Marlee Yerkes Christine Berni

Take Home Essay English 2328 Section 70309-004

Part 1: Moral Dilemmas, Part 2: Power of Possession Wednesday May 15th, 2019

In the short story, “My Man Bovanne” by Tony Cade Bambara the main character Hazel is faced with a moral dilemma of embracing her heritage, and being kind to a nice blind gentleman that her children are not to found of. In the story, a generation gap exist between miss Hazel and her children which makes it difficult for them to understand each others’ views. The children wish for her to focus on the Black Party fundraiser rather than to be kind and dance with Man Bovanne. They also wish for her to embrace her black culture. The children are in the age of standing up for black rights; being proud of their heritage. While miss Hazel, older, is still in the age where you would be ashamed to be black. She tried to look more western by wearing wigs and such. This generation gap creates a moral dilemma in the story which leads miss Hazel to choose between supporting the Black party (and thus embracing her heritage), and doing as she wishes with herself and Man Bovanne; upsetting her children and other Black Party members. Ultimately, Hazel resolves the dilemma by doing as she wishes, and ignoring judgment of other; not embracing the culture that was wished by her children.

At the beginning of the short story Hazel is enjoying a dance with Man Bovanne when she is tapped on the shoulder by her child, Task, who brought her back in the kitchen to be lectured by the other kids. “You were making a spectacle of yourself out there dancing like that” (Pg 3307), “You embarrass yourself and us too dancing like that” (Pg 3308) said miss Hazel’s children. They continue to try and persuade Hazel into acting according to social/moral norms. Wishing she would be more involved in the event, and wishing she would take off her wig and embrace her black heritage, “Is your hair braided up under that thing? If so, why don’t you take it off? You always did do a neat cornroll” (Pg 3309). Miss Hazel’s reaction to the moral dilemma that her children face her with is to pretty much ignore the issue. She arranges to address the issue at dinner the next night, and continues doing as she wishes with Man Bovanne. Ignoring her children’s wishes, Hazel leaves the fundraising event with Man Bovanne to pamper him and give him a luxurious bath and spa treatment, “Instead I just haul the man on out of there, and Joe Lee and his wife look at me like I’m terrible” (Pg 3310). Hazel chooses to rebel against the moral standards that her children and the black party represent. She ignores their wishes of the moral dilemma, and instead does as she wishes; taking Man Bovanne home to show her appreciation for him by giving him a nice spa treatment.

In the short story, “Burning Barn” by William Faulkner a similar moral dilemma is demonstrated when Colonel Sartoris is pressured by his father’s moral standards to be loyal to family. Instead of the children pressuring the parent into a moral dilemma like in “My Man Bovanne” by Tony Cade Bambara, in this story the parent pressures the child into a moral dilemma. Colonel Sartoris is expected to lie on his father’s behalf in the courtroom so his father can avoid punishment. Colonel Sartoris is faced with a moral dilemma of being loyal to his father and being loyal to the law/truth. At first, Sartoris chooses to be loyal to his father, lying for him/defending him. But towards the end of the story, the pressure from his father becomes to much to bare. He confronts this moral dilemma by rebelling against his father, and running away.

At the beginning of the story, Sartoris seems worried about lying for his father, but compiles anyway. He defends his father in the Mr. Haris case and even gets into a fight with a boy about the barn burning as they leave the court house, “Barn Burner!”...”feeling no blow this time either and tasting no blood, scrabbing up to see the other boy in full flight” (Pg 1998). Sartoris if forced to stick up for his father again when his father makes his sisters clean Mrs. de Spain expensive rug incorrectly. Mrs. de Spain request for twenty bushels of corn in exchange for the damaged carpet. Sartoris defends his dad saying, “He did the best that he could” (Pg 2005) and tries to dismiss the charge of twenty bushels of corn in court for his father, but fails. At the end of the story, Sartoris can not bare the pressure his father places on him anymore. He rebels from his father when he runs to warn Mrs. de Spain that his father is going to burn down her barn. Sartoris is sick of lying for his father and trying to clean up his messes, he screams “barn” (Pg 2009) giving away his father’s location, resulting in his father’s death. Sartoris was faced with a moral dilemma in the short story, “Barn Burning”. He was forced to choose between being loyal to his dad by lying and covering up his tracks, or to tell the truth; disappointing his father. Ultimately, Sartoris deals with this dilemma by rebelling against his father’s wishes, tells on his father to Mrs. de Spain, and runs away, “He went on down the hill, towards the dark woods”...”He did not look back” (pg 2010). Saroris rebellion from this dilemma seems to free him from the pressures of his father, so he can finally be loyal to the truth.

