Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* as an Autobiographical Fiction: An Implicit Set of (Re)Order through Generic Disorder

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Abstract

Set to distinguish literary works and the criteria through which these works are to be written and analyzed, literary genres are based on generic limitations that present the norms by which literary generic order is established. As it demolishes generic limitations, Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* is read as an autobiographical fiction in which autobiographical reflections of the writer’s life are inscribed through the amalgamation of fiction and facts. Fictionality of facts in Lee’s work seems to grant fiction, different functions that serve factuality more than fallaciousness. Accordingly, in this paper, fictionality of facts is to be perceived as a break of generic limitations – possibly judged as generic disorder.

Such generic innovation is to be criticized as a means of factual representation of the writer’s life, deposited as a novel way of mirroring the commonly ordered set of codes of the writer’s community- the American south. The role of such a blend of fiction and facts is, however, not restricted to allowing a detached position to the writer in order to grant self representation. The ‘disordered codes’ of writing in this subgenre have a wider function of implicitly unveiling the disordered aspects of the social and political codes commonly constructed as ‘legitimized order’. Hence, the notion of disorder in the generic form is therefore a triggering exploration of the discounted disorder in content with an attempt to call for a new set of (re)order on both levels. A study of the fictionalization of the subject, in this paper, is therefore to decipher Harper Lee’s implicit attempts of representing her fictionalized subject, all converging in her aim of setting a (re)order at the level of collective subject.

Keywords: order, disorder, (re)order, fiction, facts, autobiographical fiction.
Introduction

To classify To Kill a Mockingbird as an autobiographical fiction is an emphasis on its incorporation of both fictional and autobiographical aspects. Breaking generic boundaries, therefore, puts the concepts of order and disorder into play. Antagonist as they might seem, the two are to be considered as notions of correspondence, foreshadowing the multidimensional interplay of unchained generic sets and life-based content in the novel.

In its first part, this article not only studies Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird as defined by generic hybridity but also unravels the latter's role in generating order within disorder. An examination of a hidden disorder within the apparent order embodied in the book is the focus of the second part. Eventually, fictionalization of the self as an aspect of autobiographical fiction is to be assessed in terms of its relativity with respect to the question of authorial intention.

I. Order emanating from disorder

Being a hybrid genre, an autobiographical fiction inherits both autobiographical and fictional generic features. One of the autobiographical sets that distinguish it is the author-narrator common identity.

1. Fictionalization of the self/ the author-narrator identity

The identification of the narrator in the To Kill a Mockingbird is unconventionally complex as the novel starts with: “When he was nearly thirteen my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow” (Lee 3). A hint to the identity of the narrator is conveyed through the first person point of view exposed through the use of “my.

Besides, adopting a retrospective narration, the novel opens with a childhood incidents “when enough years had gone by to enable us to look back on them” (Lee 3); leaving the narrator’s identity, sex, age, and name unidentified. The absence of a clue to the narrating voice breaks the classical code of auto-representation in autobiographical writings. Not till the second paragraph is the first person pronoun explicitly announced: “I maintain that the Ewells started it all…” (Lee 3). The name Scout representing the narrator and protagonist, is uttered by her older brother Jem, saying: “‘Scout yonder’s been reading ever since she was born,…’”(7). The mismatch in the identities of the writing “I” and the narrating one, embodied in a difference in names, is to be noted as transgression of the autobiographical generic code, and therefore as a first aspect of generic disorder in the novel.

Furthermore, the “I” telling, acting and authoring in the autobiographical novel is multidimensional since self-referential clues allow an “équation proprement autobiographique” ‘properly autobiographical equation’. In such an equation, the author, narrator and protagonist share the same identity (Gasparini 158, translation mine). Despite the transgression of this equation in the novel, the author- narrator- protagonist common identity is preserved through clues to similarities in physical appearance, age, origins, and social environment, as critic Philip Gasparini reveals.
Biographical examination of the writer’s life, named by Gasparini as “clef[s]” (“key[s]”) is a strategy the trace resemblances in the identities if the author and narrator. This reveals that the family name of Lee’s mother, Frances Finch Cunningham is appointed for her protagonist Scout as a member of the Finches; and attributed to poor white farmers in the novel as the Cunninghams (38, Translation mine).

