

## The Intertextual Relationship between Sex and Crime in Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

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### Abstract

This study revolves around the intertextual relationship between sex and crime in Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Intertextuality in its simplest meaning means the shaping of a text's meaning by another text's meaning. This paper deals with the topic of intertextuality based on the theoretical background of Bakhtin's theory of intertextuality as developed by Julia Kristeva and other critics. The study hypothesizes that there is an intertextual relationship between sex and crime in the two selected novels. Actually, the two writers use different styles of writing to depict their stand against racism. This paper aims at investigating the phenomenon of intertextuality between the two novels Wright's *Native Son* and Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* in tackling the themes of sex and crime. By establishing an intertextual analogy between sex and crime, the two literary texts spotlight the predicament of discriminating people against their race or color. Richard Wright and Harper Lee use their novels to send warning messages against stereotyping the Afro-Americans because it

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propagates crime. Eventually, the human experiences as well as the themes of literary works are identified for their recurring resemblance through different eras.

**Key words: Intertextuality- racism- sex-crime- stereotyping- Bakhtin's theory.**

Richard Nathaniel Wright (1908 -1960) is a great American novelist who is well-known for his masterpiece *Native Son* (1940). In his literature he tackles the predicaments of racial discrimination and violence that face the Afro-Americans in the mid of the twentieth century America. Wright's most renowned novel, *Native Son*, introduces the story of the black twenty years old young man Bigger Thomas who lives in an absorbed poverty in one of Chicago's suburbs. Bigger has been accused of raping and killing the white young girl Mary Dalton. Actually, Wright is not apologizing for Bigger's crimes, but he wants to spotlight that Bigger and other Afro-Americans are a natural product of their white dominant racial society that shaped and classified them as criminals. In fact, readers are forced to choose between sympathizing with a rapist, or condemning him and ignoring that he was a victim of systemic racism. Noticeably, Bigger is found guilty in front of the court and sentenced to death for murder.

Nelle Harper Lee (1926 –2016) is an American novelist best known for her 1960 novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The plot and the characters of *To Kill a Mockingbird* are largely based on some incidents that occurred near Lee's hometown Monroeville, Alabama in 1936. In this novel, Lee addresses both racial injustice and the destruction of innocence. Additionally, the events of the novel take place in Maycomb County where the protagonist Afro-American, Tom Robinson, lives. Likewise, Tom Robinson is accused of raping and beating the white young girl Mayella Ewell. Although Atticus Finch, the lawyer, proves that Mayella is lying and she has made many sexual advances towards Tom, the jury convicts him guilty. Unfortunately, Tom is shot and killed while trying to escape from prison.

The study hypothesizes that there is an intertextual relationship between sex and crime in Wright's *Native Son* and Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. This paper deals with the topic of intertextuality based on the theoretical background of Bakhtin's theory of intertextuality as developed by Julia Kristeva and other critics. Richard Wright and Harper Lee use different styles of writing to portray their stand against racism. This paper aims at investigating the phenomenon of inter-textuality between the two novels Wright's *Native Son* and Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* in tackling the themes of sex and crime. There are a lot of similarities between both of them especially in handling the idea

of sex and/or rape as a motive for crime. The similarity in the prejudiced social and juristic injustice practiced against Afro-Americans in regard to stereotypical charges of sexual rape and crime is also very apparent in Wright's *Native Son* and Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The two native sons of America Bigger Thomas and Tom Robinson are facing the same miserable destiny which is to serve a jail for murder. More important, however, the two authors show that the white discriminating society in the two texts has convicted Bigger Thomas and Tom Robinson guilty even before the trial because of their race.

Richard Nordquist argues that "*Intertextuality*" refers to the interdependent ways in which texts stand in relation to one another (as well as to the culture at large) to produce meaning. They can influence each other, be derivative of, parody, reference, quote, contrast with, build on, draw from, or even inspire each other. Knowledge does not exist in a vacuum, and neither does literature"(n.p). In fact, the concept of intertextuality draws on Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theory of heteroglossia in literature. Bakhtin argues that "[e]ach word tastes of a context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions" (293). Commenting on the thematic social interrelationship among texts Parla elaborates that "what literature reflects are the common things; "in literature there is nothing "strange" or "from outside"(14). Implicitly, almost all

literary creations are based on comprehensive readings of archetypes of other literary creations. This process of intertextual reading leads to the "epistemological or sociological events that lie behind the appearance of a new literary genre" (Parla 14). In a similar vein, Julia Kristeva explains text as "a permutation of texts, intertextuality in the given text," where "several utterances, taken from other texts intersect and neutralize one another" (36). The idea of thematic and social influence among literary texts according to the above mentioned theoretical hypotheses is clear. That is to say, intertextuality in its simplest meaning means the shaping of a text's meaning by another text's meaning.

