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FEMINIST CRITICISM AS ROLE ANALYSIS FOR THE INTERPRETER: WOMEN IN LILLIAN HELLMAN'S MAJOR PLAYS

The University of Arizona

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FEMINIST CRITICISM AS ROLE ANALYSIS FOR THE INTERPRETER:
WOMEN IN LILLIAN HELLMAN'S MAJOR PLAYS

by
Sara Hurdis Shaver

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH COMMUNICATION
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

1984

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As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read
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entitled Feminist Criticism as Role Analysis for the Interpreter: Women
in Lillian Hellman's Major Plays

and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the
candidate's submission of the final copy of the dissertation to the Graduate
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SIGNED: Sara Hindis Shaver
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ABSTRACT

Many types of literary criticism have been used successfully in the analysis of literature for oral interpretation. Feminist criticism looks at literature from a female perspective and explores the effects of society's beliefs about the nature, place, and function of women as revealed in literary plots and characters. The hypothesis of this dissertation is that feminist criticism will prove to be of value for interpreters in the analysis stage of preparation.

An original method of analysis, based on the tenets of feminist criticism, was developed by this author and applied to women in the four major plays of Lillian Hellman. The methodology focuses on character analysis, featuring inquiry into the character's role, values, self image, finances, attitudes toward sex, and measure of power. To judge the value of the methodology, critics' opinions of the women were surveyed and compared.

This comparison revealed the method's power to generate fresh, innovative insights into the characters and to disclose new interpretations of the plays themselves.
The method focussed attention onto the societal forces of sexual conditioning which restrict women and cause them to adopt stereotypical roles and patterns of behavior. The study concluded that feminist analysis is a viable critical approach for interpreters and that the methodology of this dissertation, being defined, consistent, and reliable, was capable of producing valuable and useful results.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades the women's movement has had a profound effect on our society. The idea of equality for women has disturbed conventional thought about a multitude of things: the biological, intellectual, and emotional differences between the sexes; women's traditional work and the dollar value assigned to it as compared with men's work; behavior circumscribed by adherence to stereotypical sex roles determined by society, and so on.

Due to the influence of the women's movement, ideas about traditional matters have changed. Today informed people no longer accept the skewed logic of "traditional wisdom" or worse, "old wives' tales." Life is seen through a new, informed perspective: a female perspective, which takes the point of view of woman as an equal person. This new vision has affected all areas of our lives: personal, political, financial, religious. Feminism has altered our society in basic, compelling ways.

As our society has changed, so have our perceptions of literature changed. Literature is a product of our culture, a mirror of society. Readers are finding that they
cannot avoid looking at literature without an awareness of the female consciousness.

It is this new reaction to literature that has influenced a new school of literary criticism to develop in the last ten years which takes as its perspective a sensitivity to woman's experience. This feminist criticism "has emerged as a discipline"\(^1\) with a large and faithful following, a significant new development in the field. In general outline, it involves "exposing the sexual stereotyping of women in both our literature and our literary criticism and, as well, demonstrating the inadequacy of established critical schools and methods to deal fairly or sensitively with works written by women."\(^2\) Diane Matza says:

the subjects fall into four broad categories: women's images and issues in works by men and women; women writers; male critical bias; and women's works that have been forgotten or largely ignored. Actual strategies for the analysis also fall into four main areas: balancing scholarship to include women; arguing with established critical opinion in order to correct a vision or offer a new one; examining a work in terms of its ideological or political content; and searching for distinctively feminine themes and styles.\(^3\)

This approach as a critical philosophy has gained popularity, and it is currently a vital, responsive, and evolving form of analysis.

Feminist criticism has a valuable contribution to make to the art of oral interpretation, a medium which has
always been responsive to changes both in society and literature. This method has especially practical application in the interpreter's analysis of literature leading to the development of role. As an aspect of the analysis of social roles, feminist criticism generates valuable insights for the performer into the characters, themes, and social mores of literature.

**Purpose of Study**

This study will explore the hypothesis that an analysis of the performance piece from a feminist perspective will produce fresh, insightful information that will be helpful to the performer in the development of her/his conception of the role. To accomplish this aim, a form of feminist analysis will be applied to the major plays of Lillian Hellman to produce character analyses which stress the female point of view and sex role expectations as a cultural phenomenon.

**Discussion of Concepts/Terms**

Central to this study is the concept of analysis for performance. Interpreters must understand the literature they intend to perform, and an analysis of the piece is usually one of the first steps the performer takes to prepare. The goal is to translate the written text into an aural medium and to create an artistic, authentic experience
of the literature for the audience. Some performers are blessed with an innate ability to sense what is right for a text; however, most need to study or analyze a script in order to intellectually and emotionally understand it. The process of analysis is of supreme importance to a good interpreter, as writers of the major interpretation textbooks acknowledge.

The goal of analysis is to bring the hidden nuances or subtle meanings of a text to a conscious level. Ideally, analysis will help the interpreter to know the literature intimately; she will realize the structure, theme, symbolism, and characterizations, for example, of the chosen material and be able to readily discuss them with awareness and sensitivity. Analysis contributes to the performer's perception of the literature, thereby determining to a large degree the artistic, personal presentation of the text.

Geiger defines oral interpretation as "a critical illumination offered in behalf of literature." Oral interpretation theorists agree that one of the primary purposes of interpretation is to perform literature so that its many subtleties and levels of meaning are revealed to an audience. The reader has an obligation to "illuminate" or interpret a text correctly. However, to be true to the text, the interpreter obviously must know the layers of meaning imbedded in the text. Here lies the value of a
serviceable critical methodology; in its many forms, literary criticism serves as a powerful tool for ferreting out the hidden implications of a text.

Gregory Polletta says the "main purpose of criticism is understanding the concrete literary work." Literary criticism serves as handmaiden to literature; it is intended to complement, to enhance the reader's experience of the text. Richard McGuire calls it "the activity that seeks continually to demonstrate the significance and profundity of the work in such a way that it is there for all people to see and take delight in."

To approach this aim, critics have developed several different methods of examining works which produce different insights into the literature. A textual approach produces awareness of the formal elements of the text and its perceived unity; psychological criticism encourages understanding of the characters' emotions and motivations; archetypal criticism explores the literature's basis in myth. Each critical style has its own value, and each can provide special insights into literature from its own perspective.

Literature is not a static, simple art; rather, it is complex, offering a multivariance of meaning to the reader. Consequently, no single type of analysis is able to reveal all the meaning contained in a literary work. This
is the limitation of criticism: although its goal is to promote understanding, criticism can never completely capture all the essence of the literature. We can never totally understand art, just as we cannot truly know another person. However, acknowledging our critical limitations, we can gather knowledge about the text that expands and enriches our perception of the literature. The various analytical modes supply different viewpoints that can all be useful in apprehending the whole literary work. Northrup Frye points out that the different methodologies have value and that critics should have a tolerant attitude toward dissimilar critical stances:

In criticism, as in philosophy, argument is functional, and there is bound to be disagreement. But disagreement is one thing, rejection another, and critics have no more business rejecting each other than they have rejecting literature. The genuine critic works out his own views of literature while realizing that there are also a great number of other views, actual and possible, which are neither reconcilable nor irreconcilable with his own.

McGuire adds: "The value of criticism is not that it lays down laws which any reader must follow, but rather that it offers a new way of seeing a literary work which may not have been possible to the reader. And if it enriches his perception of a literary work, then it has value."\(^8\)

Interpretation scholars have enthusiastically endorsed the use of many types of critical analysis for performance preparation. Hopkins praised the development of
linguistic analysis as a valuable tool for the interpreter's study. Geiger, as well as Sloan and Maclay, promoted the methods of "new criticism." Roloff recommended myth, rhetorical, and psychological analysis in the interpretation of drama. Others have demonstrated the value of historical, myth, and sociological criticism for the interpreter.

Feminist criticism is a method that could prove to be of exceptional value for the interpreter. It began as an organized critical effort in 1970 with the formation of the Modern Language Association's Commission on the Status of Women. From this group evolved the following published journals: Feminist Studies, Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Aphra, and Women's Studies. By 1975, volumes of feminist criticism appeared, published both by commercial and university presses. Diamond and Edwards summarized the state of the art in 1977, saying it "does not connote a school of criticism with a rigidly defined methodology" but implies "a general orientation, an attitude toward literature which can turn a wide variety of existing techniques to its own ends." In her review essay on literary criticism, Cheri Register examined feminist analysis in the 1980's. She found that it is "a school of criticism that continues to produce fresh readings of literary texts after a decade" in practice and that it looks
"at how literature comprehends, transmits, and shapes female experience and is, in turn, shaped by it." Sandra Gilbert commented on the "now well-established conjunction of feminism and criticism" and concluded that "feminist criticism is and should be a major current in the main stream of contemporary literary thought." 

Feminist criticism utilizes a perspective, attitude, or orientation, just as any form of criticism has a particular critical stance. Feminist critics, together with historical and sociological critics, believe that literature legitimately can be examined in terms of its social, political, and moral contexts. The feminist perspective explores the impact that societies' beliefs about the status and nature of women have on literature. It is one of many "critiques of literature and criticism which have at their core the inclusion of views of oppressed groups, that probe the mythology about women and other minority groups perpetuated in the stereotypes and attitudes which are a mirror of prevailing fantasies and conscious social norms." Diamond and Edwards explain further that feminist critics:

are distinguished by virtue of their particular concern with society's beliefs about the nature and function of women in the world, with the transformation of these beliefs into literary plots, with the ways in which artistic and critical strategies adjust and control attitudes toward women.

Feminist criticism does not have one, single methodology. Virtually every methodology can be used within a
feminine perspective. At the Modern Language Convention in 1976, papers were read that combined feminist criticism with the methodologies of "historical criticism, formalism, archetypal theory, psychoanalytic criticism." Structuralist and Marxist methods have often been incorporated into the feminist perspective.

Annette Kolodny describes the feminist critics as "pluralists" in the use of many methodologies. She quotes Robert Scholes' explanation of the pluralist contention:

In approaching a text of any complexity... the reader must choose to emphasize certain aspects which seem to him crucial... in fact, the variety of readings which we have for many works is a function of the selection of crucial aspects made by the variety of readers.

Scholes believes there cannot be just one correct interpretation of an intricate literary piece. He says: "We do not speak of readings that are simply true or false, but of readings that are more or less rich, strategies that are more or less appropriate." Feminist critics acknowledge that differing interpretations of a given text may be equally valid, and these strategies point up diverse aspects of the work, varied facets of meaning. Kolodny elaborates:

All the feminist is asserting, then, is her own equivalent right to liberate new (and perhaps different) significances from these same texts; and, at the same time, her right to choose which features of a text she takes as relevant because she is, after all, asking new and different questions of it. In the process, she claims neither definitiveness
nor structural completeness for her different readings and reading systems, but only their usefulness. • 22.[as] alternative foci of critical attentiveness.

The pluralist quality of feminist analysis makes it open-minded to the benefits of many critical approaches and methodologies.

Leslie Fiedler acknowledges feminist criticism as valuable in exposing the effects of sex conditioning on our literature which he feels will continue "as long as the female continues to be felt and to be made to feel herself a stranger in a culture whose notion of the human is defined by males."

He points out the harm of stereotyping in literature: readers are "only actual incomplete females, looking in vain for a satisfactory definition of their role in a land of artists who insist on treating them as goddesses or bitches. The dream role and the nightmare role alike deny the humanity of women." Lillian S. Robinson explains further: "Throughout much of our literature, fanciful constructs of the ideal female, her character and psychology, have obscured the limitations suffered by actual women. Worse, they have encouraged expectations and behavior that only strengthen the real oppression." Ruth Yeazell continues: "Novels have tended, the feminists argue, to identify the fully human with the male—to see women as flat embodiments of a particular force or theme, to see them mythically, allegorically, symbolically, but never
realistically--as fully rounded, complex human beings."  

Lynn Sukenick summarizes the situation:

Criticism which is sexually .... discriminating will hide and withhold a significant portion of the life of a book. Elements in women's writing which have been unappreciated or denigrated by male critics may appear in a different light once the prejudices of these critics have been named as such. Sexual neutrality in criticism may be impossible or even undesirable; sexual hostility, however, is not inevitable. Until that hostility disappears, women will have to keep speaking of it .... making of the freedom to speak with authority a tradition and a norm rather than a history of exceptions.

Review of Related Literature

This review will examine the sources for this study in the literature of oral interpretation, feminist criticism, and Lillian Hellman. It will provide summaries of important works and point out areas in the research which need strengthening.

Literature in Oral Interpretation

In 1979, Keith Henning delivered "Gender as a Factor in Oral Interpretation" at the Western Speech Communication Association convention. In this paper he called for further study to be done in consideration of the women's viewpoint in oral interpretation: "Today's sexual awareness demands that gender be considered as a possible determinant of meaning in literature and its performance." Henning feels that gender is not being given proper attention by interpretation theorists and teachers. He thinks it is an
extremely important consideration, especially in today's world which makes it "impossible for a teacher of oral interpretation to ignore considering gender as a factor in the complex meaning systems involved in responding to and performing literature." Henning argues that gender should be included in pre-performance analysis, and he urges scholars to research the many implications of gender as it influences interpretation. He concludes: "Gender as a factor in the oral interpretation of literature can no longer be the great silent operative."²⁸

In her article, "Kenneth Burke and The Mod Donna: The Dramatistic Method Applied to Feminist Criticism," published in 1978 in the Central States Speech Journal, Janet Brown investigates a type of feminist analysis. She discusses the theory of feminist criticism briefly, and then uses Burke's dramatistic methodology to analyze a particular play. Her aim is to isolate and identify the feminist characteristics of a play—in other words, to point out what turns a drama into feminist theatre. The term "feminist theatre" defines drama which is politically and socially aware of the condition of women, which disapproves of the existing male-dominated hierarchy, and which often seeks to persuade or influence audiences to correct the sexual injustices of society. Brown sought to describe the "feminist rhetorical impulse" in such drama. In addition,
she says "feminism is a significant and widespread human response" and "it might be a recurrent theme in dramatic literature, perhaps overlooked in the past by critics insensitive to the feminist impulse."  

Patti Gillespie also discusses feminist drama in "Feminist Theatre: A Rhetorical Phenomenon," published in the Quarterly Journal of Speech. She focusses on the formation and characteristics of this drama as a basis for examining feminist rhetoric.

Women's issues have interested writers in other areas of speech besides rhetoric. Communication theorists feel that sex differences are significant in communication. See, for example, Michael E. Roloff and Bradley S. Greenberg, "Sex Differences in Choice of Modes of Conflict Resolution in Real-Life and Television," Communication Quarterly 27 (Summer 1979):3-12. Gender is considered important in language studies; see William R. Todd-Mancillas, "Masculine Generics=Sexist Language: A Review of Literature and Implications for Speech Communication Professionals," Communication Quarterly 29 (Spring 1981):107-115 which advocates alternatives to masculine generics in speech communication instruction to reduce sexism. Interaction of sex related factors is also a concern for researchers; for example, see Ernest G. Bormann, Jerie Pratt, and Linda Putnam, "Power, Authority, and Sex: Male
Response to Female Leadership," Communication Monographs 45 (June 1978):119-155. Topics on women's issues consistently appear in programs for national and regional speech conventions. Most of the national and regional associations have formal women's caucuses or women's interest groups.

Although companion areas of speech communication have exhibited interest in gender concerns, oral interpretation has yet to join in to actively research this topic. There is some interest in women's language (notably manifested by Isabel Crouch of New Mexico State University who, along with Dr. Betty Lou DuBois, investigated aspects of women's speech in such articles as "The Question of Tag Questions in Women's Speech: They Don't Really Use More of Them, Do They?" Language and Society 4:289-294 and "Man and its Compounds in Recent Prefeminist American Prose" Papers in Linguistics 12 (Fall 1979):3-4), but on the whole the topic is wide-open for interpretation scholars. Specifically, feminist criticism has not been considered for its usefulness in oral interpretation. To date, there have been no articles or dissertations written on this topic.

Although no dissertations on the feminine perspective in role analysis have been written, several dissertations concern the subject of role analysis itself in oral interpretation. These include: "Joan of Arc and Four Playwrights: A Rhetorical Analysis for Oral Interpretation"
by Isabel M. Crouch, Southern Illinois University, 1972; "A Rhetorical Analysis of Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida" by Mary Z. Maher, University of Michigan, 1973; "Ethos as Mask: A Study of Character in the Plays of Luigi Pirandello" by Kathleen Bindert, Northwestern University, 1974; "Women of the Nobility in Shakespeare's English History Plays" by Karen D. Smith, Northwestern University, 1974. Each of these dissertations examines differing approaches to role analysis, and they have proved its value as a viable method of dramatistic interpretation.

Henning surveyed the major books in oral interpretation and found that the authors do not mention the gender factor in literature. At best some texts offer advice on how to portray a character of the opposite sex. Beyond that, the possibility that women's special point of view might affect interpretation is ignored. All of the textbooks recommend that the student analyze the performance piece by some critical method, and most of these methods are traditional. For example, some recommend analysis of theme, symbolism, historical background, allusions, and so on. Maclay and Sloan focus on the speaker with rhetorical or dramatistic criticism. Long recommends a formalist methodology, considering the speaker, plot, and causes. Cohen suggests semantic, historical, psychological, sociological,
aesthetic, and moral criticism. None mention feminist criticism as a possible choice.

Some texts deserve special mention because of their relevance to this study. Beverly Whitaker Long and Mary Frances HopKins in *Performing Literature: An Introduction to Oral Interpretation* advise interpreters to follow an extensive analysis procedure. There is a definite emphasis on preparation. They provide an outline for analysis based on Burke's dramatistic pentad which is similar in form to the outline used in this study. Long and HopKins approve of the outline analysis process as a preparation technique.

In his latest edition, Wallace Bacon has acknowledged the influence of the women's movement by attempting to use generic pronouns: "In accordance with contemporary usage, I have attempted to change the singular pronoun 'he' to an equivalent term indicating both male and female." Bacon also approves of the question/answer form used in the methodology of this dissertation:

There are specific questions to which an interpreter seeks answers in trying to set characterization: How old are the characters? In what settings do they move? . . . How are characters seen by other characters? How do they see themselves? What are their temperaments? At what tempo do they seem to move and speak? What things change their behavior? Most important of all, what do they want—what drives them to do what they do?"

In addition, Bacon seems to approve of the pluralist view: "One must have as many sets of questions as possible to
explore fully any very complex literary work. . . . Make use of any critical system that will lead to useful answers, but do not subscribe simply to one."33

The benefits of criticism are many, whether analyzing prose, poetry, or drama. However, when performing drama, the actor especially needs reliable, fruitful methods of analysis. The dramatic interpreter has only the dialogue to work with, without the explanatory narrative or the description of prose or poetry. Thus, the drama performer must have analytic methods which aid in constructing an accurate and rich conception of the play's subtext.
Charlotte Lee and Tim Gura state: "Since explicit clues about what is happening, and particularly what the characters are thinking, are not always provided in the drama, the interpreter constantly must be on the lookout for implicit and even concealed clues in a given scene, speech, line, or work."34

When the female point of view is not considered, biased analysis can result. Unfortunately, there are a few examples of this in interpretation texts. In their discussion of The Little Foxes, Brooks, Bahn, and Okey assert that Regina, Oscar, and Benjamin are motivated "by greed."35 The feminist critic would point out that Regina's motivations are influenced by her special circumstances which are markedly different from her brothers'. In addition, Regina
never had the opportunities to acquire necessities that Oscar and Benjamin undoubtedly shared. Regina definitely needs to be considered separately from the men. Joanna Maclay says in *Readers Theatre: Toward a Grammar of Practice* that in *Hedda Gabler* one might choose to "underscore Hedda's masculinity, as well as illuminate her latent homosexuality." In this case, aggressive "masculine" behavior is interpreted as abnormal for a woman; thus, she must be a lesbian. It is hoped that a skillful use of feminist criticism would eliminate biased, potentially misogynistic interpretations.

**Literature in Feminist Criticism**

The literature available concerning feminist criticism is abundant. Several books explore the theories of this critical approach while illustrating theoretical aspects with sample analyses of well-known pieces of literature. Major books include: *Feminist Criticism: Essays on Theory, Poetry, and Prose; The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction; Feminist Literary Criticism: Explorations in Theory; The Authority of Experience; Images of Women in Fiction: Feminine Perspectives; and Thinking About Women*. There are several journal articles which are significant. *Signs* publishes review essays which summarize the most recent theoretical and practical developments. Annette Kolodny has published several articles

In her dissertation, "A Critique of the New Feminist Criticism," Diane Matza analyzed the work of critics to assess the state of the movement and to give her suggestions for future directions. Matza concentrates on the lack of "coherent method" and discusses problems with the "autobiographical fallacy." She asserts that many feminist critics have little discernible method, that they mistakenly hear the author's voice, background, and attitude in the fiction, and that they fail to analyze how culture might influence the individual author. Matza finds these faults in the writings of Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone, and others. She criticizes them for continually finding political significance in works of fiction and for assuming that the author projects his/her own personality onto the main characters as mouthpieces.
Matza advises feminist critics to remain close to the text by employing textual criticism. She suggests the use of contextual criticism to relate the text to social, political, and other external considerations. In her work, Matza uses Burke's method of cluster analysis which "insists that the critic look closely at all of the things around the character and decide where they belong, what they connect to in the larger context, and how they help to determine an author's attitude."\(^{37}\)

In "A Theory for Feminist Criticism" Patrocinio Schweickart explores a conceptual framework and a methodology for feminist criticism. A definition is formulated and a dialectical method is proposed. To illustrate the method, Schweickart analyzes realistic novels and science fiction novels.

Literature on Hellman

The literature available on Lillian Hellman is plentiful. Her plays were reviewed numerous times as each was performed, and Hellman's own critical comments on her plays are contained in her published memoirs. Furthermore, there are books of criticism devoted to Hellman's dramatic work. Richard Moody approaches the plays from a biographical viewpoint. Both Jacob Adler and Doris Falk discuss the works in terms of thematic, structural, and biographical issues. Lorena Holmin considers them in terms of subject
matter, plot, structure, dialogue, characterization, and
critical evaluation. Katherine Lederer concentrates on
Hellman's use of irony and the novelistic characteristics of
the plays.

Hellman's female characters have been studied,
notably by Larimer, Patraka, and Friedman. Larimer examines
Hellman's women to study her use of characterization as
dramatic technique. Each character was analyzed according
to these criteria: (1) her autobiographical significance;
(2) her dramatic portrayal through scenery, costume, and
make-up, her style of speech, her relationship to the theme
of the play, her values and ideas, her relationship to the
symbolism of the play; (3) her significance to Hellman's
maturing artistry of creation. Larimer does not employ a
feminist perspective.

Patraka does consider feminist concerns in her
analysis of Hellman's women. Her main thesis, however, is
to determine whether the female characters fulfill the
requirements for characterization as dictated by dramatic
realism. Secondarily, Patraka investigates whether Hellman
created "rounded" portrayals of women.

Friedman studies selected works of four twentieth-
century American dramatists--Susan Glaspell, Rachel
Crothers, Lilliam Hellman, and Lorraine Hansberry--to
determine the nature and extent of feminist concerns in
their plays. Her method was traditional textual analysis within feminist theory. Her purpose was to locate the social and psychological phenomena portrayed in the dramatic literature which relate to women's condition. She concludes that feminist concerns are not central to Hellman's works, but are enmeshed in other issues and may be seen in her characterization of women.

The present study will contribute to the literature of all three fields--oral interpretation, feminist criticism, and Hellman. It is an original topic for interpretation which will incidentally focus attention on the process of analysis and on the genre of dramatic literature. It will extend feminist criticism from a purely literary to a performance medium. Also, it will add a performance dimension to the Hellman literature.

Selection of Literature

As stated previously, the purpose of this study is to employ a feminist approach to role analysis, to see whether or not this type of literary examination might prove to be worthwhile for the interpreter. The literary works chosen to demonstrate the critical method are the major plays of Lillian Hellman: The Children's Hour, The Little Foxes, Another Part of the Forest, and Toys in the Attic. These plays were chosen because they have significant women characters and because they are currently being performed by
interpreters. Hellman was chosen because she is a well-respected playwright, not because of her personal traits or her gender. The objective of this examination is not biographical criticism in which Hellman might be studied as a dramatist, as a person, as a feminist, nor is it intended as a general study of her plays. Rather, this study seeks to use Hellman's characters as the means to demonstrate the use of this particular feminist methodology in role preparation. The feminist form of analysis developed here should be suitable for use on many plays, and ideally it should not be impaired by the interpreter's choice of author or play.

The Collected Plays, published in 1972 by Little, Brown and Company, will be the edition used. Following is the publisher's note:

The Collected Plays brings together for the first time all of Lillian Hellman's works for the theatre, and supersedes any previous collections and editions. For this edition Miss Hellman has made numerous small revisions and emendations in each of the plays: the texts as given here are henceforth to be regarded as definitive.

References to the plays will be noted internally with page numbers in parentheses.

Procedures

The procedure followed will be to focus on one character at a time, applying a structured feminist method of analysis, using evidence from the entire play. The character's actions will be examined as well as internal
considerations such as self image and motivations. The end result of each character analysis will be a synthesis essay which summarizes insights into the role. After the examination of female characters for each play has been completed, related analyses by other critics will be reviewed. The attitudes, implications, and conclusions of these critics then will be compared to the findings of this dissertation regarding each character in order to determine the effectiveness of the method in producing fresh original insights and in adding to the body of criticism on the play.

The scope of this study is limited to the interpreter's pre-performance analysis. Advice will not be given on how to actually physicalize character traits, motivations, attitudes in the act of performance. In addition, this method is not intended to be the only preparation necessary for the performer.

Method

As explained before, feminist criticism is a perspective which can use any number of established methodologies. Diane Matza states: "feminist criticism may effectively combine historical, psychological, and textual concepts with a feminist perspective." Matza specifically advises that: "the feminist critic must marry her feminist perspective to close textual analysis that accounts for language, symbol, and tone, and to a contextual criticism
that includes whatever extraliterary disciplines are necessary for tackling the problem at hand." The feminist perspective itself implies the consideration of social aspects of the literary work, but also it can be employed with textual and other contextual methods. Annis Pratt, one of the leading writers of feminist critical theory, advocates the use of textual, contextual, and archetypal criticism.

In this study, the method features the contextual approach with limited application of textual criticism. It is "contextual" in examining the social, political, intellectual, and economic realities in the environment of the text; it is "textual" in its attention to images, style, and the impact of individual words. Annis Pratt says the:

new feminist critic should be a "new critic" (in the aesthetic rather than the political sense) in judging formal aspects of individual texts; she should be "feminist" in going beyond formalism to consider literature as it reveals men and women in relationship to each other within a socio-economic context, that web of role expectations in which women are enmeshed.

The following is an outline of the analytic procedure of this study which was developed by this author. The question/answer format is intended to guide the critic's inquiry into certain possibly significant areas and to encourage original insights through concentrated reflection. Although the topics covered in the outline all have potential significance, it must be remembered that certain areas
will prove to be more revealing for one play while other areas will be more fruitful for another play. It also must be realized that the synthesis essays will not necessarily follow the organizational structure of the analysis schema.

I. World of the Play

What is the hierarchy of power in the culture? What are the spheres of influence for each caste?

This section is a description of the forces operating in the culture of the characters in the play. It is not intended as a study of the historical setting of the play when it was written or produced; it is intended as a look at the inner world of the play itself.

II. Image of the Character

A. Role

What is her occupation? Does it focus on her actions or on her relationship with men? Is her occupation stereotypical? Is her occupation commensurate with her abilities? Does she function as a stereotype: submissive wife? earth mother? little girl? domineering bitch? sex object? seductress-goddess? old maid?

B. Values

What is her hierarchy of values? How does her culture value competence, passivity, virtue in a woman? What are the values of her culture—the attitudes of what a woman should be or do? How does she value her career? marriage? children?
C. Intelligence

How intelligent is she?
Is she free to exercise her intelligence?
Must she hide her intellect? Why?
How are her ideas received?
Must she resort to a male "mouthpiece" to get attention for her ideas?
How much freedom to think does she allow herself?

D. Emotions

Is she allowed to show her feelings?
Is she free to have feelings?
How much freedom to feel does she allow herself?

E. Self Image

What is her self image?
How does she value herself?
How does she see herself in the future?

F. Ethos--how do other characters view her?

Competence--How capable do they think she is?
Good Will/Virtue--Is she viewed as thoughtful, true, gracious, selfless, understanding?
Dynamism/Aggressiveness--Is she viewed as charismatic, energetic, dominant?
How do other characters value her characteristics? Do they praise or condemn them?
What is her status (worth) to other characters?
Are her physical, emotional, or intellectual characteristics most important to others?

G. Style of Speech

Is her style of speech "feminine": tag questions? qualifiers? fillers? lengthening of requests?
Does she interrupt or is she interrupted?
How does she use silence? When?
How does she use humor?
III. Aspects of the Character's Actions

A. Physical Independence

Is she free to move? Are any locations off limits to her?
What are the physical boundaries of her world?
Is she free to travel? Alone?

B. Financial/Economic

How much money does she have?
Does she have control over her money?
Does she need money? Why?
Does she have options for earning money?
Does her financial situation motivate her actions?

C. Sex

What are her attitudes about sex?
What are her expectations of sex?
Does she use sex for power?
What are her motivations for sex?

D. Relationships With Other Characters

1) With Men

How important are they?
What quality are they?
Who is dominant?
What are her emotions toward the man? Are they justified?
Who makes efforts to maintain, improve, or damage the relationship?
Is the relationship used to fulfill a purpose?
What strategies are used in the relationship?

2) With Women

How important are they?
What quality are they?
Who is dominant?
What are her emotions toward the woman? Are they justified?
Who makes efforts to maintain, improve, or damage the relationship?
Is the relationship used to fulfill a purpose? What strategies are used in the relationship?

E. Motivations

What does she want? What does she do to accomplish her aims? successful? Are her actions passive or aggressive? Are her actions sex-typed (ludicrous when done by a man)? What are her major motivations? minor motivations? What choices does she have? other options?

F. Power

How much power/influence does she have? Over women? Over men? How does she feel about her use of power? guilty or proud? Is her use of power open or hidden? Does she openly command or resort to manipulation/tricks? What strategies does she use? What decisions does she make? How important are they? Who do they affect?

