

Abstract

This thesis will explore the complexity of racism and whiteness through the beloved canonical novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Over the last years there have been many critical voices regarding the status of *TKAM* and the adoration of the protagonist, Atticus Finch. *TKAM* has been used in American education for decades, hence there are several scholars and teachers who have studied how it has been used in the American classroom, some of which we can learn from and use in a Norwegian context in light of LK20. My overall aim throughout this thesis is to identify the more hidden racism in *TKAM* while focussing on how we can use the novel in the Norwegian classroom to increase the students' awareness about the complexity of racism and whiteness.

The introduction chapter will look at *TKAM*'s status in America, and how it has been used in the American classroom. In this chapter I will also examine some relevant terms for this thesis: old- vs new racism, the complexity of racism, literary whiteness and American Africanism. The second chapter emanates around antiracist pedagogy and experiences made with *TKAM* and antiracist pedagogy in the American classroom, while focussing on how we can transfer these experiences to the Norwegian context. The third chapter explores *TKAM* through critical close-readings and comparisons of some characters. The fourth and final chapter examines how we can use *TKAM* in light of LK20 in the Norwegian Secondary- and Upper Secondary schools.

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1. Introduction

I have been fascinated by Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (henceforth *TKAM*) ever since I first read it. Both the story and the characters have captured my interest. One character in particular stands out as extraordinary, as almost too good to be human; the forever loved and worshiped protagonist Atticus Finch. Atticus is white, male and privileged in the social hierarchy of the fictional town, Maycomb. When I first read *TKAM*, it did not cross my mind that my own race and privilege would influence my interpretation of the novel and the characters involved. However, after having read the American author and English professor, Toni Morrison's acclaimed book *Playing in the Dark*, I started to question my own thoughts about the beloved novel. I decided to read it again, through a new and more critical lens. I tried to read it as a writer, and not as a reader, as Morrison (1992, p. 15) so wisely formulates it. My aim was also to increase my awareness of my own race, hence how I reproduce certain privileges linked to whiteness and how it creates a perspective from which I interpret literature. A new awareness and critical perspective helped me to see aspects that I was ignorant about the first time I read it. As a consequence, I now think *TKAM* is even more relevant than I first assumed; not for its ordinary antiracist intentions, but rather for the more hidden racism, lurking underneath the intended message. Its vivid description of how the social hierarchy is built, and how white privilege impacts this hierarchy, makes it an excellent novel for a study of the complexity of racism, white privilege and superiority. In addition, it will allow us to learn more about our own interpretations and our own position.

Throughout this research I rely on American readings of *TKAM* and antiracist pedagogy. *TKAM* has not frequently been taught in Norwegian classrooms, and thus not studied with the Norwegian educational context in mind. I want to examine how we within the Norwegian educational system can transfer and learn from the experiences made in an American context. *TKAM* has been used in American schools for decades, with the intention to teach about racism and social injustice. After all, it is an antiracist novel, or at least that is the author's intended message. It is important to remember that this novel was ground breaking when it was published in 1960, with a story set in the highly segregated South of the 1930s.

TKAM and Atticus Finch have an indisputable reputation in America, teacher and researcher Michael Macaluso (2017, p. 279) asserts, and mentions that President Barack Obama quotes Atticus Finch in his farewell speech, Oprah Winfrey refers to *TKAM* as "our national novel",

people wear T-shirts saying “WWAD – What Would Atticus Do?”, playing on the known “WWJD – What Would Jesus Do?”. He argues that the status of Atticus Finch is so significant, that Atticus is compared to both Jesus and Superman, which makes Atticus not human, but an ideal impossible to live up to (Macaluso (2008, p. 279). These are just a few examples that prove how important *TKAM* has been, and still is, in a North-American context. When a novel and a character reach such a status, it is very important to scrutinise its overall effect critically. Macaluso (2017), Meyer (ed.) (2010) and Saney (2003) are but a few of the plethora of critical voices raised against the way *TKAM* has been used in the American classrooms over the last decades.

Is it possible that the very status of this novel and the way it has been read and taught for decades in American schools contribute to social injustice and thus racism in contrast to its intentions of overcoming it? This question is obviously impossible to answer in this context, but it has inspired me to inquire how we can transfer the North-American experiences and research to the Norwegian classroom.

When I got familiar with Toni Morrison’s term “American Africanism”, I started questioning whether *TKAM* deserves its label as “a Holy Grail among all English teachers” in America (Ako-Adjei, 2017, p. 183), for its intended antiracist policy. The intended message complicates the readers’ ability to read beyond this message, to identify the larger picture, and thus to find textual evidence of a more hidden form of racism, a form that perhaps is more relevant today than the more visible form of racist violence and oppression clearly described in *TKAM*.

Although I conduct a critical reading, my overall aim is to find alternative ways to teach antiracism, and social justice, through *TKAM*. For this research to be relevant and interesting, one needs to assume that through the last decades’ American teachers have been using *TKAM* uncritically in the classroom, with the good intention of teaching their students about how racism works, and how we can overcome it. In the following, I will address some central concepts relevant for my research, whereafter I will turn to an inquiry of the central features of anti-racist pedagogy and how it has been addressed and implemented in the North American context. I will then turn to a critical analysis of *TKAM*. Finally, I will address the LK20 and how to implement *TKAM* successfully in Norwegian classrooms.

1.1. *To Kill a Mockingbird's* role in the American classroom

Together with Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, *TKAM* has been the most frequently taught novel in the United States for many years (Applebee, 1993). English professors Carlin Borsheim-Black & Sophia Sarigianides (2019, p. 8) argue that *TKAM* is a rich and complex story of great appeal and literary complexity, but that there are also many other rich and complex novels to read and teach. Maybe it withholds its position in the educational system because it tells a story about racism that fits in rather than challenges our dominant racial ideologies. "Scholars have been pointing out Atticus Finch's racism for years" (Marsh, 2015), however, according to Macaluso (2017, p. 280) this message does not seem to reach most teachers. He refers to a survey of English teachers across the state of Michigan made by Borsheim-Black (2012), who found that most of the teachers still use *TKAM* to teach multicultural issues, especially those connected to racism and race relations in the United States. Macaluso (2017, p. 280) expresses his concern about teachers who still use this novel uncritically, which he thinks is problematic for many reasons. The plot itself in *TKAM* proves his point. Harper Lee tells a story, through young narrator Scout, about race and social injustice in the South during the Great Depression. Although the story revolves around the themes of race and injustice, the protagonist and hero of the story, Atticus Finch, a privileged white attorney, is portrayed as the saviour, while Tom Robinson, an African American, who is barely portrayed at all, but simply placed in the novel as the crippled, black victim, who needs saving from the only one who can save him; a white privileged man, such as Atticus Finch. If this story is taught in school, without a critical revision of the stereotypes presented, it can cause more harm than good in order to overcome the supremacist idea that the white race is the only race society cannot survive without. Morrison (1992) refers to this as literary whiteness, which I will examine closely later on both in my introduction and in my critical revision and analysis of *TKAM*.

1.2. Antiracist pedagogy in the Norwegian classroom?

When I considered the curriculum on how we teach about racism and antiracism in the Norwegian Secondary- and Upper Secondary classrooms, my first assumption was that we barely touch the subject. I asked some teachers and professors who all shared my assumptions. It seemed to me that it is mainly taught as something that belongs to the past, especially in the former segregated America and apartheid South-Africa, and thus limited to

black vs white, which again makes it hard for most Norwegians to relate to as we do not share the same history as America and South-Africa regarding slavery and apartheid. In other words, it is easy for Norwegians to conclude that racism is not our concern. If my assumption is correct, racism is limited to something that belongs to the history of some nations rather than being a relevant matter that permeates the entire world, including Norway. LK20 does not mention racism/antiracism at all, but it mentions several aspects that makes it relevant to include antiracist teaching, both in light of history and modern perspective. My own experience as a substitute teacher in Secondary School, is that when it comes to teaching antiracism in the classroom in the subject of English, the course books included a brief section about Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks, and that this is pretty much it. Both of them are persons of great significance in the past, yet, they belong to history. Teaching about both of them is important, but I believe the subject of racism is so complex and relevant that it should get a lot more focus in the Norwegian classroom than it does. Although I am convinced that there are a lot of Norwegian teachers that go beyond Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. in their teaching about racism, I believe my observation touches a nerve and proves a point that I think many teachers would agree with.

For further inquiry into how LK20 and the The Directorate of Education (Utdanningsdirektoratet) deals with racism / antiracism, let us scrutinise the curriculum more in detail. The Directorate of Education includes several aspects in their curriculum that can be of relevance regarding antiracist teaching, although racism or antiracism is never mentioned explicitly in LK20. LK20 underline the importance of “opening doors to the world and give the pupils and students historical and cultural insight and anchorage” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020) in addition to “Education and training shall provide insight into cultural diversity and show respect for the individual's convictions. They are to promote democracy, equality and scientific thinking.” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). These two statements in the core curriculum stress the importance of history, equality and intercultural competence. I believe this is the essence of the Norwegian context and traditions; to educate about different cultures, to prevent prejudice, and thus prevent racist behaviour, rather than to teach about the mechanism, past and present, of racism. On the other hand, I do believe that teaching about racism also is effective in order to prevent racism, especially the more subtle forms of it that often occurs today. I will expand on this issue in the next section on old vs new racism. It is much easier to teach about racism if it is located far away, instead of recognising our

complicity be it in action or in thoughts. This applies to a lot of the teaching in the USA, which I will go through in more detail in my second chapter.

Further on The Directorate of Education states that

The objectives clause is based on the inviolability of human dignity and that all people are equal regardless of what makes us different ... Pupils must also contribute to the protection of human dignity and reflect on how they can prevent the violation of human dignity. (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020).

This passage in the core curriculum underlines equality and the importance of preventing violation of human dignity, which can be violated in many ways, racism being one of them. So, in order to prevent racism, we need to educate about it and how it operates, both learning from the past and acknowledging the ongoing racist issues. In addition to this, The Directorate of Education also points out that “Equality and equal rights are values that have been fought for throughout history and which are in constant need of protection and reinforcement. School shall present knowledge and promote attitudes which safeguard these values.”

(Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). This reminds us yet again of the importance of knowledge about history, and to learn from it in order to prevent it from reoccurring. To focalise this passage through racism, we could say that the school shall present knowledge of how racism functions and promote attitudes which safeguard these values, in addition to learning about the history of racism, both in Norwegian context and in American context. Nevertheless, LK20 should have included antiracism more specifically, through emphasizing the importance of fighting against racism.

1.3. Old vs new racism

Although educators may continue to teach *TKAM*, now may be the time to challenge its status, eschew its idealized notions, and confront its implicit racism. One way to do this is through a comparative lens of old and new racism. (Macaluso, 2017, p. 280)

The critical scrutiny of race, racism and antiracism is diverse and complex, hence I have chosen this somewhat simplified distinction between old and new racism because it allows me to use them as operative categories in the analysis of *TKAM* and the education commitment to teaching about racism and antiracism, rather than exploring the concepts themselves.

Macaluso (2017, p. 282) points out that the term old is somewhat misleading, as old and new racism are linked together and not mutually exclusive. One can assume that these different facets of racism are levels rather than categories. Several scholars (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001; Enciso, 2007; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Scheurich & Young, 1997) link these terms to whiteness, historical privilege and institutional racism, all of which are relevant when reading, teaching or studying racism using *TKAM*. Both Dr. Beverly E. Cross (2005) and Macaluso (2017) underline that even though old and new racism differ, there are no simple binaries between them. Both Cross and Macaluso are adamant that old and new racism co-exist in today's society.

