



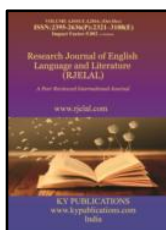
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## IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT AND COMING OF AGE AFFINITY BETWEEN PATRIARCHY AND FEMINISM IN HARPER LEE'S *GO SET A WATCHMAN*

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### ABSTRACT

Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman* presents a narrative that deals with human relationship mostly from men vs women point of views. The novel is adorned with sometime amicable and sometime hostile male-female bond. By establishing comparisons and contrasts among the senses of value and convictions from both feminist and patriarchal sides, the novelist demonstrates her noble aim to reach some coming-of-age issues among the characters of the novel. On one hand, the events in the novel on many occasions contribute to consolidating men's and women's beliefs towards each other. On the other hand, at the end of the day, some other incidents lead to the disillusionment of the trust one nurtures for the other. Nevertheless, Harper Lee has all her commendable story making adroitness to come in touch with moralization and victory for individual differences at length. The novelist depicts a social context that goes through myriad upheavals only to exhibit a stage where men and women acquire independence of each other. Before getting hold of the celebrated individual existence, the male and female characters in the novel have to be grossly influenced by reciprocity. But it takes time to liberate completely from the ever-existing patriarchal stronghold. Jean Louise being the chosen one to belong to feminist liberty, has to face antagonistic feedbacks, get her beliefs towards her counterparts shattered and at long last have her conscience accept the truth. In the process, the patriarchal agents remain there beside her as both helping and inhibiting forces with a view to providing her a true understanding of human choice and conscience. This article desires to pursue a careful perusal to the novel and review it in the light of men and women dealings. This aims to come up with the psychological workings of the characters in terms of the individual-identity-oriented realizations. It is assuring that this cogitation will be of some significance for further study on feminist and patriarchal considerations in Harper Lee's writings in the days to come.  
Key Words: patriarchy, feminism, ideology, conflict, coming of age, *Go Set a Watchman*

### INTRODUCTION

Feminism and patriarchy appear in both supporting and inhibiting ways in *Go Set a Watchman*. Jean Louise always receives an

affirmative psychological response and upbringing from Atticus. She gets amicable and comforting manner and companion from Henry, her soul mate. About Jean Louise's being antagonistic to him, he

says, "Don't argue with a man, especially when you know you can beat him. Smile a lot. Make him feel big. Tell him how wonderful he is, and wait on him" (Lee 16). On one such occasion, while going out with Henry, Jean Louise gets bumped with the car and lets loose her irritation yelling, "Damnation! Why don't they make these things high enough to get into" (Lee 50). But Henry is always there to behave quite softly with her as he knows her temperament and responds to it mostly in a friendly and soothing manner. Together they pass quite an enjoyable time in the neighborhood. At one midnight they go swimming in a certain type of dress that makes them look naked, but actually they are not. In the morning Alexandra flares up and demands to know what made her do such scandalous deed. During the brawl, Atticus arrives and comes to know the incident. He understands Jean Louise much better. He has all his assertions towards his daughter and he funnily utters, "I hope you weren't doing the backstroke" (Lee 86). This puts both the father and the daughter in a very amusing ambience.

It becomes known to Jean Louise that Atticus as well as Henry is a member of the 'Maycomb County Citizen's Council' (Lee 103) that works for the disintegration of black people from the society. She has a verbal dispute where she almost bursts into rage as her idea about her father's morality is proved to be wrong. She yells at Atticus. But, Atticus keeps himself composed and answers her questions as nicely as possible. At the end when she realizes her mistake and ends up seeking pardon, Atticus says generously, "You may be sorry, but I'm proud of you" (Lee 277). He also speaks of his heart, "Well, I certainly hope a daughter of mine'd hold her ground for what she thinks is right-stand up to me first of all" (Lee 277).

On the other hand, the patriarchal social structure Jean Louise live in at Maycomb County does a great many things that hurt her and shakes her belief. The hypocrisy lying beneath the polished appearance of the men folk around her agonizes her to a great extent. She gets to know what to do and what not to do from the world she has been brought up in. She nurtures the humanitarian attributes so much so that she believes these are in fact the mottos of her society. But she is hit hard with the

