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Four Reasons Why Readers Hate Go Set a Watchman (and One Reason Why I Don't)

Judy Cornett

FOUR REASONS WHY READERS HATE *GO SET A WATCHMAN* (AND ONE REASON WHY I DON'T)

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Go Set a Watchman was published to much fanfare on July 14, 2015. The reviews were mixed at best, and hostile at worst.[2] Few were enthusiastic about the novel.[3] Among readers who venerated Atticus Finch, the reaction was disappointment tinged with sorrow. Their desire for additional proof of Atticus's heroism went unfulfilled—indeed, many felt betrayed by the revelation that the lawyer who could rise above the prejudices of his community in the 1930s could fall prey to

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[1] College of Law Distinguished Professor, University of Tennessee College of Law. I am grateful to many colleagues and friends who have shared their thoughts on the novel with me over the past year. I am especially grateful to my colleagues Dwight Aarons and John Zomchick, and to my research assistant Hallie Dyer, UT Law Class of 2018. Versions of the ideas presented here have been presented at a University of Tennessee faculty forum in July 2015, at the Law Day program sponsored by the Knoxville Bar Association in May 2016, and at the Tennessee Municipal Attorneys' Association annual conference in June 2016. I am grateful to all the participants in those programs. For excellent editorial assistance, I am grateful to the Board and Staff of the *Cumberland Law Review*.

[2] For mixed reviews, *see, e.g.*, Madison Smartt Bell, *In "Watchman," Atticus Finch is Deeply Flawed*, BOSTON GLOBE, July 14, 2015, https://www.bostonglobe.com/1970/01/25/lee/VVGcqMJNpx5VR0SL0E2toL/story.html; Randy Dotinga, *"Go Set a Watchman" is an odd follow-up to its classic sister*, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, July 30, 2015, http://www.csmonitor.com/Books/Book-Reviews/2015/0730/Go-Set-a-Watchman-is-an-odd-follow-up-to-its-classic-sister; Lane Filler, *The Reality of "Go Set a Watchman,"* KNOXVILLE NEWS-SENTINEL, July 19, 2015, at F4; Adam Gopnik, *Sweet Home Alabama: Harper Lee's "Go Set a Watchman,"* THE NEW YORKER, July 27, 2015, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/07/27/sweet-home-alabama; Randall Kennedy, *Harper Lee's "Go Set a Watchman,"* N.Y. TIMES July 14, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/14/books/review/harper-lees-go-set-a-watchman.html; Mark Lawson, *Go Set a Watchman Review – More Complex Than Harper Lee's Original Classic, but Less Compelling*, THE GUARDIAN, July 13, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/12/go-set-a-watchman-review-harper-lee-to-kill-a-mockingbird. For hostile reviews, see Harry Bliss, *Bliss*, KNOXVILLE NEWS-SENTINEL, Aug. 7, 2015, at K41 (cartoon showing woman writing a letter: "Dear Harper Lee, What the %$#&!!?"); Rheta Grimsley Johnson, *Go Set Your Clock Backward*, KNOXVILLE NEWS-SENTINEL, Aug. 9, 2015, at E3.

[3] The most enthusiastic review was Joni Rodgers, *"Go Set a Watchman" Is a Novel We Can Love,* BOSTON GLOBE, July 14, 2015, https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2015/07/15/set-watchman-novel-can-love/F2xqnM4vqYay3mH1Yp8nmL/story.html ("Like most people who love 'To Kill a Mockingbird,' I came skeptically to 'Go Set a Watchman.' Would it be a buried treasure or a hijacked rough draft? Turns out, it's neither. And both. I loved it for exactly what it is: a brilliantly written, underedited [sic], beautiful Southern novel about a young woman who discovers her father is not a god."). *Id.*

those very prejudices in the 1950s.

In contrast to most readers, I find the novel authentic, insightful, and ultimately satisfying. It is not as good as *To Kill a Mockingbird* as a novel—not as nuanced, not as tightly woven, not as consistent in tone. But it is good as something else—as a deeply personal narrative of one young white Southerner's attempt to come to terms with the culture she loves: a culture based upon abhorrent principles. Over the course of the past year, I have discussed the novel with many friends and colleagues; most of them are lawyers and all of them smart readers. None of them like the novel as much as I do, and each of them has a reason to dislike the novel. What follows are the top four reasons why readers hate *Go Set a Watchman*, along with my one reason for liking it.

