

# DECONSTRUCTING THE POSITION OF THE SAVIOR AND THE DAMNED IN FLANNERY O'CONNOR'S “THE LAME SHALL ENTER FIRST”

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## **Abstract**

This paper aims to show the use of deconstruction theory by Jacques Derrida to offer other possible meanings in a short story entitled “The Lame Shall Enter First” by Flannery O'Connor. The researcher shows the flaw in the binary oppositions constructed by the text and reveals the failure of the logical arguments of the oppositions by redefining qualities of the opposite characters in the story, Sheppard, Norton, and Rufus. The researcher used descriptive-qualitative method as it is a qualitative research of which the data are nonnumeric.

The researcher finds three binary oppositions that become the center of the story. The first pair of binary opposition is religion and logic. The second are selfishness and compassion, and the third is ignorance and sympathy. The oppositions are represented by characters Sheppard, Rufus, and Norton. By closely reading the text and attacking the basic premises of the text, the researcher finds that the binary oppositions no longer serve as the foundation of the story since the story proves that all those binary oppositions eventually show otherwise.

**Keywords:** deconstruction, binary opposition, character

## **THE STORY**

Sheppard was a City Recreational Director who also worked in a reformatory house every Saturday. His wife passed away just a year ago. He lived with his only begotten son, Norton. Norton was just ten years old and Sheppard felt helpless about Norton since he could not forget her mother. In the reformatory, Sheppard knew a boy named Rufus Johnson whom he considered brilliant yet had a

bad record as a professional juvenile delinquent. The boy had a hard life with his grandfather who always treated him improperly and the effect was reflected in his indecorous behaviors. He had a list of criminal records which ranged from the simple to the massive public property destruction which finally sent him to the reformatory where Sheppard worked.

Sheppard had a hope to adopt Rufus and led him to the right path by making him studying many subjects, particularly science, since he thought he knew Rufus' intellectual capacity. Rufus had a high pride not to easily accept Sheppard's offer to stay with his family and be adopted. Thus, Sheppard had a method of letting Rufus having one of the keys in his house so that he could freely come whenever he wanted. The method was quite successful for at last Rufus came in when Sheppard was away from home. His coming also marked his first encounter with Norton. The boy was amazed by Rufus although previously he had been informed by his father that Rufus might come. During his first visit to Sheppard's house, Rufus continuously made Norton serve him. Rufus wandered around the house and made Norton furious by using his mother's comb and corset.

When he came from the office, Sheppard was too excited with Rufus' decision to come and ignored Norton's protest about Rufus' behaviors. Rufus had his own room and Sheppard began to buy him a telescope and a microscope which he thought would encourage and fulfill Rufus' curiosity on science. Rufus was interested but it was not long. It disappointed Sheppard.

The conflict was followed when a policeman came and charged Rufus with an attempt of robbery and smashing furniture in a house. In his purpose to teach Rufus responsibility, he let the policeman took Rufus from his house. However, it was proven next that the bad job was the work of another man. Sheppard felt sorry and picked Rufus from the police office. The days went as usual despite the relation between Rufus and Norton were getting closer.

One day, another policeman came with the same charge upon Rufus yet at this time Sheppard decided to save him because he wanted to believe him and repaid his fault. The next morning, they went to the shoe maker to pick a new shoe for Rufus that had been measured before. However, Rufus rejected the new shoe and said that he was not interested and preferred his old and knackered shoe. When they were home, the police came for the third time with the same charge and enough proofs of what Rufus had committed. Sheppard could prove that he and the boys were together all day long. The police left.

In the breakfast table the next morning, Rufus and Norton brought the Bible and read them together. Sheppard was angry at the attitude since he was a secular and always got irritated by Rufus' religious remarks upon what Sheppard had done to him. He said that Rufus should start to leave Bible because he was too intelligent to be able to believe it. Responding to Sheppard's anger, Rufus ate one of the pages from the Bible and disappeared. Sheppard started to think about his decision to change Rufus. When he was still deep in his thought, the policeman came with Rufus in his custody. The boy shouted that he preferred to be caught rather than staying in an atheist's house.

