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***Negotiating Racism as a
Dehumanizing Experience
in Lee's To Kill a
Mockingbird***

A Dissertation in American Literature
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to all valued persons who have encouraged me.

To my parents whose patience, confidence, pride and love are as important to my life as they have been to my education. To all my family and all my friends without exception.

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Abstract

The problem of racism is deeply rooted in the American history mainly in the southern societies. This dissertation aims at revealing this issue in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) in an attempt to investigate its ugliest consequences on the blacks' humanness which is dehumanization. This study adopts the analytical approach. It is found as a helpful tool to explain and examine how racism throughout the novel's events is a dehumanizing factor. In two chapters, this study tackles a historical background about the blacks' history in America followed by an analytical one. The latter is dedicated to analyse racism's dehumanizing effects on the blacks.

Key terms: racism, dehumanization, stereotype, prejudice.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Racism has been differently defined. However, precisely it may be defined as those strong feelings of hostility, hatred and superiority by one group toward another due to skin colour, birth place, language, religion and any other sign of difference. As a matter of fact, racism has been around for generations. It has existed ever since the ancient civilizations and continued its spread until the current times. Although in this world there exist much destructive powers which can dehumanize an individual and ruin his existence, racism remains the most devastating power. It can awfully destroy the human lives depriving them from the basic rights and liberties. The experience of the Africans in America under the whites' oppression can be the notable example of this.

Racism toward the blacks is as old as America itself and is one of most important historical issues. Thus, it has been highly covered by the American literature throughout its different forms. It has been always the primary preoccupation of the black writers as it is the most painful experience they have passed through. Nevertheless, several white American writers have included racism among the subjects they have tackled in their works. Likewise, Harper Lee, the white American writer, has given a space to the issue of racism in her first work *To kill a Mockingbird* (1960). Throughout this novel, which falls under the southern gothic literature, Lee has shed light on the terrible life the blacks have experienced due to the whites' racist attitudes in the deep South of America.

The significance of the existing work is found in the fact that the latter provides the reader with a different reading about "*racism*" in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960). Previously, many analyses considered racism in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a secondary theme in which they just present its illustrations from the novel with superficial analyses. Nonetheless, this study works on, through a deep analysis, revealing the consequences racism causes to the black Americans, which are mainly dehumanization and destruction.

This dissertation is motivated by some interests. Firstly, the topic of racism is important, especially that makes up one of the significant issues of the minorities, particularly the blacks in America. In addition, racism in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is represented by a southern white writer, which was of interest to check how racism is treated by a white southern American writer. Plus, in this novel racism is depicted in the early twentieth century America, the 1930s, which means the period after the end of slavery. By talking about racism in this period of times, racism is given a new setting unlike the most known works, of both white and black writers, which usually highlighting racism within the period of slavery.

The present work strives to investigate and answer the following questions. The main question to be asked in this thesis is about what is the main reason behind the racist mistreatment by the white people toward the blacks? Furthermore, some sub questions are generated from this main question: what are the major consequences resulted out of racism? Finally, the last question is about the extent to which is racism a dehumanizing and destructive action in *To kill a Mockingbird*?

Several hypotheses may serve as suitable answers to the questions raised above. The hypothesis which may be correspondent to the previous questions comes to say that the racist nature of the arrogant whites considering themselves as the superior race as well as to the “blackness” of the African Americans are the main factors behind racism toward the blacks. Another hypothesis which looks relevant to the former questions states that racism is a hard and hurtful experience for the blacks, it results in dehumanizing their humanness as a consequence of treating them as nonhuman beings. It further results in destroying and damaging their lives. Likewise, the last hypothesis concerning the early mentioned questions suggests that according to the horrible results it causes, racism is to a great extent a dehumanizing and destructive action and attitude.

In a search to provide appropriate answers to the research questions and to investigate the previously mentioned hypotheses, an analytical method will be selected. Making use of a literary analytical approach is for the sake of examining how racism throughout the events of *To kill a Mockingbird* (1960) is a dehumanizing factor that put the blacks in the circle of nonhumans.

On the other hand, the existing work is made of two chapters. Using a historical approach, the first chapter deals with the historical (social and political) background of the African Americans presence in the new America. This background is for demonstrating their first coming and provide a concise description about their experience in American during the first centuries of its history and thus, showing the origins of racism. After recognizing the history of the blacks and the sufferings they witnessed during the slave trade and slavery, we move to shed light on the blacks' status after the abolition of slavery. This discussion focuses on the blacks' reactions against their political and social positions beginning from the early struggle during the 1930s to the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement.

Using a literary analytical approach, the last chapter is devoted for a discussion of racism as dehumanizing experience in the concerned novel. The beginning of this chapter is about an analysis of the main inspirations, including people, events and ideas that have influenced Lee when writing her work so that to link her personal experience to the novel's story. Additionally, the rest of this chapter is about investigating how racism is presented in this novel and to assess the extent to which racism is a dehumanizing power that deprived the blacks their human nature.

As a matter of fact, the topic of racism has been always a vital subject and considerably tackled by different scholars and in different fields of study such as civilization, psychology and literature. Thus, various references have been used in order to conduct this

research. Firstly, as our concern is racism in relation to dehumanization, Dr. David Livingstone Smith provided an amazing article entitled: “*Dehumanization, Essentialism and Moral Psychology*” (2014). Through different analytical theories as the psychoanalytical one, he addresses the phenomenon of dehumanization in relation to different aspects among which is racism and social stereotyping. By giving the example of the blacks’ enslavement in American, Dr. Smith clarifies that Racism is one of the essential factors that causes dehumanization of individuals. In the same way, Farhad Dalal in his article “*Racism: Processes of Detachment, Dehumanization and Hatred*” (2006), examines racism according to different theories. When giving meaning to race and racism, Dalal also uses the example of the blacks and the whites and points out that one of the bad results of racism is dehumanization of the individuals when considering them sub humans.

However, when addressing racism in relation to the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a collection of essays “*Race and Racism in Literature*” (2005)_by Charles E. Wilson. Jr, has also made its contribution. These essays examine how racism is present in the American literature by bringing several novels as examples and among them is Lee’s novel. In a chapter devoted for this novel, the author analytically explores the presence of racism in this book and the way of its depiction by the novel’s writer

The above references are useful ones in which they provided a discussion of racism from different perspectives. Yet, none of them have dealt with racism as dehumanizing factor in a literary analysis and in relation to the concerned novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Thus, this is the main contribution of this work in which we attend to prove that the blacks are dehumanized because of racism according to novel’s story.

CHAPTER ONE
THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF
BLACK AMERICANS

Introduction

The following chapter is a historical background dedicated for the history of the blacks Americans in America. The first part is devoted for discussing the conditions in which the blacks had come to the new world as slaves as well as to their situation under the life of slavery. Then we move to the other part in which we try to speak about the position of the African American after the independence of American and the main changes they had witnessed until the end of the Civil Rights Movement.

I. The Arrival of the Blacks

In fact, the story of African immigration to America is exceptional among other immigrant groups. Unlike other comers, most Africans came to America against their will. Being imported in ugly conditions, the black people experienced a harsh life under slavery and then lawful segregations in a nation they had made its foundation.

I.1.The Early Arrival of the Blacks to the New World

The early coming of the Africans to the new world was not in the European slave ships. However, in 1500s a number of African servants had joined the large Spanish expeditions during the early explorations of the Americas. Almost Africans were present in all early Spanish expeditions and the most celebrated black explorer was Esteban¹. Alongside with the Spanish, they could reach areas that became South Carolina, Peru and New Mexico. (Wood 1, 2, 3)

¹ Estéban Dorantes or Estebanico, (c. 1500_1539) was a slave to a Spanish man. He was one of the first native Africans to reach the new world as he was taken in the Spanish expeditions in 1500s.

