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The Depiction of Racial Issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Práce se zaměří na zobrazení rasového tématu v románu *To Kill a Mockingbird* od Harper Lee. V první části se autorka bude zabývat specifiky amerického Jihu (Alabamy), pojedná o rasové situaci, o změnách, kterými jižanská společnost procházela v daném období a vysvětlí termíny, s kterými bude pracovat v analytické části. Hlavní část práce se bude soustředit na vyobrazení rasových otázek v daném díle - studentka se zaměří na zobrazení vztahů mezi bílými a černými obyvateli městečka a porovná knižní zpracování s reálnou situací na jihu Spojených států amerických. Práce bude založena na kvalitních sekundárních zdrojích a zakončí ji přehledné shrnutí daných zjištění.

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ANNOTATION

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to analyse the depiction of racial issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. The first four chapters provide a historical background to the life of African Americans in the American South in the first half of the twentieth century, focusing on the 1930s. The main chapter covers the relations between African Americans and white residents of Maycomb, explore the role of language and symbols, and examine the inevitability of Tom Robinson's death and the inspiration behind the court case.

KEYWORDS

African Americans, American South, Harper Lee, mockingbird, segregation

NÁZEV

Vyobrazení rasové problematiky v knize *Jako zabít ptáčka* od Harper Lee

ANOTACE

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzovat vyobrazení rasové problematiky v *Jako zabít ptáčka* od Harper Lee. První čtyři kapitoly pojednávají o Afroameričanech žijících na jihu Spojených států amerických v první polovině dvacátého století, především se zaměřují na třicátá léta. Hlavní kapitola se zabývá vztahy mezi Afroameričany a bílými obyvateli města Maycomb, analyzuje význam jazyka a symbolů a zkoumá nevyhnutelnost smrti Toma Robinsona a případy, které se staly inspirací pro jeho soudní případ.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Afroameričané, americký jih, Harper Lee, drozd mnohohlasý, segregace

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCC – the Civilian Conservation Corps

CPUSA – the Communist Party of the United States

ILD – the International Labor Defense

NAACP – the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

RFC – the Reconstruction Finance Corporation

SDC – the Scottsboro Defense Committee

WPA – the Works Progress Administration

INTRODUCTION

Harper Lee has written two novels during her lifetime. The first, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction a year after its publication in 1960 and it has become one of the most frequently read books with more than forty million copies sold.¹ The sequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird*, called *Go Set a Watchman*, was published in 2015 and became the best-selling book in the United States of America the same year.² This bachelor thesis focuses merely on Ms Lee's first novel and the way Harper Lee depicted the racial issues in it. Even though the novel is not an autobiography, Harper Lee wrote about people and milieu she knew well. Some characters, events and the setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird* parallel with Ms Lee's childhood experience from Monroeville, Alabama, and hence the novel provides readers with a very realistic portrayal of the 1930s Jim Crow South.

The story is set in Maycomb, Alabama, at the beginning of the 1930s when the racial injustice and segregation were ubiquitous in this part of the world. *To Kill a Mockingbird* engenders a lot of controversy concerning the racial issues. For example, divergent views are held by scholars on the importance of the racial theme itself, the belief that Atticus Finch is an American racial hero and the language used in the novel. The aim of the bachelor thesis is not only to describe the acts of racism and the racial segregation that is practised in Maycomb but also examine the contrasting views of scholars and analyse the symbols that occur throughout the novel. To a large extent the analysis is based on the knowledge of the real-life events and laws, hence the depiction of historical and cultural background precedes the depiction of racial issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

The bachelor thesis consists of five chapters. In the first chapter, relevant terminology is defined. Terms such as 'racism', 'Jim Crow laws' and 'racial segregation' are briefly explained. The second chapter outlines the period of African-American³ history between the court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) and the decision of the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954). The third chapter is devoted to the main features of the

¹ Charles J. Shields, *Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee: From Scout to Go Set a Watchman* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2016), Kindle Edition, 164, 244.

² Rachel Deahl, "'Go Set A Watchman' Tops Print Book Sales in 2015," *Publishers Weekly*, January 1, 2016, accessed June 22, 2017, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/bookselling/article/69052-watchman-tops-print-sales-in-2015.html>

³ The spelling of this term varies in different dictionaries. The terms 'African-American' as an adjective and 'African American' as a noun has been chosen for the purposes of this bachelor thesis. (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/african-american?q=African+American>)

Great Depression and Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs, and the last chapter concerning the historical background focuses on African Americans during the Great Depression.

The aim of the last chapter is to analyse the depiction of racial issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The chapter comprises of three subchapters. The first deals with race relations in Maycomb. Among other things, the position of African Americans within the Maycomb society is defined, references to racial segregation are examined and the interracial relationships, which in some of their forms represented "the strongest taboo of the system,"⁴ are discussed. The following subchapter explores the language and symbolism related to racial issues. In the first part of the subchapter, the importance of literacy within the Maycomb society is analysed. Subsequently, the symbolism behind terms such as 'right,' 'left' and 'a mockingbird' is examined and the last part of the subchapter is devoted to the effort of the Black Educator's Association from Nova Scotia to ban *To Kill a Mockingbird* from school use across Canada because of the language Harper Lee used in the novel. The last subchapter deals with Tom Robinson's death. More precisely, the inevitability of Tom Robinson's death and the inspiration behind the court case is studied.

⁴ Fred Erisman, "The Romantic Regionalism of Harper Lee," *The Alabama Review: A Quarterly Journal of Alabama History* XXIV, no. 2 (1973): 125, accessed March 23, 2014, http://www.uwa.edu/uploadedFiles/alabamareview/1973Apr_RomanticRegionalismHarperLee.pdf.

1 RELEVANT TERMINOLOGY

The expression ‘racism’ is frequently defined as the prejudice and discrimination against a group of people from different racial or ethnical backgrounds. However, one can hardly imagine the cruelty hidden behind the term from reading its definition. People from countries with well-developed public education system are surely acquainted with the Nazi anti-Semitism, which resulted in Holocaust.⁵ This act of racism leading to the death of six million Jewish men, women and children represents the best-known manifestation of racism in Europe.⁶

In the United States, mainly the African Americans experienced the injustice of being treated unequally not only by individuals but also by law. Despite the abolition of slavery in 1865, the southern states violated the civil rights of African Americans by passing the Black Codes right after the Civil War. The Black Codes were “economic, legal and extralegal”⁷ regulations designed to restrict the rights of former slaves. Freedmen were, for example, not allowed to launch their own business or marry a person of a different race.⁸

In fact, after the slavery was abolished, numerous antiblack laws were introduced in the United States. These regulations were known as Jim Crow and they generally controlled the relations between African Americans and white Southerners until the 1960s.⁹ According to David Pilgrim, the founder of the Jim Crow Museum in Michigan, “Jim Crow represented the legitimization of antiblack racism.”¹⁰ Originally, the term Jim Crow referred to a black stage persona played by white American artist Thomas Dartmouth Rice. Rice and other minstrel performers of the nineteenth century helped to create a stereotypical image of African Americans. The shows suggested that African Americans were lazy, inferior and their integration would not be beneficial. Moreover, this type of entertainment supported the racial segregation, which was not banned until 1964.¹¹

⁵ George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), Introduction.

⁶ Fredrickson, *Racism*, 127.

⁷ Richard Zuczek, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Reconstruction era* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 72.

⁸ Zuczek, *Encyclopedia of the Reconstruction era*, 23, 72.

⁹ Zuczek, *Encyclopedia of the Reconstruction era*, 335.

¹⁰ David Pilgrim, *Understanding Jim Crow: Using Racist Memorabilia to Teach Tolerance and Promote Social Justice* (Oakland: PM Press, 2015), Kindle Edition, 42.

¹¹ Pilgrim, *Understanding Jim Crow*, 38-40, 60.

The racial segregation enforced through the Jim Crow laws influenced nearly all aspects of African-American lives. For example, African Americans were forced to attend different schools and churches, use separate lavatories and in case of emergency go to hospitals intended specifically for African Americans. In most cases, these facilities were in much worse conditions than the ones for white Americans.¹²

¹² Pilgrim, *Understanding Jim Crow*, 49.

2 AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Racism is one of the major themes of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The author of this novel, Nelle Harper Lee (1926–2016), herself grew up in the American South at the time of great racial injustice. Moreover, she wrote the novel throughout the 1950s when the American civil rights movement gained national prominence.¹³ It is evident from the story that the real events of the first half of the twentieth century inspired Harper Lee. Therefore, it is crucial for the analysis of the racial issues depicted in *To Kill a Mockingbird* to examine the historical background. Firstly, an overview of the most significant events concerning African Americans from the end of the nineteenth century to the decision of the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* is provided and then more detailed description of the Great Depression and the New Deal era follows.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a time of abortive attempts for the emancipation of African Americans. In 1868, the fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution was ratified. It guaranteed the citizenship to everyone “born or naturalized in the United States.”¹⁴ However, a vast majority of white Americans rejected to accept these changes and refused to consider African Americans equal. The manifestations of racial intolerance occurred all over the United States but were more extreme in the South. The government proved to be inefficient to ensure the racial equality during the Reconstruction era as well as after it. The period from around 1877 to the beginning of the First World War represented the climax of racism in the United States.¹⁵

Shortly before entering the twentieth century, the Supreme Court had jailed Homer Plessy, an African-American train passenger, for sitting in the whites-only railroad car.¹⁶ The Plessy decision provided legal justification of segregation under the “separate but equal”¹⁷

¹³ Shields, *Mockingbird*, 1.

¹⁴ Zuczek, *Encyclopedia of the Reconstruction era*, 264.

¹⁵ Fredrickson, *Racism*, 81.

¹⁶ George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, *America: a narrative history* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 716.

