

RODE MOLLA

University of Denver, Iliff School of Theology

REFRAMING THE ADWA VICTORY AS A DECOLONIZING PRAXIS:
DISCOURSE AROUND COLONIZATION IN THE ETHIOPIAN
CONTEXT

White-Painted Ethiopia Bodies

In 1896 Ethiopians defeated the Italian military and defended their border. That made Ethiopia the only black nation that defended its border in the era of colonization.¹ However, protecting their land/border was not enough for Ethiopians to be a free nation. Their bodies and souls became abused and colonized by the Western discourses. In his book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon employs the psychoanalytical method to show the colonized mentality of the black man in which he becomes alienated from his cultural and social identity. Fanon wants to address both the inferiority complex of the black man and the superiority complex of the white man. The inferiority complex of the black man comes from the superiority complex of the white man that wants to create only the world of white men. Fanon writes,

The black man wants to be white. The white man is desperately trying to achieve the rank of man. This essay will attempt to understand the Black-White relationship. The white man is locked in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness.²

Fanon exposes this created identity through his psychoanalytical method. If the white man eliminates the world of a black man, the only destiny that the black man has is whiteness.³ The 1896 Adwa victory, however, shows that the black man has the power to defend his culture, identity, and language. Fanon's psychological analysis cannot address the ideological, discourse, and image colonization of Ethiopians. Fanon cannot describe this kind of colonization Ethiopians because he is describing the people who are struggling due to land and cultural colonization. However, Ethiopians' colonization is not only psychological but also metaphorical and ideological.

In his article, "The Anomaly and Paradox of Africa," Tesehale Tibebu argues that even though Ethiopians as a black nation were able to defend their border, their victory was not accepted as a black nation's victory. Western discourses painted Ethiopian bodies white and de-Africanized them. Instead

¹ Raymond Jonas, *Adwa Victory: African Victory in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 1-3.

² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, Trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 1967), Location 102.

³ Ibid., 9-14.

of being part of the black nations, Ethiopia became an exception. The major image that the Western discourses employed to separate Ethiopia from the rest of Africa was “isolation image”. The Plateau geography of Ethiopia was presented as a country that cannot be accessed by other African nations and the rest of the world.

However, the truth is that the Italians, the British, and the Sudanese Mahdists contested the Ethiopian border and tried to colonize it. Similarly, the isolation discourse of the West stresses Ethiopians’ Coptic/Monophyte faith tradition, and its connection to the Hebrew Bible and Roman civilization. However, they neglected to show that Ethiopian’s Coptic Christianity was part of the Egyptian Coptic church.⁴

The romantic image was another image that the Western writers employed to show the beauty of Ethiopians, in particular, the Amhara. Amhara is a Semitic ethnic group, and they were Ethiopian elites for the centuries. Ethiopians were praised by the Western discourses for their olive skin color, beautiful body structure, and facial expression. The romantic image presented Ethiopians as distinct and different from the rest of Africa.⁵ Everyone wants to look beautiful, but the romantic image was not a compliment; instead, it was imagery and body colonization that makes Ethiopians feel white and superior by obscuring their blackness.

The “Adwa complex image” is one of the known Western discourses that painted Ethiopians bodies white. As Fanon argues, a White man’s superiority complex cannot accept its defeat by a black man, because the black man is “a pure replica of the white man.”⁶ The superiority complex wants to have a world that is free from black men, so it rejects the Adwa victory by painting Ethiopian bodies white. Tibebu writes:

A new image of Ethiopia and Ethiopianism, an image in tune with the western racist imperialism of the times, had to be worked out. The easiest way to do so was to paint Ethiopians white.⁷

This image of Haile Selassie I represents the white-painted bodies of Ethiopians. After the Adwa victory, Ethiopian military power and Menelik II were presented as Caucasian and military power. Fanon argues that due to the inferiority complex, the black man alienated himself from his own identity and borrowed the mask of whiteness to live in the white world. Even though the black man and woman can defend their border as in Ethiopia, the superiority complex of the white man cannot accept it. The Adwa war is a victory of black men and women.