WHY READERS HATE IT

The novel was published against Harper Lee's wishes.

I recently spoke at a CLE program on "The Ethics of Atticus Finch." When I asked the audience, "Who has read *Go Set a Watchman*?" one lawyer volunteered that he refused to read the novel on principle. A native of Monroeville, Alabama, he believes that Harper Lee was taken advantage of, and perhaps defrauded, in the publication of the novel. Certainly, the story of the novel's discovery contains enough inconsistencies to give credence to such a belief.[4] And the woman who discovered the manuscript and arranged for its publication can be cast as a Machiavellian figure who swoops in to a community, gains the confidence of its two most illustrious (and wealthy) citizens, and manages their affairs so as to enrich herself.[5] There is certainly a circumstantial case to be made that the novel exists only because of overreaching by Lee's personal lawyer.

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[4] For a concise summary of the controversy surrounding the discovery and publication of the novel, see William Giraldi, *The Suspicious Story Behind Harper Lee's 'Go Set a Watchman,'* THE NEW REPUBLIC (July 13, 2015) https://newrepublic.com/article/122290/the-suspicious-story-behind-harper-lees-go-set-a-watchman. For a more detailed account, see Shekhar Bhatia, *Exclusive: Did Harper Lee's lawyer purposely hold on to the manuscript of Go Set a Watchman for years-until she had control of the author's affairs? New account claims she knew all about book in 2011*, DAILY MAIL (July 17, 2015), http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3163203/Did-Harper-Lee-s-lawyer-purposely-hold-manuscript-Set-Watchman-years-control-author-s-affairs-New-account-claims-knew-book-2011.html.

[5] Claire Suddath, *What Does Harper Lee Want?*, BLOOMBERG (July 9, 2015) http://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2015-harper-lee-go-set-a-watchman. *See, e.g.*, Serge F. Kovaleski, Alexandra Alter & Jennifer Crossley Howard, *Is Harper Lee Competent to OK "Mockingbird" Sequel?*, BOSTON GLOBE (March 12, 2015), https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2015/03/11/state-alabama-steps-into-debate-harper-lee-mental-state/JApzHm9PTpnsBA5GDdX8XI/story.html.

This objection is the weightiest of the four. If Harper Lee was duped or misled, if she did not in fact give her consent to publish the novel, then it can hardly be read in good conscience.[6] However, there is some evidence that she might have agreed to the novel's publication. The PBS series *American Masters* showed a video of Lee's receipt of a copy of the novel, to which she responded: "Wonderful . . . . Thank you." When asked whether she ever thought the novel would be published, Lee responded, "Of course, I did—don't be silly."[7] Another bit of evidence is the apparent failure of Lee's family and friends to interfere with the novel's appearance. As the lawyer from Monroeville stated at the CLE program: "Those of us in Monroeville look after one another, and we're especially protective of Harper Lee." If Lee's friends suspected misconduct, they might be expected to bring it to light. But at least one of her friends confirmed the publisher's statement that Lee had allowed friends to read the manuscript before deciding to publish it.[8]

The two halves of the novel do not fit together.

It is impossible to deny that the novel consists of two distinct halves. In the first half of the novel, we meet the grown-up Scout when Jean Louise Finch returns home from New York City shortly after the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education*.[9] She interacts with her friends and family in Maycomb and makes a series of discoveries that cast doubt on her idealized view of her father, Atticus. Interspersed with these actions are several flashbacks to

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[6] This assumes that Lee remained competent when the manuscript was discovered and the novel published. Although her elder sister Alice famously said, "Poor Nelle Harper can't see and can't hear and will sign anything put before her by anyone in whom she has confidence," Lee never had a conservator or guardian. Elaine Woo & Valerie J. Nelson, *Harper Lee, author of classic novel 'To Kill a Mockingbird,' dies at 89*, LA TIMES (Feb. 19, 2016) http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/music/la-me-harper-lee-dies-20160219-story.html.

[7] Sean Fitz-Gerald, *Listen to Harper Lee Receive a Copy of Her Newly Published Book, Go Set a Watchman*, VULTURE (July 13, 2015, 11:22 PM), http://www.vulture.com/2015/07/harper-lee-go-set-a-watchman-pbs-interview.html.

[8] *See* Suddath, *supra* note 5.