I.2. The Arrival of the Blacks to British America

With the early 1600s, European immigrants had begun to arrive to the new world and established a number of colonies. The English also had begun establishing settlements in North America hoping to build their own European empire. Through years, the British colonies grew rich thanks to tobacco growing. Nevertheless, this meant a large number of working force which the white could not provide due to the hard climate and tropical diseases in the new land. To avoid such dilemma, English settlers thought of an easy solution which was affordable, slaves.

By August of 1619, a group of Africans had been brought to the English colony of Jamestown, Virginia. This black people were the first group of Africans to land in the north of America. At this time slavery was not yet well established in colonial America, thus those black people had functioned as indentured servants. The system of servitude was limited by a period of work, usually seven years, for no salary because the masters had paid the costs of the trip to America. (Hollis Lynch², Britannica)

I.3. Slave Trade

Within the mid of the 17th century, the presence of the African slaves in the English colonies had become quite necessary and indispensable. Therefore, many European ships had made their journey to the African Western Coast across the Atlantic Ocean to trade in African people.

It was the largest forced immigration the human history ever witnessed. Approximately 12.5 to 15 million captured Africans were brought to the Americas. More than

² Hollis Lynch is a professor of history in Columbia University.

half of the transported slaves were taken from the Western Coast of the African continent what was called Senegambia (what is now Gambia, Senegal and the surrounding nations). Actually this region that was known as the Slave Coast had had a prolonged history in supplying the Europeans with slaves, particularly the Portuguese since the 15th century. (Hakim Adi³, BBC)

Although the slave trade was the interest of Europeans, Africans had greatly participated in this operation. The European slave traders despite their power, they were unable of capturing African slaves independently. For the most part, the 12.5million transported African slaves were purchased from the African rulers or slave traders, often exchanging them by powder or guns .Trevor Lloyd (2006) confirmed this saying “...*buying slaves was a matter of negotiating with local rulers on the coast, who were perfectly ready to guard the people they were selling until it was time to pack them aboard ships of the Atlantic crossing*” (p19).

African slaves had experienced the horrors of slavery even before reaching the English colonies and being slaved. Regarded as mere goods, the captured slaves were transported in crowded, brutal conditions and treated very harshly aboard the ships. Throughout the journeys, there was a high rate of death among them, and a very great number of the transported blacks could not complete the trip. Often the poor care, including the malnutrition, the spread of fatal diseases as well as to the violent suppression was the reasons behind the slaves any resistance. Moreover, some of the captured Africans could not bear the harsh life aboard the ships, for them attempting to escape or suicide by jumping overboard was a kind of solution. Most of these facts were told by the survived slaves who had written down their

³ Hakim Adi is Reader in the history of Africa and the African Diaspora at Middlesex University, London.

experiences aboard slave ships like Olaudah Equiano⁴ who had given a long deep description about this unique trip in his autobiographical book *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), the following lines illustrate this....”*One day, we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who chained together..., preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea; immediately, another.....followed their example*”(qtn. in History Matters).

II. Slavery

Arriving to America, the imported Africans were sold as slaves to slave owners and were oriented to different places to start their new lives as slaves.

II.1.The Beginning of Slavery

More than half of transported slaves were sent out to the large plantations in the south where crops such as sugar, tobacco and cotton grew. But the majority of them were put in the sugar plantations for it required large number of workers.

If life had been bad in the slave ships, it had not been any better in the new land, it had been even worse. Regardless to their nature as humans, slaves had been working in very dreadful and miserable conditions. As mere machines, they had been spending the whole week and for long hours in labour. In plantations, slaves had been responsible for ploughing, sowing and harvesting the crops during either the hot and humid summer days or in cold months of winter. Additionally, slaves had been also required to clean the animal farms and cut wood in forests. Moreover, farming had not been the only task slaves had performed, but

⁴ Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa was former African slave and after being free, he became a prominent abolitionist. He was also a writer and he wrote autobiographies about his life as a slave.

they also had worked in their masters' houses as servants, handmaids and nursemaids. Oftentimes, this people had received no wages. (Dr. Michelle Getchell khan academy)⁵

Although the enslaved people had been required to work well and hard, they had lacked the basic conditions of life to meet such demands. The arrogant masters had never treated their slaves as humans, but no more than mere piece of property with any legal rights. Predominantly, slaves had been fed inadequate or barley adequate food to meet the demands of the heavy workload .consequently, the malnutrition and hard labour had made slaves vulnerable to serious diseases which had been inadequately remedied. For the slave holders slaves' lives were of no true value and hence they had forced them to work even in sickness cases.

Furthermore, the enslaved blacks could not have properties for their own. They could not even own houses like the white inhabitants. In fact they had been living in poor wooden huts with dirty floors and little or no fortune. Often these small huts had been grouped together near the plantations.

Physical suffering had been not the only horrible fact in slaves' lives, however, they had undergone to psychological hardship as well. In all over American colonies, slaves had been living under the constant threat of separation or sale. The latter had been considered as kind of punishment, especially after an attempt to run away had been made, a slave could have been deported to other location at any time. Thus, a great number of black families had been separated. Cousins, brothers and sisters could find themselves forcibly scattered, losing contact with each other with no possibility to meet again. (Heather Andrea Williams, National Humanities centre)

⁵ Dr. C. Michel Getchell has PhD in history at the University of Texas.

II.2.The Development of Slavery

Throughout most of the 1700s, slavery had been legalized in almost the English colonies .It had witnessed a wide spread and had become the popular labour system. That rapid increase had been as a result of the great desire of the greedy colonists to gain huge fortune as much as possible. In colonial America, plantation owners had taken the lead in earning wealth out of growing tobacco and sugar depending heavily on slave labour. Peter Kolchin in his book *American Slavery*(1993) pointed out to this saying “*it grew like a cancer, at first slowly, almost imperceptibly, then inexorably, as colonists eager for material gain imported hundreds of thousands of Africans to coil their fields*” (p,4).

II.3.The Resistance to Slavery

Many, perhaps the majority of the African slaves had engaged in humble resistance against their miserable position. Indeed the expression of resistance had taken a variety of ways. The collective rebellion in which the slaves had gone in strikes or protest might be the main form of resistance. Yet, they had also resisted in other ways including coming late, doing the job wrong or performing the work inadequately. On the other hand, others had gone far aggressive. They dared to bring their masters’ lives to end by poisoning them through toxic herbals or poisonous insects. As a result, with the first half of the 1700s, poisoning had become the highest crime in Virginia. In addition, setting fire on the masters’ properties had been also done by the rebel slaves, especially in the early 1700s when more than 300 houses had been burnt in south Carolina .(Sweet James⁶, National Humanities Centre)

However what the slave holders had been most afraid of is the violent rebellion. Throughout the colonies, some slaves had been, able of owning arms and fighting back against their masters. By the early 1800s there had been a series of armed revolts, most

⁶ James H. Sweet is a professor at the Department of History, University of Wisconsin-Madison

notably Turner's Rebellion that had taken place in Southampton County, Virginia during August of 1831. Led by the rebel slaves, over than 50 European Americans were killed. (Times, 86)

Through years, slaves had become less dependent to their masters and hard to be controlled. Actually the many instances of resistance had indicated that slaves had been not accepting their situation as victims, instead they had showed their will and determination in fighting back for freedom. Slaves' resistance might have been a significant factor that helped in the abolition of slave trade and slavery.

III. Blacks 'Situation after the Independence of America

The aftermath of the American Revolution had generated in many changes and challenges to the black people in America. To a certain extent the revolutionary war transformed slaves' lives in several different aspects. However, the bitterest lesson the blacks had got was that the independence of America was not their lost dream and it had been the whites' freedom and not slaves' freedom.

III.1.The Abolition of Slave Trade

In the second half of the 18th century many voices had raised against slave trade in America. A lot of people had opposed the transportation of black people to American states as their number had increased highly. Moreover, the slaves' violent rebellions had led to the Americans' worry about the country safety. After passing several acts for the purpose of regulating slave trade, the American States under the presidency of Thomas Jefferson had outlawed the importation of slaves beginning on January 01, 1808(Du Bois, 94). This federal law had ended the legality of American involvement in the slave trade and banned any kind of buying or selling slaves.