Even though Fanon failed to talk about black women, the Empress Taitu and most Ethiopian women were the support of the Ethiopian army that has

⁴ Teshale Tibebu, “Ethiopia: The “Anomaly” and “Paradox” of Africa,” *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 26, No. 4 (March 1996): 414-419, Stable URL:

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2784716>, accessed: 29-01-2018 17:37 UTC.

⁵ Ibid., 419-20.

⁶ Fanon, 19.

⁷ Tibebu, 419.

defeated the white military power.⁸ Western discourse cannot accept Ethiopians' identity as African and black, so Westerners isolate and paint Ethiopian bodies white so that their white superiority cannot be penetrated and defeated by black bodies. Ethiopians need to decolonize white-painted, isolated, and romanticized images by using the Adwa victory as a praxis not only to remember the past but also to disrupt the ideological and metaphorical colonization that disconnects them from their cultural and social location.

Gendered Ethiopian Bodies

"The Adwa Complex Image" made Ethiopians not only white but also white-male. However, in 1936, when the Italian war occupied Ethiopia, Western images of the white-painted bodies of Ethiopians changed to a barbarian and uncivilized status.⁹ Fanon claimed that the lived experience of the black man resisted the inferiority complex that was imposed by the white man. However, the lived experiences of the black man are not valid in the world of whiteness. The black man has triple identities: black body, white soul/mask, and the Other.¹⁰ Even though Fanon calls for an end to this alienation by creating psychological awareness, he does not show how black bodies are gendered and racialized due to their relation to whiteness. The victory of Adwa or the lived realities and experiences of Ethiopians cannot determine their identity because their bodies are not only alienated but also gendered and racialized by the power of whiteness.

Brian Yates employs the Lewis Gordon's presence/phallus and absence/hole images to show how colonization works in the Ethiopian context. According to Gordon, the phallus image represent presence, white and civilized bodies. The hole image represents absence, black, female, and uncivilized bodies. Gordon integrates Fanon's and Jean-Paul Sartre's theories to analyze the racial and gendered bodies of colonized nations.¹¹ As Fanon argues, the superiority complex of white man wants to have a world free from black men, and that creates the inferiority complex and alienation of the black man. According to Gordon, bodies with phallus are white, and the rest are holes, so black men are not only inferior but also absent/ female bodies. When Ethiopians were able to defend and protect their border, culture, and identity, they become male/phallus. Yates writes,

Ethiopia, alone on the African continent, stopped this spread by defeating the Italian at Adwa. It was seemingly a victory of a Black female body over a white male body, which was an impossibility during the late 19th century.¹²

⁸ Jonas, *Adwa Victory: African Victory in the Age of Empire*, 112-113.

⁹ Brian J. Yates, "From White Males to Black Females: Understanding the National Bodies of Ethiopia (1896 – 1936)," *Journal of Black Studies* Volume 44, No. 1 (JANUARY 2013), 93-95, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23414705>, Accessed: 29-01-2018 22:47 UTC 83.

¹⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin, Whit Masks*, 90-95.

¹¹ Yates, 81-100.

¹² Ibid., 83.

The emperor of Ethiopia Menelik II was presented as Caucasian/ white male because only a white-male can defeat a white-male. Based on this definition, Ethiopians are not female or absent, because they were able to defend their border. On the other hand, even though the European discourses presented Menelik as Caucasian, still, he was not a phallus because defeating is not enough, he should penetrate other bodies.¹³ Yes, Menelik II is a Black man and Ethiopians are Africans, and they were able to protect their border, culture, and identity, but were they able to understand the ideological and discourse colonization that gendered and racialized their bodies?

After the death of Menelik II, Haile Selassie I came to power. In his era, Ethiopia became a member of the League of Nation and started the Pan-African movement among diaspora Africans. That gave Ethiopia a black identity that could represent other black nations. Menelik II was able to protect against European penetration. Haile Selassie I started to penetrate other bodies, and he became a phallus. Haile Selassie was equal to the level of a white male who can defend and at the same time penetrate other bodies. Yates writes, "His image was a world image that displayed to the world that one could be Black, Independent, and Christian."¹⁴ However, male/phallus images of Ethiopians and Haile Selassie I did not stay for very long – the Italian Fascists occupied Ethiopia from 1935-1939.

