ymmärrystä rotuennakkoluulojen vaikutuksesta muotoiluprosessissa. Näkökulmana on visuaalisen suunnittelijan/muotoiluopiskelijan henkilökohtaiset kokemukset.

Esimerkkitapauksena tuotettiin kuvitussarja Länsi-Afrikkalaisista hahmoista microstock kuvapankkeihin. Muotoiluprosessin aikana tehtiin kenttämuistiinpanoja ja niitä täydennettiin muistelmilla tapahtumista, jotka olivat johtaneet muotoilijan nykyiseen näkökulmaan. Kenttämuistiinpanoista ja muistelmista muokattiin evokatiivinen autoetnografinen kertomus. Tämän prosessin kautta muotoilija pystyi tunnistamaan ja hylkäämään joitakin selvimpiä rasistisia konsepteja, sekä tekemään tietoisia päätöksiä koskien representaatiota, ja ottamaan vastuuta tekemistään valinnoista.

Analyysissä havaittiin, että tunnistetut stereotyypit olivat holhoavuuden ja kateuden värittämiä. Pääasiallisiksi vaikutteiksi tunnistettiin muotoilijan omat kokemukset ja suomalainen ja länsimaalainen visuaalinen populaarikulttuuri. Yhteyksiä kolonialismin, orjuuden ja abolitionismin aikaisiin stereotyypeihin havaittiin.

Havaittiin, että vaikka tietoisuus henkilökohtaisista rotuennakkoluuloista muotoiluprosessin aikana saattaa olla hyödyksi stereotyyppistä kuvausta välteltäessä, liiallinen keskittyminen niiden tunnistamiseen voi hidastaa luovaa prosessia.

Keskeiset käsitteet:

Rotuennakkoluulot, etniset ennakkoluulot muotoiluprosessi, ulkoryhmä, autoetnografia, stereotypia.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1. <i>Significance and Aims</i>	4
1.2. <i>Theoretical Frame and Research Method</i>	4
1.3. <i>Case Study</i>	4
1.4. <i>Outline of the Thesis</i>	5
2. Literature Review	6
2.1. <i>Social Bias</i>	6
2.2. <i>Racial Bias and Ethnic Bias</i>	6
2.3. <i>Archetypes and Stereotypes</i>	7
2.4. <i>Image formation of Africans by the West</i>	8
2.4.1. <i>The Medieval -The Demon and the Saint</i>	8
2.4.2. <i>The Evolution of Savage</i>	9
2.4.3. <i>Trans-Atlantic Slavery - Sambo</i>	10
2.4.4. <i>The Abolitionism and Post-Slavery America -patronising images and racism</i>	11
2.4.5. <i>Explorations -Dark Continent in Need of European Light</i>	11
2.4.6. <i>Colonialism -brutal warriors and human sacrifice</i>	12
2.4.7. <i>De-colonisation and Post-colonialism</i>	12
3. Methods	14
3.1. <i>Autoethnography</i>	14
3.2. <i>Subject: Illustrations for Microstock Image Banks</i>	14
3.3. <i>Setting: Finland and Ghana</i>	15
3.3.1. <i>Ghana</i>	15
3.3.2. <i>Finland</i>	16
3.4. <i>Ethical Consideration</i>	16
3.5. <i>Progress of the Study</i>	16
4. The Narrative	18
4.1. <i>Summary of the Narrative</i>	18
4.2. <i>First Stages</i>	18
4.2.1. <i>Arrogant Dictator</i>	19
4.2.2. <i>Riot of Stereotypes</i>	19
4.2.3. <i>Dancing Away</i>	20
4.2.4. <i>Missing Fufu</i>	21
4.2.5. <i>Focus on My Family</i>	21
4.2.6. <i>Africa of my Dreams</i>	22
4.2.7. <i>Family Photos</i>	23
4.2.8. <i>Sambo</i>	23

4.2.9. Pretty Boring.....	24
4.2.10. Negro's Kiss	24
4.3. <i>Turning Point</i>	26
4.4. <i>Housegirl</i>	27
4.4.1. The servant and the mistress	28
4.4.2. House chores.....	30
4.4.3. Disciplining.....	32
4.4.4. Let's play!	33
4.4.5. Religion	34
4.4.6. Baby	35
4.4.7. Wax print	36
4.5. <i>Outcome</i>	37
4.5.1. Afterword	41
5. Results and Discussion.....	42
5.1. <i>Racial Stereotypes and their Sources</i>	42
5.1.1. Dictator	42
5.1.2. Rural People stuck in Past	43
5.1.3. Sambo.....	43
5.1.4. Jezebel	43
5.1.5. Macho	44
5.1.6. Servant.....	44
5.1.7. Victim	45
5.2. <i>Application of Stereotype Content Model</i>	47
5.3. <i>Brief Comparison with Earlier Works</i>	48
5.4. <i>Consequences of Awareness of Personal Racial Bias</i>	52
5.5. <i>Moral Issues</i>	54
6. Conclusion and Recommendations.....	55
References	56
Appendix	58
<i>Final illustrations</i>	58

1. Introduction

As a graphic designer working in a public university in Ghana and married to a Ghanaian, Sub-Saharan African characters are often the subjects of my illustrations. As a European portraying Africans I am in a position where I might be unconsciously reinforcing racial stereotypes.

Though I have been somewhat immersed to the culture in Ghana through my little less than five-year stay in the country, I am an outsider looking in, in many ways. I differ from the group I am depicting by my culture, my nationality, my age and my race. As I returned to my country of origin to do my Masters in Design I began to ponder over my role as a producer of social representations. I began to question my motivations and wanted to find out whether I harboured unconscious racial biases and how these biases might translate in the design process.

1.1. Significance and Aims

Social representations affect social realities. How different groups are portrayed has a significant impact on how they are seen, how the group members see themselves and what kind of roles the group members can take in the society. Illustrators and designers in general have a responsibility to aim at producing representations with minimum or no social bias, including racial and ethnic bias.

Not much has been written on the effects of awareness of racial bias and ethnic bias in the design process from the point of view of a design practitioner. More information is needed on how awareness of one's prejudices affects the design process in practice. The study seeks to deepen understanding of the issue of racial and ethnic bias in design at a micro level and joins the debate of decolonising design.

This study is about the way the designer's awareness of her personal racial biases affect the design process when portraying out-groups. Furthermore, it explores the role of surrounding visual culture, history and personal experiences in the formation of racial stereotypes when a European designer illustrates African characters for microstock image collections.

1.2. Theoretical Frame and Research Method

The study utilises the Stereotype Content Model of Fiske et al (2002) and agrees with the second wave of studies on social bias described by Dovidio (2001), which suggest that social biases are based on normal cognitive processes.

Autoethnographic method is used to gain deeper understanding on role of awareness of personal racial bias in the design process. The study is an addition to other studies using more conventional methods taking a micro level approach.

1.3. Case Study

The case study of the thesis is the production of a series of illustrations depicting Sub-Saharan African characters to microstock image banks. Autoethnographic narrative follows how the project evolves from an attempt to provide variety to illustrations of Sub-Saharan African characters to microstock image banks to a sense making quest of a cultural practice where Ghanaian children, known as house girls or house boys, find themselves under living arrangements resembling both

unofficial adoption and domestic servitude. The focus of the narrative is on identifying racial stereotypes, personal racial biases behind the stereotypes, their sources and the effect that the awareness of these things has on the design process.

1.4. Outline of the Thesis

The second chapter takes a look at the literature concerning racial bias and stereotypes. The following chapter presents autoethnographic method and the case study. Chapter four narrates the design process. Chapter five consists of the analysis of the narrative and discussions on the results. The sixth chapter summarises the findings and the final chapter gives recommendations for future studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Bias

Social Bias, which racial and ethnic bias form part of, refers to a preconceived tendency, feeling, or opinion about a social group. Social bias can occur at individual, institutional and cultural levels. Regardless of this diversity some common processes apply to them all. Summarizing the work of Haslam and Dovidio (2010), Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick and Esses state that four basic factors foster and maintain bias: personality and individual differences, group conflict, social categorization and social identity (2010, 11).

There have been three scholarly waves in the social psychological study of social biases from 1920s onward (Dovidio, 2001, 830; Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick & Esses, 2010, 15-16), the first of which, largely based on Freudian psychodynamic theory, represented social biases as psychopathologic problems. It was assumed that if a people group with biased tendencies could be identified and their problem addressed the rest of the population would then be free of bias (Dovidio, 2001, 830-831).

On the contrary, the second wave of research suggested that social biases are based on normal cognitive processes aiming to simplify and store large quantities of information (Dovidio, 2001, 831). Stereotyping is based on our natural tendency to categorize. Categorizing leads to retaining more detailed information about ingroup than out-group members, causing one to see out-group members as "all alike" (Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick & Esses, 2010, 14).

One could argue that if social bias is natural to us, is it not then inevitable and efforts trying to get rid of the phenomena done in vain? The second wave studies suggest that changing social norms can help in addressing the issue in more general societal level (Dovidio, 2001, 831). This study seeks to contribute to the change in societal norms by creating awareness of racial bias in design process, with the hypothesis that this will decrease stereotypical representation of out-groups.

The third wave from 1990s onward emphasizes the multidimensional nature of prejudice and utilizes new technologies to measure more subtle forms of prejudice (Dovidio, 2001, 832).

Social identity theory from 1980s onward reasons that people value and identify with their ingroup and therefore demean the out-group in order to boost one's self-esteem. This adds motivational aspect to the cognitive function. (Fiske, 2000, 303.) Fiske (2000, 305) further lists five social motives behind stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination from social adaption perspective as: belonging (people must work to enhance relationships with similar others to get along with an ingroup), understanding (to belong to a group, the group members must share common understanding), controlling, self-enhancing (maintaining and enhancing self-esteem) and trusting (people won't easily assign ingroup membership to strangers because inter-dependence is only possible with trust).

2.2. Racial Bias and Ethnic Bias

Race is a socially constructed term that refers to groups of people who share certain biologically inherent physical appearances deemed socially significant. An individual may identify with a different

race than what other people apply to him or her. The term has faced justified criticism, with other terms like ethnicity offered to replace it. Ethnicity refers to a mix of shared cultural practices and ancestry that set a group apart from others. These terms overlap and are used interchangeably. I chose to use the term race as it better suits the context of the study.

Inter-group bias refers to tendency to evaluate one's ingroup more favourably than an out-group. Racial bias and ethnic bias are forms of inter-group biases. They include sub terms such as racial and ethnic prejudice (unfair attitude reflecting overall evaluation of a group based on race or ethnicity), racial and ethnic stereotyping (simplified presentation of a race or ethnicity based on generalisations and assumptions), racial or ethnic discrimination (biased behaviour and treatment based on race or ethnicity) and racism (acceptance of racial ideology).

This study uses the term black to describe the social group of Sub-Saharan African descents within and outside the continent of Africa. The term African is used to describe original inhabitants of the continent of Africa. Sub group Sub-Saharan African is used to exclude Arabic African groups in the Northern Africa. West-Africa refers to the countries and cultures in the West of the continent. Term Westerner refer to European and North-American cultural groups of mostly European descent and European refers to the original inhabitants of Europe. White is used to describe groups of European descent within and outside the continent of Europe. Arguably these terms are loose and artificially constructed. These terms are used here in wanting for a better system.

