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# **The Child's Perspective in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner***

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**Magnhild Haugen**

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## Abstract

This thesis will explore how adult fiction invites empathy in the reader and lets the reader experience and learn through reading. I will look at how adult fiction narrated through the child's perspective invites the reader to an empathetic reflection. By using *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, I will identify how narrative techniques are used in order to promote empathy. Novels influenced by the child's perspective might encourage an empathetic reflection of unfamiliar social conflicts and promote an understanding of otherness and other cultures.

Chapter 1 will look at narration in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and how the narrator takes advantage of the space between the narrating self and the experiencing self. The child focalizer is limited in terms of knowledge and does not understand all aspects of the society she is set within. The reader is allowed to partake in Scout's developmental process as she learns to see past prejudices and understands how social code is constructed. The access to Scout's mind might encourage an empathetic reflection of this process.

Chapter 2 will examine how the narrator in *The Kite Runner* functions as an important element in how the novel invites to an empathetic reflection of Amir's relationship to his father and the Afghan society presented in the novel. Furthermore, the relationship between Pashtuns and Hazaras is portrayed through the narrative perspective, and the dynamics in the relationship between Amir and Hassan reflects the conflict between moral responsibility and social code. By looking at narrative techniques in the novel it is possible to understand how the child's perspective promotes empathy.



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# 1 Introduction

Children view and experience the world in various ways. Looking through the lens of a child can be both intimidating and enriching. As I am going to be an English teacher, I would say that both me and my students benefit from confronting unknown situations through novels narrated by children. Not only can children make hard and difficult topics easier to understand, they also reveal something about how a child develops and conforms to a society.

This thesis will look at the narrative perspective in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) by Harper Lee and *The Kite Runner* (2003) by Khaled Hosseini. Both novels are strongly influenced by the child's perspective in the portrayal of social injustice. Scout and Amir are children set in a particular society, and both reflect and question the social structure they are a part of. I will try to show how the children's voices possess traits that might invite the reader to an empathetic reflection. This way, the reader is introduced to a versatile portrayal of other societies. My focus will be on how narrative elements in the novels promote empathy for characters in certain situations.

Both novels portray a culture that might be unfamiliar to the reader. Most readers are unaware of social conflicts in other parts of the world. Jack G. Shaheen, a professor specializing in ethnic and racial stereotypes, found that media coverage of the Middle East was dominated by misconceptions of the Arab people. "Many myths perpetrated by writers for television and film, novelists, cartoonists, and others promote false perceptions. Arabs are portrayed as extremely wealthy, as sex maniacs and white slavers. They are described as terrorists, their society as violent, and their religion, Islam, as radical" (162). For the most part, knowledge about other cultures and other places in the world is attained through media, and as long as the focus of the mainstream media neglects to document the stories of ordinary people of the Middle East, the knowledge will be less accessible for Western audiences. The same can be anticipated for media coverage of Western countries in Africa and Asia. I want to argue that experiencing a different culture through the perspective of the child can invite empathy and promote understanding.

Fiction from other parts of the world sometimes depict a nuanced and honest image of life, and contributes to enlighten its audience. My interest in reading in order to empathize and learn about others emerged out of the overwhelming refugee situation present in the world today. In the future, I want to encourage my students to be aware of one's own and other's

culture in the global society. Over the later years, immigration has increased in Norway. Adult immigrants and refugees from Africa and the Middle East are offered an education in the regular Norwegian school system. While teaching these students within a Norwegian curriculum where knowledge of American culture and history is required, I discovered that they have little knowledge of the United States and its history. Few knew about the African-American history in the United States at all, and some had no knowledge of the word “slavery”. This inspired me to use *To Kill a Mockingbird* to exemplify the racial conflict. The novel might increase understanding through easy language and the curious observations of the child. Similarly, for me and the average Norwegian student, Afghanistan is an unfamiliar country. For the same reasons, I would use *The Kite Runner* to educate students in a regular Norwegian (or any other Western) high school classroom about the unfamiliar Afghanistan. The child perspective in both novels creates a more honest portrayal of life than any media coverage can promote, thus giving the reader insight to current and historical life in a foreign culture.

In this thesis, I want to argue how child focalization in adult fiction implies the presence of narrative techniques that might invite the reader to an empathetic reflection. I will explore how the child perspective in two popular adult fictional novels, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner*, lets the reader more closely into the sphere of being a child in the middle of a social conflict. I want to find out how the thoughts and views of the child is portrayed through empathy-promoting narrative techniques.

The introduction briefly presents child development and children’s position in social conflicts in order to point out how children differ from adults. Then, I will explain theory of narrative empathy and narrative techniques in order to understand what formal features of a are more empathy-promoting.

Chapter one will argue how literary techniques in *To Kill a Mockingbird* contribute to view Scout more empathetically. I will identify narrative techniques that are prominent in the narrative, and how these techniques promote an empathetic reflection of the child’s perspective in relation to the race conflict in Maycomb. I will discuss how features such as Scout’s lack of knowledge, her embodiment of social code, and her child-like behavior makes her vulnerable, and how the exposure to her vulnerability invites empathy. I will also show how Scout is influenced by her father in order to establish his importance in Scout’s narration.

Chapter two will argue how empathy-promoting literary techniques in *The Kite Runner* create empathy for Amir. Narrative empathy is important in how the reader understands and empathizes with Amir's portrayal of the Afghan culture and his quest for redemption. I will discuss how his limitations in terms of knowledge, his internalization of social code and his ambivalent relationship to his father invites the reader to an empathetic reflection.

Overall, I wish to highlight how adult fiction narrated through the child's perspective promotes empathy. Such novels possess literary techniques that promote and facilitate empathetic reflections. It is important to understand how children and the child's perspective increases empathetic reflections by looking at features in these novels. Literary empathy is more prominent in novels narrated through the child's perspective because empathy-promoting techniques are more frequent. Consequently, a reader might learn to be more empathetic by reading stories narrated through the child's perspective. Fiction that promotes empathy can teach the reader to reflect over the characters they empathize with, which can lead to understanding and increase the ability to feel with others.

### **1.1 Child narration**

Child narrators are common to come across in literature for children. Children's books are dominated by young characters who confront various topics and situations where their moral sense is tested. "Reading children's literature is often considered important for developing [...] children's ethical and empathic understanding of society and its people" (Mallan 105). Even though there are exceptions, children's books tend to be narrated by children, often on the verge of a moral journey. "Children's literature is, at least in part, about control, and the primary result of that is that it reflects first of all what society wishes itself to be seen as, and secondly, subconsciously and retrospectively, what it is actually like" (Hunt 8). Children learn empathy through reading about the life and experiences of another child. Children's books and their narrators have a great responsibility to teach children about empathy and moral values. Suzanne Keen<sup>1</sup>, a Professor in English at Washington and Lee University and a scholar of narrative empathy, highlights the importance of reading for children. She foregrounds how childhood reading might influence a person's ability to empathize, and shape that person's empathetical abilities for the future (Keen *EN* 69).

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<sup>1</sup> I will refer to Keen's books *Empathy and the Novel* and *Narrative Form* as *EN* and *NF*.

Literature intended for adult audience is dominated by novels narrated by adults, portraying experiences connected to adult life. Fiction of this kind usually revolves around themes suitable for adults to read, typically stories of relationships, social conflicts, physical and physiological experiences and so on. Some novelists have challenged the use of adult narration in literature for adults and use children as narrators or focalizers in portraying difficult topics. By using child narrators, the dynamics in a novel might change as the voice of the child differs from the adult, and might be perceived as less reliable. Despite a potential unreliability, children represent an important notion of moral development as they represent a phase in life every human has been through. Therefore, any adult should be able to relate to childhood and the vulnerable period of growing up. Furthermore, an adult might recollect important impacts or influences present in the process of growing up. The development from childhood to adulthood can also be significant in various aspects, as the adult is capable of understanding more complex information and situations than a child is able to. Furthermore, children can function as a universal reference, which might contribute to the use of child characters as an ability to communicate with people across cultures.

The idea of using children to tell adult stories has been around for some time. One of the earliest novels narrated by a child is *Great Expectations* from 1861. Charles Dickens used the child perspective as Pip narrates his life of being a young, unfortunate boy who grows into prosperity. The child perspective is important in the portrayal of other characters, and also on how Pip views himself throughout the novel. Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) narrates his journey down the Mississippi with his friend and runaway slave Jim. The novel accentuates the social conflict at the time, and the child perspective contributes to criticize the racial politics in the South. Today, the child narrator and focalizer is a popular literary device. Especially in novels intended to educate the reader in unfamiliar or less explored topics, children appear as important. Novelists such as Mark Haddon wrote a novel in which Christopher narrates the story of being a young boy on the autistic spectrum. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) is interesting because it contributes to the current debate of children with disabilities, and the perspective of the child emerges as an important voice. Still, the attention paid to the narratological aspect of such canonical novels narrated or focalized by children has been paid little attention.

Some scholars have studied how fiction narrated by children in difficult situations has might promote empathetic reflections and understanding in the reader. Robyn Wilkinson, Annie

Gagiano and Charles M. Tatum all acknowledge the importance of the child perspectives in novels about trauma and abuse and acknowledges the voice of the child as influential and important in such narratives. Wilkinson notes how “the voice of the child, though limited in terms of knowledge, experience and understanding, can offer an effective mode for the critique of social and political issues, because of its straight-forward and unselfconscious nature” (124). Thus, young voices can have a great influence on how a novel is perceived. On the contrary, scholars such as Mike Cadden criticizes the reliability of the child narrator, noting that the adolescent narrator is always ironic because of an author’s incapability of authentically recreating a younger voice (146). However, an author who narrates a story can be perceived as more authentic because the author is connected to his or her own childhood. Both *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner* are influenced by their authors’ own experiences as both authors grew up in the same context as their narrators. By using their own experience as inspiration for a work of fiction, these authors connect their stories 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. Both *The Kite Runner* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* are works of fiction, but they reflect real challenges in society as well as real human emotions connected to social conflicts.

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

*To Kill a Mockingbird* is written by Harper Lee and was for a long time the only novel she published until *Go Set a Watchman*, the story of the grown Jean Louise Finch’s return to Maycomb, was released in 2015. *To Kill a Mockingbird* pictures the everyday life in Maycomb, a small town located in Alabama, United States. The novel is set during the 1930s in a turbulent South occupied by racial tension. It depicts the life of Scout, a 6-year-old girl whose father, Atticus, is appointed to legally represent Tom Robinson, a negro accused of raping a white girl. Tom Robinson’s trial takes place in a segregated South influenced by racist prejudices manifested in the community and its people.

The novel depicts the everyday life of the children Scout, her brother Jem, and their friend Dill. The reader is exposed to how social structures in Maycomb is expressed through them. As Scout and Jem grow up with no mother, they are taught moral values by their father and their cook and housekeeper Calpurnia. The children learn through being exposed to cultural prejudice and otherness. Tom Robinson’s trial functions as a framework for the racial conflict in the novel, as well as it functions as an important event because of how it affects the children.

Racial prejudice and racist attitudes are strongly present in Maycomb. These prejudices and attitudes are challenged through characters such as Calpurnia, Dolphus Raymond, a local drunk who lives and has children with a colored woman, and of course Atticus. Interestingly, the novel does not accentuate the social issues directly, rather Scout's perception of situations she encounters and her reaction to social norms contribute to accentuate the social problems of the South and how the vision of her father diverges from cultural tradition.

### **1.2.1 Critical perspective: *To Kill a Mockingbird***

It is hard to imagine another novel so popular in the classroom context as *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The novel became a natural choice for teachers because of its portrayal of controversial themes such as discrimination, racism and justice through the perspective of the child. The child makes language and reflections easier to understand, which makes it a good choice for students who are learning English. Edgar Schuster (1963) commented upon the success of Lee's novel in the literature classroom.

The achievement of Harper Lee is not that she has written another novel about race prejudice, but rather that she has placed race prejudice in a perspective which allows us to see it as an aspect of a larger thing; as something that arises from phantom contacts, from fear and lack of knowledge; and finally as something that disappears with the kind of knowledge or 'education' that one gains through learning what people are really like when you 'finally see them' (Schuster 511)

In a classroom, it is important to support and teach new generations how to be open and willing to learn about societies, cultures and peoples different from our own. It is important to be aware of the narrative techniques the novel takes advantage of in order to understand its value in the classroom.

In her collection *On Harper Lee: Essays and Reflections* published in 2007, Alice Hall Petry points to how the novel is "[r]ather short [...], not technically intimidating, narrated by a child, and presenting complex issues [...] in a nonsensational fashion" (xv), which has made it a popular novel among young adults. All of these simplistic features might be strongly connected to child focalization. Claudia Durst Johnson published two books on the novel in 1996; one of the books were for students, and the other a critical examination of the historical context *To Kill a Mockingbird* is based on, which establishes the context the child is set within. She notes how "[t]he historical context of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is formed by the national economic depression of the 1930s and the regional history of race relations in the South"

(*Threatening* 3), and the novel reflects real social issues at the time. Not only is the social conflict projected through Scout, she is also a part of these tensions which makes her perspective valuable.

In the beginning of the 2000s, more attention was directed towards the novel. The child focalizer's point of view in *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been acknowledged by most critics – yet it is not thoroughly explored in terms of its qualities as a narrative technique. Critics such as Jennifer Murray, Lisa Detweiler Miller, Kathryn Lee Seidel and Holly Blackford acknowledge the importance of Scout's voice in terms of the themes and topics the novel explores. "Lee uses the young Scout to acknowledge what white eyes can and cannot see" (Blackford 167), thus acknowledging how Scout represents the white privileged child's point of view. Scout makes a journey from "prejudice to tolerance, from ignorance to wisdom, from violence to self-control, from bigotry to empathy, from a code of honor to a code of law" (Seidel 81). It is certainly correct to accentuate Scout's moral development, but these critics fail to examine how her moral development is communicated through the discourse. Narrative techniques might play an important role in the presentation of Scout's moral development. Scout's role as a Southern girl and her personality as a tomboy have been subject to critical analysis by Dean Shackelford, Smaranda Ștefanovici, Imani Perry and Gregory Jay who discuss how Scout struggles to conform into the female standards of society. They do to some extent pay attention to Scout's own experience of Maycomb's female standards but tend to focus more on the social aspect. The child's own thoughts and reflections on gender stereotypes can be just as important as a critical examination of the social structure that generates these stereotypes.

The importance of the domestic space and the family in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is explored by Austin Sarat and Martha Merrill Umphrey, Thomas L. Dumm and James B. Kelley. In the novel, distinctions between how social code is upheld differs depending on space. The knowledge Scout acquires at home does not necessarily correspond well with the social code, and Kelley notes how Scout's "homeschooling creates problems in the public school classroom" (453). Scout first encounters the difference between public and social space when she starts school and is disciplined by her teacher for speaking in an improper manner. The difference between spaces is essential in how the conflict in the novel is constructed. Yet, narrative techniques contribute to understand the space is experienced and internalized by Scout remains less explored. The 'other' is an important notion in the novel, and Gilmore points out how "otherness emerges as an essential component of our common humanity, which from



infancy calls for a natural caution, suspicion, fear and anxiety when confronted by the other” (33). He emphasizes how otherness is perceived by Scout, and how such otherness is defined in Maycomb. Narration highlights how otherness is reflected upon, and narrative techniques contribute to view the other more empathetically. The novel revolves around society’s perception of the other, but Scout’s narrative perspective shows how she has not fully internalized these perceptions.