According to Cross (2005, p. 267), the concept of old racism manifests itself through individual actions, while new racism is systematic and operates through a hierarchy based on power and domination. Old racism functions in the open, operates through imperialized knowledge, it is a system of prejudice and supremacy and it often applies power to the physical body. New racism, on the other hand, functions slightly differently, according to Cross (2005, p. 267). New racism is a system of power and domination, it functions best when invisible and operates through privileged knowledge and built into institutions. In contrast to old racism, new racism applies power to the social body rather than the physical body. In other words, old racism is often more connected to physical violence on individuals, while new racism works in a subtler way and is still damaging for the ones affected by it – it is implicit racism through structure, superiority and privileged knowledge. As Macaluso (2017, p. 282) argues, the racism encountered in *TKAM* is of the old style, and it is very visible and clear to notice violence, prejudice, supremacy, discrimination, bias and hate simply based on race. In addition, the prejudice and social structure in *TKAM* also regard class, gender and age.

Old racism can easily be detected, and throughout decades this detection work has been a common approach to *TKAM*, Macaluso (2017, p. 282) holds. Further on, he confesses that he himself has been teaching *TKAM* this way for many years, simply focusing on the obvious

signs of old racism. It is not wrong to look for old racist signs in *TKAM*, but if teachers and students are led to believe that racism stops here, then it is problematic. There is nothing wrong with discussing old racism through *TKAM*, but it is wrong to overlook the clear evidence of so-called new racism that also infiltrates this novel. Otherwise our students might be led to believe that unless there are signs of intentional racism, whether spoken or violently enacted, racism does not exist, neither in the novel nor in our societies today (Macaluso, 2017, p. 282). To neglect the implicit new racism in *TKAM* when teaching about racism using this very novel, is not only very naïve, it might even contribute to feeding the so-called new racist facets. If the focus only lies on old racism, and identifying this, it is easy to conclude that these matters are not relevant in modern society, and thus not relevant for us today. According to Cross (2005, p. 267), new racism is “a hidden system of power and domination” which for instance is seen “through systems and institutions (including schools) because they are key sites where people learn the attitude and behaviours they are to live by and the consciousness by which they make sense of the world” (Cross, 2005, p. 268). Through this Cross underlines the teachers’ responsibility. It is extremely important today, in our often multicultural classrooms, to be aware of the more hidden and complex signs of so-called new racism, when studying and teaching literature, as well as in real life situations. It is fair to assume that identifying evidence of both old- and new racism through literature, can be significant in order to identify the similar structures in our surroundings as well.

Through this research, I want to find textual evidence of so called new racism in *TKAM*; systems of power and domination, invisible racism, racism through privileged knowledge, racism built into institutions and racism through power applied to the social body. Although my focus is to uncover the more hidden racism in *TKAM*, it is important to keep in mind that racism is a very complex matter, and to simply look explicitly at race when discussing racism, would not cover the complexity of it. One needs to consider other subjects such as sexism, gender roles, stereotypes, class, disability and religion, to mention some, in order to fully grasp the complexity and enormity of how racism functions and interacts with, gains strengths from and supports other forms of discrimination.

1.4. The complexity of ‘racism’

In order to uncover evidence of so-called new racism in *TKAM*, it is important to understand the complexity of racism. “Racism is a global hierarchy of human superiority and inferiority, politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the ‘capitalist/patriarchal western-centric/Christian-centric modern/colonial world-system’” (Grosfoguel, Oso & Christou., 2015, p. 636). According to this definition, some people are classified as superior, and thus recognized socially as human beings who enjoy access to rights, in addition to a social recognition of their subjectivities, identities, epistemologies and spirituality. On the other end of the spectrum, according to this definition of racism, there are inferior people, who experience that their humanity is questioned and negated and that their access to rights is denied, alongside the recognition of their subjectivities, identities, spirituality and epistemologies. Further on Grosfoguel et al., (2015, p. 636) underline that the hierarchy of human superiority/inferiority can be constructed through various racial markers; colour, ethnicity, language, culture and/or religion. Superior humans experience to be in, what Franz Fanon calls the “zone of being”, while inferior people experience the opposite, to be in the “zone of non-being”, as cited in Grosfoguel et al., (2015, p. 636).

The incidents of racism are neither coincidental nor isolated; racism is pervasive in American society because it is woven into the fabric of laws, policies, systems, and institutions from the Constitution to citizenship to the legal system to the educational system to language to land ownership to the accumulation of intergenerational wealth. As a result, racism applies not only to individual beliefs, prejudices, and behaviours, but also to the ways in which it operates systematically and materially to privilege some and marginalize others.

(Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019, p. 6)

Here Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides underline the complexity of racism and how deeply it is woven into Western society. Similar to Grosfoguel et al. (2015), they express how someone is privileged, while someone else is marginalized. Furthermore, Grosfoguel et al. (2015, p. 637) state something interesting as they underline that although an individual might be racialized as a superior being according to colour, ethnicity, language, culture and/or religion, hence in the “zone of being”, while still subjected to class, sexual gender oppression. This ‘intersectionality’ of race, class, sexuality and gender power relations occurs in both the

superior- and inferior zones of the world, although the experience of how this intersectionality is articulated differs in the zones of being and the zones of non-being. Within these zones, there are other non-racial conflicts, evolving around the “I” and the “Other”. Consider a superior “I”, who is Western, heterosexual, masculine, metropolitan elite unlike the “Other” who experiences that his/her humanity is recognised due to racial privilege, but who at the same time is oppressed based on class, sexuality or gender, dominated by the imperial “I” in their regions or countries (Grosfoguel et al. 2015, p. 637-638). In other words, we can divide racism into clear racist oppression based on colour, ethnicity, language and/or religion. This kind of racism works around the belief that personality, morals and behaviour is linked to race, and thus that one race is superior to the others. Yet, the superior “I” and the inferior “Other” according to this kind of racist oppression, might experience racist privilege oppression which regards gender, sexuality and class. My interpretation of this, is that one might experience something similar to racism through the discrimination by losing some privileges because of one’s gender, sexuality or class. So, we can conclude that racism is indeed a very complex matter, and it is important to not only look at one side of it, but to see how it all is tied together. Cross (2005) also points out how racism is tied together with white privilege: “Any consideration of race (or diversity and multiculturalism) is useless unless it also considers racism and white privilege – and considers them as a hegemonic system” (Cross, 2005). White privilege emanates around identifying as the superior race, and thus all the privileges that might follow, especially if one in addition identifies as the “I” – male, heterosexual and wealthy. Further on Racism includes public policies that support discrimination in housing practices and in employment practices, Cross (2005) contends, which demonstrates concrete examples of unevenly divided privileges and hence creating categories of superior and inferior. This type of racism is often referred to as ‘new racism’, a more hidden kind that emanates around the lack of opportunities and privilege.

1.5. Literary whiteness

Whiteness is defined in a variety of ways. Borsheim-Black (2015, p. 410) defines whiteness as “a socially constructed racial category that has been used to justify and legally defend social inequality based on race”, yet she also argues that it can be seen as a racial discourse, or an ideology, that is maintained by the way we speak, think and interact. She also contends that it can be anchored in institutional policies and societal norms. With this in mind, she

formulates the definition of whiteness as “ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, and speaking that construct, perpetuate, reinforce, and privilege whiteness” (p. 410). Further on, she includes how Haviland’s (2008) characterizes “White talk”: “avoiding words, making false starts, engaging in safe self-reflection, asserting ignorance and uncertainty, letting each other off the hook, citing authority, silence, changing the topic, affirming sameness, joking.” (Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 414).

According to Borsheim-Black (2015, p. 408), several white teachers tend to maintain the norms of whiteness despite their intentional goal to disrupt them. This shows how whiteness is constructed and reinforced, even with antiracist intentions. Several researchers and studies on the matter illustrate that both students and teachers tend to subvert and resist instructions to question their own assumptions about whiteness and racism (Sleeter, 2001; Bolgatz, 2005; Gordon, 2005; Marx & Pennington, 2003). In other words, it is unfortunately very normal to neglect the fact that we might have to work with ourselves, instead of simply trying to identify whiteness, and thus racism, with others, in literature and on a structural level. Other research shows that the literature curriculum is predominately white, as most of its content is written by white authors (Applebee, 1993; Stallworth, Gibbons & Fauber, 2006). This again leads us to Morrison (1992), who argues that problematic racial ideologies are woven into the text and subtext of some of our most beloved and taught novels in American middle- and high schools. “Whiteness is constructed and reinforced through the literature curriculum itself” (Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 408).

1.6. Africanism in literature

Africanism has become both a way of talking about and a way of policing matters of class, sexual license, and repression, formations and exercises of power, and meditations on ethics and accountability. Through the simple expedient of demonizing and reifying the range of colour on a palette, American Africanism makes it possible to say and not to say, to inscribe and erase, to escape and engage, to act out and act on, to historicize and render timeless. It provides a way of contemplating chaos and civilization, desire and fear, and a mechanism for testing the problems and blessings of freedom. (Morrison, 1992, p. 7).

According to Toni Morrison (1992) Africanist characters have a certain resemblance as to how they are all presented in a similar way, and at times, not presented at all, limited to barely existing. She calls it “invented Africa” (1992, p. 7) and claims that black people’s literary function and purpose is simply limited to act, or not act, as the white man's shadow; often as sexualized objects, criminalized savages, victimized beings or to add some occasional jungle fever (Morrison, 1992, p. 8). She goes on to argue that “in matters of race, silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse [...] It is further complicated by the fact that the habit of ignoring race is understood to be a graceful, even generous, liberal gesture” (p. 9-10). Hammering down her point, Morrison asserts “to notice is to recognize an already discredited difference. To enforce its invisibility through silence is to allow the black body a shadowless participation in the dominant cultural body”, (p. 10).

Morrison (1992) also points out that Africanist presence in literature often serves to either make the white protagonist even greater, or to provide more hatred among the white antagonists to make them even trashier – both robbing the Africanist characters of their own identity and influence, no matter the intentions of the writer. According to Morrison, whiteness almost always appears in conjunction with representations of Africanist people who are either dead, impotent or under complete control. Further on she states that these images of whiteness function as both antidote for and meditation on the companion of whiteness – the black shadow (p. 33). When Morrison refers to the coloured characters as the white man's shadow, she means that the Africanist characters in classic American literature rarely, if ever, cease to carry out any influence at all, they are in other words irrelevant, which is the very essence of whiteness. It is all about how the white narrator, and thus white author, sees fit to present them, or not give them any introduction at all.

Although Morrison’s research regards Africanist characters, which also is the case in *TKAM*, it is important to underline and keep in mind, that these matters are transferable to other minorities as well, and thus relevant in countries without the same historical background as the US regarding clear segregation between black and white. Since *TKAM* is an American novel, playing out in the segregated Southern states in the US, and mainly used in the American classroom, the majority of the research done is from the US and this regards the research cited in this research as well. Nevertheless, if African American realities are

irrelevant to the discourse of whiteness, then we can say that by focussing on token figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks in Norwegian schools we are doing the same.

2. How to teach about racism through *TKAM* today

2.1. Antiracist pedagogy

Borsheim-Black (2015, p. 409) defines antiracist pedagogy “as an approach that works proactively to interrupt racism”. She goes on arguing that this pedagogy acknowledges the importance of racial and cultural identities, by honouring different voices and experiences of coloured people in the classroom. This pedagogy also focusses on teaching methods such as collaboration and dialogue when examining oppression and systematic discrimination. The antiracist pedagogy critiques traditions of schooling, and stands up for social action (Ladson-Billings, 1994; May, 1998; Lynn, 1999). In other words, the main goal of an antiracist pedagogy is to help white students to disrupt whiteness, and thus to open up for a more inclusive community in the multicultural classroom. In order to help white students to disrupt whiteness, it is important for them to be made aware of their own racial identity and to consider their own privilege (Banks, 2004).

