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Standing on the Front Porch of *To Kill a Mockingbird*

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Departmental Honors Thesis

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

English

Examination Date: April 1, 2024

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## The Front Porch

In the last chapter of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout Finch begins to truly understand the significance of perspective. After fearfully misperceiving her recluse-like neighbor Boo Radley for years, she finally sees life from his point of view when she stands on his front porch for the first time: "Atticus was right. One time he said you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them. Just standing on the Radley porch was enough" (Lee 321). This is the moment where Scout is able to piece together the significance of this statement. She looks around at her own street, observing aspects of it from her newfound perspective and realizes the implications of putting on someone else's shoes. This act involves an invasion of one's unique walk or journey of life, entering into initial discomfort, unfamiliarity, and oftentimes, fear. However, after walking around and experiencing the life of another, this sense of intimacy becomes recognizable or at least less intimidating. This is the revelation that Scout encounters on Boo's porch: by coming to know life from his point of view, she comes to know him better. Her perception of him begins to shift from fear to understanding.

In this pivotal scene, I want to draw attention to the location where such profound revelation happens: the front porch. The front porch is the space where Scout truly learns the value of empathy. However, it is not the most iconic space in public memory of Lee's novel. Published in 1960 in the heat of the Civil Rights movement, Lee emphasizes major issues of racial prejudice, social class injustice, and gender inequality. Directly attending to these topics promoted instant success, as the novel was widely distributed among middle and high schools. The narrative illustrates Maycomb County during the 1930s, a fictional town in Alabama, through the eyes of a six-year-old girl. The primary plot of the novel follows the trial of a black man falsely accused of rape and since Scout's father Atticus is called upon to defend this man,

she witnesses ingrained racial prejudice up close in the courtroom. The trial is one of the most pivotal moments in the novel because the man, Tom Robinson, is unjustly found guilty by the jury and Scout, in her young age, cannot make sense of this. In this case, the courtroom serves as a space to emphasize racial injustice, as well as a space to highlight Scout's internal development. Seemingly, the courtroom holds incredible significance to the plot of the novel in its emphasis on racial prejudice. However, racial prejudice is just one issue that Lee addresses, along with social class and gender inequality. I argue that examining the space of the front porch illuminates and expands upon *all* of these issues, rather than just one.

In this thesis, I claim that the Southern front porch serves as a space of synthesis between perception and reality. This synthesis illuminates how Lee's themes so carefully woven throughout the novel are framed by the value of empathy. This liminal space is extremely ordinary in itself and traditional to Southern culture; yet, the front porch offers comfort, reflection, and personal transformation for the characters. In this way, we see Lee drawing attention to deep-rooted conflicts within a common, communal space. It is within the seemingly insignificant atmosphere of the Southern front porch where outside perception and inside reality meet.

Front porches are extremely prevalent in Southern culture due to their inviting, communal nature, as well as their practical functions. American short story writer and novelist Eudora Welty, whose work consists primarily of the American South, once stated: "Southerners love a good tale. They are born reciters, great memory retainers, diary keepers, letter exchangers . . . great talkers." Accordingly, the front porch is frequently found in Southern American literature as a space to swap stories and engage in long conversations. Reynolds Price describes it as "a room without walls," which implies two functions (1992). Practically, the open air and

shade of the front porch made it the most comfortable space to reside in the summer. Due to the heat, every room in the house would be too hot until later in the evening, so comfortable livelihood was contingent upon the front porch. The other implication of a “room without walls” is that it meshes together the inside and outside worlds (1992). Price describes this realm as “a vital transition between the uncontrollable out-of-doors and the cherished interior of a home” (1992). The transition being “vital” or essential to crossing between realms emphasizes the importance of this space. Price’s contrasting categorization of the outdoors as “uncontrollable” and indoors as “cherished” showcases a deeper tension between vulnerability and protection (1992). In other words, this space provides a buffer for characters to face the realities of the outside world.

In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the Southern front porch represents a space for characters to wrestle with the complexities of morality and humanity. For example, right before Tom Robinson’s trial, a group of men show up at the Finch household to question Atticus’s decision to represent Tom. For the men, this decision seems illogical because despite Atticus’s efforts, they know that Tom will most likely be found guilty regardless. However, as they try to reason with him, Atticus explains his moral obligation to continue on. He reveals his personal, emotional struggle to this group of men who see the situation as completely hopeless. One of them states, “You’ve got everything to lose from this, Atticus. I mean everything” (166). Atticus is aware of the risk as he responds, “Link, that boy might go to the chair, but he’s not going till the truth’s told” (166). Right there on his front porch, Atticus displays the depth to which he values his morals. He cannot, in good conscience, let this pass under his nose. We tangibly see him work out the complexity at hand and then remain loyal in his decision to defend Tom. Jocelyn Donlon asserts: “Storytelling porches, situated between public and private worlds, can furnish a ‘space’

where individuals tell stories to seize and display power in the face of an already imposed social order” (1996). This scene illustrates Atticus’s powerful resistance to cultural expectations. Lee’s choice to place him on the front porch at this pivotal moment shows how it is a space to work out the difficult realities of personal, social, and ethical tensions.

I divided this thesis into three sections to explore the tensions presented by the synthesis of perception and reality on the front porch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*: the character of Boo Radley, the implications of Southern women on the porch, and Scout’s personal development. The first chapter will explore how Boo on the front porch challenges the relationship between presence and absence. In the second chapter, I will focus on white women on the porch as they expose the complexities of womanhood in the novel. Lastly, I will attend to our protagonist as she begins to come of age in the midst of the societal constraints she observes. By studying the novel from the front porch, we will see how each of these tensions influences Scout’s perception of individual characters, her society, and her own identity.

Through Scout’s narration, we, as readers, get to “stand in her shoes” and see how Lee’s themes so carefully woven throughout the narrative are framed by the value of empathy (321). In other words, we get to explore the novel from her unique perspective, empathizing with her experiences. As Scout is exposed to various issues within her society and learns how to demonstrate empathy toward others, we see how her perception of life evolves over time. While Scout stands on Boo Radley’s front porch at the end, we now stand on the front porch of the novel, in order to discover what Lee is communicating about the value of empathy rendered by perception.