2.3. Archetypes and Stereotypes

Archetypes are models that are used as basis when building characters. They are reoccurring motifs in communication arts. For example in fantasy literature Harry Potter is based on an unwilling hero archetype and Snow White in fairy tales is based on the archetype of the damsel in distress (Fig. 1).



Figure 1: Cover of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher stone* on the right (Bloomsbury Publishing, 1997, image from www.bloomsbury.com) and the cover of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs -DVD* on the left (Disney, 2016, image from www.movies.disney.com.)

Stereotypes should not be equated to archetypes. They are based on generalisation, simplification and denial of individuality. Stereotype is a form of social representation. It is the association and attribution of certain characteristics to a group. In communication arts a stereotyped character is one which is depicted with simplistic character traits assumed to represent the whole group. A racially stereotyped character then would be a character based on assumptions about racial characteristics.

Social representations affect social reality, which in turn enforces social representations. Racial stereotypes work like self-fulfilling prophecies, defining the roles that the target of the stereotype can act in the society. Braking away from these roles can be difficult. (Pieterse, 1992, Moscovici, 1981.)

Fiske et al (2002), in their study of stereotype contents, suggests that interpersonal and intergroup interactions are the source of stereotypes, two important factors being status and competence, which predict dimensions of stereotypes (878). When people meet, they want to know the other's intent —their goals toward one's group (the degree of warmth), and capability (how effectively they are able to pursue those goals) (879).

The Stereotype Content Model divides stereotypes into combinations of warm and competent. Different attitudes are applied: pity to incompetent competitors of high warmth, envy to competent competitors of low warmth and contempt to incompetent competitors of low warmth (879). I use the model to analyse my motivations behind the stereotypical roles identified from the design process and outcome.

2.4. Image formation of Africans by the West

Image formation of out-groups reflects the changes of the dynamics of the ingroup (Pieterse, 1992, 29). Thus Western stereotypes of Africans take different shapes according to the developments within the Western nations. Trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism and the post-colonial era and the relations of majority and minority groups in the West are the major backdrops in the image formation of Africans and blacks by Westerners (Pieterse, 1992, 10).

2.4.1. The Medieval -The Demon and the Saint

The image of Sub-Saharan Africans in the eyes of Westerners changed from positive images of the antiquity as black colour came to stand for evil and demons in the early Middle Ages by influence of Gnosticism, astrology, alchemy and Manichaeism. As the relationship with Islamic world got tense the symbolism of black demon was transferred to Muslims as the enemies, linking negative connotations to dark skin colour. (Pieterse, 1992, 29.)

In the late Middle Ages the image of Sub-Saharan Africans was lifted through images of admirable characters like the Queen of Sheba, Saint Maurice, Black Caspar and Prester John, as Ethiopia became a political ally to Europe against Islamic threat (Pieterse, 1992, 28) (Fig. 2 and 3).



Figure 2: Miniature of Queen of Sheba on the right (Conrad Kyeser, Bellifortis, 1405, Niedersächsische Staats-und Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen, Germany, image from www.upennmanuscripts.tumblr.com) and detail of an altar painting The Adoration of the Magi depicting Black Caspar (Jheronimus Bosch, 1485-1500, Museo del Prado, Madrid, image from www.artbible.info.)



Figure 3: Statue of Saint Maurice in Magdeburg Cathedral, from 1245. Photograph by Deyemi Akande, 2016. Image from www.sah.org.

2.4.2. The Evolution of Savage

The sixteenth to seventeenth centuries brought again transition from positive to negative images of Sub-Saharan Africans as savages. The term, which originally had described various groups of Europeans, was transferred to non-Europeans. (Pieterse, 1992, 30.)

The 16th century also brought about the concept of noble savage, the ideal of an uncorrupted society in its natural state, to reflect on the political situation in Europe (Fig. 4). This positive anthropological view was driven by revolutionary ideas whereas the more pessimist anthropological view supported the status quo and absolutism, a form of government where unlimited, power is held by a centralized sovereign ruler. At the end of 1800 Europe's self-confidence was elevated and savagery finally acquired solely negative meaning to affirm European supremacy over other continents. (Pieterse, 1996, 33-34.)

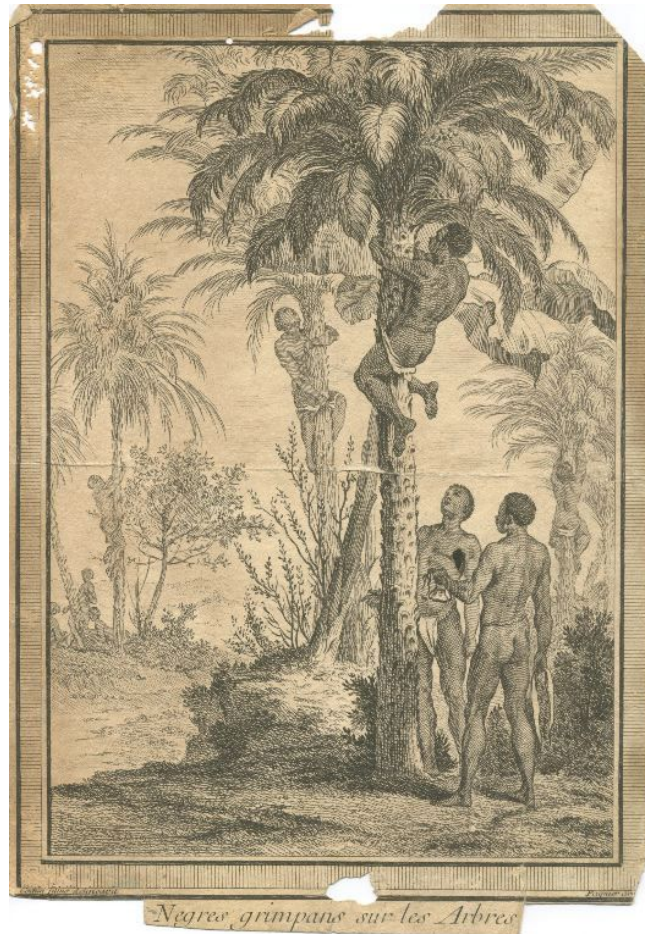


Figure 4: Illustration of noble savages. *Nègres grimpant aux arbres* from 17th century by Philippe Bon. Original in Musée Charles VII, France. The image from www.webmuseo.com

2.4.3. Trans-Atlantic Slavery – Sambo

Sambo stereotype in American culture was the prototype of a content but lazy childlike slave. Infantilization of slaves served the purpose of justifying the rule over them. A slave, it was believed, was unable to take care of him or herself. Another purpose for the character lies in the threat of bloody slave rebellions. This harmless goofy character was needed to ease tensions. (Pieterse, 1996, 152, 153.) Stereotype of childish and lazy Sambo was later applied not only to African Americans but also to Africans and other oppressed ethnic groups as well.

2.4.4. The Abolitionism and Post-Slavery America –patronising images and racism

Pro-slavery images are rare. It was the abolitionists who made slavery visible. The images were aimed to generate sympathy and doing so promoted a new kind of stereotype of the blacks as submissive and weak victims. (Fig. 5.)

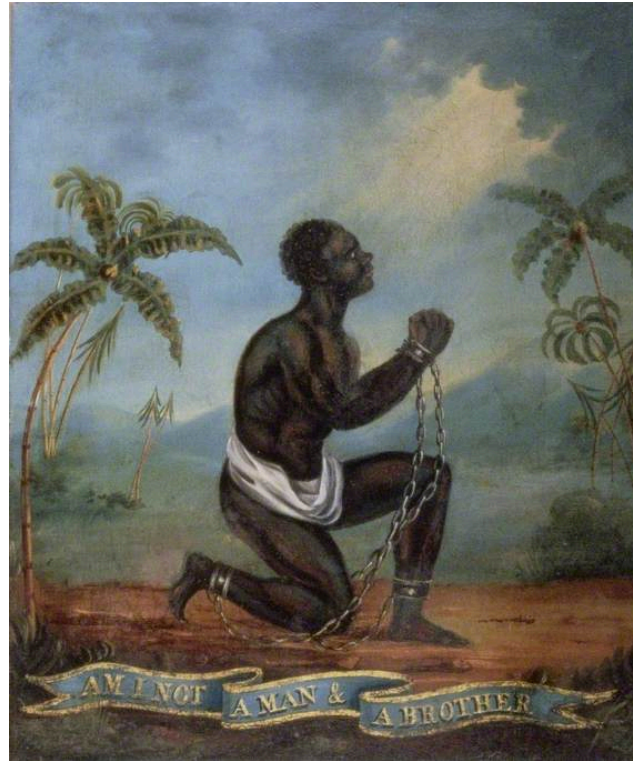


Figure 5: Abolitionist painting: *Am I not a man and a brother?* From 1800. Original at Wilberforce House Museum. Photo by Bridgeman Images. Image from www.artuk.org

The Enlightenment brought up gradual abolition of slavery but gave birth to racial thinking, the attribution of inferiority or superiority on the basis of biological traits. Race defined blacks as free but not equal. (Pieterse, 1996, 45.)

Prior to 1770 African inferiority was backed up by their cultural traits and Christian beliefs, notably that of the curse of Ham until, 1770s when the arguments more and more concentrated on racial attributes. Physiological attributes of human races were analysed and compared. Sub-Saharan Africans were even compared to apes and they were regarded as separate species from Europeans. Likening blacks with animals has continued even in the 20th century. (Pieterse, 1996, 41-44.)

Image of the black Americans have influenced those of Africans. The post-slavery developments in America created and deepened black stereotypes. Images of African Americans continued to dwell in servant roles, other common roles being those of entertainers and sportsmen.

2.4.5. Explorations –Dark Continent in Need of European Light

As Europe's interests sifted from exploiting a portion of Africans as slaves to the large scale exploitation of the continent itself in the late 1700 systematic exploration of Africa set off. The expeditions were a prelude to the colonialism of the late-nineteenth century. The images that spread along with

the stories of the expeditions, some of which by illustrators who had never been to Africa themselves, served the purpose of justifying European supremacy and rule over the continent. (Pieterse, 1996, 65.) The expeditions and concurring Christian mission trips produced long lasting iconographies of primitive Africans reduced to the roles of head porters, uncivilised people without past and human-sacrificing idol-worshippers. Religious and racial arrogance coloured the images. (Pieterse, 1996, 70.)

2.4.6. Colonialism –brutal warriors and human sacrifice

The early Colonial time image of an African is that of an enemy (Pieterse, 1996, 78.) He was a half-naked warrior carrying brutal weapons, shown mostly alone or in a disorganised group (Pieterse, 1996, 79). The most often used excuse for use of force was that of fight against human sacrifice. Propaganda images were produced on the subject.

As colonial rule got firmly established a different kind of image of an African formed. The rule of few European settlers over the majority of Africans required that the promotion of the supremacy of the Europeans and the subjection and helplessness of the Africans. Stereotype of a lazy native emerged as an excuse of exploitation and force labour (Pieterse, 1996, 91.) Africans were also depicted as impulsive and child-like, surrendering willingly to the all-mighty white man. Colonial iconographies included natives throwing themselves on the ground in adoration in front of the Europeans and humbly carrying them in hammocks or seats, taking the position of a beast of burden (Fig. 6). (Pieterse, 1996, 88, 89.)



