

12-2015

White Double Consciousness in Lillian Smith's Strange Fruit, Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird, and Geraldine Brooks's March

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WHITE DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS IN LILLIAN SMITH'S
STRANGE FRUIT, HARPER LEE'S *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*,
AND GERALDINE BROOKS'S *MARCH*

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2015

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Title: White Double Consciousness in Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit*, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and Geraldine Brooks's *March*

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The concept of double consciousness may prompt people to think of how W.E.B. Du Bois used it in his discussion of the African American's divided psyche as a response to American racism. However, Toni Morrison (1992) acknowledged the value of the scholarship on the effects of racism on the servant's mind, but she urged scholars to also engage in an exercise that would help theorize what racism does to the mind of the master.

This dissertation is a part of the current conversation on white double consciousness, which examines white people's responses to racial injustice they do not suffer, but which taxes the minds of the many. Through the analysis of Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit*, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and Geraldine Brooks's *March*, it makes the case that these novels depict white psychological responses to racial injustice. The novels' white characters reveal a range of mixed responses to racial injustice; they embody both hypocritical attitudes and genuine concern for racial injustice. Whiteness plays an important role in shaping the characters' psychological responses to racism.

White double consciousness is not a monolithic response, but a set of ambiguous/mixed attitudes and responses to racial injustice. These responses fall into three major aspects: 1) conflict between public and private image as a result of power relation between the individual and the group; 2) professed moral values or good intentions coupled with an accommodation of racial injustice; and 3) sustained genuine struggle for righteousness, which is hindered by nostalgia for status quo. Overall, the analysis shows that white double consciousness is an enduring, though under-theorized psychology of whiteness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I praise Jehovah, God Almighty, “The One telling from the beginning the finale;” for his great gift of life, and specifically, for giving me courage, patience, and determination through the long, trying period of researching and writing of this dissertation (Isaiah 46.10).

I am greatly indebted to the following people who in one way or another have helped me in both the writing of this dissertation as well as in my graduate studies at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

I give special thanks to Dr. Veronica Watson, who introduced me to Critical Whiteness Studies, and who, in spite of her various occupations, willingly accepted to be my advisor. Her observations, suggestions, and remarks contributed greatly to the completion of this dissertation.

I also express my gratitude to Drs. Mike Sell and Todd Thomson for kindly accepting to be a part of my dissertation committee notwithstanding of their own busy schedules.

Furthermore, I address my sincerest regards to the entire English Department, and most specifically to all the professors of Graduate Studies in Literature and Criticism, for their contributions to my academic growth.

I am grateful to the Fulbright Scholarship Program and its officers at the American Embassy in the Democratic Republic of Congo for opening the door for me to pursue a master’s program, which eventually led to my doctoral studies.

I cannot forget to thank my Christian brothers and sisters at the Indiana Christian Congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses, especially the McNavishes, Sister Elaine Barry, Tim and Dandy Petrus, the Reichels, Steve Sally, and my best friend, Doby Wells and his wife and children, who I have been able to call at any time of the day or night—for spiritual support and friendship. I also extend heartfelt thanks to my dear friends from the Starkville, Mississippi Congregation: Ed

Davis, Lisa Davis, Colin Davis, and Kieran Davis, who welcomed me in their home when I first came to the United States and with whom I have maintained a good friendship to this day. The same thanks also go to my friend Charlotte Lawson for her kind heart.

I do not have appropriate words to express my warmest thanks to my dear friend Mrs. ErikaLynn Taylor-Mwenze, without whom, I would have been unable to bring my family to the United States. May Jehovah Almighty continue to bless her in return for that loving kindness and generosity! By the same token, I am also indebted to my friend Lancina and his wife Rosine Karambiri, who did not hesitate to help me when we barely knew each other.

May all the faculty of the English Department at Université Pédagogique Nationale find here the expression of my gratitude for their moral support. In this regard, I think particularly of Drs. Ndolo, Nkulu, Valinande, late Drs. Khandi, Yaba, and Dika, for believing in me. May Mr. Kasongo, Mr. Lutumba, Mrs. Kandui, Mr. Ntoto, Mr. Mbala, Mr. Kasendwe, Mr. Ngizulu, Mr. Kabwiku, and Mrs. Pauline Isanga know that I remember and appreciate their kind words of encouragement.

I thank my brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, and aunts--Henry Munongo, Hypolite Munongo, Jean-Paul Munongo, Francine Tsimba, Nzuzi, Mapasi, Sambutu, Matsanaga, Fwama, Claudine Manketa, Nestorine Milele, Henry Ibanda, Dieu-Merci Ntimbukila, Marie-Josée Kavuandula, Bonheur Ntungu, Richard Lukusa, Jean Tuka, Polydor Butsuki, Dauphin Tsitukenina, Jean-René Mawesi, and many others of my big family—for their love and indefectible support throughout my life.

I also thank my high school and undergraduate school colleagues as well as my many other friends, including Medard Kitakani, Dr. Sessoko and his wife, Hubert Mokoso, Hubert Mayeka, Chantal Tsimba, Prub Kingala, Odon Ndiata, Cyril Lungu, Edo Mananga, Max Mbenga, Sophie Sharadi, Mrs. Ndongala, Mbwol, Edo Asuli, Dipanda, Jules Tsengele, P. Mavakala, Alec Besi Nlopo, Anatole Kubikula, Dr. Ngaki, and Dr. Kanyinda for encouraging me to do well.

Last but not least, my heartfelt thanks go to my dear wife Bibiche Mambimbi Makiosi, for shouldering most of the burden of our living expenses and for all the other sacrifices she's made throughout our lives together. I also say many thanks to her parents Noel Makiosi Landa and Marie Tsima Nzasi for their love and care. May my children Jasper Konda Ntimbukila, Andy Konda Munongo, and Lisa Konda Lutondo, whose playtime I have oftentimes neglected and sacrificed, find through these words, the expression of my deep fatherly love.

Jean-Paul Konda Ntusi

DEDICATION

To you:

my late father, uncles, and aunts, Ernest Ntibukila Ntusi, Julien Munongo Mfwa, Marie-Josée Kavuandula Masapu, and Jeannine Ndema, who did not live to see this day;

my mother Elizabeth Uzangama Masapu Nsiku, for your love and care since the early days of my life till today;

my wife Bibiche Mambimbi Makiosi for all sacrifices, and my children Jasper Konda Ntimbukila, Andy Konda Munongo, and Lisa Konda Lutondo, the understanders of your always busy father, I dedicate this dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1	CONTEXTUALIZING DU BOISIAN DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS 1
	Why Fiction instead of other Genres 26
	Why White Women Writers..... 29
2	PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IMAGE: LILIAN SMITH'S <i>STRANGE FRUIT</i> ... 34
	Power Relation between the Individual and the Group 51
	The Mind of Versatile White Characters 56
3	BLIND JUSTICE IN <i>TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD</i> 74
	Making Sense of Blind Justice: White Characters' Moral Ordeal..... 83
	Atticus Finch Seen through Different Lenses..... 86
	Resisting the System..... 106
4	THE STRUGGLE FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS AND NOSTALGIA FOR THE STATUS QUO..... 118
	John Brown: <i>A Provocateur</i> 119
	March's Constant Fight for Righteousness 134
5	CONCLUSION 153
	Race as a Sensitive Topic in America 153
	Recalling the Conversation on White Double Consciousness..... 166
WORKS CITED 176	

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXTUALIZING DU BOISIAN DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS

We live in a racialized society, and the racial ideology fabricated a few centuries ago has altered our way of thinking and looking at one another. It has enabled human beings to prey on each other using superficial differences in skin color as a motive for one type of oppression. This ideology has changed through the years from overt cruel acts of racial repression to more covert or subtle forms of injustice and unnoticed white racial privilege. Most whites acknowledge that slavery and other forms of racial oppression have been detrimental to black people socially, economically, and psychologically. But when presented this way, racism seems to cause problems only to the oppressed.

In *Playing in the Dark* (1992), Toni Morrison argues that the “scholarship that looks into the mind, imagination, and behavior of slaves is valuable. But equally important is a serious intellectual effort to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behavior of masters” (11-12). Responding to Morrison’s call, in this dissertation I explore the way that racial ideology has also damaged the mind, imagination, and the behavior of the “masters.” By “masters,” Morrison implied white people as a racial group. Racial ideology has altered the sense of moral justice of many of them in such a way that they have become insensible to injustice. It has dehumanized the “masters” and “the servants,” or “the oppressors” and the “oppressed,” albeit in different manners. People pay more attention on the negatives consequences of oppression on the oppressed, but oppression is not the enemy of the oppressed alone. It is also the enemy of the oppressor in that it causes both parties to become brutes. Consequently, we grapple with different ways of approaching racial ideology. Some have chosen to accept it as such, others have decided to openly fight it, and still others feign ignorance or simply deny its existence. Yet, even when people ignore or deny racial ideology as a problem, very few can honestly claim that racism has not affected them.

Racism is grounded in the American society in such a way that it constitutes the bedrock of whiteness and white privilege. In his article “William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963),” philosopher Donald J. Morse notes that W.E. B. Du Bois is “a thinker [who] more than almost any other, employed thought in the service of exposing [white] privilege, and worked to eliminate it in the service of a greater humanity” (n. pag.). Du Bois’ work did not stop at “exposing whiteness and white privilege,” he also did a tremendous job in discussing the consequences of racism on its victims, notably African Americans. Using “double consciousness,” a popular concept among nineteenth century scholars, Du Bois applied it to the African American psyche during the days when racism was the norm. In this dissertation, I discuss double consciousness in the larger context of whiteness in looking at the way in which this phenomenon affects white people, the beneficiaries of racism.

People usually associate “double consciousness” with W.E. B. Du Bois even though the concept did not originate with him. Double consciousness was already part of the medical, philosophical, and literary discourse of the nineteenth century before Du Bois used it in association with race. Scholars who have discussed Du Bois’ “double consciousness” mention Hegel and Emerson to have influenced and/or inspired him [Du Bois] the most (West 148; Zamir 113-14; Bloom 1; Bogue 89). Other scholars also mention that prior to Du Bois’ version of double consciousness, the “subject of the double and the divided self” was used in relation with the effects of modernity in the nineteenth century both in Europe and the United States (Allen Jr. 222; Watson 41). Although the different scholars mentioned above evoke the way “double consciousness” was used in the nineteenth century prior to the Du Boisian version, they also acknowledge that Du Bois did not use it in imitation of his predecessors, but he did it in a specific way to address an African American psychological issue. For example, in his book *Dark Voices* (1995), literature and visual studies expert Shamoan Zamir posits that “Du Bois radically adapts Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Mind* in

order to describe the historical problematic that preoccupies him in the first chapter of *Souls* . . . [yet he] does not adopt Hegel but adapts him to his own ends” (113-14). Zamir insists that though he sees similarities between Hegel and Du Bois’ work, the latter is centered on an African American matter.

In *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W.E. B. Du Bois used the concept of “double consciousness” to refer to the black American’s psychological dilemma of being both black and American. For Du Bois, “The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, a sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others” (3). He continues that the black American feels his “two-ness, --an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body” (3). Du Bois’ point is that the black American is seen as an outsider in his own country, where he feels rejected because of the color of his skin. He is denied the American identity because his race does not fit the white man’s definition of Americanism. Because the dominant white culture equates “Americanism” with whiteness and thereby excludes blackness, the black “American” functions under a double identity. One is to try to accommodate the way in which whiteness sees him, and the other is his perception of himself which cannot be penetrated by racial myths and mythologies of whiteness. In spite of his marginalization, Du Bois asserts that the black American is endowed with “second-sight” (3). This second-sight is an advantageous stance for the black American because it gives him a better perspective and understanding of American society. Commenting on Du Bois’ concept of “second sight,” Morse writes, “Du Bois holds that due to double consciousness, African- Americans [*sic*] possess a privileged epistemological perspective. Both inside the white world and outside of it, African-Americans are able to understand the white world, while yet perceiving it from a different

perspective, namely that of an outsider as well” (n. pag.). The inclusion of the “second sight,” thus, gives the Du Boisian double consciousness a positive connotation because it offers the black American a better understanding of white America and offers him/her tools of survival in a dangerous environment where he/she can reveal to the white person only what he/she wants him/her to see or hear.

Moreover, the “second-sight” that Du Bois couples his notion of double consciousness with also functions as an antidote to the debilitating effects of racism. As regard the Duboisian double consciousness, Morse also notes that “the dual perspective of African Americans can be used to grasp the essence of ‘whiteness’ and to expose it, in the multiple senses of the word ‘expose.’ That is to say, second sight allows an African- American to bring the white view out into the open, to lay it bare, and to let it wither for the problematic and wrong-headed concept that it is” (n. pag.). What Morse describes here is the transforming effect of the second sight. Its role is to turn double consciousness into an empowering attribute rather than a position of weakness. Philosopher George Yancy’s *Look a White* (2012), which I will discuss later in this chapter, is a good example of the empowering aspect of double consciousness.

Because of the oppressive nature of the white society under which black people live, double consciousness can be considered as a part of the silent resistance that they have long used in a hostile environment. The South, for example, has long been considered as the hotbed of American racism and white violence. For this reason, African Americans have learned from experience to adopt attitudes that would help them avoid getting into confrontation with white people. Black Americans knew exactly when to talk and when to remain silent in front of whites. They even accepted being ridiculed just to avoid further violence and humiliation. However, it was impossible to avoid complete victimization regardless of one’s good conduct. Put in the context of racial violence, double consciousness can be seen as a survival technique. It was one of the ways black

Americans would use to try to preserve their lives in an environment in which white oppression was part of their daily ordeal. I would go further to claim that the lyrics of the song “Me and my Captain” is a very good illustration of the Du Boisian double consciousness because the singer eloquently expresses his dual personality when he says,

Me and my captain don't agree,
But he don't know, 'cause he don't ask me.
He don't know, he don't know my mind,
When he sees me laughing, laughing to keep me from crying.
Got one mind for the white folks to see,
Another for what I know is me. (qtd. in Dance 514)

This lyric clearly shows the speaker's awareness of his double personality: one that he displays to “the white folks” to see and believe, and the other, his true identity, that the white man is not aware of. Put differently, the speaker actually double crosses the white man in making him believe that he knows him, while all he gets is a performance of what he wants to see and hear.

Malcolm X alluded to the Du Boisian double consciousness to explain that in his everyday dealing with the oppressive white man, the black man conducted himself so as to appear stupid, without giving the white man a clue of his motives. In his interview with Alex Haley in May of 1963, Malcolm X warned his interviewer that he was going to reveal him a “secret,” and told him that “the black man is a whole lot smarter than the white people think he is. The black man has survived in this country by fooling the white man. He has been dancing and grinning and white men never guessed what he was thinking” (“The Playboy Interview,” 107). X's legitimization of the black man's capability to devise survival methods, in adopting a conduct that is appropriate for a hostile racist environment, gives a positive connotation to the Du Boisian double consciousness.

Five decades after Du Bois redefined double consciousness, Frantz Fanon adopted his concept, but added another dimension to it. In *Black Skin White Masks* (1952), Fanon writes, “The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro (17). This dualistic view of the black man’s mind is not different from the one that Du Bois discussed in *The Souls of Black Folk*. The only difference is that while Du Bois focuses on the African American’s experience, Fanon discusses not only the black Antillean’s experience, but also the experiences of other colonized people. “Every colonized people . . . in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality,” observes Fanon, “finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle” (18). This means that being colonized equates to being subjected to a lesser status than the one of the colonizer. The imported culture causes the colonized to consider his native culture and customs as something repulsive. Thus the Fanonian double consciousness takes a slightly different route from the Du Boisian one because of Fanon’s reference to the black man’s split mind as an “ailment” (132). I use the word “slightly” because one could contend that Du Bois’ use of double consciousness is equally debilitating.

Yet, I maintain that the Fanonian double consciousness does not contain the empowering element and is, therefore, entirely debilitating. Fanon writes, “I made a complete audit of my ailment. I wanted to be typically Negro—it was no longer possible. I wanted to be white—that was a joke. And, when I tried, at the level of ideas and intellectual activity, to reclaim my negritude, it was snatched away from me” (132). Fanon acknowledges the colonized black man’s dilemma after the contact with Western culture because he is caught in a mix whereby he feels culturally inauthentic and becomes a byproduct of two cultures. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Fanon goes further to

show the debasing effects of colonialism on its victims when he writes, “Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: ‘In reality, who am I?’” (250). This quote implies that colonialism also causes psychological damage on the colonized because he/she becomes an individual with two conflicting minds he/she cannot reconcile.

I stated earlier that double consciousness is the product of racism. Yet, we currently live in what communication scholars Joan Faber McAlister and Ralina L. Joseph, respectively, call “post-racial” and “post ideology of race/post-race” era. McAlister, for example, uses the concept “post-racial” to refer to the popular belief that “we have moved beyond racism” (312). Likewise, Joseph uses the terms “post-ideology of race/post-race” to explain that “it is popularly assumed that the civil rights movement effectively eradicated racism to the extent that not only does racism no longer exist, but race itself no longer matters” (239). The two scholars, however, contend this popular belief, joining a long list of scholars who use expressions like “subtle racial attitudes,” “sanitized racis[m],” “sincere fictions,” “covert racism,” “modern racism,” “racism without racists/ color-blind racism,” “racism lite,” or other similar expressions to refer to racism in its new look (Dovido and Gaertner 319; Matsuda 22; Feagin and Vera 13; Feagin 141; Bonilla-Silva 3, 204). The novels through which I discuss white double consciousness do not portray the “new racism” (Bonilla-Silva 202). Instead, they portray overt racism because they are set in the pre-civil rights movement era, a time period when it was acceptable for white people to inflict all kinds of degrading and dehumanizing treatments to African Americans without the fear of being held accountable. So with this kind of setting where racial injustice and violence against black people was the order of the day, I ask the questions: How do well-meaning white people react to injustice? Do they feel morally guilty and do nothing? Are they tempted to take some kind of action to right the wrong or to simply

clear themselves from collective guilt? Or do they simply look the other way as if they are not concerned with racial injustice? In essence, these questions are purely moral because all human beings have various moral values that they uphold in their daily life. The answers to these questions are the niches for my understanding of white double consciousness, through the selected works I discuss further in the following chapters.

The focus of this dissertation is on white double consciousness as depicted in Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit* (1944), Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), and Geraldine Brooks's *March* (2005). To some extent, Du Bois' black double consciousness can be viewed as a powerless people's response to oppression and a survival technique. But while black people suffered the bulk of the consequences of racial prejudice, it is unthinkable to imagine that white lives were completely shielded from the negative impact of racism. Thus, I argue that white people also experience double consciousness, though of a different kind than African Americans. I will examine the multiple and complex ways in which white people respond psychologically to injustices that they do not necessarily suffer from, but which tax their sense of moral justice. My objective is to displace the debate about double consciousness to the other side of the color line by arguing that white double consciousness is an enduring, though under-theorized psychology of whiteness.

Building on the work of Joe R. Feagin and Hernán Vera, who argue in *White Racism* (1995) that "whites have created a set of 'sincere fictions'—personal mythologies that reproduce societal mythologies at individual level" which are "generally use[d] ... to define themselves as 'not racist,' 'good people,' even if they think and act in antiblack ways," I will examine white people's differing responses to racism and discrimination in particular historical times (13-14). In the novels I will analyze, many white characters are accepting of the injustice they see around them and do not want to do anything against it. Their attitude can be explained by the fact that they don't personally experience injustice and also because of the fear of being disowned by their communities if they

denounce the actions of some of “their own.” Most of those who adopt silence as a response to their community’s injustice instead of denouncing it, are simply tacit supporters of their communities’ doings. Others, however, do not remain silent to racial injustice and stand up to denounce it simply because remaining silent does not give them peace. Their sense of moral justice keeps urging them to do something, even at their own risk. So I will analyze the moments when well-intentioned white people remain silent in front of racial injustice. I will also look at the circumstances that push some courageous white people to denounce injustices though they may fear rejection. Both responses, I would argue, are evidence of white double consciousness. I will be paying particular attention to mapping these different responses and theorizing them as aspects of white double consciousness.

In this dissertation I am also interested in examining how white people react in situations where the power relation is not between oppressors and oppressed, but between people who enjoy similar levels of privileges in an unjust system. That is, not between people considered racially “inferior” or “superior,” but between whites enjoying similar social and economic privileges of a biased social structure. This aspect is important to analyze because it reveals how the perpetuation of injustice and racism numbs the conscience of many white folks. Most of those who have convinced themselves that nothing needs to be done against the system find fault with those who dare speak against it. It does not take long for the entire community to turn against the very few who speak up against the injustice of the system. The exceptional white people who can criticize a system that benefits them become victims of their communities’ diatribes. They experience their double consciousness in moments when they weigh whether they should remain loyal to their communities in letting immoral racist practices continue, or speak their minds and become the community’s enemy. The texts under consideration have several moments like this where people are caught between what they believe to be right and the pressure of standing with community. Hence the

following questions: Would some morally upright white folks speak against a system that has granted them everything though they think it unfair and needs to be fixed to benefit all beyond racial consideration? Would they be willing to have inner peace in speaking up knowing that doing so will upset the community and have it against them? Or will they simply keep quiet, let go, and live with the discomfort because they feel powerless before the power of their communities? My discussion of the different aspects of white double consciousness should be regarded as an analysis and interpretation of a series of responses and reactions that white folks adopt in order to adapt to the discomfort generated by the perpetual existence of a system of racism and injustice. In my examination of whiteness in these texts, I will necessarily borrow from and build upon the analyses and insights of other disciplines such as sociology, history, psychology, philosophy, and law to produce a multilayered analysis that more fully reveals the consequences of whiteness for the white subject.

In his book *Race in the Mind of America: The Vicious Circle between Blacks and Whites* (1999), clinical psychologist Paul L. Wachtel points out that “Blacks and whites in America are partners in a complex and fateful dance” (1). The idea of a “fateful dance” reminds me of my grandfather, a traditional chief in the Democratic Republic of Congo. When I was a boy growing up, my parents’ house was across from my grandfather’s. As a traditional chief, he had nine wives living under the same roof of his big house. He never had any Western education, but he had an invaluable practical wisdom that I wish I had even a thousandth. He never said things straight, but always veiled them in a saying, a proverb, a riddle or a tale, sometimes difficult to unpack. The time I spent at his feet was always an initiation to practical wisdom. When he noticed that I, or any of his many grandchildren, did something wrong, he would use his proverbial language and as always, we would react that we did not get the point. He would make fun of us, saying that we go to school to become intelligent but not wise. Then he would continue that a wise child is taught through proverbs and riddles and

not with plain language. Otherwise, he would say, how would you know that someone is signifying you if you don't understand figurative language? I have one particular saying that he used on one occasion that I think would apply to conversations on race and race relations in America.

On one occasion, two of my older cousins got into a heated debate and were at each other's throat. One of them told the other that he hated him so bad that he won't be sorry if he died. That was very strong language, but my grandfather did not react on the spot. He looked pensive but waited until they calmed down and called all of us to hear what he had to say to them. In Yaka¹ culture, and many other Bantu customs, talking about the genitals, or even the butts, is a taboo. The genitals are always referred to through the use of metaphorical expressions like "the front of a woman," "the male body," and the butts are always called "the behind." The only time that those parts are called by their true names is when an elderly person wants to make a serious point. Such was the case when my grandfather finally talked to the two trouble-makers while we all listened. He said that the "two parts of the butts always rub each other, but neither the left part nor the right one will ever leave its spot because it is tired of the other." As always, we laughed at his blunt mention of the butts, but we asked him what he was up to. He smiled as usual and said, all of you here share the same blood, and no matter what, you are condemned to live together till death. You can fight, but you can never say to your brother that you wish he were dead because you belong together. Why did I bring this anecdote up? Because for me, despite the ideologically enforced fictional racial barrier, white and black Americans are fellow country men and women, with a sealed fate to live and work together for the progress of their common nation. This country is their common property and no one can honestly say that the other did not effectively contribute to its building. Until white Americans fully understand that they and black Americans constitute the "two parts of the butts,"

¹ Yaka (Bayaka) is one of the many Bantu tribes of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Democratic Republic of Congo is an amalgamation of tribal groups that constitute a rich and varied cultural and linguistic heritage. However, there are noticeable inter-tribal similarities as well as differences in languages and customs. Every time I use the expression "my culture" in this dissertation, I mean my tribal [Yaka] culture.

made to gently rub each other without contempt; the American society, to quote Feagin and Vera, will continue “paying a heavy price in material, psychological, and moral terms for the persistence of white generated racism” (WR, 2). So even if white people reap the material benefits of racism, they cannot avoid its psychological and moral consequences.

The Du Boisian double consciousness is an issue of how race affects human consciousness and how it was used to perpetuate racial injustice and inequality in twentieth century America. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois states that “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line” (209). Du Bois had the black and white dichotomy in mind and that is why after discussing African American double consciousness, he also touched on white double consciousness in his discussion of whiteness in “The Souls of White Folk.” At the beginning of his discussion, Du Bois claims that he is “clairvoyant” of the Souls of White Folk because he “see[s] in and through them” (29). He writes, “I see these souls undressed and from the back and side. I see the working of their entrails. I know their thoughts and they know that I know. This knowledge makes them now embarrassed, now furious” (29). What Du Bois means is that his clairvoyance enables him to have a clear picture of white people’s psyche in such a way that it hurts them to realize that they cannot hide anything from him. Next, he castigates the “discovery of whiteness” as a modern invention that would have amused the ancient world and he sarcastically defines it as “ownership of the earth” (29-30). This sarcastic definition of whiteness is a hint to white double consciousness.

Du Bois does not exactly use the expression “white double consciousness” in his discussion of whiteness in *Darkwater*, but his argument implies that he sees white people as subjects with a divided consciousness. On the one hand, white people exalt themselves and want everybody else on the surface of the earth to accept and believe in their greatness. Du Bois debunks this belief, saying that “the title to universe claimed by White Folk is faulty. It ought, at least, to look plausible. How

easy, then, by emphasis and omission to make children believe that every great soul the world ever saw was a white man's soul; that every great thought the world ever knew was a white man's thought; that every great deed the world ever did was a white man's deed . . ." (31). The tone of Du Bois' words prove that he does not buy this pretention of greatness that the white subject entitles him/herself to. On the other hand, the white subject fears that other people can resist his/her vision and he/she is not ready to accept the view of those who see the world differently. In that case, the white subject resorts to any kind of repressive means, including demonization of the Other and even violence to impose his/her will to the world. Du Bois explains this contradictory behavior of the white subject with a sarcastic tone when he points out that

The first minor note is struck, all unconsciously, by those worthy souls in whom consciousness of high descent brings burning desire to spread the gift abroad,--the obligation of nobility to the ignoble. Such sense of duty assumes two things: a real possession of the heritage and its frank appreciation by the humble-born. So long, then, as humble black folk, voluble with thanks, receive barrels of old clothes from lordly and generous whites, there is much mental peace and moral satisfaction. But when the black man begins to dispute the white man's title to certain alleged bequests of the fathers in wage and position, authority and training; and when his attitude toward charity is sullen anger rather than humble jollity; when he insists on his human rights to swagger and swear and waste,--then the spell is suddenly broken and the philanthropist is ready to believe that Negroes are impudent, that the South is right, and that Japan wants to fight America. (32)

Notice here that Du Bois observes two distinct attitudes from white people. (1) The white subject is happy and morally satisfied when using his/her self-assigned lofty position for charitable actions towards those he/she deems lowly. He/she is delighted when the 'lowly' ones have a welcoming

attitude and are thankful for his/her 'altruistic' actions. (2) On the contrary, when the 'lowly' ones question the white subject's self-assigned prerogatives, authority, and consider his/her charitable actions as an insult to their human dignity, he/she becomes disconcerted and exposes his/her anger in the form of naming-calling, violent reprisals, and demonization of the Other. As Du Bois paints it in the quotation above, white double consciousness is a tension between the white subject's calculating move of claiming possession of the best moral and cultural values, and his realization that 'the lowly' ones know about his pretension and resist it. It is this realization that leads the white subject to constantly resort to violence as means of imposing his/her will. That is why when World War I broke in the heart of Europe, the center of a "civilization that boasted so much," Du Bois unequivocally criticized Western religion, saying, "A nation's religion is its life, and as such white Christianity is a miserable failure" (35-36). If Westerners could consider World War I as a deviation from their 'high culture,'² DuBois believed that from the perspective of "darker men," that war was "the real soul of white culture" (39). In other words, DuBois perfectly understood the dilemma of the white subject's psyche. The white subject is the self-appointed bearer of nobler human values that he/she claims to share selflessly with the rest of the world. At the same time, the white subject exposes his/her weaker side of barbarity and violence when he/she is resisted by the 'lowly' ones. White violence is, therefore, an offshoot of fear and embarrassment resulting from the white subject's realization of the fact that the 'inferior' has actually figured out his/her dilemma and modus operandi. This is an implied discussion of white double consciousness, but with regard to

² The concept of culture is very slippery and it is the object of debate among scholars. In *The Idea of Culture* (2000), Terry Eagleton discusses the multiple meanings of culture in pointing out that 'culture' may, for example, be synonymous of 'colonialism,' or 'civilization' as opposed to primitivism (2). He notes that "culture as civilization is rigorously discriminating, [while] culture as a way of life is not. . . . Culture as civilization had borrowed its distinction between high and low from early anthropology, for which some cultures are plainly superior to others . . ." (14). Eagleton goes on to show the controversy around "culture" adding that "[t]he standpoint of high culture, like that of the Almighty, was the view from everywhere and nowhere. Since 1960s, however, the word 'culture' has veered upon its axis to mean almost exactly its opposite. It now means the affirmation of a specific identity—national, sexual, ethnic, regional—rather than the transcendence of it" (38). So I used "high culture" in accordance with the assumption that Europeans considered their culture as the best of the entire world.

whiteness, Du Bois eloquently referred to it as a major issue of modern times and called it a “new religion” in this groundwork [“Souls of white Folk”] (30). Since then, many writers and scholars have echoed, expanded, and continue to theorize whiteness.

In “White Man’s Guilt,” James Baldwin refers to color as “the American curtain” and points out that the “White man has used this word [color], this concept, to justify unspeakable crimes, not only in the past, but in the present” (725). Du Bois and Baldwin’s statements were the results of keen observations and experiences of rampant, overt racism in their days. To survive in this hostile environment, Du Bois theorized that all African Americans, including himself, were experiencing double consciousness, a kind of split conscience that he defined as a “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (215). Looked at from this perspective, one would argue that Du Bois circumscribed double consciousness exclusively as an African American problem. Such an opinion could be correct given the fact that African Americans as a group were overwhelmingly victims of racial prejudice. In explaining the African American’s desire, Du Bois made an important point when he mentioned that the African American wanted to be “both a Negro and an American,” with equal opportunity as any other American (215). Notice here that to be ‘American’ equates to being ‘white’ since Negro and American are antitheses of each other.

Since American identity is at play, it is impossible to think that the consequences of racial prejudice are only felt by the oppressed without any repercussion on the oppressors as a group. In *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison notes that “the presence and influence of Africanist peoples in American criticism is the pattern of thinking about racialism in terms of its consequences on the victim,” but she believes that it is equally important to study “the impact of racism on those who perpetuate it” (11). I can’t agree more. Perpetrators of racial prejudice endure consequences even if it is in different ways. For this reason, I believe that double consciousness should not be

pigeonholed as an African American problem. How is white double consciousness different from black double consciousness? How do white characters who do not approve of the actions of their community manage and channel their frustrations and anxieties? How are young white children initiated to accept injustice and live with it? I will answer these key questions through the character analysis of the novels under consideration. But, first, I want to look at the literature of double consciousness as part of the discussion of whiteness.

Since Du Bois' seminal work, many scholars have analyzed and interpreted black double consciousness in different ways. To some, double consciousness is considered as African Americans' method of protection in a hostile social environment and to others, double consciousness is a political strategy (Bay 152; Allen Jr. 234). In *The White Image in the Black Mind*, Mia Bay comments on blacks and whites' interaction when she writes that "Blacks rarely speak openly with white people because of the vulnerability as an oppressed minority. As a group in power, whites can afford to openly express their thoughts about blacks, whereas the latter conceal their feelings towards whites as a means of self-preservation" (152). Bay's argument can be seen as an example of how double consciousness works in African Americans. Even if there is a room for disagreement with a "powerful" white person, the tactic of saying "yes" to preserve one's life while one actually feels enraged inside is a mechanism of double consciousness. Another group of scholars emphasize the fact that educated blacks (and mainly Western ones) are torn between two antagonizing cultures and it is difficult for them to be one thing and not the other (Fanon 17-18; Henze 5; Gilroy 1-2).

Black writers have also long depicted instances of white double consciousness in their novels. William Melvin Kelley's novel *A Different Drummer* (1962); Douglas T. Ward's play *A Day of Absence* (1966); and James Baldwin's short story "Going to Meet the Man" (1965), are a few illustrations among many other African American works that depict white double consciousness. In *A Different Drummer*, for example, William Melvin Kelley portrays Harry Leland as a white man who

acknowledges that black people have suffered unprecedented injustice. He wants to do something to change the situation and wants his son Harold to be a morally upright man. He wants him to be respectful to everybody, including black people. It is for this reason that Harry rebukes his son when he refers to Tucker as a “nigger” (33). However, through Harry’s relationship with his friends on the porch, Kelley portrays him as someone who contributes to the status quo because he does not criticize his friends’ racism nor openly expresses his anti-racism convictions in front of them. This brief description of Harry shows that he is of a double mind. While he can easily and directly reprove his son to stop using racial slurs, he is not courageous enough to behave the same way with his friends. He is either afraid of them or simply wants to maintain good relationship with them. Douglas T. Ward also touched on white double consciousness in *A Day of Absence*, where an unnamed Southern town becomes dysfunctional because no black person reports to work nor is seen in the town. The absence not only causes white people to have an epiphany of their crucial socioeconomic dependency on blacks, but also of the fact that they do not actually have full control of black lives as they always believe. I read this play as an aspect of white double consciousness because prior to the absence, the town’s white people were fully assured that they dictate the rhythm of life and nothing can escape them. Black people’s absence becomes an eye opener and a reminder to the white people that their assumptions are not always correct. The absence makes white people think of the importance of the unacknowledged partnership with the black people they despise on a daily basis. In “Going to Meet the Man,” James Baldwin depicts white violence and double consciousness through Jesse, the deputy sheriff of small Southern town, who is haunted both by the images of a lynching he witnessed when he was a boy and his own brutality towards black people. His double consciousness is apparent in the fact that even if he tries to console himself in thinking that he is a good man, deep down, he has a tormented conscience because of his actions. This realization gives him nightmares when he goes to bed. This is only a small sample of many other literary works depicting white double

consciousness from African American writers' perspective. Once again, these works are not the subject of my project because they depict white lives from an African American perspective.

In theoretical and philosophical texts, notable scholars have also visited white double consciousness, including Linda M. Alcoff (1998), Karyn D. McKinney (2005), Shannon Sullivan (2006), Steve Martinot (2010), George Yancy (2012), and Veronica Watson (2013). All of these analyses agree that white double consciousness cannot be discussed outside racism and white privilege. If black Americans have experienced double consciousness, it is because of their victimization through a systemic racism that denies them full citizenship. As beneficiaries of racism, White Americans cannot escape double consciousness since whiteness and white privilege are the pillars of the perpetuation of racism through white hegemony and white power. But because of their status as beneficiaries of racism and white privilege, white people's experience of double consciousness differs from the one of their victims. In his book *Systemic Racism: A Theory of Oppression*, sociologist Joe Feagin incriminates the creation of whiteness as a "terrible invention" and agrees with Du Bois on the fact that whiteness helped "whites" to claim possession of the earth. Feagin writes, "Whiteness was indeed a major and terrible invention, one that solidified white thinking into an extensive and racialized either/or framework and that came to symbolize for whites the "ownership of the earth" and 'civilization'" (15). Alcoff, McKinney, Sullivan, Martinot, Yancy, and Watson are all in agreement that to change his/her perspective on race, any white person must first and foremost take a different look at whiteness in either acknowledging/becoming aware of his/her own racism, or white privilege. In her article, "What Should White People Do?" philosopher Linda Alcoff observes that "[p]art of white privilege has been precisely whites' ability to ignore the ways white racial identity has benefitted them" (8). The ignorance of white privilege that Alcoff evokes here should not be interpreted as unconsciousness, because one can deliberately choose to ignore a serious problem that he/she is conscious of. She suggests that white identity needs to develop its own version of

"double consciousness," but she does not equate it to the Du Boisian one based on "white and black subjectivities or black and American perspectives" (24). Alcott elaborates on her idea in explaining that "[white] double consciousness requires an everpresent acknowledgment of the historical legacy of white identity constructions in the persistent structures of inequality and exploitation, as well as a newly awakened memory of the many white traitors to white privilege who have struggled to contribute to the building of an inclusive human community" (25). In other words, white double consciousness manifests itself in the recognition of racially constructed identities that are at the basis of societal inequalities and its damaging consequences. It also includes the efforts by those who are willing to "betray" their racial privilege in their fight for a better human society.