## Boo Radley

For someone physically absent for most of the novel, Boo Radley certainly influences the other characters and the plot in his own indirect style. On their way to and from school each day, Scout and Jem have to pass by the Radley house and Scout always looks for Boo, hoping that one day she might find him sitting on his front porch on her way home:

I imagined how it would be: when it happened, he'd just be sitting in the swing when I came along. 'Hidy do, Mr. Arthur,' I would say, as if I had said it every afternoon of my life. "Evening, Jean Louise," he would say, as if he had said it every afternoon of my life, 'right pretty spell we're having, isn't it?' 'Yes sir, right pretty," I would say, and go on. It was only a fantasy. We would never see him." (278)

The image of him "sitting in the swing" elicits a sense of relaxation or contentment, but it mainly suggests commonality. In her head, Boo is an estranged creature; yet, here, he adopts an aura of human normalcy. Like every other neighbor, he is enjoying a fine afternoon on his front porch, discussing the weather. Scout addresses him as "Mr. Arthur" and he calls her "Jean Louise," demonstrating polite, Southern etiquette. They both have pet names but using their proper names highlights a mutual respect and formality between them in this fantasy. Scout's dream illustrates a world in which this interaction is part of her daily reality, "as if I had said it every afternoon of my life" (278).

In this chapter, I explore how this fantasy about Boo showcases the front porch as a bridge between absence and presence. At this point in the novel, Scout has never laid eyes on Boo; rather, he dwells inside her mind, occupying her imagination. Her perception of him hinders her from seeing the reality of why he does not appear physically. A barrier builds up in her head between her and Boo because she struggles to understand his motives. Once, in her confusion of why he retreats from the rest of the neighborhood, Scout asks her neighbor Miss Maudie Atkinson, "I'd wanta come out. Why doesn't he?" (49). Until Scout stands on his front



porch at the end, Boo remains a mysterious concept to her, and she struggles to empathize with him. However, his underlying presence lingers throughout the novel as he occupies a third realm of ghostly existence, adopting a reputation of “otherness.” As seen in Scout’s fantasy, this third realm is her imagination of him on the front porch.

The rumors about Boo elicit an overarching tone of both fear and fascination. Atticus does not discuss the Radleys very often, so the children receive most of their information from their nosy neighbor Miss Stephanie. She claims, “Boo drove the scissors into his parent’s leg, pulled them out, wiped them on his pants, and resumed his activities” (9). As a result, the neighborhood’s general consensus is that Boo is a madman. This story paints him in a dark light while also provoking feelings of curiosity amongst the neighbors about what he does inside the house. Scout even goes so far as to describe him as a “malevolent phantom” (9). The term “malevolent” is proactive in its implication that Boo intends to inflict harm, while “phantom” suggests that this is a figment of the imagination (9). In other words, the neighborhood perceives him as a monster as he creates mysterious exhilaration.

The physical appearance of Boo’s front porch mirrors the strangeness of his character. Scout illustrates that “the shutter and doors of the house were closed on Sundays, another thing alien to Maycomb’s ways,” communicating that the Radleys do not wish to be disturbed (10). This observation sets Boo’s house apart from the rest of the neighborhood, completely contradicting any expectation of Southern hospitality. The Radleys clearly do not present a very warm or inviting home, communicating a deeper sense of isolation from the characters living inside it. Scout also notes that “the Radley house had no screen doors. I once asked Atticus if it ever had any. Atticus said yes, but before I was born” (10). To not have a screen door during that time in a Southern county like Maycomb would have been extremely rare. The screen door

protected the house from bugs when the front door was open, offering air flow and producing an inviting nature. The Radleys do not ever leave their front door open so they have no need for a screen door, communicating that visitors are not welcome. The Radleys' front porch adds to the neighborhood's fascination with Boo and emphasizes their seclusion from the rest of the community, to the point where Scout refers to her father about it. Scout's attention to detail and observation of Boo's front porch speaks to the significance of the space. Front porches cultivate a sense of community, so Boo's absence is incomprehensible to Scout and justifies her confusion about him.

Lee's placement of the Radleys on the street suggests an even deeper layer of isolation. The Radleys live on the same main residential street as the Finch family, just a few doors down. In order to get to the Maycomb County town square, walkers must pass by their home. Lee intentionally places the Radleys in a well-established area, on a corner that one cannot avoid. However, they are the least interactive with the neighborhood. They are not at the end of the street or blocked by another house; rather, they are located in the most prominent spot on the street. This expands upon the mystery of Boo's character: while their house is clearly visible, the people inside are the least known. The dark, eerie, and mysterious atmosphere of the house mirrors Boo's isolation.

In addition, his ghostly characterization allows further insight into how he appears in the novel. Scout explains at the beginning: "People said he existed, but Jem and I had never seen him. People said he went out at night when the moon was down, and peeped in the windows" (9). He operates indirectly but impactfully, in a haunting and ghostly manner. He is invisible, he only appears at night, and he apparently haunts the neighbors, all the qualities of a ghost. Once, when Miss Maudie's house catches fire in the winter, Scout and Jem anxiously wait outside for

the commotion to reside; however, to their surprise, Scout later realizes that she is covered with a blanket. Her father remarks:

“Someday, maybe, Scout can thank him for covering her up.”

“Thank who?” I asked.

“Boo Radley. You were so busy looking at the fire you didn’t know it when he put the blanket around you.” (81-82)

This dialogue is a representation of how Boo operates like a ghost when he interacts with the Finch children. Scout being “so busy looking at the fire” suggests that she is actually too distracted to notice him (82). The fire is a parallel to her blazing perception of Boo; it distracts her from realizing the reality of his presence. The fact that she did not even realize when he covered her with the blanket implies a sense of gentleness and care that Boo demonstrates; however, it also highlights the subtle or transparent nature of a ghost.

The very name “Boo” is associated with fear and death. Jumping out and scaring someone by screaming “boo” elicits fear of the unknown; furthermore, its lack of warning speaks to the unpredictability of death. This seems to be how the neighbors view Boo, almost as if they are walking on eggshells in anticipation of his eventual appearance, or death. They are holding their breath for him to strike unexpectedly, as if he is some dark power building up his army to one day return. Scout assures readers: “We knew Boo was there, for the same old reason—nobody’d seen him carried out yet” (277). Here, we see how the relationship between presence and absence is connected to death itself. Absence from the earth can only be claimed if one was once present; in other words, death is first contingent upon life. The children decide to call him “Boo” as their way of dramatizing his spooky, ghostly reputation, exhibiting their childish fear and imagination. Through his physical absence, he manages to establish a lingering presence of fear.