Relatedly, in the two selected novels both sexual rape and crime are inter-textually attached to the Afro-Americans. The white oppressors look down upon the blacks as mere rapists and criminals. Richard wright considers crime the sole possible response of oppressed people. Accordingly, Bigger Thomas does not become a criminal and a rapist out of free choice but rather because of some unfair racial circumstances over which he has no control. Meanwhile, Wright contends that racial injustice could lead to crime. Not only racial oppression could lead to crime, but also the stereotypical images of black men as sambos who are totally possessed with sex. The stereotypical charges of rape imposed on Bigger Thomas and Tom Robinson have aggravated their repressed feelings and pushed them to assert themselves

through committing crimes. By establishing an inter-textual analogy between sex and crime, the two texts *Native Son* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* spotlight the predicament of discriminating people against their race or skin color. The two writers Richard Wright and Harper Lee use their novels to send warning messages against stereotyping the Afro-American character as it naturally leads to crime.

Racial segregation is also inter-textually presented in *Native Son* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* as one of the manifestations of both sex and crime. During the 1930's and 1940's, the Afro-Americans were living in segregated areas which are completely isolated from white places. Bigger Thomas and Tom Robinson are confined to segregationist places of black ghetto spaces that completely exclude them. Bigger and his family live in "a one-room cage-like apartment on Chicago's South Side"(Macksey & moorer 5). In his book *How Bigger was Born*, Richard Wright describes Dixie, Chicago where Bigger lives "In Dixie there are two worlds. The white world and the black world, and they are physically separated" (25). Bigger lives in a completely segregated world in which, "[t]here are white schools and black schools, white churches and black churches, white business and black business, white graveyards and black graveyards, and, for all [he] know[s] white God and black God" (25). Likewise, Tom Robinson lives in a humiliating segregated ghetto in Maycomb,

Alabama where there are fences that isolate blacks from whites. Racial segregation is practiced everywhere even in churches. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lula is a black woman who mocks, Calpurina, the black housewife who works at the lawyer Atticus Finch. Lula disapproves Calpurina's act of accompanying the sons of Atticus Scout and Jem to their church. She tells Lula, "Stop right there, nigger." Lula stopped, but she said, "You ain't got no business bringin' white chillun here—they got their church, we got our'n. It is our church, ain't it, Miss Cal?" Calpurnia said, "It's the same God, ain't it?" (*Mockingbird* 63).

Oppressively enough, Bigger Thomas and Tom Robinson's first contact with the white world has brought them many troubles. Bigger has been sent to Mr. Dalton to work as a chauffeur. Blacks "cross the line only when whites invite them to do so (as servants or other menial workers), or as presumed criminals. No wonder that Bigger, whose crossing of the color line illustrates both propositions finds his choices so limited" (Eby n.p.). As long as Bigger has crossed the line, he is going to be accused of raping and killing Mary Dalton. Tom Robinson, too, will pay dear for crossing the fence of the whites. Although Mayella Ewell invites him, he has been charged of raping and hitting her. Atticus asks Mayella Ewell, "Didn't you ever ask him to come inside the fence before?" She was prepared now. "I did not, I certainly did not." "One did not's enough," said Atticus

serenely. "You never asked him to do odd jobs for you before?" "I mighta," conceded Mayella. "There was several niggers around" (*Mockingbird* 98). The lawyer investigates Mayella in front of the jury. Her answers are nervous and reveal her lying. She was the one who asked Tom to come inside her house, but he was wrongly accused of trespassing and breaking in her house.

In the two texts, Bigger Thomas and Tom Robinson are intertextually suffering from racial injustice and racial segregation practiced against them by the white oppressors. Segregation takes many forms social, political, and economic. Economic segregation is represented in job opportunities. Both Bigger and Tom are deprived of an equal job opportunity that could improve their financial status. They could only have jobs of service and other menial works. In *Native son*, Bigger laments his bad luck in this world and tells Max about his dreams and hopes that will never become true because he is a black man who lives in the world of whites. "I wanted to be an aviator once...I wanted to be in the army once...I'd like to be in business. But what a chance has a black man got in business? We ain't got no money. We don't own no mines, no railroads, no nothing. They don't want us to. They make us stay in one little spot" (*Native Son* 327). As a native born son of America, Bigger is supposed to serve the army. But historical facts reveal that blacks were segregated against



even in the army. They were given menial jobs to serve white soldiers.

