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GROWING UP WITH SCOUT AND ATTICUS: GETTING FROM *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* THROUGH *GO SET A WATCHMAN*

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I remember that rape case you defended, but I missed the point.

– Jean Louise “Scout” Finch, twenty-six, to her father, Atticus,
seventy-two¹

INTRODUCTION: TWO HALVES OF A COMING-OF-AGE TALE

Twenty years ago, in the very generous pages of the *Duke Law Journal*, I compared two coming-of-age stories: Harper Lee’s singular, though single, novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and one of William Faulkner’s least-remembered works, *Intruder in the Dust*.² On the evidence then before us, I argued, the verdict had to go to Faulkner. The fundamental difference, I tried to show, was this: In Faulkner’s coming-of-age novel, the lawyer’s nephew grows up, at least enough to see the flaws in his much-admired uncle, particularly on matters of race. In Lee’s novel, by contrast, the lawyer’s daughter never sees the same flaws in her father, and thus remains a child. Speculating on why Lee had never written another novel, I suggested that, until Scout comes to a more mature appreciation of Atticus, she

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1. HARPER LEE, *GO SET A WATCHMAN* 248 (2015) [hereinafter *GO SET A WATCHMAN*].
2. Robert E. Atkinson, Jr., *Liberating Lawyers: Diverging Parallels in Intruder in the Dust and To Kill a Mockingbird*, 49 *DUKE L.J.* 601 (1999).

simply has nowhere to go—or more precisely, Harper Lee had nowhere to take her.

That was then. Although few knew it at the time, Lee had already grown Scout up, sent her off to college and the City, and brought her back home to Maycomb, Alabama. Now, with the publication of her other novel, *Go Set a Watchman*, we have the more mature reflection of Scout, and I daresay Harper Lee, on both her father and her homeland. Thanks again to the generosity of the *Duke Law Journal*, we have a chance to re-open the case of Scout and Atticus.

What we find, I'm afraid, is both good news and bad. This time, our verdict must be mixed. To the good, Atticus is not the racist that recent rumor would make him; allowances made for time and place, he is as much a moderate in the late 1950s as he was in the early 1930s. And he is still Scout's loving father, Maycomb's most conscientious citizen. But their center has not held; their story is more artifact than art. A coming-of-age story written and set in the 1950s, only to be buried for over half a century makes rather stale reading today. We have already lived this sequel's sequel, and we know all too well the age that is coming. In that age, we ourselves have come of age, with only half the help Lee might have given, and maybe not the half we needed the most.

I. *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*: THE CASE SCOUT REMEMBERED AND THE POINTS SHE TOOK

Scout, you aren't old enough to understand some things yet, but there's been some high talk around town to the effect that I shouldn't do much about defending this man. It's a peculiar case

– Atticus Finch to his daughter Scout³

In the vanishingly unlikely event that you have neither read the novel nor seen the movie, spoiler alert: *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a Tom-and-Huck tale with a clever twist—Huck is a girl—and a bittersweet ending. After setting the general scene, this section reviews the bitter—the tragic death of the novel's titular mockingbird, Atticus Finch's brilliant but ultimately unsuccessful defense of a Black Good Samaritan falsely accused of raping a white teenager he

3. HARPER LEE, *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* 83 (1960) [hereinafter *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*].

has innocently befriended. It then reviews the sweet—Atticus’s relationship with his children, particularly his educating them about the harsher racial realities of their hometown and his hope that, with his help, they can transcend them. Finally, it analyzes the tale’s hopeful conclusion, which, in turn, sets the stage for *Go Set a Watchman*.

A. *Girlhood Idyll—Interrupted*

The story of Scout and Atticus is too familiar to need much scene-setting. The most basic sketch of its main contours shows them to be the same as those of its sequel. Once upon a time, Atticus Finch, a fifty-something lawyer in the county-seat town of Maycomb, Alabama, lost his wife and is raising his son Jem and daughter Jean Louise, or “Scout,” with the full-time help of their Black live-in maid Calpurnia and the frequent, if not always welcome, support of his sister Alexandra, his brother Jack, and a host of more remote relatives and near neighbors.

Times are hard; this is the Deep South in the Great Depression. But folks generally help each other out, and children enjoy lots of good, clean, outdoor fun. Scout, Jem, and their playmate Dill climb trees, shoot air rifles, and run merrily amok among friends and neighbors. Everyone knows his or her place, a matter of race and class that continuously, and comically, confuses the children. But folks from the lower orders, forgetting their place, act up. Things go badly awry, and the noblest of them all has to take center stage, first to set things right, then to explain them to the children.

B. *The Case Jean Louise Remembered*

The case that twenty-six-year-old Jean Louise remembers in *Go Set a Watchman* is the case that we have all seen through the eyes of eight-year-old Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Her father had defended a Black man, Tom Robinson, against the false charge of a white teenager, Mayella Ewell, that he had raped her. In fact, Robinson’s damning sin had been condescension, presuming to pity, even help, a white woman. Atticus proved his innocence to all who had eyes to see and ears to hear. But the racist jury returned a verdict of guilty, and sentenced him to death.

Understanding the sequel, in both fact and fiction, requires reviewing the details. With brilliant courtroom theatrics, immortalized at least as much by Gregory Peck’s performance as by

Lee's prose, Atticus made a double case: the defendant Tom Robinson could not have assaulted his accuser Mayella Ewell; the real assailant has to have been Mayella's own father, Robert E. Lee "Bob" Ewell. Tom Robinson had, indeed, entered the derelict home of the Ewell family down at the town dump, but at Mayella's bidding, not on his own, a fortiori not by force. What's more, he entered intending to help her with her chores, not to harm her in any imaginable way.

In his closing argument, Atticus gave the peroration that has inspired aspiring lawyers and bar presidents ever since:

[T]here is one human institution that makes a pauper the equal of a Rockefeller, the stupid man the equal of an Einstein, and the ignorant man the equal of any college president. That institution, gentleman, is a court. It can be the Supreme Court of the United States or the humblest J.P. court in the land, or this honorable court which you serve. Our courts have their faults, as does any human institution, but in this country our courts are the great levelers, and in our courts all men are created equal.⁴

Straight from these rhetorical heights, Atticus descends to his own everyday experience:

I'm no idealist to believe firmly in the integrity of our courts and in the jury system—that is no ideal to me, it is a living, working reality. Gentlemen, a court is no better than each man of you sitting before me on this jury. A court is only as sound as its jury, and a jury is only as sound as the men who make it up. I am confident that you gentlemen will review without passion the evidence that you have heard, come to a decision, and restore this defendant to his family. In the name of God, do your duty.⁵

Atticus (nicely named for Cicero's pen pal) knows his classics, and this is perfectly pitched Aristotle⁶: from *logos*, through *ethos*, to what should have been a winning touch of *pathos*.

Alas, it does not win. The members of the all-white, all-male jury do not do their duty. Against all evidence, they convict Tom Robinson of rape. Atticus hopes to win on appeal and urges Tom Robinson not to lose hope. But Tom does. During an exercise break

4. TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, *supra* note 3, at 218.

5. *Id.*

6. ARISTOTLE, ON RHETORIC 38–39 (George A. Kennedy trans., Oxford University Press 2007).

in prison, he makes a desperate, despairing dash for the perimeter fence; the guards fire warning shots into the air. When Tom clears the top of the fence, they bring him down with eleven shots, presumably in the back. Ugly, but what did we expect? Tom is not the book's only metaphorical mockingbird, but he is the only one who is literally killed.⁷ And that, Atticus has long before taught his children, is a sin. Perhaps, we come to see, the original sin; its source, the serpent in his children's Eden.