McKinney (2005), Sullivan (2006), Martinot (2012), and Yancy (2012) have a similar approach as to how double consciousness should work in white people. In *Being White: Stories of Race and Racism*, sociologist Karyn McKinney examines white reflections on race and racism through the autobiographies of young white American students. She analyzes how young whites students tend to call themselves "good people" who treat everybody the same way, but contradict their statements of good intentions with subtexts of their feelings about people of color. She also points out how the young white students see themselves as victims of "reverse racism" and feel they have to be careful in their choice of words in public because using the wrong ones will cause them to be labeled "racist." McKinney's objective is not "to determine which whites are 'racist' or 'nonracist,' but to try to uncover what whites think about being white, how they have come to think these things, and what impact this may have on the racial system" (xx). Notice that McKinney's notion of white double consciousness is very close to the Du Boisian one. In the past, disagreeing or simply saying the wrong thing to a white person was a matter of life and death for black people. Today, white folks fear the use of wrong words or the articulation of sentiments that would cause them to figuratively wear the badge of a "racist." They mostly worry because they do not want to be wrongly

portrayed, or to borrow sociologist William Ryan's words, because "No one . . . thinks of himself as a son of a bitch" (19). This kind of psychological fear can produce positive outcome in the sense that it helps individuals to put themselves in other people's shoes and change the way they view and treat others. However, it may also have a negative outcome in the sense that white people may become suspicious about people of color and may avoid contact with them whenever possible. This aspect of white double consciousness shows that although the consequences are different, the mental and psychological burden is obvious in both cases (black and white) because of the discomfort bred by the lack of mutual trust. That is why people adopt all kinds of strategies to cover their internal discomfort. Some choose silence, while other opt for isolation or minimal contact with people of color.

In *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege*, philosopher Shannon Sullivan talks about the advantages of understanding white privilege as an unconscious habit. By "unconscious habit," she doesn't mean that white privilege is uncontrollable, but she rather considers it as a kind of resistance to any attitude that would bring about change. Sullivan argues that "changing unconscious habits of white privilege requires altering the political, social, physical, economic, psychological, aesthetic, and other environments that "feed" them" (9). The different domains that she enumerates here show how racism pervades all aspects of human life. Thus, Sullivan recommends that "a white person who wishes to try to change her racial and racist habits would do better to change the environments she inhabits than (attempt to) use 'will power' to change the way she thinks about or reacts to non-white people" (9). Sullivan's argument is interesting because it reveals that white people can either choose to resist change due to racist practices they have internalized, or for the sake of protecting their illicit gains; or else, develop mental and psychological counter arguments to ideas that cause them to become comfortable with injustice.

In *The Machinery of Whiteness*, philosopher Steve Martinot talks about actions that can bring about an “anti-racism movement” in America. He suggests that the understanding of race be revisited because as it stands, it is white people’s instrument of “denigrat[ion] and inferioriz[ation]” of others (175). He goes on to say that race uses the notion of “purity” as the basis of the belief in whiteness (175). Just like Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) refer to whiteness as a “club,” Martinot also sees it as a “performance” which “benefits other white” to the detriment of “people of color” (175). To achieve a “real democracy,” Martinot suggests a doublefold solution: (1) white people have to give up the notion of “race purity” because it is the cause of all evils perpetuated on people of color, and (2), “construct an anti-racist whiteness . . . by adopting an inverse form of Du Boisian double consciousness” (178, 185). Martinot explains:

The dominant tend to see themselves as the norm, as simply human. Thus, a double consciousness would entail seeing themselves not as the norm but rather as oppressors that they are in the eyes of those they oppress and racialize. It would be to see their hegemony, their dominance, their pretense to privilege through the eyes of those who suffer from it. This is not a question of guilt, but rather of seeing who one is, and who one is made to be, by one’s position, one’s role, and one’s complicity in the machinery of whiteness. (185)

Martinot is right in inciting white people to see themselves from the perspective of the oppressed. White people can work toward changing their attitude in the face of injustice if they can take time to imagine themselves facing injustice and suspicion on a daily basis. But, as I will explain shortly, I would humbly add that guilt should be part of the motivation for change. Otherwise, how can one take action if he/she convinces himself/herself that he/she is not doing anything wrong?

In *Look, a White!*, African American philosopher George Yancy discusses the way in which his philosophy course on race is intended to engage his white students to take a different look at

their whiteness. Like Martinot, he stresses the fact that it is important for white people to look critically at their whiteness. Yancy writes, “*Look, a White!* returns to the white people the problem of whiteness” (6). He wants whiteness to be “marked.” “The act of marking whiteness,” continues Yancy, is “an act of historicizing whiteness, an act of situating whiteness within the context of material forces and raced interest-laden values that reinforce whiteness as a site of privilege and hegemony” (7). He goes on to say that “[m]arking whiteness is about exposing the ways in which whites have created a form of ‘humanism’ that obfuscates their hegemonic efforts to treat their experiences as universal and representative” (7). Yancy wants his white students “to shout, ‘Look, a white!’ on a daily basis, to call whiteness out publicly” (12). But most of all, Yancy incites his white students to

[D]evelop a form of double consciousness, one that enables them to see the world differently, and to see themselves differently through the experiences of black people and people of color The strategy is to have [his] white students see the white world through . . . [black] eyes, a perspective that will challenge whiteness, not deteriorate into white guilt or take new forms of white pity to help the so-called helpless. “Look, a white!” is meant to be unsafe, indeed, to be dangerous to whites themselves. (12)

Like Martinot before him, Yancy wants white people (white students to be exact) to see their whiteness through the lenses of people of color in such a way that the privilege that they take for granted as part of their meritocracy could reveal itself to them as something unjustly bestowed. He also does not want this discovery to make them feel guilty or urge them to think of new ways of helping the unfortunate blacks, but to be an epiphany that would remove the veil on the myths of whiteness. Here again, I perfectly agree with everything Yancy says, but I humbly admit, at least from a literary perspective, that I have a different take on the role of guilt. Exempting the white

subject from the feeling of guilt will only foster what educator Alice McIntyre calls “white talk.” For McIntyre, white talk is “talk that serves to insulate white people from examining their individual or collective role(s) in the perpetuation of racism” (31). As I said earlier, questions related to racial injustice are of moral nature and they affect people differently depending on the place moral values occupy in their lives. In his article “White Guilt” (1990), African American author Shelby Steele claims that in general, white guilt “springs from the knowledge of ill-gotten advantage” (499). He explains that people react to guilt in two different ways: either for “selfishness and escapism,” or because of “genuine concern” for prejudice done to other people (502). Steele refers to real guilt as a “civilizing emotion” because it helps a person to truthfully regret and act in a way that redeems him/her from misconduct or prejudice caused to other people (502). I borrow Steele’s approach to guilt to show how “genuine white guilt” can be beneficial to white people if they change their attitude toward racial injustice in order to contribute to the event of a better society. So I see guilt as an integrative part of white double consciousness because it can lead to action. I consider honest guilt as a great motivator for change. As psychologists Aarti Iyer, Colin Wayne Leach, and Anne Pedersen (2004) point out, “guilt . . . motivate[s] opposition to racial inequality” (262). This is how I perceive “honest/genuine guilt.” I do not mean that white people (as a group) should pity themselves for all the wrongs they inflicted to African Americans. I rather evoke a kind of guilt that is forward looking. It feels like burning fire, causing troubled consciousness and sleeplessness, because it incites concerned white folks to take corrective actions to lingering injustice. At least from a literary perspective, my take on guilt is different from my eminent predecessors. Notice that Alcoff, McKinney, Sullivan, Martinot, and Yancy discuss white double consciousness in aspirational terms, that is, not what double consciousness is, but what it ought to be.

In *The Souls of White Folk*, through a thorough analysis of Du Bois’ *Souls of White Folk* and Charles Chesnutt’s *The Colonel’s Dream*, Veronica Watson explores the questions, “how have white

people benefitted from the racial politics of this country?” and “what psychological, spiritual, and emotional effects the color line has produced in white Americans?” (17). She points out that both Du Bois and Chesnutt “framed white double consciousness as a malaise —one that threatened not only the individual but also national progress and development” (19). Most importantly, her analysis and discussion of those two texts lead her to argue that “white double consciousness has a solid footing in fear—fear of being truly seen by an Other and fear of seeing oneself honestly. It is a mind divided against itself, feverishly erecting defenses to prevent true self-consciousness and the heavy responsibility of change and growth that often attend such self-awareness” (35). Notice here that Watson’s literary approach brings some clarity on the meaning of white double consciousness by analyzing and interpreting literary texts. Thus, her theorization of white double consciousness is from a literary perspective.

The literature review above is a clear indication of the current conversation on white double consciousness. I am interested in the critique of white writers on white behavior where personal values are in conflict with community interests. So going from a literary perspective, like Watson, I will pinpoint individual white people’s difficulty and indecision in choosing either their own moral values and prepare themselves to face their communities’ wrath, or simply swallow their personal convictions to feign to be in tune with their groups. Through my analysis of the three literary works I will discuss, I posit that white double consciousness is not monolithic, but rather multi-faceted. Well-meaning white folks do not react uniformly when confronted with racial injustice. Since racism has not victimized them physically, economically, or socially, in the same way it has people of color, well-meaning white people vacillate between the moral obligation to denounce it, and the natural instinct of respecting and protecting racial ideology that grants them everything. Generally speaking, I see white double consciousness as a discomfort/psychological conflict resulting from an individual white subject’s strong desire to uphold his/her moral values in front of racial injustice suffered by

the Other—and his/her natural instinct that urges him/her to overlook injustice in order to stand with his/her community in the defense of racial ideology, which is the pillar of their common white privilege. One might contend that some white people's acceptance of racial injustice is a proof of their lack of consciousness rather than a sign of their self-consciousness. It sounds like a pertinent point, but I strongly believe that some white people deliberately choose to ignore racial injustice as a way of protecting themselves from moral guilt and personal responsibility. African American educator Joyce E. King coined the concept "dysconscious racism," to explain the distortion of consciousness that most people consider to be a lack of consciousness. "Dysconscious racism," writes King, "is a form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges" (135). In other words, dysconscious racism causes the beneficiaries of racial injustice to normalize injustice. Others have chosen to flip flop constantly in their position toward racial injustice and it is for this reason that some black scholars and civil rights leaders like James Baldwin, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X have challenged white people's morality and Christian values.³ I will analyze white behavior through white fictional characters in literary works written by white women writers as a means of addressing white people moral issues. Through a close reading of specific sections of the novels under discussion, I will do an in-depth analysis of some major characters to address the multi-faceted white double consciousness in the subsequent chapters.

³ James Baldwin in "The White Man's Guilt" and "White Racism" voices his doubts on white America's professed Christian and moral values (725, 753). Similarly, in *Where Do we Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* Martin Luther King, Jr. pointed to white Americans who were indifferent to racial injustice that they were equally responsible of African Americans' sufferings in reminding them that "[t]o ignore evil is to become an accomplice to it" (86). Malcolm X was even more virulent in his denouncement of white America and he seemed to see no difference between liberals and conservatives. In "God's Judgement of America," for example, he declared that "[t]he white liberal differs from the white conservative only in one way: The liberal is more deceitful than the conservative. The liberal is more hypocritical than the conservative" (283). In "The Playboy Interview," he cynically voiced his admiration for Southern white bigots who openly expressed their racist views than Northern hypocrites saying, "I'd rather walk among rattlesnakes, whose constant rattle warns me where they are, than among Northern snakes who grin and make you forget you're still in the snake pit" (124).

WHY FICTION/NOVEL INSTEAD OF OTHER GENRES

Why have I chosen fiction instead of other genres to discuss white double consciousness? In his essay titled “The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality,” Paul Ricoeur starts his discussion with the role of an image in the mental framework. Ricoeur writes that “[t]o have an image of something is to ‘see’ it in our mind’s eye, without the presence of the actual thing” (124). He gives the example of a photograph as a “copy . . . of some absent thing which can be shown and perceived elsewhere . . .” (124). Ricoeur’s major concern is to show not only the difference between an image and fiction, but also and most specifically the relationship between fiction and reality. He notes that “fiction changes reality, in the sense that it both ‘invents’ and ‘discovers’ it . . .” (127). In other words, fiction has the power of creating a ‘reality’ of its own that may or may not be based on an actual event. So the novel as a genre is able to accomplish what Ricoeur describes above. Unlike other genres, the novel helps the writer create stories that mimic reality in a very subjective way but convincing enough to get the readers involved in the peculiar world of fiction. This is one of the advantages that fiction has on other genres. In his article “Commentary: What is Literature Now?” Jonathan Culler paraphrases Garry Hagberg when he writes that literature is

[A]n instrument of relational aesthetic experience for the construction of selfhood. Within the world of literary experience we accomplish acts of comparison that are both interpretative and self-interpretative, helping us comparatively to constitute ourselves as we imaginatively see or do not see ourselves in the actions and reflections of literary characters and discursive positions. (230)

In other words, literature makes it possible for readers to build images of themselves, to project themselves in the fictional world, and see themselves through the actions of imaginary characters. Readers can either approve or disapprove the conduct of a given character depending on their

morals, ethics, and values. It is something that the writers of the novels discussed in this dissertation do in a very powerful way through their characters' internal monologues as we shall see.

Realistic novels are good examples of the power of fiction in the creation and representation of human experience. Gifted realistic novelists use their artistic imagination to celebrate values that they want the society to uphold, or deride social evils that they want people to reject. Realistic novelists help members of the society examine and/or confront their communities' social issues through the prism of fictional stories. They can use fictional characters as representations or embodiment of token behaviors of a given society. They can caricature people in high spheres of power as well as the average citizens in their efforts to criticize social mores. They can expose serious social injustices through fictitious stories and characters without openly risking their lives. Although fictional writers cannot claim that they are completely protected from any danger resulting from their literary output, at least, they can defuse their attackers' anger in claiming that their stories are fictional and have nothing to do with reality. Unlike diaries, journalistic reports, testimonies, memoirs, and a number of other genres in which writers are concerned with factual accuracy of the stories they narrate, fictional writers have a wiggle room. Their god-like role enables them to create and treat their stories with subjective perspectives that they force on their readers. They create characters whose internal and external feelings they expose to their readers in order to get them involved with the subject matter. Consequently, writers of fiction force their readers to use their time in order to read hundreds of pages, reflect on the subject matter, take sides with some characters or oppose others depending on the actions and values they embody. In his article titled "The Ethical Functions of the Novel," William Todd writes that "[t]he most obvious and perhaps greatest advantage [of the novel] is that the novelist is able to create ethically interesting characters on the spot and is not dependent on having to find persons with the required traits" (203). Todd has a point because the novelist can use his/her creative power to design characters with ethical traits

that he/she wishes to see in the society. In a morally wanting society, the novelist can equally exaggerate rampant social vices in order to incite the people to become aware and conscious of these vices and fight against them.

The novels discussed in this dissertation engage its readers on serious moral issues related to racial injustice in a supposedly democratic country, but in which slavery and racially motivated crimes and injustices have long betrayed its professed democratic and humanistic principles. So readers of *Strange Fruit*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *March* may in one way or another feel forced to reflect, or examine themselves on the issues racial injustice, personal values, inhuman treatments, and white violence. These three novels are only a small sample of many other realistic novels that powerfully depict psychological conflicts that mirror the human experience. In his article titled “The Function of Literature in a Democracy,” Floyd Stovall starts off, saying that “[t]he quality of a social system cannot be better than the quality of the people who create it” (440). Put differently, one can understand the values of a given society in looking at its members who reflect those values in their daily lives. Stovall goes on to say that “[t]he preservation of democracy . . . depends upon the preservation of man’s faith in himself as a spiritual and potentially godlike being” (440). I like Stovall’s idea of the ‘preservation of man’s faith in himself’ because each individual human being has the potential of contributing to social progress. Stovall also reminds the role religion has played in the event of democracy, but he mostly insists on the fact that “it is to literature especially that we must look for the support of religion in building up man’s faith in himself” because “[a]ll great literature is life transformed by passion and art into lasting forms of beauty and truth, to which we may turn for reassurance in moments of discouragement” (440-41). The juxtaposition of religion and literature can be intriguing because of the ambiguous role that religion has played for the perpetuation of racial oppression as well as its denouncement. As for literature, fictional writers have story-telling abilities that cause readers to be vicariously involved with fictional characters who might

be experiencing serious psychological conflicts, but who continue to hope for a better future. It is for the various reasons above that I have chosen fiction as a venue for the discussion of whiteness and moral issues through white double consciousness.

WHY WHITE WOMEN WRITERS

Though many other scholars before me have explored “double consciousness,” the concept fascinates me in a particular way. I want to explore the way it works in the white people’s minds through the analysis of some white women writers’ works. But why white women writers, one would ask? A number of reasons have motivated me to explore white double consciousness through white women’s literary lenses. First, like black people, white women have long been the victims of patriarchal marginalization and oppression. The founding fathers have excluded them from their definition of the “free and equal,” just as they did for enslaved black people. In her essay “The Social Construction and Institutionalization of Gender and Race,” gender and women studies professor Evelyn Nakano Glenn points to this aspect when she reports that “white women were ‘virtual citizens’ because men were assumed to represent their wives and children’s interests along with their own. Men of color were deemed noncitizens by virtue of their being unfree, lacking cultural traits of ‘freedom’ and being servile” (22). If white women were considered as “virtual citizens,” we understand why they were also victims of marginalization in real world.

Although we cannot compare the sufferings and injustices of enslaved people to the ones of white women, the fact that they have also been victims of white male oppression is undeniable. Some kind of coalition even existed between the abolitionists and the women rights’ movement before the Civil War. Historian Ellen Carol DuBois informs us that women’s rights pioneers used “antislavery ideology and method” to express “a vision of equality and independence for women, and . . . spread their radical ideas” and “[their] most radical demand was enfranchisement” (22). One would contend that after the emancipation of slaves, the coalition was put to the test over women’s

suffrage that the abolitionists considered as “a burden they could not carry if they were going to overcome the enormous opposition to black suffrage” (DuBois 59). I counter that this subsequent disagreement does not rule out the fact that the two groups identified who the common enemy of black people and white women’s fundamental freedoms was.

Second, while white male abolitionists are well recognized as the champions of the fight against racial injustice and dehumanization, there is a distinguished historical record of courageous white women who have also denounced and fought against slavery. Lydia Maria Child and Harriet Beecher Stowe are very good examples whose writings have helped a great deal in the struggle against the dehumanization of enslaved people in the U.S. Child, for example, received praises from the fiery abolitionist Lloyd Garrison in calling her “the first woman in the republic” (qtd. in Karcher 1). Author Karolyn L. Karcher reports that Child was committed to the cause of abolitionism to the point of “wreck[ing] many of her friendships” (14). She also points out that Child “pioneered the genre of antislavery fiction that Harriet Beecher Stowe would later popularize” (141). Child’s militancy as an anti-slavery woman is therefore undeniable. She even was the editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, the weekly newspaper of the American Anti-Slavery Society, a further proof of her commitment to the cause anti-slavery. On the other hand, Stowe also made a name for herself thanks to her famous *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. When President Lincoln met her in 1862, it seems that he attributed the Civil War to Stowe’s novel saying, “So you’re the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war”⁴ (qtd. in Hedrick vii). Whether President Lincoln really said these words or not, the important thing is that receiving Stowe at the White House is in itself a great sign of Lincoln’s recognition of her novel’s influence on a very important national issue. This is another

⁴ In his article “Lincoln, Stowe, and the “Little Woman/Great War” Story: The Making, and Breaking, of a Great American Anecdote,” Daniel R. Vollaro debunks the anecdote quoted above stating that “[d]espite its popularity . . . the quotation is entirely apocryphal, emerging from within Stowe family tradition and without any textual support from the author herself” (18).

eloquent reason which proves that women were not mere observers of racial injustice, but some of them did what they could to get involved in the fight against slavery.

Third, I also selected white women writers for their continuing work in efforts to resist racial and social injustice. I worked from the assumption that white women, who have been victims of patriarchal injustice and marginalization in this country, might be more resistant to racial injustice and willing to speak out against the social evil of racism. They are more likely to sympathize with other oppressed people.⁵ Thus, I looked for texts in which women writers' depictions of their communities reveal white people's responses to the evils of their society. The advantage of analyzing texts by white women writers is that they give what Karyn D. McKinney calls an "insider's perspective" on whiteness that black writers, perhaps, do not have (xix). I could have pursued this insider's perspective in texts by white male writers, but I believe that the perspective of victimized people can be more reliable than anybody who has never faced injustice. For example, Lillian Smith, who was a lesbian, was not very vocal on her homosexuality because of the conservative tradition of her native South. But she could take a pleasure in fearlessly denouncing her community on racial issues. An old Bantu proverb says that if a fish tells you that the alligator is sick, you have to believe it because both of them live in water. The fish here would be the metaphor of "the weak" woman and the alligator, the presumptuous "powerful" white man, who, sometimes forgets that the "weak" woman meticulously scrutinizes his actions. My assumption is that white women writers tell ugly story of injustice with a passion that would be different from their male counterparts, who might embellish their stories with patronizing thoughts.

Because I posited that white double consciousness is multi-faceted, each one of my three key chapters develops an aspect of white double consciousness. In chapter two, entitled "Public and

⁵ In her essay "Who Am I?" African American clinical psychologist, Beverly Daniel Tatum points out that "to the extent that one can draw on one's own experience of subordination—as a young person, as a person with disability, as someone who grew up poor, as a woman—it may be easier to make meaning of another targeted group's experience" (8).

Private Image: Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit*," I argue that white double consciousness is not only a conflict between public and private image, but also a power relation between the individual and the group. Some characters in this text have to negotiate how they would keep their own personal values and interests along with the ones of the community. They want to be true to themselves and, at the same time, try to show their loyalty to their community. This situation of choosing how to act where and when, leads these characters to have an internal conflict between their private and public image.

In chapter, three titled "Blind Justice in *To Kill a Mockingbird*," I discuss blind justice as a metaphor of white double consciousness through the analysis of Harper Lee's novel. I argue that the idealistic and well-meaning description of "blind justice" as something impersonal and impartial is only true in the books. It is unattainable in an environment where race and social class play an important role in the distribution of justice. White double consciousness is, therefore, a combination of assumed good personal morals and an accommodation of racial injustice. It is on the grounds of the discrepancy between what justice should be and what it really is that I define "blind justice" as a justice that does not rely on evidence or facts, but which is based on certain written and unwritten principles. My interest here is in looking at the psychological effect that institutional racism has on a white character like Atticus Finch, who has to deal with a system and an environment he despises, but where he also feels at home. I will show why the different strategies he and other characters adopt in order to maintain mental sanity and keep their frustrations in check, constitute an aspect of white double consciousness. Finally, I look at the way in which the environment of injustice is replicated and perpetuated by teaching children to despise injustice at personal level while simultaneously training them to live with and within an immoral system without considering ways of changing it.

Chapter four, titled “The Struggle for Righteousness and Nostalgia for the Status Quo,” examines the way in which white double consciousness is depicted as a sustained struggle for righteousness in spite of occasional nostalgia for the status quo. Whenever the occasional contemplation of status quo occurs, white double consciousness becomes a negative feeling/force that causes one to regret that he/she has to pay a personal higher price for actions done in good faith for the sake of righteousness. Through the analysis of Geraldine Brooks’s *March*, a “pre-quel to Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, I will focus on the novel’s major white characters: John March, the protagonist and his wife Marmee, both of whom restlessly fight for righteousness and sacrifice their material and financial means with the objective of seeing the end of slavery. While March and Marmee go through episodic moments of crisis causing them to regret their involvement in the fight for freedom, nevertheless, these brief periods of challenge do not compromise their overall commitment for racial justice. Through *March*, Brooks suggests that many well-meaning white folks have tried sometimes to fight for what is right in a system of unfair practices and marginalization of the Other. However, when their personal lives or interests are threatened, they tend to give up or simply regret why they have chosen to fight a system that was put in place to benefit them. In this particular case, I see white double consciousness as a negative force that causes one to regret that he/she has to suffer for his/her morally appropriate actions.

In Chapter five, titled “Conclusion,” I will try to explain why I thought that white women writers can tell a story about racial injustice better than white male writers. I will briefly discuss my findings to confirm whether my assumptions on the different aspects of white double consciousness can be traced in the selected novels, thanks to a meticulous character analysis.

CHAPTER 2

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IMAGE: LILLIAN SMITH'S *STRANGE FRUIT*

In 1939, the African American Jazz singer Billie Holiday recorded “Strange Fruit,” a song in which she boldly criticized lynching. Holiday’s song had such a strong impact on the society that it led some people like the American historian and actor, Studs Terkel, to declare that “when you think of the South and Jim Crow, you naturally think of the song [Strange Fruit], not ‘We Shall Overcome’” (qtd. in Margolick 92). Similarly, record producer Ahmet Ertegun, called Holiday’s song “a declaration of war” (qtd. in Margolick 92). Five years after the recording of “Strange Fruit,” Lillian Smith published a novel with the same title, and the general reaction was that she borrowed that title from Holiday’s song. It seems logical for people to draw such a conclusion because Holiday’s song denounced lynching and Smith’s novel also happens to end with a lynching. But in her essay titled “Metaphors of Race and Psychological Damage in 1940s American South: The Writings of Lillian Smith,” McKay Jenkins reports that by “strange fruit,” Smith did not imply black bodies “swaying in the summer breeze, although that image adds an acute dramatic weight, but to the damaged, ‘split,’ primarily white people raised in a culture of deep racial, sexual, and class-based taboos and conflict” (102). In other words, Smith’s idea of strange fruit was not related to Henry McIntosh’s lynching at the end of the novel. Rather, she was most interested in the psychological distortion whites experienced as a result of racial segregation.

The original manuscript that Smith submitted, but which was rejected by ten publishers, was titled, “Jordan Is So Chilly” (Loveland 66). The title change occurred in 1943 when publishers Reynal and Hitchcock accepted the novel with the condition that it be renamed. According to Smith’s biographer Anne C. Loveland, Smith agreed to “give the song a credit line on the copy right page,” but it was a decision that “she always regretted” because she was afraid that associating the novel with “Billie Holiday and the song” would result in a “distort[ion] of the theme of the book” (67).

Smith was mostly concerned with “the effect of the Southern concept of race upon not only lives but minds and emotions” of white Southerners (Loveland 64). Since I am interested in white people’s psychological responses to racism, what Loveland says in this quote supports my choice of *Strange Fruit* as a good novel for the study of white double consciousness.

Following Smith’s understanding of the intervention her novel would make, I analyze *Strange Fruit* to discuss white double consciousness through white characters’ behavior and attitude toward racial injustice to demonstrate how white characters’ public and private images reveal their double consciousness. Using critical whiteness theory, I want to analyze and interpret white behavior and attitude in a society in which showing signs of empathy toward the Other can be considered as a “race treason.”⁶ This aspect of white double consciousness finds its roots in moments when well-meaning white folks are torn between their public and private images depending on whether they are in public space or in the privacy of their homes. It is during the interaction with other members of the community that a well-meaning white person’s public image is most often inconsistent with his/her private one. In mapping white double consciousness in this chapter, these are the moments in which I am interested because of the moral and psychological torture that accompany the characters’ choice to remain silent in front of racial injustice and violence.

Lillian Smith was a native of the Deep South and she is known for her fearless critique of Southern racial injustice and religious hypocrisy. She was born in the small town of Jasper, Florida on December 12, 1897. She spent her first eighteen years there and after graduating from high school, her family moved to Clayton, Georgia. Smith was outspoken about racial issues and according to authors Louise Blackwell and Frances Clay, apart from her occupation as a writer,

⁶ In his conference paper, “The Point is not to Interpret Whiteness but to Abolish It,” historian Noel Ignatiev defines “a traitor to the white race” as “someone who is nominally classified as white but who defies white rules so strenuously as to jeopardize his or her ability to draw upon the privileges of whiteness” (n. pag.). Some of the aspects of white double consciousness that I will discuss in this chapter border what Ignatiev refers to as “race treason,” that is, the ability and courage to refuse supporting immoral racial interests.

Smith was also actively engaged in “social and political causes” (*Lillian Smith*, 27). One of these causes was racism. Through *Killers of the Dream* (1949), for example, Smith meticulously denounced Southern religious hypocrisy and the ambiguous and tense race relations between the dominant whites and the oppressed blacks. Being born and raised in the Jim Crow South, Smith witnessed segregation and its damaging effects, particularly on black people but also on whites. Her novel *Strange Fruit*, is a good fictional depiction of Southern racial ideology and injustice.

Set in early twentieth century shortly after World War I, *Strange Fruit* gives a clear depiction of race relations in the South. Besides the major story line, Smith makes a small allusion to African American soldiers who served in World War I and gives a portrayal of the two generations of Maxwell’s black people: the old, uneducated, and submissive generation, and the one of their young, educated, and a bit subversive children. Unlike their parents, young African Americans were more and more interested in education in spite of Southern whites’ opposition to their intellectual progress. The old generation is more obedient to the white folks and wants their children also to respect white people in order to stay out of trouble. The younger generation, however, does not always follow the advice, but it is most of the time frustrated. As historian Leon F. Litwack reports, while white Southerners were deeply concerned about the “new negro,” that is, the younger generation, they “romanticize[d] and mythologize[d] the ‘old negro’ [because he was] rapidly disappearing” (“Hellhound on my Trail,” 191). Smith’s *Strange Fruit* has a cast of characters that clearly represent these two categories of black people.

The period between late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was also characterized by the prevalence of lynching and other forms of violence as the means white Southerners used to maintaining control over African Americans. Many African Americans were

victims of lynching,⁷ that is, they were hung extra judicially and most of the times, on false allegations of crimes they never committed. In his book, *There Goes my Everything* (2006), historian Jason Sokol writes that the “Jim Crow South [was] an era defined by lynching, intimidation, and disenfranchisement that kept blacks powerless and enslaved by fear” (17). Violence and all other forms of inhuman treatments against African Americans have been parts of the Southern social fabric long before the Jim Crow era.

To maintain their subordination of black people, white Southerners used two effective strategies: coercion and the spreading of the myth of African Americans’ contentment with their lowly social status. As it always was the case in the past, during the Jim Crow era, white Southerners used violence and maintained a discourse according to which blacks and whites were living peaceful and that black people knew their place in the social ladder and were satisfied with it. In *Systemic Racism* (2006), sociologist Joe Feagin stresses white people’s ability to recycle old tactics of oppression when he writes, “Over the centuries, white Americans in all social classes have spent much time working out an array of rationalizations for the oppression of black Americans in most U.S. institutions. As a rule, whites have only seen what they have wanted to see in African Americans, and much of that view has been greatly distorted or simply mythologized” (181). One of these tactics is “the patriarchal language that had long been used to describe and assess the lowly position of black Americans in society” (JR, 181). In fact, despite the proven black resistance, Sokol writes that Southerners continued with the rhetoric of false belief of very good race relations, forming “an abyss [that] separated white racial attitudes from reality (56). Selling the myth of black contentment was a powerful argument against black people’s less publicized counter narratives of

⁷ There is an extensive historical scholarship on lynching that I would not even scratch the surface here. For more information on this topic, see Stewart E. Tolnay and E. M. Beck’s *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930* (1995); Ida B. Wells’s *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*. Ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster (1997), and Philip Dray’s *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: Lynching of Black America* (2002), among many others.

their discontentment, resistance, and even rebellion. This myth was maintained through extreme violence and injustice. Lynching, for example, was a way of instilling fear in rebellious black people and their communities.

Strange Fruit is set in the fictitious town of Maxwell, Georgia, and it is the story of secret interracial relationship between Tracy Deen, a white man, and Nonnie Anderson, a black woman. Reviewers of renowned literary magazines and journals were divided in their assessment of *Strange Fruit*. Some praised Smith for her “honesty, sincerity, and compassion” (Loveland 68). Orville Prescott of the *Yale Review* found the author’s use of “stream of consciousness and deft time shift as her major achievement[s]” (Loveland 68). Others, like Malcolm Cowley, thought that she wasn’t as talented as William Faulkner or Carson McCullers, observing that Lillian Smith would be better off in “some other field than the novel” (qtd. in Loveland 68). Some Black reviewers, like W.E.B. Du Bois and Theophilus Lewis, praised the author for her clear representation of the “tragedy of the South,” while others like Dean Gordon B. Hancock objected to Smith’s “distorted portrayals” of black characters and black womanhood (Loveland 69). Overall, *Strange Fruit* was not well-received in either the North or the South. On both sides on the Mason-Dixon Line, Blackwell and Clay comment that people were outraged because a “Southern white woman was willing to oppose racial segregation by writing an exposé of segregation’s lurid and inhumane aspects in the form of a novel” (38). They go on to say that Southerners were mostly disgusted with the theme of “miscegenation” while Northerners had an issue with Smith’s way of discussing this theme (38). The novel was banned in Boston and Detroit, and it could not even be mailed through the U.S. post office until President Roosevelt lifted the ban after his wife requested a copy of it. Critical reception of the novel notwithstanding, in the space of two months after its publication, the novel went through “seven printings for a total of 140, 000 copies,” and became shortly after “the best seller of the *New York Times Book Reviews*” (Loveland 71).

The fame and financial security following the commercial success of *Strange Fruit* did not come without problems. Smith became the target of various attacks and even death threats from Southern whites. Referring to the white race as a “club” in *Race Traitor* (1996), Noel Ignatiev and John Garvey caution, “When individuals questions the rules [of the white race club], the officers are quick to remind them of all they owe to the club, and warn them of the dangers they will face if they leave it” (10-11). Applying Ignatiev and Garvey’s logic, it can be said that in writing this critique of the Southern society, Smith sort of sinned against her club as a white woman. This dilemma of whether to denounce the community’s racial injustice or be loyal to it in remaining silent is one important aspect of white double consciousness.

Strange Fruit, as mentioned earlier, centers on the interracial relationship between Tracy, a white man, and Anderson, a black woman. Tracy leaves college after only half a year and serves two years in the army. When he returns home, he reunites with Nonnie romantically and soon after, she becomes pregnant. When Tracy learns about the pregnancy, he is overwhelmed by its implications. He enlists his childhood friend and family houseboy, Henry McIntosh, to marry Nonnie to cover up his relationship with her. When Nonnie’s older brother, Ed, overhears Henry bragging about the arrangement, he beats him. Later, he also ambushes Tracy, shoots and kills him. When Tracy’s body is discovered, Henry is the prime suspect and is lynched before Tom Harris, an upstanding white man of the town, can intervene. Despite arriving too late to make a difference, Tom’s son later scolds his father for interfering with the lynching, reminding him that he could have been killed for his opposition to the mob.

Every aspect of social life in Maxwell helps understand white double consciousness because each one of them contributes to the people’s manifestation of public or private image. In Smith’s Maxwell, no single aspect of life escapes the influence of race. For example, Maxwell’s white folks are very religious but they cannot be good Christians. In their daily lives, Christian principles take

the back seat to racial ideology. In so doing, their religious devotion becomes hypocritical. Further, race determines social classes in Maxwell in such a way that even poor whites are comforted to have black people at the bottom of the social ladder. Economically, race also obscures the thinking of poor whites folks, who are taken advantage of by the rich but who, unfortunately, choose to fight black workers rather than their common employer and exploiter. Racial injustice, on the other hand, rules the society. People who are determined to do the right thing find themselves psychologically traumatized by their community's injustice. The depiction of interracial life in Maxwell gives the impression that its inhabitants are boxed in and conditioned by their environment. White people are on the top and black folks at the bottom suffer from abject injustice and nothing is done to bring about change. On the surface, the majority of people in the white community is apparently satisfied with this kind of socio-political setup. However, this apparent satisfaction can be misleading because while the social, physical, and psychological sufferings of black people are common knowledge, some white people also suffer unnoticed psychological consequences of their community's actions.

Smith helps her readers realize that while white people in Maxwell are the beneficiaries of racial injustice, they also endure psychological and moral torture. They cannot function as free human beings who can think and have relationships with whoever they want. The social structure forces them to submit to the will of the community, which is a hallmark of white double consciousness. Consider Tracy, though he feigns to be happy and act normal in front of the white community, he is morally tortured every time he thinks about the community's view on his relationship with Nonnie. Tracy's interior monologue shows his mixed feelings of happiness and frustration when he contrasts his personal choice with the community's expectations:

You didn't give a damn what the world thought. She was yours, that's all. She is my girl. She is lovely and beautiful and she is mine. . . . He knew he loved her—as a man loves a woman who fits all his needs [but] . . .

The moment he opened the door, tiptoed through that dark hall and up the steps . . . he heard the whole town—*been out all night with a nigger gal . . . getting something you can't get here in white town . . . Well, they've got plenty of that.*

It's like an obsession. Seems true to you, but everybody else says it isn't. You can't love and respect a colored girl. But you do. If you do—then there must be something wrong with you. (95, 97)

The contrast between what Tracy thinks of his lover and the expectations the white community has for his actions and choices is an illustration of the psychological effects of a racist ideology in the white folks. Smith's effective use of internal monologue here foregrounds Tracy's dilemma. While Tracy thinks that he is obsessed with the girl he loves, he cannot help imagine the town's reaction to his choice only in terms of whiteness. For the white community, Tracy is an abnormal human being and falls beneath the norms because he has a romantic relationship with a black woman. In the community's racialized reasoning, being in an interracial relationship is beyond the pale. The racist ideology is so powerful that nobody seems to think that it is illogical to deny another person's humanity because of his/her skin color. Smith achieves two things here: first, she portrays the paralyzing psychological effect of racism on the white subject. And second, she illustrates the irony of an unprecedented Southern bigotry through the presence of some bi-racial children in the community.

Another example of the white community's moral and psychological torture is shown through Maxwell's white men's first reaction to Tracy's murder. When the town learns that Tracy was murdered on "the Old Town road," most of the white men link his murder to his supposedly "secret" relationship with Nonnie (*SF*, 300). Their theory is that Nonnie killed Tracy after he told her that he is engaged to Dottie. But as Maxwell's white men speculate on the best response to the

murder, they rule out the possibility of bringing Nonnie to trial as the prime suspect. They fear that evoking miscegenation would be detrimental to the community as shown in the following quotation:

Yes, she must have done it. That Anderson girl. Everything pointed that way. . .