Even though both nations were the member of the League of Nations, Italy transgressed the covenant and occupied Ethiopia. According to Yates, the propaganda that was transmitted about Ethiopia's uncivilized social and economic status initiated the second Italian occupation. In 1930, most European countries' representatives came to Ethiopia to attend the coronation ceremony of Haile Selassie I, and they evaluated Ethiopian civilization and development through their gaze and categories. So, from 1930-1936, there was propaganda about the need to civilize Ethiopia.¹⁵

Menelik II was able to defend his border, and Haile Selassie I was able to penetrate other bodies due to his capacity in national relation and pan-Africanism. Still, Ethiopians were not fully presence/ phallus because, according to the European categorization, they were uncivilized and undeveloped. Due to this propaganda, Fascist Italy occupied Ethiopia; when Italy occupied Ethiopia, Italians were identified as white. On the other hand, Ethiopians went back to their Barbarian, black, and uncivilized bodies.¹⁶ The female gendered bodies of Ethiopians were connected to civil war, famine, poverty, and at-risk and impoverished children.

One of the best-known images that represents Ethiopia after the Italian occupation was the 1980s famine. Alemayehu Erkikhun Engda, in his article, "Ethiopia in the Image of the West in the 1980s" argues that the western media played the major role in creating fixed-famine images of Ethiopians. In the 1980s some parts of Ethiopia suffered due to famine and drought, but the Ethiopian communist regime was not willing to ask for help from the West.

¹³ Ibid., 84-86.

¹⁴ Ibid., 89.

¹⁵ Ibid., 88-95.

¹⁶ Ibid.

However, BBC journalist Mohammed Amin's documentary film showed the terrifying suffering of unnourished children and breastfeeding mothers to the world.

At the same time, David Baily displayed a photographic collection of the victims of the famine for public exhibit. The exhibition, documentaries, and media prompted many humanitarian organizations to come to Ethiopia and support the famine victims.¹⁷ However, the Western media, instead of presenting the famine as an incident, presented Ethiopian women's and children's bodies as the description and symbol of poverty and famine. "[T]he Encyclopedia Britannica and Oxford English Dictionary referred Ethiopia to illustrate famine."¹⁸ The famine's images, exhibitions, and movies demonstrate that Ethiopian bodies are female and absent. At the same time, they are uncivilized and undeveloped nation who cannot feed their children. The Western discourses and media sustain the undeveloped and uncivilized images of Ethiopians until today.

Docile Ethiopian Bodies

Foucault, in his book, *Discipline, and Punish*, describes how the human body is the object of different ideologies. Foucault emphasizes the modern way of disciplining technics that made the human body docile. In the modern world, Descartes and modern philosophers and physicians see the body as an object that can be disciplined, improved, and civilized. The new thought that modernity brought to disciplining the body is new "techniques." These techniques are part of the art that is created to docile and tame the bodies.

These practices and techniques make the body lose its power.¹⁹ Foucault writes, "Thus; discipline produced subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies."²⁰ Some of the techniques that Foucault articulated are scholastic theological understandings, education, and pedagogy and military practices. The disciplining methods are the source of domination and colonization; as a result, human beings body act as machines or non-being objects.

Tamed bodies become colonized to the extent that they cannot operate by themselves. In the modern era, the disciplining and the punishing methods work in different systems such as schools, hospitals, and prisons.²¹ Docile bodies are without power and agency; they cannot speak and fight for justice and equality because they are tamed.

Ethiopian bodies are tamed by a modern higher education system that creates systemic oppression. In her book *Undoing the demos: neoliberalism's stealth revolution*, Wendy Brown employs Foucault's concept of neo-liberal political rationality (biopolitics) to describe the practical effect of neoliberalism.

¹⁷ Alemayehu Erkikhun Engida, "Ethiopia in the Image of the West in the 1980s," *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies (IJHCS)* Volume 3, Issue 4 (2017): 11-13, <https://www.arcjournals.org/pdfs/ijhcs/v3-i4/1.pdf>

¹⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, Trans. Alan Sheridan (Vintage Books: New York), 134-138.

²⁰ Ibid., 137.

²¹ Ibid., 138-139.