Figure 6: Postcard from 1920 showing a British army officer being carried in a hammock in Sierra Leone. Image from www.sierra-leone.org

2.4.7. De-colonisation and Post-colonialism

The political de-colonisation of Africa from European rule began from the early 1900 with the independence of Egypt from Britain in 1922 and continued all the way till 1980 when Zimbabwe gained independence from Britain. The Western media has since broadcasted a grim image of the continent through news of war, genocide, dictatorship, inequality, poverty, hunger and disease. Well intending aid-organisations have further harmed the continent's image by emphasising on catastrophes and suffering, spreading paternalistic stereotypes and victim portrayals. (Fig. 7.)



Figure 7: A patronising and victimising scene from music video of Band Aid 30 - Do They Know It's Christmas? (2014) showing ebola-sufferer. Image from www.youtube.com/user/BandAidVEVO.

3. Methods

3.1. Autoethnography

Autoethnography attempts to describe and analyse personal experiences in order to understand cultural experience (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011, 273). Evocative Autoethnography is the chore method used in this study. It is a method where the researcher studies his or her own attitudes, emotions and reactions through a narrative, aiming to evoke emotional experiences, produce writing of high quality and to improve readers', participants' and authors' lives (Ellis, 2004, 30). Rather than trying to generalize the results, this method focuses on deepening understanding, aiming to cause reflections on the reader on the emotional level.

The autoethnographic approach gives this study a human face. By going through personal experiences of the designer the study seeks to acquire a deeper understanding on the role of social bias in the design proses, and to evoke strong feelings in order to provoke conversation on the issue of subtle racial bias in design.

I produced an illustration series of West African characters with the aim to sell them at microstock image banks. The theme of the final series is underage domestic labour in Ghana within a controversial practise borderlining with unofficial adoption and child labour. Children involved in this practise are referred to as housegirls or houseboys. I made field notes about the process accompanied by reflections of past events (marked in italics in the narrative) that have affected my present perceptions, and reconstructed the notes as an autoethnographic narrative. Finally I compared my findings to the stereotype content model of Fiske & all (2002) to reveal motivations behind the stereotypes.

3.2. Subject: Illustrations for Microstock Image Banks

The subjects of the case study are illustrations of West African characters made for microstock image banks, which are commercial collections of photography and illustrations sourced through wide range of contributors online. These copyrighted images are licenced for multiple users for a small fee. Microstock agencies differ from stock agencies mainly by the cost of images, fees of single images in regular stock photo agencies being higher.

In the image content industry images are treated as commodities or promotional items of other commodities rather than editorial images or fine art and the viewers are treated primarily as consumers of commodities (Frosh, 2003, 3). The usual immediate customers of microstock agencies are advertising companies, marketing divisions and graphic designers (Frosh, 2003, 4). The end user is virtually unknown at the initial production stage and the target group is usually very wide or undefined.

To gain maximum sales the image must be alterable and open for interpretation and the end use should be somewhat undefined (Frosh, 2003, 72.) The illustrations for microstocks are mostly done without a design brief or the brief is very loose. This does not mean that the illustrator or photographer is free to express him or herself. He or she is restricted by the context and practises of the stock image industry within the framework of capitalist commodity production (Frosh, 2003, 5).

The goals (targeting maximum sales instead of creative expression, for example) and practises (promoting through catalogues certain kind of images that sell well, which encouraged photographers and illustrators to produce imitations of best selling images) of stock image industry have traditionally encouraged conservatism in terms of image style and content leading to constant reproduction of formulaic, generic images that create and reflect cultural stereotypes. (Frosh, 2003, 59-60.)

From 1990 onward gradual shifts in marketing practises (the shift from use of printed catalogues to online collections and acknowledgement of growing black, Asian and Hispanic middle class) have led to more frequent appearance of images that are less stereotypical and more diverse in style and content, including more images of ethnic and minority subjects. (Frosh, 2003, 5, 80.)

3.3. Setting: Finland and Ghana

The thesis and the illustrations focus on West Africa, especially on Ghana. My country of origin is Finland, in Europe. Finland itself was never an imperial country, having no colonies, but it was part of Sweden when it had a colony in Ghana, then known as Cold Coast, from 1650–1663.

3.3.1. Ghana

Ghana was the first West-African nation to break free from European colonial rule, becoming independent from Britain in 1957. The nation has gone through five coups d'etat but has had democratically elected presidents since 1993. It is considered as one of the more politically stable countries in West Africa and till 2013 it had a considerable economic growth based on export of gold, cocoa and fuel, attaining middle-income country status in 2010. Recently the country has suffered with high inflation and a weakening currency. (BBC, 2017.)

Ghana is located at the coast of Gulf of Guinea, surrounded by neighbouring countries Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Togo, with a population of 27,4 million in 2015 (World Bank, 2017). It is divided into 10 regions, namely Greater Accra (where the capital Accra is located), Western, Central (where the colonial time capital Cape Coast is located), Volta, Eastern, Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Northern, Upper East and Upper West. Majority of the time I spent in Ghana I resided in Cape Coast.

The Urban population in Ghana has grown from 24% to 54% of the total population from the year 1960 to 2015 (The World Bank, 2017). In 2016 households in rural areas had higher average rate of poverty (37.9%) than the households in urban areas (10.6%) (Cooke, Hague & McKay, 2016, 1). The GDP was US\$ 37.543 billion in 2015 (World Bank, 2017).

Average household size in Ghana was 4.4 persons in 2010. In the Greater Accra the house hold size was the smallest (3.8) whereas the regions in the Northern parts had the highest house hold sizes (5.8 in Upper East, 6.2 in Upper West and 7.7 in the Northern region) (Knoema, 2012). The Northern regions also had the highest rates of poverty (Cooke, Hague & McKay, 2016, 1).

Culture in West Africa is not coherent but consists of various sub cultures of different ethnicities. There are 75 ethnic groups in Ghana alone (Embassy of Ghana, 2017) consisting of seven major groups, namely Akan 47.5%, Mole-Dagbon 16.6%, Ewe 13.9%, Ga-Dangme 7.4%, Gurma 5.7%, Guan 3.7%, Grusi 2.5% and Mande 1.1% (CIA,2017). My experiences in Ghana consists of mainly the Akan, being resident in an area mostly inhabited by the Fantes, and the Ga-Dangme cultures, being married to a Dangme.

Majority of Ghanaians are Christians 71.2% (Pentecostal and Charismatic 28.3%, Protestant 18.4%, Catholic 13.1%, other 11.4%). The rest are Muslims 17.6%, members of traditional religions 5.2%, other religions 0.8%, and 5.2% do not belong to any religion. (CIA, 2017.) The religious community I was involved with in Ghana was the Apostolic Church, which belongs to the Pentecostal movement.

In 2013 UNICEF published an estimate of Ghanaian children involved in child labour during years 2002-2012. The children involved in child labour were defined as children aged 5 to 11 who during the week preceding the survey did at least one hour of economic activity or at least 28 hours of domestic work and children aged 12-14 who during the week preceding the survey did at least 14 hours of economic activity or at least 42 hours of economic activity and domestic work combined. They estimated that 33.9% of Ghanaian children were involved in child labour.

A cultural practise of keeping “housegirl “or” houseboy borderlines with child labour. In this practice a child or teenager is given to a relative or a family friend, sometimes a total stranger, to foster in unofficial adoption. The child is provided upkeep, care and usually also education in exchange of help in domestic chores. The practise could be compared to the Western concept of au pair, though the age of the person rendering services is usually much lower than in the Western context.

3.3.2. Finland

Finland is a Northern European country located at the coast of Gulf of Finland and Gulf of Bothnia with land borders with Sweden, Norway and Russia, with a population of 5,5 million (Statistics Finland, 2017). Finland was part of Sweden from 1249 till 1809 when it became part of Russia as an autonomous Grand Duchy. Finland declared itself independent following the Russian revolution in 1917 and fought against Soviet Union during the Second World War.

Majority of Finns are Christian, 72,0% of the population belonging to the Lutheran National Church, 1,1% to the Greek Orthodox Church, and 1,1% to other denominations and religions. 25,3% has not been registered to a religious community. (Statistics Finland, 2017.)

The ratio of urban population has risen from 55% from 1960 to 84% in 2015. In 2014 the average family size was 2,77 and the average number of children was 1.84 (Statistics Finland, 2015). The GDP was US\$ 232.351 billion in 2015 (World Bank, 2017).

3.4. Ethical Consideration

This study involves a minor of 17 years of age, who has given her consent. The draft text was given for her to read and comment on. Also her legal guardian has given his consent on behalf of the biological parents.

Efforts have been made to hide the identity of the minor by the use of a pseudonym and by not revealing her place of birth and other identifiable details. There is however a risk that people close to the author may identify the minor, hence, careful consideration has been applied in choosing the contents of the narrative.

3.5. Progress of the Study

Series of illustrations of West African characters exploring the theme of the 'housegirl' phenomenon in Ghana through personal experiences were produced. The design process was recorded in journal and blog as field notes accompanied by reflections of events in the past that had led to the design-

er's present perceptions. These were then reconstructed as an autoethnographic narrative and the final illustrations were analysed.

Stereotypes and their possible sources were identified from the narrative. The stereotypes were then compared to Fiske's stereotype content model to reveal motivations behind the stereotypes.

The effects of awareness of subtle racial biases during design process were identified from the narrative. Earlier illustrations made during the years 2010-2014 were briefly analysed to compare the effect of the level of awareness to the racial biases.

4. The Narrative

4.1. Summary of the Narrative

The illustration project started as a mission to provide more variety to the illustrations of West African characters in microstock image banks. Along the way my mission evolved into a personal sense-making attempt about my role in a complex social setting.

I began my journey by setting a loose frame to my illustration project. I had a vague idea I wanted to draw illustrations about West Africans to microstock image banks. The overall impression I had was that many of the illustrations in the image banks provided a kind of narrow representation of what it is to be an African. A re-occurring theme was rural women carrying pots on their heads and babies on their backs. The images seemed to lack time and space. They were balanced by variety of images of modern city life depictions of black characters, usually labelled as African-American, lacking any references to the continent of Africa or its cultures thereof. I wanted to provide illustrations that were characteristically West African with depth and which did not appear stereotypical.

As I sketched I tried to steer away from anything stereotypical and offensive. I felt like my own big brother, watching over every move to reveal the least of mistakes. I had a feeling that whatever I drew was biased somehow. I felt suffocated. Sketching was slow and unfruitful until I decided to analyse my works at a later stage instead of during or immediately after drawing.

From the beginning I struggled with the idea of portraying an out-group. What right did I have as a European designer to define how Africans are seen? Should I not have left that task for the Africans themselves? I acknowledged I was only able to give an outsiders view on things. Doing so I continued the colonial setting of the white defining the black, the first world dictating how the third world should be seen. I chose to plug my ears from the nagging voices to enable me continue drawing.

I became fascinated by the house help theme. I reflected it with my own experiences with a young relative who had lived with us for a period of four years as our ward helping in house chores. Her position resembled that of house help in some ways. She also represented a larger group known as housegirls and their male equivalent houseboys. They are a part of Ghanaian culture difficult for outsiders like me to fully understand at first sight.

The outcome was a vector silhouette collection and pixel art collection with the theme of African child as a house help that were be put on sale on a microstock image bank.