Being relief that finally Rufus left his house, he began to think about Norton whom he had ignored for the past days. He realized that he missed his only time with Norton and ensured himself that he should be more caring about Norton. When he came up to the attic, he found Norton hung himself in his longing for his mother.

## **DECONSTRUCTION**

Post-structuralism is a respond to structuralism which believes that everything in the universe has structures and can be defined based on the structures which construct it. This belief goes for language as well. Structuralists like Saussure declares that every sign, including language which is regarded as a sign, consists of signifier and signified. Every signifier corresponds to the signified automatically and is able to define the essence of the signified fully. The absolute relation between signified and signified is the premise of structuralism.

Structuralism also believes in logocentrism, a belief upon an essence or truth which becomes the foundation of all our beliefs (Sarup, 1993: 37). This logocentric principle is longing for a transcendental signifier which directly relates to transcendental signified. This kind of signifier exists because it excludes or negates another signifier so that it can emerge as the major one. Binary oppositions exist to serve this kind of exclusion in order to create the most prominent signifier or transcendental signifier. Upon this way of thinking, Derrida suggests that it is important to subvert these oppositions and show that one signifier is inherent within others.

In *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida criticizes Husserl who makes a distinction between expression and indication. According to Husserl, expression is speech proper which is meaningful. Indication is things like gestures, facial expressions, and other forms of contextualizations such as culture, rhetoric, and writing which involuntarily accompany expressions. Thus, indication is favored less than expression since it is regarded as meaningless. The true meaning is speech, when utterances are spoken directly by a person. The way Husserl sees the importance of speech is what has been called as logocentrism which becomes the center of Western philosophy and has been discussed previously.

However, according to Derrida, what happens in communication is that:

Sensible phenomena (audible or visible, etc.) are animated through the sense-giving acts of a subject, whose intention is to be simultaneously understood by another subject. But the "animation" cannot be pure and complete, for it must traverse, and to some degree lose itself in, the opaqueness of a body. (Derrida, 1973: 38).

It means that the hearer does not completely grasp the meaning conveyed by the speaker since he does not have the same experience with the speaker. He is only able to capture the languages delivered.

What is being criticized is the phenomenology premise which believes in the simultaneity between experience and awareness of experience. A truth can be perceived because it is repetitive. The presence-of-the present is derived from repetition (Derrida, 1973: 52). It always consists of traces, repetition.

Language so long has been used as a media to define and convey human's expression. Language is regarded as a full representation. However, in reality, language has elements that cannot be absolutely defined and so is writing. Derrida argues that writing is precondition of language and must be conceived as prior to speech (Sarup, 1993: 41). The respond is used to reject structuralism's belief that speech has the higher privilege rather than writing. According Derrida, writing in this context is not the empirical concept of writing. It is a structure that is already inhabited by trace. The term trace is essential in deconstruction. Derrida believes that every sign consists of trace since the presence always consists of traces.

Deconstruction is a thorough reading method used to reveal paradoxes in a text. The reading process will not end until the last sentence is reached by the reader. Thus, meaning does not emerge until the end of the reading process. Unlike the belief of structuralism, post-structuralism holds a belief that meaning will

never stay the same from context to context (Sarup, 1993: 34). Language, in which meanings are brought within, consists of traces that can be connected with other traces in the different contexts. Thus, meaning or trace will never be stable since language is not as stable as what has been thought by structuralism.

The paradoxes can be found through listing oppositions discovered in a text and then the analyst shows that the text fails in bringing the meaning suggested by the text itself on account of the unstable criteria and standards. Readers or researchers should note that language is constructed by a lot of metaphors. Every language is metaphorical. Thus, they should pay close attention to every metaphor used in the text. Text is not built by a logical argument. Instead, it is constructed based on the metaphors. Thus, readers or researchers should find the failure or flaw in the logical arguments through the metaphors (Faruk, 2012: 218). Derrida also says,

Writing is the outlet as the descent of meaning outside itself within itself: metaphor-for-others-aimed-at-others-here-and-now, metaphor as the possibility of others here-and-now, metaphor as metaphysics in which Being must hide itself if the other is to appear (Derrida, 2002: 35).