Despite critics’ great interest in various topics in the novel, language has also been explored. Jennifer Murray, Sarat and Umphrey, Naomi Mezey, Lisa Detweiler Miller, and Deborah Vriend van Duinen and Audra Bolhus show how social codes and prejudices are expressed through language in the discourse. Murray notes how language is manipulated in order to portray Scout as innocent despite her internalization of social codes and norms when we first meet her. When Scout makes racist remarks, “no insight is offered on the part of the adult narrator to attenuate the force of this racist but completely normalized statement” (79). She argues that the way the social situation is portrayed through Scout preserves her from being associated with the prejudice and injustice present in the novel (80). This might in fact be a representation of narrative empathy because of the way Scout is manipulated to conform to social code. Language presents itself through Scout’s narration, thus is a way of exploring how children internalize language codes. Miller accentuates how a reading of the child’s voice can reflect how race and disability is perceived in Maycomb. The narrative portrays a diversity of characters, and the child depicts how others are afflicted by social norms.

The novel has gained interest outside of the field of literary criticism as well. Attorneys and law professionals have taken interest in how the law and the judicial system is represented in the novel (Austin Sarat, Linda Ross Meyer, Joseph Crespino and Tim Dare). Crespino juxtaposes the plot of the novel with the ongoing process of liberating the United States. “Lee’s characters and choice of narrative strategies in *To Kill a Mockingbird* reflect the moral tension that all liberals faced in the Jim Crow South. They combine the passion and ambivalence characteristics of southerners drawn to the South’s agrarian tradition and heritage but frustrated by the South’s ugly racial history” (Crespino 14). By looking closely at Scout’s narration, it might contribute to enlighten how the representation of law is exploited in order to provoke the reader’s empathy. Furthermore, the reflection of social code is juxtaposed with the code of law in Maycomb.

In terms of gender criticism, race criticism and development of moral all are greatly influenced by the child. The fact that narrative techniques are crucial to the interpretation of other topics have to a great extent been omitted from primary focus despite the fact that Lee cleverly takes great advantage of certain techniques in the novel. I want to argue that the narrative technique itself, not depending on the theme and content of the novel, is important and might influence the reader in terms of promoting narrative empathy.

### ***1.3 The Kite Runner***

*The Kite Runner* was the first novel published in English by an Afghani man (Noor 148) and is influenced by Hosseini's own childhood memories (Goldblatt 43). The novel depicts life in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, in the 1970s and portrays the life of the young Pashtun boy Amir and his father Baba, as well as their Hazara servant Ali and his son Hassan. Amir and Hassan are friends, and spend their time together reading or kite-running. The novel accentuates the social situation in Afghanistan and depicts how the social conflict between ethnicities and religious groups develops into an armed conflict and a civil war. Throughout the novel an Islamic fundamentalist group, the Taliban, becomes an increasingly influential power in the country. The novel juxtaposes the childhoods of Amir and Hassan and how their friendships is troubled by the ongoing social situation. Hassan is a humble, devoted friend to Amir, yet Amir is torn between his love for Hassan and the social detestation of Hazaras among the Pashtun majority. Amir is remorseful of his ambivalent feelings towards his friend. After passively observing the neighborhood bully Assef raping Hassan, Amir's consciousness is burdened, and he is saturated by a great guilt for not intervening and rescuing his friend. The assault functions as the plot twist in the novel because it changes Amir's relationship to Hassan. The feeling of regret and remorse shape the relationship between the two boys after this incident and might encourage the reader to empathize and connect with the strong feelings that presents themselves in the discourse. Guilt, remorse and regret are universal feelings and might enable all people to recognize themselves within such emotions.

As the armed conflict evolves in the novel, the story moves on to portray the dangers of being a refugee as Amir and Baba flee from Afghanistan to the United States. Their journey out of Kabul shows how dangerous and difficult it is to leave, and how difficult it is to settle in a completely different culture far away from Afghanistan. Amir spends his adolescence in America and faces the challenges of living in a diasporic community in California. They create a life for themselves, and Amir eventually marries a woman named Soraya. After many years

away from Afghanistan, Amir is contacted by an old family friend, Rahim Kahn. Amir learns that Hassan married and had a son and feels morally obliged to protect Hassan's son Sohrab after Hassan and his wife are assassinated by the Taliban. Amir sets out on a journey of redemption back to Afghanistan in order to bring the boy to safety, which evidently leads to Amir avenging the rape of Hassan as he again encounters Assef. The novel describes the Afghan culture in a vivid way, and the non-Afghan reader is introduced to the everyday life and culture of the country.

### **1.3.1 Critical perspective: *The Kite Runner***

The body of criticism on *The Kite Runner* is significantly smaller than on *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The novel was published in 2003, and much of the criticism on the novel reflects the international relationship between the United States and the Middle East post 9/11 world, and how the novel contributes to an understanding of these differences. Furthermore, critics have focused on *The Kite Runner* as a diasporic novel in relation to how the narrator flees Afghanistan and settles in the United States.

Lee Erwin, a scholar on post-colonial literature, points out how *The Kite Runner* explores the domestic space of the house of Baba and Amir. She questions the connection between race, ethnicity and social class and the different spaces present in the novel. Furthermore, she argues that Baba's house works to "contain violence by positing the domestic space as a class-free zone and individual desire as transformative" (Erwin 328). The omission of categories within the domestic space juxtapose with the perception of a universal humanity. Even though the house is important as a symbol of acceptance, narrative perspective might add to the understanding of how Amir experiences these spaces. How these spaces are internalized and communicated through Amir is less explored.

David Jefferess, Masood Ashraf Raja and Tanja Stampfl, also scholars on postcolonial literature, highlight how the novel promotes global ethics through being a representation of universal human values. Jefferess explores the novel as an allegory of global ethics through Amir's quest for moral redemption, and how "the novel 'humanizes' Afghan culture, providing depth and meaning to the sign 'Afghanistan' to the non-Afghan reader, otherwise a mere signifier of post-9/11 conflict" (389). Such a perception can accommodate to an identification with others, which conducts a perception of closeness or resemblance. "While the novel's reception reflects and openness to, and a desire for, understanding the Other, it also reflects the limits of acceptable difference" (Jefferess 390). The novel does not portray Afghans as similar

to all other people, rather Hosseini acknowledges difference while promoting acceptance. However, how narrative techniques contribute to the understanding of the novel as a representation of global ethics is less explored. Amir's thoughts are responsible for the great access to his quest for redemption. Over the last years, *The Kite Runner* has gained popularity in classrooms. The novel introduces the students to a "world far and foreign to many readers" (Goldblatt 42). Students might benefit from experiencing a completely different culture from their own. Especially in terms of how "abrogation of rights is sadly a theme for our times: a source and resource for comparative studies where social justice has been abrogated and denied" (Goldblatt 42). Because the novel portrays the social injustice and discrimination of the Hazaras, the social conflict is exemplified to the reader. Raja points out how the novel is valuable in the classroom as it encourages students to a global solidarity through "a mode of identification with the plight of the others who may be different but still share the same planet" (32). The notion of a common, shared humanity is acknowledged by scholars, they lack to emphasize how Amir's perspective is important in promoting understanding and empathy for others.

Graham Huggan and Rachel Blumenthal both foreground the novel as a cross-cultural influence in terms of religion and Middle Eastern culture. The novel takes an anti-extremist approach to the Afghan culture and society and focuses the novel as a diasporic representation. "Hosseini attends to both Afghan and American cultures as he searches for an ideological homeland" (Blumenthal 258). The novel contributes to humanize Afghans which can be important in a post 9/11 world influenced by xenophobia. The close access to Amir's thoughts and experiences might contribute to explain how such a humanization of Afghans is promoted.

Timothy Aubry tries to categorize reader's experiences and reactions to *The Kite Runner*. Aubry collected reader reviews from Amazon.com in order to gain insight to how the novel is perceived by its readers. Even though understanding the complete impact a novel has on its readers is impossible to record, book reviews can help identify patterns in the way readers respond empathetically. Readers seemed to experience a sense of universality with Amir, and Aubry notes how "readers' assertions of universality often seem to be the product of empathy" (28). Empathy seems to play a role in how the reader experiences the novel. Therefore, it is important to understand what aspects of the narrative that promote empathy. The emphasis on how the novel represents otherness, acceptance, redemption and global ethics is important, but

the narration and the voice of Amir is less explored in terms of how it contributes to an empathetic understanding of these topics.

Even though both *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner* are greatly explored in terms of themes portrayed in them, the novels might be important beyond the themes they explore. Novels depicting social structures that might be unfamiliar to the reader can be meaningful in terms of educational value, not only in schools but in everyday life of adult people. Both novels portray social tensions from the child's perspective, which might have a greater influence on readers because of their child-like features. Of course, it is important to explore the controversial themes presented in the novels, but I want to highlight how narrative structure plays an important part of how such themes are interpreted and perceived. The *what* the novels are trying to portray is important, but we need to understand *how* it is done. How the texts portray these themes is crucial in identifying features that promote empathy.

#### **1.4 Children and social conflicts**

The perception of the other is essential in understanding how a social conflict is established and unresolved. Richard Jenkins, a professor in sociological studies, separates otherness into two categories, *internal definition* which is how a person, or a social group categorizes themselves, and *external definition* which is how a person, or a group categorizes other people or other groups, and validates the internal definition of a group (199). Jenkins also differentiates between groups and categories. Categories are defined by external factors, such as social class or race. Groups are defined by themselves through internal factors (201). The establishment of categories emerges out of a common perception of identity, thus excluding those who might have another identity. Both novels evolve around the ethnical differences in Maycomb and Kabul. Both the Pashtuns in Afghanistan and the Whites in the South are categories Amir and Scout are born into. These groups are privileged as they have legitimate power in their societies, as the legitimization of power is central in maintaining superiority (Jenkins 199). The Pashtuns and the White's power implies that the Hazaras and the African Americans are denied access to resources and opportunities in the social environment. This is exemplified in the novels through how most of the blacks and the Hazaras are illiterate, thus denied access to an important part of human life. Another important aspect is that "ethnicity is situationally defined" (Jenkins 198), which is clearly exemplified in *The Kite Runner*. When Amir and Baba immigrate to the United States, they are no longer part of the social elite. The fact that they are Pashtuns is of

little significance in the American context. Therefore, the social structure of the ethnic tension plays an important role in the construction of otherness.

Jenkins acknowledges that primary socialization teaches the child what group it belongs to, and is often connected to an ethnic component (204). Primary socialization renders both Scout and Amir dependent on their ethnic group, but their fathers and their servants contradict the sense of ethnic group-identity. This corresponds well with how self-image can be constructed to represent both the “‘true’ self-image” and a “public image” (Jenkins 205). Both Amir and Scout are perfect examples of how they develop conflicting self-images; one public and one private. Annie Gagiano points out how “[y]oung children are only beginning the socialisation process and are necessarily to an extent outsiders; minors without access to political power - hence their feelings and thoughts are unlikely to be (as yet) ideologised” (31). Children exist outside of the political sphere and have little power to influence their surroundings, rather they conform into society’s ways. Amir and Scout alternate between conforming to and opposing social code. The narration reveals how the children problematize and question their feelings during this process.

Both *The Kite Runner* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* depict social conflicts present in their respective societies. *To Kill a Mockingbird* revolves around the racial conflict between blacks and whites in Maycomb. Johnson notes how the social system in the novel dooms blacks only because of prejudice connected to color (*Threatening* 6). The racial conflict is deeply rooted in American history, and the novel was published in the middle of the Civil Rights Movement, a collective movement who fought for equal rights for all American citizens (*Threatening* 11). Lee’s novel has been greatly valued for highlighting these controversies, and Scout’s perception of the social structure in Maycomb have been discussed in various classrooms not only in America, but all over the world. On the other hand, *The Kite Runner* has not been paid much attention in the classroom setting but has been acknowledged for its value in an increasingly globalized world. In Afghanistan, a religious and ethnic conflict creates tension between the Shi’a Hazaras and the Sunni Pashtuns. Hosseini himself notes how there is much history connected to the tension that arises between the ethnical groups in the novel (qtd. in Bloom 12). Additionally, the Taliban emerged because of the tension. The Taliban represent extremist views of ethnic and religious purity. Because of the ethnic tension, it is to this day challenging to establish Afghanistan as a harmonious viable state (Siddique 2).

The racial conflict occupying *To Kill a Mockingbird* differs from the ethnic conflict in Afghanistan, yet the prejudice towards the other is strikingly similar. Both Scout and Amir represent a majority but are closely related to the minority, and their relationship with minorities is criticized by other members of society. The way these children reflect on these relationships shows how children perceive social tension. The United Nations raises awareness of the situation for children in social conflicts, and how they are shaped by the tensions of their societies. Graça Machel, an advocate for children's rights, published in 1996 a report for the UN; "Impact of Armed Conflict on Children". In this report, she established the importance of children in a world influenced by tension.

Children can help. In a world of diversity and disparity, children are a unifying force capable of bringing people to common ethical grounds. Children's needs and aspirations cut across all ideologies and cultures. The needs of all children are the same: nutritious food, adequate health care, a decent education, shelter and a secure and loving family. Children are both our reason to struggle to eliminate the worst aspects of warfare, and our best hope for succeeding at it (Machel 10).

Machel acknowledges the power of children as a unifying force. Consequently, children might communicate with readers from different cultures. Because Amir and Scout are exposed to dangers that threaten them directly or indirectly, readers are exposed to their vulnerable features which might invite empathy independent of their cultural background.

## **1.5 Child development**

In order to better understand the child as narrator, it is significant to decide how children differ from adults. Therefore, social development in children needs to be explored. One cannot simply give children the credit of being pure and innocent as long as children bully, harass and are violent towards others. On the other hand, it is important to understand such acts as a result of the social structures a child is conformed into. Children find it difficult to understand "a belief that is contrary to rules because they expect people to hold beliefs that are consistent with norms and obligations" (Conry-Murray 491). Young children need to learn that norms are socially constructed in order for them to become independent thinkers. As children develop, they learn how social rules can be open for renegotiation. Both Amir and Scout experience a conflict between their relationships to characters of minority and social norms they are expected to respect, and they constantly renegotiate socially constructed boundaries.



The process of child development is affected by external factors such as cultural environment and social structures. “Person and culture cannot be understood in isolation from each other” (Fung 102). In order to understand how the child conforms into a social setting, one needs to consider the environment and surroundings present when the child grew up. Development “takes place in networks of interpersonal relationships and materializes through interacting with more mature and expert cultural members, each of whom has a personal historical past” (Fung 104). Both Scout and Amir learn from interaction with family, friends and peers in school. Culture and social code is prominent in language, and speech reflects culturally preferred ways of communicating (Fung 106). The way Scout and Amir communicate reflect language, habits, values, morals, and knowledge of their communities, and reveals itself through narration.

William Damon, Professor at Stanford University and scholar in human development, points to parents as especially influential in a child’s moral development. “For most children, parents are the original source of moral guidance” (Damon 77). Atticus and Baba are somewhat different fathers, but both are strong advocates of being good towards others independent of social status. Even though both Scout and Amir challenge, and sometimes resent their fathers, they remain faithful to their moral guidance and show a great respect for them. Peers also impact a child greatly, and parents seem to influence their children’s relationships with others. By encouraging the right relationship, moral growth can increase as “[c]hildren grow up in a complex system of relationships that are affected by influences found in different levels of the surrounding environment” (Smith and Hart 139). Both fathers promote acceptance and respect. Scout and Amir benefit from their moral values, but also suffer from their fathers’ decisions.

Lawrence Kohlberg, a developmental psychologist, defines six stages of moral development. These stages are “organized systems of thought”, and represent a hierarchical system where movement from one stage to another is always forward (Kohlberg and Hersh 54). The first stage is the *preconventional level* in which children are aware of cultural rules of good and bad. On this level, the child complies accordingly to positive or negative consequences (Kohlberg and Hersh 54). The next is the *conventional level* where children are able to comply to expectations of the family and society, which consist of interpersonal concordance and “law and order” orientation (55). Children behave according to the established right and wrong because they wish to support and maintain the collective of the group in order to shape a sense of belonging. In both novels, the children are torn between the social and domestic code. This

brings us to the last stage which is the *postconventional level* which represent a successful moral development. “At this level, there is a clear effort to define moral values and principles that have validity and application apart from the authority of the groups or persons holding these principles and apart from the individual’s own identification with these groups” (Kohlberg and Hersh 55). Both Lee and Hosseini exploit different developmental levels in their narratives. The child focalizers are still on the conventional level and strive to identify with the social group they represent. The dissonant narrators are on the postconventional level of moral development, thus narrating the childhood experiences from an omniscient and critical perspective.