C. *The Points Scout Took*

What went wrong, and what is to be done? The root of this evil, if not all, is racism—or, more precisely, racism born of the fateful union of poverty and ignorance. Atticus knows that, even as he fights it in court, he must also fight it on a longer, closer front at home. Shortly after Atticus takes the case and his children's school takes in, Scout attacks a classmate for calling Atticus a “[n]igger-lover.”⁸ Back at home, she asks him if he is.⁹ He first forbids her from saying “nigger,” which he says is “common,” and then explains, like any lawyer, why he must take this case: “[I]f I didn't I couldn't hold up my head in town, I couldn't represent this county in the legislature, I couldn't even tell you or Jem not to do something again.”¹⁰ It's not clear that Scout understands this reasoning; Atticus repeats it to her in the spring, as the trial draws closer.¹¹ But she already seems to appreciate the importance of the case: “Atticus,” she asks, “are we going to win it?”¹² No, he admits, even as he explains why certain defeat is no excuse for not trying to win. Nor is certain defeat any reason to hate those who defeat them, for they are neighbors.¹³ Scout and Jem must learn, in effect, to hate the sin of racism, even as they continue to love the hateful racists. This, Atticus shows them, requires empathy, walking around in their shoes for a while.¹⁴

7. Lest there be any doubt on the point, Maccomb's newspaper editor “likened Tom's death to the senseless slaughter of songbirds by hunters and children.” TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, *supra* note 3, at 254.

8. *Id.* at 92.

9. *Id.* at 82.

10. *Id.* at 82–83.

11. *Id.* at 113–14.

12. *Id.* at 84.

13. *Id.*

14. *Id.* at 294 (“One time he said you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them.”).

When Uncle Jack, Atticus's younger brother, comes home from his Nashville medical practice for his annual Christmas visit, an eavesdropping Scout learns more. Atticus intends "to jar the jury a bit," and he thinks "we'll have a reasonable chance on appeal."¹⁵ But his main point is pedagogical; the brothers' conversation began with Atticus explaining to Jack how to explain things to children—"[c]hildren are children, but they can spot an evasion quicker than adults"¹⁶—and it ends with this:

You know what's going to happen as well as I do, Jack, and I hope and pray I can get Jem and Scout through it without bitterness, and most of all, without catching Maycomb's usual disease. Why reasonable people go stark raving mad when anything involving a Negro comes up, is something I don't pretend to understand . . . I just hope that Jem and Scout come to me for their answers instead of listening to the town. I hope they trust me enough. . . . Jean Louise?¹⁷

Scout, who had been hiding around the corner, realizes she is busted; Atticus sends her back to bed. But what she overhears is not the whole of the lesson:

I never figured out how Atticus knew I was listening, and it was not until many years later that I realized he wanted me to hear every word he said.¹⁸

Atticus does not want his children to see the trial, lest they be disillusioned by the disjunction between his classical rhetoric and local reality.¹⁹ But both Scout and Jem sneak into the courthouse with the help of an avuncular Black minister, who lets them sit with him in the segregated balcony.²⁰ Even as Atticus had feared, they find the jury's guilty verdict shattering. But, even as he had hoped, they come to him, not the town, for answers.

Atticus builds on what his children already know. The better sort of white folks—the ordinary kind like us and the neighbors—tend to come from fine old families, delight in book-learning, and pursue urban careers, mostly urbanely; the other sort of white folks tend to

15. *Id.* at 96.

16. *Id.*

17. *Id.* at 97 (all ellipsis in original).

18. *Id.*

19. *Id.* at 169.

20. *Id.* at 174.

come from humbler stock, read as a last resort, and work on the land, mostly rustically.²¹ Scout and Jem know, too, that at the bottom are the Blacks.²² Atticus supplies them with the skewing factor in their analysis:

There's something in our world that makes men lose their heads—they couldn't be fair if they tried. In our courts, when it's a white man's word against a black man's, the white man always wins. They're ugly, but those are the facts of life.²³

More important than white folks' socio-economic status is their moral status, and that turns almost entirely on their attitude toward the other race. Racism, "Maycomb's usual disease,"²⁴ is the character flaw that cuts across all divisions of kinship and class. With a vehemence that surprises Scout and Jem, Atticus continues:

As you grow older, you'll see white men cheat black men every day of your life, but let me tell you something and don't you forget it—whenever a white man does that to a black man, no matter who he is, how rich he is, or how fine a family he comes from, that white man is trash.²⁵

The converse, we learn, is equally true. Their neighbor, Miss Maudie Atkinson, makes this quite clear to Aunt Alexandra, unofficial keeper of Maycomb's social register. According to Miss Maudie, "[t]he handful of people in this town with background,"²⁶ its moral aristocrats, are

[t]he handful of people in this town who say that fair play is not marked White Only; the handful of people who say a fair trial is for everybody, not just us; the handful of people with enough humility to think, when they look at a Negro, there but for the Lord's kindness am I.²⁷

And Miss Maudie explains to Aunt Alexandra, as she had explained to Jem,²⁸ that the noblest of these nobles is none other than Atticus,

21. *Id.* at 239.

22. *Id.*

23. *Id.* at 233.

24. *Id.* at 97.

25. *Id.* at 233.

26. *Id.* at 250.

27. *Id.* at 249–50.

28. *Id.* at 227.

knight-errant of *noblesse oblige*.²⁹ He is their champion: “We’re so rarely called on to be Christians, but when we are, we’ve got men like Atticus to go for us.”³⁰ He wins their laurels: “[W]e’re paying [him] the highest tribute we can pay a man. We trust him to do right.”³¹

Try though he did to immunize his children from the disease of racism, they prove to be at risk in a way almost too terrible to contemplate. Just as the summertime trial scene shows Atticus at his best, recognized by the better elements of both races and all classes, so the novel’s concluding episode, the following fall, shows Bob Ewell, the child-abusing,³² dump-dwelling,³³ welfare cheat,³⁴ at his worst. At the trial of Ewell’s daughter’s accused, Atticus had humiliated Ewell in discrediting his false accusation of Tom; on the evening of Jem and Scout’s fall school festival, Bob Ewell nearly avenges himself by murdering these innocents.³⁵

It is not Atticus who saves them, but their reclusive neighbor, Arthur “Boo” Radley. But it *is* Atticus who introduces the children to their deliverer, and Atticus who, in his turn, saves “Boo” from the publicity of an inquest that would have destroyed him. Atticus dispatches Scout to walk Boo Radley home, and Atticus tucks both Scout and Jem safely in at the end of the long, fateful day that closes their much-extended, but most edifying, bedtime story.³⁶ The Moral: Fatherly beneficence watches over us, even in the Valley of the Shadow.

D. The Accruing Debt and the Dreaded Reckoning

But all is not quite so well as this final scene might suggest. Even as Atticus lays Scout and Jem down to sleep and guards their small-town castle-keep, he knows that, in the larger world, dark forces still lurk. After the trial, when he had explained to them the deep moral evil of racism, he also foreshadowed its grim historical consequences:

29. *Id.* at 228.

30. *Id.*

31. *Id.* at 249.

32. *Id.* at 206 (“She says she never kissed a grown man before an’ she might as well kiss a nigger. She says what her papa do to her don’t count.”).

33. *Id.* at 181.

34. *Id.* at 188.

35. *Id.* at 275–80.

36. *Id.* at 292.

