Images of Women in Lillian Hellman's Eight Original Plays

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IMAGES OF WOMEN IN LILLIAN HELLMAN'S
EIGHT ORIGINAL PLAYS

BY
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This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the degree, Master of Arts, and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree. Acceptance of this thesis does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

Lillian Hellman, one of America's foremost 20th century playwrights, wrote eight original plays with women as the central characters. These plays include *The Children's Hour*, *Days to Come*, *The Little Foxes*, *Watch on the Rhine*, *The Searching Wind*, *Another Part of the Forest*, *The Autumn Garden*, and *Toys in the Attic*. Hellman's female characters fall into three basic categories centered on their economic status: women with money and power, women trying to obtain money so they can have control over their own lives, and women without money who are usually ignored by other characters in the plays because of their lack of power. In her plays Hellman appears to state that women need money to be autonomous individuals, and although she did not embrace feminism, the model for her characters is Hellman herself.

Although Hellman was politically active throughout much of her life (she belonged to the Progressive Citizens of America, sponsored the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, supported anti-Fascist causes in Spain, and survived an accusation of Communist affiliations), she never actively participated in the woman's movement; she was never a member of The League of Women Voters or The National Organization for Women. Because "feminism" has many connotations, I chose essayist Rosalind Delmar's definition, "Feminism is usually defined as an active desire
to change women’s position in society,” on which to base my comments
about Lillian Hellman (Mitchell and Oakley 13). One of the reasons Hellman
did not embrace feminism was the fact that she didn’t personally suffer from
prejudice against women; in 1977, she told Christine Doudna in an interview:
“I didn’t run into men who put women down. It was not the kind of man who
attracted me . . . I was lucky. I was successful early; I was 27 years old” (55).
Other reasons include the Southern genteel tradition in which she was
raised, and most importantly the forty-year hiatus between 1920 (when the
19th Amendment gave women suffrage) and 1963 when Betty Friedan
published Feminine Mystique. Born in 1905, Hellman claimed that she was
born five years too late to become involved in feminism; early fighters for
women’s rights emphasized political, social, and economic status but by the
time Hellman was an adult, women had acquired suffrage and an improved
social status. Even though women were working outside the home by 1930,
they still faced job segregation and inferior wages. According to this
playwright, the real goal of the feminist movement is “that people be
economically equal. So that if somebody feels like walking out, there’s a way
for her to earn a living rather than suffering through a whole lifetime because
she can’t” (Doudna 55). Hellman recognized a woman’s need for money in
order to attain the power to control her own destiny.

Hellman was a feminist by example rather than by activity. As a young
woman Lillian experienced an abortion, marriage, and divorce and began a
thirty-year relationship with Dashiell Hammett, though they were never
married. Perhaps her status as a single woman with a successful career made it difficult for her to identify with some of the women's issues. When she was older, Lillian believed several feminist issues were trivial: "The talk of brassieres or no brassieres, who washes the dinner pots, whether you are a sex object--whatever the hell that is--has very little meaning," she told Barnard College graduates in a commencement address in 1975 (Mademoiselle 167). Also, her confrontation with the House Un-American Activities Committee during The McCarthy Era resulted in her statement made in a letter to the committee: "I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions, even though I long ago came to the conclusion that I was not a political person and could have no comfortable place in any political group" (Hellman, Scoundrel Time, 93). By the time the second wave of the women's movement began in the 1960's, Hellman's "belief in liberalism was mostly gone. I think I have substituted for it something private called, for want of something that should be more accurate, decency" (Hellman, Scoundrel Time, 113). Fortunately, Lillian Hellman had already stated her case for womankind through the female characters in her plays.

Lillian Hellman was born in New Orleans on June 20, 1905, to Max Hellman and Julia Newhouse Hellman. Because of her father's financial exploits/failures, Lillian spent half of her childhood living in New York where her wealthy maternal relatives resided and the other half in New Orleans where her paternal aunts ran a boarding house. Although she preferred the time spent with her poor relatives in New Orleans, she recognized her family's
need for security as the reason why they were dependent on the wealthy Newhouse relatives in New York.

During the 1920's, Hellman attended New York University for a couple of years, but then went to work for the publisher Horace Liveright as a manuscript reader. Soon thereafter, she married Arthur Kober. Kober was a theatrical press agent and later a writer; the two of them spent several years working in Hollywood. Although the marriage lasted only a few years, Hellman made several friends and contacts in the literary and dramatic worlds during that time including Dashiell Hammett, with whom she lived on and off for the next thirty years.

The 1930's was the decade during which Hellman implanted herself as a prominent American playwright with the success of *The Children's Hour* and *The Little Foxes* (which later won the Pulitzer Prize). *Days to Come* was produced in 1936 but closed after a brief run. The proceeds from these plays enabled her to buy Hardscrabble Farm in Pleasantville, New York, which became a writers' haven for Lillian and others. Politically, this was the time when Hellman began her activities on behalf of the antifascist causes. Although she was never a member of the Communist party, living with Hammett (who was a member) and believing in human equality/freedom made Hellman sympathetic to communistic ideology. While traveling abroad in the late 1930's, she both witnessed the Spanish Civil War and made a theater trip to Moscow (on this trip she supposedly smuggled $50,000 into Berlin for a friend in the underground). These associations later resulted in her
appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee during the McCarthy Era.

In 1941, Hellman's anti-Nazi play *Watch on the Rhine* was produced. Although it was a timely play when it was produced and received the New York Drama Critics' Award, it later became politically dated and has received little attention from the critics in the years since. During this decade Hellman also wrote *The Searching Wind* and *Another Part of the Forest*, which is the second play about the Hubbards (the main characters in *Little Foxes*). After writing the script for a semi-documentary called *North Star*, Lillian was invited to Russia as a cultural emissary in 1944 and was allowed to visit the Russian fighting front. Besides writing and traveling during the 1940's, Hellman continued her support of liberal causes by joining a political action committee which proposed a third party, the Progressive Party, which was backing Henry Wallace for President, hoping for important reforms which would result in world peace.

In 1951, Hellman's *Autumn Garden* was produced and four years later she wrote adaptations of *The Lark* and *Candide*. *The Children's Hour* was also revived (with political overtones due to the McCarthy Era), but Hellman's career suffered temporarily because she was blacklisted by Hollywood executives after being subpoenaed by the House Un-American Activities Committee. At this time much of Hellman's income was supplemented by writing scripts for movie producers and because she would not sign a clause denouncing any connection with communists or communism, she was
unable to get such work in the United States. She did, in fact, travel to Italy to work on a movie (at one-fifth of her previous salary), but the producer defaulted on the contract and she experienced passport difficulties, so she returned to the States. Finally, Hellman was forced to sell Hardscrabble Farm in New York, and she even resorted to working in a department store for a few months. Fortunately, in 1954, Lillian received an inheritance and was able to start writing again.

Politically, Hellman stated, "I am a liberal: I choose to think that means that I believe more in the rights of the working man than in any other rights" (Kunitz and Haycroft 634). Her association with Dashiell Hammett and her liberal practices had made her suspect to HUAC. Although she was never jailed, the appearance before HUAC injured her career--even though she did become famous for her statement in response to incriminating other possible subversives: "I will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions."

*Toys in the Attic*, Hellman's last original play, was produced in 1960 and won the Drama Critics' Circle Award. During this decade, Hellman began her teaching career which, over a fifteen year span, included positions at Harvard, Yale, MIT, University of California at Berkeley, and Hunter College in New York. The 60's ended with the publication of her first book of memoirs, *An Unfinished Woman*, which won the National Book Award. *Pentimento* and *Scoundrel Time*, both memoirs, were published in the 1970's.

Hellman researched her characters well and knew how women were treated during the first half of the twentieth century: "I write about people.
When I decide on the characters I want to use I do considerable research to determine what their social standing and outlook would be in a certain period and how the world in which they moved would affect their lives" (Holmin 117).

Hellman was cognizant of the patriarchal society which prevailed during the early 1900's; consequently, the level of independence of her female characters is directly proportional to their dependent relationships on male characters.

The family gatherings that Miss Hellman remembers most were those presided over by her Grandmother Sophie Newhouse "... an independent power whose severity and assurance commanded respect and obedience" (Moody 14). Grandmother Newhouse instilled in Hellman a picture of women who had money and the power that came with it. The playwright is often referred to as a "grand dame" by literary critics; this sobriquet is also applicable to Grandmother Newhouse as well as some of the powerful women in Hellman's plays. Hellman wants autonomy for the females in her plays, which is best represented by the older, independent women who recur. Marriage is one way of gaining economic freedom for some women; however, Hellman was not married for most of her life, nor were her powerful/economically independent female characters.

**NOTE:** On the following pages, all quotations made by characters in any of the eight original plays are taken from *The Collected Plays* by Lillian Hellman and will be cited in text with only a page number.
Mrs. Tilford, Mary's grandmother in *The Children's Hour* which opened to a long, successful run in 1934, is a good example of an autonomous woman. This play is centered on two women, Karen and Martha, who run a girls' boarding school. Mary, a young student, avenges a disciplinary action by spreading rumors about a lesbian relationship between the two teachers; she convinces her Grandmother Tilford the rumor is true and, in turn, Mrs. Tilford arranges for all the students to withdraw from the school. After losing a libel suit, Karen and Martha are professionally and financially ruined. The play concludes with Martha's suicide because she fears suppressed feelings for Karen, Karen's broken engagement because her fiancé harbors doubts, and Mrs. Tilford's attempt to make amends because she recognizes her granddaughter's deceit.

Mrs. Tilford had helped the teachers monetarily when they started the school, so they feel indebted to her. Because of her financial status, Mrs. Tilford has the power to sway others, so when she removes Mary from the school, other parents in the community follow her example and Karen and Martha find themselves in dire financial straits. Even at the end of the play when Grandmother Tilford realizes she has made a terrible mistake which has led to slander, bankruptcy, and suicide, she assumes that money will alleviate all suffering: "The damage suit will be paid to you in full and--and any more
that you will be kind enough to take from me. I--I must see that you won't suffer anymore" (69). For the powerful Mrs. Tilford, money is the only solution.

The setting of *Watch on the Rhine* is 1940 in the Washington, D. C. country house of the Farrelly family, where the widow Mrs. Farrelly lives with her bachelor son David. Houseguests of the Farrelly's include a corrupt Rumanian Count and his wife, who is going to leave him because of his gambling and because she thinks she is in love with David Farrelly. Sarah, the Farrelly daughter, has returned after a twenty-year absence with her husband Kurt, an anti-Nazi espionage agent, and their three children; this family is poverty-stricken since they have devoted all of their time and money to fighting the Nazis. Kurt is carrying $23,000 which was raised to help rescue political prisoners from the Nazis. During the course of the play, Kurt murders the Rumanian count, who discovers the money and attempts to blackmail him. The Farrellys allow Kurt two days to return to Germany before reporting the Count's disappearance to the authorities.