Annette Kolodny says "feminist scrutiny" is:

nothing less than an acute attentiveness to the ways in which certain power relations—usually those in which males wield various forms of influence over females—are inscribed in the texts (both literary and critical), that we have inherited, not merely as subject matter, but as the unquestioned, often unacknowledged given of the culture.

The power relations in a culture are expressed in an individual's values and motivations, as well as in self image and freedom. In fact, the power structure of a culture affects the entire personality of an individual or a character, and this fact is the major justification for this method.
It is expected that this study will reveal the usefulness of feminist analysis in role preparation. As Matza reminds us, in literature "stereotypes are so destructive precisely because they are often so covertly woven into accepted notions of the world as to be unrecognized by otherwise intelligent persons." Oral interpreters want to be aware of sexual conditioning in characters and literature in order to give successful, relevant readings. Therein lies the value of feminist role analysis.
Notes


8 McGuire, p. 12.


16 Diamond, pp. ix, x.

17 Diamond, p. x.


21 Kolodny, p. 18.

22 Kolodny, pp. 18-19.


27 Diamond, p. xii.

29 Brown, p. 138.


32 Bacon, p. 294.

33 Bacon, p. 507.


37 Matza, p. 250.

38 Matza, p. 87.

39 Matza, p. 230.

40 Matza, p. 63.


42 Kolodny, pp. 3-4.

43 Matza, pp. 39-40.
CHAPTER 2

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

In this chapter Karen Wright and Martha Dobie, main characters from The Children's Hour, will be analyzed using the method outlined in Chapter 1 to demonstrate the practical application of the methodology. The Children's Hour was written in 1934 and was first produced on November 20, 1934.

It is important to remember that these analyses are for the purpose of performance—to help the interpreter gain a clear understanding of the characters and the play in order to make correct performance decisions. Therefore, the factors affecting characterization are given the greatest emphasis while consideration of theme, for example, will be explored only in the process of amassing information about the individual characters.

To the interpreter, the method that will glean the most relevant data from the text is the most valuable. The close analysis of specific characters is particularly appropriate when working with drama since there is no narrative in dramatic literature as there is in prose or poetry. A detailed knowledge of characters, supported by evidence from the play, is essential in order to fill in the...
subtext of the literature and gain a clear understanding of the performance piece.

**World of the Play**

*The Children's Hour* is set near the Massachusetts town of Lancet, and, although Hellman does not specifically date the play, the characters function as if in the 1930's. The society of the play is greatly affected by the male-biased power distribution that operates within it. Women are accorded secondary status and are encouraged into socially approved activities such as child rearing, housekeeping, and other domestic duties. Working women are tolerated by this culture as long as they remain dependent on men and pursue careers suitable for women such as teaching or social work.

It was no accident that Hellman chose Massachusetts as the scene for this play. *The Children's Hour* is infused with puritan values, and these ethics govern its society's attitudes toward work, morality, and sex. These dispositions are particularly inflexible regarding sex roles and sexual preference. Any variation from the normal heterosexual model is not tolerated, as the unfortunate Martha discovers in the play. These modern puritans, whose ancestors burned nonconforming women as witches, are hysterical in their righteous condemnation of Karen and
Martha who, like the victims of the past, are accused by the unsupported testimony of a child.

Karen Wright

Karen is revealed by her name; she is indeed "right" in her speech, her actions, her attitudes. The image she projects is pure, the epitome of the "good woman." This stereotype is extended in her occupation as a schoolteacher, a female-dominated profession approved by her society. Although unmarried, Karen avoids the stereotypical role of "old maid" since she is attractive and has the ultimate disclaimer to old maid status: a fiancé.

When the play begins, Karen is approved by the members of her culture. The societal values match hers, and Karen's actions are in line with cultural expectations. She is devoted to a socially acceptable profession, her personal life appears to be typical, and her philosophies regarding the students' education, discipline, and deportment make her a popular, respected member of her society.

Karen's sense of morality and world view demand that truth be paramount since she firmly believes that honesty is part of an unbreakable code of honor both for adults and students. Further, she believes in the curative value of discipline, and when lies are told strong punishment must be administered. When Mary tells a lie about where she got the flowers, Karen confronts her, saying: "You know that isn't
true. . . . this kind of lying you do makes everything wrong." (p. 11) Ironically, Karen's choice of punishment for Mary's falsehood inspires the child to fabricate the lie that eventually destroys the school. Mary is forbidden to attend the boat races, so first she fakes a heart attack and then runs to her grandmother with a fraudulent story about Karen and Martha's relationship.

Karen is devoted to her career. Both she and Martha have dedicated years of work to the school and have endured economic hardship for its sake. As Joe says, the school means "things to them: self-respect, and bread and butter, and honest work." (pp. 43-44) We might add that the school means financial independence for Karen; she treasures the security, position, and freedom that co-owning the school gives to her. Although she does not have a great deal of money, she does have complete control over her finances and those of the school. She considers it important to be financially solvent, and she delays her marriage so that she will be independent of her husband's resources. She says she will marry: "Perhaps when the term is over. By that time we ought to be out of debt, and the school should be paying for itself." (p. 13) Although this decision arouses some suspicion in her culture since normal women are expected to value marriage above all, in our contemporary
society it seems logical for a woman to postpone romantic commitment until her career is well established.

Karen also values highly her close friendship with Martha. Their relationship goes back eight years and more to their college days. Karen loves Martha, but from her perspective it is a normal, friendly attachment. Other characters in the play and several critics question their long, intimate association and their co-ownership of the school; they list these as evidence of Karen and Martha's sexual abnormality. However, this accusation is obviously biased since men are not criticized for forming business partnerships with intimate friends.

Karen and Martha have a very stable relationship before the play opens. When the play starts, though, Karen announces that she will marry soon since she can now afford it. Martha perceives this as a threat to their relationship, and she protests that it will hurt the school: "and now when we're getting on our feet, you're all ready to let it go to hell." (p. 14) Karen naively assures her that her marriage will not change her involvement with Martha or the school. She insists she will continue to work after the wedding and the three of them will vacation together. Martha is not reassured, however, since she knows that, despite Karen's best efforts, the marriage will demand major compromises from both her career and personal life:
KAREN. We agreed a long time ago that my marriage wasn't going to make any difference to the school.
MARTHA. But it will. You know it will. It can't help it.
KAREN. That's nonsense. Joe doesn't want me to give up here. (p. 14)

Karen believes in her ability to manage both her marriage and career, but for insurance she adds that Joe wants her to work. In the back of her mind she is relying on her husband to grant her permission to continue her vocation.

Karen has a strong positive self image. She has confidence in her morality, her values, her reputation, her abilities. It is essential for Karen to be able to perceive herself as a good, worthy, respectable, responsible person. The other characters in the play agree that Karen is capable, honest, and virtuous. Mrs. Mortar does complain that: "Karen is consistently rude to me" (p. 15), but Martha probably reflects more truthfully: "I know that she is very polite to you and--what's more important--very patient." (p. 16) The accusation that she is a lesbian inflicts severe damage to her self image.

Karen's style of speech is forceful and direct without "feminine" aspects like tag questions or qualifiers. Her speech reinforces her character: strong, dominant, intelligent. She neither interrupts nor is interrupted to a significant degree, and she rarely uses humor.
In *The Children's Hour* sex is a forbidden subject kept hidden away. Naturally the taboo makes the subject full of mystery and interest, but it is never openly discussed. Sex is usually referred to by the euphemism "love" and, in accord with puritan values, normal heterosexual relationships within marriage are the only sexual liaisons sanctioned by society. When Karen explains Mrs. Tilford's accusation to Joe she finds it hard to say: "That--that Martha and I are--in love with each other." (p. 42) She feels ill at ease when talking specifically of sexual topics, as when she questions Rosalie about Mary's accusation:

She says that you told her that you saw certain--certain acts between Miss Dobie and myself. She says that once, when the door was open, you saw us kissing each other in a way that--(Unable to bear the child's look, she turns her back) women don't kiss one another. (pp. 49-50)

Karen's reluctance seems to be due to her desire to be proper, a delicacy regarding the matter.

Since Karen does not talk about sex, it is difficult to determine her expectations regarding her association with Joe. However, it is clear they do not have a passionate relationship. Their love is quiet and calm, based more on friendship than on physicality. In their most emotional scene when Karen tells him she and Martha never were lovers, she "pulls his head down on her shoulder" (p. 59), more of a comforting gesture than a sexual one.
All critics question Martha's lesbianism, and it seems equally logical to wonder about Karen's true sexual orientation. Certainly there is as much "circumstantial" evidence in the play against Karen as there is against Martha. The clues include her lukewarm arrangement with Joe, her postponement of the marriage, her long intimate friendship with Martha, their practice of vacationing together, and her odd notion that Martha should accompany the newlyweds on their vacation and honeymoon. Karen, however, has a sufficiently strong self image to know that the charge of lesbianism is false and to avoid self accusation.

Karen has physical independence without restriction at the beginning of the play. However, after the trial, both Martha and Karen are immobilized by the force of public disapproval. They stay inside for eight days, not even daring to go for a walk in the woods lest someone see them. They feel like running away, but they fear they would be recognized. As Martha points out:

KAREN. Let's pack and get out of here. Let's take the train in the morning.
MARTHA. The train to where?
KAREN. I don't know. Someplace; anyplace.
MARTHA. A job? Money?
KAREN. In a big place we could get something to do.
MARTHA. They'd know about us. We've been famous.
KAREN. A small town, then.
MARTHA. They'd know more about us.
KAREN (as a child would say it). Isn't there anywhere to go?
MARTHA. No. We're bad people. (pp. 61-62)
Karen is obviously very intelligent and is aware and open in exercising her mental acuity. This is shown in several instances in the play. When Mary says she peeked through the keyhole into Karen's room to see her and Martha kissing, Karen remembers the crucial evidence that there is no keyhole on her door. She also sees through Mary's lie in the first scene that Mary picked spring flowers specially for Mrs. Mortar when in fact she had plucked them from the garbage. Through most of the play she forthrightly declares what she thinks and exhibits sharpness of mind.

Given this evaluation of Karen's intelligence, it seems odd that she does not see through Mary's blackmail of Rosalie at the end of the second act. Mary forces Rosalie to corroborate her tale of the teachers' lesbianism by threatening to expose Rosalie as a thief. However, Mary is not very subtle in her coercion, and it is mystifying that the other characters cannot discern Rosalie's motivation, especially since they have from April to November—the time span between Act 1 and Act 2—to reflect upon it. The stage directions say Karen is "puzzled, as are the others, by the sudden change in Rosalie's manner" (p. 50), but the lapse in Karen's perception is not explained.

In stress situations Karen allows her feelings to inhibit her usual intellectual response. When Mary and Mrs. Tilford brand her as immoral, it so mortifies her that she
does not respond rationally. Considering the value she places on self respect and honesty, this behavior seems plausible. Her attempts at self defense are not commensurate with her intelligence. In fact, her basic strategy is to declare repeatedly that the accusation is a lie. She tries to rely on her good reputation alone to save her. She feels tainted by the necessity of defending herself:

I don't want to have anything to do with your mess, do you hear me? It makes me feel dirty and sick to be forced to say this, but here it is; there isn't a single word of truth in anything you've said. We're standing here defending ourselves—and against what? Against a lie. A great, awful lie. (p. 43)

When Mrs. Tilford remains unmoved, Karen responds with total emotion: "Damn you!" (p. 43) and she allows Martha to decide the course of action they will take—which, of course, later turns out to be disastrous.

Karen's willingness to follow Martha's lead at this point is particularly significant because, up to that time, she had been dominant in their relationship. It is she who disciplines the students in the play. Karen decides Mary's punishment without conferring with Martha, but when the girls are caught eavesdropping, Martha delays their punishment until she can defer to Karen who immediately knows the correct action: "We'll have to move those girls away from one another." (p. 20) And Karen autocratically decides that Martha's aunt, Mrs. Mortar, should leave, although she phrases it very diplomatically:
KAREN. Couldn't we get rid of her soon, Martha? I hate to make it hard on you, but she really ought not to be here.

MARTHA (after a moment). I know.

KAREN. We can scrape up enough money to send her away. Let's do it. (p. 13)

Karen's strength offset by Martha's weakness seems to add fuel to the suspicion that they have an unnatural relationship. Karen seems to fulfill the masculine or "butch" role while Martha is feminine, a "fem." This assumption reveals a prejudice which most heterosexuals harbor against "gays." They presume that all homosexuals follow the rule that one is dominant and "masculine" with the other being passive and "feminine." However, these sex role stereotypes are no more true for homosexuals than they are for heterosexual couples.

Karen is dominant also in her relationship with Joe, although in the strain of the confrontation with Mrs. Tilford she does at first seem to need his support. She enters with: "Is it a joke, Joe?" (p. 41) And later she vents her frustration with:

What's she talking about, Joe? What's she mean? What is she trying to do to us? What is everybody doing to us? (p. 42)

However, Karen does not stand back to let Joe defend her; even though her efforts are ineffective, Karen is assertive in her own defense.

In other interactions with Joe it is Karen who exercises the most control. She decides they should wait to
marry, and later she concludes they should break up. Joe ignores his true feelings, and insists he wants to go through with the marriage. However, Karen honestly faces their situation, and she realizes Joe is:

still trying to spare me, still trying to tell yourself that we might be all right again. But we won't be all right. Not ever, ever, ever. . . . But it's no good now, for either of us; you can see that. (pp. 59, 60)

Karen knows that the accusation of homosexuality would haunt them all their lives and eventually destroy their love for each other. Joe tries again to salvage their relationship; he agrees to go away to think rationally about their predicament, and he insists optimistically that he will return to her. However, when Karen says with finality: "No, you won't. Never, darling." (p. 60) it is clear that she has made the painful decision for both of them.

Karen is emotionally drained by the time Martha and she finally talk about the accusation that has ruined their lives. She is mystified that people could have condemned her so viciously. She protests: "But this isn't a new sin they tell us we've done. Other people aren't destroyed by it." (p. 62) And since she is sure they are innocent she is unable to take Martha's confession of love seriously. She tries to convince Martha:

You are guilty of nothing. . . . It's a lie. You're telling yourself a lie. We never thought of each other that way. (p. 63)
Since she never questions Martha's innocence, she does not think to offer reassurances. She honestly feels Martha has become unbalanced, ill from the stress of their situation. She tells her: "You are tired and sick" (p. 63) as an excuse for Martha's strange behavior. Her last advice to her--"Go and lie down, Martha. You'll feel better." (p. 63)--is offered with sincerity even though it turns out to be ironically prophetic.

There is no question that Karen is innocent of all wrong-doing. Her only mistake is to be too successful in her career, too obviously independent of men's control. As a successful woman, she attracted suspicion, and the townspeople were eager to believe unsubstantiated rumor.

Martha Dobie

Martha is the stereotypical "old maid," a role known in literature for centuries. She has all the necessary qualifications: she is pushing middle age and does not even have a male admirer; she is not physically attractive; she has annoying, waspish qualities and is "a nervous, high-strung woman." (p. 12) Even the sound of her name has an unattractive ring.

Martha's values correspond with her society's expectations, which include virtue, passivity, and domesticity in a woman. Martha wants approval; she is frantic to prove herself innocent when accused of being "unnatural." Her
personal values include dedication to work and self sacrifice. Martha certainly is industrious, believing in the value of hard work. Her days begin early, as she explains to her aunt: "I'm tired. I've been working since six o'clock this morning." (p. 17) She has devoted years of labor to the school and has willingly sacrificed personal luxuries and even necessities for the sake of her career:

It's been so damned hard building this thing up, slaving and going without things to make ends meet--think of having a winter coat without holes in the lining again! (p. 14)

Martha has a genuine fondness for the school children. She wants to protect them from the influence of her aunt and to provide them with a healthy home environment. After the girls are caught listening to their private conversation, Martha tells Mrs. Mortar:

I don't like them hearing the things you say.... the truth is that this is their home, and things shouldn't be said in it that they can't hear. When you're at your best, you're not for tender ears. (pp. 18-19)

Martha realizes the girls need to be punished for eavesdropping, but she is not a strong disciplinarian.

Martha is intelligent in a "street-wise" realistic way. She does not show her intellect as Karen does; Karen, the traditional scholar, easily corrects Lois' Latin, but Martha never refers to her proficiency in her own subjects. Martha's intelligence helps her to see situations clearly
and to deal with them realistically. She discerns that it was Mary who must have deceived Mrs. Tilford. Joe says: "So you took a child's word for it?" and Martha adds: "I knew it too." (p. 44)

Martha does not allow herself any emotional freedom. Her feelings are wrapped up tight, and she guards them carefully lest she reveal too much of herself. Martha never tells Karen honestly how she fears the loss of their intimacy. She also has an unhealthy emotional relationship with her aunt. Mrs. Mortar continually upsets Martha with her silliness and vanity, and she provokes her into a fury when she suggests that Martha's attachment to Karen is unnatural. Martha suppresses her emotion until she has an outburst: "The sooner you get out of here the better. You are making me sick and I won't stand for it any longer. I want you to leave--" (p. 18) At this point they are interrupted by the girls eavesdropping, and Martha controls her anger again since she is "afraid that her anger with her aunt will color anything she might say to the children." (p. 18) Repression of emotion in personal relationships is a pattern of behavior that Martha uses throughout the play.

Martha's dedication to career is possibly a compensation for her lack of a family life. She worries about the effect of Karen's marriage, but she never complains that she would like to marry someone herself. Rather than indicating
abnormality, this shows her acquiescence to her spinster status. She logically does not consider marriage or children as a possibility. She realized years before that marriage was not a viable option for her.

Martha's style of speech is direct and economical. When she wants something, though, she uses subordinate style with qualifiers, hesitations, and lengthening of requests. For example, her language choice when with Joe in the first act is marked by hesitation and uncertainty: "I guess I am." (p. 19); "Well, Karen and I" (p. 20). Moreover, she avoids direct requests in favor of the long, indirect route: "But I do think somebody ought to talk to Mrs. Tilford about her." (p. 19) In this sentence she also uses emphatic language to bolster her opinion, a typically "feminine" language usage. She uses wry humor consistently to emphasize the reality of situations, to point out absurdities, and as a technique for dealing with life.

Martha has a very weak self image. She leans on Karen for emotional support and companionship, and she has little faith in her own ability to function without her. Martha's main fear regarding Karen's marriage is that: "It's going to be hard going on alone afterward." (p. 14) She panics when threatened with the loss of her friend, doubts her own self worth, and cannot be assured of her ability to survive and cope with life on her own.
She even fails to let herself stand up to her aunt since she feels so unworthy. When she attempts to tell Mrs. Mortar to leave the school, she allows her to use obvious emotional attacks to get her way, and Martha feels miserable from guilt, shame, and embarrassment after their confrontation. Since Martha was raised by her aunt, it is likely that Mrs. Mortar used these tactics repeatedly in the past. And yet, Martha never allowed herself to find a suitable way of coping with her aunt's tactics. She undoubtedly had an unhappy childhood with such a parent substitute. Karen sarcastically says: "You must have had a gay childhood." and Martha replies: "(bitterly). Oh, I did. I did indeed. God, how I used to hate all that--" (p. 13) Martha's unhappiness as a child, as well as her lack of love and attention, definitely affected her self image.

When accused, Martha reacts defensively; this response is natural for her since she has never had confidence in her self worth. Later she admits that Mary's attack caused her to question herself, to ask if the charge might be true. Martha is too weak to guard against self doubt. When Karen tells her she is not guilty, Martha is incapable of self assurance like Karen's:

I've been telling myself that since the night we heard the child say it; I've been praying I could convince myself of it. I can't, I can't any longer. It's there. I don't know how, I don't know why. (p. 63)
Martha lacks the necessary self knowledge to withstand such an attack. And she is pathetically deficient in self love; she cannot forgive herself for whatever she might discover in her soul. Considering her poor self image, it is natural for her to place all blame on herself:

I don't know. It all seems to come back to me. In some way I've ruined your life. I've ruined my own. I didn't even know. (p. 63)

Martha condemns herself for her perceived failure to measure up to her culture's code of normality.

Martha's status as a spinster is significant in explaining her poor self concept as well as in considering the lesbian question, which must be included in any discussion of Martha. From evidence in the play, the question of Martha's true sexual orientation cannot be resolved. There are definite indications that she could have latent homosexual tendencies, but just as good a case can be made for her normality.

There is no doubt that Mary's accusation is false; Karen and Martha never engaged in lesbian activities. Mary had just finished reading that morning the forbidden Mademoiselle de Maupin, which describes a lesbian love affair, and she probably received inspiration for her lie from that source.

Certainly a relationship like Karen and Martha's was not uncommon in their society; unmarried women often have
close friendships, and they even go into business together. When Joe entered their lives, it is not surprising that he picked the attractive Karen instead of Martha. Martha never exhibits jealousy that Joe did not choose her; however, it is possible that she resents Karen's marriage because, irrationally, she would like to be loved by Joe. From an early age, Martha must have heard and heeded her society's message: being unattractive dooms a woman to a spinster's life. Martha's experience proved this prophecy; she concluded long ago that no man would find her worthy of love. She has no rational expectations regarding sex and no hope of having sexual allure. Old maids are expected to concede their deficiency in sexual power, as evidenced by their lack of a man.

In fact, Martha has few options for satisfying her need for affection. She is doing exactly what society expects of old maids: to form attachments to women and children. Martha clearly does not love her aunt, so it seems natural for her to love her friend Karen who does genuinely value her. Understandably, Martha fears that Joe will change their relationship. Her anger and jealousy of Joe are remarked upon because she does not follow society's dictates that, as a woman, she be passive and unselfish. Spinsters are not supposed to stand up for their love and companionship needs; old maids are traditionally powerless.
In this play a child is believed over the word of an adult woman, and the townspeople feel free to believe a charge with no shred of proof. In Martha's case, it was an ironic price to pay for the sin of being an unmarried woman—to be punished for something over which she had no control. When Joe has left, Martha does not rejoice that now she will have Karen to herself. Instead she feels remorse, guilt, and such intense self hatred that she kills herself. Martha is tricked into believing she is despicable; she accepts society's condemnation and carries out the punishment herself.

Martha has the potential for a great deal of strength in her relationships; instead, she lets others influence and control her and allows her ideas and desires to be lost. She has little influence over anyone, even the schoolgirls. Her favorite tactic is to persuade rather than to command, a covert use of force. Nonetheless, she has little success in her persuasion. In fact, Martha's efforts in the play lead to nothing but failures.

In her first scene, she fails to convince Karen to talk to Mrs. Tilford about Mary. Karen cuts her off with: "All right, all right, we'll talk it over with Joe." (p. 13) She gives Karen no argument when Karen peremptorily decides to send Mrs. Mortar away. Martha acquiesces, accepts Karen's judgment, and asks for her approval:
You've been very patient about it. I'm sorry and I'll talk to her today. It'll probably be a week or two before she can be ready to leave. Is that all right? (p. 13)

Their next topic of conversation is Karen's marriage and its probable effect on their school. Martha protests that it will have a devastating effect; Karen insists nothing will change. Martha seems to be losing the argument when they are interrupted by Joe. Martha never brings up the subject again.

Martha then has a conversation with her aunt—a talk which proves to be crucial in the play. Martha tries to interest her in leaving the school—which she dislikes anyway—and in going to London. However, Mrs. Mortar sees through her subterfuge and immediately attacks: "So? You're turning me out? At my age! Nice, grateful girl you are." (p. 17) When guilt does not sway Martha, Mrs. Mortar then tries humiliation:

I should have known by this time that the wise thing is to stay out of your way when he's in the house. . . Every time that man comes into this house, you have a fit. It seems like you just can't stand the idea of them being together. God knows what you'll do when they get married. You're jealous of him, that's what it is. (pp. 17-18)

Mrs. Mortar knows she has struck a nerve, so she goes on, calling Martha's fondness of Karen unnatural, intimating that Martha has always been overly fond of her girl friends. Martha explodes with anger and insists that her aunt leave. Poor Martha is the loser in the conflict. She wanted to
persuade her aunt to willingly leave; instead, she endured an emotional fiasco which hurt her far more than it harmed Mrs. Mortar. And, of course, later in the play we realize that it would have been better for Martha if her aunt had not left.

Next Martha has a talk with Joe in which he easily side-steps her wish that he talk to Mrs. Tilford regarding Mary and makes her doubt the worth of her ideas. When she complains about Mary he silences her with: "Aren't you taking it too seriously?" (p. 19) Martha meekly accepts his judgment but also tries again, cloaking her idea with a statement of defense:

I guess I am. But you stay around kids long enough and you won't know what to take seriously, either. But I do think somebody ought to talk to Mrs. Tilford about her. (p. 19)

Joe teases her a little: "You wouldn't be meaning me now, would you, Miss Dobie?" and Martha finally starts to make her request, taking care to use non-threatening language: "Well, Karen and I were talking about it this afternoon and--" However, Joe abruptly cuts her off: "Listen, friend, I'm marrying Karen, but I'm not writing Mary Tilford in the contract." (p. 20) Martha then gives up on an idea that we, the readers, know was a good one.

Then Joe confronts Martha with her resentment of the upcoming marriage. The power distribution in their relationship is revealed by the stage directions. Joe, the
dominant one, feels quite free to touch Martha: "Cardin takes her by the shoulders and turns her around to face him again." Martha rebels for an instant and tries to find some strength: "(pushing his hands from her shoulders). God damn you. I wish--" Her burst of emotion intimidates her and she stops. Then she asks for forgiveness; she begs for submissive physical contact as she offers her hands: "holds them out to him. Contritely." and says: "Joe, please, I'm sorry. I'm a fool, a nasty, bitter--" Martha blames herself for insolence in standing up for herself. However, Joe is happy to forgive: "(takes her hands in one of his, patting them with his other hand). Aw, shut up. (He puts an arm around her, and she leans her head against his lapel." (p. 20) Their pose is a classic symbol of weak woman gaining support and forgiveness from the all-potent man.

After this scene she and Joe become friends. Martha changes from resentment of him: "Isn't he always on his way over here?" (p. 13) to an open admiration: "Your friend's got a nice shoulder to weep on." (p. 20)

In Act 2 Martha finally tries to take an effective stand. When she enters in the confrontation scene she says: "(with great force to Mrs. Tilford). We've come to find out what you are doing." (p. 41) Martha does not waste time with conciliatory phrases or submissive gestures; at last she takes decisive, aggressive action. Martha decides her
course of action in this speech:

(softly, as though to herself). Pushed around. We're being pushed around by crazy people. (Shakes herself slightly) That's an awful thing. And we're standing here. . . We're standing here taking it. (Suddenly with violence) Didn't you know we'd come here? Were we supposed to lie down and grin while you kicked us around with these lies? (p. 42)

Martha commits herself to an active, passionate defense. When Mrs. Tilford suggests they simply leave town, Martha responds: "There must be something we can do to you, and whatever it is, we'll find it." (p. 43) And later:

What is there to do to you? What can we do to you? There must be something—something that makes you feel the way we do tonight. (p. 44)

It is vitally important to Martha to find some way to hurt Mrs. Tilford, to achieve revenge. She favors a libel suit since it would afford her public redemption.

In Act 3 we find that Martha lost the litigation, receiving public infamy rather than vindication. Indeed, it would have been better for Martha had she not insisted upon a trial. Her one assertive act led directly to more punishment for her and Karen than she could have imagined. She is devastated by the loss, but she finds some comfort in Karen's future marriage. She says: "You'll be getting married soon. Everything will be all right then." (p. 53) and later: "There mustn't be anything wrong between you and Joe. Never." (p. 54) Although she resented their marriage
before, now Martha clings to the idea that no harm was done and that their normal life will return soon.

When Mrs. Mortar returns, Martha finally expresses herself freely and is in control of the conversation. At last Martha stands up to her aunt, commands her specifically to leave, and tells her: "Because I hate you. I've always hated you." (p. 55) The catharsis Martha feels is evident in her much improved mood. She smiles as she agrees to go to Vienna with Joe and Karen, her first positive emotion since the trial. When she re-enters after their talk, she laughs and says:

Cooking always makes me feel better. Well, I guess we'll have to give the Duchess some dinner. When the hawks descend, you've got to feed them. (p. 61)

Martha's jovial mood allows her to feel forgiveness toward her aunt and optimism about the future.

Her mood is shattered when she learns that Joe has left for good. Martha feels that she is to blame for the breakup, and her admission of love for Karen is a confession rather than a declaration. Her guilt is so strong that she condemns herself and concludes that the accusation is true: she is unnatural. Although Karen tries to deny it, her assurances seem half-hearted to Martha and the message she receives is rejection.

Martha's self hatred, her fear of life without Karen, her perceived lack of options, her desire for control
over herself, and the pain of social condemnation all contribute to Martha's decision for suicide. As she exits, she gives clues to Karen:

There's a big difference between us now, Karen. I feel all dirty and... I can't stay with you anymore darling. (p. 63)

In her last statement, the verb tense reveals it all:
"Tomorrow? Karen, we would have had to invent a new language, as children do, without words like tomorrow." (p. 63)

With such hints, Martha must have felt Karen was giving tacit approval for her suicide.

Martha's suicide can be seen as the last powerful act left to her. Certainly, since the trial failed, her suicide was the ultimate solution for Mrs. Tilford's punishment; it was guaranteed to make her feel as they had felt. So, in her death, Martha finally accomplished something—a desperate solution to her lack of power.

After seeing this play, the audience is mystified that a child's malicious lie could be so blown out of proportion and create such hysteria that it destroys the lives of two women and even in the end convinces the weaker of the two that the charge might not be false. However, Hellman took the idea of the play from an actual police case, and it has historical precedent in the Salem witch trials of the 17th century. Part of the explanation lies in psychology and the dark force that drives people to hysteria
in finding a scapegoat for cultural tensions. But more can be explained by the socially enforced powerlessness of women which makes them easy victims for unresolved aggression. The society is eager to ostracize them, and they, like the accused witches of Salem, are unable to prevent it due to their shortage of significant influence or control.

Comparison With Related Analyses

Other writers have examined the characters of The Children's Hour using various methods of criticism. The work can easily be divided into two groups: those which use traditional approaches and those which employ a feminist viewpoint. Not surprisingly, the first group far outnumbers the second.

The traditional writers all share a certain myopia concerning the women in the play. They simply do not see several important aspects of character while they do focus sharply on less important issues. Also they are not very sympathetic to Martha and Karen, although they admit the women are innocent victims. The writers are very eager to believe the worst about the women, especially regarding Martha.