The meaning brought by metaphors can be interpreted differently since there are two different worlds between the world of the author and readers. There is no fixed meaning that can solely define the aim of a word, phrase, sentence, or text as a whole. They are changeable according to contexts. Authors can always be interpreted since meaning is something more, less, or other than what the writer would mean (Derrida, 1997: 68). It highlights a fact that meaning and author are paradoxical for there are differences between what the text wants to say and what the author does. It does not mean that text is meaningless for if the text is meaningless, it does not have the possibility to be interpreted by the readers.

## **METHOD OF THE STUDY**

The writing aims to reveal the failure of the text entitled “The Lame Shall Enter First” in maintaining the criteria and standards of the text meanings or in other words, this paper tries to deconstruct the meaning that is attempted to be built by the text. The researcher used Derrida's theory of deconstruction to reveal the instability found in Flannery O'Connor's short story entitled “The Lame Shall Enter First” by listing the binary oppositions found in the text and then tearing them

down to show that the oppositions fail in their own ways to maintain the arguments and standards that have been tried to build. The researcher used a descriptive-qualitative method as it is a qualitative research of which data are nonnumeric.

## FINDINGS

I use deconstruction to reveal other possible meanings hidden in Flannery O'Connor's "The Lame Shall Enter First" as a part of understanding the issue brought by the story. The story is basically bringing the issue of faith, on how the author wants to highlight the deprivation of those who do not believe in religion and favor logic more as their sole belief.

The text builds the binary oppositions by putting two characters in two different poles for each pair of oppositions. Sheppard is portrayed as a logical man, settled, mature, and having a great career as a director of a city recreational office and still maintaining a time to take care of children in reformatory house based on his belief that he should serve others who need care and guidance. One of the children whom he is interested due to his brilliance is Rufus who in the beginning of the story is depicted as a juvenile delinquent who has much trouble with his life and characteristics. Yet, he is portrayed as being so religious and ignorant at the same time. Sheppard also has one son named Norton whom he considers as selfish and spoiled since the death of his wife. He is a ten-year-old boy who badly needs guidance and love from his surroundings.

The first binary opposition that is highlighted in the story is the logical characteristic represented by Sheppard's and religious represented by Rufus. Sheppard's view on religion can be identified through this lines, *He wondered if he could infuriate Johnson enough to make him leave of his own accord. Last night what had enraged him was the Jesus business* (O'Connor, 1971: 475). The topic on religious things brought by Rufus makes him in fury because he is an atheist and considers the teachings of religion as useless for the development of people. He wants Rufus to grow up as an intellectual whose thought is based on rationality. On the other hand, Rufus is a faithful Christian who besides his destructive behaviors and emotional imbalance, still holds the belief of God strongly represented by his favorite topic in the Bible depicted in some occasions, *"The Bible has give the evidence," Johnson said darkly, "and if you die and go there you burn forever"* (O'Connor, 1971: 461).

The second pair of oppositions are selfishness and compassion that are represented by characters Norton and Sheppard. Norton's nature is portrayed as selfish after his mother dies. Sheppard cannot tolerate it. In the story, the word "selfish" or "selfishness" directed to Norton from Sheppard is mentioned six times to show how massive it is the effect caused by the death of his wife, *Johnson's sad thin hand rooted in garbage cans for food while his own child, selfish, unresponsive, greedy, had so much that he threw it up* (O'Connor, 1971: 449). The opening of the text attempts to create that kind of image for Norton when he is described responding sensitively with any topics about his mother. Sheppard is found always criticizing every conduct of Norton and he shows that he is not happy having Norton and always worries about what the child may become in the future.

