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THE THEME OF BLACKMAIL IN THE PLAYS OF LILLIAN HELLMAN

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THE THEME OF BLACKMAIL IN THE PLAYS OF LILLIAN HELLMAN

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ABSTRACT

Lillian Hellman has been widely acclaimed as one America's most distinguished playwrights. She has, since 1934, contributed eight original plays to the American theatre. Two of Miss Hellman's plays, Watch on the Rhine and Toys in the Attic, have received the Critics' Circle Award as best American plays of 1941 and 1960, respectively.

This dissertation is divided into nine chapters. In those chapters we will analyse how the blackmail motif is an integrated theme in most of her plays. Blackmail may be categorized in two ways: financial or emotional blackmail. In the emotional blackmail pattern the blackmailer wants to get people (either through sex, flattery or any kind of emotional involvement) to submit to the blackmailer's will. In the financial blackmail pattern the blackmailer seeks power swindling and cheating people so that he can get status and financial rewards through blackmail.

In her Southern plays (TLF, APF, TAG, TA) we find the emotional blackmail pattern predominantly while in her Northern plays (DC, TCH, WR, TSW) financial blackmail exposes the cold

materialism of an industrial society. Another point illustrated in the dissertation is her discipleship to Ibsen in her "engagé" plays and her turn to Chekhov in her last plays. In the 'Ibsen' period Miss Hellman creates certain idealists of good faith who are beyond blackmail while in her last plays this figure is swallowed by her fatalism.

Such a pattern reveals Miss Hellman's attitude towards man: she thinks blackmail is possible either in a Southern culture, or a Northern because she would find difficult to believe in life where people do not hide secrets, which both defy and derive from the "decent" life of good faith that she wants to assert.

RESUMO

Lillian Hellman tem sido aclamada como uma das mais famosas dramaturgas da América. Desde 1934 ela contribuiu com oito peças originais para o teatro americano. Duas peças receberam o Prêmio do Círculo dos Críticos como as melhores peças americanas em 1941 e 1960 respectivamente.

Esta dissertação está dividida em nove capítulos. Nestes capítulos analisaremos como o motivo da chantagem é um tema integrado na maioria das suas peças.

A chantagem pode ser classificada de duas maneiras: chantagem financeira ou emocional. No modelo da chantagem emocional o chantagista quer as pessoas submetidas à sua vontade (seja através do sexo, lisonjas ou outro envolvimento emocional). No modelo da chantagem financeira o chantagista busca o poder logrando e fraudando as pessoas afim de adquirir "status" e recompensas financeiras através da chantagem.

Nas suas peças sulistas (TLF, APF, TAG, TA) predomina o modelo de chantagem emocional enquanto que nas suas peças nortistas (DC, TCH, WR, TSW) a chantagem financeira expõe o frio

materialismo de uma sociedade industrial. Um outro ponto ilustrado na dissertação é a influência de Ibsen em suas peças engajadas e a sua mudança para Cheklov nas suas últimas peças.

No período ibseniniano Miss Hellman cria certos idealistas de boa fé que são imunes à chantagem enquanto que nas suas últimas peças esta figura é absolvida pelo seu fatalismo.

Tal modelo revela a atitude de Miss Hellman em relação ao homem: ela pensa que a chantagem é possível seja numa sociedade sulista ou nortista porque ela dificilmente acreditaria em uma sociedade onde as pessoas não escondem segredos que desafiam e derivam de uma decente vida de boa fé que ela quer defender.

ABBREVIATIONS

TCH - The Children's Hour

DC - Days to Come

TLF - The Little Foxes

WR - Watch on the Rhine

TSM - The Searching Wind

APF - Another Part of the Forest

TAG - The Autumn Garden

TA - Toys in the Attic

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CHAPTER I

1.1. Statement of Problem:

In my initial reading of Lillian Hellman's drama, I was struck by the frequent recurrence of situations and scenes of blackmail. It seemend to me that though this theme had received little commentary by the critics, it was somehow central to Hellman's work, and indeed something of an obsession for the author. I therefore resolved to gather evidence around this blackmail theme, attempting to remain free of preconceptions and to work empirically until conclusion grew out of the evidence. The questions that follow are the questions that arose for me as I read through the plays.

In this dissertation we will ask whether blackmail seems to presuppose a kind of deterministic universe whose cause and effect proceed relentlessly and whether one can ever escape the consequences of the past. We will ask furthermore if, in the Calvinist manner, the 'sins of the Fathers' are 'visited' on the son and the son's own sins are visited on himself later in life. We will question also if revolution is really possible in

such a world: are Hellman's radicalism and her moralism really working at cross-purposes? If it is true as some critics argue, that Lillian Hellman's work passes out of an "Ibsenite" phase into the Chekhovian work of her last two plays, we may ask whether the treatment of the theme varies accordingly. We may ask if in the early plays blackmail is somehow commensurate with the writer's social aims, while in the last plays it is an expression of a more personal, fatalistic world view? We may ask whether in the context of the Southern writing generally, Hellman's blackmail theme reflects the subjectivism of a decadent society. Is Hellman saying (like Faulkner, Capote, etc...) that blackmail succeeds when love has failed, or been twisted into incestuous or narcissistic forms?

We may further ask whether blackmail is unequivocally evil for Miss Hellman, or whether in certain situations bad means may not produce good effects. We will see in TA, APF, TAg and TCH that blackmail sometimes has a positive aspect and works in a devious way to bring the truth to the surface. In TCH, for example, a false accusation of misconduct proves to be true to the extent that by brooding on the accusation, Miss Martha is led to examine her motives more intensively. Finally she is her own accuser, and judges herself guilty enough of homosexual impulses to put an end to her own life. We cannot conclude that her suicide is a good or happy conclusion, but in other plays we see that blackmail is not always a device of pure scoundrels, and that counter blackmail may function as a device to silence a blackmailer. For example, Lavinia in APF, who has always been blackmailed by her husband with a threat to put her in an asylum, blackmails him about the source of

his fortune and gains her freedom with it. Or in WR, when Kurt Müller murders Count Teck de Brancovis, putting an end on the financial blackmail engendered by the second. Or yet in TA when Mr Warkins beats up Julian as an efficient way to silence the blackmailer.

We will question furthermore if Miss Hellman's idealism is be a consequence of her Southern code of honour and if this code has any links to a Puritan consciousness. We would ask how does blackmail differbetween the Northern community and the Southern scene.

In our conclusion we will finally pose the question whether Miss Hellman's Puritanic consciousness of the difference between what society says and what society does, in secret, reveals a kind of idealism. We will also ask whether blackmail can be 'reformed' either by social change or by an inner realization of self. Which kind of change is ultimately prior in her work? Moreover, is it really true that blackmail can be eradicated by either avenue of reform, or is it a permanent fact of human experience, an abiding sign of human hypocrisy and self-division in a deterministic universe?

1.2. Review of Criticism:

We would like to point out that no scholar focuses specifically on the problem of blackmail, but several critics make general comments about Lillian Hellman which are helpful to my discussion. For instance, Allan Lewis points out Miss

Hellman's moralism and determinism in his statement:

> "Hellman's dark world of those who triumph through a calculated disregard of moral values is as grim and full of pain as in the most extreme theatre of absurd. Her dramas differ in that they are portraits of people and not of abstract symbols. Events are causative, and the individual the product of his environment." (1)

Allan Lewis talks about moralism and determinism because in his point of view blackmail would be a sign that the modern world is 'morally bankrupt' for Hellman. He also speaks of Miss Hellman's idealistic views about human nature in her moral portrayal of her characters in her socially concerned plays:

> "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. She is a moralist and her major weakness, by her own confession, is the obvious addition of the moral, either by an all too explanatory speech or through an arranged resolution that borders on the melodramatic." (2)

Lewis shows that sometimes Hellman's plays acquire melodramatic undertones due to her ethical view of life.

Jacob Adler includes blackmail as a melodramatic device used in her plays. He comments on TLF:

> "Its big scenes - Regina's letting Horace die, Regina's blackmailing her brothers, Alexandra's defiance, and so on - are beautifully written and hard to forget. There are melodramatic aspects, including blackmail and murder, but only the stealing of the bonds seems vulnerable to attack,

> and even that is wholly in keeping with the characters." (3)

Here, blackmail is viewed not as a sign of the author's ethical criticism of modern society, but as a potential flaw in the way she puts her plots together. Blackmail, Adler implies, is indicative of melodramatic technique.

Winifred Dusembury defends Miss Hellman against the charges of melodrama:

> "Miss Hellman's plays are not thesis plays, but the fact that she was interested enough in her characters to study their past and seek out the sociological and moral causes of their rapaciousness proves that she did not consider them mere figures in melodrama." (4)

Miss Hellman's earlier plays show her discipleship to Ibsen in a clear way: she presents issues of social meaning in her dramatic structures. She also adopts Ibsen's meliorism, that is, she presents a problem as a way towards correcting it. In the Ibsenite tradition of realism she deals with real people, carrying out real actions in a real world. She also reveals that blackmail is due to the hypocrisy of American society, or she deplores the business ethic as she has done in TLF.

James Eatman comments on her plays:

> ..."the focus of the dramatic argument is the effect of their predacity on others in their immediate circle and in their community. Near the end of the play, the context of the Hubbard story is broadened to include American society in general, as Ben predicts that ever-flourishing Hubbard-Types will eventually own the country. Like Ibsen, Miss Hellman is far more concerned

> with the moral crises fostered by rapid industrialization than with the benefits of economic progress." (5)

David Sievers takes a psychoanalytic approach toward analysing Lillian Hellman's plays. About TSW he comments:

> "the author shows our isolationist foreign policy during the thirties as an inevitable expression of the personal escapism of the men who made the policy." (6)

Sievers also uses a psychological insight to explain the blackmail theme in TAg:

> "Sophie would use Nick's attempted seduction as an excuse to blackmail him for $ 5.000 with which to return to Germany. Miss Hellman seems determined to remind us that human personality is composed of sadistic as well as tender impulses in a subtle balance. With her back to the wall in a hostile, foreign land, Sophie uses her wits to advantage, a familiar trademark of Hellman's characters." (7)

Miss Hellman's change from Ibsen's manner to a Chekhovian style is noticed by Marvin Felheim:

> ..."the kind of drama we have in The Autumn Garden is the only kind which makes for modern tragedy. It is not only merely psychological (as in Tennessee Williams) nor sociological (as in Arthur Miller) but it is artistic (poetic) and moral - and all in the Chekhovian sense." (8)

In that sense Felheim states that the action has no cause - effect relationship as in Ibsen's plays and the characters haven't a firm grasp on their lives but as in Chekhov's plays they become the playthings of circumstances.

In "A New Miss Hellman" James Mason Brown also notices the change in The Autumn Garden:

> "For the first time in her distinguished career she has, so to speak turned her back on Ibsen and moved into the camp of Chekhov... To the theatre - minded it represents a change in attitude, method and purpose of the utmost significance. Were an old guard Republican to become a New Dealer or vice-versa; where a Catholic to turn Campbellite or a Campbellite to make the trip to Rome, the about - face could not be more complete." (9)

As Mason Brown states, the characters are frustrated egos and Miss Hellman walks deliberately away from the road of socially concerned plays to a kind of personal insight into maturity and old age.

Mason Brown is ambiguous as to whether Miss Hellman's turn to Chekhov is a turn towards or away from conservativism. But it seems to me that Brown states that her Chekhovian - influenced plays show a reactionary tendency in Miss Hellman's point of view. On the other hand her turn towards Chekhov has heightened her craftsmanship and she has gained art at the expense of political commitment.

I think that Adler's final words, which I make mine, are fit to conclude my review:

> "What sustains Miss Hellman is in part, of course, craftsmanship - in plot construction, in dialogue, in creation of vivid character, in the presentation through plot and character of a clear-cut theme. This craftsmanship represents hard and humble labor through many months and many drafts." (10)

1.3. Statement of Purpose:

Blackmail may be categorized in two ways: financial or emotional blackmail. In the emotional blackmail pattern the blackmailer wants to get people (either through sex, flattery, or any kind of emotional involvement) to submit to the blackmailer's will. In the financial blackmail pattern the blackmailer seeks power swindling and cheating people for the sake of money so that he can get status and financial rewards through blackmail.

In some plays the two types of blackmail mingle. For instance, in APF, Regina Hubbard emotionally blackmails her father in order to get financial rewards. Or in TLF where Regina first attempts to use sex as a form of emotional blackmail towards her husband and at the same time blackmails her brothers financially as a means to seize power. In TA and TAg, Carrie and the Ellises also use money as a bribe to blackmail Julian and Frederick emotionally and keep the two dependent on them.

Four of Miss Hellman's plays - TCH, DC, TSW, WR - are set in the North of the United States, paralleling (at least in number) her Southern series. It is easy to understand Miss Hellman's concern for the North of her country. Born in New Orleans, she moved to New York at the age of six. From that time on her life was divided. Each year she would go back to her home town to stay with her father's sisters for six months, and each year she would move from school in New York to school in New Orleans. This constant need to adapt to two different cultural cycles developed her analytic power to write plays about the anxieties, longings and conflicts of both the Southern and the Northern American.

The prodigious expansion of the Northern industry and its technology prepared the ground for the social struggle between capital (the Rodmans, the Ellicotts) and labor (the Whalen and the Firths). Northern settings also illustrate American non-interventionist policies in the thirties (WR) or the employment of individual coercion to alienate individuals from their milieu. (TCH)

Miss Hellman portrays in those plays the competitive pattern of a Northern materialistic society, where money - minded people bargain and blackmail others financially in order to seize power. Following Calvinistic principles of 'good works and good deeds' she presents the figure of Cora Rodman (DTC) and the ruthless entrepreneur and lawyer Ellicott.

In the Northern plays (DTC, WR, TSW, TCH) blackmail always ends in compromise which summons a sense of guilt on both parts. This occurs in DTC where labour strife and love affairs end in compromise, or in TCH when Mrs Tilford comes to offer money as a reward for slanderous charges; or in WR where public and private affairs are intertwined and blackmail unveils the character's failure to achieve commitment either in love or public affairs.

On the other hand, Miss Hellman examines Southern agrarian society with its Chivalric code of honour in her other plays (TLF, APF, TAg, TA) trying to match the Northern ethos of progress. This Southern code of honour is presented in Bagtry (APF); in Lavinia (APF) and in Birdie (TLF). A twentirth-century version of chivalric entrepreneurs is presented in her two last plays (TAg, TA) set in the Deep South in the

portrayals of Nick Denery and Julian Berniers.

But she presents the Southern agrarian community and the Northern materialistic society as both flawed with blackmail. In the Southern plays (APF, TAg) blackmail will be allowed as a reparation for the Southern code of "stained honour."Thus in Lavinia's and in Sophie's case blackmail has a benevolent end: it is a way to redeem their code of stained virtue.

In the Southern community blackmail seems to follow the pattern of what Ruth Benedict called a "shame culture" in her anthropological study of Japan, The Chrysanthamun and the Sword. In the "shame culture" pattern the individual seems to be guilty of a "hidden secret" before the community. This is presented in Marcus Hubbard in APF with the fear of the mob who could lynch him if his wife's blackmail was carried to its last consequences. It is also presented in TLF, when Regina blackmails her brothers advocating the community's support, who could use it as a revenge because society despised their business methods. It is also shown in TAg, where Sophie's blackmail is successful because the Denerys and the aristocratic guests of Constance Tuckerman were afraid of the community's "scandal-mongering".

On the other hand, Ruth Benedict's definition of "guilt cultures" applies to the individual Puritan guilt, a pattern presented in her Northern plays. In plays like WR, TSW, TCH, DC, the character revolves about his sense of individual guilt towards others. And this guilt always implies financial blackmail: the individual uses money to bribe people and buy their affection. Yet he/she also feels a sense of personal

guilt for a failure to get involved in events outside themselves (as in TSW, WR, DTC).

A great deal of narcissism is displayed in Hellman's Northern plays; like TSW, where Moses implies that men are frustrated in their private lives so that they cannot take hold of the historical moment properly. Or in DC where the capitalist (Andrew Rodman) feels guilt about his personal and public life but seems unable to change, deciding for compromise on both levels. In WR, the Farrellys have a sense of guilt because they didn't give support to their relatives who were fighting for a good cause (Kurt's fight against Nazism).

Sartre does consider the ethical problem of the influence by example of one's action upon others, and he states unequivocally that "one ought always to ask oneself what would happen if everyone did as one is doing" and that one cannot escape from this responsibility "except by a kind of self-deception (bad faith)." (11)

Bad faith arises when the individual tries to escape his responsibilities, by accepting some ready-made, socially acceptable, stable consciousness of itself as its true and fixed identity. Thus, characters like the Farrelys (WR), the Rodmans (DC), the Hazens (TSW) act in bad faith, choosing to be identified with a public image of themselves and denying their personal responsibility towards commitment. They remain as bystanders, alienated from external reality and unwilling to prevent destruction.