As for appearance and conduct, being “dubbed ‘queen of the Tomboys’”; Lee appears to be the model on which her child-narrator is based, as critic Tamara Castleman clarifies (3). Similar to the author’s, Scout’s physical appearance and conduct are portrayed as boyish. Therefore, a physical similarity and attitude is another common aspect of the author and the narrator.

Robert Tracy, explains that, in an autobiographical novel, a protagonist and author share the same identity that differs in ways that do not bond them (para.2). Thus, fictionalizing the self establishes a space of freedom for the author.

Ultimately, breaking the autobiographical code of writing through fictionalizing the self appears as a means that camouflages the author’s identity, to generate a generic disorder that remains at the surface, while hiding a deeper intentional order in the novel.

2. Fictionalization of facts and the function of fiction

As an autobiographical fiction, To kill a Mockingbird majorly comprises real events wrapped in opaque layers of fiction. Such an amalgamation of reality and imagination, however, might represent a locus for disorder in the book.

Despite Lee’s persistent denial of the autobiographical aspect of her book, elements like the setting, characters and events in the novel reveal clear resemblances to her personal life. In addition to the previously stated similarities between the author and her child-narrator, like Atticus; lee’s father was also a lawyer. And parallel to Dill was Truman Capote, Lee’s childhood friend. Adding to that, Maycomb, where the novel’s events are set, is obviously inspired by Lee’s hometown Monroeville, in Alabama. Furthermore, people who grew up in Lee’s neighborhood account for Sonny Boular, a neighbor who displays a real version of Boo Radley in the book. And most importantly, Tom Robinson’s trial was modeled, according to the Scottsboro Boys trial in 1931 when nine black men were unfairly accused of raping two white women on a train.

Blending fictional and factual elements might discredit fictionalized facts as truthful though, which might distort the autobiographical dimension in the book.

Holding opposed natures; fiction and truth seem to be antagonist codes in literary order. The exclusion of imagination from the sphere of truth, interpolates the exclusion of truth from fictional works. Thus, the notion of truth is supposedly odd in the functioning of autobiographical fiction.

Classified as nonfiction, autobiographical writings seem to be compatible with truth. However, critic Birgitt Flohr questions the classification of autobiography as nonfiction for
being written in fictional style (3). Besides, According to Klaus and Silverman in Elements of Literature “Fact, in order to survive, must become fiction. Seen in this way, fiction is not the opposite of fact, but its complement. It gives a more lasting shape to the vanishing deeds of men”. (qtd. In Adams. Truth, para. 6). Fiction then, is not in opposition with reality rather a complement of it (Flohr 4). Imagination becomes a “contamination that “nourit le texte” ‘nourishes the text’ and consequently preserves truth (Gasparini 342).

The duality of features in the novel is then, not only to avoid direct exposition and integration of the author, but also to complement truth and save it from distortions. Ultimately fiction, chaotic as it might seem within the autobiographical context of the novel, figures as an element that preserves truth and order, through freeing the author from being involved in the text.

Fictionalizing facts might be perceived as facet of the disordered nature of the genre, but according to Katherine Hayles “chaos [is] seen as order’s precursor and partner, rather than its opposite” (9). Thus Blending fiction and facts is not merely a chaotic literary amalgamation but rather, like chaos, “a system that comprises a hidden order” (Hayles, 9). The function of fiction is, thus, what preserves order and reveals a hidden aspect of it in this subgenre.

3. Temporal references

While being set within a lapse of time extending from 1033 to 1953, during the Depression Era; events in the novel cover incidents of the Civil Rights movement, the period when the novel was published. Temporal references in the novel are thus an outcome of temporal concurrency of two distant periods in the history of the American South.

In fact, the period of the sixties is implicitly alluded to in the novel through Atticus’ words as he states: “‘ This time we aren’t fighting the Yankees, we’re fighting our friends, but remember this, no matter how bitter things get, they’re still our friends and this is still our home’”(84-85). This passage can be viewed as a prolepsis to the period of the sixties when blacks struggling against discrimination and fighting for racial equality in the United States.