[9] HARPER LEE, GO SET A WATCHMAN 24 (2015) [hereinafter "WATCHMAN"]. It is unclear from the novel whether the decision is *Brown I* or *Brown II*. *Id.*; *Brown v. Bd. of Educ.* (*Brown I*), 347 U.S. 483, 493–495 (1954) ("[S]egregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race" is a denial of Equal Protection under the 14th amendment); *Brown v. Bd. of Educ.* (*Brown II*), 349 U.S. 294, 299, 301 (1955) (School authorities have the primary responsibility in enforcing *Brown I*. The Supreme Court ordered "the District Courts to take such proceedings and enter such orders . . . as are necessary and proper to admit to public schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis with all deliberate speed the parties to these cases.").

the life of a younger Jean Louise told in the inimitable voice of Harper Lee. Most readers enjoy the logical narrative and charming anecdotes of this half of the novel.

The second half of the novel is very different. It is talky—almost preachy. It consists of a series of three dialogues: one between Jean Louise and her fiancé, Hank Clinton; one between Jean Louise and her father; and one between Jean Louise and her uncle, Dr. Jack Finch. There is little action and no charm in these conversations. Moreover, the dialogues are filled with arid, outworn ideas: rationalizations of segregation that were current in the 1950s but are merely offensive today. Here is an example of her conversation with her father:

> "Let's look at it this way," said her father. "You realize that our Negro population is backward, don't you? You will concede that? You realize the full implications of the word 'backward,' don't you?"
>
> "Yes, sir."
>
> "You realize that the vast majority of them here in the South are unable to share fully in the responsibilities of citizenship, and why?"
>
> "Yes, sir."
>
> "But you want them to have all its privileges?"
>
> "God damn it, you're twisting it up!"
>
> "There's no point in being profane. Think this over: Abbott County, across the river, is in bad trouble. The population is almost three-fourths Negro. The voting population is almost half-and-half now, because of that big Normal School over there. If the scales were tipped over, what would you have? The county won't keep a full board of registrars, because if the Negro vote edged out the white you'd have Negroes in every county office—"
>
> "What makes you so sure?"
>
> "Honey," he said. "Use your head. When they vote, they vote in blocs."[10]

For the modern reader, a little of this goes a long way. As the novel becomes more static, the reader's patience with philosophical debate about outmoded ideas wears thin. Whatever interest these debates might have held for a reader in the late 1950s or early 1960s, for the modern reader, they do little more than repetitively drive home the racist views of the men in Jean Louise's life. The repetition of these sentiments and the smug pseudo-intellectual tone in which they are delivered are apt to disgust the modern reader.

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[10] WATCHMAN, *supra* note 9, at 242–43.

Jean Louise Finch is not a likeable heroine.

A novel about the inner conflicts of its protagonist should boast a likeable main character—one about whom the reader cares. One reason why readers hate *Go Set a Watchman* is that Jean Louise Finch is not very likeable. She has been working in New York City for at least five years, but makes an annual trip back home to Maycomb. Her mother is dead, as is her brother, Jem. Her father still lives in Maycomb along with his sister, Alexandra. Jean Louise has a boyfriend, Hank Clinton, who is a lifelong friend but is considered "white trash" by her aunt.[11]

Jean Louise speaks in an acerbic voice. Her remarks lack the naïve sweetness of Scout's social observations. As she and Hank prepare to go swimming in the river near Finch's Landing fully clothed, her banter with Hank exemplifies the tone of her conversation. She asks Hank whether the steps down to the river are safe:

> Henry said, "Sure. The club keeps 'em up. We're trespassing, you know."
>
> "Trespassing, hell. I'd like to see the day when a Finch can't walk over his own land." She paused. "What do you mean?"
>
> "They sold the last of it five months ago."
>
> Jean Louise said, "They didn't say word one to me about it."
>
> The tone of her voice made Henry stop. "You don't care, do you?"
>
> "No, not really. I just wish they'd told me."
>
> Henry was not convinced. "For Heaven's sake, Jean Louise, what good was it to Mr. Finch and them?"
>
> "None whatever, with taxes and things. I just wish they'd told me. I don't like surprises."
>
> . . . .
>
> Hank said wearily, "The thing I hate most about this place is you always have to climb back up."
>
> "I have a friend in New York who always runs up stairs a mile a minute. Says it keeps him from getting out of breath. Why don't you try it?"
>
> "He your boyfriend?"
>
> "Don't be silly," she said.
>
> "You've said that once today."
>
> "Go to hell, then," she said.
>
> "You've said that once today."

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[11] *Id.* at 36.