Quietest nigger girl in Maxwell Dangerous when they're so quiet. Jealousy eats them like a disease. . . Best thing folks can do now is to hush it up. Get the boy buried and hush the talk. Bring that Mulatto girl to trial, pretty as she is, and you'd spread a scandal from end to end of the United States They'd have to watch Tracy's friends. . . . Talking about running those Anderson girls out of the county.

Not so easy to run out the best negro family the town ever had. Bound to be a scandal if you tried. No, better hush it up, get folks minds on something else. (*SF*, 301)

This quote helps understand a few things about Maxwell white community's state of mind. Tracy's "secret love story" is not a secret after all because Tracy's death leads everybody to point fingers at Nonnie as the potential culprit. Yet they are reluctant to accuse her openly of the murder because it would contradict their racial ideology. Theoretically, Nonnie and Tracy cannot be lovers since they belong to different races. An open accusation would, therefore, sound like a disgrace for Tracy's family and the community. To be consistent with their racial logic, the community thinks that Tracy should be buried, his secret love story silenced, and nobody should try to find the truth about the murder because following such a path would undermine the community's racial interests. Henry is a scapegoat whose death serves as a loophole or a cover up for the story of the forbidden intimate interracial relationships. His death becomes a means of protecting racial myths which buttress white power. So, far from being only a realistic depiction of a fictional story, Smith gives a damning portrayal of the Southern race relations and their damaging effects on the entire community.

Nonnie cannot be brought to trial not because of her beauty, but because, as a black woman, accusing her of killing her lover would expose the myth of the forbidden intimate relation between blacks and whites. The community's line of reasoning shows that in spite of the apparent contentment of being the beneficiaries of the system, white people are not always satisfied with what happens in their community. Their private decisions on what action should be taken in public and which one should be avoided to protect the community's well-being, are a manifestation of white double consciousness. Psychologically, these people are tormented that an alleged culprit cannot be brought to trial, and yet, they are satisfied with the extra judicial killing of an innocent person since it helps them avoid a big scandal. The preceding quotation perfectly exemplified that aspect. The psychological torture affects all social classes in the white community as they stand together in the defense of racial interests.

Besides the psychological torture that affects all classes, the economically exploited white people also have their share of double consciousness. Apart from a few rich families, Maxwell's white community is made of many poor people who work as mill hands. Most of the mill workers are not happy with the wages that the mill owner, Tom Harris, pays them. Willie Echols, for instance, does not spend a day without complaining about his miserable wages. During a discussion with his wife and a few friends, he tells them he will not go to the workers' meeting because he is sick of listening to their employer who pays them, "[e]xactly enough to starve on" (*SF*, 118). Willie understands that it is the employer who exploits him and the other workers. However, these poor white people are far from attacking the root cause of the problem. Instead of joining forces with the exploited black folks in order to face their common enemy, poor whites target them as the cause of their meager wages. For example, during the conversation mentioned above, responding to Willie's tirade, Cena, a friend of his wife, comments, "If they warn't so many niggers, might be folks would git more money" (*SF*, 118). In her eyes, the mill owner is not to blame for low wages, but blacks,

who are also trying to survive, are the ones responsible. Even Cap'n Rushton, one of Maxwell's "good" white people, is of the same opinion. After Henry's lynching, Cap'n Rushton sees a link between the economy and lynching, saying, "There'll be lynchings long as white folks and black folks scrouge each other—everybody scrambling for the same penny" (*SF*, 362). Thus, race interferes with white people's reasoning. Poor white folks do not concentrate their efforts on their bosses who do not pay them decently, but they blame other victims of the same system as the primary cause of their misfortune.

Blaming black workers gives poor white people some leverage, because skin color is the only characteristic that sets them apart from blacks. In his book *Black Reconstruction in America*, W. E. B. Du Bois used the concept "psychological wage" to refer to poor white workers who received a form of compensation for their skin color. Whiteness gave them consolation because they were encouraged to believe that they were better than any black person (700). Smith echoes Du Bois in *Killers of the Dream* when she writes that whiteness "became the poor white's most precious possession, a symbol of self-esteem and psychic security, a charm starving off utter dissolution. . . it helped maintain his sanity in an insane world, compensating . . . for so many spiritual bruises and material depravations" (161). She terms it a "bargain" between the rich and poor white men: the poor will "boss the nigger" and the rich will "boss money" (*KD*, 175). So, although poor whites may know that they are victims of economic exploitation, the awareness of their whiteness boosts their self-esteem.

I mentioned earlier that every aspect of human life and human behavior has a racial explanation in Maxwell. Even black and white sexuality is explained in terms of race: chastity is a white women's quality while promiscuity is attributed to black women. However, this myth is exposed in the story when a minor character's conduct betrays the town's assertions about racialized sexuality. Nonnie, the college-educated black woman, becomes pregnant at twenty-one years old;

Grace Stevenson, a white girl, becomes pregnant at only fourteen years old. Yet, the white community of Maxwell maintains its own images and interpretation of these two girls. After learning that Tracy dates a black girl, Dunwoodie, Maxwell's white preacher, attempts to convince him to think that he does not have real feelings for her, but he is only satisfying his lust. He demonizes black women, pretending that if white men have intimate relations with them, it is because they are "scared of white girls. Scared [that] nice white girls can't satisfy them. And they are right! Of course no decent fine white woman can satisfy you when you let your mind out . . ." (*SF*, 87). The preacher insinuates that white women's ability to control their sexual needs causes white men to turn to black women who are available because they are naturally promiscuous. When Tracy reveals to the Preacher that he cannot abandon Nonnie because she is pregnant, once again, the preacher has a stereotypical explanation for black women. He tells Tracy not to worry about the pregnancy because it is a black girls' habit to have babies prematurely, "They all have em! Almost before they have their first sick-time!" (*SF*, 100). Here the preacher overlooks Tracy's love for Nonnie and uses a stereotype to convince him not to feel guilty for abandoning her or pushing her to have an abortion. It would certainly be unimaginable to hear the preacher use this kind of arguments in public, in front of his congregation. One would contend that this is an instance of hypocrisy rather than white double consciousness as I define it in this chapter.

Though I can make a concession that the preacher's conduct can be viewed as hypocritical, I still insist that it also fits my definition of white double consciousness. While the preacher's behavior can be justified in the context of a racialized environment, his advice to Tracy to seek abortion for his girlfriend has no Biblical grounds. Nobody can imagine him preaching publicly his flock that abortion is a divine will, nor can he convince Tracy using abortion as a biblically acceptable practice. Being aware of this truth, racial ideology becomes his only best option to convince Tracy to change his mind. Also, through his conversation with Tracy, the preacher realizes that Tracy is strongly in

love with his girlfriend. A critical look at their conversation shows that any Biblical argument on sin won't cause Tracy to retract. On the contrary, taking advantage of the fact that their society is based on racial injustice, the preacher considers racial stereotypes as his powerful arguments since they are believed to be true. He has an arsenal of stereotypical arguments and uses them efficiently to the point of pushing Tracy to reconsider his relationship with Nonnie. Because the preacher cannot publically use (in front of his flock), the type of arguments he used to convince Tracy, I maintain that his private image is in discrepancy with his public one.

White double consciousness can be a calculated move that white folks use to justify misconduct and to present it as something good. Like the priest, Tut Deen, Tracy's father and white town physician, also functions under a double image, a public and a private one. When L.D. Stevenson, the father of Grace Stevenson, the fourteen year- old- pregnant girl, approaches him to request an abortion for his daughter, Deen replies that he cannot commit a murder. He would do it only in case she was raped by a "nigger," but Grace had sex "for fun with a boy she like[s]" (*SF*, 151). Notice here that Grace does not meet the standard of the chaste girl pictured in the white mythology since she can have sex for "fun." For her father, "[Grace] is a baby, not fifteen [and] she is not a bad girl" (*SF*, 151). If we consider the mythical description of decent white girl set by the preacher, we quickly notice that Grace falls in disgrace. In the mind of the dominant white man, sex is not something that any white woman would contemplate, let alone a fourteen year-old. Yet the doctor, though a conservative, argues that consented premature sexual intercourse is acceptable. Since Grace had sex with her boyfriend for their mutual enjoyment, he (the doctor) cannot perform an abortion. One might say that the doctor's decision to refuse performing an abortion is motivated by the fact that he does not pass a judgement on Grace's behavior. However, we cannot lose track of the fact that Maxwell is a very conservative and religious society in which a premature pregnancy would not sound acceptable, let alone the idea of an abortion. It is for this reason that his father

does not want his “good girl’s” reputation to be tarnished and wants to make her have an abortion to save her face in front of the community. Otherwise, everybody will know that she is promiscuous, a profile assigned only to black girls. The father is obviously more concerned with his daughter’s public image than anything else. This is a good instance of white double consciousness here because referring to premature sex before marriage in a conservative society as something “enjoyable and recommendable,” is not the kind of argument that Deen will maintain in public. Grace’s father, on the other hand, would not say in public that he supports abortion.

Moreover, the doctor has a double language in his opposition to perform an abortion. He considers abortion an immoral act because it is a murder, but in his logic, abortion ceases to be a murder in case the pregnancy is the result of rape by a black man. Resisting to give a favorable answer to Grace’s father’s request, Tut says: “I’ll do almost anything. God knows, but murder. . . . If a nigger had assaulted her, or if she would lose her life in childbirth” (*SF*, 152). Grace’s father does not believe him and reacts cynically, “Don’t reckon you’ve ever killed a patient? . . . you doctors, all fools and hypocrites. Damn the whole lot of you” (*SF*, 152). Grace’s father does not buy into the doctor’s inconsistent argument because they both know the hypocrisy and the mindset of their community. So whether we consider the preacher’s encouragement of abortion, or the doctor’s accommodation of premature sex in a supposedly conservative society, we see that white double consciousness can be a deliberate way of justifying misconduct misrepresented as an acceptable behavior. Supporting premature sex and abortion are not the kinds of behaviors that high profile members of the Southern white community such as a preacher and a physician would condone in public; but in private, they defend them tenaciously. Even if such behavior (of supporting premature sex and encouraging abortion) can solve an immediate problem, it remains a reproachful attitude that always leaves psychological and moral scars in anybody who wants to have a good moral standing. This leads me to claim that both black and white people are victims of psychological

trauma as members of the racially divided environment of Maxwell. Psychological trauma is part of double consciousness because it is the result of a mind that constantly and deliberately refuses to reveal itself to the public.

While black psychological trauma is clearly seen in *Strange Fruit* because of the vulnerable position that black folks occupy, white folks' trauma also pervades the story. The acceptance of dehumanization and cruelty are traits of psychological trauma. While blacks suffer both physical and psychological trauma, white folks mostly endure psychological damage by constantly taxing their minds to accommodate cruelty as a way of life. In *Killers of the Dream*, Smith points out that the Southern white folks' continuous efforts to find the best ways to hurt black folks has robbed them of their humanity. Smith writes, "I knew, though I would not for years confess it aloud, that in trying to shut the Negro race away from us, we have shut down ourselves away from so many good, creative, honest, deeply human things in life" (30). The preeminence of racial ideology takes a toll on the humanity of both blacks and whites. It also gives us an idea of the difference between the aspects of black and white double consciousness.

While blacks always worry about the best conduct to adopt in front of white people to stay out of trouble, honest white folks have to think constantly about attitudes that will make their neighbors believe that they also despise black people. This is done with the objective of letting other white people in the community know that they belong and stand together, even if deep down, they disapprove racial injustice, cruelty, and violence. In *Strange Fruit*, Henry's lynching is a traumatizing experience for many people in Maxwell's white community. On the night of the lynching, some white women and children have a hard time sleeping because the vivid image of a burning body is still fresh in their minds. Belle, a town's lady decides to go to the house of Ms. Sadie, the town's operator, to spend the night with her because she is afraid of sleeping alone. In the conversation

below, the two women try to help each forget the tragedy, but Belle is unable to stop talking about it,

You'll just have to let me sleep with you, Sadie, for I can't stay another minute in that house by myself, I'm so nervous. . . .' "Wasn't it just awful! . . . I stood there on my piazza and watched and I was so close, Sadie, that I could hear that nigger's scream, and it made my blood—" "Let's try to sleep, Belle we are both worn out." Sadie edged over nearer the rim of the bed. 'Yes, we do need sleep all right, after all we've been through,' Belle agreed. . . 'My, it was terrible—terrible you know, Sadie, I'll never forget this in all my life, it's one of those things you carry with you to your gr—" "Yes, I know. But let's try to sleep now if we can." Belle turned over. (*SF*, 347-48)

Belle is appalled not only by Henry's murder, but also by her fellow white people's cruelty. The horrible image of a burning body is stuck in her mind that it robs her sleep and she even admits that she will take this trauma to her grave. She is psychologically damaged even if other people in the community cannot notice it. This honest confession on the community's violence happens in private between two friends who trust each other. Belle did not open her mouth during the actual lynching probably because she knows the mindset of her community and preferred to keep quiet than speaking up and cause problems to herself.

In her book *Learning to Be White*, theologian Thandeka uses a "Race Game" to help white Americans "become aware of what it feels like to take on and maintain a racial identity in America" (3). The seemingly simple game consists in asking white Americans to address each other using the adjective "white" before nouns like "husband, friend, father/ mother, son/daughter" and the like, in order to make their race noticeable like they do for black people. This game proves to be very stressful and psychologically demanding for white Americans who try to play it with their fellows,

because they quickly realize that it is uncomfortable to address each other as “white.” Through this experience, Thandeka notes that white Americans have “feelings they ha[ve] to put aside in order to remain a member in good standing of their own communities” (5). With Thandeka’s theory in mind, white double consciousness, as illustrated above, is also a matter of power relation between the individual and the group; the individual is in constant fear of revealing his/her true image to the group for the sake of calling into question his/her loyalty. The power of the community has a disarming effect on individuals in such a way that most individuals would prefer to be treated like loyal members of their communities rather than disloyal ones.

In addition to the first illustration of traumatic experience, in another family, Willie Echols, his wife Mollie, and their son J. L. have very different reactions to the lynching. While Willie is satisfied with the lynching, saying that Henry deserved what he got. Mollie, his wife, does not want him to talk about it because she wanted to faint at the sight of the burnt body. Their son, J.L., has nightmares and cannot sleep because of the flashbacks of the lynching. He comes running out of the house, “Mommy, mommy . . . they’ll git me . . . I seed em . . .” The response he receives from his mother is, ‘Nobody aimin to git ye! Hit’s niggers they burn. They ain’t going to burn you. Get on back to bed, boy,’ does not remove the little boy’s fear (*SF*, 352). This family is divided in the way Henry’s violent death affected its members. Willie’s conviction that Henry deserved death is a line of reasoning that protects him from psychological trauma. This is also a general opinion of the white community. It is a strategy for the justification of racial terror and violence. Smith emphasizes the deterioration of humanity in the South in *Killers of the Dream* when she writes that “the wasting away of the nature of man has been the South’s greatest loss” (221). This wasting of humanity is well illustrated through Willie’s reaction to lynching. Racial hatred has turned him into a blood-thirsty brute who takes pleasure in violence. His wife and son, on the other hand, are so traumatized that the mention of such a horrid crime causes the former to feel sick in her stomach, and the latter to

have a series of nightmares that make him become a vicarious victim of lynching. Mollie and her son are white, and have been ideologically framed to see black people in their community as lesser human beings, but watching the cruel experience of Henry's lynching affects them deeply in a very traumatizing way because some unnamed force inside them condemns the crime they have witnessed. Their reaction is understandable because, as historian R. A. Lawson points out, "Human beings are a diverse bunch, but some of our experiences and feelings are universal" (x). As members of the human race, other people's sufferings can have some indirect effects on us. This is what happens to Mollie and her son, although she wants to distance herself from Henry's heinous murder, she is still horrified by the simple mention of the subject. Through these imaginary characters, Smith shows the scope of the less discussed multi-dimensional consequences of racial ideology on white subjects. She leads her readers to see how racial ideology has caused many white people to evoke racial violence and to normalize it to the level of being pleased with it. She also shows how the same ideology has psychologically traumatized other anonymous white people who were appalled by their communities' cruelty, but who were afraid of expressing publicly their opposition to their communities' heinous crimes.

POWER RELATION BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE GROUP

I also stated earlier that white double consciousness is not only a conflict between a person's public and private image, but also a power relation between the individual and the group. In the white community, the power relation is not between the oppressor and the oppressed, but among beneficiaries of an unjust system who only differ in the way they react to the injustice that the victimized African Americans suffer from. In their book *Lillian Smith*, commenting on Smith's objective in *Strange Fruit*, Louise Blackwell and Frances Clay point out that because Smith "was convinced that the evils of segregation had their beginnings in psychology and sociological error, [she] wanted her readers to become aware of the roots as well as the fruits of the racial dilemma"

(44). Blackwell and Clay are right to mention the psycho-sociological beginnings of racial injustice as depicted in this novel, and it is through the characters' actions that we understand the issues at hand. Many white characters are convinced that there is nothing wrong with their society and see racial injustice suffered by the Other as a normal way of life. The majority of white people who feel at ease with racial injustice are not necessarily bad people, but their long and repetitive exposure to racist ideology has greatly contributed to their insensitivity. Although Smith uses fake white people in her novel, the problems she depicts are not imaginary. They are true, crucial, and reflect the mindset of many white Southerners' attitude toward racial issues. In *Racist America* (2010), Feagin points out that "[t]he antiblack elements of the old white racial frame are perhaps the most developed and long included various religious, scientific, and psycho-sexual rationalizations of racial oppression" (61). In other words, years of unjust practices have molded white people thinking in such a way that most of them no longer question what happens in their society. From that point, they wrongly start treating injustice as a normal way of life. However, an unfortunately small number of white people are morally and psychologically tormented by racial injustice and grapple with the different ways of responding to it.

In the discussion that follows, I have broken black and white characters from *Strange Fruit* in different groups, but my focus is mainly on white characters. Black characters fall into two groups: the old generation, which includes people like Tillie Anderson (Ed, Bess, and Nonnie's mother), Mamie and Ten (Henry McIntosh's parents), Reverend Livingston and his wife Rosanna, as well as other unnamed blacks of their generation; and the younger generation. This old generation represents the class of what historian Leon Litwack calls "the old negro" cherished by Southern white folks because they have learned to live with daily humiliations and frustrations (191). They have learned to live with oppression as patients with chronic diseases accept to live with their pains willy-nilly over the years. This does not mean that they are happy with their situation as they make

the white people believe, but they have chosen humiliation over death. Their common philosophy is to please whites in any ways they can, which they believe help them stay alive. Tillie, for instance, thinks that good manners are the “best life insurance [for] a colored person” in the white man’s society” (*SF*, 290). Mamie believes that “white folks is always right” (*SF*, 114). After Henry’s lynching, Rosanna tries to convince her husband that they need to run away from the South, to give their twin daughters the opportunity to avoid living the same life of misery that she and her husband have lived. However, Reverend Livingston tells her, “There ain no runnin away from white folks, Rosie, you oughter know that well as me. There’s ways to git along wid white folks if you hunt round for um” (*SF*, 350). The three blacks quoted here basically say the same thing but in different words. They are convinced that they can stay out of trouble as long as they accept their assigned position; they survive in a hostile environment by avoiding confrontation with white folks. In “Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination,” the African American author and social activist bell hooks writes, “black people have, from slavery on, shared in conversations with one another ‘special’ knowledge of whiteness gleaned from close scrutiny of white people. Deemed special because it was not a way of knowing that has been recorded fully in written material, its purpose was to help black folks cope and survive in a white supremacist society” (38). Their attitude reflects the Du Boisian double consciousness because this old generation of black people let the white community define them as subservient or “good negroes” while they are aware that they perform an identity that corresponds to the conditions of a hostile environment.

The younger generation is represented by people like Doctor Sam Perry, Bess and Nonnie Anderson, their rebellious brother Ed, and other people in their age group. One characteristic of this group is that though they are college graduates, they have no equal opportunity in the job market. They understand that they deserve better jobs, but the environment in which they live does not allow them to make progress in this regard. They have also learned to accept humiliation and control

their frustrations, but at times, it seems difficult for them not to question the system in which they live. Ed Anderson, Nonnie's older brother, hates Maxwell and has left it for Washington, DC. For him, his hometown is nothing but a "hole" (*SF*, 182). He does not understand why even the so-called "good white people" cannot refer to a black man as "mister" (*SF*, 179). With their college education, Bess and Nonnie can only work as housemaids. Besides, Bess does not approve of her younger sister's relationship with Tracy. She strongly believes that Tracy takes advantage of her sister because "all white men" consider black women as "secondhand clothes" (*SF*, 40). Even Sam Perry, the black physician, also has his own frustrations, but he cannot leave Maxwell because he sees himself as a pillar of the black community. Leaving Maxwell would mean an abandonment of his responsibility.

White characters also fall into two categories, not in terms of generations, but rather, in terms of their responses to racial ideology. In *White Racism: The Basics* (1995), Feagin and Vera consider "concrete events and actions of racism" as a "ritual" (9). As for those who participate in this ritual, Feagin and Vera write, "Racist rites involve minority victims, several categories of white participants (officiants, acolytes, and passive observers), a range of acts . . . and an array of myths (stereotypes about black Americans) that justify racist acts in perpetrators' minds" (9). Each category of participants mentioned in Feagin and Vera's work is well represented in *Strange Fruit*. Their common denominators are whiteness and professed Christian values. However, their interpretation of Christianity falls along the lines of racial ideology, not necessarily under God's higher standards. The vast majority of Maxwell's white folks tacitly approve of black people's oppression. This is why most of them are part of the mob that actively cheers, or tacitly supports, the actual lynchers of Henry McIntosh. In "White Racism," African American writer James Baldwin doubts white America's professed Christianity because of the lack of concrete sympathy for the sufferings of other human beings, and their refus[al] to act on the basis of their Christian knowledge

(753). In “The White Man’s Guilt,” he charges, “One can measure very neatly the white American’s distance from his conscience—from himself—by observing the distance between White America and Black America” (725). What Baldwin denounces here is exactly the conduct observed in the majority of white people in Maxwell. This group is made of people in whom the effects of ideology are visible. These people are unable to realize that ideology has altered and even blinded their moral judgment to the extent of becoming insensitive to black people’s suffering.

The Christianity of many white people is tainted with racial ideology which helps them overlook their feeling of guilt and to continue to call themselves “good” people. Bill Tally and his lynching mob, the Preacher Dunwoodie, Brother Sanders, Doctor Deen, and most of Maxwell’s poor white population, fall in this category. Doctor Deen, for example, is a “good” Christian only to the extent that God’s principles are not in conflict with racial ideology as I mentioned earlier in my discussion of religious hypocrisy. The same attitude is observed in the Preacher’s conduct. Brother Dunwoodie does everything to convince Tracy that God is merciful, but he blends his gospel with racial ideology to persuade him to dump Nonnie in order to marry a white girl. One good example of the blending of Christian principles with racial ideology can be found in the conversation between the Preacher Dunwoodie and Brother Saunders, a member of his church, in the evening after Henry’s lynching. The preacher is the first to speak saying, “I don’t condone a thing like this afternoon. I feel nothing but condemnation for such blood thirstiness” (*SF*, 358). Brother Saunders, his interlocutor, has an ambiguous reply: “Nor I, . . . But it doesn’t do any good to criticize people—not at a time like this. Only stirs up more bad feelings about the races. It don’t do to talk about these things. . . . A servant of God has no business mixing in such matters. Our job is to win souls to Christ” (*SF*, 358). This conversation shows the hypocritical nature of the professed Christians. They exactly know that what happened is wrong, but the other gospel of racism forbids them to take a firm stand to condemn the racial violence of other “good Christians.” Such conduct

extends bad behavior because the more people are willing to be “passive participants,” in keeping silent and refusing to condemn racial violence, the more they tacitly encourage violence and intolerance to continue (Feagin and Vera 10). The preacher and his friend are afraid of alienating the white community from the church if they vehemently condemn the mob’s actions. Taken together, the mob and their supporters constitute a powerful group that threatens the preacher’s spiritual leverage as an individual. This is one manifestation of white double consciousness given that the preacher and his friend refrain from publicly denouncing lynching because they are afraid of the power of the community. Maybe Smith’s message here is that the mixing of religion and racial ideology alters individual people’s judgement in such a way that they have to succumb to the will of the group.

THE MIND OF VERSATILE WHITE CHARACTERS

In opposition to the majority of white people who are accepting of racial injustice, Smith also portrays a small but complex group of white characters made of versatile individuals. This group responds differently to their own community, the black folks, and most importantly, in the way they choose between racial ideology and their own moral standards. They do not seem to accept black people’s oppression, and sometimes, they even distance themselves from the lynchers, saying that lynching is the business of poor white folks. Yet, in spite of their opposition, they still believe in racial superiority in showing a paternalistic attitude in their interaction with black folks. This is why I called them versatile characters. In her book, *Silent Racism* (2010), sociologist Barbara Trepagnier emphasizes the fact that “silent racism” is not the business of bigots only, but “it inhabits the minds of all white people whether or not they acknowledge it or are aware of it” (6). One of the two forms of silent racism is what she calls “paternalistic assumptions [which] are based on a sense of superiority found in some relationships between blacks and whites, especially hierarchical relationships that were, and perhaps still are, customary in the South” (6). The danger of this form

of racism lies in the fact that it can go unnoticed. This is the form observed in this second category of white characters. Because of these white characters' versatile attitude, some black folks consider them as "good white folks." This group includes people like Tracy Deen because of his relationship with Nonnie, Tom Harris, the mill plant owner, his son Charlie, and his daughter Harriet Harris. The ambivalence in the behavior of these characters makes them good subjects for an in-depth study of white double consciousness. They are constantly of two minds and it is only through private conversations that they reveal the motivation behind their conduct in public space. Let me consider some individual characters.

Tracy is the first character worth considering because his choices and actions trigger a chain of repercussions on all Maxwell's racialized communities. For the majority of white people in Maxwell, Tracy is a "loser" because after dropping out of college, he served in the Army for two years and came back home with no specific plan for his future. Yet, it is a vitally important time for him because when he enlisted in the army and was sent to Marseille, France, he realized that he truly loved Nonnie. When other soldiers started talking about women, he thought about Nonnie. For him, Nonnie "wasn't a Negro girl whom he had in a strange crazy way mixed his whole life up with. She was the woman he loved" (*SF*, 50). But because of the time period in which they live, the two lovers have to meet in the bushes where disapproving eyes cannot see.

Tracy's deep feelings for his lover seem to transcend racial boundaries, however he cannot escape the pressures to conform to societal rules once he comes back home. Once back home from war, Tracy cannot wait to meet his lover even if he is torn between the love he feels for her and the strong racial separation that looks like a wall that restrains his happiness. His divided psyche is nowhere more apparent than when he sits in his family drugstore after spending time with Nonnie:

There wasn't in his mind a word that explained his feeling. All he knew was that thirty minutes ago he had been with the woman he loved. Now there was a colored

girl named Nonnie. That was all there was to it... He had been somewhere . . . in a dream maybe; maybe crazy. Maybe it had been shell-shock. He laughed. Or plain amnesia. That's better! Maybe he'd lost, not his memory, but his white feelings.

Ought to be thankful he hadn't lost his memory too. (*SF*, 59-60)

The fact that Tracy thinks of himself as Nonnie's private lover, as well as a pressured white man, evidences his double consciousness. In his heart, he is in love with Nonnie, but he is also conscious that when he puts himself in the shoes of a common white man who always thinks in terms of race, he considers himself as a violator of social codes. He has a strong love without borders for Nonnie as a human being, but he struggles with the Southern society's artificial barrier of race that reminds him that Nonnie is not his lover, but "a colored girl" who should be kept in her place in order to avoid upsetting social order. Because Tracy cannot reconcile his competing feelings of love and respect of social ideology, he is condemned to live a double lie. He must prove his unfailing love to Nonnie without revealing that their relationship has no future, but simultaneously feels compelled to show Maxwell's white community that he fits in by keeping his love for Nonnie a secret.

Things change drastically when Tracy learns from Nonnie that she is pregnant and is happy about it. This is a serious problem for Tracy not only because it goes against the mores of a segregated society, but also because it is disgraceful for his family. Nonnie's celebration of her pregnancy catches Tracy off guard. Through the narrator, readers become aware of Tracy's divided mind. When Nonnie tells him that she is glad to be pregnant, Tracy reacts, "Glad? You can't be! . . . Reckon we ought to talk about it, or something—" He looked out toward the swamp, forgetting his words. *In the dusk she is as white as Laura. God, if she weren't a nigger! Lord God what a mess . . .* (*SF*, 6-7). Tracy tells Nonnie that he does not share her happiness, but thanks to the internal monologue, the reader can see that he [Tracy] has mixed feelings and regrets in his mind. Although Nonnie's skin color is similar to Tracy's sister, Laura, she is not "white." In *Visible Identities* (2006), philosopher

Linda M. Alcoff observes that “[r]ace may be a social construction without biological validity [but] it is powerful enough to alter the fundamental shape of our lives” (207). Nonnie is socially “black,” and for Tracy, her racial identity constitutes a “mess” because he fears that once the news of the pregnancy is known to the public, it will cause trouble and embarrassment to his family. In her play *Les Blancs*, Lorraine Hansberry calls race a “device with consequences” and “once invented it takes on a life, a reality of its own. . . . It is pointless to pretend that it doesn’t exist—merely because it is a lie” (122). Nonnie’s pregnancy troubles Tracy because his white society has created race and has convinced people to believe that it is real. In *Learning to be White*, Thandeka notes that “the European child is socialized into a system of values that holds in contempt differences from the white community’s values” (18). This contempt can be seen in Tracy’s reaction. He loves Nonnie dearly and his feelings for her are sincere and true. But because he has been instructed to become white through what Thandeka calls a “formal induction into whiteness,” Tracy is devastated failing to perform the identity that Maxwell’s white community requires of him.

But one might ask, when was Tracy inducted into whiteness and how does he fail to abide by the principles of his induction? Smith depiction of the fictional character Tracy helps answer this question. Tracy became aware of his whiteness during his childhood when he was playing with Henry McIntosh, who later becomes his family’s houseboy. When the young boys collide with a white girl, Henry’s mother whips her child for being disrespectful to a white girl, but she dismissed Tracy, asking him to go to his parents. Later, Ten, Henry’s father, is angry with his wife and scolds her to never beat his son again to please white people. Mamie, Henry’s mother, reiterates her advice to her son, saying that Henry must always respect white people. Tracy, who listens to the conversation, tells his friend Henry, “It means I’m white . . . ‘and you’re black.’ . . . ‘It means,’ he went on with and he felt a strange new swelling pride rising in him, ‘I’m always right, I reckon.’ ‘How come?’ asked Henry dully. ‘Cause I’m white—you heard Mamie’” (114). This scene constitutes

Tracy's preliminary induction into whiteness. When he hears Mamie say that Henry must be respectful to white people, Tracy, realizes that he has something special that Henry does not have. But at this early age, it is difficult to assert that he understands the whole idea of the meaning of his racial privilege.

A more substantial induction occurs years later during Tracy's conversation with the preacher that I mentioned earlier. It is during that exchange that the preacher exposes Tracy's inappropriate conduct by bashing of Nonnie. As a prerequisite to the induction into whiteness, the preacher causes Tracy to feel sorry for his bad choices. To become a full member of the white community, Tracy must abandon or even learn to despise someone he has long considered as the love of his life. This is a psychologically taxing process for him and his love is put to the test. Stressing the importance of community in a person's life, Alcoff argues that each person "needs to feel a connection to community, to a history, and to a human project larger than his or her own life. Without this connection, we are bereft of our concern for the future or an investment in the fate of our community" (207). In the case of Tracy, we can observe that he is divided between his love for Nonnie and the demands of the community. This is a fundamental aspect of his double consciousness. While he loves Nonnie in private, he cannot publicly proclaim his love for her for the fear of falling in disgrace in front of the community that wants him to act white. As an individual, he is overpowered by the group standards.

Tracy's induction into whiteness is successful because the preacher's advice eats him like a poison and he starts to imagine ways of severing the ties with Nonnie. At times he espouses a racialized line of reasoning that emphasizes his whiteness to convince himself that he did not respect his rank in becoming intimate with a black woman. At other times, he puts the blame on the white community that forbids two human beings who love each other from publicly expressing their love for one another. The narrator remarks, "All his life he had been making new ways so as not to flaunt

in the town's face what he was doing" (*SF*, 142). Tracy always has the community in mind when it comes to his relationship with Nonnie. He constantly fears the public reaction in whose eyes his relationship with Nonnie is abnormal.

Tracy has to always present a public image that obeys the community's rules while keeping relationship with Nonnie at bay. He bitterly blames the community's racial intolerance as follows, "You would God wanted to play a fine joke and he made Nonnie. Here . . . is a woman any man would love and be proud of. She has everything you could desire. But you can't have her. No. You can have sips and tastes, but you can't have her. And you'll be ashamed and sneak around and feel nasty That's the price you have to pay for the sips" (*SF*, 148). Tracy feels here what Thandeka calls "white shame," which she defines as a "deeply private feeling of not being at home within one's own community" (13). For Tracy, Nonnie's beauty and womanhood are undeniable assets that anybody would appreciate and desire. However, these assets become useless and repulsive once seen through the lenses of whiteness. They suddenly fall under the norm and become things to appreciate and enjoy only in private, but which are shameful and undesirable in public. This is a huge conflict between Tracy's public and private image. This scene exemplifies Smith's critique of the drama of the ludicrous Southern miscegenation laws that embittered race relations.

The venom of hatred that the preacher has injected in Tracy's mind following their conversation allows the latter to make the right moves to conform to the white community's norms. He attends the revival as a new "convert" to religion, and he proposes to Dottie. Armed with these two reasons, he is prepared to put an end to his relationship with Nonnie, whom he begins to consider no longer as his lover but as a "piece of unfinished business" (*SF*, 188). He starts to juggle Dottie, his new white fiancée, and Nonnie, his former lover. When he visits Dottie in the evening, he seems to be in a hurry to return home because he is afraid that the neighbors might become suspicious of unchaste conduct between the new lovers. In reality, he hurries because he wants to

meet Nonnie and begin to prepare her for the end of their relationship. He starts a tactic of being both bitter and sweet to Nonnie through a successful scheme.

Tracy victimizes himself in order to get rid of his lover. Before his last meeting with Nonnie, he drinks whisky and seems to be upset. He pretends to have been Nonnie's victim for a long time, and for the whole duration of their relationship, Tracy claims that Nonnie has been making fun of him. Now he seems to have understood his mistakes and wants to put Nonnie in her place. To Nonnie's surprise, he calls her a "nigger" for the first time. She does not understand what is going on. She sees Tracy like a different person and concludes that he is not himself. To this Tracy reacts, "Not myself? Maybe you don't know myself—what nigger girl knows of myself?" (*SF*, 197). Nonnie has no clue that Tracy is putting an act to upset her in repeatedly calling her names. He even calls her his possession, "You're mine—even if you're just a little nigger, you're mine and I love every inch of you. How about that coming from a white man, huh?" (*SF*, 198). Here, Tracy accents his race again to give Nonnie the impression that he did her an exceptional favor in loving her as a lowly black woman. His professed love takes the back seat and he does this in a calculating way before announcing the end of their relationship. Tracy's attitude here fits the Watsonian definition of white double consciousness. Watson argues that "white double consciousness has a solid footing in fear—fear of being truly seen by an Other and fear of seeing oneself honestly" (19). One of the objectives of Tracy's act is to hide his true motive and confuse Nonnie in pretending that their whole love story was a huge mistake. In so doing, he would feel less guilty about the entire situation. In his discussion of guilt, Steele writes,

Guilt makes us afraid for ourselves and generates as much self-preoccupation as concern for others. The nature of this preoccupation is always the redemption of innocence, the reestablishment of good feelings about oneself. In this sense, the fear for the self that is buried in all guilt is a pressure toward selfishness. It can lead to put

our own need for innocence above our concern for the problem that made us feel guilt in the first place. But this fear for the self does not only inspire selfishness, it also becomes a pressure to escape the guilt-inducing situation. (501-2)

This is exactly what Tracy does here because, apart from confusing Nonnie, he also wants to cover his fake and self-serving guilt in acting as a “real” white bigot in front a black woman to whom he reminds her racially assigned place. To liberate himself from his guilty feeling, he blames Nonnie as if the latter has forced him to love her. This attitude helps him overlook the fact that he is a victim of racial constraints beyond Nonnie’s power. This self-serving guilt allows Tracy to make the necessary move to recover his place in his community. He fully recovers his place in the white community when he bluntly tells Nonnie that it is necessary for them to separate, just a few hours before her brother murders him.

Tracy is not the only one whose public image contrasts with his private one. Other characters like Tom Harris and his son Tracy show an interesting contrast between their private and public image. The Harrises represent one of Maxwell’s opulent families. The way the father and son react to racial injustice reveals that the power relation between the individual and the group can impact people differently. Tom Harris is a sawmill plant owner who employs many white and black folks from Maxwell and other neighboring towns. He is a religious person and the town blacks also consider him as one of the very few Maxwell’s “good” white folks. His wife Anne is also a good Southern wife and she employs Dessie, Henry’s girlfriend, as the family maid. Their children, Charlie and Harriet, are also well-mannered and they disapprove racial injustice, but cannot express such an opinion publicly when they interact with other white folks. Tom is the exact opposite of his son Tracy when it comes to their responses to racial injustice. Tom is able to express his opinion against racial injustice in public without the fear of being reprovved. One obvious reason for his lack of fear is his economic power. As the employer of many poor white sawmill hands, whoever wants to attack

him has to think twice about the consequences of his actions on his employment. His son Charlie, on the other hand, thinks that it is unwise to confront an angry crowd. He pretends to be silent in public and discusses racial injustice only when surrounded by the members of his family whom he trusts.

