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PERFORMING FATHERHOOD: FATHER HUNGER VS. NEW FATHER IN *TO KILL A MOCKING BIRD* BY HARPER LEE (1960)

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Abstract: Over the past few decades, there was a profound transformation in the role of fathers within families, leading to the emergence of the "new father" concept. This shift marks a departure from the "old father" archetype, characterized by more inflexible performative gender roles and limited involvement in care-giving and household duties. Instead, the "new father" embodies a more equitable and involved approach to parenting as a result of the shifting social norms and family dynamics. Influenced by feminist movements that have fought for equal opportunities and duties for men and women, and that have questioned the conventional paternal responsibilities, fathers are pushed to be more involved in their children's lives during the critical early months and years of their development. This paper, therefore, explores the various roles of fathers in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960)and examines the concept of fatherhood from a postmodernist perspective, drawing on some psychoanalytic discourses, namely Lacan's Mirror Stage, Freud's Oedipus complex, and Kristeva's semiotics of gender. This paper grapples with the intersection of these psychoanalytic theories with the evolving landscape of fatherhood in contemporary society, emphasizing the importance of self-perception, emotional connections, and redefined paternal identities within this transformative context. Atticus, for instance, serves as a representative model of a positive father-child relationship. He embodies 'new father' figure who values emotional expression, open communication, active parenting, and gender equality. However, the narrative also delves into the darker portrayal of vicious paternal figures, like Bob Ewell, who conform to traditional gender roles, exhibit restrained emotions and limit their involvement in childcare and household responsibilities.

Keywords: Fatherhood- New father-Father hunger –-Psychoanalysis- To Kill a Mocking Bird

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1. Introduction

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee explores the importance of paternal influence in characters' journey towards maturity and the negative effects of an absent father figure. The novel presents Atticus Finch as a model of the "new father," fostering an environment where mutual respect is paramount and guiding his children toward informed decision-making. In contrast, Bob Ewell and Mr. Radly personify toxic paternal figures; Mr. Radly stunts his son's growth and condemns him to a state of living death through a life of seclusion, while Bob Ewell physically abuses his children and stands as a hideous paternal model. The novel delves into the complexities of fatherhood, exploring its multifaceted nature. Through the contrast between exemplary paternal figures and abusive or absent fathers, it offers an evocative analysis of the profound influence that fathers have on their children's development, ultimately emphasizing the timeless significance of this theme in literature.

The concept of the old father archetype pertains to a psychological representation of an absent father, either physically or emotionally, which can result in children feeling abandoned and experiencing what is known as "father hunger." Traditional parenting typically involves strict rules and discipline. However, since the 1960s, the role of fathers in modern society has been re-evaluated due to various factors such as social changes, cultural shifts, and economic pressures that led to a more diverse understanding of the contributions that fathers can make beyond traditional stereotypes (Crowley, 2009). The fathers' rights movement has played a crucial part in securing equal legal rights for fathers concerning their children's upbringing too. Shifting economic demands have challenged the traditional role of fathers, urging a re-evaluation of their contributions within the context of contemporary family dynamics. Furthermore, the social and cultural core of society changed, which redefined the role of fathers too; they are now acknowledged for emotional support, nurturing, and involvement in their children's lives. They play diverse roles in their children's development, beyond just providing financial support. The role of fathers in shaping a child's growth is extremely significant. Thus, the cultural norms in society can impact how fathers behave when raising their children due to the diversity of values and beliefs within societies. Moreover, Queer theory has significantly broadened societal perspectives on fatherhood by challenging traditional gender norms and fostering a more inclusive understanding of diverse identities and relationships. This theory, rooted in the idea that gender is fluid and subject to change, questions established social norms and power relations, including those related to sexuality and gender identity. Scholars like Judith Butler argue that gender is performative, meaning it is constructed through repeated actions rather than a fixed biological reality (Butler, 1988). By delinking gender, sex, and sexuality, queer theory challenges the notion of stable gender identities and emphasizes the performative nature of gender, leading to a more nuanced understanding of diverse identities and relationships.