According Foucault neoliberalism is “art of government,” “reasoned way of governing best,” and “reprogramming the liberal governmentality.”²²

Based on this definition, Brown argues that neoliberalism disseminates the freedom of the people by intersecting its rational governmentality with economic, social, political, and moral values and cultures. According to Brown, neoliberalism vanquishes the *homo politicus* nature of people and makes them *homo oeconomicus*, meaning human beings become economized, financialized, and *responsibilized capitals*.²³

Education is one of the central phenomena in which neoliberalism demonstrates its rational normative governmentality. The Ethiopian modern higher education system that was imposed on Ethiopians creates a system that makes Ethiopian bodies docile to the extent that they cannot function and operate by themselves.

In Ethiopia, the modern higher education system has a concise history. It was established in the Era of Haile Selassie I in 1950. Its establishment and reform were adopted from European and the United States imperialist higher education systems. Ethiopia did not apply its own modern higher education philosophy, so adopting between the European or American teaching models was one of the leading challenges.²⁴

In the era of Haile Selassie I, Ethiopia’s higher education was used as a political agenda to implement the Emperor’s policies of expansion, as in Foucault’s system of surveillance. However, the system that was created for keeping the sovereignty of the emperor became a place of opposition. University faculty and higher education students resisted the feudal and colonial leadership of Haile Selassie I. However, neither the emperor nor the students succeeded because of the communist regime that came to power.²⁵

The Communist government or *Derge* came to power in 1974 and denied and banned political, religious, and economic freedom. Even though university students started the revolution, their voice was not heard. Many people were imprisoned, killed, and persecuted due to their different political and religious views.

The communist government destroyed all higher education relationships with the United States and other Western countries that the Emperor Haile Selassie I started, and established another higher education relationship with socialist countries.²⁶ These two political systems have two similar characteristics in the establishment and reform of Ethiopia’s higher education. Both the regime of Haile Selassie and the communist government used higher education to tame Ethiopians for their political agendas.

²² Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 55, 109.

²³

²⁴ William Saint, “Higher Education in Ethiopia: The Vision and Its Challenges” *Journal of Higher Education in Africa/ Revue de l’enseignement supérieur en Afrique*, Vol. 2, no. 3 (2004): 83-86, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24486295>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

They imported the Western imperialist and socialist higher education systems without allowing the expression of agency and subjectivity from the Ethiopian people. The *Derge* fell in 1991, and the current Ethiopian government/EPRDF came to power. The EPRDF education policy is related to globalized neoliberal capitalist values.

When the current government started leading Ethiopia, there was a lot of hope and expectation among Ethiopians. However, as with previous higher education reforms, the new changes in higher education do not address the needs and experiences of Ethiopians. Instead, they impose the global agenda of neoliberalism.

The EPRDF government reforms higher education curriculum and policies by integrating knowledge and poverty reduction. In his article, "Neo-liberal Policy Agendas and the Problem of Inequality in Higher Education: the Ethiopian case," Tebeje Molla argues that the Ethiopian higher education reform, which integrates knowledge and economic development, could not bring equality and justice that Ethiopians were expecting for decades. Instead, the EPRDF human capital education reform exposed Ethiopians to inequality, because the human capital education system gives priority to the people who can invest and consume.

When Foucault writes about the panopticism system or technique of the modern world, he emphasized that the people who are surveilled do not have subjectivity or agency. "He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject of communication."²⁷ Women and people who have less capital become vulnerable in the competition-oriented higher education process.²⁸ The neoliberal and human capital higher education system does not give agency for social equality and democracy for the Ethiopian society.

Ethiopia integrates knowledge production or human capital development and economic development. In 1999, there were only two public universities, but currently, there are more than thirty public universities all over the country.²⁹ However, this reform cannot address Ethiopians' struggle because the education system does not prepare Ethiopians to be agents to participate in the social reformation process.

According to Brown, neoliberalism as a model of reason and governmentality displaced people from their way of being and knowing and deployed its homo-oeconomicus practices. People imitate those practices without having any subjective authority, meaning they become *responsibilized* agents who do not have their own normative reasoning but live according to the imposed practices of homo-oeconomicus.³⁰ They become docile and tame bodies.

²⁷ Foucault, 200.

