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ENC 1101

Welcome Home in Mengestu's "Home at Last"

Human being has to accept events taking place in social medium and predict their development most accurately to make this world understandable and interesting. Inner harmony is impossible without existential understanding of rules powering our lives; purification of our souls is not possible without hardships and misery. Life can be really tough at times and whenever you are morally crushed and spiritually disencouraged it is always important to find the place where you can be your own self. This place can be a piece of land, apartment, country, continent, which can be called by one important word - "home". This is a place all of us are looking for like an ordinary Ethiopian immigrant to US Dinaw Mengestu who discovered his writing talent after a long period of solitude, endless roaming and a feeling of being homesick. Mengestu moved to US while being a toddler and always had a curious sensation that there is no home for him, no place where he belongs and thus felt extremely lonely and lost. This feeling he tried to explain in his writing "Home at Last".

This piece is a quintessence of his loneliness, his cry in the dark, his attempt to find a place where he belonged. While being sympathetic with his parents who had to leave their native land Mengestu never felt like a true Ethiopian because did not share or keep cultures and traditions of his country of origin. Nor could he find his rightful place among "melting pot: of the US community with its incoherent public from all over the world.

There are plenty of ideas that I could outline about "Home at Last" by Dinaw Mengetsu but I would like to stress the main one: finding your own pace in

the world, a corner dear to your heart, a place called home. Mengestu describes his experience of a wild roamer, an outsider in his brilliantly light manner. His words go deep in soul and touch invisible cords of the reader's heart. You feel as if you see the circle of events and faces with your own eyes. His writing manner combines objectiveness and disguised tendentiousness, authorial noninvolvement and authorial evaluation (not implicit but feelable). With other words, Mengestu creating his writings is oriented from the beginning on reader's co-authorship. He does not formulate his conclusions but bring the reader to them. Looking deep in author's writing I was brought to a certain perception of the solitude problem by authorial attitude to existing world and his own symphony of feelings (love, compassion, irony, mockery, sympathy). Mengestu is shows himself as a gifted writer, a painter of the word telling us truths about war-torn areas of sub-Saharan Africa, life in Darfur, northern Uganda, and eastern Congo. His writings and essays are like a breath of fresh air in smoky and gloomy surroundings of urban America.

Travelling further along the pages of Mengestu's writing we see how author lights up an ethnic character by depicting the distinctive life style around him in Brooklyn and his parents' image back in Ethiopia. I cannot miss out Mengestu's torturing feeling of isolation within the family who seemed to cut all the roots with their homeland. He feels divided from his legacy and attempts to find his route back. Mengestu paints a vivid representation of life removed and revamped in the wake of political roughness, additionally outlines the breaks and pressures which describe quickly changing zones of contemporary urban America. The author provides us with heartbreaking

unforgettable memories. “(By that point my father, haunted by the death of his brother during the revolution and the ensuing loss of the country he had always assumed he would live and die in)” (Mengestu)(75) perceives that his guardians would have flashbacks of Ethiopia and relatives that they abandoned. His father once stated. “(Remember you are Ethiopian).” (Mengestu) (75) felt the change of his parents’ life who were lost in memories of past years tied toughly to the their culture, family members and community staying alien to new world while Mengestu and his sister having become more assimilated with new society feel deepened estrangement even within the family.

In early years of his way Mengestu moved to the Chicago suburbs where he didn’t feel himself being in a proper place while was surrounded by white schools and temples. Schools today are filled with all types of races so this problem is not so acute like in old times, however, Mengestu tried to associate himself, though not very successfully, with alien social medium. In the mid 1950’s there were many schools, restaurants, and even bathrooms separated for black and white people. At that point when he moved to Washington D. C. where most Ethiopian immigrants existed he was still not able to identify his belonging to a place or share a connection with anyone. The author boldly states in a confident tone “(Now it was enough, I wanted to believe, to simply be, to say I was in Brooklyn and Brooklyn was home).” (Mengestu) (75) has mentioned in the beginning of this paper, he doesn’t need much to prove where his real domain is. Mengestu just needs to remain his own self, to put on his big boy’s shoes and explore the world on his own. The world is not going to feed him nor it is going to come to him.

Mengestu's writing gives food for thinking as we feel author's attitude to reality, touch his inner world, learn about his personal life experience. Mengestu dwells on his memories and finds that he is grateful to the community he belongs to. He admires the sacrifices and contributions immigrants from different parts of the world have made coming to America. Mengestu's story reminds me of a movie called "Coming to America" with Eddie Murphy. The main hero comes to America to find a wife, looking for changes in his life, Mengestu and his family have come to America to find real home at last. Though the author still stays an Ethiopian boy his heart is pondering on his happy lot while a place he is looking for is Brooklyn. What I have learned in this expertly written piece is that it doesn't matter where you are from or what is the color of your skin or nationality, the feeling of loneliness follows everyone even natives who spend the whole life in their country of birth. The nature of this piece has convinced me that we are all unique in one way or another. We are all family and whether we want it or not, we all belong to communities which sooner or later become home to us. Welcome home Mengestu.

Work Cited

Dinaw Mengestu. "Home at Last." *Mirror on America*. By Joan T. Mims and Elizabeth M. Nollen. 5th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003. 74-78 print