The only job available for Bigger is working as a chauffeur at his landlord Mr. Dalton's: a job that keeps him in a subordinate position in order to maintain the stability of the wide gap between the two races. Bigger does not even have the right to refuse that job as his mother Mrs. Thomas says, "we wouldn't have to live in this garbage dump if you had any manhood in you"(12). Bigger submissively thinks that "he could refuse it and starve. It maddened him to think that he didn't have a wider choice of action" (*Native Son* 16). With all these harsh practices of segregation and economic deprivation, criminal acts come as a normal outcome. Similarly, Tom Robison, in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, suffers both segregation and economic repression. Tom is working in Mr. Link Deas's farm. He is doing some menial labor such as collecting cotton and other farm works:

Were you acquainted with Mayella Violet Ewell?" asked Atticus. "Yes suh, I had to pass her place goin' to and from the field every day." "Whose field?" "I picks for Mr. Link Deas." "Were you picking cotton in November?" "No suh, I works in his yard fall an' wintertime. I works pretty steady for him all year round, he's got a lot of pecan trees'n things (*Mockingbird* 101-02).

Significantly, these forms of discrimination lead to inhuman and poor living conditions among Afro-Americans who are looked down upon in these racial societies as pariahs and beasts. Feeling that they are powerless and do not have the minimum account of humanism lead them to avenge this racial oppression through some subservient criminal acts.

More oppressively, when Tom Robinson is imprisoned, his wife Helen and her three babies are starved. Helen suffers from racial injustice; she cannot find a work to feed her three young children. The employers are whites and they do not agree to employ Helen because of her husband's fabricated sexual crime. Scout tells; "[...]Helen's finding it hard to get work these days...[...]" "Folks aren't anxious to—to have anything to do with any of his family." "Just what did he do, Cal?" Calpurnia sighed. "Old Mr. Bob Ewell accused him of rapin' his girl an' had him arrested an' put in jail—" (*Mockingbird* 65). More oppressively, the children of these black families suffered the most because they were living in unhealthy and merciless conditions. "It was customary for field Negroes with tiny children to deposit them in whatever shade there was while their parents worked—usually the babies sat in the shade between two rows of cotton. Those unable to sit were strapped papoose-style on their mothers' backs, or resided in extra cotton bags" (65).

Here, the white oppressors are intended to keep the blacks poor and powerless in order to maintain their supremacy, power, and control over them. Economic segregation practiced by the racial system over the blacks leads them to live poverty-stricken.

Ironically enough, the title of the two texts *Native Son* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* is inter-textually very symbolic. The title of the *Native Son* novel symbolizes residential segregation. That is to say "even though Bigger has born in America, he is an American outsider. As a Negro, he recognizes his exclusion from American life" (Turner 164). Actually, Bigger is fully aware of that racial segregation and racial discrimination. He expresses his agony to his friend Gus and says, "I know I oughtn't think about it, but I can't help it...We live here and they live there. We black and they white. They got things and we ain't. They do things and we can't. It's just like living in jail. Half time I feel like I'm on the outside of the world" (*Native Son* 23). Here, it is very obvious how the title is very symbolic. Although Bigger has been born in the United State of America, he is totally deprived of any rights of American citizenship. Moreover, Mrs. Dalton's blindness is a symbolic one. It symbolizes that the whites do not want to see the effect of their oppressive racial segregation on the blacks.

The title of *To kill a Mockingbird* is also very symbolic. It symbolizes the assassination of innocence represented by the innocent protagonist black man Tom Robinson. In the novel,

Harper Lee stresses the viewpoint that mockingbirds are innocent harmless birds that killing is a crime in itself. “Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don’t eat up people’s gardens, don’t nest in corncribs, they don’t do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill a mockingbird” (*Mockingbird* 49). Tom is a representative of innocence in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. He has been oppressively accused of raping the white young girl Mayella Ewell. As the story unfolds, it appears that she has been making sexual advances towards him and he refuses her. As Tom Robinson is a black man, the court finds him guilty and he has been mercilessly killed. Scout narrates:

He was running. It was during their exercise period. They said he just broke into a blind raving charge at the fence and started climbing over. Right in front of them—” “Didn’t they try to stop him? Didn’t they give him any warning?” Aunt Alexandra’s voice shook. [...]They got him just as he went over the fence. They said if he’d had two good arms he’d have made it, he was moving that fast. Seventeen bullet holes in him. They didn’t have to shoot him that much. [...]“What was one Negro, more or less, among two hundred of ‘em? (*Mockingbird* 125).