## 1.6 Literary empathy

Theory of literary empathy connects well with the idea of how a reader responds emotionally to a work of fiction. In order to understand how narrative techniques promote empathy, it is necessary to establish how narrative empathy is created in the reader. Susanne Keen emphasizes narrative techniques that might strengthen the emotional reaction to a literary text. She points to how the terms *empathy* and *sympathy* have been confused for each other. She clarifies how feeling *for* someone (sympathy) and feeling *with* someone (empathy) need to be distinguished from one another (EN xxi). Keen defines narrative empathy as:

Narrative empathy is the sharing of feeling and perspective-taking induced by reading, viewing, hearing, or imagining narratives of another’s situation and condition. Narrative empathy plays a role in the aesthetics of production when authors experience it [...], in mental simulation during reading, in the aesthetics of reception when readers experience it, and in the narrative poetics of texts when formal strategies invite it. Narrative empathy overarches narratological categories, involving actants, narrative situation, matters of pace and duration, and storyworld features such as settings.

(Keen, *The Living Handbook of Narratology*)

Literary empathy is formed during reading and can be primed by formal strategies. Keen further notes how “[t]he emphasis by readers, authors, and the novels themselves on a common emotional heritage and the universality of human feelings bridges social, cultural, economic, and geographical gaps that might otherwise impede empathy” (EN xxiii). Reading can promote an understanding of otherness through an empathetic reflection. *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner* both represent a culture that might be unknown to the reader. Therefore, the notion

of empathy is even more important as the reader must empathize with a character in a different setting. Both novels are valuable in promoting respect and understanding for the other.

Kerry Mallan, a scholar on children's literature, acknowledges that certain studies show how readers might be influenced by a "similarity bias", which indicates that "we are more inclined to empathize with people who are closer and more like ourselves" (Mallan 105). Keen contradicts this by proposing that it might not be similar traits that invites empathy. Rather, readers' reports highlight that empathy is created through shared emotions, especially shared negative emotions (Keen *EN* xii). Following the similarity bias, it should be harder for the reader unfamiliar to the context in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner* to empathize with Scout and Amir. As Keen notes, features like emotions might be more influential in generating empathy. Because Scout and Amir share their emotions with the reader, similarities might be less significant in terms of generating narrative empathy.

Narrative empathy is also present within the narrative. Both Scout and Amir encounter situations testing their empathetic responses towards others. "In fiction, empathy can be the basis of compassionate behaviour between characters, it can also be used as a cultural tool for reinforcing existing dominant hierarchies and exclusions" (Mallan 107). Scout and Amir are empathetic towards others, but at the same time they show little or no empathy in situations which it might be expected of them. The novels portray events where the children fail to react empathetically because they are corrupted by social code and fail to do the morally right thing which allows the reader to reflect on their moral behavior. Philosophers such as Martha Nussbaum strongly advocates the impact literature can have on individuals and their behavior as fellow citizens. As part of a global community, "we must also cultivate in ourselves a capacity for sympathetic imagination that will enable us to comprehend the motives and choices of people different from ourselves, seeing them not as forbiddingly alien and other, but as sharing many problems and possibilities with us" (Nussbaum 85). In other words, it is an obligation to learn to accept and respect those who are different or "other" to oneself, and literature might communicate such values. Both Scout and Amir experiences the process of learning to respect others, which might influence the reader to empathize with their development into decent human beings.

Furthermore, a novel's influence on a reader's empathy is not static, rather "[t]he timing and the context of the reading experience matters: the capacity of novels to invoke readers' empathy changes over time, and some novels may only activate the empathy of their first,

immediate audience” (Keen *EN* xii). The fact that a novel’s meaning and audience might change over time is an important point to bear in mind when suggesting how a novel might invite empathy. One might assume that novels concerning a particular social conflict might be short-lived. This may be, but the common features which construct social conflicts remain timeless and universal. Both conflicts in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner* represent historical events which affect the respective societies today.

## **1.7 Theory of narrative strategies**

Narrative strategies employed by an author can shape both the structure and the perception of a literary work. Narrative strategies provided in the discourse level of a narrative can influence the story in many ways. “Makers of narrative use identifiable tools and techniques to craft stories” (*NF* x). Narrative techniques are picked carefully in relation to the story the author wants to narrate. Keen notes how formal and structural literary critics have traditionally viewed narratives as completely isolated entities, yet the construction of narratives can contribute to represent or cultivate present or historical phenomena in the social world (*NF* xii). The discourse in a novel contributes to this notion, as “[authors] take up tools of language and build fictional worlds in which narrators introduce readers to imaginary persons who move, think, feel, and act, in these patterned sequences of events” (Keen *NF* x). In other words, authors can manipulate the discourse into facilitating an influence of the reader’s empathetic reflection. Narrative theory is important in order to explain how narrative techniques are used in the novels, and narrative vocabulary will help understand and identify techniques that might contribute to empathetic responses to characters in a novel.

### **1.7.1 Narrative situation**

The reader’s access to characters in a novel might impact literary empathy. In *Narrative Form*, Keen highlights multiple narrative devices that can be identified in narrative fiction. Among these, *narrative situation* appears as crucial in identifying characters and their functions in a narrative. In *Empathy and the Novel*, Keen summarizes narrative situation as:

the nature of the mediation between author and reader, including the person of the narration, the implicit location of the narrator, the relation of the narrator to the characters, and the internal or external perspective on characters, including in some cases the style of representation of characters’ consciousness (Keen *EN* 93).

Keen additionally argues that narrative situation has a significant role in terms of promoting readers' empathy, and that certain narrative strategies appear as more likely to attract a reader's empathetic response because of how these strategies involve the reader in the narrative.

Both *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner* are narrated through first person narration. Common for both novels is the adult dissonant narrator looking back at childhood. Dissonant narration reflects a gap between the narrating self and the experiencing self, and "lets the narrating self deliver judgements or make reflections that would be impossible or highly implausible for a narrator cleaving close to the experiences" (Keen *NF* 36). Both Scout and Amir recollects memories from childhood though the omniscience attained through experience and knowledge of lived life. However, some of their reflection is not corrupted by dissonant influence. The unaltered recollection of childhood is balanced with the dissonant narrator's presence. The dissonant narrator both supports and discredits reflections of the childhood self through advanced vocabulary and nuanced reflections. This gives the reader access to both the reflections of the children and the reflections of older and wiser narrators.

Even though the narrators view their childhood experiences through dissonance, the perspective of the child focalizer is influential. Focalization, or point of view, reflects the perspective of the interpreter of narrated events. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan looks at what effect focalization might have as a formal device. She points out how "focalization and narration are separate in so-called first-person retrospective narratives" (75). External focalization occurs in first person narratives when "the temporal and psychological distance between narrator and character is minimal" or when "the perception through which the story is rendered is that of the narrative self rather than of the experiencing self" (Rimmon-Kenan 76). She shows how language might indicate this gap by reflecting an adult narrator's language from the child focalizer's point of view. Both *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the first part of *The Kite Runner* are dominated by the child to an extent that readers believe it is actually narrated by the child. The dissonant narrator is only present in reflections narrated in a language too advanced for a child. The child perspective lets the reader experience events through the children which might connect the reader to his or her own recollection of being a child.

Rimmon-Kenan goes on to distinguish between facets of focalization (79); the perceptual, the psychological and the ideological facets which reflect difference between focalizer and narrator. Knowledge is connected to the perceptual and psychological facet, and a dissonant narrator is more likely to possess more omniscient knowledge of childhood

perceptions. The child focalizer is then limited in terms of knowledge and understanding. Additionally, the ideological framework can be represented by the narrator but the focalizer might diverge from it. The “norms of the text” (Rimmon-Kenan 83) are often projected through the presence of the dissonant narrator in the discourse. These norms appear as authoritative, and other ideologies are valued from a “higher” position (Rimmon-Kenan 84). Both Scout and Amir question the morals of their childhood selves which creates a divergence in the focalizer and narrator’s ideological beliefs.

Unreliable narration deliberately exploits readers’ awareness to perceive the narrator’s story with skepticism (Keen *NF* 42). If the values of the dissonant narrator diverge strikingly from the child focalizer, it might render the child unreliable. The unreliability juxtaposes with the immaturity a child can possess which might settle the suspicion and legitimize the unreliability. The first part of *The Kite Runner* is saturated with childishness, and depicts Amir’s struggle with emotions connected to his father’s negligence of him. Similarly, the first part of *To Kill a Mockingbird* depicts Scout as ruthless and tough, giving children of other social classes a hard time. Because the children portray childish behavior, they lose credibility as truthful focalizers. Unreliability might prevent the reader from feeling empathy with a character. However, Scout and Amir are children, which contributes to legitimize their unreliability.

Representation of consciousness contributes to how the narrator and the focalizer is perceived by the reader. Certain types of narration give the reader access to the innermost thoughts of the narrator. Dorrit Cohn, a scholar on formal analysis on narrative fiction, notes how first-person dissonant narration represents consciousness in the same way as novels narrated through third-person narration because the dissonance creates a distance between “the narrating and the experiencing self” (Cohn 143). In both *The Kite Runner* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the element of the “enlightened and knowing narrator who elucidates his mental confusions of earlier days” (Cohn 143) saturates Scout and Amir’s reflection of their childhoods. The dissonant narrator portrays “retrospective cognition of an inner life that cannot know itself at the instant of experience” (Cohn 146). An insight to a character’s consciousness can happen through *dissonant self-narration*, *self-quoted monologue*, *self-narrated monologue*.

Dissonant narration represents speech clearly influenced by the knowledge and language of the adult. Self-quoted monologue represents past thoughts through quotations or highly rhetorical speech (Cohn 161). In order to distinguish between present and past thoughts,

a narrator can use explicit or ironic comments in order to separate himself or herself from a younger self. However, a narrator might also want to exploit this gap “by omitting clear signals of quotation, [authors] run together their narrator’s past and present thoughts, thereby suggesting that their ideas on a certain subject have remained the same” (Cohn 164). The awareness of past thoughts is acknowledged by Scout and Amir as they reflect on their experiencing selves. Quoted monologue might create unreliability through uncertainty of which narrative self is speaking or thinking. Hosseini takes advantage of this type of monologue when Amir reflects with regret upon his past actions, and sometimes addresses his childish ignorance with irony. Self-narrated monologue renders the narrator in a moment of identification with its past self “giving up his temporally distance vantage point and cognitive privilege for his past time-bound bewilderments and vacillations” (Cohn 167). Looking back connects the narrator to its childhood self, allowing the narrator to identify with the memories. Narrated monologue is used to portray Amir and Scout’s reflections and thoughts. Furthermore, “self-narrated monologue can attain far greater importance in a text: when a highly self-centered narrator relates an existential crisis that has remained unsolved” (Cohn 168). Amir expresses his regrets through narrated monologue by addressing immoral behavior from the past, indicating that he possesses a need to resolve any wrongdoings. Representation of consciousness lets the reader into the mind of the narrator’s reflections of past and present emotions.

### **1.7.2 Characterization**

Keen notes how “character identification lies at the heart of reader’s empathy” (*EN* 68), and that realistic representation through recognizable situations or implicit feelings might trigger a character identification. Therefore, character traits are important in understanding how these features might impact the reader emotionally. “[M]any readers report that novels in which child characters are subjected to cruel or unfair treatment evoke empathy” (Keen *EN* 69). Children might connect to the reader more prominently because of the child-likeness and naivety they sometimes possess. Both Scout and Amir are subjected to cruel and unfair treatment because they are et within social conflicts that causes them harm.

Negative emotions generated by a narrative might to a greater extent influence the reader’s empathy because it challenges the reader’s emotions more prominently. “[E]mpathetic responses to fictional characters and situations occur more readily for negative emotions, whether or not a match in details of experience exists.” (Keen *EN* xii). Narrative empathy can emerge when a reader recognizes negative emotions such as anger, sadness, grief or envy in the discourse. Even though the reader might be unable to relate such feelings to own experience,



readers might engage with the negative emotions connected to Scout and Amir. Both narrators experience sadness and anger in many situations. These emotions might influence the reader to empathize with the injustice the narrators experience.

Furthermore, readers seem to respond empathetically in situations where characters are subjected to “cruelty, injustice, and victimization” without directly being able to identify with the characters’ experiences (Keen *EN* 70). Cruelty, injustice, and victimization might trigger a more empathetic response because they apply to recognizable emotions in the reader. Both Amir and Scout are vulnerable as children, and less capable of defending themselves. On the other hand, they are also inflictors of cruelty, which renders them both victims and victimizers. Especially in novels where social conflict is so prominent, these notions become an important narrative technique to an author who wants to highlight the social injustice.

Characters subjected to cruelty, injustice, or victimization can often be perceived as vulnerable characters. Keen points out that readers sympathize with animals because they are vulnerable creatures (*EN* 68). The same can be predicted for children; they are traditionally left out of the social sphere and have little power to change their social situations, which renders them vulnerable. Research on reader responses from college students at different universities in America report that they are more likely to empathize with characters in negative affective states such as states provoked by undergoing persecution, suffering, grieving, and experiencing painful obstacles (Keen *EN* 71). This form of empathetic response might be strengthened by using the child’s voice because it contributes to how Amir and Scout’s vulnerabilities are more prominent through the narrative strategies used.

Another feature that can be assigned to children and thus appear in child narration is child-likeness and childishness. Children act, speak and think in ways that diverge from how adults act, speak, and think. If children misbehave their negative behavior is often excused as childish. Whereas children can be excused from such behavior, similar adult behavior would be corrected in a far stricter way. The child focalization in the novels is saturated by child-likeness and childishness, and much of the representation of consciousness revolves around how the dissonant narrators reflect on this behavior.

Even though all of the above are narrative techniques that might have an influence on a reader’s empathy, there is no way to confirm that it is so. Narrative techniques cannot be generalized as empathetic, and Keen emphasizes how any narrative technique “should be

subjected to careful empirical testing before any aspect of narrative technique earns the label of ‘empathetic’” (Keen *EN* 99). Still, these techniques might impact how *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner* are perceived. I think it can be useful to identify how these techniques are used in novels, and how the child perspective connects with narrative empathy.

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

*To Kill a Mockingbird* is narrated by the young tomboy Jean Louise Finch or “Scout”, and she portrays her childhood through first person narration. Common for both *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner* is the similarities between the narrators. Scout is similar to Amir in many ways, the most apparent is that they share the notion of growing up in the middle of a social conflict which shapes their childhood. Both characters grow up with a father as their only parent. Both lost their mother when they were very young and have little recollection of her, which renders the domestic space in lack of a maternal character. Furthermore, both Amir and Scout enjoys the company of the servants working for their fathers, as both Baba and Atticus hold servants who represents the society’s other. Consequently, the domestic space is occupied by both the oppressed and the oppressor, imaging the social conflict going on in their societies. The relationship between whites and African-Americans in the South and between the Afghani Hazaras and Pashtuns holds similar traits in terms of how the society is saturated by discrimination and segregation limiting the rights and opportunities of the African-Americans and the Hazaras. *To Kill a Mockingbird* contributes to give a nuanced image of the history of the South and contributes to enlighten the reader.

The novel revolves around the everyday life in Maycomb, a Southern small town occupied by people from different social classes. The story is set in the 1930s, but the novel is written in the late 1950s. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was a turbulent time in the history of the South. The traditional relationship between blacks and whites were being challenged (Johnson *Understanding* 129). The social movements at the time led to a change in judicial and political traditions, and challenged the American society through the Civil Rights Movement, a movement advocating equal rights for all citizens of the United States. Alabama has a history of racial segregation in social institutions such as schools, work places and buses. Even the right to vote was corrupted by requiring qualifications blacks were unable to attain (Johnson *Understanding* 84). The social and political situation at the time influenced everyday life in Maycomb, and the novel revolves around the manifestation of racism and the liberal movement for equal rights. The social conflict presented in the novel is important in terms of how the narrative is perceived by the reader. Lee uses the child perspective to question social code by letting the child challenge the code of honor and the judicial procedures.

