

WHAT WAS THE MOCKINGBIRD'S SONG?
REASSESSING TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD
THROUGH THE LENS OF
GO SET A WATCHMAN

by

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THESIS

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Abstract

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The publication of *Go Set a Watchman*, a companion piece to Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, problematizes many of the accepted readings of the canonical text. This 'new' novel is actually the initial manuscript of the 'old' classic Harper Lee submitted to her publisher in 1957. In this iteration, readers find 26-year-old Jean Louise and 72-year-old Atticus at odds over the Brown v. Board of Education decision. The father does not believe that the Supreme Court has the right to legislate integration for the individual states, and works to keep NAACP lawyers out of Maycomb. His daughter is shocked and appalled by her father's choices, believing them to be in contradiction to the egalitarian philosophy in which Atticus has raised her. Jean Louise is thus forced to differentiate herself from her father and come to her own conclusions – in the process learning that the self-awareness and autonomy necessary to do so were in fact her father's most valuable bequests to her.

So then, Scout was first envisioned as a young woman on the cusp of the Civil Rights' Movement, struggling to break free from the more backward aspects of her

Southern heritage, and Atticus was a respected patriarch who had fulfilled his purpose in enabling his child to grow and evolve beyond him.

This thesis will argue that the existence of *Go Set a Watchman* demands a reanalysis of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It will assert that, although a great deal about the plot and details of the story changed in the revisions and re-writings that would take Harper Lee from *Watchman* to *Mockingbird*, the essence of her characters did not. The Atticus we encounter in *Mockingbird* remains an imperfect man, shaped by his environment, and incapable of saving his beloved Maycomb from its darker proclivities or from the frighteningly different future toward which it is hurtling. Atticus Finch saves no one in *Mockingbird* because he is no more capable of it in 1935 than he was in 1957.

It is Scout's ability to change and grow which offers hope for the future of the South and will take the next generation into a better world, not the hero worship of a clearly flawed Atticus which has become the focus of most scholarship on *Mockingbird*. With this in mind, it is necessary to consider some of the major changes that take place between drafts of the Finch family's story and determine why they might have changed and how they serve to further the unifying theme of Scout's autonomy. In sum, the changes serve mostly to accentuate Atticus's failure as the hero, while at the same time highlighting his success as a father empowering his child to grow beyond him, thus re-centering Scout in the narrative.

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Chapter 1

The Author

Harper Lee wrote about the South she loved and peppered her fiction with characters and events based on her real life experiences. Therefore, in order to appreciate her novels, one must have a basic understanding of the woman herself. Nelle Harper Lee was born on April 28, 1926. She was the youngest of four children. Her sister Alice, whom she always referred to as “Atticus in a Skirt” (Mills 82), was fifteen years her senior; her sister Louise was ten years older than she; and her brother Edwin was six years ahead of her (Don 13). Their parents, Amasa Coleman Lee and Frances Finch Lee, were rather progressive for their time period, and encouraged their children to do and be whatever they wanted, regardless of social norms (Mills 125). So it was that Alice Lee became one of the first female attorneys in Alabama and joined her father’s practice in Monroeville. Louise Lee, the only one of the Lee girls to choose a traditional route, married and had two children. Ed Lee served in WWII and then made the Air Force his career (Mills 148). Nelle Harper initially thought to join her father and her sister in the legal profession, and she attended law school at the University of Alabama from 1944 to 1949 (Don 115). But as much as she enjoyed the law and as much as she admired her father and her sister, she felt more drawn to writing. She dropped out of law school and moved to New York

City where she got a day job as an airline clerk, leaving her free to write in the evenings (Mills 143).

In 1956, Nelle Harper was still living in Manhattan, working for the airline and writing as much as she could when she was given an extraordinary gift. Joy and Michael Brown, fellow Southerners transplanted to New York, presented her with a check. They would provide all her financial needs for the next year, so that she could give up her day job and just write (Mills 42). The next month, Nelle brought a partial manuscript titled *Go Set a Watchman* to her agent, Maurice Crain.

By May, they felt it was ready to be sent to publishing companies (Don 55). In June, editors at J.B. Lippincott asked for a meeting with Lee. They explained that they liked her manuscript, but wanted her to take another pass at it before they made their final decision. They felt that it was “more of a series of anecdotes than a fully conceived novel” (56). Lippincott purchased the book in October of 1957, but asked Lee to continue working with editor Tay Hohoff to revise it (Mahler). Two and half years later, in the spring of 1959, a date for the publication of *To Kill a Mockingbird* was set (Don 56). Nelle chose to write under the name Harper Lee because it appalled her when people mispronounced her first name. Of course, the androgynous nature of her middle name was very probably an asset to a first-time writer in the 1960s (Mills 224).

Lee expected “a quick and merciful death” for her first novel (Mills 43), and she was genuinely surprised when it made it onto the *New York Times*’ best-seller list within a few weeks, and then stayed there for the following eighty-eight (Don 64). Nelle, a quiet and reserved person her entire life, did not quite know how to deal with sudden fame. In the early years, she did appearances and book-signings, albeit reluctantly (67). She did not enjoy the spotlight, but she made an effort to fulfill her promotion duties to the publishing company, giving radio and print interviews (Mills 44). After the film rights to the book were sold in 1961, the demands on her time increased (Don 71). Appearances to promote the film brought more and more reporters into her sphere, and she began to find their questions invasive. Her unexpected fame was something she endured, not something she enjoyed (Mills 45).

In the mid-60s, she withdrew from public life completely and granted only a handful of interviews in the last half century of her life. Marja Mills, the journalist who published the only biography the Lee sisters ever authorized, observed, “From her forties on, Harper Lee was branded a literary recluse, an imposing figure but also a curiosity. If living her life apart, and leaving unchallenged speculation about her nonconformity, was what it cost, she was willing to pay” (252). Lee did agree to allow Oprah Winfrey to use *Mockingbird* for her book club and even wrote her a letter in May of 2006 which was published in *O Magazine*. She liked Oprah, and was glad to be a part of the project, but she

still did not enjoy the spotlight. She told Winfrey, “You know Boo Radley? Well, that’s me.” (229). Although she always acknowledged the autobiographical aspects of the character of Scout Finch, she still insisted that she was much more like Boo in her love of home and her distaste for social situations.

Her decision to withdraw from public life did not lessen the public’s interest in her private life; rather, it most likely heightened her readers’ desire to uncover the mystery of Harper Lee. Over the years, Alice developed as the gatekeeper for her younger sister. When Marja Mills came to Monroeville in 2001 seeking the author’s input on the city of Chicago’s decision to use *Mockingbird* in its *One Book, One Chicago* initiative, she was at first granted only an informal chat with Alice Lee, which was to be strictly off the record (Mills 25). Few would-be interviewers made it this far. The journalist was quite shocked when she received a phone call from Harper Lee herself the next day (35). Generally speaking, the Lee sisters had learned to distrust journalists, who they felt tended carelessly to print inaccuracies and had a bad habit of misquoting the reclusive author (112). Worse, they were mortified by the speculation that inevitably ensued when they refused interviews (111), and so they chose mostly to ignore the outside world as much as possible.

This propensity of the sisters to shun the spotlight, coupled with Alice’s fierce protection of her little sister’s privacy left much of the literary community scratching their heads when the announcement was made in 2015 that the original

manuscript submitted to J.B. Lippincott in 1957 was to be published as a separate book. Harper Lee suffered a debilitating stroke in February of 2007, and from that point forward, she had good days and bad days (Mills 269), but was not always the “feisty and independent” (148) woman her friends had come to know and love. In November of 2014, Alice Lee passed away at the age of 103, leaving her sister without a gatekeeper, and less than three months later Harper Collins announced that it would be publishing *Go Set a Watchman* the following July (Alter).

Close friends of the author were afraid that she was being taken advantage of, since she had previously stated her intention never to publish again, proclaiming, “I have said what I wanted to say and I will not say it again” (Mills 210). Even though the friends who were there when she made that declaration had found it a bit suspect (211), this supposed discovery of a lost manuscript so soon after the loss of Miss Alice left many friends concerned for Nelle. Alexandra Alter, writing for the *New York Times*, contacted Marja Mills to get her perspective on the announcement, and Mills shared an excerpt from a letter she received from Alice Lee in 2011, stating that Nelle Harper “can’t see and can’t hear and will sign anything put before her by anyone in whom she has confidence” (Alter).

All statements regarding the book prior to its publication came from Tonja Carter, Lee’s attorney and a former associate of Alice Lee. In these statements

the author herself is quoted as saying that after the manuscript was rediscovered, she “shared it with a handful of people I trust and was pleased to hear that they considered it worthy of publication” (Alter), however, it is hard to be certain what would have happened had Miss Alice lived.

Regardless of *how* the manuscript came to be published, it *was* published in July 2015, and has caused a firestorm of controversy ever since. Many readers have decried the presentation of Atticus Finch in his seventies, feeling that he has become a stereotypically racist Southerner, incapable of inspiring anyone. Others have held the book up as proof that *Mockingbird* was really always fairly racist and undeserving of the accolades it has received for fifty-five years.

Both interpretations have their flaws, but it is certain that the existence of *Watchman* allows us as students of literature to re-evaluate *Mockingbird* in the light of this earlier manuscript and to use the changes that Lee made between drafts to begin new conversations about what she was telling us in *Mockingbird*. The opportunity to compare a piece of classic literature with its own initial draft is an exciting prospect, and one which must be seized.

Chapter 2

The Zeitgeist

The importance of considering the political realities of Harper Lee's world when seeking to engage in meaningful literary criticism of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is well established. Many literary scholars have assessed the impact of the zeitgeist of the 1950s on the plot, characters, and over-all themes of this piece of classic literature. This section will offer a political context for the writing and publication of the novel.

As Ms. Lee was working on the first draft of her novel, the Supreme Court was preparing to make its ruling in the case of *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. The plaintiff was challenging the 1896 ruling of the Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The earlier case came before the Court when Homer Plessy, an African American, contended that his constitutional rights had been violated when he was arrested for refusing to ride in a 'colored' train car in Louisiana. At that time, the Court upheld the right of the individual states to impose segregation of Caucasians and African Americans, as long as they followed the "separate but equal" doctrine ("*Plessy v. Ferguson*"). *Brown v. Board* challenged this ruling in the context of public school education, seeking to broaden the scope of decisions the Court had made previously regarding only the integration of post-graduate studies and win a recanting of the "separate but equal" doctrine altogether (Johnson *Understanding* 96).