There's nothing more sickening to me than a low-grade white man who'll take advantage of a Negro's ignorance. Don't fool yourselves—it's all adding up and one of these days we're going to pay the bill for it. I hope it's not in you children's time.³⁷

The story the older Jean Louise has told us is set in the 1930s; she tells us she is telling it “many years later,” which must be in the 1950s. We have to wonder, even as we read: Has the fateful bill indeed come due, despite Atticus's fervent hope, in her time? Will he be there to help her deal with it, to battle yet again against Maycomb's dirtiest, most dangerous monster?

II. *GO SET A WATCHMAN*: HOW SCOUT GOT THE POINT SHE MISSED, AND THEN GOT PAST IT

Jean Louise, I'm only trying to tell you some plain truths. You must see things as they are, as well as [as] they should be.

– Atticus Finch, seventy-two, to Jean Louise Finch, twenty-six³⁸

Where the older Jean Louise's telling of *To Kill a Mockingbird* ends, the telling of her own story in *Go Set a Watchman* begins. The older Jean Louise is offstage in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, her age and situation indeterminate. She is center stage in *Go Set a Watchman*, a woman of twenty-six whose life is transformed by the story's events. Though the actions of the stories are separated by more than two decades, the telling of the stories is quite close together. The narrator of *Go Set a Watchman* raises the curtain on the same twenty-six-year-old Jean Louise who had closed the curtain on her own girlhood in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

A. *The Return of the Native*

Go Set a Watchman opens with twenty-six-year-old Jean Louise on the train from her job in New York City for her fifth annual trip home to Maycomb.³⁹ Things have, of course, changed a bit in the intervening year, and quite a lot since her childhood. Back then, Maycomb had but one partially paved street, thanks to the vagaries of New Deal politics; post-war prosperity has paved all the rest. Returning veterans, “with bizarre ideas about making money and an

37. *Id.* at 233.

38. *GO SET A WATCHMAN*, *supra* note 1, at 243.

39. *Id.* at 3.

urgency for to make up for lost time,” have transformed both commercial and residential Maycomb.⁴⁰

The more things change, however, the more they stay the same: “Although Maycomb’s appearance had changed, the same hearts beat in new houses, over Mixmasters, in front of television sets.”⁴¹ Just as Scout had found provincial hypocrisy in Aunt Alexandra’s Missionary Circle at the time of Tom Robinson’s trial,⁴² she finds racial insensitivity in her classmates whom Aunt Alexandra invites to coffee in honor of Scout’s visit home.⁴³

She has to admit to her childhood friend Henry “Hank” Clinton that she does not entirely like the new Maycomb’s post-war progress, though it has paved the streets, has also “ruined the old town’s looks.”⁴⁴ She describes her attitude as “[c]onservative resistance to change”;⁴⁵ he teases her for “[g]oing Southern on us.”⁴⁶ And they both know⁴⁷ she is deeply ambivalent about one particular change, their feelings for each other:

She was almost in love with him. No, that’s impossible, she thought: either you are or you aren’t.⁴⁸

Hank had arrived in Maycomb the very fall during which *To Kill a Mockingbird* had ended, as a boarder from a rural corner of the county.⁴⁹ He became high-school best friends with Jem, who has died in the interim between the stories, a victim of his mother’s congenital, and perhaps symbolic, heart trouble.⁵⁰

Aunt Alexandra, ever vigilant on the social frontiers and always the upholder of Finch family status, sees Hank as an arriviste, no proper protégé for Atticus and a wholly unsuitable suitor for Scout.⁵¹ Indeed, the same family problems that prompt Atticus’s charity

40. *Id.* at 45.

41. *Id.* at 46.

42. *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*, *supra* note 3, at 237–42.

43. *GO SET A WATCHMAN*, *supra* note 1, at 32–33.

44. *Id.* at 45.

45. *Id.* at 46.

46. *Id.* at 74.

47. *Id.* at 14.

48. *Id.* at 15.

49. *Id.* at 12.

50. *Id.* at 108, 115.

51. *Id.* at 36–37.

toward Hank trigger Aunt Alexandra's snobbery.⁵² She has realized her own ambition, presiding over Atticus's domestic sphere and sending his loyal maid, Calpurnia, packing. She remains the voice of Southern ladyhood, pestering Jean Louise about what she wears, how she speaks, and, most intrusively, whom she dates. In her twenties, every bit as much as in her pre-teens, sometimes in the same phrases, Jean Louise views her aunt with mixed dread and admiration.

As with her Aunt Alexandra, so with Uncle Jack. He has made enough playing the stock market to retire from practicing medicine and move back home to Maycomb.⁵³ He, almost as much as Atticus, helped her through her fraught adolescence. He remains less Aunt Alexandra's comic foil, more Atticus's alter-ego.

Atticus himself remains the most important person in Jean Louise's life. Her appreciation of him has not diminished since her girlhood; it has grown as she herself has grown.⁵⁴ It was, she recalls, Atticus who had

sent her to a women's college in Georgia; when she finished he said it was high time she started shifting for herself and why didn't she go to New York or somewhere. She was vaguely insulted and felt she was being turned out of her own house, but as the years passed she recognized the full value of Atticus's wisdom⁵⁵

Atticus of *Go Set a Watchman* is very much the Atticus of *To Kill a Mockingbird*: "Integrity, humor, and patience were the three words for Atticus Finch. . . . His code was simple New Testament ethic, its rewards were the respect and devotion of all who knew him."⁵⁶ In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, one of Atticus's admirers tells Scout that, "Atticus Finch is the same in his house as he is on the public streets"⁵⁷; she herself attests to that: "His private character was his public character."⁵⁸

52. *Id.*

53. *Id.* at 89.

54. *Id.* at 32 ("He is an incredible man, she thought. A chapter of his life comes to a close, Atticus tears down the old house and builds a new one in a new section of town."); *id.* at 38 ("Atticus was a wise man, so he dropped the subject" of Jean Louise's argument with his sister Alexandra about the suitability of Hank as a husband.).

55. *Id.* at 117.

56. *Id.* at 114.

57. *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*, *supra* note 3, at 53.

58. *GO SET A WATCHMAN*, *supra* note 1, at 114.

The very afternoon she arrives at his new house, they resume one of their oldest and most significant rituals: reviewing the news together.⁵⁹ It comes as no surprise to her that Atticus asks her, almost as an afterthought, “[H]ow much of what’s going on down here gets into the newspapers?”⁶⁰ When Jean Louise playfully responds that the tabloids cover all the Governor’s indiscretions, Atticus narrows the subject and shifts the tone: “I mean about the Supreme Court’s bid for immortality.”⁶¹ Taking her cue, Jean Louise answers with the sassiness we would expect from an older Scout:

Oh, that. Well, to hear the *Post* tell it, we lynch ’em for breakfast; the *Journal* doesn’t care; and the *Times* is so wrapped up in its duty to posterity it bores you to death. I haven’t paid any attention to it except for the bus strikes and that Mississippi business.⁶²

She rightly assumes that he will know what that business is, and she concludes with this observation about it: “Atticus, the state’s not getting a conviction in that case was our worst blunder since Pickett’s Charge.”⁶³ Atticus then asks about the NAACP; Jean Louise says, “I don’t know anything about that bunch.”⁶⁴ To drive home the point, she recounts a prank worthy of her younger self: “[S]ome misguided clerk sent me some NAACP Christmas seals last year, so I stuck ’em on all the cards I sent home.”⁶⁵

In their first meeting, then, Jean Louise and Atticus are, figuratively, if not literally, very much on the same page. Neither of them feels any awkwardness that the former understudy is now advising the old master on matters of common interest with the advantage of her wider perspective. Indeed, he agrees with her assessment of both “that Mississippi business” itself and the northern paper’s sensationalist coverage of it.⁶⁶ She may be off in the big city, reading its very variegated papers, but with the wry outsider sensibility of a proper daughter of the South who comfortably makes common cause with her much-beloved father on the affairs of the

59. TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, *supra* note 3, at 33; GO SET A WATCHMAN, *supra* note 1, at 24.