Fatherhood is a labyrinthine subject within psychoanalysis, enriched by the insights of luminaries such as Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Carl Jung, and Julia Kristeva. They have shaped our understanding of how fathers influence children’s identity and development through exploring the father complex. For instance, Freud proposed the Oedipus complex to elucidate the intricate dynamics of a child's bond with one parent and feelings of rivalry toward the other. The Oedipus complex is a key component of Freud's psychoanalytic theory. It occurs during the phallic stage of development, typically between ages 3 and 6, where children unconsciously experience feelings of desire for their opposite-sex parent and jealousy and envy toward their same-sex parent. The complex is resolved through identification with the same-sex parent which leads to the development of a mature sexual identity (Freud, 1953). Furthermore, Jacques Lacan elaborated Freud's ideas by introducing the concept of the symbolic order, which is a crucial aspect of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The symbolic order is a

cultural construct that structures social identity and is different from the imaginary order, which is concerned with individual perceptions and identifications, and the real order, which refers to the material world. The symbolic order is represented by the symbolic father, who is not a real person but a position, a function, and hence is synonymous with the term "paternal function." The symbolic father represents the authority, rules, and structure of the broader social order, serving as a figure through which societal norms and expectations are conveyed. In the context of the Oedipus complex, the child's identification with the symbolic father marks a critical developmental milestone, as it facilitates the internalization of these norms. This identification not only resolves the rivalrous dynamics experienced during the Oedipal phase but also enables the child to transition from a familial framework to a larger societal context, gaining access to the symbolic realm of language, culture, and law that defines human social existence. Furthermore, the symbolic father is also referred to as the Name-of-the-Father, which is a concept that Lacan developed from his seminar "The Psychoses" (Lacan, 1955–1956). The process of internalizing the paternal name during the resolution of the Oedipus complex ensures that Lacan becomes integrated into the symbolic order, a fundamental aspect for maintaining human sanity.

Similarly, Carl Jung delved into archetypes, emphasizing the role of the father archetype in shaping an individual's psyche. He referred to the father archetype as the authority figure, protector, and provider, closely associated with power, control, and the symbolic order. Jung believed that the father archetype is a part of the collective unconscious, which is a shared pool of experiences and knowledge across cultures. The father archetype takes various forms, such as God, kings, judges, doctors, and other figures of authority. Additionally, Julia Kristeva offers valuable perspectives on the subject through her writings; Kristeva's analysis of the semiotics of gender concerning fatherhood enhances our comprehension of how cultural and linguistic representations contribute to the development of paternal roles and identities. In "Julia Kristeva on Femininity: The Limits of a Semiotic Politics," Ann Rosalind Jones (1998) discusses the importance of the father figure in the construction of gender identities and the symbolic order. She argues that the father is a symbolic figure, a metaphor for power, control, and authority in the family and society.

As a recurring literary theme, father-son conflict, rooted in Greek myths and Biblical narratives, has inspired a wealth of substantial works across diverse genres, including drama, novels, and short stories. In drama, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* (*Oedipus Rex*) stands as one of the earliest plays to depict this timeless struggle. This theme has continued to captivate playwrights, spanning from ancient Greek tragedy to the Elizabethan era and well into the twentieth century. Notable examples include J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949), Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956), Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* (1978), and August Wilson's *Fences* (1985), all of which explore fractured and dysfunctional father-son dynamics.In prose, father-son conflict has also been extensively examined by authors from varied literary traditions. Works such as Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1862), Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Ernest Hemingway's "Fathers and Sons" (1933), William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and "Barn Burning" (1939), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), and Ernest J. Gaines's *In My Father's House* (1978) portray a spectrum of father figures, including the abusive alcoholic, the authoritarian, the absentee, and the failed mentor.These narratives reveal that father-son tensions often arise from psychological, political, social, cultural, and historical forces, leading to intergenerational clashes, ideological disputes, physical confrontations, and profound psychological struggles within families. Through these works, the enduring

complexities of paternal relationships are laid bare, illustrating their far-reaching emotional and societal implications.