After The Children's Hour opened in 1934, numerous reviews were published. Joseph Wood Krutch's review, written about two weeks after the play opened, represents the typical reaction. Krutch loved the first two acts, but
like other critics he hated the third act. He writes:

There then follows a third act so strained, so improbable, and so thoroughly boring that the effect is almost completely destroyed, and one is left to wonder that anything so inept was ever allowed to reach production.  

Krutch's boredom was caused by his inability to focus on the women as legitimate main characters. On the other hand, Krutch finds it natural to look for strong effective action from the male and ascribes to Dr. Cardin an active role he never assumed in the play: "All the pupils are withdrawn by horrified parents, and the physician fiance of one of the proprietors undertakes to expose the plotter. He almost succeeds..." Krutch does not dream that the women might try to expose Mary's treachery, and he says nothing of their efforts.

Krutch's bias is for Mary as the main character, and he is furious that she does not appear in the third act:

the whole of the dramatic interest is centered upon the perverse child, and the only real concern of the audience is with her. . . . The character unceremoniously dropped is incomparably the realest and most vivid person in the play, as well as dramatically the center of the action. Moreover, all the real tension has developed around her, and the solution of the play lies inevitably in her fate.

Krutch could not fathom why anyone should be interested in two women schoolteachers. He makes his attitude clear with this statement: "the indescribably tedious last act concerns itself exclusively with the two teachers--one of whom loses her fiance while the other commits suicide." One
wonders what else Karen and Martha could have done to attract Mr. Krutch's attention! Instead of questioning his own analysis, he attacks Hellman's judgment as a playwright. He concludes she was not aware of how the play actually developed, having "begun as the story of two girls [italics mine] wrongly accused of lesbian love." Krutch even robs Karen and Martha of the dignity accorded to women.

Several books have been written on Hellman and her plays, most from a biographical viewpoint. All discuss The Children's Hour, primarily centering on the controversy surrounding the production and on critical opinion regarding the third act. There are few comments on the characters individually.

Richard Moody is short-sighted in his view of the women. He, like Krutch, cannot imagine women defending themselves, so he fastens his tunnel-vision onto Joe Cardin as the potential savior of the situation. His comment on the end of the second act is:

Mary is in command. The adults are helpless against the machinations of this hateful child. Perhaps Cardin can save them, but during these final moments he has not spoken.

No mention is made of the possibility that Martha or Karen might save themselves. Moody's opinion of Joe and Karen's confrontation scene in the last act includes an insult for Karen as well as disbelief that Cardin really will not save the day:
Karen is right, yet we wonder if they fought hard enough. Weren't Karen's arguments a bit thin, fevered rationalizations about the shadow that hung over them? What happened to the no-nonsense Cardin who first exposed Mary's trickery? Was he in court? On the stand?6

Moody feels Cardin's silence ranks as one of the major flaws of the play: "Why didn't Cardin shake the truth out of Mary, out of Rosalie? Why didn't he testify at the trial?"7 and "Audiences were undisturbed by the weaknesses in the play: Cardin's silence, Mary's absence from the final act, the anti-climactic closing scene."8 Indeed there are weaknesses in the play, but surely Martha's and Karen's inaction is just as puzzling as Joe's. Moody simply does not see the women as equals to men. Invariably he refers to Joe as "Cardin" while familiarly using the first names of Karen and Martha. They just do not have enough status for Moody to take them seriously.

Critics are happy to believe that Martha--and maybe even Karen--is a lesbian. We have Hellman's testimony that the play is not about the homosexual issue: "this is really not a play about lesbianism, but about a lie."9 It is impossible to prove Martha's guilt or innocence with evidence from the play. Certainly she never experienced a homosexual act, so if she is guilty, she is condemned in her thoughts and feelings alone. However, many critics treat Martha as if there is no question about her guilt. For Hellman, the main issue was the effect of a lie; for critics
the main interest is unnatural love, an example of men's tendency to sexualize women.

Moody brands them as homosexual: "In the third act the ground has shifted. Another play is beginning about Lesbians who live in a society that punishes Lesbians."10 The idea that Hellman abruptly changed the theme of the play in the third act was a major flaw for most critics. Jacob Adler also assumes the truth of the lesbian charge: "Martha comes to realize that the accusations, so far as her own desires go, were valid, and she commits suicide."11

Nowhere do we find a sensitive, sympathetic consideration of Martha's complex personality; instead, critics immediately believe she is gay and imply that suicide is a fitting end for such a person. Holmin says: "as a result of Martha's insight into her true nature (the climax), suicide seems to her the only logical finality, and thus is valid and almost necessary as a part of the denouement."12

These critics fail to realize that Martha had complicated reasons for her suicide, several of which had no connection with homosexuality. Certainly she had few options regarding her future. These motivations include her battered self image, her fear of going on alone, her desperate desire to have control or power over herself, her altruistic wish to spare Karen any more contamination from
her. None of these explanations require Martha to be guilty of lesbianism.

Holmin, however, builds quite a case for believing in Martha's abnormality, citing such clues as: "the first slight hint of possible perversion," the "extreme possessiveness on the part of Martha" when she and Karen first talk of the upcoming marriage, and "Martha indicates irrational concern when she charges Karen with indifference to the school."\(^{13}\) It is debatable that Martha is possessive or indulging in irrational concern; in fact, Martha seems much less naive than Karen regarding the effect of a marriage on a friendship or partnership.

Holmin also fastens on Cardin as the potential hero, while ignoring the women. She becomes irritated, though, with "his annoying hesitation and inaction later in the play."\(^{14}\) At the end of Act 2, she states: "We are left with the dramatic questions: will Cardin believe the charges? what will be the effect upon the teachers? will Mary's deceit be found out?"\(^{15}\) Implied is Joe's activity and freedom and the women's passivity. Holmin is further displeased with Joe in the third act:

Cardin in Act III also pales before our eyes. What kind of man insists that another woman accompany him and his bride on their honeymoon?\(^{16}\)

Obviously Holmin would prefer Joe to be a macho John Wayne
hero instead of a sensitive, caring person who had compassion for Martha and did not want to desert her.

Doris Falk also wants to believe in Martha's perversion. She states: "Hellman carefully prepared her audience in act one for Martha's final revelation. Martha is portrayed as depressed and fearful at the prospect of Karen's marriage." In addition, she theorizes that Hellman wrote the play with the question: "What if, after all, one--or even both--women had such feelings consciously or unconsciously?” The point is that these critics eagerly label Martha as a lesbian without pausing to consider the ambiguity of evidence that Hellman purposely left in the play. The feminist view is that Martha may or may not be homosexual; either way, it would make no difference to the true theme of the play: the effect of a lie.

The feminist critics who have commented on The Children's Hour are alike in their attention to the women in the play and their sensitive, sympathetic attitude toward them. Honor Moore states in the introduction to her collection of plays by contemporary American women:

the wholeness of many of her characters, especially her female characters, is impressive. Although The Children's Hour dramatized oppressive attitudes toward lesbianism that are now dated... the relationship between Karen and Martha acknowledges a kind of friendship between women--trusting, conscious and intimate--that is rarely dramatized.

Victoria Sullivan and James Hatch emphasize in their
anthology introduction that:

Women in positions of authority have always been particularly vulnerable to slander. . . they are expected to be exemplary at the same time that they are suspected of hiding sinister perversions. If they were "normal," the reasoning goes, why would they desire careers?19

Martha and Karen definitely are in the precarious social position of being both old maids and career women.

Sullivan and Hatch provide this insight into Martha's admission of love: "Perhaps Lillian Hellman is suggesting that if a woman can learn to love herself, she will not be afraid to love another."20 Certainly Martha's biggest problem is her low self esteem. And Cynthia Sutherland comments briefly on the play, noting the important effect of the old maid stereotype:

the plays for which American women have won Pulitzer Prizes deal essentially with the "old maid" figure in whom the threat of sex-role conflict is "neutralized," as did the near winner, Lillian Hellman's The Children's Hour . . . which dealt with the cruel ostracism of suspected lesbians.21

Katherine Lederer writes a perceptive, sensible discussion of The Children's Hour. She explains the critics' error regarding the theme:

they misunderstood the playwright's purpose. The play is not about a psychopathic child or about lesbianism as subject or theme. The subject is character assassination; the theme is the damage done in our world by so-called "good" people, through self-righteous judgment, selfishness, blindness to their own weaknesses. The havoc is created, not by Mary's lie, but by adult reaction to it.22
Lederer concentrates on the critical reaction to the play, and unfortunately does not discuss the individual characters.

Sharon Friedman does consider character in her dissertation, "Feminist Concerns in the Works of Four Twentieth Century American Women Dramatists," which includes a chapter on Hellman. Her main purpose is to identify feminist themes in the plays, but she does analyze certain characters to some extent. Her comments on Karen include: "Karen Wright... does not rely on a man to escape the slander which threatens her economic and social standing" and "Though her reputation has suffered, Karen does not cling to Joe, but rather breaks from him until she has reestablished her life on her own." Friedman recognizes Karen's independence and efficiency as well as her autonomy to make her own decisions.

Friedman treats Martha with sympathy and feminist insight, especially in her explanation of Martha's suicide:

Martha struggles to feel what she now believes she has always dimly perceived: She loves Karen "the way they have said." Shocked by her own realization, Martha withdraws to ruminate on the implications of her previously unconscious behavior. . . . Martha suffers the stigma of lesbianism, a societal torture which causes her to take her life. Unable to live with Karen nor to live within a self which the world treats as leper, Martha quietly steals off to kill herself.

Friedman does not brand her as a lesbian; Martha "struggles" to feel what she "now believes." Friedman puts the emphasis
on Martha's coming self awareness, the woman's point of view, and blames society for her demise. In fact, Friedman believes the fear of social condemnation forced Martha to hide even from herself feelings that were deemed "unnatural":

This is the story of a woman who has not known that she is a lesbian; the enemy is a society which has prohibited her from knowing what she feels by the promise of punishment upon becoming self-aware.

Martha's fear prevented her from confronting herself and coming to terms with what she found.

Friedman identifies the following feminist concerns in The Children's Hour:

1) the portrayal of lesbianism from the point of view of women—one woman who experiences lesbian feelings, and one who does not, but who is accused of lesbianism;
2) the dramatization of a close relationship between women, a relationship which exists apart from their relationships with men;
3) the portrayal of independent women who earn their own living and who value their work, qualities which may encourage the slander and certainly indicate the problems of its negative effects;
4) the psychic colonization of women who are, perhaps, more than men, intimidated by societal norms, particularly with regard to the definition of appropriate sex-roles.

The technique of comparing analyses definitely has provided insight into the effectiveness of the feminist methodology of this study. From the comparison, one can come to several conclusions. The critics with traditional approaches tend to produce sexist or at least biased statements about the characters. They focus automatically
on men as the central interest, thereby missing the true significance of the theme. They unconsciously sexualize the women by focusing so intently on lesbianism. The feminist critics give special attention to the women and treat the homosexual issue as a manifestation of Martha's conflict between self knowledge and society's expectations.
Notes

2 Krutch, p. 657.
3 Krutch, p. 657.
4 Krutch, p. 657.
6 Moody, p. 54.
7 Moody, p. 55.
8 Moody, pp. 57-58.
10 Moody, p. 55.
13 Holmin, pp. 17-18.
14 Holmin, p. 19.
15 Holmin, p. 22.
16 Holmin, p. 23.
20Sullivan, p. ix.

Cynthia Sutherland, "American Women Playwrights as Mediators of the 'Woman Problem,'" Modern Drama 21 (September 1978):330.


24Friedman, pp. 266-267.

25Friedman, p. 274.

26Friedman, p. 403.
CHAPTER 3

THE LITTLE FOXES

Regina Giddens and Birdie Hubbard of The Little Foxes are the major characters analyzed in this chapter; the minor character Alexandra Giddens is examined briefly. As in Chapter 2, the purpose of these analyses is to demonstrate the practical application of the methodology of this study. The Little Foxes, first produced in February, 1939, is perhaps Hellman's best known play, with striking, memorable women who are fully characterized and who contribute to a significant degree to the development of the play.

World of the Play

The Little Foxes is set in 1900 in the deep South, and the world of the play is certainly influenced by these circumstances. The power structure favoring white males is acknowledged and unchallenged by the characters. Examples of racism are just as blatant as instances of sexism; however, the characters accept these as commonplace, and obvious sexism—even brutality—is considered normal. Members of society are slotted into caste pigeonholes: their value as individuals is determined by their sex, race, and economic standing.
Since the play takes place at the turn of the century, sex roles are rigidly defined, and male dominance is the "given" of the culture. Women are unquestionably subordinate and inferior in all respects. Their place is in the home with children and the servants, certainly not in the business world. A woman's ability to travel alone is doubted, since she needs the help and sponsorship of a man at all times. Females are admired for—and expected to have—beauty, purity, sweet disposition, and quiet speech. In marital relations, wives have few rights. The concept of community property is unheard of; the husband legally owns the wife, children, and all their money and possessions.

Naturally, contemporary audiences will view The Little Foxes with their own values and attitudes in mind. They will see the world of the play in a modern light, questioning outmoded practices and ideas. For the contemporary spectator, a discussion of the sexual power relations in the world of this particular play is revealing.

Regina Giddens

The name Regina means "queen" in Latin, and it is a fitting title for Regina Giddens. She has many royal qualities: her poise, her intelligence and insight into complicated situations, her regal outlook regarding her own importance, and her ability to give the impression of having
dominance and power. Most important, however, Regina has no real power as long as the King is there. The term "figurehead" is particularly appropriate for her because she is expected to fulfill her role--to be the queen--but certainly not to take independent action or to have true power.

Regina also plays the stereotypical role of the "domineering bitch." This role is a favorite misogynistic image in literature; its popularity has ranged from Noah's wife in the early miracle plays, to Shakespeare's shrew, and to modern literature. The traditional characteristics of the bitch include: nagging, a loud, annoying voice, selfishness, and a desire to be dominant over men. The domineering bitch is often intended as a comical role with the audience sneering at the audacity of the woman. However, Regina's role is decidedly serious. Most critics have condemned her as a greedy, unprincipled woman. However, if the surface of the play is scratched and her image, actions, and motivations are examined in depth, Regina is revealed as much more than a stereotype, and the truth of the "domineering bitch" label comes into question.

Regina's image is partially formed by her occupation--or, more accurately, her lack of occupation or purpose. Ostensibly, her career is to be a wife and mother; these roles, as well as the "sister" role she plays, define Regina exclusively in terms of her relationships with men.
Regina herself has no legitimate, socially sanctioned career other than her marriage to occupy her mind. She uses her "career" as an excuse for remaining at home while Horace was in the hospital: "You know, Horace, I wanted to come and be with you in the hospital, but I didn't know where my duty was. Here, or with you." (p. 166) However, Regina is not happy in her domestic role, as evidenced by her desire to scheme along with her brothers and eventually leave home for Chicago. At heart, Regina feels a void in her life; she senses accurately that she is nothing, but she would truly love the opportunity to become something and gain respect and admiration from others.

Regina's hopes for herself involve her values, which also compose a major portion of the image she projects. She has no interest in improving her marriage or in anything domestic; rather, she is focussed upon herself—perhaps selfishly—to improve her quality of life. In this aim, Regina is squarely at odds with what her culture expects. As subordinates, women are supposed to care about and serve others while sacrificing concern for self. In this society any amount of self assertion in a woman is regarded as selfishness.

In addition, Regina's scheme for investing her husband's money is in conflict with her society's belief that women have no place in business, as Regina herself
mentions in her talk with Mr. Marshall: "I'm afraid they mean that this is the time for the ladies to leave the gentlemen to talk business." (p. 141) Leo's faux pas with Marshall leads Oscar to confirm another truism of the culture: "worldliness is not a mark of beauty in any woman." (p. 138) Again in opposition with societal values, Regina would love to acquire a certain measure of worldliness; her lifelong desire has been to become a sophisticated and cosmopolitan resident of Chicago.

Regina's dream of Chicago has far more significance than its surface meaning indicates. She does not merely want a change of pace through an exciting holiday. Chicago is Regina's metaphor for independence and self actualization, and she intends to achieve her dream in order to make up for slights and lost opportunities she thinks she has experienced. She felt neglected and deprived in her youth; she was:

Lonely for all the things I wasn't going to get. Everybody in this house was so busy and there was so little place for what I wanted. I wanted the world. Then, and then--(Smiles) Papa died and left the money to Ben and Oscar. (p. 188)

Regina correctly perceived that her desires were not important to her family. Her disinheritation by her father was a betrayal, and she sees it as the primary cause of her situation: "Ah, Ben, if Papa had only left me his money." (p. 198) Regina feels she has never been allowed to fulfill her
needs; she has always had to do the will of others:

Somewhere there has to be what I want, too. Life goes too fast. . . . Too many people used to make me do too many things. (p. 199)

Regina's hope of escape to Chicago means freedom for her to finally be what she wants without restrictions; it is her symbol of fulfillment and autonomy. She thinks she might enjoy being a fashionable society woman like Mrs. Marshall. Then again, she might just indulge in Paris shopping sprees. What Regina actually will do is not as important as what her dreams indicate about her personality. The essence of her Chicago fantasy is to escape from restrictions and finally receive the attention and admiration she deserves.

Regina equates money with power and realizes that she will have to accumulate a great deal of both in order to reach her Chicago goal. She is a practical, sensible woman who does not hesitate to break with the existing cultural mores to achieve her ambitions.

Her style of speech is usually direct and serious, but when she tries to impress or persuade a man, her speech changes and becomes flowery and frivolous. For example, in her interchange with Marshall, Regina's speech is flirtatious and typically "feminine." She compliments him, "laughs gaily," and qualifies her sentences with "I hope" and "I'm afraid." (p. 141) Also, in her first scene with
Horace she tries to use "feminine wiles" to persuade him to invest in the mill. She masks her true feelings and uses indirect language. At times she uses repetitive rhetorical questions: "About us? About you and me? Thinking about you and me after all these years. You shall tell me everything you thought--someday." (p. 167) Then her style changes to frankly subordinate, and her speech is peppered with "I was stupid," "It's all my fault," "Please... please do this for me now," "I'll try. Really, I will." (pp. 168-169) Her pleading with Horace sharply contrasts with her style at the end of the play when she has the power to order Ben: "You will come back in this room and sit down. I have something more to say." (p. 194)

Regina's self image is very positive and strong. She has no guilt over her action, and she never doubts her own worth. At all times she is confident and self assured. Others do not see Regina in this light, however, and fail to give her due credit. There are several clues throughout the play indicating that other characters misprize Regina:

HORACE. How little people know about each other. (laughs) But you'll know better about Regina next time, eh, Ben? (p. 170)

REGINA. You know me well enough to know that I don't mind taking the other way.

BEN (after a second, slowly). None of us has ever known you well enough, Regina. (p. 197)

Regina's ethos suffers the undervaluation commonly accorded to women in her society. It is important to the development
of the play that Regina is not understood and esteemed by the men.

Regina's actions in the play, like the image she projects, reveal hidden aspects of her personality. The physical boundaries of her world are very narrow, and the modern audience member would wonder, if she has always dreamed of Chicago, why she does not simply go there. The answer is that Regina cannot leave because her society allows her no physical freedom; a grown woman was rarely permitted to travel alone for the sake of family duty much less to go on a pleasure trip. Regina's movements are limited to her house and her town; she has no option to travel about or to relocate.

Regina's intellectual freedom is also curtailed. She is gifted with a clever, sharp mind, but since her culture does not appreciate a smart woman, she lacks any outlet for her abilities. She attempts to operate on her brothers' level in business, and they tolerate it because they need the Giddens' financial contribution. However, Ben and Oscar continually remind her that she is overstepping her boundaries. And, of course, all of her ideas are received with a cold shoulder from Horace.

Her society also puts certain constraints on emotional expression. Women were presumed, at that time, to be sensitive creatures, and unabashed displays of sorrow,
pity, and other "feminine" feelings were expected and condoned. At no time, however, were women permitted to experience and show anger. At best, outbursts of temper were considered unladylike; more often a woman's demonstration of anger or willfulness signaled a dangerous, rebellious spirit. Regina is the recipient of social disapproval since rage is the emotion she most freely expresses.

Regina's lack of financial freedom is significant to her personality and actions. She has no resources of her own and no control over any of her husband's money. She receives funds only at the generous whim of Horace, and must beg for permission if she wants to invest. Regina inherited none of her father's fortune, and, although this would constitute a major humiliation for a son, Regina was expected to accept as a fact of life that men inherit all the wealth. Regina bitterly resented the favoritism and sexism her father's will represented. However, she had little choice but to resign herself to the paternalistic system of succession of wealth and wait for her chance for retribution. At no time did Regina have any means of earning her own income. For most of her life she was trapped, totally financially disenfranchised.

Understandably, Regina seized upon the opportunity to assume fiscal control when Horace was in the hospital.
She convinced her brothers that she was acting as his agent and was fully empowered to make financial decisions. It is ironic, though, that even at the height of her influence, she was never allowed to sign Marshall's contracts. Only her husband's signature was valid, and Regina's pipe dream came to an abrupt end when Horace returned.

Although Regina has been labeled the domineering bitch by many critics, an examination of her power status in the play shows the true measure of her influence and control. Of course she has authority over the servants. She does not hesitate to give orders to Cal to return her breakfast to the kitchen: "The grits isn't hot enough. Take it back." (p. 162) and she has no trouble silencing Addie:

ADDIE. Going alone? Going by herself? A child that age! Mr. Horace ain't going to like Zan traipsing up there by herself.
REGINA (sharply). Go upstairs and lay out Alexandra's things.
ADDIE. He'd expect me to be along--
REGINA. I'll be up in a few minutes to tell you what to pack (p. 152)

She uses simple imperatives when dealing with inferiors. However, when she is with peers or superiors, or finds that her demands are resisted, she employs a markedly different style, resorting to some form of subterfuge instead of open commands. Moreover, her tactics fall into a pattern: first, she tries putting on an act, usually a "feminine" one, to charm her opponent; then, if that fails,
she tries manipulation, relying heavily on emotions like love or guilt; after that, she resorts to begging, openly acknowledging her inferior status; if all else fails, she explodes in anger.

With Mr. Marshall, Regina has only to use her "womanly wiles" act to charm him completely. As noted earlier, she uses her best "feminine" speech strategies, bolsters his ego with compliments, and even honors him with their best wine. In this speech, she fishes for a compliment: "I should like crowds of people, and theaters, and lovely women—Very lovely women, Mr. Marshall? (p. 137) That Regina is successful is shown in Marshall's courtly, almost amorous attention to her.

When Alexandra challenges her authority, Regina switches to emotional manipulation in this interchange:

ALEXANDRA. He may be too sick to travel. I couldn't make him think he had to come home for me, if he is too sick to--
REGINA (looks at her, sharply, challengingly). You couldn't do what I tell you to do, Alexandra?
ALEXANDRA (quietly). No. I couldn't. If I thought it would hurt him.
REGINA (after a second's silence, smiles pleasantly). But you are doing this for Papa's own good. . . . It's the best possible cure for him to come home and be taken care of here. He mustn't stay there any longer and listen to those alarmist doctors. You are doing this entirely for his sake. Tell your papa that I want him to come home, that I miss him very much.
ALEXANDRA (slowly). Yes, Mama. (p. 153)

With more intimidating opponents, like Horace, Regina progresses through all four tactics in a confronta-
tion. She must trick him into returning from the hospital, and she has to use all of her persuasive techniques when he arrives home. She tries her "act" first, pretending to be happy to see him, telling him she wanted to be with him in the hospital, giving the impression that she missed him. She soon decides this approach will not work as they start to bicker, and so she tries to make Horace feel remorse over his sexual transgressions. This has little effect, as Horace informs her: "You'll not make me feel guilty anymore." (p. 168) Regina then turns to open subservience:

It's foolish for us to fight this way. I didn't mean to be unpleasant. I was stupid... It's all my fault... I'll try. Honestly, I will. Horace, Horace, I know you're tired, but, but-- couldn't you stay down here a few minutes longer? I want Ben to tell you something. (p. 168)

Regina continues begging with this plea: "Please. You've said we'll try our best with each other. I'll try. Really, I will. Please do this for me now." (p. 169) Then Ben, Oscar, and Regina try to convince Horace to invest in their deal. Regina acts particularly obsequious. She says, "Oh, I'm sorry" (p. 170) when she fails to anticipate her husband's desire for a glass of water. She carefully acknowledges his dominance: "Ben has agreed to give us--you, I mean--a much larger share." (p. 170) She "looks at him nervously" and "laughs nervously." (p. 171)

Unfortunately, all of Regina's anxiety and efforts are in vain. Horace regally refuses the deal without even
giving his reasons. Regina smart from this indignity, and her anger starts to surface: "I've waited long enough for your answer. I'm not going to wait any longer. . . . We have waited for you here like children. Waited for you to come home." (p. 172) As the legal owner of his wife and child, Horace feels assured that he should make the decisions, and he pompously says: "I must do what I think best." (p. 172) With this dismissal, Regina's fury explodes, but this attempt at persuading Horace proves to be as futile as the others.

In their final confrontation, Horace has devised a suitable punishment for Regina: to change his will so that Alexandra will inherit most of his money with Regina receiving only the Union Pacific bonds which her brothers had stolen. In effect, Horace planned to disinherit her just as her father had done years before. He gloats: "You won't do anything. Because you can't. . . . For once in your life I am tying your hands." (p. 187)

This is a desperate situation for Regina: her dream of wealth, respect, and independence is destroyed; none of her persuasive techniques have worked with Horace; and she is threatened again with the ultimate humiliation of disinheritation. Regina's only option is to try to hasten Horace's death. Consequently, she deliberately upsets him, and then refuses to get him his medicine, a "passive" murder
by omission. Regina is considered by many to be a cold-blooded killer. However, from her point of view she had no choice; she was acting in self defense.

As with Horace, Regina is dominated by Ben through most of the play. They both enjoy the intellectual stimulation of the pursuit of wealth as well as their sparring for power, and Regina changes from her usual manipulative response to function as an equal with Ben using intellectual persuasion. It is understandably thrilling for her to be accepted as a peer, and she relishes her success in getting a larger percentage of the profits for Horace. However, Ben always remembers that she has no real power--only the hope of derived power from Horace. And even when she wins the larger share, Regina retains her subordinate status: "Well, you should know me well enough to know that I wouldn't be asking [italics mine] for things I didn't think I could get." (p. 149) Ben only allows her to "play the game" on an equal basis with him because he needs Horace's money.

After Horace has refused to invest and Oscar has confided his scheme to steal Horace's bonds, Ben is exuberant and does not bother to veil his dominance over his sister. He is flip as he toys with her:

REGINA. He will change his mind. I'll find a way to make him. What's the longest you can wait now?
BEN. I could wait until next week. But I can't
wait until next week. (He giggles, pleased) I could but I can't. Could and can't. Well, I must go now. I'm very late— (p. 175)

REGINA (Taking a step to him). I demand to know what—you are lying. You are trying to scare me. You haven't got the money. How could you have it? You can't have—(Ben laughs) You will wait until I—

(Horace comes into view on the landing.)

BEN. You are getting out of hand. Since when do I take orders from you? (p. 176)

Ben not only has total control but also he has the infuriating habit of advising Regina to "act like a lady" to get what she wants. He recalls to her their mother's advice: "It's unwise for a good-looking woman to frown. ... Softness and a smile do more to the heart of men—" (p. 172)

Regina continues to vie for controlling power, and when she feels her victory is near due to Horace's imminent death, she orders: "You will come back in this room and sit down. I have something more to say." (p. 194) However, Ben chastises her for her presumption:

Since when do I take orders from you? ...(softly, pats her hand). Horace has already clipped your wings and very wittily. Do I have to clip them, too? (Smiles at her) You'd get farther with a smile, Regina. I'm a soft man for a woman's smile. (p. 194)

Regina is not daunted and continues with her demand:

I'm smiling, Ben. I'm smiling because you are quite safe while Horace lives. But I don't think Horace will live. And if he doesn't live I shall want seventy-five percent in exchange for the bonds. (p. 195)

Ben ignores her threat and criticizes her for her arrogance:
"Greedy! What a greedy girl [italics mine] you are! You want so much of everything." (p. 195) He patronizes her, as he feels certain of his own triumph:

Learn to make threats when you can carry them through. For how many years have I told you a good-looking woman gets more by being soft and appealing? Mama used to tell you that. (p. 195)

Ben's condescension and dominance finally end when Horace dies, and Ben realizes that Regina actually does have power.

Just as Regina's true status is misunderstood, there are many other misconceptions that enjoy popularity with critics. First, is it true that she is greedy? Greed is defined as a selfish wish for more that what one needs. Especially when compared with her brothers, with whom she is linked as sharing the same motives, Regina does not seem greedy. She is merely trying to fulfill her needs. Ben and Oscar, in contrast, are the "fat cats" who already have wealth and dominance; Regina has no financial resources or power. And when Regina tries to get two-thirds instead of her original one-third share of the deal is she being greedy? On the contrary, Regina is relishing the challenge of bargaining with her brothers. Indeed, she learned the technique of holding out for more from them:

I should think that if you knew your money was very badly needed, well, you just might say, I want more, I want a bigger share. You boys have done that. I've heard you say so. (p. 149)
Another common misconception is that Regina is pure evil, while Horace is total good. He does give the impression of being quite noble, unselfish, stoically enduring pain—a veritable saint. However, there is evidence in the play, in addition to his cruel treatment of Regina, that Horace has many undesirable qualities. He accuses Regina of being greedy, yet he must have been greedy himself to rise from a clerk's position and accumulate his wealth. He must have done some financial scheming of his own, and he admits that his deals have not always been totally honest or beneficial: "I'll do no more harm now. I've done enough." (p. 177)

In addition, Horace was a workaholic, who had little time for his family. We have his word that he "never had much time to think before" and that his enforced rest in the hospital was "the first holiday I've had since I was a little kid." (p. 166) He used to play the violin, but he stopped before Alexandra was old enough to remember it: "Papa used to play? . . . I never knew—" (p. 178) And although Horace acts quite noble when he accuses Regina and her brothers of not caring about the suffering and poverty of others, his own servant Cal is described: "He has on an old coat and is carrying a torn umbrella." (p. 180) If Horace is so concerned about the welfare of the town and the
well-being of its citizens, why was he not more generous to the poor instead of concentrating on his own fortune?

Horace clearly has controlled Regina for years and has tried to mold her into an obedient, respectful wife. This domination pushed Regina to the limits of her endurance and provided ample provocation for her actions. That she is a victim of sex-bound imprisonment is strikingly revealed if the situation is reversed. Picture a husband begging for money from his all-powerful wife. If, after the wife has threatened to disinherit the husband he then aids in her swift demise, the traditional audience would applaud! It would be a classic example of the "worm finally turning."