¹⁷ Michael Jay Friedman, *Outline of U.S. History* (The U. S. Department of State, 2011), accessed February 6, 2017, http://photos.state.gov/libraries/amgov/30145/publications-english/history_outline.pdf, 178.

doctrine for nearly sixty years. After the trial, the racial segregation affected every area of African American's lives, including hospitals, schools and public transport.¹⁸

The racial segregation and the belief in white supremacy were in many cases enforced by lynch mobs. Violent punishments and open public murders of African Americans suspected of crime resulted in thousands of deaths during the Reconstruction era and at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Since the late nineteenth century, a phenomenon called southern rape complex spread across the American South. It was groundless and irrational fear of black men committing sexual assaults on white women frequently used by white Southerners to justify the racial segregation and mob murders.²⁰ African Americans were also forbidden by law from marrying white Americans, especially in Alabama. As Peter Wallenstein notes in *Chicago-Kent Law Review*: "Alabama produced more antimiscegenation litigation than any other American state in the first half of the twentieth century."²¹

From the beginning of the twentieth century until 1933, the quantity of extrajudicial mob actions was progressively reduced. A considerable increase in frequency of lynching occurred in 1933. At that time, public lynching occurred outside the South as well, which heightened fears of lynching becoming even more widespread. However, the expanded authority of the federal government and emerging mass culture and media conduced to create a general opinion on lynching as an obsolete act that could blemish a state's image; hence lynching was largely eliminated throughout the South in the second half of the 1930s.²²

Lynching, together with threats and racist attacks, was also common practice of various hate groups, of which the best known is certainly the Ku Klux Klan. The organization was formed a year after the American Civil War as an opposition to the Union Leagues and the Republican Party in general. However, the first of the three movements was successfully suppressed in the 1870s.²³

¹⁸ Friedman, *Outline of U.S. History*, 178.

¹⁹ Robert S. McElvaine, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression*, Volume 2: L – Z, index (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2004), 593–595.

²⁰ Merrill D. Smith, ed., *Encyclopedia of rape* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 237–39.

²¹ Peter Wallenstein, "Race, Marriage, and the Law of Freedom: Alabama and Virginia 1860s-1960 - Freedom: Personal Liberty and Private Law," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* (1994):410, accessed May 31, 2017, <http://scholarship.kentlaw.iit.edu/cklawreview/vol70/iss2/3>.

²² McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression*, Volume 2: L – Z, index, 593–95.

²³ Tindall and Shi, *America*, 689 –91.

When the second Ku Klux Klan was found in 1915 it was no longer limited to the South. Its members could have been found in the Deep South as well as in the Midwest and North. The members of the Klan were white Protestants and their victims were not only African Americans but also Roman Catholics, Jews and immigrants. The founder of the Klan, William J. Simmons, propagated a belief in “100 percent Americanism”²⁴ and he claimed that the United States of America, often referred to as a melting pot, was actually “a garbage can.”²⁵ It is impossible to determine the exact number of the Ku Klux Klan members. However, George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi suggested that up to eight million Protestant men pledged their loyalty to the Klan at its peak in the 1920s. The Klan’s membership and influence diminished greatly in the next few years and the organization soon disbanded.²⁶ The Klan-related violence occurred again in the 1960s and 1970s in reaction to the rise of the Civil Rights Movement.²⁷

The racial segregation, lynching and ubiquitous plantations in the South on one side and the increase in job opportunities caused by the First World War in the North on the other side caused the Great Migration of African Americans between years 1915 and 1940. With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, the demand for munitions increased enormously. Nevertheless, the same war caused the decrease in number of immigrants from European countries, who represented a substantial portion of cheap labour. The deficiency in foreign cheap labour compelled the business owners to seek substitution. African Americans from the South seemed to be ideal. Recruiters sent to the rural areas of the South promised African Americans well-paid jobs and cheap accommodation. Subsequently, hundreds of thousands of African Americans decided to leave their families and seek opportunity in the North. Shortly after their arrival, they ascertained the actual situation. Companies in the North truly offered them a great deal of job vacancies, but these jobs were the worst available in the labour market.

²⁸ In “*The Great Migration of Afro-Americans, 1915-40*”, Spencer R. Crew, a highly-regarded historian, describes the types of jobs for African Americans:

Afro-Americans typically wound up in dirty, backbreaking, unskilled, and low-paying occupations. These were the least desirable jobs in most industries, but the ones employers felt best suited their black workers. On average, more than eight of every ten Afro-American men worked as unskilled laborers in foundries,

²⁴ Tindall and Shi, *America*, 971.

²⁵ Tindall and Shi, *America*, 971.

²⁶ Tindall and Shi, *America*, 972.

²⁷ Tindall and Shi, *America*, glossary A18.

²⁸ Spencer R. Crew, “The Great Migration of Afro-Americans, 1915–40.” *Monthly Labor Review* (1987): 34–35, accessed February 22, 2017, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/1987/03/art5full.pdf>.

in the building trades, in meatpacking companies, on the railroads, or as servants, porters, janitors, cooks, and cleaners. Only a relatively few obtained work in semiskilled or skilled occupations.²⁹

Despite the fact, that both African-American men and women were in low-status jobs, they earned more money than they would have earned for identical jobs in the South. Other advantages of moving north were better access to education and greater anonymity, which evoked a feeling of greater safety and freedom. On the other hand, the rent charged to African-American migrants was nearly twice as expensive as the rent white tenants paid for equivalent accommodation. The migration northward did not solve all the problems stemming from the racial discrimination, but it definitely boosted hopes for better future in which African Americans have equal rights with whites.³⁰

In contrast to those who stayed in the South, African Americans in the North had more opportunities to express themselves, for example, they participated in politics through voting. Some of them also expressed their opinions and feelings through art. The artistic movement established in the 1920s was called the Harlem Renaissance. It was comprised of African Americans who longed to share “both the joy and the pain of being African-American.”^{31,32} The Harlem Renaissance was directly connected with the concept of the New Negro. The concept was known as early as at the end of the nineteenth century, but at that time, the New Negro would have demanded political and social equality by means of “the political sphere of action or protest poetry,”³³ while in the 1920s it became an “apolitical movement of the arts”³⁴ demanding the equality by the means of fine arts.³⁵ Among the most significant writers of the Harlem Renaissance were Claude McKay, Langston Hughes and W. E. B. DuBois, who was one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) formed in 1909 to fight the racial injustice.³⁶ The organization grew dramatically, ten years after its establishment more than three hundred local branches were opened across the

²⁹ Crew, “The Great Migration,” 35–36.

³⁰ Crew, “The Great Migration,” 36.

³¹ Robert V. Rimini, *A Short History of the United States* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008): 209, accessed January 30, 2017, http://mrleechs.weebly.com/uploads/5/8/9/5/58957823/apush_book-_remini_short_history.pdf.

³² Tindall and Shi, *America*, 981–82.

³³ Henry Louis Gates, “The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black,” *Representations*, no. 24 (1988): 147, accessed June 18, 2017, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2928478?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

³⁴ Gates, “The Trope of a New Negro,” 147.

³⁵ Gates, “The Trope of a New Negro,” 147.

³⁶ Rimini, *A Short History of the United States*, 198, 209.

country. As a legal advocate, the Association fought against discrimination, lynching and hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan.³⁷ The organization also had a substantial role to play in the Scottsboro rape cases.

The Scottsboro boys, as they were called by the media, were nine African-American young men aged thirteen to twenty-one accused of raping two white women on a train. The incident happened in 1931 near Scottsboro, Alabama, where the youths were incarcerated. All but the youngest boy, Roy Wright, were convicted and sentenced to death. After the initial failure of the defence, the International Labor Defense (ILD) led by the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) took control of the case. The ILD mounted an effective legal defence and organized mass protests throughout the country. While African Americans supported the ILD's efforts by participating in protests and raising money for necessary expenses, Communists, intellectuals, and human rights advocates from Latin American and European countries signed petitions to obtain pardons for the convicted. The campaign demanding freedom for the Scottsboro Boys swiftly boosted Party popularity. The NAACP, however, doubted the Communist party's intentions. The organization was convinced that the CPUSA is using the case for propaganda purposes. The conviction resulted in a battle for the right to represent the Scottsboro Boys. Ultimately, the defendants and their parents chose to be represented by the ILD.³⁸

In 1933, a new trial of Haywood Patterson, one of the nine youths accused of rape, was held in Decatur, Alabama. Despite the inconsistencies in stories of the allegedly raped women and the fact that one of them, Ruby Bates, dropped the charges, an all-white jury found him guilty.³⁹

Another aggravation arose on September 30, 1934 when two ILD officials attempted to bribe the other woman, Victoria Price, and were caught in the act. This scandal contributed to the decline in popularity of the Communist Party and induced the ILD to form the Scottsboro Defense Committee (SDC) with NAACP and other members in 1935. It took the SDC fifteen more years to succeed, but by 1950 all the defendants had been discharged.⁴⁰

³⁷ "Oldest and Boldest." Naacp, accessed February 21, 2017, <http://www.naacp.org/oldest-and-boldest/>.

³⁸ McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 2: L – Z*, index, 870–71.

³⁹ Claudia D. Johnson, *Understanding To Kill a Mockingbird: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historic Documents* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 17, 37.

⁴⁰ McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 2: L – Z*, index, 872.

At the time the Scottsboro boys were arrested, the United States of America was in the grip of the worst economic collapse in its history. Franklin D. Roosevelt, the thirty-second American president, launched a series of programs and projects to defuse the Great Depression. However, the New Deal programs were discriminatory towards African Americans.⁴¹

In comparison to the First World War, where African Americans did not get many opportunities, the Second World War heralded the desegregation of military units, as more Americans now realized the hypocrisy of the United States “fighting against world fascism with a segregated army.” Generally, the perception of African Americans and other ethnic groups changed significantly after the Second World War. Ethnic minorities together with white Americans now “belonged to the same group, namely humanity.” This new approach most probably helped towards the decision of the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, a case in which thirteen African Americans demanded the end of segregation in public schools after their children were not permitted to study at local school. On 17 May 1954, the U. S. Supreme Court concluded that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional and thereby overruled the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* from 1896.⁴²

Brown v. Board of Education undoubtedly marked a key milestone in the fight for racial equality in the United States of America. Nevertheless, the ruling applied solely to public education and thus the struggle for complete emancipation of African Americans continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Some of the major breakthroughs in African-American history were achieved during these years, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.⁴³ Despite the importance of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s it is not essential for the purpose of this thesis, hence no space is devoted to this period.

⁴¹ McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 1: A – K*, 8–9.

⁴² Lili Kunfalvi, “Separate but equal - Racial segregation in the United States,” *Human Rights Issues Series* (2014): 18–25 xxx, accessed February 14, 2017, http://culturalrelations.org/Resources/2014/ICRP_Human_Rights_Issues_2014-02.pdf.

⁴³ Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), Kindle Edition, 6.