Contrasting to these character's sense of personal guilt we have Miss Hellman's Sartrean heroes. Like Leo Whalen

(DC) or Kurt Müller (WR) who are of "good faith." They are committed to a political cause and fight for it, the first against the factory-owner's exploitation and the second against Nazism. They are not susceptible to blackmail because, unlike the others they have a definite outlook on life and transcend their individual selves fighting for a good cause.

Miss Hellman's idealism seems to induce her to follow Ibsen's methods in her earlier plays. Ibsen's meliorism seems to be her standard when she has written TLF, APF, DTC, WR, TCH, TSW.

In TLF, Ibsen's method is followed in the revelation of the truth to Alexandra so that the youth becomes aware of the Hubbards' predacity in order to fight it.

Miss Hellman is concerned with social problems and with a way out of their impasses: she shows a cold materialism in DC being contrasted with an engaged hero who fights against oppression. She condemns the U.S. non-interventionist policy in the Thirties and blames it through her "engagé" herose like Sam and Kurt Müller, showing its consequences in World War II and Nazism in WR and TSW.

In Ibsen's fashion she shows the Southern Reconstruction dilemma (APF, TLF), that is, an agrarian society with a Chivalric code of honour is contrasted with Northern materialistic values and she seems to propose an alternative society. In those plays some characters present a Southern Chivalric code of honour like Bagtry and Horace Giddens (APF, TLF) and even Julian (TA) who couldn't bear to live by the materialistic values of Northern society. Other characters,

like Regina, Oscar and Ben Hubbard accept those materialistic standards and try to realize them. They pursue the "mystique of success" also rooted in the Puritan principles that justify working and getting rich as not being incongruous principles. In this alternative society viewed by the playwright, Southerners could adopt the Northern ethos of progress as a way to escape economic decadence.

But in her last two plays (TAg, TA), influenced by Chekhov, she seems fatalistic about the Southern destiny, prophesying failure and decay for the South. She presents the individual's tragic soul-searching as a vicious circle leading to meaninglessness and decadence.

Characters in the last plays, like Carrie and Mrs Elliss, illustrate a narcissistic outlook on life, displaying incestuous feelings as a sure sign of their failure to love. They couldn't go beyond their selves and participate in outside reality, like the people of good-faith in Ibsen-influenced plots, who struggle to become complete and self-fulfilled as human beings.

We would like to emphasize that in her earlier plays (TLF, WR, TSW, DTC) certain honourable characters (Alexandra, Kurt Müller, Sam Hazen, Whalen) are immune to blackmail because they are people of good faith: by their free choice they transcend their individual selves and fight for an ideal which will promote mankind's welfare. While in her last two plays (TAg, TA), no one moves beyond "bad faith"; all are shown absorbed in their selfish interests and inward crisis, escaping their responsibilities towards the outside world and thus

being led to self-deception and to a fatalistic view of world.

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CHAPTER II

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR (1934)

The Children's Hour was first performed in 1934 and because of its subject matter, lesbianism, it was banned in Boston and Chicago for a long time.

Lorena Holmin states that this play was based on an actual trial: "Closed Doors; or the Great Drumsheugh Case", one of a collection of criminal cases entitled Bad Companions by William Rowghead (N. York, Duffield and Green, 1931). Two headmistresses of a Scottish boarding school were accused of a lesbian attachment to each other on the slanderous testimony of a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl. The teachers sued and although they proved their innocence after ten years they were economically and morally destroyed.

David Siewers says that

> "Miss Hellman has declared that it was difficult to cast the original production because prominent actresses were afraid to take part... and even Prof. William Lions Phelpps of Yale, a member of the

> Pulitzer Prize Committee, refused to attend The Children's Hour; the prize that season went to a comparatively tepid study of the relationship of two women, The Old Maid."[1]

Many critics agree that the season's best play was really TCH.

Miss Hellman declared that its subject was good and evil. This play questions the moral code established by society and its punishment of those who deviate from it. It criticizes slander and blackmail as a means of social coercion showing the destruction it brings to people's lives.

It is set in the Wright - Dobie school for girls, a converted farmhouse in a small town in Massachussets. The first act takes place in Mrs Mortar's sewing-class. Mary Tilford arrives late with a bunch of faded flowers as a present for Mrs Mortar. Mrs Mortar, a vain ex-actress is pleased with them. But Karen Dobbie, one of the school headmistress arrives and discovers Mary's lie: Karen punishes her for it. The latter simulates a heart-attack and threatens to blackmail her teachers into submission, threatening to tell her rich and powerful grandmother a tale about being mistreated. Karen informs Martha Wright, the other headmistress, about the girl's pretended illness and they decide to call Doctor Joe Cardin in to examine her.

Joe Cardin is Karen's fiancée and on his arrival there is an open hostility in Martha's behavior towards him. Martha had previously complained to Karen of her loneliness and the loss which she would suffer in the partnership administration of the school after Karen's marriage. Karen dismisses it and they

combine to offer Mrs Mortar a sum to leave the school. They think that the old actress should leave because her eccentric behavior and small-mindedness can be harmful to the schoolgirl's character.

Martha communicates their decision to her aunt and Mrs Mortar maliciously accuses Martha of having an 'unnatural' attraction for Karen. She charges Martha with lesbian feelings and jealousy towards her friend. Two schoolgirls overheard the conversation and later on they reveal it to Mary Tilford who decides to run away from school.

In the Second Act Mary arrives at Mrs Tilford's house and lies to her grandmother. Perceiving that she couldn't deceive her and helped by reading Mademoiselle de Maupin she insinuates an 'unnatural relationship' between her two teachers. Mary mentions Mrs Mortar's quarrel with Martha, the latter's hostility towards Cardin and her crying over Karen's marriage to corroborate her charges. In order to conclude her revenge she states that she has been punished for knowing the truth.

Mrs Tilford, self-righteously, starts her "whispering campaign' to destroy the teachers. She phones Cardin and the schoolgirls' parents are warned. In the next scene she has told the whole community and all the girls are taken out of the school. Roselie arrives at Mary's house and the second blackmails her guest: Mary threatens to tell about Helen's bracelet which was stolen by Rosalie, if she didn't obey her.

Joe Cardin is already at Mrs Tilford's house when Karen and Martha arrive demanding an explanation of her accusation of a homosexual relationship. They threathen to sue Mrs Tilford

for slander. Cardin questions Mary who states her previous accusations and although she falls into contradiction Mrs Tilford believes her. She calls Rosalie as a witness and the latter, submissive to blackmail, confirms Mary's version.

In Act III, Karen and Martha have lost the libel suit and talk about their exclusion from society. Mrs Mortar arrives apologizing for errors of judgement. They reject her excuses and ask her to leave in the next train.

Joe Cardin arrives and proposes that Karen and he escape to Germany. He demands the truth concerning the slander and Karen breaks up their engagement.

Martha comes into the room and in a bitter self-realization confesses her "hidden secret": she had unconsciously cherished a homosexual attraction for Karen. After this revelation Martha goes out and commits suicide. In the meantime Mrs Tilford arrives to make amends: she offers money and a public apology as a reward for moral damage.

Blackmail was discovered when Helen's bracelet was found in Rosalie's rooms and Mrs Tilford admits that Mary is a sick child. Karen remarks that her reparation is worthless after Martha's death. But later she feels compassionate for Mrs Tilford and shows what both the community and the old lady lacked: mercy. She forgives Mrs Tilford and promises to see Cardin again. In doing so Karen extends a reconciliation to the community which had excluded her.

Critics say that the title of the play was taken from Longfellow's poem. It is used ironically because it demythologizes the Romantic assumption of the child as a

symbol of purity, innocence and perfection.

In this play we see the community as a powerful coercive force which annihilates the individual who didn't fit into its rules.

It is through different means of social controls such as blackmail or slander that inter-personal relationaship work out in the social milieu.

Moreover Miss Hellman emphasizes blood relationhips between the characters: the closer their blood links, the more their faults are intensified.

Mary Tilford, who is described by Sievers as a "psychotic child" manipulates words cunningly either to flatter her grandmother or to persuade her to believe in her charges. Mary uses flattery as emotional blackmail to submit Mrs Tilford to her will. Mary is also a leader among the schoolgirls, often using physical violence or blackmail to submit the others to her will.

In the schoolgirls' conversation on 'unnatural attraction' between the two teachers they mention Mademoiselle de Maupin.

As Doris Falk states, Mademoiselle de Maupin is:

> "Gautier's titillating novel describing some varieties of sexual experience including inversion."(2)

Reading Maupin helps Mary's elaboration of slanderous charges against the headmistresses.

We see this first in Mary's arrival at Mrs Tilford's house and her use of flattery and persuasion to convince Mrs Tilford

of her charges.

Mary has decided to run away from school and takes for granted Mrs Tilford's economic power on the community, using it as a possible threat to her teachers:

> "I'm not staying anymore. 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. They can't get away with treating me like this, and they don't have to think they can." (TCH, p. 25)

Mary plans her revenge using Mrs Tilford's fortune as a possible source of blackmail. Money is used as a source of power and as a means to subjugate others to one's will.

Mrs Tilford's respectability and her standing as a paragon of tradition and morality is pointed out by Cardin:

> Cardin... "You can look at Aunt Amelia and tell: old New England stock, never married out of Boston, still thinks honor is honor..." (TCH, p. 19)

Here we have a glimpse of Mrs Tilford's rigid moral standards and of her privileged economic position. It is a foreshadowing of the formal controls (e. g. law apparatus) which she will set in motion to destroy Karen and Martha.

Mrs Tilford may be compared to the memorable matrons which will follow in the next plays: to Mrs Ellis in TAg or to Mrs Fanny Farrelly in WR. They are self - righteous and status - conscious, standing up as moral judges to the acts of a family or community. They stand as a repository of daily wisdom and common sense and from this derive their ability to judge people. On the other hand they are liable to admit the injustice and the

errors they may commit in the name of common sense.

But there are characters who oppose those self-righteous matrons. Afatha, the housemaid is such a character: she is aware of Mary's mischievous personality. She is an earlier representative of Hellman's type: the servant who has an upright position and stands against the oppression and unjustices of its owners. She is an earlier development of Addie in TLF and like her, although occupying an underprivileged position she stands as a critical consciousness to the other characters. By the end of the play she stands as mediator between Mrs Tilford and Karen stating that she stood on the headmistress's side throughout the judgement. But now she pleads mercy for the guilt-ridden grandmother. Agatha is like Dilsey in Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury, a witness of corruption and destruction, and she tries to serve as a mediator in the process of reconciliation between the outcast and the community.

Mrs Tilford starts her "whispering compaign" and manipulates the public opinion pleading for the enforcement of the mores. Anything that deviates from an established moral code (e. g. perversion, lesbianism) had to be annihilated so that order could be re-established in society.

Blackmail is used in this play in order to carry on a process of slander, to smear the headmistresses' reputation, destroying them emotionally and economically. Blackmail is somehow alwayslinked to money, property or to illegal acts of acquisitiveness, which is a characteristic of a capitalist society.

People's behavior is conditioned, in this play, by the

Northern materialistic ethos, competing and using illegal means of acquisitiveness to get power, status. Thus the blackmailer profits from his victim's weaknesses to exert his power over him. At first Mary coerces Rosalie to cooperate in the slander, blackmailing the second emotionally. Mary uses Rosalie's sense of guilt for stealing Helen's bracelet as a way to blackmail Rosalie and to obtain her cooperation in the slander process. As is evident, blackmail loads the dice for the choice desired by the blackmailer. In the confrontation scene with the teachers Rosalie is powerless to tell the truth because of blackmail and is forced into a hysterical corroboration of the slander. In this scene blackmail has a highly coercive power because it implies the psychological violence a neurotic girl can exert on a guilt-ridden person.

Mrs Tilford also corroborates Mary's charges in her self-righteous and prejudiced remark:

> Mrs Tilford... "You've been playing with children's lives and that's why I stopped you." (TCH, p. 43)

She uses the taboos of social consensus to condemn the two teachers. In her 'naivete' the teacher sues Mrs Tilford only to see the reversal of her expectations: the legal apparatus just sanctions the social consensus condemning Martha and Karen. Some critics have pointed out that the playwright has borrowed motifs (e. g. the keyhole and the teacher's room) from the Drumsheugh case. Mary stated that she had seen things through a keyhole in Karen's room. Like in the real trial there was no keyhole in Karen's room and Martha shared a room with her aunt in another part of the house.

In the third act slander and blackmail have been consolidated by the law apparatus and Karen and Martha talk about their social ostracizing.

They talk about their treatment as social outcasts: they couldn't even go shopping because the ladies' club had written circulars to exclude them from their milieu.

Social consensus had secluded them in the house and it is as if they were living in a Kafkaesque world:

> Karen -..."It's like that dark hour of the night when half awake you struggle through the black mess you've been dreaming... But now it's all the nightmare, there's no solid world." (TCH p. 53)

But there are two interruption from the outside world: the telephone call and Mrs Mortar's arrival. Martha releases her anger on Mrs Mortar, informing her that the accusation had been couched in her words and that her refusal to testify had provided evidence to condemn them. She shows Mrs Mortar that she has acted in "bad faith" towards them, that is by her inaction, avoiding to testify at the trial she helped their destruction.

Doris Falk classifies Mrs Mortar as a "bystander", that is:

> "a character well-meaning or not who stand by and allow the despoilers to accomplish their destructive aims." (3)

Joe Cardin is shown, in the last act, as a weak man blinded by social consensus. In his dialogue with Karen no communication is possible because distrust has tainted their relationship.

Cardin is an earlier development of well-intentioned but feeble man who is easily manipulated and who sometimes fails to take a stand in the course of events. We have his counterparts in the character of Frederick who is manipulated by his mother in TAg, in David Farrely, manipulated by Fanny in WR or in Julian manipulated by his sisters in TA. They are all good-willing characters but their inaction and indecisiveness is harmful to themselves and to the ones who are close to them.

Other critics state that Martha's revelation of homosexual tendencies to Karen and the former's consequent suicide are melodramatic devices. I would argue that Martha is the only character in Hellman's play who follows the tragic pattern.

According to Aristotle tragedy requires a character whose misfortune is brought about by some "error or frailty."[4] Modern interpretations of the tragic pattern show that the conflict in human life derives from the clash between appearance and reality. According to Karl Reinhardt the tragic hero stands against a set of values which rules his world. And his life balances between truth and lie. Tragic process evolves toward the discovery of truth, that is the hero achieves the consciousness that he had a false vision of reality, he sees his truth now as a lie. Reconciliation with the world is possible through death.

Miss Hellman shows this irony in the tragic process of TCH: what seemed to be a lie, turns out to be true. And the heroine's position appears to herself as false, inconsistent with the set of rules that govern her world. Martha's self-

realization makes her confess to Karen that she had cherished, unconsciously, homosexual feelings towards her best friend. Sievers points out that Miss Hellman created

> "understanding and empathy for unconscious deviation as a tragic flaw."(5)

As Martha shares the moral code of the community the only possible reconciliation is through death. Committing suicide is a form of expiation of her guilt and thus being in peace with the community. And the playwright is conventional enough to agree that suicide is an appropriate aftermath to discovery of this secret.

By the end Karen herself is reconciled with the outside world, and she resigns herself to endure life in a community which had excluded her.

Mrs Tilford comes to reveal that Mary's blackmail was found out minutes after Martha's suicide. She offers money as a moral reparation. It seems that only in a society with a materialistic ethos, money is offered as the highest incentive to relieve one's consciousness. Mrs Tilford, who belongs to a Northern community, shares its materialistic values. She revolves about her sense of guilt because she has acted in bad faith towards the teachers helping their condemnation. As a way to relieve her sense of guilt she offers money as a reward for "false blackmail" and slander.

Karen answers that reconciliation with the community is only possible through forgiveness and endurance.

Doris Falk poses the question of freedom of choice:

> "What if the charges were not false? What if after all - one or even - both women had such feelings, consciously or unconsciously? Would the guilty deserve destruction at the hands of society?"(6)

We would agree with these assertions asking if society has any right to manipulate gossip, blackmail and slander to condemn two people regardless of their freedom of choice. In this play there is a criticism of the justice system, which condemns people based on slanderous accusations of a neurotic child.

That is why in the 1952 revival, Miss Hellman directed TCH as a libel against Mc Carthy and the Un-American Activities Committee, which used the formal controls of the State, e. g. censorship, law apparatus, to condemn people.

And the same ethical questions were raised over the revised version: has the State any rights to control political ideology? Why did they use the smear and the big lie? Why has the justice system cond emned intellectuals depriving them from work and dignity? So, questions of freedom of choice on political engagement were implied by the 1952 performances.