The Court had begun hearing arguments regarding *Brown v. Board* in 1952 and on May 17, 1954, they were finally ready to deliver their decision. The Court unanimously overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In his statement delivering the opinion of the Court, Chief Justice Earl Warren alleged, "To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to

their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to be undone” (Johnson *Understanding* 98).

It was an earth-shattering moment for civil rights activists, and the importance of and potentially violent consequences of that ruling would have been immediately obvious to Harper Lee as the daughter of a prominent Alabama attorney and statesman. The reaction of the citizens of Maycomb to this decision is a major plot point in the manuscript Lee completed in 1957 and published in 2015 as *Go Set a Watchman*. However, it is not merely the decision itself which had such an impact on Lee’s writing, but the wellspring of politically-charged events sparked and enflamed by it in her beloved Alabama.

At roughly the same time the Court began hearing the Brown v. Board arguments in 1952, Autherine Lucy, an African American woman, began seeking admission to the University of Alabama (Johnson *Understanding* 107), where Harper Lee had attended law school from 1945-1949 (Don 115). Finally, on February 2, 1956 – nine months after the Supreme Court decision that public schools must integrate – Lucy successfully enrolled for classes at the University of Alabama. But the fight for equal treatment was not over. University authorities denied Lucy on-campus housing, which, as a freshman whose family did not live in Tuscaloosa, the university by-laws required her to have (Johnson *Understanding* 103). Officials told the Birmingham News that they were acting in compliance with a directive from the board of trustees, which they released to the paper. It read: “The AUTHORITIES of the University are instructed by the Board of Trustees to study each applicant for room and board with respect to welfare, safety and other effects upon the applicant and the other students and other applicants of the dormitory, and to deny such applicant as might endanger the safety or result in sociological disadvantages to the students” (Johnson *Understanding* 104). The memo went on to mention Autherine Lucy specifically (although her name was misspelled) and

to direct officials to deny her application. Perhaps the Trustees were sincerely trying to keep all of their students, including Lucy, safe; or perhaps they were simply unfamiliar with Chief Justice Warren's opinion that, "In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms" (Johnson *Understanding* 97).

Lucy attended classes the next day and was offered words of support by several white classmates (Johnson *Understanding* 106). However, on Saturday, February 4th, a massive demonstration was staged against her on campus. Participants sang the Confederate war anthem "Dixie" and were heard repeatedly shouting the slogan "Keep 'Bama White! To Hell with Autherine!" (109). Although the vast majority of protestors that day were not even students of the university, the demonstration sparked similar protests over the next several days, causing the Board of Trustees to bar Lucy from campus on February 7, 1956 (117). Autherine Lucy remained determined to earn a degree from the University of Alabama, and she finally achieved her goal – on May 9, 1992 at the age of sixty-two (91).

While these events were playing out at Harper Lee's alma mater in Tuscaloosa, elsewhere in the state other sorts of trouble were brewing. Two months prior to Autherine Lucy's enrollment, Rosa Parks had sparked a firestorm of controversy by refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus to a white passenger. She was arrested on December 1, 1955, and the religious and political leaders of the African American community rallied around her. December 5th began a boycott by African Americans of all public transportation in Montgomery. It proceeded rather quietly and without incident until January 31, 1956. Just two days before Autherine Lucy walked into the registrar's office at the University of Alabama, an explosion shattered windows in the

home of “a young Negro minister” in Montgomery (Johnson *Understanding* 99). That minister, identified in the Birmingham News as “Rev. M.L. King, the most outspoken leader in the boycott movement” (100) begged the black community to remain calm in the face of “mounting racial tension” (99). Twenty-two days later, Rev. King and 114 other leaders of the boycott were arrested.

The Montgomery bus boycott was to test the strength of the *Brown v. Board* decision. *Brown* had dealt specifically with education, but would the Court see the right to a bus seat as equally significant? They would. On November 13, 1956, the Court ordered the city of Montgomery to integrate its buses, and on December 21, 1956, African Americans returned to public transportation in that city. After 380 days of abstaining, the black citizens of Montgomery, which is approximately 100 miles from Harper Lee’s hometown of Monroeville, had finally earned the right to claim their bus seats on a first-come, first-served basis (90).

A handful of months later, in the spring of 1957, Harper Lee’s first draft of *To Kill a Mockingbird* (later published as *Go Set a Watchman*) landed on the desk of editor Tay Hohoff at J.B. Lippincott (Mahler). This draft tackles the issue of *Brown v. Board* head-on, and although the final version of *Mockingbird* published in 1960 is set between 1933 and 1935, and therefore has no direct ties to the Civil Rights activities in Alabama in the mid-1950s, scholars and casual readers alike have acknowledged the influence that the dramatic events in her home state had on the author and on her work.

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See Table 2.1 for an example of a landscape table. Replace this text with your own words. Remember to use HEADING 2 for all second-level subheadings, HEADING 3 for all third-level subheadings and so on. If you need to change the way they look, MODIFY the heading STYLES; don't change them one at a time. Replace this text with your own words. Remember to use HEADING 2 for all second-level subheadings, HEADING 3 for all third-level subheadings and so on. If you need to change the way they look, MODIFY the heading STYLES; don't change them one at a time. Replace this text with your own words. Remember to use HEADING 2 for all second-level subheadings, HEADING 3 for all third-level subheadings and so on. If you need to change the way they look, MODIFY the heading STYLES; don't change them one at a time. See Table 2.1 for an example of a landscape table.

Chapter 3

The Patriarch

Almost since the moment *To Kill a Mockingbird* was published, the name Atticus Finch has served to invoke the dauntless pursuit of ethical behavior, the strength of character to ignore peer pressure, and the general ability to perform heroic deeds. This was an opinion shared by the legal community of the time, and inexorably stamped into the popular imagination by the film adaptation of the novel. As Claudia Durst Johnson points out, the courageous Southern lawyer is an archetype which Harper Lee was almost single-handedly responsible for introducing into the lexicon (Johnson *Threatening* 15). In 1960, it was much more the literary fashion to create characters which confirmed the corruption of Southern white society (Johnson *Threatening* 16). Here instead was an educated white Southern gentleman who refused to allow his children to use the word nigger, who ignored his elder sister's suggestion that he fire his black house keeper in the midst of the Great Depression, and who placed his body between a drunken lynch mob and the black client falsely accused of rape. Consequently, Atticus Finch appeared to the contemporary reading public to be an entirely new sort of hero, even though he was actually modelled after the very real A. C. Lee, Harper's own father (Mills 82).

Law professor Teresa Godwin Phelps has observed, "So ubiquitous is reader reverence for him that we... call him by his first name: not 'Finch' but 'Atticus'" (511). He has earned this status by being a peace-maker, an arbiter of character (513), and an exemplar of virtue who proves that a lawyer can have moral standards and still be a great attorney (Johnson *Threatening* 27). Indeed, apart from the initial book reviews in 1960, the bulk of scholarship on the novel for the first thirty-five years came not from literary circles, but from law professors and legal ethicists extolling the virtues of Atticus Finch as the role model for the entire profession. R. Mason Barge calls him a hero for

"[taking] on the establishment pro bono publico" (qtd. in Johnson *Understanding* 192). Thomas Shaffer confers the title of hero upon Atticus because he "has greater insight and bravery than the rest of us, whose efforts are extraordinary and beyond what can be explained rationally" (qtd. in Johnson *Threatening* 26). Phelps asserts, "A generation of young lawyers and law students have identified with Atticus and emulated his values" (513). Since Phelps's praise was penned over twenty years ago, it is safe to say that two generations of attorneys have now done so.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the 1962 film adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird* did much to re-route scholarly assessment of the novel in the direction of what Claudia Durst Johnson terms Lee's "convincing brief for her father's sainthood" (Johnson *Threatening* 96). After all, the face of Atticus Finch will now forever be fixed in the popular imagination as bearing a striking resemblance to Gregory Peck (Johnson *Understanding* 189). Coupled with Horton Foote's screenplay, which robs the adult narrator of much of her control over the text and her younger counterpart of her centrality in the narrative, Peck's Oscar-winning performance certainly has the weight to convince anyone that Atticus was always intended to be the hero of the narrative, whether or not it was indeed Harper Lee's original intention for him to be so. A closer study of Hollywood conceits of the time and primary documents related to the film's production may explain why the film evolved in this direction.

Hollywood producers of the 1960s felt they had developed a formula to make money on pictures that worked well: find a well-known and well-loved star and build the movie around him (yes, conventional wisdom held it should be a "him"); worry less about story and theme (Palmer 192) and more about making sure your star receives enough screen time (194). The fact that Gregory Peck so desperately wanted to play Atticus Finch was the only reason that relative new-comers director Robert Mulligan and

producer Alan Pakula were given a contract with Universal to make the movie at all, and so their intention to be as faithful to the source text as possible was from the beginning in serious conflict with Universal's demand that Peck's presence be emphasized in both the screenplay and the camerawork (193). In a move designed to protect their investment in a film so very different from other commercial successes of the day, the studio went so far as to give their A-list star, not their director, almost total control over the final cut of the film (201).

Additionally, the different techniques inherent in switching from print to visual media worked against Horton Foote's ability to stay true to Harper Lee's narrative structure. R. Barton Palmer explains that "something like the anchoring presence of narrative voice is achieved in cinematic representation by the visual privileging of a main character" (194). Since Universal had already declared that their "main character" must be portrayed by Gregory Peck, rather than the unknown Mary Badham, Scout Finch was destined to be pushed out of her own story the moment Harper Lee signed away the movie rights.

Still, the creative team behind the film did their best to keep as much of the focus on Scout and Jem as they could. Producer Alan Pakula said, "Our overall theme is the children's first contact with evil, with the injustices that exist in the world – and their coming through it with understanding and compassion because of the moral values instilled in them by their father" (qtd. in Palmer 202). Pakula and director Robert Mulligan fought valiantly for this interpretation of their film, but the deck was most certainly stacked against them, since Gregory Peck's interpretation of the film and what his role in it was meant to be were not quite the same.