## 2.1 Narrative situation

First-person narration lets the reader access the thoughts and reflections of the child. Scout's voice is a compound of narrated monologue and dialogue where Scout is either part of the conversation or listening to it. The use of narrated monologue as a technique gives the reader an insight to the thoughts and reflections of Scout, which reveals the true thoughts of the child. The novel is narrated through the child focalizer's point of view but is narrated dissonantly by the adult Scout reflecting on her childhood experience. The dissonance influences the recollection of childhood by adding nuanced reflections of experiences, giving the reader access to both the child's reality and the moral values of the adult. In this chapter I will explore how Lee uses the child's perspective as a narrative device in her portrayal of life in Maycomb. The child perspective in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is influenced by Scout's experience of injustice and cruelty through limited understanding of social life. Because of Scout's immature world view, she is a vulnerable character. Consequently, her vulnerability contributes to create a relationship with the reader that might promote empathy for Scout.

Lee depicts the current race conflict in the South in the 1930s through the eyes of the child, which humanizes of all sides of the conflict. The child encounters prejudice and social codes with question and curiosity and lets the reader into the world of the child. In the beginning of the novel the child focalizer is corrupted by prejudices, norms, and social codes present in Maycomb, and the discourse is vividly colored by child-likeness and naïve reflections of the established norms and codes. Even though the child focalizer saturates much of the narrative, the adult dissonant narrator influences both perception, thought, and language throughout the discourse. The adult dissonant narrator exposes the limitations of the child in order to show the reader that Scout observes social conflicts and situations but does not fully understand the importance of them. By using child focalization, the author is able to portray a certain message through the simplified language and questioning consciousness of the child, which juxtapose with how popular the novel has been among teachers (Schuster 511). The reader is invited to understand the racial conflict of Maycomb through the eyes of Scout. The closeness in the narrative situation might invite the reader to a more empathetic perception of Scout's life (Keen *EN* 68). Her recollection of events portrays how vulnerable she is because of the social situation. Because of Atticus' role as an attorney in Maycomb and defender of a black man, Scout is forced to reflect upon the diverging sides of the conflict. The discourse reflects how she is torn between the liberal views of her father and the conservative social code of Maycomb in the process of conforming into society.

The adult dissonant narrator deliberately preserves the voice of the child throughout the discourse, which creates a balance between the experiencing and the narrating self. The child-likeness Scout possesses is reflected in her speech and actions. Many of Scout's reflections are saturated by childishness which merges the reader into the mind of the child and how the child reasons differently from adults. When her teacher asks her how she learned to read, Scout responds by noting that she was born reading, and that Jem has said that she "was a Bullfinch instead of a Finch. Jem says my name's really Jean Louise Bullfinch, that I got swapped when I was born and I'm really a—" (19). Childlikeness saturates Scout's reflections of her own reading-abilities without being influenced by dissonance.

The child focalizer's language describes others without being influenced by the dissonant narrator at various points in the novel. There is a distinction between the language provided by the adult dissonant narrator and the language the child focalizer acquires from her surroundings. In a conversation with Calpurnia, Scout reproduces a characteristic she has learned from Atticus when she refers to a group of people, the Ewells, as trash. "Why, Atticus said they were absolute trash—I never heard Atticus talk about folks the way he talked about the Ewells." (141) Even though Atticus is portrayed as beacon of morality, he contributes to the manifestation of labels in the Maycomb society. Scout learns and internalizes labels from her father. She labels others in a child-like manner without interference from the dissonant narrator. The fact that Lee "keeps open the dialectic between childhood and adulthood, between innocence and experience" (Murray 81) contributes to how the reader perceives the narration produced by Scout. The independent reflections of the child focalizer adds to the perception of how the dissonance in narration contributes to a more omniscient understanding of the limited child's recollection of events.

The voice of the child narrator is influenced by both the dissonant narrator, Atticus and the social code she is set within. These influences make Scout's voice unreliable because it is hard to distinguish between Scout's own language and language she has adopted from others. The notion of the corrupted child emerges when Scout uses language that is acquired from her surrounding environment. Scout depends on the voice of others when she constructs her own. Therefore, other characters are important in the developmental process of the child and how the narrative of the child is constructed. Miller comments on and exemplifies the way Scout embodies the language of other people around her and how she reproduces it (ch. 13). Scout allows the reader to take part in the communicative norms and embodied prejudices of Maycomb as the different voices of Maycomb are represented through her. Some places in the

novel the voice of the child is preserved but still influenced by other characters' language. In the beginning of the novel, Scout reflects on her knowledge of their mysterious neighbor, Boo Radley. "Inside the house lived a malevolent phantom" (8), and "[w]hen people's azaleas froze in a cold snap, it was because he had breathed on them" (9). She shows her immaturity through hasty and prejudice judgements of someone she does not know but is very curious about. Yet, the language of this reflection is influenced by what she has heard about Boo Radley and admits that she has received this information from Jem, who has received the information from a neighbor, Miss Stephanie Crawford. Scout shows how she receives and reproduces language and reflections acquired from others.

Childhood is established as a common ground in which readers recognize and identify with the child by recollecting their own childhood selves. By appealing to the emotions of the reader, Scout is able to communicate in a different way than an adult character would. Characterization might contribute to the development of empathy in the reader (Keen *EN* 93). Lee successfully creates a character with whom readers are able to identify. Blackford found that "readers of (...) *To Kill a Mockingbird* reveals [*sic*] that teens speak of being able to laugh at Scout's childishness and at their own past selves through her, yet they enjoy the feelings of suspense generated by her unusual combination of objectivity and local color" (165). Childishness and negative emotions are foregrounded as influential factors, which juxtapose with Keen's findings. She notes how empathetic emotions are promoted to a greater extent when the subject is exposed to negativity (*EN* xii). The child-like features Scout possesses makes her more vulnerable in terms of her limited understanding and lack of abilities to defend herself. Atticus' business in Maycomb affects both his children, and through Scout's point of view the reader is exposed to what the children go through and how they are subjected to "cruelty, injustice and victimization" by other characters in the novel (Keen *EN* 70). The dissonance presented in the novel emphasizes the experiences of the child while supplying additional information or correcting any perceptions the child focalizer might have misunderstood. This works as a narrative device in terms of showing the reader how the child would originally perceive an event or situation, while compromising the limitation of the point of view, showing to the reader that the narrator is in fact more omniscient than what the focalizer appears to be.

## **2.2 Limitation in the child's perspective**

Much of Scout's vulnerability is created because of the limitations in child focalization as she is limited in terms of understanding the meaning of what she experiences. The adult narrator

holds back on information in order to let the reader experience through the child focalizer. The adult narrator “is wise; rational; aware of issues of gender, race, and caste; reverential of the innocence of children; and saddened by the tendency of individuals and society to urge children to commit the sins of their fathers” (Seidel 80). Blackford notes how Scout “notices far more than she can explain” (167), which is accentuated through the discourse as the narration clearly observes and acknowledges the importance of event which the child focalizer does not completely understand. The omniscient knowledge of life experience is only available to the reader indirectly through the information provided in addition to the reflections of the child focalizer. By adding the reflections of the dissonant narrator, Lee is able to take advantage of the child-likeness and naivety of the child focalizer and level the reader with the dissonant narrator’s knowledge of her past in order to portray a social critique of the events depicted in the novel.

The discourse reveals Scout’s lack of knowledge of other groups of people in Maycomb. She encounters situations where her naivety and child-likeness affect her perceptions. The dissonant narrator highlights situations where the child focalizer remains credulous and generalizes social perceptions uncritically until she learns to know individuals from other social groups in Maycomb personally. Even though Scout encounters Calpurnia every day, she has little knowledge of the African-Americans in Maycomb. “It is not until Scout and Jem attend church with Calpurnia that a sense of Calpurnia’s difference reaches Scout” (Johnson *Threatening* 85). Her first encounter with a greater number of blacks is when she accompanies Calpurnia to church. When Scout learns how most of the Black congregation is illiterate, she is amused by the fact that black adults cannot read. “Calpurnia laughed. ‘They can’t read.’ ‘Can’t read?’ I asked. ‘All those folks?’” (141). In this dialogue, the dissonant narrator is left outside of the discovery, leaving the pure reflection of childish amusement for the reader to perceive. The child’s point of view foregrounds limitations in knowledge of other social groups, and knowledge of the black citizens of Maycomb is presented to the reader through the discoveries made by the child. Scout is completely shocked by the fact that there are adults who cannot read. By presenting how Scout accesses knowledge through experiencing and perceiving the other, the reader is primed to do the same. By exposing the reader to the vulnerability of not knowing, the reader is merged into the developmental process of Scout and how she learns through experience. Scout’s process of gradually developing into a more reflected and nuanced character promotes an empathetic reflection of the obstacles and challenges she faces in the process.



Scout shows how she learns and receives advice from others which influence the choices she makes. Scout is not afraid of fighting other children, but she is asked not to by Atticus. “My fists were clenched and I was ready to let fly. Atticus had promised me he would wear me out if he ever heard of me fighting any more; I was far too old and too big for such childish things, and the sooner I learned to hold in, the better off everybody would be. I soon forgot” (85). The narrated monologue above shows how Scout’s thoughts are influenced by Atticus’ voice. Scout is consciously aware of Atticus’ expectations of her, and these expectations are incorporated into her voice and reflections. The voice of the dissonant narrator also influences the discourse through language, ideological framework and irony. When Scout and Dill discuss how babies are made, the dissonant narrator comments ironically on the childhood reflection. Dill suggests that all babies comes from an island and Scout contradicts him. ““That’s a lie. Aunty said God drops ’em down the chimney. At least that’s what I think she said.’ For once, Aunty’s diction had not been too clear” (164). Here, the narrating self adds the ironic comment of Aunt Alexandra’s unclarity in explaining the matter, showing how the experiencing self has no knowledge of how babies are made. The clash of voices aims to support the notion of Scout as an unreliable narrator. This unreliability juxtaposes with how the child develops. Scout is not yet on the level of moral development where autonomous and independent thinking shapes the character (Kohlberg and Hersh 55). Therefore, Scout is dependent on external influence in her moral reasoning which is a natural explanation of her unreliability. These reflections are influenced by dissonance by being recollected through a more nuanced language.

One of the reasons why Scout thinks and acts the way she does is her limited access to knowledge because of her age. The limitation of her abilities to understand reveals childish traits. However, they are legitimized by her young age and immaturity. Murray notes how “the narrative voice in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is not uniform in its perspective on the past. Lee uses the possibilities of the remembering adult narrator, who has the distance of both time and maturity from the events, but at strategic moments she limits the insight of the narrator to what she, as a child, might have understood” (78). She accentuates that the multiple perspectives in the novel is a strategy opening up for possibilities in terms of how they are exploited. The perspective of the child and the perspective of the adult differs yet are intertwined in the novel. Holly Blackford notes how “Scout becomes our naive eyewitness to the melodramatic persecution of the innocent and even disabled Tom Robinson” (167). Scout is the observer of an unfair situation, and unable to affect it in any way. Consequently, the dissonant narrator

accentuates the innocence in the child-likeness of Scout's focalization while reflecting critically on what the child observes.

The knowledge accessible to the reader creates an unequal relationship which renders Scout vulnerable. When Scout narrates dialogue between Atticus and other adults, she is unable to understand the meaning of the conversations. The distinction between the child and the dissonant narrator is maintained, and the comments of the dissonant narrator shows the reader that there is more to be understood. Because the child narrates events of unacknowledged importance, the reader is primed to pay extra attention in order to understand what is really going on. The voice of Atticus shapes the perception of how Scout is influenced by his moral and liberal views. Atticus has to defend Tom Robinson during his trial, which creates demonstrations and fury among other members of the Maycomb society. The negative attitudes of others affect Scout as she is mocked for having a father who defends "negroes". Scout reflects on the divergence between the different attitudes she encounters in town and in school, and the values Atticus promotes to his children.

I hope and pray I can get Jem and Scout through it without bitterness, and most of all, without catching Maycomb's usual disease. Why reasonable people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up, is something I don't pretend to understand . . . I just hope that Jem and Scout come to me for their answers instead of listening to the town. I hope they trust me enough. . . . (100).

Even though Scout eaves drops on Atticus' conversation with Uncle Jack, "Maycomb's disease" is never directly explained. Rather, the knowledge is indirectly exposed through various prejudice and racist attitudes of the Maycomb people. Scout does not make this connection. Therefore, she does not understand the content of their dialogue, only that they are talking about her. The dialogue presented in the discourse lets the reader perceive the content of Atticus and Jack's conversation. After the dialogue, the dissonant narrator reflects on how the conversation was meant for the child to hear. "it was not until many years later that I realized he wanted me to hear every word he said." (101). Looking at the memory in retrospect, the narrator acknowledges the importance of the dialogue and realizes that her father has indeed succeeded to protect her from becoming ignorant and prejudiced. By stressing the importance of their dialogue within the discourse, the dialogue emerges as an important moral lesson. To the reader, the notion of "Maycomb's disease" contributes to the understanding of how prejudice and ignorance in Maycomb is reproduced as Atticus is afraid his children will "catch"

the disease. The disease appears as easy to catch and is the heart of the social conflict in Maycomb; the reluctance to view all men as equal despite the color of his skin.

Scout's limited knowledge also appears when she encounters vocabulary or pragmatics she does not understand. Her childish reaction to slander emerges not because she is offended by what is said, rather *how* it is said, significantly emphasizing how tone and attitude is crucial in communication and also expressed through the discourse. Especially when people Scout encounters criticize the ways of her father, she gets offensive and aggravated. In a conversation with their uncle about an earlier Christmas family party, Scout confesses to having hit her cousin because he offended her. "“What did Francis call him?” ‘A nigger-lover. I ain’t very sure what it means, but the way Francis said it—tell you one thing right now, Uncle Jack, I’ll be—I swear before God if I’ll sit there and let him say somethin’ about Atticus”” (98). Scout reacts not to the vocabulary itself, rather it is the tone and attitude of the saying that provokes her and leads her to understand that a “nigger-lover” is negative. When Scout first attacks her cousin Francis at the Christmas party earlier in the discourse, Scout does not reveal to the reader that she does not understand what Francis means when he mocks Atticus. The fact that this information is provided to the reader sheds light on the earlier events where Scout has come across the term “nigger-lover”. In a sense, the words themselves are undermined as the attitude and body-language reveal to Scout the meaning behind the words. This contributes to show how the social code extends beyond language as a form of expression, and how attitudes also reveal themselves through body language and attitudes.

By experiencing the other, Scout's understanding and knowledge changes. During Tom Robinson's trial, Scout is exposed to the reality of the Ewell family's life, which exceeds her previous knowledge of their family. The Ewells live in the dump, they are very poor, and the family father abuses his children on a regular basis. The narrated monologue during the trial shows how Scout learns to apply the advice of Atticus to real life and tries to understand what it must be like to be in Mayella Ewell's shoes. When Mayella is offended by the decent courtesy of politeness presented by Atticus, the child focalizer reflects curiously on how it must be to be a Ewell. "I wondered if anybody had ever called her “ma'am” or “Miss Mayella” in her life; probably not, as she took offense to routine courtesy. What on earth was her life like? I soon found out” (208). Mayella's rejection of polite courtesy leads to a reflection of how Mayella's life might differ from the focalizer's own. This passage also foreshadows how the life of Mayella is harder and tougher than her own by adding “I soon found out” as an afterthought to the reflection. Through the narration of Tom Robinson, Scout learns how the life in the dump

proceeds. “As Tom Robinson gave his testimony, it came to me that Mayella Ewell must have been the loneliest person in the world” (219). The realization of Mayella’s life lets Scout understand why Mayella tried to tempt Tom Robinson. The notion of loneliness contributes to explain the irrationality that presents itself during the trial, thus giving answer to some of Scout’s prejudices towards the Ewells and their way of life. “Scout’s narrative voice is a negotiation of the many languages that characterize Maycomb” (Miller, ch. 13). Scout’s voice contributes to a humanization of Mayella by exposing her loneliness and the hardships that characterize her life. Scout learns about other people through a compound of information and experience. Through her narrated monologue, she does not only undermine the prejudice of colored and disabled folks, she also undermines the prejudice of and humanizes what Atticus refers to as “trash”. Through these revelations, Scout exceeds her limitations by acquiring knowledge and experience that alters her prejudices. By humanizing Mayella, empathy might be generated for her through the negative emotions present in Tom Robinson’s testimony.