In these circumstances, however, Regina is righteously condemned for her actions. People are critical of Regina because her pain and humiliation are hidden in the text; Horace's cruelty to Regina is covert but still deadly.

Their marriage was a mistake; both of them wed the wrong person. Their years together have been a battle for dominance with each trying to change the other to her/his wishes. Yet Regina is considered a bitch for trying to change her husband; Horace's desire to control Regina is regarded as normal. Regina merely wanted a man who was strong enough to tolerate, even appreciate, independence and equality in a woman.
A controversial opinion held by many critics is that the Hubbard mill would harm the town; as Horace says:

Why should I give you the money? (Very angrily) To pound the bones of this town to make dividends for you to spend? You wreck the town, you and your brothers, you wreck the town and live on it.

( p. 176)

However, modern viewers would more likely consider the deal to be a good one. As Ben explains:

The century's turning, the world is open. Open for people like you and me. Ready for us, waiting for us. After all this is just the beginning. There are hundreds of Hubbards sitting in rooms like this throughout the country. All their names aren't Hubbard, but they are all Hubbards and they will own this country someday. ( p. 197)

Ben was right; the audience of today is composed of Hubbards who think that economic expansion is a good idea. Rather than rape the town, the mill would bring prosperity to the area, with wages higher than the local market had provided. This attitude shows Horace's refusal of investment capital in its true light--as an arbitrary punishment of Regina.

Most critics also downgrade Regina for her apparent lack of motherly love, and they feel that only Addie and Horace look out for Alexandra's welfare. On the contrary, Regina cares genuinely for her daughter, wants her to have the things she herself lacked as a girl, and desires to get her away from the bad environment of home:

It will be good for you to get away from here. Good for me, too. Time heals most wounds, Alexandra.
You're young, you shall have all the things I wanted. I'll make the world for you the way I wanted it to be for me. . . . Be good for you to get away from all this. (p. 198)

And it is clear that Regina never intended to let Leo marry Alexandra; she only agreed to think about it in order to placate Oscar.

At the end of the play, Regina has won, and she is happy in her victory. She would like Alexandra to be with her in Chicago, but she does not want to force her affections:

We don't have to be bad friends. I don't want us to be bad friends, Alexandra. (Starts, stops, turns to Alexandra) Would you like to come and talk to me, Alexandra? Would you--would you like to sleep in my room tonight? (p. 199)

Her last line is usually interpreted as showing emotional weakness; however, it can also be seen as Regina's first attempt to win over the reluctant Alexandra. After all, Regina knows that her daughter could threaten her position by raising suspicions about the circumstances of Horace's death. It is logical for her to try to get Alexandra on her side. Regina is fairly confident that she knows her daughter: "Well, you'll change your mind in a few days." (p. 199)

The woman that has emerged from this analysis has a far different image than the one traditionally assigned to Regina. Although she does have some undesirable qualities,
Regina is also a likeable character who could be admired for her spunk and craftiness in the face of oppressive control.

Birdie Hubbard

Birdie's name functions as a metaphor which suggests most aspects of her personality. She is indeed like a bird in her actions and her mind; she is delicate, timid, nervous, impulsive, and flighty. Moreover, she is a caged creature; her freedom is severely curtailed, and she is victimized by the "foxes" around her. Birdie's preference for the diminutive form of her name reflects her lack of mature responsibility and authority.

She has simple, innocent values, uncolored by adult ambiguity. She loves quiet and peacefulness; she feels compassion for animals, the poor, and the sick; above all, she values kindness.

She is the stereotypical "submissive wife" and is subordinate to the point of being ludicrous. She fits in well with her society's expectations since she is meek, obedient, and selfless. Birdie enjoys her role, the self abasement it demands, and even the domestic scene, but she is not happy with her own marriage and child. She suffers from a lack of love and the unremitting, stifling control of her husband. Instead of trying to solve her problems, Birdie turns to drink as her only dependable source of comfort and to forget her sorrows.
Birdie's image assuredly is not an intellectual one. She is silly and light-minded, truly a "birdbrain." As a young girl, she was never encouraged to be smart—an "unfeminine" trait—only to be childish and dependent. Her ideas are badly received, if not ridiculed, by others. Oscar says she is stupid to think Marshall would want to see her music album; Regina ignores her suggestion that she accompany Alexandra to retrieve Horace; none of the characters are impressed with her idea of living at Lionnet. Only Alexandra, her beloved niece, pays attention and agrees with any one of Birdie's thoughts.

Birdie's style of speech reinforces her low status. She is able to order the servants with fairly direct speech:

*Left* drawer, Cal. Tell him that twice because he forgets. And tell him not to let any of the things drop out of the album and to bring it right in here when he comes back. (p. 136)

However, especially with Oscar, she is uncertain and timid. In her first scene she shows this with speech marked by qualifiers and fillers: "Oh, Oscar. . . . But, really, Oscar. Really I promised." (p. 136) She uses emphasis to try to strengthen her defense: "But, Oscar, Mr. Marshall said most specially he wanted to see my album. . . . Mr. Marshall wants to see that. Very, very much." (p. 136) She gets repetitive and defensive when excited:

He wasn't bored. I don't believe he was bored. . . . I just don't believe it. . . . What am I doing? I am not doing anything. What am I doing? (p. 137)
Throughout the play her speech is filled with indecision, fear, and self effacement:

The autograph? Oh. Well. Really, Mr. Marshall. . . . Really I. . . . I didn't get it because, well, because I had--I--I had a little headache and-- (p. 139)

Birdie also uses repetitive questions to show bewilderment and to avoid communicating a definite opinion: "Introduce you? In Chicago? You mean you really might go?" (p. 143)

In contrast, her speech with peers or friends is much more assured. In Act 3 when she is with Horace and Alexandra she speaks directly and honestly without effort.

Not having enough status or confidence, Birdie does not use humor, and she is silent a significant portion of the time. She listens as a non-participant to Regina, Ben, and Oscar. When she does venture a comment, she usually rises to help direct attention to herself; invariably, however, she is ignored.

Birdie's self image is very poor. She thinks of herself as "shy" and a "ninny" (p. 178), and she knows she is stupid, weak, and incapable of control. Having no strength in her self concept, she sees herself only through the opinions of others. For example, Oscar intimidates her regarding her impression on Mr. Marshall. Birdie interprets her conversation with Marshall as a mutually pleasing dialogue, but Oscar insists that she had been chattering to
him, boring him with drivel, and that she was foolishly drunk. He easily makes Birdie doubt the reliability of her own perceptions. Oscar's constant criticism has so eroded Birdie's faith in her perception and convictions that she questions her own self worth.

The other characters do not take Birdie seriously; they treat her as a silly scatterbrain. Even Alexandra and Horace, who love her, do not treat her as an adult or an equal. Birdie is considered by others to be good, virtuous, honest, loving, but also simple, not competent, not capable, and non-assertive.

Birdie is a pitiful person who feels she has endured a sad life:

You know what? In twenty-two years I haven't had a whole day of happiness. Oh, a little, like today with you all. But never a single, whole day. I say to myself, if only I had one more whole day, then--

. . . . And you'll trail after them, just like me, hoping they won't be so mean that day or say something to make you feel so bad--only you'll be worse off because you haven't got my Mama to remember--

(p. 183)

Her husband and her culture forbid her to show her sadness, so she turns for comfort to drink. As a young girl she took wine as a cure for hiccoughs. Naively, Birdie tries to ease the suffering of her adult life with liquor. When drunk, she can dream of her past with her parents at Lionnet and pretend that all is well.
When Regina and Oscar ask her what she would wish for when they are rich, she has two responses, both of which are emotional. First, she wants to have Lionnet renovated so it can become their home. She believes that merely by returning to the scene of her greatest happiness, all her marital and personal problems will be solved:

Oh, I do think we could be happier there. Papa used to say that nobody had ever lost their temper at Lionnet, and nobody ever would. Papa would never let anybody be nasty-spoken or mean. No, sir. He just didn't like it. (pp. 145-146)

Her second wish is innocently illogical; she forgets that it should be related to their prospective wealth and entreats Oscar to give up hunting: "I want you to stop shooting. I mean, so much. I don't like to see animals and birds killed just for the killing. You only throw them away--" (p. 146) Birdie senses that Oscar's indiscriminate killing of birds is related to his brutality to her.

Birdie's physical actions are very limited; her movements are restricted to the town in which she lives. It is significant that, like Regina, her greatest desire is to live somewhere else. For Birdie, Lionnet symbolizes perfect peace and joy. However, she cannot simply move there because she is bound to the will of her husband.

Money has little attraction for Birdie since she has no financial responsibility and no way to earn a living. Before her marriage, Birdie was the owner of Lionnet, a
valuable plantation. Unfortunately, she lacked the personal strength and initiative, as well as the necessary training and capital, to make it into a profitable operation. However, the financial potential of Lionnet made Birdie very attractive to the Hubbards, in particular to Ben, who influenced Oscar to marry Birdie for the land. Birdie explains:

Ask why he married me . . . . My family was good and the cotton on Lionnet's fields was better. Ben Hubbard wanted the cotton and Oscar Hubbard married it for him. (p. 182)

It is ironic that, instead of providing independence, Birdie's wealth served only to attract those who would use and enslave her. Birdie merely was considered a commodity in the marriage bargain. Ben boasts: "To make a long story short, Lionnet now belongs to us . . . . Twenty years ago we took over their land, their cotton, and their daughter." (p. 141)

After their marriage, Oscar began to treat her as a possession, feeling free to abuse her at his whim. He enjoys complete authority over Birdie, considering it his duty and privilege to berate her— even to mistreat her. His vicious slap at the end of Act 1 is not unusual behavior. And Birdie alludes to another occasion of Oscar's violence:

Your papa don't like to admit it, but he's been mighty kind to me all these years. . . . Often he'd step in when somebody said something and once—(She stops, turns away, her face still) Once he stopped
Like many battered wives, Birdie protects her husband by saying nothing about the incidents. Even if she did speak up, the legal system of her society would not protect her. As the property of her husband, she is at his mercy.

Birdie has little influence over any of the other characters. She is able to order the servants, as noted earlier, but it is more likely that she is only following her family models on how to treat inferiors rather than exercising power of her own. Birdie is so weak and ineffectual that she must have been trained from birth to exhibit no initiative or spirit. Rewarded by her parents and her society only for "feminine" behavior, she takes these lessons to heart.

Birdie does try to satisfy her needs in the play but only through hidden attempts using covert influence. She must ask Oscar's permission for anything she might wish. Her most daring attempt at persuasion occurs at the end of Act 1 when she warns Alexandra of the plans for her to marry Leo. Birdie is frantic with worry, and she vows with a rare expression of confidence: "You are not going to marry Leo. I am not going to let them do that to you--" (p. 154) Alexandra assures her that she will not need anyone's help to avoid the marriage. Indeed, Birdie does not follow through with any effort to save Alexandra. Her last action
in the play is to become drunk, and she must be led home by her niece.

Contemporary audiences may find Birdie's willing compliance and obsequious behavior ludicrous and dismiss her as an archaic caricature. However, Birdie has been imprisoned by sexually influenced cultural forces; therefore, her annoying subservience is not entirely her fault. She was taught to be passive, ineffectual, unselfish, obedient—the perfect submissive child-wife. She is a pathetic creature, robbed of happiness by her inflexible sexual conditioning, her disastrous marriage, and her own pliable nature.

Alexandra Giddens

Alexandra is restrained by the same societal forces which repress her mother and her aunt. Simply because of her gender, many experiences of life are considered to be "off limits" for her. Although she is seventeen years old, no mention is made of a possible career for her. In fact, none of the characters consider it to be a logical option. Her father is very concerned about her future, but it never occurs to him to offer her a position at the bank. Even Leo, the ne'er-do-well cousin, works for Horace, but the only future mentioned for Alexandra is marriage. Oscar leers: "She's almost old enough to get married" (p. 152), and he thinks only of her potential financial value in the marriage bargain he desires.
Alexandra is restricted in her daily actions as well. Ben will not permit her to drive the horses when she and Leo take Marshall to the station:

ALEXANDRA. May I drive tonight, Uncle Ben, please? I'd like to and--
BEN (shakes his head, laughs). In your evening clothes? Oh, no, my dear. (p. 142)

Ben ostensibly worries that she might soil her fancy dress, but the true reason Ben forbids her to drive is because it is "unladylike."

Alexandra has strength of character, as shown by her spirit and determination in the play. She is not afraid to travel alone, taking responsibility for her sick father; after they arrive home, she is not reluctant to make a scene in her efforts to protect Horace. She bravely defies her mother when she feels her father's well-being will be jeopardized. And she is quite confident, when Birdie warns her of the plot afoot to marry her off to Leo, that no one can force her to do anything: "That's foolish, Aunt Birdie. I'm grown now. Nobody can make me do anything." (p. 154)

At the end of the play, Alexandra implies that she will promote an inquiry into Horace's death if Regina tries to force her to stay:

REGINA (softly). And if I say no?
ALEXANDRA. Say it Mama, say it. And see what happens.
REGINA (softly, after a pause). And if I make you stay?
ALEXANDRA. That would be foolish. It wouldn't work in the end. (p. 199)
Alexandra is important because she represents a compromise between the two female role models in the play, Regina and Birdie. She combines in her personality the altruism and sweetness of Birdie and the energy and strength of Regina. She symbolizes the ideal female with the correct ratio of concern for self and concern for others.

**Comparison With Related Analyses**

Critics are uniform in their approach to *The Little Foxes*. They agree it has great power and artistic merit, but they criticize its melodramatic qualities and its failure to achieve universality. They are also agreed in their condemnation of Regina; they are misogynistic in their refusal to look at Regina positively or to empathize with her circumstances. At the same time, critics unanimously praise Birdie as a wonderful, sympathetic woman who deserves our pity. Most critics categorize the characters as either evil or good; thus, Regina, Ben and Oscar are totally bad and Horace, Birdie, and Alexandra are saints. This simplistic approach tends to stereotype the characters and discourages a deeper look into character motivation and controlling factors.

Treating the characters as stereotypes locks the critics into interpreting *The Little Foxes* as a melodrama. Naturally the play seems melodramatic if the real societal
deprivation of the women characters is not seen as well as the one-dimensionality they seem to represent. A rounded characterization requires the portrayal of both good and bad qualities which are combined in each individual character. Hellman, as a sophisticated, mature playwright, supplied this paradox of character in The Little Foxes; however, critics have been unable to see the complexity and life-like ambiguity of the women characters due to their limited critical vision.

Richard Moody's discussion of the play is marked by his prejudice against Regina. He so enjoys hating her that he does not bother to question her motives. According to him, "Regina is a magnificent embodiment of evil: cold, hard, determined, and beautiful, larger than life."¹ He admires her as the "domineering bitch" stereotype; in fact, he praises Tallulah Bankhead for possessing "the aggressive bitchiness needed for Regina"² as if that were the only requirement necessary for the role. He feels that Regina is "self-centered, aggressive, and unencumbered by petty human sympathies. . . . She clearly dominates the Hubbards."³ He cannot see the lack of power Regina really has; he assumes that "Ben and Regina are fighting in the same class."⁴ Moody hates her so thoroughly and feels he knows her so well that he invents for us the lines that Regina supposedly shouts at Horace when the stage directions say she should be
heard but not understood:

I won't let you pass up this chance. . . . All my life I've had to force you to make something of yourself. . . . Did you think I wanted you home for yourself?

Moody happily assumes that Regina has been a successful termagant throughout her marriage, her bitchiness and nagging alone being responsible for Horace's ambition. He sees Regina as evil incarnate and a perfect stereotype; thus, he feels free to ignore any signals of her humanity or her complex motivations and restrictions.

Jacob Adler calls Regina's stereotype "the Ruinous, often Neurotic, Woman, particularly the Hedda Gabler type." By pigeonholing Regina with this unflattering label, Adler feels that he has delved sufficiently into Regina's psyche—not to mention the damage done to Hedda's persona! He is totally biased against her, as unsympathetic comments such as this indicate: "We are sure that she would sacrifice anything, including her daughter, if the profits were sufficient." And Adler believes:

The Hubbards are entirely bad, without compunction, shame, or hesitancy; and the others—Horace, Alexandra, . . . Birdie, the servant Addie—are all on the side of the angels.

Adler does recognize one fault in Horace; he has "waited through twenty years of marriage before standing up to Regina." Like Moody, Adler assumes that Regina has henpecked Horace for years, and it was about time he put her
in her place. This attitude disregards the evidence in the play that Horace enjoyed "clipping her wings" and dominated her throughout their marriage. It is ironic that, although he never looks at the play from Regina's point of view, Adler smugly says about the characters: "We know all there is to know about them."\textsuperscript{10}

W. David Sievers feels Regina is "masculine" in her aggression. In fact, he suspects her of abnormality: "She has identified herself so completely with the male Hubbards that she expresses a hint of Lesbianism by her curiosity over the lovely women in Chicago."\textsuperscript{11} Katherine Lederer reports: "At least two critics have said that Hellman implies latent Lesbianism in Regina," and she comments that Regina's behavior is not "womanly": "Regina is almost masculine in her drive for power. Before women's liberation, Regina would have been considered masculine; if anything, she is, like Lady MacBeth, unsexed."\textsuperscript{12} Lederer concludes that there is something generically wrong with Regina simply because she is ambitious and assertive.

Cynthia Larimer implies that assertion, cunning, and ambition are exclusive male qualities, and she finds nothing to admire in Regina:

Regina, like Hedda Gabler, is more a man than a woman: she is aggressive, predatory, and shrewd. . . all of the evidence points to a firm interpretation of Regina as villain. . . . there is no redeeming quality in her personality that allows for
clear recognition of her error or sympathy for what has happened to her."  

Lorena Holmin continues this misogynistic treatment of Regina, ascribing to her the most vicious, malignant qualities, blaming her for unrelated events, dismissing her as totally evil. She divides the characters into two camps, with Horace, Addie, Alexandra, and Birdie as the forces for good versus the "foxes": Regina, Ben, and Oscar. Most of the critics, like Holmin, lump Regina and her brother together, blindly assuming they have the same motivation, resources, and backgrounds. Holmin considers the good characters to be "seemingly so faultless, their contrast with the villainous characters so clearcut." She finds Horace to be especially appealing; he "commands respect" and his "speeches are characterized by a quiet dignity." She pities him for having to live with Regina, and blames her for the lack of music in his life: That Horace has changed and has been broken down during his marriage to Regina is indicated, for example, by the fact that he has stopped playing the violin.

Holmin even turns Horace's faults into virtues:  

Living with the Hubbards has poisoned him to the degree that he can beat them at their own game. It is in fact refreshing to see the good Horace capable of guile and revenge. He thus becomes more believable through his human frailties.

As opposed to her solicitous concern for Horace, Holmin delights in characterizing Regina as a demon and a
harpy. She is "avaricious," her "viciousness knows no bounds," she is "sharp," characterized "not only as covetous, but as a liar to boot," and "incredibly cruel." Holmin's favoritism toward Horace and hatred of Regina shows in her discussion of their final scene together, when Horace tells Regina he plans to disinherit her. Holmin feels Horace is perfectly justified in his actions because he is merely "taking revenge for a miserable marriage" and rightly "punishing her for her years of contempt for him." Holmin feels Regina deserves whatever embarrassment and misery Horace can provide, and she thinks we should rejoice when she is conquered. Holmin says: "Regina's entering speech, when she tells the sick man to stay in his own part of the house, characterizes her as incredibly hard." However, what Regina actually says is:

    We had agreed that you were to stay in your part of this house and I in mine. This room is my part of the house. Please don't come down here again.

(p. 185)

Rather than attacking him, Regina is pointing out to Horace that he has forgotten the arrangement they both had consented to; she even says "please" when she requests that he not repeat the error. Holmin's attitude, however, is that:

    Regina's cruelty toward her husband immediately before he reveals the truth makes it possible for the audience to enjoy [italics mine] vicariously with him her shock and discomfort. . . . Thus Regina's shocked disbelief becomes all the more amusing."
It does not occur to Holmin that audience members might empathize or identify with Regina and feel fury instead of humor.

Holmin's critical bias is particularly clear in her comment on Horace's refusal to finance Regina's investment:

In this scene we have perhaps the greatest irony in a play fraught with ironies: that a dying man, in a wheelchair, can get the upper hand over such a formidable antagonist as Regina when even her brothers have failed to do so.

Holmin notes the irony but stops prior to asking why this could be possible. The answer is found in an examination of the sexual power relations in the play and the sexual conditioning in the play's society. Horace, weak though he is, still retains the power that his culture reserves for males: financial and physical control of females.

A few critics have examined The Little Foxes and produced theories which support the findings of this study. For example, Doris Falk, although most of her comments are traditional, finds fault with Horace: "Horace is not entirely a victim; he too was once a despoiler but he is now relenting [sic] of his past at the point of death." Honor Moore sees beyond the typical interpretation to a perceptive comment on Regina: "The Little Foxes, most often seen as the battle between a rapacious sister and her evil brothers, is also the story of a woman, Regina, turned bitter by her impatience and despair with provincial life."
Sharon Friedman analyzed *The Little Foxes* with a feminist perspective, observing that:

Feminists have long underscored the relationship between women's perceived role and the political and economic structure that creates and perpetuates this role. Hellman's characters, though personally and morally responsible for their actions, are always portrayed within a social framework, their motives rooted either in social forces or in their attempts to remedy the conditions that thwart them from acting humanely.

Friedman does perceive Regina as a negative character, without any redeeming features, "one of the most destructive women characters in the history of the theatre," but she also states that "it would be a limited vision to perceive Regina's characterization as anti-feminist." Friedman is able to see motivation and cause for Regina's aggression, her economic powerlessness as a woman being a major factor:

Regina is the most negative response to powerlessness. Contrary to the critics' perceptions of her as more than equal to the men in her family, she has always been at the mercy of her father, her brothers, and finally, her husband. The predatory life she leads has, in one sense, been carved out for her by patriarchy.

Friedman classifies Regina's literary type as "Bitch," and she quotes Dolores Schmidt's observation that the Bitch is usually depicted in the "restricted sphere of home and social life, where she appears to dominate," thus not being "viewed in her true powerlessness, far removed from any source of significant decision making." Friedman extends the analysis to *The Little Foxes*:
Regina is a Great American Bitch. . . whose behavior is largely a response to the limited options of a woman's life, particularly with regard to her economic dependence. . . . Although Hellman has portrayed Regina in the home where she appears to reign, the dramatist has also shown her to be consistently dethroned by virtue of being a woman.29

Friedman displays a sympathetic attitude toward Regina, saying she "is as much the victim as she is the cause of her unhappy situation. . . . At the root of Regina's evil is her ultimate powerlessness where power is all that matters. . . . Regina has a history of being excluded, and her exclusion is based on the fact that she is a woman. Having no money of her own in a family whose lives revolve around money keeps her in a state of perpetual grasping."30 She agrees with Morris Freedman in The Moral Impulse that Regina may have been involved, indeed like Hedda, in a process of self-discovery, self-definition, in trying to live within the limits of her capacity, a richer life than her present constricting one.31

Thus, Friedman touches on Regina's major motivation, her drive for self actualization. However, Friedman never actually befriends Regina; she maintains that "Regina is not a sympathetic character. She evokes neither admiration nor feeling for her plight."32

Friedman also comments on Regina's relationship with her daughter, noting that Regina is a better mother than commonly believed, and she emphasizes Regina's importance to
Alexandra as a role model:

Indeed despite her negative characteristics, Regina is a model for resisting women's traditional behavior. And Alexandra has picked up Regina's cues. Furthermore, there is evidence in the play that Alexandra is not as removed from her mother as her dislike for her might seem to suggest. The daughter is the only character who knows that her mother is vulnerable, a point which not only underscores Alexandra's strength and Regina's weakness in her further isolation, but which indicates a special relationship between mother and daughter founded, perhaps, on their common experience as women—to be vulnerable in a man's world.

This passage also illustrates the popular critical opinion that Regina is somehow defeated at the end of the play, emotionally vulnerable, instead of happily plotting to win over Alexandra. The attitude reveals a hidden desire to see Regina punished for her success. As if to console themselves that hers was an empty victory, critics portray Regina as emotionally isolated, stripped of any loving human contact by her unnatural ambition.

Friedman does see through the sainted Horace. She notes that "for all these years, Horace has just 'stood around and watched,' while presumably accumulating his profits in the bank." And "although Horace claims social responsibility as his reason for denying his wife her investment... his morality does not prevent him from aiding Ben and Oscar in order to spite Regina."

Critics are unanimous in their love for Birdie; they consider her to be totally sympathetic, admirable, deserving
of pity, an innocent victim. Lederer observes that
"Birdie's speeches are like arias... Birdie is a silly, lost, pathetic woman."36 Falk says she is a "pathetic victim" who "may be weak-willed, but she is also sensitive and musical, with longings for beauty and affection."37 Holmin sees a little deeper into her character and voices the one negative comment found in criticism on Birdie:
"Actually one almost questions the believability of such continuous gentleness. Can Birdie actually hold audience sympathy throughout the play? On the page she seems cloying."38 In spite of their affection for Birdie, critics spend little time on her. They do not look beyond her surface qualities to ask why she acts as she does or what cultural forces control her. Nor do they ponder the effect she would have had on Alexandra if she had been the only female role model in the play.

The Little Foxes is a complex play, filled with ambiguity. There are numerous clues pointing to elusive information, and each can be interpreted in several ways, supporting widely varying theories and attitudes toward the characters. Ambiguity in drama is both a strength and a weakness, but in Hellman's hand this multi-faceted approach results in a play rich with many levels of meaning. The present survey of work on The Little Foxes reveals a stagnant uniformity among most critics regarding the
characters and their motivations. Analyses of this play could benefit from new ideas, original approaches, and a great deal more flexibility.

The feminist analysis used in this study has definitely produced fresh ideas about the characters. The examination of Regina is marked by the apparently novel approach of looking at her sympathetically, without the preconceived notion that she is consummate evil. The analysis of Birdie is unusual not only in the amount of attention given to her but also in moving beyond a description of her woes to the causative forces behind them.

Several critics quote Hellman's thoughts on the characters. For example, she thought of Birdie as silly, not pathetic, and she did not think of Regina as bad. However, it is important not to fall into the "intentional fallacy" and assume that Hellman's opinions are more valid than any other critics's perceptions. The fact is that the play has a life of its own, and the characters are recreated in the minds of the audience each time it is produced or read. It is obvious, then, that the characters will now be seen in a modern context.
Notes


2 Moody, p. 84.

3 Moody, pp. 89-90.

4 Moody, p. 92.

5 Moody, p. 97.


7 Adler, p. 18.

8 Adler, p. 20.

9 Adler, p. 20

10 Adler, p. 20.


15 Holmin, p. 45.

16 Holmin, p. 48.

17 Holmin, p. 53.

18 Holmin, pp. 30, 31, 41, 47.

19 Holmin, p. 53.

20 Holmin, p. 52.
21 Holmin, pp. 52, 53.
22 Holmin, p. 53.
26 Friedman, pp. 285, 288.
27 Friedman, p. 289.
29 Friedman, p. 291.
30 Friedman, pp. 292, 293.
32 Friedman, p. 293.
33 Friedman, pp. 295-296.
34 Friedman, p. 301.
35 Friedman, p. 287.
36 Lederer, pp. 45, 46.
37 Falk, p. 54.
38 Holmin, p. 37.
CHAPTER 4
ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST

This play is a companion piece to The Little Foxes. Hellman originally intended to compose a Hubbard trilogy, with Another Part of the Forest portraying the characters as young adults, The Little Foxes representing their middle years, and another play planned to deal with their future. After completing Another Part of the Forest, however, Hellman lost interest in the project and never wrote the third play.

Although Another Part of the Forest, originally produced in November, 1946, was intended to show the early life of the Hubbards and how they developed into the characters of The Little Foxes, it would be a mistake to relate the two plays too closely. Certainly the Hubbard siblings and Birdie are in both plays, but one cannot assume that character traits developed in one play will automatically be carried over into the other. For instance, the Hubbards, although younger than in The Little Foxes, are a good deal more ill-tempered in Another Part of the Forest; furthermore, they need to be examined in the unique circumstances of the play. Another Part of the Forest must be
considered as an autonomous work, not merely as a footnote for *The Little Foxes* or a reverse sequel to it. Hellman changed significant details in the story line for the sake of dramatic development. For example, Horace Giddens comes from a rich society family in *Another Part of the Forest* whereas his background was as a small town clerk in *The Little Foxes*. More significantly, the disbursement of the father's money is different in the two plays. In *The Little Foxes*, the father dies and leaves his estate to both sons, Ben and Oscar. In *Another Part of the Forest*, Ben blackmails his father into giving him all his money when the father is sixty-three years old. Other details differ, such as the length of time the Hubbards have lived in the town and which ancestor founded the family business. In addition, Birdie's memories of her first adult party at Lionnet do not mesh with John's recollection of the last plantation ball held at the opening of the war when Birdie would have been an infant. *Another Part of the Forest* cannot be considered as a reprise of *The Little Foxes*; the two plays differ in these important details as well as in basic aspects such as characterization and focus.

In this examination of *Another Part of the Forest*, Regina Hubbard, Lavinia Hubbard, and Birdie Bagtry will be the major characters analyzed with Laurette Sincee receiving minor attention. In this play, the women are not the
primary focus as they are in most of Hellman's other plays; the men are the main characters and promote most of the action. Therefore, the women are not developed as fully as before.

Since the women are not the main focus in this play, Another Part of the Forest is a good example of the flexibility and usefulness of the analytic methodology of this dissertation. Certainly not all playwrights give the care and attention to women that Hellman customarily does. Consequently, this chapter will show the value of feminist insight in plays which give more plot emphasis to men.

World of the Play

The scene is Bowden, Alabama, in June, 1880. Although it is set twenty years earlier Another Part of the Forest shares the same locale and essentially the same world of the play with The Little Foxes. Traditional sex roles are the norm, and deviation from these is not tolerated. Roles for women and men are totally defined by society, and they are inflexible as if set in concrete. Men have their duties and privileges and women have theirs. The power structure is built on the principles of patriarchy. Therefore, men have control over women and all financial or governance matters. In addition, male offspring are expected to inherit control, as well as money and property,
from the patriarch. The dominant male has absolute power over all subordinates.