This quotation is highly suggestive of the fact that killing the innocent black man Tom Robinson symbolizes the killing of

innocence itself. That is why the title of the novel is very symbolic because it alludes to Tom Robinson's unfair murder. In another scene, Jem's father Atticus warns him not to kill any mockingbird while practicing shooting (a sport that was dedicated for the whites only). In Atticus Finch's viewpoint, the lawyer who defends Tom Robinson, killing a mockingbird is a great sin. "Atticus said to Jem one day, 'I'd rather you shot at tin cans in the back yard, but I know you'll go after birds. Shoot all the bluejays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird" (*Mockingbird* 49).

As the extraction reveals, it is the first time for Atticus to consider killing a mockingbird as "a sin." This actually comes after Atticus has been appointed by the court to defend Tom Robison. It was beyond doubt for Atticus that Tom Robinson is innocent and he has not raped Mayella Ewell. However, Atticus has proved that Tom is innocent; the court has found him guilty.

Additionally, the two texts *Native Son* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* are inter-textually sharing the same idea of portraying Negroes as mere animals. When the police officers arrested Bigger Thomas, they dragged him and repressively treated him as an animal "Lynch 'im! That black...Kill that black ape!" (*Native Son* 253). In his trial, Bigger is described by the whites as an ape "He looks exactly like an ape! ...His lower jaw protrudes obnoxiously, reminding one of a jungle beast" (260). In

fact, lynching and other violent practices against Afro-Americans were practiced by the racial system in order to implement the policies of racial segregation and to terrify them. Moreover, the legal system of the whites at that time encourages the mob violence and lynching against the blacks. "Lynching and mob rule become an accepted part of the social [and legal] order of Adams County, throughout Mississippi, the South, and the rest of the United States" (Walker 15-16).

Concomitantly, Richard Wright in his book, *How Bigger was Born*, describes the racial relationship between the whites and the blacks as "volatile and tense... that if a Negro rebels against rule and taboo, he is lynched and the reason for the lynching is usually called 'rape', that catchword which has garnered such vile connotations that it can raise a mob anywhere in the South pretty quickly, even today" (26). Again, same as many bad connotations that are attached to the blacks; the idea of animal-based degradation has a great share. Noticeably, when Bigger tells his friend Jack that he wants to go to the white nightclub in order to watch his favorite movie, Jack remembers him of his portrayed animal character "Man, if them folks saw you they'd run... They 'd think a gorilla broke loose from the zoo and put on a tuxedo" (*Native Son* 33).

Elsewhere, Bigger is aware of their status as animals when he describes the ghetto where he and his family live "They keep us

bottled up here like wild animals" (233). They are racially segregated against race and are entrapped in separate areas just like they separate wild animals. His mother Mrs. Thomas also says, we "live like pigs" (15). Robert Felgar argues that "The black ghetto is the kingdom of the beast. Its streets are long paths leading through a dense jungle, lit here and there with torches held high in invisible hands" (103). Indeed, the rat image in the very early beginning of the novel is very pivotal. Vermin stricken entrapments in which Bigger finds himself and his family entrapped in poverty and dirt same as the rat. The killing of rat is a symbolic act of vindication and revolt foreshadowing racial verbal oppression. The rat image symbolizes both Bigger's poor conditions and his final tragic fate. In both novels animals are killed in reference to the future killing of the protagonists.

Similarly, the image of the dead dog in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is inter- textually very symbolic. Atticus shot the dog Tim Johnson who belongs to Harry Johnson. The killing of the dog, Tim, stands clearly for the killing of the main protagonist character Tom Robison. Ironically, Atticus Finch who kills the dog, Tim, is a white man and Zeboo (a Negro boy and the son of Calpurina the housekeeper of Finch's family) is the one who collects the dog's body and buries it after being shot by Atticus. More oppressively, the whites of this racial system are calling Zeboo "the garbage collector" (63). Scout says; "[w]e saw Zeebo

drive up. He took a pitchfork from the back of the garbage truck and gingerly lifted Tim Johnson. He pitched the dog onto the truck, then poured something from a gallon jug on and around the spot where Tim fell" (*Mockingbird* 53).