### **2.3 Prejudice in the child’s perspective**

Scout develops as a character throughout the discourse as she ages and matures. Jennifer Murray (80) argues that the novel is not a bildungsroman, a novel about the moral and physiological growth of the character, because it only depicts Scout’s life between the age of six and nine. Seidel disagrees, and argues that Scout’s development qualifies despite the short span the novel is set within. Whether or not the novel qualifies as a bildungsroman is less relevant in terms of how the reader perceives the development Scout goes through. Scout nevertheless goes through a moral development triggered by a juxtaposition of biology and social influence. She matures because she ages, but also because she is exposed to situations that challenge and develop her moral and social views.

Lee uses Scout to expose how racial prejudice is manifested in the people of Maycomb. Various characters in the novel express racist attitudes. Mrs. Dubose, an old, grumpy lady that lives next door, tells Scout how “[Atticus is] no better than the niggers and trash he works for!” (116). Moreover, Scout observes her teacher, Miss Gates, when she leaves the courthouse after Tom Robinson’s trial. “I heard [Miss Gates] say it’s time somebody taught [the negroes] a lesson, they were gettin’ way above themselves, an’ the next thing they think they can do is marry us” (283). Racist remarks are present in the discourse throughout the novel. The racial prejudice is also expressed the other way around. When Calpurnia brings the children to her church, Lula, a member of the black congregation says “[y]ou ain’t got no business bringin’ white chillun here—they got their church, we got our’n” (135). The manifestation of racial

prejudice exists both internally and externally in the characters; these prejudices shape both individuals and groups. In order to accentuate how all of the social prejudice is filtered through Scout, Blackford points to how “Lee uses the young Scout to acknowledge what white eyes can and cannot see, continually negotiating between local and transcendent perspective” (167). Through Scout, Lee is able to portray the racial conflict not by removing all prejudice but by showing how it exists within people, and help the reader understand why it exists. By disproving the negative stereotypical traits usually connected to these prejudices, the reader is exposed to a deconstruction of the social codes established in the novel, thus creating a more empathetic understanding of all the characters.

The prejudice embodied in Scout makes her vulnerable as she does not understand how powerful these prejudices can be, yet they are important to her moral development. When Scout encounters Dolphus Raymond, her prejudices are challenged. Dolphus’ way of living is criticized by the Maycomb society. The reader is primed to understand that in Maycomb, black and white should remain separate. Because Dolphus Raymond drinks too much and has children with a colored woman, he is discredited in Maycomb. When Mr. Raymond offers Scout and Dill a sip of Coke outside the courthouse during the trial, Scout is skeptical. “As Mr. Dolphus Raymond was an evil man I accepted his invitation reluctantly, but I followed Dill. Somehow, I didn’t think Atticus would like it if we became friendly with Mr. Raymond, and I knew Aunt Alexandra wouldn’t” (228). Through this passage, Scout is reluctant to be acquainted with Dolphus because of his reputation. By applying the notion of “evil”, she stresses the negative emotions she holds towards him. Additionally, the passage accentuates her prejudice towards someone with whom she is not yet personally acquainted. Her preconceptions of Mr. Raymond contribute to the understanding of how Scout has adopted the prejudice present in Maycomb, and uncritically accepts it to be true.

She is proven wrong of her own assumption when she learns to understand that the social perception of Dolphus in fact is untrue. Through narrated monologue, Scout reflects both on the socially accepted assumption of Mr. Dolphus Raymond as well as her own personal experience of him that has forced her to alter her prejudice towards him. “I had a feeling that I shouldn’t be here listening to this sinful man who had mixed children and didn’t care who knew it, but he was fascinating. I had never encountered a being who deliberately perpetrated fraud against himself” (229). The internalization of social code emerges through vocabulary such as the “feeling” of doing something wrong, while in fact Scout refers to Dolphus as “fascinating”. She refers to his divergence from social code as perpetrating “fraud against himself”, indicating

that respecting the ways of Maycomb appears as important. Furthermore, this narrated monologue emerges in the middle of a conversation. By interrupting dialogue with such a reflection, it appears urgent for the narrator to inform the reader of how she was mistaken in her assumptions. The speech itself is strongly influenced by the dissonant narrator through such vocabulary as “deliberately perpetrated”, which indicates that dissonance functions as a device in portraying how the manifestation of social code corrupts individuals into prejudice that can create misunderstandings between people.

Throughout the course of the novel, Scout learns to internalize Atticus’ advice on how to respect others no matter who they are or where they come from. When Tom Robinson is imprisoned in Maycomb, Atticus sits outside his cell in order to protect him from any harm. While he sits there, he is confronted by a lynch mob who refuses to back off. Johnson notes how the presence of a lynch mob “are well within the realm of plausibility in the South during the thirties” (*Threatening* 5), indicating that it is a common Southern phenomenon at the time. As the children walk into the dangerous situation, Scout is able to console one of the members of the mob, Mr. Cunningham, simply by polite conversation. “Atticus had said it was the polite thing to talk to people about what they were interested in, not about what you were interested in. Mr. Cunningham displayed no interest in his son, so I tackled his entailment once more in a last-ditch effort to make him feel at home” (174). Through this narrated monologue, she explains how she has learned to behave towards others, and how politeness emerges out of being respectful and interested in other people. Additionally, the discourse shows how Scout can change the attitudes of others by making use of what she has learned from her father. When Scout tries to have a respectful and peaceful conversation with one of the members of the mob, they eventually calmly retreat.

The manifestation of prejudice in Lee’s characters creates an understanding of how strongly society influences its members. Not only does Lee show racist prejudice in characters expected to possess such attitudes, she also shows how such prejudices are manifested in Scout throughout the novel. The expression of racist remarks late in the novel makes Scout’s voice unreliable as the focalizer’s ideological values all of a sudden are corrupted and diverge from the narrator’s own. After Tom has been found guilty in court, Dill is frustrated by the result. In Scout’s attempt to comfort him, she explains “Well, Dill, after all he’s just a Negro” (227). This passage emerges right after the trial where the main focus has been to give Tom the just treatment he deserves. Murray comments on how “no insight is offered on the part of the adult narrator to attenuate the force of this racist but completely normalized statement” (79), thus

promoting the honest reflection of the child. Further, she notes how “Scout’s words leave the reader in a situation of uncertainty in relation to the character’s ideological positioning” (79). The sudden racist remark Scout makes at a late stage in the novel functions as a clear statement of how powerful social codes are. Because Scout is a victim of inevitable social prejudice, she is vulnerable because of how easily she is manipulated due to her young age. The unreliability emerging by divergence from the novel’s ideological framework is legitimized by the strength of social influence.

## **2.4 Internalization of language**

Scout embodies the language in her surrounding environment which is reflected in her behavior and her moral development. Lisa Detweiler Miller notes how Scout not only embodies language, but also actions and behavior she is expected to uphold or perform. This way, “languages [are] absorbed by the body and performed quite literally by [...] Scout” (5). Such an embodiment of language emerges when Scout uses language to justify a certain behavior, such as when she fights her peers for offending her verbally. Throughout the discourse, there is a change in Scout’s reaction to other people’s language and behavior. Especially when she tries to self-regulate the reader is exposed to her development. The way the reader is merged into her moral development depicts the struggle of being a child and exposes the challenge of becoming responsible and caring towards everyone regardless of race or social class. This exposure might invite an empathetic reflection through the purity of child development and the common emotions it generates such as fury, envy and curiosity. Because of Atticus’ advice, Scout works hard to maintain her dignity and tries to avoid fighting with children who aggravate her. “Somehow, if I fought Cecil I would let Atticus down. Atticus so rarely asked Jem and me to do something for him, I could take being called a coward for him. I felt extremely noble for having remembered, and remained noble for three weeks” (87). The narrated monologue above shows how Scout reflects over her role as a daughter, and how by conforming to Atticus’ request, she will be rewarded by Atticus’ approval. Her wish to comply to her father shows her child-like way of reasoning which reveals that she is on the conventional level of development (Kohlberg and Hersh 55). Even though Scout’s sacrifice is to give up violence, the reader might respond empathetically to the fact that she has to leave her tradition of code of honor and her ability to defend herself, which is important to her. The child narration in this passage shows a strong relationship between Scout’s moral growth and how her child-like reflections emphasize the altruism she assigns to herself. The child-likeness excuses the otherwise self-bragging

acknowledgement, which contributes to the understanding of this reflection as an attribution to how the child her father's advice is embodied in her behavior.

The dissonant narrator juxtaposes with the child focalizer by reflecting in a vocabulary too advanced for the child. Readers are primed to understand that the narrator acknowledges her past self and values her own moral development. The ignorance in the child focalizer is explained and to some extent excused. The difference in advancement of language serves "to remind readers of how young [Scout] and Jem were and to inform them that she is moving back and forth from past to present in her sharing of this experience" (Miller, ch. 13). The relationship between the adult dissonant narrator and the child focalizer is used as a narrative device that emphasizes the child-like reflections but at the same time adds omniscience without corrupting the perception of the child. The balance is displayed at various occasions in the novel, especially when it is clear to the reader that the dissonant narrator has more knowledge of a subject than the child focalizer. Through narrated monologue, the adult narrator reflects on how Calpurnia's private life. "That Calpurnia led a modest double life never dawned on me. The idea that she had a separate existence outside our household was a novel one, to say nothing of her having command of two languages" (143). Though vocabulary such as "modest double-life", "never dawned", "separate existence", and "having command" shows how the adult narrator contributes to the recollection of the childhood memory. The juxtaposition of the two voices emphasizes the importance of the adult as narrator, reminding the reader that the adult narrator is more omniscient than both the reader and the child focalizer. The narrative technique of using advanced vocabulary emphasizes the dissonance, and expresses a more thorough distinction between the child and the adult. By reminding readers that the focalizer is a child, the reader might empathize more through the understanding of how the dissonant narrator is not in a position to change anything from her past, only explain it. The narrator does not explain away any of the events, rather they are depicted honestly which might generate empathy for the narrator's truthfulness.

Scout herself is also labeled according to her social category. Calpurnia, Atticus and other adult characters in the novel contribute to the perception of Scout as a child by referring to her as "baby". This works as a notion to emphasize that Scout is a child and should be perceived as one. By adding the label of "baby" Scout is characterized as someone who is young and immature, and the label prime the reader to perceive her speech, thoughts and actions as child-like. The labeling works to support the child-likeness in Scout, as well as the category she belongs to contributes to legitimize her childish speech, thoughts and actions. Especially when



Scout perceives situations she does not completely understand, she is referred to and comforted by the label of “baby”, which accentuates her limitations in terms of knowledge. By assigning Scout this character trait, the reader might view this as a “recognizable situation” (Keen *EN* 68). With this in mind, the reader might relate to the vulnerability of being very young, inexperienced, and lacking knowledge and emotional maturity. Accordingly, Scout’s social category of being a child is confirmed by the label she is assigned.

Scout’s perspective contributes to the perception of how labels of groups in Maycomb are constructed and manifested through external definition (Jenkins 199). By questioning these labels, the discourse deconstructs them into being false perceptions of reality. Seidel argues that when we first meet Scout, she is “a practitioner of the code of honor rather than the rule of law” (81). The code of honor leads her to make hasty and violent decisions towards others inferior to her in order to protect her own reputation. In addition, her phase of being a practitioner of code of honor juxtaposes with her stage of moral development. The maintenance of the code of honor causes Scout to actively use labels in order to categorize people into groups. Through this labeling, she justifies her reprehension of those inferior to her. As the child focalizer matures, the relationship to the code of honor changes, and Scout’s questioning of labels emerges as central in the discourse. Through questioning Atticus, Scout learns how labels are constructed, and how ignorant and misleading they can be. Especially when Atticus is called “nigger-lover”, and the tone of the name-calling sets Scout off into assuming that the label is negative, she reacts and requests to know the meaning.

“Scout,” said Atticus, “nigger-lover is just one of those terms that don’t mean anything—like snot-nose. It’s hard to explain—ignorant, trashy people use it when they think somebody’s favoring Negroes over and above themselves. It’s slipped into usage with some people like ourselves, when they want a common, ugly term to label somebody.” “You aren’t really a nigger-lover, then, are you?” “I certainly am. I do my best to love everybody . . . I’m hard put, sometimes—baby, it’s never an insult to be called what somebody thinks is a bad name. It just shows you how poor that person is, it doesn’t hurt you” (124-125).

The dialogue between Atticus and Scout reflects the developmental process of the child, as well as her curiosity and her interest in learning from Atticus. Groups and categories manifested in a social code need to be explained to Scout in order for her to develop her own understanding of them. The conversation with Atticus shows how Scout associates negativity with the notion

of being a “nigger-lover” and how she tries to clear Atticus of the label. Instead, she learns the meaning to be “to love everybody” and learns how it is a good quality to possess. The perception of “nigger-lover” changes, thus Lee succeeds in turning the negative association into a good human quality. By assigning such a character trait to Atticus, empathy might be created through the negativity generated because he tries to do his best to defend Tom Robinson.

Scout sometimes omits prejudice labels in some of her reflections of others, which shows the reader that not all social categories are manifested in Scout. The omission of labels contributes to understand that the child is not innately corrupted by social code, rather it is a construction the child learns through the socialization process. It is therefore possible to have individual perceptions of the constructed groups and categories. In the beginning of the novel when the reader is introduced to Scout and her family, Calpurnia is thoroughly described by Scout. Interestingly, this narrated monologue completely omits characteristics that refers to Calpurnia’s race or color. On the contrary, Calpurnia is introduced as “our cook” (5) and characterized by the way she treats Scout.

Calpurnia was something else again. She was all angles and bones; she was nearsighted; she squinted; her hand was wide as a bed slat and twice as hard. She was always ordering me out of the kitchen, asking me why I couldn’t behave as well as Jem when she knew he was older, and calling me home when I wasn’t ready to come. Our battles were epic and one-sided. Calpurnia always won, mainly because Atticus always took her side. She had been with us ever since Jem was born, and I had felt her tyrannical presence as long as I could remember. (6)

In this characterization of Calpurnia, other traits than color and race are accentuated. Child-like aspects of importance such as the description of Calpurnia’s hand and how they quarrel establishes the child’s point of view. By doing so, Lee accentuates the qualities people possess that *really* matter, and that any prejudice towards others is not innate. Scout does not care about Cal’s color, only her traits that actually influence Scout in her everyday life. The tyrannical notion over Scout’s characterization of Calpurnia is saturated by childishness and irrationality but omits racial prejudice. The childishness in the narrated monologue contributes to the general perception of how a child might reflect; they can be very irrational and selfish. Here, Scout shows how she really only cares about Calpurnia’s qualities that concern her. The point of view stresses how Scout experiences Calpurnia’s tyranny as cruel. The reader understands that Calpurnia’s tyranny is well deserved, but the strong presence of Scout’s perception of injustice

renders her vulnerable. Scout lacks understanding of how discipline is necessary and even though the dissonant narrator knows, she does not influence the experiencing self. Scout's experience of cruelty is isolated for the reader to perceive the hardships of childhood and shows how Scout herself categorize people based on her own perception. Even though Scout criticizes Calpurnia's regime and projects selfish motives through the characterization of her, empathy is projected for the child focalizer because she disregards social prejudice.