cruelty of the inevitable truth. The whole male-world betrays her. She discovers that Atticus is not who she believes him to be. She finds Henry in a wrong sort of hypocrite attire. She complains, "I don't understand men at all and I never will" (Lee 277). It turns to be very cumbersome for her to accept the truly hostile nature of her male counterpart. She yells at Henry, "I understand that you are a goddamned hypocrite" (Lee 234). Jean Louise looks for Atticus to take him on a sort of remand about the latter's being involved in the segregation plot against the black community. She finds him and retorts, "I don't understand men" (Lee 237). She demands to know Atticus's stance about the rights of Calpurnia's people. The answer is affirmative. She can't help letting loose her frustration. She shouts, "Yes sir, I'm upset about something. That citizens' council you are doing. I think it's disgusting and I'll tell you that right now" (Lee 238). The humanity in the sublime soul of Jean Louise speaks up. Her exploration of the fact that her guardian angel is none but a common white one who is to stand against the rights of the black people as usual. She cries, "You deny them hope. Any man in this world, Atticus, any man who has a head and arms and legs, was born with hope in his heart. You won't find that in constitution, I picked that up in church somewhere. They are simple people, most of them, but that doesn't make them subhuman" (Lee 251). However, though the conflict between feminism and patriarchy is about ideology, the latter does not attack starkly on the former in the novel. Rather, they have their good times of mutual understanding as well as bad times of betrayal. Nevertheless, at the end of the day, both of the attributes contribute to the fulfillment of human existence in Maycomb County.

#### **Literature Review**

In *Go Set a Watchman*, Harper Lee presents feminism's dependence on as well as independence from patriarchy. This takes place in a consecutive manner signifying Jean Louise's over reliance on her father and fiancée, and subsequent shock followed by coming of age realization. The patriarchal figure in *Go Set a Watchman*, Atticus proves to be a man more responding and tending to the demand of his time and social set-up than to the ideology Jean

Louise expects of him (Fields). Fields also states that the Scout of *To Kill a Mockingbird* has turned to be a grown-up, independent as well as cosmopolitan in thinking of and regarding people irrespective of all negligible differences. Jean Louise not just understands the ever existing disparity in the society, she stands bold and protests the anomaly courageously. Harper Lee's young protagonist, Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and adult one, Jean Louise in *Go Set a Watchman* stands to be a gigantic resistance to the prevailing color-caste conflict and inferiority taboo in American culture (Clukey). She gets the sense that she being a woman is not supposed to talk about these male-oriented issues. Nonetheless, she emerges and fights for her impeccable ideology. Clukey (705) brings to the front that Jean Louise has to fight against the long set codes for women in general to face the obstructing challenges deployed by the society, in other way mechanized by the patriarchal mind-set to be able to come out as a free entity. On her pursuit for justice and humanity, Jean Louise comes to get hold of the underlying characters of the people she has been nurturing a trust on. Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman* portrays the characters to be stark opposite to what they are remembered and expected as. This means change and growing up since these are what happen in real life circumstances (Mendenhall). Exploring and encountering the real identity of her male counterparts, it becomes quite horrific for Jean Louise to compose herself and let go of things as they are. Mendenhall (6) points out that the novel puts its female protagonist to face her worst horror and battle relating to if she can retain what she has her faith in. However, the abstract as well as palpable phenomena relating to gender consciousness in *Go Set a Watchman* are more complementary than obstructing to each other. Albeit their antagonistic standing on each other's way, they cooperate to let the protagonist, Jean Louise come of age. This difference contributes in full blossom to help her understand human nature in the truest sense.

Patriarchal vs. Feminist Issues

Patriarchy does not appear so apparent in *Go Set a Watchman* as the term is supposed to do. It

works automatically. People at Maycomb spontaneously live by some codes. Women in the county do not go beyond the inherently prescribed regulations. Nobody gives tidings to anybody. None says someone at Maycomb County has to abide by certain accepted codes. Nevertheless, there prevails the rule of patriarchy more comprehensively than what it would be if it were explicitly effectuated. There exists an aura that advocates the weakness of women and its being constantly safeguarded by men. This prevailing set-up entices Scout cum Jean Louise to resort to more of manly attributes than womanly ones. Scout Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is Jean Louise in *Go Set a Watchman* and sets a challenge towards gender stereotype to remain a tomboy to erase the pervading lesser sort of evaluation towards womanhood at Maycomb (Hakala). Implicitly and in an all-inclusive manner, there rules a gender phenomenon that makes Jean Louise feel her sexual identity time and again. Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* which is the first installment of *Go Set a Watchman* begins the portrayal of a young girl and her intimate interaction with the socially constructed gender awareness (Stefanovici). As a matter of fact, the gender issue gets started in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* where Scout is (the girl Jean Louise) almost always accompanied by male characters like, Jem Finch and Dill. As time passes, she grows up to be Jean Louise and learns things and issues that mould her understanding of herself. Scout Finch, the narrator in *To Kill a Mockingbird* holds strong to learn and come of age. Subsequently she knows how to strive and attain individual existence amidst overbearing tidings of the authoritative world (Nurbudhiati). She encounters the more convoluted issues of male-world that shock her in the first place. Alternatively, this helps her to understand the reality better. Skurnick says *Go Set a Watchman* is the grown-up stage of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and introduces the readers with an adult and a liberal Scout but a regrettably racist Atticus. Skurnick also reviews that the novel is about Jean Louise becoming a woman and a sexual being who has her long-nourished ideal view of her family, society and most importantly about her father, Atticus.

