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DIPLOMA THESIS

A structural and thematic comparison of Harper Lee's novels *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman*

Strukturální a tematické srovnání dvou románů Harper Leeové, *To Kill a Mockingbird* a *Go Set a Watchman*

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I hereby declare that this diploma thesis titled A structural and thematic comparison of Harper Lee's novels *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman* is my own work and that I used only the sources listed on the Works Cited page. I also declare that this thesis was not used to obtain any other academic degree.

Prague, 23 July 2020

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this diploma thesis is to analyse and compare Harper Lee's canonical coming-of-age novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* to its original forerunner, the novel *Go Set a Watchman*, which was, however, published several years later. The theoretical part provides a brief synopsis of each of the novels and outlines Lee's life, as well as the main aspects of the historical and social background relevant to the stories, namely the Great Depression, Jim Crow laws, and the Scottsboro Trial. The practical part then investigates and juxtaposes the two novels from thematic and structural perspectives, and considers them specifically through the psychological, sociological, and stylistic prisms. Besides, it compares the factual similarities and differences in storylines and characters, who are often based on Lee's real-life acquaintances. The overall comparison shows how *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a gently tuned novel of children growing up yet packed with diverse topics, evolved from a rather intricate novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, dealing with a difficult task of one's individuation and realising that one's father is only a human. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is set in the 1930s and takes place over several years, while the story of *Go Set a Watchman* is situated some twenty years later, and its plot culminates in the course of a few days. Last but not least, unlike the first novel, which employs the first-person narration, the second novel makes use of the third-person narration.

## **KEYWORDS**

Harper Lee, Southern literature, comparison, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Go Set a Watchman*, bildungsroman, psychological prism, sociological prism, stylistic prism

## **ABSTRAKT**

Cílem této diplomové práce je zanalyzovat a srovnat kanonický bildungsroman spisovatelky Harper Leeové *Jako zabít ptáčka* s jeho původním předchůdcem románem *Postav hlídku*, který byl však publikován o mnoho let později. Teoretická část práce poskytne stručnou synopsi obou děl a nastíní život autorky spolu s hlavními aspekty historicko-sociálního pozadí doby, ve které se příběhy odehrávají, a to velká hospodářská krize, zákony Jima Crowa, a Scottsboroský případ. Praktická část práce poté zkoumá a srovnává dané romány z hlediska tematického a strukturálního a nahlíží na ně zejména z pohledu psychologického, sociologického a stylistického. Tato část také srovnává rozdíly v dějové lince a v postavách, které jsou často založeny na blízkých osobách z autorčina života. Celkové srovnání ukazuje, jak se jemně laděný román *Jako zabít ptáčka* pojednávající o dospívání dětí a dalších rozmanitých tématech vyvinul ze spletitého díla *Postav hlídku*, které se zabývá obtížným úkolem individuace a uvědomění si, že vlastní otec je také pouze člověkem. Román *Jako zabít ptáčka* je zasazen do třicátých let dvacátého století a odehrává se během několika let. Naproti tomu příběh románu *Postav hlídku* je situován o přibližně dvacet let později a jeho děj vrcholí v průběhu několika málo dní. V neposlední řadě se díla liší ve způsobu vyprávění, kdy první román uplatňuje ich formu, zatímco druhý román využívá vyprávění ve třetí osobě.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Harper Lee, literatura amerického Jihu, srovnání, *Jako zabít ptáčka*, *Postav hlídku*, bildungsroman, psychologické prizma, sociologické prizma, stylistické prizma

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## Introduction

In the literary world, there are authors whose lists of highly acclaimed works are endless or at least numerous, and then there are authors such as Harper Lee. Despite having written only two books, Harper Lee is ranked amongst the most respected authors with her novels being read worldwide. The work that established Harper Lee's canonical literary status was the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* published in 1960 (Shields, *Mockingbird* intro). Unfortunately, after that, the readers had to wait fifty-five years to see the birth of another Lee's novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, which was published in 2015, a year before her death (Shields, *Mockingbird* intro). Immediately, the novel attracted many readers and ranked among the best-selling books of 2015 in the USA ("Bestselling Books Of 2015"). However, the latter was not just another ordinary publication of an author. Its story is much more complicated than it seems. An attentive reader may notice that some passages, identical or modified, already appeared in the first book. Initially, *Go Set a Watchman* was regarded and promoted as a sequel to the 1960 classic. However, it is now generally considered an original first draft of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a speculation which is supported by the same episodes that appear in both novels (Kakutani).

While the most evident and indisputable dissimilarities can be found within plotlines and the manner of narration, the readers may also be surprised by the sudden change of behaviour of one of the main characters, Atticus Finch, who represents the moral hero of Lee's admired first novel. *To Kill a Mockingbird* portrays Atticus as an admirable single parent and a lawyer whose moral fibre makes him tower above the racially prejudiced and parochial citizens of Maycomb. When juxtaposed against the second novel, that larger than life image may seem too good to be true, i.e. the portrayal of Atticus found in *To Kill a Mockingbird* can be readily understood as an idealizing grand narrative penned by his daughter Scout. Retroactively, it could also be argued that in *Go Set a Watchman*, that same daughter punctures her own mythological bubble and cuts her father down to human size.

This diploma thesis hence seeks to explore the two novels in some depth and provide their comprehensive analysis and comparison. Besides, focusing on Harper Lee's life as well, the work tries to trace the autobiographical elements in both stories and, therefore, present the works in a new light. The theoretical part aims to introduce the personality of Harper Lee



and provides a brief synopsis of the two novels. Furthermore, it is concerned with the reception of the novels, be it the reactions of literary critics or the response of the readership community. The practical part, being the main focal point of the thesis, scrutinizes both novels, compares them particularly from the respective psychological, sociological, and stylistic points of view, and tries to answer the question why Harper Lee chose not to publish the original version and instead rewrote it into *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

# 1 Theoretical part

## 1.1 Harper Lee: life and work

The following chapters seek to shed some light on Harper Lee, who does remain a rather mysterious figure, encompassing both her life and her literary oeuvre. Probably the most complete renditions of Lee's life are the literary biography *Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee: From Scout to Go Set a Watchman* written by Charles J. Shields, and its re-edited, mildly abridged, version *I Am Scout* adapted for young readers by the same author. These two will play a crucial role in both parts of this thesis and in large part due to their almost identical content will be used interchangeably.

Given the fact that this diploma thesis deals with the only two works of fiction written by the author, which are interconnected and whose publication moreover did not follow the typical pattern of publishing one work after the other, but the publication of the later work was not primarily initiated by the author herself, it is necessary to clarify the use of the attributes "the first" and "the second" in reference to the novels at the very outset of this thesis. Another reason for making this clear is the complex story behind the two novels. Both stories follow the lives of the same protagonists who grow older and the plotlines move chronologically in time; therefore, it could be easily assumed that the two novels are actually two consecutive volumes. However, as has been discovered, the novel that was published later had in fact been the original first draft of the earlier novel.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned facts, it follows that the attributes can be assigned to the individual books in three possible ways. The first option may consist in marking the books on the basis of the real time of their creation, in other words, in the chronological order as they were written by the author. If this option was chosen, the first book would be the novel *Go Set a Watchman*, the second would be *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The second way of determining the order of the books in question can be based on the actual content of the books, specifically on the period in which the individual stories take place. In this case, the order of the novels would be reversed - *To Kill a Mockingbird* could thus be described as the first book, while *Go Set a Watchman* as the second book. Finally, the third way of appointing the given order is to label the books with regard to their date of publication. This method, in its result, leads to the same designation of the books as the

second method, where *To Kill a Mockingbird* bears the attribute “the first”, and *Go Set a Watchman* “the second”. It is the third way of labelling the books that has been chosen and is used within this diploma thesis. It can be legitimately argued that that the order of the publication of the novels has been crucial to the success and importance of both works for it was the success and literary merit of the first work that was the key prerequisite for the publication of the second book.

### **1.1.1 Mockingbird: a portrait of Harper Lee**

Nelle Harper Lee was born on 28 April in 1926 to the family of Amasa Coleman Lee and ten years younger Frances Cunningham Finch (Shields, *Mockingbird* ch. 2). Together they raised four children, the oldest Alice Finch Lee, Frances Louise Lee, Edwin Coleman Lee and the youngest Nelle Harper Lee. Nelle grew up in the town of Monroeville, “a dusty old hamlet”, which she later left first for the University of Alabama and then for the City of New York (ch. 1).

During her university years while studying law, Lee voiced her opinions and regularly shared her stories in the campus humour magazine and afterwards also in the campus newspaper (ch. 4). She took part in the exchange programme for students after World War II and sailed to England to spend a summer course at Oxford (ch. 5). Being a great admirer of British authors, she finally realised that following in her father’s footsteps at law school was not the path she wanted to take. Her decision to drop out of law school and pursue the career of a writer was not met with approval from her parents (ch. 1).

When in New York, she worked in various positions to make both ends meet and in her free time she was meeting other Southerners residing in the city and trying to write (ch. 1). Her meeting with the Brown family signified a crucial change in her career. They were so convinced of Lee’s talent that they provided her with financial means so that she could quit her job for a whole year and merely concentrate her effort on writing (ch. 6). Right after the publication of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in 1960, the world was craving to get to know more about its author, Harper Lee (ch. 9). The spate of journalists striving to interview her was not something Harper Lee was longing for. Unlike her best friend Truman Capote, she did not find herself enjoying all the attention that she received. And there was another thing that differentiated between the two friends and authors - winning the Pulitzer Prize. Capote’s

dream never came true while Harper Lee was awarded the prize in 1961 (*Mockingbird* ch. 9).

After the sensation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* wore off a little bit, Harper Lee sat down to start working on her next novel. In 1964 during one of her last interviews she opened up her heart and expressed her intention in her future writing (ch. 11). She spoke about her wish to write about small Southern towns and about the social system that governed the life in them. “‘In other words,’ she said, ‘all I want to be is the Jane Austen of south Alabama’” (Shields, *Mockingbird* ch. 11). However, during the years of constant endeavours of writing another novel without any success, Harper Lee was gradually turning into a recluse rejecting various offers coming from the literary world. Eventually, she did not manage to finish any other book during her career.

### **1.1.2 *To Kill a Mockingbird* – synopsis**

Prior to the actual head-to-head comparison, the two novels need to be briefly synopsized, in order to facilitate comprehension of the finer nuances of the two narratives. Let us start with the more canonical of the two novels.

The story of *To Kill a Mockingbird* follows the lives of the members of the Finch family living in Maycomb, “a tired old town” (Lee 5) in Alabama in the 1930s. Jeremy “Jem” Atticus Finch and his younger sister six-year-old Jean Louise, commonly addressed as “Scout”, are children of a widowed lawyer and highly esteemed member of the local community, Atticus Finch, who raises his offspring with the help of a black servant Calpurnia. Scout as the main protagonist and narrator is an example of a tomboy who, missing the mother figure in her life, does not want to accept her girlish role and rather follows her brother in boyish manners. She recounts the episodes from their apparently blithe childhood which is suddenly interrupted by an ugly legal case led by their father. In an attempt to protect the equality of human rights, Atticus defends a black man, Tom Robinson, wrongfully charged with rape and stands against a dehumanizing society as a moral hero. Unfortunately, the conservative jury unanimously pronounces Tom guilty despite Atticus proving his innocence in front of the whole courtroom and his children’s eyes. Since their father plays the most important part in the trial, it has a huge impact on Jem and Scout, who up to now believed in justice and an uncorrupted society. Both children together with their

friend Dill are stricken by the unhappy result of the trial, which seems absolutely incomprehensible to them.