## **2.5 Atticus**

Atticus knows how social code affects and manifests itself in his children. Through education and exposure, he influences his children to understand others before any judgement can be made. The limitation of Scout's narration decreases throughout the discourse as she matures and learns to know the ways of Maycomb. How she internalizes her father's advice is significant for her moral development. Lacy Daigle highlights three tools Atticus applies on the moral development of his children; "the use of examples, verbal statements, and learning through experience" (58). These devices are reflected in Scout's narration as the dissonant adult narrator reflects upon the experiencing self. Furthermore, Hans-Georg Gadamer, a philosopher on hermeneutics, highlights how "transposing ourselves" into another's situation will create an understanding of the other. He even uses the metaphor of putting "ourselves in someone else's shoes" (Gadamer 315), which juxtaposes with how Atticus always asks his children to understand others.

"First of all," he said, "if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—" "Sir?" "—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it" (32).

By deliberately exposing his children to other people, unknown situations and controversial choices, Atticus teaches them to accept others and emerge themselves beyond their internalized prejudice towards otherness. When the child focalizer asks "Sir?", she indicates that the content in Atticus' advice needs simplification. The dissonant narrator might not be the one who needs repetition, the omniscient knowledge is available to her. By repeating and simplifying, the importance of the content is emphasized. Furthermore, this passage establishes the ideological framework of the novel, encouraging the reader to perceive others the same way. The reader is presented to the same prejudices Scout possesses in the beginning of the novel, partaking in the process of the development and expansion of horizons. By depicting the development in the

child focalizer, Lee is able to expose the problem of prejudice to the reader. Uncritically internalized perceptions are changed paralleled with the increasing access to knowledge of other people.

The father is central in the novel, and he is characterized thoroughly in the discourse. Scout's feelings towards her father changes throughout the discourse, and these feelings juxtapose with her process of maturation. In the beginning of the novel, she does not think highly of her father despite his highly respected profession and their social status. "Our father didn't do anything. He worked in an office, not in a drugstore. Atticus did not drive a dump-truck for the county, he was not the sheriff, he did not farm, work in a garage, or do anything that could possibly arouse the admiration of anyone". This reflection highlights qualities Scout values as important, which also reveals how she perceives social status as less relevant. The disapproval of Atticus is present in narrated monologues early in the discourse, but changes as she matures and her perspective on admirable qualities changes. She learns to appreciate her father's qualities and his position in society. When Atticus is friendly towards Mrs. Dubose, Scout is in awe of his good-hearted nature. "He would return his hat to his head, swing me to his shoulders in her [Mrs. Dubose] very presence, and we would go home in the twilight. It was times like these when I thought my father, who hated guns and had never been to any wars, was the bravest man who ever lived" (115). This narrated monologue shows both what qualities Scout attributes the Southern man; guns and war (manifested in social code), and her increasing acceptance of more important human values such as dignity, courtesy, and kindness. The dissonant narrator clearly influences the reflection made in the last sentence and promotes a more general understanding of how Scout on many occasions learns the value of Atticus' characteristics and moral values, thus letting the reader into the vulnerable and exiting time of childhood.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the child focalizer is important in how society is perceived. Scout is both the embodiment of society as well as she has a voice and an ability to contradict social codes she perceives as unreasonable. Limitation in knowledge and understanding, prejudice expressed through narrated monologue and the embodiment of social code in opposition to Atticus' representation of values are narrative techniques used to promote Scout as vulnerable. The dissonant narration emphasizes the injustice expressed in Maycomb's norms and codes, which subjects Scout and other characters to the notion of being victimized and unjustly treated. These strategies promote how it is to be set in this particular context and gives the reader access to the mind of the child as well as the mind of the reflecting adult.

### 3 *The Kite Runner*

This chapter will look at the child narrator in *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. I will identify and explore how Hosseini uses narrative techniques in order to invite empathetic reflections. Hosseini distinguishes between techniques promoting empathy and techniques where an empathetic response might be deliberately absent. There are scenes in the novel where Amir behaves immorally, and these scenes contribute to enforce the fact that he represents a privileged social group which might discourage an empathetic response. First-person narration promotes and invites an empathetic reflection because of the closeness to Amir's feelings. Also, limitation in the child's perspective makes Amir vulnerable in certain situations. I will look at narrative situation and characterization in the novel and identify places where these are strongly influenced by the child, and work as narrative techniques in order to invite an empathetic reflection.

*The Kite Runner* is the story of Amir from early childhood into adulthood. The novel is narrated through dissonant narration with the experiencing self as focalizer. The beginning of the novel depicts Amir's childhood in Kabul in the 60s and 70s, and follows Amir and his father when they migrate to California, United States in 1981. The story goes on to portray Amir and Baba's life in a diasporic community until the plot turns, and Amir returns to Afghanistan in 2001 to rescue his nephew Sohrab. The narrative covers a duration of 40 years or so, and the vulnerability of the child remains important throughout the narrative. I will look at the first part of the novel in order to establish an understanding of the conflict that shapes Amir's actions throughout the rest of the novel. Then I will suggest how the child focalizer is influential throughout the narrative.

To establish why this novel can be a strong influencer of narrative empathy, it is important to map out the conflict in which the plot evolves. "*The Kite Runner* provides for Afghans a human face, otherwise not recognizable in popular representations of the country as a site of seemingly never-ending warfare" (Jefferess 398). The war is the main event of the story, and Amir is part of an ethnically divided community composed of various ethnic groups (Siddique 2). Amir himself is a Pashtun; the superior ethnic group in Afghanistan. Amir and his father hold two servants who descend from the ethnic group of Hazaras, which are suppressed and discriminated upon in the Afghan society. The tension and conflict between the two ethnic groups is characterized by the dualism between superior and inferior created by difference in class and ethnicity. The relationship between Amir and his Hazara servant Hassan represents

the conflict of ethnic and class differences, and is crucial to the plot of the novel. Even though the ethnic conflict in Afghanistan might be unfamiliar to the Western reader, the dynamics of the conflict between the suppressed and the suppressor are recognizable. Aubry (2009) notes that the novel is “a desire to overcome or elude partisan, ethnic, religious, and national divisions – a desire, [...] capable of allying, unpredictably, with a diversity of antagonistic political orientations” (26). By portraying the everyday life of Afghans, both in Afghanistan and in California, Hosseini contributes to merge the divisions between the novel and the Western reader. Not only is the novel important in terms of its universal appeal, it depicts a social conflict unfamiliar to the reader, and lets the reader into an unfamiliar world. Reading can promote an empathetic reflection on the divisions in the Afghan society, thus promote a real understanding of the cultural division between Hazaras and Pashtuns.

The first part of the novel covers the years before Afghanistan enters into a civil war. These pre-war years are influenced by the ethnic and religious tensions dividing the people, which appears as an underlying force in the discourse. The emerging tension influences Amir by creating a divergence between conflicting external influences. On the one hand, Baba discredits the mullahs that teach in school by undermining the importance of religion. On the other, religious motives strongly influence the military movement. As the military conflict evolves, the Taliban emerges as an influential military power. The Taliban is based on the social and cultural values of the Pashtuns, thus viewing Pashtuns as superior. When Amir returns to Afghanistan, he encounters a country ruled by the Taliban through horror and violence. The novel depicts the cruelty and injustice of war, which in turn emphasizes and makes the child more important. Not only are children more vulnerable, the trauma inflicted on them can impact them for a lifetime. Machel explains how children are affected differently by war and conflict depending on factors such as “personal and family history and cultural background” (50). The novel portrays children as completely ordinary even though they are set in the middle of one of the worst conflicts at the time. Even though Amir has the advantage of belonging to the superior group and has the opportunity to leave Afghanistan, he is still greatly shaped by the conflict when he returns. The impact of Sohrab’s living conditions and the abuse he suffers infuriates Amir. By exposing the reader to these cruel conditions, the reader might reflect empathetically on how it must be to be a child in a country occupied by war.

### **3.1 Narrative situation**

*The Kite Runner* is composed of various narrative techniques which could affect the reader’s empathetic perception of the novel. The novel is strongly influenced by the presence of the

child, which contributes to the uniqueness of how the narrative techniques are used. Narrative situation influences the way a reader interprets a novel, and certain techniques might invite a closer relationship between the narrator and the reader. Amir is both the protagonist and the narrator through first-person narration. This gives the reader an exclusive access to Amir's consciousness through narrated monologue. The adult Amir narrates the story, but the focalization changes throughout the discourse. Amir's childhood is narrated through the child focalizer (Rimmon-Keenan 76). Furthermore, limitation in the narrator's perspective projects themselves when the focalizer fails to understand situations. Childishness and child-likeness strongly influence the focalizer's experiences. Amir's negative thoughts, speech and actions contribute to explain why he behaves irrationally. Additionally, the dissonant narrator recollects his wrongdoings as a child, and shows a great remorse. The immaturity that saturates his decisions is explored through narration, and shows how his reflections and actions are cruel, but excused by his childishness. The childishness might contribute to legitimize irrational behavior and promote empathy in connection to the vulnerable child.

The child's point of view is influential in the way it accentuates certain aspects of the child that are distinguishable from adults. Vulnerability is especially relevant in terms of children. In *Empathy and The Novel*, Keen points to a reader's response to *Jane Eyre* emphasizing how "fundamental powerlessness of children" leads to the "continuing appeal of suffering characters" (70). She notes how the reader empathizes with suffering children despite having anything in common with them. The way in which children are victimized invites an empathetic reflection of their situation. Readers are more likely to recognize Amir's vulnerability because the reader can recollect own memories of being a child. Not only are children smaller in size and strength, they are less cognitively developed (Kohlberg and Hersh 55), and consequently less capable of contributing in the social sphere. Of course, this can be attributed not only to children, but also people with lack of cognitive abilities or with cognitive impairments. Still, children differ in terms of how they are developing into becoming a part of this social sphere, and are shaped and molded to eventually fit in.

The relationship between Amir and Baba is important in terms of how empathy is generated for Amir's childhood. The story reflects how Amir is subjected to unjust treatment and victimized throughout his childhood, especially by his father. As Keen notes, "many readers report that novels in which child characters are subjected to cruel or unfair treatment evoke empathy" (Keen *EN* 69). As children are especially vulnerable, they are also more likely to be subjected to unjust treatment. Amir suffers from parental neglect as Baba treats him with

little affection, and Amir experiences his father's emotional negligence as cruel. Consequently, Amir is selfish and full of envy for those Baba treats with affection, and he is unable to value all the good Baba does. Because Amir is a child, his selfishness might be excused because he is a victim of parental neglect. The relationship between Amir and Baba changes throughout the discourse as Amir matures and Baba learns to understand his son. Moreover, the narrative distinguishes between material neglect and emotional neglect through the narrator's reflection of his own situation. It is necessary to stress that Amir does not suffer from any material neglect, on the contrary. Baba is a wealthy man and provides everything for his son. Because Amir is neglected emotionally, the novel is a honest portrayal of Amir's relentless wish for parental affection.

Amir's perspective is important in two ways. First, he symbolizes the elite in society and views otherness from a superior position. He represents a privileged group not subjected to social injustice. Similarly to Blackford's comment on Scout point of view, Hosseini uses Amir's eyes to acknowledge what the privileged "can and cannot see" (Blackford 167). The author uses narration to show how universal character traits can be found in all characters, and how members of the upper class also suffer from injustice, victimization and cruelty. The empathetic projection might be affected negatively by Amir's immediate privileges, but the vulnerability created by his relationship to his father is more important than material privileges. This contributes to a humanization of Amir. Consequently, the way the novel is narrated contributes to neutralize his privileges.

Second, the novel is narrated dissonantly through the adult Amir but strongly affected by the reflections and thoughts of the younger focalizer. The child's consciousness is present in scenes where Amir recollects his childhood through dissonance. In certain scenes, recollections are strongly influenced by the adult narrator's knowledge and vocabulary. Nevertheless, the dissonance does not compromise the focalizer's point of view. Important events in the novel are emphasized by the preservation of the child's consciousness in recollections of the past. The adult narrator only interferes in scenes where his reflections are crucial for the interpretation of the recollected memory. Most of Amir's thoughts are narrated through self-narrated monologue, and other characters are interpreted through Amir's portrayal. Narrated monologue is central in how the reader is granted access to Amir's thoughts, which in turn can promote empathy because of the closeness to his reflections.



### 3.2 Characterization

The Western reader might not have much culturally or ethnically in common with Amir. Still, as long as there are implicit feelings present in the narrative, empathy can be promoted. As Keen points out, there is a strong pattern among readers that support “the notion that character identification lies at the heart of reader’s empathy” (*EN* 68). Characterization is therefore influential in how Amir is perceived, and his character traits might be important in how the reader empathizes with him. Character identification is not necessarily provoked by the reader’s emotions of strong characterization with a character in the story; Keen notes that a reader can experience character identification in recognizable situations and through the portrayal of implicit feelings (Keen *EN* 68).

In the first sentence of the novel, the importance of childhood is stated through dissonant quoted monologue. The next passage shows ambivalence and suggests for the reader how there is pain connected to the story that is to come. This pain will both positively and negatively affect the narrative.

I became what I am today at the age of twelve, on a frigid overcast day in the winter of 1975. I remember the precise moment, crouching behind a crumbling mud wall, peeking into the alley near the frozen creek. That was a long time ago, but it’s wrong what they say about the past, I’ve learned, about how you can bury it. Because the past claws its way out. Looking back now, I realize I have been peeking into that deserted alley for the last twenty-six years (1).

The above passage clearly states Amir’s emotions and regrets and lets the reader access his innermost thoughts. The dissonant narrator excuses what is to come, and reminds the reader to keep in mind that he was a child. At the same time, he acknowledges his past and takes responsibility. Cohn notes how quoted monologue as a technique creates a problem with credibility because of how the reliability of the narrator is questioned in long quotations of his past thoughts (162). The dissonant narrator points to how his actions as a young boy came to shape an entire life. Hosseini might take advantage of quoted monologue in order to question Amir’s credibility. The reader is exposed to the child-consciousness as well as the dissonant narrator’s remorse in the beginning of the novel, which might contribute to reduce the reliability of the narrator. The child focalizer possesses unreliable traits because he is in a developmental phase of his life. Hosseini might want to accentuate how the unreliability is a natural part of

this developmental process, and does so through narrative techniques. The reader is invited to access and partake in the narrator's remorse through acknowledging the notion of childhood.

By using the perspective of the child, Hosseini is able to exploit and encourage an empathetic reflection through the reader's recollection of his or her own childhood. As Keen notes, children are vulnerable because they are less capable of protecting themselves if they are neglected. Any neglect or harm they might be subjected to might be undeserved and unprovoked as they have little control of their surroundings. Moreover, children are left out of the adult world, and Amir is never allowed to be in his father's study when Baba is discussing business with his partners. "Sometimes I asked Baba if I could sit with them, but Baba would stand in the doorway. 'Go on, now,' he'd say" (4). This reflection shows how Amir is not only left out of the adult world, he is also left out of Baba's world which he desperately wants to be a part of. Readers might seem to sympathize more with characters who suffer, grieve, or are subjected to painful obstacles (Keen *EN* 71). Amir feels excluded and suffers because of it. Even though Amir might be different from a Western reader, common emotions might still invite an empathetic reflection. Emotions can be characterized as universal, and thus established and perceived the same way in all humans.

Even though Amir might be from a different culture and tradition than the reader, the reader is invited to connect empathetically with Amir through common emotions. Characterization of Amir highlights his emotions in certain situations. Characterization can be achieved directly or indirectly, and Amir is described through his actions and his judgements. Such characterization is made through the observation of "action, speech, or context key traits of the character" and habits constructed from repetition of actions (Keen *NF* 64). The traits connected to Amir manifests themselves in him as a child, and many of the character traits continues to characterize him throughout the story. Amir shares emotions like anger, sadness, boredom, fear, disgust, joy, admiration and so on. The reader is merged into the experience where these emotions appear. These emotions also make Amir vulnerable. Vulnerability might evoke a stronger empathetic reflection with him because it contributes to his internal suffering and remorse. The vulnerability is visible to the reader because of how the child focalizer's emotions are connected to his perception of his father and the master-servant dynamics of their society (Aubry 31).