It starts from *To Kill a Mockingbird* where Jean Louise has her girlhood, Scout. She begins to learn sense of justice and equality from some good people including her father Atticus, uncle Jack, brother Jem Finch and motherly figure Calpurnia. She gets her respects and regards accumulated for her ideal hero, Atticus, who symbolizes justice and humanity in the world she is heading towards in her mature self, Jean Louise. From the very inception of her journey, she has been more accompanied by male counterpart than female association. She has always been with her brother, Jem Finch who lets her know and see into the world around her. On other times, when Jem Finch is not around her, she is accompanied as well as guided by her father, Atticus. She possesses her thoughts and judgments more from the men around her than from her own self. She is instructed time and again of the do's and don'ts in her day to day life. She never gets to complain about it because what she is taught suits the ideology her soul feels at home with. So, she lives in a utopian dream. This continues until she attains her adult self, Jean Louise in *Go Set a Watchman*.

In this novel, Jean Louise is a woman living in New York. She is an artist and has a life of her own. On vacation, she comes to visit her family at her childhood place, Maycomb where her icon of justice, Atticus and her boyfriend, Henry live. She has been here for two weeks and feels no sense of hurry to go back to the mega town because after all Maycomb is the abode of what she has grown up with. She finds that at this small county, she cannot be and act as she wants as an independent being. She has to live by some long set codes here. Though no where mentioned explicitly, it is very obviously understood that their codes for shrinking the blossom of feminism are directly or indirectly designed by the patriarchal stronghold. The women folk in and around Maycomb have no grudge against these narrowing rules and regulations. Rather, they find it unbecoming if someone belonging to their sex does not go in concurrence with these formulas. Jean Louise does not fight, rather, goes on her own way not giving much concentration to what others think of her until and unless things related to equity, justice and humanity are not subjugated. As time

passes, she comes closer to know the prevailing truth around her birthplace. Slowly but sure the society at Maycomb reveals its multi-layered coils and lets Jean Louise know what is actually going on in full swing there. She finds that both Atticus and Henry are active members of 'Maycomb County Citizen's Council' (Lee 103), an agency that works for the segregation of black people from the white community. This shakes violently her long preserved trust about her father being the champion of civil rights and causes of the black people. Her belief in her lover, Henry as a person possessing a mental standard of equality and humanity gets shattered too. She stands alone with her cosmopolitan trademark that is isolated and forsaken by her childhood heroes. She encounters the double standard that she never saw coming. She flares up and demonstrates her fury to the people who have betrayed her convictions.

She starts packing to leave this rotten and hypocritical atmosphere when Uncle Jack arrives and teaches some sense into her. He teaches her to stop, concentrate and compose herself. This is when the coming of age gets noticed. She understands that the thoughts and ideology she has been bearing about her father and other people are actually hers. Those people including Atticus do not necessarily live her dream at all. She realizes that people are only human and they have their own good and bad issues. People can be angelic sometimes. Sometimes they can be devilish. She deciphers that it is only faulty for her if she burdens other people with her beliefs and ideologies. She comes to feel that it is only she who is to fight for establishing her ideal world. If she wants integration between white and black, she herself is to struggle and devise a breakthrough. And, this can never be achieved if she turns her back to the problems prevalent at Maycomb. She has to stay with it and go for making it what she wants it to be. For the purpose, she needs to be a composed and an articulate woman, who she proves to be when she enters the car without bumping her head for the first time in her visit at Maycomb.

#### **Conclusion**

There remains an impalpable but ubiquitous conflict between Jean Louise and

patriarchy that she has trust on to be her ideal entity. And, if we talk about feminist emancipation, it all starts in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and reaches its full blossom in *Go Set a Watchman*. Because of the magnitude of liberty on the part of Scout and subsequently Jean Louise, the patriarchal body is taken into custody for its objectionable deeds. The two prevailing phenomena stand face to face with each other and get their respective path paved to reach a reconciled existence. However, the disparity between male and female in the novel is more of ideology than physique. In addition to this, the dissimilarity does not culminate to something oppressive in the traditional sense. Rather, it sometimes creates opposition and in some other times develops an atmosphere that helps both men and women to flourish. On this note, it can be surmised that feminism and patriarchy are complementary to each other in *Go Set a Watchman*. Each is completed by the other in the way it happens in every two opposite phenomena in the universe.

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