Furthermore, Tom Robinson’s fictional trial in the novel is another hint to the Civil Rights Movement, since it reflects the Emmet Till Trial of 1955. It is a case of a Young black fourteen-year-old boy who was murdered by “two white men in the Mississippi Delta on August 28, 1955 for allegedly whistling at a white woman in a store in Money, Mississippi” (Chura 49). Chura further explains that the case caused further reforms and protests and ended by creating a loss of faith in the American legalism as well. The event can be seen as inspirational for the unjust Trial of Tom Robinson showing the unfair victimizations of blacks in that period.

Another event that can be said to be inspirational for the writing of the novel is the Scottsboro trial. The latter took place in Scottsboro, Alabama, when nine black men were accused of raping two white women on a train. As explained in Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird there are many parallels to the trial of Tom Robinson in To Kill a Mockingbird
as the unfair verdict based on race segregation. Tom Robinson was accused of rape which was “… a capital offence in Alabama,” faced with a death penalty as stated by Atticus in the novel (Lee 242).
On the one hand, the employment of such events, inspired by happenings in the South during the years of the fifties, give a more solid ground for the referential aspect of the novel. On the other hand, it reflects the author’s representative view of her own community- the Southern communal self and identity.

Accordingly, assessed as “a cross-historical montage”, the novel’s “historical present” is attenuated by events of the period of the book’s production (Chura 48). Not only does this temporal fusion flaw the representation of the 1930s in the novel, but it also contaminates the historical dimension of the book by temporal discrepancies; generating, in consequence, a locus for temporal disorder.

The role of fiction anon evokes an effect of separation between real facts and their fictional counterpart in the novel. Referring to real events with wrong dates exemplifies Katherine Hayles’ idea of “the separating information from meaning” to make the chaotic aspect of reality in the book clearly perceived as a “presence [rather] than an absence” (Hayles 6). Through fiction, this temporal separation of meaning results in valorizing the positive function of chaos within the text. Temporal disorder, as a chaotic aspect, fills temporal discrepancies with meaning to allow it to be more informative and free from judgmental interpretations.

Lee, then, implicitly alludes to facts through fiction to foreground their factual aspect and maybe to stick to fiction’s basic function of creating distance between autobiographical elements and fictional ones.

4. The Title: “To kill a Mockingbird”

Separating fictional techniques from meaning is also manifested through the title. Not till the ninety-ninth page of the book, was an explanation of the title catered by the voice of wisdom of the novel—Atticus.

The title is segmented from Atticus’s advice to his children not to shoot on mockingbirds, as he offered them a rifle on Christmas. Instead of teaching them how to shoot, Atticus recommended that they can shoot on “all the bluejays [they] want… but remember it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird.” (Lee 99).

Accordingly, omitting “It’s a sin” from the tile is intentional on the part of the author, as it implements the idea of separation between information and meaning as means of foregrounding a positive function of chaos of intensifying meaning in the book. Emphasizing the generic disorder in the book from the very title is actually the first proof that what is apparently disordered in the novel bares a deeper level of order.
5. Characterization

Among the major aspects of a novel is the technique of characterization. To Kill a Mockingbird is obviously rich in key characters that add much to the understanding of the book and to its plot structure. The character to be studied as disordered in the book is that of Arthur known as Boo Radley.

Based on the spread saying of superstitious Maycomb folks, Boo Radley is pictured as Maycomb folks as a “malevolent phantom” living in a haunted house (Lee 9). Such an image of a mentally-disordered man provides no answers to the persistent enquiries of Scout, her brother Jem and their Fiend Dill. The latter, driven by curiosity, sneak to the Radleys’ garden fence with a hope to see Boo or leave him a note with a persistent attempt to solve his enigma. It’s through their unconventional act of breaking the common order of fearing the Radley place that they managed to unravel the enigmatic image of Boo.

In fact, not till Boo Radley started to leave gifts for the children in a knot hole of a tree near the Radleys’, did they start to realize that Boo’s isolation was not a proof of his evil nature. Additionally, Boo would rather sacrifice his life to save Scout and Jem’s when they were attacked by Bob Ewell in an act of revenge against their father.