3 THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE NEW DEAL

The story narrated by Jean Louise Finch is set in Alabama in the first half of the 1930s. At that time the United States experienced the worst economic depression in their history. Millions of people were desperate, jobless and starving.⁴⁴

Individual economists and historians hold different opinions about the causes of the Great Depression. Nevertheless, a majority of them realizes that it was the changes in American economic system after the First World War that led to the crisis.⁴⁵ As Rauchway claimed: “With the war the United States had switched positions, almost overnight, from the world’s great debtor to the world’s great creditor.”⁴⁶ Until 1928 the United States lent money to countries such as Poland, Brazil and Canada. During the same period, Americans were convinced that their country entered a great new era of better living standard. Many of them were sure about the bright future to such an extent that they did not hesitate to obtain credit to purchase desired things.⁴⁷ It came as a dreadful shock when the stock market crashed in 1929. Within one year “factories closed and banks failed. Unemployment more than doubled its 1929 level.”⁴⁸

Despite the efforts of the US President, Herbert Clark Hoover, to fix the economy, the Depression became even worse in 1931 and the United States stayed in such poor conditions for another five years. According to Robert V. Remini, “approximately 2,300 banks, with deposits of over \$1.5 billion, failed that summer. The number of unemployed increased from 7 million in 1931 to 14 million by 1936.”⁴⁹ In 1932, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) was established to provide loans mainly to financial and agricultural institutions (banks, farm mortgage societies etc.). Owing to the RFC, the largest banks of the United States did not go bankrupt. However, no help was aimed at individuals and small entrepreneurs.⁵⁰

As the economic crisis gradually deepened under Herbert C. Hoover’s presidency, his democratic opponents rejoiced at the increasing chances of success in the upcoming presidential

⁴⁴ Tindall and Shi, *America*, 1015.

⁴⁵ Eric Rauchway, *The Great Depression & the New Deal: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), eBook Academic Collection Trial, accessed January 12, 2017, 8.

⁴⁶ Rauchway, *The Great Depression & the New Deal*, 12.

⁴⁷ Rauchway, *The Great Depression & the New Deal*, 12–13.

⁴⁸ Rauchway, *The Great Depression & the New Deal*, 19.

⁴⁹ Remini, *A Short History of the United States*, 215.

⁵⁰ Remini, *A Short History of the United States*, 217.

election. One of the most promising candidates was the Governor of New York, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In his nomination speech at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, he made a firm commitment to introduce a new program that will boost the economy of the United States: “I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a New Deal for the American people.”⁵¹

Expectations were fulfilled and Franklin D. Roosevelt, was elected president. From his inauguration in 1933 to 1938 he launched a series of programs and projects referred to as the New Deal. The main objectives of the New Deal were to protect ordinary Americans who became victims of the Depression and increase the scope of the federal government’s activities. Americans had not been used to such control by the federal government before, but it brought profit to millions of people. The government, for example, provided employment for a significant amount of Americans in public works and work relief projects. These workers drew the state pension and their minimum wage was set by the government.⁵²

Among the best-known Roosevelt’s New Deal programs were the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and a program recently known as Social Security, both created in 1935. Under the direction of Harry Hopkins, the WPA alleviated unemployment by hiring people in public works projects. Millions of Americans were paid for constructing roads, hospitals, schools, public housing etc. The agency also sponsored writers, actors and other artists. Additionally, it introduced a “security wage”⁵³, which assured WPA employees of decent and regularly paid wages.⁵⁴ While the WPA’s main task was to hire unemployed workers, the Social Security was aimed at those disabled to work, such as retired workers, low-income elderly and widowed mothers. Franklin D. Roosevelt himself described the act as the New Deal’s “cornerstone”.⁵⁵ The program continues to exist in the present days and constitutes “the single largest public income support program in the United States”.⁵⁶

A considerable number of programs were aimed at farmers. In 1933, the Agricultural Adjustment Act was enacted. Its purpose was to restore the agricultural prosperity by offering payments to farmers in return for voluntary reduction of crop acreage and animal production. The strategy proved to be effective. In 1935, farm income was more than two times higher than

⁵¹ Rimini, *A Short History of the United States*, 217.

⁵² McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 2: L – Z*, index, 701–3

⁵³ Rauchway, *The Great Depression & the New Deal*, 67.

⁵⁴ Rauchway, *The Great Depression & the New Deal*, 67.

⁵⁵ McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 2: L – Z*, index, 896.

⁵⁶ McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 2: L – Z*, index, 896–97.

it had been in 1932. However, those results could be attributed to the federal programs only partly. The rise in commodity prices was ascribed mainly to a severe drought that ravaged the Great Plains region throughout the 1930s. The series of fierce dust storms, known as the Dust Bowl, ruined a substantial number of farms and caused a large-scale migration.⁵⁷

The innovative feature of the New Deal was the speed at which the actions were taken. Despite relatively frequent failings of reforms implemented during Roosevelt years in office, the New Deal helped millions of people out of poverty.⁵⁸ Americans embraced the expanded authority of the federal government and manifested their support by electing Franklin D. Roosevelt president four times. American citizens also supported Roosevelt's democratic successors, Harry S. Truman, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson, who strained to expand the New Deal.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Friedman, *Outline of U.S. History*, 216.

⁵⁸ Friedman, *Outline of U.S. History*, 214.

⁵⁹ McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 2: L – Z*, index, 703.

4 AFRICAN AMERICANS DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

“No Jobs for Niggers Until Every White Man Has a Job”⁶⁰

African Americans had a superior social status long before the Great Depression struck and thus when the national income declined by half and the unemployment suddenly increased at the beginning of the 1930s, their situation even worsened. As the “Last Hired and the First Fired,”⁶¹ African Americans in the southern farms struggled to keep their jobs; hence a large proportion of them moved to southern, northern, and western cities. With rising number of African Americans searching for a job in urban areas, it became almost impossible to find one. Furthermore, they faced strong animosity from white workers and job seekers. Signs such as “Niggers, back to the cotton fields—city jobs are for white folks,”⁶² were more than unpleasant but not life threatening. An example of deadly violence towards African-American workers happened on southern railroads where nearly a dozen African-American firemen were murdered by white workers. An unknown journalist described appositely the violent acts performed in order to displace black workers: “The shotgun, the whip, the noose, and Ku Klux Klan practices were being resumed in the certainty that dead men not only tell no tales, but create vacancies.”⁶³

Despite the Great Migration, more than 50 percent of African Americans lived in rural areas in the 1930s. In Alabama, where a considerable part of the Black Belt region is located, African Americans “outnumbered whites four to one in some counties in 1930.”⁶⁴ African-American farmworkers were in most cases poorly paid tenants. Any program that could provide them with income and independence constituted a threat to white landowners. When the Agricultural Adjustment Administration was created under the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the government authorities had to ensure that “the traditional dependence of tenants”⁶⁵ was

⁶⁰ Robert S. McElvaine, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 1: A – K* (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2004), 8.

⁶¹ McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 1: A – K*, 8.

⁶² McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 1: A – K*, 8.

⁶³ McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 1: A – K*, 8.

⁶⁴ Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 35.

⁶⁵ John Braeman, Robert H. Bremner and David Brody, ed., *The New Deal: The National Level* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975), 171.

going to be maintained to gain the support of landowners. Therefore, the tenants received only one-half cent for a pound of cotton they did not grow in comparison to four cents for landowners. Moreover, the payment was distributed to landowners, which enabled them to force tenants to spend the money solely in the company store or not to pass the payment to the tenants at all.⁶⁶

Insufficient job opportunities worried millions of African Americans. As the racial discrimination deepened during the Great Depression, African-American workers were frequently replaced by equally qualified white workers. This approach contributed to the fact that average unemployment rate for African Americans was 50 percent higher than the unemployment rate for white Americans in 1931. In most cases, white workers substituted African Americans in the “Negro jobs,”⁶⁷ which were “such occupations as waiters, domestic servants, and porters—traditional strongholds of low-skilled black employment in the South.”⁶⁸ These job positions were not protected by labour unions and usually involved daily contact with the employer or customers and hence it was easier and more convenient to hire white Americans.⁶⁹

When the Great Depression began, Herbert C. Hoover served as president of the United States. Despite the fact, that his administration supported predominantly large American companies and did not provide aid to indigent individuals, African Americans were hopeful of Hoover’s re-election in 1932. The Republican Party, in contradistinction to the Democratic Party, was perceived by African Americans as a political party that was going to advance their emancipation.⁷⁰

Despite the displeasure of African Americans living in the American South, the Democratic candidate, Franklin D. Roosevelt, was elected president. The concern over discriminatory treatment of African Americans under his presidency had been partially legitimate. Afraid of losing the support of white Southerners, F. D. Roosevelt refused to sign fundamental bills such as the anti-lynching bill. Moreover, the New Deal programs instituted during his presidency were in many cases discriminatory towards African Americans. However,

⁶⁶ Braeman, Bremner and Brody, *The New Deal*, 171–72

⁶⁷ William A. Sundstrom, “Last Hired, First Fired? Unemployment and Urban Black Workers During the Great Depression,” *The Journal of Economic History* 52, no. 2 (1992): 421, accessed February 24, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2123118>.

⁶⁸ Sundstrom, “Last Hired, First Fired,” 421.

⁶⁹ Sundstrom, “Last Hired, First Fired,” 418–22.

⁷⁰ McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression*, Volume 1: A – K, 8–9.

the disinterest of Republicans in African-American voters prompted a substantial number of them, especially from the northern cities, to support the Democratic Party for the first time in the presidential election of 1932. When F. D. Roosevelt was re-elected president in 1936, he gained even greater support - 76 percent of northern black votes. This African-American voting shift from the Republican party to the Democratic Party is described as “one of the most important developments in the political history of the decade.”⁷¹

Franklin D. Roosevelt made only a little effort to compel the New Deal agencies to involve African Americans in their social programs. His approach caused that the aid for African Americans by New Deal agencies did not become widely accessible till the second half of the 1930s.⁷² Joe W. Trotter captured the change as follows:

By 1939, income from New Deal work and relief programs nearly matched African-American income from private employment. African Americans occupied about one-third of all federal low-income housing projects, and gained a growing share of CCC⁷³ jobs, Federal Farm Security loans, and benefits from WPA educational and cultural programs. African Americans now frequently hailed the New Deal as “a godsend.” Some blacks even quipped that God “will lead me” and relief “will feed me.”⁷⁴

Despite the progress towards equal treatment of African Americans by New Deal agencies, the racial discrimination still existed within and outside them at the end of the 1930s. Therefore, African Americans created their own system of help within their community in addition to the help from the New Deal agencies. They exchanged crops, babysat neighbour’s children and shared various equipment, such as cookers or wash boilers. However, it was not enough. The struggle for racial equality continued, so when the United States entered the Second World War in 1941, not only did African Americans fight for their country but also continued to fight for their equality.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Braeman, Bremner and Brody, *The New Deal*, 171.