The subsidiary plot is the constant quest of the three kids, Scout, Jem, and Dill, to reveal the mystery of their neighbour Arthur Radley known as Boo, who is apparently hiding in his house and never seems to come out. Since everyone in the village is rather cagey and refuses to speak to the children about Boo, the three are desperately trying to find out more about him and to catch sight of him even though they are repeatedly told by Atticus to let sleeping dogs lie. Their curiosity is instigated even more when they suddenly begin to find small objects hidden on a regular basis in a tree in the vicinity of the Radley house. The children believe it to be a friendly signal from Boo and their imagination never lets them rest until one day Scout and Jem finally meet Boo Radley during an inauspicious accident in which both children returning alone in the dark from a school performance are attacked by a vindictive man acting in retaliation for their father's endeavour in the rape trial. Boo Radley is the one who eventually saves both kids and Scout's curiosity is satisfied as she finally gets to know him.

### **1.1.3 *Go Set a Watchman* – synopsis**

The novel *Go Set a Watchman* takes place in the 1950s when twenty-six-year-old Jean Louise Finch is coming back from New York, her current place of residence, to Maycomb, Alabama to visit her father Atticus Finch and the rest of her family, Aunt Alexandra and Uncle Dr Jack Finch. During this visit, Jean Louise notices that things, especially relations between white and black populations, have changed in the town and that her father and her prospective boyfriend Henry Clinton are somehow involved in a movement that seeks to keep the rights of black people restricted. Between wandering through the village and recalling memories from her childhood, Jean Louise is looking for answers, not being able to accept that her beloved father, who has always been a moral hero to her, is suddenly a racist. After secretly attending a meeting in which her father and her boyfriend take part, and overhearing things she would never imagine hearing from these two, she feels as if everyone in her hometown has changed and that the town itself is no longer a place she can call her home. Not even Calpurnia, a black servant, who used to work for the Finches and raised Jean

Louise, is particularly friendly when she comes to visit her hoping to receive a hearty welcome from her beloved confidant.

Breaking away from her father, upon whom she has always relied heavily and whose opinions she never questioned, is not only an extremely painful and difficult task for Jean Louise but also a critical one for her future. Seeking comfort and an explanation from her uncle, Dr Finch explains to her that she eventually has to find her own conscience in order to disengage from her father who is, after all, only human being.

#### **1.1.4 Autobiographical elements**

When she began to write, Nelle was given the advice that every novice writer encounters: “Write about what you know” (Shields, *Mockingbird* ch. 1). So it happened that she started to write about ordinary people from a southern town with her own acquaintances and relatives who often gave birth to the characters of her novels. Thus, to understand the motivation behind choosing the specific cast of characters, this chapter gives a brief summary of the people that influenced and inspired Harper Lee to such a degree that she partially portrayed them in her novels.

Harper Lee imprinted herself in Jean Louise Finch known as Scout. She never behaved like other girls of her age. From her early years, she could gain boys’ respect not being afraid of using her fists to get her own way (ch. 2). At school, she was a bright student with an extensive vocabulary due to her father’s upbringing. To use Shield’s summary, “She was a female Tom Sawyer with large, dark brown eyes and close-cropped hair” (*Mockingbird* ch. 2).

The personality of Amasa Coleman Lee, Nelle’s father, inspired her to create Atticus Finch. He was not a typical southern man drowning himself in despair, rather he was a southern gentleman who bears the responsibility for giving a moral lead to his fellow citizens (ch. 2). The general perception shared by many people was that Mr Lee was a reserved man lost in his thoughts. In light of his wife’s mental state, Mr Lee was the one who took care of the family and especially little Nelle. Despite his public image, he was a loving and caring father who made every effort to raise his children properly.

Charles Baker Harris called Dill is modelled on Harper Lee's lifelong best friend Truman Capote. From a boy living next door (Shields, *Mockingbird* ch. 1), he became a recognized writer and an author of the novels *Other Voices*, *Other Rooms* and *In Cold Blood*, which he wrote with the help of Harper Lee. Their long-lasting friendship started when Nelle was five years old while Truman was a year older (ch. 2). Being a frequent target of mockery due to his queerness, Nelle took charge of him as his "guardian angel" (ch. 2). Just like Dill, Truman was a rather oversensitive weepy lonely boy always dressed in fashionable clothes, which did not bring him much popularity among his peers.

There might be some resemblance between Jem and Nelle's older brother Edwin who passed away at the age of thirty due to a cerebral haemorrhage after an exertion during a softball match (ch. 5). Reference to his passing away is contained in *Go Set a Watchman*. Edwin was Harper Lee's first playmate who always behaved nicely to his sister but regularly went for a baseball afternoon match leaving his sister behind (ch. 2).

The character of Boo Radley was inspired by Alfred Boulware Jr., a son of the Boulware family living in a dilapidated house close to the Lees (ch. 2). After committing several boyhood crimes and being commanded to attend the state industrial school, he was pulled off by his father and kept at home without ever being seen again in public until his death.

Another person that influenced Harper Lee to such a degree that she depicted some of her qualities in her novel was Miss Watson, Nelle's favourite "high school English teacher" (ch. 3). Miss Watson, who lived in the same neighbourhood as Nelle and enjoyed gardening, provided an inspiration for Miss Maudie Atkinson. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Miss Maudie represents a dear friend of the three children and always has an understanding of their shenanigans. During her classes, Miss Watson also stirred up love for British literature in Harper Lee.

One figure that is missing in both novels is Nelle's mother Frances. As Shields proposes, the reason for not including a mother figure by Atticus' side might have been the complicated relationship Nelle had with her mother (*Mockingbird* ch. 2). Nelle, being a tomboy herself, could never comply with her mother's rather artistic disposition. Besides, after giving birth to four children, Frances "began to show signs of mental illness" (ch. 2). The situation escalated when Nelle was only two years old and "Mrs. Lee tried to drown toddler Nelle in

the bath” (ch. 2). Had it not been for her siblings, who saved her, Harper Lee might have never given the world her two novels. This incident is probably reflected in Scout’s mother passing away when Scout was the same age as little Nelle. As Scout says in the book, “Our mother died when I was two, so I never felt her absence ... I did not miss her, but I think Jem did” (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 6). After her health gradually deteriorated, Mrs Lee died when Nelle was twenty-five (Shields, *Mockingbird* ch. 5). However, Lee did not completely discard her mother’s character from the two novels. Shield suggests that “what Harper Lee understood about her mother, she poured into Aunt Alexandra’s character in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, who closely resembles Frances Lee” (ch. 5).

Not only people but also events of Lee’s life found a place on the pages of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The unfortunate accident of Miss Maudie’s house ablaze commemorated the winter night when a fire struck the neighbouring house where Truman Capote used to stay with his relatives (ch. 3). The trial over Tom Robinson raping a white girl, which is one of the key plots in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and partly appears in *Go Set a Watchman* as well, was based on a real happening when Walter Lett was accused of raping a white woman (ch. 7). Since Mr Lee did not appear in this trial as a defence attorney, Nelle had to take the inspiration from a previous case in which her father as an aspiring lawyer was defending two black men accused of murdering a white man. After losing the case, Mr Lee never practised criminal law again.

### **1.1.5 The making of *To Kill a Mockingbird***

The journey leading to the creation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the form that so many people know and love today was rather lengthy and convoluted. The novel *Go Set a Watchman* is immediate evidence of this.

Nelle Harper Lee already pointed out some of the themes and topics of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in her regular contributions to the campus newspaper (Shields, *I am Scout* 56). In the two short stories “Nightmare” and “A Wink at Justice” she elaborates on the topic of racial prejudice and justice. Furthermore, the latter bears a clear resemblance with its court setting to *To Kill a Mockingbird* and more specifically to the episode of the Tom Robinson’s trial (57,58).



A critical moment in Lee's career that set the ball rolling was meeting Michael and Joy Brown who became her close friends and who by giving her an extraordinary Christmas present of a yearlong supply of money enabled her to withdraw from her job and concentrate all her efforts solely on writing. As she wrote in a letter to a friend, "Aside from the et ceteras of gratefulness and astonishment I feel about this proposition, I have a horrible feeling that this *will* be the making of me..." (Shields, *I am Scout* 86).

It took Nelle six months to finish the very first manuscript, originally entitled *Go Set a Watchman* and later also *Atticus*, which she submitted to the publisher J. B. Lippincott & Co (86). The group of editors mainly found fault with the structure of the manuscript claiming "it was 'more a series of anecdotes than a fully conceived novel'" and advised her to revise it (87). The only woman amongst the male editors was Theresa "Tay" von Hohoff who immediately saw something in the young author and decided to collaborate with her as an editor. Together the two women worked on the revisions of the novel. What Tay admired about Nelle's writing was her specific style that was "funny, subtle, and engaging, perfectly suited for the novel with a Southern setting she wanted to write" (88).

In winter 1957, Harper Lee finally assembled all the critical features that she wanted to cover in her novel and started to work on *To Kill a Mockingbird* (93), which was the new title instead of *Atticus* that Tay and Nelle agreed on (98). During a rough period of writing, there was a moment that could have extinguished the novel when Harper Lee took all the pages written thus far and threw them out of her New York apartment window into the snowy night (99). Fortunately, her editor Tay, whom Nelle directly called after the incident, ordered her to immediately go down and collect up the papers.

In autumn 1959 during the final revisions of the novel, Nelle's solitary period of focused writing had been interrupted by an offer made by her friend Truman Capote, who invited her to join him in his investigation of a quadruple murder based on which he was supposed to write an article for *The New Yorker* magazine (101). The story eventually produced a whole novel titled *In Cold Blood*.

Harper Lee's novel took off in July 1960 and became immediately successful hitting "both the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* lists of top 10 bestsellers" (127). Hoping to receive at least some kind of a positive incentive, she was joyful as the unexpectedly great

success of her novel also vindicated everything she had to go through and give up such as leaving law school and moving to New York City to become a writer, which she has been able to achieve.

#### **1.1.6 The “second” novel: *Go Set a Watchman***

After fifty-five years of waiting, in 2015 the literary world and fans of Harper Lee’s first novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* finally lived to see a new novel being published. At the very beginning, the incoming novel was generally believed to be a sequel to its predecessor. Even the press all over the world was referring to the new book as a sequel, for instance, the headline by the *Sydney Morning Herald* read “Go Set a Watchman - the Mockingbird sequel no one saw coming” a few days before the long-awaited release date (McMahon). However, the truth would soon be revealed that the novel may indeed be a sequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird* especially when it comes to the storyline and the characters, but in fact, was written before.

The following statement provided by Harper Lee and quoted in a 2015 press release of HarperCollins Publishers is self-explanatory as to the origin of *Go Set a Watchman*:

In the mid-1950s, I completed a novel called *Go Set a Watchman*. It features the character known as Scout as an adult woman and I thought it a pretty decent effort. My editor, who was taken by the flashbacks to Scout's childhood, persuaded me to write a novel from the point of view of the young Scout. I was a first-time writer, so I did as I was told. I hadn't realized it had survived, so was surprised and delighted when my dear friend and lawyer Tonja Carter discovered it. After much thought and hesitation I shared it with a handful of people I trust and was pleased to hear that they considered it worthy of publication. I am humbled and amazed that this will now be published after all these years. (qtd. in Andreadis)

## 1.2 Historical and social background

To fully understand both novels it is crucial to be familiar with the situation in the United States during the years when the two stories take place. This chapter is tasked with providing the readers with fundamental information. Therefore, it will not be exhaustive but rather it will accentuate the main aspects of that time period relevant to the two stories. The attention will be turned to the Great Depression in general, black ethnicity issues, and specifically Jim Crow laws that dominated life in the Southern states at the end of the 19th century and through the 20th century, and lastly the overview of the Scottsboro trial, which might have influenced Harper Lee in her writing, particularly as an inspiration for the trial that makes up the plotline in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and which illustrates how black people were treated in front of the court.