After viewing the first rough cut of the film, Peck had forty-four separate objections, most of which centered around demanding more screen time for himself and less for his young co-stars (Palmer 204). Here is a sampling of what he had to say:

Scout very bad on reactions – ruinous generally. Comb through her stuff for performance. Needs more close-ups and presentations when I am on screen. Interminable footage of amateurish kids. Use more on Atticus during girl's speech at jail. This should be Atticus [sic] scene but he is not given a chance. Main reason it is all so flat is that it is cut so that the picture has no protagonist. The boy cannot fit the bill. Atticus can but is cut. Next to last scene in bedroom with Jem injured. Too much dependence on the little girl and Boo. The little girl does not deliver this. Atticus can help... (204-206).

Not all of these objections can be argued against. For example, much literary criticism of the novel centers on the lack of a clear protagonist. Is it Jem? Is it Scout? Is it Atticus? Arguments can and have been made for all three. However, it is interesting that Peck does not mention Scout as a contender for the role at all. This, again, could be chalked up to the previously mentioned assumption that all Hollywood protagonists should be male. Still, whatever its cause, the star's approach to his only scholarly endorsed objection speaks volumes as to how the young woman telling the story in the novel was so quickly and easily marginalized in the film version.

On the other hand, Peck's objection to privileging Boo and Scout in the penultimate scene flies in the face of Pakula's stated intention to present a story of children encountering evil and meeting it with compassion. At the beginning of the novel, Boo Radley is the embodiment of things that go bump in the night for Scout. The development of her understanding of true evil is made manifest in this face-to-face encounter with the boogie man she feared, who has in fact just saved her from the murderous menace she did not realize she should have feared – Bob Ewell. This is the moment which rips Scout irrevocably out of her childish view of the world and thrusts her unceremoniously into the beginnings of adult understanding. This is the moment in which she becomes not only the story's narrator, but its focus. The novel's most important

question is what Scout will do with this new knowledge, and – as will be discussed later in this paper – this moment is emblematic of the most significant change between *Watchman* and *Mockingbird*. Why should an attempt be made to pull focus away from this moment of revelation and epiphany? How could Atticus have helped to deliver this scene?

Peck's objections are clearly designed to push the film further from the child-centered novel and closer to the vehicle for its A-list star with which Hollywood was more familiar. Even though it detracted from their stated vision, upon receiving their star's feedback, Pakula and Mulligan immediately recut the film, and Peck was somewhat mollified, but he still never felt that Atticus received the screen time he deserved (Palmer 207).

Gregory Peck himself probably best articulated the effect of the film on the popular, and subsequently critical, interpretation of Atticus Finch. He said, "I think it is the first time that the enlightened, liberal Southerner has been put on the screen... I think it's the point of view of the fair-minded Southerner that will provide the solution to [racism] with the help of fair-minded Northerners and people of good will" (qtd. in Palmer 197). This was a message that many within the white community wanted to hear in 1962. Many whites wanted to believe that there were "fair-minded" and "enlightened" people who could be trusted to work toward social justice. They wanted to believe that Atticus Finch could exist and that they might see him reflected back at them in the mirror. They wanted to believe that a 'New South' of "respect, restraint, and racial equality" was possible (Sarat 20).

It seems fair then to say that the film, coming so closely on the heels of the novel, had a significant impact on the direction and bent of initial scholarship, in both the legal and literary realms. Carolyn Jones represents the acceptance of academic scholars that

Atticus is as much a literary hero as he is a legal one, describing him as, “an ordinary man” who becomes “the hero of the novel” through his insistence on living by a simple code: “the call for critical reflection on the self, the rule of compassion, and the law that it is a sin to kill a mockingbird” (100).

However, not everyone ascribes to this interpretation. It took thirty years for any serious critic to take Atticus to task, and once again it began within the legal community, not the literary one, but in 1992, Monroe H. Freedman published an article in which he points out that all Finch really does is follow Judge Taylor’s instructions, which is neither laudable nor even truly significant, given that failing to do so could land him in jail (Johnson *Understanding* 190). Freedman, one of the most respected legal ethics professors of his time, argues that whatever effort Atticus puts into Tom’s defense comes from a sense of noblesse oblige, and is therefore indicative of an insidious attitude of superiority on the part of Southern whites toward their African American neighbors. The article ends with a call for the legal community to give up its adulation of Atticus Finch in favor of real life lawyers who have regular day jobs and choose to spend a portion of their time on pro bono endeavors (Johnson *Understanding* 191).

Freedman’s article took up less than two pages in its issue of *Legal Times* magazine, but his stance caused such a significant disturbance in the legal community that he felt compelled to publish an additional article in 1994 defending his position. He begins this follow up piece with the historical account of Leo Frank, a Jewish factory owner dubiously convicted of murder in Marietta, Georgia in 1915. Although evidence exists that lawyers were threatened by anti-Semitic townspeople and that at least two of the jurors had declared their intentions to see the Jew hanged before the trial even began, no mistrial was declared, and Frank was sentenced to a life term (Freedman 473). The ‘good, upstanding’ citizens of Marietta were not content with this decision, so

they took it upon themselves to hang Mr. Frank, and then conduct a two hour long town picnic around the tree from which his corpse swung. Afterwards, the lynch mob reconvened nearby to hold a ceremony reinstating the Ku Klux Klan in Marietta (Freedman 474).

Freedman argues, rather eloquently, that Atticus Finch, living a mere twenty years after and 280 miles distant from this horrible breach of human rights, could not have failed to think of it when reassuring his children that the most recent Klan activity in Maycomb had been stamped out before they were born (Lee *Mockingbird* 196).

Freedman points out that the patriarch's recounting of the Maycomb-born (and Jewish) Sam Levy shaming the White Knights into leaving him and his family alone is flip and indifferent at best, leaving no room for the lawyer to display his own vastly touted empathy (Freedman 475). This, the legal ethicist maintains, is one of many moments in the text when Atticus fails to "climb into [another's] skin and walk around in it" (*Mockingbird* 39). The journalist Malcolm Gladwell takes this accusation one step further, asserting that "[Atticus] wants to believe the fantasy" that the KKK and the possibility of bigoted sentiments pose no actual threat to any of the citizens of Maycomb (60).

In her literary criticism of the text, Katie Rose Guest Pryal echoes Freedman, asserting that Atticus has either an "inability or unwillingness to see racism as a large scale problem" (181), going so far as to characterize Tom as "a bone over which the white people fight" (180) in the lynch mob scene. Tom, she observes, remains invisible and largely voiceless throughout a scene where his life literally hangs in the balance, which is emblematic of the colossal failure of empathy towards victims of racism throughout the novel. She believes that none of the white characters have any idea how to empathize with their African American counterparts, nor do they truly want to because they are all, including Atticus, terrified "that [their] safe position of superiority might

crumble if [they] recognize the agonistic humanity of the supposed monster before [them]" (178). Therefore, it is easier for Atticus to view Tom as an object given into his protection than a human being deserving of social justice.

Malcolm Gladwell accuses Atticus of paying lip-service to the idea of social justice but being, in truth, opposed to any actual structural change in his beloved Maycomb. He professes to view Atticus in much the same light as George Orwell viewed Charles Dickens. Dickens was well known for his anti-Victorian politics and outspoken support of social reform, but Orwell found the author to be overflowing with verbosity and lacking in action, stating, "He attacks the law, parliamentary government, the educational system and so forth, without ever clearly suggesting what he would put in their places. There is no clear sign that he wants the existing order to be overthrown, or that he believes it would make very much difference if it were overthrown. For in reality his target is not so much society as 'human nature'" (qtd. in Gladwell 64). This, according to Gladwell, is the sin of Atticus Finch as well. The lawyer takes what Gladwell calls a "hearts and minds" approach to social reform, celebrating the near conversion of the one Cunningham on Tom's jury rather than being enraged over the injustice of the verdict itself (59).

Extending past this failure of empathy and contentment with the segregated and racist status quo of early 20th century Alabama, Steven Lubet asserts that Atticus, although clearly an extraordinarily talented attorney, is no one's picture of a moralist or a hero. Lubet acknowledges that only a litigator of uncommon talent could have caused a Southern jury of 1935 to deliberate for any amount of time in Tom's case (1361). However, he suggests that Mr. Finch's defense of Tom could be read as misogynistic, since his basic strategy can be boiled down to "the 'she wanted it'" interpretation of rape (1345). Lubet, who does not assume that Robinson is in fact

innocent, goes on at some length about the ways in which Atticus employs standard rape defense tactics of the early 20th century – from implying that all women actually want to be raped, to shaming Mayella for experiencing sexual desire and exhibiting sexualized behavior, to accusing her of being too confused about the details of the event to know whether she had in fact been raped or not (1351-1353). Gladwell takes a slightly less incendiary track when he suggests that, in his closing argument, Atticus basically asks the jurors to replace their racial prejudices with their classist prejudices when he suggests that they consider the source of the allegations laid against Tom – Mayella Ewell – and therefore dismiss them out of hand (64).

In sum, the scholarly objection to the hero-worship of the Atticus we meet in *Mockingbird* is that he is simply a lawyer doing an excellent job defending a difficult-to-defend client, that he embodies none of the ideals of the Civil Rights crusaders history offers us in the 1950s and 60s, that he is in no way an iconoclastic figure of the Depression-era lawyer, and that the best we might say of him is that he is “an especially slick hired gun” (Lubet 1362).

While the “hired gun” line seems a bit theatrical and unfair, it is reasonable to argue that the character of Atticus Finch has been blown terribly out of proportion. Truth to tell, Harper Lee herself does not seem to have intended Atticus to be the hero of the story. She did make a statement in praise of the film adaptation – one of the only times she has ever commented on any interpretation or analysis of her work – saying, “For me, Maycomb is there, its people are there: in two short hours one lives a childhood and lives it with Atticus Finch, whose view of life was the heart of the novel” (qtd. in Shackelford 116). Everything about this statement problematizes the popular view of Atticus as the hero. Firstly, Lee begins her praise with the rendering of Maycomb and its people. This prioritization of the setting would seem to imply that it was the

community she most wished to present, which is corroborated by the few statements she has made about her own work (Petry xxi). Secondly, she refers to the experience of childhood in that community. This would appear to place the emphasis back on the child narrator, Scout. The last things she mentions is the patriarch of the family, but even if we were to read that as a different sort of prioritization of Atticus, we must assess more carefully what she actually says in order to do so. She names him as neither hero, nor protagonist. Cannot a character be the heart of a story, yet fail to be the hero in it? Besides which, she does not say that he, but his view of life is the heart of the novel. I read that as a refocusing on the children, since his view of life is being played out for the benefit of his progeny. There is yet one other interesting aspect of Lee's statement. She doesn't actually say that his view of life is one to be emulated. I know that I – like Freedman, Lubet, and Gladwell – am flying in the face of decades of established criticism to imply that Atticus is not a paragon, but consider the textual evidence Lee herself gave in *Mockingbird*.