Even though the 1808 law had aimed at ending completely trade in slaves in all America, it had been not so effective to the domestic slave trade. Throughout the American states, particularly the southern ones slaves had continued to be purchased and sold out of law for many years.

III.2.The Abolition of Slavery

After the 1808 law had banned the slave trade, many black Americans as well as to white abolitionists hoped it would eliminate slavery too. But it had not been as they expected, this law could not stop the increase of slavery in America. Actually it seemed that the abolition of slavery had not been that easy, it had cost America a lot, years of bloody civil war between the south and the north.

In the 1860 the north and the south had argued fiercely about the issue of slavery. In the south slavery had appeared to be substantial in its agricultural economy. From the early establishment of the southern states, slavery had made up the major labour force. Then, with the development of the cotton cultivation which had been the main source of wealth as it had been exported to the foreign markets, it had been quite difficult for the Southern States to dispense this work force (Times, 85). In the other hand, the northern states many of which had not depended much on the slave labour due to its industrial economy had strongly objected slavery. Eventually, after a conflict had lasted four years, the 13th amendment to the constitution had abolished slavery in all the American States in 1865.

In addition, what is worth to be said is that plus to the political and economic reasons that led to the end of slavery, the humanitarian aspect had its contribution too. The abolitionists both blacks and whites had been in the vanguard of the battle for the abolition of

slavery. Figures like Frederick Douglass⁷ and William Brown⁸ had made a vital contribution in the abolition of slavery. They had used many ways to fight against slavery like founding antislavery newspapers as well as to other genres of writing in order to speak out about the horrors of slavery.

IV. The Racial Dehumanizing Attitudes towards the Blacks and their Reaction

“We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and pursuit of happiness”(the declaration of independence by Thomas Jefferson, qtd. in Wikipedia.org).

These ideal words have always been a slogan of freedom, liberty and democracy for they maintain the basic rights for all humans. However one may wonder who is considered to be human according to these principles defenders.

In fact these words appeared to be so contradictory with the reality in America. Although the above expression admits the equality of all men with their unalienable rights, it ignored a huge minority of people their only guilt is their skin colour. It clearly seems that Jefferson’ *“all men”* does not include black men, or in other words the blacks cannot be considered as human. This demonstrated the American hostility and dehumanizing racism towards the black people.

⁷ Frederick Douglass (Born around 1818), was an African American author and orator. He was an eminent human rights leader in the anti-slavery movement and the first African American citizen to hold a high U.S. government rank. He wrote several autobiographies about his experience as a slave which was influential in promoting the cause of abolition.

⁸ William Brown (1814_1884) was a prominent black abolitionist, historian and writer in U.S. he devoted his writings to the abolitionist cause.

Since ever their early coming as slaves, black Americans had been exposed to the most dehumanizing racism by the white American. And throughout years racism towards the Africans in America had been increasing sharply to reach its peak in the post-reconstruction period in a form of racial dehumanizing laws under the name of “Jim crow”.

After the abolition of slavery, many of the black Americans who had dreamt about freedom and full equality were once again disillusioned by the Jim Crow laws which seemed to be the system to replace slavery. Hence the African Americans had come to realize that the story is yet to finish and freedom did not mean independent life.

IV.1.The Racial Segregation

The Jim crow laws was a series of segregationists laws adopted in almost the American states particularly the southern states against the blacks from 1877 to 1965.they had intended primarily to maintain the political and the cultural domination over the blacks. These racial codes had been built basically on segregation between the whites and the blacks in all public places including hospitals, schools, bus station and many other places.

Actually the ugliness of these laws lies also in its name. The Jim Crow laws had been named after a sarcastic theatrical character performed by a white actor who appeared wearing a black mask and using black dialect mocking at the Negros. Since then, this dehumanizing term was associated to the black people (Tischauer, 01).

Segregation between the two races had been applied, especially in the south, in all aspects of life. There had been no possibility for the blacks to meet the whites in one setting. It was by law that the blacks were forbidden sharing them the same schools, hotels, theatres or any other public services or facilities. Moreover, social institution like marriage had been also

touched by these hateful laws. In almost American States, all marriages between black and white person were considered illegal and void. (O'Callaghan, 57)

As years passed, the African Americans had witnessed no improvement in their lives. However, things had gone even worst. In 1896, the Supreme Court had established the separate but equal doctrine after the Plessey v.Fergusson Case. That was after a black man named Plessey had intentionally attempted to break the law by setting in a white only seat. Consequently, Jim Crow laws became more valid and the blacks' rights were reduced more.

Furthermore, physical violence had been another kind of racism black Americans had faced. After the end of the Civil War, reconstruction was supposed to grant blacks rights as equal as whites and this had angered the racist southern whites. A group of violent terrorists known as the Ku Klux Klan, and often as the KKK or the Klan had emerged in the south to express their anger towards the blacks through lynching. The KKK members held strong feelings of hatred to the blacks so that they had killed thousands of them in extreme violent ways. Sometimes they hanged them, in other cases they beaten and tortured them until death and at times they burnt them alive. (O'Callaghan, 56)

Day after day black Americans had been living under the humiliation and the oppression of the white Americans. In his book *Less than Human: Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate Others* (2011), David Smith Livingstone⁹ defines dehumanization as viewing person as less than human or even nonhuman (Livingstone) and hence ignoring his existence. And this fully represents what happened to the black people in America. Nearly for four centuries they had been regarded as a subhuman race that deserve no value .Based on this view, black Americans had been excluded in all opportunities, for instance they had been

⁹ Dr. Livingstone Smith is an America professor of philosophy at the University of New England

offered hard and low wages jobs and their children had received a low education in segregated schools.

George M. Fredrickson, in his book *Racism: a Short History* (2002), pointed out that racism is a combination of “*differences and power*” (09) claiming that strong people are the most racists. However, this was not applicable to the American people. In America all categories and classes; upper, lower and middle, all kind of people; men, women and children had been hostile racists towards the African Americans. Racism in America, in fact, had dehumanized the blacks to the extent that they were equalled to animals, “no Negros, no dogs” these words had been signs written in several segregationist places in America to prevent animals and blacks from getting into only whites places.

IV.2.The Early Resistance against Racism

Being extremely hurt by the whites’ suppressive policies, the African Americans had become determined to speak out against them instead of giving up. By the turn of the 19th century, many black activists had appeared as defenders of the black American rights and fighters against the American prejudice. Booker T. Washington and W.E Du Bois had been outstanding leaders in the early protests against the poor status of the blacks. However, although these leaders had been fighting for a common goal, mainly the equality for the black people, they had different visions and ways.

Booker T. Washington, officially Booker Taliaferro Washington was an educator from Virginia. He had started his resistance in the 1890s. Actually, Booker T. Washington had advised the African Americans not to care about the immediate equality and desegregation, but instead they must first improve their economy. He had believed that if the black Americans would be economically independent and developed, then segregation would fade away without any other efforts. Perhaps Washington was pointing out that once the

Americans could observe the blacks as a powerful economic nation, they would recognize them. For this he had established what is called the vocational education in which he encouraged the blacks to attend trade schools to learn skilled jobs. (Britannica)

On the other hand W. E .Du Bois, full name William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, a free born black scholar from Massachusetts who had opposed Washington's view about the blacks' situation. He thought that Washington wrongly focused on the economic independence of the blacks as a key solution to their situation and ignoring the political and civil rights. The latter had believed that with the absence of the equality and the civil rights, economic progress and independence can never be achieved. By the early 1900s, Du Bois became the leading defender of the African Americans' rights and he frankly had called for the immediate full equality for the black citizens. In 1909, he assisted in establishing the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (N.A.A.C.P) which had been the earliest organization in the fighting for the civil rights. Furthermore, Du Bois focused on general education instead of industrial education for sake of increasing the number of the educated black Americans in order to create an educated and aware black minority. (Elliot Rudwick, Britannica)

IV.3.The Modern Resistance against Racism

After the Second World War, African Americans had acted more actively and effectively against the racism and the racial inequality by the white Americans. Their participation as soldiers in the Second World War led them to return with more experience and strength to continue the struggle for their rights. In addition, the wide spread of the liberation movements in all over the world, especially in the African continent where the blacks were fighting bravely for their liberation, had encouraged the black Americans to intensify their fighting. So, with the early 1950s new leaders had emerged to the scene with

new and various views and ways of resisting. Some of whom had chosen the peaceful path. Others had preferred violent ways starting the modern struggle for the African Americans rights.