Although an antiracist pedagogy seems to be a convincing strategy, there are some aspects to keep in mind when discussing whiteness and racism in the classroom, either through literature like *TKAM* or in general. Leonardo (2013) warns that an increased focus on whiteness in education might co-opt conversations about racism and whiteness, and thus, focus on white interests and privilege, which again might contribute to accentuate the “superiority” of the white race. On the other hand, Critical Whiteness Studies (Doane, 2003; Leonardo, 2013; Morrison, 1992; Roedigger, 1999) agree that whiteness sustains its power through its invisibility, and thus argue that it is important to discuss how it works in order to overcome it. Critical Whiteness scholars often focus on tracing the history and present-day legacy of whiteness, identifying how whiteness operates to systematically privilege white people, often at the expense of people of colour. Their main goal is to “deconstruct whiteness as a category,

delegitimize its neutrality, and reveal ways in which it operates as an ideology tied to material privilege” (Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 410). Wagner (2005) describes the challenge of an antiracist pedagogy:

Antiracist pedagogy will be especially challenging in an ... environment which has traditionally privileged Eurocentric “objective” and “apolitical” knowledge. This intellectual domination has imposed certain ways of seeing the world through the lenses of traditional disciplines. As a result, only specific types of knowledge have historically been recognized as legitimate for the academy. (Wagner, 2005, p. 261)

DiAngelo (2016, p. 16) too, argues that most white people have never been given direct or complex information about racism, and thus not able to consciously recognize, understand, or articulate much about it. This indicates the importance of an antiracist approach and pedagogy that focuses on rectifying these gaps in white students’ educational experiences, by providing a larger societal and historical context of racism in education (Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019, p. 8). This is essential to consider in the Norwegian context.

There is, in other words, a lot to consider when teaching about whiteness and the complexity of racism through *TKAM* today in the Norwegian classroom. As previously mentioned, from an antiracist perspective *TKAM* presents a lot of pedagogical challenges. Some of which have been mentioned; to identify both new- and old racism, by exploring how they affect each other. *TKAM*’s intended message focuses primarily on old racism, which is easy to identify and thus overcome. However, the complexity occurs when trying to read beyond the intended message, and to identify evidence of so called new racism. This form of racism is more hidden, unless the reader has been made aware of how whiteness and African Americanism works. As Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides (2019, p. 10) underline, whiteness maintains its power through remaining invisible, so one of the main goals of antiracist pedagogy is to make whiteness visible, and thus, less powerful. It is important to underline that whiteness does not contain power in itself, but the power is vested in the system. Even when aware of these terms and how they operate, it can be difficult to read between the lines, and to identify the more hidden evidence of racism.

2.2. Antiracist pedagogy through literature

To get a deeper understanding of new racism, it can be useful to look at the different categories of racism by Borsheim-Black (2015, p. 414), who believes it is helpful to divide racism into four different categories, each containing specific codes related to instructional strategies. This is relevant to an overall anti racist pedagogy, yet also in light of a more specific antiracist literacy instruction. The four categories of racism are according to Borsheim-Black: *individual, societal, institutional and epistemological*. All of these categories can be seen as categories of so-called new racism, which is what I want to identify in *TKAM*. To understand the meaning of the different categories, Borsheim-Black (2015, p. 414) describes some codes for each of them. In the category of individual racism, she points to three codes; *resistance, white talk and white racial identity*. On an institutional basis, she underlines the *curriculum, canonical novels (like TKAM), instructional strategies and English department values, norms practises, and expectations*. Regarding the societal category of racism, it is important to be aware of the *broader social context* and to look at how the society around you functions. The final category is epistemological, which considers the role and responsibility of an English teacher in light of the assumptions and expectations of how education should be. Another thing to keep in mind in this category, is to be aware of what counts as knowledge in schools; objective knowledge, accountability and uncertainty about challenging the students' beliefs (Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 414). These categories can be useful and helpful when approaching the complex matter of racism and whiteness in the classroom. When analysing and discussing a canonical novel, like *TKAM*, it can be easier to identify racism and whiteness when you have been made aware of the different faces of it. It can also be interesting to focus on the different categories while discussing *TKAM*, trying to identify these different categories. For instance, one can scaffold the students through the novel by gradually having them identifying the different codes in the categories. Narrowing the investigative questions bit by bit, might help the pupils grasp how new racism and whiteness can be well hidden, and thus the need for quite specific tools and questions to identify textual evidence of it.

Baker-Bell (2017) underlines that racism is woven into the English education, through traditional language, literature curriculum, literacy and through overvaluing Eurocentric grammar rules at the expense of African American language. Butler (2017) adds the prioritization of white authors over literature which represents experiences of coloured people

to the list. Morrison (1992) has also been calling attention to how racism is almost invisibly woven into the fabric of American literature, and thus probably Western literature in general. Morrison's term, American Africanism, which has been explained in the introduction part, is highly relevant to be aware of when reading, analysing and teaching novels like *TKAM*. Briefly explained, the canonical anti racist literature, often the ones used in education, revolves around white authors portraying (or barely glimpsing) the only literary Africanist presence our students are presented to. In other words, the Africanist presence our students are introduced to, are according to Morrison (1992, p. 6) fabricated by white authors, and thus not fulfilling at all. According to Kailin (2002) all literature curriculum is racialized, which means that teaching about race or racism through literature is not optional; it is impossible to remain neutral. Through an antiracist approach we deliberately challenge racist structures in and through the curriculum and instruction (Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019, p. 7). Haddix & Price-Dennis (2013) also state that the whiteness of traditional curriculum teaches racialized lessons about whose stories matter, and whose voices are prioritized and last but not least, whose version of history is acknowledged as the truth.

Many English teachers in America want to promote antiracist pedagogy in their literature instructions, according to Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides (2019, p. 10), which is why they present antiracist literature instruction, a framework designed to merge antiracist goals alongside familiar tools for literature instruction. This instruction makes racism and whiteness a central part of curriculum and instruction by foregrounding racial literacy goals while relating to literature learning specifically. The main elements in this antiracist literature instruction revolves around the identification of examples of racism in literature, and thus the world in general. It also includes understanding the concepts of race, colour-blindness, white privilege and racial identity. Further on it emanates around considering our own racial identity, and thus the awareness of that racial position and perspective, which might affect our interpretation of literature. One of the main goals is to be able to use literature as a platform to enlighten and engage in conversations about race and racism even when it feels difficult, and to leverage this understanding into an ability to name and challenge forms of racism in real life. Finally, an antiracist literature instruction focuses on recognizing the role literature plays in reinforcing and interrupting constructions of race through racial stereotypes (Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019, p. 11).

2.3. Racialized Reader Response

Toni Morrison (1992, p. 15) argues that to change a perspective during reading, to read as a writer and not as a reader, makes it easier to read in nuanced and more critical ways. Ernest Morell (2018) also underlines the importance of *reading differently*, especially when approaching canonical novels such as *TKAM*. Both *reading as a writer* and *reading differently* emanates around reading through a critical and nuanced lens; to read beyond the intended message, and thus to identify the somewhat hidden message lurking in the shadows of the intended message. But as Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides (2019, p. 33) point out, readers might misunderstand a text that represents racial perspectives that differ from their own, and that is why it is important for English teachers to provide tools to help students to read differently. This is where a racialized reader response is relevant, to engage readers to reflect on how for instance whiteness influences personal responses to texts. It emanates around awareness of one's own racial identity, and also how that affects how we read and interpret texts. It is challenging, but necessary, to take a step back and identify whiteness in ourselves and in our social surroundings; friends, family, and how it all affects our own reflections.

As mentioned previously, the American literary curriculum primarily consists of novels written by white authors with white characters as protagonists. I tried to find a list of literary curricula in Norway, but I did not succeed, so I asked a few teachers who confirmed that we do not have a literary curriculum in Norway. The teachers I asked also added that most teachers they know hardly use literature beside the excerpts provided in the course books. Nevertheless, the white literary dominance in America continues to mark white racial perspectives as central and neutral, and other races as "the others". According to Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides (2019, p. 36), the effect of a literary curriculum dominated by whiteness, is that white readers bring their previous literary experiences, and thus assumptions about literature, and thereby continue to form their reading strategies around this, and thus, their responses are often coloured by this. When students mainly read literature that is infiltrated by whiteness, it is difficult to read it critically, unless they are made aware of how it works, and how it is visible, or perhaps, relatively invisible for the untrained eye. Moreover, Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides (2019, p. 36) underline that whiteness does not only dominate among curriculum authors and representation of characters, but also in terms of the assumed readers. Morrison (1992) too states that readers of virtually all American fiction have been

positioned as white.

2.4. Case study by Borsheim-Black (2015): Ms. Allen

Carlin Borsheim-Black is a professor of English Education at Central Michigan University. Her teaching and research focus on antiracist literature instruction, especially in predominantly white and rural communities (University of Michigan, 2021). Borsheim-Black (2015) formed a qualitative case study, where she considered the complexity of a teacher, Ms. Allen's, antiracist pedagogy and relationships between her antiracist pedagogy and different dimensions of whiteness; individual, societal and epistemological. Ms. Allen was a second-year English teacher at Clearwater High School in Clearwater, Michigan, a wealthy and predominantly white community with 96 % of the students identifying as white. Ms. Allen had a good reputation as a talented teacher. She expressed concern about how her own whiteness might shape her antiracist pedagogical approach, whether it could create blind spots in her pedagogy, because as white people "we don't know what we don't know". She was concerned that despite her goal to disrupt whiteness through her teaching, she might end up doing the quite opposite, to inherently reinforce white privilege and supremacy. Ms. Allen's awareness of her own whiteness, in addition to her antiracist pedagogical goals made her a good candidate for Borsheim-Black's (2015) case study. During this study, Ms. Allen focused her teaching on *TKAM*. She utilized a variety of pedagogical approaches and activities; journal prompts, chapter quizzes, a re-enactment of Tom Robinson's trial and a Socratic seminar.

To begin with, Ms. Allen offered her students a journal prompt: "How does race affect my life?". This led to group discussions that focused on different narratives where Ms. Allen and her students told about times they felt aware of their own whiteness. What Ms. Allen did here, is very smart. She starts off by making her students aware of their own racial identity, and how it affects them, and thus how they are aware of their own whiteness. The fact that Ms. Allen shared her own experiences as well, makes it safer and thus easier for her students to open up themselves (Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 416).

During this case study, Borsheim-Black (2015) noticed that the students were not resistant at all, which she found interesting. This might be because of Ms. Allen's successful scaffolding

on the subject of whiteness, or it might be as Trainor (2008) states, that students that participate in antiracist activities distance themselves from appearing racist. Ms. Allen pointed out that one of the most challenging parts of an antiracist pedagogy is language awareness. It is easy to use words like *we*, *us*, *our* and *my* – for instance when discussing *our* heritage and ancestors, which often is not shared by all of the students in the classroom. This is a typical example of white talk, as previously referred to by Haviland (2008). For instance, a discussion during a class about whether it is okay to use the “N-word” or not, it became clear in the pupils’ answers there was a clear line between *us/we* and *them/they*. These pronouns assume that all members of the classroom share a dominant white perspective, which contributes to normalize and neutralize the very same perspective (Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 418). Haviland (2008) suggests that it is more productive to discuss racism by avoiding white talk, but this example shows that English teachers might be able to use white talk in order to increase the awareness about how easy it is to use it without even thinking about it. In addition, it increases the focus on how language choices contribute to reinforce whiteness on an individual level (Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 418).