Regina Hubbard

If Regina Giddens is a "queen" in The Little Foxes, then Regina Hubbard is a "princess" in Another Part of the Forest, with Marcus, her father, as the king. This character is not, however, a younger version of Regina Giddens. Hubbard is very different from Giddens and is far less admirable in her characteristics and actions. In comparison, she seems shallow, obvious, and her lines often are obligatory plot development rather than revelatory of inner character. Despite her limited development, however, Regina Hubbard deserves attention; she exemplifies several effects of sexual conditioning, restrictions, and power play in her image and in her actions.

Regina's role is very limited; she functions primarily as a daughter. She has no occupation or career, although she is intelligent enough to handle one. She had no purpose or activity beyond fulfilling her role as a daughter and scheming to become a wife. Her stereotype is "young domineering bitch," and she measures up to that label by being selfish, crabby, and controlling. She also has some "sex object" traits since she uses her physical appeal to her advantage and is censured by society for her sexual behavior.
Regina's self image is fairly strong and positive. She has confidence in herself and her ability to get what she wants. As she says to John, her lover: "When I want to meet you, I go and do it." (p. 330) She has a strong will, and she never doubts that she deserves what she tries for. However, Regina does feel intimidated by the social class of old southern aristocrats in her town, those who lost their wealth in the Civil War but not their standing as the cultural elite. Regina's father made his fortune by smuggling salt through enemy lines during the war to sell to patriots at larcenous prices, and her family was never accepted by members of their community. Her feelings of subordination make her defensive, and she jeers at the impoverished society people when she asks John why he failed to meet her the night before: "Why couldn't you? Plantation folks giving balls again? Or fancy dress parties?" (p. 330) She is very quick to feel a slight regarding her social position: "I don't want you to tell me about the differences in your family and mine." (p. 330) She has felt deeply the snub that she lacks good breeding, and she retaliates by bragging about her father's money:

Your Cousin Birdie's never done more than say good morning in all these years--when she knows full well who I am and who Papa is. Knows full well he could buy and sell Lionnet on the same morning, its cotton and its women with it-- (p. 331)

Regina has been ignored by "polite society," and she has
grown up lonely. She never mentions having any friends in the play.

Regina compensates for this "chink" in the armor of her self image by shoring herself up with her father's money and power, expensive clothes, and her own physical attractiveness. By surrounding herself with luxury, she tries to prove to society and herself that she is as good as anyone. She enjoys comparing herself with wealthy Chicago aristocrats and defends her exorbitant shopping spree with:
"Those people in Chicago, just the other day, gave their daughter a hundred-thousand-dollar check for a trousseau--" (p. 339)

Her beauty is extremely important to her, and she uses it for gaining attention and power. She loves John Bagtry because he is a member of the old gentry, and she uses him to reinforce her self image, thinking he will lend her respectability. She had to employ her sexual power to snare John, and she is much more confident in her physical appeal than in her social standing. She tells John it was insulting to her when he stayed with his cousin and aunt rather than meeting her. She would rather have a worthy opponent--another woman--and put the competition into a sexual sphere rather than a social one.

It would be better if you lied to me where you were. This way it's just insulting to me. Better if you lied. . . . Better if you said you were with another
woman. But not meeting me because of those two mummies-- (p. 330)

Regina has a good opinion of herself; it is the opinion of others that infuriates her and makes her feel inferior. She wants other people, especially the aristocrats, to see her as she sees herself and to value her as a unique and wonderful person. She needs the attention and validation of others' admiration.

Regina's values are closely associated with her self image since she regards most highly those things which she feels will elevate her esteem in the eyes of others. Therefore, good clothes, luxurious surroundings, her own beauty, and, above all, money are important to her. She is entirely concerned with self--not at all with others. She thinks she loves John and wants to get married, but she does not value the domestic life. She uses love and sex for power, and she is not above using people, especially her father and John, to achieve what she desires.

Regina is certainly clever and crafty. She knows how to control Marcus, her father, completely. And she is swift to comprehend Ben's scheme regarding Lionnet and how it would affect her situation with John. In other words, she is sharp and quick regarding things that could concern her; she is totally egocentric in her thinking. This narrow-mindedness hampers her in many ways. She has a limited vision, thinking only of one plan rather than
allowing for all possibilities. She does not seem to know herself or her real needs. Her plans for John and her future are short-sighted. She is rash concerning her reputation; certainly she was unwise to allow her affair to become a public scandal. She also, inexplicably, slips and reveals things she should not. For example, she says:

I'm going away. I'm going to Chicago—(Ben gets up, stares at her. Oscar looks up. She catches herself) Oh, well, I guess you'd have to know. (p. 341)

She slips three times with her father regarding John. The first time, she had been saying she would like a girl her own age to come to his music night, and she blunders: "Otherwise I just wouldn't want to see him [italics mine] come unless we'd be awful nice and polite." (p. 349) Later she says:

REGINA (angrily.) Papa, I didn't ask John here to listen to you lecture and be nasty and insulting. MARCUS. You asked him here? You asked John? (p. 368)

A little later, Regina catches herself just in time: "I wanted to talk to—to Captain Bagtry." (p. 369) And Regina is very slow to catch on to Ben's deposal of Marcus, although eventually she is able to see the path that would be more beneficial to her. She is a bright young woman, but her overriding concern for self prevents her from functioning at an optimal intellectual level.
Regina's emotional capacity is restricted. Although she believes she loves John, she is really deceiving herself. She does not truly care for John's well-being, she does not listen to him, and she cares little about his inner thoughts. She dismisses his emotional disclosures:

JOHN. I was only good once—in a war. Some men shouldn't ever come home from a war. You know something? It's the only time I was happy.

REGINA (wearily). Oh, don't tell me that again. You and your damn war. (pp. 331-332)

Regina does not care about John's desire to fight in Brazil; she cannot take it seriously, referring to it as "that silly joke." (p. 368) Ben sees through her infatuation: "You're not in love; I don't think anybody in this family can love." (p. 399) And in spite of her closeness and attention to her father, she does not love him.

She does, however, show genuine affection for her mother, Lavinia. She is impatient with Lavinia's craziness at times, but she seems truly to love her. She wants Lavinia to go with her to Chicago: "Never mind, Mama. Maybe you'll be coming away with me. Would you like that? There are lots of churches in Chicago. . . . I'm not teasing." (p. 351) And later she solicitously says: "We must order you new things. You can't go to Chicago looking like a tired old country lady--" (p. 356) Logically, Lavinia's presence in Chicago would hamper Regina in her conquest of John, so Regina cannot be wanting her mother.
along as a chaperone. Perhaps she is unconsciously trying to liberate her mother along with herself from the tyranny of Marcus. This would seem to be a selfless, admirable desire, but even in this Regina has tunnel-vision. She refuses to hear her mother's protests, and, as with John, ignores Lavinia's own plans for happiness, dismisses her dream of teaching black children as ridiculous.

Regina's style of speech is quite reflective of her character. Most of the time she is bold and direct. With John, she states her views simply and confidently with no subtlety or hesitation: "Where were you going? . . . you tried not to hear me when I called you. I called you three times before you turned." (p. 329) After an initial attempt to cajole Lavinia, Regina turns easily to an authoritative order when the coaxing fails:

REGINA. Oh, Mama, it's late. Do go and get dressed.
LAVINIA. I'm dressed, Regina.
REGINA. You can't look like that. Put on a nice silk--
LAVINIA. I only have what I have--
REGINA. Put on your nice dress, Mama. It will do for tonight. (p. 355)

And she does not mince words with Oscar: "Here? That girl--What's the matter with you? You're doing nothing of the kind. Come back here. You can't bring that--" (p. 358)

However, when she wants something or is faced with superior power, she easily slips into a subordinate mode. For instance, with John, when he upbraids her with: "I would
not like to hear anybody talk that way again. No, I wouldn't," she responds contritely and repetitively: "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I give you my apology. I'm sorry, darling. . . . I'm never going to be mean again, never going to talk mean--" (p. 331) She simpers with Marcus and is candidly subordinate, combining self effacement with the weak interrogative form: "Course I don't know anything about business, Papa, but could I say something, please?" (p. 349) When she mistakenly provokes Marcus, she goes into a "poor little girl" act, trying to arouse pity and claiming child-like irresponsibility for her words:

(turns away, little-girl tearful). I'm mighty sorry. What have I done? Just said I'd like to have a few people to listen to your old music. Is that so awful to want? (p. 349)

She also has certain affectations of speech which make her characterization individual. She calls all her family members "honey" or "darling" which gives her speech a southern flavor. Also her speech has an uneducated, "hick" quality, and examples of this are plentiful: "do you reckon?" (p. 333); "Oscar's got one of those faces shows everything." (p. 338); "You never going to learn, Ben." (p. 341); "you ain't smart" (p. 341). She has a sarcastic, almost coarse sense of humor which she most often vents on the inferior Oscar:

Now really, Oskie, can you blame us? You in a railroad station trying to carry off a spitting--
girl? You'd laugh yourself, if you didn't always have indigestion. (p. 400)

At the end of the play, when she is trying to comprehend the new power situation, Regina uses repetition to emphasize the incongruity she senses: "You're in Papa's chair, Ben, eating breakfast at Papa's table, on Papa's porch." (p. 395)

Regina's actions are very restricted. Her movements are limited to her town, and she is even barred from certain aristocratic houses. She dreams of invading the Bagtry estate: "I think I'm going to sashay right up on that sacred plantation grass." (p. 331) She has to ask her father for permission to go on the Chicago trip. And although she is invited by Marcus to travel to New York and Europe, she is not free to make her own decisions regarding travel without parental approval. The expedition to Chicago is her own idea, and it represents her bid for independence.

Regina is extremely limited in her financial situation. She has no money of her own and no way to earn a living. She is totally dependent on men for financial support. In the play she projects the illusion of wealth with her fine clothes and travel plans, but she can give this impression only because she has been successful in getting money from her father. She is interested in money and the power it brings. She has carefully calculated the cost of her trip: "And the trip's going to cost a lot of money. I got letters from hotels, and I know." (p. 342)
However, she denies knowing how much she spent on her Chicago dresses; in this case she is probably trying to emulate the rich Chicagoans who do not have to ask the price of things. She is confident in her ability to persuade Marcus to support her; she even expects him to finance her honeymoon. Money is a prime motivator for Regina, and she is finally convinced to forsake John by Ben's description of her future penniless life. She is sensible enough to see that she needs to align herself with the man who has money and power.

A great deal of Regina's character is revealed by an examination of her strength and influence. She has two sources of power: one is her own sexual allure and the other is derived power from Marcus. Regina is extremely successful in her use of sex for control and dominance. She netted John with her sexual charm, and although he protests that they are not right for each other, he always gives in to her desires:

REGINA. Will you meet me tomorrow night, same place? Darling, darling, please. Please. (She pulls him toward her. He hesitates for a second. Then he takes her in his arms, kisses her with great feeling. She smiles.) Meet me? JOHN (softly). I always do. No matter what I say or think, I always do. (p. 333)

Ben sees that Regina has the weak John in a power sexual hold: "You go ahead, your own way. Ride over to your soldier. Stand close and talk soft: he'll marry you."
This type of power is very satisfying to Regina because it is all her own; nevertheless, the use of sexual power does have drawbacks for her. She had to sleep with John in order to ensnare him, somehow the knowledge of their affair leaked out, and it became a public scandal. Oscar refers to her blemished reputation:

Well, I could say she's been worrying me. Many's the time I thought of taking action. Sashaying around as open as-- (p. 339)

And everyone sure is gossiping. Laurette even heard it up in Roseville. I said there's nothing between you. I wouldn't believe it. (p. 342)

In addition, her sexual power is tied to her beauty and youth. Ben teases her about becoming old:

Certainly I want you to marry money. More than that--(She wheels around to stare at him) You're twenty years old. You ought to be settled down. You been worrying us. (p. 339)

Regina has an obvious sexual hold on Marcus. They speak to each other like lovers, calling each other "honey" and "darling." Like a lovesick bridegroom, Marcus asks Regina to have her first morning coffee with him, and he indulges her in luxury. From her successful exploitation of Marcus' love, Regina receives derived power with which she flaunts her wealth and enjoys dominance over her brothers. When Marcus sees her seven new dresses he merely asks:

"What are you going to do with them, honey?" (p. 338) This contrasts jarringly with his cruel taunting of his sons whom he keeps penniless. Regina hesitates in her answer and then
gaily says: "Could we go for a walk?" (p. 338) She realizes that she will have to make a special effort to gain approval for her Chicago trip, so she suggests an intimate picnic: "Come on, darling. Let's take our lunch and go on a picnic, just you and me. We haven't done that in a long time." (p. 340) She refers to her persuasive efforts with her father as "work"; as she leaves she says to Ben: "Wish me luck. I got a hard day's work ahead." (p. 342) Indeed her only career has been to exploit her role as favored daughter to her best advantage. Her philosophy regarding her father allows her to use him for patronage and support, since she has successfully figured out how to live within his ironclad control:

You should have figured out long ago that Papa's going to do just whatever you tell him not to do, unless I tell him to do it. (Pats his shoulder) Goodness gracious, that's been working for the whole twenty years I been on earth. (p. 341)

Regina has no illusions regarding her father; she realizes that he buys admiration and compliments at his discretion. Moreover, much like Regina is trying to, he has surrounded himself with wealth, culture, and flattery to compensate for his feelings of low self worth.

As with her sexual power over John, Regina's hold on Marcus also produces disadvantages. The most obvious is that, in order to maintain her influence, Regina must encourage the incestuous nature of her relationship with
Marcus. Regina is loathe to do this since she has picked out a man of her own and since Marcus' possessiveness is frightening. He is already jealous of Regina's suitors. As Ben says:

Papa didn't just get mad about you and Horace Giddens. Papa got mad about you and any man, or any place that ain't near him. I wouldn't like to be in the house, for example, the day he ever hears about you and Bagtry-- (p. 342)

And Ben predicts the dismal future in store for Regina if she does not break free:

And I'll think many things, like how you used to be a beauty but at fifty years your face got worn and sour. Papa'll still be living, and he'll interrupt us, the way he does even now; he'll call from upstairs to have you come and put him to bed. And you'll get up to go, wondering how the years went by--(Sharply) Because, as you say, he's most devoted to you, and he's going to keep you right here with him, all his long life. (p. 341)

However, Regina has not been unaware of her need to break free from her father's control. For several months she has practiced distancing herself from Marcus. Both she and Marcus comment that they have not had a picnic together for a long time. And Marcus says: "Come on now, honey. It's been a long time since you been willing to spend a Sunday with me." (pp. 349-350) Plus, for over a year, she has been developing her affair with John. Knowing that her marriage will liberate her from the incestuous relationship with Marcus, her plan is to use John as her new male sponsor. Since John is weak, she will easily dominate him
once he is hooked. Then she can come back to town, reinstate herself in Marcus' good graces, and have the best of both worlds: the power and money of her father without their stifling, too intimate relationship. She apprises John of her scheme:

I'm going to Chicago, and a month later you're coming and we'll get married. When Papa finds out he'll have a fit. Then we'll come on home for a while, and I'll talk him out of his fit-- (p. 368)

With this plan, Regina makes her bid for real power. She has sensed Marcus' weakening like an aging monarch, and she intends to use it to her advantage. She assumes that, as he loses strength, she, being the favored child, will take over the control and decision-making power. She warns her father to be cautious lest Ben gain too much strength:

Ben is sometimes smarter than you are, and you are so sure he isn't, that you get careless about him . . . . You're getting older, Papa, and maybe you're getting tired and don't think as fast. I guess that happens to everybody. You'll have to start watching Ben even more-- (p. 370)

Regina rightly senses that her only competitor for the inheritance is Ben. However, Regina is not worried since her hold on Marcus is very strong. She becomes more forceful with him as the play develops, and her power culminates in this speech to him:

Otherwise, I'll go away. I say I will, and you know I will. I'm not frightened to go. But if I go that way I won't ever see you again. And you don't want that: I don't think you could stand that. My way, we can be together. You'll get used to it, and John won't worry us. There'll always be you and me--
(Puts her hand on his shoulder) You must have known I'd marry someday, Papa. Why, I've never seen you cry before. It'll just be like going for a little visit, and before you know it I'll be home again, and it will all be over. You know? Maybe next year, or the year after, you and I'll make that trip to Greece, just the two of us. (Smiles) Now it's all settled. Kiss me good night, darling. (p. 379)

She is so confident in her victory that she tells her mother they will be leaving for Chicago earlier than planned. In fact, Regina would have won everything if not for the unlucky event that Lavinia chose to tell Ben her secret regarding Marcus' past. Ben had not been plotting to overthrow Marcus in his efforts to get Birdie the loan; he was merely trying to get $5,000. However, when presented with the opportunity, he seized his chance and usurped his father's throne.

Regina never looks to Lavinia for help or power. In spite of her affection for her mother, she never suspects that Lavinia might have worthwhile knowledge. Instead, Regina looks to the men for money and influence. When she realizes that Ben has "inherited" Marcus' empire, she is convinced by Ben to come over to his camp and do his will, which is to marry Horace Giddens for money.

Regina has been severely criticized for this and the seemingly heartless way she abandons her father. Throughout history, though, women have been condemned for their so-called "fickle" nature; in particular, the infamous Cressida comes to mind. However, women have always been bound by the
economic necessity of going with the strongest protector; they seldom have a choice in the matter. And Regina, also, has extremely few options available to her at this point. It would be impossible for her to survive on her own; she must choose a male sponsor. So, instead of selecting an impoverished suitor—John or Marcus—she very sensibly chooses for her own benefit rather than for self sacrifice.

Men are seldom expected to sacrifice themselves for love; if they do, they are considered sentimental, weak, and "feminine." However, women are called false, a bitch, or worse when they choose according to their financial benefit.

Regina is not totally unhappy over the shift in power. She is mystified at first, but when it finally sinks in, she adapts quickly to the new regime. She comforts herself with the delightful prospect of wreaking vicious revenge on Ben someday, laughs at Oscar's tale of the spitting Laurette, and gets down to the serious business of insinuating herself into the good graces of the new monarch. Above all, Regina is a practical woman trying to survive in a man's world.

_Lavinia Hubbard_

Lavinia is a character with a literary background; she has her roots in the Shakespearian play _Titus Andronicus_ and has common traits with characters in _King Lear_ and
Hamlet. It is important to examine her literary origins since they so greatly influence her attributes and actions.

The names "Lavinia" and "Marcus" probably were taken from Titus Andronicus; Lavinia is the virgin daughter of Titus, and Marcus is his brother. This is a revenge play with all the dark elements of Senecan drama. Thus, the play contains a lot of violence, horror, gore, and shock. As revenge for Titus' earlier cruelty, Demetrius and Chiron, two barbarians, viciously rape Lavinia, then slice out her tongue and cut off her hands to guarantee her silence. Later, Lavinia manages to write the names of her attackers in the dust with a stick held in her mouth and stumps. The rapists then receive the ultimate punishment: they are chopped up and served in a pie to their mother.

Another Part of the Forest does share certain characteristics with Titus Andronicus, most definitely in the portrayal of Lavinia Hubbard, but also in its sensationalism, its darker elements of incest and greed, and its tone of revenge. Lavinia Hubbard feels violated by her marriage to Marcus, a "barbarian" who tries too hard to seem cultured and artistic; she knows it was a sin for which she must do penance. She says: "We weren't ever meant to be together. You see, being here gives me--well, I won't use bad words, but it's always made me feel like I sinned." (p. 380) By naming Lavinia's husband "Marcus," Hellman suggests the
incest theme, since Marcus was Lavinia's uncle in *Titus Andronicus*. Hellman extends this theme in the relationship of Marcus and Regina. It is significant that Lavinia cooks the food for Marcus' picnic and his concert party; with *Titus Andronicus* in mind, this conjures up grisly pictures of desired revenge. And Lavinia does finally avenge her violation by telling her awful secret about Marcus' past. She is unable to speak of Marcus' atrocity at the time, but she manages to write the incriminating facts in her Bible, much like her unfortunate literary forebear.

Lavinia's most obvious personality trait is her mental derangement, and in this too she resembles several literary figures. Titus feigned madness in order to carry out his plot for revenge, and of course Hamlet used insanity to stall for time while he struggled with deciding his course of action. The wise Fool of *King Lear* also is recalled. These characters all have important knowledge, but they cannot communicate due to their lunacy or their doubt regarding the right thing to do. Lavinia says: "Coralee and I were half wild with what was the right thing to do and the wrong." (p. 385) So she wrote in her Bible what she would later use for revenge.

Lavinia plays two roles: the crazy but knowledgeable fool and the submissive wife. She is completely subordinate to her husband, and her most common activity in
the play—except going to church—is cooking for others. Although Marcus instructs her to "tell Belle to make us up a fine picnic basket" (p. 340), Lavinia makes the lunch herself: "I've fixed you a mighty nice lunch, Marcus, the way you like it. I boilled up some crabs right fast and--" (p. 350) Moreover, Lavinia plans the "cold collation," or cold light meal, for the music night guests. In fact, the action of the play never occurs far from the time of a meal: Act 1 features the Hubbards at breakfast; Act 2 shows them with their guests enjoying the collation after the concert; Act 3 again shows breakfast but with Ben as the new patriarch.

Lavinia has Christian values, religion being the most important thing in her life. She goes exclusively to the black church, and she wants to go on a mission to teach poor black children to read. She affiliates with blacks because they accept her and because, as a minority group, they are more like her than privileged, powerful whites. Her chosen mission was probably inspired by her grandmother, whom she greatly admired: "the one who taught me to read and write. And 'twas mighty unusual, a lady to know how to read and write, up in the piney woods." (p. 359) Money, clothes, and prestige are unimportant to her. She says:

Where I'm going I don't need clothes or things of the world. I'm going to the poor, and it wouldn't be proper to parade in silk— (p. 356)
Oh, nobody should have everything. All I want is a nice school place, warm in winter, and a piano, and books and a good meal every day, hot and fattening. (p. 383)

She is entirely selfless, caring more about the needs of others. She is kind and empathetic to John, to Laurette, and to Birdie. She loves her own children, and she stayed with Marcus through the years for their sake: "I should have gone after that night, but I stayed for you children. I didn't know then that none of you would ever need a Mama." (pp. 381-382) She does not love Marcus, but she is loyal and duty-bound as his wife; she protests vehemently that she is against lynching— even Marcus’ lynching. She is scrupulously honest and believes in the sanctity of a sworn statement or "Bible promise."

Lavinia's self image is tied to her sense of having sinned. She feels she is "undeserving" (p. 332), and she tries to be meek and humble. She considers herself to be incompetent and ineffective: "Course they could have many a better teacher. I know mighty little, but I'm going to try to remember better. . . . I was silly to speak today. And I did it wrong." (pp. 351-352) However, Lavinia is perceptive enough to realize her limitations, and later she decides: "I want to send for a teacher--I'm getting old and I'm ignorant--I want to make a higher learning." (p. 392) She does not think she is psychotic, and she resents it highly when Marcus calls her crazy. Lavinia suspects that she has
not been living up to her true potential: "I spent a life afraid. And you know that's funny, Benjamin, because way down deep I'm a woman wasn't made to be afraid." (p. 382) Lavinia knows she has strength inside that she has never used, and as the play progresses she becomes more assertive. She finally stands up to Marcus, but she still thinks she needs the support of Ben. Others view her as eccentric but also honest and virtuous. The fact that her credibility is good is crucial to the play.

Lavinia certainly is not mentally sharp, but she exhibits at times a simple, intuitive wisdom that others seem to lack. She is very perceptive regarding her own qualities and what would make her happy. She sees when Ben cannot that the townspeople, eager to avenge their dead sons, would not need much proof of Marcus' complicity. However, she is definitely unbalanced, and she has irrational episodes throughout the play. In Act 1, she reacts "as if this were an ordinary morning scene" (p. 332) when she surprises her daughter, dressed in a negligee, having an early morning rendezvous with a man. In Act 2, she enters with her hair and clothes in disarray, reminiscent of Hamlet, and she forgets her own father's name. Her queer behavior provides some comic relief, as when she mistakes Laurette for Birdie (p. 363) and when she thinks
Laurette is doctoring her heart trouble with liquor (p. 370). She is helpless and childlike with Coralee (p. 352).

We are not told the cause of Lavinia's derangement; all that is given in the play are intriguing clues that point to different theories. Ben says Marcus has driven her to insanity: "they think Mama is an eccentric, and that you made her that way." (p. 389) Lavinia could have had mental problems before the night of the massacre since she says: "First part of the war I was so ill I thought it was brave of your Papa to run the blockade" (p. 383), but she could also have meant she was physically sick. And the weight of evidence points to the night of Marcus' secret guilt as the time of the inception of her mental illness. Lavinia herself says that she became ill with the stress of her own sinful guilt:

I was ill after that night. Who wouldn't have been? It had nothing to do with, with my nerves. It was taking part in sin, your sin, that upset me, and not knowing the right and wrong of what to do-- (p. 389)

A more sinister theory is that Dr. Hammanond, to whom she was taken after that night, gave her some treatment which left her permanently addled. Ben says Marcus was at least acting in his own interests in taking her to the doctor: "Why do you think he took you to Dr. Hammanond in the first place? Because he thought you might have seen him, and because it wouldn't hurt to have a doctor say that you were--" (p. 393) Whatever caused her sickness, it is
important in the play that her unwilling participation in that particular incident makes her feel sinful and motivates her to seek atonement.

Lavinia's style of speech is strictly subordinate. She is uncertain: "That's good, I'm sure, I mean--" (p. 335); "I really don't know, son. I really couldn't say." (p. 339) She is needlessly apologetic: "I'm sorry. I'm sure I didn't mean to--" (p. 338); "Goodbye, son. I'm sorry if--I'm sorry." (p. 377) She is extremely repetitive when upset: "Tomorrow then. Tomorrow wouldn't hurt so much, because tomorrow is just after today. . . . Tomorrow, Marcus? Tomorrow, tomorrow." (p. 350) Her style is whimsical and eccentric. Often she is silent and then suddenly speaks as if coming out of a trance (pp. 339, 375). Her customary speech patterns certainly reinforce her character.

As noted earlier, Lavinia has no interest in money. She has known all along where Marcus kept his envelope of money, but she never took any for herself. She admits she was tempted to use it for her school, but she is held back by her morality and her assurance that it is "evil money and not worthy of the poor." (p. 383) Lavinia has no financial resources of her own; she must wait on the permission of Marcus to start her school.
In fact, Lavinia is entirely dominated by her husband. He blithely puts her off when she begs him to talk to her about her mission, and she is distraught that he would break his promise to talk to her that day. All she wants is to be allowed to travel to Altaloosa, live there, and devote herself to poor children; in other words, she wants a career, financial stability, and freedom to travel. It is his denial of permission for her dream that drives her finally to rebel:

Last night he said he'd never ever meant me to go. Last night he said if ever, then he'd have Dr. Seckles, have him, have him—(Turns, her fist clenched) Take me away from here. For ten years he swore, for ten years he swore a lie to me. I told God about that last night, and God's message said, "Go, Lavinia, even if you have to tell the awful truth. If there is no other way, tell the truth." . . . All night long I been thinking I should go right up those steps and tell him what I know. Then he'd have to let me leave or—(Puts her hands to her face) I've always been afraid of him, because once or twice— (p. 382)

She would like to assert herself and gain power, but her fear of Marcus' physical violence stops her. She feels in need of Ben's sponsorship to carry through her decision to tell the truth. And when Ben assures her that their plan will work, she is thrilled with her new power. She calls Marcus to wake up, even though she has never dared to before: "Marcus! Marcus! I want—we want to speak to you. (To Jake) Hear what I did? Everything's different—Marcus!" (p. 386) She has not achieved true independence, however,
because she is now dependent on and subordinate to Ben; he says: "Now I want you to do what I tell you, and trust me from now on, will you?" and she replies: "I'm going to do what you tell me." (p. 386)

It is ironic that for years Lavinia held within herself the power to win over Marcus and yet never gave herself permission to use it. She is so indoctrinated with the notion of male superiority that she never considered herself able—or worthy—of holding power. Instead, she retreated into insanity, the safe path, so that no one would hold her responsible for anything. And she was content to live for years with her dream of accomplishment and self respect, being mollified by Marcus' occasional promises that she could go to her dream in the future.

It is also ironic that Lavinia never considered Regina as a potential ally. She says she decided to tell Ben her secret because he was her first born and therefore part of her sin (pp. 379, 381). However, it is more likely that she instinctively felt him to be more formidable than Regina and more able to protect her and take her with him. She is certainly ingrained with her society's teachings on sexual roles, rules, and expectations.

However, Lavinia benefits from her limited assertiveness, and one senses that she will be happy teaching the black children in Altaloosa. She has broken free from the
absolute control of the patriarch and graduated to the protection of a male sponsor. She has enough wits about her, though, to keep the source of her power--her Bible--with her lest her benevolent sponsor become too ambitious.

Birdie Bagtry

At first glance, Birdie seems to be a bland, mousy character. However, with closer examination, she is revealed as a person with a little spirit and determination who is seriously hampered by societal restraints. Although she is a minor character, Birdie is intriguing, and she has an important function in the play.

She assumes several roles, all of which require her to act subservient and helpless. One of these is the "dutiful daughter." She is devoted to her mother and, although he is dead, her father still exerts a powerful, restraining influence. Her parents were meticulous in their training of Birdie to be an aristocrat, and Birdie was such a good student that she became the embodiment of ideal southern womanhood: meek, polite, delicate, modest. She considers herself as a member of her family--not as an independent agent--and she worries over the welfare of her group as she forfeits concern for self.

As for career, Birdie says: "if the war hadn't come, and my Papa had lived, I would have gone to Europe. It was planned for me to study watercolor." (p. 365) Her
parents had decided painting would be a good project for her; however, it was certainly not considered as a career for Birdie but merely as a cultured avocation. Birdie could be thought of as a "submissive wife in training" since that was the goal of her aristocratic education. Birdie is pitiful, however, because although she succeeded in fulfilling the upper class woman role, she is failing in life since the role was poorly adapted to the changing environment. In her situation, Birdie needs a great deal of cleverness in order to survive and prosper; however, all her background and training taught her was to follow rather than lead and to repress her intelligence. In this fashion, she portrays the "dumb blonde" role in its aspects of helplessness and cute stupidity. However, Birdie is assuredly not a coquette; she is "pretty" but "faded-looking" (p. 344), and she knows she is silly in an annoying way.