Beginning with the peaceful protest, Martin Luther king¹⁰ became to be most associated with the nonviolent struggle. In fact king had been heavily inspired and influenced by the Indian activist Ghandi¹¹'s nonviolent disobedience philosophy. He had sought human rights and equality for the black Americans through peaceful protest which had depended mainly on massive rallies and manifestations against the segregation policies. Probably King had adopted the peaceful way as a means to show the world in general and Americans in particular how civilized citizens the blacks are. However, what is important to be said is that for long years, King had been the driving force behind turning point events such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott¹² and the 1963 March on Washington. Although these events had brought about landmark legislation as the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, some were not satisfied with his policy and shifted toward a different direction.

Malcolm X¹³ had been among those who preferred the armed self-defence as a method to fight for civil rights and full equality. He had criticized King's policy as fruitless and unable of providing any improvement to the black Americans position. Malcolm X was a Muslim and for that he was influenced by the Islamic principles among which is that to fight back for your stolen right. He then had joined the Nation of Islam¹⁴ which its main belief had

¹⁰ Martin Luther King Jr. (1925), a black American Baptist, minister and social activist in the civil rights movement from 1954 until his assassination in 1968. He was awarded the Noble Prize for peace in 1964.

¹¹ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (869) was an Indian activist who fought for the Indian freedom and civil rights against the British Colonization through peaceful fight or civil disobedience which is the act of refusing some laws and orders of the state by the citizens.

¹² Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955_54) was a protest during which the blacks refused to ride city buses in Montgomery, Alabama to protest segregated seating after Rosa Parks was arrested when refused to give up her seat to a white man.

¹³ Malcolm X (1925_1965) was an African American Muslim prominent figure in the Nation of Islam who articulated concepts of race pride and Black Nationalism.

¹⁴ The Nation of Islam was African American political and religious movement and organization founded in 1930 and it was known for its traditional ideas of Islam and Black national ideas.

been that black Americans should adapt the Islamic African culture instead of the whites' culture. Through years, Malcolm X had become an influential leader in the Nation of Islam and his violent view had affected many blacks. However, after he had made a pilgrimage to Mecca and met other Muslims, he had changed his views and became nonviolent before his assassination in 1965. (Hollis Lynch, Britannica)

Falling under the influence of Malcolm X, a group of young men from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) decided to break their ties with the peaceful protest. Under the slogan of Black Power, this group also had come to represent the call for more radical and violent actions to fight the whites' supremacy. Actually, the term Black Power was popularized after Stokely Carmichael¹⁵ wrote his book the "*Black Power*" through which he had asked the blacks to be proud of their African culture and heritage. (Levy, 29)

In addition to the Black Power group, nonviolent protest had become no longer the preferable form of fighting for many other blacks. Likewise, the Black Panthers were another group directed toward the militant resistance as a suitable means for liberation. In 1966, black activists mainly Huey Newton¹⁶ and Bobby Seale¹⁷, had founded the Black Panther for self-defence. Their prime purpose was to protect the blacks from the American police brutality as well as to eliminate the racial inequality. They used to dress in black beret, black pants and black leather jackets act too violently. The Black Panther party was dissolved two times by the American government because of its extreme violent actions. (Jones, 01)

With the late 1960s, the African Americans struggle for the civil rights had decreased. The assassination of Martin Luther King coupled with the high violent of groups like the

¹⁵ Stokely Carmichael (1941_1998) was a black American organizer in the civil Rights Movement and the Pan-African movement, he was the 4th Chairman of S.N.C.C

¹⁶ Huey Percy Newton (1942_1989) was a black political activist. He earned Ph.D. in social philosophy; he was one of the charismatic symbols of black anger in the 1960s.

¹⁷ Bobby Seale, Robert George, (1936) African American political activist who was influenced by Malcolm X and preferred armed fight.

Black Power and Black Panthers which led to the government interference, had brought the end of the Civil Rights Movement. However, this had been after the movement could generate considerable gains for the black American citizens and which proved that the long years of struggle had not been in vacuum.

IV.3.a.The Achievements of the Blacks

A significant achievement made by the Civil Rights Movement in 1954 when segregation in public schools had been outlawed. The United States Supreme Court made segregation in all public schools illegal in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*¹⁸.

Another remarkable change the blacks had done was in the public transport. After the outstanding black activist Rosa Parks had refused to give up her seat to a white man, she had been arrested by the police and fined for violating the segregation law. This event had mobilised the black community to boycott the Montgomery buses in 1955. For one year the black Americans refused to ride city buses in Montgomery. This long protest led the United States Supreme Court to cancel segregation in transport by law.

In 1957 the Civil Rights Act had been passed into law under the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower. This act had been passed to protect the rights of the African Americans to vote although some people had interpreted it as an opportunist act by Eisenhower to gain blacks voting in the elections.

In the 1960s the African Americans' accomplishments continued to reach the most important victory in its history. In 1964 president Lyndon B. Johnson had signed the Civil Rights Act. The latter had ended segregation in public schools and any public places and had made discrimination based on race, colour, gender, religion, or nationality illegal.

¹⁸ Brown c. Broad of Topeka(1954) was a landmark Supreme Court case in which segregation in schools illegalized when a man named Oliver Brown filed against a Topeka school after rejecting his daughter

On the other hand the Voting Act, most awaited goal by the black citizens, had been passed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965. Thanks to this law, African Americans had become able to vote after this act had revealed all barriers such as the literacy tests that had prevented the blacks from exercising the right for long years.

Finally the Fair Housing Act of 1968 had been also a positive change for the black Americans. Discrimination in housing based on race, sex, or national origin had been eliminated. Thanks to this act, black people became able of owning or hiring houses and in different places.

The changes that the Civil Rights Movement had made could to some extent succeed in enhancing the blacks' lives to be a respected minority in the American society. Perhaps the presidency of Barack Obama as the first black president in the United States had been the clear example of this. However, one cannot deny that racism in America is not yet over.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter we discovered that the black Americans had been hurt a lot in their lives. From examining the conditions of their coming to America, we found that they had been brought against their will from their homelands in order to work as slaves. It was clear that from life aboard the slave's ships to life under slavery and even life after gaining freedom, the blacks had been exposed to harsh and humiliating treatments in America. However, we came across the fact that the blacks had not submitted as weak victims, but they had made many efforts and had tried to fight the oppression imposed against to establish rightful and lawful social and political position.

***CHAPTER TWO RACISM AS A
DEHUMANIZING EXPERIENCE IN TO
KILL A MOCKINGBIRD***

Introduction

The following chapter is a discussion dedicated for the concerned novel *To kill a Mockingbird* (1960). Thus, its first part tackles the contextualization of the novel. As it is the matter for any other novel, this part focuses on the main different circumstances and inspirations that contributed in the making of the novel's plot. Moving from the contextualization, the second part works on showing the major examples of racism experience that are illustrated in this book. Last and not least, the third part, the important one, is devoted for the discussion of how badly racism affected the blacks' lives and how it resulted in tragic consequences.

I. Lee's Inspirations in Writing *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Fiction is never a pure imagination of the writer. Often, when the readers contextualize a literary work they find out that there is at list a little aspect shared between the reality and the fictional story. Writers sometimes build their stories upon real life events which service as an inspiration, or in some cases they choose their own experience and integrate it within created events. This is the same thing for Lee's novel. Various social and historical climates have influenced the shaping of this book during both the fifties when it was written and published and the thirties when its plot is set. The Great Depression was the main event that characterized the thirties while the fifties in America were mainly characterized by emergence of blacks fight against racism and both, besides to other factors, have their influence on the novel.