The Atticus we meet in *Mockingbird* has some excellent qualities, yes – even several we might want to emulate – but he is not without flaws. He often chooses to see things the way he wants to see them, like when he stubbornly insists that no citizens of Maycomb would ever go so far as to lynch Tom Robinson, and then ends up putting himself and his children in mortal peril because he has refused to have his client moved to a different jail. He does not always make the best decisions, as when he sends his children off to a Halloween carnival alone after Bob Ewell has very publicly threatened to “get him if it took the rest of his life” (Lee *Mockingbird* 290). And, as Teresa Godwin Phelps observes, “The bitter truth that flies in the face of all interpretations that see triumph in the book is that Tom Robinson is dead” (529). While it seems a bit excessive to claim that this leaches away all interpretations of triumph, one might extend her

observation to include the reality that Atticus successfully saves no one in the book. His client dies, and, without the intervention of Boo Radley, his children would have too. There is really no more devastating charge we can level against a would-be hero than that of failing to protect his own children.

There is a leitmotif running throughout the text, for which only Jennifer Murray has offered any literary criticism. Atticus repeats some form of the phrase “It’s not time to worry yet” three times in the novel. The first is in response to Scout’s very real fear that Mrs. Dubose might shoot Jem with the Confederate pistol she is rumored to keep under her shawl. Of course, Scout’s fear is indeed childish and mostly unfounded, but it is obvious in Atticus’s continued reply that he is thinking of broader concerns, “I never thought Jem’d be the one to lose his head over this – thought I’d have more trouble with you” (Lee *Mockingbird* 139). Clearly, Atticus does not believe it is yet time to worry about the trial or the virulently racist response of some of the members of the community to his defense of Tom Robinson. Atticus offers Jem the same comfort when, the morning after the verdict was announced, the boy is still struggling to understand how it could have happened. Placing his faith in the appeals process, the attorney assures his son, “It’s not time to worry yet. We’re not through yet” (285).

His third avowal comes in direct response to his daughter’s question about what will happen if Tom loses his appeal. Atticus confidently affirms, “Not time to worry yet, Scout. We’ve got a good chance” (Lee *Mockingbird* 293). Why is this statement necessary? He just said almost the same thing to Jem eight pages earlier, and Scout was in the room when he did it. Is Harper Lee just being redundant? No. The assurance comes directly after a rather lengthy conversation with his children regarding the threat Bob Ewell made against Atticus, and this proximity is what prompted Lee to have him reiterate the statement. Jem and Scout try several different tactics to encourage their

father to take the threat seriously, none of which work. Atticus goes so far as to employ the gist of his most famous fatherly advice, which was originally given to Scout at the beginning of the novel, when he encouraged her to “consider things from [someone else’s] point of view... climb into his skin and walk around in it” (39). In reference to his nemesis, Atticus encourages Jem to “stand in Bob Ewell’s shoes a minute” and understand that “[t]he man had to have some kind of comeback” (292). Atticus is absolutely certain that “We don’t have anything to fear from Bob Ewell. He got it all out of his system that morning” (293).

Jennifer Murray reads this motif as a failing of the text – nothing more than Atticus’s “inability to evaluate danger,” which therefore makes his character unbelievably naïve (86-87). He does indeed present as oblivious and naïve. Two chapters after the second iteration of Atticus’s statement, Tom Robinson is dead, having been shot seventeen times. The reader cannot help but wonder, if Atticus had taken the racist remarks of Mrs. Dubose more seriously, might he have been more attentive to the precarious position his client was in as a black inmate convicted of raping a white woman? Four chapters after the third iteration, Scout and Jem barely make it home from the Halloween carnival. If only Atticus had been just a bit less certain, maybe Bob Ewell would still be alive, and Jem never would have broken his arm in the first place.

However, if Jem doesn’t break his arm, there is no novel. So then, I believe Jennifer Murray has missed an important point. Atticus’s cock-sure sense of security and lack of concern are integral to the story Lee is telling specifically because he is so tragically wrong to adhere to them. Perhaps this is the “view of life” that is “the heart of the novel.” Perhaps Atticus’s insistence on holding to his own code of honor, his refusal to acknowledge that the world he lives in doesn’t ascribe to the same standards, and his inability to actually save anyone because of these things are at the heart of the lesson

Lee wants to put forth. This reading is supported by the version of Atticus we encounter in *Go Set a Watchman*.

In the recently published story of the Finch family, Jean Louise is stunned by the news that both her father and her fiancé, Henry Clinton, have joined the Maycomb County Citizens' Council (Lee *Watchman* 103). These types of organizations were springing up all over the South in the wake of the Supreme Court decision to strike down 'separate but equal', and although they sustained a thin veneer of socially-conscious civic duty, their primary aims were to circumvent the overthrow of the Jim Crow legal structure, thwart attempts at integration, and generally keep the African American community in 'their place' (Johnson *Understanding* 88).

When her Aunt Alexandra informs her that the Council is meeting at the courthouse one Sunday afternoon, and that her father is there running the meeting, Jean Louise moves down the familiar path in a fog, intent on proving her aunt wrong (Lee *Watchman* 104). Instead, she is confronted with a horrifying sight. As a guest speaker expounds upon the inferiority of all non-white persons, "[s]he stared at her father sitting to the right of [him], and she did not believe what she saw. She stared at Henry sitting to the left of [him], and she did not believe what she saw... but they were sitting all over the courtroom. Men of substance and character, responsible men, good men" (110).

Unable to process this, Jean Louise simply retreats into the acceptable unconsciousness of sleep (Lee *Watchman* 120). But the morning light changes nothing. Instead, she is confronted with more damning evidence against "[t]he one human being she had ever fully and whole-heartedly trusted" (113). News reaches the Finch household that Calpurnia's grandson has been arrested for vehicular manslaughter of a drunken white man (148). Jean Louise feels certain that Atticus will step up out of devotion to Cal and a desire to help someone in a difficult situation (150). Atticus does

decide to take the case, but only in order to circumvent interference by NAACP lawyers who “are standing around like buzzards down here waiting for things like this to happen” (149).

The *Watchman* version of Atticus has, as previously mentioned, troubled contemporary readers who, like his daughter, confess themselves nauseated over what they learn of him (Lee *Watchman* 119). One *Watchman* reviewer condemns the patriarch as “a racist... spouting hate speech” (Kakutani), while another laments the revelation that Atticus was once a member of the KKK, insisting that “reading *Watchman* will forever tarnish your memories” of the man first introduced in *Mockingbird* (Jordan). But reviewers seem to skip over other descriptions Jean Louise gives of her father. According to her, “His private character was his public character” (114), just as the character Maudie Atkinson asserts in *Mockingbird* that, “Atticus Finch is the same in his house as he is on the public streets” (61). How did this description survive, nearly word-for-word the same, when Atticus himself did not? How does Atticus merit Reverend Sykes insisting to Scout, “Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father’s passin’” (Lee *Mockingbird* 283) in 1935, but become merely a “tin god” (Lee *Watchman* 268) who must be deposed in 1957?

I propose that the essence of his character did not change at all. He is still holding onto a code of honor which he cannot understand is becoming increasingly obsolete. And because of that, he is still incapable of saving anyone. The only difference is that now Jean Louise sees all that clearly. At nine years old, she was not ready to see it, and so it became obscured for the readers as well. At twenty-six, she can no longer ignore it, and so neither can we. For the first time in her life, Jean Louise is confronted with Atticus’s fallible humanity, and she must navigate a frightening and lonely

path through her disillusionment to the final stage of maturity – the realization that one's parent is not, after all, a saint.

Chapter 4

The Heroine

This difficult discovery of her father's humanity, while painful for the adult Jean Louise, opens up an important avenue of discussion for the story of her younger self. While it is impossible to argue against the young woman's status as protagonist in *Go Set a Watchman*, the centrality of her childhood self in *To Kill a Mockingbird* has proven to be a tougher sell. Although the decision to make *Mockingbird* a first person narrative arguably should have placed Scout in greater control of her plot than Jean Louise was in the third person limited narrative of *Watchman*, precious little scholarship accords the child narrator the pride of place.

The most common literary criticism focusing on Scout revolves around her representation of Southern womanhood. Dean Shackelford asserts that "the novel is very much about the experience of growing up as a female in a South with very narrow definitions of gender roles and acceptable behavior" (116). Kathryn Lee Seidel agrees, pointing out that, at first glance, Scout is the epitome of the archetypal postbellum Southern belle, who often has lost her mother and is very close to her lawyer father. She even sees some of Scout's less lady-like activities, such as her tendency to solve disputes with her fists, as a perfect reflection of a "conventional Southern womanhood" which espouses "violence and impulsivity" (80).

Lee, however, appears to use Scout's resemblance to the archetype in order to turn it on its head, since Atticus is anything but the typical Southern father of his day. In praising his daughter's mind, rather than her physical features, he enables her to break away from the stereotype (Seidel 83), which she does with gusto. Claudia Durst Johnson observes that nearly everything about the young narrator is designed to shatter lady-like stereotypes: her androgynous nickname, her preference for boys' overalls, and her love affair with profanity to name a few (Johnson *Threatening* 53).

Several characters throughout the text question her femininity: Mrs. Dubose insists that Scout's refusal to wear a dress is the first step on the road to a lifetime of waiting tables (Lee *Mockingbird* 135), Jem punctuates an argument with a declaration that, "It's time you started bein' a girl and acting right!" (153), and Aunt Alexandra professes to have moved into the Finch home in order to supply her niece with a much-needed female presence (170). However, Scout herself remains "ambivalent at best concerning the traditional Southern lady" (Shackelford 123).