Birdie's values are reflective of the roles she plays. She adores her family and never questions the self sacrifice she makes for others' sake. She is a good, obedient daughter who feels a duty to provide for the family and its servants. Her honor and pride are important. She says, when asking Ben for the loan: "No, when everything else is gone, Mama says you at least got pride left" (p. 345), and she fears that her mother will find out she came to ask for help: "She'd never forgive me, rather
die--" (p. 346) She is shy and lonely but also kind and empathetic. Although Regina accuses her of being unfriendly, Birdie is incapable of snobbism, and she is genuinely polite and grateful for any favors. As befits a southern lady, she is well trained in the arts, music being her specialty. Also she excels in the art of conversation, the traditional woman's skill, as shown in her dialogue during Marcus' party. When there is a lull in conversation or if anything embarrassing is said, Birdie steps in quickly to smooth things over. Also when John makes a hostile statement, she tries to explain what he really meant, to tone down the potential conflict:

JOHN (sharply). It's still hard for a soldier to understand.
BIRDIE (quickly). John means once a soldier, always a soldier. (p. 367)

Birdie accepts without question the values of the lost southern nobility and tries to carry on in that tradition.

Like a true lady, Birdie acts as if sex does not exist. She is not adept at flirtation, and she has no obvious thoughts of marriage. Presumably, however, she does consider it as a possibility because she is embarrassed, then pleased, when Oscar walks her home. When she is surprised by the scene of Oscar and Laurette kissing, she ignores the sexual implications and, in spite of her embarrassment, calls on her good manners as she "curtsies,
puts out her hand, smiles warmly" (p. 362) to greet Marcus, her host.

Birdie gives the impression of having a sub-normal intellect in the play. She cannot understand many issues crucial to her livelihood, for example the demand for cotton: "everybody was raising cotton that nobody else wanted. I don't understand that. I thought people always wanted cotton." (pp. 345-346) She acts like a simpleton when asking Ben for the loan, and she is open about her mental failings: "Oh. You mean you can't sign for what you don't own. Oh. I see. I hadn't thought of that. Oh. That's how much of a ninny I am." (pp. 346-347) She has no suspicions when Ben raises the amount of her loan to $10,000; she blindly trusts him and takes his advice.

In Birdie's defense, it must be noted that she never had received any education in financial or economic matters. In fact, Birdie's main problem is that she hides what intelligence she possesses. In her society, an intelligent woman is unattractive, so females are encouraged to strive to be demure, genteel, and dense. With her background, Birdie automatically represses her ability to reason. However, under the stress of poverty and her desire to help her mother, Birdie did think of a good idea; it was clever of her to come to the Hubbards for a loan. She probably
does have a good mind that she has kept hidden and dull through lack of use.

Of course, Birdie has a very low self image. She regularly calls herself a "ninny" and even doubts she should have been born: "I was such a ninny, being born when I did, and growing up in the wrong time." (p. 345) She knows she is silly, foolish, and annoying. She is very hard on herself, pointing out her stupidities to her listeners:

It's not good manners to take up all your time saying how sorry I am to take up all your time, now is it? Oh, and I'm doing that again, too. Mama says I say everything in a question. Oh. (p. 345)

Forgive me for bothering you. I shouldn't have. I'm sorry I just ruined your Sunday morning. Good day, sir. (p. 347)

Oh. I've said the wrong thing again. I don't know how to-- (p. 373)

The irony is that many times Birdie is berating herself for nothing; she does have a good plan, but she lacks confidence to give herself credit for anything. Instead, she is incredibly apologetic:

Please, you all, forgive my coming to your house, particularly on this day of privacy. (p. 344)

(Tense, frightened) Forgive me. Would you, I mean your father and you, would you lend money on our cotton, or land, or-- (p. 346)

When she tells Marcus about her past plans to study watercolor, she stresses that she likes "small watercolor" (p. 365); thus, by making it diminutive, she makes her talents seem trivial, unimportant, more appropriate for her
worthless self. Other people like Oscar and Regina accept her own valuation: Oscar calls her "Melty-mush-silly" (p. 344) and Regina perceptively says Birdie and her mother are "two mummies" (p. 330), aristocrats who have been frozen in time.

Her style of speech is entirely appropriate to her personality. Her subservient, self-effacing manner is unmistakably projected by her speech filled with qualifiers, fillers, hesitations, repetitions, and so on: (Italics mine) "You see, that was one of the things Mama was going to do with the money." (p. 346); "Me? Er. Yes." (p. 346); "Oh, John doesn't mind. He means--well, you see, it's hard for us to understand anybody who thought we'd lose--" (p. 367); "Oh. Oh. Of course, I'd make the promise." (p. 347) Her favorite crutch is the word "oh" which she uses constantly. Her speech is also marked with tag questions that suggest her uncertainty and requests for approval: "I couldn't come to see you in the store, because then the whole town would know, wouldn't they? ... (Giggles nervously) Isn't that so, Mr. Benjamin?" (p. 345) Birdie's mother is correct that she says "everything in a question." (p. 345) Her approach is always indirect, and her references are obscure:

Have you been able, did he, speak of the matter that I-- (p. 363)
Mama didn't want to do it, but she did it, and it was just awful for her. (p. 345)

Stress and emotion intensify her subordinate style; when she feels relatively secure, she is able to converse politely and successfully.

Birdie is motivated by her desire to obtain money in order to save Lionnet. She realizes dimly that something new must be tried, that their old ways are bringing them to ruin. So she gets an idea and makes an independent decision: she will sneak to the forbidden Hubbard house and appeal to Ben to intercede for her with Marcus to give her a loan. Considering her timidity, it is brave of her to dare to carry through such a plot; the effort leaves her flustered and witless when she tries to tell Ben of her wish. Her persuasive technique with Ben is a combination of pleading and giving the impression of helplessness and stupidity; both approaches loudly signal her subordinate status in order to arouse pity. However, she consciously tries to be courageous, and at one point she stops herself from her accustomed fearfulness:

BIRDIE (backing away). Oh, no. I couldn't say all that today again. I just couldn't--(Softly) That's silly. Of course I could. What time will I come? (p. 347)

It is at this point that she makes another independent decision and says: "(after a second, with determination). Thank you very much. I will be most pleased to come." (p.
Her speech is confident, triumphantly minus her usual hesitations and qualifiers. With this decision, she accepts the invitation to the concert along with the challenge of persuading John to accompany her and of stealing out without her mother's knowledge.

At the party she enjoys herself and rectifies the social errors that John makes. And, although she is frightened, she assertively tells, then asks, John to leave her with the Hubbards:

BIRDIE (to John, desperate). Stop it, John. Go outside. Wait for me in the carriage.
JOHN. I don't want you here.
BIRDIE. I want to stay for a few minutes. Please go outside. Please. Please. (p. 372)

When Marcus turns down the loan, she automatically starts pleading: "Oh, please, Mr. Hubbard. Please. I went around all day telling our people they would be paid and--I'll give more, whatever you want--" (p. 373)

However, she does have flashes of assertiveness and pride which, unfortunately, she suppresses in favor of begging:

Yes, I had a motive. Why shouldn't I have? It was why I was asked here--Oh, I musn't talk proud. I have no right to. Look, Mr. Hubbard, I'll do anything. I'm sure you like good pictures: we have a Stuart and a West, and a little silver left. Couldn't I give--couldn't I bring them to you-- (p. 373)

She even allows herself to become angry for an instant before reverting to self criticism and hopelessness:
BIRDIE (angrily). That isn't what I mean. I mean starving. (She looks up at him, her voice changes, sighs) I should have known I couldn't do anything right. I'm sorry to have told you such things about us. You lose your manners when you're poor. (p. 374)

Birdie is dignified in her defeat, and she is able to politely say goodbye to Lavinia and Ben.

Birdie is a powerless person, ill-suited to deal with the greed and struggles for control that she encounters in the Hubbard home. However, she deserves respect for her efforts to assert herself and overcome her financial troubles. Any action at all is an accomplishment for Birdie; however, her actions are too passive, too dependent on the motives of others. It is refreshing that she does get the money after all, but it happens in spite of her efforts—not because of them. Her society shaped her into an ideal mold, and her attempts to change herself are ineffectual. Birdie elicits pity because she cannot loosen herself from an archaic set of values and way of life.

Laurette Sincee

A clue to Laurette's character is contained in her last name, which combines "sin" with "sincere." Laurette really is sincere and open about her profession of "sin," and she happily plays the role of "good-natured whore," a variety of the "sex object" role. In the play she exemplifies the "hooker with a heart of gold" with her
simple manner, her willingness to forgive Oscar for insulting her, her uncultured eagerness to please, and her easy acceptance of her way of life.

The audience knows immediately that Laurette is a prostitute. Oscar says he beat up Sam Taylor for trying to make appointments with her, and Ben asks: "Is Laurette the little whore you've been courting?" (p. 342) Marcus also labels her: "Is this Laurette that, that little, er--little thing from Roseville you been steaming about?" (p. 357) Like the stereotypical prostitute, Laurette is branded as a whore and dismissed as worthless and comical.

Laurette has good qualities, though. She is a happy person who accepts herself as she is. She knows she is uneducated--she innocently calls the classical music "noise" and her favorite expression is "Squeel!"--but she makes a good faith try to act genteel and impress Oscar's family even though her "Finely, thank you" (p. 363) is more comic than cultured. She is frank about her profession and never dreams of self criticism. She even jokes about her way of life: "Instead of fancy whoring, I wanted to do fancy embroidery." (p. 361) She has pride in herself and her family and heatedly defends herself when Oscar advises her regarding her behavior at the Hubbard's:

OSCAR. Pretend nobody knows anything about you, pretend you're just as good as them--
LAURETTE. Pretend? Pretend I'm as good as anybody called Hubbard? Why, my Pa died at
Vicksburg. He didn't stay home bleeding the whole state of Alabama with money tricks, and suspected of worse. . . . I'm not better than anybody, but I'm as good as piney wood crooks. (pp. 361-362)

It is interesting that Laurette defends her honor with a description of her father's valor rather than with her own qualities. In her paternalistic society, the father's reputation determines the worthiness of the children. In the same way, Marcus' bad reputation spoiled Regina's chances with high society people.

The most interesting thing about Laurette is her use of sex and the reaction others have to it. The other characters condemn Laurette as an immoral, low class person, and they make jokes throughout the play at her expense. Some of these include:

MARCUS. Er. Does she come dressed? I wouldn't like her here, er, unrobed. (p. 357)

BEN. She's not accustomed to a sitting position? (p. 364)

REGINA. You'll have ten children, and five of the thin ones may be yours. (p. 377)

MARCUS. An unhappy event interfered. I am thus unable to finance your first happy months in your rose-covered brothel. (p. 396)

This attitude toward Laurette is obviously sex-typed because sexually active men in the play are never censured. Oscar never receives a hint of disapproval for his pre-marital sexual freedom. Marcus says he had hoped Ben had gone to Mobile for a lady (p. 335). John obviously knew Laurette
before they meet at the concert party since they call each other by first names; oddly enough, Regina is convinced John should be insulted merely by Laurette's presence (p. 358). It is always the same: prostitutes are considered immoral and filthy, while gigolos are thought to be clever and dashing.

Society encourages people to denounce sexually experienced women and to consider them as comical; in this way the threat that these women pose to society is diminished. Women with sexual freedom menace the structure of a patriarchal society since it is based on hundreds of customs and rules which limit the independence of women so that men may reign secure. Laurette flaunts society's restrictions and uses sex as a career through which she gains money, independence, and power.

As noted earlier, women in her society have few options for work, and Laurette, with her circumstances, had little choice when she had to support herself. Oscar explains: "She was left an orphan and she didn't know what else to do, starving and cold, friendless." (p. 357) After her father died, Laurette had to find some employment; prostitution, although still dependent on men, does give her financial freedom. The disadvantages include the moral stigma and short-term nature of the profession. Oscar, who is totally in her power, defends her again: "Papa, you
couldn't condemn a woman for a past that society forced upon her; a woman of inner purity made to lead a life of outward shame?" (p. 376) The insufferable Marcus responds that he pulled himself up by his bootstraps through hard work and determination, a veritable Horatio Alger. He conveniently fails to realize that the jobs he had are unavailable to women; he also forgets to mention that he had to cheat to amass his wealth. Laurette had a dream of supporting herself legally with the most feminine of skills, needlework:

Well, I'd certainly like to go to New Orleans. I know a girl there. She has an embroidery shop on Royal Street. I'm good at embroidery. It's what I always wanted to do. Did I ever tell you that? Always wanted to do embroidery. (p. 361)

However, with her lack of capital, Laurette's wish is merely whimsy. Of course, the other women in the play also use sex in exchange for support from men, but they work within the sanctioned framework of society--they marry for money.

Laurette sees her profession as just a job, and she views her customers, including Oscar, with detached objectivity. She does not love Oscar; she is frankly using him for his money. She views sex with clients dispassionately, removing it from the scope of morality. She tells Marcus: "Why, the first night he slept with me, I didn't even want to speak to him because of you and your doings." (p. 372) She gives the impression that she did not mind
having sex with Oscar but she hesitated to have real intimacy by conversing with him.

Laurette is the only woman in the play with independent means, and she is the only one to stand up to and tell off Marcus. In addition, she is the only woman to actually leave town without the help of a man. Laurette finally loses patience with Oscar's promises of money, and Oscar reports she:

Said she was going on to New Orleans, anyway. That she'd had enough—My God, I talked and begged. I even tried to carry her off the train... You know what she did? She spat in my face and screamed in front of everybody that she was glad I wasn't coming, if I didn't have the money, what the hell did she need me for? (pp. 399, 400)

Laurette does not need a specific man; therefore, she is free to actively resist the will of Oscar and travel to New Orleans, the city of her dream.

**Comparison With Related Analyses**

The traditional critics who have analyzed *Another Part of the Forest* typically devote little attention and space to the women characters. This is not very surprising since the play centers on the men. All too often, however, the women are not given credit for the contribution they do make to the development and integrity of the play.

Jacob Adler glorifies Ben apparently because it is he who wins in the end:
What Ben wants is money, power, and revenge on his father. What Oscar wants... is to marry the whore he is in love with and live a life of idleness in New Orleans. What Regina wants is to marry Birdie's cousin, John Bagtry... And she wants to live with him, supported by her father's money, in Chicago. What she wants is hopeless.

Adler quickly disposes of Laurette by labeling her as a whore and then goes on to misprize Regina. His conception of her motivations is shallow and his dismissal of her chances for success is insulting. Adler continues by explaining that Ben's goal is not hopeless because he is his father's son, with the further advantage that, unlike his father, his brother, and his sister, he is never in the slightest sidetracked by sex. And so in the end he gets what he wants, discovering from his mother the truth about his father's role in the massacre.

Adler praises Ben for acting asexually; one can imagine what Adler would call a woman who behaved so unnaturally. And he gives Lavinia no credit for telling her painful secret; instead, he congratulates Ben for his active, persistent detective work in prying the truth out of his mother.

Doris Falk sees the play as "a contest between the father and the oldest son, Ben, who crushes the father in the end and takes his place." Falk cannot see the power struggle between Regina, Marcus, and Ben for she focusses too intently upon the men. Also she does not mention that, without Lavinia's help, Ben could not have crushed Marcus in the slightest manner. Falk also does not see Laurette as anything but a comic caricature, certainly not a real person.
with feelings: "Oscar is in love . . . with the town prostitute. One of the comic, or satiric, highlights of the play occurs when Oscar brings his girlfriend to meet the family."^4

Richard Moody refers to Laurette as "Oscar's floozy" and comments with amusement: "Bawdiness is not common with Miss Hellman; with Laurette it is irresistible."^5 And Moody ascribes an active role to Ben, who "sensing a trump card, demands the full story,"^6 while Lavinia is portrayed as a senile person whose mind wanders without control.

Katherine Lederer also misjudges Regina, downgrades her motivations by saying that her "twofold obsession" is to marry John Bagtry and to go to Chicago," and claims that "Ben is the most interesting of the Hubbard progeny. In Another Part of the Forest Regina is no match for him because she still wants something human--love."^7 This attitude ignores the dominance that Regina possesses over Ben through most of the play and fails to see that Ben's rise to power was due to luck, the fortuitous fact that Lavinia decided to tell him, and not Regina, her secret.

W. David Sievers takes a misogynistic view of Regina in declaring:

The masculinity of Regina is illuminated now by her attachment to her father, which assumes more significance than her affair with Captain John Bagtry. . . To get away from Regina's possessiveness, he contrives to go to Brazil where there is fighting. [italics mine]
Sievers complained of Regina's interest in the lovely Chicago women in *The Little Foxes* and branded her as a lesbian. In this play he criticizes her closeness to her father and blames it as the cause of her "masculinity." He concludes she must be a masculine lesbian since that is the only way he can explain her actions and desires. To punish her for her assertiveness with John, Sievers brushes aside John's real reason for going to Brazil--to find himself in fighting for a worthy cause--and blames Regina for driving him away.

Cynthia Larimer also criticizes Regina harshly without stopping to consider what cultural factors force her actions. She says that: "Regina is greedy and selfish in her relationship with Marcus," that she "coldly, objectively deserts Marcus, who has lost everything, to side with Ben, who now has more to offer her," and that her physical movement at the end of the play--sitting next to Ben rather than Marcus--"dramatizes better than words can her cruelty and fickleness." Although she admits Regina does not love her father, Larimer still expects Regina to be faithful and help Marcus when he is out of power.

Larimer also comments briefly on Lavinia, Birdie, and Laurette. She admires Lavinia for her virtue, pities her for her misfortunes, and admits she is important to the plot "because she is the keeper of the secret which unlocks
the truth in the play, and because she is unwittingly and ironically the destroyer of her tormentor." However, Larimer does not see any self control in Lavinia and feels that her revenge upon Marcus was "unwitting." Larimer is more perceptive in her treatment of Birdie. She sees beyond the silly girl stereotype to "the dignity and self-respect of a courageous young woman," and she compliments her control, bravery, and innocent spirit which "put in a sort of wistful and ineffectual protest." Larimer neglects Laurette, though, since her opinion is that she and Coralee are "mere sketches, caricatures, rather than fully-drawn people." She is critical of Hellman for the use of these "tricks," saying Hellman must have been unaware of what she was doing to use characters purely for functional purposes. Larimer says Laurette merely "provides comic relief and represents the moral outrage of the townspeople." Sharon Friedman, on the other hand, looks at the play with a feminist perspective, and gives the women caring attention. Immediately she observes:

the Hubbard home is an arena in which women can be viewed in their "true powerlessness" for they are not far removed from the source of significant decision making, and yet, do not actively participate.

Friedman acknowledges that the main focus is on Marcus and Ben; yet, she still looks at the women with interest to discover their unique contributions. She gives
most attention to Regina and perceptively says that her affair with John "is essentially the first of many plans to escape her confines" and "Although Regina spends her father's money while her brothers work for meagre wages, she has no money of her own... and is considered a marketable asset by her brother." Friedman approaches Regina with an open mind; she does not damn her for her actions but admires her resistance:

Only Regina faces her circumstances head on, imitating the strengths which she perceives in the male tradition... Regina is unusual, but only in her attempt to appropriate power; the powerlessness of her situation as a woman (she does not own property nor does she earn a wage) is a quality which she shares with other women in the play: Lavinia and the young Birdie... and Laurette, Oscar's prostitute, who has only her body to sell. Laurette's class background separates her from Regina in that she must sell herself, where Regina's brother will act as Regina's agent.

Friedman's first mention of Laurette is empathetic and non-judgmental; rather than saying that Oscar is in love with the "town whore," Friedman says Oscar "spends his time with a woman who earns her living by humoring him."

Friedman has a lucid understanding of Regina's quest for power. She feels that Regina "regards both John and even more so Horace as a means of escape, and her sexuality becomes merely a means for gaining power"; however, "even the power of her sexual attractiveness is not enough to secure her any sense of freedom." Friedman explains Regina's attempts to fight back:
At age twenty, she has already learned to manipulate family politics to her maximum benefit. .. Regina, though she is as powerless as her mother and Birdie, does not retreat; she attempts to beat the men at their own game, utilizing the methods which she has seen them employ. .. However, when the financial power is transferred from father to son, Regina, despite her plotting, is, as always, excluded from these transactions.

At the heart of Regina's problem, Friedman posits, is her "particular kind of loneliness, one which stems from her position as a woman... Regina is alone in that she is a woman, albeit a vicious one, in a seething microcosm of a man's world."19

Friedman is also perceptive regarding Birdie and Lavinia. She theorizes that although Birdie

has the strength to come begging to the Hubbards when she has no other alternative, she loses confidence in herself when the deal falls through. She is unable to acknowledge even to herself that her bargaining position is weak through no fault of her own.20

She admires Lavinia, saying:

she is less a stock character than she appears... Broadening one's perspective beyond the stereotype of the weak-minded female victim, this fictional "mad woman" is seen to create her own visions as a means of self-determination. What Marcus has not allowed her, she will, at least, imagine for herself.

Friedman's summary of the women definitely comes from a feminine perspective:

The three central women of this play--Lavinia, Birdie, and Regina--live, more or less, according to the dictates of men. Lavinia's actions are governed first by her husband and then by her son. Birdie must go to Ben for financial assistance and legal
maneuvering, and ultimately must marry Oscar to remain solvent. Even Regina, the most formidable woman, must please her father and then Ben. . . . the social and economic powerlessness of women puts them at a disadvantage. 

The character analyses in this chapter are supported by Friedman's views; however, they move beyond Friedman to greater detail, greater depth. The feminist approach to role analysis produces very solid results, even in this play with its obvious male focus. Of course, Another Part of the Forest is greatly influenced by the cultural principles of male dominance and male succession to rule, so it is not surprising that a look at the sexual power relationships would prove to be fruitful. It is interesting to speculate how different the play would be if the women were truly equal to the men and had financial resources of their own. However, this female freedom would destroy Another Part of the Forest as we know it, just as it would shred the net of its social fabric, because both the play and its society are dependent for survival upon the validity and tenacity of male dominance as a basic operative principle.
Notes


2 Adler, p. 29.


4 Falk, p. 58.


10 Larimer, p. 126.

11 Larimer, p. 127.

12 Larimer, p. 128.


14 Friedman, pp. 304-305.

15 Friedman, pp. 307, 308.

16 Friedman, p. 304.

17 Friedman, p. 315.

18 Friedman, pp. 305, 314.
19 Friedman, p. 316.
20 Friedman, p. 314.
21 Friedman, pp. 312-313.
22 Friedman, p. 312.
CHAPTER 5

TOYS IN THE ATTIC

Toys in the Attic, first produced on February 25, 1960, was Hellman's last original play. It will serve as the final example of the application of the methodology for analysis developed in this dissertation. In this play, Hellman once again returns to the technique of centering the drama on the women; therefore, these characters are richly developed, multi-dimensional, and fascinating.

The sisters Carrie and Anna Berniers are the main characters studied in this chapter; Lily Berniers and her mother Albertine Prine are studied as minor characters.

World of the Play

Toys in the Attic is set in the city of New Orleans; the time is indeterminate, but the flavor of the play is the 1940's since the characters customarily travel by train, the women wear gloves, and middle-class people still use "ice boxes" instead of the luxurious refrigerator. The atmosphere of New Orleans drifts through the play with mention of characteristic foods like jambalaya and crayfish and the proximity of bayous and Cajuns. The cultural milieu of New Orleans is an interesting mixture made from the white,
French, and Black people who settled it. These influences contribute to the open, melting-pot nature of the city. Societal attitudes toward sex are affected by these widely varying cultural values: the white stance is puritanical with its insistence on the secrecy of sex and inherent sin; the French and Black sexual values are much more open, more accepting of the naturalness of sex, its inevitability in human relations. With this mix of attitudes, the subject of sex becomes as hot and steamy as New Orleans' weather, and interracial sex—as well as adulterous and pre-marital affairs—seem a normal part of the cultural landscape.

The status of women is much improved in this Hellman play. Women are lawfully allowed to own property, vote, hold jobs, travel, accumulate wealth. Their horizons are much broader with their greater freedom of choice. However, despite this welcome independence, women are still distinctively inferior to men, and as such they are subject to inflexible societal controls which limit their lives. Although a career is a viable choice for a woman in this culture, the pay is low and the possibilities for advancement are practically nil; therefore, a woman's cherished right to a career is usually revealed to be merely a ticket to a life of drudgery outside the home, doing the menial work for men who continue to hold the real power. In addition women may choose to work rather than to wed, but they will not escape
the stigma of being an "old maid" and, therefore, unwanted, of low quality, strange.

A little freedom is better than none, however, and the women of this society do have a chance at liberty and economic advancement even though ultimate success would require herculean effort and incredible luck. Old attitudes die hard, though, even in the minds of those who are oppressed. Often, therefore, women themselves limit their potential by clinging to the old ways of servitude and obeisance to men.

The Berniers women are the reactionary type, sabotaging their own happiness and freedom by sacrificing all for their man. The Berniers sisters are very insulated from the cultural mores of New Orleans; their self-imposed isolation leads to a severely limited vision, bad communication, submerged hatred, and incestuous leanings. The title of the play hints at another aspect of their static lives: their preoccupation with and reverence for the past. This obsession haunts all the characters, and the influence of the past greatly affects the world of this play.

Carrie Berniers

An understanding of Carrie Berniers' complex personality is essential in order to comprehend the nature of *Toys in the Attic* since her actions are pivotal in the development of the play. Her neurotic character is shaped
to a large degree by sexual conditioning which was instilled in her as a child by society's examples and expectations. The conditioning has backfired in Carrie's case since it worked too well. Carrie's personality is so twisted that she is unable to function happily, and she hurts others in her attempts to meet her own warped needs.

Carrie's values were determined in her youth, and her personal development seems to have halted at that time. She appears frozen in her attitudes, unable and unwilling to change. In fact, she actively resists variation in her life; she finds comfort and security in tradition and ritual. She truly believes "there are lives that are shut and should stay shut, . . . people who should not talk about themselves." (p. 739) Her life script calls for avoidance of all sources of threat to her world. By fighting change, she can deny the reality of life and avoid self knowledge.

In tune with her refusal to deal with change is her love of the past. She nourishes a cemetery fetish and an inordinately close attachment to her dead parents. When she has an afternoon off work, she goes to the cemetery:

I was the only person there. Nobody goes to see anybody in summer. Yet those who have passed away must be just as lonely in summer as they are in winter. Sometimes I think we shouldn't have put Mama and Papa at Mount Olive cemetery. Maybe it would have been nicer for them at Mount Great Hope with the new, rich people. What would you think if we don't get buried at Mount Olive with Mama and Papa? (p. 686)
Anna observes that Carrie always goes to the cemetery when worried, and Carrie lists their graveyard duty as one of the prime reasons for going to Europe:

CARRIE. Remember the night Julian told us about the marriage? He said that night we would all go to Europe together, the way we always planned. Mama would want us to put flowers on the graves in Strasbourg. She would, Anna, and so we must.
ANNA. I don't know what the dead would like. Maybe Mama's changed. (p. 690)

Carrie ignores the notion that her mother might be different now just as she disregards any comment she finds unpleasant. She recalls her mother's statements as if they should automatically be appropriate to the situation, as when she tells Anna: "Mama use to say you could sleep through anything." (p. 711) And she talks about her father as if he were still alive:

CARRIE (laughs). Papa always said he was scared to death and ran whenever he could. But Papa said just anything. Julian didn't like it when he said things like that. No little boy would. Papa shouldn't have talked that way.
ANNA. Papa's been dead twenty-two years, Carrie. You should have taken it up with him before this. (p. 687)

Carrie's statement also reveals some sexual bias since she feels that no male would like hearing an admission of fear.

Her most compelling obsession, however, is with her brother Julian. She thinks of him constantly and is eager to sacrifice all for him. She always puts him first:
"Every time there's a wishbone I say I want a good life for Julian, a piano, a trip to Europe. That's all." (p. 691)
She counts Julian's marriage and subsequent departure from home as a personal tragedy, frets when they do not hear from him for two weeks, and when he returns she instantly knows it has been "one year and six days" since he left. (p. 697) Her whole life revolves around him; she admits that she cannot figure out what would benefit everyone, "I'm not used to thinking that way. I just think about what's best for us, for Julian." (pp. 742-743) She looks forward to providing for him even when old; she tells Anna: "You said that as long as we could work and save a little then we could get sick when we get old, and take care of Julian." (p. 712) She denies herself material things so that Julian might have every penny, and ostensibly she is acting in a very selfless, devoted fashion; however, in reality Carrie's obsession is the highest degree of selfishness and self-indulgence.

Carrie believes in the value of her hard work and devotion to duty. She endures nineteen years in a job she hates, and she is certain that her loyalty and "nineteen years of faithful work matter for something." (p. 713) However, in spite of her self-righteous devotion, Carrie does not truly value her job as a career; she views it as a way to finance Julian's ventures and provide for her retirement. She receives no joy from her work, she hates Mr. Barrett, her boss, and she mentions no friends among her
co-workers. In fact, she feels contempt for them:

Look at the people in my office. Dull, stupid—ugly, too. I don't like ugly people. I just can't help it, and I'm not ashamed anymore to say it. (p. 696)

Not only is she uncharitable to her co-workers but also she is prejudiced against blacks. She does associate with Gus, who delivers their ice and who was a childhood friend, and she feels it a shame that he is "getting to talk just like that white trash in my office" (p. 688-689), but she maintains the correct distance from him and all "coloreds." She is dumbstruck when Mrs. Prine introduces her black companion:

Is that the man Lily calls Henry? That man was there in a white coat when we went for dinner, but I didn't know that was the Henry. You mean he's a nigger? I never heard anybody introduce a nigger before. I'm sorry I didn't say something. I never think of things in time. (p. 695)

Carrie also cannot understand how Julian could have had an affair with Charlotte Warkins:

She's ailing, I've always heard, and doesn't go into society. But I suppose the real reason is that she's part nigger and thought somebody would find out. Julian didn't mind. Imagine that. He didn't mind. (p. 742)

To Carrie, being part black is a dreadful sin which makes a person obviously inferior; she assumes Charlotte hid from society because of this shame rather than the more probable reason that she was continually being beaten by her husband.
Added to the list of her unattractive values is her habit of intruding and eavesdropping. She peers so obviously at the money her brother gives to the taxi driver that Julian tells her, "don't be nosey." (p. 698) She listens in on Julian and Lily's private conversation (p. 701), also when Albertine, Henry, and Lily are talking (p. 727), and again when Henry and Albertine converse intimately (pp. 728-729). Even when Albertine confronts her with her eavesdropping, Carrie feels no shame:

ALBERTINE. Are you writing a book, Miss Carrie?
CARRIE (softly). This is our house, Mrs. Prine. (p. 729)

Carrie does have some traits that would seem to indicate a desire for independence. She says she hates their house, wants to sell it and go on an extended tour of Europe. However, Carrie has postponed this trip several times because Julian needed their money or they needed to buy him a luxurious wedding present. Carrie cherishes the dream, the illusion that she will travel, particularly to Paris. She studies French in preparation, buys French books, and spouts French phrases.