According to Borsheim-Black (2015, p. 418), Ms. Allen stated that the curriculum was not communicated officially through written documents, but after a while in the same school, she learned that there were certain expectations for curriculum and instruction. For instance, it was generally assumed that every English teacher would assign *TKAM*, which, from an antiracist perspective can involve pedagogical challenges, especially if one is not aware of the more hidden whiteness and racism involved in the novel. Ms. Allen had her students analyse *TKAM* for characterization, theme and symbolism. During this case study, Borsheim-Black (2015) was impressed by Ms. Allen’s way of using apparent disadvantages and turning them around to interesting discussion that increased the students’ awareness of how whiteness is woven so deep in our understanding, and thus hard to overcome without essential awareness. She raised some interesting questions in the class, which led to great discussions. For instance, about the meaning of the symbol “mockingbird” and making the students consider how characters’ use of racialized language, like *coloured*, *negro* and *nigger*, contributed to characterization. Ms. Allen also raised a simple question, “Does Atticus seem racist?”, thus inviting her students to consider the hero in the novel, in addition to overall whiteness and racism, in complex ways. All in all, Ms. Allen found that it was very interesting to invite her

students to read against the dominant racial ideologies in *TKAM*, and thus an effective anti racist approach to canonical novels in general (Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 420).

I want them to be thinking – rather than me telling them. It’s got to happen in a different way. It’s got to be posing an issue. I want to lead them to a place where they can make their own choice. I try to expose them to things. I think that some people are going to continue to feel the way they feel. I don’t want to have a classroom where they feel like I’m trying to make them feel a certain way, like indoctrinate them. (Ms. Allen in Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 423).

What Ms. Allen expresses is that this is extremely important. As a teacher, perhaps especially when teaching in slightly controversial ways like exposing whiteness in America’s most loved novel, it is wise to let the pupils make up their own minds. Teachers can not force antiracism and awareness of whiteness on their students, but we can do like Ms. Allen, give them clues, ask critical questions, have them read against the ordinary intentions in a novel, and thus let them gradually increase their own awareness and thoughts around the matter of racism and whiteness.

2.5. Macaluso’s (2017) experience with teaching *TKAM*

Michael Macaluso is a former secondary English teacher, a fellow of the Institute for Educational Initiatives and an assistant professor of the practice for English education at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, USA. Macaluso (2017, p. 281) explains that he used to teach *TKAM* through the dominant perspective of the novel and of Atticus, focussing on the characterization of its white privileged protagonists: Scout and Jem’s coming-of-age and Atticus’ moral compass.

Certainly, we discussed the role that racism played in setting up Tom as a sympathetic character, one caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, and the ways in which racism fuelled the mob at the jailhouse, the jury, and the community of Maycomb at large. Yet, I also remember my simple take-away at the end of the novel when Atticus and Heck Tate appealed to a moral reasoning higher than the law in dismissing Boo’s killing of Bob Ewell, a conclusion that once again sidestepped race. (Macaluso, 2017, p. 281).

Macaluso (2017, p. 281) continues, that this perspective allowed him, a white male teacher, to distance himself from the racist people in the novel, like the Ewells and the mob in Maycomb, acknowledging that he would never say or do any of the things they did; seeking physical violence against someone of a different race or unjustly condemn a man based on the colour of his skin. Macaluso (2017, p. 281) states that he would, like Atticus, operate under a moral system rather than a racial one. Further on he states that this interpretation, and thus classroom discussion of the racial issues in *TKAM*, turned into affirmation for him and thus his students. “We would never do that, so therefore we are not racist” and “Of course, we would do what Atticus did and stand up for someone like Tom” (Macaluso, 2017, p. 281).

When Macaluso (2017, p. 281) looks back at his former approach to teaching *TKAM*, he dwells on how he could have embraced the subject more profoundly; through meaningful and introspective conversations on how race and racism truly function in *TKAM*. His turning point as a teacher and a reader of *TKAM*, came when he taught the novel in his undergraduate class of culturally diverse young adult literature. This course explored topics such as racism, privilege, marginalization and authorship, and Macaluso wanted his students to research the question, “Is *TKAM* a multicultural text?”. This question opened up for an interesting discussion that questioned the students’ canonized perceptions of the novel. After this course, Macaluso, in light of Cross’ (2005) idea about old vs new racism, started to read, and teach, the novel through reading both with and against its intended message; reading through a lens of new and old racism (2017, p. 282). Cross (2005) argued that “any consideration of race (or diversity and multiculturalism) is useless unless it also considers racism and white privilege – and considers them in a hegemonic system” (Cross, 2005, p. 266). Macaluso (2017, p. 282) realized that this interpretation of racism was missing in his former teaching approach to *TKAM*. For Macaluso it helped to differ between old racism and new racism, after reading how Cross (2005) split the two, which have been portrayed in my introduction part. Macaluso (2017, p. 282) underlines that he does not believe in simple binaries between old and new racism, nor does he endorse the belief that old racism only belongs to the past and thus not present and still relevant today.

Macaluso (2017, p. 283) finds it challenging to analyse *TKAM* from the perspective of new racism, which he state is mainly about “access, opportunities, and worldviews (or ways of thinking) linked to concepts such as privilege” (Macaluso, 2017, p. 283). According to him,

one of the reasons why it is so difficult to identify new racism in *TKAM* is because of its setting; the story takes place during a historical period where old racism predominantly persisted. This kind of racism is so clear throughout the novel, which makes it challenging to identify the more hidden forms of racism. Macaluso (2017, p. 283) is concerned that teaching through the dominant perspective of *TKAM*, and other canonical novels concerning the subject of racism, might contribute to students dismissing racism as a thing of the past. With this in mind, Macaluso started to analyse, and thus teach, *TKAM* through a different perspective; reading against the intended message and the obvious old racism. Macaluso (2017, p. 284) raises some important questions for how reading and teaching the novel (or any other novel for that matter), while underlining that one needs to combine them with an understanding of both new and old racism:

What popular conversations surround this book and its author? How does power work in the text? Who has power, and why? Whose story is emphasized? How does the text maintain dominant ideologies or understandings from the time? How would the story be different if an author of a different racial identity wrote it? Are characters from historically marginalized populations complex or stereotypical? (Macaluso, 2017, p. 284).

Furthermore, Macaluso (2017, p. 281) briefly exemplifies the difference between reading with and reading against *TKAM*. Reading with the novel considers Atticus a hero and accepts the underlying assumption that this is how we discard racism. Part of this reading is the idea that Scout learns perfect empathy, through Atticus. It reduces Tom Robinson to a black man in need of saving only to end up a poor black man shot by the police. On the other hand, it is possible to read against the authorial intention by addressing Atticus' privilege, identifying new racism and old racism, considering Harper Lee's jargon intention, question where Tom's point of view is to be found and challenge stereotypical portrayals of the different characters (Macaluso, 2017, p. 281). Dividing racism into old and new racism might be a simple approach of a subject of such complexity, nevertheless in order to teach Norwegian Secondary and Upper Secondary students, it might be beneficial to simplify the complexity of racism to avoid unnecessary confusion, especially given the timeframe available to cover the different subjects.

3. To Kill a Mockingbird: a critical review

In light of the terms presented in my introduction part; American Africanism, Whiteness, old- and new racism and intersectionality I will examine *TKAM* through critical close reading and comparison. In this section I will mainly focus on identifying textual evidence of new racism in *TKAM*. I begin by briefly examining the narrative situation, and how Scout as a child narrator elicits the reader's empathy and interpretation of the characters. Thereafter I will look at some examples of old- and new racism in *TKAM*, before looking at the social hierarchy in Maycomb and then briefly examining the failure of empathy in the novel. Finally, I am going to look at some of the characters in comparison to each other.

3.1. Narrative situation

TKAM is a southern gothic, playing out in a small southern town during The Great Depression in the 1930's. There is no insight in the world around Maycomb's borders, which makes it a claustrophobic setting. The narrator of the story is Scout, a grown white woman looking back at her childhood, thus through the lens of a white privileged child, which of course impacts the narration of the story. Although Scout is looking back at her childhood, one gets the impression that there is no psychological or emotional distance between the narrator Scout and the protagonist. Scout's growing maturity affects how she looks at her racist surroundings, and her perception of her father, the hero of the story, Atticus Finch. Although one gets the impression to follow Scout's journey during her childhood, the author gives us several hints that Scout is writing this as a grown woman looking back at her childhood. This is important to keep in mind, as the child narrator allows the author to use the child's innocence to freely express her opinions, and at the same time allows her to use the adult Scout's awareness and knowledge as background for some of the information the reader gets a hold of. Hintz & Tribunella (2019, p. 411) draw the intention to Scout, and how she as a young girl seem to have very good insight to more or less everything that goes on, despite her young age, except when it comes to Tom Robinson's character or his family, characters which the reader barely is granted a glimpse. The feelings of the characters in the Finch family is thoroughly explored, which contributes to developing them as complete and whole characters. As a consequence, the Robinson family is reduced to "props for the heroic efforts of Atticus and his children on Tom's behalf" (Hintz & Tribunella, 2019, p. 411). Another way of putting

is, is that the Robinson family is limited to acting as shadows, with one simple purpose, to make Atticus shine even brighter, as mentioned in my previous chapter referring to Morrison's (1992) work. This aspect is highly relevant and important to grasp when reading, or especially when using *TKAM* in the classroom.

Lee's choice of narrator plays an important role in several ways. It is clear that Scout impersonates Lee herself and that the story is based on her own experiences as a child growing up. By using these experiences as inspiration for a work of fiction, she can connect her story to real events and real human emotions. That "realness" initiates an intimate relationship between the story and the reader, inviting the reader to involve him or herself emotionally (Haugen, 2018, p. 13). As pointed out by the scholars, Mohammed & Alhadi (2020, p. 151) the use of children as narrators help authors to draw their image around difficult topics, as is the case for *TKAM*. By using Scout's voice and her insight to tell the story of *TKAM*, the author can "hide" behind the innocence of the child that is narrating the story, which has its advantages and its drawbacks. As Blackford (2010, p. 167) points out, "Lee uses the young Scout to acknowledge what white eyes can and cannot see", and thus she acknowledges that Scout represents the white privileged child's point of view (Haugen, 2018, p. 15). Scout is interesting. On the one hand she is an innocent, white and privileged child, on the other hand, she is a rule breaker and rebel, who questions societal codes, both regarding gender and race. This is something she learns from her father, in many ways. Atticus too goes against societal codes when he agrees to defend a black man, and when he allows Scout to dress as she wants to and not as society expects her to. The ultimate hero of the novel is the narrator's own father. It is quite common for children at Scout's young age to look up to their parents, and admire them, which of course affects the reader's idea about this person, Atticus in this case. This alone gives us reason to question Atticus' status, which I will examine more closely in the section where I compare him to the protagonist, Bob Ewell.

Scout identifies with the outcasts in Maycomb, such as Boo Radley and the black inhabitants, Rowe argues (2008, p. 3), because she herself is treated like an outsider, a tomboy, especially when she is made the object of brutal ridicule in the genteel ladies' missionary society, with her own Aunt Alexandra in charge. The fact that Scout is a tomboy, someone who does not fit into the narrow-minded society of Maycomb, makes her an interesting character and narrator. Although my overall focus regards racism, it is also important to remember the overall

narrow-mindedness of the society where this story takes place. As mentioned previously, intersectionality is an interesting aspect regarding *TKAM*. Scout is clearly growing up in a man's world, as a girl who does not fit into the society's expectations and gender codes. Although Scout in some ways represents one of the "others", she is still regarded as a white, privileged and innocent child. In other words, her white skin overrules her other inconvenient ways of life, in light of the societal codes. The theory by Grosfoguel et al. (2015) that I presented earlier regarding the superior "I" vs the inferior "Other" is relevant regarding Scout's identity. Dolphus Raymond is another interesting character, who demonstrates the hierarchy of zones. As a white man living with a black woman, and raising a family with her, he is breaking the most important societal code of Maycomb, which is segregation. To make it easier for the people of Maycomb to understand his choice, he pretends to be a drunk, which is easier for them to forgive, than a white "sane" man living with a black woman. "It helps folks if they can latch onto a reason ... if I weave a little and drink out of this sack, folks can say Dolphus Raymond's in the clutches of whiskey – that's why he won't change his ways. He can't help himself, that's why he lives the way he does." (Lee, 1960, p. 213).