4.2. First Stages

I type word "African" to the search field of a microstock image bank and limit the search to illustrations. Images of dry savannahs and half naked women carrying pots of water on top of their heads and babies on their backs in the heat of Tropical Africa create a striking contrast to the cold and wet reality of Finland in December. I won't use search words West African, as at this stage I want to see vast results. Later when using the search word "West African" and "Sub-Saharan African, I get mostly images of flags and maps as a result.

I scroll down trying to ignore the countless safaris with smiling crocodiles and cute little monkeys. Majority of the human characters I find are women. Two female types emerge: the half-naked pitch dark rural woman stuck in the ancient times and a modern light skinned woman usually labelled as

"African American". Only few modern looking female characters remain after I mentally filter the African Americans. Most of the characters fall into the category of rural folks, often labelled "tribal" or "traditional".

My overall impression is that majority of illustrations show a decorative illustration of an exotic woman having no function, story or personality. I am hoping to contribute to the collections with illustrations of characters that have more depth.

4.2.1. Arrogant Dictator

I want to draw a character with confidence and pride. The idea behind this is to provide an alternative to victimising images that I remember vaguely having seen on various charity advertisements. The character should preferably be a modern male to balance the abundance of rural female characters available at the microstock image banks.

I feel a bit intimidated by the task at hand. Will I be able to provide any better illustrations than those already on the market? What if I fail miserably and fall in to using stereotypes and clichés? Feeling uncertain I first head to Google image search. I type words "powerful man".

Richard Avedon's portrait of Putin looks down on me from the search results. In awe of the rhetorics of the photo I take out my pencil and sketchbook and begin to copy. I modify the image replacing the world leader with a handsome black male seated on throne leaning on a globe. The image looks far from West African, so I add a Ghanaian Adinkra symbol and some bright colours. I begin with colour red but quickly change my mind as the image starts to resemble Nazi propaganda. I also remember that in Ghana red is associated with witchcraft and funerals. I choose instead a golden yellow colour scheme borrowed from images of royal kente fabrics of the Akan.

I take a deep breath and take a look at the result. I have drawn an arrogant macho showing of his wealth and power. A drug lord or a dictator comes to mind. (Fig.8.)

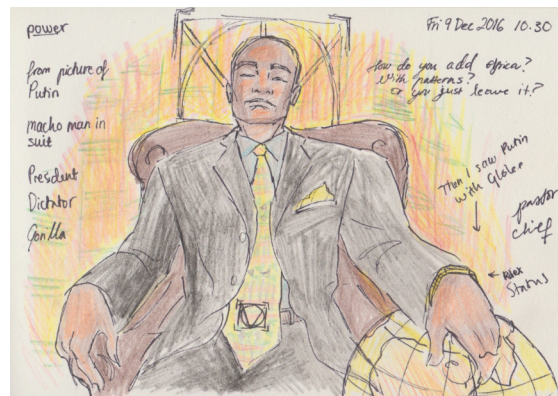


Figure 8: Sketch of a powerful man.

4.2.2. Riot of Stereotypes

Taking a completely different approach I create the most stereotypical image I can think of. It's a very quick process. I just burst into drawing without much thinking. A cartoony female character emerges carrying a baby in her back and a huge goofy elephant on her head. I immediately regret drawing it as I remember I will have to scan it and publish it in my blog. I quietly hope no one will mistake me for a racist because of this goofy scribble. My aim was to explore stereotypes and may-

be turn them into ironic criticism. I am however so aware of judgement waiting for me should I be misunderstood that I decide to retreat tale between my legs. (Fig. 9.)



Figure 9: Sketch of a cartoon character

4.2.3. Dancing Away

I try to find my inspiration from the world of music. I pick some random Nigerian play list in YouTube. Wanton girls shaking their butts fill the screen. My sketches end up looking as sexist and vague as the music videos. They bring to mind Jezebel stereotype of lusty black woman. (Fig. 10.)

I make one last attempt. Afraid of drawing yet another harlot I draw a very young and innocent character. She looks like a fairy with her fluffy pink dress. I give up for today. Feeling disappointed for the results of the first day of drawing I close the sketch book. It remains closed for one week. (Fig. 10.)



Figure 10: Sketches of dancers.

4.2.4. Missing Fufu

I curl up on sofa munching a Christmas cookie and open the sketch book. My husband is watching online news broadcast on election results from his home country, Ghana. I travel back in time to Cape Coast, to my work place canteen where I spent my lunch breaks consuming the local dishes. I can almost smell the fufu and goat meat soup.

I draw young middle class workers eating fufu. They are using their hands to eat sharing one plate. Maybe they are a couple. Later I draw a close up version of only the lady. The drawings are still somehow boring. They have details of modern life in Ghana but lack depth. I make a note to myself to use real people as models next time. (Fig. 11.)



Figure 11: Sketches of people eating.

4.2.5. Focus on My Family

My husband and son are playing on the floor with Legos. I wonder if other Ghanaian fathers have such a close relationship to their children. Reality fights against my preconceived assumptions of all African fathers being distant authority figures. When I think about it I can't really recall any Ghanaian father like that among my acquaintances.

The next three sketches concentrate on our family. As I draw I however modify some details to make the characters easier to recognise as West African instead of an African American, for example. I draw my husband an embroidered traditional West Africa style shirt and make my child look like a regular Ghanaian child (or what I think a Ghanaian child should look like) instead of a child of mixed heritage. I ponder over this decision and it troubles me a bit. Is my child not Ghanaian enough? What is a Ghanaian supposed to look like? (Fig. 12.)

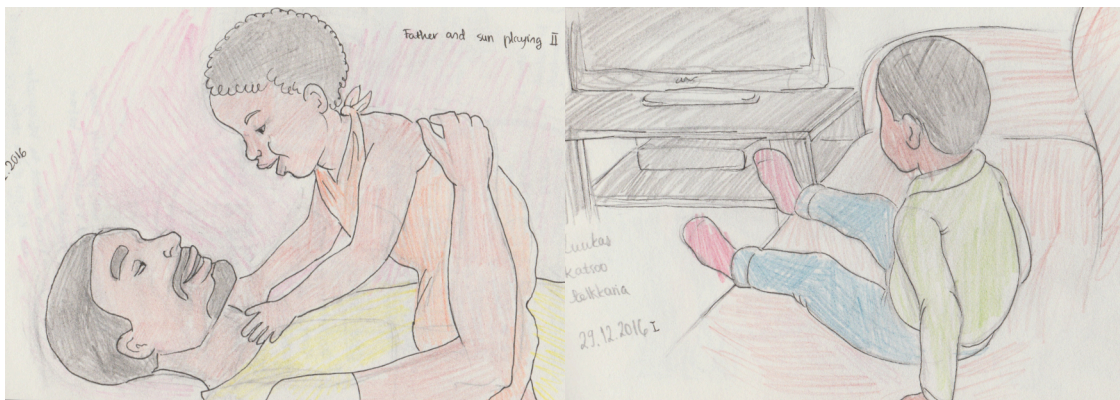


Figure 12: Sketches of my husband and son.

4.2.6. Africa of my Dreams

To distract my son from trying to seize the pencil from my hand I turn on the TV for him. I remember how my husband once told me that in his childhood they would gather around fire to listen to stories told by their father in the moon light. I sketch down how I imagine that situation. The result is quite nice but not what I was looking for. After all I wanted to steer away from all this romantic rural scenery. My son snatches my colour pencils and I take a break. (Fig. 13.)



Figure 13: Sketch of story time.

4.2.7. Family Photos

Running out of ideas I turn to our family photo album and copy two photos; one where my father-in-law holds my baby son and one where one of my husband's nieces holds him. Again I modify the appearance of my son to look more like what I imagine an average Ghanaian child to look like. The resulting drawings are a bit boring. (Fig.14.)



Figure 14: Sketches from family photos.

4.2.8. Sambo

One day after spending the whole morning watching cartoons with my son I feel like drawing something playful. A happy little boy emerges to the paper playing drum and dancing to the music playing in radio. This character is really the embodiment of my childhood ideas about Africa imposed to me through children's' culture. In songs and stories and cartoons Sub-Saharan Africans are carefree people always dancing and making merry. I recognise a Sambo stereotype. (Fig. 15.)



Figure 15: Sketch of a dancing child.

4.2.9. Pretty Boring

Another failed attempt to draw from my imagination ends up flat on the paper. I draw a pretty girl in a fashion pose. She conforms too much to Western beauty ideals. She has no agenda, no purpose, just a pretty face. (Fig. 16.)



Figure 16: Sketch of a beauty.

4.2.10. Negro's Kiss

One of the favourite sweets of my childhood was called "Neekerin Suukko", which translated is "Negro's Kiss." It is a chocolate coated marshmallow sweet. The package of the treats was adorned with a cartoonish drawing of two dark skinned characters kissing. They had huge lips and they wore grass skirts. Later the Negro was dropped from the name, lips were made smaller and the grass skirt was replaced with normal skirt. The symbolic message remained the same. (Fig. 17.)

I scratch my response to a piece of paper. I want to make a statement. I draw a similar couple embracing each other, kissing but in more realistic fashion. The man is holding a drum, like in the Neekerin Suukko -package. They are wearing beach wear. It all looks so teenage fantasy it makes

me want to puke. I have made the guy a macho and the girl a picture perfect model. It's just all so cheesy. I wonder if I could ever turn this into something serious. (Fig.18.)



Figure 17: The Neekerinsuukko after changes. Image from urjalanmakeistukku.fi.

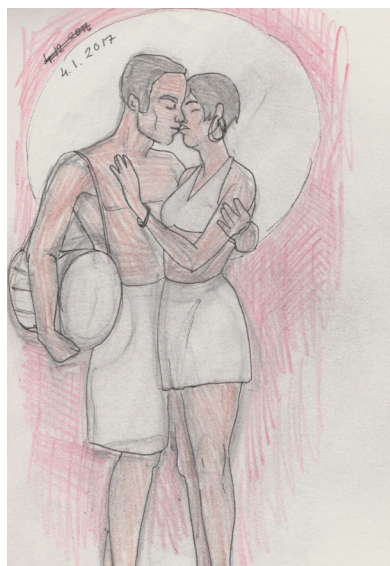


Figure 18: Sketch of a couple kissing.

I plan to continue developing a series where I tackle the stereotypical images of my childhood but I never quite get started. I do however make a version of a particular souvenir image that is being all around Ghana. It's an image of a traditionally clothed girl pouring water as a welcoming gesture. I attempt to modernise this image and end up creating something ridiculously naïve and boring. The end result reminds me of the servant role blacks are often pushed to in Western popular culture. (Fig. 19.) I hate the drawing. I feel angry and frustrated, having spent over a month sketching and having achieved nothing.



Figure 19: Sketch of the Akwaaba-girl.

4.3. Turning Point

I write to my blog in anxiety: "Do I design socially just and socially conscious way or is my design colonialist in nature? Do I merely exploit the people and cultures I am portraying in order to gain from them?"

Suffocated by my own constant criticism and avoidance of the least racial bias I decide to be less concerned about it and to postpone the analysis to a later stage.

I try a collage technique and cut out interesting images from magazines combining them to evoke new associations. The most interesting results I get by combining a photo of a wooden tribal mask and a cake topper groom. I sketch the combination and get an image that brings to mind black male servants or jazz musicians. (Fig. 20.)