Carrie's attitude toward sex is an important key to her character. Her natural sex drive is almost totally repressed. She has no thoughts of establishing a relationship with a man and no hope for marriage. She has no apparent desire for sex. Lily says:
Julian told me that you talked like an old maid when you were twelve years old, and that Gus used to say you kept your vagina in the icebox, that he'd seen it there and shut the door fast. (p. 741)

Carrie loudly responds: "Stop that filthy talk." Her squeamishness is shown by her use of euphemisms for sex, and she is scandalized that Lily is dressed only in her slip in front of men. Carrie refers to only one episode in her past regarding sex; she speaks of Mr. Barrett with disgust: "Mean, too, ever since he tried to put his hands on me years ago. Pig." (pp. 696-697) Apparently she never had a normal romantic relationship with any man. Most assuredly she has never experienced intercourse:

CARRIE. I don't know much about gentlemen in bed and I don't want to learn from you.
LILY. Haven't you ever slept with a man?
(CARRIE turns and stares at Lily.)
CARRIE. Shall we have a pillow fight or make fudge? I don't like these girlish confidences. (p. 738)

If Carrie did yearn for a normal outlet for her sexual and emotional needs, her society would afford her little comfort since she is commonly regarded as an old maid, and as such she is expected to stifle her needs since no man has found her worthy. And Carrie does exhibit signs of repressed desire. The play is sprinkled with her many theories on love and marriage. Evidently, she spends time thinking about sex and gets her information from books:

CARRIE. Girls like Lily don't have babies right away. Too full of good times the first year of marriage, I can tell you that.
ANNA. What do you know about the first year of marriage?
CARRIE. I just know.
ANNA. How? From books you don't read anymore?

When she observes an explicit scene with Lily begging Julian to go to bed with her, she "sucks in her breath; loudly" and says: "I read in a French book that there was nothing so abandoned as a respectable young girl." (p. 730) It is significant that the book was French; indeed, Carrie's preoccupation with Paris, all French things, and her perennial trip all can be related to the subverting of her sexual nature. The French culture is noted for its acceptance and celebration of adult love. Carrie's dream of going to Paris corresponds with her subconscious yearning for the freedom to express her own sexual nature.

Instead of allowing herself to unlock her restraints and honestly search for love and sex, Carrie neurotically focusses on Julian and transfers her desires onto him. Her unnatural attachment to her brother has obvious sexual overtones. She wears constantly the topaz pin he gave her years before; she cries "I even wear it at night--" (p. 708) and implies she wears it in bed. She is jealous of his wife and never passes an opportunity to be cruel to her. She whines to Julian that he should comfort her, that he has not talked with her privately since he has been home. She moans: "We're coming apart, you and I--" (p. 727) and
whimpers: "Once, and not long ago, you'd have known by my face, and you'd have kissed me and said, 'What is it, my Carrie?'" (p. 726) She becomes hysterical when she learns from Anna that Julian had an affair with Charlotte, a middle-aged woman who seems to resemble Anna in her attributes. Near the end of the play she openly reveals the danger of her violent jealousy when Lily confides:

LILY. Last night, in bed, Julian was thinking. . . he was thinking of you, although, of course, I can't be sure. And maybe of Miss Anna, but most probably not.
CARRIE. You'll be leaving here in an hour. Be satisfied with that victory and don't trust me.
LILY. Oh, Miss Carrie. I wanted you to like me.
CARRIE. There is no need to worry about me anymore.
LILY. Oh, I do. And I will. I'm frightened of you. (p. 738)

Anna thinks that Carrie desires sex with Julian; she tells her: "Years ago I used to be frightened that you would try and I would watch you and suffer for you." (pp. 731-732) However, Carrie does not really want sexual intimacy with her brother. She acknowledges and obeys the cultural injunction against incest just as she obeys society's rules regarding a spinster's sexual repression. Her inability to reconcile her needs with society's strictures surfaces in her desire for the safety of the past. Carrie protects herself from the risks and responsibilities of mature love by trying to remain as a child. She really wants Julian to be her adoring baby brother, her own personal playmate. She is never actually seductive with
him; rather, she is juvenile, trying to persuade him to play with her alone. When Julian arrives she "laughs with enormous pleasure" and invites him to join in their old game: "I can still jump. Shall I jump and you will catch me?"

(p. 697) She calls him to sit on the porch steps where they always ate dinner alone together to give him the savings passbook: "Come here. I've got a nice secret. And this is where we always told nice secrets." (p. 702) Carrie wants Julian to resume the life they had before he got married, to preserve the childhood intimacy they shared in the past.

Carrie's perception of herself as a child is vital to her self image. Anna says she is considered "the frail, the flutterer, the small. That's the way you wanted them to think. I knew better." (p. 745) Her name is really Caroline, but she always uses the diminutive form. She allows herself no limits on her jealousy, self-indulgence, spiteful revenge, and irresponsible cruel talk. A great deal of tension exists in Carrie because in conflict with her desire to stay young is her knowledge that she is indeed growing old:

No, I don't read much anymore, and I don't play the piano, or put ice on my face, or walk for wild flowers—(very loudly, as if she were going to cry) I get tired now after work and that terrible man. All I want to do is have a little something to eat and play casino. (p. 695)

Carrie senses that her image is more that of a spinster than the youthful one she prefers, and she is very frightened:
Of my hair which isn't nice anymore, ... of walking by a mirror when I didn't know it would be there--(She gasps) People say "Those Berniers girls, so devoted. That Carrie was pretty, and then one day she wasn't; just an old maid, working for her brother." They are right. An old maid with candied oranges as a right proper treat each Saturday night. (p. 738)

It is intriguing to speculate about the Berniers' family history to see what could have given Carrie such a warped sense of self. There is evidence in the play that Julian, as the son, was favored by the parents. Carrie tells him: "Mama wasn't mean to you. Just to us." (p. 735)

It is not hard to imagine a 1940's family with traditional views on sex roles: the parents would be partial to the boy, expect him to be successful in earning money, and influence him to emulate the stereotypical powerful male; the parents would expect the girls to be meek, supportive of males, self-sacrificing, and they would allow the younger girl especially to become spoiled, petted and rewarded for her immaturity. Carrie, in her adoration of her parents, takes these familial influences too far and tries to turn them into prophecy. This explains why Carrie professes to want Julian's success: "You know, it sounds strange, but I am positive he will make a fortune someday." (p. 696)

Carrie represses her anger when with intimidating, powerful people. She stifles her fury with Mr. Barrett by telling Anna what she would have liked to say: "You mean you're hot and want to go home, you faker, I said. I said
it to myself." (p. 686) When the postal workers jeer at her for her silly request at the post office she fumes to Anna: "I was angry, but I didn't show it." (p. 688) However, with family or subordinates her emotions are given free rein. When Gus teases her about their trip cancellations and asks laughingly when he should stop their ice delivery this time, she vents her anger and childishly offers to swear an oath:

(angry, too upset). Very soon. Very soon. You hear me, Gus? Very soon. And if you just don't believe me you come around to church Sunday and hear us take a solemn oath right in church. (p. 689)

Carrie gives her other emotions open play; she whines, pouts, acts immediately upon her impulses, and is guided not by rationality but by her unique set of emotional directives.

Carrie certainly is not a very intelligent woman. Her inclination to suppress her natural wit makes it difficult to assess her capacity; however, her affectations give the impression of limited potential, and she does not function wisely in the play. She pretends not to know what Julian is telling when he broadly hints he is now rich, she jumps to conclusions, she suspects the futility of her life but she denies it to herself. She avoids self knowledge and never thinks deeply about her situation. In spite of this lack of mental acuity, though, Carrie is clever enough to figure out how to get her own way.
Carrie's speech is tailored to her personality. Her style is disjointed, flitting from one light topic to another. She has a habit of not listening to others, as in this interchange with Lily:

LILY. My money? Doesn't matter about my money. I don't want money.
CARRIE (to Lily). You mustn't worry about it. Not worth it.
LILY. I'm not worried about money, Miss Carrie.
CARRIE. I suppose rich people always worry about money. People like us have to learn there are more important things.
LILY. I said I wasn't worried about money, Miss Carrie.
CARRIE. Well, you musn't. (p. 699)

Her style changes to bitchiness when she hears of Julian's success. Julian says to put on the clothes he bought her, and she responds: (sharply). All of them?" (p. 708) She is as repetitive as a two-year-old when she pouts: "I hate caviar, The one time I ever ate it, I hated it. Just hated it." (p. 707) She lashes out at her sister: "Anna. You look like a fool. Like a real fool." (p. 709)

The scope of Carrie's physical world is limited not by society, but by Carrie herself. She claims she wants to leave, but she will never willingly leave the scene of her childhood. It is ironic that she dreams of Paris with its lack of inhibition and restraints while she lives in New Orleans, a city steeped in the French tradition. She could find her freedom and self fulfillment right in her own city
if she could bring herself to finally break away. However, she carefully protects her isolation.

Although her society already limits her economic potential, Carrie restricts herself even further. Her salary is low, but it is sufficient for her needs, and she could enjoy financial independence. She does not indulge herself, though, since her code of values demands that everything must be for Julian. She denies herself a new winter coat, yet she automatically mails Julian $1,000 because she hopes he needs it.

Carrie is neurotically dependent on Anna who plays the role of mother and authority figure for her. Anna cooks for Carrie, making her favorite jambalaya when she is upset, and she is clearly the decision-maker of the pair. She says:

Pretend it's last week. You've just told the girls in the bank that you can't have coffee, you have to hurry home, that Anna will be mad at you for being late, that Anna gives the orders to the soft and tender you. (p. 746)

Carrie confuses Anna and her mother in her memories. Anna complains: "Why do you so often make it seem as if I had been severe and unloving?" (p. 696) These characteristics are her mother's which Carrie projects onto Anna. And Carrie's memories are distorted as in her recollection of her suppers on the steps with Julian:

CARRIE. Nice of Mama and Papa to let us, wasn't it? Must have been a great deal of trouble carrying
the dishes out here. Mama had an agreeable nature.

ANNA. I carried the dishes out.
CARRIE. Did you? Yes, so you did. Thank you, Anna. Thank you very much. (p. 687)

Carrie even claims that Anna taught her to sacrifice for Julian, and she exhibits jealousy over Anna's favoritism:

"Let's go and ask your darling child. Your favorite child, the child you made me work for, the child I lost my youth for." (p. 731)

For all their closeness, Carrie and Anna have very poor communication. They hide their true opinions in order to preserve the status quo and maintain the charade of their lives together. They never are open or honest with each other about their feelings and needs. Carrie impulsively says she hates Anna when she finally hears of Anna's suspicions regarding her desire for Julian. But, curiously, Carrie does not want to sever relations with Anna; she states: "We will find a way to live." (p. 745) Carrie needs Anna so much that she requires her physical presence even though she will not forgive her.

More than anything, Carrie wants to return to the past because she cannot deal with the pressures of change she is experiencing. She moans: "I'd close my eyes, and say I don't believe it, when I get up--(Points to the spinet, the boxes, etc.)--that thing, and that, won't be there, and it will be years ago." (p. 711) However,
Carrie's wish to return to the past is more than a desire to regress to a simpler, happier time. Her dream is also intricately connected to her perceived measure of power. Carrie wants Julian back in her life not only so that he can give her a sense of purpose and direction but also so that she can dominate him as she did when he was her little brother. Carrie wants Julian to be dependent on her; she wants to be able to manipulate him because of his great need for help. She so loves to give him money when he fails that she cannot cope when he does not need her financial aid anymore. After Julian returns from Chicago, Carrie's mood is jubilant; she assumes he has failed in another business venture, and she feels noble and powerful when she generously gives him her savings bankbook. The price she expects Julian to pay for this aid is unparalleled devotion, attention, and obedience.

However, this time Julian has other ideas. He is rich, so he need not beg any more, and he wants to repay his sisters for their generosity. He cannot understand why they are not happy with their presents; he does not realize that repayment is not a valid option in the mental contact he has with Carrie.

Incidentally, although Julian seems to be making a break to freedom, he does not intend to abandon the benefits he receives from his sisters. He enjoys the luxury of never
having to grow up, never facing responsibility; his life is easy because he never has to make a decision that counts, and he is cushioned in any case from all failure and harm. His miraculous fortune came not from his efforts but from a woman who, like his sisters and wife, was looking out for his interests. Julian loves the power and joy of wealth, and he thinks he deserves the respect accorded to tycoons. However, he acts like a child with his money, and it is clear he does not intend to let his "success" spoil his fun or make him mature.

Interestingly, Carrie maintains her composure as long as she believes Julian won the money in a poker game; however, she becomes agitated when she realizes that Julian earned the fortune through his own efforts and that he is a success. When he tells her to play her new piano, she responds after he exits: "(softly). Since when do you give me orders? (Very loudly) I said since when do you give me orders?" (p. 707) This is a turning point in the play for Carrie. She becomes mean, her speech style turns acidic, and she starts hoping for Julian's failure. She tells herself that the situation will correct itself since Julian has to fail:

CARRIE. Rich! Do you really believe this foolishness? Julian rich! God knows what he's been up to. God knows when and how it will blow up. (p. 712)
CARRIE. What's going to happen when trouble comes if we're not here to take care of it?
ANNA. Why do you think trouble will come?
CARRIE. Because it always has. (p. 713)

After her stressful conference with Mr. Barrett, she returns home and tries to order Julian to do her will, but Julian good-naturedly reminds her that he will not follow her lead:

CARRIE (... sharply). Come inside.
JULIAN (playfully, but with meaning). Carrie, stop talking like that. You got a new man on your hands. You got to talk to me different now, like I'm a tycoon. (p. 725)

After Carrie unsuccessfully pleads and appeals to his affection for her, she tries assertiveness once more:

CARRIE. I want to speak to you now. Now.
JULIAN (softly). Did you always use that tone with me? Did you? (p. 727)

She uses the soft approach when she next meets Julian, telling him: "Do you know that all I want in this world is what will be good for you?" (p. 733) She tries to tempt him with a cozy plan for their evening: "I'll practice today and tonight I'll give a little concert for you and we'll sing all the pieces you used to like." (p. 734) She is crushed when he tells her that he and Lily will be leaving that day for a year or more. She begs: "(in a cry) Julian, don't go--" (p. 734)

Her jealousy and her fear that Julian will leave forever motivate her to look for a way to bring about his failure. She finds a perfect pawn in Lily. First she indirectly but purposely confirms that Julian was paid by
Albertine to marry Lily; then, she gloats that she could have stopped their marriage if she had wanted to. Next Carrie tortures Lily by telling her that Julian plans to meet Charlotte secretly in New York, thereby goading her into phoning Cyrus Warkins. Carrie does not hesitate in her betrayal; she quickly gives Lily the location of Julian's meeting so that she can tell Warkins.

Lily's telephone conversation improves Carrie's mood immensely. She smugly tells Anna: "I think our brother will need us. Now or someday. And we must stay together for it." (p. 746) When Julian returns home, physically beaten, defeated, with all the money lost, Carrie is happy in her selfish victory, and Julian senses her pleasure:

CARRIE. Why don't you go rest yourself, darling. Good hot bath--

JULIAN (turns to stare at her). Why you start to purr at me? As if I'd done something good--
(Moves toward her) You're smiling. What the hell's there to smile at? You like me this way?

(p. 750)

Carrie can scarcely hide her jubilation as she says: "Let's be glad nothing worse happened. We're here together, the three of us, that's all that matters." (p. 750) Albertine points out that Carrie failed to include Lily in the count. Soon Carrie will make her victory complete by telling Julian it was Lily who betrayed him, and the three Berniers truly will be alone together. At the end of the play, Carrie is
happy and busy; Julian has returned to her, so she is eager to get on with the important business of providing for him.

Carrie is a pitiful character, forced by her sexual conditioning into channeling all her energies into living through a man. Carrie invests so much of herself in Julian that she thinks of him as her life's work. She laments to Anna that Julian is "lost to us after all the years of work and care." (p. 731) The tragedy is that Carrie does have other options: if she had sufficient personal strength she could have accepted Julian's success with joy, gone to Europe, and started living for herself. However, Carrie is too weak to adapt, too enmeshed in her social training. Much like Birdie, she follows the classic pattern of "girl-woman" in which the only comfortable stance is to try to return to the roles of childhood. The only option she can see is to continue in her self-destructive pattern.

Anna Berniers

Anna Berniers, like her sister Carrie, suffers immeasurable mental and emotional anguish because her sexually biased social conditioning leads her to sacrifice herself for the sake of others. Her parents and culture taught her that women were most valuable in the role of servant or caregiver to the superior male, and no amount of self deprivation was considered abnormal if done for the honorable cause of helping a man.
Anna wholeheartedly embraced this "womanly" career, assuming the role of mother for both Julian and Carrie at an early age. She made this obsession the center of her life; thus, she found it impossible to let the "children" go when they should have matured.

The character Anna is much more than a stereotype, but she does exemplify, with her sexual conditioning, the typical "earth mother" role. The characteristic psyche of an earth mother leads her to constantly nurture. She delights in providing sustenance, both in the physical and emotional forms, for her charges. She denies her own needs in order to gratify the needs of her children, and she would fight to the death to defend them. She strives to fulfill her offspring so completely that they have no reason to seek elsewhere. Thus a symbiotic relationship is formed; she needs them and they need her.

This role is greatly admired in patriarchal societies. The mother undeniably is admirable in her devotion and selflessness; however, the earth mother role is a trap for women which hardly deserves emulation. It cages the woman, puts her at the mercy of her progeny, forces her to submerge her natural sense of self and all other aspects of her personality, and frees the fathers to happily tend to their selfish pursuits.
In Anna's case, the initiation to the earth mother role occurred in her childhood because of the sexual-social influences of her society and probably as a result of a void in her own family. The play does not give much information about the Berniers' youth, but there are some hints that their family life was less than ideal. The Berniers sisters hate the house, Anna admits she disliked eating dinner in "that awful oak tomb" (p. 687), their Mama had strange notions regarding sleep avoidance (p. 711), and, most important, their Mama was nice to Julian but mean to the girls. Mrs. Berniers probably was not very motherly to the children, so Anna was encouraged to step in and assume the role. Both Carrie and Julian have memories of Anna acting as mother. Carrie cherishes the remembrance of eating supper on the front steps with Julian; it was Anna who always carried the dishes out to them. Julian recollects that Anna made him give back the marbles that he had won from Gus. Her siblings continue to treat her as their mother, and Anna's fulfillment of this role is the key to her character. It constitutes her identity and is vital to her self worth.

Anna's values are all related to her mothering instinct. Invariably she sublimates her desires in order to care for others. She is unselfish to the point of self neglect. When Julian returns after a year's absence, he
comments that she is still wearing the same old dress (p. 698). And later Julian remonstrates with her for packing her old clothes instead of the new ones he lavished on her (p. 720). And when Gus encourages her to treat herself with a new icebox, Anna rebukes him for his materialistic, wasteful attitude: "You know, Gus, colored people are getting to talk just like white people. Kind of a shame."

(p. 688) The scope of her mothering includes everyone and everything: she offers food to Gus; she defends and lies for Lily; she even babies her houseplants. Of course, her main focus is on Carrie and Julian. She picks out a coat for Carrie and makes her favorite dishes to pamper her. However, as Carrie points out, Julian is her "favorite child" (p. 731), and she reserves most of her worry, energy, and love for him. She tells him when he takes their bankbook: "You are our life. It is we who should thank you."

(p. 702)

Anna loves to provide for Julian; she would like to keep him in a dependent state forever. However Anna, unlike Carrie, realizes that this need is not healthy, and she makes a good faith effort to leave Julian and Lily alone, not to intrude into their business. In addition, she modifies her desires, adapts to Julian's marriage, and hopes to be able to mother their future children. She says: "I wanted to be around the children he will have. I wanted
something nice to grow old for. I held on to that and prayed for it." (p. 737)

Anna even genuinely wants Julian to be successful. She has a problem, though with Julian's devil-may-care attitude, his lack of respect for job loyalty and hard work. His life view conflicts with her basic practical nature. Her pragmatism is shown by her ability to eat dinner when Julian is due to return any minute and by her response to Carrie in this exchange:

CARRIE. You know, it sounds strange, but I am positive he will make a fortune someday.
ANNA. A fortune isn't necessary. A job is. (p. 696)

Julian's choice of a refrigerator for her present was very perceptive. And Carrie voices Anna's philosophy regarding her own motivation for work:

CARRIE. You said that as long as we could work and save a little then we could get sick when we get old, and take care of Julian, and not end as Mama and Papa did. (p. 712)

Anna wants Julian's success, but she wants it on her terms; she dislikes the idea of luck and getting rich quick. When she questions Julian about his shoe factory, she is distraught when he casually says it is gone, and she scolds him for being flip. He confesses:

JULIAN. I was being flip. I forget that you worry about the money I lose.
ANNA. It's not the money--It's that you don't seem to care. (p. 699)

And later Julian tells her not to be depressed over him:
JULIAN. This time, no need to be sad. I used to tell you: never was any good; never came out anywhere.

ANNA. I am sad that you think it all so easy, so unimportant, so--"Never came out anywhere." I guess not, although I don't think those words mean very much. (p. 700)

Anna values responsibility and dedication, and she has a neurotic tendency both to encourage and stifle these qualities in Julian.

Anna functions fairly intelligently, but she lacks the self knowledge to perceive her own failings and to see her way to true happiness. At a crucial time when her intervention could have helped, she fails to suspect that Carrie would try to destroy Julian's independence. It could be that, because of her emotional distress over Julian's final departure, she wills herself not to see the destructive potential in Carrie. Anna says she has always been lonely (p. 745), and she goes through deep emotional turmoil during the play. She says:

I read somewhere that old maids are the true detectives of the human heart. But I don't want to be a detective of other people's hearts. I'm having enough trouble with my own. (p. 712)

There is no doubt that Anna feels her life has been emotionally deprived. She casually refers to herself as an old maid, and she appears resigned to her status, but it is clear that she regrets the chances lost, the sacrifices made. Anna never mentions any past love, but her speech to Julian is wistful and revealing:
Faner. Elle commence à se faner. The leaf came in the spring, stayed nice on the branch in the autumn until the winter winds would blow it in the snow. Mama said that in that little time of holding on, a woman had to make ready for the winter ground where she would lie the rest of her life. A leaf cannot rise from the ground and go back to the tree, remember that. I remembered it. But when it came there was nothing I could do. (p. 735)

Of course this attitude regarding a woman's life is sexist: its demeaning and restrictive implication is that a woman's fate depends on her attractiveness alone, that she has one shot at life to get a man, and she is no good for anything when she is old. However, Anna believes in this misogynist philosophy, just as she believed other sexual myths that conditioned her into always giving to others and never taking for herself. She feels she had no choice when her "fanée" time came, the time when she "fell from the tree" onto the "winter ground"; she was trapped by Julian's and Carrie's dependency.

Anna is confident about her ability to work and fulfill her role, but her self image suffers because she does not value herself highly. There are indications in the play, though, that Anna is growing in her self knowledge. After her primary raison d'etre--Julian's dependency--is gone, she begins to see that her entire life has been lived for others, leaving her with nothing for herself. She had always wanted to go to Europe, but now she sees it as her last chance to fill the emptiness of her life. She even
starts to perceive the folly of perennial mothering:

I am a woman who has no place to go, but I am going, and after a while I will ask myself why I took my mother's two children to be my own. (p. 746)

Anna's style of speech is like her personality: thoughtful, reserved, practical. It is unmarked by subordinate expressions. The most notable aspect of Anna's speech is her humor. She has a good sense of comedy and timing, and often her slightly acerbic humor serves to bring in a sense of pragmatism and reality. When Carrie, being far too nervous and excited to enjoy her dinner, asks incredulously if Anna really is going to eat, Anna replies: "I always have. I think it's best to continue." (p. 696)

Anna has financial independence, but, as in other areas of her life, she does not allow herself to enjoy it. She is clearly in charge of the Berniers sisters' finances, although both agree that their money should be saved in case Julian needs it as he has in the past. Anna cares little for her job; it is merely a source of a paycheck. She exhibits no real shock or concern when Julian announces he has mailed her resignation letter.

Indeed, Anna's true career is to mother; this employment receives her best energy and attention and it is the foundation of Anna's power, influence, and control. Anna is a strong character. However, her influence is diluted because she does little to promote her desires. In
fact, most of her actions are related to cooking for and looking after others. She reacts to what others do or say; she characteristically does not act herself. When Julian comes home she ignores the hints he drops that he is now rich, and she automatically switches to her nurturant role and offers to help him with money. When Julian does announce his wealth, she does nothing; her main concern is where he got the money. First she asks "(softly): What is all this, Julian?" (p.703) Then again: "(softly). Where does all this come from, Julian?" (p. 704) And finally, after she loses patience with his dodges: "(Very sharply) Where did you get this money, Julian?" (p. 704) After Julian explains to her satisfaction that he got the money legally, she is in shock. She struggles to comprehend the change in her life, but she does not resist or try to fight. Instead, she quietly adapts and prepares to go to Europe, as Julian told her to.

At the root of Anna's failure as a "mother" is her inability to let go of her charges or to recognize when they need to be forced out of their dependence. Carrie recounts Anna's philosophy on love: "You used to tell us that when you love, truly love, you take your chances on being hated by speaking out the truth." (p. 731) Anna so feared the loss of love that she never told Carrie or Julian that they needed to grow up. In so doing, she also spared herself the
painful process of learning to live without them. In spite of her admirable resolve to live for herself, to leave Carrie and go to Europe alone, it comes as no surprise that when Julian miraculously needs her again she runs to his aid. Her future rapprochement with Carrie is signaled by her ready agreement with her sister that they never wanted the trip to Europe or the benefits of Julian's success. At the end of the play, Anna and Carrie both resume their old roles. The future for Anna is left ambiguous: she may eventually break away, but more likely she will remain forever with her family.

**Lily Berniers and Albertine Prine**

Lily and Albertine are minor characters in *Toys in the Attic*, but each serves an important function. Both exemplify a different female reaction to love, sex, and the pressures of a sexually biased society. Therefore, it is illuminating to examine these characters in comparison to each other to see their interesting contrasts.

Lily is a child, both mentally and emotionally. Somewhat like Carrie, she has found that she can avoid adult responsibility by forever maintaining her childlike innocence, actions, and dependence. Lily furthers this avoidance by assuming bizarre, crazy behavior which insures that no one will hold her accountable for her own happiness or actions.
She has such a low self image that she constantly seeks approval from others. It never occurs to her to try to find strength and security from within. Her childhood with a cold, distant, unloving mother contributed to her lack of security, but at the base of her problem is society's dictum that women who are worthless in themselves must find self worth through others. Therefore, Lily is frantic to obtain love and proof of love both from her mother and from Julian.

When Lily returns after a year's absence she needs to hear that Albertine wants her back. She pitifully tries to make Albertine say she wants her and ignores her mother's attempts to avoid the subject:

ALBERTINE. How are you, Lily? I haven't seen you in a whole year. The garden wing of the house is being cleaned for you. You are very welcome, and I've come to say that to Julian.
LILY. Thank you. It's nice that you want us. Do you?
ALBERTINE. You are thinner, Lily. Have you been well?
LILY. Do you?
ALBERTINE. Do I what?
LILY. Do you really want me to come home again?
ALBERTINE. I'll come later. You must be tired from your--night's exercise. (p. 714)

Lily tries to please her mother to no avail; although she uses her best submissive tactics, she cannot help annoying and frustrating Albertine. She signals her need by acting helpless, weak, and dependent, and thus tries to inspire protective, loving responses from her mother. However,
Albertine is unmoved by this style of appeal. Mrs. Prine gives money to her daughter instead of emotional support. This cold, rational response fuels Lily's insecurities, makes her feel unlovable, and confirms her suspicion that others think of her only in terms of money.

Lily's submissive behavior wins more points with Julian. He is thrilled with her non-threatening nature, and he gives her more love than she thought possible. When Julian marries her he gives her the identity and purpose she craves. As she recalls the wedding day she soars in a transport of joy:

Did it rain? I don't remember. It was all days to me: Cold and hot days, fog and light, and I was on a high hill running down with the top of me, and flying with the left of me, and singing with the right of me—(Softly) I was doing everything nice anybody had ever done nice. (p. 698)

After they were married, Lily discovered to her amazed delight that Julian also approved of her sexual ability:

You'd never believed anybody could want me. I didn't believe it either. I was so scared at first that I—But there I was, good for the man I loved. He said I was better than anybody, and that I must learn to cook because he'd always believed that a woman who was good in the bedroom was good in the kitchen—(She laughs happily) And I did learn. (p. 719)

So Lily added sex to her limited repertoire of power tactics. And she finds further purpose in her existence after Julian becomes impoverished; she learns to cook (a skill focussed on serving others), she learns the joys of
self-denial and becomes addicted to the exclusivity of Julian's love:

First we lived in a big hotel in Chicago, and I didn't like it, and didn't have anything to do. Then we moved to a little, poor hotel and I learned to cook in the bathroom, and Julian and I were close together, and he didn't have his friends anymore, and he was sad and sweet and often he stayed with me all day, in bed, and we'd read or sleep, and he'd tell me about things. We were never really hungry, but I'd have to watch the meat and give him my share when he wasn't looking because he likes meat, and I was very happy. (p. 716)

Lily feels fulfilled by Julian's constant attention and by the security of the socially approved roles she is growing into. With more time to gain experience in the roles, she would enjoy the personal definition of being a combination of sex object, earth mother, and submissive wife.

However, when Julian becomes rich he does not seem to need her as much as he did, and she becomes terrified at the prospect of losing him and her identity. She is incapable of reacting rationally to the situation. She starts to worry when Julian's attention turns to finances instead of her that his love was never genuine and that her mother paid him to marry her. She is aware that her money gives her power over Julian, but she would prefer her hold to be emotional or sexual since she senses correctly that her financial influence is merely derived power from her mother.
Besides, if Julian has riches of his own, he would not even need Lily for her money.