⁷² McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 1: A – K*, 9–15.

⁷³ the Civilian Conservation Corps

⁷⁴ McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 1: A – K*, 11.

⁷⁵ McElvaine, *Encyclopedia of the Great Depression, Volume 1: A – K*, 13–16.

5 THE DEPICTION OF RACIAL ISSUES IN *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*

The aim of this chapter is to examine Nelle Harper Lee's approach to the racial issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The first subchapter explores the depiction of race relations in Maycomb, in the second subchapter, the language and symbolism is discussed and the last subchapter is devoted to the death of Tom Robinson.

Harper Lee was born in 1926 in Monroeville, Alabama. Growing up in a small town in the Deep South, Harper Lee together with her friend Truman Capote (Dill in the story) witnessed to racial discrimination and enforced segregation. In the novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Ms Lee deals with racial issues through the eyes of a little girl, Jean Louise Finch frequently called Scout, who has a lot in common with the author herself – Ms Lee's father was a lawyer, she was raised in a small southern town and she was also a bit of a tomboy.⁷⁶

In terms of racial issues, the book provides the background to a period of legally sanctioned racial segregation and portrays the racial injustice in the southern judicial system of the 1930s. The author does not directly criticize the racial inequality in the South throughout the Jim Crow era nor does she present the Maycomb white residents as an evil unit prejudiced against African Americans. On the contrary, Harper Lee lets the readers to gather all the racial references from the book to create their own image of how the human rights were violated in the South at that time.⁷⁷

In addition to racial issues, *To Kill a Mockingbird* contains other themes, including: "Jem's maturation, the social stratification of the town, the metaphor of the mockingbird, education, and superstition."⁷⁸ Since the story is narrated by a child, it may seem that the major element of the book is the Gothic figure called Boo Radley and the adventures the children experience while trying to discover more about this mysterious man. As Dian L. Baecker, a professor of language and literature at Virginia State University, suggests, Harper Lee herself

⁷⁶ Shields, *Mockingbird*, 2,17.

⁷⁷ Calvin Woodard, *Listening to the Mockingbird*, published in *Social Issues in Literature: Racism in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird*, ed. Candice Mancini (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 149.

⁷⁸ Diann L. Baecker, *The Africanist Presence in To Kill a Mockingbird*, published in *Social Issues in Literature: Racism in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird*, ed. Candice Mancini (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 102.

“minimize[s] the importance of race in the novel”⁷⁹ by beginning and ending the whole story with a reference to Boo Radley:

When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow... 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. He said it began the summer Dill came to us, when Dill first gave us the idea of making Boo Radley come out.⁸⁰

Conversely, when Scout couldn't fall asleep after Dill, Jem and Scout tried to spot Boo Radley through a window, she associated Boo Radley with nature and “every passing Negro.”⁸¹ Being associated rather with nature than urban areas represents a common feature of Boo Radley and African Americans.⁸² Moreover, the two plot lines that occur in the novel, one revolving around Boo Radley and the other one around Tom Robinson, might both include a common element related to racism. The white residents of Maycomb are scared that African Americans might “threaten the established order,”⁸³ for example, by having mixed children with white women. Similarly, Jem and Scout are scared of Boo Radley because he constitutes a threat to “the known world of home and family.”⁸⁴ Considering that Boo Radley is a borderline case within the Maycomb society, the opening and closing scenes concern the racial theme to a greater extent than it might seem at first glance.

5.1 RACE RELATIONS IN MAYCOMB

Boo Radley, together with Dolphus Raymond who is married to an African-American woman, makes an exception to an otherwise typical Southern social structure. In the novel, Jem divided the Maycomb society into four groups – the white elite class (the Finch family), two completely different groups of white working class – poor farmers who became victims of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl (the Cunninghams), the lowest class amongst the white people in Maycomb (the Ewells) and Negroes (Tom Robinson).⁸⁵ Despite the fact, that individual members of the African-American population occupy different social statuses, they are all

⁷⁹ Baecker, *The Africanist Presence*, 103.

⁸⁰ Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), 9.

⁸¹ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 61.

⁸² Baecker, *The Africanist Presence*, 104.

⁸³ Hovet and Hovet, *Contending Voices*, 116.

⁸⁴ Hovet and Hovet, *Contending Voices*, 116.

⁸⁵ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 230.

considered socially superior to white people, even to the Ewells, who do not have money, education or good manners and represent the “white trash.”⁸⁶ In *The Romantic Regionalism of Harper Lee*, Fred Erisman described the purpose of the caste system in Maycomb: “Maycomb has a taut, well-developed caste system designed to separate whites from blacks” and “to keep the blacks in their place.”⁸⁷

African Americans in Maycomb have sundry occupations, but they are all unskilled and low-paying – Calpurnia and Sophy work as housekeepers, Zeebo, Calpurnia’s son, is the town garbage collector and Tom Robinson picks cotton and other crops for a local farmer. Most of the Maycomb’s African-American population, including Tom Robinson and most probably Calpurnia, lives in a settlement located on the outskirts of the town: “A dirt road ran from the highway past the dump, down to a small Negro settlement some five hundred yards beyond the Ewells’.”⁸⁸ However, it is not solely the location of the outlying settlement that separates African Americans from the rest of the Maycomb’s population, but several other references to racial segregation that can be found in the novel.

Some of the references, which Harper Lee included in her novel, are direct. The first reference to racial segregation refers to the First Purchase African Methodist Episcopal Church. The following extract from chapter 12 highlights the fact that African Americans attend a different church than white residents of Maycomb and it points out the “consistent desecration”⁸⁹ of the church:

First Purchase African M.E. Church was in the Quarters outside the southern town limits, across the old sawmill tracks. It was an ancient paint-peeled frame building, the only church in Maycomb with a steeple and bell, called First Purchase because it was paid for from the first earnings of freed slaves. Negroes worshiped in it on Sundays and white men gambled in it on weekdays.⁹⁰

When Calpurnia took the Finch children to the African-American First Purchase Church, they encountered Lula, an African American member of the church, who was enraged by the presence of white children in the church: “You ain’t got no business bringin’ white chillun here – they got their church, we got our’n. It is our church, ain’t it, Miss Cal?”⁹¹ Everyone else in the church treated Jem and Scout nicely and told them to ignore Lula. Lula is

⁸⁶ Hovet and Hovet, *Contending Voices*, 114.

⁸⁷ Erisman, “The Romantic Regionalism,” 124.

⁸⁸ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 174.

⁸⁹ Erisman, “The Romantic Regionalism,” 124.

⁹⁰ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 122.

⁹¹ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 123.

the only African-American character in the novel that expressed anger against white residents of Maycomb. She shows “what the proper African American response to the white presence should be”⁹² since African Americans could have been arrested or lynched for ignoring the segregation rules and laws.⁹³

Even though African Americans in *To Kill a Mockingbird* are depicted as passive bystanders in their fight for equality and the only character who expressed some negative emotions towards white residents was Lula, Atticus Finch knows, that the day when African Americans will find their voice is inevitable: “it’s all adding up and one of these days we’re going to pay the bill for it. I hope it’s not in you children’s time.”^{94,95}

Another reference to racial segregation can be found in chapter 16 where nearly all residents of Maycomb come to the Maycomb County courthouse to witness the trial. Before entering the courthouse, African Americans show their inferiority by waiting outside until the white visitors enter the building. The seating in the courthouse is also segregated. While white people sit downstairs in the main part of the courtroom, African Americans are placed in the balcony: “The Colored balcony ran along three walls of the courtroom like a second-story veranda, and from it we could see everything.”⁹⁶

The last example of direct reference to racial segregation appears in chapter 25 when Calpurnia goes with Atticus to tell Helen Robinson about Tom’s death. Despite the front seat being empty, Calpurnia sits in the back seat of the car.⁹⁷ In real life, it was dangerous to be seen in a car with African American during the 1930s in the American South. As Thomas J. Sugrue explains: “blacks who drove with whites in the same car put themselves at risk of arrest or violence. Only when it was clear that the black driver was a chauffeur could blacks and whites share the same car without arousing suspicion.”⁹⁸

In contrast with the direct references to racial segregation, some references ought to be discovered by the readers. Based on the fact, that neither Scout nor Jem has ever mentioned

⁹² Joseph Crespino, *Representation of Race and Justice in To Kill a Mockingbird*, published in *Social Issues in Literature: Racism in Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird*, ed. Candice Mancini (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 85.

⁹³ Crespino, *Representation of Race*, 85.

⁹⁴ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 225.

⁹⁵ Freedman, “Atticus Finch,” 479.

⁹⁶ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 168.

⁹⁷ Erisman, “The Romantic Regionalism,” 125.

⁹⁸ “The Car and Jim Crow,” Thomas J. Sugrue, accessed May 27, 2017, http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Casestudy/R_Casestudy2.htm.

anything about having an African-American classmate, one can assume that the Maycomb school is segregated as well. It is highly unlikely that the narrator would not mention anything about her African-American classmates when her family is frequently talked about because of her father defending an African-American man. The assumption is also supported by the author's knowledge of the historical background.

As mentioned in *African Americans in the first half of the twentieth century*, the racial segregation in the South was in many cases enforced by lynching. In chapter 15, Atticus tells Jem that the Ku Klux Klan, whose practices included lynching, is gone and it will never return to Maycomb. However, it is highly probable that the actions of the third incarnation of the Klan, which operated mainly during the 1960s and 1970s, would have affected Alabama town like Maycomb.

In the novel, Harper Lee does not describe any acts of lynching, but the readers can easily recognize that later in chapter 15 the men of Old Sarum plan to lynch Tom Robinson:

“He in there, Mr. Finch?” a man said.

“He is,” we heard Atticus answer, “and he’s asleep. Don’t wake him up.”

In obedience to my father, there followed what I later realized was a sickeningly comic aspect of an unfunny situation: the men talked in near-whispers.

“You know what we want,” another man said. “Get aside from the door, Mr. Finch.”⁹⁹

Even though Tom Robinson's trial has not yet taken place, these men succumb to fear of an African-American man trying to rape a white woman, as sexual relationships between African-American men and white women were considered “the strongest taboo of the system.”¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, a white man, Dolphus Raymond, who is married to an African-American woman is depicted relatively sympathetically. He is a drunkard in the eyes of most Maycomb residents. However, during Tom's trial he offers Dill a sip from the bottle covered by a paper bag to settle his stomach. At this point, Scout, Jem and Dill realize that he is drinking Coca-Cola, not whiskey. He has pretended to be a heavy drinker since his fiancée committed a suicide and now he acts this way to provide the townspeople with justification for being married to an African-American woman and having mixed children. His social status within the Maycomb's society is similar to Boo Radley's status.¹⁰¹ Interestingly, Dolphus Raymond is not

⁹⁹ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 154–155.