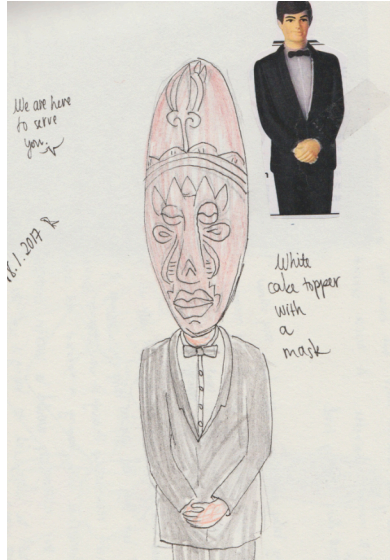


Figure 20: Sketch of cake topper figure wearing a mask.

Next I combine the same mask with a photo of a white woman playing with children. When I place the mask on her face she resembles the mammy stereotype of black female house help. It brings to mind my own experiences with having a housegirl, a kind of house help. I want to explore this theme further. (Fig. 21.)



Figure 21: Sketch of a woman wearing a mask.

4.4. Housegirl

There is a custom in Ghana to send children to live with relatives or family friends who are in a financially better position to take care of the child. These children, unofficially known as housegirls or houseboys (a term that was passed down from the British colonial masters referring to domestic servants), are expected to help with house chores in exchange of care. There is a fine line with this practise, child labour and human trafficking.

We went to visit my husband's relatives on my first trip to Ghana. We drove through a bushy road and reached a semirural community. A family of seven welcomed us in front of a mod-

est mud house with a thatched roof. I was introduced to the children. Araba, the youngest sister, ran away and hid herself fearing I would catch her and take her away.

During our next trip to Ghana a few years later I finally met Araba. We took the children to the capital city for an excursion. We took them to the airport and the mall and we spoiled them with ice cream and toys. They stayed in our rented apartment overnight and in the morning we took them back home. Araba was cranky and disappointed. She would have wanted to stay with us and watch TV and eat sweets.

Years later as we moved to Ghana permanently my husband began to talk about taking Araba to live with us to help me around. The main motive was to get me someone as a friend and a guide in this new country. I opposed the idea, terrified of being seen as a white colonial master having a little black servant. My husband however did not see anything bad about the practice having also lived with his aunt and uncle rather than his mother, helping on a cocoa farm.

As my husband got work from the city and we had to move there life became hard for me. Power rationing and water shortage made simple housekeeping unbearable. I was too afraid to go out on my own due to cultural shock I was experiencing. It was then that I gave in and we decided to go for Araba.

We travelled to the village to fetch her. Her parents were happy as she would be provided with better living standards and education in a city which was famous for having top schools in the country. Araba's consent was also asked though I wonder how she could make such a decision being only eleven at the time.

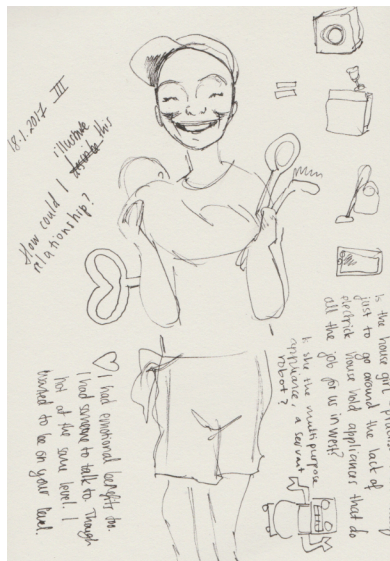


Figure 22: Sketch of Araba.

4.4.1. The servant and the mistress

Pierre Mignard's portrait of Louise de K rouaille from the 17th century fascinates me. In the portrait the Duchess of Portsmouth is posing with a very young black slave girl who seems to be looking for affection from her mistress. (Fig. 23.)



Figure 23: Louise de Kérouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth by Pierre Mignard , 1682. Oil on canvas. Original on display at National Portrait Gallery in London. Image from ngp.org.uk.

"Araba, are you crying?" Why don't you call home? It will make you feel better." I suggest. "No, It will just make me miss them more," she sobs. I force myself to look straight to her soggy eyes tell her "I can never replace your mother but I love you and would want to be your friend. If you ever want to return to your parents you can do that." "How could I go back?" She asks. "I have told all my friends at school. They would laugh at me. And my mum would be very angry."

I sketch myself as the duchess (Fig. 24). This is the nightmare image of Araba and myself. This is what I fear people would read to our relationship. I would never want to be seen in this role, this being the reason I was so reluctant for the arrangement in the first place. Also my fear of maybe not having given enough affection to the child at my care is reflected from the drawing. Had I been as distant and self-centred as in the drawing, using the poor child to my advantage?

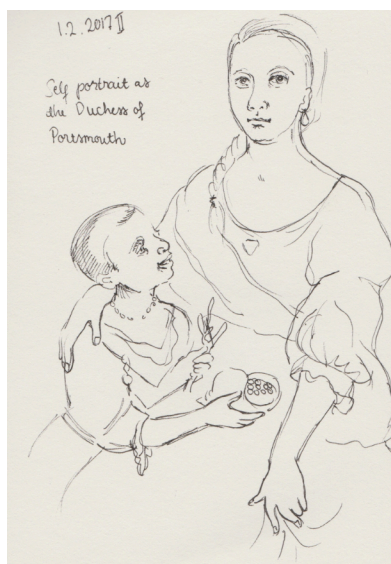


Figure 24: Sketch of a self-portrait as Louise de K rouaille.

A week later I go through the photos I have of Araba. One of the earliest photos shows me posing with her. I sketch this photo, leaving out other details and concentrating on our postures (Fig. 25). I find a striking resemblance to the portrait of Louise de K rouaille. Araba and the little girl have similar poses. Araba is clinging on me looking for affection. I however act like the duchess concentrating on posing to the camera, facing away from her. My body is equally stiff and uncompassionate.



Figure 25: Sketch of a family photo.

Going through feelings of guilt is taking its toll and it all explodes one day during an innocent conversation with my husband. "Should we ask for my sister to come and help you when you deliver?" My husband asks one evening. I consider. With our son it had been helpful to have relatives around, but now things are different. "I don't think it's reasonable to fly someone across the Atlantic. I don't see how much she could even be of help. She does not know how to navigate this culture. Everything is different starting from cooking, shopping and travelling around. She would not be able to do anything." I reason. "That sounds very selfish. You know she would not come here to be your servant. You can't assume her to come here to do everything for you." My husband corrects me. I am shocked. "How can you say that?" I ask with a tone of rage. "I have noticed that of you. You assume my family is there to serve you somehow," he adds. I can't take this any longer and answer with fire. I attack more against my guilt than his accusations. Heated arguing follows.

4.4.2. House chores

Probably trying to escape the painful analysis of our relationship I concentrate on sketching typical chores of a house girl. I try both detailed sketches and silhouettes. I choose to use the silhouettes as a way to universalise the story. Silhouettes also sell well on image banks. I acknowledge the trade-off of personality and emotion.

"Would you treat your child the same way you treat me?" She asks with a shaky voice. I don't understand what she means and she won't explain further. I wonder if I had made her work too hard. Hesitantly I say that I was treating her just like I would my own child. I now have a

son of two years and I wonder whether we indeed will expect him to work as hard as we expected Araba to.

As I look at the finished sketches I realise the tension depending on who is looking at them. These are images of children working. (Fig. 26 and 27.) From my cultural point of view this could be labelled child labour. From the viewpoint of Ghanaian culture this would most likely be described as normal participation of children in the house chores.



Figure 26: Sketches of house chores.



Figure 27: Sketches of house chores.

4.4.3. Disciplining

Corporal punishment as enforcement of strict discipline is common in Ghana. I opposed such methods and as a result they were rare in our family though not completely absent.

"How can you be so stupid? What's wrong with you? Go to your room!" I shout in fit of rage. Araba won't say anything to me the whole day. Her face is wearing a hurt but defiant look. I wish she would shout back at me.

I sketch a body twisted in exaggerated agony and fear (Fig. 28). The character is on the receiving end of violence. I wonder if this will victimise the group I'm portraying. I decide to balance it with other more pleasant images.



Figure 28: Sketch of a corporal punishment.

4.4.4. Let's play!

"Aunty, let's play ampe!" Araba begs me to join the local jumping game. "Ooh, you know I'm not good at it. Don't you have some homework to do or something?" Disappointment overshadows her face.

Coming from a large family and tight knit village community she was used to having lots of kids around. Now she had lots of toys but no one to play with. She never liked the quiet suburb we lived in. We both missed life in the countryside and made sure to travel to her village every Easter and Christmas.

"Oh well, just for a few rounds." I give in and regret immediately. My jumping is clumsy, I feel embarrassed and I loose every time. Adults don't make fun playmates.

In my drawings the girl is playing and dancing to popular music (Fig. 29). I draw her a shorter dress on the dancing image to show the movements better. That stops me to wonder why I had chosen to draw her skirt at all. Araba would have been wearing both skirts and shorts or trousers at home. My preference to clothe the character in a dress might be due to my preconceived assumption of Africa as a conservative region.

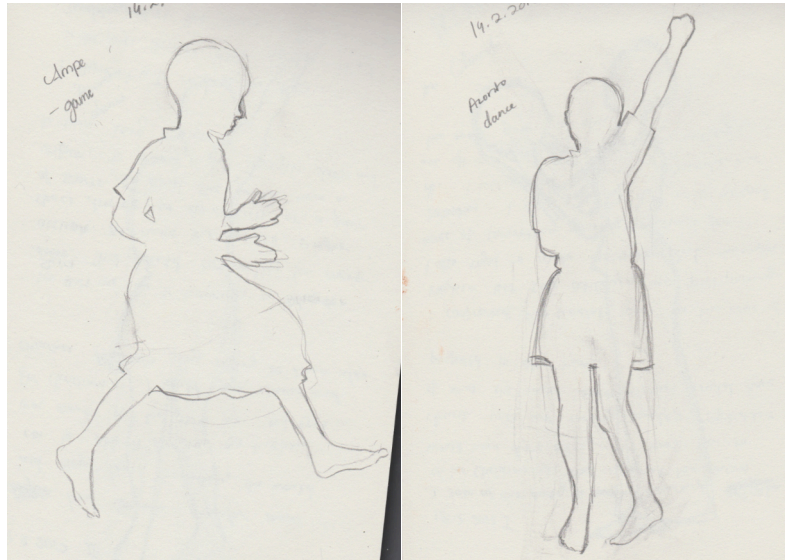


Figure 29: Sketches of ampe game and dance.

Later I replaced the dancing character with a schoolgirl wearing a uniform and holding a cane, a common tool for corporal punishment in many Ghanaian schools. Children are sometimes asked to bring their own canes to school for the teacher to use. (Fig. 30.)

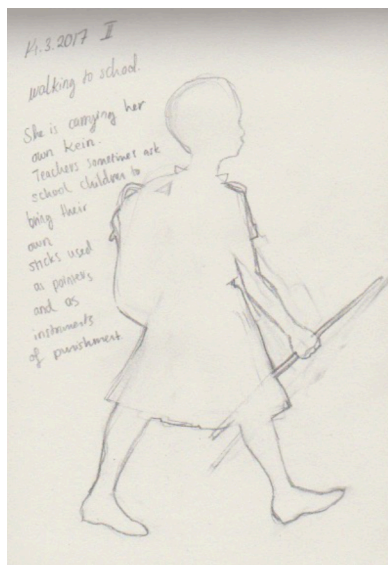


Figure 30: Sketch of a schoolgirl.