Tom Harris' versatile attitude is a very good instance of white double consciousness as a contrast between public and private image. Tom is a nice person with good relationships with black people in an environment where racial segregation prevails. He is ready to help blacks and he can also make his voice be heard when he is in front of other white folks. However, in spite of his "good" relationships with black folks, racial ideology always interferes with his judgment. Although he tolerates black people, it does not mean that he considers them his equals. Nevertheless, at least on the surface, he shows real concern for black people and feels morally obligated to help them. For instance, after learning the truth that Henry is not Tracy's actual killer, he takes the initiative to exfiltrate him from the Deens' place to take him into custody in jail hoping that he would be safer there. This small action alone shows that Tom is goodhearted and willing to help without prior request from the black community.

But even as Tom does this humanitarian and unsolicited act, he lets racial ideology control him because of his difficulty to consider black people as his equals. Consider Tom's conversation with Sam Perry after the latter calls on him at his office to plead him to do something on Henry's behalf. As Sam tells Tom a false story to prove Henry's innocence, he does not know that Tom already knows the truth and has already taken action to protect Henry. Before Sam opens his mouth, Tom already assumes that he came "in for a pack of lies" (*SF*, 337). Naturally, Sam cannot tell the truth about Tracy's death, but his false story is intended to give Henry an alibi to prove his innocence. He tells Tom that if Cap'n Rushton, some other good white folks, and he do not do anything to help Henry, the mob will get him in no time. He invents a story according to which

Henry was at his house the night Tracy was killed and that he stayed there all night before getting dropped at the Deens' in the morning. Since Tom was already told the true version of the story, he replies: "Sam . . . that's a good story you told, gives Henry a clean slate all right. Only trouble is, it's a lie" (*SF*, 338). Sam confesses that his story is a lie indeed, but he adds that he had to lie "[b]ecause a Negro can't afford the truth! Truth's for powerful folks. And this time I don't know all the truth. But I happen to know enough to know that Henry McIntosh didn't kill Mr. Deen. And they are after him . . . they get him before dark" (*SF*, 338). Tom quickly dismisses the idea of seeing Henry lynched because, for him, it would be easy for "no-count" whites to lynch a black man in case of rape, but not in the event of a murder. Here, Tom takes a condescending tone assuming that Sam has a poor judgment of the situation and does not know what he is talking about. For him, Sam does not exactly know the circumstances under which white people can decide to lynch a black man. Because of Tom's patronizing attitude, Sam lashes on him all the frustrations that black people in Maxwell have been victims of. Sam's reaction does not please Tom, who reminds him that he has forgotten the protocol a black man has to follow while talking to a white man, saying, "Sam . . . You've lost control . . . You've forgot, Sam, he said slowly, there're things no nigger on earth can say to a white man!" (*SF*, 341-342). Tom considers Sam as a "friend," but not an equal. It is an unbalanced relationship because Tom is on the powerful end of the relationship while Sam is on the weak side. Tom wants Sam to know that he dictates the rules of their friendship. When he notices that Sam oversteps the boundaries of the friendship and forgets the expected conduct of a black man in front of a white man, he reprovcs him because of the strong influence of the powerful racial ideology on him. This is a manifestation of white double consciousness because, while Tom publicly stands against racial injustice, in private, he still wants Sam to respects the white power structure, which is at the basis of systemic injustice. Also, like any other white man, Tom also resorts to stereotypes when it comes to defining black people's actions. We recall that when Sam visited him at

his office, he already concluded that he came to tell lies before the latter even had the time to open his mouth. One might say that Tom was true because Sam eventually told a lie. This observation is only true when one decontextualizes the problem. But we remember that Tom did not have a strong argument to rebut Sam's answer on the reason why black people were used to telling lies in front of white people.

Tom consistently supports white power structure in private, an attitude that contrasts with his public image. When Sam informs him of Henry's pending lynching, he realized that he needs to do something to save him even if he is upset for letting Sam address him disrespectfully. The frenzied mob has abducted Henry from jail and it is only a matter of minutes before they murder him. He decides to go to the lynching site, but it is too late because the lynching has already started. Nevertheless, he tries to interfere with the lynchers to stop Henry's murder and save his life. Doing so is a gamble for him because his empathy toward an alleged black murderer also means inviting the wrath of his fellow white folks. Unfortunately, his strong opposition does not save Henry whose body is now burning. Nonetheless, Tom's action has a strong symbolic significance in that he openly fights against the power of the community, thereby proving that he disapproves of the community's actions. Through his action, Tom is viewed as a potential enemy, a "traitor," but for himself, his intervention is morally valuable—because, as we shall see shortly, he believes that many people among the onlookers are also against lynching but are afraid of voicing their opinion.

However, the man who publicly opposes racial injustice displays a contradictory attitude towards race in the privacy of his own home. When he goes home in the evening and sits down to discuss the horrible event of the day, his son Charlie rebukes him for his reckless conduct in public. Charlie could not imagine that his father would take the risk of interposing himself between the lynching mob and its victim. In the following conversation between father and son, I use italics to distinguish Charlie's words from his father's:

Dad, you were right—reckless, this afternoon. *Well . . . I don't know.* I don't think many men would have done what you did. It didn't do any good. They might have killed you. *Maybe it did more than you know. Maybe some of those watching felt . . . as I did. I don't know Charlie. I'm too old to know—anything. . . Too old to figure out things like this . . . some of the boys doing that burning, Son, were our men from the mill. Hard-working. Good to their families. Two of them are stewards in Sarah Chapel.* (SF, 354)

This father and son conversation within the confines of their home is an instance of white double consciousness. It reveals the difficulty of finding the middle ground between one's personal moral conduct and racial ideology. Tom defends his action in telling Charlie that many people in the crowd might have felt like he did or might have acted like he did, but they lacked the courage to do so because they feel accountable to their community. He has no doubt in his mind that some people in the crowd who felt as he did thanked him in their hearts or simply congratulated him for his exceptional courage. But like his son, he was also appalled to see that even some of his own employees, the so-called “good people and Christians,” could be found taking pleasure in the violent killing of Henry McIntosh. Nonetheless, while Tom blames his fellow white people for their violence, he terribly fails to examine his own public and private behavior.

Although Tom acknowledges that killing someone is wrong regardless of his race, he does not want his son to believe in racial equality. In the following quotation, Tom is unable to explain the reasons of his belief in white racial superiority as Charlie presses him to elaborate on his obscure theory: “*A lynching is a terrible thing. I know it's wrong to kill a man, no matter what his color. I know you got to be fair to him. But you can't make a Negro your equal. Why? You know you can't do it. . . you'd have—*” Tom stopped. What you reckon would happen, Dad? What you reckon? Tom didn't answer. The two men sat looking out in the darkness” (SF, 355). This quotation shows that Tom does not have a rationale to help his son understand why he should not believe in racial equality. His failure to

elaborate on his rejection of racial equality is due to the fact that his son's question constitutes what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva calls in *Racism without Racists* an "incursion into forbidden issues" (54). Tom stammers and then remains silent because he has no clear answer for his belief in racial superiority and/or inferiority. His attitude, therefore, shows his ambivalence between his moral obligation to acknowledge black people's humanity, the need to treat them right, and his strong belief in white supremacy. It is an attitude that would lead one to question the overall motive of his intervention against lynching. Maybe Smith wrote this scene to suggest that many white people believed in white superiority because it was a social trend. They never took time for themselves to ponder on this sensitive issue and its incalculable consequences.

Tom's actions and attitudes in different situations evidence his versatility. In front of black folks like Sam, Tom is a good guy who defends everybody's humanity. In front of the lynching mob, Tom is a bad guy because he openly opposes his community's action. Yet, in the privacy of his home, he still supports the very idea which is the root cause of racial ideology: a belief in white supremacy. Tom cannot combat racism, for he defines himself using "sincere fictions," and "personal mythologies" of a "good man" and "not a racist" (Feagin and Vera, *WR*, 14). These false beliefs undermine his ability to serious self-examination. When we contrast Tom's heroic stand in public with what he says to his son in the privacy of his home, we see the extent of his "sincere fictions." Feagin and Vera suggest that a "successful antiracist struggle will involve a critical examination of the many sincere fictions undergirding racist action" (18). Tom seems to show his good will in combating racism, but through what he says to Charlie, we quickly note that he fails to inspect his own racist behavior. Therefore, he cannot honestly be an agent for societal change. Assessed from the different facets of his life, it is difficult to clearly say that Tom is morally upright because he simultaneously wants one thing and its contrary. I consider this ambivalence which borders hypocrisy as one form of white double consciousness. On the one hand, one would think

that in publicly opposing the mob, Tom wanted to seek his own glory of self- righteousness. On the other hand, facing the danger associated with what bigoted whites would call “race treason” would cause one to believe in Tom’s impartiality. This leads me to a brief discussion of his son Charlie and his daughter Harriet.

From Charlie’s early remarks on his father’s interference with lynching, one may quickly jump to the conclusion that, unlike his father, Charlie whole-heartedly supports mob violence. A superficial look at the beginning of father and son conversation would lead one to conclude that Charlie approves of the lynching and that he sees nothing wrong with it. He can be seen, to borrow Feagin’s concept in *Racist America* (2001), as one of the ‘bystanders’ [who] provide support for others’ racism” (140). However, Charlie disapproves of racial violence. His only problem is that he is not ready to show publicly to the mob that he detests their action. Ironically, he is one of the people his father referred to as lacking courage to express openly their opposition to racial violence. Charlie is morally shocked and appalled by the violent behavior of his community. He disapproved of his father’s action because he feared that his conduct might have caused the mob to hurt him. He wants his father to be discreet in public and to dissemble his opposition to his community’s violence. To maintain his friendship with the community, he should not overtly show that he disagrees with his fellow white people. Charlie has apparently understood that to belong to the “white race club,” one must pay the price of sacrificing or silencing his moral values in public to preserve group cohesion. This is something that his father failed to do. In *Racist America*, Feagin points out the existence of “actively antiracist whites” across the USA who “constantly and regularly speak against white racism, even to the point of risking personal injury, friendships, and jobs” (140). If we consider this statement, we can assume that Charlie values his relationships with other members of Maxwell and does not want to show publicly how he views racist acts. However, Charlie has serious issues of trust in his community and its religious devotion, but nobody knows it apart from his family.

Religion, racial injustice, and violence are at the center of Charlie's lack of belief in community values. In looking at the way Charlie discusses with his father, we quickly realize that his presence at the site of the lynching cannot be interpreted as a support to that heinous crime. To his father, he openly explains that in the South, each person uses his little power to take advantage of the weak and helpless below him. Charlie says, "[Y]ou can't be a Christian in the South. You can't be even if you want to, in the set up we've got down here. Everybody gouging his living out of somebody beneath him—singing hymns as he gouges" (*SF*, 355). Charlie's critique of Southern immoral practices also include his own father, a businessman whose employers always complain for not receiving a decent pay. But Charlie is not alone to think that the South is morally sick because even his sister Harriet, is of the same opinion. Henry's lynching has given her the opportunity to discuss racial injustice and violence with her brother. The two siblings have long stopped going to church because they do not see any sign of its positive impact on the people of the community. Restarting the conversation on the lynching that his father and his father have just let go, Harriet tells Charlie, "I've always wondered how a lyncher feels . . . Now I know. . . Every Southerner knows, of course. We lynch the Negro's soul every day of our lives. . . In all this town no one had the courage to try to stop it" (*SF*, 355). For Harriet, her entire community is guilty of lynching because she cannot imagine that someone has been savagely killed without anybody's protest. Charlie, who has been silent with his father, reacts to his sister's comment, pointing out that their father makes a difference in the entire community because he is the only one who tried to stop the lynching. To some extent, Charlie was proud of his father's action in front of the mob even if he deemed it risky. The fact that Charlie waited to be in the private sphere of their home in order to acknowledge that his father's action was commendable proves his fear of the power of the community. In these scenes, Charlie and Harriet serve as Smith's outlets for her critique of Southern wanting morals, the community's complacency with violence, and its lack of courage to denounce injustice.

For the two siblings, the South is in a morally despicable situation and people with good moral values have no place there. Charlie thinks that the only solution for someone with a sound mind is to run away from the South for fear that, as years go by, he might become insensitive like everybody else. He tells his sister, “Right now I have some ideas. . . If I stay here twenty years, I won’t have them. Now I see things without color getting in the way—I won’t be able to, then. It’ll get me. It gets us all. Like quicksand. The more you struggle, the deeper you sink in it” (*SF*, 356). In spite of his youth, Charlie understands the Southern racial problem and he wants to run away from its practices before his conscience becomes insensitive to repetitive violent acts against black people. He does not want to live a life where he will get used to seeing abnormal inhuman behavior as normal, and where racial violence is commonplace. He wants to preserve his clean conscience, and to do so, he has to flee from the South. This is where Charlie’s aspect of white double consciousness is very different from his father’s. Charlie would not express his opinion about the South so openly and honestly in public in front of Maxwell’s white community as he does here in the privacy of family home. He assisted to the lynching as an observer and the mob could interpret his presence among them as a support to their action. Internally, though, Charlie was hurt and it is only to his father and sister that he has the courage to express his deep and terrible feelings about the Southern racial violence. Moreover, he reveals that he consciously weighs what to do and say in public and what he should not. As an individual, the power relation is against him in comparison with the group. Therefore, he wants the group to believe that he is one of them while internally he feels frustrated and disapproves of its action. Refraining to denounce racial violence and injustice in public is a way for Charlie to show his allegiance to the community. Nonetheless, his attitude is not commendable because his silence sends the wrong message to the mobsters who interpret it in their own way. This is something that his father does not do in public because the community clearly knows where he stands.

Charlie's attitude is actually the embodiment of white double consciousness as a contrast between public and private image. Charlie's behavior can be extended to the entire Maxwell community because everybody apparently tolerates the heinous crime of the lynchers. We recall that Harriet wondered why nobody in the community was moved to oppose Henry's lynching. How could so many people powerlessly assist to a savage murder? It is for this reason that she asks Charlie if he can name the ringleaders of the lynching. For Charlie, the killers are ordinary people. Their own father's employees are among the lynchers. He stresses the fact that the most shocking thing in the entire situation is "the hate on folks' faces. Even on the women's" (*SF*, 357). Charlie's comment causes Harriet to remind him of the time when they went to Milledgeville where they saw a man who was in asylum and called himself God. When they let him loose, he wanted to assign everybody a place and came close to killing a woman who did not want to sit where he directed her to. So for Harriet, white folks are paranoid just like that man (*SF*, 357). Then she challenges her brother saying, "What would happen Charlie . . . if for one day here in Maxwell you and I would do the human thing? Just act human and sane and decent—for one day. Would you have the courage?" (*SF*, 357). Harriet's question is interesting because it shows that his brother and she do not live a sane/normal life. By extension, nobody in Maxwell does because he/she would definitely be in disagreement with the community.

Individual members of the white community are afraid of the entire community as a group. They always have to hide their true feelings from their fellow white men and women as a way of preserving their sense of belonging and loyalty to the community. That is the explanation to the fact that most people feign to approve violence in remaining silent in public. They bear the burden of a tormented conscience because of their lack of courage to confront the members of their community. Their public conduct is just a make believe that does not necessarily reflect their moral values. So many white people are torn between their loyalty to their community in showing that they

respect racial ideology, but at the same time, they struggle to do what is morally correct. Their double consciousness is similar to the black one only to the extent that they do not really reveal their inner feelings to the other members of the community as regard racial injustice. It is different from the black one in the sense that while blacks are locked in oppressor-oppressed relationship, white double consciousness is the one of people with the same privilege but whose open denunciation of the community's action would result in what bigoted racists would consider race treason. The analysis of some characters of *Strange Fruit* has, therefore, shown the complexity of white double consciousness. Through their attitude in public, white people may seem to be sharing their community's ideology, or rejecting it, but in private, they reveal their true feeling either positively or negatively. It is their behavior in the private settings of their homes that is more telling of their true standing vis-à-vis racial ideology and racial injustice. It is all the elements of human life including religion, class, economy, social relationships, and personal values that are tied to racial ideology, which in turn, contributes largely in the shaping of white double consciousness.

CHAPTER 3

BLIND JUSTICE IN *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*

It is common to see a statue of a blindfolded woman bearing balancing scales in one hand and a sword in the other in front of modern courthouses. In ancient Greek and Rome, the goddesses Themis and Justitia personified law and justice. According to historian Martin Jay, in earlier images of Justitia, the Roman goddess of justice, was not portrayed with a blindfold. It is only towards the end of the fifteenth century that Justitia started to be represented with a blindfold over her eyes. The impact of this new representation is what Robert Jacob calls “the most enigmatic of the attributes of justice” (qtd. in Jay 19). Jay points out that originally, the blindfold had a negative connotation in the sense that with her closed eyes, Justitia was unable to judge things correctly. He goes on to say that during the Middle Age and the Renaissance, “allegories of occluded vision, such as those of Death, Ambition, Cupidity, Ignorance, or Anger” were equally negative. But by 1530, Jay continues, “this [negative] image [of blindfold] was transformed into a positive emblem of impartiality and equality before the law” (20). For the judges who were in charge of distributing justice, “the blindfold, like the scales, came to imply neutrality rather than helplessness” (Jay 21).

Today, the concept of blind justice is commonly understood, at least on the formal level, that in principle, justice is fundamentally impartial and neutral. However, on the practical level, many people (including myself) are of the opinion that the impartiality of the law is still a hard to achieve ideal, most especially in racially divided societies like the USA. In his article, “Blind Justice,” criminal law expert Bennett Capers rightly wonders “[w]hat it means for Justitia to be blind in a society where justice, for so long, has been color-coded” (180). This is a crucial question for anybody who takes a critical look at American society because, if from the onset, justice is “color-coded” as Capers posits, the suspicion is that this kind of justice is biased and consequently, the very idea of blind justice becomes unrealistic or problematic.

In spite of its professed democracy, the United States continues to suffer from the lack of true blind justice because of its sustained systemic racial injustice. As sociologist Joe Feagin points out in *The White Racial Frame* (2010), the American “society was, in the founding era as today, a white social space within which black Americans and other Americans of color typically were trapped and thus had to submit to whatever exploitative and oppressive actions privileged whites might wish to impose on them” (x). As far back as slavery time, enslaved Africans were reduced to property status with no civil rights and were, therefore, at the mercy of their masters. The end of slavery and the Reconstruction period that followed did not really bring radical change to the free blacks’ legal situation. The Jim Crow era, one of the darkest moments of the history of the United States, was characterized by increased white violence and a continued denial of civil rights to African Americans. In the face of this extreme violence, to evoke the idea of blind justice was a far-fetched image that was disconnected from reality.

The novelist, lawyer, judge, and radical politician Albion Tourgée was among the Northerners who went South to support the Federal government’s efforts during the Reconstruction era. He wanted freed black people to benefit from legal protection and to ensure that the law was applied to all Americans equally. According to historian Mark Elliott, the writer of Albion Tourgée’s biography, “For Tourgée, the metaphor of color-blind justice referred to a transcendent goal of equality before the law, regardless of race” (35). Elliott goes on to explain that in a society that strongly believes in racism, Tourgée’s ideal of color-blind justice made him a “troublemaker” in the eyes of Southern as well as Northern whites. Southern whites saw Tourgée as their antagonist because of his campaign against lynching, disenfranchisement, and segregation. Northern intellectuals and so-called “social scientists” were frustrated because of Tourgée’s rejection of “racial inequality” (2). In 1896, Tourgée represented Homer Plessy in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, a case he lost and which instituted the pitiable “separate-but-equal” ideology. In spite of his losing the

Plessy case, Elliot notes that Tourgée's argument in front of the justices was very powerful, for he reminded them of the meaning of the blindfold that the Greek goddess of justice wears as a symbol of the impartiality of the law: "Justice is pictured blind . . . and her daughter, the Law ought at least to be color-blind" (qtd. in Elliott 4). Tourgée's evocation of a color-blind law simply means that he did not want a kind of justice that favored one race to the detriment of the others.

The debate of the impartiality of the law that Tourgée engaged with the justices then is far from being over. Today, any honest observer of the American society would have to admit that it fails to render justice in a fair and equitable manner. In the fictional story analyzed in this chapter, Nelle Harper Lee portrays the "color-coded" justice in the fictional small town of Southern Alabama (Capers 180). As a daughter of an attorney and a law-school dropout herself, Lee might have been familiar with the contradictions associated with the idea of blind justice as an ideal, and the actual practice of justice in cases that involved black people in the racially segregated Alabama of her childhood. The goal of my discussion of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is to analyze the gap between what is ideally expected of justice and what is really practiced in a racially divided society. Most importantly, I ask, what are the psychological and moral consequences of this justice, believed to be blind but which fails to be one, on the minds of the white characters of the novel? I argue that some aspects of white double consciousness are manifested through white people's responses to professed blind justice which is practically hard to implement. While some white characters seek justice for all as a matter of their moral obligation, their actions lack consistency to achieve this noble goal.

Like Lillian Smith, Nelle Harper Lee is another woman writer of the Deep South. Lee was born in Monroeville, Alabama on April 28, 1926; the town that critics consider to be the fictional Maycomb, the setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.⁸ Lee was the youngest child of a family of five children

⁸ Johnson (1994), Shields (2006), William T. Going in his forward to Petry's *On Harper Lee* (2007), and Petry (2007) refer to Maycomb, the setting of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as the fictionalized Monroeville, Alabama, Harper Lee's native town.

born to Amasa Coleman Lee, her father, a lawyer and a state legislator, and Frances Cunningham Finch Lee. Many critics believe that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is an autobiographical novel because, among other similarities, both Harper Lee and the fictional character, Scout, the narrator of her novel, are daughters of attorneys.⁹ Lee completed *To Kill a Mockingbird* in 1960, and J.B. Lippincott scheduled its publication for the same year. However, the literary critic Claudia D. Johnson reports that the novel's publication was "delayed until fall, when several book clubs [chose] it as a selection" (xiii). The novel won the Pulitzer Prize in April 1961, making Lee the first female writer to win this prestigious prize after 1942, when Ellen Glasgow won it (xiii). During the same year, *To Kill a Mockingbird* sold "500, 000 copies and has been translated into ten languages" (Johnson 13). In December, it won the "Brotherhood Award of the National Conference on Christians and Jews" (Johnson xiii). Then in 1962, the novel's movie adaptation premiered and "was nominated for eight academy Awards, ultimately winning four, including best actor and best screenplay" (Johnson xiv). *To Kill a Mockingbird* was mentioned among the best- sellers for eighty years, and was also cited among the books that have changed people's lives. Its never-ending popularity compares with the Bible (Johnson 14; Mezey 105; and Heinzelman 138).

To Kill a Mockingbird is set in the Jim Crow South, with its corollaries of despicable laws and practices. This popular novel was surely shaped by the turbulent civil rights battles and socioeconomic upheavals of the 1930s-1950s. Among these events are the Great Depression of the 1930s, the infamous Scottsboro trial of 1931, and what critic Claudia D. Johnson calls "the drama of racial change" of the 1950s (1). Most notable in this last category are Rosa Parks' bus incident, which resulted in her arrest and also triggered a bus boycott by the African American community of Montgomery, Alabama; and the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision that deemed school

⁹ In their respective criticism of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Moates (1989), Shields (2006), and Petry (2007) make a connection between Harper Lee's life and the characters of the novel and assume that the novel is partly autobiographical.

segregation illegal. Although I have no proof to confirm that these events might have impacted Lee directly, the fearless roles that African American women played to bring about change, must have impressed her. In the novel itself, Lee also alludes to the Holocaust and New Deal Agencies such as the Work Progress Administration (WPA) and the National Recovery Administration (NRA).

The 1930s were characterized by the great economic depression. While nobody could escape this economic crisis, in the South, African Americans were in a far worse situation because of their disadvantageous position as an oppressed people. On top of their economic worries and daily survival, many black males had to face the threat of lynching, mostly on false allegations of raping white women. In his book *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South* (1971), historian Dan T. Carter reports that lynchings were not a thing of the past by the 1930s. In those years, they even increased with “an average of twenty per year” (113). Lynching was well established as a method of social control over black Americans in particular, and its explicit sanctioning was nowhere better evidenced than by the fact that “[e]ven when officials rescued the accused from the mob’s vengeance, he seldom obtained impartial justice in the courts...As a result, lynchings were increasingly replaced by a situation in which the Southern legal system prostituted itself to the mob’s demand” (Carter 113). On March 25, 1931, nine young African Americans travelling on a train from Chattanooga for Memphis, were falsely accused of gang raping Victoria Price and Ruby Bates, two poor, white women in the neighborhood of Scottsboro, Alabama. This incident started a long trial known as the Scottsboro trial. For Carter, “the Scottsboro Case became almost a talisman, a symbol of the daily injustice Southern whites inflicted upon the negroes of the region” because it was a trial based solely on false allegations (135). It is not in vain that the African American investigative journalist, Ida B. Wells, who campaigned against lynching (through the reports she published in newspapers), referred to alleged rape of white women by black men as an “old thread-bare lie” (52). Harper Lee was only five years old when the Scottsboro incident occurred, but she might have consulted the archives of

the Scottsboro trial while she was writing her novel. Price was a poor and promiscuous white woman and Mayella Ewell, the alleged rape victim in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, fits the same social description. Because of the period in which *To Kill a Mockingbird* is set, and considering the taboos and dangers associated with interracial sexual relationships at that time, it is difficult to imagine that the Scottsboro trial meant nothing to Lee.

Historians and literary critics who have discussed the Scottsboro trial and its fictional representation in *To Kill a Mockingbird* agree that the actual alleged rape was racially motivated. Critic Claudia D. Johnson emphasizes the similarities between the two alleged rape victims in the actual Scottsboro trial and the fictional trial of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In *Mockingbird: Threatening the Boundaries* (1994), she writes, “In both the fictional Robinson trial and the real Scottsboro trial, the social class of the woman bringing the charges, as well as her lack of respectability, is at issue” (8). Most of the times, a black man accused of rape died an atrocious death of extrajudicial execution by lynching, burning, and mutilation. In *Alabama: A Bicentennial History* (1976), historian Virginia Van de Veer Hamilton shows the impact of lynching in Alabama when she points out that “Tuskegee Institute, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and other groups which kept the grisly record of lynchings in the United States estimate Alabama’s toll between 1889 and 1940 at 303” (88). Even if black people could be lynched for many other reasons, Hamilton notes that “[r]ape of white women remained the deadliest sin of which a black man could be accused” (88). As another example of the predominance of rape-related lynching in Alabama, historian Wayne Flynt reports that while the Scottsboro trial was not yet closed, three African Americans falsely accused of raping “Vaudine Maddox, the daughter of an itinerant Tuscaloosa County sharecropper” were lynched after “a half- dozen masked white men intercepted a sheriff’s car carrying the blacks to Birmingham” (503). In an environment where black people’s lives could be ended without consequence, white people who wanted justice for all might have been psychologically and morally

tormented. For black people and the few concerned white folks who yearned for fair society, blind justice, as ideally defined, was an empty concept. Thus, white double consciousness has its foundation in the challenges faced by the few concerned white people as they try to live up to their moral standards in a society where racial injustice is the norm. Morality and justice are based on principles beyond personal choices and they tend to be values that an entire society is supposed to uphold. But when the society at large makes it a habit to violate these high principles because of racial ideology, those who want to remain true to themselves are psychologically pressured to either compromise, in going with the crowds, or stick to their principles and unfortunately stand alone.

Set in Maycomb, a small Alabama town, in the 1930s, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is the story of the conviction of Tom Robinson, an innocent black man wrongly accused of raping Mayella Ewell, a poor white woman. The narrator, Jean Louise Finch, also known as Scout, and her brother Jeremy Atticus Finch, commonly called Jem, are the children of Atticus Finch, a prominent lawyer and widower, who lost his wife when Scout was only two years old. Scout is naturally short-tempered and she fights when provoked. One day at school, a boy taunts her that her father defends “niggers,” and once home, she asks her father about it. Atticus agrees that he is going to defend Tom Robinson, a black man accused of raping a young white woman and the trial is for the following summer. Atticus tells his two children that the judge appointed him to defend Tom and he has to do it. He warns his children that because of racial prejudice, people in Maycomb might ridicule them for his being Tom’s attorney.

On the day of the trial, Scout, Jem, and their friend Dill sneak in the courthouse and sit with Reverend Sykes, Maycomb’s black pastor, in the balcony, the only section reserved for black people. Although Atticus convincingly proves that Tom is not a rapist, but a victim of Mayella’s seduction, the all- white jury still convicts him. But instead of being satisfied with the verdict, Bob Ewell, Mayella’s father, promises to take his revenge on both Atticus and Judge Taylor for exposing his

already wanting reputation in front of the community. Shocked by the jury's verdict, Jem, and Dill lose trust in their community. Atticus tells them that the jury's decision was motivated by racism without actually using the term "racism." A few days after the trial, Tom is shot while trying to escape from prison. On Halloween night, Bob attacks Scout and Jem on their way back home, and Boo, their anonymous friend and neighbor rescues them, killing Bob with a kitchen knife. In agreement with Atticus, the sheriff, decides to cover up Boo's crime and tells the public that Bob died of self-inflicted wound after falling on his own kitchen knife.

Some critics have approached *To Kill a Mockingbird* from a historical perspective and placed it in the context of the Scottsboro trial, the great depression, the history of the civil rights movement, and the racial ideology of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s (Johnson, 1994b; Chura, 2007; Sandquist, 2007). Claudia D. Johnson's *Understanding To Kill a Mockingbird* (1994), for example, is a repertoire of the Scottsboro trial, the historical context of the Civil Rights Movement, and a parallel between these historical events and the story of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Similarly, in "Prolepsis and Anachronism: Emmett Till and the History of *To Kill a Mockingbird*," Patrick Chura claims that Lee's story is "an amalgam or cross-historical montage" because of the influence of the socio-historical events and ideological considerations of the time of its production (115). Eric J. Sundquist's essay, "Blues for Atticus Finch: Scottsboro, Brown, and Harper Lee," discusses the novel from the perspective of the troubling racist history of the South in connection with other texts that discuss interracial sex as the core issue of Southern racism. For Sundquist, this novel is an "allegory of [Southern] public philosophy of race relations," which stipulates that change in the South has to come slowly and not abruptly (80).

Lee's novel received and continues to receive critical attention both from literary, legal, as well as film critics. The oddity of this criticism, as Johnson notes, is that most of the critical responses come not from literary scholars, as one would assume, but from legal ones (17). A group

of literary critics focus their criticism on race, class, sex, and gender issues. For example, in *To Kill a Mockingbird: Threatening Boundaries*, Johnson argues that Lee's novel is "essentially a tale about a variety of boundaries—those of race, region, time, class, sex, tradition, and code—boundaries that are at time threatening to collapse, that are threatened by circumstances and community member" (31). In *Lovers and Beloved*, Gary Richards reads *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the same fashion as he did Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit* and *Killers of the Dream*; he argues that "To Kill a Mockingbird preoccupies itself with gender transitivity" (119). To prove his case, Richards continues that Harper Lee engages in what he calls the "violation of normative gender manifest[ed] through characters like Dill Harris, Scout Finch, Miss Maudie . . ." (119-120). Richards' point is pertinent because of some unusual attitudes in these characters behavior. For example, Scout acts as a boy and she is easily provoked into fighting, and her father is a widower who raises his children largely by himself.

Among legal critics, Atticus Finch's heroism in defending an alleged rapist has been one of the subjects of their debates. Given that the public opinion mostly accuses our contemporary lawyers of greed and immorality, most of the debates on Atticus Finch, the fictional lawyer, are on whether he is morally upright or not. For some, Finch is not a hero because defending Tom Robinson was not his choice, but a court appointment. Also, assuming that Tom Robinson has actually raped Mayella Ewell, then Finch must have had questionable ethics in defending a rapist. One such critic is Steven Lubet, who, in his provocative article "Reconstructing Atticus Finch," posits that Mayella Ewell is a true rape victim and interrogates Finch's ethics and motives because he believes that it is unacceptable to defend a rapist. Lubet misses the fact that Tom deserved the benefit of the doubt and his innocence or guilt would be proven only if he were granted a fair trial. Therefore, Finch had the moral obligation to defend him, though he could anticipate the negative outcome of the trial and had to deal with the white community's indignation. Other critics, such as Ann Althouse (1999) and Randolph N. Stone (1999), think that accepting a case that nobody else

would take is in itself an act of heroism on Finch's part, given the racial climate of that era. There is yet another group of critics who view Finch as the ideal lawyer whom those in the legal profession should imitate. For instance, in "Being Atticus Finch: The Professional Role of Empathy in *To Kill a Mockingbird*," the Harvard Law Review Association emphasizes the role of empathy as the key influential factor on many lawyers' professional progress and ethics. In her essay, "A Ritual of Redemption," the American Legal scholar Naomi Mezey writes that the "old Courtroom [of Monroeville, Alabama, Lee's home town] has become a museum" and "[o]utside the courthouse is a statue erected by the Alabama Bar Association in 1997 of the fictional lawyer Atticus Finch . . ." (105). The reification of this fictional character in the real world evidences Atticus' status as an exemplar of moral righteousness for the legal profession.

In a recent collection titled *Reimagining To Kill a Mockingbird* (2013), the contributors "revisit [the characters], their community, and the events [of *To Kill a Mockingbird*] through the interdisciplinary prism of law and humanities scholarship" (1). Austin Sarat and Martha Merrill Umphrey, the collection editors, argue that "in focusing on the film version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, [they] wish to emphasize how its visual dimension shapes the representation of ideological conflict" (5). The commonality of their essays, add Sarat and Umphrey, lies in their "suggest[ing] that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a text that exceeds and subverts the usual platitudes that have enshrined it as an iconic text in the struggle over American race relations" (13). In all this scholarship on *To Kill a Mockingbird*, nobody has critically read this novel as a representation of white double consciousness using the metaphor of blind justice.

MAKING SENSE OF BLIND JUSTICE: WHITE CHARACTERS' MORAL ORDEAL

The idea of "blind justice" makes people think of a legal system in which laws are applied equally and evenly regardless of individual differences such as race, class, or gender. In other words, blind justice refers to legal system that renders justice impartially to the parties involved. In "Racial

Disparities in Capital Punishment: Blind Justice Requires Justice a Blindfold,” sociologist Scott Phillips opens his article by emphasizing the impersonal nature that justice should have, but which it fails to have. He writes, “Justice is supposed to be blind –meted out according to the legal characteristics of a case rather than the social characteristics of the defendant and victim. But decades of research on race and capital punishment demonstrate that blind justice is a mirage” (1). Likewise, in his book *Sociological Justice*, sociologist Donald Black distinguishes two models of law, the jurisprudential and sociological models. “The jurisprudential model,” writes Black, “assumes [that] law is constant from one case to another. It is written and available to all, and the same facts result in the same decisions. In other words, law is universal, applying to all in the same fashion” (20). This idealistic and aspirational description of “blind justice” is, of course, true only in books. It is unattainable in an environment full of social and racial inequalities. The sociological model, on the other hand, “assumes [that] law is variable. It changes from case to case with the social characteristics of the parties” (Black 20). Put differently, blind justice does not exist in real life given that social considerations impact the application of law.

It is on the grounds of the discrepancy between what justice should be and what it really is that I define “blind justice” as justice that does not rely on evidence or facts, but which is based on certain arbitrary, written and unwritten principles. The most important layer I examine is the psychological and moral pressure that well-meaning white people feel while they know that the judicial system on which they rely for justice is at best flawed, and at worst, a perpetrator of most egregious crimes, the very injustices that their communities should seek to remedy. And yet, they shy away from the responsibility of fixing it. In the context of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, my analysis of blind justice will concern itself with the way in which legal justice blinds or inhibits the white characters’ ability to fight the system that causes them to have conflicted feelings about what the system is

believed to be and what it really is. Although some characters are men who try to defend and abide by their own moral integrity, their actions are not consistent.

Characters reveal their white double consciousness as they struggle to keep their moral values while also trying to accommodate the American democracy, which, in “The Ballot or the Bullet,” Malcolm X, defines as a “disguised hypocrisy” (26). These characters must be channeling their frustrations when they come to realize that, somehow, they support a judicial system that acquits or convicts people in spite of direct or corroborative evidence, and often despite the existence of more than a little reasonable doubt. Because racial ideology has distorted moral values, lawyers, jurors, and people in the attendance are left to suffer the psychological consequences generated by their awareness of the fact that no evidence will change the outcome of a trial in which a black man is accused of raping a white woman. In such an environment where the legal system is so obviously biased, the few white people who put their trust on a supposedly fair judicial system end up losing heart. But the majority of white folks who convince themselves that the biased system is good, although they know that it is not, adopt a position that make them support the legal system no matter how bad it appears to their eyes.

When people support an unjust system blindly, they indirectly encourage mob violence and extra-judicial practices (like lynching and other acts of racial terrorism) since they know that the law is on their side and it gives no real protection to people of color. However, because each human being has a conscience that either approves or condemns the choices and decisions that he/she makes daily, I want to pay a particular attention into the psychological effects of institutional racism and judicial injustice—responses that I argue are on the spectrum of white double consciousness—on characters like Atticus Finch, his children Scout and Jem, and their friend Dill. I will also examine other white characters, such as Dolphus Raymond, who lives with a black woman, Underwood, Maycomb’s only journalist, and the unnamed jurors for their individual responses to legal injustice.