¹⁰⁰ Erisman, “The Romantic Regionalism,” 125.

¹⁰¹ Baecker, *The Africanist Presence*, 109–110.

a poor man. According to Jem, Mr Raymond “owns all one side of the riverbank down there, and he’s from a real old family to boot.”¹⁰²

Mr Raymond’s mixed children look the same as full-blooded African Americans, but they do not belong anywhere. They are not accepted by African Americans, nor are they accepted by white population. In the following extract, Jem mentions that it is better for the mixed-race people to live in the north where racism is not that rampant:

They don’t belong anywhere. Colored folks won’t have ‘em because they’re half white; white folks won’t have ‘em cause they’re colored, so they’re just in-betweens, don’t belong anywhere. But Mr. Dolphus, now, they say he’s shipped two of his up north. They don’t mind ‘em up north.¹⁰³

The interracial marriages were constitutionally prohibited in Alabama in the 1930s. Scout’s teacher, Miss Gates, even mentions in the novel that African Americans are not allowed to marry white Americans: “It’s time somebody taught ‘em a lesson, they were gettin’ way above themselves, an’ the next thing they think they can do is marry us.”¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Harper Lee does not mention whether Dolphus Raymond has to deal with some legal problems because of his interracial marriage and his mixed children.

The remark made by Miss Gates about African Americans “gettin’ way above themselves”¹⁰⁵ makes Scout to think about the lesson she had earlier that year with Miss Gates. Each week the pupils choose an article from a newspaper and paraphrase the news to the rest of the class. The current event for that week was Adolf Hitler and the persecution of Jewish people. Miss Gates tried to explain the term ‘democracy’ by comparing the political situation in the United States and Germany:

We are a democracy and Germany is a dictatorship...Over here we don’t believe in persecuting anybody. Persecution comes from people who are prejudiced...There are no better people in the world than the Jews, and why Hitler doesn’t think so is a mystery to me.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 164.

¹⁰³ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 165.

¹⁰⁴ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 251.

¹⁰⁵ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 251.

¹⁰⁶ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 249.

Considering Miss Gate's remark about African Americans in Maycomb, her explanation is hypocritical. She applies double standards in dealing with African Americans and the Jewish people.¹⁰⁷

There can be found many people in Maycomb who share Miss Gate's opinion on African Americans, such as Grace Merriweather or Mrs Dubose. Mrs Dubose despises Atticus Finch for defending Tom Robinson. She is not ashamed to yell at the Finch children from her porch in the middle of the day: "Your father's no better than the niggers and trash he works for!"¹⁰⁸ Mrs Merriweather, one of the ladies of the Maycomb Alabama Methodist Episcopal Church South, is more like Miss Gates. She talks about the Mrunas, a fictional African tribe, with compassion and her eyes always fill with tears when talking about them, but when it comes to African Americans living in Maycomb, she is not compassionate at all. Despite Tom Robinson being innocent, Mrs Merriweather does not show any empathy for Helen Robinson, Tom's wife, or other African Americans who are concerned by Tom Robinson's conviction.¹⁰⁹ At the missionary circle meeting in the Finch house, she complains about her African-American housekeeper, Sophy, being upset the next day after the trial: "there's nothing more distracting than a sulky darky. Their mouths go down to here. Just ruins your day to have one of 'em in the kitchen."¹¹⁰

On the other hand, Some of the Maycomb residents recognize the injustice committed against African Americans. One of those people is Maudie Atkinson who fervently supports Atticus Finch's decision to defend Tom Robinson. After the trial, she tried to convince Jem that his father is not the only one in Maycomb who wanted Tom to be vindicated:

"You'd be surprised how many of us do."

"Who?" Jem's voice rose. "Who in this town did one thing to help Tom Robinson, just who?"

"His colored friends for one thing, and people like us. People like Judge Taylor. People like Mr. Heck Tate. Stop eating and start thinking, Jem. Did it ever strike

¹⁰⁷ Theodore R. Hovet and Grace-Anne Hovet, *Contending Voices in To Kill a Mockingbird*, published in *Social Issues in Literature: Racism in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird*, ed. Candice Mancini (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 122.

¹⁰⁸ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 107.

¹⁰⁹ Edwin Bruell, "Keen Scalpel on Racial Ills," *The English Journal* 53, no. 9 (1964): 660, accessed January 2, 2017, https://www.jstor.org/stable/811370?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

¹¹⁰ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 236.

you that Judge Taylor naming Atticus to defend that boy was no accident? That Judge Taylor might have had his reasons for naming him?”¹¹¹

In addition to the aforementioned Maycomb residents, white Americans like Dolphus Raymond, Link Deas, Braxton Underwood, Jem and Dill recognize the immorality of Tom Robinson’s conviction. Even though Atticus Finch belongs to the same group of people, he did not defend Tom Robinson on his own initiative. On the contrary, he hoped to never participate in such a court case.¹¹² To what extent Atticus Finch should be regarded as an American racial hero has been the subject to debate among scholars for several decades. According to Monroe H. Freedman, a law professor and the recipient of the Martin Luther King Award, “Atticus Finch knows about the grinding, ever-present humiliation and degradation of the black people of Maycomb; he tolerates it, and sometimes he even trivializes and condones it.”¹¹³ He takes the case because otherwise he would be ashamed of himself, but he does not initiate any legal action that would contribute to desegregation. Therefore, Monroe H. Freedman did not rate Atticus to be a suitable role model for modern lawyers. He believes that in order to provide legal help to all Americans, the United States needs more proactive lawyers who would voluntarily help those in need.¹¹⁴

Atticus Finch’s proponents, including the president of the American Bar Association, Talbot D’Alemberte, claim that in his analysis focused on legal ethics, Monroe Freedman did not consider some of Atticus Finch’s praiseworthy traits and the “power to inspire similar acts [of racial heroism].”¹¹⁵ Commenting on Atticus Finch’s character, Talbot D’Alemberte wrote: “Finch rose above racism and injustice to defend the principle that all men and women deserve their day in court.”¹¹⁶ As Joseph Crespino, a professor of history at Emory University, appositely pointed out in *The Strange Career of Atticus Finch*, it is important for both, the admirers of Atticus Finch and their opponents, to realize that the novel is set in the 1930s when racism was more pervasive and therefore contemporary lawyers work under different conditions.¹¹⁷ Despite the fact that Atticus Finch could be more active in the fight for racial

¹¹¹ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 219.

¹¹² Monroe H. Freedman, “Atticus Finch—Right and Wrong,” *Alabama Law Review*, vol. 45 (1994): 479–81, accessed May 11, 2017, http://scholarlycommons.law.hofstra.edu/faculty_scholarship/220.

¹¹³ Freedman, “Atticus Finch,” 479.

¹¹⁴ Freedman, “Atticus Finch,” 481–82.

¹¹⁵ Crespino, *Representation of Race*, 86.

¹¹⁶ Crespino, *Representation of Race*, 87.

¹¹⁷ Crespino, *Representation of Race*, 87.

equality, he is a real gentleman who is respectful of everyone, regardless of their skin colour.

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This admirable quality can be substantiated by Atticus Finch's relationship with Calpurnia. Even though Calpurnia is an African American and Atticus Finch's employee, she is one of his closest friends. She teaches his children good manners and comforts them when needed. When Atticus Finch's sister, Aunt Alexandra, comes to town, Atticus does his best to satisfy all her demands, but when Alexandra wants to fire Calpurnia, Atticus resolutely refuses. He trusts her enough to talk about private matters in front of her: "Anything fit to say at the table's fit to say in front of Calpurnia. She knows what she means to this family."^{119,120}

5.2 LANGUAGE AND SYMBOLISM

Another important aspect of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is the language and symbolism. Harper Lee uses language and literacy as a tool for differentiation between the poor and the rich and between African Americans and white residents of Maycomb. While Mr Ewell's eight children have never attended school for more than two years, Scout can read by the time she starts school.¹²¹ Most of the African-American population of Maycomb is illiterate, but the housekeeper for the Finch family is one of the few African Americans who can read and use proper language. Jem and Scout are therefore surprised by Calpurnia talking differently to Lula.¹²² She explains that her community might consider her arrogant if she spoke to them the way she does in the Finch home:

Folks don't like to have somebody around knowin' more than they do. It aggravates 'em. You're not gonna change any of them by talkin' right, they've got to want to learn themselves, and when they don't want to learn there's nothing you can do but keep your mouth shut or talk their language.¹²³

Throughout the book several symbols related to the theme of race occur. The terms 'right' and 'left' have, in addition to their literal meaning, a symbolic meaning. The term 'right'

¹¹⁸ Freedman, "Atticus Finch," 482.

¹¹⁹ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 160.

¹²⁰ Thomas L. Shaffer, Learning Good Judgment in the Segregated South, published in *Social Issues in Literature: Racism in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird*, ed. Candice Mancini (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 142–143.

¹²¹ Baecker, *The Africanist Presence*, 106–107.

¹²² Thomas L. Schaffer, "Growing Up Good in Maycomb," *Alabama Law Review*, vol. 45 (1994): 540, accessed June 1, 2017, http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/law_faculty_scholarship/660.

¹²³ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 130.

stands for “good, just, or tolerant,”¹²⁴ whereas ‘left’ denotes “bad, unjust, or racist.”¹²⁵ The side that is healthy, unscathed or dominant determines the group in which a person belongs. For example, Atticus Finch and Tom Robinson belong to the ‘right’ side because Atticus Finch is nearly blind in his left eye and Tom Robinson’s left arm is lame. The group of people who could be characterized as bad, unjust or racist includes Bob and Mayella Ewell. Bob Ewell is left-handed which means that his left hand is dominant and Mayella Ewell’s right eye was injured during the incident. This method can also be applied to the rabid dog, as it was lame in its right legs.¹²⁶ Moreover, the dog might possibly represent the racism in the American South that Atticus is forced to confront.¹²⁷

When Maycomb is after more than forty-five years covered in a thin layer of snow, Jem and Scout decide to build a snowman. Inasmuch as not enough snow has fallen in Maycomb, the children use mud to construct the torso and cover it with snow. When the muddy part is done, Scout utters: “Jem, I ain’t ever heard of a nigger snowman.”¹²⁸ Within one day the snowman melts because of the fire in Maudie Atkinson’s house, and thus it turns black and muddy again. The transformation from black to white and vice versa in less than one day implies the superficiality of skin colour.¹²⁹

A hidden meaning can be also found in Jem’s emotional outburst in chapter 26. Jem reacted angrily when Scout told him about Miss Gates’s hypocritical attitude towards African Americans. Jem, upset by Tom Robinson’s death, silenced her right away. His high hopes for Tom’s vindication were crushed and his reaction indicates that “the town is returning to the racist, classist, and sexist norms”¹³⁰ and everyone who questions these norms will be silenced.¹³¹

The most significant symbol in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is most likely the mockingbird. When Jem and Scout received air rifles for Christmas, Atticus told Jem: “shoot all the bluejays

¹²⁴ Laurie Champion, *Racism and Other Injustice in Harper Lee’s Writing*, published in *Social Issues in Literature: Racism in Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird*, ed. Candice Mancini (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 89.