I.1.The Great Depression

The Great Depression was a severe worldwide economic crisis that took place after the Second World War. Like the rest of the world, America was heavily touched by this economic hardship as a result of stock market crash¹⁹ in 1929 after the fall in the stock prices. This economic depression affected the American society negatively. Consequently, more than ten million Americans became out of work which caused hard times for them like the increase in unemployment and poverty.

In fact the Great Depression provides a remarkable part for the setting of the novel in which Lee demonstrated how these difficult circumstances contributed in making life hard in the deep south of America.

In the beginning of the novel, the narrator introduces the town of Maycomb²⁰ as "*Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it*" (Lee05). Describing the town as "tired" is a hint for the miserable state of the town after the depression which made it a dead place. The narrator carries her description saying: "*There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy with, nothing to see outside the boundaries of Maycomb County*" (05). This is also an indicator denotes the poor situation of the town and its people who are almost jobless, thus unable to purchase or even to sell anything.

Another allusion to the Great Depression in the novel is embodied within this quotation

.. Before Mr. Cunningham left he said, "Mr. Finch ²¹, I don't know when I'll ever be able to pay".... I asked Atticus if Mr. Cunningham would ever pay us. "Not in money," Atticus said, "but before the year's out I'll have been paid. You

¹⁹ Stock Market Crash (October, 1929), during the 1920s, the U.S. stock market underwent rapid expansion, reaching its peak in August 1929, after a period of wild speculation. By then, production had already declined and unemployment had risen.

²⁰ Maycomb is a fictional town where the events are set and which thought to be the model of Monroeville

²¹ Mr. Atticus Finch is a white lawyer lives in Maycomn and he is the father of the narrator

watch”.... One morning Jem²²and I found a load of stovewood in the back yard. Later, a sack of hickory nuts appeared on the back steps....”Why does he pay you like that?” I asked.” Because that’s the only way he can pay me. He has no money.”....”the Cunninghams are country folks, farmers, and the crash hit them hardest.” (Lee, 21)

Apparently, Mr. Cunningham is a poor man who is “*hit by the crash*” what made him paying the lawyer by giving him materials instead of money.

I.2.The Scottsboro Boys 1931

The event of Scottsboro Boys took place in 1931 in Scottsboro, Alabama. It was named Scottsboro Boys after nine black boys who were falsely charged of raping two white women on a train near Scottsboro, Alabama. The incident was widely covered by newspapers even outside America. Thus, it is thought that this event was an inspiration for the story of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, particularly the story of the black man Tom Robinson. Both the event of Scottsboro and the novel’s story have a similar charge and the same place and time: Alabama 1931. (Cavoto, 408)

I.3.The Civil Rights Movement

To Kill a Mockingbird was written during the 1950s the period when the Civil Rights Movement against the racial inequality was attracting a considerable attention, especially after Rosa Parks’ action and king’s emergence. This perhaps provided an important subject to Harper Lee especially in the south the most segregated region where racism was strongly existent.

²² Jem Finch is the oldest brother of the narrator

I.4. The Author's Childhood

Lee once claimed that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a mere instance of how a writer “*should write about what he knows*” (the Guardian) and it is not a reflection of her own life of childhood. Nonetheless, many aspects in the novel show that Lee has alluded to many real facts from her childhood when writing the story.

For instance, some characters in the novel are based on real people Miss Lee has once met. To illustrate, the character of the lawyer Atticus is based largely on the author's own father who was also a lawyer. Lee created this character to be similar to her father who was like him a good father and lawyer and devoted his life defending what is fair and right. In addition, Scout, the protagonist, is portrayed to be much like Miss Lee during her childhood. Throughout the novel, Scout appears as a tomboy and never addresses or behaves as a girl which was the same characteristic of Harper when was a child. Besides, the protagonist's friend and next door neighbour who is named Dill Hariss is believed to be modelled on Lee's childhood closest friend Truman Capote²³. (Cavoto, 408)

II. The Characters Experience of Racism

Through the novel of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, racism is largely present. During the 1930s when the story was set, racism was a normal fact in the Americans daily life. Although racism is an issue bigger than to be portrayed in limited papers, Lee could illustrate the racial attitudes of the American society through different incidents and characters.

²³ Truman Capote, Truman Streckfus Persons is an American novelist, short story writer and playwright. He is well known for his best known works In Cold Blood(1965) and Breakfast at Tiffany's(1958)

II.1. Racism toward the Blacks

Americans always believed that being American means being a pure white. Hence the black people came to realize that their destiny in the American society would be determined by something out of their choice. They understood that their skin colour would determine their position among the white society no matter what are the circumstances. Therefore racism in America has been shaping the white's views and actions towards the blacks regardless of the result.

In the novel, the black characters have been subjected to racism in various forms manners. Wherever they are, they find themselves vulnerable to stereotype, dehumanization and humiliation. And many instances can illustrate this.

Calpurnia, the black housekeeper of the Finch family is one of those whose race background affected their lives. Calpurnia is a black woman serving a white family which indicates that the blacks were ranked to a low class in the American society. Moreover, it also proves that the Americans still viewing the African Americans as properties broking their humanness.

Additionally, although Calpurnia is treated kindly by the Fiches, she is always seen as a mere black servant. Illustrating this might be through the attitude of Alexandra, the two children's aunt, towards Calpurnia. When the little Girl Scout²⁴ expresses her desire to visit Calpurnia's domicile, her aunt prevents her. She narrates this saying: "*I remembered something. Yessum, and she [Calpurnia] promised me I could come out to her house some afternoon. Atticus, I'll go next Sunday if it's all right, can I?... You may not*" Aunt Alexandra²⁵ said it" (136). In fact aunt Alexandria made it clear that there is no possibility to integrate

²⁴ Scout Finch is a six to seven year child and the lawyer's daughter. She is the protagonist and the narrator of the story.

²⁵ Alexandra is the Lawyer's sister who is portrayed as an arrogant and racist person.

with the blacks and they are not to be accepted in the whites' world. Simply put, Alexandra could not see beyond Calpurnia's race. Her racist attitudes led her to ignore the black servant's kindness, to forget her services to the family and further to deny her humanness.

Tom Robinson is another name to be mentioned in the racism victims list. Tom story with racism is more awful and tragic than Calpurnia. This black man is charged of beating and raping a white girl but Lawyer Atticus Finch reveals his innocence. Unfortunately Atticus overwhelming evidences and arguments were useless as the all white jury convicted Tom Robinson.

The black Tom story as a racism victim seems so strange. He faced racism in the heart of a place that should be built on justice and fairness regardless of race or any other sign of differentness. Actually the trial of Tom demonstrated that racism in America was not only actions and manners of ordinary people, but even the court system was no exception.

Tom is innocent of hitting and beating the white girl but his only crime was his blackness. For the white jury, who were blind by their bias, Tom's blackness is strong justification for not admitting his innocence over the white accuser. The narrator describes the jury: "A jury never looks at a defendant it has convicted, and when this jury came in, not one of them looked at Tom Robinson. The foreman handed a piece of paper to Mr. Tate who handed it to the clerck who handed it to the judge.....Judge Taylor²⁶ was pulling the jury: "Guilty...guilty...guilty...guilty....", (211). "Maycomb disease", as Atticus describes racism, made them unable of putting away their racist feelings to judge him by what is right and fair. Furthermore, all the Maycomb folks contributed to Tom's conviction believing that a "nigger"²⁷ is synonym with being criminal. Thus they gathered to lynch him without any trial.