> Jean Louise put her hands on her hips. "How would you like to go swimming with your clothes on? I haven't said that once today. Right now I'd just as soon push you in as look at you."[12]

Although her remarks reveal a certain feistiness and disregard for convention, this introduction to Jean Louise does not exactly endear her to the reader.

A comparison of the tea parties in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchman* further demonstrates the almost studied alienation that Jean Louise affects. In the former novel, the six-year-old Scout endures the uncomfortable clothing and perfect manners demanded by Aunt Alexandra and tries to participate appropriately in the ladies' conversation, earning a sympathetic hand-squeeze from Miss Maudie Atkinson. In *Go Set a Watchman*, on the other hand, Jean Louise intervenes awkwardly in the conversation, making conventional conversational forays but finding herself repulsed by the insensitive, sometimes racist, responses to her comments. Finally, she comes to a realization: "I can't think of anything to say to them. They talk incessantly about the things they do, and I don't know how to do the things they do. If [Hank and I] married—if I married anybody from this town—these would be my friends, and I couldn't think of a thing to say to them."[13]

It is hard to love an anti-heroine, especially when she is the adult version of the precocious but innocent narrator of the prequel. We learn about Scout through her words and actions and through others' reactions to her. We learn about Jean Louise Finch partly through her words and actions (and others' reactions), but we learn much more through her own ruminations. Much of the narration in *Go Set a Watchman* is interior monologue—Jean Louise's inner thoughts. In the first half of the novel, these reflections can be poignant. For example, she looks at one of the single women at the tea party who had refused to be her friend in elementary school and says to herself: "Now we are both lonely, for entirely different reasons, but it feels the same, doesn't it?"[14] But in the second half of the novel, her inner monologue becomes increasingly anguished and even repetitious as she tries to make sense of what she is learning about her community:

> Hell is eternal apartness. What had she done that she must spend the rest of her years reaching out with yearning for them, making secret trips to long ago, making no journey to the present? I am their blood and bones, I have dug in this ground, this is my home. But I am not their blood, the ground doesn't care who digs it, I am a stranger at a

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[12] *Id.* at 74–79.

[13] *Id.* at 172–73.

[14] *Id.* at 169.

cocktail party.[15]

Atticus Finch turns out to be a racist.

Of all the reasons to hate *Go Set a Watchman*, this is the most popular. For years, Harper Lee faced pressure to write another novel starring Atticus to give his fans more examples of his heroism. Indeed, her refusal to produce another novel came to be seen as perverse or even malicious, as if she were withholding food from her children. So, when publication of the novel was announced, fans of Atticus were excited. At last their hunger would be satisfied. Thus, not surprisingly, early reviews of the novel focused on the portrayal of Atticus. Unfortunately, he turned out to be a racist, just like any other garden-variety racist of the Deep South in the 1950s.

It is easy for us to forget what the Deep South was like in the first six decades of the twentieth century. From 1900 through at least 1964, Jim Crow kept a death grip on the South. Jim Egerton's monumental history, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South*, traces the intransigence of the racial divide that permeated the former Confederate states post-Reconstruction. Segregation—the de jure and de facto separation of the black and white races—was embedded in the culture of the South. For example, even Eleanor Roosevelt failed to protest segregated seating at the Southern Conference for Human Welfare in Birmingham in 1938. When she was asked about the seating arrangements, she answered:

> "What do I think of the segregation of white and Negro here tonight? Well, I could no more tell people in another state what they should do than the United States can tell another country what to do. I think that one must follow the customs of the district. The answer to that question is not up to me but up to the people of Alabama."[16]

All the themes rehearsed by Atticus in his conversations with Jean Louise—themes which seem dead to us today—were live arguments made by real people in the Deep South throughout the 1930s, '40s, and '50s. Arguments against segregation—and they were being made with incremental results—were met with counterarguments about the preferability of local and state control in race matters, the rights of states under the Tenth Amendment to make and change laws that were not clearly within the purview of the federal government, and the undesirability of moving too fast in an area likely to inflame the passions of citizens and overturn ingrained habits of everyday life. The soporific

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[15] *Id.* at 225.

[16] JOHN EGERTON, SPEAK NOW AGAINST THE DAY: THE GENERATION BEFORE THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE SOUTH 194 (1994).

power of "gradualism," mentioned by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his "I Have a Dream" speech, was a very real force prior to the 1960s.