Richard Watts reviews *Watch on the Rhine* as "also the story of aristocratic old Fanny Farrelly, the splendid matriarch who ruled her country estate with urbanity and grace" (N.Y. Critics' Reviews 342). Mrs. Farrelly has difficulty relinquishing control of her family--Sarah's marriage and exit from home as well as David's handling of the family business. When her poverty-stricken daughter comes home, Fanny Farrelly asks, "Why wouldn't you take money from us? What kind of nonsense--" (232). She is appalled at the idea
of her daughter doing manual labor -- "You sewed for a living? . . . Really, Sara, were these--these things necessary? Why couldn't you have written?" (241)

David Farrelly aptly describes his mother when he explains his sister's situation to a friend: "Mama didn't like the marriage much in those days--and Sara didn't care, and Mama didn't like Sara not caring. Mama cut up about it, bad. . .Mama wouldn't have minded that [Sara's husband's poor economic state]. If they'd only come home and let her fix their lives for them" (219). However, even after accusations of manipulating her family, the resilient Mrs. Farrelly handles the situation caused by her son-in-law's committing murder and leaving his family at the end of the play by saying, "I understand it very well. We will manage. I'm not put together with flour paste" and is once again in charge of her children as well as her grandchildren (276).

"A rich and realistic old grandmother brings fact if not gaiety into the lives of her selfish daughter-in-law and weak grandson" is the way theater critic William Hawkins describes Mrs. Ellis in The Autumn Garden (N.Y. Critics' Reviews 325). She speaks with assurance and authority and distributes money to her family. Lillian Hellman creates one of her most autonomous women in Mrs. Ellis: "Happiest year of my life was when my husband died. Every month was springtime and every day I seemed to be tipsy. . ." (489).

Lillian Hellman uses Mrs. Ellis as a functional narrator in The Autumn Garden. She not only controls her family, but also explains to the characters and audience the consequences of certain actions. This play centers around
a motley group of guests residing at a summer resort owned and operated by
Constance Tuckerman in 1949. Among the boarders are Nick Denery
(Constance’s first love) and his wife; the Ellis family: Mrs. Mary Ellis, her
daughter Carrie, and grandson Frederick; General Griggs and his wife Rose;
Edward Crossman; and Sophie, Constance’s niece whom she has rescued
from poverty in a French village and who works at the resort. Plots abound in
this play, but all of them revolve around the ideas of love, marriage, and
divorce.

Act III begins with Nick, one of the houseguests, found sleeping on
the livingroom couch with Sophie, the fiancée of Mrs. Ellis’s grandson
Frederick. Although it appears to be a compromising situation, nothing
actually happened as Sophie totally rejected all Nick’s advances; however,
because he was drunk and she was unable to move him when he fell asleep
half on top of her, Sophie simply slept there too. Wise Mrs. Ellis arrives first
on the scene, knows that nothing actually happened, and takes charge. At
the end of the act, when it appears that Frederick and his mother want to
accept Sophie into their family in spite of what the local gossips will say, Mrs.
Ellis kindly explains to her that they are really shallow people and there will
never be a marriage because in a few weeks they will have changed their
minds.

Not only does Mrs. Ellis take control, but others also frequently turn to
her for advice. When Carrie and Frederick are having a disagreement about
one of his friends, Carrie defers to Mrs. Ellis, who responds: “Now kiss your
mother good night, boy. Otherwise she'll be most unhappy. And say you forgive her... when your mother starts out right she talks and talks until she gets around to being wrong" (495). Both Carrie and Frederick proceed as directed. Later, when deciding the course their lives will follow in the next couple of weeks, Mrs. Ellis tells Frederick, "Don't make bargains with your mother... I advise you to go now, or stay" (527). The following dialogue between Mrs. Ellis and Carrie shows who really has the power and that it does stem from money:

Mrs. Ellis: You're to go upstairs and say that you are reconciled to his leaving without you but that Frederick is to make clear to his guest that his ten thousand a year ends today and will not begin again. Tell him you've decided young people have a happier time in Europe without money-

Carrie: I couldn't do that. He'd hate me for it. Maybe we'd better let him go... I will not cut off his allowance.

Mrs. Ellis: I didn't know it was you who wrote the check.

... 

Carrie: If you stop his allowance, Mother, I will simply send him mine.

Mrs. Ellis: Then I won't give you yours. Yes, old people are often harsh, Carrie, when they control the purse. You'll see, when your day comes... I say to myself,
one should have power, or give it over. But if one keeps it, it might as well be used, with as little mealymouthiness as possible. Go up now, press him hard, do it straight. Tell yourself you're doing it for his own good.

Mrs. Ellis has built a strong financial empire for herself and wittingly wields her power.

Critic Margaret Harriman says that Lillian Hellman “combines a sensible fondness for money with a violent dislike for people who wallow in it” (100). Mrs. Ellis is certainly comfortable with her wealth but also recognizes that it doesn’t come easily; in a conversation with his mother, Frederick criticizes her by saying he thinks no people are so moral about money as those who clip coupons for a living, to which his grandmother replies, “And why not? Particularly your mother who is given the coupons already clipped by me who has the hardship of clipping them” (490). Also, Mrs. Ellis responds to one of the pretentious houseguests sarcastically with “And nobody can be more nouveau riche than your family, can they? I wish we were nouveau riche again” (493).

Lorena Holmin wrote “Miss Hellman, throughout her dramatic career, has shown a keen understanding of the effects of money. The playwright’s concern with money in Toys in the Attic is with the problems of the individual and is not a form of social protest...” (162). The social protest referred to
here is an astute comment on the evils of capitalism; however, nowhere in her plays does Lillian Hellman develop a stronger argument for rich, powerful women than in *Toys in the Attic*.

Two unmarried sisters, Anna and Carrie, live in genteel poverty in their family home in New Orleans. They are very possessive of their younger brother Julian who consistently fails at his business ventures and thus remains dependent on his sisters. Julian’s wife Lily, Albertine Prine’s daughter, also wants to keep her husband poor and dependent on her. Carrie and Lily’s interference in Julian’s get-rich-quick scheme aborts his plan, and the audience is left with the impression that he will remain a financial failure.

The stereotypical older, wealthy Hellman character in *Toys in the Attic* is Albertine Prine. In a conversation with Richard Stern, Lillian Hellman described this character before the play was finished:

The wife has a mother who almost dominates the play now . . . She’s a very rich lady . . . one of the reasons she’s given them a big wedding present and comes around with another check is that she’s wanted to get rid of this girl. . . . So the marriage has just delighted her. . . . She [Albertine] doesn’t like him [her son-in-law Julian], but he’s better off with money in her eyes than he is without it. (117)

In reference to her son-in-law, Albertine tells Lily, her daughter, that “It’s good for people to have money of their own. The day comes when they don’t like
taking it from others” (752).

When Lily and her husband Julian come back to visit, Albertine assumes they are destitute and at their initial meeting offers Lily a check for five thousand dollars and a lake house to live in; she doesn’t want Lily living with her so it is a tidy way of taking care of her responsibility. While trying to explain to her mother that they don’t need money, Lily talks about how happy she was being poor and taking care of Julian. Albertine’s reaction is “How often the rich like to play at being poor. A nasty game, I’ve always thought. You had only to write me” (750).

Lily remembers hearing Albertine tell Henry (Albertine’s black chauffeur and live-in companion) how she’d pay anything for the time they’d be alone together, so Lily asks her mother if she sold her to Julian. Although Albertine disclaims such an idea, she never directly answers Lily.

For a brief period of time Julian is wealthy, and he flaunts and spends his money recklessly. He tells Albertine that now he will have to have financial consultations with her, but she responds, “About money? I don’t think so. I like it very much. But it makes dull talk. . . . I like nice, rich, happy relatives. But I have 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” (759). Author Margaret Harriman wrote “The easy riches of the 1920’s, of which she [Hellman] had no share, may partly explain her curiously split social attitude, which combines a sensible fondness for money with a violent dislike for people who wallow in it” (100). Albertine Prine in Toys
in the Attic is a powerful, wealthy woman who utilizes her money but does not wallow in it.

The Searching Wind is Lillian Hellman's only play where the powerful woman is actually married, but Emily is independently wealthy. This play centers around a love triangle involving Emily, Alex, and Cassie. The two women were girlhood friends who have since become rivals; although Alex married Emily, he and Cassie have met secretly over the years.

As young women Emily and Cassie traveled in Europe where Alex was an ambassador. Unlike Cassie, who has to return to the States to work, Emily is able to stay in Italy and eventually marries Alex. Emily basically wants two things--Alex and a political future which will not jeopardize her financial holdings--and she gets both. When Cassie is forced to return to work, the following dialogue is heard:

Alex: You can't stay alone, and Cassie wants to get back-
Anyway, your father wouldn't like it--

Emily: (smiles) You forget that I don't have to ask anymore.
I'm a great heiress. ... I'm going to stay here. I'll ask
Aunt Sophie to come. We'll take a house, I think, for
a few months--

Emily knows that Cassie and Alex have quarreled, so she takes advantage of the time in Europe to win Alex for herself.

After they are married, Alex is an ambassador in Germany and reports to the American government on the rise of the Nazis. While he is working on
a report recommending whether or not America should enter the war, Emily says that she does not want the United States involved in the war and cites her friends' beliefs as supporting evidence that it is unnecessary:

Emily: Last night at dinner Toni said the Czechs were acting like fools. He said if Hitler got what he wanted now that would shut him up for good. And Baudouin said if there is war it means Russia in Europe and--

Alex: That's what I meant. That kind of people and that kind of talk. Toni has been doing business with the Nazis for years and Baudouin's bank is tied up with the Japs.

Emily: I have a lot of investments in his bank.

Alex: That's bad news. I've never known about your money. Why are you telling me now, Em?

Emily: You've made a point of not knowing about my money, and not touching it. I wonder if you were scared to find out we are rich; to find out we are the people we are.

Alex: You've never talked about your money before. I don't know what you mean now. But if I thought you were trying to tell me that what I think or believe or will report should be influenced by it, I would be very
angry, Em. Very angry with both of us.

Emily: I don’t mean to influence you with my money. I have it, I’m glad to have it, and it’s never meant much to me. But I’m not willing to lie to myself about it, or where and how I was born, or the world I’ve lived in.

(328)

As the conversation ensues, Emily also discusses the possibility of their only son, now old enough to be a soldier, dying in a war which Alex promoted; whether or not Alex realizes her influence, Emily has planted seeds of doubt in his mind. Consequently, Alex vacillates from his earlier firm resolve and his report states that America should avoid getting involved in the war, and Emily wins again.