²⁶ Judge Taylor is the judge of the black man trial

²⁷ The word nigger is a racial slur and insult directed at black people in America. It originated as a variation of the Spanish noun negro which means black

Being a black in a white racist society you may be charged for any action, behaviour or a word you may say even unintentionally. During the trial Tom for a while forgot that he is a nigger and exceeded the limits. While giving his testimony about the incident the black accused mentions that he used to go to Mayella²⁸ house to help her without even being paid he states: "[she] looked like she didn't have nobody to help her, like I says". Answering the question of Mr. Gilmer²⁹ "You're a mighty good fellow, it seems__did all this for not one penny? (197). The latter replies that he did so simply because he took pity on her. He carries saying that he ".....I felt sorry for her, she seemed to try more'n the rest of'em" __ (197).

By this declaration Tom put himself in a negative situation in front of the white jury. A declaration that made the Ewell's lawyer, Mr. Gilmer to react surprisingly by saying: "*You felt sorry for her? You felt sorry for her?*" (197). The lawyer's reaction made Tom to realize his serious mistake "*The witness realized his mistake but shifted uncomfortably*" (197), but it was too late and "*The damage was done*". Tom could see how a wrong statement he admitted in the eyes of all the present in courtroom, the narrator says that "*Below us, nobody liked Tom Robinson's answer*". All these reactions reminded the black defendant that in the white society the social system does not allow any black person to take pity on a white whatsoever being him. Feeling sorry for a white person might be enough to make Tom Robinson guilty of another crime.

II.2. The Whites Experiencing Racism

Perhaps it is important to mention that not only the black characters who were exposed to hateful attitudes by the racist whites. However, even the whites who were sympathetic to them lived nearly the same experience. The white lawyer Atticus, who decided to defend a black man, can be the obvious example as he could not escape the touch of

²⁸ Mayella Ewell is a white girl who accused the black man of raping her violently

²⁹ Mr. Gilmer is Mayella's Lawyer during the Trial.

racism. Much like his defendant who was accused of rape, Atticus was accused of being a “*Nigger Lover*” by Maycomb people. He was strongly blamed for broking the codes of his society and standing against a white person in favour of a black one, though he only stood against injustice.

Advocating the black defendant caused the white lawyer extreme critics by the anger inhabitants of Macomb town. In numerous occasions Maycomb people revealed their racist ideologies toward him. He was described as “*Nigger lover*” (85) which was unaccepted sin in his society. It was the sin that made Mr. Finch inferior to the rest of the white residents of Maycomb. According to them, by this wrong action Atticus has no real value more than his black defendant. This was also the view of racist neighbour of Atticus, Mrs. Dubose when she told his children that [*Their*] *father’s no better than the nigger’s and trash he works for*” (105). Furthermore, even the lawyer’s family stood against him and tried to prevent him. The Finches blamed Atticus of destroying the family reputation by his shameful action; his sister Alexandra says about him that “*He’s ruinin’ the family, that’s what he’s doin*” (85). Yet, despite of all these racist actions the lawyer paid no attention to them and did his duty till the end regardless if the result.

Another sign of racism in the novel is embodied in a character named Mr. Dolphus Raymond, whose story is really different. The latter is a wealthy man belongs to an old family and lives in Maycomb. However, Mr. Raymond could not enjoy his life and the racist nature of his townspeople obliged him to live a miserable life. At that time the social segregation between the blacks and the whites prevented any kind of relations between them such as friendship or marriage. Yet, Mr .Dolphus Raymond did not believe in the racial differences and chose to live with a black woman.

Mr. Raymond, however, was not courageous enough to confront the others and defend himself for he knows very well their reaction towards him. Then, he must find a way to cover his doing and protect himself from the racial attitudes. When Scout, the narrator, met him during the day of trial, she introduced him as a bad man and chronic drunk. She claims: "As *Mr. Dolphus Raymond was an evil man I accepted his invitation reluctantly, ... Somehow, I didn't think Atticus would like it if we became friendly with Mr. Raymond and knew Aunt Alexandra wouldn't*" (200). However, later Scout found out that what he was drinking was not whiskey but only Coca-Cola out of a brown paper bag.

In all actuality, Mr. Raymond pretended to be alcoholic just to make the people think that because he is drunk, he is living in such way, in other words that is why he lives with coloured people. He tells Scout these words:

...you mean why do I pretend? Well, it's very simple" he said. "Some folks don't __like the way I live. Now I could say the hell with 'em, I don't care if they don't like it.....but I don't say the hell with 'em, see?...." I try to give 'em a reason, you see....folks can say Dolphus Raymond's in the clutches of whiskey__that's why he won't change his way. He can't help himself, that's why he lives the way he does." (200)

Under the effect of racism Mr. Raymond tolerated to live such way for years. It seems that racism has violated the privacy of his life and his freedom of choice, he shouts "....they could never, never understand that I live like I do because that's the way I want to". Even though it was his own life, he was unable of living it the way he wants simply because of the prejudice of the white people. In deed he intended to give up his freedom only to leave peacefully away from the racists.

III. Racism as a Destructive and Dehumanizing Factor

“Cry about the simple hell people give other people__without even thinking. Cry about the hell white people give colored folks without even stoping to thing that they’re people too.”(201)

Racism is one kind of the very devastating powers in the world which can awfully destroy the human lives. Throughout the novel of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, obvious examples demonstrate how bitterly the black characters are exposed to stereotype, humiliation, and degradation and even doom as a result of racist attitudes.

III.1. Stereotyping the Blacks

From the first time the white Americans have met the black men, they have started drawing their own image about them. Driven by their racist views, they regarded the blacks as a subhuman race that worth no respect by the superior whites. Furthermore, they associated to them everything bad and evil such as crimes, and thus they consider the blacks’ presence among them a danger. In the novel we came across similar attitudes which intended to dehumanize the black race.

In fact, everyone in *To Kill a Mockingbird* who is covered by a black skin is put in the distorted image the racist whites have designed. However Tom Robinson is the black character to be most touched by the detrimental judgements of the white townsfolk.

Going back to Mr. Robinson case, we find that a white young woman charges him of violent rape. Right after the white accuser opens her mouth against Tom, the townspeople did not hesitate to believe her. As a reaction, they all mobilize around the jail to lynch the black defendant without even proving guilty. According to the narrator this occurs when:

We were taking a short cut across the square when four dusty cars came in from the Meridian highway.....and stopped in front of the jail.....In ones and twos, men got out of the cars.....moving toward the jail door....."He in there, Mr. Finch?" a man said.....the men talked in near-whispers. "You know what we want" another man said. "Get aside from the door, Mr. Finch." (151)

Obviously, what does matter for them is being a black man which is enough evidence for committing such crime for the blacks are the most corrupted folks in the society. Assuming the blacks as a savage rapist who can never be trusted around the white women was the common belief which was rooted in the minds of all the Americans.

Following the same opinion, the all white jury also associated blackness to corruption and crimes. As it was previously mentioned about the case in court, the jury pay no attention to all the strong and clear evidences put in front of them in favour of the black accused. Although they represent justice and fairness, their racial stereotype toward the blacks overcome the clear truth which they see only in skin colour of Tom. By convicting Tom Robinson intentionally despite his innocence, the white jury emphasizes strongly the former view. Consequently, Tom's reputation, and the reputation of all the blacks, as pure man is damaged and his freedom is broken down.

A similar attitude is clearly existent in the sixth chapter even before the above example is mentioned in the novel. This is in the incident when the three friends Scout, Jem and Dill decide to have to have a look inside the Radley house at night hoping to meet the unseen man Boo Radley "*Dill and Jem were simply going to peep in the window with the loose shutter to see if they could get a look at Boo Radley,Because nobody could see them at night....., and because it was easier to se inside a dark house in a dark house in the dark than in the daytime*" (51). After a few moments the adventure begins, the children hear a shotgun behind them what makes them to run quickly. As the kids come back to the

neighbourhood, they see the neighbours gather near the Radley Place and when they wonder what happened, a neighbour replies that “*Mr. Radley shot a Negro in his collard patch*” (51).

Neither the neighbours nor Mr. Radley could see the face of the person who was trying to get into the house. Yet, they automatically blame the blacks for this because they build their assumptions on their constant racist view about the African Americans. Without even witnessing the incident, they all believe that a black man should be the responsible while it is all done by white children. Indeed, this example is another indicator of how the black Americans are stereotyped as criminals by the white Americans.

