

Evaluative analysis of "barn burning"

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William Faulkner's short story entitled "Barn Burning" is a depressive manifestation of discrimination and oppression in the society. Many people especially slaves experienced in this kind of situation. Even if they were not convicted of any malicious act, they will become the prime suspect or the criminal of any unlawful actions towards the ruling class. Despite of the Abner's character as a father and a worker contacted to the character of the main protagonist, Abner's son. This story illustrated the circumstances and conflicts within the family in the eyes of a child.

Sartoris loves his father so much but he could not tell his father how much because his father refuses to interact with his family due to successive problems in his work. In this case, the actions of the father always mould the situation of the family for he was the source of strength, weaknesses, failure, and success of everyone that gives unpredicted experience in each of the family members. "Barn Burning" is a story of a family who was being deprived in their society. Because the place was just a small county, every actions of each family or even a person were seen by everyone especially those in the ruling class.

Abner Snopes, the father was suspected of burning the barn of his neighboring farmer. Despite of the fact that he was only suspected to do the unlawful action, he was already connoted as a "barn burner". In a small place, they conduct a trial wherein they must know the reasons and evidences of burning the barn. They keep on asking Abner but he did not speak for his own yet, he almost remains silent and unpredictable. The Court of Peace dismissed the case and asked Abner to leave the county, which was the only way to "solve" the problem.

Abner and his family went out the county. As they went away from their previous location, a new landlord and aristocrat went by their lives. Major de Spain owns the house they occupied. He wants Abner to pay him a hundred dollars for the rent but Abner could not able to pay him that amount that is why de Spain told him to give him twenty bushels of corm from his farm to be the payment of their stay. Abner could not say anything because he knows that he has nothing to offer due to their lack of profit and their previous problem in their county.

He did not accept what de Spain wanted but he did not also refused because he does not have any power over him. Satoris, Abner's son did not want to pay de Spain because these were the only things they have. If they give it to de Spain, they will suffer more. Abner could not find a way, until one night while eating, de Spain's rug partially burned. Abner did not know what to do; his temper went up again and releases his anger to his family especially to Satoris for it was always there to watch his actions. One day, they went to the Justice again.

The Justice knew that de Spain's rug burned because Satoris have told him, for the reason that Satoris think that it was the only way to defend his father from probable punishment due to accidental burning of the rug, but it does not happen. The Justice asked Abner to pay more than the bushels of corn because of the burned rug. Abner did not say anything that made the case dismissed again. Abner's mind and heart was full of problems and heartache, which was seen by Satoris even if he refused to confess. Until one night, Abner decided to burn de Spain's barn as his revenge to him for his inhumane actions towards him and his family.

Abner runs toward the trees in the dark and went to de Spain's barn. Satoris followed him but he could not find his father because of the darkness. He saw de Spain and warned him that his father would burn his barn. After de Spain heard Satoris's confession, he went to the trees and find Abner with his horse. While Satoris was finding his father, he heard two shots of gun that made him think if this would be the assassination of his father or his brother's gun whom to be his father's accomplice. Due to tiredness, he did not saw his father. He went home when the sun rises and thinks of his father with fear, sadness, and revenge in his heart.

Personally, I can say that the main protagonist in this story is Satoris because the story went on from his perspective as a child even if the author uses third person point of view. The narrator did not speak for the father but for the son who seemed to grow with unusual scenario and an irony of innocence and maturity within his heart and mind. After what had happened to his father, Satoris wants to comfort and give his father the strength but Abner refuses to communicate with his family especially with Satoris for he knew that he was just a child not knowing anything in the real world, which was the opposite of his recognition to his son.

This scenario was seen throughout the story from the beginning up to the end that Abner did not give Satoris a chance to show his capability to help his father to minimize his circumstances. The words " get back into the wagon" were always the dialogue of Abner when he did not want Satoris to tell the truth. Aside from this, he only speaks to Satoris when he is mad as if Satoris and his family member were his punching bags. Punching bags

means his way of releasing his anger by way of shouting and yelling at them.
" You were fixing to tell them.

You would have told him," He didn't answer. His father struck him with the flat of his hand on the side of the head, hard but without heat, exactly as he had struck the two mules at the store, exactly as he would strike either of them with any stick in order to kill a horse fly, his voice still without heat or anger: " You're getting to be a man. You got to learn. You got to learn to stick to your own blood or you ain't going to have any blood to stick to you. Do you think either of them, any man there this morning, would?

Don't you know all they wanted was a chance to get at me because they knew I had them beat? Eh? " Later, twenty years later, he was to tell himself, " If I had said they wanted only truth, justice, he would have hit me again. " But now he said nothing. He was not crying. He just stood there. " Answer me," his father said. (Faulkner, n. d.) This situation is one of the most significant interactions between the father and the son where we could see that a father will always be the authority while the son will always be beneath the authority's actions and words.

However, it also shows that Satoris wants to tell his father to listen to him – to what he wants to say and what he wants to make him feel despite of everything but he could not because he knew that his father was already numb by all their tragic situations. Another issue emerged in the story is the formulation of family versus morality. The contradiction between family and morality evolved from the beginning and developed within the middle up to the end of the story. It was a circumstance for Abner because he was the

connected between the two – he was the bridge to the interrelating and opposing factors within him.