²⁸ Tebeje, Molla, "Neo-liberal Policy Agendas and the Problem of Inequality in Higher Education: the Ethiopian case." *Policy Futures in Education* Volume 12, no. 2 (2014) 297, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2304/pfie>.

²⁹ Ibid., 298-300.

³⁰ Brown, 177-178.

Currently, Ethiopia is under great deal of ethnic conflict in different parts of the country. Ethiopians are resisting the neoliberal identity and ethnic educational and political systems that surveilled them for the last twenty-seven years. Ethiopians portray their resistance by crossing their arms which is the symbolic and embodied expression of tamed bodies. Their crossed arms demonstrate their reaction to the imposed taming practices and programs neoliberalism/ EPRDF.

Neoliberal superficial representation focuses on improving the GPA of female students for entry to the universities, but it does not address other injustices and inequality issues that female students are facing due to power dynamics and cultural and traditional impositions. At the same time, it does not change the teaching approaches, pedagogy or curriculum to address the needs of less represented groups.

Rather, Ethiopia's public higher education focuses on producing human capital in natural science and mathematics departments to tackle poverty and economic problems. As a result, private colleges, and universities, which are perceived to have a low quality of higher education, run most of the humanities and social science fields.

Most of the students who are attending the private colleges are women, so giving less attention to the humanities programs exposed women who are interested in those fields not to get any support from the government. At the same time, careers in the humanities earn the lowest-wage salary in Ethiopia, so women do not get good salaries after completing their degree programs.³¹

The neoliberal global agendas that are imposed in Ethiopia creates a system of *devolution*. Policies and curriculum or other reforms are not the main responsibilities of the government; instead, the government gives responsibilities of social justice and inequalities to stakeholders or weak institutes. The government transferred its responsibilities of protecting and supporting the disadvantaged groups to the university leadership and other stakeholders; the universities focus on quantitative records rather than addressing the experience of the disadvantaged groups. For example, in Ethiopian higher education reform, most of the universities have gender, multicultural, and diversity offices, but they cannot function, because they do not have enough budget and resources to support the people they are tasked with supporting.³²

The human capital thought, which integrates knowledge and self-investment denied and superficially represented the social struggles and inequality issues of Ethiopians. Despite the Adwa victory, Ethiopian higher education imposed imperialist, communist, and neoliberal ideologies that made Ethiopians bodies financialized/homo-oeconomicus.

Tamed bodies do not have power to shape their political and social struggles instead they participate in the imposed higher education political and social

³¹ Ibid., 301-302.

³² Ibid., 302-303.

systems for their existence. They become docile, *responsibilized* and economized bodies which function and operate in the way they are operated and programmed.

Aida Muluneh's Photography as a Religious Praxis

Muluneh left Ethiopia when she was a child and lived for 28 years in the Northern hemisphere. She worked for the Washington Post as a photojournalist. She returned to her country a decade ago to face the reality of her origin. Muluneh does not deny her duality or the existential reality that most immigrants are facing: the nostalgia of the past and the unknown and uncertain future. She experienced a lot of personal shame due to the Western media that produces the images of hunger, poverty, and uncivilized Ethiopia. Muluneh said,

I remember when I was a teenager I was so ashamed to tell people that I was Ethiopian that I wished I was South African! Regardless, the stigma of the 'starving Ethiopian' made it impossible for me to have any kind of pride in being Ethiopian. But, it was at the end of high school that I realized how images could create or distort realities and so, at the age of sixteen, I began exploring photography.³³

Anthony Pinn, the editor of *Black Religion and Aesthetics*, describes how people in the African diaspora use aesthetics to disrupt the imposed representation and signification of black bodies. The contributors of *Religion and Aesthetics* are not only writing to analyze and expose negative constructions of black bodies, but they are articulate how the African diaspora use black bodies as religious aesthetic and expressions to claim the subjectivity of their own bodies.