The killing of the dog Tim by the white master Atticus foreshadows the killing of the innocent black man Tom Robinson. Both Tom and Tim have been cruelly shot by their white oppressors. More to the point, Scout is not pleased of her father Atticus shameful act and tells,"Atticus is real old, but I wouldn't care if he couldn't do anything—I wouldn't care if he couldn't do a blessed thing" (54).

Furthermore, in the two novels *Native Son* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, readers are inter-textually introduced to the two depicted radical characters Mary Dalton and Atticus Finch who adopt the communist ideas. To begin with, Mary Dalton treats Bigger in a humanely and friendly way. Mary and her communist friend, Jan Erlone, have asked Bigger to take them to a Negro restaurant; moreover, they ask him to sit with them on one table. "He did not understand them, distrusted them, really hated them. He was puzzled as to why they were treating him this way" (*Native Son* 71). When Jan extends his hand for Bigger to shake his hand, Bigger is confused and angry. He thinks "Were they making fun of him? What was it that they wanted? Why didn't they leave him alone?...He felt foolish sitting behind the steering



wheel like this and letting a white man hold his hand"(67). Samuel Sillen elaborates on why Jan's friendly behavior confuses Bigger: "His good will toward Bigger Thomas outruns his understanding of Bigger. By overwhelming Bigger with impetuous kindness, by over-reaching himself in his quite sincere demonstration of friendship, Jan manages to increase the bewilderment of the man whom he would enlighten" (85).

Elsewhere, Bigger sits between Mary and Jan in Mary's car while Jan is driving. Mary also befriendly exposes her relationship with Jan to Bigger while the latter drives her to the university. On the contrary, these practices cause Bigger's anxiety and nervousness. In this respect, Max lerner elaborates on how the laws of segregation were oppressively practiced against the Afro-Americans during that period:

No Negro in the South could break the laws and traditions of segregation when he went to work on a bus, or wanted to eat lunch or dinner in a restaurant, when he tried to travel on a train, when he wanted to see a movie or a play. In most Southern cities no Negro would dare park his car in front of the post office without running the risk of being considered "an uppity nigger," nor would he dare walk late at night in the white section of the town (519).

Inter-textually, Atticus Finch in, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is also interested in communist ideas. He is described by the whites of the Maycomb County as "a nigger-lover." Francis, Cecil, and others are anti- communists who mock and tease Scout for her father's sympathetic behavior towards the black man Tom Robinson. It is worthy to mention that in the time of writing *To Kill a Mockingbird* there was an atmosphere of accusations of disloyalty and lack of patriotism prevalent in American society and politics against those who go against the mainstream of American cultural awareness. Believers in communism and black sympathizers were equally accused of treason. In this respect, Lerner writes:

This was the American mood in the inquisitional years of the early 1950s that came to be called the era of "McCarthyism" after its principal symbol, and caused a good deal of apprehension abroad. One may over-emphasize what Justice Douglas called the "black curtain of fear": there was much double-think by liberals who assumed that none of accusations could be true and that the accusers were always self-interested and hysterical (458).

Significantly, this is the chaotic racial atmosphere that prevailed especially in the South during that period of the whites' discriminative history against all the Afro- Americans as well as their sympathizers.

Relatedly, the chauvinist nature of Francis, the grandson of Scout's Aunt Alexandra, is very obvious in the following quotation. He tells Scout that:

If Uncle Atticus lets you run around with stray dogs, that's his own business, like Grandma says, so it ain't your fault. I guess it ain't your fault if Uncle Atticus is a nigger-lover besides, but I'm here to tell you it certainly does mortify the rest of the family—(*Mockingbird* 45).

In fact, Francis's grandmother thinks that Atticus's attitude as a "nigger-lover" will ruin their family's reputation. So, she tells her son "[...] it's bad enough he lets you all run wild, but now he's turned out a nigger-lover we'll never be able to walk the streets of Maycomb again. He's ruinin' the family, that's what he's doin'."(45).