Eventually, by offering gifts and by defending the innocent kids Boo symbolizes a break of prejudice in town. The character of Boo is thus presented by Lee an embodiment of the counter-role of fictional disorder in the novel. His character contributes in re-establishing order.

Characterization, as a technique of fiction writing; thus, contributes to revealing the hidden order within the disordered facets of the book.

This implicit order, granted mainly through the fictionalized autobiographical nature of the book, juxtaposes the thematic ‘conventional order’ in to To Kill a Mockingbird.

II. Disorder within order

As the novel interplays a variety of factual events and fiction, what seems to be reflected through Maycomb as a system of order through which the town functions is then a truthful representation of Lee’s own community.

1. Codes and Law in the novel

“Because its primary reason for existence was government…”, Maycomb is pictured as a distinguished town where “its court-house [is] proud” (Lee 144). Such a description of Maycomb hints to its ordered nature and proud-full legal system.

Presented as a cornerstone in Maycomb, law extends from the courthouse of the town to its different houses, setting ethical and social codes that regulate relationships in formal and informal ways (Johnson para.6).
The novel unravels several living codes that characterize Maycomb, like going to church on Sundays, closing doors on Sundays as a sign of illness and cold weather, devoting Sunday afternoons for formal visiting etc. These conventions are adopted by most inhabitants of Maycomb. Violations of the legal and ethical codes of Maycomb, however, are in fact the core of plot structure in the novel (Johnson para.8).

Lee stresses the disjunction between Maycomb’s people codes and those of the Finches’ through the character of Scout. The latter, as a narrator-protagonist seems to be the first demonstration of law and code breaching. A mirror of the author, Scout does not abide by the standard image of a girl in Maycomb who has to dress like a lady and wear pearl necklaces, but she rather identifies with that of a tomboy and a child who cannot even fit in her school for her ability to read since an early age. Scout also shows an inability to fit in her aunt’s missionary meetings with her neighborhood ladies, shown as a symbol of hypocrisy and social bias among women in town. The narrator-protagonist’s oddity is intensified through her inability to grasp the stereotypical facets of her community when she tries to contradict her brother’s scrutiny of Maycomb people as being socially divided saying: “‘Naw Jem, I think there’s just one kind of folks. Folks’” (Lee 250). Thus, Scout seems to be the fruit of the Atticus’ progressed sense of civilization and ideal domestic tolerance that contradicts and overcomes Maycomb’s common codes.

Atticus is, therefore, the principal figure that stands against codes of living in his community. Lee pictures Atticus as a lawyer who implants at his house, various codes in the forms of compromises, treaties, rules like accords about reading and going to school for the children and rules of learning to read and write for their maid Calpurnia (Johnson, para.6). Ironically, despite being a Lawyer, Atticus stands against the discriminatory codes of Maycomb, as he approves to defend a black man and bears the defeat of losing that legal case.

Thus, both Scout and her father are set as unconventional characters that contradict their community’s codes and laws, showing an eagerness to resist the acknowledged disordered anomalies their society unfolds despite its various commonly cherished but breached laws and codes.

The incident of Tom Robinson’s rape trial is an explicit violation of the law that not only accentuates the image of injustice in southern American courtrooms in the period when the novel was set, but it also expands over the issue of race.

Unfairly accused of raping a white woman, Tom Robinson who is a black man sentenced to prison by a court-jury made up of only white males of the same group the claimant and her father belong to. And as no lawyers are black, black convicts are never to be defended in a town like Maycomb. So, a defending a black by a white lawyer is the first unconventional aspect of the trial. In fact, the trial scene seems to digest the major racial disordered codes of the community that gathers in a courthouse where a physical separation between whites and blacks is crucial through compelling blacks to sit separately in what the narrator names a “Coloured balcony”(208). The trial comes as proof of the favored social position whites hold over the blacks. It is a fact further highlighted by Atticus’ words to his children saying “In our
courts, when it’s a white’s man’s word against a black man’s, the white man always wins” (Lee 243).