Other critics have addressed the topic of fatherhood in contemporary literature and examined modern trends in fatherhood, moving beyond stereotypical depictions. For instance, James M. Herzog (2001) has made significant contributions to the domain of child psychology by examining the impact of fathers on their children's emotional development. His research underscores the crucial role that paternal interactions play in shaping a child's emotional landscape and interpersonal relationships. Herzog explores the concept of "father hunger" and emphasizes how important a father figure is for a child's overall well-being and emotional growth. Accordingly, he states : "absent nutritive experience with the actual father and overwhelming hunger are to become a prominent feature of one's evolving self"(p.22) Besides, Cabrera (2000), in "Fatherhood in the Twenty-First Century," explores the impact of social trends on children's growth, highlighting the roles of working women, absent dads, involved dads, and cultural diversity. He sheds light on the evolving dynamics of fatherhood in contemporary society, emphasizing the need to understand and adapt to these changing trends to support positive child development. On the other hand, he challenges the conventional portrayal of fathers in American literature as oppressive and dictatorial figures, immersing in the depiction of fathers as a reflection of the American literary hero who often shirks family responsibilities leading to unfavorable representations of pure society.

Nowadays, fathers are recognized for their nuanced and involved approach to parenting that emphasizes shared responsibility with active participation in their children's development. The "new father" characterizes himself through his departure from strict gender norms towards a more active parenting style coupled with a commitment to shared responsibilities; this transformation aligns with broader cultural shifts towards gender equality, unlike the old father archetype. Scholars have highlighted how crucially important it is for fathers to play an active role in their children's development, leading to increased recognition regarding the significance of bonding between them both. However, despite the progress made within society, a phenomenon known as "father hunger" persists. Shifting economic demands have challenged the traditional role of fathers, urging a re-evaluation of their contributions within the context of contemporary family dynamics. Therefore, it is colossal to deconstruct the notion of fatherhood and to focus on the tension between the emerging father figure and the notion of 'father hunger.This paper not only deepens our comprehension of the father's role in a child's development but also offers insights into the changing dynamics of family structures and the intricate nuances of father-son relationships. As a result, it contributes to a more sophisticated understanding of fatherhood in the current era, which is of great significance. This intricate analysis resonates with the paternal themes in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, where Atticus Finch epitomizes the ideal of a nurturing, morally grounded father, whose guidance profoundly shapes the narrative and his children's growth. In stark opposition, Bob Ewell symbolizes an outdated and destructive father archetype, defined by neglect and abuse, underscoring the broader societal transition toward a more compassionate and actively involved model of fatherhood.

2. The Institution of Fatherhood in *To Kill a Mocking Bird*

To Kill a Mockingbird delves into the complex interplay between the innocence of childhood memories and the often harsh realities of adult experiences, as seen through the perspective of its protagonist, Scout. As an adult, Scout observes her father's changing perspective on life. Atticus Finch, a widowed father during the Great Depression in Maycomb, Alabama, challenges the overly used ideas of fatherhood, leading to a profound exploration of identity, compassion, and the complexities of being a contemporary father. To de-construct the concept of the ‘new father’ and to explore this concept further, we use the Lacanian concept of the

"mirror stage" to analyze how postmodern fathers construct self-identities. According to Lacan's theory, an infant's encounter with its reflection leads to the development of the ego or "I" and helps form a cohesive self-image. However, fathers may struggle to integrate societal expectations into their self-concept, leading to fragmentation and hindering their ability to form a cohesive self-image. As clearly stated by Lacan (1977):

> The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation—and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic—and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development(p.4).

According to Lacan's quote, the mirror stage occurs when a child recognizes his image in a mirror. This stage marks a significant shift for the child, moving him from a sense of incompleteness to a state of anticipation, forming the basis for their sense of self and identity. It allows the child to perceive themselves as a unified and complete entity rather than a fragmented body image. Furthermore, the child realizes that his body can be observed by others, leading to developing a sense of self with others like when Scout first meets Boo Radley, the reclusive neighbor who is shrouded in mystery and fear. Scout's initial encounter with Boo is through a gift he leaves for her, which she interprets as a sign of kindness and understanding: "A strange small spasm shook him, as if he heard fingernails scrape slate, but as I gazed at him in wonder the tension slowly drained from his face. His lips parted into a timid smile, and our neighbor's image blurred with my sudden tears. 'Hey, Boo,' I said"(Lee, 1960, p.295). This scene could be seen as an example of the mirror stage, as Scout is forming an image of Boo based on her limited interactions with him and her preconceptions, executing the need for empathy taught by Atticus; this marks a turning point in Scout's perception of Boo Radley, shifting from fear and curiosity to a deeper understanding of his humanity. Boo's gift becomes a symbol of connection and empathy. Similarly, the scene where Jem gets his arm broken by Bob Ewell illustrates the development of an alienating identity, as Jem and Scout are forced to navigate the prejudice and violence in their community while maintaining their sense of self. After the attack, Scout describes her visceral reaction to Ewell, stating: *"I smelled stale whiskey."* This captures Scout's disgust and fear towards Ewell, recognizing his drunken state as he assaulted them. Therefore, this scene enables understanding the development of Jem and Scout's sense of self and identity in the face of adversity.