In a forum discussing women, Renata Adler asks Lillian Hellman about “...that question of who has the money in the end and who lives to run the family in the end. Who has the power.” Hellman responds with “It’s a very necessary power. . .” and portrays characters whose lives prove its effectiveness (608). Into the early 1900’s, the feminists had only one model of a full and free human being—man (Friedan 82); thereafter, Lillian Hellman was one of the first American playwrights to give them the image of the wealthy and powerful woman as an alternative.
Chapter 3
Women Striving for Money and Power

Lillian Hellman realized the value of money when it came to autonomy for women, so many of her female characters strove to acquire at least enough money to achieve their goals/dreams. “In 1939, the heroines of women’s magazine stories were not always young... but were independent career women marching toward some goal of their own... a woman needed a commitment to herself in 1939” (Friedan 40). This quotation not only applies to Lillian Hellman’s personal life but also to the lives ascribed to her female characters who were striving for autonomy by gaining economic independence.

Critic Victoria Sullivan wrote, “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?” (ix) Sullivan is obviously referring to the situation of Karen and Martha, who run a girls’ school in The Children’s Hour (synopsis p. 7). The women hope to make enough money from their teaching careers to accomplish three goals: pay for the school, rid themselves of Martha’s Aunt Lily, and find a place of refuge. An early discussion between Karen and Martha reveal their hopes:

Karen: We can scrape up enough money to send her [Aunt
Lily] away. Let's do it.

Martha: It'll probably be a week or two before she can be ready to leave. Is that all right?

Karen: Perhaps when the term is over. By that time we ought to be out of debt, and the school should be paying for itself.

Martha: Then we won't be taking our vacation together?

Karen: Of course we will. The three [including Joe, Karen's fiancé] of us.

Martha: I had been looking forward to someplace by the lake--just you and me--the way we used to at college.

Karen: You really are going to leave, aren't you?

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.

Martha: 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! and now when we’re getting on our feet, you’re all ready to let it go to hell.

Karen: ... I’m not getting married tomorrow, and when I do, it’s not going to interfere with my work here. You’re making something out of nothing. (14-15)

The level of the women’s commitment is reinforced by Joe Cardin, Karen’s fiancé, when he tells his aunt, Mrs. Tilford: “But you can believe this: they’ve worked eight long years to save enough money to buy that farm, to start that school. ... That school meant things to them: self-respect, and bread and butter, and honest work. Do you know what it is to try so hard for anything?” (46).

Once Mary Tilford, the selfish and vengeful student, spreads the slanderous rumors about Karen and Martha’s lesbianism, their chances for autonomy are ruined:

Karen: They’ve taken away every chance we had.

Everything we wanted, everything we were going to be.

...

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? (60, 64)

By the end of the play, Martha commits suicide because of a dim future and her inability to confront her real feelings for Karen; Karen accepts the offer of money from Mrs. Tilford because she knows that without it she is destitute or dependent on Joe. As Hellman stated in a forum discussing women: “We’re fighting a society that won’t give you a chance to support yourself . . . It’s fine to be brave, but if you can’t find a job to be brave with, then you can’t eat by being brave, and it doesn’t mean much” (American Scholar 605).

Mary Tilford, the fourteen-year-old antagonist in The Children’s Hour, seeks the power she recognizes in her grandmother. To one of her peers Mary says, “They’re scared of Grandma--she helped ‘em when they first started, you know--and when she tells ‘em something, believe me, they’ll sit up and listen” (26). Mary convinces Mrs. Tilford of Karen and Martha’s lesbian relationship because Grandmother Tilford is influential and will be able to ruin the two teachers professionally as well as economically; therefore, Mary gets her revenge.

Through blackmail, Mary finds a witness in one of her peers: “Mary insists that Rosalie share the responsibility for the havoc at the school. If not, she’ll tell about Rosalie stealing Helen Burton’s bracelet; the police will be called and she’ll spend her life in a solitary prison, and when she gets out her father and mother will be dead and she’ll be forced to beg” (Moody 48). Although Mary’s deceit is discovered by the end of The Children’s Hour and
her grandmother has offered Karen financial restitution, the damage is irreparable.

In *An Unfinished Woman* Hellman wrote, "I think we were younger in our twenties than people are now because the times allowed us to be and because we were not very concerned with position or the future or money. (That came to most of us a few years later)" (53). However, the character Sophie, a seventeen-year-old girl in *The Autumn Garden*, recognized early the need for money to gain her independence. Sophie, the French niece of the resort's proprietor Constance Tuckerman, works as a domestic and is engaged to marry Frederick Ellis, who is a homosexual. Sophie sums up her predicament in Act I:

We owe money in our village, my mother and I. In my kind of Europe you can't live where you owe money. Go home. Did I ever want to come? I have no place here and I am lost and homesick. I like my mother, I--Every night I plan to go. But it is five years now and there is no plan and no chance to find one. Therefore I will do the best I can. (514)

Later, Nick (one of the guests at the resort) accuses Sophie of being a poor little girl marrying for money, which is true. She knows of Frederick's homosexuality, but needs the financial security which the marriage can provide.

In the last act of the play, Sophie is discovered in a compromising situation with Nick, which ruins the prospect of marriage; although she is
innocent, Sophie uses this situation to get what she wants, which is to return to Europe. Like Mary Tilford in *The Children’s Hour*, Sophie is willing to blackmail to achieve her goal. In *The Southern Quarterly*, Mary Lynn Broe states:

Sophie is shrewd about the female ploys she uses to threaten Nina Denery with exposure of her husband’s seduction: ‘We will call it a loan, come by through blackmail,’ she says of the five thousand dollars she extorts as escape money with which she will return to Europe. . . . Sophie, with realistic savvy about money as power, uses the meta-theatrics of her social role not for moral disguise but as a means to physical escape. (37)

Critic William Hawkins disagrees with the preceding author when he writes, “I could do without the windup of the European niece’s story. Writing, direction or acting make about-face in character, when she goes after money” (*N. Y. Critics’ Theatre Reviews* 325). However, if he had paid closer attention to her dialogue and actions throughout the course of the play, he would know how conscious Sophie is of money and the possible independence it could bring. Also, if Hawkins were aware of Lillian Hellman’s feelings about autonomous women, he would realize there is no other way for Sophie to escape.

Constance Tuckerman, Sophie’s aunt and the protagonist in *The Autumn Garden*, also labors for independence. Through indirect characterization, the reader discovers that “Old man Tuckerman surprised everybody by dying broke. Constance sold the New Orleans house and
managed to hang on to this by turning it into what is called a summer guest house” (504). Aunt Connie wants to help Sophie and remain solvent while waiting for an old beau to return:

Nick: Do you make a living out of this place, darling?
Constance: Not much of one. The last few years have been a little hard. I brought Sam’s daughter from Europe--she and her mother went through the occupation and were very poor--and I’ve tried to send her to the best school...

Nick: The girl expected all that from you?
Constance: Oh, no. Her mother didn’t want to come and Sophie didn’t want to leave her mother. I finally had really to demand that Sam’s daughter was not to grow up...

Nick: Why didn’t you ever marry Ned?
Constance: I can’t answer such question, Nick. Even for you.

(510-511)

Constance believes she is in love with Nick, who has finally returned after twenty-three years, but she is disillusioned with him and discovers she has wasted her time:

Nick: Has it been wise, Constance, to lose all the graces in the service of this house?
Constance: Do you think I wanted it that way?
Nick: I'm not sure you didn't. You could have married Ned, instead of dangling him around, the way you've done.

Constance: I loved Ned and honored him, but--I just wasn't in love with him when we were young. You know that, and you'd have been the first to tell me that you can't marry unless you're in love--

Looking at a portrait that Nick has painted of her, Constance realizes at the end of the play that she is "...older than I thought or--And I don't look very bright" (571). Like Karen and Martha in *The Children's Hour*, Constance Tuckerman has labored all her life for goals which she'll never achieve.

A quote from writer Katherine Lederer provides a good transition between analyses of the protagonists in two of Lillian Hellman's plays: "... to make the closing line of *The Autumn Garden* absolutely clear: 'Most of us lie to ourselves,' says Constance. She might have then added, 'Let me tell you a tale of two sisters who lived once upon a time in New Orleans'" (95). New Orleans is the setting for Hellman's last play, *Toys in the Attic*, and the lie is the two sisters thinking they actually want their brother to be successful. According to Doris Falk, the idea for *Toys in the Attic* was suggested to Hellman by Dashiell Hammett; Hellman tried to develop the idea of a man attaining material success, but discovered she could only do it by writing about the women around such a man--the people who thought they wanted him to succeed but actually needed him to fail (85).
The two sisters in the play are Anna (approximately forty-two years old) and Carrie (thirty-eight), who live in the mortgaged house which they inherited from their parents. The women have worked all their adult lives as a salesclerk and a secretary, respectively. Although Julian, their brother, is a grown man perfectly capable of holding a job, his sisters continually supplement his income and bail him out of business failures: "We haven't got twenty-eight hundred and forty-three dollars. I took out a thousand dollars yesterday and sent it to Chicago. I didn't know then that Julian had moved from the hotel. But I am sure they'll forward the money--I signed the wire with love from Anna and Carrie..." (723). When Anna and Carrie discover Julian is back in town, they assume he is again destitute and respond to the situation thusly:

Carrie: ... It's you who gave him everything, long before I was old enough to help...

Anna: (takes a bankbook from her pocket). Here is the savings bankbook. Give it to him.

Carrie: (deeply pleased). Oh, thank you. I'll give it to him when we're alone and Lily [Julian's wife] doesn't see. It's only for a short time. We'll have it back. After all, in a sense, this money is his. We lent it to him and he paid us back. This is the very money he paid us back, Anna. So, in a sense, it's his. (729)

When Julian comes home not destitute but with a large sum of money from a
quick profit real estate deal, Carrie and Anna are suspicious and reject his gifts. Carrie goes so far as to let his part in the business venture be known to the buyer, which results in a violent climax during which Julian is beaten and his money taken.

In her doctoral dissertation, Lorena Holmin suggests:

The title *Toys in the Attic* implies that we all have toys in the attic, cherished illusions which may be false dreams. . . Miss Hellman in this play wavers between two views on the smashing of illusions. She seems to approve of revealing the truth about destructive human relationships, so that they will cease to destroy. On the other hand, she implies that the truth should not always be unveiled, that we sometimes require our dreams.