¹²⁵ Champion, *Racism*, 89.

¹²⁶ Champion, *Racism*, 89–93.

¹²⁷ Crespino, *Representation of Race*, 80.

¹²⁸ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 72.

¹²⁹ Dorothy Jewell Altman, *The Life of Harper Lee*, published in *Social Issues in Literature: Racism in Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird*, ed. Candice Mancini (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 20.

¹³⁰ Hovet and Hovet, *Contending Voices*, 122.

¹³¹ Hovet and Hovet, *Contending Voices*, 122.

you want, if you can hit ‘em, but remember it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird.”¹³² Maudie Atkinson later explained what Atticus meant by his statement:

Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don’t eat up people’s gardens, don’t nest in corncribs, they don’t do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird.¹³³

After Tom Robinson was killed by the prison guards, Mr Underwood, the editor of The Maycomb Tribune, condemned his death in one of his articles by comparing it to “the senseless slaughter of songbirds.”¹³⁴ The link between Tom Robinson and the songbirds implies that Tom was as innocent as a mockingbird.¹³⁵

Tom’s association with innocent mockingbirds, together with the portrayal of African Americans as passive victims and the use of the word ‘nigger’, is the reason why the Black Educator’s Association from Nova Scotia with support of parents endeavoured to ban *To Kill a Mockingbird* from school use across Canada. In 2000, The African Canadian Services Division presented a report regarding the usage of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in Canadian schools, in which the schools were advised to remove the novel from their lessons.¹³⁶ Among other things, the report comments on the language used in the novel:

This language is still widely used today and the book serves as a tool to reinforce its usage even further... The terminology in this novel subjects students to humiliating experiences that rob them of their self-respect and the respect of their peers. The word ‘Nigger’ is used forty-eight times [in] the novel.¹³⁷

Shortly after the report was published, Canadian as well as foreign media started to criticize the effort to ban the novel from schools. The great influence of the media led to the retention of the novel in schools.¹³⁸

5.3 TOM ROBINSON’S DEATH

Tom Robinson is a twenty-five-year-old African American, who lives with his wife Helen and their three children in the African-American settlement located behind the town. He makes a

¹³² Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 96.

¹³³ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 96.

¹³⁴ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 245.

¹³⁵ Woodard, *Listening to the Mockingbird*, 154.

¹³⁶ Isaac Saney, “The Case Against To Kill a Mockingbird,” *Race & Class*, vol. 45 (2003): 99–100, accessed May 23, 2017, <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/blog/Mockingbird.pdf>.

¹³⁷ Saney, “The Case Against To Kill a Mockingbird,” 100.

¹³⁸ Saney, “The Case Against To Kill a Mockingbird,” 100–101.

living by picking cotton and other crops for a local farmer, Link Deas. Tom ought to pass the Ewell's house every day on his way to work. One day Mayella Ewell, the oldest child of Bob Ewell, asks Tom Robinson to help her with some chores. When Tom is helping Mayella inside of the house, she suddenly embraces him and tries to kiss him. Just when Tom is trying to break free from her embrace, Bob Ewell enters. Tom instantly flees. After that, Bob Ewell beats Mayella and forces her to falsely accuse Tom Robinson of rape, which leads to Tom's imprisonment and death.

After Tom's death, Scout was deliberating whether his death was inevitable. She came to the conclusion that Atticus could not have done anything to win a rape case involving a black man and a white woman:

Atticus had used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson, but in the secret courts of men's hearts Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed.¹³⁹

Lisa Lindquist-Dorr from the University of Alabama observed that in case of parallel real-life rape cases involving black men and white women, historians also consider death of the alleged rapist to be an inevitable outcome. The conviction "has shaped most analyses, not only of interracial sexual relations and lynching but also of race relations in the twentieth-century South."¹⁴⁰ However, Lisa Lindquist-Dorr claims that there might have been a chance for the verdict of not guilty in Tom Robinson's case.

In the novel, the jury consists of rural farmers, predominantly lower class members, who voted guilty on all counts to defuse the racial tensions in Maycomb. The high racial tensions were caused mainly by strained relations between the poor and African Americans.¹⁴¹ Dian L. Baecker from Virginia State University suggests that the residents of Maycomb determine their position within the society by "setting themselves apart from what and who they are not."¹⁴² This means that the poor white Southerners, who frequently do not have much more than their white skin, endeavour not to be associated with African Americans and hence it would be inconceivable for Bob Ewell to publicly admit that his white daughter tried to seduce an

¹³⁹ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 245.

¹⁴⁰ Lisa Lindquist Dorr, *The False Accusation of Tom Robinson*, published in *Social Issues in Literature: Racism in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird*, ed. Candice Mancini (Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 95.

¹⁴¹ Dorr, *The False Accusation of Tom Robinson*, 94–97.

¹⁴² Baecker, *The Africanist Presence*, 107.

African-American man. However, the only thing that differentiates Bob Ewell from African Americans is “that if scrubbed with lye soap in very hot water, his skin [is] white.”^{143,144}

Tom Robinson’s accusation was Bob Ewell’s attempt “to break out of the social isolation that has been imposed upon him and his clan by mainstream society in Maycomb.”¹⁴⁵ Even though a majority of Maycomb residents supported the conviction of Tom Robinson, Bob Ewell’s social status has not changed a little after the trial; on the contrary, the judge, John Taylor, “made him look like a fool.”¹⁴⁶ Atticus Finch even expressed his personal conviction that the judge Taylor tried to influence the jury: “John looked at him [Bob Ewell] as if he were a three-legged chicken or a square egg. Don’t tell me judges don’t try to prejudice juries.”¹⁴⁷ During the trial, Scout noticed that the prosecuting attorney, Mr Gilmer, is not so harsh on Tom Robinson as he would normally be on the accused. His lenient approach to Tom Robinson’s case indicates that Mr Gilmer most likely realized that Tom Robinson is a victim of Bob Ewell’s desperate effort to gain recognition for being a member of the white community. Therefore, it is obvious that white legal authorities hold a different opinion on Tom’s innocence from the poor. If Tom Robinson was not shot dead by the guards and his appeal was brought to the Court of Appeals, the judge would possibly not condemn Tom to death.¹⁴⁸

A case similar to Tom Robinson’s case occurred in 1933 near Monroeville, Alabama, where an African-American man, Walter Lett, was accused of rape by Naomi Lowery, a white woman. The town authorities expected the townspeople to attempt to lynch Walter, as the people of Old Sarum did in *To Kill a Mockingbird*; hence the town Sheriff took Walter to Greenville. After six months, he was found guilty and was sentenced to death by electrocution. The death penalty was, however, changed to life imprisonment due to doubts expressed by a considerable number of influential citizens of Monroe County.¹⁴⁹ This is another piece of evidence that the appeal might have saved Tom Robinson from the death sentence.

¹⁴³ Baecker, *The Africanist Presence*, 107.

¹⁴⁴ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 275.

¹⁴⁵ Hovet and Hovet, *Contending Voices*, 120.

¹⁴⁶ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 254.

¹⁴⁷ Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, 254.

¹⁴⁸ Dorr, *The False Accusation of Tom Robinson*, 94–96.

¹⁴⁹ Shields, *Mockingbird*, 88–90.

Even though a majority of teachers and scholars assume that Tom Robinson's case was inspired by the Scottsboro rape cases (see p. 16–17), some scholars believe that it was Walter Lett's case that inspired Tom Robinson's trial in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.¹⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to find the references to racial issues in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee and analyse them. The analysis was preceded by relevant terminology and theoretical background, namely by African Americans in the first half of the twentieth century, the overview of the Great Depression and the New Deal, and the description of living conditions of African Americans during the Great Depression. In the chapter focused on relevant terminology, the terms 'racism,' 'Black Codes,' 'Jim Crow laws' and 'segregation' were briefly introduced. The following chapter acquainted the readers primarily with the Great Migration, which occurred between years 1915 and 1940 mainly as the result of the first World War, the Scottsboro rape case, which is commonly considered to be the inspiration behind Tom Robinson's case, the hate group called the Ku Klux Klan and the practice of lynching that was commonly used to enforce the racial segregation. The third chapter covered the effects of the Great Depression, the transition between Hoover and Roosevelt administrations, and some of the main New Deal programs and acts such as the Works Progress Administration and the Agricultural Adjustment Act. The last chapter described the unequal treatment of African Americans by New Deal agencies and the unequal housing and living conditions for African Americans during the Great Depression.

The analytical part revealed that Harper Lee is not overly critical and rather let the readers to gather all the racial references from the book to create their own image of how the human rights were violated in the South at the beginning of the 1930s. Her depiction of typical southern society is based on her own experience and a substantial number of characters resemble people from her childhood in Monroeville, Alabama. Scholars have disagreement over the importance of the racial theme in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Dian L. Baecker suggests that Harper Lee diminishes the importance of race herself by beginning and ending the novel with a reference to Boo Radley. However, the analysis showed that Boo Radley is associated

¹⁵⁰ Shields, *Mockingbird*, 90.

with African Americans and represents a borderline case within the Maycomb Society and hence the racial theme pervades the entire novel.

The first subchapter showed that African Americans in Maycomb have unskilled and low-paying jobs, such as a housekeeper, a garbage collector or a cotton picker, and they are superior to all white people, even to the Ewells who represent the white trash. Harper Lee included four direct references to racial segregation in *To Kill a Mockingbird* – the housing, the African-American First Purchase Church, the Maycomb County courthouse and the transport. When Calpurnia takes the Finch children to the African-American First Purchase Church, an African-American woman called Lula gets enraged. Lula is the only African-American character that expressed anger towards white residents. Harper Lee used Lula as an example of how African Americans should react to whites, as other African Americans are depicted as passive bystanders in their fight for equality.