While the chapters about Jim Crow laws and the Scottsboro trial are explicitly concerned with the black ethnicity issue, the chapter about the Great Depression is not, which, however, does not mean that it should be omitted. The Great Depression is a long-term event that most significantly determined the way of life of Americans and also determined the overall atmosphere in the country. It is in this period that the plotline of the first novel is set. Although, we do not find direct references to the economic crisis in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, after closer examination it can be claimed that the situation caused by this event is to some degree reflected in this book, for example in the social background of some of the characters, who, to a certain extent, typify similar social class across America. The economic crisis can also be seen as one of the causes of a certain frustration, which manifests itself in hostility towards black fellow citizens.

On the contrary, the remaining chapters are directly connected with the story of both works, because they concern the black minority, and in both works, it is possible to find several references to these topics. For this reason, it is appropriate to briefly explain what the chapters are about. While understanding the meaning of segregation laws will not be a problem, understanding the significance of the U.S. Supreme Court decisions is possible only with a general awareness of the functioning of the United States justice system, in which an important role is played by so-called precedents, i.e. generally binding court decisions that represent a universally applicable source of law relevant for other cases with a similar

nature. It is the system of precedents that is one of the main features distinguishing the American legal system (common law) from the continental legal system (civil law), in which precedents do not constitute a source of law as the dominant source of law is legislation (Syam).

### **1.2.1 Great Depression**

During the 1920s, after the First World War, the United States was at the height of its economic boom and represented one of the world's major economic powers. However, this situation was reversed to a large extent at the end of the decade, specifically in 1929 with the advent of the Great Depression, which lasted through the 1930s until 1941 (Hall, and Ferguson 1).

The causes of this crisis are to be found in the stock exchange sector. The significant decline in US stock markets on what is also called “the day the bubble burst” marked a complete upheaval particularly in the social life of many Americans, which was reflected namely in rising unemployment and, interestingly, the related increase in suicides. As Granados and Roux report in their research article, “Suicide mortality peaked with unemployment, in the most recessionary years, 1921, 1932, and 1938” (17291). Within a few years, millions of people lost their employment as businesses were forced to close down and the overall industrial production decreased to its half (Zinn 378).

In connection with the recession, it is worth noting that this economic crisis was not the only problem causing economic losses in the US during this period. There were also dust storms, called Dust Bowls, in mid-America at the time, as a result of which many Americans moved from this area to the State of California (Hall, and Ferguson 1), which is worth mentioning because this topic also has a literary overlap appearing in the pivotal work of John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, a book which, like Harper Lee's novel, partly describes the social form of America in the 1920s and 1930s.

### **1.2.2 Black ethnicity issues**

In the vast majority of American history, the population of America did not form a homogeneous unit from an ethnic point of view. On the contrary, it was largely structured. In addition to the white population, which migrated to the United States over several

centuries, from the original settlers to numerous Irish immigrants, and the original Indian natives, a large part of the population was also black.

Pointing out the coexistence of the black ethnic group with the majority white population is one of the topics that Harper Lee opens and addresses in her books. If we focus on *To Kill a Mockingbird* as the first book and the social background of the black minority in the period in which the novel takes place, it should be mentioned that despite the abolition of slavery and the formal equalization of the population that has been reached on the grounds of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln in 1862 and coming into force on 1st January 1863 (Zinn 187), there was still so-called segregation, i.e. the separation of individual groups on the basis of race, which is reflected in the novel.

On the contrary, the story of the second book is shifted some twenty years forward as *Go Set a Watchman* takes place in the 50s of the 20th century, that is in the period during which the U.S. Supreme Court gave its judgment *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (Fremon 5), which is often referred to as a milestone formally marking the end of racial segregation in the United States. In the novel, however, we observe a kind of contradiction between the formal state of the matter and the perception of the inhabitants of the southern states, because they do not fully respect the newly acquired rights of the black community, despite the confirmed end of segregation by judicial authority. This approach did not really begin to change until the 1960s and the influential work of Martin Luther King.

### **1.2.3 Jim Crow laws**

The period of racial segregation under the commonly known Jim Crow laws lasted from the end of the 19th century until the mid-20th century when one of the most significant judgments was issued on May 17, 1954, by the U.S. Supreme Court, the previously mentioned *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (Fremon 5). David Fremon calls it “the most important decision” as it was life-changing for the black community, ushering in new hope and strength (5). This closely observed case involved on the one hand as the complainant the Browns, an African American family from Topeka, Kansas, who wanted to enrol their eight-year-old daughter in the local public school and, on the other hand, the school’s board of education, who turned down the application based on racial segregation and rationalised their decision on the grounds of the “separate but equal” doctrine (Fremon

5, 6). The U.S. Supreme Court, however, found for the plaintiff claiming that the idea of equal education can never be achieved unless white and African American children are brought and educated together (Fremon 7). This momentous decision thus set the process of genuine emancipation in motion.

As Catherine and Richard Lewis explain, the unofficial but commonly known term for various regulations that controlled the life of African Americans is derived from the name of a typical black character that has featured in songs which form a part of the African American folklore (Lewis, intro 11). The name Jim Crow made itself known to the public owing to the white performer Thomas Dartmouth Rice in the 1830s who employed this character in a specific type of performance characteristic for this period of American history, so-called minstrel shows (Lewis, intro 11). A minstrel show is a performance based on the representation of African American life. The quintessential element that creates all the humour is a white male actor who paints his face black to portray an African American character (“Minstrel show”). However, the name Jim Crow underwent a development of various meanings until it started to be used “to refer to the legal, customary, and often extralegal system that segregated and isolated African Americans from mainstream American life”, the Jim Crow laws (Lewis, intro 11).

Absurd as it may seem, the Jim Crow laws, which gradually spread across southern states and beyond, included restrictions through diverse spheres:

Access to the legal system was denied or severely restricted. African Americans were separated or denied access on railroads and steamships and in hotels, restaurants, and places of entertainment and restricted to separate unions and working conditions. Housing was restricted, and many were prevented from entering certain cities and towns. Prisons, hospitals, and homes for the indigent were like-wise segregated to a degree never before known in the South (Lewis, intro 20).

However, the Jim Crow laws were not obediently accepted by the African American community. Instead, new associations and organisations were being founded to help African Americans regain their lost rights. One such organisation that was established in 1909 and is repeatedly mentioned by Harper Lee in her second novel is the National Association for

the Advancement of Colored People, shortly NAACP, with people such as W. E. B. Du Bois taking its side (Lewis, intro 21). Apart from the aforementioned *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case, there was a series of events that continuously stirred up the atmosphere and encouraged African American resistance throughout the 1950s and 1960s. For instance, the murder of a teenage boy who whistled at a white woman, or the Montgomery Bus Boycott when a tired black woman, respected in the community, declined to give up her seat for a white man (Lewis, intro 26). Needless to say, a huge part in the fight for equal civil rights was indubitably played by Martin Luther King Jr., who, with his “I Have a Dream” speech, represented the spirit and endeavours of African Americans in their struggle.

Legally, the Jim Crow laws came to an end under the American President Lyndon Baines Johnson, who succeeded John Fitzgerald Kennedy after his assassination in 1963, and carried on in his predecessor’s effort, which he successfully completed when he managed to get the Civil Rights Bill through Congress in July 1964 (Lewis, intro 28, 29). “It banned segregation in restaurants, hotels, places of entertainment, and all places of public accommodation” (Lewis, intro 29).

However, despite the above-mentioned steps aimed at eliminating different approaches to people based on their race, it is clear that this goal has not yet been fully met. Evidence of this can be provided by the constantly recurring riots, the cause of which lies precisely in the different approach of state authorities in particular to black people, whether it is a presumed approach or a different approach with a real basis. Examples provided by Wallenfeldt in his article include the riots in Detroit in 1967 or Los Angeles in 1992 (“There’s a Riot”). However, it is unnecessary to go that far in history as recently there were riots taking place in the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and related demonstrations in other cities of the United States, which are associated with a simple rallying cry “Black Lives Matter”, which is also the name of the contemporary movement fighting for equal human rights.

#### **1.2.4 Scottsboro Trial**

As it was already mentioned, the nature of Tom Robinson’s case described by Harper Lee in both novels bears a resemblance to at least three known cases of black men being accused either of a rape or a murder on the grounds of racial injustice. Probably the most distinctive

case that has gone down in American history is the Scottsboro Trial commonly known as the Scottsboro Boys.

What later became an example of a great injustice started on 25th March 1931 in Alabama when a group of black young men between the age of twelve (some sources state the age of thirteen e.g. Cates) to twenty were traveling in a freight train hoping to find work outside their hometowns (Sorensen 5). This specific way of traveling, typical during the years of the Great Depression, was called “hoboing”, which, as explained by Sorensen, meant “jumping freight trains in order to seek work or adventure in other towns or states” (9). The group consisted of nine African American boys from Georgia and Tennessee (Sorensen 7). Four of them knew each other: Haywood Patterson (18), Eugene Williams (13), brothers Roy (12) and Andy (19) Wright. The other five boys did not know anyone from the arrested group: Clarence Norris (19), Charlie Weems (20), Olen Montgomery (17), Ozie Powell (17), and Willie Roberson (16). After a fight for space between black and white boys, which a white boy initiated, the nine black boys suddenly found themselves dragged out of the stopping train by a posse based on the report made by the white boys who were overpowered (Sorensen 5, 6). The black boys were arrested and sent to jail in Scottsboro. Besides, while questioning other people from the train, the posse made two white young women claim that they had been raped by the very same group of black boys (Sorensen 6).

Several days later, on 9th April eight of the nine boys were charged with rape and sentenced to death (Cates 7). The only exception was made for the youngest of them, who was only 13 years old. However, the majority of white people had already been clear about the boys’ guilt before the trial started and their persuasion was continually reinforced by various newspaper articles with unyielding headlines. The lacking evidence suggesting the boys’ guilt made no difference (Cates 8).

Given the circumstances of that period, it was nearly impossible for the boys to win the trial. For many southerners, the mere presence of the black boys on the same train as the two white girls was a satisfactory proof of their guilt and, therefore, a reason for their execution (Cates 8). The following statement of democratic Alabama Congressman George Huddleston provides an illustrative example of how people perceived the situation:



I don't care whether they are innocent or guilty. They were found riding on the same freight car with two white women, and that's enough for me! It doesn't matter to me what the women had done previously. I'm in favor of the boys being executed just as quickly as possible! You can't understand how we Southern gentlemen feel about this question of relationships between negro men and white women. (Fairclough)

The aforementioned specific relationship between a black man and a white woman plays a crucial role in Tom Robinson's case as well. Despite her reputation and everyone knowing what kind of a family the Ewells are, the jury still sympathizes with Mayella Ewell. As Huddleston said, a woman's history is irrelevant because she is a white woman in the first place which automatically puts her and her credibility above any black man.