(142)

The lifelong dream of Carrie and Anna, who hope to save enough money to one day make a trip to Europe, does prove to be illusive, as by the end of the play such a vacation is not economically feasible. Katherine Lederer is right when she says, “Money is the catalyst that alters the chain of human relationships because it forces the sisters to face the truth. They have always told themselves and Julian that life would have been different had they had money” (95). The women did not take advantage of Julian’s fleeting wealth, and now Anna realizes that Carrie thrives on Julian’s dependence:

Anna: And you the frail, the flutterer, the small. That’s the way you wanted them to think. . .
Carrie: All those years of nights, all the things you knew and never said. Does everybody live like that, or just two old maids?

Anna: I loved you and so whatever I knew didn't matter. You wanted to see yourself a way you never were. Maybe that's a game you let people play when you love them. Well, we had made something together, and the words would have stayed where they belonged as we waited for our brother to need us again. But our brother doesn't need us anymore, and so the poor house came down.

Carrie: I think our brother will need us. Now or some day. And we must stay together for it. (780-81)

In Act II of *Toys in the Attic*, after Julian has informed his sisters' bosses that they would no longer be working, Carrie expresses her fears: "*We have no jobs. They're not easy to get and we're not young. You told me all my life what that would mean to us. 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*" (745). However, the sisters' goal of keeping their brother Julian financially dependent on them does prove to be successful. Julian is physically and financially beaten, and the play ends with Carrie again in charge: "Let's be glad nothing worse happened. We're
together, the three of us [forgetting about Julian's wife], that's all that matters . . . All that stuff [gifts from Julian] has to go back, and the debts, got to find ourselves jobs. So much to do" (786). As Rollyson so aptly states: "Toys in the Attic is how two sisters had created a brother, Julian, all for themselves, a brother mated to their desire to exert total control over a world of their own making" (377).

The most popular Hellman character seeking autonomy is Regina, who appears both in The Little Foxes, written in 1939, and Another Part of the Forest, written in 1946. These two plays center around the Hubbard family. Originally Hellman had intended to write a trilogy about this family with Another Part of the Forest set in the 1880's, The Little Foxes set in 1900, and the third one set in the 1930's; however, the third play never materialized.

Although Little Foxes was written first, the setting of Another Part of the Forest is twenty years earlier and therefore reveals Regina's character as a young woman. In Another Part of the Forest, Regina's parents, Marcus and Lavinia Hubbard, are still alive; Marcus is a self-made man who made his fortune as a storeowner selling salt at inflated prices to others in need during the Civil War. He also unwittingly led Union soldiers to a camp of Confederate soldiers, causing their deaths, but only his wife knows his secret. Lavinia is a passive person whose only interest is opening a school for poor black children; Marcus has convinced nearly everyone that she is crazy because of her religious fervor.
The Hubbard children include Ben, Oscar, and Regina. Ben, the oldest, works for his father at a menial wage, but wants desperately to get control of the family fortune. Oscar’s only desire is to marry the town whore and get enough money to go to New Orleans. Regina is twenty years old and doted on by her father. She is in love with John Bagtry, a local aristocrat who has lost his money during the war. However, she knows her father would not approve of the match since all of the townspeople despise the ruthless Hubbards, and Marcus, in turn, treats them with disdain. Therefore, Regina hopes to get money from her father so she can go to Chicago where John can join her.

The Bagtrys, the local aristocracy, appear in the play in the characters of Birdie, also twenty years old, and her cousin John Bagtry, an ex-soldier who is having an affair with Regina. Lionnet, the Bagtry plantation, is in danger of financial ruin so Birdie asks Ben Hubbard for a loan. She intends to use the money to save Lionnet and to enable John to leave the plantation, since his goal is to find a war to fight in. Birdie makes the request without her family knowing about it because they would never condescend to ask the Hubbards for money. Ben is in favor of lending Birdie the money because, as critic William Hawkins writes, “The loan would be a lever for Ben to send Regina’s lover, John, off to another war, and arrange his sister’s marriage to a richer prospect” (N. Y. Critics’ Reviews 239).

In Another Part of the Forest, Ben tells Marcus of Regina’s affair and Regina exposes Ben’s plan to ask for more than the loan money so he can
have the rest himself. Marcus orders Ben out of the house but Lavinia tells Ben the secret about Marcus, which Ben uses to blackmail his father. By the end of the play, Ben is in control of the family business, Oscar's lover has left for New Orleans without him, Lavinia is on her way to open a school for black children, John Bagtry is heading for South America as a mercenary, Birdie has received her loan, and Regina has switched her allegiance from her father to Ben, who now doles out the money.

While her father is still in charge, Regina is fully aware of the power that comes with money. To John's comment on his family's good breeding Regina responds, "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" (345).

Ben doesn't want Regina to marry John Bagtry, but rather Horace Giddens, a local banker. By telling Marcus about the affair, Ben hopes to end it, but to her father's questions Regina replies, "It's nothing, Papa, nothing. You know Ben. You know he wants me to marry money for him. I'm not even thinking about Giddens," and Ben admits "Certainly I want you to marry money" (354).

Only Marcus, a somewhat confused Lavinia, and Ben know how he gains control of the family business. Ben simply tells Regina he is now the boss without giving any reasons:

    Regina: I'm sure something very interesting has happened
here. But whatever it is, don't talk that way to me.

Ben: Can I talk this way? You're not going to Chicago. And for a very simple reason. Papa has no money at all-- now. No money for you to travel with, or to marry with, or even to go on here with.

Regina: What are you talking about? What's happened? What's he done with his money--

Ben: Given it to me... You mean what were his reasons? Oh, I don't know. I'm the eldest son: isn't that the way with royalty? Go up and talk to him...

Regina: He says there's nothing he can tell me. He's crying. What does all that mean?

Ben: He can't tell you, and I won't tell you. Just take my word: you're, er, you're not well off, shall we say?... So take it this way: what is in your room, is yours. Nothing else. And save your time on the talk. No Chicago, honey. No nothing.

Regina: (softly). I'll find out what's happened, and--

Ben: No you won't.

Regina: And the day I do, I'll pay you back with carnival
trimmings. [foreshadowing of Little Foxes]

The end of the play establishes that Regina is as canny as ever. After Marcus has asked her to pour him a cup of coffee, the stage directions indicate: 
"(Regina looks at him, gets up, crosses to table, pours coffee, brings it to him. Marcus pulls forward the chair next to him. Regina ignores the movement, crosses to chair near Ben, sits down)" (421). Although Regina and Marcus have had a loving relationship, she knows who is writing the checks at the end of Another Part of the Forest.

In Pentimento, Hellman said that The Little Foxes was the most difficult play she ever wrote--partly because it has a distant connection to her mother's family. A later discussion in the memoir leads one to think the connection was not so distant:

I belonged, on my mother's side [the Newhouses], to a banking, storekeeping family from Alabama and Sunday dinners were large. ...with high-spirited talk and laughter from the older people of who did what to whom, what good nigger had consented to thirty percent interest on his cotton crop. ... what new white partner had been outwitted, what benefits the year had brought from the Southern business interests they had left behind for the Northern profits they had had sense enough to move toward. ...

But a few years after a change occurred for which even now I
have no explanation: I began to think that greed and the
cheating that is its usual companion were comic as well as evil
and I began to like the family dinners with the talk of who did
what to whom...my mother's generation would sit white-faced,
sometimes tearful, appalled at what was happening, all of them
envying the vigor of their parents, half knowing that they were
broken spirits who wished the world was nicer, but who were still
so anxious to inherit the money that they made no protest.

(180-181)

It is easy to identify the major characters of the play with members of the
Newhouse family: Regina is Grandmother Newhouse, Ben is Great-Uncle
Jake, Birdie is Julia Newhouse Hellman (Lillian's mother), and Alexandra is a
youthful, innocent Lillian Hellman. The plot of The Little Foxes compares
closely to the Newhouse family experience.

The Little Foxes, Hellman's most popular play, has also been made into
a movie and an opera. It is set in the deep South in 1900, and chronologically
the reader can see what became of the siblings Ben, Oscar, and Regina
Hubbard. The elder brother Ben, a bachelor, is in charge of the family
business and investments; Oscar works for him. Oscar is married to Birdie
Bagtry (which Ben arranged so they could get control of the plantation
Lionnet), and they have a twenty-year-old son named Leo, who works for his
Uncle Horace at the bank.

Regina is married to Horace Giddens, a local banker, and they have a
sixteen-year-old daughter named Alexandra. Horace suffers from a serious heart ailment and has been in a Baltimore hospital for the past five months; in fact, the doctors say he has only a short time to live. Both Regina and Oscar married for money, which has resulted in loveless, estranged unions.

In an analysis of Hellman's plays of the 1930's, Lederer writes "Regina despises Horace for his weakness and for his 'fancy women.' Regina is almost masculine in her drive for power. Before women's liberation, Regina would have been considered masculine" (48). In The Female Imagination, Patricia Spacks writes: "Miss Hellman dreams of living successfully by masculine standards: honor, courage, aggression. Her stories of triumph, considered as testimonies to the possibility of feminine freedom, thus have an ironic edge, of which she seems unaware" (297). This comparison reveals Hellman's admiration for a character like Regina, who has the courage to persist in a male-dominated world although she would never consider herself or Regina masculine. In her mind, they are simply striving for equality.

The major plot of The Little Foxes centers on a Hubbard business venture which entails raising enough capital to hold fifty-one percent of a new cotton mill which they plan to build in the South. Mr. Marshall, a Chicago businessman who will finance forty-nine percent, has agreed it is time to bring the mill to the cotton, ultimately knowing that cheap labor is available and strikes are not a danger. Ben and Oscar are ready with their shares of the investment but are waiting for Regina's share, which must come from Horace. Regina insinuates that she is holding out for a larger part of the profits, when
in reality she is still trying to convince Horace to invest. To her brothers, Regina says: "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 could say that I wouldn't like to persuade Horace unless he did get a larger share. I must look after his interests. It seems only natural-" (154). Ben and Oscar will give her a bigger share if she is willing to have Alexandra marry Leo and therefore keep the money in the family. Regina feigns interest in this proposition simply as a ploy to get what she wants. In an analysis of *The Little Foxes* Allan Lewis writes, "Hellman's bitter complaint is that greed and avarice have eroded love, and that the cause is a social system in which human relations are a product for sale" (198). However, this quote applies more to Regina herself than to her feelings about Alexandra, since Regina never seriously considers a marriage between her daughter and Leo.