She is sure that her sexual appeal has disappeared since Julian appears preoccupied with another woman and has not had marital sex since she entered their lives. In desperation, Lily cuts herself with a knife to elicit pity and begs for sexual attention:

Please. Make me cured, Julian. Let's go to bed and maybe you'll be pleased with me--Maybe. (She puts his hand on her breast...) And if you're pleased with me, then all the bad will go away, and I will pray for it to be that way. But if you're not, I'll understand, and won't ask why--(She laughs gaily, slyly, and presses his hand on her breast) But if you are pleased with me, darling--(Julian leans down to kiss her) I have missed you.
(p. 730)

Lily is temporarily reassured by Julian's attentions, but she is an easy mark for Carrie who has only to play upon her insecurities regarding sex and money to manipulate Lily. She is led to doubt her powers of sex, money, and non-threatening dependency as means of ensnaring Julian; therefore, she moves to guarantee that Julian will be hers forever. It is pitiful that she is too naive to realize Carrie's menace and too short-sighted to see that by her action she only insures her future rejection by Julian.

Albertine Prine is Lily's opposite in many ways. She has a very strong self image which is manifested in her confidence, her independence, and her self sufficiency. Whereas Lily is tightly enmeshed in society's expectations,
Albertine isolates herself. She behaves as an eccentric, sleeping in the day and living at night in order to avoid association with people. She flaunts society's dictates with her behavior, attitudes, and most particularly with her miscegenetic affair. She receives her strength from her money, and she respects it for the power and freedom it brings.

Whereas Lily is childlike and emotional, Albertine is entirely adult and rational. She cannot understand Lily's huge emotional need, and although she does love her daughter she does not respond well to Lily's subordinate displays. All she can do is to offer sensible adult advice to Lily when she pleads for help and to offer her money. Considering how Albertine values money, her offer seems less heartless than at first glance; it is as if Albertine were trying to fortify Lily with the same strength money gives to her. However, Albertine does want to keep Lily at a distance. She allows only Henry, her lover, to come close. And although she does enjoy Henry, it is clear that she tries to remain in control of her emotions with him. She definitely retains her autonomy and concern for self in the relationship.

Certainly both daughter and mother display aberrant responses to cultural pressures regarding love and sex. The weight of evidence in the play seems to favor Albertine's
way of loving, however, since the grasping, dependent variety exemplified by Lily, Carrie, and Anna produces tragic results. Albertine is the only woman in the play who functions well and happily in her life; she is secure enough in herself to welcome Julian's success and rejoice in his happiness. Further authorial approval of Albertine is indicated by Hellman's selection of her as the "mouthpiece" character. Many times Albertine voices wise philosophies in the play that seem to come straight from Hellman herself. Examples of this include:

There's something sad in not liking what you wanted when you get it. And something strange, maybe even mean. (Sharply, as if in warning) Nobody should have cried about your good fortune, nobody should have been anything but happy. (p. 722)

But I have some bad news for you, Julian--it's not simple being happy, and money doesn't seem to have much to do with it, although it has to do with other things more serious. (p. 725)

Certainly Hellman does not intend to champion Albertine as the "perfect woman." Although her strength and independence are admirable, her eccentricities and faults are obviously detrimental. Her most significant personality flaws are manifested in her inability to function within the confines of society and her failure to give love that her daughter desperately needs. In this play, however, Albertine is presented as the closest approximation to a positive female role model.
This play's message to women is a warning to examine the various ways of loving and to avoid those which are self destructive and harmful to others. The truly loving approach would combine a healthy sense of self, a need for intimacy balanced by a desire for autonomy, and emotional receptivity without excessive emotional vulnerability.

Comparison With Related Analyses

Critic's opinions of the characters of Toys in the Attic are nearly identical; reading the criticism becomes monotonous because virtually all the attitudes toward the characters are the same. Critics agree that Julian is an attractive, ne'er-do-well, Lily is a neurotic child, Carrie has an unnatural desire for her brother, and Anna, who is more mature, tempers her need for Julian with genuine affection.

Critics also concur in their ideas of the themes of the play: the condemnation of destructive love, the power of money to distort and seduce, and the tendency for people to dream for what they really do not want. Critics are unanimous in identifying Carrie's, Anna's, and Lily's type of love as the ultimate cause of Julian's failure. However, they are also uniform in the limits of their critical vision; none of the critics pause to reflect on the cause of the women's possessiveness nor do they give sympathetic attention to the women's options in their particular world.
This points up the difference between traditional critics and feminist critics; it is a subtle difference and many times the variance is hard to detect. However, the revealing feature is the shift in emphasis and focus that feminist critics insist upon.

One of the more obvious habits of some of the traditionalists is to look at the male characters as natural protagonists and promoters of action. In Toys in the Attic, this tendency surfaces as an attitude that it is Julian's play rather than a play focusing on the women. Several critics display this prejudice in spite of Hellman's well-known comment that she structured the play with primary emphasis on the women. In her memoir Pentimento, Hellman wrote regarding Toys in the Attic: "I can't write a play that centers on a man. I've got to tear it up, make it about the women around him, his sisters, his bride, her mother."¹

Lorena Holmin reluctantly admits that Carrie is an important character and grants her status as a secondary principal: "At the end of Act II Carrie as well as Julian must also be considered a protagonist. . . . Indeed, Toys in the Attic is not only a play about Julian, but is to a great extent Carrie's play, as well."²

Critics with this male-biased tunnel vision are often bewildered when faced with a character who they feel
should be the main focus but who stubbornly does not act the part of the strong lead. They tend to mercilessly criticize the man for his weakness and lack of authority, and they cannot understand why the playwright does not make him do something. Holmin is so angered by Julian's apparent "one-dimensional" development and her impression that he "lacks qualities that would make us care sufficiently about what happens to him" that she sees the play as defective and blames it on him: "The major flaw of the play lies in the weakness of the characterization of the main protagonist, Julian."³

Jacob Adler also sees the play as Julian's story. He discloses his bias in subtle ways much like his revealing choice of words when referring to Lily: "What would have happened if Julian's wife had refused to be her tool or if Julian had left his wife in Chicago?"⁴ Adler reduces Lily to a mere possession of Julian's and, like most critics, dismisses her as a crazy girl who does not merit more than surface critical attention. Adler does acknowledge Carrie's importance to the play, but he does not delve deeply or sympathetically into her personality. Instead, along with most critics, he brands her as the incarnation of evil, thus following in the stereotypical tradition of labeling woman as scapegoat or evil, mysterious "other." He writes: "Evil looms in her, and she is its agent and its victim."⁵
Incidentally, the attitude that evil controls her actions implies that Carrie has no independence or responsibility in her behavior. Adler also reduces her complex motivation down to one factor: "her incestuous affection causes her now to take action which will inevitably mean her brother's losing all the money, and possibly worse."

It never occurs to Adler that Carrie might want something other than sexual intimacy with Julian.

Richard Moody fails to see the significance of New Orleans as the setting along with his failure to include the Berniers sisters in his consideration: Hellman "enfolded them in the decaying atmosphere of the South that she knew by instinct, though the locale served only to give the ring of truth. Home for Julian and his child bride could have been anywhere." Perhaps Julian and Lily would not have been altered by a different setting; however, Carrie and Anna are given considerable impact by placing them against the backdrop of the culture of New Orleans.

Frank Magill describes Julian as the protagonist and characterizes the women as both vicious destroyers of Julian and willing pillows for his comfort and safety:

The central character is Julian Berniers, an un­

witting, if not unwilling, victim of the women in
his life. . . . Fortunately for Julian, he finds a
woman to cushion each fall and help him again to his
feet. His reward for them is that he is affable,
even thoughtful, in a dashing, theatrical way.

Magill apparently finds nothing unusual in women sacrificing
their own well-being for the munificent reward of a man's smile; therefore, he never inquires what else the women might be receiving from this relationship. And Magill has no curiosity about the women's inner motivations, needs, or expectations, much less their measure of power or the societal forces which constrain them. He even includes Albertine Prine in his misogynistic view. One of the things he finds notable in the play is "Henry Simpson's inability to rise to the role of Mrs. Prine's lover while leaving the role of Negro servant." If Henry could gain in power and esteem, this implies, he, being a male, could control Albertine as a lover should. And it is odd that Magill should mention Henry along with the major characters; since Henry has a very minor part, this inordinate amount of attention suggests that Magill is searching in vain for a dominant male in the play.

Cynthia Larimer focusses on the women as main characters, but in spite of her careful attention she fails in certain crucial areas to analyze with enough depth. She does not question why Carrie and Anna have such a need to possess Julian; she accepts the characters as they seem to be, never wondering what cultural influences could have shaped them. Larimer condemns Carrie, saying she "is pure evil, the one repressed woman who is ruining the lives of six people around her." And Larimer does not inquire
deeply into Carrie's attitude toward sex. She says:
"Carrie's sexuality is deeply repressed because of her
incestuous feelings for Julian." Thus, Larimer assigns
one cause to a complex syndrome with many possible causes,
not the least of which is society's imperative that un-
marrried women behave asexually or Carrie's desire to escape
the responsibility of adult sex.

Katherine Lederer is more insightful than most
critics regarding the theme of the play. She writes:

What so permanently alters the lives of the Berniers
is not the arrival of sudden wealth after a lifetime
of poverty and penuriousness, nor is it the need to
be loved. The basic theme about the human condition
in Toys in the Attic reflects Hellman's constant,
lifelong concern with the necessity for self-
knowledge and the disastrous effects of its absence.
Love and money are only the means effecting an end
made inevitable by these characters' beginnings... .
. To speak of Toys in the Attic in terms of incest,
miscegenation, Southern decadence, is to miss the
point. Toys in the Attic is a fable about what
happens to adult children when their protective
self-deception is stripped away. .

Lederer is also perceptive regarding Carrie's desire for
Julian. She states:

Anna (and the critics) spoke of incest, but it is
not that Freudianly simple. Carrie, in fact, wants
something more, or other, than Julian as a lover... .
. She wants to be able to go back to the "secret
place" with Julian, where the children got away from
the grown-ups (reality). She wants to repeat all
the rituals developed in childhood... . Carrie
can't accept Julian's having sexual relations with
any woman, perhaps not so much because she wants him
for herself, but because the act makes Julian a man,
not a boy. .
However, Lederer does not go further to investigate why Carrie might want to remain a child or what power play has to do with her psyche. Instead, Lederer subscribes to the theory that Carrie is possessed by evil, unaware of her enslavement, and thus absolved of responsibility for her act. Lederer analyzes Anna in the same fashion; she scratches her surface to make an interesting observation, "Anna, who knows better, will be forced to go on playing Mother to the spoiled children," but she fails to follow through to ask why or what causes Anna to behave as she does. Lederer makes the common mistake of assuming that the roles society creates for women are "God-given," natural and right—a fact of life instead of a stereotyped, limited option.

Sharon Friedman, a feminist writer, views *Toys in the Attic* with a distinctly different perspective from that of the traditionalists. To her, there is no question that the women, who are the main agents in the play, are imprisoned by societal rules and expectations which limit their independence and have far-reaching effects on their development. Friedman comments that others have noted Hellman's indictment of harmful love and adds her own view with other important insights:

However, the nature of destructive love might be examined more specifically as it functions in women's lives, rather than as a universal dilemma common to "man." Certainly Julian's two sisters
have been constrained by expectations concerning women--marriage, children, sexual proprieties--of which Julian has had no knowledge. Having never married, these sisters have justified their existence on earth as mother surrogates, and Carrie has channeled her sexuality through a repressed desire for her brother. Because they work for Julian, his work, his potential success, constitutes the pride they will feel in their labor. He is their identity, their grasp upon the outside world, and his absence threatens to sever their hold, indeed to blot out their lives. Clearly, Hellman's portrayal of the destructive and self-destructive consequences of this situation may be seen as an indictment of the narrow identity afforded most women.

Friedman touches upon women's use of sex for power, and she feels that Hellman, by her emphasis of Carrie's and Lily's employment of sexual persuasion, "reveals a feminist insight: that woman's sexual desirability as a means to power leads to a specious power at best." However, as Friedman knows, this does not stop many women from attempting to bend men to their will with the force of their sexual appeal, though the strength of their charms is deceptive and fleeting.

Friedman mentions the role of the eternal mother as another means to gain control, one of the "strategems for survival in a world which has taught women to regard themselves as inferior." Thus, Friedman is sympathetic to the women of Toys in the Attic, refusing to condemn Carrie, for instance, for an act that she was driven to:

This precise depiction of women's unequal position and their varying responses to this inequity is evidence of Hellman's sharp awareness of the conditions of a woman's life that make their
"crimes" or tactics at times inevitable, if unpleasant.

Due to the wide scope of Friedman's study, however, she does not analyze the women individually in detail. In analysis, intensity of focus and comprehensiveness are important in building a coherent and valid argument.

The analyses of this dissertation have once again differed significantly from those produced by traditional perspectives. The feminist writers, however, have corroborated many of the contested points of the analyses, thus lending them support and credibility. Furthermore, this study goes beyond the other feminist critics' writings on Hellman in its depth of view and comprehensiveness. Considering the homogeneous nature of most of the criticism on *Toys in the Attic*, the feminist perspective brings in a much needed breath of new air.
Notes


3 Holmin, p. 163.


5 Adler, p. 35.

6 Adler, pp. 34-35.


9 Magill, p. 7727.


11 Larimer, p. 172.


13 Lederer, p. 102.

14 Lederer, p. 103.


16 Friedman, p. 326.

17 Friedman, p. 327.

18 Friedman, p. 329.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Critic Elaine Showalter uses the similarity between literature and a well-known optical illusion to make an enlightened observation on feminist criticism:

There is an optical illusion which can be seen as either a goblet or two profiles. The images oscillate in their tension before us, one alternatingly superseding the other and reducing it to meaningless background. In the purest feminist literary criticism we are similarly presented with a radical alteration of our vision, a demand that we see meaning in what has previously been empty space. The orthodox plot recedes, and another plot hitherto submerged in the anonymity of the background, stands out in bold relief like a thumbprint. Yet the other plot, the other images, are still there; sometimes they are still the only ones we can see. Sometimes the images are engaged in such complex vibration that we can barely bring one into focus before it collapses under the domination of the other.

Showalter vividly describes feminist criticism's remarkable ability to uncover new meaning in texts, to articulate alternate visions. She does not mention that her analogy also demonstrates the need for the feminine perspective in criticism.

Indeed, any perception model illustrates this principle; perhaps the one most apt for this dissertation is the image of the woman who can either be seen as a beautiful young lady or as a disgusting old hag. These models serve

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primarily as exercises in perception since in them both figure and ground are designed to form equally valid images. So, too, a work of literature presents us with multiple possible interpretations depending on which aspects we, as critics or readers, choose to apprehend. The important characteristic of perception models is that both figure and ground combine to form a gestalt image which is greater than the sum of its parts. The implication for criticism is that in a piece of literature both the "figure" (traditional approaches) and the "ground" (feminist perspective) are required in order to complete the gestalt whole. To deny the female point of view is to refuse to recognize a significant portion of the literature itself.

The purpose of this study has been to evaluate the effectiveness of feminist analysis in producing valuable information that would aid the interpreter in her/his development of a role. This exercise in practical criticism of Lillian Hellman's major plays has demonstrated that feminist criticism is a useful, productive, stimulating approach to character analysis. The particular method employed proved to be successful in picking out new meaning from the text; it was efficient in making an alternate vision of the literature focus and become clear.

The comparison sections of each analysis chapter in which views of other critics were compared with the opinions
produced by this study amply demonstrated the originality and innovativeness of this method of feminist criticism. However, the intent of these comparisons was not to imply that the other critics were wrong in their opinions nor was it to assert that feminist criticism is the only approach needed to apprehend and appreciate the literature. Critics are always entitled to their view, and the multivariance of literature demands multiple ways of looking at its many facets. The comparison was intended to show the scope of the traditional vision of each play and how that differed with the female point of view.

The comparison was also informative in that it identified major critical tendencies among many of the traditionalists which led to biased and misogynistic interpretations. These include:

1) the tendency to sexualize women, looking at them exclusively in terms of their sexual nature;
2) the habit of focusing automatically on males as possible protagonists, while ignoring the women;
3) the tendency to praise and sentimentalize weak women like Birdie Hubbard who obediently conform to society's expectations while refusing to view sympathetically strong women like Regina who, of course, refuses to shape her behavior and attitudes to fit a "female" mold.
4) the eagerness to believe the worst about a woman, automatically ascribing to her perverted or sinister motives, willingly assigning her the role of "alien" or "mysterious other." Obvious examples of this include critics' opinions of Martha and Carrie; they are treated as strange societal aberrations who cause, through their "unnaturalness," untold harm and misery.
5) the apparent desire to place blame on and punish independent women like Karen, Regina Giddens, and
Regina Hubbard who are presumed to deserve their fate as a fit penalty for their breaking of society's rules.

6) the automatic acceptance of stereotypical behavior by the women as normal and natural without inquiry into causative factors.

Some critics even dare to question Hellman's competence as a playwright when their vision of the characters is contradicted by alternate evidence from the play.

The effect of the method used in this dissertation is quite different from the conventional approaches. Its emphasis is on cultural factors which limit and impede women in their actions and development; therefore, stereotypes and prescribed behavior cannot escape notice. The method also insists upon the sympathetic, positive treatment of women characters since the analysis is from their point of view. Women are presumed to be equals to the men, and if they do not function as such the important critical question "why?" is asked.

The technique of the methodology also proved to be versatile and serviceable. The alternate spotlighting of critical attention on each character produced a wealth of information regarding each woman and her position in the play. The careful accumulation of detail mandated total immersion in the play which, in turn, forced an intimate acquaintance with the character. This amassing of data provides a strong evidential base for critical opinion and theory. The weight of evidence supports the validity and
credence of conclusions obtained through this method of analysis and gives them argumentative impact.

The methodology is very versatile since with only a shift in emphasis it can productively illuminate many different types of characters in widely varying plays. In this study, the most useful part of the method varied from character to character. For instance, some were disclosed best by an examination of their physical restrictions, while others opened up when their emotional patterns were considered. For most of the characters, though, two areas were paramount in importance: the woman's self image and her power. These areas always were very close to the essence of the character, and, as tools for analysis, they proved to be an excellent technique for peeling off layer upon layer of meaning.

The method also confirmed its versatility by working equally well with plays where women are the main focus and in plays where they function merely in support roles. A method of analysis must meet this criterion since good playwrights create life-like situations and women certainly play both major and minor parts in life.

Indeed, the methodology was highly successful in this study. This positive experience with the analytic outline impacts significantly on any attempt to evaluate its merits. In judging the methodology, certainly the
limitation of all criticism applies here; it provides just one perspective, albeit with depth and clarity, and one approach cannot do justice to a complex, vibrant, evolving form of art such as literature. However, every type of literary criticism shares this fault, and this particular version of feminist criticism provides a valid point of view with rich results.

In general, feminist criticism's point of view is sociological, an approach which has as its base the theory that the culture of a literary piece affects the nature of the literature to a significant degree. As a representative of the sociological approach, feminist analysis is cogent, articulate, and sensitively perceptive. Arlyn Diamond thinks that:

> feminist criticism is one of the best tools we now have available for examining the deepest connections between literature and culture, and for revealing the false claims to objectivity and science we see all around us, and for broadening the increasingly narrow approaches to literature currently fashionable.

Cultural forces which influence literature and the characters within it are sinister and deadly, precisely because, being a part of our cultural heritage, they are accepted without thought; thus, they are invisible. Diamond explains: "it ought not to be surprising, or a subject of controversy, when we describe the way that concepts of sexual differentiation, concepts most deeply embedded and
distorting in all cultures we know about, manifest themselves in particular works or authors.3 The feminist viewpoint expertly delves out the silent operatives of literature—the stereotypes, the sexually prescribed behaviors, the misogynistic tendencies—and exposes them to the cleansing light of intellectual inquiry.

The analytic outline of this dissertation produces a large amount of detailed information, as mentioned previously, but it must be noted that this data is always focused on individual characters. Thus, other areas of analysis, like theme or dramatic development of the play, are revealed only in the course of character study. This does not have to constitute a drawback for the method since obviously in this study a great deal of collateral information regarding theme resulted. However, a scholar interested in studying plays as a whole would do well to remember that this method outline is intended as a segmented, cumulative approach focused on individual characters.

Perhaps the method outline's greatest functional strength lies in its predictability and reliability. It is a controlled and methodological scheme from which to make observations, with flexible yet consistent criteria. This method is more dependable, practical, and more "scientific" than approaching the text with merely a general orientation and good intentions. The trustworthiness of the analytic
method enables the critic to feel confident about the completeness of her data and the validity of her conclusions.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study's analyses regarding Hellman's portrayal of women. She is definitely sympathetic to the social conditions of women, understanding and interested in their psyches. She pointedly shows women in relation to their culture and in specific societal settings. In this way, she dramatically demonstrates how the woman's personality and actions are rooted in her social conditions. The force of sexual training and protocol shapes and controls the women of Hellman's plays; it demands that they adapt.

Some of the women, like Martha, Birdie, Carrie, Lily, and Anna, unthinkingly accept the teachings of their culture and try to conform and obey as appropriate to their gender. They subscribe to the belief that the current female stereotypes are ideal role models; they are brainwashed into thinking that if only they can be just like the stereotypes they will be successful, admirable women, capable of withstanding anything life offers. Hellman shows the disastrous results of this belief and the women's inability to cope with life: Birdie Hubbard becomes an alcoholic "doormat" character, believing in her own worthlessness; Birdie Bagtry behaves so obsequiously that she can barely
function; Carrie, Anna, and Lily exhibit neurotic possessiveness and cannot live without Julian; Martha engenders such intense self hatred that she kills herself.

Some of these characters are also alike in their use of avoidance strategies. Birdie, Lily, and Carrie try to recapture the security of their youth by acting like irresponsible, childish girls. Lavinia and Lily avoid contact with an unpleasant reality by feigning madness.

Other Hellman females rebel against the strictures of their sexually biased cultures; this group includes Karen, Regina Giddens, and Regina Hubbard. These women are seen as strong and dominant, although their true measure of power is low. They act on the strength of their courage to obtain an independent career, money, or respect, and, although these goals would not be considered unsuitable for a man, the women are severely castigated by society for their "unnatural" desires. The culture manages to punish the women in some way for their effrontery, and often this punishment and the repressive circumstances of their lives drive the women to desperate, socially unacceptable acts. Regina Giddens "murders" her husband; the "fickle" Regina Hubbard "deserts" her father.

Laurette Sincee flaunts society's rules by openly using her sexual power to gain money and independence. In
return, her society censures her for her "immorality" and makes her the object of ridicule and jokes.

Although Hellman's women can be grouped loosely according to their responses to societal forces, they are still all individualized, fully developed characters. Other critics assert that Hellman re-uses certain character "types" over and over. Larimer says: "There are five basic types of female characters in The Children's Hour, and from these all Miss Hellman's subsequent females derive." However, the criteria for these "types" are based on surface, simplistic qualities, and any amount of in-depth analysis demonstrates the unique complexity of each Hellman woman.

Hellman seems to be making a statement through her characterizations about women and their nature. Her technique definitely is to teach by negative example, dramatizing the pitiful and sometimes tragic consequences of sexual prejudice and social conditioning. There is also the positive example of the compromise characters--Alexandra and, to a lesser extent, Albertine. These women represent a good, if not yet perfect, female role model. They are independent and strong, but they are still able to love and to pity. Hellman seems to be arguing for the right balance in a woman of rebellion against social codes and acceptance of cultural virtues. Undoubtedly, the example of Hellman's
women calls for females to function as people, equal to men, not defined by sex roles.

A by-product of this study, produced by the microscopic examination of characters as required by the methodology, is a warm admiration for Hellman's skill as a playwright. Her attention to detail and subtle nuances of characterizations is superlative. She has always been admired for the tightness of her plots, the well-made craftsmanship of all her plays. This study has demonstrated that her careful attention extends as well to her characters in their consistency, believability, and individuality. Rather than being "unaware," as some critics have accused, Hellman is keenly perceptive and alert to all particulars in her plays.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study regarding feminist criticism and its future directions. Most assuredly, this dissertation demonstrates that sexism in criticism is not a thing of the past. Even today many critiques of literature can be found which are biased and limited toward women, unsympathetic to the female point of view, and unenlightened in their world vision. Feminist critics have commented playfully that their ultimate goal is to self destruct: to expose sexual bias so well and so convincingly that the need for their services no longer
exists. This goal obviously is not as yet within sight, so the justification for feminist analysis lives on.

In fact, there is a clear need for more examination of social conditioning as manifested in literature. Critics must expose stereotypes, sex roles, skewed motivation, and, most important, women's self-concept and measure of power as influenced by the reigning sexual power structure.

Most feminist critics group work on female authors as distinct and separate from work on male authors since they believe that women and men have differing sensibilities and referents when writing. This seems to be a valid theory which may likely be true. However, in referring to work done in each group, feminist writers themselves employ "reverse discrimination" in the terminology they choose. When analyzing women's work, the activity is called "illuminating the underpinnings of woman's world and sensibilities" or some other flattering term. On the other hand, when men's writing is criticized, the activity is referred to as "exposing sexism" or "illustrating chauvinist principles." There is an obvious need for equality in terms since the uncharitable tone of name-calling only serves to isolate feminist critics from other equally valid critical schools. It would be more equitable and tolerant to emphasize feminist criticism's sociological approach for both sexes by avoiding divisive grouping and by referring to
critical activity as "exposing cultural gender conditioning" or another equally neutral phrase. A future direction for feminist criticism's development might be to focus on men in literature to explore the sociological pressures which control them. After all, males are victimized by sex roles and their expectations too.

The successful use of the outline developed in this dissertation also has implications for feminist criticism. First, the performance outlook of the method reminds the critic that literature must live today—not in the past—and that it will be judged by discerning, contemporary minds. The critic must be aware of current attitudes and their effect upon the literature's reception. Second, the method is clear, reliable, consistent. Feminist criticism has been faulted for its lack of coherent method; too many feminists approach a text with no defined tool of criticism except a general orientation favoring the feminine point of view. Their organization seems to be ruled most by stream-of-consciousness perceptions. Certainly I am not advocating that all feminist critics should adopt the method outline of this dissertation, but the example of attention to approach should be heeded. Feminists need not spell out their areas for analysis in every book or article, but they should be able to write down clearly for themselves their critical bias and their methodology of analysis.
In addition, this dissertation has important implications for the field of oral interpretation. It points up the need for further analysis and research to be done. Already mentioned is the need for a variety of this methodology to be developed for the purpose of analyzing male characters. Certainly men are subject to sexual conditioning as women are, but the method would need to be fine-tuned in order to perceive sexual oppression of males. Hellman's men would be good subjects for an initial inquiry of this kind; even with a surface glance it is obvious that Julian Berniers, John Bagtry, and Ben Hubbard are all imprisoned to some degree by cultural expectations.

More work could profitably be done with this method on other types of drama, other playwrights' work. Oral interpreters tend to neglect the entire genre of dramatic literature in favor of prose or poetry, and performance of drama needs to be encouraged. Some version of the feminist methodology of this study could be inserted into oral interpretation textbooks so that students might be made aware of the significance of sexual stereotypes. Graduate courses in oral interpretation would be especially appropriate forums in which the merits of feminist analysis could be explored.

Certainly this dissertation has emphasized the need for and benefit of pre-performance literary analysis, which most interpretation teachers acknowledge to be essential.
Its methodology features the close study of a text with the aid of a specific analysis format. The study also points up the lack of attention given to the process of analysis itself and the subsequent scarcity of research on this topic in interpretation literature. The varying benefits of employing different methods of literary criticism need to be explored.

The analysis methodology used here offers certain advantages to the individual student performer as well as to the interpretation director. First, it requires looking at the play from the character's viewpoint, and in so doing it forces the critic to sympathize with or "befriend" the character. This befriending of the character is often the first essential step in the assumption of a role. Second, the method is advantageous in its focus on characters. While understanding the theme is important to an interpreter, understanding the characters is essential. This particular analysis scheme produces a wealth of detailed information regarding each character. Specificity of information is required for preparation of the best kind. Interpreters, aiming at the quality of preparation espoused by Shakespearian actors, need a serviceable methodology for the accumulation of data on which to base performance decisions. This analytic technique can substantiate the individual interpreter's choice of attitude, inflection,
timing, facial expression, gesture, paralanguage, and other aspects of physicalizing the text which must be decided during performance preparation. The high quality, reliable data obtained through the use of this method would be invaluable to a director in determining her/his overview of the play or directorial concept.

Interpreters need the feminine perspective in analysis because it is essential for them to know when their characters are behaving naturally and when they are being forced to respond to cultural edicts or stereotypes. Invariably the character's motivation, self image, and power—which unquestionably comprise the major elements of the drama—are tied up in sexual restrictions and cultural conditioning. Indeed, societal expectations regarding gender have a crucial impact on the development of the woman character, and her personality is subtly intertwined with artificial, invisible socio-sexual directives which need to be identified.

To make this important point more clear, let us explore the specific example of The Little Foxes, although any other of the plays analyzed here would serve just as well. Critics are generally agreed that the play is a classic, wonderfully written with fascinating characters. However, they also concur in labeling the play, regretfully, as melodramatic. In addition, the characters lack
universality, they say; audiences cannot identify with the magnificently evil characters nor with the saintly good ones. As a final blow, critics feel the play is dated; it would creak through a performance today with all its aged, melodramatic faults glaring.

Indeed, critics are correct in this opinion if the play is interpreted in a traditional fashion. To play the characters as flat embodiments of evil or purity would condemn the show into being a ludicrous parody. However, if *The Little Foxes* is re-interpreted from a feminist viewpoint the play miraculously revives and becomes exceptionally performable. Richard Moody praised Tallulah Bankhead's 1939 portrayal of Regina with her aggressive bitchiness. A 1984 feminist interpretation of the role would show Regina's complexity and humanity, as well as her intricate motivations and restrictions. A modern performance of Regina would require a markedly different internal imaging from the interpreter which is responsive to the status of women today. Contemporary audiences would not only sympathize with Regina, if her role is interpreted with a feminine perspective, but also they would find her to be a fascinating strong woman of great depth.

This dissertation's examination of the women in Hellman's major plays has shown the value of the feminist approach to literary analysis for oral interpreters. The
methodology proved itself to be an effective, functional, thought provoking, and serviceable technique. Feminist criticism definitely merits inclusion in any interpretation performer or director's performance preparation.
Notes


3Diamond, p. 152.

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