### **1.3 Reception of the novels**

The two novels that Harper Lee has left the literary world indubitably provoked and are still provoking readers to think about them and maybe even rethink them, especially after the publication of the latter one. The following chapter aims to outline the reactions of literary critics on both novels as well as the views of the general public. Furthermore, it will also provide an overview of the awards and acknowledgments that Harper Lee or her novels gained since the first publication of *To Kill a Mockingbird* until now.

#### **1.3.1 *To Kill a Mockingbird***

##### **Awards**

In 1961, one year after the publication of her first novel, Harper Lee was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Letters, Drama & Music in the category of Fiction ("1961 Pulitzer Prizes"). Besides, this prestigious novel would later earn Harper Lee the Presidential Medal of Freedom from the President of the United States of America, George Bush, in 2007 "for her outstanding contribution to the great literary tradition of America" ("Citations Recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom").

## Comments

Even though the novel has been published almost 60 years ago, it is still possible to find bits and pieces of the actual reviews from 1960 records. Angela Levins in her article “What They Said About ‘To Kill A Mockingbird’ 55 Years Ago” quoted some of the reviews that had appeared in the press at that time:

“She has written a wonderfully absorbing story, unencumbered by either of the gimmicks--bedroom or bestiality--which are supposed to be the only things that sell fiction today ... a good and readable novel has been written.” – *Mobile Press-Register*

“... a first novel of such rare excellence that it will no doubt make a great many readers slow down to relish the more fully its distinction ... it passes the test with honors.” – *Chicago Sunday Tribune's Magazine of Books*, Richard Sullivan

Here is a storyteller justifying the novel as a form that transcends time and place ... the meaning in this novel runs even deeper because of the subject of injustice in the south ... Miss Lee's original characters are people to cherish in this winning first novel by a fresh writer with something significant to say, South and North. – *New York Times*, Herbert Mitgang

Moreover, various authors have expressed their views on Lee's first published novel. A quote that has appeared on the back cover of its 50th Anniversary Edition is written by Nelle's dear friend Truman Capote who commented: “Someone rare has written this very fine novel, a writer with the liveliest sense of life and the warmest, most authentic humour. A touching book; and so funny, so likeable.”

Other famous quotes that Chen included in her article “10 Famous Authors on *To Kill a Mockingbird*” are as follows:

Few contemporary literary American novels have such a sweep and fewer have the confidence to take on social issues in the way Harper Lee does. Much literary writing today about racism is cloaked in irony or in so much lyricism that it becomes gaseous. Lee refuses to hide behind aesthetics. Her writing is so beautiful, so steady and even and limpid, that she might have evaded

confronting these tribalisms head-on, but she doesn't. – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

“I think it is our national novel.” – Oprah Winfrey

Herein, it should not be forgotten that not only did *To Kill a Mockingbird* celebrate high achievement as a literary work, but also it was adapted for the screen. The movie, starring Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch, was released two years later after the novel's publication. Its success cannot be denied as it won 3 Oscars (Shields, *I am Scout* 172) and ranks as the 120th top rated movie according to the Internet Movie Database (“To Kill a Mockingbird”).

### 1.3.2 *Go Set a Watchman*

#### **Awards**

The only award that Harper Lee's second and final published novel has obtained to date is winning the Annual Goodreads Choice Awards, which is based on voting by the general readership community. Votes from readers all over the world placed the novel *Go Set a Watchman* among the best books of 2015 on the first position in the category of fiction (“Best Books of 2015”).

#### **Comments**

The announced publication of *Go Set a Watchman* surely brought various expectations and doubts among critics and readers as to whether it could stand comparison with its masterful predecessor. Not unlike other books, the novel, winning the Goodreads award, gained numerous fans but of course also those who were disappointed or even frustrated with the twist.

For instance, Tina Jordan, the current deputy editor in the *New York Times* Book Review (“Staff News”), who worked as a books editor at *Entertainment Weekly* at that time, called the novel a mess. She reviewed that “Though *Watchman* has a few stunning passages, it reads, for the most part, like a sluggishly-paced first draft, replete with incongruities, bad dialogue, and underdeveloped characters, because it is a first draft—of *Mockingbird*” (Jordan). Jordan concluded her rather critical review with the following words: “I just want people to understand two things: First, this is all about the money. And second,

reading *Watchman* will forever tarnish your memories of one of the most beloved books in American literature (“‘Go Set A Watchman’ By Harper Lee”).

An English author Mark Lawson entitled his 2015 review for the *Guardian* “Go Set a Watchman review – more complex than Harper Lee's original classic, but less compelling”. In the review, he touched upon the problem of assigning the ordinal numbers the *first* and the *second* to the novels. He suggested that the rather complicated relationship between both novels offers a great opportunity for teachers and students of American literature prodding them to scrutinize the similarities and differences. However, he admitted that “If the text now published had been the one released in 1960, it would almost certainly not have achieved the same greatness” (Lawson).

Michiko Kakutani, the 1998 Pulitzer Prize winner in Criticism (“The 1998 Pulitzer Prize”), wrote a critique for the *New York Times* with the title “Review: Harper Lee’s ‘Go Set a Watchman’ Gives Atticus Finch a Dark Side”. Wondering how the adored *To Kill a Mockingbird*, “a classic coming-of-age story”, evolved from its very different predecessor, “a lumpy tale”, she paid a lot of attention to the development of Atticus and pointed out the main differences between both novels (Kakutani). She discussed the overall tone of the novels suggesting that *To Kill a Mockingbird* tells a story about both bad and good attributes of everyday life in Maycomb whereas *Go Set a Watchman* casts predominantly a negative light on Maycomb’s dwellers. Kakutani’s final words referred to the famous quote from *To Kill a Mockingbird*: “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view” (Lee 33). She claimed that the two novels did have something in common. They both incorporate an emotional aspect lying in “a plea for sympathy” (Kakutani). According to Kakutani, “The difference is that “Mockingbird” suggested that we should have compassion for outsiders like Boo and Tom Robinson, while “Watchman” asks us to have understanding for a bigot named Atticus” (“Review”).

## **2 Practical part**

### **2.1 Thematic comparison**

The method chosen for the comparison of both novels is based on reading the two novels in dialogue and counterpointing them according to selected criteria which are the following prisms: psychological, sociological, and stylistic. However, the overall comparison will escalate from simple and more apparent features to more complex characteristics. Therefore, at the outset of the practical part, a concise overview of the most relevant characters, featuring either in both novels or only in one of them, will be provided to facilitate orientation in the following chapters. Last but not least, there is a chapter devoted to additional differences that are not discussed within the selected prisms.

#### **2.1.1 Character list**

When looking at the characters that appear in both novels, the main characters are maintained even though some of their traits are dissimilar since the characters develop throughout the stories. However, it is impossible not to notice some conspicuous differences concerning other characters that also attract attention. The question arises, why Harper Lee originally included some of the characters in *Go Set a Watchman* and later on, when re-editing the novel, completely omitted them in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and vice versa?

The central character of both novels is beyond doubt Jean Louise Finch. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* she is predominantly known under her nickname Scout. Jean Louise completely meets the connotative meaning of her nickname as she is definitely not an ordinary girl playing with dolls and dressed up in frocks. She is always prepared for any adventure with her brother Jem and friend Dill and has her fists ready to start a fight with a boy without any hesitation. However, in the second novel, the childhood sobriquet is hardly used when referring to her as she is now a young woman living in New York. The first use of it by her father appears towards the end of the second chapter and is only followed by two more occurrences throughout the whole novel. Altogether no one calls her Scout except for her father and an acquaintance from her childhood. “‘That’ll do, Scout,’ he said. ‘Apologize to your aunt. Don’t start a row the minute you get home.’ Jean Louise smiled at her father. When registering disapprobation, he always reverted back to her childhood nickname” (Lee,

*Go Set a Watchman* 22). Nevertheless, some of her typical personality traits are maintained and emphasized even within her older and mature version. She is stubborn, smokes cigarettes, and often likes to argue with her Aunt Alexandra, who constantly reproaches her for not behaving womanly as Jean Louise hates everything that is associated with being an obedient Maycomb young lady. “Her schooldays were her most miserable days, she was unsentimental to the point of callousness about the women’s college she had attended, ...” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 33).

Another central character figuring in both novels is Jean Louise’s father Atticus Finch, a highly regarded lawyer commonly popular with the people of Maycomb. Due to the early demise of his wife, Atticus, who has never sought another woman, brings up his two children, older Jem and his younger sister Scout, alone. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, both kids hold their father in high esteem, especially after the trial, even though they usually do not display their feelings. In *Go Set a Watchman*, Atticus is already seventy-two years old and suffers from rheumatoid arthritis, which sometimes paralyses his upper limbs.

Surprisingly, the distinctive character of Scout’s older brother, Jeremy Atticus Finch alias Jem, who plays an important part in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, where readers observe his maturing from a reckless boy into a sensible young man, is not given any significance in *Go Set a Watchman*. It makes only a passing reference about his sudden death caused by a congenital heart defect (29), (115), and childhood memories (50), some of them being stated solely in the latter novel.

The same applies to another character who is integral to Scout and Jem in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. With their friend Charles Baker Harris, “Dill” for short, they form an inseparable trio spending summer holidays together and experiencing various shared events. Like Jem, Dill appears in *Go Set a Watchman* only in a vivid memory of their childhood game. The whole episode is narrated quite minutely though.

On the other hand, both boys, Jem and Dill, as Jean Louise’s closest male figures of her age are replaced in *Go Set a Watchman* by her long-time close friend and possibly even a future husband Henry Clinton, shortly “Hank”. While in *To Kill a Mockingbird* there is not a single mention of him, in the second novel he is a prominent character appearing in passages where Jean Louise goes back in time and retells her childhood memories that, however, were left

untold in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Nevertheless, the absence of Hank in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is in accordance with *Go Set a Watchman*, where the narrator explains that every summer when school ended Hank must have gone back home and, therefore, he could not have appeared side by side Scout, Jem, and Dill during their summer stories that form a major part of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In the second novel, Hank works as Atticus' assistant in his legal practice and overtly believes in Jean Louise eventually accepting his repeated proposals to her. Throughout the novel, the relationship between Jean Louise and Henry is developing, and as with her father she too gets angry with Hank, grows apart, and starts having doubts about knowing his personality at all.

A character that is given quite a lot of attention and importance in *Go Set a Watchman* is Atticus' younger brother and Jean Louise's uncle, Dr John Hale Finch, known as Uncle Jack, whom Jean Louise holds dear and calls him "one of the abiding pleasures of Maycomb" (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 49). Uncle Jack is an old bachelor, who after making enough money abandoned his medical profession and dedicated his time to his biggest avocation - literature. He is Jean Louise's confidant, whose house is often visited when she seeks refuge, and acts as a mediator in mitigating the conflict between her and her father. Even though he is mentioned in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, his role is rather subsidiary.

Another character that belongs to the Finch family is somewhat unpopular Alexandra Finch Hancock, known as Aunt Alexandra, sister of Atticus and Dr Finch. Alexandra appears in both novels but in *To Kill a Mockingbird* she only comes to stay with the Finches during the trial in order to help their servant with the care of the kids as their father is kept occupied with the lawsuit, whereas in *Go Set a Watchman* she permanently lives with Atticus in Maycomb, who is left alone after the death of his son Jem and after the retirement of Calpurnia. Aunt Alexandra takes great pleasure in social life throwing tea parties for other women to gossip, enjoys giving advice and criticising. She always does her best to look neat in appearance and is very particular about not giving anyone reason to slander her or any other member of the family. This, however, represents everything that Jean Louise loathes, which is the reason for their frequent exchange of views, which Jean Louise likes to stir up.