To cope with this fear, the children's game of trying to lure Boo out of his house illustrates how the front porch represents a crossing of boundaries. They dare each other to run up and touch his porch: "Jem said if Dill wanted to get himself killed, all he had to do was go up and knock on the front door" (14). In Jem's mind, stepping onto Boo's front porch and overstepping into his realm results in death, further suggesting a haunting, ghostly presence. Taking the risk, Jem decides to complete the dare as Scout narrates: "Jem threw open the gate and sped to the side of the house, slapped it with his palm and ran back past us, not waiting to see if his foray was successful. Dill and I followed on his heels. Safely on our porch, panting and out of breath, we looked back" (16). In this scene, I want to draw attention to the tension between Boo's front porch and the Finches. The children portray Boo's porch as if it is a disease that they do not wish to be exposed to. In a similar manner as entering a room with contaminated air, Jem quickly runs to the house, attempting to act before he breathes or processes what he is doing. His "slap" indicates a rapid and frantic gesture, in a hasty attempt to get out of there (16). He does not even wait to see if anyone appears at the window or door before dashing back out of the gate. The term "foray" is associated with an attack or raid, meaning that Boo, in this sense, is considered an enemy (16). This further distinguishes him as an outcast. With this mindset, they must retreat to their own porch, where they "safely" breathe and finally look back to see if they disrupted anyone in the house (16).

The juxtaposition of the Radley and Finch porches mirrors the tension between presence and absence. While Boo's front porch represents danger and risk, the Finches front porch represents safety and relief. In this way, we see how absence once again elicits fear of the unknown, while the reality of presence is more certain and secure. This playing with boundaries speaks to how Lee develops the children's perception of other characters. Kristen Proehl argues,

“While the children intentionally test boundaries through game-playing, they unwittingly cross racial and class boundaries” (207). However, this binary leads Scout in her journey of learning how to “stand in someone else’s shoes” (274). In order to fully empathize, she must cross boundaries and inhabit the world of those different from her.

In order to understand how Scout accomplishes this, we must address how scholars have suggested that Boo’s ghostly presence promotes a sense of “otherness.” Rebecca H. Best writes an article that explores the concept of the “Other,” defining it as “that which one contrasts itself” (541). As we have established already, Boo does not follow standard pattern behavior compared to the rest of the community. In contrast to others, he is not “sitting in the swing” on his front porch, as Scout fantasizes (278). However, this fantasy about Boo on the porch sparks Scout’s journey in understanding aspects of her society. Best articulates:

Through Boo, Scout and Jem are able to see flaws in society that run deeper than the simple problems they face as children, social ills that allow a community to witness passively and thus allow the abuse that Boo faced and that Mayella still faces, that allow a society to, in effect, kill Tom Robinson or any other innocent man to protect their own prejudice. (551)

Best is drawing our attention to the inherent passivity ingrained in Maycomb society, arguing that it is this very allowance of injustice that kills Tom Robinson and abuses Boo. Although Scout struggles to make sense of her own place in the world, her obsession with Boo and eventually meeting him at the end helps her to see the failings of her broken society. Through Boo, they are able to understand prejudices of all forms, instilling in them a sense of compassion and empathy for the outcasts, or the “Other.”

In this way, Boo’s absence and categorization of the “Other” illuminates his relationship with marginalized presences in the novel. Diann Baecker argues:

Marginalized groups tend to share each other's characteristics. They collectively form the context within which they are individually placed so that women, children, and racial

minorities are generally considered like each other (feminine, immature, less intelligent) as well as being dirty, uncivilized, closer to nature, and any other losing end of a dichotomy Boo's association with insects, chinaberry trees, Negroes, and, of course, madness, helps to align him near the margins. Thus, in some ways, Boo himself is part of the Africanist presence in the novel. (129)

Baecker's assertion here shows how Boo shares a similar sense of outcast as black residents in Maycomb; their exclusion from society unites them at a very general level. However, Baecker drives her claim even further: "Yet, as much as he lives life on the boundary of society, Boo is not like the black people or even the Ewells and Cunninghams of Maycomb. In some ways his madness makes him even more of an outcast" (129). His very absence on his front porch symbolizes his exclusion from every aspect of society, including all other marginalized groups; in other words, he is in his own category.

The way that black residents respond to Boo reveals the depth of this exclusion. Scout remarks that, "a Negro would not pass the Radley Place at night, he would cut across to the sidewalk opposite and whistle as he walked" (9). It is interesting that Scout specifically notes that "a Negro" would not pass by; she seems to be making a point about the fear instilled in particularly black residents. Considering the racial prejudice posed toward black residents, the rumors regarding the Radleys' violent past would only elevate this fear. Cutting across to the other side of the street showcases their avoidance and dissociation with the Radleys, as if they are untouchable outcasts. The act of whistling also suggests an attempt to distract themselves from the dark perception of the house; ultimately, it is an attempt to pretend that the Radleys do not exist. Here, we see how even groups within the categorization of the "Other" treat Boo with disdain.

I want to expand upon these scholars' claims about Boo by exploring Scout's relationship with the "Other" from the view of the front porch. The front porch serves as the very space for

Scout to alter her perception of Boo and other marginalized groups. By the end, she sees that he is not a phantom of the past; rather, she actually acknowledges his caring nature. She admits:

Neighbors bring food with death and flowers with sickness and little things in between. Boo was our neighbor. He gave us two soap dolls, a broken watch and chain, a pair of good-luck pennies, and our lives. But neighbors give in return. We never put back into the tree what we took out of it: we had given him nothing, and it made me sad. (320)

In this passage, Scout is referring to her only proof of Boo's existence throughout the novel: gifts. This gesture of subtle kindness demonstrates how even in his apparent indifference to the community, he was still displaying small-town Southern care in the best way he knew how. Scout has to remind herself that "Boo was our neighbor," realizing that because of his indirect presence, she had never thought to care for him in return (320). The gifts that he gives indicate that he observes and knows the children; their failure to return these gifts demonstrates their lack of effort to know and empathize with him. This scene opens Scout's eyes to realize Boo's true generosity.