60. GO SET A WATCHMAN, *supra* note 1, at 24.

61. *Id.*

62. *Id.*

63. *Id.*

64. *Id.*

65. *Id.*

66. *Id.*

hometown. It is he who sent her off to the city, and her opinion that he seeks on matters of national import, unsurprised to find that it accords with his own. In her mind as in his, it's still us Southerners against them Yankees; as with Pickett's ill-fated charge at Gettysburg in 1863, so with the state of Mississippi's loss in that "business" in today's papers. We have no sense that she is humoring an aged parent.

Indeed, she remembers Atticus more as he was in his prime than as he is now: "He was seventy-two last month, but Jean Louise always thought of him as hovering somewhere in his middle fifties—she could not remember him being any younger, and he seemed to grow no older."⁶⁷ A little inter-textual calculus confirms that Atticus was fifty-four at the end of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.⁶⁸ Not surprisingly, then, just as she had known he would be there in the morning when she and Jem woke up after their scrape with death, so she had expected him to be waiting for her at the train station upon her homecoming.⁶⁹

But he is not. We suspect this is significant, if only because we learn it in a one-sentence paragraph: "Her father was not waiting for her."⁷⁰ She knows, and Henry confirms, that it is a flare-up of his rheumatoid arthritis.⁷¹ But we suspect there may be more, maybe from the narrator's nod:

She was too old to rail against the inequity of it, but too young to accept her father's crippling disease without putting up some kind of fight.⁷²

When we learn that Jean Louise has returned, all grown up, to Maycomb, unable to accept Atticus's crippling disease, how can we not think of what Atticus had told Scout, that long-ago summer, was Maycomb's "usual disease?"⁷³

B. *The Case Jean Louise Did Not Anticipate*

Atticus has always been an omnivorous, if not indiscriminate, reader;⁷⁴ we might remember, from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, that he

67. *Id.* at 17.

68. *Id.* at 115; *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*, *supra* note 3, at 163, 281.

69. *GO SET A WATCHMAN*, *supra* note 1, at 7.

70. *Id.* at 9.

71. *Id.* at 10.

72. *Id.*

73. *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*, *supra* note 3, at 97.

74. *GO SET A WATCHMAN*, *supra* note 1, at 115–16.

shared all his readings, not just the newspaper, with his children.⁷⁵ It is no surprise, then, that Scout discusses the news with him on the very afternoon of her arrival. Later that day, just back from a date with Hank, she peruses the volumes of military history on one of Atticus's living-room shelves and picks one to read in bed, anticipating a bookish visit with her Uncle Jack the next day.⁷⁶

And the next day, after church, she is back among Atticus's reading materials.⁷⁷ But now the habit that both defines and unites them threatens to destroy her image of him and divide them forever. As she tidies up the papers around his chair and straightened the stack of books on his lamp table, "a pamphlet the size of a business envelope ca[tches] her eye."⁷⁸ This is a book to be judged by its cover: It is entitled *The Black Plague*; its cover features "a drawing of an anthropophagous Negro"; Jean Louise, repulsed, discards it as if it were a dead rat.⁷⁹ But far worse is yet to come. Her Aunt Alexandra not only confirms her unspoken horror, but compounds it: The pamphlet belongs to Atticus, who brought it home from a Citizens' Council meeting. He serves on the board of the local branch, Hank is one of its staunchest members, and both of them are at one of its meetings this very afternoon at the court house.⁸⁰

Determined to know if the two of them are up to no good, Jean Louise strides down to the court house herself.⁸¹ She already knows why she knows about the citizens' councils: "New York papers full of it."⁸² Regretting that she hadn't paid more attention to their coverage, she nonetheless remembered "a familiar story: same people who were the Invisible Empire, who hated Catholics; ignorant, fear-ridden, red-faced, boorish, law-abiding, one hundred per cent red-blooded Anglo-Saxons, her fellow Americans—trash."⁸³ She reaches the court house, climbs the stairs up to the "Colored balcony," and takes "her old place in the corner of the front row, where she and her brother had sat when they went to court to watch their father."⁸⁴

75. *Id.* at 115; TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, *supra* note 3, at 22.

76. GO SET A WATCHMAN, *supra* note 1, at 81.

77. *Id.* at 101.

78. *Id.*

79. *Id.*

80. *Id.* at 102–03.

81. *Id.* at 104–05.

82. *Id.* at 104.

83. *Id.*

84. *Id.* at 105.

Below her sit “not only most of the trash in Maycomb County, but [also] the county’s most respectable men.”⁸⁵ She recognizes the incorrigibly corrupt local boss and his even more odious right-hand man and heir-apparent. Hank and Atticus sit at the table in front. Atticus turns the floor over to a guest speaker, a notorious race-baiter who “needs no introduction.”⁸⁶ From a low barnyard joke, the speaker launches into a tiresome white supremacist harangue, sounding all the notes of the familiar monotony: “the Southern Way of life,”⁸⁷ “kinky woolly heads,”⁸⁸ “Christian civilization,”⁸⁹ “ninety-five per cent of the tax money . . . for the nigger,”⁹⁰ “old Lady Roosevelt.”⁹¹

As Jean Louise listens in horror, the scene shifts in her mind: Atticus is defending a Black man; unbeknownst to him, Scout and Jem are watching. Jean Louise remembers the case well; Atticus had taken it only

because he knew his client to be innocent of the charge, and he could not for the life of him let the black boy go to prison because of a half-hearted, court appointed defense. The boy had come to him by way of Calpurnia, told him his story, and had told him the truth. The truth was ugly.⁹²

That was the Atticus she has known and loved: “Atticus took his career in his hands”;⁹³ nonetheless,

Atticus pursued the case to its conclusion with every spark of his ability and with an instinctive distaste so bitter only his knowledge that he could live peacefully with himself was able to wash it away. After the verdict, he walked out of the courtroom in the middle of the day, walked home, and took a steaming bath. He never counted what it cost him; he never looked back. He never knew two pairs of eyes like his own were watching him from the balcony.⁹⁴

85. *Id.*

86. *Id.* at 107.

87. *Id.* at 108.

88. *Id.*

89. *Id.* at 110.

90. *Id.* (ellipsis in original)

91. *Id.*

92. *Id.* at 109.

93. *Id.*

94. *Id.* at 109–10. As every reader of the two texts will know, this is not quite Tom Robinson’s case. The differences, as I discuss elsewhere, make Tom’s case both more

Now she has seen Atticus, along with his protégé, her beau, sitting in the same courtroom in the retinue of a ranting bigot. Numb, she nonetheless “knew that her father’s presence at the table with a man who spewed filth from his mouth—did that make it less filthy? No. It condoned.”⁹⁵

Literally nauseated, she stumbled from the courtroom, away from the town center, back to the site of her childhood home, now an ice cream shop.⁹⁶ Sitting in the graveled-over backyard,

try as she might she could not think, she only knew, and what she knew was this:

The one human being she had ever fully and wholeheartedly trusted had failed her; the only man she had ever known to whom she could point and say with expert knowledge, “He is a gentleman, in his heart he is a gentleman,” had betrayed her publicly, grossly, and shamelessly.⁹⁷

The next morning, Atticus at first seems his old self. During breakfast, Hank arrives with news that one of Calpurnia’s wayward grandchildren has run over and killed the town drunk, most unfortunately, a white man. Atticus agrees to take the case; Jean Louise knows that Atticus will never forget his old retainers but Hank seems taken aback, until Atticus explains:

Hank, I suspect when we know all the facts in the case the best that can be done for the boy is for him to plead guilty. Now, isn’t it better for us to stand up with him in court than to have him fall into the wrong hands?⁹⁸

Now it is Jean Louise’s turn to be taken aback, and Atticus’s explanation to her is anything but a comfort:

Scout, you probably don’t know it, but the NAACP-paid lawyers are standing around like buzzards down here waiting for things like this to happen

sympathetic, and more tragic: more sympathetic, because he is surprised by unwanted advances; more tragic, because he is convicted, then killed. *See* Robert E. Atkinson, Jr., *Writer Re-Written* 6 (2015) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with author). For present purposes, the important point is the stark contrast between Atticus’s role, then and now: heroic in the 1930s rape case; shameful in the 1960s Citizens’ Council meeting.