Critics complain about the third act as being too lenghty and they say the denouement is overwritten.

Miss Hellman justifies herself in the Introduction to Four Plays.

> "I am a moral writer, often too moral a writer, and I cannot avoid it seems that last summing up..."(7)

Miss Hellman apparently agrees with those critics wishing that she had ended the play with Martha's suicide. But Adler attributes this last summing - up to Hellman's

discipleship to Ibsen:

> "like Ibsen she presents issues of social significance... where the characters had a tragic confrontation with themselves... she uses his technique by the end of the play: a discussion where the issues brought about the play are spelled out." (8)

Lorena Holmin classifies TCH as well-made play by the use of technical contrivances which order the plot in a strict cause-effect relationship.

For example, Mary breaks an ornament, described as a 'lover's gift', as a foreshadowing of the splitting up of Karen's love affair. Another reiterated motif is Helen's 'stolen bracelet', which makes Mary's emotional blackmail effective.

Critics praise this play because here the major virtues are already present. As Adler points out there is:

> "an admirable characterization, the firm and life-like dialogue, its economy and crispness" (9)

are presented not as vividly as in the later plays.

Blackmail appears as an informal control and it is linked to material goods and to mischiveous purposes. It appears as a overt form of control in order to submit the victim's will to the blackmailer's aim. It works as a subtler form of power when Mary blackmails Mrs Tilford emotionally with flattery and gossip persuading her to use her strength to defeat the teachers. Emotional blackmail is also presented in APF where Regina Hubbard flatters her father and uses his incestuous impulses towards her to obtain power and cheat her brothers

financially. It is a central motif in the play because it makes

It is a central motif in the play because it makes slander actually possible. It has been proved as a powerful coercive force in a society with a materialistic ethics, because its sucess deprived others of social integration and denied them their means of support.

Blackmail, in this play, works in a devious way to bring the truth to the surface. After the homosexual charges Karen is led to a kind of self-examination discovering that there was an 'unconscious' attraction between them. Ironically, it is they also who pronounce sentence on themselves, and who believe their homosexual impulses to be wrong. Thus we will have to conclude that society is not their sole persecutor, or that they have been so well conditioned by the public mores that they cannot admit or fulfill their private impulses.

Blackmail in this play is rather different from other plays because it doesn't raise ethical questions like in TSW or DC where world affairs are linked to the private lives of the characters. But here blackmail shows a more private, more psychological dimension portraying the character's inward crisis provoked by a lie which becomes truth by the end.

It is interesting how unfeminist this ending is. Miss Hellman seems to be saying that although society is bigoted, individuals cannot survive outside of the conventions for very long. Miss Hellman is rather conservative when she shows by the end that Karen condemns herself. In this play 'false' blackmail applied socially stimulates a kind of inner guilt in the latent homosexual, so that the false charges proves finally

to be true when redirected by the individual against herself. Miss Hellman's end is that of a moralist who is often almost 'puritanic' in her conclusions.

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CHAPTER III

DAYS TO COME (1936)

Days to Come, Miss Hellman's second play, was produced in 1936, It played only six performances in New York and closed. Miss Hellman recognizes its failure in the Introduction to Four Plays:

> "I spoiled a good play. I returned to the amateur's mistake: everything you think and feel must be written this time, because you may never have another chance to write it." (1)

Smiley says that it is a "didactic strike play, but it focuses on capitalists rather than on workers." (2)

Miss Hellman's failure is attributed by most critics to the fusion of the labor strife with her psychological insight into the lives of capitalists.

Miss Hellman, considered by Allan Lewis as a "survivor of the Depression" portrays the problems of labor unionization in a strike. Like many intellectuals in the thirties she

became aware of the problems of the depression faced by the working-class. In the American drama of this decade we find a group of playwrights concerned with the activist theatre. They formed groups not only for propaganda but to set standards of high artistic quality, both in the professional and amateur's stage.

Central in this movement was the Group Theater or the Theater Guild. In 1935, the Federal Theater Project provided roles for many playwrights and produced many activist plays. Without being connected to any of these groups, Miss Hellman nevertheless reveals the struggle between capital and labour in an independent production on Broadway.

Sartre would pose the division between bourgeois ideology and 'engagement' as the writer's delemma:

> "We were born into the bourgeoisie, and this class has taught us the value of its conquests: political freedom, habeas corpus etc...
>
> We remain bourgeois by our culture, our way of life, and our present public... But at the same time the historical situation drives us to join the proletariat in order to construct a classless society... It will, of course, be said that this antinomy which tortures us is merely due to our still dragging around the remains of bourgeois ideology...; on the other hand it will be said that we have a case of revolutionary snobbism and that we want to make literature serve ends for which it is not designed." (3)

Miss Hellman shows this antinomy clearly: she sympathizes with the labor cause and wants the underdog to fight back. On the other hand, she portrays the factory-owner as an

unwilling oppressor. This contradiction is set up to the detriment of the plot which is:

> "crowded with loosely related elements, including blackmail, adultery and broadly satirical sketches of the rich". (4)

But these contradictions may be attributed to Miss Hellman's ambiguous political belief. As she declares in An Unfinished Woman:

> "It saddens me now to admit that my political convictions were never very radical, in the true, best, serious sense". (5)

On the other hand, she is benevolent toward the capitalists (Rodmans) because she gave them the same treatment as her mother's family: the Newhouses.

> ... "But that New York apartment where we visited several times a week, the summer cottage where we went for a visit each year as the poor daughter and granddaughter made me into an angry child and forever caused in me a wild extravagance mixed with respect for money and those who have it. The respectful periods were full of self-hatred and during them I always made my worst mistakes". (6)

Without intending a "Woolworth Freud" (7) analysis I would argue that her ethical vision of the world balances between her respect for capitalism and her sense of guilt over it. The combination led her to an intellectual pseudo-engagement in the thirties.

The play is set in a small tourn in Ohio, in which workers are reluctantly striking against the owner of a brush factory, Andrew Rodman. Rodman is portrayed as a paternalist

businessman, concerned with the welfare of the exploited workers. He couldn't adapt himself to the new ways of capitalism which required the reduction of the wages in order to increase his profits for successful competition with greater monopolies. Other stockholders, like his sister Cora or his lawyer and partner Ellicott, persuaded Andrew to hire strikebreakers from Cleveland, under the command of a certain Wilkie. The men who come are professional killers who try to provoke the workers into starting a fight in order to use legal forces to end the strike.

Leo Whalen, the union organizer, warns the workers not to fall victim to Wilkie's manoeuveres which would lead them to violence. But when one of the strikebreakers, Joe, kills his partner, Mossie, Whalen is unjustly arrested as the murderer.

In Days to Come her characters are well defined Northern types: the labor leader, the strikebreaker, and the emancipated woman.

Julie Rodman, Andrew's wife, wants to prove Whalen's innocence but she is blackmailed by Wilkie. He threatens her by saying that if she ever tells the truth, he will incriminate Whalen and Andrew.

From then on violence starts and the workers are defeated and forced back to work.

A sub-plot develops parallel to the labor cause: it portrays the inner conflicts of the Rodmans, their anxieties, their illusions and frustrations.

This introduces ambiguity into the play's treatment of a social

theme.

Sievers says of the play:

> "it failed to satisfy either as labor relations, as psychological analysis or as theatre." (7)

The two stories are interwoven because Julie Rodman, Andrew's wife, a liberated Northern woman, falls in love with Whalen. Dutiful to his cause, Whalen refuses her.

DC ends in compromise on both levels: on the social plane, violence overcomes the workers who promised to return to the factory. In the Rodman's house, the decadence of his industry parallels the family economic decay. In the final confrontation scene they must face the truth: treachery (Julie was Ellicolt's lover), escapism, hatred, failure to love and loneliness.

In spite of betrayal, husband and wife make a compromise: to stay together facing loneliness and despair for 'all the days to come' (DC, p. 128). This compromise of staying together as a substitute for love will be portrayed in other plays which deal with existential conflicts: Emily and Alex in TSW, or Mr and Mrs Griggs in TAg, Anna and Carrie Berniers in TA.

In the beginning of the play the house-servants discuss the strike. Hannah, the house-servant quarrels with Cora Rodman about oppression, showing in the Rodman's household a microcosm of the labor versus capital strike that is happening outside.

In the same way that Mrs Farrelly in WR traces unfavourable comparisons between her dead husband and her son David, Cora contrasts her brother's weakness and uncertainty

with her father's self-reliance and leadership with the workers. Cora is a spinsterish caricature of Regina in TLF. She talks business with Ellicott, trying to make profits from any situation regardless of her brother's financial losses. There is also a love triangle parallel in TSW and in DC: in the first the husband deceives his wife with her best friend, in the second Julie deceives Andrew with his friend and partner Ellicott. In both plays the characters reach a final confrontation where the "hidden secret" is unveiled and parallels between public and private lives are drawn.

In DC Miss Hellman shows more clearly contradictory political views that she will manifest later in other plays: in TLF she shows the exploitation of the Negroes and common whites by the white masters in the South. But she seems to justify the Hubbard's greed and oppression in the name of the ethics of progress adopted in the Southern Reconstruction.

In DC she in part justifies capitalism and exploitation by portraying Andrew Rodman as a paternalist factory-owner and showing the workers, led by Tom Firth, as unwilling rebels against their boss.

Although she stresses some contradiction in the worker versus the oppressor conflict, the struggle is always rooted in an emotional ground: Tom Firth, a working-class leader fights not because of the factory-owner's oppression, but because the strike-breakers had killed his daughter.

On the other hand, Andrew Rodman cannot adapt himself to the new situation: he cannot accept the exploitation of his workers in order to compete with huge Northern conglomerates. Like the aristocratic Bagtry he refuses to adapt to a new

economic reality as a result of his good faith (e.g. Birdie in APF). He also becomes an easy prey for speculators like Ellicott, who invests his money in Andrew's factory so that he can manipulate the factory's business later on.

At first, Andrew, like Alex in TSW, acts in "bad faith", denying his personal responsibility in the worker's crisis:

> Andrew - "I don't care who wins. I can't fit the pieces together. That's what's happening to me. I suddenly don't know where my place in the whole thing is". (DC, p. 99)

But later on Julie reminds him of his code of honor and in moment of self-realization he assumes his responsibility in the crisis:

> Julie - "They talked you into it. Why did you let them? ... Why didn't you stop it?"
>
> Andrew - ... "There are a lot of reasons. The reason I tell myself is that I couldn't stop anything. I owe money. A lot of money- I've been borrowing it for a long time".

Because he owes money to Ellicott, he is induced to hire the strikebreakers in order to guarantee the factory's profits.

Contrasting to Andrew's weakness and to Ellicott's villainy stands the working-hero, Leo Whalen, the union-organizer. He is introduced as an "attractive man, in a simple, clean, undistinguished way" (DC, p. 83).

Like Kurt in WR he is an idealist of "good will" who believes in the cause he fights for. He comes to reveal to the workers their power for doing or undoing: in short for acting against the exploiters.

He is at the same time, idealistic and practical, simple, noble and self-reliant. But like Kurt, Whalen dismisses love and compromises his sense of duty towards the workers.

> Julie - "We don't get many visitors here and because you and my husband... happen to think differently, is no reason we can't eat together".
>
> Whalen - "In my business it's a good reason". (DC, p. 84).

We see his compromise again when he refuses Julie's love:

> Whalen... "then you're 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 and who doesn't stutter: sick of your own world, aren't you, and you think I know another?... I don't like that..." (DC, p. 86)

Whalen helps Julie to achieve self-knowledge and doesn't accept compromises with the 'status quo' because he believes in the cause he is fighting for. He has the self-reliance and leadership lacking in Andrew and a consciousness of his duty to fight oppression which both workers and factory-owner lack.

It really seems an oddity to us that Whalen is sure of himself, despite the fact that Hellman herself is not sure of her socio-political intentions. Miss Hellman wants both clear solutions for the crisis and psychological complexities at the same time.

On the other hand, this play overtly shows a melodramatic structure: it is full of stereotypes, villains are paired out with heroes, the oppositions are pointed out and violence happens as a "deus ex-machina" in the play. As Heilman

points out:

> "melodrama has affinities with politics because pragmatic politics appears as competition for power between good and evil". (9)

Leo Whalen is, like John Bagtry, or Kurt, a romantic hero with an ideal code of honour and good will to fight for the oppressed,while his counterpart Wilkie, is portrayed as the arch-villain of the play. He is the leader of professional killers hired as strikebreakers meant to provoke a riot in the community. The strikebreakers are playing cards when after their discussion Joe murders Mossie. Wilkie takes the corpse out of Rodman's room and throws it in front of Whalen's door. Trapped by Wilkie, Whalen is arrested on suspicion of this murder. Julie was with Whalen at that time and tries to tell the truth but Wilkie blackmails her

> Wilkie - "They usually land the men they know in cemeteries... And that's where you're getting ready to land Leo Whalen".
>
> Wilkie - ..."It sounds foolish, since you and I know better, but they might think that Mossie caught you together and Whalen killed him for it. That's my guess, and I've been in the business for a long time... It's going to look like a sell out, and if he gets out all in one piece he's lucky..." (DC, p. 112).

Julie's naiveté helps the blackmailer to achieve his end: she holds back the truth and Whalen is arrested. When finally Julie tells the truth it is too late to prevent violence. Firth comes in and tells Andrew about the murder of his daughter. Morally defeated, the leader of the workers accepts: to stop fighting

and go back to work. So, the strike, usually a symbol of revolt against the oppression of the capitalistic system becomes ineffectual here.

Whalen, standing as Sartre's engaged hero, tells Firth how dangerous that compromise is. Despite this the worker accepts it:

> Firth - "We don't care who wins, like you."
>
> Whalen - "You will care. More than I do. For me, you're only one of a thousand fights. But you've only got one fight. This one." (DC, p. 121).

In Pentimento Miss Hellman justifies those issues as a prophetic vision of the labor movement in the States:

> "Reading it then, for a book that includes all my plays, I liked it: it is crowded and overwrought, but it is a good report of rich liberals in the thirties, of a labor leader who saw through them, of a modern lost lady, and has in it a correct prediction of how conservative the American labor movement was to become". (10)

By the end of the play Miss Hellman has used a repeated technique: she relates her character's private affairs with a large socio-economic and historical context.

In WR and TSW, failure of love, rationalization, lack of involvement in family life is parallel to their alienation and inability to participate in world affairs; DC also portrays family tensions, greed, ambition and hate as a parallel to the characters' inability to cope with the main conflict: labor strife.

> "The general dissatisfaction, both private and social, portrays those years between the Civil War

> and the First World War when the big industries of the North divided the market among them and destroyed the smaller ones by price cutting. America saw her economy controlled by a small number of huge trusts and conglomerates, the Northern paraphrase of the big plantations of the South, tending to find its center in itself and fighting to be an independent social unit."(11)

The Rodmans are split apart as their industry collapsed in the crisis. In their final confrontation they display personal truth: Cora, like Regina Hubbard, hates her brother because of his weakness and simple-mindedness. Like Ellicott and Wilkie, she stands as the arch-villainess of the play.
Miss Hellman seems both for and against the victmized capitalist in her description of Andrew Rodman. It may be that his characterization is deliberately ambiguous to avoid elements of melodrama associated with a doctrinaire allegory.

Although he has been told by Cora that Julie had deceived him with Ellicott, he takes her back. In his personal as well as in his public life the solution for the crisis is compromise.

Julie is portrayed as a Northern liberated woman. As Adler points out, she plays the role of the outsider wife among people who grew up together.

This motif occurs again in plays like TLF, APF and TA.

Julie, like Alexander Hazen in TSW is divided between her duty toward Andrew and passion for her lover. Dissatisfied with both, she finds an escapist dream in thinking about Whalen and his romantic enterprise among the workers. Julie is attracted towards adultery both with left (Whalen) and right-

wing (Ellicott) ideologies, which shows that she is lost either on political or personal levels.

While the Rodmans are entangled in their domestic crisis, Hannah, like Addie or Coralee, comments on her master's actions and refuses to cooperate with oppression. She asks cooperation from the other servants for the strike's fund and robs Rodman's pantry in order to help the strikers promoting social justice.

In this play she is the only servant who effectively acts against her master's interests.

Doris V. Falk comments that the title is quoted from the "Ecclesiastes", which is a book commenting on labor and reward:

> "For there is no remembrance of the wise more than the fool forever; seeing that which in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? As the fool." (Ecclesiastes 2:16).

So Miss Hellman's point of view becomes that of a moralist, showing that the character's lives, on both sides, become meaningless and ineffectual in their inaction and their inability to foresee and prevent the destruction of love and life.