Abner wanted to gain his and his family's morality after what happened to them in the county that is why he chose to go away from their place, but the life and survival of his family was in the county, it was very hard for him to decide as the father and the ruling power. The story also demonstrated how Abner became powerful within his family where his words would be the rule while within his landlord and the justice, he was nothing but a farmer – a low class farmer without eyes to see, ears to hear, and mouth to speak.

If Abner's violation of his own code is the impetus for Sarty's breaking away, why didn't the whole Snopes family run defiantly to the de Spain's home? It is because this breach of standards comes at an impressionable stage of Sarty's life, while he still bears "the terrible handicap of being young, the light weight of his few years . . . not heavy enough to keep him footed solid in [the world], to resist it and try to change the course of its events" (220). This "handicap" allows him, unlike the others, to see the wrong committed by his father and to strive to prevent its disastrous consequences.

Many issues are needed to discuss in the story that emerged and developed throughout the flow of the narrative such as political, social, cultural, and personal aspects of the characters. In terms of political aspect, the situation within Abner and the Justice happens in reality. The Justice depends on the ruling class or the elite rather than the people who need him like Abner and his family. His dismissal of the case signifies that Abner was just a small person who cannot pay the Justice's job as the same as what his landlord used to do to win the battle in the court.

This political issue shows that there is no hope for people like Abner who needs the help of law but they close their doors because Abner cannot pay them huge amounts like those others. Social problem in this story was seen through the problem of morality. Discrimination was taken place in this story in different angles such as the discrimination towards the capabilities of a child, the discrimination towards low class people, and the discrimination towards women.

Discrimination towards children can be seen within the clash between the father and the son wherein, the son cannot show what he got because he was just a kid, which was shown by his father. Discrimination towards low class people can be seen within the clash between Abner and his landlord, wherein his landlord keep on telling him that he could not be able to rise from poverty because he was a " Barn Burner" and he will always be the barn burner as long as he lives. On the other hand, the discrimination towards women can be seen through the characters of Abner's wife, sister, and his daughters.

All of them have no voice in their family. They just keep on asking themselves what is happening without any confrontation between them and Abner. The character of Abner's wife was weak as what the narrator illustrated wherein she only used to cry and to shout when Abner is doing something unusual, but there is no resolution within her – just an explosion of her feelings through tears and yell. Cultural issues also emerged within the family. Their family culture was seen when they went to their new house. All of them have their own tasks, from the father, the mother, the aunt, up to the children.

However, the emergence of the conflict did not come from their tasks but from their own beliefs as individuals. Abner's belief as a father did not match from the belief of the mother and his son Satoris but the same with his other son whom to be his accomplice in the end. Despite of the fact that they are a family, their culture did not match from one another, which resulted more problems and conflicts between them. Personal issues were the primary problem in the story. All of the characters have their own problems, fears, and failures as individuals.

Even if they get along as a family, they tend to clash because of their own perspectives and ideologies that are different from one another. Aside from these, their personal issues increased because of their environmental issues or their issues within their environments such as the people around them. Through this, personal issues became the real point of attack of each character to establish their characterization. When it comes to the characters in the story, protagonists correlate one another in order to build their own depiction. However, the father made its character become part of each of the characters in the story.

His actions and words manifest significantly towards the realizations and ideologies of other characters especially his family. His words became the rule; his scream was the echo of the house, while his face became the image of law in their house. " If you ain't going to tote, go on and set up the wash pot," the first said. " You, Sarty! " the second shouted. " Set up the wash pot! " His father appeared at the door, framed against that shabbiness, as he had been against that other bland perfection, impervious to either, the mother's anxious face at his shoulder.

" Go on," the father said. " Pick it up. " The two sisters stooped, broad, lethargic; stooping, they presented an incredible expanse of pale cloth and a flutter of tawdry ribbons. " If I thought enough of a rug to have to git hit all the way from France I wouldn't keep hit where folks coming in would have to tromp on hit," the first said. They raised the rug, " Abner, " the mother said. " Let me do it. " " You go back and git dinner," his father said. " I'll tend to this. " (Faulkner, n. d.) As a whole, all the characters in the story were mould based on the character of Abner.

His weaknesses, strengths, failure, and success became their foundation to have their own perspective in life. Despite of the fact that they have encountered cultural, political, personal, and social issues, all of them are connected to the execution of Abner in different situations even the Justice and the landlord expose its character to make the life of Abner more miserable. Justification towards this issue can be seen throughout the story where all their eyes were set to Abner's actions and expressions.

Therefore, I can say that fatherhood is a sensitive responsibility towards family and morality. A man's family always depends on his strategies and capabilities as the provider of his home. However, his capability to discriminate the strengths of his family members is also an emerging conflict for the reason that because of his power, he tends to dominate their own principles without recognizing that it may be the solution to their problem, which resulted failure, inconvenience, and miscommunication within the family. Works Cited

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