4.4.5. Religion

An important aspect of Ghanaian culture is the religion. Attending religious gatherings is crucial for one's social life. This is a subject that has to be part of the series.

"Can't I just skip for this once?" She moans. "But I thought you liked church?" I ask. "At home church is fun. Here it's boring." Knowing she misses her Sunday school friends in the village I try to remind her of the deeper meaning of joining religious activities. My adult reasoning goes to deaf ears. She ends up sitting in the back row in the church with a bored expression

on her face, but by the time of praises she is up dancing and playing tambourine with the rest of the ladies.

I sketch the character holding a tambourine, instrument commonly used during praises, wearing a blouse, long skirt and a head scarf, a typical church wear in Ghana (Fig. 31). At a later stage I change the outfit to resemble the tea length dress in the other illustrations for the sake of uniformity. There are some churches, which approve women to wear trousers, and the headscarf wearing is mostly not mandatory, especially for children. Yet again I choose to promote the more conservative image.



Figure 31: Sketch of a tambourine player.

4.4.6. Baby

All though in the beginning of the project I judged images of women carrying babies at their back as a cliché I still decide to go ahead and produce my take on the theme. (Fig. 32.) Araba's role as a kind of big sister to my son was crucial in our family life.

"Why is she crying?" Araba asks. "She is in labour. It's painful," someone explains. Araba joins us in the car and we hurry to the regional hospital. Araba follows me to the labour ward. She even offers to rub my back but escapes to the corridor after a while.

My screams of pain are replaced by cries of a new-born. After few minutes proud father carries his baby boy to the corridor. He is given to Araba's shaky hands. She smiles to camera nervously.

Few weeks later she would carry the crying little boy in her back wrapped in wax print cloth trying to make him fall asleep to the gentle rocking motion of her walking. The baby would know her as his big sister and she would love him like her little brother.



Figure 32: Sketch of a girl carrying a baby.

4.4.7. Wax print

The rich colours and bold patterns of factory made wax prints that have become iconic in West African fashion inspire me. I want to use the visual language of these textiles in my illustrations because of the visual effect and the juicy controversy behind. Factory made wax print materials were originally designed, produced and marketed by the Dutch company Viscio and they still dominate the market.

Concentrating on patterns and contrast I create monochromatic vector illustrations. As I look back on what I have created I get a feeling that my illustrations are depiction of a victim. Maybe it's the use of the silhouette, meek posture and the monochromatic palette. At this stage I am so attached to the illustrations that I don't wish to make drastic changes to them. I'm hoping to bring more positive associations to the illustration with bright colour combinations. (Fig. 33.)



Figure 33: Monochromatic vector illustrations.

I browse for interesting wax prints and use their palettes as stepping-stones, tweaking them slightly. The end result is less harmonious but it's exactly this striking cacophony of colours that I associate with West African visual language. It's the same effect you get when stepping into a fabric shop in Ghana and suddenly you are bombarded with a riot of colours.

4.5. Outcome

Having been on sale at dreamtime.com exclusively for about nine months only one of the illustrations, one with plain black silhouettes, has been sold once. Generally my sales at dreamtime.com have

been slow due to very limited portfolio. Artists who have more to show get more exposure and more sales. I would need to upload much more to get faster earnings.

This illustration has attracted 15 views which means it has not been searched after a lot. The niche I'm targeting is probably a little too narrow. I'm still positive that on the long run this illustration will yield more sales.

Plain silhouettes are easily customisable and thus they will probably do better than the detailed illustrations that might be just a little too expressionistic to do well on micro stocks. They can however act as portfolio samples for commissions.

When I look at the ready series of illustrations words that come to mind are submissive, obedient, good girl and content. There is no protesting or teenage rebellion present. The character is somewhat passive to her situation. (Fig. 34.)

The stereotypical roles of a victim and servant are present in the outcome. I feel the topic justifies these presentations as it is an important social issue to bring up and corresponds with my experiences. Never the less these are negative roles and something that a Sub-Saharan African viewer would probably not prefer to identify with.



Figure 34: Final illustrations in mock up frames.



Figure 35: Final illustrations with plain black silhouettes.

African child house help



ID 95131882 © Laura Doku | Dreamstime.com

2 15 1



Figure 36: Sales situation of the plain silhouette illustration titled African child house help. The symbols mean that the illustration is graded as level two in dreamtime's system, it has been seen by 15 users and downloaded once and it's sold exclusively in dreamtime. Screen shot from dreamtime.com on 14th March 2018.



African child house help
(exclusive sale)
\$0.42 | subscription | maximum
Buyer searched for: asian ?

Approved On: 06/27/2017
Download date: 03/12/2018
License: (RF)
Image level: 6

Figure 37: Thumbnail of the illustration and details of the sold item. The buyer had a subscription, she or he downloaded the maximum size of the image and used a search word "asian". Screen shot from dreamtime.com on 14th March 2018.

4.5.1. Afterword

"Aunty, won't you leave your mp3 player for me now that you're leaving?" Araba begs. "Hey! I'm not sharing my will here. I'm coming back you know." I say and sensing her true feelings add "I will come back before you notice. You will be so busy with studies that you won't have time to miss me."

After having spent five years in Ghana I would return to Finland for two years to do my masters. Araba would have to stay behind to finish her studies. She would have one more month of junior high school left and after that she would join a boarding school for senior high.

"I love you!" I whisper and hug her clumsily slipping the mp3 to her hands to relieve my guilt. I step into the car and we drive away my little baby boy blissfully unaware he would not see his big sister for two long years.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Racial Stereotypes and their Sources

Figure	Stereotype	Influences
1	Black ruler as dictator	News, History
2, 6	Rural traditional people stuck in past	Popular culture, especially children's culture
3	Jezebel	Popular culture, especially Hollywood movies
8	Sambo	Children's culture
1, 10	macho	Popular culture, especially advertisements
12-15, 17, 19, 20, 25-27	Servant	History, popular culture
14	Mammy	Popular culture, especially cartoons
19, 21, 26, 27	Victim	Aid campaigns, relationship with Araba

Table 1: Table of Figures, Stereotypes and Influences.

I identified eight stereotypical roles during the design process. They were dictator, rural traditional people stuck in past, Jezebel, Sambo, macho, servant, Mammy and victim. There might be stereotypes and racial biases I have failed to identify. Racial biases are partly unconscious processes and thus it is impossible to gain awareness of all one's harboured biases.

As I identified the stereotypical roles of rural people stuck in past, Sambo, Mammy, Jezebel, dictator and macho, I discontinued with the sketches. The roles of victim and servant, however, are present in the final illustrations. I made a conscious choice to keep them in the final series in order to finish the project and in the belief that the topic justified this way of presenting.

I identified in broad terms factors that have affected me regarding the roles. The influences were mostly popular culture of Finland, which is part of a broader Western popular culture and which in turn has links to the historical events of colonialism, trans-Atlantic slavery and abolitionism. Also intergroup relationships played a role, especially the relationship with Araba.

5.1.1. Dictator

Many African Countries after being decolonised have gone through a stage of dictatorial governance. I had very little knowledge of African political history prior to moving to Ghana and even then my knowledge was limited to the history of Ghana.

Ghana has had dictators but it has enjoyed democracy since 1993. Still the stereotypical image that I produced was that of a dictator when I intended to draw someone with power and affluence. The stereotype of African ruler always being an arrogant dictator is one derived from history and news of

rulers like Idi Amin Dada, Gaddafi and Robert Mugabe, who represent only a fraction of Africa's political history.

5.1.2. Rural People stuck in Past

The urban population of Africa has increased considerably in the recent decades. Despite of this I chose to draw images of rural Africa during the process. It is true that majority of Sub Saharan African's and about a half of Ghanaians live in rural areas (World Bank, 2017). Still the urban history of Africa predates that of Europe and the modern day urban life forms a considerable, yet understated aspect of African lifestyle.

5.1.3. Sambo

The sambo stereotype reaches to the 19th century when a stereotype of black slave as childlike, dumb and oblivious emerged. Though my character was an actual child it did remind me of the Sambo-stereotype and I discontinued with the childhood theme. This might have been overly conscious.

The way I portrayed a carefree African child probably comes from the children's culture I grew up with. I remember a song about boy called Sambalele sitting lazily in a papaya tree while others work. The song was likely situated in South America but I erroneously linked it to Africa as a child. I also liked to watch Little Black Sambo, a very obviously racist cartoon from 1935 by Iwerks (Fig. 38).



Figure 38: Title frame of Little Black Sambo animation by Iwerks (1935). Image from cartoonsof1935.blogspot.fi.

5.1.4. Jezebel

Black women have been portrayed as sexually promiscuous and immoral in popular culture, especially in movies and music videos produced in the West but surprisingly I have encountered the same stereotype in music videos and movies produced in Ghana and Nigeria.

This stereotype can be traced back to the colonial times. In the 1800s Sub-Saharan African women were considered in Europe as overly sexual and thus as prototypes of female sexuality in general (Pieterse, 181, 1992).

5.1.5. Macho

The stereotype of black man as overly masculine and overly sexual is a stereotype that is repeated in Hollywood movies and pop music videos. This stereotype is fear driven as a sexually active black male is seen as competitor and thus a threat to the white male in a competition over women. (Pieterse, 175, 1992.)

5.1.6. Servant

Pieterse in his book claims that black servant and entertainer are variations of the figure of eunuch, the emasculated harem slave (141, 1992) (Fig. 39). Black male as servant is stripped down from strength, vigour and will, making him less of a threat to the white man.



Figure 39: Black eunuch servant in an illustration titled *Les petits voyages des Paris-Playsirs* in *Paris Playsir magazine*, 1930. Image from www.bbc.co.uk.

Mammy is the female equivalent of a de-sexualised servant usually tending children or doing other house hold work. She is a happy natured and overweight motherly character. Growing up, I was influenced by the character trough children's cartoon Tom and Jerry by Warner Bros and the earlier mentioned Iwerks animation Little Black Sambo (Fig.40 and 41).



Figure 40: A scene from *Little Black Sambo* animation showing a mammy figure by Iwerks (1935). Image from cartoonsof1935.blogspot.fi.



Figure 41: A scene from Warner Bros animation *Tom and Jerry: Dog Trouble* (1942), showing the character Mammy Two-Shoes. Image from aveleyman.com.

The servant stereotype is clearly linked to the slavery and lower socio-economic position of blacks in post-slavery America. My encounters with this type of characters have mainly been through filmatisations about slavery, like *The Roots* (ABC, 1972) and *12 Years a Slave* (Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2013).

My character is also a kind of servant character, though the position of a house girl is a bit more complex. By choosing this topic I unwillingly reinforce the servant role so often cast for blacks.

5.1.7. Victim

In their attempt to gain sympathy for their cause abolitionists in the 1800 gave birth to the stereotype of black as victim. In their imagery a slave would often be shown kneeling down chained, begging for mercy or humbly surrendering to the abuse of his or her master.

Modern aid organisations have used similar rhetoric's to evoke pity. Images of starving children and HIV victims may yield good results in donations from the Western target group but the African viewer

may experience these kind of images humiliating and patronising as they reinforce harmful identities of Africans in need of help of the "white Messiah" incapable to do anything for themselves.