3.2. Old vs new racism in *TKAM*

"Mr. Cunningham's basically a good man," Atticus said, "he just has his blind spots along with the rest of us."

Jem spoke. "Don't call that a blind spot. He'da killed you last night when he first went there."

"He might have hurt me a little," Atticus conceded, "but son, you'll understand folks a little better when you're older. A mob's always made up of people, no matter what. Mr.

Cunningham was part of a mob last night, but he was still a man ... So it took an eight-year-old child to bring 'em to their senses, didn't it?" said Atticus.

"That proves something - that a gang of wild animals can be stopped, simply because they're still human." (Lee, 1960, p. 157)

This passage, which takes place after the mob approached Atticus at the jailhouse, is interesting to look at in order to understand how different the very same text can be interpreted. According to Macaluso (2017, p. 284) the typical interpretation of Atticus' saying here, is to conclude that he wants his children to learn that people are complex individuals and

to avoid rushed assumptions and judgement of their character; to see beyond people's fault and thus identify their humanity. This interpretation contributes to making Atticus loveable and heroic. Although, the very same passage, interpreted in light of the more hidden new racism, can be a signal of Atticus' excusing racism. "By implying that Mr. Cunningham was caught up in a mob mentality whose racism is just a flaw, Atticus excuses Mr. Cunningham's racism and, more egregiously, his deadly intentions and those of the mob" (Macaluso, 2017, p. 285). Further on, Jem is the one who challenges Atticus, when saying "Don't call that a blind spot. He'da killed you last night when he first went there" (Lee, 1960, p. 157). One can assume that Jem disagrees with excusing racist actions and ideals as "blind spots", but, Jem only points out that Mr. Cunningham and the mob could have killed Atticus, not Tom Robinson, their intended target. Tom Robinson is barely mentioned in this episode even though he was the target of a mob lynching, which, in fact, is the case of the entire novel, and once again Robinson is dependent on the help of Atticus to survive. Nor does Atticus mention that Tom could have died that night, because of the "blind spots" in the mob. In one way, Atticus' perception about everyone – even the worst of humans – are individuals with "blind spots" that clearly can be excused. Atticus' true statement here implies that when this mob intended to kill Tom Robinson, it was a "blind spot", a feeling of irrational behaviour that can be turned on and off. As Macaluso (2017, p. 285) points out, this is a clear marker of privilege. This passage is a clear indication of new racism, mainly in the individual- and societal category that Borsheim-Black (2015) talks about, with these relevant codes: the societal context, resistance, white talk and white racial identity, hence white privilege in this context. In addition to the racial identity, class is also relevant here. However, Mr. Cunningham's white racial identity overrules his lower class, and thus Atticus' excuses his racist behaviour, saying that he is "basically a good man" (p. 157).

Another clearly racist character to look at is Mrs. Dubose, an old and cranky woman giving a "public voice to the values and attitudes of the Old South" (MacKethan, 2014). English Professor Lucinda MacKethan (2014) argues that Atticus' response to Mrs. Dubose behaviour and statements suggest that he actually lacks the critical perspective that is needed to acknowledge the depth and pervasiveness of Maycomb's racism. Instead of pointing out how her racist behaviour is bad, Atticus tries to excuse her behaviour blaming her condition as an addict. To fully understand the character of Mrs. Dubose, and thus her opinions, her age is relevant. As MacKethan (2014) suggests, she might be in her seventies, which would mean

that she was born in the 1860's, at the end of the Civil war. With this in mind, Mrs. Dubose represents a generation that witnessed several historic events which might have shaped their attitudes and values regarding race. In other words, Mrs. Dubose is another character that most readers today feel no resemblance to, and thus contributes to limiting racism into something that belongs to the past, or to someone so remote from our own self that we with good consciousness and confidence conclude that racism is not a concern of ours.

3.3. Social hierarchy and white privilege in *TKAM*

Lee appears to include the philanthropic interest of Aunt Alexandra and her "missionary circle" primarily to satirize the hypocrisy of southern whites' concern with the welfare of people of colour in Africa even as these whites continue to oppress the African American inhabitants in their own community. This double standard is not limited to racial divisions; it also includes anyone who differs from the established white social order. (Rowe, 2008, p. 3).

What Rowe expresses here, is something that clearly show through Scout's teacher, Miss Gates, who teaches her class about the holocaust, and she state "Over here we don't believe in persecuting anybody. Persecution comes from people who are prejudiced." (Lee, 1960, p. 267). Miss Gates states that the persecution Jews was wrong, since they "contribute to every society they live in, and most of all, they are deeply religious people" (p. 276). Young Cecil Cunningham spoke up against the persecution of the Jews, ending his statement with "They're white, ain't they?" (p. 267). This passage is very interesting. Miss Gates is clearly blind to her own society and the persecution going on right before her own eyes, which I sadly believe many of us can relate to. Young Cecil's question is even more interesting. In his young mind, he brings forth the essence without confronting Miss Gates, perhaps because he does not quite understand what he says himself. According to Cecil, and Miss Gates, prejudice and persecution is wrong if the victims are white and thus contributors in society. In other words, Miss Gates does not see the black inhabitants of Maycomb as contributors, she doesn't even recognize them as religious beings, or human beings for that matter, even though most of them attend church and contribute the way society allows them to, as she does herself. The hypocrisy of Miss Gates is clearly described, and Scout herself picks it up and questions it. That being said, this thesis does not examine the clear racism, but rather the more hidden kind, concerning the most loving characters in the novel. Nevertheless, Miss Gates' example

proves the narrow-mindedness that infiltrates most of Maycomb's inhabitants, and thus relevant to include, as it clearly describes the social hierarchy they live in, and their mind-set. Miss Gates is an important character to study in the classroom, and thus to examine ourselves and question whether we are as open minded as we might think we are.

Another interesting passage that presents the hierarchy of Maycomb, is the one where Dill, Scout's friend, started to cry during the trial because of the way the attorney spoke to Tom Robinson. Mr. Dolphus Raymond, a "sinful white man" living among "Negroes" went up to them outside the courtroom and said,

'Because you're children you can understand it' He jerked his head at Dill 'Things haven't caught up with that one's instinct yet. Let him get a little older and he won't get sick and cry' ... 'Cry about what?' 'Cry about the hell white people give coloured folks, without even stopping to think that they're people too' (p. 219).

This passage is interesting in many ways. Mr. Raymond, who is an outcast himself, brings forth this important message to the children. Scout and Jem are privileged children, as to their white skin and as children of a man of great significance in the community, but they are still children, thus not on the top of the social hierarchy. Dill, on the other hand, is an outcast himself, with a troubled childhood in foster care. Mr. Raymond knows it is safe to tell the children about why he only pretends to be a drunk, when he sees that Dill is crying over what he witnessed in the courtroom. So, Dill, who has a lower social status himself, was more troubled over what went on in the courtroom than Scout and Jem, who belong to a more privileged social rank.

Mr. Raymond provides an interesting dimension to our scrutiny of the social hierarchy. Scout herself thinks that "Mr. Raymond was an evil man" (p. 218) and "I had a feeling I shouldn't be here listening to this sinful man who had mixed children and didn't care who knew it" (p. 219). The last quote says a lot about the social community they live in, and the hypocrisy pointed out above. As previously mentioned, Mr. Raymond lets the town believe he is a drunk, to make it easier for them to understand his "sinful" way of living with a black woman.

His secret, that he only drinks Coca-Cola, is also something he reveals to the children, and not to the adults, not even to Atticus. Scout proudly quotes Atticus to Mr. Raymond,

'Atticus says cheatin' a coloured man is ten times worse than cheatin' a white man ... Says it's the worst thing you can do'

Mr. Raymond said, 'I don't reckon it is' – Miss Jean Louise, you don't know your pa's not a run-of-the-mill man, it'll take a few years for that to sink in ... You haven't seen this town, but all you gotta do is step back inside that court-house' (p. 219).

Mr. Raymond's answer here is excellent. In Atticus' statement, although with his seemingly good intentions, he claims that white men are above black men, and thus cheating someone below yourself is the worst thing you can do. Mr. Raymond, on the other hand, makes black and white equal in his simple answer here. He confronts Scout about her ideas of both Atticus and Maycomb. Mr. Raymond proves a point when addressing Atticus' privilege, and in a simple way he points out that things would have been rather different if he was of a different rank in the social hierarchy. He also states that all the children have to do if they want to learn the true colours of Maycomb, is to step back into the court-room. In other words, the social hierarchy is made very clear inside that room, which is yet another proof of Atticus' privilege and social status, as the attorney he is.

Another interesting passage in light of the social hierarchy and whiteness, regards Atticus' cook and the mother figure of Scout and Jem, Calpurnia.

'Cal, why do you talk nigger-talk to the – to your folks when you know it's not right?'

'Well, in the first place I'm black –'

'That doesn't mean you hafta talk that way when you know better' (p. 136).

Scout and Jem have clear opinions on what is right and wrong, and nigger-talk is wrong. Although Calpurnia claims her blackness, owning it, the children seem to think she is better than "ordinary Negroes", because they know her, and see her as a human being and thus beyond the colour of her skin. "Nigger-talk" is referred to on several occasions in the novel. For instance, when Jem and Scout discuss "hot steams", Calpurnia says "that's nigger-talk"

(Lee, p. 40). It is clear that Calpurnia think of superstitious talk as “nigger-talk”, and thus that the African American population is considered to be more spiritual than the white residents of Maycomb. In this passage it is referred to a superstitious spirituality, hence not of a positive character. It is clear that Calpurnia does not want “her white children” to go around using “nigger-talk”, as if she thinks they are better than that. This points to Calpurnia’s own awareness of the social hierarchy and her own place in it. Scout herself seems to think of Calpurnia as somewhat spiritual, when thinking “by some voo-doo system Calpurnia seemed to know it all” (p. 112), which confirms Morrison’s (1992) statement about how “...black people signified little or nothing in the imagination of white American writers. Other than as the objects of an occasional bout of jungle fever...” (p. 15). In a Norwegian classroom context, the students can discuss how dialects and slang is a part of our identity, and to think about the prejudice that is linked to certain dialects or accents in Norway.

3.4. The failure of empathy in *TKAM*

Rarely do the black characters in the novel express how they feel about Maycomb’s culture of white supremacy; nor do the white citizens express interest in hearing about these feelings. This disinterest, mingled with fear, ultimately stands in the way of cross-racial empathy. (Pryal, 2010).

It is important to distinguish “empathy” from “sympathy”, as these terms are often mixed. As Pryal (2010) points out, “empathy entails the desire and ability to understand the plight of another person from that person’s point of view”. Sympathy, on the other hand, does not require that you employ another’s perspective, but simply describe that you feel pity for another’s plight. Pryal (2010) also states that although Atticus on several occasions expresses the importance of empathy, what he practices is most often sympathy. Pryal (2010) continues by contending that empathy is something we do, not just something we feel. Burke (1969) suggests that identification is significant in order to practice empathy. Identification can only occur when one’s interests are joined with another person’s interests. If Atticus was empathetic towards Tom, he would, as Gladwell (2009) states “be brimming with rage at the unjust verdict”. One can also argue that Harper Lee fails to express empathy for the black people, as they are so poorly described and portrayed as whole complete characters. As a reader of *TKAM*, I feel more sympathy, thus pity, for the black characters in the novel, than

empathy, although that is what I want to feel. In other words, the desire for empathy is there, but the “ability to understand the plight of another person from that person’s point of view” (Pryal, 2010) is impossible regarding the black characters in *TKAM*, simply because one does not get a full description of their point of view. Nevertheless, Harper Lee’s intention might as well have been to draw around the logic of the South, which includes marginalizing the black characters, since they did not exist in the logic of the South during the 1930’s.