Throughout the novel, Scout's perception of him indicates how his existence mirrors a distant fantasy; however, by the time she actually stands on his front porch soaking in his perception of the world, she sees the reality of his humanity. When they are sitting on the Finch porch before she leads him home, Scout realizes: "Having been so accustomed to his absence, I found it incredible that he had been sitting beside me all this time, present. He had not made a sound" (318). This line summarizes Boo's entire, indirect, yet influential, function in her life. Through her experience with Boo, the veil of "otherness" falls and Scout is able to acknowledge the reality of his presence all along. The tension between presence and absence rendered through Boo's character allows us to see how empathy requires an invasion of space; it requires standing on someone's front porch and viewing life from their perspective. Scout may be able to

sympathize with the stories she hears about Boo, but she cannot empathize with him until she actually “stands in his shoes” (274). In a similar manner, experiencing the novel through Scout allows us to empathize with not only her, but also the marginalized characters that she encounters.

### **Southern Women**

As Scout stands on Boo’s porch at the end, she envisions a scene in which the women of Maycomb are going about their daily business: “Daylight...in my mind, the night faded. It was daytime and the neighborhood was busy. Miss Stephanie Crawford crossed the street to tell the latest to Miss Rachel. Miss Maudie bent over her azaleas” (320). In contrast to Boo Radley’s ghostly presence in Maycomb society, this illustration illuminates the hyper-presence of Southern white women. Notice that in the busyness of the neighborhood, Scout focuses on women, specifically in the daytime. This detail that they are home during the day exposes the expectations and constraints placed on women in Southern society. As Miss Stephanie crosses over to Miss Rachel’s porch, we see how news is spread in the small town through women and as Miss Maudie attends her flowers, we see her participating in domestic duty. Scout’s illustration of the women visibly present in the neighborhood during the day draws our attention to how image and perception functions in the novel.

This chapter attends three Southern white women on the front porch to expose the complexities of womanhood in the novel: Mrs. Dubose, Miss Maudie, and Aunt Alexandra. Exploring white women on the front porch provides insight into how Lee makes visible the private, feminine realm. The porch representing a gateway between indoors and outdoors enhances our understanding of how each woman deals with the challenges presented in gender



roles. Scout, who prefers to be outside, struggles to conform to stereotypical, female behavior associated with the indoors: “It was summer and we were outdoors. Of course, some afternoons when I would run inside for a drink of water, I would find the livingroom overrun with Maycomb ladies, sipping, whispering, fanning, and I would be called: ‘Jean Louise, come speak to these ladies’” (149). In this scene, I want to draw attention to the transition Scout makes from outdoors to indoors. Outside of the house, she enjoys the freedom from domestic constraints; however, as soon as she crosses over the porch and into the house, she is overwhelmed with expectations. Based on this passage, being a woman entails “sipping, whispering, and fanning” (149). It also highlights the pressure of impressing others by displaying eloquent and polite etiquette in conversation. This is the standard expectation of Maycomb women; however, the front porch produces a space for these women to defy these expectations.

Understanding the role of white Southern women on Harper Lee’s front porch requires a brief detour to the front porch of another Southern woman writer: Zora Neale Hurston. Investigating Southern front porches in Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* provides further insight into how the front porch serves as a space of personal transformation for women in both novels. In his article, Dale Pattison states, “As both an intimate space connected to the house and an exterior space accessible to the public, the porch generates a liminal zone in which rhetors function beyond the binaries that often produce reductive readings of race, gender, and other political discourses” (2013). In other words, the porch serves as a space of transition and transformation, both literally and metaphorically. Hurston explores how this transition transpires for the black community, while Lee highlights white women. However, each novel showcases how the front porch provides a space for women to not only physically transition from inside to outside, but also to grow in their establishment of identity.

Examining how the protagonist Janie functions on the front porch in Hurston's novel accentuates its sense of transformation for women in both novels. For Janie, the front porch serves as a space for her to contemplate her role as a black woman and navigate her various relationships. When Tea Cake – one of her love interests – walks her home one night, Janie stays on the front porch: “So she sat on the porch and watched the moon rise. Soon its amber fluid was drenching the earth, and quenching the thirst of the day” (99). The imagery in this illustration draws a parallel between Tea Cake and the moon as a sign of purity. This moment for Janie on the porch illuminates how Tea Cake represents the end to her thirst and the beginning of adventure. In this description, we see how he is beginning to seep into every aspect of her life, as if the purity of the moon is healing the destruction of her past. The front porch allows her the space to contemplate this.

For the black community, the front porch is where they attempt to challenge structured culture and language with regard to white influence. Pattison puts it simply: “On its most basic level, the porch, as a liminal space, encourages verbal communication that destabilizes the structured language of white authority” (2013). He specifically emphasizes that the tension on the porch in which black people are attempting to separate themselves from is actually about the dominance of cultural white authority both linguistically and culturally. Thus, the porch serves as a space “where playful language and storytelling provide relief from the imposing structure of white authority” (2013). Pattison perceives the porch to be a place to establish black identity and vernacular within a safe, communal space. Describing it as a place of “playful language,” implies a sense of relaxation and released tension from struggling with the pressures of white authority outside of the porch (2013). He argues: “Rather than upholding the binaries that separate hush harbors from the public realm, porches invite participants into a liminal zone that challenges

clearly defined discourses of blackness/whiteness and maleness/femaleness” (2013). The phrase “hush harbors” refers to a place where enslaved African Americans would meet to practice their religion in the Antebellum South (2013). These secret gatherings became a space for slaves to freely express their emotions and the traumatic hardships of slavery. Pattison is claiming that the front porch in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* provides characters with a place to challenge the binaries that resulted in “hush harbors” in the South.

Hurston’s depiction of transformation on the front porch accentuates the tensions that white women deal with in Lee’s novel. For example, examining the Finch’s neighbor Mrs. Dubose on the front porch exposes the tension between public and private affairs. Scout describes her as “vicious,” always reprimanding and criticizing the children: “If she was on the porch when we passed, we would be raked by her watchful gaze, subjected to ruthless interrogation regarding our behavior, and given a melancholy prediction on what we would amount to when we grew up, which was always nothing” (115). Lee’s description here highlights Mrs. Dubose’s public, judgemental, and condescending nature. The term “rake” suggests that she is actively looking for something to critique and “ruthless interrogation” summarizes her extremely direct and unnecessary assumption that Scout and Jem are always up to no good. They are “subjected” to the trap, revealing how her questioning is unavoidable. Here, we see how commenting on the children is her method of entertainment, or rather, a distraction from something else.