Lee appears to share her narrator's ambivalence. There are many female characters in the text, but few role models. Stephanie Crawford is a malicious gossip, Grace Merriweather is a self-righteous hypocrite, Caroline Fisher is a hopelessly overwhelmed neophyte, and Aunt Alexandra is a thorn in the flesh. Only Maudie Atkinson and Calpurnia emerge from the miasma of questionable

female morality to stand as women worthy of respect and admiration, and neither of them fit the mold of traditional Southern womanhood. Maudie, in failing to marry, has fallen short of the expectations of her gender in Depression Era Alabama, and Calpurnia, in being born African American, has been disqualified from consideration (Shackelford 123). Although Scout vacillates between being appalled at being thought a girl and deciding that there are indeed moments when one should be a lady (Lee *Mockingbird* 69, 318), her repudiation of societal norms for her gender wins the day. The night that she and Jem are attacked by Bob Ewell, Aunt Alexandra goes to Scout's room to find her some clothes to wear in place of the ruined costume she was walking home in. Distracted by her concern for her nephew and the continued uncertainty over what exactly happened, Alexandra returns to Scout with the "most despised" overalls (354). The final image of the narrator will show her as a tomboy, not as a lady.

The triumph of Scout over her expected role is further secured by Seidel's observation that, in the end, it is the disdained Mayella Ewell who most clearly upholds the ideals of Southern womanhood (81). She has done what good white girls do – stayed home and taken care of the children, sacrificed herself for her family, and blamed whatever problems exist in her world on the intrusion of an African American. She is the typical damsel in distress: defined by her gender, incapable of defending herself, denied the expression of sexual desire, having the ideal of her virtue zealously defended by all the white men around her, but

subjugated by those same men, who cannot or will not defend her from the abuse of her father. If this is what Southern womanhood should be, then Scout would do well to avoid it.

The adult Jean Louise we meet in *Watchman* struggles with her role as a Southern woman in almost identical ways. She has moved away from Maycomb and made her home in New York City – about as far from regional expectations of her gender as she can get – but she finds that a two-week visit in her father’s house pulls her right back into a role she had wanted to leave behind.

She is collected at the train station by her on-again, off-again fiancé, Henry Clinton. Henry, who was a friend of Jem’s in high school, has stepped into Jem’s shoes following his friend’s untimely death and is working his way up to partner in Atticus’s law office. Maycomb County has declared there to be “no finer young man” (Lee *Watchman* 12) and would be glad to hear wedding bells just any day. While Jean Louise also has a great affection for him, she knows that she is not in love with him, and on that basis continues to stall. She seems resigned to the fact that eventually she will be required to do the right thing, but just like the younger Scout, being forced by convention inspires her to run in the opposite direction.

The adult Jean Louise flouts other accepted behavior norms as well. Towards the beginning of the text, she convinces Henry to go swimming with her at Finch’s Landing (Lee *Watchman* 79). Although they are both fully clothed, by

the next morning Aunt Alexandra has been informed by the town gossip mill that they were skinny dipping (85). Atticus and his daughter thoroughly enjoy the distress this episode causes Alexandra, and it is easy for the reader to see shades of a younger Alexandra's vehement objection when Scout asks to go spend a Sunday afternoon at Calpurnia's house (Lee *Mockingbird* 181).

Of course her most obvious departure from a lady-like stance is the passionate argument she has with Atticus over his involvement in the Citizens' Council. Whereas the female contemporaries who attend her aunt's tea merely parrot the political opinions of their husbands (Lee *Watchman* 174), Jean Louise goes toe-to-toe with Atticus on Constitutional law, Supreme Court authority, and the sociological necessity of the *Brown v. Board* decision (238-252).

By the end of the novel, Jean Louise has achieved an uneasy peace with the expectations placed upon her by her hometown. She will not marry Henry Clinton after all (Lee *Watchman* 276), but she will continue to strive toward being a lady (259), and she will seriously consider moving back home to make certain that a more progressive voice is heard in Maycomb (273). She will not abandon her heritage, but it will have to accept her on her terms.

I believe Scout's struggle against and with the ideals of Southern womanhood deserves even greater critical attention than it has heretofore received. Harper Lee seems to be reassuring her readers (especially the females) that we are not alone in feeling as though we don't quite fit in the world that was

created for us, but that we should not feel liberated to turn our backs on our upbringing because of it. In the penultimate scene of *Mockingbird*, Scout makes sure that Boo Radley is the one walking her across the street, “as any gentleman would do” (Lee *Mockingbird* 372), even though the lady he escorts is still wearing her overalls. As *Watchman* draws to a close, Uncle Jack, in encouraging her to move back home to Maycomb, counsels Jean Louise that, “the time your friends need you is when they’re wrong” (Lee *Watchman* 273).

Her message seems clear: Don’t let your community tell you who you are, but don’t behave as though who you are has nothing to do with your community. Take the suggestions that have been made to you about the things you ought to value in life and make your own decisions. Because ultimately, you are the one who has to live with who you are. I find an overwhelming sense of solidarity and hope in this.

Although there are but these few literary scholars who have considered Scout in the context of Southern womanhood, an even smaller percentage of literary criticism has identified Scout as the unequivocal protagonist of *Mockingbird*. Husband and wife team Theodore and Grace-Ann Hovet have asserted that the coming-of-age narrative structure of the novel “encourages readers to equate Scout’s psychological and intellectual growth with progress in the South as a whole” (68). Seidel also reads the novel as a bildungsroman in which the narrator must grow away from the type of Southerner she doesn’t want

to be. She asserts that part of the coming-of-age process for Scout is the repudiation of the cult of Southern womanhood, since a true Southern woman operates out of a sense of elitism and a tendency to label those around her as either the right sort of people, or the wrong sort (81). When we first meet Scout, she is hell-bent on defending her pride through any means necessary, including violence (82). This, Seidel says, is a typical Southern response, and one which the atypical Southern patriarch Atticus attempts to educate out of his daughter (80). The critic believes that Atticus has succeeded by the end of the novel, asserting that Scout's recklessness has evolved into bravery and that she has found a way to be courageous without being violent (90). She believes that the nearly nine-year-old Scout has gone from "prejudice to tolerance, from ignorance to wisdom, from violence to self-control, from bigotry to empathy, from a code of honor to a code of law" (81), and is now "ready to become the narrator whom we meet thirty years later" (90).

Jennifer Murray disagrees with Seidel and the Hovets' reading of Scout as the protagonist, arguing that the kind of growth Seidel describes is an unrealistic burden to place on a narrator who has yet to achieve her first decade of life (80). She further argues that Scout seems still to be mired in some of the very same stereotypical Southern attitudes which Seidel believes her to have grown out of, pointing out that it is Dill and not Scout who is moved to tears over Mr. Gilmer's racist treatment of Tom Robinson during his cross-examination (79). Murray also

reads Scout's decision to emulate her aunt during the missionary tea and carry on as if they had not just received the horrific news of Tom's death as her internalizing of white indifference to black suffering (80).

Re-evaluating these criticisms through the lens of *Watchman* causes a seemingly more accurate assessment to land somewhere in between the two readings. Murray is well-founded in arguing that "tolerance... wisdom... self-control... and empathy" (Seidel 81) are quite a bit to ask of an eight-year-old. In point of fact, they seem to be too much to ask of a twenty-six year old, who in her argument with her father insists that she "will never forgive [him]" (Lee *Watchman* 248) for not living up to her expectations and refers to him as a "ring-tailed old son of a bitch!" (253). Certainly many things changed in the revising and editing process of Harper Lee's manuscript, especially when it pushes a story back in time two decades, and yet, based on the mirroring discussed previously, the Jean Louise we meet in *Watchman* is the woman that Scout will grow up to be, and she is anything but "wise and rational" (Seidel 79).

While Scout certainly does grow and change during the course of *Mockingbird*, I believe it is in a much smaller way than critics have postulated. She has begun to recognize the hypocrisy of the adults in her world, questioning how her teacher can have such strong opinions about Hitler, but not see the injustice of Tom's verdict (Lee *Mockingbird* 331). She has empathized with Mayella Ewell, whom she understands to be "the loneliest person in the world"

(256). And she has stood on Boo Radley's porch, seen the world through his eyes, and come to realize how much she owes him (374). However, these are all incredibly egocentric moments, typical of the developmental stage Scout is in. She sees these things because she has felt the sting of injustice and loneliness when her brother and Dill proclaim her unwelcome in their endeavors (55), and having lived through a night of true terror, she can no longer mislabel Boo Radley as the most frightening thing in her world. She has grown, yes, but she did not set out in search of growth, and the understanding she has gained does not yet amount to maturity.

On the other hand, a bildungsroman structure is strikingly evident in *Watchman*. The truest proof of a development from thoughtless acceptance to mature questioning is the inevitable severing which must occur between a child and his or her parent. This watershed moment never arrives for Scout – who is still curled up in her father's lap on the last page of *Mockingbird*, but it comes crashing home for Jean Louise. Uncle Jack tells her that he and Atticus have been waiting for it to come for years (Lee *Watchman* 265), and Atticus congratulates her on having finally achieved it, proclaiming, "Well, I certainly hoped a daughter of mine'd hold her ground for what she thinks is right – stand up to me first of all" (277).

Taking *Mockingbird* in context with *Watchman* allows us to reassess Scout's possible coming-of-age as a dream deferred. The South of the 1930s was

not ready for the kind of severing from the ideals of previous generations that they would soon have to undergo, and so I agree with the Hovets' claim that readers are meant to equate Scout's development in the novel with that of the South as a whole. However, I disagree with their interpretation that she has fully achieved it, and therefore object to their assertion that focusing on her allows audiences "to overlook the reality that the social structure in Maycomb remains unchanged at the end of the novel" (68). This is the most important point Harper Lee is trying to make: nothing has changed. Ultimately, this horrible thing has happened, an innocent man is dead, and the world will go on almost exactly as it did before, because Atticus's limitations prevent him from being the savior, and Scout is not yet ready to take up that mantle. She isn't quite ready in *Watchman* either – as Jack observes, "...it takes a certain kind of maturity to live in the South these days. You don't have it yet, but you have a shadow of the beginnings of it" (Lee *Watchman* 273). However, she is a good many steps closer, and her willingness to contradict her father is the spark of hope that may burst into the flame of change the South needed in the 1950s and still needs today.

Ultimately, the Jean Louise we meet in *Watchman* sheds fresh light on the complexities of her younger counterpart, in which Scout is shown as a more stimulating topic of academic debate than she has been considered previously. Having seen what Scout will grow to be (and what she was first written as), her

centrality to the message of *Mockingbird* becomes clearer, and the statements made through her about heritage, conformity, and hope are strengthened.