Pryal (in Meyer, M. J. ed., 2020) questions how cross-racial empathy comes across in *TKAM*, and criticises Atticus for not practicing the empathy he preaches. She underlines that Atticus in fact did not endanger the status quo in Maycomb, while quoting Gladwell (2009) who argued that Atticus does not take on Tom Robinson’s case simply because he emphasises with the plight of black people in the South, but that he rather practises an old-style Southern liberalism. Gladwell (2009) also points out that Atticus does not look at the problem of racism beyond the immediate context of his neighbours in Maycomb, and thus that he was not a pusher of civil rights in general. Gladwell (2009) continues to argue that Atticus does not fight against the injustice of Tom’s conviction, when failing to mount an appeal in Tom’s case. Pryal (in Meyer, M. J. ed., 2020) underlines that Atticus might have felt sympathy for Tom Robinson and the other African Americans in Maycomb, but that he fails to practice the empathy that is often associated with the novel. For instance, one of the most famous quotes from Atticus regards empathy; “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view – until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” (p. 31). One can question whether Atticus manages to live up to this himself, because as a white educated male in the South he is privileged in every matter concerning racism and intersectionality, hence he could not possibly be able to understand what it is like to not have the privileges he entitles.

We are reading the novel from the narrator’s point of view, and are affected by how she emphasizes or sympathizes with the other characters involved. The conversations between Atticus and Tom Robinson, that we can only assume have been taking place, are not witnessed by Scout, and thus not described in the novel. The result is zero insight in Tom Robinson’s feelings and opinions, which also stretches to his family. So, although one wants to empathize with Tom Robinson, and the rest of the African American inhabitants in Maycomb, it is impossible, because we do not “know” them. They are limited to strangers,

the “others”, or Africanist shadows as Morrison (1992) puts it; the ones we should pity and feel sorry for, which is sympathy and not empathy. Narration is interesting to discuss in the classroom. To have the students think about how they are the narrators of their own life, and thus how important it is to acknowledge how we as our own narrators are affected by our prejudice and background knowledge when we engage with people from other cultures.

3.5. Social class and whiteness - Atticus Finch and Bob Ewell

I have throughout the thesis touched on Lee’s depiction of Atticus as a flawless character. In this section I want to continue scrutinising the protagonist, Atticus, and compare him to his antagonist, Bob Ewell. Bob Ewell and Atticus Finch have something in common. They are both white men, widowers who are left alone with their children, involved in the case against Tom Robinson, and both of them have a say in the courtroom. Although there are some similarities, they still differ significantly. Atticus Finch is a middle-aged, educated and privileged lawyer. He is the seemingly the perfect father, who never raises his voice towards his children, Jem and Scout. However, Atticus has Calpurnia, his African American cook who also functions as Scout and Jem’s mother figure. Hence, Calpurnia is the one who is in charge of the children’s upbringing. “Calpurnia was something else again. She was all angels and bones; she was near-sighted; she squinted; her hand was wide as a bed slat and twice as hard.” (p. 6). This is the only description of her features, which I reckon is quite slim unlike the descriptions given of the white characters in the novel. We are told a lot more about the white characters' personalities and interests, in addition to a broader description of their looks. Although this quotation infuses her with some characteristics it conveys that she is raising the children, and that she can be strict, putting them in their place, an authority granted her by Atticus. Atticus makes it clear that Calpurnia is somewhat more fit than the majority of the black people living in Maycomb, “and when she was furious, Calpurnia’s grammar became erratic. When in tranquillity, her grammar was as good as anybody’s in Maycomb. Atticus said Calpurnia had more education than most coloured folks” (p. 26). These sentences prove an important point; if Calpurnia can keep her peace and be happy, she acts and speaks as good as the white people in Maycomb, but through her anger and true emotions, her inner self

comes forth. This proves what Ako-Adjei (2017, p. 186) points out, about the black characters preferably acting happy and content unless they want trouble.

Atticus is a successful and respected lawyer, a kind neighbour and a “decent Christian” with his moral compass very much intact; Atticus Finch is as close to being the perfect white American as can be, the very symbol of America. Bob Ewell is his very contrast; he is poor, lazy, an outcast, and he is a typical example of old racism; he is abusive and violent both physically and mentally. He lives close to the African American quarters of Maycomb, which proves his place in the social hierarchy; his white skin overrules his bad behaviour according to the hierarchy of Maycomb. Toni Morrison (1992, p. 9) wisely says “What parts do the invention and development of whiteness play in the construction of what is loosely described as “American”?” (Morrison, 1992, p. 9). Whiteness is an important factor when creating a perfect American character, such as Atticus Finch. “America is inherently a “white” country: in character, in structure, in culture” (Hacker, 1992, in Guess, 2006, p 650). What Hacker states here, is important in order to understand the term whiteness; it is because of the racial hierarchy in America, where white people are considered to be the real Americans, the superiors, and the African American are considered “the other”, the inferior, according to Guess (p. 649). Atticus is the very symbol of the white man Americans proudly relate to, while Bob Ewell is the very opposite.

The good-hearted neighbour, Miss Maudie, applauds Atticus: “There are some men in this world who were born to do our unpleasant jobs for us. Your [Scout] father’s one of them ... We’re so rarely called on to be Christians, but when we are, we’ve got men like Atticus to go for us” (p. 234). This, is one of the many quotes that describes Atticus as a good white man, in addition to prove that most people in Maycomb would not dare to challenge the “rigid and time-honoured code of society” (p. 222) regarding letting “Negroes be Negroes”, and white men be men. In one way, Atticus does challenge this “time-honoured code” when he agrees to defend a black man in court. Atticus is clearly a man of high standards and good morals, but he is not flawless. For a concerned member of the society as himself, it is surprising that he does not in any way question or intervene in the case of his white neighbours, the Radley’s. Clearly there is some domestic abuse going on against their autistic son, Mr. Arthur. Quite the contrary, he keeps telling his children to leave them alone, and to honour their privacy. In other words, respecting a family’s privacy is more important to Atticus than to help their autistic son who is clearly experiencing domestic abuse. Why Atticus does not interfere here is

also interesting. I believe it has something to do with the social hierarchy; Mr. Radley is also a white man who does his work and keeps out of other people's affairs. In other words, it is not clearly in his place to confront a fellow white privileged man. Nevertheless, as the hero Atticus is set to be, this is something that needs to be questioned.

In contrast to the privileged Atticus Finch, who fights against the cruelty of racism, Lee (1960) presents Bob Ewell, the very opposite of a hero. Atticus states that "...the Ewells had been a disgrace of Maycomb for three generations" (p. 32). According to Ako-Adjei (2017, p. 190) the Ewells, and the other poor white people in *TKAM*, serve a very significant role in order to have someone to blame for the racist violence in the South, someone who removes the responsibility from the privileged upper class. Ako-Adjei (2017, p. 190) argue that Lee (1960) used the character of Atticus to proclaim that the known racism in the South is to be blamed on poor white people, like the Ewells, and not people with a privileged background, like the Finches. "Don't say nigger, Scout. That's common" (p. 81), according to Atticus, racist language belongs to "ignorant, trashy people" (p. 118), like Bob Ewell and the rest of the white poor people "from out in the woods" (p. 235).

Atticus also points out the wickedness of the social hierarchy in Maycomb, when he states "As you grow older, you'll see white men cheat black men every day of your life, but let me tell you something and don't you forget it – whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash." (Lee, p. 241). In this saying, Atticus is pointing out Bob Ewell and men like him as trash, but he is also stating that every white man, no matter their social rank, who cheats a black man, is trash. No matter how fine Atticus' intentions are when saying this, I believe Mr. Dolphus Raymond's belief about this matter is brilliant. As previously mentioned, he indirectly states regardless of the colour of your skin, you are a terrible person if you cheat another man. This is the very essence; not black vs white, but an equal man vs an equal man, men vs men. This is Atticus' biggest mistake throughout the novel; that although his intentions are noble, he proves several times that he believes white men to be above black men, and thus it is noble for white men to protect black men as they are not capable of doing this themselves. I believe the readers can learn a great deal from the few words spoken by Mr. Dolphus Raymond.

During the trial, Atticus says that “This case is as simple as black and white” (p. 221). When using this phrase in the courtroom, he is merely saying quite the opposite of what he intends. This is what he wants to go against in the courtroom, when standing up for Tom Robinson. Further on in his speech, Atticus holds:

“She [Mayella Ewell] has committed no crime, she has merely broken a rigid and time-honoured code of our society, a code so severe that whoever breaks it is hounded from our midst as unfit to live with. She is the victim of cruel poverty and ignorance, but I cannot pity her: she is white. She knew full well the enormity of her offence.” (p. 222).

She is white, and because of her whiteness, she was able to be aware of the consequences of her actions, no matter how poor a background she comes from, according to Atticus. Mayella's way of life is described as economic and moral degradation, with a drunk and abusing father. Still, she is regarded as a higher ranking human than Tom Robinson, a decent black man who lives a respectable married life, or at least that is the little knowledge we have about his character. Atticus describes Mayella's crime: “She tempted a Negro. She was white and she tempted a Negro.” (p. 222). The underlying assumption speaks to the uncontrollable “black sexuality”, which, when unleashed, is uncontrollable, as stated by Fanon (1952). This as well undermines the qualities of Tom Robinson, and every other African American man. If they are tempted, they are clearly unable to restrain themselves, as if they were animals robbing them of their humanity. Nevertheless, Tom Robinson never gave in to such temptations, although Mayella clearly tried to seduce him. He is never given credit for that. What Atticus is actually saying, is that if a white person tempts a “Negro”, the “Negro” is never to blame, no matter the outcome; they are simply not able to restrain themselves, so the fault lies with the white, more competent self who knows better. Atticus' intentions are good, but the outcome just proves his whiteness, and Tom Robinson as his black shadow in need of a white man's protection, a white saviour. In other words, Atticus is described as a hero and a saviour, Bob Ewell is described as “white trash”, and Tom Robinson is reduced to being the necessary black shadow who proves the greatness of Atticus on the one hand, and the “trashiness” of Bob Ewell on the other hand. Hence, it is all about the internal hierarchy of the white men in the story.

Atticus continues his speech in the courtroom by stating that “Tom Robinson, a human being ... A respectable, humble Negro who had the unmitigated temerity to “feel sorry” for a white woman” (p. 222). The underlying assumption which Atticus reveals is of course that no black man should feel sorry for a white woman, because no matter the circumstances she will always be the fortunate one, and to be pitted by a black person, is a humility like no other in the society of Maycomb. It is also important to keep in mind, that in addition to being white, Mayella is also a girl, and girls in general are beneath men in this society. So, Mayella is the daughter of the villain Bob Ewell, she is lying in court, she uses filthy language and she is clearly not very bright – and, she is a girl in a man’s world. Although, she is considered to be above Tom Robinson, a humble, Christian and married man, who addresses everyone in the courtroom with respect.

“This case, Tom Robinson’s case, is something that goes to the essence of a man’s conscience – Scout, I couldn’t go to church and worship God if I didn’t try to help that man”. (p. 114). Again, with good intentions, Atticus' conscience is stretched because of a less fortunate “other”, Tom Robinson. For Atticus, being a good Christian means that he needs to save this less fortunate black man, which again points to Atticus as “The White Saviour”. During the trial, Scout recalls how “All around us and in the balcony on the opposite wall, the Negroes were getting to their feet” (p. 224). They got to their feet, and applauded their “White Saviour”, thanking him for helping one of them. According to Ako-Adjei (p. 186, 2017) this very scene is one of the reasons why white readers love Atticus Finch. Ako-Adjei assumes that the white readers want to be like Atticus, to be able to save and help the less fortunate others, while being cherished for doing so. This is the very essence of whiteness, I assume, to be so privileged that one feels the need to stretch out a helping hand to “the others” on their path to the white way of life. “The White Man’s Burden”, as Kipling (1899) so nicely puts it.