It is important not to overlook the main African American character in *To Kill a Mockingbird* servant Calpurnia, who partly makes up for the missing female figure in the family.

Calpurnia is Atticus' right hand in looking after the household and helping to raise the two kids who both have a hearty relationship with her. Thanks to Calpurnia, Scout and Jem have the opportunity to get to know the African American community and even win favour with them, as well as their father. The overall depiction of Calpurnia in *Go Set a Watchman* is, however, quite different. The servant is no longer a part of the Finch family and she predominantly appears only in Jean Louise's memories except on a brief occasion in which Jean Louise visits her in her home but is disappointed at being turned down by her old friend. The last character that is going to be discussed is not a typical character that is involved in dialogues, rather it is a character that triggers a lot of action throughout the whole book. The novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* in fact starts and finishes with a reference to this peculiar personality, Boo Radley. Living in the neighbourhood and being the subject of many rumours, he represents a mysterious figure to the three kids, Scout, Jem, and Dill, whom they secretly long to catch sight of. In comparison, Boo Radley is completely excluded from *Go Set a Watchman*.

### **2.1.2 Psychological prism**

The character that is most attractive for the psychological analysis is unquestionably little girl Scout and her older and mature version Jean Louise Finch who appears in *Go Set a Watchman*. The two novels utterly differ in her perception of the world and of the people that surround her.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout's worldview is unconsciously nourished and dominated by her father Atticus to the point that it is almost verging on the Electra complex. Having lost her mother in her early childhood and not actually experiencing her mother's absence, Scout has always relied on and looked up to her father. As Scout puts it, "Our mother died when I was two, so I never felt her absence" (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 6). She and her brother were readily willing to protect their father and did not tolerate any slander towards their beloved father, which is shown in the following extract:

'You can just take that back, boy!'

This order, given by me to Cecil Jacobs, was the beginning of a rather thin time for Jem and me. My fists were clenched and I was ready to let fly. Atticus



had promised me he would wear me out if he ever heard of me fighting any more; I was far too old and too big for such childish things, and the sooner I learned to hold in, the better off everybody would be. I soon forgot.

Cecil Jacob made me forget. He had announced in the school yard the day before that Scout Finch's daddy defended niggers. (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 82)

The perfection of her father has been further stimulated by the status he has amongst the citizens of Maycomb, even amongst the African American inhabitants who treat Atticus and his family with friendliness and courtesy. “‘We were ’specially glad to have you all here,’ said Reverend Sykes. ‘This church has no better friend than your daddy’” (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 136).

In *Go Set a Watchman*, the so far unimpaired relationship of Jean Louise and her father undergoes a critical phase when she suddenly becomes aware of some of his (shocking) flaws, a realisation which enables her to step away from his stifling influence. It all begins when Jean Louise unwittingly and secretly follows her father and Henry to the courthouse where she witnesses with terror a meeting of the Maycomb County Citizens' Council, which causes her mental and even physical pain as she cannot understand and believe what she has just heard. Seeing her father sitting next to a man propagating racial segregation suddenly makes her feel as if her whole world has started to fall apart. “The one human being she had ever fully and wholeheartedly trusted had failed her; the only man she had ever known to whom she could point and say with expert knowledge, ‘He is a gentleman, in his heart he is a gentleman,’ had betrayed her, publicly, grossly, and shamelessly” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 113). She even calls her father a nigger-hater (188).

The father-daughter relationship between Atticus and Jean Louise has not been an ordinary one, in fact their bond or at least the attachment of the daughter to her father has always been particularly strong and grew even stronger as Jean Louise matured. Not only did her father represent safety and certainty, but he was also her closest friend who willingly helped her overcome various stages of her coming of age. She never felt the need to make friends with her peers, let alone among girls, for she had her father and her uncle and that was fully satisfying:

She did not stand alone, but what stood behind her, the most potent moral force in her life, was the love of her father. She never questioned it, never thought about it, never even realised that before she made any decision of importance the reflex, “What would Atticus do?” passed through her unconscious; she never realized what made her dig in her feet and stand firm whenever she did was her father; that whatever was decent and of good reputation in her character was put there by her father; she did not know that she worshiped him. (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 118)

Having deeply loved her father and regarded him faultless, the sudden realisation causes Jean Louise great pain and culminates in the final part of the novel in a huge battle of words with her father which is startlingly one-sided as Atticus lets his daughter speak without much stepping in and defending himself. “I believed in you. I looked up to you, Atticus, like I never looked up to anybody in my life and never will again” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 149). Jean Louise further continues in assaulting her father: “You double-dealing, ring-tailed old son of a bitch! You just sit there and say ‘As you please’ when you’ve knocked me down and stomped on me and spat on me, you just sit there and say ‘As you please’ when everything I ever loved in this world’s—you just sit there and say ‘As you please’—you love me! *You son of a bitch!*” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 252).

Subsequently, Uncle Jack explains to devastated Jean Louise that eventually, she had to free herself from the attachment to her father’s conscience in order to become a fully-fledged human being with her own conscience being her own watchman.:

... now you, Miss, born with your own conscience, somewhere along the line fastened it like a barnacle into your father’s. As you grew up, when you were grown, totally unknown to yourself, you confused your father with God. You never saw him as a man with a man’s heart, and a man’s failings—I’ll grant you it may have been hard to see, he makes so few mistakes, but he makes ’em like all of us. You were an emotional cripple, leaning on him, getting the answers from him, assuming that your answers would always be his answers. (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 265)

## **Colour blindness**

As far as Scout is concerned, there is an obvious issue, one that lies in between the psychological and sociological prisms. Even though it might be traced in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as well, it is only articulated in *Go Set a Watchman*. In fact, Jean Louise is colour-blind. However, the concept of colour blindness does not refer to the physical disability, but its meaning relates to sociology. According to Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, colour blindness is defined in a figurative meaning as "the practice of treating people with different coloured skin in exactly the same way" ("Colour Clindness"). This fact is first openly revealed towards the end of the first half of *Go Set a Watchman*: "Had she insight, could she have pierced the barriers of her highly selective, insular world, she may have discovered that all her life she had been with a visual defect which had gone unnoticed and neglected by herself and by those closest to her: she was born color blind" (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 122).

Even though the exact wording, especially in the very last sentence of the quotation, might be confusing and might lead readers to misunderstand that Jean Louise is actually colour-blind, it is most likely that Harper Lee used the words in the figurative sense that has been discussed above.

Jean Louise has ignored this handicap her whole life, which until now caused her to perceive the world and people around her differently. As her uncle explains to her during their final conversation, her colour blindness has influenced the way she thinks about people. "The only differences you see between one human and another are differences in looks and intelligence and character and the like. You've never been prodded to look at people as a race...You see only people" (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 270). However, none of this is her fault as she has been brought up in a surrounding that taught her to respect African Americans as regular human beings, which has surely contributed to her colour blindness. As she recollects, she has never heard any member of her family referring to black people as niggers. All the black people she knew used to be called by their names: "Calpurnia, Zeebo the garbage collector, Tom the yard name" (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 179).

As it was mentioned above, the concept of colour blindness can be traced within *To Kill a Mockingbird* too and not only to Jean Louise known in the novel as Scout. In the article "The

Power of Being Color-Blind in *To Kill a Mockingbird*”, the authors identify Atticus as a colour-blind character on the grounds of his defending an African American in a trial against a white woman (Rezazade and Zohdi 49). Furthermore, they point out the three children- Scout, Jem, and Dill, who are truly shaken by the unfavourable outcome of the trial, not being able to understand the injustice against the innocent man, which makes them colour-blind as well (Rezazade and Zohdi 51). However, according to the author of this thesis, there is a difference worthy of note between the colour blindness of Atticus and colour blindness of his daughter. Unlike Atticus as a grown man, who has constructed his values and personal beliefs off his lifelong experiences and has deliberately chosen to be colour-blind, Jean Louise’s colour blindness is unconscious. She was born *tabula rasa*, as can be claimed about any other child, and her colour blindness did not dissipate as she was growing up in an environment that consisted of her fair-minded father and a black servant who replaced her mother and always treated her warmly.

Comparing the two novels on the basis of colour blindness, it may be concluded that the first published novel is covertly interwoven with the sociological concept of being colour-blind since particularly the four main characters- Atticus, Scout, Jem, and Dill, do not judge people based on their race and have respect for every human and, therefore, can be called colour-blind. On the other hand, in the second novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, the expression *colour-blind* is bluntly stated when talking about Jean Louise, who unlike in the first novel seems to be the only character not differentiating between white and African American people and not denying African Americans any rights that the white race has.

### **2.1.3 Sociological prism**

Counterpointing the two novels on the basis of the sociological prism, there are various aspects and situations that should be observed. Both novels pay attention to the complicated relationship between white Americans and African Americans in the mid-20th century, which was marked by the growing tension between the two groups. The question of social class as well as an ongoing dispute between the South and the North is touched upon as well. The following chapter, therefore, provides an insight and an analysis of these sociological topics as they transpire in the novels.

### **Question of race**

The portrayal of the African American race and the relationship with the white race differs in the two novels. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* the African Americans appear mainly in three subplots - Tom Robinson's case, maidservant Calpurnia and the visit of Scout and Jem together with Calpurnia to the African American church.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus agrees to argue the case for a defenceless African American man - the ultimate underdog in pre-WWII Alabama, accused of raping a young woman. He considers the case critical for his life and career. "... every lawyer gets at least one case in his lifetime that affects him personally. This one's mine, I guess" (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 84).

As Atticus explains to his daughter:

'Scout,' said Atticus, 'when summer comes you'll have to keep your head about far worse things ... it's not fair for you and Jem, I know that, but sometimes we have to make the best of things, and the way we conduct ourselves when the chips are down – well, all I can say is, when you and Jem are grown, maybe you'll look back on this with some compassion and some feeling that I didn't let you down. This case, Tom Robinson's case, is something that goes to the essence of a man's conscience – Scout, I couldn't go to church and worship God if I didn't try to help that man.' (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 116).

In *Go Set a Watchman*, that same protector of the weak finds it difficult to accept the fact that African Americans are becoming agents of their own fate, i.e. he can no longer patronizingly help them.

The Tom Robinson's case of the rape is portrayed differently in both novels especially when it comes to the resolution of it. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout, her brother Jem, and Dill have a first-hand experience of the case as it is taking place during the summer holidays and the three of them secretly sneak into the courtroom to watch Atticus in action. In *Go Set a Watchman*, the narrator only briefly recounts the affair. While in the first novel the innocent African American young man is pronounced guilty and is shot dead when trying to escape

from the prison while waiting for his appeal, in the latter the trial outcome is most favourable to Tom Robinson who is not found guilty (*Go Set a Watchman* 109). Looking at this particular episode from the psychological point of view and analysing the effect it has on readers, the affair as it appears in *To Kill a Mockingbird* gives a much more melodramatic impression and makes the readers live out the whole case and empathise with the innocent African American victim.

Another subtle difference that might pass unnoticed to the readers is covered in the following sentence: “He never knew two pairs of eyes like his own were watching him from the balcony” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 110), which reveals that Atticus was not aware of his children’s presence in the courtroom, while in *To Kill a Mockingbird* Atticus catches sight of his children sitting in the balcony intended for the coloured, withdraws them outside and after their urging eventually lets them watch the rest of the trial. Even though it is only a marginal difference, which is definitely not as substantial as the trial’s result, it may be speculated why Harper Lee made this particular change. When considering Atticus’ character and his relationship with his children, it supports the overall positive characterization of Atticus as it shows that he puts his trust in his kids, lets them watch the whole trial, although they are most probably the only children in the courtroom, since he apparently believes they are reasonable enough to understand what is going on and that they should know what is happening in the world they live in.