Chapter 5

The Brother

For eager readers of *Go Set a Watchman*, possibly even more shocking than Atticus's involvement in a Citizens' Council is the revelation that Jem died such an early death. In an otherwise mundane description of Henry Clinton and how he came to be a part of the Finches' lives, we are treated to this startling revelation: "Just about [the time Henry was entering law school], Jean Louise's brother dropped dead in his tracks one day, and after the nightmare of that was over, Atticus, who had always thought of leaving his practice to his son, looked around for another young man" (Lee *Watchman* 13). Jem is not even given a name until after he has been declared deceased, but the best place to begin a critical study of who and what Jem would come to be must begin with this first direct mention of him in the initial draft.

The first thing we learn about Jem is that he is dead. Why bring up a dead brother? The simplest and most obvious answer is that Jem was intended as an homage to Harper Lee's own brother Edwin, who was found dead in his bunk at Maxwell Airforce Base one summer morning in 1951. He had suffered a brain aneurysm in his sleep and never woken up. He was thirty years old (Mills 146). It seems understandable then that Lee was still mourning her brother and wanted to acknowledge him in her first book.

However, such a reading does not account for the rather dry and acerbic tone of the statement. Jean Louise's brother died, and so her father looked around for another son to whom he could bequeath his law practice. Although Jean Louise does not ever express a desire to become her father's apprentice, clearly Atticus does not consider her an appropriate candidate, and the statement drips with bitterness and sarcasm.

On the other hand, remembering that Harper Lee's older sister Alice did follow in her father's footsteps, and that she and her father shared a law office until his death, it is

difficult to read the sarcasm in an autobiographical way. It seems more likely that this is a comment on the state of 1950s Southern society at large – where young men were encouraged to take up their fathers' mantels, and young women were encouraged to iron them. This reading gains credence with the portrayal of Atticus himself in this text. Yes, he is progressive enough to argue politics and law with his daughter and expect her to keep up with him; but he is still impeded enough by outdated thinking to argue that African Americans are not yet ready to “share fully in the responsibilities of citizenship” (Lee *Watchman* 242).

The structure of this statement about Jem's death tells readers volumes more about the novel Harper Lee is writing than it tells us about Jem himself. With these few words, Lee establishes that this novel will have a female protagonist – because her brother isn't there to usurp her right to it. And it appears we have already identified the antagonist: a father who, for all his “integrity, humor, and patience” (Lee *Watchman* 114), is too hampered by tradition to allow his daughter an equal footing with his son, even after his son is dead. In point of fact, Atticus has found another son in Henry Clinton, whom Jean Louise is supposed to marry in order to legitimize his sole claim to the Finch inheritance.

So then, if it is Jem's absence which is of paramount importance in *Watchman*, what does his presence in *Mockingbird* mean? Since he figures prominently in the flashbacks Jean Louise has in 1957, it would make sense for him to be a continuing presence in the re-writing that took the entire plot back twenty years. Additionally, now that Jean Louise is a mere six years old as the novel opens, it is much more believable to center the bildungsroman structure on a preteen who will enter puberty during the course of the story. This interpretation of Jem as the protagonist and the character who most obviously comes of age during the novel has been skillfully articulated by Jennifer

Murray, who asserts that he is the one who struggles to reconcile childhood beliefs with adult experiences (81), losing his innocence and his faith in blind justice along the way. Murray takes issue with Seidel's reading of Scout as the protagonist, asserting that Seidel "ignores the existence of Jem in the scenes where there is indeed some process of development occurring" (83). She goes on to state that in most of those scenes, Jem is the key actor or the primary recipient of their father's advice, and that Scout is usually only there because Jem is, not because she is achieving any true growth of her own. It would appear that Atticus, if not Harper Lee herself, would agree with Claudia Durst Johnson's assertion that *Mockingbird's* plot is dependent on Jem because he is the one who will follow in his father's footsteps (Johnson *Threatening* 96).

But why not merely re-write the narrative to make Scout the preteen and Jem already a teenager? Well, in that case we would lose the child-like innocence that allows Scout to say and do some of the things she does without resorting to the bitterness or relentless pointedness the older Jean Louise employs in *Watchman*. An eight-year-old can get away with artlessly discussing entailments with the drunken leader of a lynch mob and thus shaming him into departure. As Jem proves in the same scene, a twelve-year-old is no longer capable of such a guileless approach, and thus is utterly powerless to intervene.

Additionally, having the two children so close in age, and yet so far apart in developmental stages allows for a foiling effect that would not be present if Scout were to venture into the narrative without her brother. The siblings have almost identical experiences throughout the text, but they see everything in completely different lights and through completely different filters. The reader is thus afforded the experience of the freedom and innocence of the childlike viewpoint and the growing understanding of the adolescent simultaneously. This is best expressed in Jem's reaction to finding Dill hiding

under Scout's bed after having run away from home. Dill assumes that his secret is safe with Jem, but Jem surprises both his younger friend and his younger sister when he "[breaks] the remaining code of our childhood" (Lee *Mockingbird* 187) by telling Atticus that Dill is there. Jem wants to protect his friend, but his newfound ability to sympathize with a parent worrying over a missing child demands a different response. He knows that he has disappointed the younger children, and although he tries to explain and apologize, he accepts their dismissal of him without complaint (188). He is precariously straddling two worlds, and understands that sacrifices are now expected of him, while Scout does not yet carry that burden, and is therefore free to carry on in the brutal honesty of childhood with impunity.

The restoration of Jem also opened an avenue for Lee to give the disjointed anecdotes presented in *Watchman* a unifying structure. Through the framing event of Jem's broken arm, the narrator is able to establish an unequivocal ending point for her chronicle from the first page. She is also able to relate a heart-wrenching story of miscarried justice instigated by institutional racism under the guise of explaining a personal trauma. The implied chronological distance inherent in this frame structure also allows her to speak mostly in the voice of a child whose main concern in embarking upon the tale is to explain how her brother survived a terrifying night.

Most ingenious of all, though, is that the frame structure allows Scout to reclaim the narrative at the end. As the novel closes, Jem is unconscious, having been brought into the house insensible from the struggle with Bob Ewell that broke his arm. He will wake the next morning having missed the event which he and his playmates had spent the entire first half of the novel scheming to bring to fruition: a personal encounter with Boo Radley. It will not be Jem who comes face to face with the mysterious phantom, the reclusive neighbor, the unexpected savior. It will be Scout. She alone will experience the

concluding scene of empathy in which she views her familiar neighborhood from the completely unfamiliar vantage point of the Radleys' front porch. She alone will be able to explain to Atticus that what was so terrifying at the beginning of the book was in fact not scary at all. Finally freed of her brother's almost constant presence, she will seize the opportunity to "climb into [another's] skin and walk around in it" (Lee *Mockingbird* 39) for herself.

Chapter 6

The Devil

During the revision process that recast a barely-mentioned rape trial as the main catalyst of all the plot's action, the face of evil incarnate emerged. Bob Ewell, the drunken and abusive father of supposed rape-victim Mayella Ewell, evolved out of the need for a clear and obvious villain. It is impossible to find any positive – or even ambivalent – literary criticism of Bob Ewell. Umphrey and Sarat claim he is the embodiment of the worst characteristics of the Old South: violence and racism (20); Robert C. Evans declares him “a lurking, potentially murderous assailant who threatens and stalks utterly defenseless children” (106); Susan Heinzelman labels him simply a monster (141). But why does the story need him? Does not the virulent racism which convicts Tom Robinson despite plain common sense and overwhelming evidence to the contrary fit the bill already? Sadly, no.

The character of Bob Ewell is created out of the simplification of the character of Atticus Finch. Whereas the Atticus whom Jean Louise describes when she is twenty-six is an extremely complicated person, carrying within himself both dark and light, along with a vast array of gray overtones; the Atticus whom the child Scout reveals has really very little room for shadows within his constitution – at least not in the eyes of his daughter. Therefore, all the latent racism and questionable traditional beliefs which Atticus himself held in *Watchman* must be exorcised from him in *Mockingbird*, and inhabit the character of Bob Ewell. This bifurcation of evil from good may well have been the first step in creating *Mockingbird* as the beloved classic it became. As Alice Hall Petry points out, “... some commentators have recognized that the use of stock characters... may be perceived as essential to conveying the book's civil rights message” (xxiii).

Certainly the creation of an unmistakable foil for the gentleman lawyer is crucial to the clarity of that message.

Thomas L. Dumm has observed that both Bob and Atticus are attempting to raise their children as single fathers in a time period that did not give men much, or really any, credit for their paternal skills. The two men of course have diametrically opposed approaches to their unusual role. While Atticus does everything he can to educate, empower, and encourage his children, Bob allows his brood to run wild, not bothering to teach them anything, nor to expect anything of them (69).

This dichotomy is accentuated and expanded by Horton Foote's screenplay, for which he adds two significant scenes not found in his source text. In the first, Ewell confronts Atticus outside the courtroom following Tom Robinson's indictment hearing. He has heard that the lawyer actually believes the black man's story over his own, and seeks a denial from Atticus. When Atticus refuses to give it, Ewell lambasts him with, "What kind of man are you? You have children of your own!" (Mulligan). Umphrey and Sarat read this statement as Ewell's shock over the betrayal of the bonds of Southern white fatherhood, which he had expected to bridge the chasm of social standing which exists between the two men (22).

The Finch children are actually present in Foote's second added scene, when a drunken Bob Ewell stumbles upon Atticus's car outside of Tom Robinson's home. Atticus is in the house updating Robinson's wife on the case, and Jem is alone in the car with a sleeping Scout. There are no words exchanged in this scene, but the unmitigated hate which disfigures the face of the inebriated man, contrasted with the unadulterated terror written across that of the boy, speaks volumes. Atticus returns from the house, stares Ewell into submission, and drives his children home. For this night at least, he will protect his children from the intrusion of sheer evil. However, upon their return home,

Atticus will respond to Jem's continued unease with the distinctly uncomfortable and eerily prophetic declaration, "There's a lot of ugly things in this world, son. I wish I could keep 'em all away from you. That's never possible" (Mulligan). Perhaps this avowal is engendered by Atticus's secret knowledge that, in true foil fashion, he sees a bit more of Bob Ewell in the mirror than he would like.