The real issue raised by the portrayal of Atticus in *Go Set a Watchman* is the doubt it casts on his heroism in *To Kill a Mockingbird.* In other words, can a 1950s racist really have been the 1930s hero? But it would be perfectly possible for a white lawyer in the 1930s to try his best to achieve justice for a black client and for that same white lawyer in the late 1950s to espouse racist views with respect to blacks and to sell out his black client in order to dampen civil rights agitation in his community. The white culture portrayed in *Go Set a Watchman* can tolerate fairness for individual black defendants—exemplified by Atticus's motto, "equal rights for all, special privileges for none"[17]—and still oppose equal civil rights for black citizens as a group—exemplified by Atticus's rhetorical questions: "What would happen if all the Negroes in the South were suddenly given full civil rights? . . . Would you want your state governments run by people who don't know how to run 'em?"[18]

The paradox of the white Southerner who opposed civil rights while still treating individual African-Americans with apparent kindness is illustrated by an anecdote related by President Jimmy Carter. In 1951, Jimmy and Rosalyn Carter were home on leave from the U.S. Navy. While visiting with his parents, they recounted an incident in which the Governor-General of the Bahamas invited the crew of his ship to a dance, but excluded black sailors from the invitation. The officers and crew of the ship reacted by declining the invitation. As Carter relates in his memoir, *A Full Life: Reflections at Ninety*, "When I was describing this incident, my father quietly left the room, and my mother said, 'Jimmy, it's too soon for our folks here to think about black and white people going to a dance together.'"[19] Yet, two years later, as Earl Carter lay dying of pancreatic cancer, he received "[a] steady stream of visitors who came to the house . . . just to bring him small gifts and relay their personal thanks for things he had done for them or their families. More than half the visitors were African-American."[20]

WHY I DON'T HATE IT

I like *Go Set a Watchman* because I like Jean Louise Finch. She grew up in the Old South, left home, learned another way of life, and

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[17] WATCHMAN, *supra* note 9, at 108.

[18] *Id.* at 242–43.

[19] JIMMY CARTER, A FULL LIFE: REFLECTIONS AT NINETY 61 (2015).

[20] *Id.* at 66.

then returned. The resulting drama is a psychic one, as Jean Louise tries to reconcile her upbringing with her new understanding of how wrong the ethos of the Old South really is. In the process of narrating her inner conflict, Jean Louise gives the reader an insider's view of the "peculiar" culture that flourished in the Jim Crow era in the South. The reportage of the novel is indicated in its title, which refers to Isaiah 21:6: "For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth."

Jean Louise is the watchman of the title. She declares to the world what she sees in her homeland, which exists in a state of crisis following the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. This testimonial aspect of the novel echoes William Faulkner's famous postscript to his speech at the 1955 meeting of the Southern Historical Society:

> We speak now against the day when our Southern people who will resist to the last these inevitable changes in social relations, will, when they have been forced to accept what they at one time might have accepted with dignity and goodwill, will say, "Why didn't someone tell us this before? Tell us this in time?"[21]

Both Faulkner and Jean Louise Finch are watchmen: they see what is coming and they warn their people about the dangers they observe. Just as Faulkner felt a burden to warn the South of the coming denouement of segregation, the biblical watchman invoked by the novel's title bears responsibility for the welfare of her culture: "But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand."[22]

In her role as watchman, Jean Louise tries to warn her father that the time has come for change. While he is "fighting a sort of rearguard, delaying action to preserve a certain kind of philosophy that has almost gone down the drain,"[23] she insists that "no matter how hateful the Court was, there had to be a beginning . . . . [T]he time has come when we've got to do right."[24] Jean Louise is not a skilled debater; while defending the need for change, she concedes that the *Brown* decisions impugned the Tenth Amendment. During the debate she becomes frustrated with her father's smooth, patronizing responses to her assertions.

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[21] William Faulkner, American Segregation and the World Crisis (Nov. 10, 1955), *in* WILLIAM FAULKNER ET AL., THE SEGREGATION DECISIONS 12 (1956).

[22] *Ezekiel* 33:6 (King James)

[23] WATCHMAN, *supra* note 9, at 188.

[24] *Id.* at 241.