Mrs. Dubose’s mean and unapproachable facade masks her private struggle with morphine addiction. Out of anger against a comment she made about Atticus, Jem destroyed the flowers in her yard and was sentenced to reading to her in the afternoons. After several weeks, Atticus informs Jem of her morphine addiction and death: “She said she meant to break herself

of it before she dies, and that's what she did" (127). Atticus explains that this was a true act of bravery, challenging all of Jem's perceptions of her: "I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what" (128). Through this courage, Mrs. Dubose defies cultural expectations of women displaying weakness and lack of endurance. Her courage speaks to her determination to break free of her struggle with morphine. Although she publicly displays a racist, hostile worldview, her bravery earns Atticus's respect. Through Mrs. Dubose, we see the front porch as a clashing of public and private life as her internal struggle with morphine contributes to her outward behavior. In this way, Scout is exposed to the complexity of human nature. By gaining further insight into why Mrs. Dubose acts the way she does, Scout learns how to empathize with her.

On her porch, Miss Maudie Atkinson demonstrates a bending of gender norms. In chapter five, Scout informs her readers that she is a widow who "worked in her flower beds in an old straw hat and men's coveralls, but after her five o'clock bath she would appear on the porch and reign over the street in a magisterial beauty" (47). This description of her perfectly characterizes her embodiment of both maternal instinct and paternal leadership. We see her carrying out domestic duties while dressed like a male farmer, blurring traditional gender lines. Then, when she transitions to the porch, she asserts a mix of queenly dominance and inviting nature. Scout recalls that in the summertime, "often as not, Miss Maudie and I would sit silently on her porch, watching the sky go from yellow to pink as the sun went down, watching flights of martins sweep low over the neighborhood and disappear behind the schoolhouse rooftops" (48). This imagery of watching the sky change colors symbolizes Miss Maudie's transition from displaying paternal characteristics outside the house to maternal characteristics on the porch. The color

yellow is bright and dominant while she is in overalls, and then it turns to pink as she assumes the role of communal mother on the porch. In turn, her front porch paradoxically serves as both a throne and a nostalgic, safe space. This blend of roles is why Scout feels so comfortable around her. Observing Miss Maudie outside in overalls reassures and encourages Scout in her own desire to wear overalls and play outside with Jem. Miss Maudie's multi-functioning presence on her front porch allows Scout to see that she does not need to conform to expectations within the house.

Studying Aunt Alexandra on the front porch represents and exposes the constraints of domesticity. One Sunday on returning home from church, Scout recalls: "I looked down the street. Enamored, upright, uncompromising, Aunt Alexandra was sitting in a rocking chair exactly as if she had sat there every day of her life" (143). Her "upright" and "uncompromising" demeanor suggests a stubborn sense of power (143). The image of her in the rocking chair represents tradition and an assertion of dominance; there is an overall feeling that she is conservative in her attempts to preserve older ways of life. Kristen Proehl asserts, "Aunt Alexandra both represents and regulates the boundaries of race, gender, class, and sexuality in the American South" (211). In this way, Aunt Alexandra summarizes Southern female struggle in the twentieth century. She comes to live with the Finch family because she believes that Scout needs a female influence in her life, and as Laura Fine reasons, "Aunt Alexandra acts as the enforcer of conventional gender roles, constantly warning her niece about such unladylike tendencies as wearing pants instead of dresses" (123). Aunt Alexandra felt that Scout was lacking the true feminine guidance necessary to her upbringing, heavily speaking to her traditional, domestic expectations of femininity. Scout explains that "Aunty had a way of

declaring What Is Best For The Family, and I suppose her coming to live with us was in that category” (146). In this case, this meant attempting to uphold a certain image.

Aunt Alexandra’s methods signify her focus on maintaining proper social status. demonstrates the importance. Proehl argues: “Aunt Alexandra’s disciplinary methods presume a close relationship between gender and performance” (211). As the reader comes to realize, she values her reputation more than anything. She views her presence as an opportunity to reestablish whatever social status that she believes the Finch’s have lost. Scout asserts, “Aunt Alexandra fitted into the world of Maycomb like a hand into a glove, but never into the world of Jem and me” (148). The image of a “hand into a glove” evokes a sense of structure, as if fitting into traditional Maycomb society were a set, specific algorithm (148). The accessory of a glove also connotes femininity, suggesting that Aunt Alexandra’s domestic disposition fits perfectly into Maycomb format. However, her attempt to shape Scout into a typical, Southern Maycomb woman hinders their ability to relate to one another. At one point, Calpurnia takes the children with her to church and when they return, Scout recounts the experience to Atticus: “I told him in detail about our trip to church with Calpurnia. Atticus seemed to enjoy it, but Aunt Alexandra, who was sitting in the corner quietly sewing, put down her embroidery and stared at us” (154). Here, we see Aunt Alexandra clearly upset with Calpurnia’s methods of raising the children. Her body language of “sitting in the corner quietly sewing” communicates her defiance and disapproval (154). She is trying to keep to herself but her “stare” reveals her true passing of judgment. Most likely, she is afraid that if Scout and Jem are seen in a black church, then it will jeopardize their image. In this way, the front porch for Aunt Alexandra represents a physical space to assert control over how the rest of the community perceives the family.

However, toward the end of the novel, we see Scout's perception of Aunt Alexandra defied on the front porch by the reality of her genuine love and concern. In a haste to ensure Scout's wellbeing, Aunt Alexandra meets her on the front porch: "I was at the front door when they were going down the hall. Aunt Alexandra was running to meet me" (302). In this moment, Aunt Alexandra meeting Scout on the front porch showcases her newfound flexibility. Up until now, she has been attempting to mold Scout into the culture's definition of femininity. As a result, Kristen Proehl writes that "Scout turns to the outdoors to escape the constraints of domesticity" (212). But now, Aunt Alexandra makes an effort to meet Scout in the middle. Furthermore, she does so by "running," displaying an urgency that she has not yet shown. As a result, we see her reconcile with Scout when she forgets her disdain for overalls: "She brought me something to put on, and had I thought about it then, I would have never let her forget it: in her distraction, Aunty brought me my overalls. 'Put these on, darling,' she said, handing me the garments she most despised" (303). In this interaction, I want to draw attention to how Aunt Alexandra surprises Scout. Our representation of domestic values, who has been so concerned about Scout's development in womanhood, willingly provides Scout with "the garments she most despised" (303). At this moment, the woman regulating gender boundaries abandons her post. This act symbolizes Aunt Alexandra's surrender; rather, the overalls represent a peace treaty. Through her reconciliation with Scout, she defies domestic standards.