On the other hand, Sheppard is portrayed as a compassionate man since he aims to help Rufus from poverty and ignorance. Sheppard thinks that Rufus' condition is able to mend by his help. He considers himself as the one who is responsible for the betterment of the child. Despite the dislike Rufus shows to him since the very first time they met, Sheppard sticks in his aim to mend the destructive part of the boy. The care for the child is clearly shown by his serious attempts to adopt him. He buys him a microscope and a telescope, hoping that he can fulfill his curiosity on science and many fields that he has not known yet. He feels hopeful for the boy and feels disappointed that Norton does not have the sense to share with others. He hopes that by bringing Rufus home, he can show to Norton how love and care should be shared to others if people have more than enough. *"Listen," Sheppard said, "we need another boy in the house." There was a genuine desperation in his voice. "Norton here has never had to divide anything in his life. He doesn't know what it means to share. And I need somebody to teach him,"* (O'Connor, 1971: 457).

The third binary opposition aims to confront ignorance and sympathy. The first characteristic is represented by Rufus while the second one is represented by Sheppard. Rufus is portrayed as ignorant for he is described having high determination to fulfill his own need without thinking about others. He steals, breaks into houses, or makes simple crimes to fulfill what he needs. He only cares about himself, even when there is Sheppard who shows his intention to adopt and provide him with shelter and proper life. His nature is partly due to his background as having a family who neglect him and do not care with his presence. He begins to believe that his surroundings reject him and develops a feeling of ignorance as a response.

On the other hand, Sheppard has been shown as a character who has sympathy for others. He works in a reformatory house every Saturdays without payment and he also aims to raise Rufus to a better place because he thinks that Rufus deserves it. The confrontation between these two natures is explained well when Sheppard's sympathy is responded by Rufus' cold answers and continuous ignorance. Rufus' rejects the shoe that is specially made for him by a shoemaker based on Sheppard's request. Rufus chooses to wear his old shoe which is not proper anymore to be called as a shoe (O'Connor, 1971: 470-471). This proves how Rufus does not want others to give comments or even throw any sympathy upon his condition. It more or less explains his nature which makes him safe in his own world where others do not have any chance to interrupt it.

The binary oppositions are built through the different characteristics that have been discussed above. However, the aim of deconstruction is to prove that those characteristics are not able to wholly support their own and have contradiction that can be found by scrutinizing the text in a very careful way. In the very first time, it seems that the binary oppositions found in the story build their own foundation so solid that it cannot be shaken. However, the story subverts the rigidity and questions the border that has been built between the oppositions. The border between the oppositions proves to be not so strong like what has been thought before.

The following analysis will discuss the lack of each binary opposition by showing the inconsistency in the premise or basic assumption of the opposition.

### **1. Logic Vs Religion**

Sheppard adores and has hopes upon Rufus because he knows that Rufus has capability that not every person has: he is quite intelligent, proven by the score of his IQ. This sole fact serves as a proof to an opinion that Sheppard is very keen on reasoning and can explain why he does not rely much in religion. Science and intelligence are quite enough to provide a proper life since the modern life offers great chance for those who have been lucky enough having a brain. The way Sheppard favors logic much can be seen when he compares Rufus and Norton. *Johnson had a capacity for real response and had been deprived of everything from birth; Norton was average or below and had had every advantage* (O'Connor, 1971: 44). He contrasts the unjust condition between those two persons with different brains. The reason he wants to help Rufus corresponds with his affection on science and intelligence. He foresees that Rufus' future will be brighter than his son.



Rufus who is a devoted Christian criticizes Sheppard's attitudes who likes to direct others for his own sake. In one of the occasions when a journalist and policemen come to Sheppard's house to report Rufus' capture, Rufus intentionally says in a loud voice that Sheppard is an atheist and he does not like Sheppard. Similar with what has been stated by Mills and Sagan (2006: 25), "An atheist is a person who rejects the concept of God." They believe in science that only addresses naturally occurring phenomena and excludes consideration of supernatural (Mills and Sagan, 2006: 154). It is different with Rufus who holds his belief rigidly and fanatically and never seriously questions the teachings of the Church. In basic assumptions, religious adherents are different with atheists and they may perceive same things differently. What Rufus feels about Sheppard's authoritative ways prove that Sheppard regards himself as the right one without considering the interest of the persons whom he directs. He is never interested and cares in what Rufus is interested in. What becomes of his goal is how he can fulfill his ambition on others.