Eventually, she becomes angry and lashes out at her father: "You double-dealing, ring-tailed old son of a bitch!"[25]

But the novel is not a full-throated denunciation; it is not a screed against the South; it is not a jeremiad. When the expatriate Jean Louise returns home to Maycomb, we could have read a story about a disruptive force entering a close-knit community, attracting hostility and unsettling old ways of thinking. Instead it is the story of a loyal white daughter of Maycomb, Alabama, who faces the incongruity of being *from* the culture but no longer *of* it. We read about an expatriate returning home, seeing the world she grew up in with new eyes, and undergoing painful reflections on her own identity and place in the world. Jean Louise Finch asks how a culture that produced her—with her distaste for racism, her ability to see the faults of her friends and relatives, her Menckenesque perspective on the town's upper crust—how can that culture be rotten at its core? Is she, too, rotten? What lies at her core?

Her uncle poses the issue as one of filial identity: "[Y]ou, Miss, born with your own conscience, somewhere along the line fastened it like a barnacle onto your father's . . . . You were an emotional cripple, leaning on him, getting the answers from him, assuming that your answers would always be his answers."[26] But Jean Louise realizes that it is not just personal. Her quarrel is not only with her father. Her quarrel is with a way of life represented by her father and also by Aunt Alexandra, the ladies at the tea party, and even Hank, who argues that he must "go along to get along," given his lower-class background and his need for the community's goodwill.[27] After seeing her father and Hank at the Citizens' Council meeting, she reflects: "Now she was aware of a sharp apartness, a separation, not from Atticus and Henry merely. All of Maycomb and Maycomb County were leaving her as the hours passed, and she automatically blamed herself."[28]

It is, perhaps, this guilt that we see enacted in one of the novel's most shocking scenes—Jack Finch's "savage backhand swipe" to her face at the outset of their final conversation.[29] Although I have found no other critic who treats this incident as significant, for me it represents the ultimate indictment of the culture of the Old South, in which violence was simply one more means of social control by whites

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[25] *Id.* at 253.

[26] *Id.* at 265.

[27] Maureen Corrigan, *Harper Lee's 'Watchman' Is A Mess That Makes Us Reconsider A Masterpiece*, NPR (July 13, 2015), http://www.npr.org/2015/07/13/422545987/harper-lees-watchman-is-a-mess-that-makes-us-reconsider-a-masterpiece.

[28] WATCHMAN, *supra* note 9, at 154.

[29] *Id.* at 260.

against blacks. Jean Louise herself does not seem to mind the blow; she accepts Jack's offer of whiskey and continues her dialogue with him. But the blow, the whiskey, and Jack's revelation that he was in love with her mother seem to complete the catharsis: after their conversation, she is able to view her father calmly again, telling him, "I can't beat you, I can't join you."[30]

So, Jean Louise does not take the easy way out. The easy way would be to either embrace the community with all its flaws or to reject it entirely. But she does neither. Her conflict with her culture is resolved, symbolized by her ability to get into her father's car without bumping her head.[31] But the ending is ambiguous. She is not going to marry Hank, but is she going to move home as Uncle Jack had urged? Is she returning to New York with a new, righteous fervor about civil rights? Has she capitulated to Atticus's view of the *Brown* decisions? This ambiguity leaves most readers unsatisfied, but the lack of closure means that readers have to rely less on plot and more on their knowledge of Jean Louise's character. Throughout the novel we have seen her acute observations, her anguished reflections, her self-doubt, her spirited assertions of her views, and her refusal of easy solutions. She knows that reconciliation requires moving beyond judgment, while still remaining true to her basic principles—principles she imbibed from Maycomb itself.

The final verdict on *Go Set a Watchman* will not be rendered for many years. Ultimately, it will probably be judged as an inferior, and perhaps unfortunate, addition to the Harper Lee bibliography. As a raw, ragged narrative it requires a degree of reader tolerance that its predecessor does not. There is no hero in this novel who can make white readers feel vicariously virtuous.[32] There is only conflict, both within and without. But what I find satisfying in *Go Set a Watchman* are Jean Louise's courage in facing the sins of her culture and Harper Lee's courage in serving as her culture's watchman, born of her realization that the Jim Crow era must give way to the era of civil rights: "He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night."[33]

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[30] *Id.* at 277.

[31] *Id.* at 278. She had bumped her head on the car when getting into it to go to Finch's Landing, *id.* at 50, and, again when she gets into it after seeing Atticus at the Citizens' Council Meeting, *id.* at 154.

[32] *See* Nancy L. Cook, *A Call to Affirmative Action for Fiction's Heroes of Color, or How Hawkeye, Huck, and Atticus Foil the Work of Antiracism*, 11 Cornell J. L. & Pub. Pol'y 603 (2002).

[33] Isaiah 21:11–12.