Moreover, discrimination as an internalized and inescapable aspect of Scout’s community is alluded to by symbolic instances in the novel. Defended by Boo Radley, Jem survived Bob Ewell’s attack but carried a permanent scar. A badly broken arm at the elbow caused Jem a form of physical imbalance, for “His left arm was somewhat shorter than his right...” (Lee 3). Jem’s handicap is, in fact, a duplication of Tom Robinson’s since his left arm is also shorter than his right because of an occupational accident in the cotton field. In fact, not only is Tom’s handicap a proof of his innocence in the mistrial, but it is also perceived by critic Marry D. Esselman as being a symbol of disability of a whole race. Furthermore adopting Esselman’s view, Tom and Jem’s crippled arms symbolize imbalance as an outcome of injustice originating from a southern system based on a multi-layered order holding disorder at its core (Literary Qualities, para.3,4)

Thus, the legitimized order in Scout’s community unfolds a disordered reality that Lee unravels through generic disorder. It is the disordered nature of autobiographical fiction that unravels the disjunction between the ordered nature of law and the disordered nature of injustice in author-narrator’s community.

Thus self-writing that obviously contributes to the representation of the socio-cultural aspect of the group where a disjunction between spread discriminatory laws and codes credit no order but stimulate the reader’s perception of a ‘legitimized’ disordered reality of the American South.

III. from generic disorder representative (Re)Order

As the author and narrator’s identities are at the vicinity of being identical in the novel, the narrator’s point of view is to be attributed to the author herself. The depiction of the past in fusion with the present and through the mediation of fiction foreshadows Lee’s own conviction in infiltrating implied self representation that broadens from the private to the public levels.

1. Private level of representation

Falsely perceived as an obstacle to self representation, fiction, in To Kill a Mockingbird, becomes a definite part of it. The impersonalization of the personal, as some critics see it, grants the writer’s concealing of their true self and the reader’s involvement through the “distance de sécurité” ‘security distance’ granted by fiction (Gasparini 345, translation mine). Fiction writing and fictionalization of the self are therefore, indirect means of self-representation and self-examination in the process of self construction.

Hence, through a child narrator and behind the veil of fiction as a “reinvestissement” ‘reinvestment’ of a lapse of time of her childhood Lee intends to draw represent her identity through an implicit self-exposition (Regaieg, 49). Self exposition on both the private and
public levels through the process of writing is not to be scrutinized as the only intention of the writer through.

As a fictional replica of the author, the nickname “Scout” accorded to the protagonist Jean Louise seems to interpolate a hidden dimension in the author-narrator’s identity. The word “Scout” holds the meaning of “a character of honest, indomitable curiosity” highlighting the reliability of the representative function of the book told through the perspective of a child (Bloom 16). Besides, “To scout” also stands for a verb meaning “to look in various places to find s.b/s.th ….” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English). Another definition of the term by the Free Online Dictionary is “to explore carefully.”

These definitions demonstrate that Harper Lee’s intentional choice of this pseudonym can be interpreted as a missionary role assigned to her fictional replica Jean Louise-Scout. Lee’s writing of Scout’s quality of knowledge seeking can be her own. The author indirectly reviews a past state of anxiety about issues around her from the age of six till nine, like the meanings of “nigger lover” “rape” etc. Such inquiries mirror those of the adult narrator, to which she hints to through the choice of the nickname “Scout. Thus, the latter, might be a sign of the writer’s own effort of seeking knowledge through writing. Accordingly, The meaning of nickname probably unravels Lee’s intention of wrapping over her own inquiry about her own self and identity, through the process of self disguise. In this context, Gasparini makes clear that this strategy of self-disguise in autobiographical novels is mainly to serve self construction of an unknown self through investigation. Accordingly, Fiction is a device to construct the writer’s fictive self. Harper Lee together with the narrative identity of the character Scout forms her fictionalized self for main reasons of self reflection, discovery and self investigation.