In this way, examining white women on the front porch allows us to see how Lee challenges cultural standards of womanhood. It exposes the tensions of femininity represented through each woman, offering a space of transformation. On the front porch, we see how the defined boundaries created by society begin to soften, offering a space of reflection and reconciliation. Through Mrs. Dubose, we see a reconciliation with herself before she dies. Miss

Maudie provides us a reconciliation between gender tensions. With Aunt Alexandra, we see a reconciliation with Scout. Through the ability to visibly see the complexities that these women face – gender roles, personal affairs, and domestic constraints – we are able to empathize with them. In allowing us to see the realities that women face, Lee shapes our perception of womanhood.

### **Scout Finch**

On her way home after observing her street from Boo's porch, Scout proclaims her newfound maturity: "As I made my way home, I thought Jem and I would get grown but there wasn't much else left for us to learn, except possibly algebra" (374). In her mind, the events that she has witnessed in her short life have taught her valuable life lessons that algebra never could. This quotation points to how physically observing life from a different angle has shifted her mental understanding of society. The lessons that she has learned over the novel's span of two years unite when she stands on Boo's front porch. However, I argue that Scout only reaches this point of maturity in the last scene because of a prior interaction with Atticus on the front porch. This conversation is both central to the novel and pivotal to Scout's development:

"First of all," he said, "if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—"  
 "Sir?"  
 "— until you can climb into his skin and walk around in it." (33)

In this scene, I want to focus on the overarching lesson that Atticus is trying to teach Scout. He seems most concerned with learning to empathize "with all kinds of folks" through understanding each person's unique perspective (33). This is the very quote that Scout refers to



on Boo's front porch in the last scene, enabling us to look back at who she was at the beginning of the novel and compare it to who she is at the end.

In this chapter, I argue that this scene with Atticus on the porch symbolizes Scout's journey from adolescence and adulthood. The lesson she learns about understanding others enables Scout to deal with the outside issues of class and race throughout the novel. Rachel Watson asserts that "porches become stages, providing space for the dramatizing of moral lessons, particularly those involving exchanges of sympathetic points of view" (422).

Referencing the porch as a "stage" communicates a sense of action or area where stories come to life; in other words, it is the space that truly drives the progression of the characters in the novel. Thus, as Scout wrestles with societal issues, the front porch functions as a space for her to contemplate these tensions between the protection of childhood represented by the indoors and the complicated reality of the world represented by the outdoors. In this way, it is a visual symbol of the metaphorical space that Scout, in her youth, occupies between naivety and understanding.

Although scholars agree that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a coming-of-age novel in some capacity, they disagree about what that growth and maturity entails. First, a classic debate has to do with whose coming of age it narrates: Jem's or Scout's. In her article, Julia Pond argues that "although *To Kill a Mockingbird* is narrated and focalized through Scout Finch, the story actually concerns Jem's coming of age and moral development" (2017). Pond's argument is centered around her interpretation of Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman*, which she argues is Scout's true bildungsroman. Pond insists that in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, "Scout ends wiser and more aware, but she has not matured in a sense of self or identity" (2017). Her definition of "coming-of-age" appears to be contingent upon full, successful maturity.

Another scholar steers away from focusing on whose “coming-of-age” the novel displays. Jennifer Horwitz argues, “the protagonists do not have to grow up, or come of age, to realize the injustices that shape their lives; they see and experience them in the very place every child in the United States is supposed to be treated equally” (2021). In other words, she suggests that the argument should not lie within whose coming of age it is; rather, we should be concerned with the children’s mere recognition of injustice occurring in their society. She does not necessarily contradict Pond, but she rather focuses on Scout and Jem’s acknowledgment of the social issues presented. Horwitz is not worried about whether or not they actually understand the injustices in full capacity. In their youth, they cannot wholly comprehend why or how the events of the case transpired, but they can at least note that something is wrong.

Both scholars draw our attention to the bildungsroman, which supports how the front porch functions as a space of synthesis between adolescence and adulthood. However, I disagree with Pond’s assertion that Scout does not mature in her identity in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. While it is true that she might not seem to be in quite the same state of awareness as Jem, I argue that she ends the novel wiser in her understanding of society than she was in the beginning. In turn, this growth influences the development of her own identity. Through her experience with Boo, Scout releases any sense of fear, gaining insight into what it means to “climb into his skin” (33). The claim that Scout “has not matured in a sense of self or identity” actually creates inconsistency. If a “coming of age” only be classified by characters reaching development in all aspects, then neither Jem nor Scout accomplish this. However, defining the phrase as some sort of progression or journey through emotional maturity suggests that both of them experience this, just at different paces and in different manners. Either they both progressed in their “coming of age” or they both did not. One cannot fit this classification and not the other. So, I agree with

Horwitz that we should be focused on the fact that they both acknowledge brokenness in their society to begin with.

To expand upon each scholar's claims, I argue that the mere acknowledgement of societal brokenness, as Horwitz focuses on, actually constitutes Scout's coming of age in itself. Part of growing in knowledge and maturity is learning how society functions. Scout cannot develop her own identity or morality in a world whose reality she does not fully recognize. To establish her own role in society, she must first understand the world around her. In an effort to combine the perspectives of both Pond and Horwitz, I assert that we should, in fact, be most concerned with Scout's acknowledgement because it is *part* of her coming of age. Kristen Proehl articulates my claim well: "Like the sentimental bildungsroman, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is also a coming-of-age narrative that charts Scout's developing consciousness of social boundaries and inequities within her community" (203). I argue that Scout's "consciousness" is rendered by the lesson Atticus taught her on the front porch.

Providing context to Scout's character will allow us to see how she has progressed in her identity on the porch by the end of the novel. A natural born tomboy, she states, "I was usually mud-splashed or covered with sand" (149). This description indicates that she often plays outside, usually getting into some sort of mischief with Jem. She is even so bold as to fight Walter Cunningham on the first day of school: "Catching Walter Cunningham in the schoolyard gave me some pleasure, but when I was rubbing his nose in the dirt Jem came by and told me to stop" (25). This instance highlights her independence and strong will, as well as the "pleasure" she gets from asserting dominance over a classmate (25). However, through her resistance to conform to stereotypical female behavior, Scout actually ends up connecting with Walter and his family. Kristen Proehl writes: "Scout's tomboy status contributes to her development of

sympathetic alliances with other “outsider” figures in Maycomb” (199). As she encounters marginalized characters like Walter, we see how she deals with the tensions between her own, inside experience and the experiences of others. In this way, the front porch symbolizes the realm that she occupies between the two.