Lacan's revisions of psychoanalysis introduced a reimagined understanding of the Freudian concept of the father, focusing on the father's symbolic role rather than the psychosexual dynamics emphasized by Freud. Freud's core studies on the father center around the Oedipus complex—a psychosexual development phase in which a child experiences desire for the opposite-sex parent and rivalry with the same-sex parent. Freud(1924) posited that unresolved issues within this complex could lead to psychological problems in adulthood, making its resolution crucial for healthy development. Jem Finch, for example, explores psychological themes while growing up, facing injustice, and grappling with moral dilemmas. Jem expresses his initial aspiration to follow in his father Atticus's footsteps *as a lawyer: "I thought I wanted to be a lawyer, but I ain't so sure now!"*However, witnessing the racial injustice during Tom Robinson's trial shakes his convictions and prompts self-doubt. His journey from childhood to adolescence shows how external influences impact individual growth. Jem's growth mirrors the Oedipal complex's concept of transitioning from a child's desires and relationships with parents to a more mature understanding of the world. Jem's desire to assert his masculinity and grow into the role of a

man can be seen as a manifestation of the Oedipal complex; as he proudly displays his physical changes including his nascent chest hair to Scout. This symbolizes his transition into adulthood and his subconscious drive to become more like his father. Lee (1960) describes this teenage attitude, saying: *"Jem was twelve. He was difficult to live with, inconsistent, and moody. His appetite was appalling, and he told me so many times to stop pestering him."* (p.125) Jem is portrayed as a moody and inconsistent pre-teen who is difficult to live with. Scout is frustrated with Jem's behavior and seeks advice from Atticus, who reassures her that Jem is simply going through a phase of growth and that she should be patient with him. Jem 's relationship with his father, Atticus , exemplifies the deep bond and admiration often seen between Southern fathers and their sons during that era. He looks up to Atticus as a moral compass and a source of wisdom. Atticus' integrity, fairness, and calm demeanor significantly influence Jem, shaping his understanding of justice and courage. Throughout the novel, Jem's respect for his father grows as he witnesses Atticus's principled stand in defending Tom Robinson, an innocent black man accused of raping a white woman. Jem sees the prejudice and moral complexities of their society and admires Atticus's unwavering commitment to doing what is right, despite the personal and social costs. This dynamic reflects the traditional Southern values of honor, family loyalty, and respect for one's elders, which are central to Jem's upbringing and development.Yet, Jem's behavior of calling his father by his first name, Atticus, rather than "Dad" or "Father," can be interpreted as a subtle assertion of superiority over Atticus, indicating a potential conflict rooted in the Oedipal complex*:* "He could put himself in his father's place in a masculine fashion and have intercourse with his mother as his father did" (Lee, 1960, p.176). Jem was trying to play a father role to his sister Scout. Indeed, Jem's relationship with Atticus reveals a complex interplay between admiration and separation, echoing the dynamics of the Oedipal complex. While Jem respects and admires Atticus, there is a sense of distance between them, perhaps stemming from Jem's unconscious desire to establish his own identity separate from his father's.