This statement below also shows how Sheppard perceives that what he does is similar with the work of a clergyman which in some ways can explain his reason in deciding Rufus' future and stating that Norton will not have a bright future.

"He had never been inside a confessional but he thought it must be the same kind of operation he had here, except that he explained, he did not absolve. His credentials were less dubious than a priest's; he had been trained for what he was doing (O'Connor, 1971: 49).

His arrogance becomes his lack and makes Rufus considers him not more than a chatty man. Sheppard character cannot be proven as a religious one but at the end of the story, he realizes that the way he treats Norton is unacceptable only after he realizes that he cannot change Rufus like what he wants. This turning point is the key point which communicates an idea that Sheppard eventually is not the strong adherent of logic. In Sheppard's perspective, Rufus is a metaphor of logic, a side where Sheppard has decided to rely. That is why he has bigger hopes for him and uses much effort to place him in an important position. Norton on the other hand, is a metaphor for religion which he ignores and hates. His brain is not as brilliant as Rufus and he is considered as a source of his worries.

However, at the end, Sheppard realizes that he did a mistake by choosing a stranger over his own child. *He saw the clear-eyed Devil, the sounder of hearts,*

*leering at Him from the eyes of Johnson* (O'Connor, 1971: 481). He is haunted by guilt that he produces by favoring the wrong side. His belief and hopes are crumbling down at the same time and it triggers him to come back to Norton. Does he convert himself by siding in the position that he hates before? There is no proof. However, it is quite clear that the moment he decides to come back to Norton, that is also the moment where he starts to bear in his heart that what he believes so far is wrong.

Rufus is a problematic character since the very first time. He cannot represent a true religious adherent. There is a reason for this statement. He behaves not according to what has been taught in the Bible and religious teachings. He commits crimes and causes troubles to others. Although he declares that he is going to go to hell for what he has done, it cannot explain why he does not try to behave well which becomes the one of the cores in religious teaching. He is torn apart and thus cannot serve as a religious character that tries to be imposed by the text. Throughout the story, there is a big question that problematizes Rufus' confession as a religious person for he has different characters with religious adherents expected by the Bible.

## **2. Compassion Vs Selfishness**

It has been stated that Sheppard helps strangers and people who do not have any relations to him. He fulfills his responsibility as a helper in society. Overall, that is a portrayal that wants to be grasped from Sheppard character. Unfortunately, he does not share this quality with his own son, Norton. Norton is selfish and unresponsive. He thinks about himself and his mom, who has just died last year. Sheppard feels hopeless for he thinks that it is not normal for a child to have a grief that is not recovered after one year. He wants Norton to be as compassionate and helpful to others as himself. Therefore, he always compares his great condition with the condition of Rufus.

“You have a healthy body,” Sheppard said, “a good home. You've never been taught anything but the truth. Your daddy gives you everything you need and want. You don't have a grandfather who beats you. And your mother is not in the state penitentiary” (O'Connor, 1971: 447).

Sheppard repeats the kind of sentences in every occasion when he thinks Norton's behaviors are irritating. For him, Norton is a child who needs to be treated harder after the death of his mother. Therefore, Sheppard never cares about Norton's protests and regards them merely as whines.

Sheppard's aim to adopt Rufus partly corresponds with the need to make Norton realize that he should behave better. It is partly also due to the caring factor that he owns. Sheppard sees that getting custody of Rufus is not a simple thing for he still has a grandfather, not to mention Rufus' difficult character. Yet, he struggles to be able to make betterment on Rufus' life for the sake of his future, *The idea of getting custody of Johnson has occurred to Sheppard before, but the fact of the grandfather had stood in the way. Nothing excited him so much as thinking what he could do for such a boy* (O'Connor, 1971: 452).