95. GO SET A WATCHMAN, *supra* note 1, at 110–11.

96. *Id.* at 111–12.

97. *Id.* at 113.

98. *Id.* at 148.

....

... [T]hey watch and wait, just for some felony committed by a Negro against a white person . . . [T]hey demand Negroes on the juries in such cases. . . [T]hey raise every legal trick in their books—and they have 'em aplenty . . . Above all else, they try to get the case into a Federal court where they know the cards are stacked in their favor.⁹⁹

Atticus appears to have reversed the position he took in the rape case of Scout's childhood, in what should be an even more compelling case. Then, the defendant had been merely a member of Calpurnia's church, and Atticus had hastened to the rescue; now, it is one of Calpurnia's own grandchildren who

needed real help, and what do they do but sit in the kitchen and talk NAACP . . . not long ago, Atticus would have done it simply from his goodness, he would have done it for Cal.¹⁰⁰

Jean Louise wonders "What was this blight that had come down over the people she loved?"¹⁰¹ Why did she see it so starkly now, having missed it so thoroughly before?¹⁰² In that long-ago but well-remembered rape case, Atticus had pointed out the ugly truth and tried to protect her from it. Atticus, there the Red Cross knight, seems here the fallen angel.

In the chapter immediately following this debacle, the narrator reviews Scout's relationship with Atticus, then takes us to the basis of her sense of betrayal:

She did not stand alone, but what stood behind her, the most potent moral force in her life, was the love of her father. She never questioned it, never thought about it, never even realized that before she made any decision of importance the reflex, "What would Atticus do?" passed through her unconscious; she never realized what made her dig in her feet and stand firm whenever she did was her father; that whatever was decent and of good report in her character was put there by her father; she did not know that she worshiped him.¹⁰³

99. *Id.* at 148–49.

100. *Id.* at 150 (ellipsis in original).

101. *Id.*

102. *Id.*

103. *Id.* at 117–18.

She was, in sum, “complacent in her snug world.”¹⁰⁴ That was the world of her girlhood, where Atticus had tucked her in, where he would be there for her when she awoke. Now she has awakened into a very different world, where her old Atticus has not only abandoned her, but also turned against their common ground.

C. *The Point Scout Had Missed and How She Got Past It*

The Citizens’ Council meeting displaced Jean Louise’s planned visit with Uncle Jack.¹⁰⁵ He had been noticeably absent. Seeking explanation, if not consolation, she goes to his house as soon as she can, the following afternoon. She finds him very much as he has always been, eccentric to the point of weirdness, but also, in his way, wise—wiser, we are to learn, than she realizes, something of a Southern Socrates.¹⁰⁶

After their usual bantering amenities, she puts to him, as starkly as she can, the disturbing question: “[W]hat’s turned my father into a nigger-hater?”¹⁰⁷ This, obviously enough, is the diametric opposite of the question Scout had put to Atticus himself about his role in the central case in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, defending Tom Robinson: “You aren’t really a nigger-lover, then, are you?”¹⁰⁸ Just as Atticus had rebuked her for using the word “nigger,” so his brother rebukes her now; just as her father had gone on to explain his role then, so Uncle Jack goes on to explain it now. But Uncle Jack’s way, she remembers, is frustratingly indirect:

You’ve been giving me some kind of elaborate run-around, Uncle Jack, and I’ve never known you to do it before. You’ve always given me a straight answer to anything I ever asked you. Why won’t you now?¹⁰⁹

The Atticus of *To Kill a Mockingbird* had warned Jack that one must be direct with children,¹¹⁰ but the Jean Louise of *Go Set a Watchman* is no longer a child.

Nonetheless, she finds Uncle Jack’s explanation exasperating, ranging as it does from pre-Norman times past the New Deal.¹¹¹ What

104. *Id.* at 118.

105. *Id.* at 121.

106. *Id.* at 185–202.

107. *Id.* at 188.

108. *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*, *supra* note 3, at 118.

109. *GO SET A WATCHMAN*, *supra* note 1, at 200.

110. *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*, *supra* note 3, at 96.

seems clear enough is that the South is a culture distinct from the rest of America in two related ways: It is like England in its resolute individualism, its refusal as a collective, and its people's refusal as individuals, to be pushed around, to be moved in any direction, even the right direction, against their will. This essential individualism entails the South's other distinction: Southerners—including Uncle Jack himself and his brother Atticus—oppose Big Government.

The only thing I'm afraid of about this country is that its government will someday be so monstrous that the smallest person in it will be trampled underfoot, and then it wouldn't be worth living in.¹¹²

What Uncle Jack leaves unsaid is clearer still—"he was deliberately keeping off the subject"¹¹³—though his reason is not: "She did not know he was deeply worried."¹¹⁴ She loses patience: "Uncle Jack, I don't know why you elect to disappear into the mist. . . ."¹¹⁵ She insists that he connect what he's saying to what's bothering her: the deterioration of race relations in the South, and the perverse effect it has had on her loved ones. Uncle Jack flounders, and knows that he is floundering; he tries to make clear what he's trying to show her, and why he can't be any clearer. Unable to explain, he pleads: She should try to understand that the issue of race is not central, in either history or politics or her own private troubles.¹¹⁶ She should promise that, "when you can't stand it any longer, when your heart is in two, you must come to me. Do you understand? You must come to me. Promise me."¹¹⁷

After her meeting with Uncle Jack, Jean Louise returns to the ice cream parlor that has displaced her childhood home, just as she had after seeing Atticus at the Citizens' Council meeting. She tries, even as Uncle Jack had insisted, to make sense of what he had said: "*Promise me—incidental to the issue—Anglo-Saxon—dirty word—Childe Roland.*"¹¹⁸ But she seems to fail, falling into an hour-long reverie about her first dance. She had been delighted to have Hank as her escort, but was embarrassed by her adolescent body with its

111. GO SET A WATCHMAN, *supra* note 1, at 194.

112. *Id.* at 198.

113. *Id.* at 199.

114. *Id.*

115. *Id.* at 201 (ellipsis in original).

116. *Id.*

117. *Id.* at 202.

118. *Id.* at 205.

congruously grown-up hips and girlish bust. She had tried to make adjustments, only to produce a school-wide seriocomic crisis. But Hank had worked out a clever resolution, led by a sly reference from Atticus to his old advice about putting yourself in the other folks' shoes. And so, without her being fully aware of it, Atticus's remembered advice brings Jean Louise to her resolution of the matter at hand (with respect to Atticus, although, alas, not Hank). She must, it seems, walk a bit in Atticus's shoes, just as Uncle Jack had tried to suggest.