Regina sends Alexandra to Baltimore to bring Horace home, as she needs the money in a few days. Horace refuses to invest because he says they don't need the money and he doesn't want to exploit Negro labor, and he refuses to let Alexandra marry Leo. Meanwhile, Leo has stolen bonds from Horace's safety deposit box. Ben and Oscar invest those bonds along with their own money, claiming they have found a silent partner. Horace discovers the theft, tells Regina, but says he will not go to the authorities because it is his chance for revenge against Regina and their loveless marriage, which he believes is her fault. He is changing his will and the only thing she will inherit are those stolen bonds. Regina is so angry that when
Horace has an attack and drops his medicine, she does not get help immediately; he dies shortly thereafter. Later the same evening, Regina confronts her brothers with the theft and demands seventy-five percent of the profits or she will send them to jail. Regina wins in the contest with her siblings, but at the end of the play Alexandra refuses to go away with her mother because of the questionable circumstances of Horace's death.

Much of Regina's predicament stems from the fact that when she was young she was "lonely for all the things I wasn't going to get. Everybody in this house [the Hubbard's] was so busy and there was so little place for what I wanted. I wanted the world. Then, and then--Papa died and left the money to Ben and Oscar" (194). Hence, Regina married Horace for companionship and as an easy access to money and hopefully power. Unfortunately, as Katherine Lederer stated in her book about Lillian Hellman, "She [Regina] has as good a head for business as Ben, but in 1900 in Alabama there was no outlet for ambition in a woman except through her husband, who in Regina's case was not successful enough, did not have enough drive" (48). Horace provided Regina with a nice home, security, and the social position he believed a woman would want; however, he kept control of all family assets and Regina attained none of the power she hoped might result from marrying money. Hellman reinforces the need for economic equality for women; similarly for the early feminists, it was difficult to finance a campaign and get the vote when they had no control over their own earnings or even the right to own property.
Regina’s failure to inherit money only increased her drive to obtain it in another way. Falk says, “Hellman moves them [the characters in *The Little Foxes*] like chessmen: first one, then the other seizes power. And since power is a function of money, to understand the moves, one has to understand the dollar figures” (52). This quote is applicable to many of the characters in *The Little Foxes*, but it especially helps to establish Regina’s motives throughout the play. Regina’s goal is explained when she and Birdie dream of what they will do with the profits from the mill: “I’m going to live in Chicago. I’ve always wanted to. And now there’ll be plenty of money to go with. . . . There’ll be millions, Birdie, millions. You know what I’ve always said when people told me we were rich? I said I think you should either be a nigger or a millionaire. In between, like us, what for?” (148)

Biographer Carl Rollyson quotes Szogi’s review of Hellman’s *Collected Plays*: “What Regina wants most is to soar, to move beyond the domestic tyranny of her life,” and she can only do this with money (466). Szogi’s comment is supported by Regina when she says, “I’m going to Chicago. And when I’m settled there and know the right people and the right things to buy--because I certainly don’t now--I shall go to Paris and buy them. I’m going to leave you and Oscar to count the bricks” (150). This proves that Regina wants the money to escape and has no intention of running the business. Also, at the end of the play when she has controlling interest in the new cotton mill, Regina says to Ben, “When you do, write me. I will be in Chicago. Ah, Ben, if Papa had only left me his money . . . You’ll be sort of working for
me now” (205). In other words, if she had inherited the money originally, she wouldn’t have had to connive for so long to obtain it.

Regina struggles for power in the only way she knows how—that which she learned from her rapacious brothers. Theater critic Allan Lewis writes, “In Regina, all human values have been destroyed by the lust for power and money” (106). However, if all human values have been destroyed, then why does Hellman have Regina triumph? Greedy characters like Mary Tilford in The Children’s Hour don’t triumph. In an article for the Southern Quarterly, journalist Mary Lynn Broe states that “She [Regina] puts her own daughter up for forty per cent collateral in a deal, using her also as bait to get an invalid husband home . . . She uses her husband’s reticence about committing money and finally even his death as bargaining tools that she wields sharply against her brothers. Outwitting the thieving Hubbards, she gets seventy-five percent of the money for herself. . . .” (31). Upon close examination of the scenes, one realizes that Broe’s negative assumptions about Regina are not totally fair. First, consider Regina’s husband Horace, who is in complete control of their finances and not in the least supportive of Regina. Note that in the following conversations Horace refers to their money as his. For example, when he first arrives home, there is this exchange:

   Horace: So that you could invest my money. So that is why you wanted me home?

   ... 

   Horace: It’s a great day when you and Ben cross swords. I’ve
been waiting for it for years...And so they [Ben and Oscar] don't need you, and so you will not have your millions, after all.

Regina: You hate to see anybody live now, don't you? You hate to think that I'm going to be alive and have what I want.

... 

Horace: I'm sick of you, sick of this house, sick of my life here. I'm sick of your brothers and their dirty tricks to make a dime. Why should I give you the money? To pound the bones of this town to make dividends for you to spend? (178 & 183)

Later, after Horace has discovered Leo's theft of the bonds and refuses to acknowledge the theft, there is this conversation:

Horace: I'm going to let them keep the bonds--as a loan from you. An eighty-eight-thousand-dollar loan; they should be grateful to you. They will be, I think.

Regina: I see. You are punishing me. But I won't let you punish me. If you won't do anything, I will.

Horace: You won't do anything. Because you can't. It won't do you any good to make trouble because I shall simply say that I lent them the bonds.
Regina: You would do that?

Horace: Yes. For once in your life I am tying your hands. There is nothing for you to do.

Regina: I see. You are going to lend them the bonds and let them keep all the profit they make on them, and there is nothing I can do about it. Is that right?

Horace: Yes.

Regina: Why did you say that I was making this gift?

Horace: I was coming to that. I am going to make a new will, Regina, leaving you eighty-eight thousand dollars in Union Pacific bonds. The rest will go to Alexandra. It's true that your brothers have borrowed your share for a little while. After my death I advise you to talk to Ben and Oscar. They won't admit anything and Ben, I think, will be smart enough to see that he's safe. Because I knew about the theft and said nothing. Nor will I say anything as long as I live. Is that clear to you?

Regina: You will not say anything as long as you live.

Horace: That's right. And by that time they will probably have replaced your bonds, and then they'll belong to you and nobody but us will ever know what happened... There's nothing you can do to them, nothing you can do to me. (193-194)
Alexandra: Yes.

Regina: And if I say no?

Alexandra: Say it Mama, say it. And see what happens.

Regina: And if I make you stay?

Alexandra: That would be foolish. It wouldn't work in the end.

Regina: You're very serious about it, aren't you? Well, you'll change your mind in a few days.

Alexandra: No.

Regina: Alexandra, I've come to the end of my rope. Somewhere there has to be what I want, too. Life goes too fast. Do what you want; think what you want; go where you want. I'd like to keep you with me, but I won't make you stay. Too many people used to make me do too many things. No, I won't make you stay.

Alexandra: You couldn't, Mama, because I want to leave here. As I've never wanted anything in my life before... Addie [the black maid] said there were people who ate the earth and other people who stood around and watched them do it. And just now Uncle Ben said the same thing... Well, tell him for me, Mama, I'm not going to stand around and
watch you do it. I'll be fighting as hard as he'll be fighting (rises) someplace else.

Regina: Well, you have spirit, after all. I used to think you were all sugar water. (206)

This last statement of Regina's was made to Hellman by her Uncle Newhouse when Lillian was a young woman; she always considered it a compliment. When discussing her life with interviewer Marilyn Berger, Hellman said, "Yes, I've paid a price. . . there would have been safer, pleasanter ways to go . . . Some prices, but I have no regrets for that price. Prices are to be paid for everything. There's no way to live without paying the price, and the price is . . . it would be very hard for me to regret my life" (Bryer 260). As Hellman paid a price for independence, so does her character Regina when she loses Alexandra; however, rather than threaten to hold her by cutting off the money supply, Regina grants Alexandra the autonomy she always wanted for herself.

Author Morris Freedman sums up the character with:

Regina is at the heart of the play; . . . Is Regina's problem personal or social? She is ready to sell her daughter, to give up everything for what she wants . . . But she is driven by a lustful and entirely private restlessness. She says to her daughter: 'Somewhere there has to be what I want.' Only at the end of the play does she reveal herself without her armor, making, briefly
and tangentially, the kind of justification for herself that Hedda (Gabler) more consciously makes. And suddenly we wonder whether she may not have been involved in more than a scheme to exploit poor Negroes and poor Whites. She may have been involved...in a process of self-discovery, self-definition, in trying to live, within the limits of her capacity, a richer life than her present, plainly constricting one. (102-103)

Although Hellman claimed that writing about her relatives caused a dilemma, biographer William Wright commented:

...it was only after writing *Little Foxes* that she [Hellman] was able to resolve conflicting feelings about money itself. But when she speaks of the trappings of her relatives’ wealth, the derisive tone does not conceal a manifest pride. Later she insisted that in years following the Civil War, these merchants were often the most urbane, elegant people in town. She had no use for their ethics, but their linen and silver, she wanted it known, were impeccable. (20)

Lillian Hellman appeared to have a black and white view of the world where women were concerned. They were either equal or not, and in her mind money (regardless of how they attained it) provided that equality.
CHAPTER 4

Women without Money and Power


Contrary to some analyses of the radical feminist movement the emergent victim is not men, although men are clearly seen as the enemy. The real victim is 'traditional womanhood' or as another feminist writes, 'the enemy ... in your head.' The victim is traditional woman, for it is the 'male-identified woman' who was condemned to acquiesce in her own oppression, who was socialized by the male definition of her sexual identity, and identified as an appendage to man. Until this socialized identity was killed off, the new woman could not be born. (Brown 160)

This reference aptly describes most of Hellman's major female characters who fall into the category of women without the control of money and therefore without power. Several of them are known only in relation to their husbands and are ignored, passive characters.

Lavinia Hubbard, Marcus Hubbard's wife in *Another Part of the Forest*, is a prime example of a neglected, discounted woman. Marcus is a wealthy man who became rich selling salt at inflated prices during the Civil War. However, he is disliked by the other residents of the community, who disapprove of the way he made his money and also suspect him of leading
Union troops to the hideout of Confederate soldiers. Only Lavinia knows the secret of Marcus's involvement in the deaths of the Confederate soldiers; she recorded the events (without anyone's knowledge) in the family Bible the night they happened and never told anyone the truth because she felt it was her marital duty to protect Marcus.

Lavinia's goal is to help poor black children, but she needs money to do it and she also believes that she needs Marcus's permission to leave home--neither of which she has. In the following conversation, she tells Coralee, the Hubbard's black maid, of her intentions:

Lavinia: Now I got to do my mission. And I'll be--I'll do it nice, you know I will. I'll gather the little black children round, and I'll teach them good things. I'll teach them how to read and write, and sing the music notes and--

Coralee: Oh, Miss Viney. Maybe it's just as well. Maybe they'd be scared of a white teacher coming among them.

Lavinia: Scared of me?