### **3.3 Limitation in the child's perspective**

The limitations of the experiencing self contribute to an empathetic reflection of how the value scheme in the novel is corrupted by Amir's lack of knowledge. The dissonant narrator possesses knowledge unavailable to the child focalizer. Rimmon-Keenan (103) points to the narrator's knowledge and problematic value scheme as factors towards a narrator's unreliability. Amir lacks superior knowledge of Baba's situation during childhood. Even though the dissonant narrator has knowledge of it, the child focalizer does not possess this knowledge. The limitation creates situations where selfishness and irrationality emerge. The value scheme in the novel can be problematic when the focalizer's moral values diverge from those of the narrator (Rimmon-Keenan 104). Not only is the moral values of the child focalizer questionable to the reader, they are also questioned by the narrator himself through narrated monologue. The dissonant narrator reflects, explains, and excuses how his childhood self could make such questionable judgements. When Baba disappoints Amir because he does not acknowledge his writing, Amir reflects on how he wished Rahim Kahn, his father's friend, was his father. Immediately after thinking this, "I was overcome with such a sudden guilt that I bolted to the bathroom and vomited in the sink" (27). Even though this is a recollection of a childhood memory, the sentence is strongly influenced by adult reflection. The dissonant narrator points to the ungratefulness of himself as a child, and how he failed to understand his father. Because of these spontaneous thoughts of irrationality, the child focalizer's point of view can appear as unreliable because it is so unilateral. Unreliability juxtaposes with the childishness and child-likeness presented in the discourse, and because it is addressed by the narrator himself, the reader might partake in the narrator's empathetic reflection of himself as a child.

Even though Amir sacrifices others because he wants Baba's approval, he is still portrayed empathetically. Hassan and Amir love to fly kites and catch kites together. Catching the last kite in a kite-fight is associated with great accomplishment and considered "a trophy of honor" (46). After a kite-fighting tournament, Hassan runs to get the last kite Amir has cut. Because Hassan has sworn to never let go of Amir's kite, he ends up being molested by Assef because he refuses to let go. Amir finds them and is too scared to interfere, and runs away from the situation. In his recollection of the memory he notes how his relentless quest for making Baba proud made him justify the cowardice of neglecting Hassan. He justifies his actions by recollecting how the social code is manifested in the judgements of the child focalizer. The dissonance is strongly influenced by child-likeness in the following narrated monologue. "Maybe Hassan was the price I had to pay, the lamb I had to slay, to win Baba. Was it a fair

price? The answer floated to my conscious mind before I could thwart it: He was just a Hazara, wasn't he?" (67). The passage is influenced by the dissonant narrator but is also saturated with childishness, consequently creating a juxtaposition between them. The experiencing self explains his neglect of Hassan by the manifestation of social code in himself, as he points to how Hassan is "just" a Hazara. The fact that Amir believes that social code prevents him from rescuing his friend is discredited by the reader, as the reader knows that Amir in fact loves Hassan but understands how he failed to intervene with Assef out of fear for the consequences. By using rhyme in "pay" and "slay", the dissonant narrator creates an ironic tone over the passage, showing how the reasoning of the child focalizer is childish and desperately trying to cover up the cowardice that is really the matter in this scene.

Amir is able to revenge Hassan when he is asked to rescue his nephew Sohrab from Assef. When Amir as an adult learns that his childhood friend and half-brother Hassan had a son, Sohrab, who lives in an orphanage in Kabul, he sets out to rescue him from Afghanistan. David Jefferess explores this act of atonement, and points to that the act is not colored by "Hollywood-style heroism" (392), rather it is motivated through a sacrificing act of devoting himself to repenting his past. Furthermore, he points out how the novel itself is an allegory of "moral questions regarding responsibility and intervention" (394), and how this turns into a representation of "contemporary ethical-political discourses of humanitarianism and globalized identities" (394). He argues that *The Kite Runner* is valuable in terms of representing moral attitudes of responsibilities humans have towards each other in an increasingly globalized world. Such a universality is created by the emotions present in the discourse of the novel, which can be generalized as universal. When Amir is asked to go to Kabul and find Sohrab, the vulnerable child reemerges. He faces suppressed emotions that are evident not in the discourse itself, but present in the untold, which forces him to face the compassionate responsibility towards Hassan. When Rahim Khan asks him to get Sohrab, Amir reacts with reluctance.

"Why me? Why can't you pay someone here to go? I'll pay for it if it's a matter of money." "It isn't about money, Amir!" Rahim Khan roared. "I'm a dying man and I will not be insulted! It has *never* been about money with me, you know that. And why you? I think we both know why it has to be you, don't we?" I didn't want to understand that comment, but I did. I understood it all too well. "I have a wife in America, a home, a career, and a family. Kabul is a dangerous place, you know that, and you'd have me risk everything for..." I stopped (193, originally italicized).

The passage above creates tension through how the narrator omits the real emotions connected to the sacrifice he is expected to make. The discourse level shows how the narrator possesses a knowledge he does not want to share. Not because he is secretive, but because the truth is too painful to reveal, even to himself. Aubry (2009) notes how “Hassan [...] suffers dehumanization so that Amir can be human, and the compassion Amir feels for Hassan is accompanied by the anxiety that he himself may be Hassan’s victimizer - a status that would paradoxically endanger his own claim to humanity” (Aubry 33). This is the essence of the internal conflict Amir is dealing with, and the challenge the reader is facing. These conflicting factors of victim and victimizer reflect how Amir experiences universal humanity, and how he knows that rescuing Sohrab is his chance to redemption. Rahim Khan indirectly reveals his knowledge of Amir’s negligence of Hassan. The tension of the indirect and unsaid knowledge is evident when Rahim Khan asks questions that remain unanswered. The discourse allows the reader to assume how these questions would be answered truthfully. Amir’s excuse of his life back in America functions as a cover up for the vulnerability he still possesses and his fear of facing his own mistakes and regrets, and evidently his fear of once again failing to do the right thing.

The border between thought and speech in the discourse stresses how the vulnerable child still exists within Amir even as an adult. His shame is prominent because he has never shared it with anyone. The shame continues to influence Amir long after childhood, but how he manages this shame changes. When Amir and Soraya are to be married, Soraya reveals the secrets of her past. In this moment, Amir reflects in an open-hearted way about his emotions towards Soraya’s actions, and how he himself is unable to judge others because of his own past. When Soraya exposes her sinful past, he longs to confess his sins to her, but his thoughts interfere with his speech and obstructs him from telling the truth. This passage clearly shows the border between thoughts and speech.

I envied her. Her secret was out. Spoken. Dealt with. I opened my mouth and almost told her how I’d betrayed Hassan, lied, driven him out, and destroyed a forty-year relationship between Baba and Ali. But I didn’t. I suspected there were many ways in which Soraya Taheri was a better person than me. Courage was just one of them.  
(144)

By emphasizing that her secrets are “out”, “spoken”, and “dealt with” the repetitiveness shows the reader how Amir desperately wants to do the same. The truth has a great power over Amir

and his secrets cannot escape him until they are revealed through opening his mouth. The language reveals how the untold burdens him unconsciously, and shows the stress he is under because he is unable to let go of his secret. This self-quoted monologue is characterized by short sentences and an exaggerated use of punctuation and commas, which indicates the stress in Amir. This stress shows the reader how guilt constantly reminds Amir of how he has inflicted pain on others. Self-torment is a representation of how the internal conflict in Amir remains unresolved. The internal conflict is portrayed through the juxtaposition of the “narrator’s past and present thoughts, thereby suggesting that their ideas on a certain subject have remained the same” (Cohn 164). In other words, self-punishment is established as a stable entity as the guilt Amir experiences has remained the same throughout his life despite his childish attempt to explain away his actions. The way Amir reminds himself of his regrets shows the reader that he is remorseful for his actions, yet not ready to stand up to them and reveal the truth. Amir does not want to let himself forget how he failed to comply when Hassan needed his help. His devotion to the pain invites an empathetic reflection of how he longs to be forgiven, yet unable to forgive himself.

### **3.4 Internalization of social code**

The representation of otherness is projected through two conflicting dimensions in the novel. First of all, the domestic space portrays Hassan and Amir as both indispensable members of the family. Second, the social sphere creates a division between Amir and Hassan because of ethnical and religious divisions in society. The social code in which the differences between Pashtuns and Hazaras are manifested is evident in both the child focalizer and the dissonant narrator.

The novel clearly portrays groups and categories of people within the Afghan society. Amir struggles to fully identify with the Pashtun identity. Stampfl points to the categorization of characters within the novel, and how their otherness towards each other contributes to the understanding of how tension between ethnicities is created and manifested in the characters, and maintained throughout the novel. “By giving human faces to the various factions of the Afghani political system, the novel becomes a complex national allegory: Amir represents the Pashtun majority, Hassan belongs to the Hazara minority, and Assef becomes the evil Taliban leader” (Stampfl 34). By placing characters in different social groups by characterizing them stereotypically emphasize the different social roles in the novel, as well as it can be generalized to how other societies are constructed. Even though Amir represents the Pashtun majority physically and psychologically, he has the ability to look past the stereotypes and merge

together different ethnicities. However, the difference between public and private space influences how Amir perceives the constructed categories. Amir juxtapose more with the Pashtun majority in the public sphere, but diverge from it within the domestic space as the house is a “class-free zone” (Erwin 328). The relationship between Hassan and Amir is relative in connection to which space they find themselves within. Amir struggle to justify this system. Through narrated monologue, the narrator reflects on the emotions present in the friendship between him and Hassan.

The curious thing was, I never thought of Hassan and me as friends either. Not in the usual sense, anyhow. Never mind that we taught each other to ride a bicycle with no hands, or to build a fully functional homemade camera out of a cardboard box. Never mind that to me, the face of Afghanistan is that of a boy with a thin-boned frame, a shaved head, and low-set ears, a boy with a Chinese doll face perpetually lit by a harellipped smile. Never mind any of those things. Because history isn't easy to overcome. Neither is religion. In the end, I was a Pashtun and he was a Hazara, I was Sunni and he was Shi'a, and nothing was ever going to chance that. Nothing. But we were kids who had learned to crawl together, and no history, ethnicity, society, or religion was going to change that either (21).

By devoting a lengthy description of his friendship to Hassan, the narrator emphasizes the importance of these emotions in terms of how the story evolves, and how important Hassan is to him. Amir explains the two directions in which he is torn, and he struggles to understand how history, religion, ethnicity, and society is embodied in himself. The dissonant narrator is present in this monologue, and the limitation of the child focalizer is exceeded through an advanced reflection.

The way in which otherness is manifested in the characters contribute to the understating of how they act the way they do. Jenkins points to how the formation of one's identity is created in relation to others (199). Hassan's social role indicates that he has to sacrifice himself for Amir. Amir is superior, therefore in a position to neglect Hassan the way he does as his actions emerge out of stereotypical roles. To the reader, Amir and Hassan's relationship is defined when the reader learns that Hassan is a servant. It is when Amir diverges from these stereotypes and treats Hassan as a fellow human that empathy for his choices might be generated. Especially when Amir is in opposition to the fellow Pashtun Assef, he clearly diverges from the stereotype. The most devious character of the novel is Assef, a boy Amir's age, who expresses deep racist

attitudes towards the suppressed Hazaras and has no moral values. Amir's observation of Assef shows how prejudice shapes the perception of otherness manifested within him. This prejudice derives from the ignorance and inability to view others as equal. Assef states this in a testimony he presents to Amir.

*"Afghanistan is the land of Pashtuns. It always has been, always will be. We are the true Afghans, the pure Afghans, not this Flat-Nose [Hassan] here. His people pollute our homeland, our watan. They dirty our blood." He made a sweeping, grandiose gesture with his hands. "Afghanistan for Pashtuns, I say. That's my vision"* (34, originally italicized).

The radicalism and hate present in this speech emerges out of a collective opinion of how the Pashtuns perceive the Hazaras in the Afghan society which can be interpreted from the attitudes of other characters in the novel. Assef represents the social ignorance and irrationalism present in the discourse, which influences Amir's actions and decisions during childhood. The testimony also emphasizes Assef's personal feelings towards the Hazaras. By using words as "pollute" and "dirty", the Hazaras appear as something infectious and less valuable. Unconsciously, this affects Amir and the way he thinks of Hassan. The dissonant narrator accentuates the ambivalence through giving Assef's monologue space in the discourse, as well as the narrator himself comments upon and reflects over the difference and ambivalence the child focalizer has towards his best friend Hassan.

*But he's not my friend! I almost blurted. He's my servant! Had I really thought that? Of course I hadn't. I hadn't. I treated Hassan well, just like a friend, better even, more like a brother. But if so, then why, when Baba's friends came to visit with their kids, didn't I ever include Hassan in our games? Why did I play with Hassan only when no one else was around?* (36, originally italicized).

The narrated monologue above interferes with the ongoing action. The fact that this many sentences is devoted to the time lapse of a few seconds shows how much space this question occupies in the consciousness of the focalizer. The tone sounds convincing, as the narrating self tries to understand the reflections of his childhood self. The passage also displays the border between speech and thought. Amir's thoughts remain unspoken, and the manifestation of social code in Amir remains internal.



The domestic space and the social space are constructed differently. Stampfl notes how “[e]ven though social hierarchies are strictly observed and the amicable relations between masters and servants never quite turn into friendships, Pashtuns and Hazaras live together peacefully in Baba’s house” (Stampfl 37). Lee Erwin (2012) argues further that the central figures in the novel are “portrayed as exceptional, crucial to private life within the household [...], and capable of transcending class constraints as a consequence” (Erwin 327). The construction of the domestic space is important in how events both inside and outside the house is narrated. Hassan and Ali are crucial members of the family despite their role as servants. The life within the house during Amir and Hassan’s childhood is thoroughly narrated and accentuated through Amir. The importance of the house reemerges when Amir learns how Rahim Khan has been living there with Hassan and his family for a long time. Rahim Khan, through homo-intradiegetic narration (Rimmon-Keenan 97), recalls his years in the house after Amir and Baba left Afghanistan. An entire chapter is devoted to Rahim Khan’s recollection, which narrates a parallel existence of many years in a few pages. This time-lapse works as a reminder of how life in the house was, and both the dissonant narrator and the reader recollects the memory of the child focalizer’s childhood. The discourse emphasizes Hassan’s relationship to the domestic space even as an adult. The notion of the domestic space within the house of Kabul accentuates the importance of Amir and Hassan’s relationship as children, thus foreshadowing how this relationship is to be repaired and reestablished through Sohrab.

Sohrab emerges as the key to Amir’s redemption, and represents how Amir finally is able to make up for his childhood mistakes, as well as mending the family from Baba’s negligence to truly acknowledge Hassan as his son. In the end, Sohrab is incorporated into the family when Amir defends his role by telling Soraya’s father, General Sahib, “my father slept with his servant’s wife. She bore him a son named Hassan. Hassan is dead now. That boy sleeping on the couch is Hassan’s son. He’s my nephew” (315). The direct speech emphasizes the content through noting how Hassan is one of them. Amir emphasizes this with referring to him as his “nephew”, which indicates not only a biological connection, but also the emotional aspect of familial relations. Erwin criticizes Amir’s labeling of Sohrab and argues how the biological connection undermines the ethnical issue in the novel, and releases Sohrab of his Hazara heritage (329). However, the connection between Sohrab and Amir does not affect the guilt Amir experiences. His motive for rescuing Sohrab is not biological, rather it is motivated by his personal quest for redemption. By letting the reader follow his journey and succeed, empathy is generated for the narrator and how he finally is able to forgive himself.