Jean Louise's conversation with her father takes up precisely where her conversation with her uncle had left off: Atticus tells her Uncle Jack had called to tell him that she would be coming and that she would be upset.¹¹⁹ Jean Louise tells Atticus that she's upset about his involvement with the Citizens' Council, that she thinks it is disgusting. Atticus patiently, parentally answers each objection, trying to help her see where she herself really stands, how much ground they actually share, how close their positions really are. As he does, she remembers some of the puzzling things Uncle Jack had said, and they begin to make sense; she also remembers that she has never won an argument with Atticus, and she resolves not to try now.¹²⁰

Atticus nonetheless draws her in, carefully moving his position closer to hers, and hers to his. The Citizens' Council in Maycomb is not like the violent ones in North Alabama¹²¹ that she has been reading about in the sensationalist Northern press.¹²² As Uncle Jack had explained about the Civil War, so Atticus explains about this new conflict: Although the South is united against the new foe, as against the old, individuals' reasons are different, now as then: Some, like Sunday's speaker, are crude racists, even sadists.¹²³ But even they have a right to speak their mind, and he did not endorse the racist's rhetoric; he had carefully distanced himself with a curt and formal introduction: only name, position, and "needs no introduction."¹²⁴ For Atticus, the Citizens' Council is justified as the only defense against federal government over-reaching, prompted by the radical demands

119. *Id.* at 237.

120. *Id.* at 238.

121. *Id.* at 238; TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, *supra* note 3, at 21•22.

122. GO SET A WATCHMAN, *supra* note 1, at 238.

123. *Id.* at 250.

124. *Id.* at 107.

of the NAACP. The Federal Government and the NAACP: these, he says, are his nemeses; these, he tries to show, are hers, too.

He begins with the federal government, where he knows their views are closer. What, he asks, was her first reaction to *Brown*?¹²⁵ She remembers “I was furious,” because “there they were, tellin’ us what to do again.”¹²⁶ Uncle Jack had shown her that that’s what Southerners essentially resist; Atticus now observes that “[y]ou were merely reacting according to your kind.”¹²⁷ Having shown her where her heart is, he then asks her to use her head. The problem with the Supreme Court’s position in *Brown*, as she sees it, comes to this: “[I]n trying to satisfy one amendment, it looks like they rubbed out another one.”¹²⁸ They have elevated the equal protection guaranteed to individual citizens by the Fourteenth Amendment over the rights and powers reserved to the states and their citizens by the Tenth Amendment, “the one that meant the most, somehow.”¹²⁹ And it means the most because it protects the structure of the constitutional regime, the rights of the majority against the unreviewable decisions of the Court. The Court was, in a word, doing the right thing—protecting equal rights—by the wrong means, judicial activism, “instead of going about it through Congress and the state legislatures like we should,” thus creating the risk of ever more government encroachment.¹³⁰

Atticus congratulates her on being “such a states’ rightist that you make me a Roosevelt liberal by comparison.”¹³¹ She balks, not at his characterization of her, but at his assimilation of her to him. Lest he lead her this easily back to his fold, she turns from the *Brown* Court’s means, on which she has to agree they agree, to the end, on which she fears they disagree—racial equality:

I’m trying to say that I don’t approve of the way they did it, that it scares me to death when I think about the way they did it, but they had to do it. It was put under their noses and they had to do it. Atticus, the time has come when we’ve got to do right¹³²

125. *Brown v. Bd. of Educ.*, 349 U.S. 294, 301 (1955).

126. GO SET A WATCHMAN, *supra* note 1, at 238•39.

127. *Id.* at 239.

128. *Id.*

129. *Id.*

130. *Id.* at 240.

131. *Id.*

132. *Id.* at 241.

Atticus interrupts to reiterate, in rather more defiant terms, his opposition to judicial activism.

Finally, he comes around to the question of equal rights. First, he denies that Blacks are being denied an equal chance.¹³³ Maybe he means that poor Black people, right along with their poor white counterparts, are equally free to cross their respective racially-segregated bridges, as soon as they can build them. That would be a most charitable understanding; understandably enough, Scout will have none of that. Checked there, Atticus moves into play his second nemesis, the nefarious role of the NAACP. Patiently parrying her objections, he leads her to testify against herself.

“Jean Louise,” he said, “Have you ever considered that you can’t have a set of backward people living among people advanced in one kind of civilization and have a social Arcadia?”

“... Of course”

“... You realize that our Negro population is backward, don’t you? You will concede that? You realize the full implications of the ‘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?”¹³⁴

Realizing how much ground she has lost, she balks at his leading questions. She challenges his claim to being a Jeffersonian Democrat, noting that he voted for Eisenhower;¹³⁵ he retorts that “Jefferson believed full citizenship was a privilege to be earned by each man, that it was not something given lightly nor to be taken lightly.”¹³⁶ And the relevance in the present situation is all too clear:

Now think about this. What would happen if all the Negroes in the South were suddenly given full civil rights? I’ll tell you. There’d be another Reconstruction. Would you want your state governments

133. *Id.* at 242•43.

134. *Id.* at 242.

135. *Id.* at 244.

136. *Id.*

run by people who don't know how to run 'em? . . . We're outnumbered, you know.¹³⁷

Atticus, for his part, prefers a steadier course; he means to move, one might almost say, “with all deliberate speed.”¹³⁸ Although “the Negroes down here are still in their childhood as a people,”¹³⁹

[t]hey've made terrific progress in adapting themselves to white ways, but they're far from it yet. They were coming along fine, traveling at a rate they could absorb, more of 'em voting than ever before. Then the NAACP stepped in with its fantastic demands and shoddy ideas of government—can you blame the South for resenting being told what to do about its own people by people who have no idea of its daily problems?¹⁴⁰

Atticus thus implicitly links the NAACP of their day to the carpetbaggers of Reconstruction: “The NAACP doesn't care whether a Negro man owns or rents his land, how well he can farm, or whether or not he tries to learn a trade and stand on his own two feet—oh no, all the NAACP cares about is that man's vote.”¹⁴¹

Here Atticus makes clear the second basis of his principled membership in the Citizens' Council: It is not only the federal government's unconstitutional expansion; it is also the NAACP's precipitate course. And he brings the second part of that argument home to Jean Louise:

How can you have grown up here, led the kind of life you've led, and can only see someone stomping on the Tenth Amendment? Jean Louise, they're trying to wreck us—where have you been?¹⁴²

The basic problem, Jean Louise comes to see it, is that Atticus had not prepared her for this particular pass.

You now, you treat all people alike. I've never in my life seen you give that insolent, back-of-the-hand treatment half the white people down here give Negroes just when they're talking to them, just when they ask 'em to do something. There's no get-along-there-nigger in your voice when you talk to 'em.

137. *Id.* at 246.

138. *Brown v. Bd. of Educ.*, 349 U.S. 294, 301 (1955).

139. GO SET A WATCHMAN, *supra* note 1, at 246.

140. *Id.* at 246–47.

141. *Id.* at 247.

142. *Id.*

Yet you put out your hand in front of them as a people and say,
'Stop here. This is as far as you can go!'¹⁴³

Now she sees that treating individual Black people with respect in day-to-day dealings, even defending an individual Black man against a false charge at great personal risk, does not necessarily imply opposition to the whole system of Southern apartheid. Atticus has not been inconsistent in his position. Rather, Scout has failed to see that, although he might have come around from that position to hers, he need not have moved as a matter of logic, and he had not moved as a matter of fact. And she is furious with him for letting her make that wrong inference, and even more furious with herself for having made it.