Coralee: No, ma'am. You're right.

Lavinia: Course they could have many a better teacher. I know mighty little, but I'm going to try to remember better. . . My goodness, it's such a little thing to want. Just to go back where you were born and help little colored children grow up knowing how to read books and--You'll be proud of me. I'll remember things to
teach them. You remember things when you're happy. And I'm going to be happy. You get to be fifty-nine, you don't be happy then, well, you got to find it. I'm going to be a very happy, happy, happy, happy--I'm going, Coralee. (367)

Even though Marcus has paid no attention to Lavinia for a long time, he has no intention of letting her attain her goal. He fears no reprisals because he took her to a doctor long ago and he has convinced everyone she is crazy:

Lavinia: 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 (she believes her sin was lying for Marcus). And God wants you to make good your sins before you die. That's why I got to go now.

Marcus: I've stood enough of that. Please don't ever speak of it again.

Lavinia: Ever speak of it? But you swore to me over and over again.

Marcus: Did you ever think I meant that nonsense?

Lavinia: But I'm going!

Marcus: You're never going. Dr. Seckles knows how strange you've been, the whole town knows you're crazy.
Now I don't want to listen to any more of that talk ever. I try to leave you alone, try to leave me alone. If you worry me any more with it, I'll have to talk to the doctor and ask him to send you away. Please go to bed now, and don't walk around all night again.

Lavinia: Coralee... Coralee! He never ever meant me to go. He says I can't go. (396-397)

Lavinia has always been afraid of Marcus. Hellman's stage directions indicate that Lavinia is very uncomfortable in her husband's presence. When Marcus enters a room, Lavinia often leaves; when he is in a room with her, she doesn't know whether or not she dare speak; when he asks her a direct question in front of others, she doesn't know how to answer. For example, "I didn't say anything. I was twisting my handkerchief." and "I really don't know, son. I really couldn't say," are her responses during a family conversation (354).

Much of the time, Lavinia is characterized as pathetic; her only companion is Coralee, the black servant, and Lavinia's only social outlet is attending the local black church. In Act I she explains to a John Bagtry that it is her birthday (which her family has forgotten) and the colored folks are celebrating it at church, and tomorrow is her wedding anniversary. Later the same day, when she dares to approach Marcus about her school for black children, the reader realizes how ignored Lavinia has been:
Lavinia: It's my birthday, Marcus.

Marcus: Congratulations, Lavinia.

Lavinia: Thank you. We were going to talk today. You promised, Marcus--

Marcus: I promised to talk? Talk about what?

Lavinia: (amazed, worried). Talk about what? You know, Marcus. You promised last year, on my last birthday. You said you were too busy that day, but this year you said--

Marcus: I'm still busy, my dear. Now you run and tell Belle to make us [Marcus and Regina] up a fine picnic basket. (To Regina) And a good bottle of wine. I'll get it myself.

Lavinia: But, Marcus, I been waiting since last year--

Marcus: Get the lunch now. (She hesitates, looks frightened, goes toward kitchen door.) (355)

Although she has waited a year just to talk to him and he refuses, as an appendage of her husband, Lavinia simply continues to do her wifely duties.

Her uncertainty continues later:

Lavinia: Please, Marcus, I won't take up five minutes. Or when you come back? When you come back, Marcus?

Marcus: Another day, my dear.
Lavinia: It can't be another day, Marcus. It was to be on my birthday, this year. When you sat right in that chair, and I brought my Bible and you swore--

Marcus: Another day.

Lavinia: It ought to be today. If you swear to a day, it's got to be that day--(Very frightened) Tomorrow then. Tomorrow wouldn't hurt so much, because tomorrow is just after today--

... 

Lavinia: And the first thing I'm going to remember is to speak to Marcus tomorrow. Tomorrow. I was silly to speak today. And I did it wrong. Anyway, he didn't say I couldn't go, he just said-- (366-367)

Unfortunately for Lavinia, not only does her husband ignore and neglect her, but also her children disregard her presence. In Act III she tells Ben, her eldest son: "You know I should have gone that night [when Marcus led the Union soldiers into the Confederate camp], but I stayed for you children. I didn't know then that none of you would ever need a Mama" (399). Oscar, Lavinia's youngest son, yells at her when she accidentally bumps into him; she apologizes, but nobody pays any attention. Regina, Lavinia's daughter, cuts short her mother's comments or patronizes her:

Regina: (Regina notices Lavinia ) 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.

. . . All right, Mama. Now don't you fret. Go upstairs
and get dressed up for the high-toned guests. *(She
leads Lavinia to the hall)* Don't you worry now. Go on
up, honey. Coralee's waiting for you. *(She comes
back into room. To Marcus)* Whew! I'm sorry. I
should have known. I hope she isn't going to act
queer the rest of the evening . . . *(371)*

Even Ben makes jokes at his mother's expense; in a conversation before the
local gentry (whom Regina wants to impress) arrive, Ben laughs and says,
"Now, that's a safer subject, Mama. Tell the Bagtrys about our kinfolk in the
piney woods" *(375)*. Later, after Ben has had a disagreement with his father,
Lavinia says, "Ben won't let me talk to him. He'd feel better if he talked, if he
spoke out--I'm his Mama and I got to take my responsibility for what--" *(396)*.
So even though Lavinia exhibits concern for her children, the feelings are not
reciprocated.

At the end of *Another Part of the Forest*, it appears that Lavinia will
finally get her school for black children; however, this only happens because
she is able to break ties with Marcus by identifying with Ben. Ben, frustrated
by his father's demeaning treatment, has always wanted to get control of the Hubbard business/wealth. When his mother begins rambling in Act III, Ben realizes he may be able to manipulate her into telling him the information he needs to blackmail his father. Marcus has ordered Ben to leave home, and just after dismissing Lavinia's request to take her with him, Ben realizes that she might be saying something important:

Lavinia: . . . 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 . . . I think, now, I should have told the truth that night . . . It's not easy to send your own husband into a hanging rope.

Ben: What do you mean?

Lavinia: . . . I've always been afraid of him, because once or twice--

Ben: Of course. But you're not afraid of me.

Lavinia: Oh, I been afraid of you, too. 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 . . .

Ben: Mama, what were you talking about? Telling the truth, a hanging rope--. . . For God's sake, Mama, try to remember what you were saying, if you were saying anything.

Lavinia: I was saying a lot. I could walk up those steps and tell
him I could still send him into a hanging rope unless he lets me go. I could say I saw him that night, and I'll just go and tell everybody I did see him--

Ben: What night?

Lavinia: The night of the massacre, of course.

Ben: (sharply) Where did you see him, how--

Lavinia: You being sharp with me now. And I never been sharp with you. Never--

Ben: (carefully) Mama. Now listen to me. It's late and there isn't much time. I'm in trouble, bad trouble, and you're in bad trouble. Tell me fast what you're talking about. Maybe I can get us both out of trouble. Maybe. But only if you tell me now. Now. And tell me quick and straight. You can go away and I--

Through Ben's careful questioning, Lavinia proceeds to tell him all he needs to know about Marcus's guilt concerning the massacre of the Confederate soldiers, where she has written all the pertinent facts down in the Bible, and about the money Marcus has hidden away (which Ben quickly finds). Armed with such incriminating evidence, Ben confronts his father, who has no recourse but to concede to Ben's wishes to control the family fortune. Consequently, Lavinia is allowed to leave to start her school; however, Ben has purchased her train ticket and will be in charge of the finances, so she has
simply changed allegiances from one male to another.

There is no doubt that the character of Lavinia is based on Lillian Hellman's mother, Julia Newhouse Hellman. In An Unfinished Woman Lillian Hellman describes her mother: "She liked a simple life and simple people, and would have been happier, I think, if she had stayed in the backlands of Alabama riding wild on the horses she so often talked about, not so lifelong lonely for the black men and women who had taught her the only religion she ever knew" (5). Hellman admittedly doted on her father and his family and writes, "My mother was dead for five years before I knew that I had loved her very much" (7). In the character of Lavinia Hubbard, Lillian Hellman is writing from personal experience.

A second example of an abused, powerless woman is Birdie Bagtry Hubbard who appears in two of Hellman's plays, Another Part of the Forest and The Little Foxes. In the first play Birdie Bagtry is a young, single member of the gentry. Her family has lost most of its money as a result of the Civil War, so Birdie tries to secure a loan from the Hubbards. Ben Hubbard is willing to ask his father to loan her the money, and in the following dialogue the reader understands why:

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

Ben: Your Cousin John, does he want to go to New York or Chicago, perhaps? Has he spoken of going to
Chicago? [Regina plans to go to Chicago.]

Birdie: Oh dear, no. There's no war going on in Chicago.

Ben: I beg your pardon?

Birdie: A war. He wants to go back to war. Mama says she can even understand that. She says there isn't any life for our boys anymore.

Ben: I see. Where will Captain Bagtry find a war?

Birdie: There's something going on in Brazil, John says... You see, that was one of the things Mama was going to do with the money. Pay all our people and give John the carfare. He can earn a lot in Brazil, he can be a general. Now about the loan, Mr. Benjamin--

Ben: You will inherit Lionnet?

Birdie: Me? Er. Yes. You mean if Mama were to--You mustn't believe those old stories. Mama's not so sick that a little good care and--(Very embarrassed)

Ben: You don't want your Mama to know you've come here?

Birdie: Oh, no, no. She'd never forgive me, rather die--

Ben: To think you had come to us... (goes to dining room door) Oscar, Oscar, I know you want to walk Miss Bagtry home... You know, of course, that all loans from our company are made by my father. I only work
for him. Yours is good cotton and good land. But you
don't own it. That makes it hard. It's very unusual, but
perhaps I could think of some way to accommodate
you.

... 

Birdie: Thank you very much . . . Thank you for your courtesy
in offering to walk me back, Mr. Oscar.

Oscar: (comes close to Ben, in an angry whisper) What the
hell's the matter with you? Bossing me around,
ruining my day?

Ben: Be nice to the girl. You hear me? (361-362)

Ben's ulterior motives in obtaining a loan for Birdie are twofold: he wants her
cousin John out of Regina's life and he hopes to gain control of Lionnet,
possibly through a marriage between Oscar and Birdie. Birdie's naivété
allows her to fulfill Ben's plan.

Hellman more fully develops Birdie's character as a powerless woman
in The Little Foxes, but the author is surprised at the audience's reaction: "I
just thought Birdie was silly. I was also amazed to wake up and find that Birdie
was this touching character, because I just think she's kind of silly" (Stern
118). The difference between author and character is reinforced by Dashiell
Hammett, who once said of Hellman, "All I wanted was a docile woman and
look what I got" (Rollyson 252). Although Hellman didn't empathize with
Birdie, she was definitely representative of a large segment of the female
population, and audience members related to her.