ATTICUS FINCH SEEN THROUGH DIFFERENT LENSES

Atticus Finch is the character who has generated most of critical debate among literary and legal scholars. Some scholars like Ann Althouse, Randolph N. Stone, and Thomas, L. Shaffer, to name but a few, celebrate his heroism for accepting a task of defending a black man accused of rape. Other critics, such as Monroe Freedman, Steven Lubet, and Malcolm Gladwell, have virulently questioned his morality either for his defense of a rapist, or on the grounds of his passive support to a racist legal system. Still others came to rescue Finch from his detractors. Claudia D. Johnson observes that the “heated controversy” among legal critics decades after “the publication of Harper Lee’s novel, is [an] extraordinary confirmation of the ‘immortality’ and mythic stature of Atticus” (19). Umphrey and Sarat see him as “an embodiment of principled justice” (6). These critics present Atticus as an emblematic figure in the practice of law.

Ironically, neither those who celebrate Atticus’ heroism nor those who see him as a hypocrite are completely wrong. Atticus is a hero because when Judge Taylor appoints him (a white attorney) to defend an alleged black rapist, Finch knows that he will meet the town’s fury. Yet, he does not shrink from the case. Miss Maudie, his neighbor, considers him a hero because she thinks that people in Maycomb “are so rarely called on to be Christians, but when [they] are, [they]’ve got men like Atticus to go for [them]” (*TKM*, 247). In other words, Atticus is the only one who is courageous enough to do the dirty job for the rest of the community. Atticus wants people to see him as a responsible politician who is not afraid to shoulder his responsibilities. Robinson maybe a black “rapist” but as a state representative, Atticus has the duty to represent him as a member of his constituency even if he is a second-class citizen and an alleged criminal. Not only does he endure derogatory name-calling, his children are also affected by his choice to mount a vigorous defense for his client. Their classmates taunt them saying that their “daddy defend[s] niggers” and it is for this reason that Scout confronts Atticus, asking “Do you defend niggers?” (*TKM*, 85). Atticus replies,

“Of course I do. Don’t say nigger, Scout” (*TKM*, 85). This is the beginning of a conversation that defines Finch’s heroism and moral values. Explaining to Scout the reasons why he cannot drop Robinson’s case, Atticus says: “The main [reason] is, if I didn’t I couldn’t hold my head up in town, I couldn’t represent this country in the legislature, I couldn’t even tell you or Jem not to do something again” (*TKM*, 86). He wants his children to see his example of good moral standards and to imitate him. Yet, it is also the beginning of a long psychological preparation, or moral corruption, of his children since he coaches them not to become resentful of their white community, but to accept the outcome of Tom Robinson’s case. Scout’s next questions, “Do all lawyers defend n-Negroes, Atticus? [If they do], then why did Cecil say you defended niggers? ... If you shouldn’t be defendin’ him, then why are you doin’ it?” demonstrates her early struggle to understand the contradictory mores of her community (*TKM*, 86). Atticus seizes this opportunity as a teaching moment for his daughter when he explains the reasons why he accepted the job, but he also asks her to avoid provocations related to his service as Robinson’s lawyer, “You might hear some ugly talk about it at school, but do one thing for me if you will: just hold your head high and keep those fists down” (*TKM*, 86). Finch wants his daughter to understand that people will strike out at her because he is defending a black man, but instructs her not to react against the unfairness of their actions or beliefs. He knows that regardless of the defense strategies he adopts in Robinson’s favor, he won’t win.

For accepting Robinson’s defense, Atticus counts his opponents not only among Maycomb’s white community, but also among his own relatives. For example, when he spends Christmas at the Landing, his sister Alexandria and his brother Jack are also opposed to the idea of seeing him represent a black man. When Jack asks him what he expects from the case, Atticus replies, “It couldn’t be worse, Jack. The only thing we’ve got is a black man’s word against the Ewells’. The evidence boils down to you-did—I –didn’t. The jury couldn’t possibly be expected to take Robinson’s word against the Ewells” (*TKM*, 100). This conversation shows that Atticus knows

exactly how the jury will react to his plea in favor of a black man. With race as the key element, he doubts that he would convince the jury to acquit Robinson. “Blind justice” pre-assigns the roles of the culprit and the one of the victim in case of an alleged interracial rape. A black man’s word cannot find listening ears in an all-white jury with a white victim seeking for justice. The knowledge of this sad truth sickens and tortures Atticus given his position as a full member of this rotten system. When Jack asks him again what he is going to do since it is obvious that he is going to lose, Atticus simply replies that he could have avoided such a case if he had a choice, but the good thing is that “[he could] get Jem and Scout through it without bitterness, and most of all, without catching Maycomb’s usual disease” (*TKM*, 101). This is disheartening because it reveals that Atticus does not trust the judicial system in which he works. As a consequence, saving Robinson’s life is no longer his primary preoccupation. However, he thinks that, at least, the trial can be an early, practical experience for his children to get used to legal injustice. So, as a metaphor of white double consciousness, blind justice causes well-meaning white people to think of ways of protecting themselves and their children from immediate devastating psychological effects of rampant institutional injustice and racial prejudice, without thinking about long term solutions to the problem.

Another reason why some critics consider Atticus Finch a hero is that while the majority of white folks would twist their Christian beliefs to fit their racial ideology, Finch wants to make sure that he does what is morally right in the eyes of God. In spite of the taunts his family suffers because of the Robinson case, he tells Scout that he considers Tom’s case as “something that goes to the essence of a man’s conscience” for he “couldn’t go to church and worship God if he didn’t try to help [Tom]” (*TKM*, 120). In her book, *Children and Prejudice* (1988), psychologist Frances Aboud explains conventional prejudice when she writes, “[c]onventionally prejudiced people speak about conforming to the prejudice norms of their group in order to identify with or feel a part of that

group. Their prejudice consists of an external set of values that they have adopted from other people” (3). Atticus lives in a community where racial prejudice is conventional, but he singles himself out of the common conduct of white folks in Maycomb and more broadly, in the whole South. He declares, “[t]he one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience” (*TKM*, 120). Atticus’s reasoning here shows that even if he can give his white community the impression that he also tolerates institutional injustice, he is quite sure that he cannot fool his conscience because it will judge and condemn him for not doing what is right. In accordance with his conscience, Atticus’s conduct proves that he actually tries his best to make sure that Tom is not lynched before being given his simulacrum of a trial. On two occasions, he confronts the lynch mob, putting his own life in harm’s way to protect Robinson from an extra-judicial sentence. First, a mob goes to Atticus’ home one Saturday evening with the Sheriff to tell him that they want to have Robinson moved to the county jail to await his trial there. Atticus is clear enough to tell the Sheriff and the mobsters that Robinson may be going to the electric chair, but he won’t go “till the truth is told” (*TKM*, 167). Knowing that it is common for a black person to be kidnapped from jail and be lynched with a sheriff’s complicity, Atticus courageously decides to do a vigil at the jail door to make sure that the mobsters do not abduct Robinson during the night. When the mobsters come to jail to attempt to kidnap Robinson, Atticus stands his ground in refusing to move from the jail door and asks them to go home. This is a risky and heroic move because the mobsters can possibly hurt him in their attempt to gain access to Robinson.

Most importantly, it is during the trial that Atticus’ heroism and moral commitment reach their peak. Through his cross-examination of the prosecutor’s witnesses (Heck Tate, the sheriff, Mayella and Bob Ewell), he proves to the jury that they have no material evidence to incriminate Robinson, his client. He asks the sheriff if he called a doctor to examine the victim to confirm the rape charges. The latter answers, “I can tell why I didn’t. It wasn’t necessary, Mr. Finch. She was

mighty banged up. Something sho' happened, it was obvious" (*TKM*, 191). The sheriff's answer implies that since a black man is the alleged rapist, it was not necessary to clear his name. He has already been seen as a rapist simply because he is an accused black man in the South. Therefore, there was no need to seek a doctor's expertise to confirm the charges.

In a fair trial, even when things seem to look crystal clear, it is still imperative to show that the defendant's rights are protected through a confrontation of the victim's charges with actual evidence. The sheriff did not bother to take the necessary steps, but only relied on Mayella and Bob Ewells' accusations to decide that Robinson raped the alleged victim. He did not even try to ask for Robinson's side of the story when he went to arrest him because he was simply following the protocol of whiteness: he could not doubt of the words of his fellow white folks over a black man. The sheriff's deposition during the cross-examination clearly sets the tone of blind justice because racist ideology predisposes him to treat black males as rapists. As an officer of the law, he could have taken precautions to secure a fair trial for the parties involved in making sure that the allegations are accurate. But when Bob Ewell called him to establish the rape charges, he did not follow all necessary steps to secure the case. He simply saw that Mayella was beaten up and relied on the customs of his society: a black man suspected of rape cannot be innocent. During his deposition, the prosecutor asks how he found Mayella, the victim. The sheriff replies,

Found her lying on the floor in the middle of the front room She was pretty beat up. . . . I asked her who hurt her and she said it was Tom Robinson. . . . Asked her if he took advantage of her and she said yes he did. . . . So I went to Robinson's house and brought him back. She identified him as the one, so I took him in. That's all there was to it. (*TKM*, 191)

On cross-examination, Atticus proves that the sheriff failed to take the necessary steps to investigate or confirm the charges. The fact that he did not seek the expertise of a doctor says a lot about the

silent pact between white folks in case of a crime involving a black man. Perhaps, the sheriff's only credit in the entire Robinson's case is that he has, at least, kept him in custody till the day of the staged trial. The sheriff followed the rules of what Sociologist Joe R. Feagin calls "white racial framing." For Feagin, white racial framing is "an organized set of racialized ideas, stereotypes, emotions, and inclinations to discriminate. . . . The frame and associated discriminatory actions are consciously and unconsciously expressed in the routine operation of racist institutions of this society" (*WRF*, 25). The sheriff might have known from experience that Robinson was innocent, but he only followed the rules of the racial frame to preserve white privilege. Instead of being the protector of the law that he is supposed to be, the sheriff's attitude proves that he is the defender of a racist ideology.

Atticus does his very best to destroy both Mayella and Bob Ewell's arguments by publicly exposing the former as a seductress and the latter as a liar and the true assailant of his own daughter. Atticus proves to the jury that Robinson was not the author of Mayella's black eye, nor could he have choked her with his handicapped left arm. Atticus persuasively argues that Bob, who is left-handed, is the likely assailant of his daughter because Mayella's injuries were on the right side of her face. When Atticus calls Robinson to the stand, he [Robinson] explains that he entered the Ewells' house on Mayella's invitation to help her fix something. Instead, she unexpectedly hugged and kissed him and tried to seduce him to have sex with her, but her father stepped in before anything happened. Bob was angry with his daughter's behavior and called her a "whore." Robinson's counter-argument to the depositions of the sheriff, Mayella, and Bob Ewell, is embarrassing and shameful not only to the witnesses, but also to the entire Maycomb white community because of the myth that a white woman cannot fall in love with a black man. In his essay, "The White American Psyche—Exploration of Racism," psychologist Lloyd T. Delany argues that "the underlying psychodynamic of racism is the process of depersonalization," the manifestation of which is "a stark

denial of reality” (157). Most white folks involved in the Robinson’s case show this “stark denial of reality” because of their internalization of racial myths. In an ideal trial, this case would have been dismissed; but the blind justice of Maycomb has decided otherwise because racial ideology has paralyzed the jurors’ logical thinking.

Atticus’ final remarks and plea to the jury is another great example of his heroism and conscientious attempt to save Robinson’s life. He not only sins against his community’s unwritten conventions of whiteness in denigrating another white family for the sake of a black man’s life, but he also prepares himself to face the fulminating anger of the bigoted racists of his community.

Atticus’ final remarks to the jury are as follows:

Gentlemen . . . The state has not produced one iota of medical evidence to the effect that the crime Tom Robinson is accused of ever took place. I have . . . pity . . . for the chief witness of the state. . . she has merely broken a rigid and time-honored code of our society, a code so severe that whoever breaks it is hounded from our midst as unfit to live with She is white. . . . She tempted a Negro. She was white . . . she did something that in our society is unspeakable: she kissed a black man.
(*TKM*, 231-233)

Atticus reminds the jury that his client did not commit any crime he was accused of, but it is rather the victim of Southern social mores, mores that find fault only on sexual relations between black men and white women, while remaining silent on white men’s recurrent rapes of black women.¹⁰

¹⁰ White Southerners were strictly opposed to interracial intimate relationships in their effort to protect white women from black men and have put in place anti-miscegenation laws. Socio-criminologist J. Robert Lilly calls anti-miscegenation “a form of sexual racism that prohibited black men from having sexual intercourse with white women, but it did not attempt to stop the opposite—white men sexually exploited black females” (7). Unfortunately, this unfair code cost the lives of many innocent black men while nobody publicly or legally condemned white men’s recurrent assaults on black women.

Finch not only proves Robinson's innocence, exposing Mayella's misconduct and her father's lies, but also reminds the jury about the impartial nature of the law and the American creed of equality, saying:

. . . [T]here is one way in this country in which all men are created equal—there is one human institution that makes a pauper the equal of a Rockefeller, the stupid man the equal of an Einstein That institution . . . is a court. It can be the Supreme Court of the United States or the humblest court in the land, or this honorable court which you serve. Our courts have their faults, as does any human institution, but in this country our courts are the great levelers, and in our courts all men are created equal... In the name of God, do your duty. (*TKM*, 234)

Atticus has plainly played his role in reminding the jury the function and impartiality of the judicial system with clear examples of what it means to be equal in front of the law. But as I noted earlier on how Atticus felt about the Robinson's case, he knows that there is a gap between the ideal principles of the law that he has enumerated and their implementation in an interracial judicial case. He knows how race interferes with white people's reasoning powers and judgment, which is why he doubts the integrity of the court and jury system.¹¹ Atticus knows that most of the time, white jurors would choose not to follow legal principles if doing so would exonerate a black man accused of a crime against whites. His reminder of the jury's duty to uphold justice in a "trusted" institution that treats everybody undiscriminatingly is intended to put pressure on the jurors. To reach each juror's heart, he also evokes their moral responsibility before God as "Christians." Looking at everything I have mentioned so far, Atticus' actions prove that he is a true hero who wants to be morally responsible of his actions and who also wants to set a good example for his children. Given that Atticus is a fictional character, Lee created him to help her readers realize that in spite of the Southern racial

¹¹ In his book, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, and Unequal* (1992), political scientist Andrew Hacker states that "[r]ace is a tense terrain, where we often try to hide crucial truths from ourselves" (x).

cruelty and injustice, a few well-meaning white people were willing to do the best they can to be morally upright. They were ready to take risks in their effort of helping the oppressed black people.

But why do I agree with those who doubt about Finch's heroism? Atticus surely has many good qualities, but at times, his attitude and actions lack consistency. Journalist Malcolm Gladwell sees Atticus simply as a "racial moderate" in that he aimed only at "push[ing] for an informal accommodation between black and white" (qtd. in Umphrey and Sarat 4). Comparing Atticus Finch to the "populist" Alabama Governor James Folsom, Gladwell insists that "[a]ll politics being local, both Folsom and Atticus put personal ties above principle in order to accommodate, not to reform, the Southern white society" (qtd. in Umphrey and Sarat 4). Gladwell really has a point here. Atticus's attitude is, in fact, one of accommodation rather than reform. It is nothing less than a manifestation of white double consciousness. Atticus is courageous enough to take a case that will cause Maycomb's community to despise him. But his moral commitment is balanced with a good dose of racial ideology. While he does not like how other white people in the community treat black people, he does not condemn his community or engage himself in a series of concrete actions for true change. He loves Maycomb, Alabama, the South and its people more than anything else, in spite of its racial injustice. After explaining to Scout why he has to defend Tom, he comments, "This time we aren't fighting the Yankees, we're fighting our friends. But remember this, no matter how bitter things get, they are still our friends and this is still our home" (*TKM*, 87). Atticus' statement reveals a lack of true commitment in his fight for justice because he knows that those he opposes are his friends, and his indefectible love for his community and what it represents leads to a pattern of behavior that undermines any hope of bringing about social and racial justice in his community.

Atticus defends Robinson, but he also prepares Scout not to hate their racist neighbors or the culture of their region. In a conversation with his younger brother Jack, Finch confesses, "You know I'd hoped to get through life without a case of this kind, but John Taylor pointed at me and

said, you're it" (*TKM*, 100). This confession shows that taking Robinson's case was an embarrassment for him because he did not want to stand against his community in defending a black "rapist." Has he had a chance to avoid it, he would have done it. Similarly, while Jem sees the mob (that came to their house one evening and later went to jail to hunt Robinson) as dangerous people and potential members of the Ku Klux Klan,¹² Atticus's answer is, "[n]o son, those were our friends...I've never heard of a gang in Maycomb . . . Never heard of any Catholics . . . either. . . . Way back about nineteen-twenty there was a Klan, but it was a political organization more than anything" (*TKM*, 167). One might argue that Atticus is simply a protective parent who chooses not to tell his children the truth about the mob. But the truth is that his sanitized explanation falsifies history by denying the fact that the Klan was a dangerous white supremacist organization whose barbaric signature was terrorist acts of physical and psychological violence against African Americans.

On the other hand, Atticus's final remarks to the jury somehow contain the seeds of Robinson's indictment. He helped the jury cement their belief in white supremacy when he repeatedly told them that Mayella "has broken a rigid and time-honored code of [their] society"

¹² Formerly presented as a religious and political organization, the Ku Klux Klan was celebrated and idolized by its sympathizers for its so-called "civilizing mission in the South." In reality, The Ku Klux Klan is the oldest terrorist and white supremacist organization in the United States. According to historian Allen W. Trelease, the Ku Klux Klan was originally a social fraternity whose mission was to play pranks, but which shortly became a terrorist organization with the objective of preserving white supremacy (xi). The Klan originated in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1886. It was against the socio-political changes of the Reconstruction era and it was a negative response to the radical politics of the Reconstruction. Trelease writes, "for more than four years it [the Klan] whipped, shot, hanged, robbed, raped, and otherwise outraged Negroes and Republicans across the South in the name of preserving the white civilization" (xi). The original Klan operated only in the South and disappeared before the end of the Reconstruction in the 1870s. However, in 1915, the Klan new-look re-surfaced and its founder, "a self-proclaimed Methodist minister," writes Educator and Attorney J. Michael Martinez, "professed allegiance to radical Christian values in a manner that was absent from . . . the Reconstruction -era KKK" (x). It is also important to note that the new Klan had a nationwide organization and its enemies were not only black Americans, but also Jews, Catholics, and in the words of Martinez, "other people who seem to threaten traditional 'American' Values" (x). For More information on the Klan, see Trelease (1971) and Martinez (2007).

(TKM, 232). One might think that he was doing so to secure Robinson's acquittal. However, the jury can also interpret such a plea as a subtle assertion that Robinson's acquittal would encourage miscegenation. If Finch had progressive ideas, he would have referred to Mayella's advances as normal feelings of a woman toward a man and therefore, would have minimized the whiteness/racial aspect—just as he emphasized the fact that all men, regardless of their color, envy beautiful women.

Because of Atticus' lack of virulent protest after the verdict, Gladwell denies him the quality of a "civil rights hero," observing that [i]f Finch were a civil rights hero, he would be brimming with rage at the unjust verdict" (qtd. in Umphrey and Sarat 4). Gladwell is right, but Finch is not moved by the verdict of Robinson's trial because he was not expecting anything different. He knows exactly the workings of their judicial system that disregards any credible evidence and ignores the burden of proof in an interracial case. Atticus's white double consciousness is evidenced through his behavior here; he is morally at peace with himself as long as he is not personally involved in oppressive acts and does his best to teach his children to follow his example. But Atticus is not ready to criticize the community's actions, or be motivated to think of strategies that could bring about change. Instead, he teaches his children to accept the system because, after all, it does not work against them.

Atticus knows that the verdict is absurd to his innocent children because it makes Jem cry, but he also knows that it is a good preparation for the future. The children have witnessed firsthand racial injustice, and their innocence has been affected. Seeing Jem cry, Aunt Alexandria, Atticus's sister, blames her brother for letting his children attend the trial in the first place. Atticus's answer to his sister's observation reveals his position toward racial injustice: "This is their home, sister... We've made it this way for them, they might as well learn to cope with it" (TKM, 243). Notice that Atticus does not say that this experience will help the children fight for social change, but implies that it prepares them to tolerate racial injustice. They have to get used to these kinds of events in a

time and place where young children were taken to lynchings.¹³ In other words, Finch will always try to be morally correct at an individual level, but he has no plan and no commitment to reform the system. From Atticus' attitude, we learn that white double consciousness can also mean a personal satisfaction with one's moral principles without the will power to challenge societal injustice. Once a person is convinced that the best way to live in a society where racial injustice prevails is to do what is right at personal level and close his/her eyes on societal injustice, that person will teach, perhaps unconsciously, the younger generation to accept and replicate the system that they have entered. As a consequence, the society will remain the same because its foundations have not been shaken. It might have some well-intentioned people, but as a whole, it will not change.

Atticus is a good man but he is an ineffective militant for social justice and change. Although he disapproves of his community's racial injustice, he wants his children to understand the system and accept it as it is. It is the kind of explanation he gives to his son Jem who is confused by the jury's decision:

If you had been on that jury, son, and eleven other boys like you, Tom would be a free man. So far nothing in your life has interfered with your reasoning process.

Those are twelve reasonable men in everyday life, Tom's jury. But you saw something come between them and reason. . . . In our courts, when it is a white man's word against a black man's, the white man always wins. They're ugly, but those are the facts of life. . . As you grow older, you'll see white men cheat black men every

¹³ Between 1880s and 1930s, lynching was one of the most heinous, barbaric, and extra-judicial forms of violence that black Americans suffered in the hands of their Southern white executioners. Although lynching also claimed the lives of a few white moderates, the majority of its victims were blacks. Unlike the Klansmen who veiled their faces and launched their terrorist attacks on black targets under the cover of the night, lynchers exposed their faces because they had the support of other members of their communities who happily attended these events which they called, in the words of historian Leon Litwack, "Negroe Barbecue" (*Without Sanctuary*, 10). In time, lynching became a form of picnic where the members of the white community would bring their families (women and children) to the site of the crime, took photos of their victim and later sent them to other relatives as postcards. In his forward to *Without Sanctuary*, Congressman John Lewis calls the photographs of "hanging, burning, and castrat[ed] black bodies" an American holocaust" (7). For more information, See Tolnay and Beck's *A Festival of Violence* (1995), Allen et al.'s *Without Sanctuary* (2000), and Philip Dray's *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (2003).

day of your life, but . . . whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash. . . . Don't fool yourselves—it's all adding up and one of these days we're going to pay the bill of it. I hope it's not in you children's time. (*TKM*, 252-253)

Atticus's position is very clear here. He dislikes the racial injustice that he sees in Maycomb's "good people." But instead of telling the children that the jury acted that way because of personal and institutional racism, he uses unclear language of "something came between them and reason," without naming the "thing" in question. Far from blaming the jurors, he uses "sincere fictions" in referring to them as "good people" (*WR*, 13). He wants his children to stay away from personal exploitation of black folks, but he does not give them any suggestion on how to combat racial injustice. Instead, he wants them to accept it as a sad reality of life. His wish of seeing social change into a faraway future is another evidence that he is a passive supporter of racial injustice. He does not wish change to happen during his children's days. Thus, Atticus seems to be a "good" white man, but he is unwilling to see or participate in the South changing. As an advantaged member of an unjust society, he has found the painkiller for calming the discomfort of racial injustice and wants to pass that to his children. While he does not bear personal moral responsibility for the injustice of his community, Atticus' lack of commitment to change reveals that, somehow, he is satisfied with the way things are in his society. He does not see the need to reform his community or cause other members of the community to feel guilty about racial injustice. Through Atticus's attitude, Lee exposes some crafty white politicians' strategies of living in a complicated socio-political environment without giving the impression that they have a personal responsibility for the outrageous racial injustice. On the other hand, they continue to reap the material and economic benefits of the biased system while feigning to regret that they cannot help the situation.

One last thing worth mentioning about Atticus' double consciousness is the subjective definition of vice and virtue. In the scene after Bob Ewell's death, the sheriff does a little investigation on the crime scene, and realizes that Boo Radley killed Bob Ewell to save Jem and Scout's lives. The sheriff concocts a false story asserting that Bob Ewell died of a self-inflicted wound. Atticus, however, wishing to maintain a clean moral conscience, urges the sheriff to tell the truth even if it would make Jem the prime suspect. He tells the sheriff: "Heck . . . if this thing's hushed up it'll be a simple denial to Jem of the way I tried to raise him. Sometimes I think I'm a total failure as a parent, but I'm all they've got. Before Jem looks at anyone else he looks at me, and I've tried to live so I can look squarely back at him . . . if I connived at something like this, I frankly couldn't meet his eyes" (*TKM*, 315). Here, Atticus simply wants to remain true to the moral principles that he has inculcated in his children. He does not want his children to see him as a liar, but to always see him as their role model in whose footsteps they should walk. However, Heck Tate succeeds in convincing him to accept his story by evoking another morally complicated issue. The sheriff argues that it would be morally wrong to send Boo Radley to jail for defending vulnerable children:

There's a black boy dead for no reason, and the man responsible for it's dead. . . I've never heard that it's against the law for a citizen to do his utmost to prevent crime from being committed, which is exactly what he did, but maybe you'll say it's still my duty to tell the town all about it . . . Mr. Finch, taking the one man who's done you and this town a great service an' draggin' him with his shy ways into the limelight—to me . . . it's a sin and I'm not to have it on my head. (*TKM*, 317-18)

Importantly, the Sheriff's words reveal his knowledge of his role in the conviction of an innocent person. But it is also clear that it bothers him to see Atticus resist his proposal to lie to the public for what he believes is a good reason. It is almost as if the sheriff seeks redemption for his earlier

actions through his protection of Boo Radley from arrest. But this is yet another form of blind justice in that the sheriff and Finch decide to cover up a murder and acquit someone without even entering the court house. Given Bob Ewell's social class, and his intention in attacking Atticus's children, the sheriff and the lawyer overlook the law to spare the life of a good Samaritan out of personal interest, twisted and re-written moral code, and a subjective understanding of "sin." Though not rooted in the racial dynamics of Southern society, this is another example of white double consciousness. Here the class of the aggressor-made-victim and the intention of his killer become the elements that lead the sheriff and the attorney to twist the essence of morality. In this specific context, lying to the public (in order to protect the life of the children's rescuer) is interpreted as a subjective virtue in lieu of its objective meaning. Maybe Lee's message in this scene is that Southern law-enforcers had a tremendous power in such a way that they could twist the laws to fit their own objectives and expectations.

On a different note, the contrast between the children's reaction to the verdict with the indifference of Maycomb's adult population is another evidence of the lack of consistency in the actions of well-intentioned white people. Such a contrast helps understand how white society has succeeded to perpetuate racial injustice to this day. The white children follow Robinson's trial from a different perspective than the one of the adult jurors as well as the ones in the audience. Jem, Scout, and Dill carefully follow the pleas of both parties as well as the cross-examinations of the witnesses, the victim, and the defendant. First, Dill is offended by the way in which Mr. Gilmer, the prosecutor, treats Robinson. Gilmer is mad with Robinson for saying that he wanted to help Mayella Ewell because he felt sorry for her. In his logic, a black man should not pity a white woman. Gilmer uses the tactic of continuous intimidation to push Robinson to plead guilty for something that he did not do. Gilmer's tactics cause Dill to cry and Scout and he step outside. Their brief conversation reveals how societal influence slowly corrupts young children's behavior. Dill says, "It was just him I

couldn't stand . . . That old Mr. Gilmer . . . talking so hateful to him. 'Dill, that's his job.' . . . Dill, after all he's just a Negro" (*TKM*, 227). We see two reactions here. Gilmer's disrespectful and heinous tactics make Dill cry. Scout, on the other hand, thinks that Gilmer is only doing his job. There is also a problem on the way Scout sees Tom. We notice that Scout begins bit by bit to be influenced by societal corruption mostly from what she heard in school. She indicates that Tom is "just a Negro" (*TKM*, 227). Her attitude says a lot about the common practices of the society. Scout imitates something that her community does, but which is forbidden in her family. Although her father teaches her to be respectful to black people, she learns the opposite from the community: her statement implies that as a black man, Robinson should be considered as a lesser human being. As psychologist Kenneth B. Clark observes, "Each individual who develops in a culture in which racial discrimination plays a crucial role necessarily develops some degree of racial prejudice as a normal part of social learning (69). Because kids can easily internalize the mores of their society through imitation, it is apparent that Scout is, bit by bit, swallowing the poison of racial hatred despite her father's efforts to bring her up with good moral values. My point is that most white adults who want to keep some sense of moral justice are unfortunately the first ones to figure out how to accommodate their society's injustice. This is how they develop a form of double consciousness in which they avoid racial injustice on personal level but do not interfere with what other members of the society do. Once white folks understand that this the best solution to keeping one's conscience clean while also having good relationships with other people in the community, then all that remains is to help their children gradually adopt the same behavior. The result is a recurring cycle of societal injustice where some members claim not to be involved with racial injustice because they fool themselves in believing that they are fair and tolerant to everybody.

Adult conduct at the trial also helps young children to lift the veil off their community and see who its members really are. The verdict has caused Jem and Dill to lose faith in the entire

Maycomb community, whose adult members, they conclude, are morally deficient. Clark also points out that “[p]arents are merely one element of the complex pattern of social forces that influence the child’s racial, religious, and social attitudes. The development of racial prejudices in children reflects, among other things, the complexities of his family relationships, [and] the type of community in which they live . . . (27). Before Robinson’s trial, Jem was convinced that his community is made of “good” people. At the trial, he expected the “good” people among the jurors to acquit Robinson given the way his father cornered the alleged victim and other witnesses in his cross-examination. Jem enthusiastically tells Reverend Sykes, the black pastor: “[W]e’ve won it Don’t see how any jury could convict on what we heard.” But considering his experience as a black man, Reverend Sykes replies, “Now don’t be so confident, Mr. Jem, I ain’t ever seen any jury decide in a favor of a colored man over a white man” (*TKM*, 238-39). Jem is not entirely convinced because he naïvely believes the jury will consider only the evidence. He does not trust the experience of Sykes, who is an expert and theorist on whiteness. It is only when the verdict is read that Jem understands that the pastor was right. The verdict is absurd for the children because they realize not only did the jurors turn a blind eye on evidence, but also ignored their own conscience. They convicted Robinson not on the basis of what they saw and heard during the proceedings, but on the basis of something that the children did not clearly grasp. At home, Jem asks Atticus how could the jury act that way, the latter replies, “They’ve done it before and they did it tonight and they will do it again and when they do it—seems that only children weep” (*TKM*, 244). Atticus’s answer shows that he saw nothing extraordinary about the jury’s decision. It is a routine and it reveals adult people’s indifference to injustice. The adults are used to the corrupt ways of their society. Its blind justice has transformed true justice into a formal performance with a predictable outcome. So Atticus, who is used to the system, sees nothing out of the ordinary about the jury’s decision. The only people who are shocked with this kind of verdict are the inexperienced children. In this scene, Lee wants her readers to

notice the stark difference between the young children's innocent reaction motivated by reason only, and the adults, whose look at the verdict is based on their socio-historical knowledge of the community.

Moreover, the trial was a formal performance of justice that could have a double objective: (1) it can help the white community support their self-deception of living in a fair and democratic society, (2) because of the bad reputation that the South has in the eyes of Northerners, white Southerners could also use this parody of justice to prove to those they consider as "outside agitators" that in the South, blacks are well-treated (Little 111). Yet, for those whites with a sense of moral justice, this trial is an insult to justice and a torture for their conscience. The children's first reaction is crying because they see plain injustice and discover an abnormal conduct in adult behavior. Jem does not understand the community's satisfaction with the verdict, and he is dismayed. He openly complains to Miss Maudie, "I always thought Maycomb's folks were the best folks in the world, least that's what they seemed like" (*TKM*, 246). The Robinson trial disillusioned Jem and helps him see the true nature of the "good" people of his community. He cannot trust them anymore. Looking at Jem's face, Miss Maudie explains to him some of the absurdity he noticed at the courthouse. She tells Jem to consider what happened at the courthouse as a small victory because of the job that his father did. She also wants Jem to know that many other white folks did the background work to try to help Robinson. To show that things are not as bad as they appear, Miss Maudie adds that they knew that Atticus was going to lose but "he's the only man in [that] part who [could] keep a jury out so long in a case like that. . . it [was] a baby step, but it's a step" (*TKM*, 247). For Miss Maudie, the fact that the jury took hours to deliberate on Robinson's case instead of the usual few minutes in a case involving a black man, is a victory in its own right. Miss Maudie's reflection is a dimension of white double consciousness. The remorse that well-meaning white people feel in the face of racial injustice is revealed through Miss Maudie's reasoning and through

the fact that it took the jury long hours to deliberate on a seemingly easy case involving a black defendant. It shows the other side of their personalities that they hide when they seem to get on the bandwagon with their communities. The long deliberation implies that some of the jurors had to pull their hair to let racial ideology prevail over their personal sense of moral justice. They were definitely caught in a dilemma in trying to protect their whiteness in opposition to their oath to support and defend the truth in front of God and the law that Atticus, in his final remarks, reminded them to uphold. Still, the so-called background work done to rescue Robinson was inconsistent because, at the end of the day, he was convicted. However, Lee uses characters like Miss Maudie to illustrate the moral torture that well-meaning white people have to suffer as a consequence of living in a racially prejudiced society. It is a point that she clearly makes throughout the story through the reactions of some minor characters whose roles might be overlooked by the readers.

Unlike her brother Jem and her friend Dill, Scout is the only one who gave the impression of not being shaken by the Robinson's verdict. However, when Scout hears Miss Gates, her teacher, criticize Hitler for persecuting the Jews in Germany while praising the U.S. as a democratic and non-oppressive country, she is astonished and her reaction reveals that the verdict has also taught her something about her community. On the day Robinson was convicted, Scout heard Miss Gates express her satisfaction to another lady, saying, "it's time somebody taught 'em [blacks] a lesson, they were getting' way above themselves, an' the next thing they think they can marry us" (*TKM*, 238). While Miss Gates despises Hitler for persecuting the Jews, she exhibits blind justice by failing to scrutinize local oppression. If she were true to herself, she would condemn racial oppression in her own community as she did for Germany. That is why Scout wonders, "[H]ow can you hate Hitler so bad an' turn around and be ugly about folks right at home—" (*TKM*, 284). So here, blind justice has to do with the attitude of finding fault only in the actions of others without a sincere examination of one's own actions. While people were outraged and condemned Hitler's persecution

of the Jews, they were not courageous enough to denounce the fact that American “democracy” was also carrying out its “American holocaust” on black people (Lewis 7). White Americans needed to look themselves in the mirror to live up to the creed of their democracy in correcting the rampant injustice. As the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal points out, “The political creed of America is not very satisfactorily effectuated in actual social life. . . . The American Negroes know that they are a subordinate group experiencing, more than anybody in this nation, the consequences of the fact that the creed is not lived up to in America” (3-4). Because of the failure for white Americans to live up to the creed of its democracy, white double consciousness is, as seen through Miss Gates’s conduct, a selective denouncement of injustice without consistent actions in favor of justice for all. Through the fictional character of Miss Gate, Lee virulently criticizes the hypocrisy of American democracy and her Southern community in particular. DuBois’ “Souls of White Folk” might have inspired Lee to write this scene. Scout’s words about Miss Gate’s hatred for Hitler while forgetting that similar things were happening in America, perfectly echo DuBois’ observation on white Americans’ attitude about the Turkish massacres of Armenians and German crimes in Belgium and France during World War I. DuBois asks, “Can you imagine the United States protesting against Turkish atrocities in Armenia, while the Turks are silent about mobs in Chicago and St. Louis; what is Louvain compared with Memphis, Waco [H]ow could America condemn in Germany that what she commits, just as brutally, within her own borders?” (34). Lee may or may not have read DuBois’ *Darkwater* when she wrote this imaginary scene. Nonetheless, her creation of a character like Miss Gate is a way of reminding her fellow Southerners/Americans of their self-righteous attitude of pointing fingers at Hitler while forgetting their own inhumanity.

RESISTING THE SYSTEM

Apart from the characters discussed so far, Dolphus Raymond is a white man who embodies an aspect of white double consciousness similar to the Du Boisian one. Mr. Raymond

opposes his community's racial prejudice and does not trust its legal system, but not openly. He is a wealthy man from a very good family. While blacks and whites are supposed to live separately, Raymond lives with a black woman and his biracial children, which is an infringement on rules of segregation and interracial relationships. But Raymond also pretends to be a drunkard, providing justification for what they consider as an inappropriate conduct on his part. Raymond outsmarts the white community because he deliberately let them think so.

On the day of Robinson's trial, Raymond reveals his secret life to Scout and Dill. While sitting with black people during the court recess, he is drinking "out of a sack." Dill, who has been crying for Robinson's sake, is intrigued to see him, a white man, sitting with black people, and Scout replies, "Always does. He likes 'em better 'n he likes us, I reckon." When Dill observes, "He does not look like trash," he is told, "He's not, he owns all one side of the river bank down there, and he's from a real old family to boot" (*TKM*, 183-84). Scout and Dill have a chance to know the real Raymond and not the caricature that the town gossip made of him when they approach him and he offers his mysterious drink to Dill to calm him down. Thinking that he is being offered whiskey, Dill drinks reluctantly, only to find himself sipping Coca-Cola. Raymond openly tells the two children not only the truth about his alleged drunkenness, but also about his seeming weird conduct. He confesses that he is not a drunkard and explains the motives of his conduct. The italics are the children's questions,

Why do you do like you do?