Blackmail, in this play, has two aspects. First it is used as a melodramatic device, to veer the action of the play. That is, the strikers were almost winning the struggle when the strikebreaker's crime gives Wilkie a reason to blame Whalen, the union organizer, for the violence. After this blackmail, the power shifts to the side of the capitalists.

Because of blackmail, violence follows and the class struggle is resolved by a compromise.

And it is this compromise which manifests Miss Hellman's contradictory political views, and makes us uncertain whether to classify her as an activist playwright or not.

On the other hand, there is a second subtle kind of blackmail: it is the use of money to buy love which implies the characters' failure to love.

Cora tells Julie, in the confrontation scene, that Andrew is bankrupt because he spent his money trying to win her.

> Cora - "She's broken you... She's why you owe money to Henry and to everybody else... 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..." (DC, p. 127).

The same pattern occurs also in TSW, where Emily uses her wealth and status to conquer Alex; or in APF where Marcus bribes Regina and Regina would like to bribe Bagtry's code of honour.

In this play, although Andrew has used money as a bribe for Julie's love he sees the inadequacy of it. Nevertheless, they decide to stay together for "all the days to come" (DC, p. 128) facing despair and loneliness as a punishment for their failure to love.

In this play, the solution is compromise, which summons a sense of guilt on both parts, wife and husband, factory-owner and workers.

In this sense, Andrew feels an inner sense of guilt for not resolving properly his private and his business affairs.

The play also illustrates the Calvinistic assumption that work and good deeds are the means of getting rich. This is portrayed in Andrew Rodman's moral nobility and by the fact that the workers do not really consider him as an exploiter. Thus, compromise by both capital and labor relieves their sense of inner guilt and is a way for both classes to cope with their lives.

It is surprising however to find that even in this play of the thirties - the era of Hellman's political involvement - we find evidence of the ambivalence toward political solutions that will grow stronger in her last (post - McCarthy era) plays.

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CHAPTER IV

THE LITTLE FOXES (1939)

The Little Foxes is a naturalistic play, and its leit-motif is blackmail, a device used to seize power or to exercise power over people. The characters react to each other in a victim-victmizer syndrome and the plot shows the shift of power from one to another as a complex chess game. In a deterministic way, what is an improvement process to some characters implies a process of degradation to the others. In the Hubbard's viewpoint the building of a cotton mill means power, economic status etc. On the other hand, it implies the degradation of an agrarian order with a genteel code, represented by Birdie.

In TLF, Regina Hubbard is married to Horace Giddens, a rich banker, and Oscar to Birdie Bagtry, John's cousin. Both marriages are a consequence of the family's financial interests. The action begins when Regina and her two brothers are doing business with a Chicago tycoon. With his money they plan to build cotton mills in Lionnet, the old plantation of Birdie's

youth. They still need Horace's consent to finance a part of the project. Horace, who is recovering from a heart attack in a Baltimore hospital, is brought home so that Regina can persuade him to close the deal. He refuses to. A fight for money and power ensues among the Hubbards. In a climatic scene, Regina lets Horace die by not giving him his medicine. She then takes over as they now depend on her money and blackmails her brothers (Ben and Oscar) financially. Her victory is only partial however. Her daughter, Alexandra, revolts and announces that she will leave in order to fight people like the Hubbards.

In TLF characters behave as allies or aggressors in order to reach a goal: money and consequently power in order to submit people to their will. Birdie lives in the past and she stands for the genteel code. She is a representative of a cultivated, genteel aristocracy and she demonstrates it in her paternalistic behavior towards the Negro.

> "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 people need it so." (TLF, p. 146).

Birdie's behavior towards the Negro is contrasted to Oscar's violent threats to them. Birdie behaves as a complacent mistress who finds not only servitude but support in the exploited class. That is why she is attached to Addie.

Birdie stands as a representative of an older cultural inheritance. Her behavior is contrasted with Oscar's sharp remarks and his refusal not allowing her to show the classic music album to Mr Marshall.

But a criticism of this old order, which Birdie represents is seen in Ben's speech:

> "When the war comes these fine gentlemen ride off and leave the cotton, and the women to rot... Well sir, the war ends. Lionnet is almost ruined, and the sons finish ruining it. And there were thousands like them. Why? Because the Southern aristocrat can adapt himself to nothing. Too high-tone to try." (TLF, p. 140).

In his speech Ben attacks Southern aristocratic behavior as well as the "Cavalier myth" of the South. According to Horton and Edwards by the last quarter of the 18th century

> "a few prosperous families, with well - established holdings of a thousand acres or more, held a position of leadership and began to set standards of genteel behavior. Most of them were of middle-class origin, whose only connections with nobility developed posthumously in the subsequent Southern passion for discreetly manipulated genealogy and imaginatively contrived family crests."[1]

As Horton or Cash have pointed out there was no reason for the "Cavalier myth" and the discrediting of this legend is observed in Ben's speech. He discredits the "genteel code" showing a deep dichotomy in the clash between a New and Old Order:

> "Our grandfather and our father learned the new ways and learned how to make them pay... They were in trade, Hubbard Sons, Merchandise. Others, Birdie's family, for example, looked down on them... To make a long story short, Lionnet now belongs to us. Twenty years ago we took over their land, their cotton, and their daughter". (TLF, p. 141).

Ben's speech shows that the war that ruined the Southern aristocracy benefited a middle class, who, like the Hubbards had a more mercenary outlook and were improving on it. Ben is ironical because he implies not only "improving by trade" in contrast to the aristocrats's laziness but also that the Hubbards learned different ways to exploit Negroes and and white men alike.

In his speech Ben is a stereotype of the Southern businessman of the Reconstruction. His speech, contrasted to Marshall's, shows that the New South will grow rich and powerful in order to gain the yankee's recognition of Southern force.

> "We drink the last drink for a toast. That's to prove that the Southerner is always on his feet for the last drink... Well, I say, "Southern cotton mills will be the Rembrandts of investment." (TLF, 140).

Ben is a parody of a Northern Tycoon when he says that the Southern purpose is not only an economic but also a cultural renewal, uniting Rembrandt with investment, cultural achievement with financial interest. And the Southern goal in the turn to Progress also implies a competitive principle too, that the "South is always on his feet" in relation to the North.

It is a confirmation of the statement in the

> "News and Observer" of Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1880.
>
> "The South should... make money, build up its waste places and thus force from the North that recognition of our worth and dignity of character to which that people will always be blind unless

> they can see it through the medium of material... strength." (2)

It seems to me that Ben's statement implies not only Southern economic Reconstruction but it implies obtaining the recognition of this effort by the Northern culture, represented by Mr Marshall. This macrocosm of fighting for regaining economic power is portrayed in different ways in the microcosm of the Hubbard family in TLF.

That is why the Hubbards are so interested in the cotton mill enterprise: it is a way to regain respectability from the community, a way to fulfill their individual aspirations concerning respectability and status, and it is a way to regain Northern admiration as well. This ambition is expressed in Regina's hopes of going to Chicago, a leit-motif in this play, which represents as Eatman points out, her "aspiration of upward social mobility." (3)

On the other hand, it is contrasted to the degradation of an Old order, expressed in Birdie's escapist speech:

> "I should like to have Lionnet back. I know you own it now, but I would like to see it fixed again, the way Mama and Papa had it... We could have parties for Lan, the way Mama used to have for me." (TLF, p. 145).

Birdie wants to restore the old cultural habits, while Regina wanted to reach Chicago, a symbol of Northern success. But Ben dismisses Birdie's complaints and symbolically implies that in the new industrial South there is no place for an older code of behavior.

Since the first act, Ben, Regina and Oscar start their

power game with power shifting from one hand to another and using any means to reach their objectives. In their "foxy game", the two brothers urge Regina to get the third share from Horace. Regina attempts to blackmail them replying that she will convince Horace if she gets a bigger share in the deal. In order to persuade Horace, Regina will emotionally blackmail him: she will send Alexandra, their daughter, with a message implying her personal need to bring Horace back home:

> Regina - "Tell your papa that I want him to come home, that I miss him very much." (TLF, p. 153).

Regina's speech has dubious connotations because it is as if she is implying her sexual need for Horace to get him emotionally involved, promoting his return. That is why in most of her plays, Hellman implies sex is a means of blackmailing others into submission. Thus sexuality is used as a means of exercising power over people. Later on, Horace will see that he has been deceived and Regina's behavior was only a mask for her real purpose: to invest her money in the cotton mill business. Regina plays with his sexual drive and his love only for self-interest.

I disagree from Adler's argument in "The Rose and the Fox" when he says that unlike Williams, Miss Hellman has not achieved the synthesis of sex and power. It seems to me incipient in TLF where Regina uses Horace's sexual desire for her as a means of emotional blackmail to promote his return. In other plays like TSW, TA, and APF, some characters use sex as a way of blackmailing others into submission.

David Sievers comments about Regina:

> "she has identified herself so completely with the male Hubbards that she expresses a hint of Lesbianism over the lovely women of Chicago."(4)

I don't find this statement substantiated in the play and her curiosity about the "lovely women in Chicago" seems a natural curiosity about the Northern standards of beauty and her desire to fit in the pattern by asking Mr Marshall about it. Or as Holmin points out she is seeking a compliment from Mr Marshall.

Regina blackmails her brothers financially asking more than her proper one - third share in order to persuade Horace to participate in the deal.

> "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." (TLF, 149).

Regina is showing her brothers that she has learned new ways too: she has learned blackmail in order to get revenge on Ben, who has injured her emotionally and financially years before (e.g. APF). But her brothers have their counterpart in blackmail: Oscar agrees to give her a huge share if she acquiesces in giving her consent to Alexandra and Leo's marriage. The aspect of inbreeding in the Hubbard's family is mentioned in Regina's speech stating that their parents were first cousins. It certainly implies psychological illness in the characters or a sense of decay in the Hubbard family. And Ben and Oscar's insistence on Leo and Lan's marriage as a seal to their business deal is the moral judgement of the author explicit in the title of the play.

> "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes". (5)

It is implied that the "tender grapes", Alexandra and Leo are going to be spoiled by the Hubbard's greed.

In Oscar and Birdie's marriage we have, allegorically, the Old and the New South blended: materialism and culture united; and its by-product, Leo, is a sadistic, feeble, weak and violent element. Leo has not preserved the old cultural values and he is not smart enough to come to terms with the New South capitalistic context. Although his name has positive connotations, Leo behaves as a slow-witted fool. In the first act, Ben beats up animals for the sake of violence itself. Miss Hellman uses physical violence (Ben beating animals, Oscar shooting birds) for its own sake contrasted to cultural accomplishment in other characters (Alexandra and Birdie playing the piano). It is the old medieval duality of Southern Body and Soul, physical violence and materialism contrasted to intellectual fulfillment in the dialectics of an Old Order being replaced by a New Order in this play.

In the second Act the victim/victimizer syndrome will be emphasized by Horace's arrival and his refusal to participate in the deal. Regina's emotional blackmail is unmasked when it becomes clear that they had no sexual intimacy for ten years and Horace has been deceived by her message.

> ... "So that you could invest my money? So that is why you wanted me home? Well, I had hoped..." (TLF, p. 172).

Horace's refusal makes the balance of power shift to his hands. At the same time Leo informs his elders about the Union

Pacific bonds in Horace's safe. Ben and Oscar decide to commit fraud: to "borrow" Horace's bonds excluding Regina from their partnership. Horace knows about the stealing of the bonds but decides to silence as a revenge on Regina's lack of love.

Refusing to react against the Hubbard's predacity Horace functions as a deficient moral agent.

Act III shows that Addie, a Negro servant, is the character who represents a motherly figure to Alexandra. That is why Horace trusts her with the guardianship of Alexandra after his death. She is the one who criticizes the Hubbard's predacity. The Hubbards, Addie says, are the foxes who became rich exploiting the Southern soil and its minorities.

> Addie - "Yeah, they got mighty well-off cheating niggers. Well, there are people who eat the earth and eat all the people on it like 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." (TLF, 182).

Addie's speech is not only a moral indictment against the Hubbard's methods but it is against people who, like Horace and Birdie, represent a more humanitarian society but are ineffectual moral agents, who "stand around and watch", thus failing to fight the despoilers the earth.

Her speech also reveals Ibsen's meliorism pattern adopted in some of Miss Hellman's plays. Horace has decided to reveal to Alexandra what is hidden behind the Hubbard's nice appearance in order to enlighten Alexandra. Birdie reveals to Alexandra that her marriage was a settled deal for the Hubbards: Ben wanted Oscar to marry her because of the cotton plantation. Thus she shows that materialistic interests, upward social

mobility replaced love in her marriage. In plays like DC, TAg and TA love will be dealt in the same way: united to materialistic interests, used as a business deal for the sake of rank and economic safety. Birdie's headaches are revealed to Alexandra as a pretence for solitary drinking, a compensation for her failure to love. Answering Birdie, Alexandra exposes the split between appearance and reality:

> Alexandra - "We sit around and try to pretend nothing's happened. We try to pretend we are not here. We make believe we are just by ourselves, someplace else, and it doesn't seem to work." (TLF, p. 183)

Alexandra implies that alienation from reality, aloofness and escapism are no solutions for the present problems. Birdie's nostalgia for a no-longer existent past, a mythical agricultural Paradise is no solution for the present dilemma. It is not an effective way to fight against the Hubbard's savage competitive conceptions and for a more humanitarian society.

This new society is represented by Alexandra, who preserved the cultural views of an older generation (e.g. playing the piano) and is aware of the evils of industrialization in the present.

In the final confrontation scene with Regina she refuses to be a "friendly witness" to their rapacity and chooses to fight their methods and the consequences of their exploitation.

But it seems a highly idealistic goal and may be it is doomed to failure because in Ben's speech we see that the Hubbards are a microcosm of a nation: free enterprise will

transform America in a highly competitive and rapacious nation:

> Ben - "The century's turning. The world is open. There are hundreds of Hubbards sitting in rooms like this throughout the country." (TLF, p. 197).

Ben's statement justifies Regina's drive for money and power, any means are valid to reach her goal. What is actually exploitation, greed, blackmail, in the private life of a family is foretold by Ben as the destiny of a nation.
In Act III, Horace tells Regina about the stealing of the bonds. Regina tries to denounce them but Horace says that he won't stop them as a revenge on her. Regina strikes back at Horace revealing that she has used a falsehood (doctor's prohibition) in order to avoid sexual intercourse and she confesses that she has only married him for materialistic interests:

> Regina - "I was... lonely for all the things I wasn't going to get... I wanted the world... Papa died and left the money to Ben and Oscar... I told you I married you for something. It turned out it was only for this." (TLF, 188).

Here Regina acknowledges her driving desire for materialistic improvement to the detriment of love. This contributes to Horace heart. She doesn't give Horace's medicine bottle and he has a bad heart attack. Regina profits from this reversal of situation blackmailing her brothers into submission. She tells them that Horace wouldn't denounce the theft of the bonds, but as he would die soon she wants seventy-

five percent in exchange for the bonds. She blackmails them quite openly, because she knows that the balance of power has shifted to her hands again:

> Regina - "If I don't get what I want I am going to put all three of you in jail." (TLF, p. 195).

Regina uses three arguments in her blackmail:

1) the bonds are missing and they are with Marshall;

2) the community despised Ben and Oscar because of their business methods;

3) she threatens them saying that she would tell on them to Mr Marshall.

Regina shows to Ben and Oscar that she would obtain support and pity from the community and from Mr Marshall (because of her female attractiveness) and so she would get revenge on them.

Recognizing the extent of her threat, Oscar and Ben give up their foxy games. Ben as good loser, justifies it:

> Ben - "One looses today and wins tomorrow" (TKF, p. 197).

He threatens Regina implying, maybe, some future blackmail with his question:

> Ben - "What is a man in a wheelchair doing on a staircase? I ask myself that." (TLF, p. 198)

It gives an "open end" to the play because it is as if there is a foreshadowing of a reiterative blackmail process: in the future power may shift to Ben's hands if he proves Regina guilty of murder.

Some critics classify Miss Hellman's works as "melodrama" and "well-made" plays in her use of violence, in the shifting and slackening of tensions in the proper place and obeying the strict rules of cause and effect in the plot. The author uses the following pattern: a short exposition, a part dedicated to misunderstanding (e.g. stolen papers, a traditional device of well-made plays) and the solution which involves a confrontation and a swift denouemont.