The perception of the self as private or public is a subject of investigation in itself. In this context, Anderson, in her Autobiography, reports Elspeth Probyn’s words in Sexing the Self, saying: “there is never ‘a transparent self who speaks from the heart’” (86). So, voicing the self, constructing it and analyzing it are never made for the sake of the self alone rather for a wider scope. Personal experiences, told about in life writing, do not limit the story to the private only. Gudmundsdóttir states that “the individual autobiographer writes about universal experiences” (6). This emphasizes the universal aspect of the life of the autobiographer that is not limited only to the individual but also to the community.

2. The public level of representation

Alongside with Lee’s quest for identity, Lee’s autobiographical novel is accorded a representative function that transcends mere reproduction of reality through fiction to reach a construction of her subject on both the private and public levels. By means of self detachment, subjectivity construction is intended for main reasons of self discovery and auto-criticism through the blindfold of fiction.

Fictionalizing the self, as one of the aspects of generic disorder in the book, is then the means by which the narrator’s own quest for truth is accomplished through questioning her own sense of belonging into her Southern American community.
In fact, considering that autobiographies display rational and emotional intentions since the very moment the pen is held, as George May explains; emotional intentions, however, can be traced in the very nostalgic side of writing about childhood with an attempt to relive it. The rational motives of witnessing reality can be exposed through Lee’s attempt to picture her community and some of the aspects of American southern life in Maycomb, Alabama in the form of a fictionalized history.

Lee’s work seems to display the universal aspect of the autobiographer’s life that is not limited only to the individual but also to the community through “giving individual experiences universal connotations” (Gudmundsdóttir 6). Thus, the private subject of the writer broadens to the public level in terms of the representation of the community once written. Lee’s exposition of reality becomes an epitome of the American southern life in the form of a fictionalized history. Representation of the collective subject, thus, manifested in the image of the southern community is accompanied with an attempt to build an understanding of it.

To implicitly criticize the twisted conception of order in Lee’s community, various instances in the novel interpolate images that reflect the flawed image of order in Maycomb. To review facets of the standardized order in Scout’s community, the study of certain literary devices employed in the novel is of revealing nature. Symbolism and irony are the main literary tools emphasized in the novel that implicitly divulge the southern community.

One of the instances of irony in the book can be traced through the scene of classroom when Cecil, Scout’s classmate triggered the issue about Germany and Hitler. When the teacher Miss Gates asked the children to define Democracy, it was Scout’s definition that got praise when she said: “‘Equal rights for all, special privileges for none!’”(270). The ironic part is stressed when the teacher explains to her students: “

‘That’s the difference between America and Germany. We are a democracy and Germany is a dictatorship. Dictator-ship’, she said. ‘Over here we don’t believe in persecuting anybody. Persecution comes from people who are prejudiced. Pre-ju-dice,’ she enunciated carefully. ‘There are no better people in the world than the Jews, and why Hitler doesn’t think so is a mystery to me.’(270)

Irony, here, emanates from what Miss Gates explains about Americans’ rejection of persecution, while they evenly persecute Blacks unfairly. Irony extends when Miss Gates explains that Jews “… contribute to every society they live in, and most of all, they are a deeply religious people…the Jews have been persecuted since the beginning of history, even driven out of their own country. It's one of the most terrible stories in history’” (271). The dramatic irony is amplified in Gates’ words because she ignores that all what she says about Jews in Germany and all over the world is applicable on the persecuted blacks in Maycomb. The prejudice against blacks is not that different form that on Jews, nor is the fact that blacks were driven out of their countries too. Thus, irony, here, is inscribed by Lee to sarcastically mock the conviction of Maycomb people, as Americans, with their democracy while showing a strictly opposite sense of privileges for whites over blacks, as conveyed in the novel.
In this context, H. Berlioz in his Mémoires, explains that writers invite readers to smile on their narrative about happenings of their lives because of their embarrassment, their anger or sadness, Georges May affirms (82, 83). It is their need not to re-experience the event again that results in seeking detachment through “le mécanisme de l’ironie” (“the mechanism of irony”; 83). Accordingly, among means like the use of the third person pronoun, pseudonyms etc, the autobiographer distances himself from what he used to be through an ironic tone, May adds. So, the inscription of irony in such examples, as well as in the rest of the novel conveys some of the negative beliefs of Maycomb, in relation to race, culture and politics, religion etc.