### 3.5 Baba

The father is crucial in how empathy for Amir is generated. In order to understand Amir's actions and emotions, the importance of Baba needs to be established. The characterization of Baba is narrated through Amir and influenced by his child-like dissonant reflections. Amir idolizes and greatly respects his father. Not only does Amir act the way he believes his father will approve of, he also sacrifices others in order to achieve his approval. The decisions Amir makes accentuate the child in him which is relentless in his quest for approval, thus rendering his decisions ignorant and cowardly. Amir is the vulnerable part in the relationship with his father which is expressed through the discourse.

The representation of language in the novel is crucial in understanding how Amir reflects and feels in situations. Amir's recollection of his first words as a child makes an important symbol of how the discourse in the novel affects and foreshadows the plot. "Under the same roof, we spoke our first words. Mine was Baba. His [Hassan's] was *Amir*. My name. Looking back on it now, I think the foundation for what happened in the winter of 1975—and all that followed—was already laid in those first words" (9, originally italicized). By applying the symbol of "first words", it indicates an importance beyond the discourse level. This contributes to the understanding of Amir as a character, and how he is molded and shaped by his father throughout the novel. Not only does this recollection point to the relationship between Amir and Baba, it also symbolizes the relationship between Amir and Hassan. Even though this is not accentuated in the discourse, the relationship between Baba and Amir also reflects Hassan's longing for Amir's love. Both Hassan and Baba strongly influence everything Amir does. Because of Amir's reluctance to acknowledge Hassan, the reader is primed to reflect over the narrator's relationships in terms of this representational domestic hierarchy. Amir's role will in turn promote an empathetic reflection of the relational dynamics between the characters. Aubry (2009) points to the relationships in the novel as "social roles they have been assigned – roles that in a sense, *require* Hassan to suffer stoically for Amir" (31, originally italicized), which reflects Hassan's devotion towards Amir and Amir's devotion towards his father.

Through the discourse, Amir's feelings of inferiority are exposed. His relentless quest for approval renders him vulnerable. In the beginning of the novel, Amir's reflections of his father mirror the Afghan male stereotype, which is a strong, independent, and powerful man. Amir struggles to identify with the male stereotype, implying that he also struggles to identify with his father. Amir assumes his father thinks less of him, which sparks the insecurity and vulnerability Amir experiences in relation to Baba. The dissonant narrator reflects on his

interest for reading and writing with irony. “Real men didn’t read poetry – and God forbid they should ever write it! Real men – real boys – played soccer just as Baba had when he had been young” (17). This passage shows how the emotions of the dissonant narrator juxtapose with the emotions of the child focalizer through self-narrated monologue. The childish reflection and the irony in this passage emphasize the injustice the narrator experiences when he fails to identify with the male ideal. Additionally, the irony functions as a way of criticizing the male stereotype. The tone merges the voices of the experiencing and the narrating self and lets the reader know that the stereotype feels unfair even for the adult. Even though this description is Amir’s subjective opinion, the discourse highlights features of Baba that juxtapose with such a perception of him. Moreover, the passage shows the pain connected to the distance between Amir and his father. Amir accentuates the notion of “real men”, and the reader is projected to Amir’s self-awareness of how he does not represent such an ideal, thus evoking in him a “self-doubt about his worth” (Agnello et al. 105). The idea of what a real man is establishes a border between father and son, and the desperate wish to transcend the boundary between them is deeply embedded in the discourse. Even though Amir is denied to know that Hassan is in fact his half-brother, Baba’s affection towards Hassan indicates that they have a good relationship. Agnello et al. argues that Baba values Amir as his son more than Hassan because of “cast/ethnic differences of their mothers” (105). Yet, Amir’s narration does not support such a perception. On the contrary, the child focalizer feels abandoned by his father, and envies the attention he directs towards Hassan as he notes how Hassan resembles the ideal Afghan male more than himself. “I wasn’t just slower than Hassan but clumsier too; I’d always envied his natural athleticism” (46). Not only does Amir compare himself to Baba, he also compares himself to those Baba is affectionate towards. Because Hassan gets attention for being a good runner, Amir envies him, and “always envied” him. By stressing ‘always’, it foreshadows how the envy saturates other parts of the discourse.

The difference between Amir and Baba is not only a domestic issue, but an issue that affects Amir in the social sphere as well. Amir is aware of how he diverges from the ideal of an Afghan man which represents strong patriarchal values. As Stampfl stresses, “Baba’s house is a purely masculine world; only men live in and frequent it, and sensitive or skittish boys such as Amir are an embarrassment” (47). Not only does Amir long for his father’s approval, the approval also represents a longing for national ideal of the Afghan man. By emphasizing “real” in his recollection above, the reader is encouraged to reflect on the opposition and how Amir characterizes himself as an ‘unreal’ Afghan man. The failure Amir experiences can be a

consequence of the overall domestic situation. Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda (2004) found that “[b]oys seemed to conform to the sex-role standards of their culture when their relationships with their fathers were warm, regardless of how masculine the fathers were” (5). The reluctant relationship between Amir and Baba explains how Amir is prevented from fully adapting into the Afghan male stereotype. The reader is introduced to Amir’s failure in representing the Afghan ideal which invites an empathetic reflection through the emotions of not fitting in in the Afghan society.

The relationship between Amir and Baba is central in Amir’s recollection of his childhood. The border between Amir and Baba is enforced and exemplified throughout the beginning of the discourse. “Baba and I lived in the same house, but in different spheres of existence. Kites were the only paper-thin slice of intersection between those spheres” (43). The self-narrated monologue shows a great notion of dissonance as the vocabulary is too advanced for the child focalizer. The dissonant narrator contributes to the understanding of how the relationship between Baba and himself used to be as a child. By using advanced and abstract language such as “spheres of existence” and “intersection”, the narrator adds information to the reflection of the child focalizer. The image of being a child existing in a sphere different from his father reflects desperation, vulnerability and longing for parental acknowledgement. These emotions invite the reader’s empathy through an identification with the shared negative feelings. The kite symbolizes how “paper-thin” their common grounds are. Amir possesses a weakness and a limitation in their relationship as he does not understand how and why his father views him with such ambivalence.

Amir’s experience of being unjustly treated when Baba is affectionate towards others might invite an empathetic reflection. Negative emotions in the discourse like envy, anger, and sadness reveal how Amir perceives the strive for Baba’s affection like a competition. His response to his ‘competitors’ is saturated by childishness. Amir’s childish behavior is created and legitimized by the uncritical and emotional child-likeness present in the reflections. The dissonant narrator does not try to excuse his childish thoughts, rather he emphasizes and enforces the negativity in order to emphasize the injustice imposed upon the child focalizer. “I couldn’t help hating the way [Baba’s] brow furrowed with worry [when he heard Hassan was ill]” (71). The self-narrated monologue emphasizes the childish selfishness without interference from the adult narrator. The adult narrator pays no attention to the fact that the focalizer is a contributor to Hassan’s pain. Instead, by using the word “hating”, the emotions appear as

strong, which in turn leads to an understanding of how unjustly Amir perceives the situation, and how strongly Baba's affection for others created envy and fury in Amir.

Furthermore, the disapproval in Amir's narrated monologue shows how Amir is envious when Baba spends his resources on others. One of the things that make Amir envious is how Baba always gives Hassan great birthday presents. Hassan was born with a harelip and for one of his birthdays, Baba's birthday present is a surgeon who is going to fix his lip. Amir greatly envies the present Baba gives to Hassan. "I wished I too had some kind of scar that would beget Baba's sympathy. It wasn't fair. Hassan hadn't done anything to earn Baba's affection; he'd just been born with that stupid harelip" (39). Not only does he envy Hassan, he portrays similar reflections when Baba devotes himself to build an orphanage to benefit the community where many children suffer from the loss of their parents. "I already hated all the kids he was building the orphanage for; sometimes I wished they'd all died along with their parents" (16). Here, words such as "stupid", "hated" and "I wished they'd all died" are perceived as inexcusable and contributes to characterize Amir as callous and cynical. The self-narrated monologue contributes to the narrator "giving up his temporally distance vantage point and cognitive privilege" (Cohn 167) in order to show the pure emotions of a vulnerable child. These feelings of envy and injustice appear as sudden, unjustified and irrational. Still, the language portrayed in these passages is saturated by childishness, which might contribute to legitimize the utterances. By exploiting how the discourse portrays such strong feelings through narrative techniques, the perception of vulnerability connects to Baba's lack of affection towards his son. Furthermore, the dissonant narrator does not compromise the reflection of the child focalizer, which affects the perception of the narrator as honest and remorseful and takes full responsibility for his behavior as a child. By being humble about his past, the narrator is admirable which might generate respect and empathy in the reader.

Throughout the narrative, vulnerability is created from the notions of injustice and cruelty. The child focalizer's voice contributes to understand and legitimize the negative emotions Amir experiences. Even though Amir represents a social elite, his emotions and experiences during childhood can be acknowledged as universal. Not only does this contribute to an empathetic reflection in the reader, it can show the reader that emotions are universal, and empathy can be promoted without necessarily having anything in common with the character. Reading about Afghanistan, Afghani culture and ethnic divides can allow the reader to experience and learn about a different culture. The application of certain narrative techniques in the discourse contributes to how the characters are portrayed. These techniques might

encourage a reader to empathize with characters of other ethnic and cultural backgrounds than their own. The developmental process the reader is a part of also shows the reader how Amir develops from a cruel and childish young boy into reflected and understanding man. Such a development might influence the reader to empathize with the narrator and his reflections of a difficult childhood.

## 4 Conclusion

Because *To Kill a Mockingbird* is narrated through the child focalizer's perspective, society is perceived with curiosity. Scout has an important voice, especially when it comes to how race is perceived. Because Scout has such a close relationship with other social groups in Maycomb, she learns to respect others. She is not the perfect child, on the contrary, she is violent, strong and crafty with her words when we first meet her. The reader follows her on the journey of moral development and partakes in her process of conforming into a more reflected and nuanced human being. In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the limitation in knowledge of social code and how it contributes to the prejudice manifested in Scout invites the reader to an empathetic reflection. Furthermore, internalization of the society's code of language contributes to understand how the child's focalization is corrupted by external factors. Scout's process of developing into an independent thinker brings the reader on an emphatical journey. Because childhood is a time of exploration, failing and learning for Scout, narrative empathy is portrayed in relation to how she experiences and understands topics such as race and class differences.

Amir might immediately appear different from Scout because of their cultural difference, but they are set within a similar social framework. The main difference is their paternal influence, and while both children learn much from their fathers, Amir does not get the same parental affection as Scout. Because the fathers are the most important influence in the children's life, they affect how the children perceive the world around them. In *The Kite Runner*, characterization through recognizable emotions is an important influencer of narrative empathy as the Western reader might not immediately recognize Amir's situation. Empathetic features such as universal emotions connect the reader with Amir despite cultural differences. Additionally, the limitation in knowledge of social code renders Amir vulnerable. The cruelty inflicted upon Amir and the manifestation of social code in him are factors that might affect the reader's empathy.

Vulnerability is established as a common feature for both novels. The ways in which this vulnerability is created diverges. It is when the narrative provides techniques that highlight this vulnerability that the reader might be more likely to empathize with the characters' situation and emotions. Limitation in the children's perspective is the most evident contributor to their vulnerability. Because they do not completely understand the social code and the way adults communicate, they are left out of the social sphere, and become vulnerable because of their inability to shape the society and culture they are born into. The narration is important because

it expresses how Scout and Amir experiences this vulnerability. Both children have internalized social codes when we first meet them, but Amir and Scout exceed the values and norms of their societies and learn to become independent thinkers.

The embodiment of social codes in the beginning of the novels is evident in the language, thoughts and behavior of the child focalizers. Scout and Amir embody social structures similarly, which in turn affect them in terms of how they view others. Both Scout and Amir show how despite they are thought to be respectful and accepting, they indeed show discriminating attitudes. When Scout says Tom Robinson is “just a Negro” (227) and when Amir says Hassan “was just a Hazara” (67), it clearly shows how the narrators are similar in the way the experiencing selves have internalized social code. They are humanized because of their abilities to make mistakes. Scout and Amir’s perspective is enriching because it reveals how the children think and experience their surroundings. Through these novels the reader is allowed into the mind of the child. The discourse is rich in childish and child-like reflections of society and other groups of people. These nuanced reflection lets the reader experience how humans are very similar despite any social group or category one belongs to. Consequently, this might invite the reader to reflect empathetically on how the children perceives others, and also how the reader perceives others in real life.

The dissonant narrators’ perspectives also influence the novels similarly. Both Scout and Amir look back at their childhood through more omniscient and experienced eyes and reflect critically on their past actions. The narrating selves contribute to promote empathy for their past selves through emphasizing the childishness and the child-likeness that characterizes their childhood selves. By acknowledging their mistakes and showing how they have learned to be more respectful and accepting, empathy is promoted for both the children they used to be and the adults they have become.

One of the important aspects in the novels is how both Amir and Scout act immorally and are cruel to others. However, this behavior and these actions are legitimized because they are excused by the fact that Scout and Amir are children, and the reader might empathize with their childishness through understanding their developmental level and how childishness is a natural part of their behavior.

Looking at these two novels together supports the notion of how the perspective of the child possesses traits and techniques that promote empathy. These novels are different because



they represent different cultures, different social conflicts and different times, yet they are connected by the child focalizer and the dissonant narrator.

Because the aspect of children telling stories in adult fiction has been paid little attention by literary critics, it is necessary to look at the narrative techniques behind it in order to understand how such a perspective can create a closer and more empathetic relationship with the reader. *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner* are greatly explored in terms of the themes within them, but many critics fail to acknowledge how the narratives portray these themes. It is important to consider the child's perspective in how the themes are portrayed, as it contributes to create a more empathetic portrayal of them.

Literary empathy in adult fiction also lacks the same focus as literary empathy in children's books. It is important to acknowledge how adult fiction also can promote a greater understanding of others and influence the reader to an empathetical reflection of fictional characters. By promoting the empathetical value adult fiction can have, it might make it easier for people to understand how they can benefit and learn to be more empathetic through reading.

Both *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner* possess many literary techniques that promotes empathy. Keen's exploration of these techniques seems to correspond well with how they are represented in the novels. Even though Keen notes how it is challenging to categorize narrative techniques as empathy-promoting, it is possible to assume that tendencies can be found through further exploration of these techniques.

Literary empathy is important in understanding how a novel or a text might affect readers. It would be interesting to understand how literary empathy influence the reader in the real world. By examining literary techniques, it is possible to understand what aspects of a narrative the reader connects empathetically. It could be useful to conduct research on how these literary techniques have a transferable value to the reader's life. Keen emphasizes many techniques that make readers view fictional characters more empathetically and notes how empathy for fictional characters might be transferable and make the reader more empathetic in the real world. Despite Keen and others research on literary empathy, one cannot assume that literary empathy is always transferable to the reader's real world. It could be useful to do research on readers and how they experience empathy by reading fiction, and if certain narrative techniques are more empathy-promoting than others. Such research would establish techniques

as empathy-promoting, which could be influential in how novels can be used in education to promote understanding and acceptance in an increasingly globalized world.

Both novels have an indispensable value in the classroom. For teachers, these novels are valuable in teaching students how society manifests in children and how parents and surroundings are important in the developmental process. Also, exposure to otherness promotes acceptance and understanding, which is an important value to teach in school. Prejudices and xenophobia affect the global society today, and these novels might help students overcome differences and learn to appreciate diversity.

Both *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Kite Runner* are amazing novels which depicts life through the honest, easy and remarkable eyes of the child. Literary empathy is invited through the narrator's experience, and both Scout and Amir experience situations where they are victimized and where other characters are subjected to cruel and unjust treatment. These novels are perfect examples of adult fiction where the reader can learn from the children's reflections. Moreover, to the reader unfamiliar to the social settings in the novels, reading them can be an opportunity to learn and empathize with the unknown and the other. By reading these novels, universality and empathy is promoted through the universal emotions the reader shares with Amir and Scout.

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