On these charges Miss Hellman replies:

> "Watching it at reheasals and trying to pretend it wasn't my play,... I used to say to myself that TLF was a melodrama. Melodrama is an interesting word because it has come to have a corrupted modern meaning. It used to be a good word. If you believe as the Greeks did, that man is at the mercy of the gods he might offend and who will punish him for the offense, then you write tragedy. The end is inevitable from the beginning. But if you believe that man can solve his own problems and he's at nobody's mercy, then you will probably write melodrama. That is a bad way to write if your solutions are melodramatic. (The violence of the component parts of a play have nothing to do with the play being a melodrama)." (6)

We would agree with her statement about melodrama and the deterministic conception of TLF justifies violence and makes it more than a contrivance. Thus Horace's murder and blackmail are ways the characters use to seize power, and those motives do not sacrifice the cause-effect relationship in the plot. On the contrary, it seems to me that blackmail, working on the emotional and financial levels is a way the characters can deal with a decadent, stagnant reality (inner

and social) in order to change it in their own benefit (as Regina does). So it is through blackmail that the Hubbards are the survivors in the clash between an agrarian past and a promissing industrial future in the New South.

Concerning the charge of "well-made" plays I would agree with Adler's statement:

> "There is well-madeness in the constant shifting of forces and in the constant building to the climax of Regina's victory, but the tight and complex construction involves no obvious trickery and does not interfere with honest characterization, honest motivation and honest ideas." (7)

And it is Hellman's honest motivation and honest characterization that led her to write in Pentimento:

> "I had meant the audience to recognize some part of themselves in the money-dominated Hubbards, I had not meant people to think of them as villains to whom they had no connection." (8)

Miss Hellman implies that in TLF, form and content are rooted in a Southern historical dilemma: the Southern agrarian economy being replaced by a new order with a materialistic concern. In her moral outlook the author is asking for people's empathy with the Hubbard's greed and the harm it brought to themselves and to the community.

And because of its honest characterization, its honest motivation and its craftsmanship it became, according to Edmund Wilson and Walter Kerr, a classic of the American theater.

In TLF, there are two different kinds of blackmail: emotional blackmail, Regina using sex as a form of power to bring

Horace back home, and financial blackmail submitting her brothers financially and asking for a huge share in the deal. Horace's death is a melodramatic device which makes power shift to Regina's hands thus allowing her financial blackmail on her brothers.

Regina also uses Ruth Benedict's "shame culture" pattern in her financial blackmail: she menaces her brothers to obtain the community's support against them. As Ben and Oscar know that the community despise them because of their business methods and feel guilty about it, they submit willingly to blackmail.

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CHAPTER V

WATCH ON THE RHINE (1941)

In What is Literature?, Jean Paul Sartre says that due to the world depression and the coming of Nazism the writers in the forties were suddenly forced into historical consciousness. They had no choice but to produce a literature of historicity. They were faced with historical questions, which concerned not only their fate but the destiny of mankind. And some of them chose an answer: action by disclosure. That is, the 'engagé' writer would reveal a situation to the reader in order to change it. Sartre's concept of 'engagement' may be applied to Miss Hellman's Watch on the Rhine.

This play won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for 1941 and critics applauded it as her best play. Since then criticism has been revised and it has lost its previous impact because it deals with a specific historical moment: U.S.A. imminent involvement in World War II.

Watch on the Rhine was written in 1941 as a call to warn the American people against the dangers of Fascism and an attempt to show the interdependence of nations in their commitment against that threat.

As Lillian Hellman states in Pentimento it is

> "a play about nice, liberal Americans whose lives would be shaken up by Europeans, by a world the new Fascists had won because the old values had long been dead." (1)

It is set in the late spring of 1940, in the Farrelly's country house, outside Washington D.C.. Fanny Farrelly is a bossy matriarch who lives remembering and glorifying her dead husband, a leading diplomat in his own days. In the first act, she is anxious about the arrival of her daughter, Sara, who has married Kurt Muller, a German engineer, against Fanny's will. Fanny is entertaining a couple of the European nobility, Count and Countess de Brancovis. Count de Brancovis stands as a representative of a decadent European aristocracy and he is a Nazi sympathizer.

When the Mullers arrive there is a "recognition scene" between Kurt and the Count. In the meantime, the Farrellys are informed that Kurt has been engaged for many years in the underground fight against Nazism. He has come to America in order to take $ 23.000 in cash to help the Anti-Nazi movement and to leave his family in safety with the Farrellys.

"We consider Kurt's bribe to the Nazi guards as a kind of blackmail which would serve a benevolent end: it would free people from the Nazi prisons thus promoting the welfare of mankind."

In a Jamesian fashion, Americans and Europeans are juxtaposed in order to talk about their differing values, and American 'naiveté' is contrasted with European shrewdness.

In the third act, Fanny Farelly and her son David are deeply shocked when the penniless Roumanian Count blackmails Kurt.

Teck de Brancovis threatens to denounce Kurt to the Nazi Embassy unless Kurt gives him $ 10.000. Kurt refuses but the Farrellys try to gather the money in order to save Kurt. Both, Kurt and Teck, are left alone in the room and Kurt profits from Teck's inattention to knock him down. Kurt carries Teck out of the room and shoots him in the garden. Afterwards Kurt explains that violence is terrible anyway but in this case inevitable. Denouement follows in his farewell to his wife and children and with Fanny's realization that they have been "shaken out of magnolias" (DWR, p. 263).

As Jacob Adler points out in Lillian Hellman, WR is a "dated" play because it is linked to the idea of U.S. involvement in World War II.

But its subject matter - Fascism, commitment to a cause, personal responsibility and the sense that the world's evils cannot be kept from our homes - is still valid. And it is this awareness that will be brought home to the Farrellys in the development of the play.

In the first act, Fanny Farrelly and Anise, a French servant, are gossiping about Teck de Brancovis's debts. This information is important as a foreshadowing of the Count's later blackmailing. It serves as well to introduce a Jamesian theme in the play: the marriage of a rich American girl to the decadent European noble and its harsh effects on her destiny. Since the firts act, Teck and Marthe seem to have reached the end of the road in their relationship . In their first

dialogue it is shown that they have no concern for each other, and they show only boredom and tiredness in being together. It is through Martha's words that Teck is presented as a gambler and a Nazi-sympathizer. He questions her about the Müller's arrival and is puzzled by the mystery that surrounds Kurt's past. On the other hand, Teck insinuates that there is a love affair between David Farrelly and his wife and warns her not to cherish any plans towards David because he would spoil them. In contrast to the coldness and mutual mistrust of the Brancovis couple, Kurt Müller feels concern and warmth towards his children and wife. His children love and admire Kurt and they demonstrate it to their grandmother:

> Bodo: "Did Mama write that Papa was a great hero? He was brave, he was calm"... (WR, p. 264)

Bodo, a boy of nine shows Fanny that love, solidarity and comradeship are more important than wealth or social status. Fanny comments that her grandchildren are very intelligent and very mature children for their age.

They talk about getting a cheaper train-ticket and their clothes denote their economic shortcomings. Inquiring about his past, Fanny comes to know Kurt's underground activities.

> "It sounds so big: it is so small. I am an Anti-Fascist. And that doesn't pay well." (WR, p. 222).

He tells Fanny about the origins of his commitment to the Anti-Fascist movement.

> "On that day, I see twenty-seven men murdered in a Nazi street fight. I cannot stand by now and watch." (WR, p. 223)

Kurt reveals to Fanny that he felt personally responsible for

these events, and that he had to take sides. In doing so he stands as the Sartrean "engaged" hero: he has chosen to take hold of the historical moment in order to change it. It is through the revelation of his inner convictions and by acting accordingly that Kurt will gain the Farrelly's respect and admiration.

By the end of the first act, when the Müllers retire Teck appears and inspects Kurt's luggage. He is puzzled by a locked briefcase and by Kurt's broken hands and the scars on his face. Teck gives Joseph supposed orders from Fanny to take the luggage upstairs. In his dialogue with Marthe, Teck is shown as an opportunist, who is eager to trade information with the Nazis not out of political convictions but because he wants money.

In the second act, Teck asks information about Kurt's political commitment and is told that he has none. Sara replies that unless you have true convictions and decide to act on them it is nonsense discussing them. Kurt goes to the piano and sings the song that gives the play its name. It is a marching song which has been modified and sung by the German soldiers allied to the Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War and it expresses determination to fight and overthrow Fascism.

Insinuating that he knows about Kurt's activities, Teck asks Bodo if his father is an expert electrician. Kurt replies sharply:

> - "Count de Brancovis. Make your question to me, please. Not to my children." (WR, p. 239)

Teck and Kurt's interchange heightens the tension and prepares

the audience for the blackmail scene. In the meantime Kurt receives a long-distance call, and when he comes back, Teck says that he knew beforehand the information Kurt has just got. In order to start his blackmail process, Teck informs him that one of the leaders of the anti-Nazi movement has been caught in Germany and that Gotter (Kurt's fictitious name), is also sought by the police.

It is remarkable that the author's favourite 'leit motif', a hidden secret in someone's past, is always a source for blackmail. On the other hand, the blackmailer is always aiming at a selfish, immediate purpose and using financial rewards as a bribe.

> Teck... "They could not find a man called Gotter.
> I shall be a lonely man without Marthe.
> I am also a very poor one. I should like to
> have ten thousand dollars before I go."
> (WR, p. 245)

Teck is cynical about the loss of his wife and asks money as a compensation for their separation, thus demonstrating that he has no other motives but financial aims for his blackmail. And he has chosen the right moment to make his threat: Kurt is thrown emotionally off-balance by the news of his friend's arrest and he knows that he has little chance to escape now. In spite of his courage, Kurt is scared: his hands are shaking.

As critics point out, in this play, Miss Hellman has created more "rounded" characters: Kurt is more complex than the characters in the previous plays. As Miss Hellman states he been modelled on Julia, her friend who died fighting Fascism in Europe. Kurt has depth of feeling that is shown in his speech:

> Kurt: "I understand that you are not a man of fears. That is stange to me because I am a man who has so many fears." (WR, p. 246)

He talks about his fears in spite of being an acknowledged hero. Although he is afraid, he achieves grandeur for having the courage to say no to Teck's blackmail, thus demonstrating its efficiency when it tries to subvert true beliefs. Kurt says that the twenty-three thousand dollars have been gathered "from the pennies of the poor who do not like Fascism" (WR, p. 247) and it was intended to bribe the Nazi guards and liberate their prisoners. Kurt will not back down though he is threatened with Teck's blackmail:

> "This money is going home with me. It was not given to me to save my life, and I shall not so use it... It goes back with me. And if it does not get back it is because I will not get back." (WR, p. 255)

Here there is a contrast between the narrowness of Teck's objectives and the validity of Kurt's commitment. "Here we can see that Krt's intended bribe end. Like Lavinia's blackmail it is linked to a good cause: to save people from the Nazi prisons. It is opposed to the Count's blackmail which has only an immediate and selfish purpose." Kurt gains the audience's admiration because of his solidarity with other people and with their common cause. As critics have pointed out, he stands for what Addie and Alexandra have represented in TLF: personal responsibility to act when there is unjustice.

But the Farrellys are eager to arrange the money in order to get Teck out of Kurt's way. Kurt pretends to assent to the blackmail but he knows that it is trap prepared by Teck.

> "I think you want a visa almost as much as you want money. Therefore I conclude you will try for the money here and the visa from von Seitz." (WR, p. 257).

Blackmail would work both ways: Teck blackmails Kurt for the

money and later on he would blackmail Von Seitz for a visa to Europe. Knowing beforehand Teck's intentions, Kurt attacks him and knocks him unconscious. Kurt carries Teck to the garden and kills him. Many critics have argued that 'violent deaths' are recurrent melodramatic motifs in Miss Hellman's plays. But here violence is not gratuitous, it is not motivated by "stolen papers" but springs from the character's commitment to a cause.

Or as Sartre points out:

> "if it is true that recourse to violence against violence risks perpetuating it, it is also truethat it is the only means of bringing an end to it."

Sartre approves violence only if it promotes the betterment of the world and similarly Hellman appears to give a moral sanction to Kurt's murder. Teck de Brancovis is able to blackmail because he acts in "bad faith". He dissimulates the necessity of commitment to a just cause alleging involvement in personal affairs and lack of money to justify his alienation from the historical process. Thus, he is able to explore Kurt's secret (commitment to the Anti-Nazi fight) and blackmail him financially. But contrasting to other plays (TAg, APF, TLF) financial blackmail is not successful here because in the other plays, greed and rapacity involved both blackmailer and blackmailed, and in WR true beliefs are questioned. Kurt is immune to blackmail because he is an idealist willing to fight oppression and to die for a cause he believes in.

Kurt explains to the Farrellys and to his children that he couldn't avoid violence without risking the lives of his

fellows:

> "The world is out of shape we said, when there are hungry men. And until it gets in shape, men will steal and lie, and - and kill. But for whatever reason it is done, and whoever does it - you understand me - it is all bad." (WR, p. 250)

Kurt here shows that his ethical principle clash with his sense of duty towards others. He is also divided between duty and love and he has already made his stoic choice, the choice that is impervious to blackmail, sacrificing his private life for the betterment of the world.

When David asks him about his family responsibilities in order to discourage his return to Europe Kurt replies:

> - "Each could have his own reason. Some have bullet holes, some have fear of the camp... Each could find a reason. And many find it. My children are not the only children in the world, even to me." (WR, p. 250)

Kurt shows that he has not chosen the easiest path in his commitment and he has assumed the logical consequences of his beliefs.

On the other hand, Fanny Farrelly is a character who changes her political beliefs due to Kurt's example. Fanny, who first despised Kurt, comes to feel admiration and commitment to his cause. When Kurt is blackmailed by the Count Fanny expresses naive surprise:

> "It's all very strange to me. I thought things were so well run that bribery and..." (WR, p. 257)

Gradually Fanny becomes conscious of the dangers of Fascism and consequently her behavior changes: she gives money to the Anti-

Nazi fight and agrees to stand behind Kurt in his escape, Kurt states that by hiding his escape they are accomplices in his murder. Commitment to the murder is somehow a support to his cause.

By the end of the play, Fanny admits that they have been "shaken out of magnolias" (WR, p. 264) and that having learnt her lesson she was prepared to face trouble.

Growing aware of the historical moment, the Farrellys were moved to take sides and helped Kurt in his mission against a world-wide threat.

As critics have pointed out, in WR, the author sets a microcosm of manners against the macrocosm of world events. She contrasts European and American characters. Teck de Brancovis is seen as a dishonest opportunist, moved by personal rather than by political interests, and we witness the disruption of his family life. On the other hand, the Müllers are honest people, moved by political conviction and displaying love and warmth in their family life.

And the Farrellys are portrayed as complacent and liberal Americans who became aware of their responsibility to take sides in the world events. The play is set in a broader historical context than other dramas. It is more explicity Rhetorical than other plays, too, in its insistence on the cooperation of nations to fight the common threat of Fascism.

In WR, Miss Hellman seems to illustrate Sartre's definition of the writer's function:

> "We must historicize the reader's good will, that is, by the formal agency of our work, we must, if possible, provoke his intention of treating men, in

> every case as an absolute end and by the subject of our writing, direct his intention upon his neighbors, that is, upon the opressed of the world."

Hellman proves that she is not about to turn her back on her age, but that she is in Sartre's terms, engagé. She does not pretend to be aesthetically above her time because she has discovered that one only transcends time by taking hold of the historical moment in order to change it.

It is also interesting to point out that in this play one may be blackmailed for his virtues (anti-Fascism), which is the opposite pattern of other plays, (TLF, APF), whereas one is blackmailed by private vices in an ostensibly moral society.

Financial blackmail in WR also obeys to the general pattern of Hellman's plays: materialistic values prevail over ideals and the blackmailer's aim is to control the situation and get financial rewards through it. In the same way of Brancovis's blackmail we have Ben's blackmail in APF or Regina's financial blackmail in TLF.

Like the Hubbards, Teck de Brancovis uses Kurt's hidden secret (Anti-Nazi fight) to control the situation and get financial profits with it.

But unlike Marcus Hubbard, Kurt doesn't revolve about an inner sense of guilt and social shame before the community, because Kurt's secret was to believe and fight for a good cause. "We would like to point out also that Kurt's bribe, like Lavinia's blackmail, has an humanitarian purpose. It differs from the general pattern of blackmail in other plays because is isn't concerned with selfish matters but with mankind welfare (to free people from the Nazi prisons)".

So this play points a different direction: it shows that one who is willing to sacrifice his personal interests for an ideal is immune to blackmail. Kurt, like Whalen in DC, Sam in TSW or Alexandra in TLF, is an idealist who fights oppression and with their examples stimulate others towards commitment.

It also portrays Miss Hellman's engagement because she shows that individuals of good will can fight for the betterment of the world without being hampered by threats to their personal lives or by blackmail.

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CHAPTER VI

THE SEARCHING WIND (1944)

In TSW Lillian Hellman confronts again the public and the private life.

Jacob Adler points out that in this play

> "Miss Hellman shows that the failures in the main characters' private lives are parallel to, and explanatory of, their failures in the greater world of diplomacy. When the triangle of characters sits down with others to talk out and understand better the tangle of their lives, the parallels are underlined".