Atticus Finch redefines masculinity in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by grounding it in ethical principles rather than traditional gender roles, challenging the patriarchal norms of Maycomb society. Scout observes, "Jem and I found father satisfactory; he played with us, read to us and treated us with courteous detachment" (Lee, 1960, p.6). To deepen this analysis, Julia Kristeva's concepts of the "semiotic" and "symbolic" offer a compelling lens. The semiotic, tied to rhythms and drives originating from the maternal body, operates beneath signification and disrupts structured meaning (Kristeva, 1980). Conversely, the symbolic, rooted in syntax, order, and the law of the father, provides the structure and rules for signification. Kristeva posits a necessary dialectical oscillation between these realms, where the semiotic challenges and reinvigorates the symbolic, allowing the subject to cross thresholds and generate new meanings.Atticus exemplifies this productive oscillation. He embodies qualities traditionally aligned with the semiotic—empathy, compassion, and emotional attunement—while operating firmly within the symbolic framework of justice and ethical conviction. His moral guidance, such as teaching Scout to consider others' perspectives—"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his side" (Lee, 1960, p.31)—transcends traditional masculine detachment. Similarly, his redefinition of courage as "moral conviction and integrity rather than physical prowess" (Lee, 1960, p.121) rejects the patriarchal valorization of aggression. In doing so, Atticus disrupts and reshapes Maycomb's symbolic order, integrating the semiotic values of empathy and inclusivity into his moral philosophy. By teaching Scout that courage and empathy are not bound by gender, he challenges and expands the restrictive norms of masculinity, embodying Kristeva's notion of crossing thresholds to create a more inclusive and transformative understanding of identity.

Traditional parenting portrays fathers as secondary caregivers, reinforcing gender roles. Therefore, fathers are often viewed as helpers rather than primary caregivers. Today's "new fathers" are expected to be more nurturing and share parenting responsibilities with mothers (Walls, 2007). In the novel, Atticus is a positive representation of the "new father concept" in contemporary society. He is a single father who raises his children alone, with patience and understanding as he embodies the ideal of fatherhood by being involved in his children's lives emotionally and psychologically, setting high expectations, and expressing disappointment when they make poor choices. Atticus teaches his children empathy, which is crucial in modern fatherhood, when he defends Tom Robinson despite facing prejudice, showing that he stands up for what is right. Another value that Atticus exhibits is his commitment to his children's moral education. He believes that children should learn to make good decisions and understand the consequences of their actions. He does this by setting a good example and by teaching his children through discussion and guidance. For example, when Jem damages the camellia bushes of Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose, a neighbor who scolds and insults the children, Atticus sentences him to read to her each day. As Jem reads, he and Scout witness the dying woman's battle against her morphine addiction and learn the true meaning of courage (Lee, 1960, p.121). This shows that Atticus is willing to take the time to teach his children important life lessons and values and that he is a father who is involved in his children's lives while also allowing them the freedom to grow and develop.

Crucially, throughout the novel, Atticus respects his kids by talking straight with them. He answers their questions without flinching. When his eight-year-old daughter, Scout, asked “What’s rape?” *Atticus* “sighed, and said rape was carnal knowledge of a female by force and without consent” (Lee, 1960, p.147). He does not shroud the topic in mystery and discomfort. He defines rape for her, and if she had any follow-up questions, he would have answered them too. He encourages critical thinking and independent thought in his children. He challenges them to consider different perspectives and to question societal norms, fostering a sense of intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness. His skillful use of metaphors and analogies to convey complex ideas to his children is very remarkable. For instance, when Atticus explains the significance of empathy to Scout, he tells her that one can never truly comprehend a person until they get under their skin: *“You never really understand a person until you climb inside of their skin and walk around in it”* (Lee, 1960,p.143). This metaphor is not only potent but also easily understandable, allowing Scout to grasp the notion of empathy intuitively and profoundly. Through his words and actions, Atticus serves as a positive role model for modern fathers, demonstrating the importance of fostering meaningful connections with children and promoting their emotional, intellectual, and social development.

It is important to note that the emergence of new fatherhood is a response to the rise of the new woman phenomenon, where fathers have taken on the responsibilities of the absent mother who sought to challenge traditional gender roles by pursuing a professional career. The "New Woman" was often criticized for rejecting traditional feminine virtues, as seen in Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which opposes the idea that women could only find fulfillment through childrearing and homemaking. Thus, she argues:

> Over and over women heard in voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a man and keep him, how to breastfeed children and handle their toilet training, how to cope with sibling rivalry and adolescent rebellion; how to buy a dishwasher, bake bread, cook gourmet snails, and build a swimming pool with their own hands; how to dress, look, and act more feminine