The reader discovers in *The Little Foxes*, which is set twenty years after *Another Part of the Forest*, that the Hubbard loan was futile as far as giving Birdie any independence. She now realizes "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" (185). Through inheritance, Birdie had the possibility of becoming a powerful woman; however, she gave it up by choosing marriage which at the turn of the century gave controlling interest of her wealth to her husband Oscar.

Oscar's treatment of Birdie is cruel at best. Birdie thrives on the attention of having an important dinner guest ask to see one of her albums, so she sends a servant to find it. Then Oscar enters the room:

Oscar:  *(to Cal).*  Never mind about the album. Miss Birdie has changed her mind.

Birdie:  But, really, Oscar. Really I promised Mr. Marshall. I--

Oscar:  Why do you leave the dinner table and go running about like a child?

Birdie:  But, Oscar, Mr. Marshall said most specially he *wanted* to see my album. I told him about the time Mama met Wagner, and Mrs. Wagner gave her the signed program and the big picture. Mr. Marshall wants to see that. Very, very much. We had such a nice talk and--
Oscar: You have been chattering to him like a magpie. You haven't let him be for a second. I can't think he came South to be bored with you.

Birdie: (quickly, hurt). He wasn't bored. I don't believe he was bored. He's a very educated, cultured gentleman. I just don't believe it. You always talk like that when I'm having a nice time.

Oscar: (turning to her, sharply). You have had too much wine. Get yourself in hand now.

Birdie: (drawing back, about to cry, shrilly). What am I doing? I am not doing anything. What am I doing?

Oscar: (taking a step to her). I said get yourself in hand. Stop acting like a fool ... Sit down, Birdie. Sit down now. (141)

Later in the same Act, Birdie has been warning Alexandra, her niece, about the Hubbard's plotting when Oscar enters:

Oscar: (sharply). Birdie. (Birdie looks up, draws quickly away from Alexandra. She stands rigid, frightened).

Birdie, get your hat and coat.

Alexandra: (Birdie begins to move slowly toward the door as Alexandra climbs the stairs. Alexandra is almost out of view when Birdie reaches Oscar in the doorway. As Birdie attempts to pass him, he slaps her hard,
across the face. Birdie cries out, puts her hand to her face. On the cry, Alexandra turns, begins to run down the stairs) Aunt Birdie! What happened? What happened? I--

Birdie: (softly, without turning). Nothing, darling. Nothing happened... I only twisted my ankle. (160)

Other references in the play indicate that Oscar's abuse of Birdie is a frequent recurrence which only Horace, Regina's husband, has tried to stop. As Lorena Holmin writes in her dissertation on Hellman's plays, "In her [Birdie], we see fragmented diction used to characterize her as frightened and confused, a woman thoroughly oppressed by her husband" (35).

Birdie, like her more assertive sister-in-law Regina, does have goals, but she makes no concerted effort to reach them. In a Hubbard family discussion of what to do with all the money they plan to make from the new cotton mill, Birdie has two wishes:

Birdie: I should like to have Lionnet back. I know you own it now, but I'd like to see it fixed up again, the way Mama and Papa had it. Every year it used to get a nice coat of paint--Papa was very particular about the paint--and the lawn was so smooth all the way down to the river, with the trims of zinnias and red-feather plush. And the figs and blue little plums and the scuppernongs--The organ is still there and it wouldn't cost much to fix.
We could have parties for Zan, the way Mama used to have for me... (very happily, not noticing that they are no longer listening to her). I could have a cutting garden. 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.

Birdie: And, Oscar, I have one more wish. Just one more wish.

Oscar: What is it, Birdie? What are you saying?

Birdie: 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--... (Oscar is looking at her furiously). And you never let anybody else shoot, and the niggers need it so much to keep from starving. It's wicked to shoot food just because you like to shoot, when poor people need it so--

(150-151)

Unlike Regina, who manages to get controlling interest in the mill and the money that goes with it, Birdie shows no visible signs of fighting to make her wishes come true. Rather, she remains passive.

Feminist author Betty Friedan spoke about “women who adjust to the feminine mystique, who expect to live through their husbands and children...
who never realize their human potential" which is a quote easily applied to Birdie (310). Birdie is the stereotype of Southern fluttering femininity which, as author Morris Freedman implied in *The Moral Impulse*, leads the reader to think there was something essentially feminine about the antebellum South. Unable to develop her own potential, perhaps because she could not capitalize on her femininity in the Hubbard family, Birdie has decided to live vicariously through her niece Alexandra.

Birdie lives through Alexandra who, she says, is more of a daughter to her than Leo is a son; at one point in the play Birdie tells Alexandra that she dislikes Leo even more than she does Oscar. Initially, Birdie's concern stems from a conversation among Ben, Oscar, and Regina, who discuss a possible marriage between Leo and Alexandra. She later warns Alexandra:

Birdie: That's not what I'm worried about. Zan--
Alexandra: What's the matter?
Birdie: It's about Leo--
Alexandra: He beat the horses. That's why we were late getting back . . .
Birdie: He's my son. My own son. But you are more to me than my own child. I love you more than anybody else--
Alexandra: Don't worry about the horses. I'm sorry I told you.
Birdie: *I am not worrying about the horses.* I am worrying about you. You are not going to marry Leo. I am
not going to let them do that to you--

Alexandra: Marry? To Leo? I wouldn't marry, Aunt Birdie. I've never even thought about it--

Birdie: But they have thought about it. (Wildly) Zan, I couldn't stand to think about such a thing. You and--

Alexandra: But I'm not going to marry. And I'm certainly not going to marry Leo.

Birdie: Don't you understand? They'll make you. They'll make you... I just couldn't stand--(Oscar enters)

(159)

Horace, Alexandra's father, is near death so he advises Addie, the black maid, to take his daughter away from the Hubbard influence once he's gone. Birdie, too, encourages Alexandra's escape by showing her what the alternative is:

Birdie: I never had a headache, Zan. That's a lie they tell for me. I drink. All by myself, in my own room, by myself, I drink. Then, when they want to hide it, they say, 'Birdie's got a headache again'--

Alexandra: Aunt Birdie.

Birdie: Even you won't like me now. You won't like me anymore.

Alexandra: I love you. I'll always love you.

Birdie: (angrily). Well, don't. Don't love me. Because in
twenty years you'll just be like me. They'll do all the same things to you.  (Begins to laugh )  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 that's the way you'll be. 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—

Ironically, according to Hellman's plans for a trilogy centered on the Hubbard family, Alexandra would have grown up to be much like Birdie. In an interview with John Phillips, Lillian Hellman said, "Yes, I meant Alexandra to leave. But to my great surprise, the ending of the play was taken to be a statement of faith in Alexandra, in her denial of her family. I never meant it that way. She did have courage enough to leave, but she would never have the force or vigor of her mother's [Regina's] family. That's what I meant." With regard to the third play that never materialized, Hellman states "Alexandra was to have become maybe a spinsterish social worker, disappointed, a rather angry woman" (69).

In The Little Foxes, Oscar marries Birdie for her money and she confesses that she never had a happy day in twenty years, that she hates her
own son, that her husband beats her, and that she drinks--alone. Because Birdie does not instill the importance of money/power in Alexandra, she too will become powerless. As biographer Richard Moody says, "Miss Hellman does not waste her time with weaklings. She has invariably favored the aggressive, the self-assured. That the abused and helpless Birdie was singled out as a moving portrait proved an embarrassment" (87).

Other acquiescent, powerless females are found in Days to Come and Toys in the Attic. The former was Hellman's least successful play, due to ineffectual characters and too many plots. Richard Moody describes the young Lillian Hellman: "She was drifting. Somehow she knew she was not living the way she wanted to live, yet she had no clear notion of how she wanted to live. She held no obsessive dreams of position, of wealth, of success. She had a reasonable respect for money and its power, yet she was not painfully enough deprived to be driven to alter her situation. At least not at first" (25). Julie Rodman, the wife of prominent businessman Andrew Rodman in Days to Come, leads a totally dissatisfied life which is comparable to Hellman in her youth. Julie Rodman expresses these feelings to Whalen, a union organizer with whom she has fallen in love:

Julie: I've been busy. Busy, like you, finding out. I was finding out about myself. That took all my time.

Whalen: What were you finding out?

Julie: I don't know. When I was young, I guess I was looking for something I could do. Then for something I could
be. Finally, just for something to want, or to think, or to believe in. I always wanted somebody to show me the way.

Whalen: Certainly. That's what we all want. It's easy. Were you lucky?

Julie: No.

Whalen: Then you should try for yourself. That works sometimes.

Julie: No. I decided a long time ago that there were people who had to learn from other people. I'm one of them.

In 1936 when *Days to Come* was written, Lillian Hellman would have pitied Julie Rodman, since Hellman herself was feeling insecure and believed she had found the teacher and inspiration she needed in Dashiell Hammett.

*Days to Come* concerns the Rodman family brush factory which has met hard times during the Depression; the workers have gone on strike because they have been offered such low wages. Leo Whalen, the union organizer, is trying to organize the workers; meanwhile, Rodman's spinster sister Cora and their lawyer Ellicott have convinced him to bring in strikebreakers. After a brief standoff, violence erupts causing several deaths, the end of the strike, and no hope for an immediate union. The scenes involving Andrew Rodman's wife, Julie, portray her as an unhappy woman who takes a lot of mysterious walks which make her sister-in-law suspicious.
The reader discovers Julie has had an affair with Ellicott, and she seems to be generally at loose ends.

Julie is dependent on Andrew for financial security, but simply takes his resources for granted and shows very few emotional ties to her husband. She is ignorant of any of the economic problems they are experiencing until the end of the play when Cora tells Andrew that he has been cuckolded:

Cora: She's broken you, that's what she's done. She's why you owe money--To Henry and to everybody else. She's why--

Ellicott: Is that your business, too?

Cora: No, Thank you. It's not my money he's lost. But you needn't think I didn't know. I knew where it was going. The year her family lost their money and how her mother had to have the best doctors and how her brother had to go to Paris to study, and how she always had to have trips and clothes, and a year in Europe--to make her happy. Thousands and thousands he had to borrow for it--

Julie: I didn't know that. I swear I didn't. We always had so much. Why didn't you tell me? (131)

In The Feminine Mystique Betty Friedan says, "It can be less painful, for a woman, not to hear the strange, dissatisfied voice stirring within her" (26). Unfortunately, Julie does hear it but doesn't know how to contend
with it. She attempts to convince Whalen that he is her answer, but his response is “And if I do believe you, then you are a silly rich woman who doesn't know what to do with her life and who sees the solution for it in the first man she meets who doesn't stutter: sick of your own world, aren't you, and you think I know another? . . . I don't like that kind of playing, Mrs. Rodman” (112).