Atticus has seen from the start that she is furious, and he is ready for the storm; in the course of her rising rant, she comes to see that he is imperturbable:

Her wave of invective had crashed over him and still he sat there. He had declined to be angry. Somewhere within her she felt that she was no lady but no power on earth would prevent him from being a gentleman¹⁴⁴

At some level, she realizes that Atticus is still what she always admired, and what she had convinced herself she had lost: the paradigmatic gentleman. But she doesn't yet quite see how this can be; her frustration compounds. She takes his soft answers as taunts; they concentrate, rather than deflect, her wrath. She likens him to Hitler; he replies, "Hitler, eh?"¹⁴⁵ Says she hates him and all he stands for; he tells her that he loves her. She threatens to leave for good; he replies, "As you please."¹⁴⁶ She swears at him for destroying all that she has held dear; he responds with the same "[t]hat'll do, Jean Louise" that he had used to restore order in the childhood world she has just accused him of ruining forever.¹⁴⁷

It takes another meeting with Uncle Jack to show her how she and her father can be so close, yet so far, how her own mind and heart can be so at odds. She forgets her promise to come back to her uncle

143. *Id.* at 251.

144. *Id.* at 249.

145. *Id.* at 252.

146. *Id.* at 253.

147. *Id.*

“when you can’t stand it any longer, when your heart is in two,”¹⁴⁸ until he comes to her. He arrives at Atticus’s house in a cab as she is stowing her luggage in the trunk of Atticus’s car. With the help of a stiff drink,¹⁴⁹ he brings Jean Louise around to an unmistakable therapeutic breakthrough. He calls her attention to a radical shift in her perspective; thinking back, at his direction, over her breach with Atticus, she realizes that it is now somehow bearable.¹⁵⁰ She could not anticipate the divergence of Atticus’s position on a point as important as racial integration, because she had never fully appreciated that his conscience and hers were not the same.

As her uncle explains it, in the passage that presumably explains the book’s title,

Every man’s island, Jean Louise, every man’s watchman, is his conscience.

. . . .

. . . now you, Miss, born with your own conscience, somewhere along the line fastened it like a barnacle onto your father’s. As you grew up, when you were grown, totally unknown to yourself, you confused your father with God. You never saw him as a man with a man’s heart, and a man’s failings—I’ll grant you it may have been hard to see, he makes so few mistakes, but he makes ’em like all of us. You were an emotional cripple, leaning on him, getting the answers from him, assuming that your answers would always be his answers.

. . . .

When you happened along and saw him doing something that seemed to you to be the very antithesis of his conscience—your conscience—you literally could not stand it. It made you physically ill. Life became hell on earth for you. You had to kill yourself, or he had to kill you to get you functioning as a separate entity.¹⁵¹

That, Jean Louise realizes, is why what should have been an argument—albeit a profoundly significant argument—with a fellow adult who differed with her in good faith became, with Atticus, an existential struggle. Nor is that the end of Uncle Jack’s lesson: what is

148. *Id.* at 202.

149. And, it has to be noted, a shockingly brutal slap in the face, which demands his attention in Atticus’s bathroom, and ours in another discussion. *See* Atkinson, *supra* note 94.

150. GO SET A WATCHMAN, *supra* note 1, at 264.

151. *Id.* at 264•65 (second ellipsis in original).

true in particular of her father is also true, by extension, of her fatherland. Just as she had been distracted by Atticus's divergence of opinion, so she'd been distracted by "some pretty offensive talk since you've been home."¹⁵² But it's still home, even as he is still her father; beyond that, even as she has discovered decency beneath her disagreement with her father, so she will find that in the South "[t]he woods are full of people like you," people who "are on your side, if *side's* the right word."¹⁵³ What's more, her people need her: "[T]he time your friends need you is when they're wrong, Jean Louise. They don't need you when they're right"¹⁵⁴

And so, by parity of reasoning, we are free to think, it might be with Atticus. He himself has already told her, on the very point of race relations that had initially divided them, "I'm seventy-two years old, but I'm still open to suggestion."¹⁵⁵ It is she, Uncle Jack insists, not her father, who is the bigot; she is the one attached to her own position without possibility of movement, without openness to dialogue. And, even if Atticus will not come around, Uncle Jack reminds her that he will only go so wrong, especially with respect to racist groups like the Citizens' Council and the Klan. Atticus will let them have their say, even make common cause with them against a common foe, but he will never tolerate—indeed, he will be the first to oppose—any resort to violence. As he stood against the racist mob outside Tom Robinson's jail cell, so he will be the first to try to stop the Klan "when it starts bombing and beating people."¹⁵⁶

D. A New Beginning (Which Is Even Better Than the Old Ending)

Thus, with the help of her avuncular quasi-therapist, Scout comes to terms, in the end, with her idealized, even idolized, father. He is not really a racist, she comes to "realize," but a realist.¹⁵⁷ He does not believe that Blacks are in any ultimate sense inferior to whites; he just holds that the Blacks of his place and time are not yet ready, en masse, to assume their full political role. He is, after all, the father that Scout has loved; she now knows that he is a human being. On the

152. *Id.* at 267.

153. *Id.* at 272.

154. *Id.* at 273.

155. *Id.* at 246.

156. *Id.* at 268.

157. *Id.* at 267.

final page, “she welcomed him silently to the human race.”¹⁵⁸ He is no longer God, but he is still a Hero. For Harper Lee as well as for her fictional alter ego, this seems to be just the right balance to strike.

In the final chapter, after she has dropped Uncle Jack off at this house, she goes to pick Atticus up at his office. It is an epiphany, an ordinary meeting shot through with extraordinary meaning. When she arrives, he asks, “That you, Jean Louise?”¹⁵⁹ And it is, indeed, Jean Louise, fully realized now, completely metamorphosed into adult form. But she is only just out of her cocoon, and still a bit shaky. His voice frightens her. When he asks, “Ready?”—meaning mundanely, “Ready to go?”—she is still not entirely sure she is ready, on another level, for this adult-to-adult encounter; she is not sure where, metaphorically speaking, they are going to go.¹⁶⁰ She is at least ready to apologize, but, even as she says she is sorry, he interrupts to tell her that, sorry though she may be, he is proud of her; she has proved herself: “I certainly hoped a daughter of mine’d hold her ground for what she thinks is right—stand up to me first of all.”¹⁶¹

Having learned she can neither beat him nor join him, she tells him she thinks she loves him very much.¹⁶² They reach the car—his car—and he addresses her with her old, familiar name: “Let’s go home, Scout. It’s been a long day. Open the door for me.”¹⁶³ She is the care-giver now; we wonder what other doors she will open for him. But he is still Atticus. When we read “[s]he stepped aside to let him pass”¹⁶⁴ to get into the car, we remember the words of Reverend Sikes as Atticus walked out of the courthouse at the end of the trial of his life: “Miss Jean Louise, stand up. Your father’s passin’.”¹⁶⁵

As Jean Louise now sees it (and as we cannot help thinking Harper Lee sees it, and would have us see it), her father has not betrayed her childhood expectations; he has freed her to be a fully realized adult in her own right. His political position is not the opposite of hers; far from it. On matters of states’ rights and the limited role of the federal government, their positions are the same; on the matter of race, his mature Burkean conservatism complements

158. *Id.* at 278.

159. *Id.* at 276.

160. *Id.*

161. *Id.* at 277.

162. *Id.* at 277•78.

163. *Id.* at 278.