The diverse result of the trial corresponds to the overall portrayal of African American people in the novels who seemingly gain more power over their own lives in the second novel. Besides, with the increasing autonomy of the African Americans, the relationships between them and between the white inhabitants of Maycomb are becoming tenser and less friendly as they used to be in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Even the former servant Calpurnia who willingly spent all her time with the Finches and was considered a rightful member of the family (*To Kill a Mockingbird*) is now almost hostile and indifferent towards Jean Louise when she comes to visit her. It only takes Calpurnia to utter a sentence and Jean Louise immediately realizes that the woman who has raised her making up for her lost mother and has been one of the dearests to her keeps her distance. Calpurnia uses non-standard English and manners that she keeps for social events associated with white Americans as Jean Louise

previously explains (*Go Set a Watchman* 70). Baffled as Jean Louise is after the blatantly unwelcome visit, her confusion is deepened even more with the emphatic reaction from Aunt Alexandra when Jean Louise tells her whom she went to see. “Jean Louise, nobody in Maycomb goes to see Negroes any more, not after what they’ve been doing to us” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 166).

### **Social class**

Another topic that is overtly emphasized in *Go Set a Watchman* is social class and social background. As Jean Louise is already a twenty-six-year-old young lady who is gradually getting involved in a more serious relationship with her childhood friend Henry Clinton, her aunt feels the need to explain to her the importance of marrying a man suitable for the Finch family, which as Aunt Alexandra thinks is not the case due to the history and background of the family he comes from. Speaking to Jean Louise, Aunt Alexandra reveals how she feels about Henry as a potential husband and claims that “Henry is not and never will be suitable for you. We Finches do not marry the children of rednecked white trash, which is exactly what Henry’s parents were when they were born and were all their lives” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 36). However, given Jean Louise nature, her aunt’s speech only upsets her and makes her think about the possibility of marrying Henry even more as she refuses to act according to her aunt’s wishes her whole life (*Go Set a Watchman* 39).

Another reference to the social class system can be found in the speech of Uncle Jack, who while discussing the current political situation in America with Jean Louise declares that there is a rise of a new class: a new class that is formed by children of former small farmers and whom the government supports by providing them with job, education, and money (*Go Set a Watchman* 198).

Differences in social class and background are present in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as well but they are depicted rather covertly and naturally as the story flows. There are two families that somehow stand out from the others. The first one of them is the Cunningham family, a family of poor farmers living in Old Sarum, a detached part of Maycomb, who cannot repay for Atticus’ services but in kind. Everyone in Maycomb is acquainted with their form of payment and accept it as a fact. As Jean Louise artlessly and plainly explains to a new teacher at school who is trying to lend money to one of the young Cunninghams, “Miss Caroline,

he's a Cunningham", she does not realise that the teacher is not familiar with the local conditions (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 22). Both novels feature a short, almost identical, episode about Judge Taylor who had to cope with the intricacy of the name Cunningham alternatively Coningham (*To Kill a Mockingbird* 182, *Go Set a Watchman* 44).

The second family protruding above the others is a family that plays an important part in the legal case of the sexual assault. It is the Ewell family comprised of Bob Ewell as the head of the family and his eight children with Mayella Ewell being the oldest. Unlike the Cunninghams who get along well with the local inhabitants, the Ewells have earned a bad reputation owing to their behaviour, manners and the way they live. Their dwelling is constructed from remains and scraps of various materials (*To Kill a Mockingbird* 187). They live as spongers and collect rubbish. Scout remembers them as those "that come every first day of school an' then go home? Why, Atticus said they were absolute trash – I never heard Atticus talk about folks the way he talked about the Ewells" (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 137).

During the hearing of witnesses in the trial led by Atticus, it is implied that Bob Ewell may have been the one who beat up his daughter (*To Kill a Mockingbird* 203, 207). According to Mayella's words repeated by Tom Robinson during his questioning, it would be no surprise if her father went that far as to rape her: "She says she never kissed a grown man before an's she might as well kiss a nigger. She says what her papa do to her don't count" (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 214). As the trial is not described in detail in *Go Set a Watchman*, the name Ewell does not appear in the entire novel. However, there is a mild parallel pointing to a family of this sort when Jean Louise thinks back to her childhood and recollects a memory in which her classmates told her about Francine Owen and her older sister, who had been impregnated by her own father (*Go Set a Watchman* 128). Therefore, it can be said that the motif of a family in which girls are being abused by their father is repeated.

As Jem summarizes his elaborate thoughts in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, "There's four kinds of folks in the world. There's the ordinary kind like us and the neighbours, there's the kind like the Cunninghams out in the woods, the kind like the Ewells down at the dump, and the Negroes" (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 249).



### **North against South**

Another sociological topic that is considerably discussed and frequently referred to in the second novel unlike in the first novel is the prevailing North versus South relationship in the United States. The first hint of this complicated duality is the fact that Jean Louise, now a twenty-six-year-old young woman, lives in New York, which is the centre of the Northern way of thinking. Her stay in the city of New York has probably played an important role in her perception of the equality of the black and white population as it has been strengthening and has left her longer in her colour blindness because the question of race has not been dealt with to such a degree as in the South and the overall coexistence of both races has been more open. Returning to South causes her shock, an unexpected revelation, which speeds up the process of her individuation. Therefore, it can be said that this topic is again interconnected with the psychological prism when it comes to Jean Louise in particular.

The persistent disagreements between the South and the North are demonstrated in *Go Set a Watchman* by the negative comments of the southern residents, especially ladies that consider themselves to belong to upper social class, for whom the way of life in the North alongside the black population is absolutely unacceptable. During a coffee party that Alexandra arranges for Jean Louise, one of the invited girls expresses her opinion on the matter of different cultures and ethnicities living in New York: “Well, I wouldn’t want to get mixed up with all those Italians and Puerto Ricans. In a drugstore one day I looked around and there was a Negro woman eating her dinner right next to me, *right* next to me. Of course I knew she could, but it did give me a shock” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 181). Subsequently, Jean Louise explains that people in the North are accustomed to the presence of African Americans: “You aren’t aware of them. You work with them, eat by and with them, ride the buses with them, and you aren’t aware of them unless you want to be” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 181).

Another reference and an explanation dealing with this matter are provided by Uncle Jack who is trying to guide Jean Louise towards her awakening and who already knows that the sudden realisation will be painful for her. In addition to social inequality, the uncle's views also show that the South is troubled by political problems in the sense of a clash between the left and the right wings. His comments imply that the federal government is imposing more

left-wing ideas on the South that, however, are not identified with by the South, which is historically conditioned by the different development of the two parts, i.e. the more industrialized North and the agriculturally oriented South. As Dr Jack Finch mentions, “America’s a brave new Atomic world and the South’s just beginning its Industrial Revolution” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 198). He describes the Southerners as people who care more than in the North for their personal freedom, especially property freedom, and do not relinquish responsibility for their lives, which is reflected in the South's distrust of the actions of the federal government. “Cynical, hell. I’m a healthy old man with a constitutional mistrust of paternalism and government in large doses. You father’s the same—” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 198).

From the opinions of the characters, which probably reflect the opinions of the author herself, it follows that the racial problem is secondary to their point of view. These issues are so important for the Southerners and they cannot agree with the North to the extent that they perceive themselves as a separate nation. As Uncle Jack puts it, “Has it never occurred to you—have you never, somewhere along the line, received vibrations to the effect—that this territory was a separate nation? No matter what its political bonds, a nation with its own people, existing within a nation” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 196).

#### **2.1.4 Stylistic prism**

There are many options to approach the stylistic analysis of both of the novels. From an in-depth linguistic examination with the aid of various stylistic frameworks to a more general description of stylistic variation with a focus on the fundamental characteristics such as genre, narration, and time linearity.

Keeping in mind the numerous autobiographical elements that were more elaborated on in the theoretical part, *To Kill a Mockingbird* can be considered a self-styled memoir revolving around the childhood memories of the author. On the other hand, *Go Set a Watchman* centres rather around a close relationship between a daughter and a father and its unexpected growing tension resulting in tearing the overly tight bond. Besides, it also addresses some of the main social issues in America.

In terms of the narrative technique, in *To Kill a Mockingbird* the author opted for the first-person narration told from the perspective of a young girl, which enables readers to

experience the story from the point of view of the main protagonist, and maybe, even to recollect their own childhood memories. However, frequent passages, especially setting descriptions, are told as if from a retrospective using the voice of older Jean Louise. By contrast, the story of *Go Set a Watchman* is told through the use of the third-person narration giving it a somewhat more distant perspective.

The prevailing narrative time of both novels is chronological. However, in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as well as in *Go Set a Watchman* there appear occasional flashbacks going back to past memories of the main protagonist. The overall lapse of time in which both stories unveil is nevertheless significantly different. While in *To Kill a Mockingbird* the whole story follows the events of several years and gives a profound description of various occurrences, *Go Set a Watchman* focuses on a relatively short period of time of grown-up Jean Louise Finch's visit to her hometown and more specifically on her relationship with her father which is escalating until its final resolution.

### **Language**

As a part of the stylistic analysis, it is also interesting to focus on language since it plays an important role differentiating between the grammatically correct English of the white Americans on the one hand and non-standard English spoken by African Americans on the other hand. As it has been mentioned previously, one of the main African American characters, Calpurnia, is able to speak both dialects fluently and deliberately uses code switching based on the occasion: "With company came Calpurnia's company manners: although she could speak Jeff Davis's English as well as anybody, she dropped her verbs in the presence of guest" (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 70). In front of guests in the Finch's house, Calpurnia speaks as described in the previous quotation: "Mr. Finch? Nawm, Miss Scout. He on the back porch laughin'!" (70). According to Calpurnia's grammar Jean Louise is able to identify her restraint and disdain: "I know he will, Miss Scout. He always do his best. He always do right" (159).

Furthermore, language variation is also employed to mark the differences in social class. For instance, the Ewells featuring in *To Kill a Mockingbird* represent so-called "white trash" and their language use is accordingly non-standard. One of Bob Ewell's offspring shows up at school the very first day of the school year, which is what they always do coming to school

only the first day, gets into an argument with the teacher and addresses her rudely: “Report and be damned to ye! Ain’t no snot-nosed slut of a school-teacher ever born c’n make me do nothin’! You ain’t makin’ me go nowhere, missus. You just remember that, you ain’t makin’ me go nowhere!” (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 31). When in the courtroom, it is possible to trace cases of non-standard forms especially of verbs in the speech of Bob and Mayella Ewell. “I seen that black nigger yonder ruttin’ on my Mayella” (190), “I sawed who he was, all right” (192), “I knowed who it was” (193), “He done what he was after” (199), “Two year – three year – dunno” (201).

The primary literary texts analysed by this thesis are tainted by racial slurs and taboo words. These have been retained for the sake of the racial cruelties and idiosyncrasies of Southern society which Harper Lee’s novels are describing. In light of politically correct language, which is one of the issues greatly discussed in the current world, it is, therefore, worth noticing how and when Harper Lee addresses African Americans in her novels. In both texts, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman*, several expressions referring to people of this ethnicity can be traced. However, Lee uses them in accordance with a particular situation and varies their use as different characters speak or their thoughts are depicted.