Although Bob Ewell clearly is a bad person, he deserves to be examined beyond that - we need to understand why he does what he does. First of all, Ewell is very poor, he is lazy, he is without breed or education and has a bad reputation; quite the opposite of Atticus. The only thing that keeps Bob Ewell above the African American inhabitants is his white skin, and perhaps this is the main reason for his hatred towards the black people, to sort of prove himself to be their superior; although this attitude proves quite the opposite. By abusing his children, he proves that in contrast to Atticus he is a man of primitive sexual instinct and

violence, and he uses this to prove that he is above his daughter, to somehow make it clear that in his own house he is the superior one. His daughter, Mayella, is so lonely that she, according to Maycomb law, reaches the bottom when she looks for company both socially and sexually in the black man, Tom Robinson. When Bob sees this, he snaps. He ends up accusing Tom for raping his daughter, although he knows that is not true. I believe Bob Ewell feels intimidated by having a black man knowing his darkest secrets, which makes the very same black man his superior. This is something Bob Ewell can not live with, and thus he believes that by accusing Tom for an awful crime, he might rise on the social ladder instead of reaching an even lower status. Bob Ewell is a simple man who acts on his primitive reactions and instincts, either it is sexually or in this case, he attacks the one superior to him. First he goes after Tom Robinson, but after the trial he is clearly reminded of his place in the hierarchy, and thus he did not grant what he wished for, that the violation of Mayella created a form of racial solidarity, which allows Ewell to be included in. Although Tom ends up convicted, the majority of Maycomb knows that he is innocent, and Ewell's darkest secrets are exposed. Ewell's social degradation continues and he goes after Atticus' children in a desperate attempt to punish him after making his crime obvious in court. But he dares not face him alone, which he did not with Tom Robinson either, but instead he goes after Atticus' children, to hurt him in the most terrible way. Perhaps Bob Ewell feels that Atticus disgraced his daughter, Mayella, in court, when it was made clear that she lied and that she sought company with a black man. Ewell looks for vengeance to save his own honour.

3.6. The Mockingbirds - Tom Robinson and Boo Radley

In addition to the title, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, one of the most famous quotes by Atticus in *TKAM* emanates around the same symbolism. "Shoot all the blue jays you want, if you can hit'em. But, remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird" (Lee, 1960). The normal interpretation is that "mockingbird" symbolises innocence, in contrast to the blue jays, who are able to defend themselves, and thus a "fair shot". It is a sin to kill someone who is innocent, someone who is without fault. This someone is claimed to be Tom Robinson. He is the one on trial for a crime he did not commit. He is the one falsely accused of raping a white woman, and also the one who ends up convicted and murdered without the ability to defend himself. A lot of critical analysis of how we should interpret the symbol "mockingbird", asserts that since it symbolises Tom Robinson, it also symbolises the black race. Robinson becomes the symbol

of the injustice black people suffer in the American society (Appleman, 2009; Boyd, 2002; Thein, 2011). To get a further understanding of the symbol “mockingbird”, it is important to look at how Tom Robinson is presented in *TKAM*, and what he represents. As previously mentioned, Tom Robinson is barely portrayed at all, he is simply placed in the story as the poor, crippled victim in need of a white saviour. Tom Robinson symbolises innocence, honesty and decency, as his persona is barely described, but he also symbolises defencelessness, incapability and dependency to his superiors; the white privileged men. Thus, if “mockingbird” is a symbol of Tom Robinson, and by extension a symbol of all African Americans, it reinforces problematic racial ideologies about white saviours and heroes pitted against black victims (Borsheim-Black, 2015, p. 419).

Although Tom Robinson is the first who comes to mind when I think about a mockingbird, there are other characters who can be included in the same category of mockingbirds, or the “others”, and one of them is Boo Radley. He seems to be autistic, and as previously mentioned, he clearly has suffered from domestic abuse for a substantial amount of time. The mysterious character Boo Radley plays a significant role in the novel, with Scout, her brother Jem and their friend Dill constantly fantasizing about how he looks, whether he really stabbed his father’s leg with scissors, what he does in the house and so on.

Every night-sound I heard from my cot on the back porch was magnified three fold; every scratch or feet on gravel was Boo Radley seeking revenge, every passing Negro laughing in the night was Boo Radley loose and after us; insects splashing against the screen were Boo Radley’s insane fingers picking the wire to pieces; the chinaberry trees were malignant, hovering, alive. (p. 60-61).

Boo’s mysterious character points towards prejudice against the unknown, which absolutely can be seen as a parallel to the prejudice against “Negroes” and their ways in Maycomb. This again leads us to the theory of Grosfoguel et al. (2015) about the superior “I” vs the inferior “other”, a form of othering regardless of diagnosis, race, class or gender. Prejudice towards the “others”. Prejudice, be it against Tom Robinson or Boo Radley, makes it impossible to identify the real human being behind the “other” facade. Unlike Boo Radley, who mainly scares children's fantasy, it is the grown ups who are really blind in Tom Robinson's case. The children do not doubt his innocence, quite the contrary.

Fear is why Tom Robinson—a character so thinly sketched as to be nearly invisible—must be preternaturally forbearing, even in the face of gross injustice. The reader, prompted to remember that Tom is as harmless as a mockingbird, is supposed to see his forbearance as a sign of his goodness. But his forbearance is a means to survive living in Alabama in the 1930s, rather than an indication of his true personality. (Ako-Adjei, 2017, p. 190)

What Ako-Adjei describes here is the very essence of Toni Morrison's term "Africanism" and "Africanist shadows", by limiting Tom's character to bare existence, simply doing what he is told, without any hesitation or question. As a consequence, it is not farfetched to conclude that Lee's bestselling novel helps reinforce and keep in place a hierarchy between the races, depriving the black characters of the ability to stand up for themselves. "Tom was a black-velvet Negro, not shiny, but soft black velvet. The whites of his eyes shone his face, and when he spoke we saw flashes of his teeth." (p. 210). This thin description of Tom merely focuses on how the blackness of his skin highlights the whiteness of his eyes and teeth, which is the essence of my point: blackness highlights whiteness, by being its shadow.

In court, Tom Robinson kept it together although the prosecutor, Mr. Gilmer, kept on asking him condescending questions, always ending with referring to him as "boy". Mr. Gilmer asked him why he helped Mayella Ewell with her chores, and Tom Robinson replied that he felt sorry for her. "'You felt sorry for *her*, you felt *sorry* for her?' Mr. Gilmer seemed ready to rise to the ceiling. The witness realized his mistake and shifted uncomfortably in the chair. But the damage was done." (p. 214). Once again we encounter the familiar distinction, although the Ewells were from the lower end of the social ladder, no African American man should ever feel sorry for a white woman - that was beyond rude and humiliating. In other words, this is another proof that white men are above black men in every area, even pointing out what they are allowed to feel. Scout's friend, Dill, felt disgusted by how Tom Robinson was treated in court, and he "started crying" (p. 216). "'The way that man called him "boy" all the time and sneered at him, an' looked around at the jury every time he answered – "Well, Dill, after all he's just a Negro"' (p. 216). This is a clear indication of how the racist register of Maycomb has affected Scout, although she is raised by a black woman herself, and her own father is the one standing up for Tom Robinson.

It is also obvious that regardless of how Tom Robinson replied to the questions in court, he was in complete dependence on a white man fronting his case. Tom's words meant nothing to the jury, or the white people in the audience. Although Atticus spoke wisely on his behalf - again, the white empowered voice speaking for the black man - Tom Robinson did not stand a chance in court. The good hearted neighbour, Miss Maudie, stated that "Atticus Finch won't win, he can't win, but he's the only man in these parts who can keep a jury out so long in a case like that" (p. 235). This statement is interesting. Miss Maudie applauds Atticus for his heroic effort on behalf of Tom Robinson, and this seems to be more important to them than the fact that Tom Robinson is actually convicted, and further on ends up killed in prison. Otherwise it might be the only logic they know, the logic of how the South functions and operates.

In the novel, there is a mad dog mentioned, a dog named Tim Johnson, a name quite similar to Tom Robinson, too similar to not have a symbolic meaning. "Tim Johnson was not much more than a speck in the distance ... He walked erratically, as if his right legs were shorter than his left legs." (Lee, p. 101). Just like Tom Robinson's handicap, with a dead left hand shorter than his right, Tim Johnson suffers from a somewhat similar condition. "I thought mad dogs foamed at the mouth, galloped, leaped and lunged their throats, and I thought they did it in August. Had Tim Johnson behaved thus, I would have been less frightened" (Lee, p. 103). This is prejudice on point, whenever someone, or something, acts differently than what is expected or common, it is scary, again leading us to the concept of the "others". Atticus had to shoot the dog, just as the prisoners were forced to shoot Tom Robinson when he tried to escape. As long as Tom Robinson behaved as expected of him, being polite and saying as little as possible in court, he was harassed, but not killed. In prison, when he tries to escape from prison and thus insists on individual agency, he is shot, just as the mad dog Tim Johnson.

4. How can we use *TKAM* in accordance with LK20 in the Norwegian Secondary- and Upper Secondary classrooms?

TKAM has through decades played an important role in the American society and educational system. Although the story is set in the US and provides information about the American

history, the main themes in the novel can be highly relevant to use in the Norwegian classroom as well. One can easily find competence goals or parts of the core curriculum in LK20 that underlines the importance of teaching about equality, diversity, democracy, cultural- and historical insight and awareness, equal opportunities, discrimination, prejudice and racism – to mention some of the relevant terms in light of my research of *TKAM*. An antiracist pedagogy is to highlight diversity and equal rights to co-existence. It stresses the diversity of perspectives and teaches the students to respect each other's perspectives, experiences without domination.

Norway and Norwegians exist in a globalised world with a little room for racism, in addition the Norwegian society is increasingly multicultural and last, but not least, Norway has indigenous people, whose encounters with the Norwegians over the years has not left the Norwegians on the right side of history. All these reactions are embedded in the curriculum for Norwegian schools. Although these groups are explicitly mentioned on several occasions, it is possible to transfer the overall goal to minority groups in general, all over the world; thus transferrable to the black characters in *TKAM*. The overall goal is for the pupils to increase their knowledge about the different cultures, traditions, languages and the history of minority groups (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). Although *TKAM* does not provide much insight into the culture and traditions of the black characters involved, it provides an important aspect of their history in Western society, or perhaps not their history, but rather the history about how white men have built societies, based on their own belief in white superiority. These societies, as *TKAM* shows through the fictive society of Maycomb, are democratic, at least for white men of privilege and status. The very fact that the black characters are barely portrayed, and the African American characters suffer from a form of narrative amnesia or uninterest in their narratives and perspectives when it does not involve a white person. Tom Robinson is interesting because he is accused of a crime against a white woman, accused by a white man and represented in court by another white man. Calpurnia gains her narrative interest as a substitute mother for Scout and Jem, white children. This demonstrates how profoundly enmeshed the narrative perspective is with racism, and underlines the importance of reading the novel through a critical lens. This is an interesting matter for the students to discuss, how the democracy in Maycomb truly functions, and if they believe the more hidden forms of racism still take place, and how. Furthermore, the students can discuss how they can transfer this awareness of racism, to a Norwegian context, and what forms they believe it takes there. Although this research focuses on the English subject, one of the competence aims in Social

Studies is interesting as well in light of this discussion, “Discuss how equality matters to a democracy, and develop suggestions to how one can counteract prejudice, racism and discrimination.” (My own translation, Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020).