Considering the black people in general as rapists and criminals by the whites is a false view that has nothing to do with the truth. But rather it is built on hateful and racial attitudes which put the blacks in a degrading position in the whole community.

III.2. Symbolism of the Title

There are many different perceptions about what the “mockingbird” does represent in the novel. Nonetheless, the majority of the analysis asserted that the “mockingbird” comes to symbolise the idea of innocence.

Throughout the story several characters may be identified as a mockingbird such as Scout and Boo Radley³⁰, but Tom Robinson is the most intended one by this comparison. Generally the mockingbirds are linked to all what is harmless and innocent. Their only action is just to sing for the pleasure of people for this killing them is a sin like it is mentioned in the novel:

“Shoot all the blue jays you want, if you can hit’em, but remember it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird..... Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don’t eat up people’ gardens don’t nest in corncribs

³⁰ Scout is innocent because she is a child that is shocked by the reality of the world. While Boo Radley is innocent mockingbird for he was for he is stereotyped as an evil and monster which is not the reality by the end

they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." (90)

On the other hand, Tom Robinson shares this bird the same qualities. He is a peaceful, kind and innocent person who never hurt the others. Therefore, accusing Tom falsely by rape and then killing him is exactly like killing an innocent mockingbird.

Nevertheless, although many may agree with the above interpretation, it seemed that it has another connotation. Comparing the black character Tom to a mockingbird might be humiliating more than glorifying. As it is known, the birds, and particularly the mockingbirds, are weak animals and targets. In addition, the mockingbirds are also defenceless creatures that cannot protect themselves or resist any attack against them but instead they easily give up to their killer.

Tom Robinson is also put in this image of fragility and inability. After he was shot the direct comparison between Tom and the mockingbird was made. Mainly it was Mr. B. B. Underwood who writes an editorial in which "*He linked Tom's death to the senseless slaughter of songbirds by hunters and children*" (241). So, it is meant that the death of Tom Robinson is as easy as shooting on a mockingbird. Throughout this needless identification, it is pointed out that Tom is as weak as this kind of birds. He is, like any other black, a powerless man and unable even of defending himself, but instead he relies on the white lawyer's protection.

Likening Mr. Robinson to a weak animal, the mockingbird is in fact a clear intention to describe the blacks as fragile and disable folks who easily submit to destruction. It is again a degrading and dehumanizing characteristic which is formed out of hatred, disrespect and racism towards the African Americans.

III.3. Tom' death as a result of racism

Racism, the serious disease of Maycomb people hurt the black Tom heavily. The latter does not only lose his freedom and is subjected to humiliation and disrespect, but he paid his life as high price for being a black man. Tom's story with racism ends tragically while it began with his kindness. Eventually Tom is rewarded for his goodness by having his life ended cruelly.

After Tom is imprisoned as a result of the white jury sentence, just a few days later his lawyer Mr. Finch is informed that his defendant has died. According to the prison guards, this black imprisoned attempted to flee the prison they were obliged to shoot in order to prevent him. They claim that they tried to warn him by shooting few times in the air, but he kept running what makes them to shoot him seventeen times as Atticus tells:

“They shot him.....he was running. It was during their exercise period. They said he just broke into a blind raving charge at the fence and started climbing over. Right in front of them.....the guards called to him to stop. They fired a few shots in the air, then to kill.....Seventeen bullet holes in him.” (235)

Mr. Finch comments on Tom's death saying: *“we had such a good chance.....I told him what I thought, but I couldn't in truth say that we had more than a good chance. I guess Tom was tired of white men's chances and preferred to take his own”* (235, 236). Mr. Finch thinks that Tom Robinson got despaired from the justice system believing that he wants to free himself by running away from the jail.

Mr. Finch's interpretation about Tom' death does not sound so reasonable. If it is true that Tom really tried to escape as they claimed, he would not make it in the full sight of the prison guards. The latter takes the risk of escape despite his knowledge that this would not succeed and death would be sure the result. Possibly Tom has done this for he knows that he

would inevitably spend the rest of his life in jail or he would be hanged. It seems Tom took into account that there is no hope or chance for a black man accused of rape to be free again even if he would escape from prison. Thus, Tom wants to make his death as quick as possible and not his freedom.

Actually, Tom's escape towards death suggests different meanings. It is an escape because of getting tired of racism and inhuman treatment. It is a desire to run away because life under oppression and unfairness that put him in jail is no more bearable. Perhaps for Tom death is much better than being among racist community marginalizes him only for he is different from them. He probably does not see any difference between death and life between the prison walls. In other words, life is meaningless without his liberty that is stolen by people consider it the basis upon which their nation was built. In fact, Tom's blackness deprives him from living a little as a human even he is free outside the jail. By the end there is no choice left for Tom but doom as a final result of racism.

III.3.a. The Brutality of Tom's Death

The death of Tom Robinson is one of the events in the novel that Harper Lee does not give much detail about despite its significance. Usually, the narrator of this story, Scout, witnesses all the events she tells about. Nonetheless, she just reports about the murder of Robinson from her father who is only informed about it as well.

In fact this opens a big door for suspicion. As Tom's murder is witnessed only by the prison guards who shot him seventeen times to stop him, their version may not be trusted. It is quite possible that Tom made no try of escape and his murder is done intentionally by the guards. Not surprisingly Tom is targeted by the guards 'bullets due to their hateful and racist feelings.

In addition, if we suppose that this black prisoner was really was escaping, it is not necessary to shot him seventeen times to stop him running away. After all Tom is not a dangerous animal and certainly a few bullets would have been sufficient to slow him down or even to kill him. But apparently this is not the intention of the prison guards who are unfair with Tom even in death. The brutality in which this black is killed shows up the racist nature of the white guards towards him. For them killing Tom is just killing an insect. Moreover, in their eyes Tom is not a human being with dignity and rights, but instead he is a mere black man whose absence in this world makes it better.

It must be said that the death of the innocent Tom is the responsibility of the entire white community. Indeed, Tom is a dead man the moment he came to such society with a black skin. His death is the ugliest outcome of the destructive prejudice that made him inferior and subhuman creature without any right. It is not only the seventeen bullets that killed him, but he is shot by the oppression and injustice bullets of the white people.

Simply, Tom Robinson is just victimized by racism and his murder is the final example of how racism leads to ruin and tragedies. If racism was not present, Tom would not loos neither his freedom nor his life. Furthermore, his death is a death of a whole black nation. It is a death of the freedom that the black Americans have never enjoyed. He is killed just as the dignity of his people was killed by the hypocrite whites.

Conclusion

Eventually, this chapter gave a discussion about the main points in this work. In the first lines it provided an introduction about the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* in order to pave the way for the next discussion. After, as the theme of racism in the novel is the heart of this study, we intended to pick up the major instances of racism towards different races. Then, as the title of this work suggests, we worked to bring about the important results and

consequences of racism towards the blacks in which we came across dehumanisation and destruction as the final result.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Throughout history, racism remains one of the ugliest and brutal powers that caused damage and destruction ranking them to the inhuman degree. Although it has been present, even still existent, in all over the world, racism against the black minority in America is still the most known brutal racism the human history ever seen. Indeed the blacks have been undergone to the most humiliating and degrading treatments due to something they have no control over.

Actually, the blacks' history in America is so strange and exceptional. Unlike many other immigrants, the blacks have been forced to leave their motherlands and embark on a journey to a strange land to work as slaves. Along their presence in America they have been exposed to countless difficulties and troubles. The first thing they have faced was the long years of slavery during which they have been seen as subjects and properties. In addition, they have passed through a long bitter struggle after finding themselves subjected by oppressive laws to racial segregations as an inferior race. Simply, the blacks have been targets of racism, hatred and degradation due to their blackness in a nation they have built by their souls before their bodies.