Focusing on Scout’s relationship with the Cunningham family aids in our understanding of how Lee presents tensions of class. Mr. Cunningham is one of Atticus’s clients who cannot pay him with money; instead, he leaves wood or hickory nuts on the Finchs’ porch from time to time. After witnessing a particular interaction between the two of them, Scout addresses it in an attempt to understand:

“Why does he pay you like that?” I asked.  
 “Because that’s the only way he can pay me. He has no money.”  
 “Are we poor, Atticus?”  
 Atticus nodded. “We are indeed.”  
 Jem’s nose wrinkled. “Are we as poor as the Cunningham’s?”  
 “Not exactly. The Cunninghams are country folks, farmers, and the crash hit them the hardest.” (23)

In this scene, Atticus is honest and upfront with Scout about the financial situation of the Cunninghams in order to inform her about social class. To understand this better, she compares her own, inside situation to the outside situation of the Cunninghams when she asks if her family is as poor as them. Her persistent questions imply that she is thoroughly trying to understand the implications of class. Learning this information motivates her to invite Walter to her house for dinner, showcasing her maturity in learning how to care for others.

The scene where Walter joins the Finch family for dinner prior to Scout’s conversation with Atticus on the porch about “climbing in someone’s skin” symbolizes an instance where an outside experience is brought inside Scout’s own experience (33). His poor upbringing is evident in the way that he eats and his lack of table manners: “Walter poured syrup on his vegetables and

meat with a generous hand. He would probably have poured it into his milk glass had I not asked what the sam hill he was doing” (27). Here, Scout does not understand behavior different from her own. Their maid Calpurnia pulls Scout aside: “Don’t matter who they are, anybody sets foot in this house’s yo’ comp’ny, and don’t you let me catch you remarkin’ on their ways like you was so high and mighty!” (27). This is a moment where Scout tries to weigh her own experience of upbringing with someone’s drastically different one, which fails. In her innocence, she struggles to understand that his poor manners were probably a result of his poor home life. Having Walter over for dinner is a visual representation of external forces imposing upon Scout’s inside experience.

Later in the novel, her interaction with Mr. Cunningham reverses the previous example to bring the inside experience outside. Shortly before Tom’s trial, there is an angry mob who appears at the jail cell but Atticus intervenes and prevents the lynching. Scout, Jem, and their friend Dill curiously and secretly follow Atticus to the jail late that night. Atticus is horrified that they would put themselves in danger but Scout actually ends up unintentionally helping her father prevent what could have been a horrible situation. When the mob approaches the jail cell, Scout recognizes Mr. Cunningham and then addresses him immediately: “Don’t you remember me, Mr. Cunningham? I’m Jean Louise Finch. You brought us some hickory nuts one time, remember?” (174). Her ability to recall Mr. Cunningham’s earlier form of payment to Atticus showcases her observant nature. She tells him that she is friends with his son Walter and speaks to him in such a friendly and nonchalant manner that Mr. Cunningham is both shocked and amused. The anger in him clearly diminishes because of Scout’s friendliness and the mob ends up walking away from the jail cell. At the time, Scout does not understand the intentions of the

mob; to her, she merely sees someone she knows and speaks to him as she would any other friend.

This is a scene where we can tangibly see the tension between her innocence and maturity. She narrates: “Atticus had said it was the polite thing to talk to people about what they were interested in, not about what you were interested in” (174). Here, Scout is attempting to form a point of connection with him. In this way, she is trying to channel a lesson she learned inside the house to outside the house. This moment displays Scout trying to empathize with him; in learning about their financial situation, she was able to see him as just another human being with his own values and struggles. Her unique ability to address an adult male whom she barely knows definitely speaks to her child-like demeanor; however, it also implies a sense of mature confidence. This is a moment where we see Scout riding the line between adolescence and adulthood. In both scenes with the Cunninghams, we see how the meshing of inside and outside experiences of class develops Scout in her ability to empathize with others.

In order to empathize with those of a different race, Scout actually must leave her inside experience. One Sunday when Atticus is out of town, Calpurnia offers to bring Scout and Jem to her church. They agree and the children are given the opportunity of experiencing Calpurnia’s world for the first time. On the way home, Scout thinks: “That Calpurnia led a modest double life never dawned on me. The idea that she had a separate existence outside of our household was a novel one, to say nothing of her command of two languages” (143). The “double life” and “two languages” that Scout highlights here refers to the difference in Calpurnia’s dialect and behavior when she is with her own community versus when she is with the Finch family. Up until this point, Scout has confined Calpurnia within the boundaries of the Finch kitchen, so

seeing her other life is pivotal to Scout's understanding of racial boundaries. This is an instance where she actually "climbs in someone's skin" (33).

Attending Calpurnia's church enhances Scout's curiosity to know her even more deeply and continue this investigation of her life:

"Cal, can I come see you sometimes?"  
 She looked down at me. "See me, honey? You see me every day."  
 "Out to your house," I said. "Sometimes after work? Atticus can come get me." (143)

Notice that Calpurnia points out the fact that they already see each other every day. This is not enough for Scout; she must leave her own house and go "out" to Calpurnia's in order to fully know her; she must leave her own house and go "out" to Calpurnia's (143). This intimate connection would not have been standard for the time period, as Proehl makes us aware: "Scout demonstrates the capacity for marginalized individuals to forge alternative networks of support beyond the boundaries of the normative society" (199). Through this dialogue, we see how Scout travels across social boundaries, between inside and outside experiences, in order to better understand the complexities of race.

In this way, the end of the novel seals Scout's progression toward maturity as the front porch is where the lessons she has learned about class and race unite. Horwitz views the last scene as pivotal to Scout's development: "At the end of the eventful night, Scout escorts Boo back to his house, never to see him again, but it is on his porch that Scout gains the knowledge that catalyzes her coming of age" (2021). This newfound "knowledge" refers to her understanding of Atticus's lesson earlier in the novel. Scout's personal epiphany that "there wasn't much else for us to learn" helps her to realize that viewing life from another's point of view applies to the boundaries of both race and class (374). On the front porch, she learns to empathize with outcasts. As things begin to click for her, this moment serves as proof of her

progression as an individual. These are extremely formative years for Scout and we have the privilege of gaining insight into her inner psyche through the first person; as a result, readers are able to glimpse firsthand her thoughts, feelings, and curiosities about the world around her. As a result, any reader can see that the Scout at the beginning of the novel is not the same by the end.