Ewell also acts as foil for the mysterious character of Boo Radley. Both men are marginalized by their society and considered social pariahs. Boo Radley was locked away by an overbearing father at the age of seventeen, and has not been verifiably sighted since. Robert C. Evans opines that, in Ewell's case, ostracism is a self-inflicted state, since he "has deliberately chosen to isolate himself and his family from any kind of healthy contact with, or respect from, the rest of the community" (107). However, a convincing argument can be made for his isolation being in reality the mandate of that community, much like Boo's internment was the mandate of his father. Atticus Finch himself labels the family a disgrace going back three generations (Lee *Mockingbird* 40). Certainly Bob Ewell cannot be held responsible for the sins of his father or his father's father. And yet, his community has clearly condemned and excluded him for those very crimes.

Additionally, Boo and Bob represent two different manifestations of 'evil' in the text. Susan Heinzelman has observed that the imagined phantom of Boo Radley which haunts the children's dreams at the beginning of the novel morphs into the very corporeal malignant threat of Bob Ewell as the novel closes (141). Furthermore, since Boo appears as the children's salvation in the very moment Bob reveals the depths of his depravity, the scene functions as the "culmination of a pattern that has run throughout the text" (Evans 102) in which the two men are alternately mirrored and juxtaposed.

In this ultimate confrontation with evil, Jem and Scout find themselves without the support of any of the societal structures which have been instituted to keep them safe. There are no adults present to shepherd them through the night, and no rule of law will prevent Bob Ewell from exacting his revenge (Butler 123). Furthermore, when Jem's own attempt to save Scout renders him unconscious, the girl is left functionally alone for the brief moment it takes Boo Radley to arrive. While this reality further accentuates the vulnerability of childhood, it also places Scout indisputably in the center of the plot's action from this point forward. The ending of the novel will be hers, and all the revelations of the denouement will be in her hands, including the resolution of Bob Ewell's venomous attack, and only an unlikely savior can redeem Scout and her brother. Only Boo Radley stands between them and the abyss.

Chapter 7

The Savior

Of all the characters added in the editing process that turned *Watchman* into *Mockingbird*, Arthur “Boo” Radley is the most significant addition because he is the most unexpected. We meet Jem briefly in Jean Louise’s flashbacks to childhood anecdotes; and although Bob Ewell is not mentioned at all in *Watchman*, *Mockingbird*’s recasting of the briefly mentioned rape case as the central conflict of the new novel makes the addition of the plaintiff’s father logical. Boo Radley is the only major character in *Mockingbird* for whom *Watchman* contains no nascent mention.

Given the absolute terror that Boo engenders in the children at the beginning of *Mockingbird*, this absence is surprising to say the least. Although *Watchman* takes place nearly twenty years after *Mockingbird* ends, it is peppered with flashbacks to childhood as Jean Louise seeks to process the changes she feels are overwhelming her hometown. In these recollections, we are introduced to Dill and Jem and Scout at approximately the same age they are in *Mockingbird*. Just as in *Mockingbird*, they are presented as spending much of their time out in the yard indulging in make-believe. And just as in *Mockingbird*, when they tire of Tarzan and Tom Swift (Lee *Watchman* 55), they begin to imitate the adult world of their community. However, there is no boogie man named Radley on the corner to inspire them to “[put] his life’s history on display for the edification of the neighborhood” (Lee *Mockingbird* 65) in this iteration. Instead, they transition to reenactments of the tent revival meeting they have been attending that summer (Lee *Watchman* 62-67).

The children presented in the flashbacks are the same – Dill is still avoiding the wrath of his Aunt Rachel (Lee *Watchman* 67), Jem is still insisting that he have the lead role in their games (63), and Scout is still ready and willing to duke it out with Dill over

who will get the second best role (56). The town is much the same – Miss Maudie still lives across the street (111) and even Mrs. Henry Lafayette Dubose merits a mention (112). But there is no Boo. There's not even an Arthur. Why, then, does he materialize in *Mockingbird* as one of the most significant memories of the narrator's childhood and the savior of the Finch children?

Literary critics have generally viewed Boo Radley as the vehicle through which Atticus's maxim, "You never really understand a person... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it" (Lee *Mockingbird* 39) is most fully realized. Boo is the embodiment of the mysterious 'other'. Owing to the fact that he has been locked away in his house since before Jem and Scout were born, he is completely unknown and unknowable when the novel opens, and therefore terrifying (Johnson *Threatening* 73). Throughout Part One, Dill and the Finch children are obsessed with getting a look at Boo, while at the same time utterly petrified that they actually will. They sneak into the Radleys' backyard hoping to catch sight of their reclusive neighbor through a broken shutter (Lee *Mockingbird* 69), but run for the hills when the object of their quest appears not in the house, but standing over them in the yard (71). When Scout realizes that it is Boo Radley who wrapped her in a blanket as she stood shivering outside his front gate the night Miss Maudie's house caught fire, she responds not with gratitude, but with nausea (96).

As fascination grows, so does Jem's need to prove himself brave enough to face the unknown phantom head-on. To prove that Boo Radley has no power over him, he proposes that the children act out scenes from Boo's life. Because the recluse is the most frightening and malevolent being they have yet encountered in their young lives (Evans 105), imitating him is wholly terrifying (Johnson *Threatening* 81).

Claudia Durst Johnson argues that it is this desire toward emulation and simultaneous terror of becoming like him which is what truly scares the children about

Boo Radley. For her, Boo is a modern Count Dracula, with the ability to make his victims like himself regardless of their complicity in the act, and that is both intriguing and terrifying (Johnson *Threatening* 74). In seeking to know more about the phantom across the street, the children are actually seeking to confront a hidden part of themselves – the ‘other’ that lives within. Through the treasures in the knothole, Boo reaches out to them, and the children reach back. By the end of the novel, “what once was regarded as a monster is now a known friend who pats Jem on the head and asks Scout to take him home” (85). According to Dean Shackelford, at this point Scout has become so distant from accepted norms of her society and has drawn so close to Boo Radley that she is finally able to “recognize the empowerment of being the other” (125).

Eric J. Lundquist proposes that this is Boo’s sole function in the text: to make identifying with the mysterious ‘other’ palatable for Jem and Scout. He argues that white children are so incapable of identifying with the ‘otherness’ of Tom Robinson, that Lee was forced to introduce a more acceptable (white) character with whom they could connect and through whom they could experience empathy and growth (127). Naomi Mezey agrees, asserting that Boo’s acceptance back into society through Heck Tate’s refusal to bring charges against him for Bob Ewell’s death means that the white audience is redeemed and its sins are in the past, even though the black man who is the true ‘other’ in the novel is dead, having been shot seventeen times by hyper-vigilant prison guards (125).

This reading of Boo as redemptive has a great deal of merit. After all, he is the undisputed savior of the Finch children (Johnson *Threatening* 75). When the unadulterated evil of Bob Ewell threatens to pull Scout and Jem into the abyss, Boo Radley materializes out of nowhere as a guardian angel – “a figure more out of religious allegory than a modern novel” (Butler 124) – ready to snatch them back from the brink.

But if Boo is the savior, what then are we to make of the fact that when salvation is accomplished, he goes back into his house and Scout “never [sees] him again” (Lee *Mockingbird* 373)? It seems illogical to assert that the recluse has been “brought into the community as a friend and neighbor” (Mezey 123) when it remains true that only a handful of his neighbors ever saw him after his eighteenth birthday, and he has spoken only one sentence to any person outside his family in all that time. Although both Atticus and Heck Tate express respect and gratitude for what Boo did for the Finch children, neither of them attempt to foster a friendship with him.

By way of explaining why the savior should be allowed to disappear from view, the sheriff declares that he does not wish to “[drag] him with his shy ways into the limelight” (Lee *Mockingbird* 370). However, many critics have struggled with the credibility of this ending. Brendan Gill, commenting on the film version of this scene, says, “The moral of this can only be that while ignorant rednecks mustn’t take the law into their own hands, it is alright for nice people to do so” (qtd. in Palmer 212). Similarly, the law professor Thomas Shaffer objects to the decision not to arrest Boo, declaring that, as a litigator, Atticus is duty-bound to do so (Johnson *Threatening* 26). As the daughter and sister of attorneys, Harper Lee might have anticipated both objections. Furthermore, since the decision to sidestep the wheels of justice is glaringly out of character for a man who moments earlier was prepared to have his twelve-year-old son charged with manslaughter, it seems reasonable to assume that something else is going on here.

Dean Shackelford reads Boo’s disappearance as an accentuation of the character’s status as emblematic ‘other’, declaring, “Ironically, [as a symbolic mockingbird, he is] unable to mock society’s role for [him] and as a result take[s] the consequences of living on the margins... through his return to the protection of a desolate and isolated existence” (125). While this interpretation certainly underscores Boo’s

status as 'other', it is not sufficient to explain Atticus and Heck Tate's willingness to allow him to remain isolated, especially since Atticus has crusaded the entire novel to teach his children that avoidance of those from whom they differ is not the answer.

Robert Butler takes a metaphorical view of the situation, suggesting that Boo is more of a religious archetype than a fully-fledged character and "[a]s a spiritually potent and mysterious figure, he belongs... away from the town's gaze and possibility of corruption" (126). While I agree that Boo is a metaphor for redemption, I think Harper Lee locks him away in the house again not because he cannot be sullied by interaction with a corrupt citizenry, but because the corrupt citizenry is not yet ready to be redeemed.

This interpretation requires that we consider again the failure of Atticus as hero discussed earlier. Atticus defends Tom Robinson, and many of Maycomb's citizens support his efforts, but in the end, the mindless fear and hatred of all those who are different from themselves claims that innocent man's life and very nearly claims the lives of two innocent children. Only their reclusive neighbor, not their father, is able to prevent the latter tragedy because only he is able to understand what it is to be marginalized, misjudged, and made a monster. Boo Radley represents the acceptance of all people and the acknowledgement of the existence of both good and evil in everyone that counters Bob Ewell. But the South is simply not ready to embrace such a pure form of equality, and I believe that is the real reason he must be immediately returned to his solitary existence.