Furthermore, the novel that this research has relied on to prove its major hypothesis is a suitable choice. In relation to what is said above, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) highlights an important chapter in the history of America. Among several topics, racism is given the lion share. The writer and through depending on real events, people and facts, could depict the bitter life of the blacks under the influence of racism especially in the southern society. Thus, this novel has provided relevant examples for achieving the aim of this thesis.

It has been helpful using the analytical approach to examine the instances of the racist attitudes in the book to show its dehumanizing results on the black individuals. Possibly the prominent example which has been frequently discussed is the unjust trial against the black

man Tom Robinson who is convicted to death or life imprisonment in spite of his proved innocence. The latter is charged by violent rape, the accusation which is strongly believed by all the town residents and even the all white jury. The white community recognized this man as a mere black savage rapist who is far from a civilized human, and hence they deprived him from his rights and liberty and even his life. By these racial attitudes, Tom is ranked in the nonhuman degree.

Eventually, it is of importance to mention that many efforts have been done to make this work possible and reach its established aim. Although this study could not cover everything due to time and other obstacles, it may pave the way for further studies such as racism and dehumanization from a psychoanalytical way. We also hopefully wish that this work can make a useful contribution in the academic studies that deal with the cultural studies, mainly literature and civilization.

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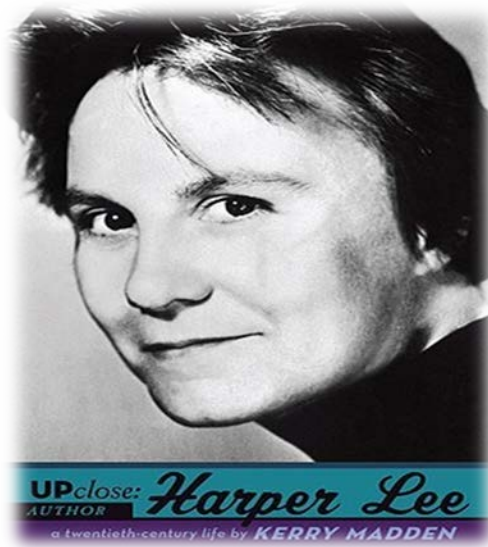
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Harper Lee's Biography



Harper Lee, officially born as Nell Harper Lee on April 28, 1926 in the small south-western town of Monroeville in Alabama in the United States. Harper was the youngest of four children of a middle class family. Her father Amasa Coleman Lee, a former editor and proprietor, was a lawyer who also served on the state legislature (1926-38) whereas her mother died before Harper could turn her twenty five.

Miss Lee was raised and grew up in Monroeville. She spent her childhood as tomboy enjoying a friendship with her schoolmate and neighbour Truman Capote. Lee attended the public grammar school and high school in Monroeville. She developed an interest in writing from her childhood and continued to write when she attended the all-female Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Alabama from 1944 to 1945. At that time, though she was an adolescent, she was a different student focusing on studies and writing instead of makeup, clothes or dating like the other girls. Then, Lee transferred to the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa to study law (1944-45), spending one year abroad at Oxford University, but left without completing her degree.

During the early 1950s she moved to New York where she reunited with her friend Truman Capote, who turned into a writer. During her presence in New York, Lee took a job as airline

reservation clerk. However, Lee was always interested in her cup of tea, writing. After receiving a financial support from her friends, she left the job and devoted her time for writing the first manuscript of her first novel *Go Set a Watchman* in the mid of the 1950s. Yet, this novel could not find a publisher. Then Lee went to work on another novel, and in 1957 signed a deal and embarked upon two years process of rewriting and refining it.

On July 1960, Harper Lee published her first novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Right after its publication, the book received a dramatic success. It achieved the bestseller status with more than thirty million copies worldwide. Moreover, just two years after, it was adopted into a film which was successful as the novel and won the Oscar Prize 1963.

In an interview Lee acknowledged that..." *I never expected any sort of success with To Kill a Mockingbird...I sort of hoped someone would like it enough to give me encouragement*" (qtn the telegraph). Through years Harper and her novel continued to receive major awards. In 1961 the Pulitzer Prize for fiction was granted to Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Within the same year the novel obtained the Brotherhood Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Besides, it was voted by the Library Journal as one of the best novels of the twentieth century dealing with race in America. Moreover, President Johnson named Lee to the National Council of Arts in 1966, and recently in 2007 she was honoured by President Bush who presented her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her contribution to the American literature.

The novel also was considered as an educating book teaching moral lessons and hence it was widely used in schools and colleges curriculums in the United States. However, the book was removed from schools in a response to the complaints who blamed Lee for using racial language and sexual subjects.

Although this book was a great success, lee made no further publication except for some articles and allowed her reputation to rest on one book until 2015 when she published her second and

last novel *Go Set a Watchman*. She spent the rest of her life between New York and Monroeville preferring private existence, granting few interviews and giving few speeches. She was died on February 19, 2016 in Monroeville. (Nancy Anderson, Encyclopaedia of Alabama)

The Synopsis of the Novel

To Kill a Mockingbird is a book about racism, injustice, racial prejudice and the like issues of the southern society. Its story is set in the old town Maycomb, Alabama during the great depression period 1930. It is told in the first person narrative by an adult girl named Scout, originally Jean Louise Finch. Scout lives in Maycomb with her older brother Jem and her widowed father the Lawyer Atticus Finch in addition to the African American servant Calpurnia.

The book is divided into two parts. Opening its early part, Scout introduces her family, her neighbourhood and her quiet town Maycomb. Then the protagonist goes in a trip of memories mostly about her adventures with her brother and their closest friend Dill Harris during the summer days. Scout spends most of this part talking about how she and the two boys are fascinated by the mysterious neighbour Boo Radely whom they never seen outside his home and just heard about him. In order to get him outside, the kids make countless unsuccessful attempts. However, the lawyer Atticus tries to prevent him asking them not to bother Boo and stay away from his private life.

The second part of the novel is dominated by another event which is the heart of it. The lawyer Atticus Finch decides to take on a case involving a black man named Tom Robinson who is accused of raping and beating a poor white girl called Mayella Ewell, a member of the Ewell family that people refer to as “trash”. Defending a black man has a deep negative effect on the Finch family who faces harsh criticism from the heavily racist Maycomb and even Atticus cousins. Yet, the white lawyer, even being called a “Nigger Lover” and is doubtful of winning the case he keeps going on till the end.

The time of the trial draws close and during this period a new personality is introduced. Atticus’ sister Alexandra comes to stay with the family. She is proper and old-fashioned who tries to make Scout look and behave like the southern feminine. Another remarkable event which occurs

just before the trial of Tom is the attack on the jail by Maycomb mob to kill the black accused, but is prevented by the lawyer.

During the trial, the accuser and the accused are asked to give their witnesses. According to the supposed victim Mayella Ewell, she asked Tom to do some work for her while her father was out. She carries claiming that Tom came in her house forcibly take advantage of her until her father came and moved him away. On the other hand, Tom's version is that Mayella invited him to her house to help her in some work, but then threw her arms around him and began to kiss him. Tom tells that she tries to push her away, but her father arrived and when he saw her, he beat her while Tom run away.

Atticus tries to prove Tom's innocence and Mr. Ewell's responsibility. According to the sheriff's testimony, the girl was hit on the right side of her face, which means it was done by a left hand. Since Tom's left arm is useless due to an old incident, he is innocent and it must be her father responsibility who is a left-hand user. However, despite the clear evidences, Atticus fails to win the case for the all white jury pronounces Tom guilty. Only few days later, the lawyer is informed the Tom tried to escape the prison what makes the prison guards to shot him seventeen times to death.

By then Mr. Ewell threatens Atticus as he mocked and humiliated him in front of people. He gets his revenge at one dark night while Jem and Scout are in their way to home after the Halloween party. The children are attacked by Mr. Ewell who tries to kill them, but unknown man saves them and takes them home. Arriving at home, Scout realizes that the strange man is Boo Radley. Eventually, the sheriff comes to tell Atticus that Mr. Ewell is found killed falling in his own knife where the attack took place.