In WR when nice liberal Americans are confronted with historical events they are "shaken out of the magnolias". In TSW those liberal upper class Americans are faced with the same questions in Europe but they are unwilling to take notice of them.

Sartre's statement of the problems of the writer in 1947 corroborates the thesis of this play:

> "We had to people our books with minds that were half lucid and half overcast... and who could never decide from within whether the changes of their characters came from their own efforts, from their own faults, or from the course of the universe." (2)

Characters, in this play, are always unwilling to take sides either in public or private life. Their inaction takes the form of appeasement and compromise in love and war.

TSW is divided in two acts, each one having three scenes. Three scenes take place in the present - 1944. Three scenes take place in the past - 1922, 1923, 1938. Flash-back scenes are concerned with political and personal conflicts in the lives of the characters, showing the consequences of their past inaction in the present. The main characters form a love triangle. Alex Hazen, a diplomat, his wealthy wife, Emily Hazen and Cassie Bowman, Emily's ex-best friend and rival.

As minor characters we have Moses Taney, Emily's father, a retired liberal newspaperman and his grandson Sam, who has just come back from the war.

Act One, scene one, is set in the present time: in the Hazen House, Washington D.C., in a Spring evening on 1944. Moses and Sam Hazen are discussing a newspaper article written by Sam's father, Alex Hazen. Sam finally admits that he disagrees with Alex's viewpoints. Hellman points out the clash of generations as well as of ideological conceptions. Sam's viewpoint is that of a soldier, who has experienced war while his father's article is that of a detached observer writing, as Moses states, in a "diplomatic double-talk." (TSW, p. 272).

Emily Hazen comes into the room and she seems nervous,

restless when she announces that Catherine Bowman is coming to dinner. Nobody knows why Emily has invited Cassie since the two women haven't spoken to each other for twenty-one years. Alex Hazen is especially puzzled by Emily's act. When Cassie arrives she remembers the past evoking Rome in 1922, on a "famous, famous day" (TSW, p. 280).

Scene two flashes back to this "famous day" in Rome. It happens to be the day that Mussolini took over the city. Moses Taney and his daughter Emily, Cassie and their servant Sophronia are on holiday in Rome. Alex Hazen is a young diplomat at the American Embassy in Rome. When the gunfire begins outside Alex comes to their hotel in order to take them safely to the Embassy. Moses is very angry with the appeasement policy followed by the Italian king and approved by the American Ambassador.
In the meantime there is a confrontation between Emily and Cassie: the second tells Emily she is engaged to Alex. Emily replies that she likes Alex too and she thought she would marry him someday. Cassie, because of economic need has to come back to a teaching job in the U.S.. Emily decides to stay in Italy for a while.

Scene three returns to the Hazen's house on the evening Cassie's dinner. Dinner has been a trial to the two women and to Alex. It is a searching evening to Sam, who didn't know that his parents had witnessed the rise of Fascism in Italy. Sam wants to be enlightened and they provide him with a historical perspective to see the consequences of past errors in the present. Emily also is in quest: she searches for truth in her private life. Alex tries, unsuccessfully to appease her

and to prevent confrontations.

Act II, scene one, takes the action back to Berlin, in 1923. Alex is waiting for Emily at a restaurant when a Nazi street-fight starts. It is meaningful that the action takes place in hotel rooms or restaurants, while important events take place outside, pointing out to the character's upper class privileges as well as to their aloofness from the historical process. Cassie who is also at the restaurant asks for his political beliefs about the pogrom and he is unable to answer.

In the next scene, there is a flash-back to a Paris hotel, in 1938, some days before the Munich pact. Alex, now the U.S. Ambassador has to send a report to Washington relating his viewpoint on the European situation. But even here he is unwilling to take sides. Like Fanny Farrelly (WR), he is unwilling to believe in villainy even when a German ambassador blackmails him to accept Htler's conditions: if America doesn't interfere when the Germans take the Sudetenland, Hitler will fight the menace of Russia in the European continent. Alex doesn't accept the idea, but after much indecision he writes a report favoring appeasement. At the same time he dates Cassie in order to resume their affair at Fontainebleau.

In the last scene, Cassie admits that she tried to steal Alex from Emily to get revenge on someone who always had better chances than herself.

On the other hand, Sam reveals that his leg is going to be amputated the following day. In his "dark night of the

soul" he has discovered bitter truths about his parents.

He blames his parents and his grandfather for their inaction, for their unwillingness to take sides in order to prevent world disaster. At the same time he offers himself as a scapegoat for the political evils (Nazism, Fascism) his parents didn't avoid. In the first act, scene one, Sam is surprised by Moses' attack on his father's article-when Alex Hazen questions Sam about his article, the second seems to hold the same views displayed by his grandfather. As Sam explains, experiencing the war doesn't match with diplomatic theories about it. We realize the gap between someone who participated actively in an enterprise and another who has just observed it.

Moses also provokes Alex to talk about the "old mummies" who compose the governments in exile in Europe. Alex answers:

> "Moses, we have to work with what there is to work with, and that doesn't mean that you like them or trust them." (TSW, p. 278)

Cassie says that she heard the same words before in Rome, 1922, stating that Alex's conformism wouldn't help the betterment of foreign policy. These words trigger the flash-back to Rome, in October 1922. Here Moses blames himself for his inability to foresee the beginning of Fascism in Italy in order to act against it in his newspaper. Moses also accuses Alex of supporting the temporizing policy of America in this crisis, thus supporting oppression.

In this scene Cassie tries to justify Alex's non-commitment on the grounds that their generation was too ignorant and that they were too self-centered.

Sartre again echoes this paradox of ethics which puzzled the writer in 1947:

> "if I am absorbed in treating a few chosen persons as absolute ends, I shall be led to pass over in silence the injustices of the age, the class struggle etc... and finally to take advantage of oppression in order to do good."(3)

This is the central dillemma of the characters in this play: Alex knew that as an American diplomat he had to be historically situated at that moment, but alleging ignorance he stands by watching and supporting oppression. Acting in "bad faith" is somehow profitable to his career and his lack of commitment is always a support to the 'status quo'.

Once again, the characters fit into Sartre's definition of "bad faith". According to Sartre man is situated historically by a free choice without excuses or aids.

Any who alleges his passions as an excuse for inaction is a man of bad faith. He acts in bad faith because he dissimulates his total freedom of compromise in a lie. In this play characters lie to each other, dissimulating the truth about themselves and denying the necessity of commitment alleging involvement in personal affairs. Thus, the love triangle is easily "blackmailed" by the system, in the sense that they are easily manipulated by the status quo into supporting oppression. Sartre's definition also explains Alex's indecision about the Italian crisis, the pogrom and about the impending world war.

On the other hand, Sam is presented as a young man of "good faith" because he unveils to his elders their disguises and he is the one who is not blackmailed by the system because

he trusts sincere personal relationship and looks forward for the freedom of mankind.

The whole theme of WR and TSW goes back to General Griggs' idea (in TAg) of action and lack of action, of self-indulgent individualism as opposed to altruistic cooperation for the purpose of accomplishing individual and social justice. Alex Hazen, like Crossman, General Griggs (TAg), Mrs Mortar (TCH) Cora (DC), Birdie and Horace (TLF) belong to Miss Hellman's cast of passive watchers. Alex is afraid of taking a firm stand not only in his private but also in his public life.

Moses Hazen also states that men turn to public affairs when they are frustrated in their public lives.

> Moses..."Now you take your father, Alex. He fell in love with the State Department and that's nothing to climb into bed with on a wintry night." (TSW, p. 295)

Moses implies that the establishment provides an escape for frustrated personal lives.

David Sievers points out that it was

> "the tendency of the thirties to view socio-political events with Freudian insight into misplaced motives and substitutions... To ignore powerful undercurrents either in politics or in emotional life, Miss Hellman seems to say, can only bring later devastation upon the society or the individual." (4)

Moses' comments on rationalization in personal lives and consequently escapism into politics seems to support the thesis of an ostrich-like foreign policy.

Alex's behavior corroborates this assertion: he is not self-fulfilled in his marriage and turns to public life as a means to escape and relieve frustration.

In politics as well as in love Alex follows the appeasement policy, which is reiterated in the scenes in Berlin and later on in Paris.

On the other hand, Moses has refused to act against oppression on the grounds of his disillusionment with politics. He gives up his role of informing people and influencing political decisions through the mass media. Like Moses, his biblical counterpart he has searched for a promised land of freedom, but has not led his people there.

In the Paris hotel, Alex receives a German diplomat, Count Von Stammer, who attempts to blackmail him into accepting Hitler's demands.

Alex tries to justify himself:

> "I don't make the policy of my country. No one man makes it, thank God. And I am an unimportant man, sending back an unimportant report." (TSW, p. 310)

Houwever,lacking political insight and without true beliefs to hold on Alex is blackmailed into submission to the 'status quo'. His naiveté leads him to be ideologically manipulated by the Count accepting the rules of the game without even questioning it.

According to Sartre, Alex has acted in "bad faith", because considering himself "an unimportant man, sending back an unimportant report" (FSW, p. 310), he has lied to himself seeking refuge in his insecurity as an excuse to deny his

responsibility towards the imminent declaration of war.

As Sartre explains

> "men avoid anguish by avoiding their responsibility towards other men, thinking that their personal judgement imply only themselves and not only the whole mankind." (5)

And this rationalization is a disguise for his anguish, a typical apology for his 'bad faith', a denial of his personal responsibility to be "engagé".

This is evident in Alex's speech:

> Alex - "What the hell has one man got to do with history? There's something crazy about sitting here and thinking that what I says make any difference. What do I know? What does anybody know?" (TSW, p. 317).

Following the "bad faith" pattern Alex uses his involvement with Cassie to forget his responsibility to be committed: before he finishes his report about the impending war Cassie arrives and they combine to resume their love affair at Fontainebleau. He disguises his anguish remarking that it was a strange day: they are once again worried about themselves when important events take place outside.

Moses Hazen and Fanny Farrelly (WR) belong to a class of people in America - the men of good will - who had cleared the way for leaders like Mussolini and Hitler to take over. Theirs had been a generation of appeasers very different from that of Kurt and his children (WR) in Europe and from that of Sam in the U.S.. Sam, Joshua, Kurt and Sara are Miss Hellman's mouthpieces. They confront life more heroically than the others and they try to change history. Their aggressive environment has

made them stronger than their complacent ancestors.

In the last scene Miss Hellman brings all the confrontations together: the women, the war and the generations. Cassie reveals to Emily that she has stolen Alex from Emily as a form of revenge for her economic shortcomings. Cassie thinks that it happened because they were frivolous people, an alienated generation, "who didn't know what they were doing or why" (TSW, p. 320). Cassie pleads ignorance as a justification for their bad faith.

Another important confrontation is held between Sam and his elders in the last scene. Sam stands for young American idealism against the evils of Fascism.

As Doris Falk points out Sam is one of Miss Hellman's "soldier boys, who has find a purposeful life in the army."(6)

He has been modelled undoubtedly on Dashiel Hammet, who is described in Hellman's memoirs as Hemingway's 'code hero': in the army he has displayed courage, endurance and self-sacrifice.

Sam's final revelation is a punishment for his parents: his wounded leg is going to be amputated the following day. But he offers himself as a scapegoat to prevent more errors from his parents.

He finds fault in his grandfather's excuse "to sit back and watch" (TSW, p. 322) world disasters, as well as his father's unwillingness to take sides in world affairs. He produces the clipping where Emily is connected with jet set Pro-Nazi people and condemns her frivolity. He unveils to his parents the bitter truth: all of them have used disguises and apologized

for non-commitment in the fight for the freedom of mankind.

Some critics find Sam's assumptions overweighted and his final speech too didactic. Alan S. Downer argues that:

> "Miss Heilman was so caught up in contemporary issues that the structure of the drama is faulty and the impact weakened." (7)

It seems to me that although critics classify the structure of the play difficult to follow due to numerous set changes and the use of flash-back, Miss Hellman doesn't use melodramatic devices and she abandons for once her well-made play structure.

On the other hand, the use of flash-back technique seems intrinsically adapted to the contrast of past and present and hence to the blackmail theme.

Because in different historical situations (Italy. Berlin and Paris) characters act in bad faith, denying their personal responsibility in history and thus being easily "blackmailed" by the system (in the sense that they are manipulated by the circumstances) to support Fascism, the pogrom and World War II.

Miss Hellman builds up conflict through parallels in the inner and public lives of the characters rather than by plot contrivances (e.g. stolen papers).

As Lorena Holmin points out, Hellman doesn't portray stereotypes because there are no real villains or heroes representing the forces of good and evil. Even Count Von Stammer, who might be considered a villain is a witty and intelligent diplomat.

Many critics argue that the parallels between the

irresolution of the characters' private lives and their irresolution in dealing with world affairs is overemphasized. Stark Young considered that the play "is far more windy than searching." (8)

Miss Hellman considers it one of her political plays:

> "The nearest thing to a political play was TSW ... But even there I meant only to write about nice, well-born people who, with good intentions, helped to sell out a world." (9)

But the play was acclaimed for its inquiry into the moral roots of the slaughter that was taking place in Europe.

Hellman declared that the title was a quotation from her black housekeeper, Helen:

> "- It takes a searching wind to find the tree you sit in." (10)

While in other plays, like APF and TLF, blackmail is an integrated theme, because it involves a "hidden secret" in the past that one character uses to manipulate another in an atmosphere of social fear or pressure, in this play it becomes diffuse and appears only as a minor form of blackmail: Emily uses her money and social position as a bribe to buy Alex's love.

In other plays this minor form of blackmail is used by characters like Nina Denery (TAg), Carrie Berniers (TA), Andrew Rodman (DC) and Marcus Hubbard (APF). They use money as a bribe to secure someone's affection which implies their lack of self-confidence and their failure to love.

Like in DC, betrayal and lack of love are resolved in compromise: characters stay together in spite of their lack of

love for each other.

In her engaged plays, Miss Hellman portrays characters of 'good faith' like Whalen (DC), Kurt (WR) and Sam, who are not blackmail-able because they are idealists who fight for a good cause. Contrasting to them, we have the Rodmans (DC), the Brancovis (WR) and Moses, Emily, Cassie and Alex (TSW), who don't move beyond bad faith and are easily "blackmailed" by the system. As an example we have Alex, who has been manipulated by Count Von Stammer into accepting compromises, which will promote World War II. And supporting oppression, he maintains his position and his career in the power system.

Thus, he is, in Sartre's assumption, the antithesis of a free man: he acted in bad faith refusing to face commitment and finding as an apology his involvement in personal matters. He has left behind many unfulfilled possibilities for the betterment of mankind.

On the other hand, Sam is described as a youth of good faith because he discovered that to be free he had to fight for the freedom of mankind. Being committed to a cause he fights in the war and endures its consequences.

He fulfills the role of the Sartrean engaged hero and unveils the truth of their bad faith to his elders. By the end of this searching evening they came out bitter but enlightened.

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CHAPTER VII

ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST (1946)

Lillian Hellman declares in Pentimento that she had intended to write a trilogy of plays about the Hubbards and so she stepped one generation back, trying to make clear why she had written TLF as a kind of satire. She points out in an interview to John Phillips and Anne Hollander that apart from identification of the Hubbards with her mother's family, she got tired of the people in TLF, implying that she wouldn't write the third play.

The play brings us back to the Hubbard family dealt with in TLF. It takes place in the year of 1890, twenty years previous to the action of TLF. In a small Alabama town we find the Hubbard clan already competing to seize power. Regina Hubbard, at twenty, is cunning and selfish. She is in love with John Bagtry, Birdie's cousin, a dreamer who wants to fight in chilvaric enterprises.

Regina plans to marry him and go to Chicago. Lavinia, Regina's mother, is driven to the brink of insanity by the

cruelty of her husband, the ruthless businessman Marcus Hubbard.

Birdie Bagtry appeals to Ben Hubbard for a loan of 5.000 dollars on her family plantation Lionnet. Ben cheats her promising 10.000 dollars from his father, assuring her that he will keep 5.000 of it waiting for her. Oscar, Ben's brother, is accused of being a member on a Klu-Klux-Klan group that has attacked and wounded a man.

Oscar wants to marry Laurette, a town prostitute, who visits the Hubbards with the Bagtrys, gets drunk and insults Marcus. She is one of the characters who imply that Marcus has committed a crime that has turned the whole community against him. Marcus is enraged with Ben and Oscar's frauds and orders his two sons out of the house. Marcus cherishes an exaggerated affection by Regina which acquires incestuous overtones throughout the play. Lavinia has developed a religious mania in order to expiate Marcus's sin'. In Act III she reveals to Ben Marcus's crime: she shows the Bible which contains the written evidence of Marcus's salt-running expedition which led inadvertently to the slaughter of young Southern soldiers by the Union troops. Ben uses this information against his father blackmailing Marcus financially and gaining the control over the Hubbard's fortune. Lavinia obtains her freedom to go away and found her mission-school.