As for the study of symbolism in the novel, Adam Smykowski considers the image of the mad dog in the book as a symbol of prejudice that got spread all around the town like a rabid dog disease man (Blue Jays and Mad Dogs, para.1). The shooting of the mad dog by Atticus symbolizes his attempt to fight prejudice and racism from his position as a lawyer who chooses to defend an innocent black man. The character of Atticus in itself turns into a symbol of wisdom and tolerance in the novel. Finally, Symbolism for Smykowski “…reveals the prejudice and narrow-mindedness, the fears they [people of Maycomb] have, and all the immortal things they do” (Blue Jays and Mad Dogs, para.2). This is, consequently, a literary device used to criticize the community and to rid Maycomb of such negative cultural aspects that go farther than mere racism, injustice, gender, prejudice etc.

Through irony, symbolism and elements of fiction; not only does Lee implicitly and sarcastically reflect the disordered facet of her community but she also conveys an aim of detaching the self from this disorder depicted through both facts and fiction.

Alongside with Symbolism and irony, fiction in itself can be the major tool of detachment, when it functions like a veil to hide the author’s presence in the narrative. Veiling herself by fiction, Lee voices her implicit criticism of the community to contribute in a wider aspect of self introspection.

The author starts the novel by introducing an absence of pride in the history of the Finches. Yet, detachment seems to be explicit in some parts of the novel. On the very first page, Lee starts by exposing the collective voice saying “being Southerners, it was a source of shame to some members of the family that we had no recorded ancestors on either side of the Battle of Hastings” (3). This explains that the narrator, eventually the author herself, tends to demonstrate the absence of the Southern spirit in her as a member of the Finches because they have no sense of ancestor worship. This reflects a sense of detachment and lack of pride towards her family, and towards the Southern community.

As a child character and a protagonist, detachment seems to be traced through Scout’s inability to reach a peaceful link with her community seen the negative aspects of the town conveyed in the novel in what relates to gender, race, segregation etc. this detached stance is in fact the outcome of the disordered nature of the legally imposed order within Maycomb county.

In point of fact, the disordered picture of Lee’s community is, summarized in a statement uttered by Atticus Finch as he addresses his brother saying:
‘… You know what's going to happen as well as I do, Jack, and I hope and pray I can get Jem and Scout through it without bitterness, and most of all, without catching Maycomb's usual disease....I just hope that Jem and Scout come to me for their answers instead of listening to the town. I hope they trust me enough...?’ (98)

Viewed by critics as the voice of wisdom in the novel, Atticus statement seems to condense Maycomb’s disordered facets through the metaphor of “usual disease”. The disease is maybe the town’s racial and discriminatory codes of living that entail a biased judgmental treatement towards anyone who shows sympathy towards ‘niggers’. Being harmful and contagious, Atticus is worried about his kids to be contaminated, and longs for providing them with an immune resistance against it through teaching them tolerance. Consequently, this disease is a reference to the implicit disorder of his town where conventionally justice is a source of shame and disorder is “usual.” (98)

Self representation through fiction in Lee’s autobiographical novel, therefore, is an attempt to detach herself from the narrative and to reestablish one’s identity through reconstructing one’s subject with the intention of criticism. Lee’s implicit criticism is mainly an attempt to juxtapose the generic disorder of the genre with the internal disorder of the Lee’s community mirrored in the novel. The author, thus, attempts to reorder what is established as a personal and communal order in both her private and social spheres.

Conclusion

Based on an amalgamation of reality and imagination, Harper Lee’s To Kill a Mockingbird hybrid aspect might represent a locus for generic disorder. As a fundamental aspect of this genre, fiction is the means by which the author camouflages her identity in the text. However, fiction, chaotic as it might seem within the novel’s autobiographical context, figures as an element that preserves truth and order, through preserving authorial detachment.

Generic disorder and apparent order in the novel are presented by Lee through a dialogical relationship based on a reverse movement that permits what is apparently disordered to unravel the disordered nature of what is apparently ordered.

Thus, generic disorder in the book seems to convey an implicit set of (re)order at the level of the form first, to be consequently accentuated at the level of content.
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