

**Robert Brinkmeyer**

**The Dynamics of Segregation in Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird" and "Go Set a Watchman"**

**ABSTRACT**

The appearance of *Go Set a Watchman* raises a vexing interpretative question: should *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Watchman* be read together, as the continuing story of Scout, Atticus, and others, 18 years after the time of *Mockingbird*? Or should the two novels be read entirely separately, two distinct works with two sets of different characters, even if characters share names across the two novels? For admirers of *Mockingbird*, it is certainly easier merely to set *Watchman* aside, thereby avoiding the problem of interpreting members of the Finch family in light of the disturbing things we learn about them in *Watchman*, including Atticus's participation in the Ku Klux Klan and the local Citizens' Council. To read the novels together, however, the more difficult and more rewarding option, challenges the reader to come to terms with what seems so contradictory about the Finches, ultimately leading, I am going to argue, to an understanding of the segregated South's complicated racial dynamics, and particularly the pressures toward racial solidarity within the white community. These pressures are at work in both novels but are more visible in *Watchman*, best revealed in the lives of Jean Louise and Atticus, both of whom face repeated challenges that force them to define their fundamental positions on race and to take their stands for or against the segregated system. The fate of both characters makes visible the crushing power of Southern traditionalism to mold its citizens so that their minds become as segregated as the social order.

**BIO**

Robert Brinkmeyer, who is the Director of the Institute for Southern Studies at the University of South Carolina, is Emily Brown Jefferies Professor of English and Claude Henry Neuffer Professor of Southern Studies. He has published widely in the field of modern Southern literature and culture, including *Remapping Southern Literature: Contemporary Southern Writers and the West* and *The Fourth Ghost: White Southern Writers and European Fascism, 1930-1950*. Professor Brinkmeyer received a Guggenheim Fellowship to complete *The Fourth Ghost*, and that book won several awards, including the Association of American Publishers 2009 PROSE Award for the best book published that year in literature, language, and linguistics and the 2009 Warren-Brooks Award for Excellence in Literary Criticism.