Wh—oh yes, you mean why do I pretend? Well, it's very simple. . . . Some folks don't like the way I live. Now I could say the hell with 'em, I don't care if they don't like it. I do say I don't care if they don't like it, right enough—but I don't say the hell with 'em see? ...I try to give 'em a reason, you see. It helps folks if they can latch onto a reason. When I come to town . . . I drink out of this sack, folks can say

Dolphus Raymond's in the clutches of whiskey—that's why he won't change his ways. He can't help himself, that's why he live the way he does . . . they could never . . . understand that I live like I do because that's the way I want to live. (*TKM*, 228-29)

What is peculiar about this revelation is that Raymond does not open himself to adults, but to children based on the assumption that they see things differently. Scout is quick to observe that living like Mr. Raymond does is a dishonest practice, but Raymond's motives are valid. He does not want the other white folks of the community to feel like he deliberately violates societal mores in living with a black woman and having children. He knows that showing his true personality can result in his death because of the South's passionate commitment to white supremacy. Unlike Atticus, who has political leverage, Raymond is an ordinary figure who can be easily attacked.

Raymond performs an identity that leads the community to see him as an irrational person. The community has no clue that Raymond's performance gives him a wiggle room to live and enjoy the kind of life that he always wants to live. Between two evils, death and ridicule, Raymond has chosen the lesser one. Wearing the cap of an alcoholic is only an act to fool his community, an act he chooses because he understands the intentions and the mores of his community better than everybody who looks down on him. The survival tactic that Raymond uses here is not very different from the one of the black Americans. Raymond plays the fool like the black American, but he laughs when the target, which is the white community, bites at the bait and sees him as an abnormal person. Deep down, Raymond, like the black American, perfectly knows who he is. He has simply learned how to live with people who are hostile and intolerant to his personal choices and preferences. Raymond's conduct perfectly fits the double consciousness that Du Bois resisted and decried since he lets his fellow white folks define him while he also keeps a second identity for himself. One side of him outsmarts the white community into believing that he is always drunk because nobody will

hold an alcoholic responsible for his actions. The other side is the true him, who wants to live his life freely and in connection with blacks people that he loves, even if it does not please the white folks. This resistant use of white double consciousness proves that even white folks are victims of intolerance and they are forced to hide their personalities to please the majority. Through his resistance, Raymond actually turns the system against those who are determined to judge his way of life.

Listening to Mr. Raymond's motives is food of thought for Scout and Dill. Scout is impressed and thinks that Mr. Raymond may be a "sinful man" with "mixed children, but he [is] fascinating," thus, she wonders why he "deliberately perpetuate[s] fraud against himself" (*TKM*, 229). Scout calls Raymond a "sinful man" because she realizes that he has been lying to the entire community; or maybe because he lives a life that the white community considers unacceptable. At the same time, she thinks that Raymond is "fascinating" because his scheme is undetectable to the community. Apparently, nobody in the white community really knows who Raymond is. While the community judges him by the mask of a drunkard that he wears, Raymond has done a deep analysis of his fellow white folks and understands that they can do anything in the name of racial ideology. He devises an effective plan to keep his fellow white folks preoccupied with his false identity. This false identity that Raymond projects to the community is his bulwark in the sense that the other white folks only despise and label him as a worthless fellow, who needs to be left alone, instead of seeing him as a subversive person deserving death.

Scout interprets Raymond's behavior as a "fraud against himself," but she forgets to ask herself why Raymond acts the way he does and what he achieves in doing so. Scout is too young to realize that with the so-called "fraud," Raymond is able to control his community in hiding his true identity without openly offending its members. Telling them the truth about the kind of life he wants to live is intolerable in their eyes. Passing for a drunkard is a lesser evil and a good justification

of his “misconduct” than the confession of his deliberate will to live with a black woman. The latter will put him in a direct confrontation with his community and make his life miserable. Raymond’s methodical approach of wearing the mask of a “drunkard” helps him give his fellow white folks a motive to ignore him. In so doing, Raymond is not worried about his life. However, Raymond’s action or response to racial injustice is inconsistent, like the actions of all other well-intentioned white people. While Raymond’s approach helps him to live the life of his choice, it does not solve the core issue of the society. Rather, it allows injustice to continue. Through Raymond’s approach to racial injustice, Lee understates that anonymous white Southerners devised several tactics to live under the racial tyranny of their community members—and they never exposed their feelings of resisting the system to people with a hostile behavior.

What about the jurors as a group? What does the verdict they reached tell us about blind justice? The verdict of Robinson’s trial indicates that the entire trial was a hoax, a formality to prove that the laws protect everybody. In their introduction to *Law and the Image* (1999), legal scholar Costas Douzinas and historian Lynda Nead explain that “[j]ustice must be blindfolded to avoid the temptation to see the face that comes to the law and put the unique characteristics of the concrete person before the abstract logic of the institution” (3). This statement makes sense only in the abstract world. As I said earlier, the assumption according to which law has no color, class, or gender, is only good in the books and not in real life situations or the fictional representation depicted in the story under discussion. The unnamed jurors are the incarnation of an ideologically biased judicial system. They represent blind justice in its flagrant form and they are actually the instrument of white supremacy in the story. Robinson’s case shows that factors beyond evidential considerations have influenced the jurors’ verdict.

The description of the social classes in Maycomb reveals that there exists a tension between the class of poor white farmers who live in the woods, like the Cunninghams, and the destitute

“white trash” like the Ewells. The poor white farmers represented by the Cunninghams are dignified in the sense that they struggle on their own to make a living and do not constitute a burden on their community. On the other hand, the “white trash” represented by the Ewells are “people who live like animals” and who are despised because of their inability to support themselves. Atticus refers to them as “guests of the county,” whose economic situation never improves in good or bad times (*TKM*, 194). At the trial, the poor white farmers are the jurors because the narrator reports that “they all come from out in the woods;” and Mayella and Bob Ewell (the “white trash”) are respectively the victim and witness (*TKM*, 153).

The Ewells’ bad reputation is known in the entire county and other white folks call them derogatory names. Atticus, for example, says that “the Ewells had been the disgrace of Maycomb for three generations” (*TKM*, 33). Given the tension between the class of the jurors and the one of the victim, one would logically expect that the jurors of a biased system might be against the Ewells. However, in spite of their destitution, the Ewells have one attribute that sets them apart from the most decent black folks: whiteness. Scout emphasizes this particular feature when she jokingly talks about Bob, saying, “All the little man on the witness stand had that made him any better than his nearest neighbors was, that if scrubbed with lye soap in very hot water, his skin was white” (*TKM*, 196). This is his only and most valuable asset in a racist setting. Historian Mark Elliott reports that when Albion Tourgée represented Homer Plessy, he asked the Supreme Court to consider “whiteness” as a kind of “property” that favored a group of citizens to the detriment of others. Tourgée asked, “. . . is [whiteness] not the most valuable sort of property, being the master-key that unlocks the golden door of opportunity? (qtd. in Elliott 6). Applying Tourgée’s idea to the Ewells, we note that thanks to whiteness, they are granted a satisfactory judgment in a court of law because it is their only property that advantages them over Robinson. In *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness* (1994), historian David Roediger notes that “for all its insubstantiality race is a very powerful

ideology” which is “reinforced by material facts like violence, job competition, and segregation” (2, 26). In the Robinson case, race becomes an important feature that consoles the jurors that it is okay to sin against their own moral probity and rule in favor of a lying victim in the name of race. In spite of class enmity and their family’s bad reputation, in a segregated society, Bob, Mayella, and the jurors are allies because of their shared whiteness. This shared racial identity positions Robinson as a racial outcast in the eyes of the jurors.

In *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (2006), sociologist George Lipsitz points out that “White Americans are encouraged to invest in whiteness, to remain true to an identity that provides them with resources, power, and opportunity” (vii). This idea plays out very well in the fictional case of the Robinson’s trial. The jurors overlook the Ewells’ social position and their doubtful moral standing to concentrate on their whiteness, the common inheritance of both the jurors and the victim, which needs to be protected at all costs. In so doing, the jurors prove that they live by and strongly support racial ideology. Under the blurred lenses of racial ideology, the jurors see the alleged victim as one of them, and the defendant, an outsider and their common enemy.

The terrible thing about the biased jury is that it values whiteness more than human life. However, it is difficult for people who make this kind of choice to completely escape its consequences. It is a choice which robs mental peace to well-meaning white people who are forced to dwell on double thoughts in always comparing what is done to what should be done. Atticus emphasized this sad truth when he talked to his brother Jack, and his son Jem on two occasions. Way before the trial, he told Jack, “The jury couldn’t be possibly expected to take Tom Robinson’s word against the Ewells;” and after the trial, he explained to Jem, “Tom is a colored man, Jem. No jury in this part of the world’s going to say, we think you’re guilty, but not very, on a charge like that. It was either a straight acquittal or nothing (*TKM*, 100, 251). Atticus’s words show that in the Southern setting, justice cannot be served because the regional customs blind its core principles of

impartiality and neutrality in an interracial case. A black man cannot win a case against a white man/woman. Clearly, racial ideology works against the jurors' reasoning powers in the sense that they lose their moral probity, sense of justice, and even the ability to see the humanity of someone deemed Other. This lack of morality leaves psychological wounds on people like Atticus. In *Systemic Racism*, Feagin informs us that "[p]sychiatrists use the term "alexithymia" to describe individuals who are unable to understand the emotions of, and thus empathize with, other people" (27-8). Hernán Vera and he extend this concept in their discussion of "social alexithymia." Feagin explains, "[e]ssential to being an oppressor in a racist society is a significantly reduced ability, or inability, to understand or relate to the emotions, such as recurring pain, of those targeted by oppression" (28). Most of the jurors and many other people of Maycomb have reached this level where their reasoning powers, their feelings, and actions are subverted and/or ruled by racial ideology. So to evoke the equality of all before the law is nothing other than a declaration of good intentions. The jury indicts Robinson not because of irrefutably proven evidence, but because the racial ideology has formatted the minds of its members in blinding their ability to uphold the law, their moral conscience, and even their own humanity.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to think that the anonymous jury reached the verdict without any difficulty or remorse. According to the narrator, a white jury usually takes only "a few minutes" to reach a verdict in a case involving a black defendant (*TKM*, 254). Yet, the jury took a few hours to decide on Robinson's life. This may be an indication that at least one of the jurors was morally torn about sentencing someone on circumstantial evidence rebutted by both the defendant and his counsel. According to Finch, Cunningham, the father of Scout's classmate, was the man who might have had the jury deliberate longer than usual. Atticus states, "If we've had two [Cunninghams] of that crowd, we'd had a hung jury" (*TKM*, 255). The time spent on the deliberation is a hint that the jurors did not easily come to an agreement even if they let racial ideology prevail

over the truth in the end. The deliberation time is also an indication that someone or some people on the jury were psychologically divided in trying to choose between their moral obligation and the powerful racial ideology. In Yaka culture, an old saying stipulates that it is difficult for a calabash that contained hot pepper to lose all its spicy scent even after it has been thoroughly cleaned. In the case of the jurors, we notice that even after racial ideology has completely brain-washed and turned reasonable human beings into brutes, there always remains a snippet of moral conscience in some people. This snippet reveals itself here through the indecision of the jury to hurriedly indict Robinson.

Robinson's indictment and subsequent death also triggered a belated moral awakening in the life of Maycomb's only journalist, Mr. Underwood. His attitude before and after the trial also helps continue the argument that the lack of consistency in well-intentioned white people's action is an aspect of white double consciousness. Like most of the white people in Maycomb, Underwood is resentful of black folks as a part of the town's racial culture. However, he respects Atticus even if the latter has to defend a black man, and he proves himself to be his strong ally. When Atticus barred the front door of jail in his effort of preventing the mob from getting Robinson, Mr. Underwood hid in his newspaper's office with his gun, ready to pull the trigger on whoever dared to assault the lawyer. It was also rumored that Underwood "rarely gathered news" because he never really left his office and that "he made up every edition . . . out of his own head and wrote it down on the linotype" (*TKM*, 168). But because he attended the trial and kept notes, he decides to write a scathing editorial after Robinson was killed while attempting to escape. As Scout recollects it, Mr. Underwood,

[W]as at his most bitter, and he couldn't have cared less who cancelled advertising and subscriptions . . . [He] didn't talk about miscarriage of justice, he was writing so that children could understand. Mr. Underwood simply figured out it was a sin to kill

cripples, be they standing, sitting, or escaping. He likened Tom's death to the senseless slaughter of songbirds by hunters and children (*TKM*, 276)

Taking Robinson's side and condemning his community at the risk of losing business is a courageous act, which constitutes an aspect of white double consciousness. Underwood, who always stands by the community in racial matters, reveals another side of his personality. His editorial is an externalization of his guilty conscience because in denouncing his community, he positions himself as a different person and this can give him peace. Yet, he feels sorry for Robinson not because he is a human being like himself, but because he is handicapped, which implies that Underwood would have probably remained silent otherwise.

In the eyes of the other white people, Mr. Underwood has judged them severely. After reading the part of the editorial above, Scout, for example, says to herself that Tom was given a "due process of the law," and was "tried openly and convicted by twelve good men" and her father tried his best to help him (*TKM*, 276). But as she continues reading, she hits Mr. Underwood's bottom line, which reads, "Atticus has used every tool available to free men to save Tom Robinson, but in the secret courts of men's hearts Atticus had no case. Tom was a dead man the minute Mayella Ewell opened her mouth and screamed" (*TKM*, 276). Underwood does not stress the literal killing of Tom through shooting, but his figurative death, which happened on the day he was wrongly accused of rape. So Underwood does not blame the actual shooters, but rather the jurors, and by extension, all whites in Maycomb who denied justice to Robinson because of his race. Robinson's death is an epiphany for Underwood because it makes him realize that he has been supporting an immoral cause. In denouncing the community's denial of a justice without fearing the consequences of retaliation from his fellow white men, Underwood fulfills a moral obligation. But he could have used the power of his pen to agitate people against a mistrial before the irreparable happened. It is white

double consciousness that held his tongue in speaking against his community's behavior until Robinson's death.

Considering that Underwood's editorial received a negative reaction from the entire Maycomb white community, then it is safe to conclude that his action is morally uplifting for himself. Psychologist Kenneth Clark asserts that "the moral quandary and inner stress that racial prejudices impose upon members of the dominant group in a democratic society may express themselves in devious and peculiar forms. Some individuals may express their conflict and guilt by becoming converted to the cause of racial justice" (80). Mr. Underwood has long lived under a morally stressful environment because of racism, but he tries to free himself in taking Robinson's side with a single act of denouncement. Still, it is an inconsistent action because it comes too late to save a wasted innocent life or to change his community's view on race. Nonetheless, Lee's message is quite clear and it has a glimmer of hope. She probably wants her readers to know that some members of dominant group of a racist society cannot always continue to support racial injustice. The course of a single event is sufficient enough to cause them to change their mind and denounce a system they have supported for a long time.

My analysis of *To Kill a Mockingbird* has shown that Harper Lee uses a varied cast of white characters with different psychological responses to and approaches on how to cope with the issues of racial injustice under its legal aspect. The different behavioral responses that Lee provides through her representation of Maycomb's white community are proofs of the less discussed negative effects of racism on white folks. Far from being random choices, these token behaviors show the difficulties of living with a racially biased legal system which pretends to treat everybody equally. Through my discussion of blind justice, my main objective was to prove that Lee created fictional characters to address a big social issue. Through these fake Southerners, we understand that some well-meaning white people who are satisfied with their personal moral values fail to consistently

pursue individual or social change in their communities. This attitude of finding satisfaction in one's personal moral values is an aspect of white double consciousness because once these people convince themselves that their personal conduct is beyond reproach, they don't care about the biased system and don't figure out ways of changing it. Rather, they prefer only to instill their professed good moral values in their children, while instructing them to refrain from criticizing the system and their community. This is like sending mixed messages to the younger generation instead of consistently motivating them to take corrective action against the system when they reach their majority. As a result, children are prepared only to reproduce the system of injustice and find themselves caught up in a vicious circle. Because of the lack of consistency in the actions in the so-called well-meaning white people, white double consciousness emerges as a combination of personal moral values and an accommodation of racial injustice. Well-meaning white folks succeed to relieve themselves of the community's burden of racial injustice thanks to their self-proclaimed "good" moral behavior, but they consider their community's evil as something beyond their control; they learn to accept and live without fighting against it.

Another category of good white people simply chooses not to openly oppose their communities and adopt the purely Du Boisian double consciousness in performing dual false identities. In using double identities, they succeed to live the lives of their choice without attracting public scrutiny on themselves. However, neither people in the first category nor the ones in the second use the right approach for the event of a truly democratic and fair society. In "A Talk to Teachers," James Baldwin eloquently stresses the obligation that citizens have in challenging societal mores if they expect their societies to change. "What societies really, ideally, want," notes Baldwin, "is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight—at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is

the only way societies change” (326). The story of *To Kill a Mockingbird* lacks that kind of responsible people who are ready to take risk to the end so that the society can change. It only has people with limited inconsistent actions which result in the continuation of the same old society.

CHAPTER 4

THE STRUGGLE FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS AND NOSTALGIA FOR STATUS QUO

I have addressed two different aspects of white double consciousness in my previous chapters. In chapter two, through the analysis of Lilian Smith's *Strange Fruit*, I argued that white double consciousness is not only a conflict between public and private image, but also a power relation between the individual and the group. I supported this claim through the analysis of the lives of characters like Tracy Deen, Tom Harris, and his son Charlie, whose public images are in contradiction with their private ones. Clearly in those cases, the power of the community influences the decisions of individual people. In chapter three, my discussion of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* led me to argue that white double consciousness is a combination of assumed good personal moral values and an accommodation of racial injustice because of the so-called well-meaning white people's lack of consistency in their actions against racial injustice. I mainly used Atticus Finch as an illustration of this inconsistency. This chapter is a discussion of another aspect of white double consciousness through the analysis of Geraldine Brooks's *March*. I argue that white double consciousness is a sustained struggle for righteousness in spite of occasional nostalgia for a racial status quo. Whenever the occasional contemplation of status quo occurs, white double consciousness becomes a negative feeling/force that causes one to regret that he/she has to pay a personal higher price for actions done in good faith for the sake of righteousness.

The common attribute of the white characters analyzed in the three novels that constitute the core of this dissertation is their self-proclaimed drive or stated intention to be morally correct. These white characters feel obliged to combat racial injustice, but as I have shown in the previous chapters, their attitudes about, and while in the fight against racial injustice, are ambivalent. Although these well-intentioned fictional white people disapprove and denounce racial injustice, their overall actions show either a discrepancy in what they say in public and what they do in private,

or simply a lack of real commitment to fight against it. In this chapter, John March, the protagonist of the novel, and Marmee March, his wife, are relentlessly engaged in fighting racial injustice. They see slavery as an immoral institution. As we shall see, they emulate the spirit of one of the fiercest abolitionists, John Brown, who considered the struggle for freedom as a moral obligation regardless of its cost. Because of John Brown's strong influence on both John March and his wife, I want to devote a few paragraphs to his impressive and tenacious fight against slavery. Then I will show how his character, shaped March and his wife's determination to fight against racial injustice.

JOHN BROWN: A *PROVOCATEUR*

Besides slavery and Southern secession, John Brown is often portrayed as an agent *provocateur* of the Civil War, a role that biographers and historians attribute to him after he raided the federal armory at Harpers Ferry on October 16, 1859. Talking about Brown's attack on Harpers Ferry in his article "John Brown's Body: Elites, Heroic Embodiment, and the Legitimation of Political Violence," sociologist Gary Alan Fine writes, "At first, the responses to the raid were uniformly negative, attacking Brown's fanaticism; the raid seemed literally crazed" (229). Immediately following Brown's attack on the federal government's armory, the majority of Americans took John Brown for a lunatic. But Fine adds that "Brown's supporters [in the North] were well-placed to reconstruct his image" (230). "Just as Harpers Ferry gave Northern abolitionists strength," continues Fine, "it did the same for Southern disunionists. Here was the evidence that Northerners, in the guise of the 'satanic' John Brown, were prepared to attack them" (235). The point is that Brown's deeds somehow gave both, the U.S. government, the protector of the Union, and the Southern secessionists, a motivation to go to war against each other. By the same token, American Civil War expert, Tony Horwitz also points out that Brown's raid caused people in the North and South to choose their sides saying that "Harpers Ferry wasn't simply a prelude to secession and civil war. In many respects, it was a dress rehearsal" (5). In other words, Brown's attack exasperated the already

growing tension between the North and the South. “On the subject of Brown,” continues Horwitz, “there was no middle ground. North and South, citizens picked sides and braced for conflict that now seemed inevitable” (5). William Lloyd Garrison, who was a pacifist abolitionist, disapproved of Brown’s bloody attack. Garrison later recanted his position because of the stormy debates that resulted from Brown’s actions.

Biographers and historians also have different opinions on Brown’s personality and actions. Some believe that his actions were not well-thought and well-planned, but they were rather the result of his insanity. In *Slavery and Freedom* (1982), historian Willie Lee Rose addresses the controversy between the scholars who have written Brown biographies. She points out that the only point on which they agree is “the Governor of Virginia’s . . . mistake in allowing [Brown’s] execution,” which granted him his martyrdom (127). Rose continues that other scholars think that “the governor’s mistake was tactical. He missed the opportunity to excuse Brown on grounds of insanity,” the consequence of which would have been a denial of his martyrdom (127). Rose simply implies that if Henry A. Wise concluded that John Brown was a psychopath and therefore could not be held responsible for his actions, that decision could have avoided Brown an execution. This, in turn, would have led people not to see Brown as a hero. But in ordering Brown’s execution, the governor granted him an undeserved status.

Some other historians explain that Brown’s actions were justified and that is why many people consider him as a martyr whose memory should be celebrated. In his article, “Emerson, Thoreau, and Brown,” historian Gilman M. Ostrander documents the details of the three men’s relationships and explains why Emerson and Thoreau were fervent supporters of Brown. Ostrander writes, “Emerson and Thoreau were important to the John Brown myth not only as character witnesses but also as the foremost proponents of the rationale by which Brown and his defenders justified his most hideous acts—that any atrocity is justified if the motives of the doer are pure”

(714). In other words, Emerson and Thoreau defended Brown because they understood his philosophy better than anybody else. So, Brown had a clear idea of what he was going to do. His actions were deliberate and had a justification, but they were not the result of a so-called insanity as many of his haters assumed.

In his book *John Brown, Abolitionist* (2005), which he calls a “cultural biography,” historian and literary critic David S. Reynolds places Brown’s action in the context of antebellum American slavery, but uses a contemporary term and calls him a “terrorist.” Reynolds notes that “Brown, concerned solely with ending slavery, resorted to terrorist tactics to disrupt the South’s peculiar institution. . . . [H]e sought to purge America of its greatest injustice through military action” (11). Reynolds’ reference to Brown as a “terrorist” does not have a negative meaning here, because in the conclusion of his book, he observes that “Brown’s violence resulted from America’s egregious failure to live up to one of its most cherished ideals—human equality. To expose this failure, Brown exercised the right of the individual to challenge the mass” (505). Put differently, Brown’s conduct was morally justifiable. It is on this moral justification of violence as a necessary means to end the injustice of slavery that the fictional character, John March, though a pacifist, embraced the ultimate purpose of John Brown’s philosophy. It is for the same reason that his wife Marmee encouraged him to support John Brown financially. When March eventually decided to serve as chaplain for the Union Army during the Civil War, Marmee also supported that decision. The historical novel as a genre makes it possible for the writer to create an interaction between the historical figure like John Brown and the fictional characters March and Marmee.

Even though some critics¹⁴ have a negative opinion on the historical novel as a genre, *March* is a very successful one thanks to the author’s effective integration of historical happenings in her

¹⁴ According to Cristina Mihaescu, some critics call the historical novel a “hybrid genre” for its blending of historical facts with imaginary accounts (84). Others are concerned about the writer’s difficulty “to find a balance between the historical elements and characters,” and still others consider the temporal distance between the occurrence of the events

fictional story. Geraldine Brooks published it in 2005 as a “pre-quel” to Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*. The story is told from Mr. March’s perspective, “the absent father from Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*” (“Introduction to *March*,” 2). To create the character “March,” which she based on Louisa May Alcott’s father, Bronson Alcott, Brooks consulted Bronson Alcott’s “two-volume memoir by Franklin B. Sanborn and William T Harris, and a 1937 biography by Odell Shepard” (*March*, 276). She also consulted the journals and letters of Emerson and Thoreau who referred to Bronson Alcott as their “mentor,” and researched the American Civil War in order to create a story that really mimics the scenes of the actual war. *March* is the story of Captain John March, a Union army chaplain, who sends false letters to his wife to avoid telling her the sad truth of the battlefield. The horrible things that March experiences in the battlefield will later on seriously affect him morally and psychologically.

As a young man, March was a peddler in Virginia in 1841, and made the acquaintance of Augustus Clement, a slaveholder, and Grace Clement, his literate slave with whom he felt in love. Peddling helped March make a fortune and marry Margaret Day, also known as Marmee, the daughter of an abolitionist. March later met John Brown and embraced his philosophy of eradicating slavery. However, March lost his fortune to Brown after investing in his abolitionist project. It is

and “the writing moment,” as a problem (84). The Russian journalist Osip Senkovsky, for example, categorically dismisses the historical novel, saying: “I don’t like historical novels. I prefer morals. It offends me to take a bastard in my hands: the historical novel is, in my opinion, a bastard son without family or tribe, the fruit of history’s flagrant adultery with imagination. I insist on purity of morals and would rather deal with legitimate children of either history or imagination” (qtd. in Mihaescu 82). Although the detractors of the historical novel have some legitimate observations, it does not mean that the genre is a failure, because it has its merits since its emergence in the nineteenth century. As a supporter of the genre, Mihaescu points out how the historical novel helps to put present and past events in perspective when she writes that “at the intersection between history and literature, the historical novel adds on vividness and emotion to the simple historical accounts of the same events, inviting the reader to reflect upon time passing by and providing him a double perspective: upon the past that he interprets on the basis of the information he has in the present and the present as a result of the past” (86). What Mihaescu stresses here is the fact that the present events of a given society always include traces of that society’s past. The historical novel is, therefore, a good example of the special relationship between the past and present. “History and literature are,” continues Mihaescu, “reunited in the historical novel; thus, a constructive and pleasant dialogue between past and present is created and past experience is actualized” (86). Brooks does exactly that in *March* in giving her readers a vivid depiction of the Civil War and its causes. The readers can then draw their own conclusions on the consequences and lessons learned from the tragic events of the Civil War on American society. Winning the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for the publication of *March* is an eloquent refutation of the accusation that the genre is a fraud.

also the belief in Brown's philosophy that led March to go to seek a position in the Union troops as a chaplain in his effort to see the end of slavery.

March did not stay long as a chaplain at the battlefield because the commanding officer did not appreciate his abolitionist sermons. It is for this reason that he found himself with a new mission of starting a school for the ex-slaves in Oak Landing—a plantation that belonged to the wife of a former Confederate colonel, but which she leased to Ethan Canning, a young attorney from Illinois. A few weeks after starting the school, a Confederate guerrilla attacks Oak Landing, kills an old black cook, and kidnaps Canning with his field hands. Later, in an attempt to rescue the captives, Jesse, a field hand, is killed and March is shot and subsequently becomes very sick. He is later taken to Blank Hospital in Washington, DC, where Grace now works as a nurse with Dr. Hale. When March becomes convalescent, he feels guilty for not completing his job of helping the newly freed blacks and returns home a changed man with sad feeling of a failed mission.

The analysis of *March* will show that unlike the characters in the first chapter, who have conflicting public and private images, or the ones in chapter two who lack consistency in their actions against racial injustice, John March and his wife Marmee, the major characters of *March*, are genuinely devoted to the cause of righteousness. They do not allow their whiteness or white privilege to obscure their conscience or moral duty. Through their actions and sustained effort for righteousness, March and Marmee act on their belief that they and enslaved people share the same humanity. March and his wife are ready to take any risk possible and sacrifice their material and financial means, or even their very lives, to help enslaved people become free. But at times, they experience momentary nostalgia. March and his wife believe that slavery is morally wrong; consequently, they feel morally obliged to fight against it with whatever means they deem necessary. Nonetheless, in spite of their moral obligation and determination, they are still vulnerable to the negative consequences of their actions and that is when they experience nostalgia.

What do I mean by nostalgia and how do I use it here? The concept “nostalgia” has its genesis in the medical field and was created by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer towards the end of the seventeenth century. Hofer considered it a pathological condition (Wilson 21; Fuentenebro and Valiente 405; Silva 124). As psychologists Filiberto Fuentenebro de Diego and Carmen Valiente Ots explain, “a Greek alternative to the German term *Heimweh* was needed, so Hofer gave a new name to the state of moral decay arising from a forced separation, when an individual is torn from the social and geographic environment of his childhood and youth” (405). He came up with a compound Greek word “*Nosos*, return to the native land; and *Algos*, suffering or affliction. [Thus], nostalgia describes the melancholy that originates from the desire to return to one’s homeland” (Hofer qtd. in Fuentenebro and Valiente 405). In her book *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (2005), social psychologist Janelle L. Wilson writes that Johannes Hofer used the term “nostalgia” to refer to “the extreme homesickness that Swiss mercenaries experienced” (21). She goes on to explain that for Hofer, nostalgia “was a disorder of the imagination. Those suffering from it fantasized about home, leaving no space for thoughts about the present” (21-22). In other words, those who suffered from nostalgia were not mentally prepared to accommodate to their new environment and experience. However, the term nostalgia did not keep the same meaning through the centuries. By the late nineteenth century, “[n]ostalgia was de-medicalized. When doctors professed the disappearance of nostalgia, they attributed it largely to technological progress—in particular, advances in communication networks and transportation. Nostalgia has moved from pathology to an emotion of wistful longing for the past. Today nostalgia is regarded as an emotion” (Wilson 22). In this chapter, I will use “nostalgia as an emotion” in two different ways: first, to explain the importance and the role of a fictional story set in slavery and Civil War time for the twenty-first century readers. Second, to discuss the brief but significant moments when the main character, John

March, doubts about his motives of the fight against racial injustice. These moments are very important because they reflect the third aspect of white double consciousness.

In part, the use of “nostalgia” here is to bridge the gap between a story set in slavery and Civil War era and its twenty-first century readers. That is partly the role of historical novels. According to Meredith Eliassen, “Historical novels are an important element of historical memory; they contain an author’s selected memories or impressions of historical events, and if compellingly presented in fictional form, they sometimes remain within the collective consciousness, shaping remembrances in more enduring ways than scholarly histories” (n. pag.). The readers of *March* would agree that Brooks’s fictional depiction of the Civil War is compelling and very engaging. She did not write *March* with the only intention of having her readers remember slavery and racial issues before and during the Civil War. The human society has always had the opportunity to learn from past mistakes and/or experiences. Sometimes, the refusal to learn from past mistakes and/or experiences has led people to repeat the same mistakes. Maybe, one of Brooks’s objectives in writing a novel on the Civil War was to incite her twenty-first century readers to examine their own moral values deeply in order to discover where they stand in racial matters. Although it is difficult to imagine exactly Brooks’s intentions, in leading her readers to revisit a painful past she enables them to bridge the gap between the past and the present, to think about then and now, to ponder on the never-ending racial injustice in spite of some progress, and to imagine ways of emulating the different activists of the fight against racial injustice. Brooks wants to draw her readers’ attention on the fact that discriminatory practices exist today because many people seem to act as if they have not learned any lessons from the past. Some white bigots still talk appreciatively about slavery time as well as the segregation era, and their statements imply that racial injustice was a good thing. In their article titled “Historic Enchantments—Materializing Nostalgia,” Jenifer Kiston and Kevin McHugh mention that the literature on nostalgia distinguishes “two schools of thought” (489). The first one is what they

call “backward looking nostalgia, understood to be revisionist, regressive, and debilitating” (489). I consider those who continue to mourn slavery and lament about the end of segregation as victims of this type of nostalgia. Every now and then, it is common to hear some overzealous white bigots claim that African Americans lived better and happier as slaves than they are now.¹⁵ They continue to romanticize a myth that historical facts have long debunked. In writing this novel, Brooks might have also wanted her readers to be aware of their personal/individual responsibility in the fight against all forms of racial injustice, and how they can personally contribute for the event of a better society.

Those who appreciate the sacrifices of some exceptionally courageous white men and women in the fight against racial injustice can, therefore, experience the second type of nostalgia that Kiston and McHugh considered to be “forward-looking, . . . productive, critical, and therapeutic” (489). So, far from being a recollection of the Civil War, Brooks’s blending of the story of the self-sacrificing historical figure John Brown, and her fictional characters John March and his wife Marmie should incite the readers of *March* to see it not simply as a fictional version of the war, but as a bridge between the past and the present—and a reminder of their own individual obligation to contribute to the building of a better human society. My main use of “nostalgia,” however, has to do with the major characters’ mental state. As we shall see, I am mostly interested in analyzing the way in which March and his wife have to think sporadically about their past life. Their belief in the fight for righteousness is challenged every time they come across an obstacle, or when things do not go as planned. March and Marmie experience nostalgia because they make brief mental journeys in the past to revisit the time when their life was better. In her book mentioned above, Wilson points out

¹⁵ After his standoff with federal authorities for refusing to pay taxes for the federal land that he uses as grazing fields for his cattle, Nevada Rancher Cliven Bundy had a news conference in which he made disparaging remarks against African Americans at the entrance of his ranch on August 19th, 2014. Referring to African Americans as “Negroes,” Bundy addressed his tea party supporters and reporters, wondering whether African Americans were better off during slavery than they are now under government subsidies. Bundy is one of many others bigots who are so nostalgic about slavery and Jim Crow laws.

that “[w]hile one’s nostalgic memories may connote a pleasant or good tie in the past, the fact that the individual is removed from the ideal situation can trigger sadness and a sense of loss” (22). This is very true for March and Marmie because the past they remember is the one in which they were wealthy and financially stable. But when they think about it, it does not bring them happiness. On the contrary, it brings them regrets because they can no longer recover the financial security they lost as a result of their anti-slavery activism. Even if these moments of nostalgia are sporadic, they are very significant because they are not simply limited to the loss of money. They cause these characters to ask themselves serious questions about the objective of their fight for racial justice. They wonder whether it is worth for someone to fight for something that does not hurt him/her personally, but which he/she considers morally wrong. And if one has to fight for a morally justifiable cause, why should he/she have to suffer for his/her good will? Such is the kind of question that troubles March’s mind and which causes him to doubt about and momentarily question his decision of fighting against racial injustice.

Though *March* won the Pulitzer Prize in 2006, it has not yet garnered substantial critical attention; most of the attention it has received has been in the form of reviews. Some reviewers emphasize John March, the protagonist’s struggle to remain a righteous man in the chaotic environment of war (Adelaide, 2005; Gropman, 2005; Sparrow, 2006; Shealy, 2006). For the Australian novelist Debra Adelaide, John March “grapples to understand, and to write, the contradictions of being just” on the battlefield (B12). Adelaide continues, “Brooks has created a compelling portrayal of an idealistic and ardent personality “whose beliefs are savagely challenged at a time when they should shine” (B12). She emphasizes the challenge of being morally correct in the midst of raging violence. In like manner, novelist and columnist Rebecca Sparrow comments that March is “an idealistic, army chaplain, sent to minister to the soldiers, [but] who finds himself profoundly changed and shaken by what he witnesses on battlefields” (M22). Sparrow discusses

March's inability to find the middle ground between his moral values and the difficult reality of the war that he is supposed to endure. Daniel Shealy asks, "[H]ow one can maintain idealism and principled life in the midst of death and destruction—how one can remain true to oneself and to others?" (165). For these three reviewers, the idea of personal integrity in the midst of chaos and the challenge of finding the middle ground between idealism and the tragic reality of war are the key to understanding John March's behavior.

Other reviewers discuss John March as someone who is divided between his physical issues (his sexual urges as well as his health), and psychological and moral concerns (Burkhardt, 2005; Hubbard, 2006). To some extent, this group continues the discussion of March's idealism that I mentioned above. Author Joanna M. Burkhardt stresses the protagonist's physical, psychological, and moral ordeals when she points out that in the context of war, John March has a "complex conflict [as] a man of principle who must adjust to the reality he encounters. [He] wrestles with hatred, evil, violence, ignorance, rage, lust, illness, and competing loyalties, from both outside himself and within" (99). In the same vein as Burkhardt, Stacy C. Hubbard sees John March as someone who fights "internal and external" battles (723). These battles are manifested through March's letters in which he is unable to relate "his immediate experience in language," and the trouble he has in "telling the truth when [his] role in the events has been less than admirable" (725). These two reviewers point to the divided March who is not satisfied with his actions and who is constantly tormented by his sick conscience. In spite of his strong determination to fight for righteousness, March faces many obstacles that make him experience brief moments of nostalgia for the way things were before the beginning of the war. Brooks portrays John March as an idealist, a representation of Bronson Alcott, Louisa May Alcott's father. In *Eden's Outcasts* (2007), legal writing expert John Matteson writes that "[t]he people who laid the best claim to understanding Alcott seem to have regarded him as a word made flesh, as a collection of ideas and principles that seemed only

coincidentally to have lodged inside a body” (7). Brooks’s fictional portrayal of Alcott comes alive with John March. While he has an ardent spirit to remain true to his high moral principles and idealism, he also has to confront not only his fleshly desires, but also opposition from people who do not share his ideal of freedom and justice for all.

March and his wife’s attitude toward racial injustice is very different from the characters I discussed in chapter two and three. In Chapter two, for example, Tom Harris’ attitude in public shows that he is against racial injustice. Yet, in the privacy of his home, he does not stand the idea of racial equality. The ideology of whiteness undermines his proclaimed Christian values. In chapter three, Atticus Finch is also against racial injustice and wants his children to shun the racist behavior of other members of the community. But at the same time, he also wants them to see racism as a sad reality they cannot change. Indeed, he encourages his children to learn to live with it instead of fighting against it. These two characters along with other well-intentioned white people discussed in the two previous chapters are deeply influenced by the ideology of whiteness. They seem to do what is right but their attitude also indicates that racial ideology benefits them and they do not see the need of fighting against it. In this chapter, however, John March and his wife, Marmee, let their moral conduct take pre-eminence over their whiteness. Their actions prove that they genuinely fight for righteousness even if at times, they are confronted with temporary nostalgia for the past.