Therefore, representing the realm between her adolescence and adulthood, the front porch is the very location where Scout begins to come of age. Outside of her comfortable life of overalls and playing with Jem, she is forced to confront society head on. Watching her grow over two years allows readers to see the inner workings as well as the outer workings of her mind. Scout learning to understand her society mirrors how Lee desires us to approach the novel willing to learn, grow, and change with Scout. Experiencing the novel through the eyes of a child elicits empathy for the youth and other marginalized groups. Just as Scout has matured on the front porch by the end, so have we, as readers.

## **Conclusion**

Before turning to leave Boo's front porch at the end, Scout takes a moment to contemplate the significance of this moment. She realizes, "I had never seen our neighborhood from this angle. There was Miss Maudie's, Miss Stephanie's—there was our house, I could see the porch swing—Miss Rachel's house beyond us, plainly visible. I could even see Mrs. Dubose's" (320). At this moment, Scout's perception of her neighborhood is altered by realizing the reality of Boo's life. Interestingly, she identifies her own house on the street by noticing "the porch swing," emphasizing the significance of the space and drawing a connection between her porch and Boo's (320). A swing provides a relaxing place to sit and soak in one's surroundings. It also creates a rhythm of rocking back and forth, indicating a sense of steadiness. The symbolism of



the porch swing in the context of this scene shows us how Scout sees the porch as a safe space to merely observe from. Specifically pointing out the other neighbors' houses is a metaphor for how she displays empathy towards each of them. This newfound "angle" shifts how she thinks about not only Boo, but also the rest of her neighbors (32). The fact that she "could even see Mrs. Dubose's" emphasizes her capacity to empathize with not only those who demonstrate prejudice, but also those who have passed. Boo has enabled her to see past her perceptions and acknowledge others' realities.

After noticing the other houses of the neighborhood, Scout returns her focus to Boo to really illuminate the reality of his care for her. In a sort of dream-like state, she recounts various scenes throughout the novel, envisioning each season from his perspective. She watches the street:

"It was still summertime, and the children came closer. A boy trudged down the sidewalk dragging a fishing-pole behind him. A man stood waiting with his hands on his hips. Summertime, and his children played in the front yard with their friend, enacting a strange little drama of their own invention." (320)

This illustration reveals Boo's close attention to the children over the years. I want to particularly emphasize Lee's subtle transition from referring to Scout and Jem as "the children" to "his children" (320). This shift indicates how Boo progresses in his care and concern for them as he observes the neighborhood. It also shows how Scout's narration is transitioning into Boo's. This symbolizes how she is embodying Boo's mind, truly "climbing in his skin" in order to realize the reality of his character (33). As the seasons go by, Scout continues: "Summer, and he watched his children's heart break. Autumn again, and Boo's children needed him" (320). The terms "heart break" and "needed" elicit a sense of compassion, showing his emotional connection to them (320). Through envisioning each season from Boo's unique perspective, Scout emphasizes the parental role that he must have assumed over time, showing how he has come to see her as

his own child. At this point, the narration shifts back to Scout as this realization about Boo reminds her of the lesson that Atticus taught her on the front porch.

In turn, I want to reiterate how each of these chapters demonstrates the front porch as a place of synthesis between perception and reality. All three sections highlight various tensions that serve as sub-categories under the umbrella of the primary synthesis. For Boo, we analyzed Scout's fantasy about Boo on the porch and explored how it represents the bridge between presence and absence in the novel. Right before they return to Boo's porch, they discuss the traumatic incident of Mr. Ewell's attack with Atticus. As the conversation continues, Scout realizes: "My small fantasy about him was alive again: he would be sitting on the porch...right pretty spell we're having, isn't it, Mr. Arthur? Yes, a right pretty spell" (312). Here, her earlier fantasy actually becomes a reality on the front porch. Realizing Boo's close observation of her and Jem over the years debunks Scout's earlier assumption that she would never see him; instead, it reveals how he actually functions as a sort of God-like figure or protector. On the front porch, she transitions from outwardly perceiving him as someone to be feared to realizing his watchful presence.

As we discussed in the second chapter, examining white women on the front porch illuminated several tensions regarding womanhood: gender roles, personal affairs, and domestic constraints. This chapter served as a space to tease out how Lee defies the culture's expectations of women by making visible the inner workings and struggles of the female realm. Charles McKay describes the front porch as "a place of public theater, where domestic drama played for a passing, peering public" (2008). In a way, this seems to mirror society's perception of women. Culture watches and regulates female behavior, subjecting and confining Southern women in *To Kill a Mockingbird* to a very specific, domestic standard. However, through examining these

women on the front porch, we saw the reality of how they each uniquely resisted and challenged expectations.

Lastly, through her experience with Boo, Scout's personal development in maturity on the front porch ties all of these chapters together. With Lee's first person narration, we see how Scout's relationship with each character reveals how her perceptions of others shift as she is exposed to various tensions within her society. In this way, she is caught between innocence and knowledge, or rather, misunderstanding and empathy. On the porch, Scout comes to a realization about humanity. Still with Boo, she narrates, "I led him to the front porch, where his uneasy steps halted. He was still holding my hand and he gave no sign of letting me go" (319). Here, we see a reversal of roles, showing how Scout has progressed in her maturity. As an adolescent, she guides a grown adult whose steps are described as "uneasy," or uncertain (319). Through her experiences in the novel, she is now able to assist others in their entrance to the reality of the world.

The front porch's significance in *To Kill a Mockingbird* is not merely a significant space used for the novel's development; it is a metaphor for the transformation that characters experience. Reynolds Price wonders: "Where else in our huge national store of fictional life can we find a compatible crystallization of human feeling in a single feature of house-and-home?" (1992). This classification grasps every aspect of how the front porch functions in the novel. The term "crystallization" indicates a solidification or tangible change; in other words, it attempts to bring some sort of structure to human emotion (1992). It is the purification of solid compounds, or a transformation. After examining the features of the front porch, we now stand "crystallized" with Scout at the end (1992).

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