Furthermore, Atticus who is interested in the communist ideas also refuses the Ku Klux Klan's laws. Benjamin Quarles contends that "the Klan used the methods of burning, warning, and disguise to terrify Afro-Americans. It reached the pinnacle of power in the mid-twenties when its members exceeded four million whites" (192). Again, Atticus accepts to defend the black man, Tom Robinson, who has been accused of raping the white woman Mayella Ewell. The communist Atticus has been threatened by the

whites to be killed if he accepts to defend Tom, but he courageously gives no interest. Scout narrates:

The Ku Klux's gone," said Atticus. "It'll never come back." I walked home with Dill and returned in time to overhear Atticus saying to Aunty, [...] She won't let him alone about Tom Robinson. She almost said Atticus was disgracin' the family. Scout... I'm scared." "Scared'a what?" "Scared about Atticus. Somebody might hurt him (*Mockingbird* 78).

This quote shows Atticu's refusal to the discriminative oppressive procedures of the Klan that appears to regain and achieve the racial white supremacy. The Klan's laws, lynching, racial segregation, and disfranchisement all these oppressive racial methods caused the eruption of both race violence and crime.

Additionally, fear is a lucid-shared inter-textual element in both novels *Native Son* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The blacks are always afraid of their white victimizer who lynches, segregates, and terrorizes them. Bigger Thomas and Tom Robinson are always afraid when dealing with white people. Fear is the only factor that control their reactions and responses. When Bigger deals with Mary Dalton, fear and terror control him. "[T]he principal fear which controls Bigger's life is that of self-knowledge" (Montgomery 455). Tom Robinson, too, is

overwhelmed by fear when he deals with Mayella Ewell. When Mayella makes her sexual advances towards Tom, he is very frightened and scared. Tom tells:

She reached up an' kissed me 'side of th' face. She says she never kissed a grown man before an' she might as well kiss a nigger. She says what her papa do to her don't count. She says, 'Kiss me back, nigger.' I say Miss Mayella lemme outa here an' tried to run but she got her back to the door an' I'da had to push her. I didn't wanta harm her, Mr. Finch, an' I say lemme pass[...]"Mr. Finch, I was runnin' so fast I didn't know what happened." [...]"Why did you run?" "I was scared, suh." "Why were you scared?" "Mr. Finch, if you was a nigger like me, you'd be scared, too (*Mockingbird* 103-04).

Similarly, when Bigger goes to meet the Daltons for the first time he thinks to take his knife because he is very frightened. "Fearful of brushing against the white housekeeper who has answered the door, Bigger tries to shrink his body by holding his breath as he walks past her into the house" (Fishburn n.p.). When Mary exposes her secret relationship with her communist friend Jan to Bigger, he does not feel safe. Bigger is very frightened as Mary is telling him her secrets. Mary befriends Bigger and tells him that she is not going to the university as she has told her father and she is going to meet her friend Jan. Bigger is worried

and confused: "She was an odd girl, all right. He felt something in her over and above the fear she inspired in him. She responded to him as if he were human, as he lived in the same world as she... Was this some kind of game?" (*Native Son* 66). Obviously, Mary "overwhelms and irritates Bigger with her patronizing and overly friendly attitude" (Taylor 49). Bigger is terrified of being lynched when Mrs. Dalton enters Mary's room and discovers his presence, so he commits a crime and kills Mary. Bigger tells the lawyer Max that "I couldn't do nothing when I turned around and saw that woman coming to that bed... I didn't know what I'm doing ...It was like man stepped inside of my skin and started acting for me" (*Native Son* 326).

All in all, Bigger and Toms' inter-textual hatred of whites manifests itself in their criminal subversive acts. For them criminality is a way of protesting against all forms of the aforementioned oppression. They have avenged their racial segregation in their own ways. Sexual arousal is the mutual motive which they use to avenge themselves on the whites. Ironically enough, when Bigger is the doer of the rape crime, Tom is the receiver of the same action. Milton Rugoff resembles Bigger to "a vessel that keeps boiling over, and promises some day when clamped too tight, to explode" (52). Bigger's desire towards Mary is not only a sexual desire, it is the desire of raping and destroying her as she is a representative of the white racial

oppression practiced against him. When Max asks Bigger why he committed such a crime, he answers him:

I reckon it was because they say we black men do that anyway. Mr. Max, you know what some white men say we black men do? They say we rape white women when we got the clap and say we do that because we believe that if we rape white women then we 'll get rid of the clap[...] They say things like that and they say it to kill us (*Native Son* 325).