As I said earlier, the story of *March* is set in the Civil War era, but through flashbacks, the narrator, who is also the protagonist, takes us as far back as the 1840s and late 1850s. In the flashbacks we learn about March’s peddling business ventures in the South during slavery, his connections with John Brown, and the latter’s attack on the Federal Armory. Thanks to Brooks’s mastery of the historical novel, she was able to blend her fictional story with some historical information, which contributes to the contextualization of the story in its actual historical era. She

did a good job in alluding to the Civil War as a consequence of the disagreement between the North and the South on the subject of slavery.

Regarding slavery, Northerners have long been accused of meddling in Southern business. Most of the accusations had to do with their abolitionist positions and the anti-slavery tracts that they were sneaking in the South even though the majority of the enslaved people could not read. The abolitionist literature not only denounced slavery, but also occasionally encouraged enslaved people to rebel against their masters. As far back as the 1740s, abolitionists attacked slavery on all fronts: moral, religious, economic, and even on the American creed of freedom. For example, Anthony Benezet, a Philadelphia Quaker, considered slave trade as “inconsistent with the Gospel of Christ, contrary to natural Justice, and the common feelings of Humanity, and productive of infinite Calamities to many Thousand Families . . . and consequently offensive to God the Father of all Mankind” (2). Benezet’s assessment of the trade of human beings simply shows that Christian values and slavery are incompatible. Divinity student Stephen S. Foster, writing then, harshly attacked pro-slavery churches and their clergies, saying, “the American church and clergy, as a body, were thieves, adulterers, man-stealers, pirates, and murderers—and the Methodist Episcopal Church was more corrupt and profligate than any house of ill fame in the city of New York” (153). Here, Foster considers church leaders who supported slavery as sinners rather than true Christians. But one of the most radical and incendiary attack on slavery and its so-called “Christian” supporters came from the African American abolitionist David Walker in 1829. In his *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*, Walker incited enslaved people not only to resist slavery, but also to kill their masters. As an evangelical, he also questioned the faith of white preachers who doubted of black people’s humanity based on the color of skin:

Can the American preachers appeal unto God, the Maker and Searcher of hearts, and tell him with the Bible in their hands, that they make no distinction on account of

man of color? . . . I ask you then, in the name of on the Lord, of what kind can your religion be? Can it be that which was preached by our Lord Jesus Christ from Heaven? I believe you cannot be so wicked as to tell him that his Gospel was that of *distinction*. (42)

Walker's words were damning to whoever called himself Christian and supported slavery on biblical grounds. He saw such a preacher as someone whose teaching did not originate from the Gospel of Christ. Walker believed that if the appeal got into the hands of enslaved people, it would awaken their conscience. In like manner, the famous African American abolitionist and orator, Frederick Douglass, attacked white Americans' support of slavery on the basis of the American creed of freedom. In his speech "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" he blasted his white audience with the following words:

[T]o the American slave . . . your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity, your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless . . . your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns . . . mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. (127)

Douglass' words exposed the contradiction of America claiming itself as "the land of the free," but in which freedom has a subjective meaning. It is for statements like these that Southerners hated abolitionist discourses and literature. In his article "Slave Conspiracies in North Carolina," historian R.H. Taylor paraphrases historian John Bach McMaster when he reports that "[t]he appearance of abolition tracts in North Carolina was viewed with acute apprehension . . . copies of the *Liberator* and Walker's *Appeal*, decrying the evils of slavery and advocating emancipation occasionally found their way into the hands of negroes" (28). Southern slaveholders abhorred Northern abolitionist tracts and accused them of fueling slave rebellions. They also considered all slave conspiracies and

the Nat Turner's rebellion of 1831 as the result of the Northern abolitionists' tracts. "After 1830 it was not uncommon," continues Taylor, "to attribute virtually all slave conspiracies and uprising to the nefarious scheming of the abolitionists. They were charged with deliberately instilling malice and spirit of insubordination into the minds of slaves" (29). So regardless of the fact that the abolitionists' actions were morally justified, their tacks had a destabilizing effect on Southern slaveholders and their slaveholding society.

While the North used Biblical argument to denounce slavery as an immoral institution, the South, through its evangelicals, also resorted to the same Bible not only to refute Northern accusations, but also to sanitize slavery and present it as a moral institution. In his book *When Slavery Was Called Freedom* (2002), historian John Patrick Daly writes, "Abolitionists attacked slavery on the basis of Christian principles and American assumptions about freedom. Southern evangelicals found ample passages in the Bible that have been used to support slavery for hundreds of years (3). However, Daly argues that Southern evangelicals did not have a solid foundation in the Bible to refute abolitionist accusations: "Southern evangelicals expected the Bible to be in perfect harmony with beliefs about contemporary science, history, political freedom, economics, and even current events. [They] did not simply stamp slavery 'Bible approved.' They articulated how slavery fit into the 'genius of the American system,' and how slavery was only right as part of that system" (3-4). In other words, instead of conforming to Bible principles and recommendations, Southern evangelicals twisted the Scriptures to meet popular social expectations. This attitude cannot be surprising given the way in which religion was used to establish and perpetuate racism.

Generally speaking, Northerners viewed the South, or maybe continue to view the South, as the hotbed of American racial injustice, even if racism is everywhere. There is a measure of truth about this general opinion given the fact that when people think about American slavery, they think primarily about the South. When people hear about segregation, they think about Southern Jim

Crow laws. People also associate lynching and other forms of racial violence mainly with the South. In the nineteenth century, fugitive slaves considered the North and Canada as symbols of freedom. However, it is naïve to believe that slavery and racism were exclusively Southern problems. At times, the romantic view that blacks had of the North turned into a disillusionment, when they had to face racial hatred from Northerners whom they wrongly viewed as welcoming and friendly people.

Explaining how black people experienced racism in the North, African American author Ronald Walters notes that “[r]acism . . . was encountered by blacks in the urban environment as the effects of the slavocracy of the rural south extended to the northern cities, resulting in patterns of exclusions of blacks from both public accommodations and private social functions” (qtd. in Morris 69). Walters’ explanation on how African Americans experienced racism throughout the United States helps us understand why Malcolm X put Northerners on the same footing with Southern racists. At the height of the struggle for civil rights, Malcolm X unequivocally addressed his fellow black Americans (gathered in King Solomon’s Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, on April 12, 1964) in his speech titled “The Ballot or the Bullet,” saying: “If you black, you were born in jail. If you black, you were born in jail, in the North as well as the South. Stop talking about the South. Long as you south of the -- Long as you south of the Canadian border, you’re south” (12). It was his way of emphasizing the fact that American racism was not a regional issue. However, X nuanced his terminology in referring to Southern white politicians as “outright political wolves” and called their Northern counterpart as “political foxes, both canines [who] belong to the dog family” (15). X used this powerful imagery to demonstrate that apart from their superficial tactical differences, Southern white politicians were essentially similar to Northern ones. A look at the fictional story of *March*, the setting of which shifts between New England and the South, helps us understand the point of scholars and other people who argue that racism and religious hypocrisy are not regional problems, but national ones. This aspect of American racism is well depicted in *March*.

MARCH'S CONSTANT FIGHT FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

John March's early life as a young peddler leads him to experience conflicting views about slavery. Though he despises slavery as an immoral institution from a young age and theoretically positions himself as a fighter for righteousness, March has yet to experience what the slaveholding society looks like on a daily basis. During one of his business trips from New England to Virginia, March is introduced to the culture of slaveholding society when he stops at Augustus Clement's plantation. Here he meets Grace, a literate enslaved woman. March assumes Clement is a "liberal" master because one of his slaves is literate at a time when the slave codes forbid masters to teach reading and writing to enslaved blacks. March quickly jumps to the conclusion that Clement is a good man and even envies his way of life; he begins to think that maybe slavery is not a bad thing after all. He suggests to his host that he extend the privilege of literacy to his other slaves, but Clement reminds him that it is a crime to do that in Virginia. When Clement later discovers that March is teaching reading and writing to Prudence, an enslaved child on his plantation, he asks him to leave his property. But, first, Clement asks March to attend the whipping of Grace, his accomplice. March powerlessly attends Grace's whipping, he is outraged and feels guilty, but he cannot stop it. He blames himself for Grace's suffering and particularly for his brief envy of an immoral way of life. Grace's whipping removes from his face the veil of his momentary acceptance of an institution he hates. March leaves remorsefully, but during his second visit twenty years later, the sight of Clement's plantation, now requisitioned as a makeshift hospital for the Union army, and his reunion with Grace, make him remember his past. He regrets his conduct saying, "The guilt I felt, for having let myself to be seduced by Clement's wealth and deceived by his false nobility had eased. . . . I had suffered from moral blindness on the matter of slavery, that I had averted my young eyes in order to partake in a small share of that system's tempting fruits" (23). Grace's

whipping, although a terrible thing, functions as a wakeup call that enables him to come back to his senses.¹⁶

After this incident, March takes every opportunity to denounce slavery. Following the Clement plantation incident, he attends a Bible study underway in Petersburg. In the next building, a slave auction is also underway. The noise from the auction disrupts the Bible study, but nobody in the Bible study group reacts. March is troubled but remains silent. But when the pastor asks his flock to subscribe to donations in order to send Bibles to Africa, March erupts. He explains: “I stood in my place and asked how it was that the Good News could not be sent more cheaply to the beings on the auction block next door? This was greeted with hisses and tuttings and a cold request that I leave, which I did, speedily and without regret” (43). March expected his fellow Bible students, and especially the pastor, to be outraged by the human auction next door, but they continued with their study as if nothing abnormal was happening. Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs vehemently condemned Southern religious hypocrisy in their respective narratives, and as noted earlier, pro-slavery Southern evangelicals sanitized slavery as “God’s will” (60). The religiously sanitized version of slavery might be the explanation to the Bible students’ silence to the auction, because their twisted interpretation of some scriptures has already convinced them to see slavery as a moral institution. When March’s observation does not meet their approval, he says to himself: “I could not help but wonder how the scene might have gone if the pastor had led his people of faith out from that little church to stand in the square with their Bibles raised in protest. From that day, I was convinced that the pulpit was the place from which to decry this barbarous system” (44). March wants religion to be used as an instrument of change, an efficient tool for denouncing injustice

¹⁶ It may be assumed that Brooks uses Grace’s cruel and humiliating public whipping to emphasize the evil nature of the institution of slavery in spite of the existence of some so-called “good” masters in the society. White folks who tolerate slavery because of some good actions of the so-called “good” masters will always be psychologically disturbed, because of the difficulty of reconciling good and evil.

symbolized by the institution of slavery. March reasons that a protest from the Bible study group could have intimidated the auctioneers, but he realizes that he is the only one in the whole group with such an idea. Instead of sympathy, he receives disapproving looks and a request to leave, as if a silent pact existed between the slave auctioneers and the Bible students in the name of whiteness. The negative reaction does not discourage March, but it helps him radicalize his position against slavery and envision preaching as the best way to denounce slavery and fight for righteousness.

Strong in his principles, March does not let someone's rank, the degree of friendship, or anything else stop him from denouncing the injustice of slavery. Unlike most of the characters discussed in previous chapters, those who remained silent for fear of being rejected by their communities, March consistently tries to remain true to his beliefs. The scene where he leaves his chaplain position and relocates to Oak Landing to start a school for the newly freed people is a good example of the consistency of March's actions. He does not wait to become well acquainted with Ethan Canning, the young attorney and land lessor from Illinois, to denounce the latter's ill-treatment of his field hands. He rebukes him for his barbaric treatment of Zeke, a field hand he put in a hole for two days for killing a pig. March does not hesitate to straighten Canning as he reports,

I bluntly spoke my dismay at his ill usage of the man Zeke. Canning grabbed my arm roughly and marched me briskly away from the telltale. When we were well out of earshot of the workers, he launched himself into a lacerating rebuke. 'How dare you, sir! How dare you arrive here with the barest notion of the difficulties I am confronted with, and have the effrontery to rebuke me. . . . And to raise such matters in front of my hands! Have you no sense of order? Have you no sense, period?' (103-104)

March treats injustice as such and feels it is his obligation to denounce it no matter when or where it happens, or who is around. Whereas Canning feels disrespected for being reproved in front of his

workers, because he sees them as social and racial “inferiors.” March does not see these considerations as valid excuses for not addressing his interlocutor’s acts of injustice in a timely manner.

Indeed, March maintains his constancy in the fight for righteousness even when it causes him personal loss. He is a wealthy man at the time of his marriage. His wife, Marmee, is the daughter of a longtime abolitionist, and an ally in the fight against slavery in her own right. Once March meets John Brown, whose self-denial and fiery speeches for the cause of abolitionism galvanize him in his own convictions, he becomes more self-sacrificing in support of the abolitionist cause. During one of his visits to Concord where the Marches live, John Brown tells an audience attending one of his lectures that if it was necessary for Americans to fight a war to achieve American independence, “. . . a war to end slavery was equally inevitable,” and in the fight against slavery, “. . . it would be right . . . not only to accept a violent death, but also to kill” (120). Brown’s statements are not easy for March to take because he sees himself as a pacifist. However, during a personal conversation with Brown, he discovers that Brown needs financial assistance to reach his goals. With Marmee’s knowledge and support, March invests in an enterprise Brown has devised to raise money to continue his fight against slavery. Over time, this commitment to Brown’s enterprise eventually costs him his fortune. Even after becoming aware that he will not get any return on his investment, March still uses his remaining resources to pay off Brown’s creditors. He is afraid that not doing it would result in Brown being thrown in jail and ending his anti-slavery work. March’s conduct shows that he is really convinced that John Brown and he have a common, noble mission. In paying Brown’s debts, March demonstrates the degree of self-denial and constancy he has in the abolitionists’ fight.

Many people would quickly give up an ideal that has ruined them financially. March is not one of them; the loss of his fortune does not cause him to abandon his fight for righteousness.

Before his bankruptcy, he lived in a nice house, a symbol of his wealth. When he experiences bankruptcy because of his ideals, he simplifies his lifestyle, sells his big house and buys a small one. He also takes time to encourage his wife, who is devastated by their loss of money. His reasoning while addressing his wife shows that he still keeps a positive attitude about the money he lost for a good cause. He tells her, “He [John Brown] risks his very life. I was asked to risk only money” (125). March sees Brown as someone who has made a greater sacrifice for the cause of abolition in putting his life at stake every day. Moreover, even with his limited means, March is more than determined to fight for the cause of abolitionism. He uses his small house as temporary shelter for fugitive slaves on their way to Canada. In so doing, he takes serious risks because of the provisions of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. In *Black Resistance before the Civil War* (1970), historian William F. Check points out how the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 “made it a federal offense to aid a runaway and [it] put federal authorities in charge of returning suspected escapees to bondage without jury trial.” This law “much increased the vulnerability of the underground railroad activities” (146). Because he strongly believes in his moral obligation of rescuing fugitive slaves, March prefers to take the risk of potential penalties rather than closing his door to the helpless fugitives. Doing otherwise would mean a betrayal of his ideals. In an earlier conversation with Reverend Daniel Day, who later became his brother-in-law, March emphasized the fact that it is through action that a person can show moral greatness: “moral greatness had little meaning without action to effect the moral end” (64). In other words, whoever claims to be a morally upright person should prove it through action and not in through the use of empty speeches. This principle would become the leitmotif of March’s life throughout.

Unlike the characters in the previous chapters, whose attitude toward racial injustice proves ambiguous and constitutes a big aspect of their double consciousness, March seems to be single minded and maintains his constancy throughout. For example, because of the immediacy of the

Civil War after the sad news of John Brown's capture and execution following his failed attack of the federal armory, March has to make a big decision. He speaks to the young men enlisted in the Union Army in Concord and who ready themselves for the war. His statements and attitude indicate that he follows John Brown's logic that war is a morally correct action against slavery. Acting otherwise would mean accepting the guilt of the society's tolerance of an immoral institution. This is another point that distinguishes March from the "good" white people analyzed in the previous chapters, who refuse to take responsibility for the evils of their communities. They are only concerned with their professed personal values and do not feel accountable for the actions of their communities. March, by way of comparison, feels guilty for his own failures as well as the ones of his community. For example, when other soldiers make mistakes, March does not think that it is their problem. Rather, he always feels that he has the moral obligation to remind them that their conduct should be beyond reproach.

Unlike characters in previous chapter who always have an explanation for racial injustice, March's actions show that he is determined to speak out and act against slavery. He outlines the reasons of the Civil War before the young soldiers enlisted in the Union army in Concord. He boldly states, "We go because there is within this blessed country an unholy land. A land where it has become a crime to teach God's children God's word. . . . We go because there is in this country a land which . . . one must in all reverence, call a damnable land, and we must go forth and root out the evil that lies within" (182). Because slavery was commonly justified for its so-called "civilizing mission," and its economic aspect in which the enslaved people were treated as "property," March takes it in the moral realm and calls it an "evil in a holy land and damnation" that needs to be removed in order to purify the nation. Portraying slavery as a symbol of evil galvanizes the young soldiers, boosts their morale, and provides them with an understandable justification of the war. However, without being personally involved, March fears that he would only sound like a sophist;

he thinks that his words mean nothing unless they are coupled with action. Putting himself in the young soldiers' boots, March asks himself, "What were words, after all, when set beside the action these young men were about to take? Action, now was all that mattered" (182). So he announces his decision to go with the soldiers saying, "I say 'we' my friends, because if the army will have me, I propose to go with you. The youths raised their heads then, and made me a great huzzah" (183). Here March shows that he is not a mere speaker, but someone with conviction, and who understands his moral obligation and its accountability. As a matter of fact, he has to act accordingly.

While March believes that war is the right thing to end slavery, his positive attitude does not last long once in the battlefield. The battlefield teaches him to become doubtful of his choice and determination to fight for righteousness, and that is how he goes through episodes of nostalgia for the status quo. March experiences guilt not necessarily for his personal actions, but because of some morally unjustifiable acts of the Union soldiers who are supposed to share his mindset: waging war for justice. As a chaplain, he expected the Union Soldiers, especially those from his unit, to have only the Confederate soldiers, their true enemies as their targets, instead of attacking innocent civilians. When his unit is on the outskirts of Harper's Ferry, however, one of the Union soldiers is killed in an exchange of fire with the Confederates. Major Hector Tyndale, the commander, orders his men to retaliate against the town. He tells them to "burn down all the town buildings that st[and] between the armory and the railroad bridge" (65). One might argue that this retaliation is collateral damage, but honestly, the damage could have been avoided if the commander did not give orders to his troops to do so. March finds this kind of military action unacceptable; he does not see the point of attacking civilian targets and destroying businesses. For someone who is convinced that he is involved in a morally justifiable war, the soldiers' conduct is unacceptable and he expresses his regrets, saying: "If a war can ever be said to be just, then this war is so; it is action for a moral cause, with the most rigorous of intellectual underpinnings. And yet everywhere I turn, I see injustice done

in the waging of it” (65). The war March signed up for is morally and ideally a clean one, a war for righteousness, for which he expects the Union troops’ conduct to be beyond reproach. When an order is given that circumvents that logic, the war morphs into a barbaric and immoral undertaking in March’s mind. In moments like this one, he experiences brief moments of nostalgia for the status quo. That is, he reassess his original decision to support the war as an aspect of his fight for righteousness, but realizes that it might have been better if he did not choose the war and left things the way they were before. He realizes that it is never easy to fight for righteousness while many other people remain indifferent to injustice.

Historically, Union and Confederate states had varied opinions on their motivation for going to war, but it is important to remember that both parties had a major disagreement on slavery.¹⁷ While Southern whites were known for their open support to the institution of slavery, Northerners seemed to be the opposite. The North represented hope and freedom for the slaves, and Northerners were not generally tender toward their slave holding Southern fellow citizens. However, as I mentioned earlier, in spite of their seeming sympathy for the slaves’ predicament, freed blacks were not always welcome in the North. The depiction of some Union soldiers’ misconduct is perhaps Brooks’s critique of the less discussed Northern racism. The biggest fear for Northerners was that the liberated men would quickly invade their cities and towns. It is not in vain that some historians and literary scholars and writers discuss slavery and racism not as Southern problems, but rather as American/national problems. Harriet Wilson’s *Our Nig* is a good example in this regard. Some Northern states, including Massachusetts, supported the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 in spite of

¹⁷ In her essay “Wartime Nationalism and Race,” historian Chandra Manning, Southerners thought that it was imperative for all slaveholding states to secede from the Union to protect their economy, the social classes, their freedom, and even their manhood as white men. Remaining in the Union meant not only a recognition of the immorality of slavery, but also accepting to be stripped of all the advantages they reaped from the system of slavery (91-92). As for the Union soldiers, Manning also points out that the ultimate reason they were fighting for was “the survival intact of the U.S. government in 1861 [and] not because the government served their families’ interests” or because it could remedy racial injustice” (98). It was important for them to see the government live on because “its survival mattered for the perpetuation of ideals like liberty, equality, and self-government” (98).

their formal opposition to slavery. The South was a typical agrarian society whose raw materials were supplying New England factories. Abolitionist Elias Hick, for example, encouraged people in the North to boycott slave produced goods in order to avoid participating in the crime of the slaveholders. Hicks writes, “Let us not think that the crime rests alone with those who conduct the traffic, or the legislature by which it is protected. If we purchase the commodity, we participate in the crime. The slave dealer, the slave holder, and the slave driver, are virtually the agents of the consumers . . .” (144). The New England businessmen knew, for example, that the cotton they ordered from Southern planters was the work of slave field hands, but they did not shun it in the name of profit. Hicks’s words prove that Northern consumers of Southern raw materials were equally responsible for the evils of slavery as the actual Southern slaveholders. Buying raw materials from slaveholding states was, in Hicks’s opinion, a deliberate to the institution of slavery.

Everything considered, slavery became a thorn in the professed American democracy. Union soldiers who fought against the secessionists had the preservation of the Union as their primary mission, but the question of the eradication of slavery also invited itself in the conflict and became like a second mission for the Union troops. Nonetheless, their position of liberators did not help them be less racist than their Southern counterparts, whom they harshly criticized. Their attitude is hypocritical because they feared that the enslaved people’s freedom might become a hindrance to their white privilege. They could imagine seeing themselves competing for the same jobs with the freed people. Brooks gives good representations of the ambiguous attitude of the Union Soldiers toward the recently freed people in some scenes of the novel. She shows that Union soldiers’ position toward slavery and emancipation was sometimes unclear. For example, when March reports the misconduct of three Union soldiers, who were about to molest a young Southern girl and her mother to the colonel in charge, the latter tells him,

I know you mean well, but the thing of it is, you're too radical for these mill-town lads. I knew your views when my old friend Day recommended you to this service, and personally I have no love for slavery. But most of these boys aren't down here fighting for the nig- for the slaves. You must see it, man. . . . Why there're about as many genuine abolitionists in Lincoln's army as there in Jeff Davis's. When the boys in this unit listen to you preach emancipation, all they hear is that a pack of ragged baboons is going to be heading north to take their jobs away (70)

The colonel's statement shows that many Union troops, including their commanders, did not consider emancipation as an integral part of the motivation behind the war. When he states that he does not love slavery, March does not believe him. The colonel's words in this scene are a perfect representation of what educator Alice McIntire calls "white talk" (31). McIntyre notes that white talk "serves to insulate white people from examining their individual or collective role(s) in the perpetuation of racism" (31). The colonel's statement that he hates slavery prevents him from facing his racism; because the rest of his sentence nullifies his earlier claim. He implies that the war is between Southern abolitionists and Northern ones. He even uses racial slurs to despise black people and openly states that in the ears of the young soldiers of the Union Army, March's words sound like these soldiers are in the South to fight for sub-humans who will later steal their jobs. The colonel's attitude and his racist language mirror an actual Union soldier, Illinois sergeant E. C. Hubbard, whom Manning paraphrases to have said that "the Union had gotten broken and now men were killing one another 'all for a detestable black man'" (qtd. in Manning 99). Whether in fiction or in real world, words like these would not be well-received by abolitionists such as March. After listening to the colonel, it becomes clear to March that the agenda of the war was not the same for everybody. The commander's attitude is an evidence of the differing perception of the objectives of the war. The lack of a unifying objective in the pursuit of war and the actual war atrocities

dishearten March, whose major goal in coming to war was to see Union soldiers fight for justice. Once again, this moment does cause March to become nostalgic of the ante bellum era. He blames himself for not choosing status quo like the majority of the white folks, rather than standing for righteousness as he did.

The actions of the Union army and conduct of some soldiers trigger March's sporadic nostalgia from time to time. He does not understand why some soldiers would take pleasure in the mistreatment of innocent people, even young children. As an illustration, apart from the first group of soldiers that March reported to the colonel, he also catches another group of Union soldiers who tricked hungry little black boys to eat out of a very hot pot. One of the kids actually burns his palm and fingers as a result of the trickery. When March confronts the soldier who gave the child the food without a spoon, the latter's answer shocks him as he hears him say, "I was just after having a bit of fun with the baby sambos." He also asks March, "You think I'd let a nigger brat eat of my spoon?" (139). This is a Northern soldier, a purported "good guy," who uses racist language that is not different from the Confederates that they consider as notorious racists. March is naturally someone whose moral values prompt him to denounce injustice. Serving as an army chaplain only reinforces his position against immoral acts. Thus, he is appalled to see this type of immoral acts among soldiers. The example in the previous paragraph and this one prove that even Northerners resented blacks while they were officially considered as the liberators. Despite the fact that most of them did not own slaves, they could not disassociate themselves from the racist ideology and the complex of superiority acquired through whiteness, an attribute they share with their Southern counterparts. As anti-racism activist Tim Wise notes in *White Like Me*, "The perverse thing about growing amidst racism is that no matter your own views . . . you ingest it as surely as you ingest the oxygen without which you could not live. Having inhaled it, you are then at the risk of coughing it back up, of vomiting it back into the world whence it came" (157). In other words, whatever

opinion one might have about him/herself, s/he cannot completely avoid the influence of the toxic environment of racism in which he/she lives. Here Wise echoes Feagan and Vera's concept of "sincere fictions," where white people boldly proclaim their nonracist conduct while their everyday actions, language, and behavior say otherwise (*WR*, 14). These moments are the ones that sadden March because anytime he observes misconduct, he feels guilty for having made the decision to fight for righteousness. This is when he contemplates status quo and realizes that remaining indifferent to injustice might have spared him the pain of witnessing immoral conduct on the battlefield.

So far I have argued that March is constant in his fight for righteousness and he strongly believes that war is the appropriate response to end slavery. However, despite his strong determination, March is still vulnerable to external and internal pressures that ultimately take a toll on him. Other people's actions, as well as his own weaknesses shatter his great expectations from time to time. In those particular moments, March contemplates returning to the antebellum status quo. His sporadic regret of committing to the fight for righteousness evidences the aspect of white double consciousness that I discuss in this chapter. In the novel, three major episodes affect March to the point of seeing himself as a failed man, largely because of his momentary longing for the easier, less complicated days of the past. The first episode is the drowning of Silas Stone, a private of the Union Army. Silas and he find themselves under the fire of the Confederates during the Ball's Bluff battle and they have to swim across the Potomac River to find cover on the other side. Since Stone drowns because he cannot swim, March feels guilty for not having been able to rescue him. Though he knows they are under enemy fire and that he is running for his life, March's expectation for himself as a fighter for righteousness does not free him from the guilt of Stone's death. This strong feeling of guilt is due to his self-sacrificing spirit, because he believes that he can still help other people even when his own life is in danger. He always sees himself as someone full of potential to accomplish anything, but who always fails to reach that goal. After pulling himself to

safety, March sporadically regrets his choice to enlist in the army. He reflects, “My aunt was right, perhaps, in her bitter denunciation of my coming here: the cusp of a man’s fortieth year is no season for such an enterprise as this. And yet what manner of man would I be, who has had so much to say in the contest of words, if I shirked this contest of blood?” (8). Here March clearly has a moment of regret for going to war. But it is brief and he quickly remembers his conviction that words alone cannot do much. Thus, despite his momentary regret, he is ultimately satisfied that he did not shy away from sacrificing himself as a proof of his commitment to the cause of righteousness.

March has another momentary contemplation of returning to the status quo after starting his school for the newly freed men. Because of his students’ destitution, he decides to write letters to rich abolitionists of Concord, Boston, and New York. While thinking about the content of the letters, the realization of what he has become causes him to regret his current position in which he feels more like a beggar than a benefactor,

As I mentally composed these letters, it was inevitable that my mind would turn to the days when it was myself to whom such epistles had been directed. From there, my thoughts travelled to the unravelling of fortune, and the exigencies of my current situation so threadbare that even my daughters are forced to toil for wages. None of them blames me. But it is a hard thing when a man is ruined by the very idea that most animates him. . . . I could not help but blame myself. (111-112).

What does March blame himself for here? His becoming an abolitionist or the loss of his fortune for the cause of emancipation? Either way, we can see that he regrets what has happened to him because of his commitment to the cause of emancipation. If he were not an abolitionist, he would not have lost his fortune and compromised his family’s financial security. In this moment his belief in the fight for righteousness is put to the test. His regret implies that he would have wished things to remain the way they were before rather than what they have become after his involvement in the

abolitionist movement. March's questions and regret suggest yet another layer to reading white double consciousness. In those who are strong enough to act against the immorality of white privilege and racial injustice, white double consciousness is a nostalgic longing for the past that occurs when they are confronted with the high price they have paid for fighting against racism and injustice. This aspect of white double consciousness is important to note because it might be the explanation of many well-meaning white people's reluctance to join the fight against racism. In the quote, March does not seem to be proud of his early choice against racial injustice, and he regrets that his actions have caused him to become a destitute. He blames himself for engaging his family in a dangerous path. Through March's words in this scene, Brooks might be hinting that many white folks may feel the need to get involved in the struggle for real equal rights and justice, but the fear of the unexpected negative consequences that may result from such an undertaking cause them to back off.

The last episode of March's nostalgia for status quo happens in the way he assesses his overall action as an abolitionist, a chaplain, a husband, and a father. Although he has sacrificed himself and has given the very best of himself in all regards, March still sees himself as a failed man. When a Confederate guerrilla kills Canning and all his black workers following its attack on Oak Landing, March is once again overcome by guilt. He already trails the guilt of Stone's death, and now the loss of his friend Canning, as well as his students, weighs him down. As he listens to the attackers taunt him to come out of his hiding place in order to rescue the last two survivors from their hands, March is overcome by "self-disgust" and calls himself a "coward" for not facing the rebels "because [he] want[s] to live" (189). Because he concentrates so much on his failures rather than his achievements, March ignores or dismisses every success that he has had in this fight. He does not realize that his going after a guerrilla gang (that outnumbers him) to rescue the captives is already an act of heroism. And even after he gets shot and becomes seriously ill, he still blames

himself for not doing enough. This deep-seated guilt causes him to reject his wife's proposal to take him home. He convinces himself that going home would mean running away from his responsibility. Even when he finally makes it home, March still does not have a positive view of himself. He does not give himself any credit for everything he has done and every risk he has taken for the sake of righteousness. He sees himself as a lesser man than he was before the war as he explains his feelings in the quotation below:

As I set my foot upon the path leading to that little Brown house, I felt like an impostor. Surely, I had no business here. This was the house of another man. A man I remembered. A person of moral certainty, and some measure of wisdom, whom many called courageous. How could I masquerade in such one? For I was a fool, coward, uncertain of everything. Had I been alone, I might have turned back then, melted away like snow . . . so that my daughters could live the unsullied memory of that other man, and not be obliged to know this inferior replacement. (270)

March's words exemplify a degree of white double consciousness that I defined as a negative force, which causes a person to be disappointed for unanticipated failures for actions done in good faith for the sake of justice. March is disappointed because he is blind-sighted by his own guilt and does not realize that he has led a successful fight against injustice. If he looked himself from the perspective of the people he interacted with, such as Grace, Ethan, or his students at Oak Landing Plantation, he would admire both his actions and self-sacrificing spirit. He makes genuine effort to get justice for the oppressed, but the setbacks he encounters make him feel worthless. To extrapolate, March's feeling of worthlessness and failure is perhaps the explanations to white attitudes discussed both under public/private image dichotomy in chapter two, and the lack of sustained actions against racial injustice covered in chapter three. Maybe, those white characters' fear of an anticipated failure is the justification of their ambiguous attitude and reluctance to be fully

engaged in the fight against racial injustice. They might be saying to themselves that they know they need to do something against racial injustice, but how will they face their society's roadblock? What if they do not win? When they realize that they would be engaged in a battle that the majority of the people in their communities will not support, they simply abandon their goodwill and think of alternative and less dangerous solutions. So they decide to remain observers of their society's injustice and choose to deal with it at moral and psychological levels, which are more private and personal, rather than taking risky concrete actions that would offend their neighbors and friends. Nonetheless, March stands out because he takes concrete actions against injustice in a sustained manner in spite of his sporadic regrets. He does not back down from the fight against injustice, but he is too hard on himself by underestimating his overall action. From my critical perspective, his action is commendable and satisfactory. March is depicted as someone who has lost his fortune as a part of his fight against injustice, he has sheltered fugitive slaves, and has decided to join the Union Army because of his belief that war was the best solution for putting an end to injustice. On the battlefield, he has risked his life more than once. He nearly got shot during the Ball's Bluff Battle, and he courageously attempted to rescue Ethan Cuning and his field hands from the hands of a Confederate guerrilla even if he knew that he was outnumbered and unarmed. All of these are commendable actions that March overlooks and does not consider as his accomplishments. In achieving all the successes he fails to acknowledge, March has his wife, Marmee, as his best ally, who also strongly believes in the fight for righteousness.¹⁸ Like her husband, Marmee is determined to do

¹⁸ Marmee March also presents a pattern of sustained actions in her fight for righteousness, but which is slightly obscured by temporary nostalgia for status quo, just like her husband. The three important moments of her actions include: her early involvement in the Underground Railroad in Concord, long before meeting March; her financial support (through her husband) of John Brown's anti-slavery project; and her willingness to let her husband go to war in order to eradicate slavery. However, in choosing to support her husband's decision, Marmee did not consider the consequences and sacrifices that the war required. The analysis of her negative reaction to the consequences of the war helps me to claim that she displays the same aspect of white double consciousness like her husband. I noted two important moments in this regard: first, her husband's sickness put her in a panic mode thinking that she was going to lose him. While caring for her husband, the sight of a wounded Union soldier lying next to his Confederate enemy made her blame herself for considering war as the best means to end injustice. She thought that the wounded soldiers might

whatever she can in order to see the end of slavery. However, she also her moments when she regrets her family's involvement in the fight for justice.

This chapter discussed a third aspect of white double consciousness, which is different from the two previous ones in chapters two and three. Through the analysis of March and Marmee's behavior, I claimed that white double consciousness is a negative feeling that might hinder appropriate action against injustice.¹⁹ March and Marmee were convinced that fighting against racial injustice is the right path they had to follow. However, they did not anticipate the consequences that might result from their decision to follow a path that many other white people shun. The analysis of their behavior has led me to conclude that some honest white folks engaged in societal change can give up the fight if they notice that they need to sacrifice a lot for the wished change to occur. Therefore, they blame themselves for their effort in favor of justice and wish they have left things where they were before. That is what I have termed as nostalgia for status quo because these well-intentioned white people do not see their courageous actions in a positive way. They dwell remorsefully on the setbacks that they have experienced instead of giving themselves credit for some of the victories they have achieved. Brooks has depicted March and Marmee as characters with strong moral convictions, and who have sacrificed their time, energy, and financial means for the

not even have owned a single slave (*March* 210). In other words, she might have preferred to see slavery continue than to see her husband or the wounded soldiers suffer the consequences of the actions against slavery. Second, when Marmee wanted to know the history of her husband's sickness, she was frustrated to have Grace, a former slave, talk to her as if they were equals. Grace's composure caused her to reminisce and imagine Grace in bondage when she should have spoken to her reverentially. Marmee also felt offended because Grace pitied her for her sorrow, thinking, "There was an irony here that at other times would have made me laugh: an ex-slave, feeling pity for my hardship" (244). The fact that Marmee wished she had Grace talk to her reverentially rather than casually as she did, implies that she had better memories of slavery time in which she had the upper hand and was the one to pity the poor enslaved people. Marmee does not appreciate that Grace, the ex-slave, could show her compassion for her ordeal.

¹⁹ In the conclusion of chapter one of her book *The Souls of White Folk: African American Writers Theorize Whiteness* (2013), Veronica Watson claims that the "social and political ramifications of white double consciousness" cause "whiteness [among other things] to moderate its attempt at social justice and reform, inducing whites to deny their individual and collective responsibility for the social ills of the past and present on the one hand, and to approach genuine progressivism only timidly and hesitantly on the other" (56). What Watson evokes here is what I consider as well-meaning white people's fear of anticipated failure that causes them to avoid being fully and openly engaged in the fight against racial injustice.

fight against racial injustice. However, in spite of their sustained commitment in the cause of emancipation, they have also experienced some painful moments that have caused them to re-assess their decision to be involved in a difficult mission. It is during those moments that they reminisce and wonder why they did not act like everybody else who do not care about racial injustice even if it is morally and psychologically taxing.