> and make marriage more ex-citing; how to keep their husbands from dying young and their sons from growing into delinquents. (Friedan , 1963, p.15)

In this quote, Freidan criticizes the concept of the *"happy housewife,"* which she considers part of the feminine mystique. She argues that this idea confines women to the roles of housewife and mother, encouraging them to forgo opportunities for work and education and to participate only in areas traditionally dominated by men. The desire for a new kind of woman, or the absence of the female figure due to single parenting and other reasons, led to a shift where fathers took on a more involved role in parenting. As gender theorist Judith Butler(1988) has argued, gender is not an innate quality but is rather performed through the repetition of socially sanctioned behaviors and practices. The concept of gender performativity disrupts the traditional understanding that gender is an inherent identity. It posits that gender is a social construct shaped through repetitive acts performed by individuals within society. She believes that individuals continually perform gender through their actions, contributing to the societal understanding of gender norms.

The enforcement of gender norms is a key theme in Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Atticus Finch's unconventional parenting style challenges traditional gender roles and societal expectations. His ability to exhibit maternal qualities, such as empathy, nurturing, and protection, highlights his capacity to perform maternal roles. These qualities, combined with his paternal responsibilities, demonstrate that Atticus is a controversial parent who can adapt to the needs of his children. He offers nurturing and guidance as he says, "but before I can live with other folks, I've got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience."(Lee,1960, p.108), emphasizing living with one's conscience and doing what is right, reflecting his maternal instincts. He guides his children to develop their moral compass, teaching them to make decisions based on their values rather than following societal norms. Moreover, Atticus's defense of Tom Robinson, a wrongly accused black man, demonstrates his maternal protective instincts. He risks his reputation and social standing to ensure justice: "I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do" (Lee, 1960, p.115). Also, Atticus's decision to raise his children, Scout and Jem, as a single father is unconventional at that time. He takes on both maternal and paternal responsibilities, showing that he is capable of nurturing and guiding his children without the presence of a mother providing emotional support, as he says to his son Jem: "You just hold your head high and keep those fists down. No matter what anybody says to you, don't you let 'em get your goat. Try fighting with your head for a change."(Lee, 1960, p.78). Atticus's words of encouragement and support to his children reflect his maternal qualities. He provides emotional support and guidance, helping his children develop resilience and confidence.

While Atticus Finch represents the ideal of a responsible, nurturing, and morally upright father, Bob Ewell's behaviors and actions epitomize the emotional absence of fatherhood or father hunger. Ewell epitomizes the "old father" archetype, defined by neglect, abuse, and authoritarian control. Bob Ewell is aggressive, rude, and volatile, reflecting a lack of self-control and an inability to manage his emotions. His language and interactions are characterized by ignorance, racism, and disrespect towards others, particularly African-American characters: *"Too proud to fight, you n* loving bastard?" (Lee,1960, p.137). Ewell's disrespectful and aggressive language towards Atticus highlights his confrontational and disrespectful nature. Furthermore, Ewell's behavior towards his son, Burris, is equally disturbing. When Burris arrives at school, the teacher, Miss Caroline, notes that "he had a scalp full of dandruff and a nasty case of hookworms"(Lee, 1960, p.238). This description

suggests that Ewell has neglected his son's basic hygiene and health, a clear dereliction of his duties as a father. Ewell disregards societal norms and rules, causing people in Maycomb to avoid him. His children lack proper guidance and education. Moreover, Bob Ewell abuses his authority as a father, using his position to manipulate and control his children for his selfish purposes. He coerces Mayella into lying about the alleged assault by Tom Robinson, exploiting her vulnerability and dependence on him for protection and survival: "She reached up an' kissed me 'side of th' face. She says she never kissed a grown man before an' she might as well kiss a n. *She says what her papa do to her don't count. She says, 'Kiss me back, n*.'"* (Lee, 1960, p.240). Bob's misuse of authority perpetuates a toxic power dynamic within the family, characterized by fear, coercion, and manipulation. His behavior is indicative of a socially entrenched patriarchy that operates on power and intimidation rather than nurturing and guidance. Furthermore, Bob Ewell's authoritative role as a father in *To Kill a Mockingbird* reflects the complex interplay between societal forces and familial dynamics, aligning with sociological perspectives on parent-youth conflict. As Kingsley Davis (1940)observes in "The Sociology of Parent-Youth Conflict," the family is not a static entity but one shaped by temporal and spatial conditions, suggesting that paternal conflicts are deeply rooted in the societal circumstances in which families operate(p.524). For Ewell, his authority is influenced by the rigid racial hierarchy, patriarchal norms, and economic marginalization of the 1930s American South. Similarly, Lewis Yablonsky(2000) notes in *Fathers and Sons* that a child's personality—and by extension, their relationship with their father—is shaped by the social context (p.218). Ewell's ignorance, frustration, and reliance on coercion to maintain control over his children, particularly Mayella, reflect this dynamic. The tensions in their relationship highlight Yablonsky's assertion that paternal conflicts often stem from incompatible life choices, limited communication, and the son's resistance to paternal control. In Ewell's case, his abusive and domineering parenting style exacerbates the natural generational divide, creating a toxic environment shaped as much by his personal failings as by the societal inequalities that reinforce his fragile authority.