A focal point here is that Bigger wants to destroy Mary because she is one of the members of that racial white society that kills and ruins him every day. Although Bigger does not physically rape Mary, he abuses and rapes her psychologically:

Had he raped her? Yes, he had raped her. Every time he felt as he had felt that night, he raped. But rape was not what one did to women. Rape was what one felt when one's back was against a wall and one had to strike out, whether one wanted to or not, to keep the pack from killing one. He committed rape every time he looked into a white face. [...]But it was rape when he cried out in hate deep in his heart as he felt the strain of living day by day. That, too, was rape (*Native Son* 213-14).

Here, it is clear that sex and crime are inter-textually associated with Afro-Americans in both literary works. They are stereotypically considered criminals and rapists by birth according to the unjust view of their white oppressors. Robert Felgar links between Bigger's criminality and those repressive social factors. He comments that "*Native Son* is the story of any brutalized and hopeless human, regardless of race. Abused and despised as Bigger was, anyone could become a Bigger Thomas; it is environment, not racial predisposition, that produces human monsters" (9-10). Bigger assures himself and his presence through committing the crime of murder. Through crime, he acquires an identity. Bigger tells Max that he "didn't know [he] was really alive in this world until [he] felt things hard enough to kill for 'em" (*Native Son* 392). In order to find a meaning for his life:

He got his knife from his pocket and opened it and stood by the furnace, looking at Mary's throat. He saw a pile of old newspapers stacked carefully in a corner. He got a thick wad of them and held them under the head. He touched the sharp blade to the throat[...] Gently, he sawed the blade into the flesh and stuck a bone. He gritted his teeth and cut harder [...] Then blood crept outward in widening circles of pink on the newspapers (*Native Son* 90-91).

Here, after committing his crime, Bigger does not think to run away, but he decides to remain in order to witness the torture of



those who have tortured him long before. Ann Joyce contends that "Bigger's accidental murder of Mary is an inevitable outcome of the socioeconomic elements of a Jim Crow society" (56). As a matter of fact, the court sentences Bigger to death. He goes to his death and says to Max, "I'm all right, Mr, Max. Just go and tell Ma I was all right and not to worry none, see? Tell her I was all right and wasn't crying none" (*Native Son* 392). Furthermore, this "repeated assurance[...] obviously means that Bigger is not at the mercy of fear, that he is sure he will not, as he had dreaded, have to be dragged to the electric chair[...] filled with animal terror because he had not been able to find human dignity" (Siegel 113).

Likewise, Tom Robison in, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, also intertextually suffers a tragic inevitable fate. Although mostly everyone in Maycomb county Knows that the Ewells are a disgrace and are not to be trusted, the court finds Tom Robison guilty. He is accused of raping the white girl Myella Ewell although she keeps making sexual advances towards him. It is clear that Tom Robinson is convicted because he is a Negro whose accuser is white. Tom is afraid of being lynched due to committing a sexual crime:

[W]hy did you run so fast?" "I says I was scared, suh." "If you had a clear conscience, why were you scared?" "Like I says before, it weren't safe for any nigger to be in a—fix like that." "But you weren't in a fix—you testified that you

were resisting Miss Ewell. Were you so scared that she'd hurt you, you ran, a big buck like you?" "No suh, I's scared I'd be in court, just like I am now." "Scared of arrest, scared you'd have to face up to what you did?" "No suh, scared I'd hafta face up to what I didn't do. (*Mockingbird* 105-06).

This quotation shows that lynching substitutes the legal system at that time. It is an unlawful and an extrajudicial killing practiced by some of the white oppressors against the blacks who are suspected of a crime. Max Lerner spots light on the facts concerning the unjust lynching system that used double standards in judging the crimes done by blacks:

White supremacy in the South has always used lynching as the ultimate sanction against the defilement of white blood. While these lynchings have steadily decreased [...], the Southern courts have operated on a double standard of justice in applying the laws against rape: most of the prosecutions are against Negroes, and even where whites are brought to trial they are not given the death penalty that is visited upon the Negroes (521)

Moreover, the white jury oppressively dismisses Mr. Link Deas when he testifies that Tom Robinson is a man of morals and has a good behavior. Noticeably, Tom spends eight years working

for Mr. Link. Scout tells; "Mr. Link Deas rose from the audience and announced: "I just want the whole lot of you to know one thing right now. That boy's worked for me eight years an' I ain't had a speck o'trouble outa him" (*Mockingbird* 104). As a matter of fact, the only witness of Tom's innocence is dismissed by the unjust judge because of racial injustice. So the judge furiously says, "*Shut your mouth, sir!*" [...]Get out of this room, sir, you hear me? I'll be damned if I'll listen to this case again!"(*Mockingbird* 104). At the end, Atticus summarizes the whole case not as a case of rape crime, but rather a case of racial injustice. The white girl Mayella is avenging her white supremacy against the black man, Tom, who refuses her sexual advances and seduction. Atticus bitterly says:

[T]his case should never have come to trial. This case is as simple as black and white. [...]The defendant is not guilty, but somebody in this courtroom is. [...]She tempted a Negro. "She was white, and she tempted a Negro. She did something that in our society is unspeakable: she kissed a black man. Not an old Uncle, but a strong young Negro man.[...] [T]he assumption—the evil assumption—that *all* Negroes lie, that *all* Negroes are basically immoral beings, that *all* Negro men are not to be trusted around our women, an assumption one associates with minds of their caliber (*Mockingbird* 108-09).

This extraction reveals how the whites look down upon the blacks. The blacks are liars and not to be trusted. For the whites, blacks are always associated with rape and criminal acts. Eventually, same like Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*, Tom Robinson has been mercilessly killed. The guards shot Tom while trying to escape from the prison. He has been killed for a sexual crime that he has not committed. "Tom's dead." "They shot him," (*Mockingbird* 125).

Finally, it seems that the two novels bear a lot of resemblance. The ideas that are discussed in the two novels *Native Son* and *To kill a Mockingbird* are thematically more or less the same. There is a kind of interaction and interrelationship between the two texts. The intertextuality among the themes of sex and crime is very obvious as well as the racial and unjust factors that lead to them. It is noteworthy that the intertextuality in its meaning is the idea of influence between two writers and it is a mutual exchange of literary sources. A plausible presumption is assumed that the intertextuality between the two texts *Native Son* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* is associated one way or another with the two writer's culture, experience, and language. Hence, the human experiences and the themes of literary works are recognized for their recurring resemblance through different historical ages.

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## تناص موضوعي الجنس والجريمة في روايتي ابن البلد لريتشارد رايت وأن تقتل طائرا بريئا لهاربر لي

### ملخص

تدور هذه الدراسة حول فكره التناص بين موضوعي الجنس والجريمة في روايتي "ابن البلد" لريتشارد رايت و "أن تقتل طائرا بريئا" ل هاربر لي. والتناص في أبسط معانيه وصوره يعنى هذا التشابه والتأثر الكائن بين أحد النصوص الأدبية وغيره من النصوص الأدبية الأخرى. وتفترض هذه الدراسة وجود هذا النوع من التشابه والتناص بين فكري الجنس والجريمة في روايتي "ابن البلد" و "أن تقتل طائرا بريئا". وقد استخدم كلا الكاتبين ريتشارد رايت وهاربر لي أساليب وأنماط مختلفة من الكتابة للتعبير عما يدور بخاطرهم بل ويؤرقهم نحو مشكله العنصرية في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. وتهدف هذه الورقة البحثية الى تتبع ظاهره التناص في كلا الروايتين فيما يخص فكري الجنس والجريمة تحديدا، وكيف قام كل من ريتشارد رايت وهاربر لي بتناولهما. كما يهدف البحث أيضا الى الوقوف على ظاهره التناص بين الروايتين موضع الدراسة عن طريق اجراء مقارنة تحوى أوجه التشابه فيما بينهما خاصة فيما يخص تسليط الضوء على مشكله التمييز بين الاشخاص على أساس الجنس أو اللون والتي برع كلا الكاتبين ريتشارد رايت وهاربر لي في القاء الضوء عليها. ومن أوجه التناص بين النصين أيضا ان كلا الكاتبين قد استخدمتا الروايتين لإرسال العديد من رسائل التحذير ضد التمييز العنصري وغيره من أشكال الاضطهاد التي يمارسها البيض ضد الأمريكان ذو الاصل الأفريقي لأن هذا من شأنه أن يوفر بيئة خصبة لارتكاب الجرائم وغيرها من أشكال العنف كنوع من المقاومة. وأخيرا، فان الخبرات الإنسانية المتراكمة وأيضا تلك الافكار

التي تتناولها النصوص الأدبية بمختلف أنواعها كانت ولا زالت يشوبها هذا النوع من التشابه والتكرار بالرغم من اختلاف العصور والأزمان.

الكلمات المفتاحية:التناس - العنصرية - الجنس - الجريمة - الصورة النمطية - نظرية باختين