Harper Lee does not describe any acts of lynching. Only one scene indicates that lynching was a common practice in the 1930s. The men of Old Sarum come to lynch Tom Robinson because sexual relationships between African-American men and white women are unacceptable. Interestingly, Dolphus Raymond, who is married to an African-American woman, is depicted relatively sympathetically and even though the interracial marriages were constitutionally prohibited in Alabama in the 1930s, Harper Lee does not mention whether he has to deal with some legal problems.

Dolphus Raymond, together with Maudie Atkinson, Link Deas and others, belongs to the group of people who recognize the injustice committed against African Americans. On the other hand, Miss Gates and Mrs Merriweather represent people who apply double standards in dealing with African Americans living in Maycomb and those oppressed on other continents. They are both compassionate when talking about Jews in Europe or Mrunas in Africa, but they are not compassionate to African Americans in Maycomb. Atticus Finch belongs to the first group of people, but disagreement exists over the heroism of Atticus Finch. The analysis showed that on the one hand, Atticus Finch is not very proactive in the fight for racial equality, but on the other hand, he is respectful of everyone, regardless of their skin colour, which can be proved by his relationship with Calpurnia.

The second subchapter dealt with language and symbolism in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The analysis revealed that Harper Lee uses language and literacy as a tool for differentiation between the poor and the rich and between African Americans and white residents of Maycomb.

The hidden symbolism behind the words 'right' and 'left', 'snowman' and 'mockingbird' was examined. The terms 'right' and 'left' help to determine whether a person is either good and tolerant or bad and racist. According to the rule that the side that is healthy, unscathed or dominant determines the group in which the person belongs, Atticus Finch and Tom Robinson are good, whereas Bob and Mayella Ewell are in a simplified way bad. This method can also be applied to the rabid dog, which might, moreover, represent the racism in the American South that Atticus is forced to confront. Another symbol that was analysed is the snowman and its transformation from black to white and vice versa in less than one day. The sudden transformation indicates the superficiality of skin colour. Nevertheless, the most important symbol is most likely the mockingbird. It symbolizes innocence and hence the link between Tom Robinson and the mockingbirds implies that Tom is as innocent as the mockingbirds.

The last subchapter demonstrated that the racial issues are directly connected with the class issues and Tom Robinson did not necessarily have to die as Scout claimed. Moreover, the analysis revealed that the inspiration behind Tom Robinson's case is not clear. A majority of scholars and teachers believe that it was the Scottsboro rape case that inspired Harper Lee. However, Walter Lett's case could have provided Harper Lee with inspiration too.

Whether Harper Lee became inspired by one of these cases or generally by the racial injustice in the Southern judicial system of the 1930s, she created a powerful story that has had an impact not only on lawyers who admire Atticus Finch but also on millions of students and literary fans within and outside of the United States of America.

RESUMÉ

Cílem této bakalářské práce je analyzovat vyobrazení rasové problematiky v díle *Jako zabít ptáčka* od Harper Lee. Příběh vyprávěný Jean Louise Finch, často přezdívanou Čipera, se odehrává ve fiktivním městečku Maycomb ve státě Alabama na začátku třicátých let. Během třicátých let sužovala jih Spojených států amerických nejen Velká hospodářská krize, ale také rasová diskriminace a segregace. Autorka knihy vyrůstala v této době v obdobném městě v Alabamě, a tak její vyobrazení jižanské společnosti značně ovlivnily vzpomínky z dětství. Vzhledem k realistické povaze tohoto románu předchází analýzu kapitola s relevantní terminologií a kapitoly, které nastíní historické pozadí života Afroameričanů v první polovině dvacátého století se zaměřením na třicátá léta.

V první kapitole jsou velmi stručně vysvětleny termíny „rasismus“, „segregace“, „Jim Crow zákony“ a „Černé kodexy“, které byly jakýmsi předchůdcem Jim Crow zákonů a stejně tak, jako Jim Crow zákony, omezovaly práva Afroameričanů.

Druhá Kapitola mapuje rasovou situaci ve Spojených státech amerických od odsouzení Homera Plessyho, Afroameričana, který si v osobním železničním voze sedl na místo vyhrazené bílým Američanům, až po rok 1954, kdy Nejvyšší soud ustanovil segregované veřejné školy protiústavními. Odsouzení Homera Plessyho zapříčinilo, že rasová segregace se stala soudně vymahatelnou. V mnoha případech Američané vynucovali segregaci i mimoprávní cestou, především pak veřejným lynčováním. To se stalo také oblíbenou praktikou nejrozumnějších skupin propagujících rasovou nesnášenlivost. Nejznámější takovou skupinou je Ku Klux Klan, který se na území Spojených států amerických objevil ve třech vlnách.

Nepříznivé podmínky pro Afroameričany na jihu v kontrastu s rostoucí nabídkou práce na severu vedli mezi lety 1915 a 1940 k tzv. Velké migraci Afroameričanů. První světová válka zvýšila poptávku po muničích a zároveň snížila počet imigrantů z Evropy, kteří představovali levnou pracovní sílu. Náborový pracovníci ze severních států byli vysláni na jih, aby nalákali Afroameričany na dobře placená pracovní místa a levné ubytování. Stovky tisíc Afroameričanů se rozhodlo opustit rodiny a cestovat na sever. Afroameričanům byla na severu vskutku nabídnuta volná pracovní místa, avšak ta nejhorší na pracovním trhu. Afroameričané si nicméně i tak vydělali více peněz, než by se jim podařilo na jihu. Navíc měli na severu více příležitostí k vyjádření sebe samých, například prostřednictvím umění. Umělecké hnutí, které sdružovalo umělce afroamerického původu, kteří psali o radostech i strastech Afroameričanů, se nazývá Harlemská renesance. Mezi nejznámější spisovatele tohoto hnutí patří například Claude

McKay, Langston Hughes a W. E. B. DuBois, který byl zároveň jedním ze zakladatelů organizace the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Tato organizace bojovala proti rasové diskriminaci, lynčování a hrála zásadní roli v soudním sporu týkajícím se tzv. chlapců ze Scottsboro.

Chlapci ze Scottsboro bylo označení, které získalo od médií devět mladých Afroameričanů, kteří byli v roce 1931 obviněni ze znásilnění dvou bílých žen poblíž Scottsboro, Alabama. Sexuální vztah mezi afroamerickými muži a bílými ženami byl ve třicátých letech nepřijatelný, a tudíž byli všichni obžalováni, až na nejmladšího, odsouzeni k trestu smrti. Navzdory tomu, že ve výpovědích údajně znásilněných žen byly nesrovnalosti a jedna z nich obvinění stáhla, obhájčům trvalo téměř dvacet let, aby bylo všech osm odsouzených propuštěno na svobodu.

Během této doby vstoupily Spojené státy americké do druhé světové války. Ta změnila přístup k Afroameričanům a ostatním etnickým skupinám. Lidé si nyní začali uvědomovat pokrytectví Spojených států, které bojovaly proti fašismu se segregovanou armádou. Názor, že Afroameričané jsou, stejně tak jako bílý Američané, především lidské bytosti se začal rozšiřovat. To s největší pravděpodobností přispělo k rozhodnutí Nejvyššího soudu v případě *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, které ukončilo segregaci na veřejných školách. Toto rozhodnutí představovalo důležitý milník v boji za rovnoprávnost, nicméně boj o emancipaci Afroameričanů pokračoval ještě v padesátých a šedesátých letech, kdy byly přijaty zákony jako např. zákon o občanských právech z roku 1964 a zákon o hlasovacích právech z roku 1965. Přes důležitost hnutí za občanská práva v padesátých a šedesátých letech, toto období není stěžejní pro účely této práce, a tudíž mu není věnován prostor.

Následující kapitola se zaměřuje na Velkou hospodářskou krizi a program zvaný Nový úděl, které ve třicátých letech ovlivnily životy bílých i afroamerických občanů Spojených států Amerických. V roce 1929 došlo k velkému propadu akcií, což mělo za následek nejhorší ekonomickou krizi v historii Spojených států amerických. Banky zanikaly, lidé hladověli a nezaměstnanost se téměř zdvojnásobila během pouhého jednoho roku. I přes snahy amerického prezidenta Herberta Clarka Hoovera napravit americkou ekonomiku, se krize v roce 1931 ještě prohloubila. Tato skutečnost přispěla ke zvolení demokratického kandidáta, Franklina Delana Roosevelta, prezidentem. Od jeho inaugurace v roce 1933 do roku 1938, Franklin D. Roosevelt představil řadu programů a projektů, které se souhrnně nazývaly Nový úděl. Cílem Nového údělu bylo rozšíření pravomocí federální vlády a pomoc Američanům, kteří se stali obětí Velké

hospodářské krize. Tato opatření pomohla miliónům lidí z chudoby a zajistila Franklinu D. Rooseveltovi, že byl zvolen prezidentem celkem čtyřikrát.

S příchodem krize bylo pro Afroameričany pracující na jižanských farmách stále těžší udržet si svá pracovní místa. Poslední kapitola se věnuje těžkostem těchto Afroameričanů. Velká část těch, kteří přišli o svá místa se rozhodla hledat volné pracovní pozice ve větších městech. Volných míst však bylo málo i ve městech a Afroameričané museli čelit nevraživosti ze strany bílých Američanů. V mnoha případech byli Afroameričané nahrazováni bílými Američany i v jejich stávajících zaměstnáních. Tento přístup zapříčinil, že v roce 1931 byla míra nezaměstnanosti u Afroameričanů dvakrát vyšší než u bílých Američanů. Když navíc Franklin D. Roosevelt zavedl Nový úděl, jen nepatrné množství programů poskytovalo pomoc právě jim.

Pátá kapitola analyzuje vyobrazení rasové problematiky v knize *Jako zabít ptáčka*, jejíž děj se odehrává během Velké hospodářské krize. Kapitola je rozdělena do tří podkapitol – první zkoumá vztahy mezi bílými a afroamerickými obyvateli Maycombu, druhá analyzuje důležitost jazyka a symbolismus a třetí podkapitola se věnuje smrti Toma Robinsona a inspiraci pro jeho případ.