Similarly, Mr. Radley, the father of the reclusive Boo Radley, presents a problematic interpretation of the traditional father concept. While his motivations and actions are not as overtly abusive as Ewell's, his decision to confine his son to the family home for decades, effectively isolating him from the outside world, suggests a deeply flawed and controlling approach to parenting. As Scout notes: "Mr. Radley was a mystery, a mystery that had been solved by the children of Maycomb County, and the solution was that he was a monster." (Lee,1960, p. 25). This quote highlights the sense of fear and unease that Mr. Radley inspires, a direct result of his reclusive and controlling behavior. His extreme form of control results in Boo's social isolation and emotional stunting. This isolationnot only damages Boo's psychological well-being but also instills fear and misunderstanding within the community. Mr. Radley's oppressive control over Boo results in severe social and emotional isolation, reinforcing Freud's theory that such authoritarian parenting can lead to neurosis and maladjustment (1927). His fatherhood is not only shaped by the cultural rigidity of his time but is also marked by a harsh and unyielding temperament toward both the older and younger generations. Even in death, his presence elicited neither grief nor sympathy from the community. During his funeral, as his body passed by the Finch household, Calpurnia, the Finch family's housekeeper, muttered, "there goes the meanest man ever God blew breath into," and spat on the ground—a rare and shocking act of open disdain from someone who typically refrained from commenting on the behavior of white people (Lee, 1960,p. 12). It is worth mentioning that Boo's eventual acts of kindness and bravery, such as saving Scout and Jem, suggest a yearning for connection and a desire to fulfill the relational hunger and void left by Radley's rigid treatment.

3. Conclusion

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee intricately examines the dichotomy between the archetypes of "traditional father" and the "new father," highlighting the significant impact paternal figures have on the development of their children. Atticus Finch emerges as the epitome of the "new father," characterized by his nurturing approach, moral integrity, and commitment to fostering empathy and critical thinking in his children. In stark contrast, Bob Ewell and Mr. Radley embody the detrimental effects of toxic and absent fatherhood, stunting their children's emotional and moral growth. The novel illustrates how Atticus's progressive parenting style, which challenges traditional gender norms and societal expectations, promotes a more inclusive and empathetic understanding of fatherhood. His ability to balance nurturing and guidance with discipline and moral education exemplifies the evolving role of fathers in contemporary society. This shift is further contextualized within broader cultural changes, including the rise of the "new woman" and the influence of gender performativity theories, which emphasize the fluidity and constructed nature of gender roles. Lee's portrayal of fatherhood is also enriched by psychoanalytic theories, particularly those of Freud, Lacan, and Kristeva, which delve into the psychological dynamics between fathers and children. The novel's exploration of the Oedipus complex, the symbolic order, and the semiotic the profound influence of paternal figures on identity formation and emotional development. Ultimately, *To Kill a Mockingbird* underscores the timeless significance of fatherhood in literature, advocating for a more nuanced and involved approach to parenting. By contrasting exemplary and abusive paternal figures, Lee offers a poignant analysis of the multifaceted nature of fatherhood and its enduring impact on children's lives. This exploration not only enhances our understanding of the father's role in a child's development, but also reflects the evolving dynamics of family structures and the complexities of father-son relationships in modern society.

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