Another relevant competence aim, for the English subject after 10th graders “Read, interpret and reflect on English-language fiction, including young people’s literature” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2021). *TKAM* is a suitable novel for this purpose, in light of its canonical status in the US. It is also important to consider that many readers (and teachers) interpret the novel by reading with the intended message instead of reading against it, as Macaluso (2017) pointed out. If teachers want to use *TKAM* in the classroom, they need to make their students aware of the difference between new- and old racism, and through this knowledge they will most likely identify a lot of racist evidence in the novel that they overlooked the first time. A practical way of doing this, is to ask the pupils to read certain passages of the novel. As Macaluso (2017, p. 281) experienced and recommends, have the pupils read a passage both with and against *TKAM*’s ordinary antiracist intentions. The pupils might also discuss how the textual evidence of old racism might contribute to hide the evidence of new racism. In light of this discussion, it might be wise to educate the students in advance about Whiteness and Toni Morrison’s (1992) terms, African Americanism; the Africanist shadows of the white protagonists. An interesting matter to discuss, is Atticus’ role as a “white saviour” and hero. Questions worth examining can be; how does Atticus’ privilege affect his role? Would he be manufactured the same way if the narrator of the novel was someone else than his own daughter? Who is the main reason for Atticus’ heroic status, and how is this person portrayed? Does Atticus deserve his heroic status today? Does Atticus show empathy or sympathy towards Tom Robinson? These questions are relevant in terms of this competence aim in English after Vg1 “explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the English-speaking world based on historical contexts” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2021). When reading both with and against *TKAM*, or identifying evidence of both old and new racism, the students are encouraged to explore and reflect on diversity and social conditions in the South of the US during The Great Depression, and to discuss whether some of it applies to modern Western society as well.

Equality and equal rights are values that have been fought for throughout history and which are in constant need of protection and reinforcement. School shall present knowledge and

promote attitudes which safeguard these values. (...) we need acknowledgement and appreciation of differences. Human beings are vulnerable and make mistakes. Forgiveness, charity and solidarity are necessary principles for the growth and development of human beings. Each person's convictions and principles must be taken seriously so that we can all think, believe and express ourselves freely. (Core curriculum, Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020)

With this passage from the core curriculum in mind, it would be interesting to examine equality and equal rights in *TKAM*. Not just regarding race, but also gender and age. Further on, this discussion might lead to a conversation about intersectionality; identifying how matters such as racism, stereotypes, gender roles and sexism co-relate, both in the novel and in real life. Through my own reading of *TKAM* I have explored how race and class intersect, how sexuality becomes contested and racialized and how white masculinity and black masculinity exist in a hierarchy. Further on in this core curricula passage, The Directorate of Education (2020) underlines the importance of safeguarding the values of equality and equal rights. I would suggest that by identifying racism, stereotypes, gender roles and sexism in literature, such as *TKAM*, the students will be more aware of how these matters function and intersect in real life as well. In other words, examining these matters through a novel, like *TKAM*, would contribute to both knowledge and acknowledgement of the importance of equality and equal rights, in addition to an increased awareness of how racism can take place in other forms than through physical violence.

When addressing subjects like racism and equality, it naturally implies ethical considerations. As stated in the core curriculum:

Ethical awareness, which means balancing different considerations, is necessary if one is to be a reflecting and responsible human being. The teaching and training must develop the pupils' ability to make ethical assessments and help them to be cognisant of ethical issues. (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020).

There are several passages in *TKAM* that are interesting to look at from this perspective. For instance, whether it is ethical when Atticus chooses not to press charges against Boo Radley for killing Bob Ewell. This is interesting in many ways, not least from the perspective of race.

Tom Robinson represents a black man who is out on trial for a crime he did not commit, while Boo Radley is not put on trial for a crime he did commit. Except for this episode, Atticus seems to uphold a great respect for the law; that respect seems to be of more significance to him than the conviction of Tom Robinson in court. Is it ethical of Atticus to respect the jury's conviction, or should he have fought harder to help Tom, through an appeal at least? What does this tell us about Atticus' empathy towards Tom Robinson? After the students have discussed these questions separately, it would be interesting to have them look at them in comparison. What if Tom Robinson was white and convicted the same way, would Atticus accept that so easily? Or, what if Boo Radley was black, would he be let off the hook the way he was? Critical questions towards the narrative and intended message, is necessary to acknowledge the possibility that the forever loved hero, Atticus Finch, might not deserve his status, at least not without questioning and consideration of his position, whiteness and privilege in the fictive society of Maycomb.

Another interesting aspect to consider, is the power of language. According to The Directorate of Education, "Language gives us a sense of belonging and cultural awareness. ... Knowledge about the linguistic diversity in society provides all pupils with valuable insight into different forms of expression, ideas and traditions." (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). In *TKAM* language divides the privileged from the unfortunate others in many ways. As I have mentioned, the young narrator Scout is well aware that "nigger-talk" is below their own standard, as she expresses that it is not "right", which in other words means it is wrong. "Cal, why do you talk nigger-talk to the – to your folks when you know it's not right?" "Well, in the first place I'm black –" "That doesn't mean you hafta talk that way when you know better" (Lee, 1960, p. 136). For Calpurnia, her way of speaking is a part of her own identity as a black woman living in the Southern town of Maycomb. So, when labelling her way of speaking as wrong, does that extend to her entire identity? Would it be allowed for a black person to describe "white-talk" as wrong? In *TKAM*, Calpurnia actually corrects Scout when she is using "nigger-talk", as she does not see it fit for a young, white girl to talk that way (Lee, 1960, p. 44). These are other examples of some interesting questions and angles of approach for the students to discuss, and to identify whether they can relate to the power structures of language and dialects in our society today.

Another important aspect, that is mentioned several times in LK20 and is one of the interdisciplinary topics, is democracy and citizenship.

A democratic society is based on the idea that all citizens have equal rights and opportunities to participate in the decision-making processes. Protecting the minority is an important principle in a democratic state governed by law and in a democratic society. A democratic state also protects indigenous peoples and minorities. The indigenous- people perspective is part of the pupils' education in democracy. (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020)

In light of this, it is important to raise awareness of how democratic values and basic human rights function in *TKAM*, considering race, gender and privilege. Who has a voice? How do they use it? Who needs protection and from whom. Who is superior and who is assumed inferior? Who is the protector, and thus the superior? Do the key human rights apply to all the citizens of Maycomb? After discussing this in light of the novel, the pupils might consider how democracy functions today in Norway, again considering how race, gender and privilege affect our opportunities in life. For further discussion, the pupils can consider and discuss these passages in the core curriculum, focusing on equality and diversity: “School shall promote democratic values and attitudes that can counteract prejudice and discrimination. Pupils shall learn in school to respect the fact that people are different and learn to solve conflicts peacefully.” and “Nurturing diversity on the one hand and including the individual on the other demands awareness of values and the exercising of professional judgment.” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020).

5. Conclusion

For decades *TKAM* has been taught in American schools and it is considered a cornerstone of American literature. Although the story is set in the US and provides information about the American history, the main themes in the novel can be relevant to use in the Norwegian classroom as well, with an antiracist pedagogical approach. In the core curriculum, the LK20 underlines the importance of teaching about equality, diversity, democracy, cultural- and historical insight and awareness, equal opportunities, discrimination, prejudice and racism –

to mention some of the relevant terms in light of my research of *TKAM*. Even though *TKAM* is a marvellous novel, I believe it also contains proof of what Toni Morrison (1992) calls American Africanism and whiteness walking hand in hand. I had to read it again, through a more nuanced and critical lens to see it, which I assume regards most white readers. Atticus is a role model in many ways and we can easily find literary evidence of his greatness. However, it is important to question whether Atticus Finch would be manufactured as a hero without his Africanist shadows, Tom Robinson and Calpurnia. Perhaps it is in fact the sad fate of Tom Robinson, who puts Atticus Finch on his pedestal. It is about time we start to look at Atticus Finch more critically, searching for traces of whiteness in the very character of whom we all love. Is he the perfect, white American? Or is he a product of his time, a product of his place in the social hierarchy which provides him the position as a cherished white saviour? Does *TKAM* contribute to equality, or does it simply make white people pity black people, and thereby contribute to promote segregation instead? In light of these questions, it is relevant to briefly point to *TKAM*'s follow-up, *Go Set a Watchman* by Harper Lee (2015). In this novel it is made clear that Atticus is a racist, who even attended a Ku Klux Klan meeting and encouraged pro-segregation speakers. The interesting part is that in the setting of *TKAM* in the 1930's the African American residents kept to themselves, thus they did not "disturb" or interfere with the white men's business. In the 1950's, the African American citizens wanted basic human rights like education and work. In other words, they now "got in the way" of the white men. The more hidden racists in *TKAM* show their true nature in *Go Set a Watchman*, which makes this novel important to keep in mind when reading and teaching *TKAM* in light of an antiracist approach.

My overall aim throughout this thesis, was to explore how English teachers in a Norwegian context can transfer the experiences and research made in America regarding antiracist pedagogy and to find evidence of whiteness and so-called new racism in *TKAM*. In other words, how can we use *TKAM* in a Norwegian classroom to increase the students' knowledge of racism, with a main focus to make them aware of their own race and how it affects them both in their everyday life, but also how it affects their own interpretation of literature, such as *TKAM*. During this research I was constantly learning more about how complex racism is, and how it is not as 'simple' as "black and white". Racism is tied together with privilege and discrimination, in other words, it is important to look at other aspects and not just racial

oppression; gender roles, class and sexuality play an important part in the overall term 'racism'. This is an important aspect to consider in the Norwegian context.

Macaluso (2017) clearly states that it is helpful to differ between old- and new racism when teaching *TKAM*. His own experience is that if one is going to identify the traces of new racism, which is more clandestine, one needs to read against the grain of the intended reading of *TKAM*. Further on, Macaluso (2017, p. 281) briefly exemplifies the difference between reading with versus reading against *TKAM*, which was something Ms. Allen also experienced success in her classroom, according to Borsheim-Black (2015). Reading with the intended message revolves around viewing Atticus as a hero, which automatically leads to the assumption that his lifestyle and values will resolve the issue of racism. It simplifies Tom Robinson as a black man who needs saving, in addition to being a poor black man shot by the police. In other words, sympathy and pity. On the other hand, it is possible to read against: addressing Atticus' privilege, identifying new racism and old racism, consider Harper Lee's position, questioning where Tom's point of view is and challenging stereotypical portrayals (Macaluso, 2017, p. 281). This discussion is just as relevant in a Norwegian classroom as it is in America. Dividing racism into old and new racism might be a simple approach of a subject of such complexity, although in order to teach Norwegian Secondary and Upper Secondary students, it might be beneficial to simplify the complexity of racism to avoid unnecessary confusion, especially given the timeframe available to cover the different subjects. It is extremely important today, in our often multicultural classrooms, to be aware of the more hidden and complex signs of so-called new racism, both when studying and teaching literature, but also in real life situations. It is fair to assume that identifying evidence of both old- and new racism through literature, can be significant in order to identify the very same in our surroundings as well. Teachers can not force antiracism and awareness of whiteness on their students, but we can do like Ms. Allen, give them clues, ask critical questions, have them read against the ordinary intentions in a novel, and thus let them gradually increase their own awareness and thoughts around the matter of racism and whiteness.

My overall conclusion is that we could absolutely benefit from using *TKAM* in a Norwegian classroom, there are several competence aims in LK20 that underline the importance of teaching about equality, diversity, democracy, cultural- and historical insight and awareness, equal opportunities, discrimination and prejudice – to mention some of the relevant terms in light of my research of *TKAM*. I also believe we can learn a great deal from the experiences

made by the American teachers, Ms. Allen and Macaluso, and that a significant part of their teaching strategies can be transferred into a Norwegian context. *TKAM* is a great resource to identify both old- and new racism while examining the complexity of racism in light of intersectionality; identifying how racism is intertwined with class, gender, sexuality and religion.

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