The characters discussed in this chapter show the complexity of white double consciousness. Characters in previous chapter constantly pay attention to their public and private image in monitoring their actions and language in front of other members of the community. Some would not publicly criticize their communities' racist acts for fear of being alienated. Doing so helps them to be at peace with their neighbors, whose actions they do not approve. Some others have spoken openly against racial injustice, but fail to take consistent action against it. They simply consider racial injustice as a social evil that they do not personally support, but which they cannot combat. In this chapter, I focused on the sustained record of March and Marmee's struggle for righteousness. March and his wife are abolitionists with strong conviction of their moral obligation to combat racial injustice. However, they have overlooked the consequences that may result from their decision to fight for an ideal that many people do not support. When they got negative results for the sacrifices they made for what they considered as a good cause, they blamed themselves and remembered the time when everything was fine for them. The moments when they saw their fight for righteousness as a cause of their personal troubles are the ones that I considered as an aspect of double their white consciousness. I stated that when the occasional contemplation of status quo occurs, white double consciousness manifests as a negative feeling/force that causes one to regret that he/she has to pay a personal higher price for actions done in good faith for the sake of righteousness. I insisted that March and his wife Marmee are consistent in their fight against injustice even though they saw themselves as failures. I considered their response to their failures as Brooks's way of showing that

some white folks who consider joining an open fight against racial injustice are reluctant to do so because of anticipated failures that they might not be able to handle. That is what leads many of them to ignore racial injustice and act like the majority of other white people.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

RACE AS A SENSITIVE TOPIC IN AMERICA

What was the relevance of a study on white double consciousness in a supposedly “post racial”²⁰ America? This kind of question can be used to dismiss the importance of a scholarly discussion on the way in which white people respond to racial injustice while many of them believe that racism is an old time business. Whether people minimize, ignore, or deny the existence of racism in today’s America, deep down, they agree that race related issues are still prevalent to this today. For instance, keen observers of American society would agree that people generally tend to either avoid dialogues on race or simply try to remain silent whenever race related issues are evoked. That is why African American scholars David H. Ikard and Martell Lee Teasley refer to dialogues on racial issues as “uncomfortable conversations” (9). In his book *Race in the Mind of America: The Vicious Circle between Blacks and Whites* (1999), clinical psychologist Paul L. Wachtel emphasizes the seriousness of the subject of race in America when he points out that “[w]hen whites walk on eggshells in their interactions with blacks, fearing that to express their views in all their complexity would leave them open to the accusation of being racists, all that results is a covering over of real issues and feelings that are essential to address if any progress in race relation is to be made” (27). What Wachtel’s point here is that people picture honest conversations on race as a dangerous path to follow. He notes that there would be no progress in racial relations as long as black and white people dodge honest conversations in which they can tell each other the truth about American society.

²⁰ I borrow this concept from Ikard and Teasley (2012) who comment on the current belief according to which America is now in its post racial era and a solid proof of the supporters of this opinion is, they say, in the election of President Obama, the first African American President. Many others scholars have also used the concept “post-racial” as noted in my chapter one.

Courageous whistleblowers who denounce continuous racial inequalities and injustices, or even those who call for honest conversations on race, are oftentimes chastised or called names for figuratively shaking skeleton bones in the cupboards. It is on the collective lack of courage to have an honest national conversation on race that in his remarks delivered on February 18, 2009, former Attorney General, Eric Holder, called America “a nation of cowards”(n. pag.). Holder pointed out that the common American is reluctant about conversations on race, saying, “Though race related issues continue to occupy a significant portion of our political discussion, and though there remain many unresolved racial issues in this nation, we, average Americans, simply do not talk enough with each other about race” (n. pag.). Holder continued his remarks stressing the common American’s resistance to racial dialogue noting that race “is an issue we have never been at ease with and given our nation’s history [,] this is in some ways understandable. And yet, if we are to make progress in this area we must feel comfortable enough with one another, and tolerant enough of each other, to have frank conversations about the racial matters that continue to divide us” (n. pag.). What Holder means is that to help bridge the gap of the racial divide, it is imperative to start and maintain an honest conversation on difficult and divisive issues. With this kind of conversation, the nation can move toward better race relations as well as the correction of racial inequalities and injustices. However, as could be expected, instead of commending him for his courageous speech, Holder’s words infuriated most white Americans who called him “an angry black’—a term used to describe a racially embittered black man who displaces self-imposed socio-economic failings onto whites” (Ikard and Teasley 2). This is a proof that most white Americans see those who sincerely address the taboo of race as “haters of America.”

Prior to Holder’s political remarks on the lack of an honest national conversation on race, various scholars in academia have already been and are still discussing this issue. The only difference is that Holder has reached a wider audience on this issue through audio-visual media, while the

scholars are mostly known to a limited circle of their peers who are interested in racial matters. While Holder talked about the average American's reluctance to discuss racial issues, scholars with vested interest in racial issues note that the lack of racial dialogue is not limited to the average American. It is a serious problem among intellectuals and even in American classrooms, where the simple evocation of a race-related topic, gives way to a deafening silence (Ladson-Billings 1996; Copenhaver 2000; Bonilla-Silva 2002; Herakova, Jelača, Sibii, and Cooks 2011; Ikard and Teasley 2012; to name but a few). I, myself, can attest to this silence when it comes to discussing race. I was once giving a presentation on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* in a graduate school classroom. As the only black student, my white colleagues became like impenetrable walls in my attempt to generate an intellectual debate from the discussion questions I prepared. One might argue that my colleagues' reaction was perhaps the result of ill-formed questions, but I strongly believe that their silence was the result of a strong emotional response to the content of book under discussion. Emotional response took the place of critical thinking because those who are familiar with X's autobiography would remember that he repetitively calls the white man the "Devil." Since I had an idea on my colleagues' resistance to engage me in the discussion, I tried to historicize X's opinion in evoking the racial context of his time. I gave the example of nine African American students who had to be escorted by over a thousand troops of the National Guard to attend Little Rock Central High School in 1954 so that they might avoid being attacked by an angry white mob. All this effort received a single answer from a courageous colleague who told me that he considers Malcolm X as someone with "incendiary language."

If we truly lived in a "post racial" America, people would normally have no problem discussing the racial past of the United States. Yet, the continuous reluctance to engage in an interracial conversation proves that race continues to be a sensitive issue. Because conversations on racial issues constitute a delicate topic, any study that centers on white people's reaction to racial

injustice is worth the effort. It helps the readers avoid putting people in the same box. It helps avoid general categorization such “white people are all the same,” or “they are all racists.” My analyses of fictional white characters in my preceding chapters have demonstrated that individual white folks react differently to racial injustice in spite of their seeming acceptance of or support to their communities’ racist actions.

In *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison emphasizes the fact that contemporary white people tend to ignore race and think that doing so is a positive thing. “[T]he habit of ignoring race,” writes Morrison, “is understood to be a graceful, even generous, liberal gesture” (9-10). For many white people, talking about race is like being stuck in the past while America is now in the “post racial” era. They minimize the impact of racism on African Americans and want the latter not to keep dwelling in the past, to forget their painful history, and look to the future. In his book *Dear White America* (2012), Tim Wise asks his fellow white people to be honest with themselves on the issue of the past. Wise observes,

[W]e love living in the past when it venerates this nation and make us feel good. If the past allows us to reside in an idealized, mythical place, from which we can look down upon the rest of humanity as besotted inferiors . . . then the past is the perfect companion: an old friend or lover, or at least a well-worn and reassuring shoe. If on the other hand, some among us insist that the past is more than that—if we point out that the past is also one of brutality, and this brutality, especially as regards race, has mightily skewed the distribution of wealth and opportunity even to this day—then the past becomes a trifle, a pimple on the ass of now, an unwelcoming reminder that although the emperor may wear clothes, the clothes he wears betray the shape he had rather hoped to conceal. No, No: the past, in those cases is to be forgotten. (18-19)

Wise's point is that white Americans are dismissive of the shameful past of slavery, of Native Americans' genocide, of lynching, and all other forms of white violence. It is a shameful past to remember because it exposes America's failure to live up to its creed. Yet, they are not ready to forget the other glorious past of their myths of greatness. Wise encourages his fellow white Americans to stop being selective about what part of the past must be celebrated and which one must be forgotten. Doing so, insists Wise, "is to engage in a fundamentally dishonest enterprise, one that, in the long run . . . is dangerous. Unless we grapple with the past in its fullest—and come to appreciate the impact of the past in our present moment—we will find it increasingly difficult to move into the future a productive, confident and even remotely democratic republic" (19). So the fear of an atrocious past should not cause white Americans to avoid conversation on race. Until racial issues are discussed truthfully and without emotion, there would always be a divide between white America and black America. People will always be hiding behind dual identities to get out of difficult situations instead of having truthful conversations that would foster a better society.

Many white people overlook or ignore the negative material, psychological, and moral consequences of racism on the society as a whole because they are sheltered from the injustices of the system. However, as Smith (1949) and Watson (2013) note, the intellectual and material means and energies wasted to maintain racial hierarchies can be efficiently used for common social prosperity. In his speech at the Lincoln Dinners in New York City on February 12, 1909, the African American leader and educator Booker T. Washington said, "Wherever in any country the whole people feel that the happiness of all is dependent on happiness of the weakest individual, there freedom exists (319). This is an insightful statement because it is people at the bottom who constitute the foundation of a nation. It is the anonymous masses that make the nation and not necessarily its leaders. Leaders do not exist in isolation without the masses they are supposed to lead. As Floyd Stovall points out ". . . the only way to improve a democratic society is to improve the

average man” (440). Therefore, if decision makers can work to fix racial inequalities as a response to the needs of the most vulnerable people, they can achieve a lot in terms of race relations in this country.

The oppression of a part of a population in favor of another does not bring true prosperity because the oppressed will always find a way to make their voices heard. And in their efforts to maintain social ranks, the oppressors do not pay attention to the problems they cause to the society as a whole. Booker T. Washington had a special way of exemplifying this aspect when he observed in his address mentioned above that “[o]ne man . . . cannot hold another man down in the ditch without remaining down in the ditch with him” (320). The veracity of this statement plays out in American society. Even if white folks as a group are the beneficiaries of an unjust system, they still pay the price for the maintenance of the system. So if white Americans continue to maintain black Americans or other minorities under their feet, they can reap material benefits but on the psychological and moral levels, they will keep on paying a dire price. This price includes, among many other things, the constant unjustified fear of minorities. A fear generated by a long list of stereotypes and myths that white Americans themselves have created, circulated, and maintained for centuries through their biased system. These myths are in part at the origin of white double consciousness. When honest white people discover that many things that they have been taught to believe about black people are far from being true, they start to liberate themselves. This liberation process is not easy because they know that an honest and open stand against their communities will cost them in terms of friendships and material privileges as many scholars have argued.

From the onset, I defined white double consciousness as a discomfort/psychological conflict resulting from an individual white subject’s strong desire to uphold his/her moral values in front of racial injustice suffered by the Other—and the natural instinct that urges him/her to overlook injustice in order to stand with his/her community in the defense of racial ideology, the pillar of

their common white privilege. The way each individual negotiates his/her response to racism is not monolithic. It is for this reason that I framed my discussion on aspects of white double consciousness throughout the chapters of this dissertation. Some people like John March and his wife Marmee in *March* have chosen to oppose racism openly in giving their best in the fight against slavery. They do so at their own risks in sacrificing their lives, their material as well as financial means. Others, like Dolphus Raymond in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, have adopted the tactics of Du Boisian or black American double consciousness in operating under a double identity in order to live the kind of life they wish to live. Still others, like Tom Harris and his son Charlie, in *Strange Fruit*, and Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, have adopted an ambiguous or hypocritical attitude. Tom, for example, openly opposes his community's racist acts but in the privacy of his home, he is unable to accept the idea of racial equality. Atticus, on the other hand, professes his high moral values while convincing himself that he has nothing to do with his community's racism apart from tolerating it as a sad reality. People in this particular category are very dangerous in the sense that they are, in part, responsible of the perpetuation of racism and racial injustice. Individuals who shy away from personal responsibility about racism use what educator Alice McIntyre calls "white talk" that I mentioned earlier in chapter one. So people who choose to accommodate their moral values with the will of their community do it to escape personal/collective responsibility in the continuation of racial injustice. The discussion of white double consciousness is one way that enables us to understand how "white talk" blinds and undermines white people's ability to see or talk about their shortcomings as a group. Worse, it causes them to proclaim their self-righteousness. In spite of the popular belief that we live in "post racial" America, which, some have claimed to be characterized by "reverse racism," social facts and literature from eminent scholars prove that American racism is still strong. In his book *How Racism Takes Place* (2011), historian George Lipsitz challenges the idea of those who blame African Americans for the "persistence of unequal racial outcomes in U.S. society

today” (5). He asks the following questions: “What happened to the hopes of the civil rights movement? What has become of Dr. King’s dream? How can it be that decades after the adoption of comprehensive civil rights laws, racial identity remains a key variable in shaping opportunities and live chances for individuals and groups in America? Why does race still matter so much?” (1). Nobody can deny the pertinence of these questions because, although they look like easy ones; people who attempt to answer them honestly might find themselves stammering and biting their tongues. It may seem embarrassing to answer these questions because people try to avoid naming the true causes of the persistence of racial injustice. As early as 1993, critical race theorists Charles R. Lawrence, III, Mari J. Matsuda, Richard Delgado, and Kimberlè W. Crenshaw, already answered the question on the outcomes of the civil rights movement. In the introduction of their book *Words that Wound* (1993), they explain the birth and gradual development of Critical Race Theory in late 1970s as a result of the lack of follow up in the outcomes of the civil rights movement. They write that the civil rights movement “has [simply] stalled, and many of its gains were being rolled back. It became apparent to many [of its activists] that dominant concepts of race, racism, and equality were increasingly incapable of providing any meaningful quantum of racial justice” (3). Given that racial justice continues to be an ideal, I thought it was a good intellectual exercise to look at the way in which well-meaning white people cope with injustice psychologically and morally. It was important to look at white people’s responses because racial injustice is, to some extent, a great weapon for the protection of white privilege that benefits all white people indistinctively.

My interest in the concept of double consciousness came from my desire to look at the way it works in the white man’s mind through the analysis of the selected white women writers’ works. I posited that white folks experience double consciousness differently because of their status as members of the power group. Unlike blacks who are afraid of racial oppression and institutional injustice that limit their material, social, and economic possibilities, white people are members of a

system put in place to protect their interests. Since all white folks are beneficiaries of white privilege regardless of their social classes,²¹ I wanted to analyze well-meaning white folks' psychological responses to racial injustice that they are not victims of, but which, some of them consider to be morally wrong. I wanted to determine how they manage to uphold their moral values while being also pressured by racial ideology that they are supposed to respect for the preservation of their system. My analysis of the three literary works I discussed confirmed my claim that white double consciousness is not monolithic, but rather multi-faceted. Well-meaning white folks do not react uniformly when confronted with racial injustice. Since racism has not victimized them physically, economically, or socially, in the same way it has people of color, white people vacillate between the moral obligation to denounce it, and the natural instinct of respecting and protecting racial ideology that grants them everything. Some are inconstant in their position and it is for this reason that some black scholars and civil rights leaders have questioned white people's morality and Christian values as I mentioned earlier.

The racialized society in which we live has fabricated racial myths that many people believe to be "true." As a result, these myths have altered the thinking of the many in such a way that people fail to realize that they are unconsciously programmed to always see everything through racial lenses. Generally speaking, the American society is unanimous in acknowledging the destructive effects of slavery and other forms of racial oppression on black people socially, economically, and psychologically. However, the society tends to ignore the way in which racism has affected its white beneficiaries. Part of my job in this project was to look at the way in which racism has also altered white people's logical thinking and morality. Racial ideology has caused many white folks to become

²¹ McIntosh (1990) and Lipsitz (2006) talk extensively about the ways in which the common white person benefits from his/her race whether he/she seems to be aware of it or not.

its “dysconscious”²² victims in such a way that they consider themselves to be more deserving than anybody else (King 135). This belief in white supremacy, even if it is sometimes unconfessed, has taken a toll on the moral compass of many people to the point that they have become insensible to injustice. In so doing, white people, who represent the oppressive power, have joined the dehumanized people of color and are unable to be human in the fullest extent (Freire 44). Racial oppression apparently breaks people in two groups: its winners and the losers, but oppression actually breeds only a big group of losers. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire has pointed out, that in resorting to violence and other forms of dehumanization tactics, the oppressor also loses his humanity and becomes a brute like his oppressed victims (56).

Nelson Mandela also eloquently evoked the trapping power of oppression and the need he felt for the oppressor to be liberated along with the oppressed. “[T]he oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed,” declared Mandela, because “[a] man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness . . . The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity” (*Long Walk*, 624). Mandela saw himself entrusted with a mission “to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both” because for him, “to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others” (*LW*, 624-25). After having spent twenty-eight years in prison, Mandela became the first black president of the new South Africa. He had the power of giving pay-back to his torturers in sending all of them to prison if he wanted to. However, he thought that doing so would be like returning himself to jail. He saw the forgiveness of his oppressors as a way of liberating them from their figurative prison of racial hatred.

²² Paraphrasing Wellman (1977) in her article titled “Discovering Dysconscious Racism,” Joyce E. King writes that “[u]ncritical ways of thinking about racial inequity accept certain culturally sanctioned assumptions, myths, and beliefs that justify the social and economic advantages White people have as a result of subordinating diverse others” (135). She also notes that “[a]ny serious challenge to the status quo that calls this racial privilege into question inevitably challenges the self-identity of White people who have internalized these ideological justifications” (135). This means that many white people no longer think critically about racial injustice, which they consider it as a normal way of life because of a twisted consciousness.

Many people would challenge the idea that oppressors are also victims of their own system. This happens because, as human beings, we are unable to read hidden thoughts. Consequently, as we grapple to find ways of approaching racial ideology; some opt to take it the way it is. Others fight it and avail themselves to face the consequences, and still many others feign to ignore it or find consolation in the continuous denial of its existence. Yet, the choice to ignore or deny racial ideology does not automatically change the reality of racism in American society. The fact that most people consider race as a touchy subject is a clear proof that racism affects everybody. White folks who are members of the power group had better make Mandela's philosophy their own, instead of simply looking at the benefits they reap from racial injustice. It is more than time to start also thinking about the freedom, justice, and well-being of others. Rather than continue to propagate the discourse of "post-racial" America, it is more than time for all Americans to embrace the idea of a truthful conversation that the scholars I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter call for. That is the ultimate route that Americans must follow to fix the broken race relations.

Commenting on mixed passionate reactions that Eric Holder's remarks on race have aroused, Ikard and Teasley say that among African Americans, "Holder emerged as a heroic figure, [who] offer[ed] a salty dose of racial 'straight-talk' to balance out Obama's lofty 'hope' rhetoric" (2). However, these scholars note that Holder's remarks were not solely directed toward white America. Ikard and Teasley continue that Holder also "demonstrates that blacks too have an inability to talk frankly, openly, and critically about race" (3). Paraphrasing Holder, they continue saying that "the nation's stalled racial dialogue is not a white, black, or brown problem, but an American problem that has a disproportionately crippling effect on African Americans and other historically oppressed groups because of disparate power dynamics" (3). Although this quote does not mean that everybody is equally responsible for the lack of genuine racial dialogue, Holder's point is that all racial groups are somehow reluctant to engage each other in this regard. Those among African

Americans who avoid discussing race fear to be considered as people who still bear grudges for all past oppression and injustice. Whites, on the other hand, avoid true racial dialogue for several reasons such as being misunderstood, opening old wounds, and feeling guilty, or they simply do not care. Clinical psychologist Paul L. Wachtel rightly claims that white America's "real crime" today "is not racism [but] indifference" (38). This makes sense because most white people may think that it is useless for members of the privileged group to discuss racism since it has no negative material, financial, or social effects on them. But even then, very few white people openly talk about the way in which they are personally affected by racism on moral and psychological levels.

I have shown the correlation between double consciousness and racism. Yet, I did not entirely reject the claim that American racism is formally something of the past, at least from a strictly legal perspective. If we consider the legal aspect alone, we officially live in "post racial" America; but we know that everyday life is made of many complex issues beyond civil and criminal laws. The black codes, Jim Crow laws, and the major forms of open acts of racism have since become illegal by law. Black people and other people of color can legally claim their civil rights, and white folks can no longer openly trample the rights of black people. However, it does not mean that true racial justice is a reality today. In his article titled "White Power, Black Crime, and Racial Politics," African American sociologist Robert Staples paraphrases Kennedy (1997), observing that "... whites and black have had different historical experiences within the criminal justice system. Mainly, whites see the law as a force to serve and protect their rights. For years the criminal justice system refused to offer protection to blacks from slave owners, from racist mobs, from white rapists" (31). In other words, blacks and whites are not treated equally in front of the law. While white people feel protected, blacks, on the other hand, see themselves as the targets of criminal justice. Current events around the country show that in most cases, a white police officer would kill an unarmed black person and get easily away with the murder. Staples points out that the Civil

Rights Act of 1964 “may have reduced the possibility that entire racial groups could be sanctioned for mistreatment, but in reality law enforcement can still legally target individuals based on their race. In fact, Supreme Court decisions over the past decades have eroded Fourth Amendment protections, ruling that police can stop people because of their membership in a particular ethnic group” (32). That is why many African Americans feel that the important work of the civil rights activists of some decades ago is far from being over. The hard work and sacrifices of many black civil rights’ leaders and activists, and some exceptional white people who openly opposed racism, should continue to inspire the younger generation to pursue the fight for a true democracy.

In my analysis of *Strange Fruit*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *March*, I also answered the following questions: With the prevalence of perpetual injustice against black people, how do well-meaning white people react? Do they feel guilty and do nothing? Are they tempted to take some kind of action to right the wrong or to simply clear themselves from their collective guilt? The analysis of the three novels has provided eloquent answers, which translated into some aspects of white double consciousness. The mention of the Du Boisian double consciousness always brings to mind black Americans’ psychological response to oppression and racial injustice. But I posited that while black people suffer the bulk of the consequences of racial prejudice, it was naïve to imagine that white lives are completely spared from the negative effects of racism. W.E.B. Du Bois used the concept of double consciousness as a result of racism in the African American’s mind. Some decades later, Frantz Fanon also used it in the same context but expanded it in discussing the debilitating effects of racism and colonialism on his fellow Antilleans as well as all other colonized people. However, the group of scholars I have joined concern themselves with white double consciousness in making arguments on the different ways in which white people also experience double consciousness as members of the privileged group.

RECALLING THE CONVERSATION ON WHITE DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS

To situate myself in the conversation, I briefly discussed the works of notable scholars such as Linda M. Alcoff (1998), Karyn D. McKinney (2005), Shannon Sullivan (2006), Steve Martinot (2010), George Yancy (2012), and Veronica Watson (2013) on white double consciousness. Alcoff, McKinney, Sullivan, Martinot, and Yancy, have given philosophical perspectives in showing that reaching a real democracy in America would require white people to adopt some kind of double consciousness. But to do so, these scholars insist that white people must first make an effort in taking another look at their whiteness. Put differently, white double consciousness is, for these eminent scholars, aspirational. They did not include guilt as part of the process of white people's adoption of white double consciousness. Watson, on the other hand, took a literary perspective in focusing on W.E. Du Bois and Charles Chesnutt's works to form her argument on white double consciousness. Her analysis led her to conclude that white double consciousness "has a solid footing in fear [which causes] the white subject to avoid being scrutinized by other people or even "seeing himself honestly" (35). In my own project, I examined the multiple and complex ways in which white people psychologically respond to injustices that they do not necessarily suffer from, but which tax their sense of moral justice. Thus, I defined white double consciousness as a discomfort/psychological conflict resulting from an individual white subject's strong desire to uphold his/her moral values in front of racial injustice suffered by the Other—and the natural instinct that urges him/her to overlook injustice in order to stand with his/her community in the defense of racial ideology, the pillar of their common white privilege. I have looked at three novels by white women writers in order to come up with the three major aspects of white double consciousness that I have discussed through the chapters of this dissertation. Obviously, I used a literary approach rather than a philosophical one. In this regard, my work is very close to Watson's, because, I too, dealt with fictional characters rather than true human beings. The works of my

precursors have been useful to this project because they helped me join the conversation in making the necessary connections between race, white privilege, and white double consciousness. Moreover, I have also included guilt as an important part of white double consciousness.

With the help of the work of Joe R. Feagin and Hernán Vera's concept of "sincere fictions," I examined white people's differing responses to racism and discrimination in particular historical times (WR, 13). I also used Thandeka's *Learning to Be White*, as a theoretical lens in my discussion of some characters of *Strange Fruit*. In the novels I analyzed, many white characters accept the injustice they see around them and do not want to fight against it. These characters' attitude is partly justified by the fact that they don't personally experience injustice; but they act that way mainly because of the fear of being disowned by their communities, which have taught them to be white (Thandeka 18). In his book *The Sociologically Examined Life* (2005), sociologist Michael Schwalbe notes that "[i]t is hard to change people's thinking when their view of the social world also supports a favorable view of themselves" (218). So white people who choose to remain silent rather than denounce the actions of some of "their own," somehow think of themselves as good people beyond reproach. Such attitude lacks critical self-examination because, as the Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., observed, "To ignore evil is to become an accomplice to it" (86). So, white people who choose to remain silent in the face of blatant injustice tacitly approve of it as a way of life. This category of people constitutes the majority of the unnamed characters of *Strange fruit* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, who take pleasure in racial injustice and violence. However, another group of white people can openly denounce injustice because of their conviction that remaining silent is immoral and it does not give them peace. It is this category that characters like Tom Harris of *Strange Fruit* and Atticus Finch of *To Kill a Mockingbird* represent in spite of their ambiguous attitude in the privacy of their homes. I interested myself in looking at the various responses of white characters who choose to

keep quiet in front of racial injustice and those who decide to speak up. I framed their various responses as aspects of white double consciousness.

In his discussion of guilt, Steele (1990) has shown that the feeling of guilt reminds white people of their being beneficiaries of unjust privileges. However, it also helps them support corrective actions geared toward ending racial injustice. Using Steele's idea, I have included guilt as a great motivator for change. For example, it is the continuous feeling of personal and collective guilt that leads John March to sacrifice himself and his assets for the cause of abolitionism. This is why I believe that guilt is a substantial part of white double consciousness. I did not imply that white people should helplessly feel guilty of racial injustice and do nothing about it. I evoked a proactive guilt that incites people to positive action. This kind of guilt puts a person's morality to the test and forces him/her to clean his/her conscience in order to have peace of mind. Conscience monitors our moral temperature, and a feeling of guilt is the signal that we have fallen below the safe temperature and have to do something quickly to restore our morality to its appropriate standard. However, repetitive violation of high moral principles can give a terrible blow to our conscience causing it to become numbed. From the moment a person becomes comfortable with injustice and other forms of vices, he has neutralized his guilty feeling. So I did not call for the kind of guilt that causes white people to feel sorry for past injustice, but a forward looking guilt that causes the white subject to fight against current forms of racial injustice for the event of a true democracy.

In his essay "White Privilege: My Theological Journey," moral theologian and Roman Catholic priest Charles E. Curran does a kind of belated mea culpa for being shortsighted on the subject of white privilege and for challenging the views of other scholars who have virulently denounced "the social ethos in the United States" (78). He explains how he failed to acknowledge the existence of white privilege until he took a serious look at his daily life and came to the conclusion that "white privilege is a structural sin that has to be made visible and removed (81).

Besides, instead of seeing people of color as the problem, Curran confesses that he “ha[s] to see [himself] as the oppressor and as the problem” after realizing that “white privilege comes at the expenses of others” given its role as an offshoot of a system of racial injustice (81). Notice that Curran had to go through a process of moral transformation and self-awareness of his role as a member of the power group in order to confront his own demons of racism. Without this difficult but important exercise, he would still be contented with his life and even consider white privilege as a fiction. He would not be different from other whites, who, to quote educator Alice McIntyre, do not want to “disrupt the niceness in which they embed interpersonal relations and [do] not wan[t] to deal with the discomfort of personal racism, [which] prevent[s] them from naming injustice, holding each other accountable, or from enacting principles of equality and justice as they creep into consciousness” (46). The lack of guilt and personal responsibility causes many white people to continue to live happily. They continue enjoying white privilege while ignoring its social and economic damages in the lives of other people. The danger of such a carefree attitude is that it also encourages whites folks to continue, as McIntyre puts it, “talking uncritically with/to other whites, all the while, resisting critique and massaging each other’s racist attitudes, beliefs, and actions” (46). In other words, people who mutually commend themselves without pausing for a serious and honest assessment of their role/responsibility in racial injustice should not expect to see racism disappear someday.

I situated my work in the larger context of racism and whiteness for a better understanding of the causes of white double consciousness. From the onset, I was interested in the critique of white women writers on white behavior. One would ask, how is this study (on works by white women writers on white characters’ psychological responses to racism) different from the one by black writers on white characters, or white male writers on white characters? I may not convince everybody in claiming that the critique of white women writers on white characters’ responses to

injustice looks like an honest confession of repentant members of an oppressive group. African American writers have done a tremendous work in denouncing or giving counter narratives to racial injustice in this country. Because many members of the African American community have long worked as housemaids for white Americans, it is fair to assume that African American writers' depictions of white lives is more accurate than the representations of black lives by white writers. Yet, many white critics sometimes belittle their works. Toni Morrison has even stigmatized the fact that some renowned white critics are not ashamed of boasting their ignorance of African American literature. She does not understand how their proclaimed ignorance of African American literature does not seem to hurt their reputation (*Playing in the Dark*, 13). Moreover, when African American scholars address racial issues in their scholarly works, most white Americans consider them not to be objective or they are thought to be speaking only out of accumulated anger and frustrations. In *Look a White*, Yancy, narrates a personal experience in which he talks about receiving angry emails after participating in a radio interview following the publication of his book *Black Bodies, White Gazes, The Continuing Significance of Race*. Yancy reports that in one of the many emails he received, his detractor said that he [Yancy] reminded him of "stupid Henry Gates who got a Ph.D. and ivy League tenure at Harvard by being an expert on himself" (139). Another one wanted Yancy to lose his job. The writer demanded the president of Yancy's university to fire him because "[h]e could not fathom how a Catholic university would hire and retain someone who would dare to discuss with white students the various ways in which they are implicated directly/indirectly in the reproduction of white racism or the way in which they are complicit in it" (140). Yancy goes on to say that this particular detractor continued his threats in more and more menacing tone in reminding the university authorities that if they did not respond positively to his demand, he would stop donating his money to the university (145). Fortunately, the university did not consider the complainer's request as a valid reason to terminate Yancy then. This is another eloquent example of how white

Americans not only downplay African American serious scholarship on race, but also consider it as a serious threat to what Yancy calls “the fortified white identities . . . that resist being moved, challenged [or] addressed . . .” (131). In other words, when minority scholars look critically into the so-called “fortified white identities,” they instill fear in the white subject. Therefore, the white subject does the best to he/she can to downplay the importance of this kind of scholarship that theorizes white identity.

Yet, when white scholars do the same work on racial issues, their fellow white Americans think that they are objective and they take them seriously. As an illustration, in her article “Silences as Weapons: Challenges of a Black Professor Teaching White Students,” African American educator Gloria Ladson-Billings relates an anecdote in which her white male colleague explained to her how students feel when he talks about class, gender, and racial problems in opposition to how the same students would react when a black faculty addressed the same issues. Ladson-Billings explains:

I chatted with two colleagues, an African American, like myself, and a white man. The man, who teaches at one of the nation’s most prestigious universities, suggested that he could be more forceful in teaching issues related to race, class, and gender because when he talked about these issues, students perceive him as being ‘objective,’ ‘scholarly,’ and ‘disinterested.’ On the other hand, he stated, when my African American female colleague or I taught about these subjects, students might tend to see us as ‘self-interested,’ ‘bitter,’ or putting forth a particular political agenda. (79)

This quote is only one of the many examples of how white America views African American scholarly work on a sensitive issue as race. The presumption of objectivity and disinterest in racial matter seems to be peculiar to the white male scholar and nobody else. It is because of this folly de grandeur that I avoided novels by white male writers. As Morrison has noted, “[w]hen matters of

race are located and called attention to in African American literature, critical response has tended to be of a humanistic nostrum—or a dismissal mandated by the label ‘political’” (12).

Many white male writers have discussed race in their novels, but in real life, some of them have an ambiguous, if not hypocritical attitude toward racial injustice. As an example, William Faulkner, one of the great twentieth century American writers, has discussed race and slavery in many of his novels such as *The Sound and Fury* (1929), *Absalom, Absalom* (1936), and *Go down Moses* (1942). He always claimed to be in “the middle of the road” on racial matters (qtd. in Baldwin 149). But in real life, when he had to give his opinion on the issue of desegregation, he revealed his true color in showing that he was opposed to it. He suggested that the whole process should “go slow” (qtd. in Baldwin 148). Clearly, Faulkner did not envision a radical racial change for the South. It is because of his attitude that, in his small essay, “Faulkner and Desegregation,” James Baldwin harshly criticizes his [Faulkner’s] hypocrisy and the inconsistency of his argument when he points out that “[a]fter more than two hundred years in slavery and ninety years of quasi-freedom, it is hard to think very highly of William Faulkner’s advice to “go slow” (148). Baldwin continues that “Faulkner’s threat to leave the ‘middle road’ where he has, presumably, all these years, been working for the benefit of Negroes, reduces itself to a more or less up-to-date version of the Southern threat to secede from the Union” (149). The point is that all the humanistic values that Faulkner’s fictional white characters show toward the slaves are only a political propaganda. Because, on the matter of desegregation, Baldwin reports that in an interview, Faulkner clearly showed that if there was a dispute between the federal government and his native Mississippi, he was going to stand with Mississippi, “even if it meant going out into the streets and shooting Negroes” (qtd. in Baldwin 149). It is for this moral instability, of claiming that he defended African Americans and at the same time saying openly that he would be ready to shoot them to preserve segregation that, Baldwin

denounced Faulkner and called him a hypocrite. With that said, what conclusions did the analysis of white women writers' novels help me reach?

I anticipated that because of their vulnerability as victims of white male oppression, white women writers might use their "insider's perspective," to borrow McKinney's expression, to truly reveal the white Americans dilemma in responding to racial injustice (xix). Unless I misread *Strange Fruit*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *March*, these three novels have revealed typical white psychological responses to racial injustice. The three white women writers have powerfully depicted white characters with mixed responses to racial injustice. They show representations of people with hypocritical attitudes toward racial injustice as well as those who are genuinely concerned with this issue. Lillian Smith, for example, has exposed white Southerners' difficulty and indecision in choosing between their personal moral values and community interests. In real life, she was an advocate of racial justice, a position that caused other Southern writers to despise her as I mentioned in chapter two. In *Killers of the Dream*, she echoed white Southerners' religious hypocrisy and bigotry that she depicted fictionally in *Strange Fruit* in the forms of sincere and critical reflections on Southern race relations. In my analysis of the fictional characters of *Strange Fruit*, I have shown how the racist society has caused many well-meaning white people to develop a public and private image. These images are the result of power relation between individual white people and their communities.

In like manner, Harper Lee also used a varied cast of characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* to show that professing one's moral values is not an efficient response to racial injustice. Through my analysis, I have proven that, in spite of his political and legal leverage, a character like Atticus Finch has no determination to change his society. Instead, he wants his children to accept racial injustice as a sad reality they have live with. This cunning attitude of convincing himself as a morally upright person, who is blameless for his community's racism helps Finch have peace of mind. Lee has also

shown through Dolphus Raymond, a character without political leverage, how other white folks cope with racial injustice. Raymond has found his own way of dealing with his community's racism. He performs false identities to cause the community to leave him alone and live the life of his choice. These categories of characters are representations of white people's psychological responses to racism. Last but not least, Geraldine Brooks has also created characters who perfectly understand the meaning of moral obligation when one is faced with his/her society's racial injustice. Through March and his wife, Brooks has shown that a morally upright person feels guilty for his/her actions as well as the ones of his/her society. For such a person, remaining silent in the face of injustice is an acceptance of wickedness. Taking a firm stand even at one's own risks is at the heart of the fight for righteousness. It is the determination in the fight for righteousness that led March and his wife to put a sustained effort in the abolition work to the point of losing their financial means and taking other life-threatening risks.

Based on the three texts of my analysis, I have concluded that when it comes to racial matters, black and white Americans have long barricaded themselves behind false identities/personalities. W.E.B. Du Bois and subsequent black scholars have long pointed to racism as the major cause of black double consciousness. Some African Americans used it as a survival strategy in a dangerous environment. White double consciousness, on the other hand, is under theorized, yet it constitutes an important part of the psychology of whiteness. I defined it as a discomfort/psychological conflict bred by an individual white subject's strong desire to uphold his/her moral values in front of racial injustice and his/her natural instinct to stand with his/her community in the defense and protection of racial ideology. I insisted that white double consciousness is not a monolithic response to racial injustice, but rather, a set of ambiguous/mixed attitudes, as well as positive and negative responses to racial injustice. In chapter two, I claimed that white double consciousness is not only a conflict between public and private image, but also a power

relation between the individual and the group. I was able to support that claim effectively throughout the chapter with specific illustrations from the characters' lives. Using the metaphor of "blind justice" in chapter three, I argued that White double consciousness is a combination of assumed good personal moral values and an accommodation of racial injustice, because of well-meaning white people's inconsistent actions against racial injustice. I used my in-depth analysis of Atticus Finch's life to prove my point. And in chapter four, I defined white double consciousness as a sustained struggle for righteousness in spite of occasional nostalgia for the status quo. Whenever the occasional contemplation of status quo occurs, white double consciousness becomes a negative feeling/force that causes one to regret that he/she has to pay a personal higher price for actions done in good faith for the sake of righteousness. I concluded that it is particularly the fear of personal consequences for a person's good will that causes many well-meaning white people to shy away from the fight against racial injustice and become simple observers, or give the impression that they do not care like everybody else.

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