Based on the disagreement Atticus and Jean Louise have in *Watchman* over *Brown v. Board*, Maycomb is not yet ready for such equality even two decades later. Taken in conjunction with Boo's absence from that earlier draft and the muted hints of Atticus's flaws that remain in *Mockingbird*, I think this can only mean that the savior

appears in the text specifically to accentuate the South's inability to fully acknowledge or adequately address the depth and depravity of its own prejudices.

My reading is strengthened by the scholarship that already exists on Boo Radley. Claudia Durst Johnson's observation that the children act out Boo's life, but are afraid to do so (Johnson *Threatening* 81), reflects the desire of many Southern whites to appear egalitarian, but absolute terror at the prospect of actually changing most of their behaviors. Moreover, her identification of Boo as a Dracula-figure possessing the vampiric ability to make men like him mirrors the argument articulated by the guest speaker at the Citizens' Council meeting in *Watchman* that desegregation would blur the line between the races and lead to the utter destruction of white society (110).

Perhaps this fear of change is the unacknowledged catalyst which prompts Atticus and Sheriff Tate to talk themselves into believing that the best thing for Boo is to be protected from the limelight. Perhaps it is this terror of being forced to change that causes two otherwise intelligent and aware men to ignore what this night did for Boo Radley. It takes a great act of courage and resolve for a man who has not left his own property in a quarter century to attack a violent drunk; but it is also a great gift for such a man to find that he matters to someone, that he is capable of something no one else is, that he is needed. Boo finds this courage, and is just on the brink of enjoying his first experience of community, when the patriarchy and the law shove him back out of sight.

In the same way, it would take a great deal of courage for the South to acknowledge and work to remediate its centuries of prejudice and racism, but the experience of community that would be gained if they could would be inexpressibly valuable. When men like B.B. Underwood write editorials about the sin of killing a black man (Lee *Mockingbird* 323) and men like Link Deas reach out to offer a black widow employment in the midst of the Great Depression (333), the South seems to have edged

tentatively toward the verge of such a possibility, but Jim Crow laws will effectively prevent change and growth in the South for decades.

This, I believe, is why Jem must remain unconscious during the entirety of Boo's visit. Whereas Carolyn Jones declares that, "For Jem, the boy coming into manhood, the desire to see Boo is abandoned with Tom's conviction" (100), I assert that Jem's coming manhood aligns him too much with the adult world to be able to see Boo for what he truly is. Therefore, Scout is the only character who interacts with Boo on a personal level – talking to him, walking him home, and experiencing a different view of her familiar world from his front porch. Jem, who never saw who saved him, is now a part of the patriarchal system, but Scout, who recognizes her savior and attempts to connect with him, is not. She represents the hope of a new and better tomorrow.

Unfortunately, it is still a tomorrow which cannot arrive as long as Scout continues to worship a father who asks her to understand and accept his decision to ignore the law in order to keep the redemptive possibilities of true equality hidden. In *Watchman*, Jean Louise successfully severs her ties to this unhealthy view of her father as divine, and can therefore move forward into that better tomorrow. However, in *Mockingbird*, Scout (and the nation?) is not yet ready to do this, and so Boo Radley must exist, but must remain sequestered.

This, then, explains the loose ends which many scholars have found troublingly unresolved in *Mockingbird*. Teresa Godwin Phelps, for one, expresses her frustration that the novel "fails to recognize or acknowledge the barriers it leaves erect" (515). The barriers remain erect precisely because Boo Radley returns to a life of isolation and seclusion. Only his full inclusion into Maycomb society could have torn them down, and the fact that they remain erect is, I believe, the very point Harper Lee intended to make. Malcolm Gladwell meant to indict the text when he observed, "The courthouse ring had

spoken. Maycomb would go back to the way it had always been” (65). However, I believe Harper Lee would have applauded him for receiving her message. Maycomb is the same. But Scout is not.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

Many scholars and critics have identified *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a novel of the New South – a treatise on the evils of Old South racism and a plea for progressively liberal changes. Fred Erisman opines, “In short, in the several Maycomb townspeople who see through the fog of the past, and who act not from tradition but from principle, Miss Lee presents the possible salvation of the South” (43). Phelps identifies Atticus Finch as the principal agent of New South liberalism (and therefore finds the novel to be an imperfect manifestation) (511). However, the publication of *Go Set a Watchman* demands that scholars reassess how *Mockingbird* truly fits into New South philosophy. The Atticus we meet in *Watchman* is clearly mired in Old South mores, lending credence to previously articulated arguments that his *Mockingbird* counterpart is not the “saint” (Johnson *Threatening* 96) so many critics have made him out to be, but adding this new fly in that old ointment: Harper Lee didn’t mean for him to be. Rather, he is merely the catalyst for dialogue between the self and the mysterious ‘other’ (Jones 103), or rather, he provides Scout with the ethical guidance and philosophical framework she needs to form her own opinions and develop her own moral code.

The fact that the moral code Jean Louise develops in *Watchman* differs from that of her 72-year-old father necessitates a reevaluation of the mores espoused by his 50-year-old self. Kathryn Lee Seidel declares that Atticus believes all men are created equal “in the Jeffersonian sense, not equal in ability but equal in natural rights” (83). This comparison is particularly significant when one remembers that Jefferson, the man who found universal equality to be a self-evident truth, died a slave-owner, while several of his Revolutionary contemporaries (including President Washington) emancipated their slaves. So then, Atticus is indeed a Jeffersonian – a man who eloquently preaches

equality and rallies other men to take action in its name, but nurses private prejudices that cry him hypocrite, and therefore leaves the realization of universal equality to another generation to achieve.

To Kill a Mockingbird is indeed, as Erisman has suggested, Harper Lee's impassioned plea that the South accept change, grow, and find its place in the nation. She is asserting that it must test its traditions and see if they are truly good in order to "escape the stifling provincialism that has characterized its past" (Erisman 48), but *Go a Set Watchman* requires that we acknowledge an important caveat: Although her appeal becomes muted in *Mockingbird*, it is still evident that Lee is not making this plea through the person of Atticus Finch, but through the hope for the next generation represented by his daughter.

Katie Rose Guest Pryal has taken *Mockingbird* to task over what she considers a failure of empathy in the text, asserting, "In the end, readers of *Mockingbird* can read comfortably because the novel does not disturb America's racial caste system" (188). On the other hand, *Watchman* centers around and thrives on that disturbance, and so the astute reader must ask herself why such a dramatic shift in theme takes place in the revision process. I believe the revised text manifests a distinctly uncomfortable and bitter acquiescence to a racial caste system which cannot yet be changed, but which may yet evolve in the fate of a nine-year-old girl.

Claudia Durst Johnson, who is the most prolific and respected Harper Lee scholar, says of *Mockingbird*, "The novel itself is, in part, her convincing brief for her father's sainthood... That Lee's readers, who are in a sense her jury, so readily and perpetually render a decision in Atticus's favor, closing the case, as it were, may in some way account for the silence of this authorial voice thereafter" (Johnson *Threatening* 96). One wonders how the discovery and publication of the older manuscript might affect the

critic's assessment. Johnson, a personal friend of Ms. Lee's, professed herself surprised to find that a second novel existed (Kovaleski), but has not yet published any other comments on *Go Set a Watchman*, so readers are left to draw their own conclusions. *Watchman* is obviously not intended to paint Atticus as a saint, and therefore casts doubt on the validity of the rest of Johnson's statement. Perhaps, instead of being satisfied with readers' elevation of Atticus Finch to one step below divinity, Harper Lee was in fact frustrated that readers could not see the remaining shades of the "tin god" (Lee *Watchman* 268) she originally created. Perhaps discouraged by the lack of serious critical engagement with her true heroine, Scout, she simply left us all to our own devices for half a century.

As mentioned previously, friends of the famously reclusive author do not all believe that she truly endorsed the publication of *Watchman*. However, there can be no question that the reverberations created by its publication have been felt not only in the literary community, but in the popular culture of the United States at large. In discussing my thesis topic with friends and relatives from all walks of life, I have often been told apologetically that this or that loved one would, regrettably, not be willing to read my finished paper. Such is the stature of Atticus Finch that not even Harper Lee herself can induce some adherents of his cult to sully their image of him with the complexities and human foibles he possesses in *Watchman*.

And yet, is not the iconoclastic idol shattering of *Go Set a Watchman* exactly what our country needs right now? The hope of a new generation that Scout represented when the public first met her in 1960 has, unfortunately, not yet come to fruition nearly fifty-six years later. Recent events prove how far we haven't come. The shooting death of Walter Scott at the hands of South Carolina police officer Michael Slager is eerily similar to the death of Tom Robinson. In 1935, prison guards shot the fictional Robinson

seventeen times as he ran for the prison fence. In 2015, Officer Slager shot Scott eight times as he ran away from a traffic stop (Schmidt).

In an age where activists feel the need to proclaim #BlackLivesMatter, not only implying, but directly stating that there is still some question about whether or not they actually do in the United States (Day), it would seem that the journey of self-discovery that might have taken young Scout Finch out of the Old South and into the New is still a dream deferred. And so, it is now time for the much more painfully direct and unashamedly biting social commentary of the original coming-of-age story of Jean Louise Finch. The impact Atticus had on social politics in 1960 has been made clear, both in extant scholarship and in this paper, but it appears that his example was not enough. Now is the time for Scout/Jean Louise to take her proper place at the center of both narratives, forcing the United States as a nation to struggle alongside her in our own quest to become better than our heritage and greater than our predecessors.

I suspect Harper Lee would have shaken her head in wonder at the myriad intelligent and thoughtful people who have refused to engage with the very real and very flawed humanity represented by both Atticus and Jean Louise in *Go Set a Watchman*. And, based on the obvious growth Jean Louise achieves through her impassioned debate with Atticus there, I believe that although she would have mourned the lost opportunity that refusal engenders, she would have responded along with her famous patriarch, "I love you. As you please" (Lee *Watchman* 253).

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Biographical Information

Leslie Cook earned her Bachelor of Arts degree and secondary teaching certification from Texas Christian University in 2001 and her Master of Arts degree in English from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2016. She has taught middle school and high school English for fourteen years, working in public, private, and charter schools. *To Kill a Mockingbird* has been a beloved text since she first encountered it in high school, and she has been thrilled to teach the novel to 8th grade students for the last nine years. Discussions with those students inspired her to write about the novel in her thesis, and she looks forward to publishing her work as a scholarly article in the near future. She also hopes to continue writing academically on the texts she has come to love through her teaching career.