The major difference between Hellman and Rodman is that although they both experienced dependence on a man, Lillian strove to terminate that by gaining economic independence, whereas Julie simply resorts to another man. In Pentimento, Hellman describes her as a “modern lost lady.” After she fails to convince Whalen to take her with him, Julie returns home and shortly thereafter, her illicit actions are revealed to her husband. She offers the following explanation:

Julie:  I wasn't doing anything to you, Andy. I wasn't in love with you when I married you. That was what I did to you. The rest had only to do with me. I didn't want to get married. I didn't want to live here. I wanted to make something for myself, something that would be right for me. I told you all that when we were young. You though marriage would be all that for me. But it wasn't. And when I found it wasn't, I took the wrong way . . .

(131)

Even after she confesses her real feelings, Julie defers to her husband at the
end of the play: "What do you want me to do, Andy? Do you want me to go away? Do you want a divorce?" (133) Andrew's response is to do whatever she wants or to stay and share whatever is left with him; every indication from watching this character throughout the play indicates that Julie will simply remain an appendage of her husband.

Mrs. Warkins in *Toys in the Attic* is the final example of an ill-treated woman who needs money to escape an unbearable situation but is unable to attain it. Although she never appears on stage, through indirect characterization Mrs. Warkins is fully realized in the audience's minds. In this play two sisters have always supported their brother Julian, who has experienced one financial failure after another. Suddenly he appears with a fortune without his family knowing its source. Later it is discovered that Mrs. Warkins, Julian's former mistress, has given him a tip enabling him to buy land inexpensively and sell it to her husband at an extremely inflated price.

Mrs. Warkins's dilemma centers around the fact that she is a mulatto (something of which her husband is unaware and would find intolerable) married to a wealthy Southern entrepreneur who abuses her. A discussion of her situation takes place between Julian's mother-in-law Albertine and her black servant Henry:

Henry: She [Mrs. Warkins] was in love with Julian once. She hates Warkins and has wanted to leave for years. Maybe this is the money to leave with.

Albertine: How do you know about Mrs. Warkins?
Henry: I don't know about her anymore, but I used to. She's a cousin to me.

Albertine: She's part colored? Isn't that wonderful! Did Warkins know when he married her?

Henry: He doesn't know now. But Julian did, and didn't care. She's a foolish woman and grateful for such things.

(763)

Julian, too, knows of Mrs. Warkins's dire predicament which is unfolded when his wife says, "Julian said there was only one woman that ever mattered, long ago, and I wasn't to worry--and that she was married to a bastard who beat her, and if her ever made money he'd give it to her to get away" (776).

Although she knows money will allow her to escape, Mrs. Warkins is inept in her methods to secure it. Her plan is to have Julian exploit her husband with the land deal and then share in the profits. Unfortunately, Julian's wife betrays him and exposes Mrs. Warkins with the following consequences:

(763)

Julian appears, stumbling toward the house. His face and hands are cut and bruised. He has been beaten, and one leg is injured. He moves toward the garden in great pain;)

Julian: I took Charlotte (Mrs. Warkins) to her brother's house. She'll be all right, but not her face. She's safe there, I think--Do you know what Charlotte I'm talking about?
Henry: Yes.

Julian: She’d better not stay where she is. Just in case. Not in this town... My friend. My poor friend. All she wanted, saved for, thought about—to get away forever. Standing there, standing in the alley, they slashed us up. (783-784)

Mrs. Warkins ends up more powerless than before, and now her life is in immediate danger.

Mary Lynn Broe writes in The Southern Quarterly: “Passivity—both a triumph and a compensation wrested from years of female victimhood—functions as an artistic means to spiritual-moral development in Hellman’s writing” (26). Although Hellman’s passive, powerless women are victims, she did not intend to develop these characters either spiritually or morally. Rather, as the black maid Addie so astutely comments in The Little Foxes: “Well, there are people who eat the earth and eat all the people on it like in the Bible with the locusts. And other people who stand around and watch them eat it. Sometimes I think it ain’t right to stand and watch them do it” (188). Hellman’s passive females are the watchers who take no positive action to improve their own conditions or anyone else’s.
In *An Unfinished Woman*, Lillian Hellman states that she herself was not a feminist: "By the time I grew up the fight for the emancipation of women, their rights under the law, in the office, in bed, was stale stuff. My generation didn't think much about the place or the problems of women, were not conscious that the designs we saw around us had so recently been formed that we were still part of the formation . . ." (35). In 1973, Hellman reiterates her lack of involvement when she tells reviewer Nora Ephron:

> Of course I believe in women's liberation, but it seems to make very little sense in the way it's going. Until women can earn their own living, there's no point in talking about brassieres and lesbianism. While I agree with women's liberation and ecology and all the other good liberal causes, I think at this minute they're diversionary--they keep your eye off the problems implicit in our capitalist society. It's very hard for women, hard to get along, to support themselves, to live with some self-respect.

(2)

However, not actively participating in the women's movement did not prevent Lillian Hellman from supporting their economic cause in her writing. In fact, author Janet Brown would probably label Hellman's plays as feminist considering Brown's criteria: "This feminist impulse is expressed dramatically
in woman's struggle for autonomy against an oppressive, sexist society. When woman's struggle for autonomy is a play's central rhetorical motive, that play can be considered a feminist drama" (1).

When describing the characters in *The Autumn Garden*, Lillian Hellman said,

> Here is what I think happens to many people at this time of life... you come to a place in your life when what you've been is going to form what you will be. If you've wasted what you have, it's too late to do much about it. If you've invested yourself in life, you're pretty certain to get a return. If you are inwardly a serious person, in the middle years it will pay off. (Moody 226)

This financially phrased statement is actually applicable to the three categories of Hellman's female characters in all her plays: powerful, wealthy women; ambitious, money-oriented women; and passive, powerless women.

In a conversation with interviewer Christine Doudna, Lillian Hellman explained that "Once somebody is powerful or rich you see vigor where it might not exist, or where it might have existed once long ago" (54). This belief is reflected in Mrs. Tilford, Mrs. Farrelly, Mrs. Ellis, Albertine Prine, and Emily Hazen—all powerful Hellman characters. All of these women are financially independent and not afraid to use their money to influence others.

In a 1944 issue of *College English*, Barrett Clark wrote, "Miss Hellman says that she is a 'moral writer, often too moral a writer' which is another way of saying that she writes her plays in order to demonstrate what is wrong with life
and how a better way of life may be found and won" (129). Morally, Lillian Hellman believes it is essential for women to be economically equal to men and demonstrates that possibility with her powerful women. One obituary labels Hellman "a model for independent women" (Brustein 23); so, too, are the women in Hellman's wealthy category.

Another aspect of Hellman's personality is found in the category of female characters striving for money and the resulting power. On the occasion of her receiving the MacDowell Prize for Literature, John Hersey describes Lillian Hellman: "... love of money and gladness in parting with it... fully liberated female aggressiveness when it is needed yet a whiff, now and then, of old-fashioned feminine masochism... Rebelliousness is an essence of her vitality--that creative sort of dissatisfaction which shouts out, "Life ought to be better than this!" (25) Because they see a better life through economic stability, women in five of Hellman's plays--The Children's Hour, The Autumn Garden, Toys in the Attic, Another Part of the Forest, and The Little Foxes--concentrate on methods to attain it.

In regard to Anna and Carrie in Toys in the Attic, Hellman says, "I meant money to be the final weapon, really as so often it is" (Bryer 78). Hellman did not consider these characters social aberrations, but rather women seeking ways to be equipped to reach their goals. The playwright herself admitted "... no one likes money more than I do... A writer must want money and want people to like what he writes but the important thing is wanting it but not writing for it" (Bryer 25).
Lavinia, Birdie, and Alexandra Hubbard, in the category of powerless women, are based on Lillian Hellman's maternal relatives, the Newhouses. Biographer William Wright writes: “Her childhood disinterest [in money] would become an adult preoccupation with money both in her life and her writing . . . A more probable reason for her dislike of money as a topic at her grandmother's dinners was that she belonged to one group at the table that didn't have any” (23). Although Hellman could empathize with her economically helpless characters, she did not applaud them since she had personally risen above that level.

By including the economically dependent group, Hellman has given the audience all three economic stations possible for a woman in the early 1900's. This last category portrays the group described by Mary Sydney Branch in Women and Wealth:

The tragic lot which has befallen many of the most stable, hardworking American citizens because of the lack of any financial resources has forced the public to realize the importance to each individual of having control over a reasonable share of the wealth and income of the nation . . . Economic dependence has long been a pertinent influence in shaping the destiny of women. (2)

The first two categories, powerful and power-seeking, provide hope for women who find themselves in the powerless category.

Author June Underwood groups Hellman's characters in another way:
Feminist criticism has only begun to deal with those archetypes which must serve to embody the terrors and the dreams of women. But each of the characters which Hellman the author develops embodies something of absolute importance for Lillian the narrator, something which she must face and come to grips with, not only in the world of terrors and hopes, but in the world of moral and physical choices.

For Lillian Hellman, the powerless women characters live a terrifying life, but she indicates that their dreams can be fulfilled through financial security.

In a forum she moderated for *The American Scholar*, Hellman was asked a question by Nancy Ross about winning something in the women's movement. The following conversation then occurred:

**Hellman:** I think you could say “win” in the sense of economics, couldn’t you? I think the point there would be equal wages, equal opportunities.

**Ross:** Well, you know why we must have power. Because of what Henry Kissinger said. Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac.

**Hellman:** He said that? Marvelous quotation, isn’t it? My God. How is it worded?

**Ross:** “Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac” This is to account for the way that he can always get those attractive young women to go out with him.
Although Kissinger may relate power with an aphrodisiac, Lillian Hellman definitely equated power with money.

In *Watch on the Rhine*, anti-Nazi hero Kurt Muller says, “There are those who give the orders, those who carry out the orders, and those who watch the orders being carried out” (316). This quote coincides with the powerful, power-seeking, and powerless categories found in Hellman’s female characters. Sullivan and Hatch preface *Plays by and about Women* with:

To be a woman in the twentieth century is to be a creature caught in a time of change. And change is an opportunity for women to define themselves. Revolutions in consciousness produce art, not only art nurtured in anger and expressed in polemic, but art with passion, sensitivity and heightened awareness. The artist is a shaper, a person who gives form to chaos, one whose pain slowly emerges as perception. The theatre has been and will continue to be the stage upon which women create new women. (xv)

Through her characters, American playwright Lillian Hellman has given audiences her perception of women’s roles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; her writing heightens awareness of the need for economic equality for all women.
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