Rasová tematika není jediná, která se do tohoto románu promítla. Svůj význam má například i sociální stratifikace nebo Jemovo dospívání. Na důležitost rasové problematiky v *Jako zabít ptáčka* existují různé názory. Dian L. Baecker, profesorka na Virginské univerzitě, tvrdí, že Harper Lee snižuje význam rasové problematiky v knize tím, že celý příběh začíná i končí odkazem na Bubu Radleyho. Nicméně Bubu Radley není typický bílý obyvatel Maycombu. Bubu Radley je spojován více s divokou přírodou než s civilizovaným životem ve městě stejně jako Afroameričané. Navíc v *Jako zabít ptáčka* se prolínají dvě dějové linie, jedna se soustředí na dění kolem Bubu Radleyho a druhá kolem Toma Robinsona. Obě tyto dějové linie mají společný prvek týkající se rasové problematiky – Bubu Radley představuje v očích Čipery a Jema hrozbu stejně tak, jako představují hrozbu Afroameričané pro obyvatele Maycombu. Z toho je zjevné, že rasová tematika prostupuje celý příběh od začátku až do konce.

Bubu Radley společně s Dolphusem Raymondem, který se oženil s Afroameričankou, představují výjimky v jinak typické jižanské společnosti, kde bílí Američané ze všech tříd jsou nadřazeni Afroameričanům. Toto postavení předurčuje Afroameričany k tomu, že vykonávají nekvalifikovanou špatně placenou práci, žijí za městskou skládkou a musejí dodržovat pravidla segregace. V *Jako zabít ptáčka* se vyskytují čtyři přímé odkazy na rasovou segregaci, týkají se

již zmíněného bydlení za městskou skládkou, osobních automobilů, soudní síně a kostela africké metodistické episkopální církve. Když Atticus požádal Calpurnii, aby ho doprovodila za Tomovou ženou, Calpurnie seděla na zadním sedadle i přes to, že přední sedadlo bylo prázdné. V soudní síni, kde se konal soud s Tomem Robinsonem bylo oddělené sezení pro bílé Američany a Afroameričany. Bílý Američané seděli v hlavní části sálu, zatímco Afroameričané na balkóně. Navíc Afroameričané prokázali své podřadné postavení tím, že nechali do soudní budovy nejprve vstoupit všechny bílé Američany. Poslední přímý odkaz na rasovou segregaci se týká kostela africké metodistické episkopální církve, kam jedno nedělní ráno vzala Calpurnie Jema a Čiperu. Než vstoupili do kostela, střetli se s Afroameričankou jménem Lula. Ta se na Calpurnii rozzuřila kvůli tomu, že si dovolila přivést tyto bílé děti do jejich kostela. Lula je jediná z afroamerické komunity, která projevila negativní emoce směrem k bílým Američanům. Harper Lee použila tuto postavu k vyobrazení chování, které by bylo opodstatněné vzhledem k tomu, že Afroameričany by čekalo zatčení nebo lynčování za porušení pravidel segregace.

Harper Lee v *Jako zabít ptáčka* nevylicila žádné lynčování. Z jedné situace je však zřejmé, že lynčování byla na jihu běžná praktika. Jedná se o scénu, kdy se muži z Old Sarum chtějí dostat do věznice a ublížit Tomu Robinsonovi. Jak již bylo zmíněno, sexuální vztahy mezi Afroameričany a bílými ženami byli ve třicátých letech nepřijatelné, a tak chtěli muži z Old Sarum potrestat Toma Robinsona i bez řádného soudu. Mezirasová manželství byla dokonce nezákonná. V knize se nicméně nezmiňuje, zda byl soudně či jinak potrestán Dolphus Raymond, který se oženil s Afroameričankou.

O tom, že mezirasová manželství byla nezákonná se zmínila slečna Gates, vyučující Čipery, která po odsouzení Toma Robinsona poznamenala, že již bylo načase, aby Afroameričané dostali zapamatování hodnou lekci, jinak by si mohli brzy myslet, že se mohou oženit s bílými ženami. Tato poznámka přiměla Čiperu zamyslet se nad tím, co říkala slečna Gates v jedné z jejich hodin. Slečna Gates vyprávěla dětem o perzekuci Židů v Evropě a rozdílu mezi demokracií a diktaturou, který podle slečny Gates spočívá v tom, že demokratické režimy, jako je například ve Spojených státech amerických, nepodporují perzekuci. Vzhledem k její poznámce ohledně Afroameričanů v Maycombu je její vysvětlení i soucit s Židy pokrytecký. Stejný přístup má i Grace Merriweather, jedna z dam z Jižní metodistické episkopální církve v Maycombu ve státě Alabama, která také soucítí se kmenem divochů v Africe, avšak utrpení Afroameričanů doma v Maycombu v ní neprobouzí žádný soucit.

V Maycombu žijí i lidé, kteří si uvědomují nespravedlnost, která je páchána na Afroameričanech, řadí se mezi ně například Maudie Atkinson, Link Deas nebo Atticus Finch. V případě Attica Finche se vedou dohady o tom, zda může být považován za hrdinu v boji za rasovou rovnoprávnost. Na jedné straně je Atticcu Finchovi vyčítáno, že je příliš pasivní a sám o sobě neinicuje žádné kroky k rovnoprávnosti. Na druhé straně je však oceňován za jeho uctivý přístup ke všem lidem, nehledě na barvu jejich pleti. Tato jeho chvályhodná charakteristika může být doložen na vztahu s Calpurnií. Přes to, že Calpurnie je Atticova zaměstnankyně a je to Afroameričanka, Atticus jí považuje za součást rodiny a nemá před ní žádná tajemství.

Druhá kapitola se zabývá jazykem a symbolismem. Harper Lee využívá jazyk a gramotnost k odlišení bohatých od chudých a Afroameričanů od bílých obyvatel Maycombu. Svůj skrytý význam mají také tyto výrazy: pravá a levá, sněhulák a drozd mnohohlasý. Výrazy „pravá“ a „levá“ pomáhají určit, zda je člověk dobrý nebo zlý. Výraz „pravá“ představuje někoho dobrého, spravedlivého nebo tolerantního, kdežto výraz „levá“ označuje někoho špatného, nespravedlivého nebo rasistického. Strana, která je zdravá, neporaněná, nebo dominantní určuje charakter člověka. Například Atticus Finch a Tom Robinson se řadí mezi dobré a spravedlivé lidi, jelikož Atticus je téměř slepý na levé oko a Tom Robinson je chromý na levou ruku. Oproti tomu Mayella a Bob Ewell mohou být označeni za nespravedlivé a rasistické, jelikož Bob Ewell je levák, což znamená, že jeho levá ruka je dominantní, a Mayelly pravé oko bylo poraněno. Toto pravidlo může být aplikováno také na psa nakaženého vzteklinou, který je slabý na pravé nohy. Navíc tento pes pravděpodobně představuje rasismus na americkém jihu, kterému musí Atticus čelit.

Další výraz, který je v této kapitole analyzován je „sněhulák“ a jeho přeměna. Když po pětáctyřiceti letech napadl v Maycombu sníh, Jem a Čipera se rozhodli postavit sněhuláka. Sněhu bylo málo, a tak děti vytvořily sněhuláka nejprve z bláta, a poté ho obalily ve sněhu. Ještě, když byl sněhulák z bláta, Čipera poukázala na to, že nikdy neslyšela o sněhulákovi, který by vypadal jako Afroameričan. Během následující noci roztál na sněhulákovi sníh v důsledku požáru, a tak změnil svou barvu opět na černou. Tato rychlá změna z černé na bílou a zpět z bílé na černou poukazuje na povrchnost barvy pleti.

Nejvýznamnější z hlediska symbolismu je nejspíše „drozd mnohohlasý“ reprezentující zpěvné ptáky, kteří neškodí lidem, pouze krásně prozpěvují, a proto je hřích tyto ptáky zabíjet. Po smrti Toma Robinsona přirovnal Braxton Underwood, editor místních novin, zabití Toma

právě k zabití zpěvných ptáků, což naznačuje, že Tom Robinson byl stejně tak nevinný, jako tito ptáci. Časté používání slova „negr“, přirovnání Toma ke zpěvným ptákům a s tím i spojený fakt, že Afroameričané jsou vyobrazeni jako neaktivní přihlížející v boji za jejich rovnoprávnost se stali podnětem pro tzv. Black Educator's Association, organizaci z Nového Skotska v Kanadě, aby usilovala o odstranění románu *Jako zabít ptáčka* ze školních osnov. To však bylo silně kritizováno kanadskými i zahraničními médii, což zmařilo snahy o odstranění *Jako zabít ptáčka* ze školních osnov.

Poslední kapitola se zabývá smrtí Toma Robinsona a zároveň odhaluje, které soudní procesy se mohly stát inspirací pro Harper Lee. Po smrti Toma Robinsona Čipera uvažuje, zda byla jeho smrt vyhnutelná, dojde k závěru, že nikoli. Lisa Lindquist-Dorr z Alabamské univerzity vyzbrozovala, že u obdobných případů znásilnění bílé ženy Afroameričanem v období třicátých let považují historici smrt údajného sexuálního násilníka také za nevyhnutelný výsledek. Lisa Lindquist-Dorr však tvrdí, že v případě Toma Robinsona existovala šance na jeho záchranu. Porota, která uznala Toma Robinsona vinným se skládala z příslušníků nižší třídy. Mezi nižší třídou a Afroameričany byly ve třicátých letech napjaté vztahy a členové nižší třídy se snažili co nejvíce distancovat od Afroameričanů. Soudce Taylor, Atticus Finch i žalobce, pan Gilmer, kteří se řadí do vyšší třídy však projeví sympatie k Tomu Robinsonovi. Z toho lze usuzovat, že pokud by se případ Toma Robinsona dostal k odvolacímu soudu, jak Atticus Finch plánoval, rozhodnutí o osudu Toma Robinsona by bylo v rukách soudce, tudíž příslušníka vyšší třídy, což by značně zvýšilo jeho šance na ospravedlnění.

Případ podobný tomu s Tomem Robinsonem se odehrál v roce 1933 nedaleko Monroeville, Alabama, kde byl mladý Afroameričan Walter Lett obviněn ze znásilnění bílé ženy. Po šesti měsících byl uznán vinným a odsouzen k trestu smrti, rozsudek smrti byl vzhledem k vysokému počtu stížností od vlivných obyvatel záhy změněn na doživotní trest. Většina lidí přepokládá, že Harper Lee našla inspiraci v případě chlapců ze Scottsboro. Nicméně někteří věří, že to byl právě Walter Lett, který se stal předlohou pro případ Toma Robinsona.

Ať už Harper Lee ovlivnil některý z těchto případů, nebo použila čistě vlastní představivost, podařilo se jí vytvořit příběh, který ovlivnil řadu novodobých právníků, nastínil rasovou problematiku třicátých let studentům a oslnit miliony lidí ve Spojených státech Amerických i mimo ně.

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