Regina and Oscar are abandoned by their lovers. Ben orders Regina to marry Horace Giddens and Oscar to marry Birdie Bagtry. By the end of the play Oscar and Regina are

allied to Ben, the new leader of the Hubbard chan.

The title of this play is a comment on the environment (post-civil War South) which historically seen,will be beneficient to the breeding of the "little foxes". As the playwright comments, all her plays portrayed her vision of contemporary society:

> "I don't like labels and isms... You write as you write in your time, as you see the world." (1)

Although critics diverge in their interpretation of the title of the play, I would argue that it is directly related to TLF in its deterministic conception: the environment is ready to breed the "little foxes" who will learn the lesson from their elders, in "another part of the forest", knowing how to cheat, swindle and blackmail the others and corrupting the Old South with capitalistic, commercial values.

In APF we have different types of blackmail: Regina's emotional blackmail of her father, Marcus Hubbard and towards her lover John Bagtry, (she attempts to use money as a substitute for love); Ben's financial blackmail of his father in order to seize power and Lavinia's blackmail of Marcus Hubbard to buy her freedom. For many years Marcus had blackmailed Lavinia into submission threatening to put her in an asylum because, as he says, she was mentally insane.

As Sievers points out in his book, Freud on Broadway:

> ..."Miss Hellman digs deeper into the background of her sadistic, predatory Southern family and he shows the psychodynamics motivating the Hubbards." (2).

In this play there is a love triangle which follows the Electra

pattern: Lavinia, Marcus and their daughter Regina. And this triangle is reversed in Regina's love affair with John Bagtry, a representative of the Southern Cavalier myth, in which Marcus's jealousy plays a part.

In the first act Oscar dismisses Lavinia's morning greeting while he treats Regina affectionately. Regina manipulates cunningly his incestuous relationship for her: she submits Marcus to her will and uses him to buy expensive clothes from Chicago. Being affectionate towards Marcus she expects to obtain his consent and money to marry John Bagtry:

> Regina - "Come on, darling. Let's take our lunch and go on a picnic, just you and me. We haven't done that in a long time.
>
> Marcus - No, not for a long time. (To Ben). Something amuses you?
>
> Ben - Yes, you and Regina." (APF, 340)

Regina blackmails Marcus emotionally and manipulates his incestuous feelings for her in order to reach her ends. Ben is aware and ironical about this "strange" attachment between father and daughter.

There are other plays by Miss Hellman which presents incestuous overtones such as TAg and TA. Characters like Carrie Berniers (TA) or Mrs Ellis (TAg) use their incestuous feelings and their money to secure someone's affection. Their use of money as a bribe is a minor form of blackmail and implies their failure to love.

Regina is self-conscious about her power to manipulate Marcus according her desires:

> "You should have figured out long ago that Papa's going to do just whatever you tell him not to do

unless I tell him to do it." (APF, p. 341)

Despite her power to use her female attractiveness to blackmail Marcus emotionally, she is warned by Ben about Marcus's jealousy

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

Marcus's behavior towards his sons and wife is the reversal of his treatment of Regina. He is very hard on his sons, Ben and Oscar and on his wife Lavinia. There is no communication between the married couple. Marcus doesn't even listen to Lavinia's plea for a birthday present: to go away and build up a school for Negroes at Altaloosa.

In the same way, Marcus despises and humiliates his sons. When Colonel Isham arrives to tell Marcus that Oscar, his younger son, was with a Klu-Klux-Klan group who had beaten a man Marcus buys the Colonel's silence with a large bribe. At the same time Marcus humiliates Oscar in front of everybody. Later on Marcus says to Oscar that the money he has paid to Col. Isham is going to be taken out of Oscar's salary. That is a subtle kind of blackmail: he uses money to exercise power over his sons, submitting them to his will and displaying no respect for their opinions.

Sievers points out that there is a hostility in Oscar and Ben towards Marcus:

> "Oscar and Ben found it necessary in the other play to release their Oedipally engendered hostility on whomever they could find as substitutes for their

autocrat fathers." (3)

As a consequence, we will see in TLF, the destructive relationship between Birdie and Oscar, modelled on his father's behavior towards Lavinia. It is still manifested on Ben's attempts to seize money and consequently power as a revenge on his autocratic father.

Another way for Ben to be revenged on Marcus, is Ben's revelation of Regina's unfaithfulness towards the end of the play:

> Ben - "You're a scandal in this town. Papa's the only person didn't know you've been sleeping with the warrior"... (APF, p. 400)

Marcus, who has been financially blackmailed by Ben, is deeply hurt by the revelation of Regina's treason. Thus he recognizes his failure in blackmailing Regina emotionally, bribing her with money to buy her love. On the other hand, Regina behaves in the same way towards her lover. She wants to blackmail John Bagtry with money so that forgetting his "Cavalier" ideology he can get married to her.

But Regina is disappointed when Bagtry refuses her proposal to get married and elope to Chicago. Once more emotional and financial blackmail fails as an attempt to buy love.

> Regina - "I'm going to Chicago, and a month later you're coming and we'll get married."
>
> John - (gently)..."Now, you're joking. Don't talk silly honey." (APF, p. 368)

Regina has to face her failure to buy Bagtry's love when at the end, he abandons her to fight for his ideal in Brazil.

Nevertheless, she tries to convince Marcus not to make a loan on Lionnet, so that Bagtry cannot go abroad. By the end Ben makes the loan on Lionnet, dismantling her plans of future happiness.

When Ben unveils to Marcus her secret love-affair, Regina still tries to get Marcus emotionally involved in order to achieve her purpose:

> Regina - "There'll always be you and me - (Puts her hand on his shoulder). You must have known I'd marry someday, Papa... you and I'll make that trip Greece, just the two of us." (APF, p. 372)

Getting Marcus involved, she suggests, hypocritically, the continuation of a sick father - daughter relationship after her marriage. By the end of the play both are defeated and emotionally embittered because their methods didn't work. They have failed to blackmail their beloved with money and their love quest is unfulfilled.

On the other hand, Oscar reiterates that he is "deeply and sincerely" (APF, p. 343) in love with Laurette, a town prostitute. Oscar wants to borrow money from Marcus to elope with Laurette, in a situation parallel to Regina and Bagtry's. But Ben has different plans for both of them. He wants to marry Regina to a prosperous banker, Horace Giddens, and Oscar to Birdie Bagtry, a ruined aristocrat farmer. Ben blackmails Oscar according to his will: he would lend Oscar money if Oscar escorts Miss Birdie home.

> Ben... "I want you to be nice to this girl. Flatter her, talk nice... Now go on. Be charming. Five-hundred dollars' charming." (APF, p. 348)

Ben, unlike Regina, Oscar and Marcus, is not sidetracked by sex and his sole aim is power. That is why he can manipulate people to fit into his mercenary plans. He wants Oscar to marry Birdie in order to acquire Lionnet, a cotton farm, increasing their capital and obtaining respectability from the community. Ben negotiates a loan on Lionnet deceiving Birdie and Marcus by having Birdie sign a note twice the value of what she is going to receive.

During the music evening, Regina sees the danger that this loan presents to her relationship with Bagtry. Thus, she unmasks Ben's dirty trick to Marcus avoiding the negotiation for the time being. In this evening party both lovers, Laurette Sincee and John Bagtry, are present. Though Marcus and Ben try to ridicule Laurette and Bagtry, the first as a representative of a discriminated - against lower class and the latter representing a decadent Southern aristocracy, Bagtry and Laurette stood up to them criticizing Marcus harshly. Bagtry questions Marcus's sense of honour and Laurette says that the origins of Marcus's fortune is immoral:

> "Right in the middle of the war, men dying for you and you making their kinfolk give you all their goods and money - and I heard how they suspected you of worse, and you only just got out of a hanging rope." (APF, p. 348)

Criticizing Marcus's exploitation of minorities is a foreshadowing of Marcus's "hidden secret in the past" which heightens suspense and suggests that Marcus got rich by illicit means.

Marcus, in his talk to John Bagtry, stands up as a representative of a new Southern order, which somehow managed

to unite cultural accomplishment (his enterest in Greek culture, patronizing classic music) with his materialistic enterprises (getting rich as a merchant supplier, exploiting minorities etc.). In their dialogue we have the clash between different worlds, the Old and the New South:

> Marcus - "Why don't you choose the other side? Every man needs to win once in his life."
>
> John - "I don't like that way of saying it. I don't fight for slavery, I fight for a way of life." (APF, p. 375).

In his pragmatic manner Marcus advises John to believe in the American myth of success: try to conquer your place under the sun, fighting on the side which has better chances to win. John, obstinately answers that he is fighting for a gentlemanlike way of living, for his agrarian ideology. In their speech there is a clash between Marcus's capitalist mind and Bagtry's Cavalier ideal. Bagtry sacrifices his love for the sake of honour and destroys Regina's hopes for the future. Later on (in TLF) she will be revenged destroying Horace's life.

Though Marcus is criticized by different scholars for his mercenary relationship towards his family, blackmailing Regina's allegiance and his son's submission to his will with money, his behavior is based, as Winifred Dusenbury points out, in the best tradition of American individualism.

Rooted in this tradition Hellman shows Ben taking after his father when he tries to make a profit from Birdie's loan. And he justifies his individualism and self-interest to Marcus:

> "I want something for myself. I shouldn't think you

were the man to blame me for that." (APF, p. 376).

Ben's individualism and cuning busines methods are qualities admired by Marcus, himself a self-made man.

As Winifred Dusenbury has pointed out American families from the beginning have risen and fallen according to their ability to compete. Dusenbury quotes D. W. Brogan in her explanation:

> "A family or an individual had to have what it took to survive - and it took adaptability, toughness, perhaps a not too sensitive moral or social outlook." (4)

And it is in this Oedipal father-son competitive game that Ben takes over power, using blackmail to achieve his ends. It's Ben's lack of moral or social outlook that makes him the winner in this deterministic match. After his quarrel with Marcus about Birdie's loan, Ben decides to leave his house. But Lavinia's knowledge of a hidden secret in Marcus's life and its revelation to Ben promotes a reversal of situation. Lavinia tells Ben about the "night of the massacre": Marcus, who sold badly needed salt to the Union camps at extortionary prices, has unintentionally led the Yankee troops to the camp of the young Confederates, promoting a massacre. Running away from a lynch-mob Marcus sought refuge in the well-house roof. Later on he bribed a Southern officer to give him false passes as an alibi to be presented downtown.

Lavinia and Coralee had witnessed the episode and had written it on the Bible swearing upon it. Lavinia, as Penniman has pointed out is a "redeemer" (APF, 354) of the Hubbards, because in the cause of justice she blackmails Marcus into

submission. As Doris V. Falk points out:

> "Lavinia's particular 'insanity' is supposed to be religious; religion put her in Marcus's power to have her declared insane. Now the Bible - her religion - has put him in Lavinia's power." (5)

It is ironical that the Bible here is used as the instrument of blackmail: it contains the written evidence of Marcus's guilt. Although Marcus and Ben try to seize it Lavinia witholds it as a magic object.

> Lavinia - "Oh, I wouldn't like to give it up. This Bible's been in my Papa's family for a long time. I always keep it next to me, you all know that. But when I die, I'll leave it to you all." (APF, p. 389).

Lavinia's blackmail buys her freedom to build up a Negro school at Altaloosa and at the same time it is a nemesis for a crime. It is nicely ironical that the source of Marcus's fortune brings about his financial defeat.

Taking advantage of Lavinia's revelation Ben, selfishly, blackmails Marcus financially.

> Ben - "Are you ready now? To write a piece of paper, saying you sell me the store for a dollar." (APF, p. 393).

Ben blackmails Marcus financially forcing him to sell the family's business for a dollar in order to escape the lynch mob. His blackmail is reinforced by the patriotism of the defeated Southerners: the society of Colonel Isham is eager to have their revenge on the Hubbards.

> "You have good reason to know there's not a man in this county wouldn't like to swing up anybody

called Hubbard" (APF, p. 386).

Knowing that he would have community support, Ben knows how effectively this kind of blackmail works on his father's consciousness.

Some critics point out that "APF" was a commonplace stage direction, in the Renaissance, including in Shakespeare's plays.

According to Manfried Triesch, the title derives from Shakespeare's stage directions, for Act II, scene IV of Titus Andronicus: this critic sees striking parallels between the characters of the two plays.

> "Both women have been violated, one in a physical sense, the other in a more subtle, psychological way; and both are the agents of revenge. Shakespeare's Lavinia indirectly manages to tell her secret, though her hands have been cut off and her tongue has been torn out. Miss Hellman's Lavinia too manages to tell her secret, though Marcus has tried to keep her quiet. His means are as subtle as they are effective:... he has declared her insane and threatens to put her into an asylum if she will not submit to his will." (6)

Doris V Falk disagrees with Triesch's hypothesis, saying that there is no real evidence, but the names Lavinia and Marcus specifically referring to Titus Andronicus. I would argue that there may be a parody of Shakesperean historical outlook: the fight for power presented as the writer's aim or historical detachement in order to have a critical viewpoint on her own times. For instance, satire and parody are suggested in Marcus's behavior as a Renaissance Maecenas in his concern for the Greek culture, reading Aristotle and patronizing music for "low brow"

artists just for the sake of flattery. But it seems to me it is intended much more as a satire on the "Southern Greek" culture allied to the Southern economic Renaissance (the rise of the bourgeoísie) than an allusion to Shakespeare's plays. Marcus is a kind of transitional figure: half "Cavalier" and half 'modern'.

Ben's ruthlessness towards Marcus is explained not only in terms of his Oedipal hostility towards his father but as a consequence of the mercenary environment he has been brought up in. It stimulates individual competition to seize money and consequently power over the members of the Hubbard clan.

It follows the deterministic pattern of capitalist society whose "leit-motif" is the "survival of the fittest".

Marcus Hubbard has adopted the self-made man mystique: he questions the tone of moral superiority in Birdie and John Bagtry's speech unveiling the pattern of aristocratic decadence. John Bagtry has no place in the Post-Civil War South with his belief in the "Cavalier myth" while Ben and Oscar are in their element. But Ben questions Marcus's aspirations towards aristocracy in his speech:

> Ben... "You were smart in your day and figured out what fools you lived among. But ever since the war you been too busy getting cultured, or getting Southerner. A few more years and you'd have been just like the rest of them." (APF, p. 402).

In his attempt towards a gentleman way of living, patronizing music and reading the Greeks, Marcus tried to be equated to the Southern aristocracy. And "getting Southerner", as Ben states, promotes Marcus' downfall.

Marcus's incestuous feelings and his eagerness for culture led him to be diverted from the utilitarian path, promoting his economic and moral defeat.

I would agree with Dusenbury's statement:

> "Miss Hellman's plays are not thesis plays, but the fact that she was interested enough in her characters to study their past and seek out the sociological and moral causes of their rapaciousness proves that she did not consider them mere figures in melodrama." (7)

In APF Miss Hellman unites the psychological factor with sociological insight in order to give the audience a historical vision of the origins of industrialization in the South, revealing the clash it brought to an agrarian society. Relationships between the characters change to a mercenary basis and the use of blackmail in all its levels (emotional and financial) fits in the pattern of a deterministic outlook on reality.

This play follows Ruth Benedict's "shame culture" pattern: the individual is guilty of a hidden secret before the community and thus is easily blackmailed because the blackmailer (Lavinia) could advocate the community's support to punish him. Lavinia's code of honour doesn't match with Marcus's materialistic principles and thus she is led to blackmail him in order to found a Negro school at Altaloosa to expiate the Hubbard's guilt. Here blackmail is used as a benevolent end. But Ben who adopts Northern standards takes advantage from this situation to blackmail Marcus financially to substitute him as the leader of the clan.

We also notice that the blackmail-secret is a

melodramatic device which reverses the action: the power shifts from Marcus's to Lavinia's hands and then to Ben.

It ssems to us that blackmail presupposes a kind of deterministic universe whose cause-effect proceed relentlessly and one can never escape from the consequences of the past. In the Calvinist manner "the sins of the fathers' are 'visited' on the son and the sons own sins are 'visited' on himself later in life.

Ben, in short, uses the same mercenary game that his father did: he uses the likeness to defeat his prototype. Later on (in TLF) the Hubbards' predacity will turn one against the others, and in this 'survival of the fittest' contest Ben will compete with the others and will be defeated, through financial blackmail, by Regina.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE AUTUMN GARDEN (1951)

The Autumn Garden was staged in 1951. In between TAg and TA (1960), there happened Mac Carthy and the HUAC Committee, Hammet's jail sentence and his illness. In 1954 Miss Hellman edited the collection of Chekhov's letters. Only in 1960 did she write her last original play Toys in the Attic.