My attempt was to portray my character and the cultural practise in neutral light but patronising tendencies are never the less visible in the outcome.

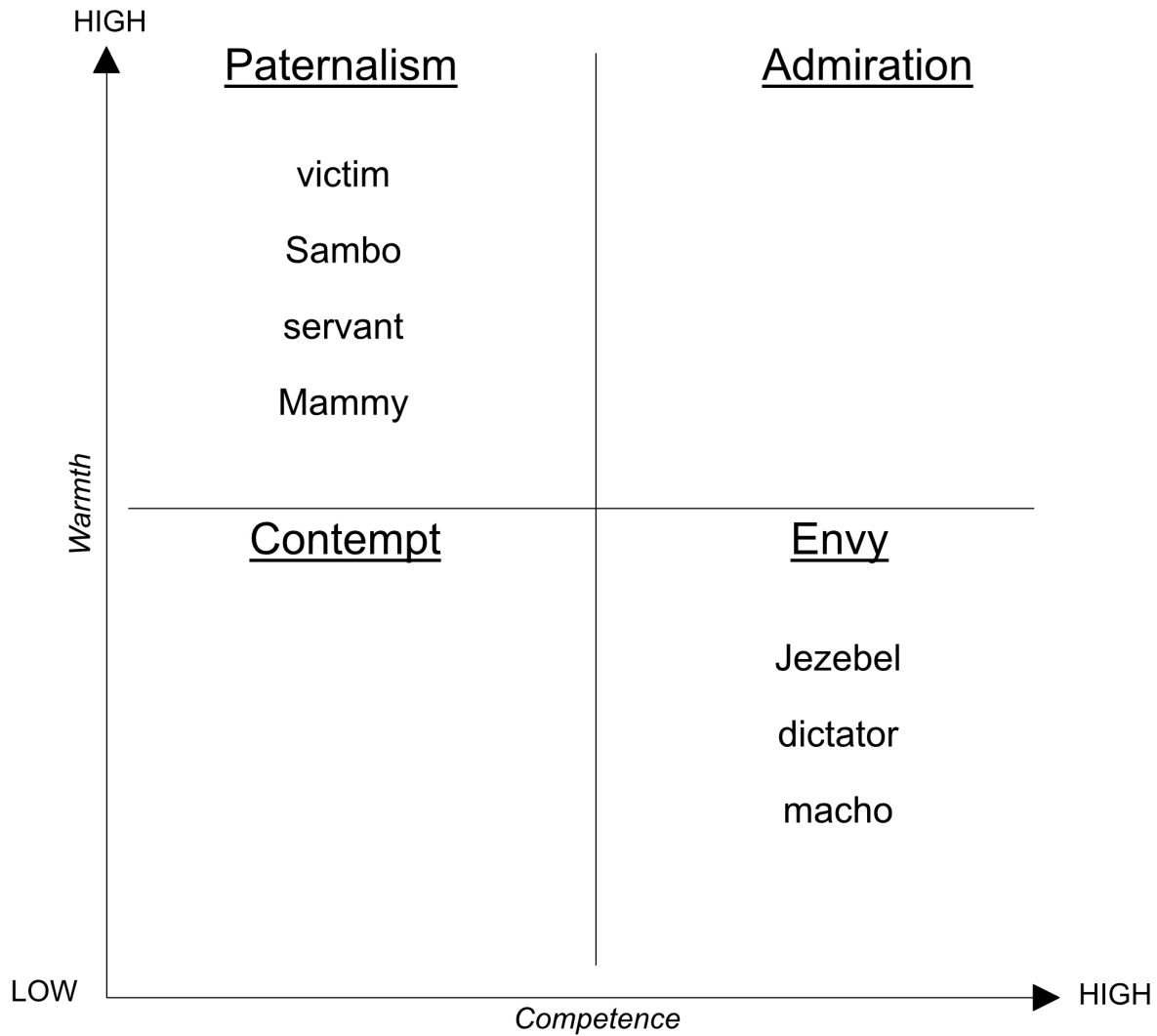
How I experienced our relationship with Araba shows in the design. Though I feel Araba is a strong child who has control over her life I still have guilt of having taken her from the comfort of her childhood home and of taking advantage of her help in house chores. This guilt is one factor that led to presenting the character as a victim.

5.2. Application of Stereotype Content Model

I used the Stereotype Content Model of Fiske et al. (2002) as the basis of my analysis to clarify the motives behind the stereotypes identified during the design process. I noticed that the stereotypes were divided among paternalistic presentations of high degree of warmth and low competence and envious presentations of low warmth and high competence. (Fig. 42.)

I chose not to place the romantic images of rural African to the scale. It could be placed somewhere between paternalistic presentation and admiration. I interpret the scale so that presentations falling in the middle would be neutral, lacking obvious bias.

Identified Stereotypical Roles in Stereotype Content Model



After Fiske Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. 2002. and Meghan S. Sanders & Srividya Ramasubramanian 2012.

Figure 42: Table of Identified Stereotypical Roles in Stereotype Content Model. Adaptation after Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. 2002 and Sanders M. S. & Ramasubramanian S. 2012.

5.3. Brief Comparison with Earlier Works

I collected all my earlier illustrations from the year 2010-2014 portraying Sub-Saharan African characters, 30 in all, to see the level of bias in them (Fig. 43 and 44). I had not paid attention to possible racial bias in them as I did these illustrations. I used these illustrations to compare how the level of awareness affects the finished work.

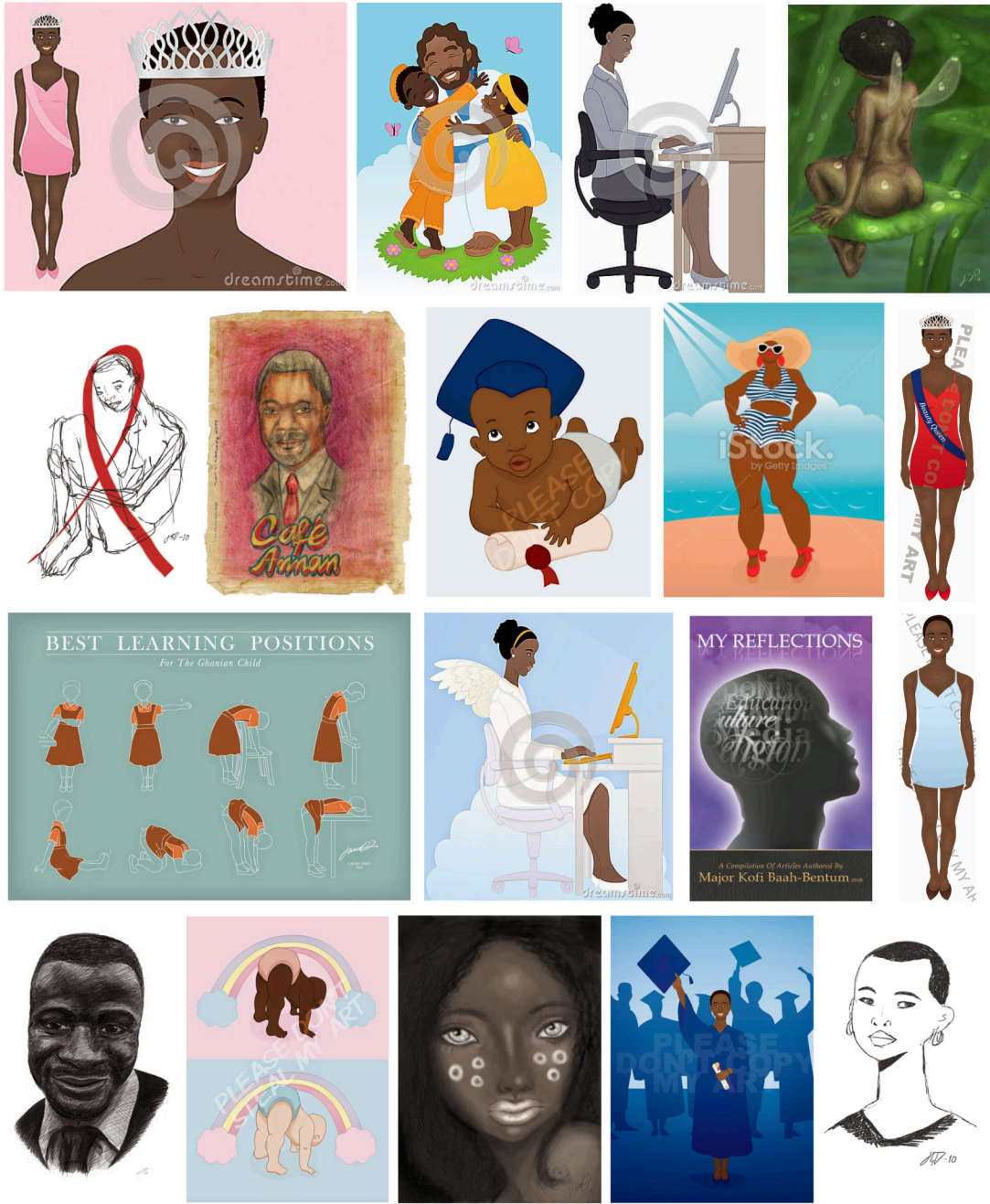


Figure 43: Earlier illustrations.

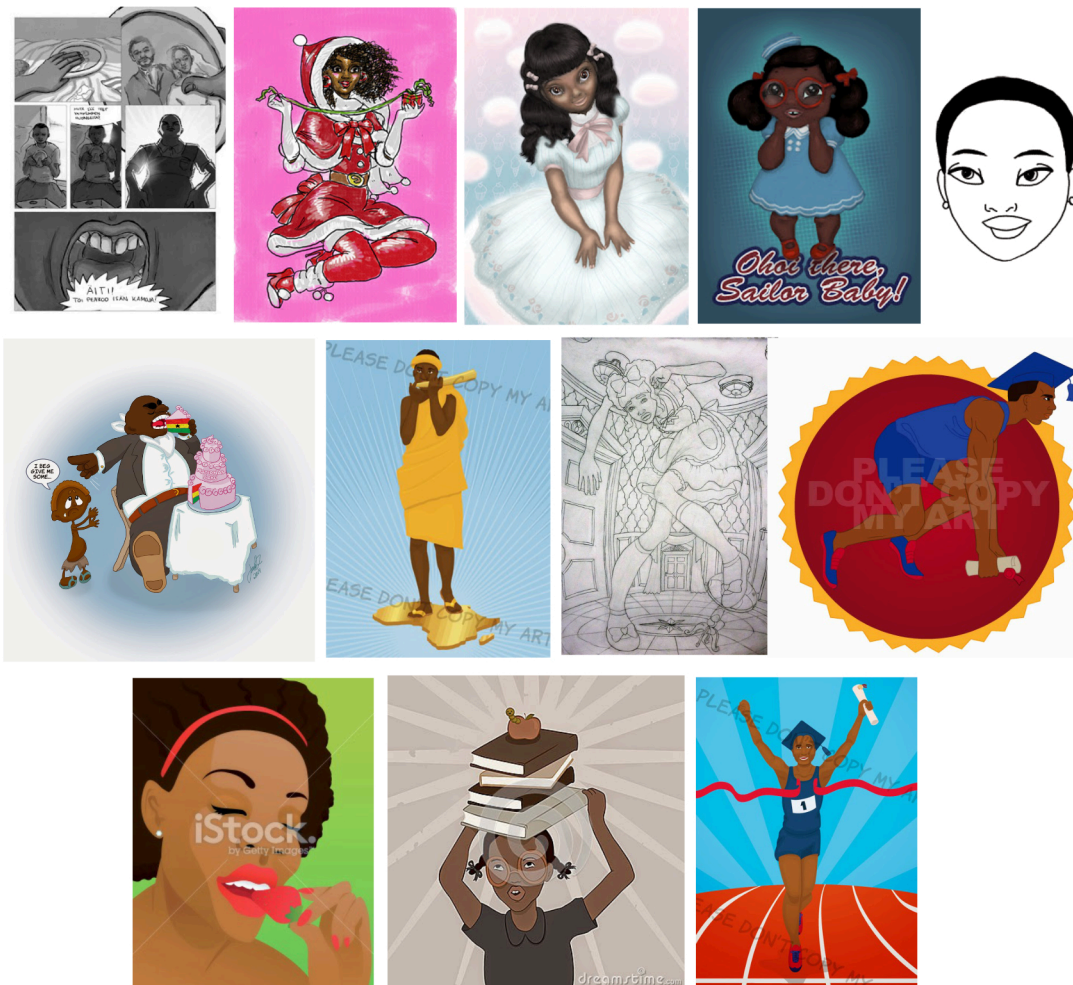


Figure 44: Earlier illustrations.