However, his care for Rufus and his constant protests to Norton's behaviors at some points start to reveal his true character. His compassion for Rufus, for example, is centered upon his belief that someday the child will have a better future and at the same time regards himself as the sole person who foresees the bright future of the child. Thus, he has complete rights to direct Rufus without considering the fact that Rufus also has his own interests. His feeling of compassion for Rufus cannot be delivered because it is not based on the purpose to make the child happy but on Sheppard's ambition. The scale of the ambition is so great that he can neglect his son in order to fulfill his ambition. The telescope and microscope that he buys is not Rufus' dream. They represent Sheppard's dream that wants to be cultivated in the child's mind.

Since he finds that Norton is incapable to fulfill his ambition, he runs to Rufus whom he thinks has enough brain to realize his dream. For him, Norton does not have any chance to deserve a great future due to his selfishness and thus his belief for his own child fades, *All he wanted for the child was that he be good and unselfish and neither seemed likely* (O'Connor, 1971: 445).

The selfish character that he continually tries to label to Norton is quite interesting to discuss. As a father, Sheppard seems to forget that his child is only ten years old. He is far to be considered as a teenager, or even an adult. Moreover, his mother has just passed away. He loses the central figure who is important in shaping his characters. Norton depends on his mother and it is normal for the children in his age to adore their mothers more than anyone else in the world. Fathers should be his only hope to replace the mother's position since fathers are the second closest figure to the children if their mothers die. As a social worker who works for a reformatory house that deals mostly with juvenile delinquents, Sheppard should be aware of the basic principle in the family role. However, he fails to understand when there is a case in his own family that badly needs understanding and analysis.

In other words, it is normal for Norton to whine and cry since he has just lost his mother. One year that Sheppard thinks as the tolerance time cannot be applied for the child since Sheppard does not think about the position of the child who is often left by the busy father who works six days in a week. He needs more time with his father because that is the basic need for a child like Norton. Norton's development is based on the treatments he receives from his surroundings in the crucial age. It also can explain why Norton is very fond of saving nickels and dimes that he collects from selling seeds. He sells seeds to win a thousand dollar prize, a child's simple dream that may also be had by other children. However, Sheppard is very sick of the seed business. He never tries to understand things from the point of view of his child. He merely blames Norton's activity as the embodiment of his passiveness. Sheppard even compares Norton's favorite activity with his dream.

“Suppose by some chance you did win a thousand dollars. Wouldn't you like to spend it on children less fortunate than yourself? Wouldn't you like to give some swings and trapezes to the orphanage? Wouldn't you like to buy poor Rufus Johnson a new shoe?” (O'Connor, 1971: 448).

The dimes, nickels, and seeds are the metaphors for the loneliness felt by Norton. He collects them because he wants to fulfill the emptiness left by the death of his mother yet cannot be fulfilled by the presence of his father since every time he has a time with his father; his father is going to find a reason to scold him. In other words, the selfishness is not owned by Norton, but rather by his father who is too selfish to fulfill his own ambition. His father who feels his compassion towards Rufus and aims to treat him like his own child fails to fulfill his basic job to his own son.

### **3. Sympathy Vs Ignorance**

Sympathy has ignorance as its opposition because the two words work in two different scales. Sympathy is a quality of showing care for the deprivation of others. The scale is wider than the individual scale. While ignorance is a quality of showing care to himself and never cares about others' feeling or condition. These two qualities are represented by Sheppard and Rufus. Sheppard gives his attention not only to the problem of his own house but also his surroundings. He thinks about Norton as the metaphor for a smaller social scale and Rufus for the wider social scale. He wants to maintain his professionalism both as a father and also a social worker. When at last he knows that he fails, he says, *I did everything I knew how for him. I did more for him than I did for my own child. I hoped to save him and I failed,*

*but it was an honorable failure. I have nothing to reproach myself with* (O'Connor, 1971: 480).