Pinn writes, "Attention is also given to the manner in which religion and religious expression challenge the construction of Black bodies to serve the social system and encourage re-evaluation of the proper "space" for and "use" of material Black bodies."³⁴ The authors used the body as a means of communication to challenge dominant systems and structures. Their method is different from creed, logos, and doctrinal way of doing religion. Aesthetics such as art, preaching, dance, worship and music are used to show how the body was materially used as a religious praxis to resist imposed ideologies and body colonization.³⁵

Luis León in his book *La Llorona's Children* defines religion as religious poetics or performance. The Mexican-Americans who live in the borderlands perform their religion in their bodies, because non-white bodies were constructed as indicator of sin and depravation. León writes "Understanding of nonwhite

³³ Victoria L. Valentine, "Ethiopian Photographer Aida Muluneh Finds Advantage in Creating and Distorting Reality," <http://www.culturetype.com/2016/04/20/ethiopian-photographer-aida-muluneh-finds-advantage-in-creating-and-distorting-reality/>, Accessed 3/9/2018 Apr 20, 2016 • 5:06 am.

³⁴ Pinn, *Black Religion and Aesthetic*, 6.

³⁵ Ibid,7.

bodies were used to advance strategies of social control, which were thought to exist outside of language, in state of nature, in a condition prior to language.”³⁶

Religion for the colonized nations is remembering and resisting. So, borderland religion uses body and place to create, recreate and reshape memory to claim its identity. The borderland people use their diverse and hybrid language, culture, and religious praxis to struggle against oppression and colonization. Religion is not static belief, but people’s everyday movement in art, music, poetry, dance, worship enable them reclaim their religious identity. That is why I call Muluneh’s photography and art work religious praxis, because Muluneh is using her art creativity to resist Ethiopians ideological and body colonization to claim her freedom as Ethiopian women.

Using her art of photography Muluneh disrupts the imposed Western images on Ethiopia and Africa. Her work emphasizes hybridity, presence, and complexity. For example, she presents an exhibition called “the world is 9” in David Krut Projects in 2016.³⁷ “The world is 9” is an Ethiopian saying meaning there is not perfect reality in the world. This saying displays our brokenness and vulnerability.

At the same time, Muluneh’s photography and art reflect Ethiopian’s diverse culture. She said, “So I came to your house and took photos all of the bad things in your house and make it that your reality.”³⁸ Muluneh is not praising a perfect image of Ethiopia, which claims we have never been colonized; instead, she emphasizes the present, complex, and vulnerable image of Ethiopians. If we use Aida Muluneh’s photography to look through Adwa, we can see imperfect victory, which is “9”. Defeating Italy at Adwa did not protect Ethiopia from being labeled as an uncivilized and undeveloped nation.

The Adwa Victory was immediately followed by Italian occupation. The world is “9” understanding of Adwa victory would make it clear for Ethiopians that both the romanization and docilaization of their bodies are colonization. Reframing the Adwa victory will expose the isolated, romantic, white-painted, gendered, and docile bodies of Ethiopians so that Ethiopians will be aware of its complexity. Reframing Adwa victory requires presence, hybrid, and complex understanding. Reframing the Adwa through decolonizing religious praxis resists the linear and eschatological-oriented interpretations and impositions of western history.

³⁶ Luis D. León, *La Llorona's Children: Religion, Life, and /dear in the US, -Mexican Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 19.

³⁷ Aida Muluneh, “The World is 9” at David Kurt Projects, April 3-16th 2016 <https://www.artsy.net/show/david-krut-projects-aida-muluneh-the-world-is-9>.

³⁸ BBC Africa, “How Aida Muluneh is Reframing Ethiopia,” Facebook page, Accessed 3/9/2018.

Conclusion

Even though Ethiopians were able to defend their border, the superiority of whiteness creates psychological, ideological, and imaginary colonization for Ethiopians. I argued that understanding and analyzing how Western discourses interpreted the Adwa victory will enable us to disrupt the perception of Ethiopians that made them deny the existing social, economic, and cultural crises and their connection with colonialism.

Ethiopians bodies became white-painted/male, female/ absent, and tamed bodies that cannot function and operate by themselves. They cannot speak against social and political injustices because imposed higher education systems and techniques tame and colonize Ethiopians. Muluneh paints from her black, female, and Ethiopian location. She paints Ethiopians as black, brown, yellow, green, red, and white. It is not a static identity, but a harmony of Ethiopianness that exists in her paintings and pictures. I want to reframe the Adwa victory through Mulunhe's art work through which we can shape the material signification and representation of Ethiopian bodies. Ethiopians bodies are 9, hybrid, and complex.