One of the illustrations fell under envious presentation, showing African politician as corrupt and greedy. In the same illustration you can see a patronising stereotype of a starving African child. The illustration was ordered and dictated by a client. (Fig. 45.)

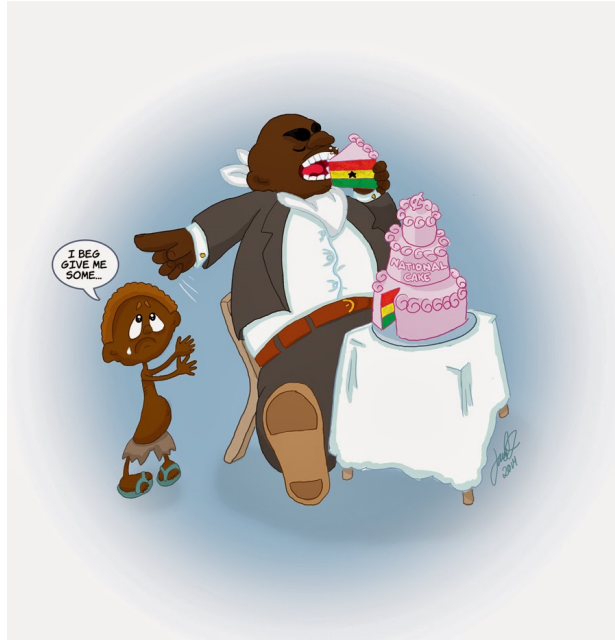


Figure 45: Illustration of a corrupt politician.

Looking back I would not have drawn an African HIV victim like I had done in 2010 (Fig. 46). The illustration is very paternalistic and enforces the negative image of Africa. Another victim portrayal is an illustration of ways school children are physically punished in some schools in Ghana. It is a critique of a system that contradicts my own morals so I still feel the victim role here is justified. (Fig. 47.)



Figure 46: Illustration about a HIV-patient.



Figure 47: Illustration about corporal punishment methods.

I was able to identify some paternalistic and envious presentations. Majority of the works however do not show any obvious bias. Seems that not having paid a lot of attention to racial biases during the design process had some effect though in many cases I was able to stay away from racially biased ways of presenting the characters regardless of that.

5.4. Consequences of Awareness of Personal Racial Bias

Awareness of possible racial bias on the other hand filtered away racial stereotypes but on the other hand hindered the creative process in the early stages until I decided not to care so much about the possible biases and postponed the criticism to a later stage. Being less aware and ignoring my biases made designing easier. This meant that there was some level of bias in the ready illustrations. I felt I might have risked not finishing the project had I given too much attention to the racial biases in my work.

Awareness of racial bias acted as a filter through which influencing factors passed. The result was disposal of concepts with racial stereotypes and hindering interference with the creative process. This led to the resolution to postpone critique and to tolerate some racial stereotypes in the design. (Fig. 48.)

EFFECTS OF THE DESIGNER'S AWARENESS OF HER RACIAL BIASES DURING THE DESIGN PROCESS



Figure 48: Effect of the designer's awareness of her racial biases during the design process.

5.5. Moral Issues

Portraying out-groups is problematic in moral sense. My experience is only my interpretation of the events. The outcome is biased merely because I am not part of the group I am presenting. This is where it all comes down to the question of whether I have the right to portray people of another social group at all if the intention is to steer away from biased presentations.

Should a designer then avoid portraying out-groups? This is in the end a personal decision to make. I believe it is possible to portray out-groups as long as one attempts to make as bias free design as possible and admits that the outcome will always be filtered through one's world view and pre-conceived biases.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The surrounding visual popular culture, historical events and intergroup relationships influence the formation of racial stereotypes while portraying out-groups. The presence of these stereotypes in the design outcome depends largely on whether the designer is aware of them or not and whether the designer can justify their presence to him or herself.

Majority of the stereotypes I was able to identify during the design process were motivated by paternalism and envy. The final illustrations were likewise influenced with paternalistic attitudes. Other influences were the surrounding popular visual culture in Finland and the West and relationship with Araba.

A designer makes an ethical choice when choosing to portray out-groups. He or she will risk reinforcing stereotypes doing so. Great care should be applied when choosing to portray out-groups. It is important that the designer acknowledges that racial biases are to some extent unconscious and thus hard to avoid completely.

Being aware of one's racial biases during the design process can be helpful when combating the recycling of racial stereotypes. Even though subtle racial biases are almost impossible to get rid of altogether, acknowledging them can help lessen the use of racial stereotypes when portraying out-groups. However, given too much emphasis, the avoidance of biases can hinder the creative process. The designer needs to find a balance between self-censorship and self-expression in order to produce as stereotype free concepts as possible while still remaining productive.

It is important that designers are aware of their position as facilitators of social representations. They should be prepared to defend their decisions publicly and make the viewer aware of the subjective nature of the portrayals.

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Appendix

All sketches, illustrations and field notes can be found from the blog:
<https://illustratingother.wordpress.com>

Final illustrations



Attachment 1: Final vector silhouettes.



AMPE, THE HOUSEGIRL SERIES, LAURA DOKU 2017

Attachment 2: Final illustration "Ampe".



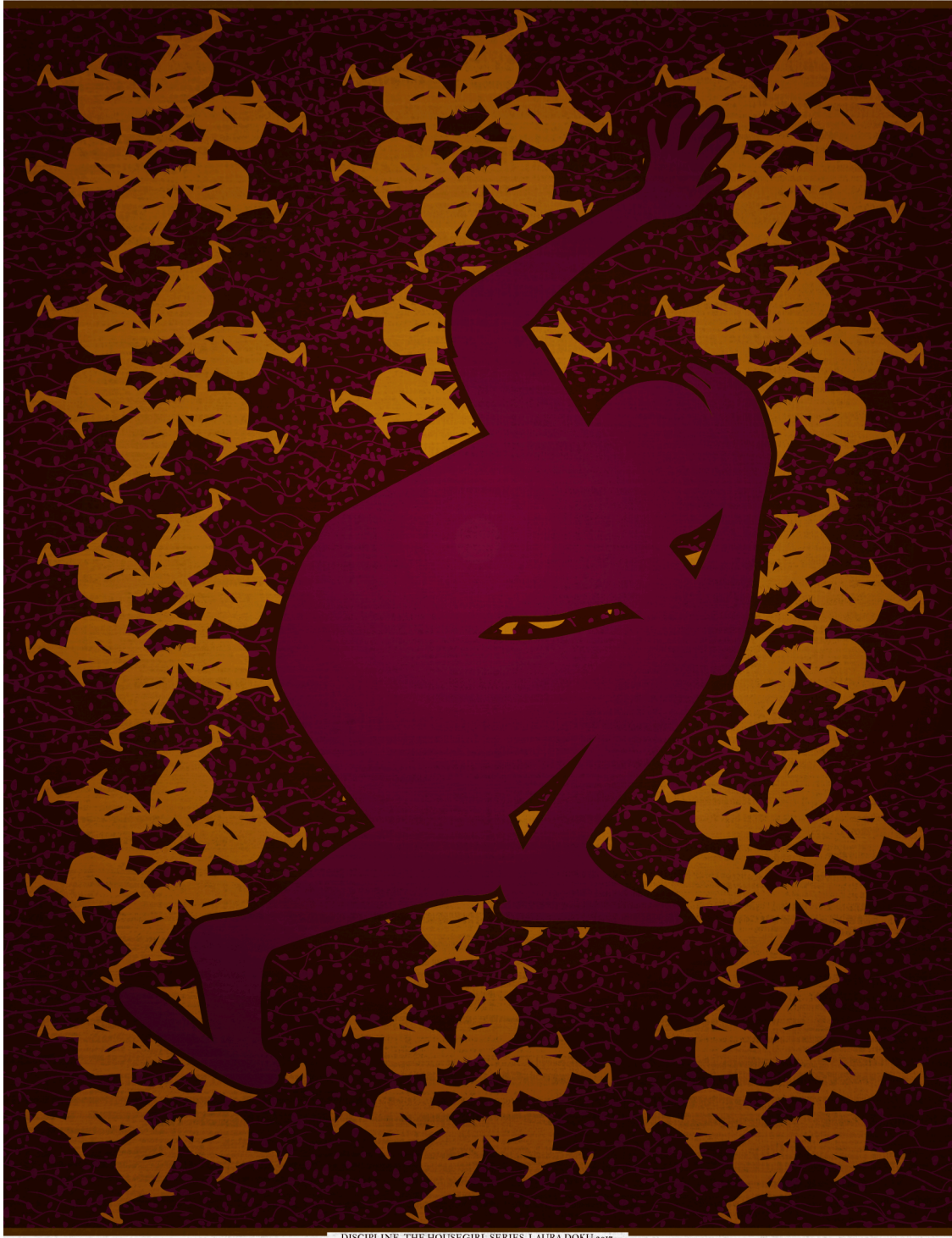
FUFU, THE HOUSEGIRL SERIES, LAURA DOKU 2017

Attachment 3: Final illustration "Fufu".



BABYSITTER, THE HOUSEGIRL SERIES, LAURA DOKU 2017

Attachment 4: Final illustration "Babysitter".



DISCIPLINE, THE HOUSEGIRL SERIES, LAURA DOKU 2017

Attachment 5: Final illustration "Discipline".



Attachment 6: Final illustration "Laundry".



SCHOOLGIRL, THE HOUSEGIRL SERIES, LAURA DOKU 2017

Attachment 7: Final illustration "Schoolgirl".



Attachment 8: Final illustration "Scrubbing".



SWEEPING, THE HOUSEGIRL SERIES, LAURA DOKU 2017

Attachment 9: Final illustration "Sweeping".



WORSHIP, THE HOUSEGIRL SERIES, LAURA DOKU 2017

Attachment 10: Final illustration "Worship".