Rufus, on the other hand, is too focused with his own life and disturbed by others' attention to him. He never cares about his surroundings because what he thinks about them is only how to take advantage of others. It much explains why he commits crimes continuously. Even the presence of Sheppard in his life with his great sympathy to take him out of poverty cannot make Rufus believe him. Sheppard's guidance is useless since the very beginning because Rufus is determined with his own doing, *Johnson looked at him stonily. "I ain't asked for no explanation," he said. "I already know why I do what I do."* (O'Connor, 1971: 450). Rufus steals and lies because he likes to do it even though he knows the consequences.

However, in line with the real character of Sheppard that has contradiction in itself and has been discussed above, the sympathetic quality also has its own gap that is possible to be questioned. This characteristic is not that rigid because it corresponds with the characteristic of compassion. Behind the sympathetic treatment that Sheppard gives to Rufus, there is a personal ambition that he wants to fulfill. He struggles to fulfill it by judging others' attitudes. Sheppard feels that he has the privilege to decide that Rufus needs help and Norton needs to be taught and treated harder. All of the assumptions are made in the name of sympathy for the boys.

In the practice, he realizes that his ambition is crumbling down because he never has the sympathy for the boys. He is ignorant of them and never thinks about their deep feeling and opinions, *"I want to see you make the most of your intelligence," Sheppard said. "What's most important to you? Let's talk about what's important to you."* *His eyes dropped involuntarily to the foot* (O'Connor, 1971: 450). He defines and constructs others' lives because he thinks he knows what is best for them.

On the other hand, Rufus who is portrayed as very ignorant shows sympathy for Norton by starting to tell him the teachings of religion to save him from his atheist father. Rufus does not respect Sheppard because he does not believe in God and shows continuous selfish treatments to him and his son. When Rufus comes and invites Norton to learn with him about the Bible, he feels excited because he has a partner to accompany him doing an activity, a simple joy that he cannot get from his own father. Sheppard is very shocked when his son and Rufus

read the Bible side by side in the breakfast table. At the same time, Sheppard is also struck by the change in Norton's face.

The child's face was bright and there was an excited sheen to his eyes. The change that had come over the boy struck him for the first time. He looked alert. He had on a blue plaid sirt and his eyes were a brighter blue than he had ever seen them before (O'Connor, 1971: 476).

It proves how Rufus' presence has more impacts for him than his father's. Sheppard fails to bring happiness and love for the child and Rufus, who is able to see the lack of it, has the sympathy to fulfill what has been left empty by Sheppard.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Flannery O'Connor's "The Lame Shall Enter First" highlights the story about a social worker named Sheppard who wants to save a juvenile delinquent named Rufus suffering from poverty and child abuse. In his effort to help him, Sheppard ignores the need of his own child who badly needs his presence after the death of his mother.

This text is problematic since the very first time because the characters that are used to build the basic assumptions of the text cannot maintain the premises. The text itself proves that characters Sheppard, Norton, and Rufus fail in fulfilling their own roles. This assumption marks the work of deconstruction to offer other possible meanings that may be interpreted from the story. There are three binary oppositions that can be used as a starting point to analyze the loose premises.

The first binary opposition is logic and religion. Sheppard who declares himself as an atheist realizes that the way he favors science and intelligence represented by his fondness of Rufus should be paid by his regret of ignoring Norton, followed by his death. On the other hand, Rufus' religious character is also problematic since he keeps committing crimes which contradict with the teachings of religion.

The second is compassion and selfishness. Sheppard feels hopeless for Norton's selfishness. He turns his attention to Rufus and pours him with care and love. The fact indicates that it is Sheppard's selfishness that needs to be highlighted because the care he gives for Rufus and the reason he neglects Norton is conducted to fill his own ambition.

The third is sympathy and ignorance. Sheppard' sympathy for Rufus brings him to Norton. Rufus starts to learn that being neglected by his own father, Norton is lack of love and care. Rufus fills it with its own way to show the sympathy. It proves that Rufus is not completely an ignorant character and it should be Sheppard who is labeled as ignorant because he disregards his own child.

By tearing down the basic assumptions of the text through listing the binary oppositions and questioning the aim of every opposition, the readers are offered with other possible meanings that can be interpreted in the story.

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