The individual tokens of the various expressions that appear throughout the texts suggest that the reference *Negro* is used generally in setting descriptions without any specific connotation, for instance in *Go Set a Watchman*: “She grinned when she saw her first TV antenna atop an unpainted Negro house; as they multiplied, her joy rose” (3), “A truck drove up the hill and stopped in front of her. A Negro boy jumped from the running-board and handed her three quarts of milk” (143), “At forty-eight, Atticus was left with two small children and a Negro cook named Calpurnia” (115). And similarly in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, in which the expression is also used by Atticus: “I’m simply defending a Negro—his name’s Tom Robinson” (83), or in a setting description: “A Negro would not pass the Radley Place at night, he would cut across to the sidewalk opposite and whistle as he walked” (9).

Another term denoting African Americans is *nigger*. In the first novel, it is interesting to consider the use of this word by Scout in relation to her development. At the beginning of the story, she uses the word unconsciously without being aware of its negative substance: “Calpurnia says that’s nigger-talk” (41), “Jem, I ain’t ever heard of a nigger snowman” (73),

“Do you defend niggers, Atticus?” However, Atticus answers: “Of course I do. Don’t say nigger, Scout. That’s common” (83), which is when Scout obeys her father and stops using the pejorative word. Interestingly, the black characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* call themselves *niggers*: “I wants to know why you bringin’ white chillun to nigger church” (131), “When Lula came up the pathway towards us Calpurnia said, ‘Stop right there, nigger’” (131), Tom Robinson says, “ Mr. Finch, if you was a nigger like me, you’d be scared, too (215).

In contrast, the expression *nigger* almost exclusively appears in *Go Set a Watchman* in the speech or thoughts of those that despise African Americans such the speaker at the Maycomb County Citizens’ Council, whose speech is particularly filled with expressions that carry a negative connotation (*snot-nosed niggers*, *mongrelize*, *greasy smelly*, *nigger-lover* (108, 110)), or the Maycomb ladies who take part in the coffee party held by aunt Alexandra and utter sentences such as “Good nigger trial, I mean. Nothing but cuttin’ and drinkin’” (172), “Bill, he’s a deep reader. He says the niggers who are runnin’ the thing up north are tryin’ to do it like Gandhi did it, and you know what that is” (174), “and if it weren’t for those boys a nigger’d be goin’ to classes with the rest of ’em” (175). As Jean Louise emphasizes never in her life before she heard the word *nigger* being uttered by someone in her family and suddenly her closest are using it without any hesitation: “When Calpurnia left I simply couldn’t be bothered with another one, not for just Atticus and me. Keeping a nigger happy these days is like catering to a king—,” said her aunt Alexandra (167).

The attribute *black* referring to the colour of one’s skin is used as well and again its usage is rather general with no specific tendency. The adjective is employed within descriptions in *To Kill a Mockingbird*: “She owned a bright green square Buick and a black chauffeur” (140), “Reverend Sykes came puffing behind us, and steered us gently through the black people in the balcony” (181), as well as in *Go Set a Watchman*: “A black hand held out the check on a tray. The hand was familiar to her and she looked up” (49), “he knew his client to be innocent of the charge, and he could not for the life of him let the black boy go to prison because of a half-hearted, court-appointed defense” (109). The only examples of a negative connotative reference of the word *black* are contained within the utterance of Mr Ewell: “I seen that black nigger yonder ruttin’ on my Mayella” (*To Kill a Mockingbird* 190), and in

the title of the handbook which Jean Louise finds at home: “On its cover was a drawing of an anthropophagous Negro; above the drawing was printed The Black Plague” (*Go Set a Watchman* 101).

Last but not least, in both novels, it is possible to find occurrences of another attribute which is *colored*. However, the proportion of its use in the individual novels differs significantly. While in *Go Set a Watchman* the attribute appears altogether only four times in the whole novel, twice in a setting description and twice spoken by Jean Louise, in *To Kill a Mockingbird* its usage frequently occurs in expressions such as *colored folks*, *colored man*, *colored people* uttered by Atticus, Miss Maudie, Jem, Scout, and Calpurnia, or in general descriptions. Hence the attribute functions in the same manner as the designations *Negro* and *black* without any particular emotional load.

To draw conclusions from the above mentioned, it is evident that the designations *black* and particularly *Negro* were commonly used at the time when Harper Lee wrote her novels. Thus, the word *Negro* is used impartially to refer to African Americans without any negative aspect, which, however, would probably not be possible to use if the novels were written in the current era. Instead, the expression *African American* might replace the two words as their politically correct and acceptable version. Furthermore, Harper Lee was aware of the pejorative nature of the word *nigger* and used it deliberately only in direct speech of specific characters.

### **2.1.5 Further differences**

Apart from the novels’ fundamental differences that are being discussed within the psychological, sociological, and stylistic prisms, there are further details that differ in the novels and should not be left out be they factual differences within the storylines or episodes that are mentioned only in one of the novels, especially the ones that are depicted in great detail and take up more than just a few lines.

The story of *To Kill a Mockingbird* comprises a subplot progressing throughout the whole volume which has embedded itself not only in the literary world but also beyond in the whole English-speaking world to such a degree that it gave rise to a new expression in the English language. The mysterious character Boo Radley and the adventure revolving around him does not appear in Jean Louise’s childhood memories in the second novel and, therefore, the

whole Boo Radley enigma that has been followed by many readers with an excitement reminiscent of their own childhood quests for adventure remains hidden and is denied to the readers of the second novel.

One such episode that is covered in the second novel, i.e. *Go Set a Watchman*, is Jean Louise's memory of a school dance to which she was invited by Henry Clinton. This episode covers one whole chapter in the second novel but does not appear in the first novel, in which Jean Louise does not even reach the age in question.

Focusing on the factual differences, there are several slight details that again may escape readers' notice. Nevertheless, these are rather insignificant for the overall comparison. The first dissimilarity relates to the Finch family and the position of their family house, which in *To Kill a Mockingbird* together with its garden and its porch serves frequently as a place for children's plays. On the other hand, in *Go Set a Watchman* Harper Lee moves Jean Louise to New York and the rest of the family to a different house in Maycomb which is accounted for as a consequence of Jem's death and their father's wish not to live in the same house anymore. Instead of the original family house, the place is now occupied by a "modern ice cream shop" (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 112) where one of the Cunninghams serves ice cream. Another difference is concerned with the character of Mrs Henry Lafayette Dubose, an old lady who is not on friendly terms with the kids in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and later as the story proceeds dies. In *Go Set a Watchman*, there is only a passing reference about her, which, however, suggests she might still be alive: "She counted the cracks in the sidewalk, steeled herself for Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose's onslaught" (112).

## **2.2 Structural comparison**

### **2.2.1 Division into chapters**

When looking at the structural differences between novels, one of the things that can be easily spotted is the division of a story into chapters, most frequently, or into other sections. As far as Harper Lee's novels are concerned, both novels start with a brief acknowledgment in which the author expresses her gratitude and takes a moment to honour those dearest, her father Mr Lee and her older sister Alice. However, the declaration of Lee's affection is

slightly different in its wording. The first novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* contains the following words: “For Mr Lee and Alice in consideration of love and affection,” while the second novel *Go Set a Watchman* includes a simple “In memory of Mr Lee and Alice.”

Furthermore, in *To Kill a Mockingbird* the author included a short quotation: “Lawyers, I suppose, were children once” by Charles Lamb, who was an English writer, particularly an essayist and a poet. This citation is omitted in *Go Set a Watchman*. A possible explanation of its absence in the second novel may lie in its different character when it comes to children. Unlike *Go Set a Watchman*, the story of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is told from a child’s perspective and revolves to a great extent around its three child characters, Scout, Jem, and Dill, and their experiences. Therefore, the quotation could possibly be interpreted as a hint to Atticus’ understanding and his fatherly but amiable attitude towards their mischief, because he as a lawyer was once a child too.

The division of the novels into chapters as such slightly differs as well. While *To Kill a Mockingbird* is literally divided into two parts, part one being composed of eleven chapters and part two containing chapters number 12 to number 31, the division of *Go Set a Watchman* is more complex as the story is distributed into seven formally marked parts with nineteen chapters altogether. However, in both novels, parts and chapters do not have any specific names that would indicate their content but are only labelled with numbers. Given the approximately same extent of both volumes, it implies that the overall tendency in writing *To Kill a Mockingbird* was to produce shorter chapters.

### **2.2.2 Layout of the first chapter: a juxtaposition**

The first chapter of a book may possess a strong power to attract or on the other hand to repulse the potential reader. The very first lines often unveil the whole ambience and tone of the book and indicate what the story might be about. For the comparison of the two novels *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman* it is, therefore, vital to pay attention to the first chapter of both books and to look for cues.

#### **To Kill a Mockingbird**

When he was nearly thirteen my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow. When it healed, and Jem’s fears of never being able to play football



were assuaged, he was seldom self-conscious about his injury. ... When enough years had gone by to enable us to look back on them, we sometimes discussed the events leading to his accident. I maintain that the Ewells started it all, but Jem, who was four years my senior, said it started long before that. (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 3)

From the opening lines of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a reader gets to know that the story is told in the first-person narration from the perspective of a girl who has an older brother. It is also hinted that the accident described and “the events leading to” it could be pivotal to the whole story and that the narrator will probably recall the past happenings.

Throughout the first chapter, the narrator mentions several characters: brother Jem, father Atticus, Simon Finch, Aunt Alexandra, Uncle John Hale Finch known as Uncle Jack, cook Calpurnia, mother, Mrs Henry Lafayette Dubose, the Radleys, and Boo Radley, Charles Baker Harris called Dill, Miss Rachel Haverford, Miss Stephanie Crawford.

The image of the story’s setting is described by the narrator so that everyone can picture it vividly. The clear depiction of the place is achieved by the use of personification as in “Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town...”, “In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the court-house sagged in the square”, “Men’s stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning” (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 6).

Another crucial moment important for the development of the whole story is referred to in the first chapter. “But by the end of August, our repertoire was vapid from countless reproductions, and it was then that Dill gave us the idea of making Boo Radley come out” (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 9).

Altogether, the first chapter of *To Kill a Mockingbird* provides its readers with an intelligible introduction that sets the whole story. The readers are not thrown into an ongoing episode but are given a clear idea of how the story’s trajectory will unveil.

### **Go Set a Watchman**

Since Atlanta, she had looked out the dining-car window with a delight almost physical. Over her breakfast coffee, she watched the last of Georgia’s hills raced and the red earth appear, ... Jean Louise Finch always made this journey

by air, but she decided to go by train from New York to Maycomb Junction on her fifth annual trip home. (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 3)

From the introduction of *Go Set a Watchman* it is clear that the story is narrated in the third person. The reader directly learns the name of the first character, Jean Louise Finch, who might be the central character as well. Besides, we can deduce that she is not a kid but a grown-up who can decide for herself and is not dependent on anyone else. The woman undertakes a regular journey to her hometown and it is evident that the visit is not an involuntary one.

The characters that are referred to in the first chapter are Jean Louise Finch, her father, her aunt, Cousin Joshua, Henry Clinton alias Hank, her brother.

Unlike *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the development of the story is not clear-cut at the onset of the first chapter. The prevailing motif that recurs throughout the whole chapter is the description of Jean Louise Finch's thoughts, feelings, and memories. The readers are acquainted with her relationship with Henry Clinton but do not learn much about the setting and about what is going to happen next.