Part 2:

The power of possession is a key theme in the novel “Euphoria” by Lily King. The main characters are on a journey which they are personally trying to possess something that is important to them, in some cases creating conflict. Fen is constantly trying to possess status and recognition throughout the story. He feels intimidated by the success of Nell, and obsesses over trying to find a way to become famous. He can’t just writing a book, who would read it? He must do something way more impressive than Nell to seek recognition for his success in his tribal studies. He comes up with a plan to steal a sacred flute with a member of the Tam tribe (Xambun) which he will bring back to America to show as proof of his success; thus having the status he wishes. This creates conflict in the tribe as when Fen returns with the the stolen flute, Xambun had been shot with arrows to death. The tribe wishes to barry the flute with Xambun for religious purposes, but Fen refuses, “stick it in the ground to rot? After everything I went through?” (Pg 224). This creates further conflicting in the tribe, forcing Bankson, Nell, and Fen to leave immediately in order to avoid more problems with the tribe.

Nell tries to possess Euphoria in her tribal studies, the moment where you think you have it all figured out. She attempts to possess the right balance between masculine and feminine in each tribe she studies. She is constantly on the lookout for a culture that, “Had it all figured out, had the secrets of life”. A culture or tribe that would make all her question make sense, a culture with good balance. This creates conflict with Nell and Fen as they both have different ideas about what the right amount of masculine and feminine is. Fen wishes for a more masculine culture while Nell wishes for there to be a good balance or equilibrium. Nell also tries to possess a lover that is wine, and she wishes to be wine to them; not turning to bread. Nell is constantly searching for answers on how she can remain like wine to he lovers. At the same time Nell is not trying to possess her lover, “Do you think it’s natural, the desire to possess another person” (Pg 191) “Many tribes share everything, food, shelter, land, income, but their stories always revolve around someone’s brother or best friend stealing his woman” (Pg 193). Nell does not believe in the possession of other people, she believes in sharing. This creates conflict as Fen does not want to share, and is possessive. She trying to possess a tribe to study that has a good balance of masculine and feminine energies, does not wish to possess each other, and can remain as wine. This creates conflict in that there is not an ideal culture with all the positive traits that Nell wishes to study. She will have to accept the culture for who they are and remember, “The story you think you know is never the real one”.

Bankson tries to possess and understand the theory of anthropology. Before Nell and Fen, Bankson was making no progress with the studying of the Kiona tribe. He was more of an observer than an anthropologist, which created conflict with the Kiona tribe. They did not trust him or known why he was there since he did not interact with the tribe as Nell did. He got little information out of them. The tribe would trick Bankson into going away while they celebrated a party. Bankson constantly tries to possess Nell’s traits of a good anthropologist. He brings her techniques that she used with the Tam tribe back to the Kiona tribe, and begins to make excellent progress in his studies. Bankson also tries to possess company, a partner, and friendship. At the beginning of the story, Bankson almost commits suicide do to his loneliness in the field of anthropology, “Three days earlier, I’d gone to the river to drown myself” (Pg 14). He was upset he had been months alone without a partner or any success in his studies. He longed for company and friendship which he tries to possess with Nell. Bankson and Nell make great progress in studying tribes together; they get each others thought process going. This bring conflict as Fen quickly become jealous of how well Nell and Bankson work together. Pushing Fen to want to possess status even more, so he can ‘out shine’’ Nell. This ultimately results in flute conflict with the Tam tribe, forcing Nell, Bankson, and Fen to leave.

The novel “Euphoria” by Lily King teaches us about the power of possession and the possession of power. Each character tries to possess something that they believe will give them power, resulting in conflict. We learned that the want to possess certain things for power can either be constructive or deconstructive. We can see this with Fen as he is deconstructive to the Tam tribe, with Nell as she is constructive to the Tam tribe, and with Bankson as he is constructive to the Kiona tribe with his possession of power. The character’s reason behind the possession is what makes the outcome positive or negative. Possessing things just for your own good (like Fen) will result in more conflict. While possess things for everyone’s benefit (like Nell and Bankson) will result in less conflict. Overall, the novel shines light on what people will go through to possess power, and the consequences of obtaining the power of possession.

Works Cited Page

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