164. *Id.*

165. TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, *supra* note 3, at 224.

her youthful Yankee-influenced Progressivism, a sort of yin to her yang. As Jean Louise herself comes to “see” it,

I guess it’s like an airplane: they’re the drag and we’re the thrust, together we make the thing fly. Too much of us and we’re nose-heavy, too much of them and we’re tail-heavy—it’s a matter of balance.¹⁶⁶

And we know that Scout has, indeed, come home. Uncle Jack had told her that she should, that the South needs her, especially now, as it risks some of its worst old wrong-headedness. At several points in her very long weekend, Scout has failed to duck as she got into cars; she is used to the public transportation in New York City. “[T]his time,” as she walks around the car to take the wheel, “she was careful not to bump her head.”¹⁶⁷

We know, too, how she will live. When her uncle tells her to come home, she says there is no fight left in her. But he already knows that fight is not what she’ll need: “[I]t 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.”¹⁶⁸ What is required is “going to work every morning, coming home at night, seeing your friends.”¹⁶⁹ Anglophile that he is, he will appreciate how much the ending of their story will be like a quatrain from the final movement of *Little Gidding*, the last of T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.¹⁷⁰

So, we imagine, she will, for so, we have seen, she has.

CONCLUSION: THE MISSING SEQUEL

On a reasonable reading, *Go Set a Watchman* nicely complements *To Kill a Mockingbird*, even as its dust jacket promises. There a little girl sees a loving father dutifully doing all the world’s

166. GO SET A WATCHMAN, *supra* note 1, at 277.

167. *Id.* at 278.

168. *Id.* at 273.

169. *Id.* at 272.

170. T.S. ELIOT, *FOUR QUARTETS* 59 (Harcourt, Inc. 1943).

difficult chores, heedless of class or color; here that little girl grows up to find that, though her father differs from her expectations, he does not disappoint. With the help of his alter-ego, Uncle Jack, Atticus both brings her up and brings her back, reconciled with her father and returned to her homeland.

And this may be a similarly doubly happy ending for the stories' readers as well. If Jean Louise's Oedipal odyssey seemed, even to her, a bit too much like lecture from Psych 101, the political take-away for us, which seems rather more the point of her sage, might well be more successful. Those of us who doubted that Atticus would take the side of our Progressive angels may claim to have been right. As we conceded, he did the right thing at a difficult time; as we insisted, he was a doubter of the New Deal, and he would be no fan of either the Great Society or the Civil Rights movement. But those who hoped, with Scout, for more from Atticus can nonetheless claim a victory as well, on different, if not higher, moral ground. Atticus proves the very finest of fathers, even as many knew he would. And though he is no civil-rights radical, neither is he a racist. He may have been wrong about civil rights, even the Great Society, but he was wrong, not as a John Bircher, but as a genuine Burkean—and Burke was right about the French Revolution.

But I doubt that is quite how any of us, either fans or critics of Atticus, will read *Go Set a Watchman*. The basic problem is that we are reading it, not as in the normal course, shortly after it was written, but six decades later. Rather than satisfying us all in our own ways, it will, I suspect, disappoint us all in pretty much the same way. Uncle Jack, not Atticus or Scout, will have the final word here, fittingly enough. Without him, after all, Atticus could not have brought Scout to her therapeutic breakthrough. It is Uncle Jack who gives the definitive interpretation of that fateful Sunday's text, which gives the book its title. And it is he who convinces her that you can, in fact, come home again. Uncle Jack also says something else, which we all may find both wise and prophetic:

Remember this also: it's always easy to look back and see what we were, yesterday, ten years ago. It is hard to see what we are. If you can master that trick, you'll get along.¹⁷¹

Here, I fear, is where we will all be disappointed. From where we are now, it is not at all clear that Harper Lee herself learned Uncle

171. GO SET A WATCHMAN, *supra* note 1, at 269.

Jack's lesson, or practiced what she had him preach. In 1960, on the eve of the Civil Rights movement and the Great Society, she gave us a little girl's heroic Depression-era daddy, with the hope that he would lead us through that most fraught of decades. Now we know she knew, and carefully kept from all of us, what some of us came to suspect: Atticus and his ilk would join, not the demonstration marches and sit-in strikes of the Dr. King and his allies, but the massive resistance movement of the filibustering Southern Congressional delegation and their local counterparts. Atticus would not be in the Progressive vanguard, but the Conservative rear guard. On their watch, the Confederate flag would rise again above statehouses all across the South, not to come down for another half century and more, not until, ironically enough, the summer that *Go Set a Watchman* finally came out. All the while, its author lived, presumably on the returns from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, an almost completely private life, even as Uncle Jack had retired from his medical practice and returned to Maycomb for a life of coupon-clipping.¹⁷²

She did not become, as she said she had hoped, the Jane Austen of small-town America. We now know that *Go Set a Watchman*, though written before *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is actually its sequel.¹⁷³ And we have every reason to believe it will never have a sequel of its own. But its recent publication does cast a less-than-inviting backlight on the events that came after Jean Louise came of age, events that would have astonished her and Atticus and Uncle Jack. All three of them feared that the North would, once again, conquer the South. They foresaw the Yankee New Deal burgeoning into the Great Society, grinding down the rugged individualism of Dixie. What they didn't see, we readers have seen: If that is what the South is really all about, then it has truly risen again, and swept its old enemy from the field. Not only did Nixon's New Republican majority turn back Johnson's Great Society; Reagan's Revolution has advanced on the very heartland of the New Deal. Liberals reading *Go Set a Watchman* today have a good deal more to mourn than the absence of Atticus in their ranks. We mourn, now, not because a promising early champion

172. *Id.* at 89•90.

173. Alexandra Alter & Serge F. Kovalski, *After Harper Lee Novel Surfaces, Plots Arise*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 8, 2015), <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/09/books/harper-lee-lawyer-offers-more-details-on-discovery-of-go-set-a-watchman.html> [https://perma.cc/NCP7-WC44].

betrayed us in an early skirmish, but because he and his allies have won virtually every campaign in the long half century since.

Nor can the Right now read *Go Set a Watchman* any more happily. Even as *Go Set a Watchman* reminds today's Left that our cumulative losses have been terrible, so it reminds today's Right that its victory has always been tainted. If the Right can believe that Atticus and Uncle Jack joined their cause in libertarian zeal, they have to know that many others, North and South, joined in atavistic racial anxiety, even animus. Race may have been incidental to Uncle Jack and Atticus, even as they argued, but it would be central to many others, as the cold numbers have shown.¹⁷⁴ In the Right's triumph, racism is everywhere: the cornerstone of the Nixon's "Southern strategy," the genius of the "Willie Horton" ads, both the medium and the message of the whisper-campaign about John McCain's Black child. The redneck South, along with the blue-collar north, has left the New Deal coalition; the lure, on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line, has always borne the spores of "Maycomb's usual disease."¹⁷⁵

Fittingly enough, *Go Set a Watchman* almost preternaturally prefigures what may well prove the ultimate double disappointment, Left and Right, of its real-life sequel, our own sad times. The consolidation of the Reagan revolution, the real end of the era of big government, would be the work of a fellow southerner, the very sort of "yesterday's gone" young man who, as Aunt Alexandra would have pointed out, had no background, and who, as Jean Louise might have realized, was not really marrying material. Like his novelistic doppelgänger, the New Democrat would lead his flock by following the herd, moistened finger ever to the wind. With almost eerie poetic justice, our national life of the 1990s would imitate Harper Lee's art of the 1950s: Careful readers will have noticed that her "new man" shares the surname of our triangulating re-inventor of government—a name, of course, that still infuriates the Right, even as it disappoints the Left.

174. Alberto Alesina, Edward Glaeser & Bruce Sacerdote, *Why Doesn't the United States Have a European-Style Welfare State?*, 2 BROOKINGS PAPERS ON ECON. ACTIVITY 187, 189 (2001), http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Projects/BPEA/Fall-2001/2001b_bpea_alesina.pdf [<https://perma.cc/77HW-UAQD>] ("America's troubled race relations are clearly a major reason for the absence of an American welfare state.").

175. TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, *supra* note 3, at 97.