In the overall comparison, there are no identical passages in the first chapter of the two novels. The only excerpt that is comparable to some degree is the description of the historical events that are related to the origins of the Finch family. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the narrator explains how her family roots were established "on the banks of the Alabama River" (4) by Simon Finch, her ancestor. Comparably, the first chapter of *Go Set a Watchman* includes a short delineation of the endeavours of Colonel Mason Maycomb during the Creek Indian Wars which consequently resulted in setting up the beginnings of the Finch family.

### **2.2.3 Title analysis**

In light of the changes that Harper Lee made to the main plot of her novel throughout the course of writing, it might be interesting to consider also the title choice. This chapter will, therefore, look at the meaning of two very different titles with regard to the novels. *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman*, both titles covertly refer to the inherently important message of the novels and as expressions appear verbatim in both texts.

The expression “to kill a mockingbird” is first used by Atticus when instructing his son Jem on shooting with an air rifle: “I’d rather you shot at tin cans in the back yard, but I know you’ll go after birds. Shoot all the bluejays you want, if you can hit ’em, but remember it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird” (Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* 99). Scout not quite understanding the meaning approaches Miss Maudie, who explains to her that unlike some other birds, mockingbirds are completely innocuous. Rather they please people with their birdsong.

The picture of this particular bird does not appear only once but is repeatedly used within the same chapter when depicting the scene of a mad dog with rabies dragging along the street. “The trees were still, the mockingbirds were silent, the carpenters at Miss Maudie’s house had vanished” (105). Almost the same scene depiction can be noticed later in the novel when describing the atmosphere at a court room. “The feeling grew until the atmosphere in the courtroom was exactly the same as a cold February morning, when the mockingbirds were still, and the carpenters had stopped hammering on Miss Maudie’s new house...” (232).

Towards the very end of the novel, as Scout grows older, she is able to understand the meaning of the expression in a figurative sense, which points out her intellectual development. After the incident of Scout and Jem being attacked by humiliated Bob Ewell and saved by Boo Radley, who most probably used a kitchen knife to fight the villain in order to protect the kids, the local sheriff Mr Tate stands his ground when trying to convince Mr Finch that Bob Ewell caused his own death by falling on a knife and that Boo Radley had nothing to do with it except for saving his kids. Scout evinces a great deal of understanding the situation and comments on it by using the figurative meaning of the title expression. “Well, it’d be sort of like shootin’ a mockingbird, wouldn’t it” (304)? Instead of the original “to kill a mockingbird”, the expression is converted to “shootin’ a mockingbird”, which might be more fitting for the manner of speech of a young girl.

From the episode described in the previous paragraph it is clear that the idea of a mockingbird as a harmless bird is shifted to label people. In fact, some of the characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* could be assigned the characteristics of a mockingbird - innocent. Claudia Durst Johnson in her book *Reading Harper Lee: Understanding To Kill a Mockingbird and Go Set a Watchman* identifies several of them. The first one is Tom Robinson, who is a victim of the hypocritical society and cannot defend himself since he is

black (Johnson 56). Johnson further suggests that “other harmless songbirds are killed, threatened, or silenced in *To Kill a Mockingbird* – not only all the black characters, but Mayella and Arthur Radley” (56). Last but not least, she considers Scout and Jean Louise to have been trapped in the society as well (Johnson 56).

The expression “go set a watchman” brings in intertextuality since it is taken from the Bible, the Book of Isaiah, the origin of it is mentioned in the novel as well. The first use of the same words appears when Jean Louise now visiting her family in Maycomb attends a regular Sunday service at the local church. Mr Stone, the church minister, is about to read from the Bible. As the narrator describes, “He opened it and said, ‘My text for today is taken from the twenty-first chapter of Isaiah, verse six:

*For thus hath the Lord said unto me,*

*Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth ”* (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 95)

However, the motif of a watchman keeps reappearing as Jean Louise struggles to understand what is going on in her beloved hometown.

Blind, that’s what I am. I never opened my eyes. I never thought to look into people’s hearts, I looked only in their faces. Stone blind ... Mr. Stone. Mr. Stone set a watchman in church yesterday. He should have provided me with one. I need a watchman to lead me around and declare what he seeth every hour on the hour. I need a watchman to tell me this is what a man says but this is what he means, to draw a line down the middle and say here is this justice and there is that justice and make me understand the difference. I need a watchman to go forth and proclaim to them all that twenty-six years is too long to play a joke on anybody, no matter how funny it is. (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 181)

Towards the resolution of Jean Louise’s inner battle, while her uncle, Dr Finch, strives to cast light on her confused mind, Dr Finch explains to Jean Louise, who has been blindsided by her father’s conscience, the importance of one’s own conscience using the following words: “Every man’s island, Jean Louise, every man’s watchman, is his conscience. There is no such thing as a collective conscious” (Lee, *Go Set a Watchman* 265). In other words,

Jean Louise needs to free herself from her father's influence that has gone unnoticed and firmly rooted within her.

As it was already mentioned in the theoretical part in chapter 1.1.5 Making of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the primal title for Harper Lee's story was *Go Set a Watchman*. Then, as she was working on its revision, she changed the title of the manuscript to *Atticus* referring to one of the main characters, and eventually, the final version bore the name *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

## Conclusion

The principal purpose of this thesis was to investigate and compare two novels written by canonical author Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman*, which not only share the author but, more interestingly, are interwoven on the level of their origination. The theoretical part paid attention to Lee's life, which she rather successfully managed to protect from the outer world leaving her personality rather enigmatic, provided concise abstracts, and also outlined the main aspects of the time period, with which readers should be acquainted to fully understand the topics and issues discussed in the practical part. The practical part, as the core of this thesis, focused on a comprehensive analysis that aimed to compare the two works from the thematic and structural perspectives, with psychological, sociological, and stylistic prisms as the primary thematic viewpoints.

The comparison of the character lists detected some differences, which, however, correspond to the overall nature of the novels. The main protagonists constituting the adult world of Jean Louise in *Go Set a Watchman* include Atticus Finch, Henry Clinton, Aunt Alexandra, and Uncle Jack. By contrast, as *To Kill a Mockingbird* revolves primarily around Jean Louise's childhood, the proportion of child characters to adult characters is much higher with Jean Louise known predominantly as Scout, Jem, and Dill being at the centre of the plotline. Besides, black servant Calpurnia is also given great importance unlike in *Go Set a Watchman*. The most conspicuous divergence involves on the one hand the complete omission of Henry in the first novel and on the other hand the absence of Jem in the second novel due to his decease, which is, however, only briefly mentioned.

Looking at the two novels through the psychological prism, the most prominent themes that were discussed include Jean Louise' maturing and individuation, and the concept of colour blindness. What distinguishes the two works to a large extent is the relationship between Jean Louise and her father, and consequently, the perspective through which she is looking at the world. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch is a moral hero advocating the rights of all human beings and defending an African American man. His daughter Scout looks up to him and considers him faultless. In her eyes, he is a saint, and whatever he says and does is unquestioned, which is the reason why realising his faults is so difficult for her in *Go Set a Watchman*, where he seemingly changes his attitude towards the rights of black people.

Jean Louise needs to free herself from his influence to finish the process of her individuation and gain her own conscience. Further psychological analysis reveals that while in *To Kill a Mockingbird* more characters than just Jean Louise, including Jem, Dill, and Atticus, are colour-blind, in *Go Set a Watchman* it is emphasized that only Jean Louise possesses this handicap, which is why she cannot understand the demeanour of other citizens of Maycomb, and even members of her family, toward the African Americans.

The sociological prism was concerned especially with the racial problems, social class, and the relationship North vs South. The overall portrayal of African Americans and their relationship with other Maycombians largely varies, which is manifested partly through the story of Tom Robinson and family servant Calpurnia. The undesirable outcome of the trial, in which Tom Robinson is pronounced guilty and is shot and killed while trying to escape, and the heartiness with which Calpurnia treats the Finches children make the readers of *To Kill a Mockingbird* sympathize with the African American community. By contrast, in *Go Set a Watchman*, the relations between white and black Americans are sharpened due to the increasing rights of the African Americans, which is to the Southerners sticking to the Jim Crow laws absolutely unacceptable. Tom Robinson is found not guilty and Calpurnia, who does not work for the Finches anymore, acts rather impassive toward Jean Louise. Besides, a political context enters the story with references to the NAACP and contemporary situation in the USA, thus possibly making the novel less comprehensible for readers who are not familiar with American history. Told through the eyes of a child, the topic of social class is subtly incorporated within the story of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In *Go Set a Watchman*, per contra, the diversity across social classes is openly expressed. Besides, numerous cues about the differences between the North and the South are present and emphasized in the second novel.

Focusing on the stylistic point of view, the comparison considered the main stylistic features such as genre, narration, and time linearity. While *To Kill a Mockingbird* can be labelled as a self-styled memoir with the first-person narration using the voice of little Scout, and with a chronological timeline with a flashback at the beginning of the novel foreshadowing the future happenings, *Go Set a Watchman* is generally a novel about a father-daughter conflict told through the third-person narration and using a chronological timeline with numerous

flashbacks, which, however, can be sometimes slightly confusing for readers. Special attention was also paid to language use. It was discovered that in both novels, Harper Lee differentiated between standard and non-standard language variety to describe the differences in social class, as well as between white and black characters. Besides, this chapter scrutinized the expressions that were used to refer to African Americans. These expressions varied from *nigger*, used primarily as pejorative, to *Negro*, and attributes *black* and *colored*, used without any negative implication.

The structural comparison focused on the division into chapters, looked closely at the first chapter of each novel, and analysed the different titles. While *To Kill a Mockingbird* is divided into two parts with thirty-one chapters altogether, the nineteen chapters of *Go Set a Watchman* are distributed into seven parts. Based on a close reading of the first chapter, it can be claimed that *To Kill a Mockingbird* begins with a successful setting, and the first lines even add a gripping opening. On the other hand, the first chapter of *Go Set a Watchman* does not really insinuate the forthcoming plot. As far as the titles are concerned, both titles are clearly related to the overall message of the novels.

To answer the primary question, why Harper Lee did not publish *Go Set a Watchman* and wrote *To Kill a Mockingbird* instead, which, among other things, motivated the origin of this thesis, we can mainly work with the executed comparison and with facts presented in Shields' biography. After being asked to revise her novel, Harper Lee followed her editor's, Tay Hohoff, advice, and continued in her endeavours. Based on the individual constituents of the comparison that have been summarised in the preceding paragraphs, we may assert that Harper Lee successfully managed to reshape her work from its more controversial version to a gentler form, which seems to be more intelligible and accessible to a wider range of readers. The former novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, deals with several social issues, while the revised version, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, does not address these problems to such an extent and, if so, does it inconspicuously and covertly. Beyond doubt, the connection of personal maturation and social issues gives greatness to the second novel. However, the positive mood and naive children's view of the world give the first story the poetics that made it a bestseller. Given the circumstances of the novels' publication, which should not be forgotten, it is important to realise and bear in mind that if it were not for the first work, the second novel



would have nothing to grow out of. The range of ideas grows with the main character, which is paradoxical, given the order in which the books were written. Harper Lee was able to accommodate the overall style of the individual novels to one particular character.

Since the publication of the later novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, is still in recent memory of the literary world, the comparison of both works surely does provide space and inspiration for their further investigation. Unlike this thesis, which assessed the novels from more than just one point of view to provide an overall comparison, the next potential research could be based, for instance, solely on one of the prisms, thus resulting in a more in-depth analysis.

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