Critics classify Miss Hellman's two last plays as Chekhovian and make distinctions between her change from Ibsen's discipleship to a Chekhovian insight. She seems to go away from her social-concerned themes to a more fatalistic point of view in her last two plays. As John Mason Brown points out, the change is compared to an "old guard Republican who becomes a New Dealer (or vice-versa)". Mason Brown is ambiguous as to whether Miss Hellman's turn from Ibsen to Chekhov is a turn towards or away from conservativism. But it seems to me that her last two plays leads her away from the road to commitment.

Allan Lewis in "Survivors of the Depression" explains such a change in terms of the historical context. Lewis shows that while in the thirties playwrights were socially conscious (and conscious in a left-leaning way too), they became less so in the following decades.

World War II restored the U.S. economy to full production and

> "plays dealing with economic dislocation gave way, in a society of affluence, to dramas of personal dislocation. The future of the nation became less important than the preservation of the self."(2)

It will in part explain Miss Hellman's transition from "engagé" plays to her last two individualistic, psychological, soul-searching dramas. It also leads us to question the ideological depth of the activist movement in the thirties. Lewis classifies Miss Hellman as the "most resilient" (3) of the survivors of the Depression. But this reversal of the national mood cannot only be attributed to Mac Carthy and the HUAC Committee and consequently to a necessity for self-censorship felt by the writer. We must also consider the entire ideological change brought about by the U.S. economic boom. On the other hand this period best illustrates Miss Hellman's craftsmanship and maturity as an artist.

The title, The Autumn Garden, is symbolic because it emphasizes the influence of weather and season on people. It is placed at the end of summer at the Tuckerman guest house. Like Williams, Miss Hellman uses heat as a metaphor for the oppressive condition of the Southerner. The end of summer means the end of growth for both natures. It is linked to maturity as well as to a decaying mode of living in the Deep South.

In DC Julie says:

> "I don't like autumn anymore. The river is full of leaves and it is too cold to walk very far." (DC, p. 81, 82).

This speech expresses the symbolism that is central in TAg. Characters notice in the autumn of their lives that they hadn't fulfilled all their possibilities. Their wasting of time, their lack of self-awareness made them victims of circumstances, and less valuable as human beings.

In the first act six characters are assembled in the living-room of a summer guest-house. Crossman is presented as "tired and worn-looking" (TAg, p. 465), a lonely character who avoids communication with the others. Rose Griggs is presented as "ex pretty" chattering lady.

Mrs Mary Ellis, belongs to the cast of Hellman's matriarchs an old lady who controls the purse and the action of Carrie and Frederick Ellis. Frederick Ellis, her grandson is presented as an intellectual, over-dependent on his mother and very immature.

Unlike Mrs Farrelly in WR, Mrs Ellis doesn't revere her dead husband's memory. Her witticism brings comic relief to the play. Carrie is presented as a rich, over-possessive mother who relies on her financial power to get Fred's submission.

Mr Griggs, an old general, belongs to Miss Hellman's gallery of soldiers. Unlike Sam in TSW he is disillusioned about patriotism and careless about the fate of the nation. All the characters are aristocratic friends of Constance Tuckerman, who lives on a once luxurious but now decadent and shabby house. Constance's summer guest house becomes a metaphor for the Southerner and the human condition too. It is a symbol of the

character's retreat from reality: each summer they come back to play with memory and the illusions of their youth.

Constance is helped by Sophie, her French niece, whom she has once rescued from poverty. She plays the "outsider" role and is the one who sees through the characters.

In the first act, Constance is anxiously expecting the Denerys. Nick Denery was Constance's former fiancée, who has met his rich wife on a trip abroad and abandoned Constance. It is a similar pattern to TSW, where the Hazens play with memory, begetting illusions about themselves and the past, till they are awake to a bitter reality.

By the end of the first act the Denerys arrive and the main conflicts are established: the Griggses' marital problems, Frederick vs Carrie Ellis, Nina vs Nick Denery. Nick is presented as a vain, second-rate painter, living at his wife's expense. Nevertheless, he is portrayed as a "deus-ex-machina" whose meddling in the lives of others leads them to self-confrontation. In the Second Act, Nick lies to Constance telling her that he has only loved her in order to make her portrait as as sad, poverty-stricken old woman. On the other hand, he encourages Constance to fantasize about Crossman's love for her. Crossman is Constance's friend and a regular guest at her boarding-house. Nick warns Carrie Ellis about Fred' relationship with Payon, suggesting his homosexual tendencies to Carrie. Fred's mother threatens to withhold his allowance and consequently Frederick is left heartbroken by his friend.

Sophie Tuckerman is engaged to Frederick for economic

safety and loneliness. Like Regina Hubbard in TLF she is shrewd and has a loveless engagement with a niece, weak and rich man.

On the other hand Nick becomes Rose Griggs' advisor about her impending divorce. He flirts with her in exchange for a $ 5.000 commission to paint the portrait of her rich niece.

The climax is brought about in the play when Nick, completely drunk, passes out in Sophie's couch.

Nina, Nick's wife, whose sadomasochist feelings make her love such a child-man sends Nick away to quiet the community "scandal-mongering".

Sophie, as a dignified exit, asks $ 5.000 as "blackmail money" (TAg, p. 537) to depart to Europe and breaks her engagement with Frederick.

Denouement follows in the reconciliation of Carrie and Frederick, Rose and Mr Griggs and the Denerys. Like in TA characters decide to stay together because of their inability to act and change their lives. But they are aware that they have been the playthings of circumstances without a firm grasp of their lives. They concluded that they have wasted their time and now it is too late to grow up.

In the autumn of their lives they stand for what Miss Hellman has described in her memoirs:

> "I left too much of me unfinished because I wasted too much time." (4)

Carrie Tuckerman stands for the Southern woman ideal. She is a twentieth-century version of Birdie, described as a paragon

of virtues and illusions. She still cultivates romantic dreams of her youth concerning her love affair with Nick Denery.

As Sophie points out:

> "It always happens that way with ladies. For them it is once and not again. It is their good breeding that makes it so." (TAg, p. 480)

So Constance stands for the Southern woman mystique of a refined delicate lady capable of self-sacrifice and fidelity to a past love.
Like Birdie she shows that her longings for her youth couldn't adapt to a new reality: she escapes from the present time through her illusions.
Thus her tendency towards unreality, towards the romantic revival of the past is reflected in the house she inhabits, which is furnished exactly as it was in the past.

On the other hand, Nick Denery plays the role of a corrupted "Southern Cavalier". He shares the Southern vision of women when he says that Constance has sacrificed her life for her brother, which is similar to Birdie's sacrifices for John Bagtry, or Carrie and Anna's self-sacrifice for Julian in TA. As Mr Crossman ironically points out:

> "Nick is still a Southerner. With us every well-born lady sacrifices her life for something: a man, a house, sometimes a gardenia bush." (TAg, p. 482).

Crossman is the spokesman for the playwright's ironic comment desmystifying the myth of Southern Womanhood as a paragon of domestic virtues, romanticism and illusions. But Nick is also a modern version of the Civil War hero, John Bagtry. Like Bagtry he is weak and dependent on his relatives and both share

illusions about themselves: one as being a war hero and the latter being a famous painter. Only he has replaced Bagtry's chilvaric dreams of war by a twentieth-century capitalist version: he pursues the dream of success in his profession as a painter. Nick's philandering and courtship makes him a comic Southern Cavalier version.

While John Bagtry belongs to the philosophical context of the Reconstruction, Nick and Julian (TA) have to cope with the XX century success archetype. Both find out by the end their delusion: Nick's self-confrontation reveals him as a second-rate painter living at the expense of his wife, while Julian always fails in his attempts to be a successful businessman.

Nick's behavior towards Constance and Rose Griggs will show a subtler kind of blackmail: love as a bribe to reach his purpose and to get financial rewards. Nick lies to Constance that he had only loved her in order to make her portrait as a sad, poverty-stricken old woman to exhibit in an exposition in contrast to a portrait he made in her youth. He swears eternal love to Constance in order to profit financially from Constance's romanticism. Here love is a bribe, a delusion, which demonstrates the failure of love. On the other hand, there is money as a source of power, money consequently used as a bribe by the Ellises to secure Frederick's love.

Another version of delusion in love is Rose Griggs's heart ailment as a bribe to stay with her husband.

Lily in TA uses sex as a form of power and Rose uses her illness as a bribe to convince her husband to stay with her.

"Stay with me this year" (TAg, p. 542).

Rose Griggs, the Colonel's vain and ex-pretty wife runs away to Nick asking for advice about her impending divorce. Nick flirts with Rose, giving her an illusion of love, youth and beauty in exhange for a $ 5.000 commission to paint a portrait of her homely niece.

Love as a bribe to guarantee economic safety is openly demonstrated in Sophie and Frederick's engagement. As Constance criticizes their engagement, Sophie replies to her:

> "Aunt Constance is sad that we do not speak of it in the romantic words of love." (TAg, p. 513).

Sophie discloses to Constance the falsehood of the illusions they have cherished for so long: their love affairs and marriages being rooted in money and self-interest rather than in self-effacement and "magnolia dreams".

Sophie plays the outsider role. Like Julie in DC or Lavinia and Birdie (APF, ILF), she stays as an alien among people who grew up together.

Lorena Holmin attributes her characterization to a Jamesian cliché: European smartness vs American naiveté. I would argue that her Greek name denotes wisdom and she shows up European common sense. Sophie is used as an index of the shallowness and the "wasting time" of the others. She is a round, complex character. When Nick makes advances to her and passes out on her couch, the guests and Constance make a row about community "scandal-mongering". Thus, Sophie asks $ 5.000 as blackmail money to return to Europe. She calls "a spade a spade" when she demands it.

Sophie - "We will call it a loan, come by through

blackmail." (TAg, p. 537).

As Nina says that Sophie is worried about a foolish accident the latter replies that she had only adopted their viewpoint: blackmail for stained honour is a way out according to the Southern code.

In APF Lavinia has blackmailed her husband because her code of honour wouldn't match his. Both of them, Sophie and Lavinia, bought their freedom from a loveless engagement through blackmail. Blackmail in this play becomes a stereotype: Sophie unveils the blackmail patterns used in other plays: she exploits an individual's hidden secret in order to get financial rewards.

Blackmail in TAg is used as a means to solve an individual problem. Blackmail doesn't raise ethical questions as in her Ibsen - influenced plays (TSW, DC). Blackmail doesn't involve melodramatic devices as in TLF (e. g. stolen papers) or in TSW (the briefcase), but it is a way out for Sophie to keep her dignity according to the Southern code of honour.

Sievers will justify Sophie's blackmail saying that "human personality is composed of sadistic and aggressive as well as tender and generous impulses in a subtle balance. In a foreign land Sophie uses her wits to her advantage." (5)

I would say that blackmail is an integrated theme in the plot. In the first act, Crossman plays Sophie's confidant and advisor and we know that: Sophie has always been homesick, she feels morally indebted to Constance but she needs money to return to Europe and pay her mother's debts. Furthermore I

think that blackmail fits the Southern code of "stained honour". Disclosing blackmail as blackmail, it shows a caricature of a decadent society where any means are available to cheat people and get financial rewards with it.

As Sophie tells Nina who calls her a "tough little girl" (TAg, p. 538):

> Sophie - "Don't you think people often say other people are tough when they do not know how to cheat them?" (TAg, p. 538).

Thus Sophie becomes a mouthpiece for the writer concerning the Southern background: to their sense of "stained honour" she counterposes blackmail; to the Southern woman mystique she counterposes a pragmatic view of marriage and love.

And stripped of their illusions about honour, love, romanticism, the characters have to face a bitter reality: self-interest lies behind the illusion of love, while nostalgia and romanticism are the delusions of a decadent society whose longing for the past is a retreat from reality.

But it is Mrs Griggs, the disillusioned Southern soldier, who sums up the theme of this play:

> "There are no big moments you can reach unless you've a pile of smaller moments to stand on. That big hour of decision, the turning point in your life, the someday you've counted on when you'd suddenly wipe out your past mistakes, do the work you'd never done, think the way you'd never thought... - it just doesn't come suddenly. You've trained yourself for it while wait - or you've let it all run past you and frittered yourself away. I've frittered myself away, Crossman." (TAg, p. 541).

In Griggs' speech we can see that the conflict between cultural

ideals and bitter reality has led Constance, Griggs and most of the boarding-guests to delusions about themselves, about the past and about reality.

The same theme is clear in APF and TLF: it leads Lavinia to dementia and Birdie to alcoholism. In his self-confrontation Griggs blames their inaction and the wasting of time which prevented them from ripeness in the autumn of their lives.

Miss Hellman attributes this central speech to Hammet:

> "Yes, the basic idea was his. Dash was hipped on the subject. Dash worked at it far harder than I ever have, as his death proved." (6)

Crossman is the observer of life, critical of his friends, lonely and drunken. He is a man who is crossed, puzzled and skeptical in his search for the meaning of life.

In his self-confrontation he tells Constance about his nostalgia for the past, his delusion about his present and concludes bitterly that we can't lie or beget illusions about ourselves:

> "I not only wasted myself, but I wanted it that way." (TAg, p. 544).

His embittered outlook is also Hellman's quotation from Chekhov's letters:

> "A reasoned life without a definite outlook is not a life, but a burden and a horror." (7)

Many critics agree that Miss Hellman definitely cast off her melodramatic devices in this play.

As I have already remarked melodrama is a form coherent with a political plot because it isolates the forces of evil

and of good. Miss Hellman uses melodramatic devices in DC, commenting on the working-classes in the American scene of the thirties. She has also explored well-made play devices in TLF and APF (e.g. stolen papers). But she changes her insight in TAg,without using violence. She doesn't show human nature as black or white, but as a composite of grey, showing the ugly and nice aspects of it.

It is a higher verisimilitude which shows the greater crafsmanship of the author.

In this play blackmail has also different levels: love as a bribe to get financial rewards to secure someone's affection. It is also presented in Sophie's blackmail: she shows that the Southern code allows blackmail as a reward for "stained virtue".

Blackmail turns out to it Sophie's aims and it benefits both blackmailer and blackmailed: Nick and Nina are rejoined again because of this 'incident' and Sophie will achieve her aim of returning to Europe.

While TLF and APF portrayed historical and economic trends in the Southern Reconstruction, TA and TAg show the mood of twentieth-century Deep South, portraying the sterility and shallowness of a decadent society trying to justify itself.

Constance's exaggerated romanticism and her Southern code of honour makes her accept Sophie's blackmail as a dignified exit for her niece. This involves Ruth Benedict's "shame culture" pattern, where the individual feels himself guilty before the community and thus is susceptible to blackmail. As most of the characters are Southerners, they

share the same cultural code thus being susceptible to Sophie's blackmail. They accept blackmail as a way to quiet the community's scandal - mongering.

On the other hand, Northern materialistic values appear in the behavior of other characters: they use money to buy love. Buying love with money implies an individual sense of guilt, in the sense of their failure to come to terms with love and life and become self-fulfulled as human beings and lovers. It is a sort of financial blackmail which shows that the cold materialism of Northern community has been adopted by the Denerys and the Ellises in TAg.

In this play Miss Hellman doesn't portray blackmail related to a historical context, like she has done in her Ibsenian plays (TLF, DC, WR, TSW), but blackmail is shown as a solution for individual problems of the characters (e.g. Sophie's return to Europe).

It is also related, it seems to us, to a compromising, vaccilating element from the standpoint of old age that the playwright criticizes in herself. She seems to be longing for a more definite outlook on life for the "wasting of time" that she blames herself for in An Unfinished Woman. In TAg, Miss Hellman has reached maturity and goes back to the past looking for the meaning of love and life.

It may also lead us to conclude that in spite of her political compromises, the road which leads her from Ibsen to Chekhov, her turn from political themes to a more personal and fatalistic world view, is the same path that leads her toward a greater craftsmanship in drama.

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CHAPTER IX

TOYS IN THE ATTIC (1960)

Toys in the Attic is set in the Berniers house in New Orleans. As the play begins, the two sisters Anna and Carrie Berniers are talking about their lives and about their plans for the future. Later on Albertine comes and tells them that their younger brother Julian is coming back home with his wife, Lily.

Anna and Carrie receive him very happily but are puzzled when they discover that Julian, who has always been a failure in busines, has become very rich. Carrie Berniers is portrayed as a romantic Southern lady who cultivates "magnolia dreams". After a visit to the cemetery, she quotes an inscription which shows her romantic vision about the Chilvaric Southern enterprise during the war:

> "Un homme brave, mort pour la cité pendant la guerre." (TA, p. 667)

While Anna is more realistic and tries to learn French in order to go to Europe.

Like Regina Hubbard, whose "dream of success" is to go to

Chicago, the two sisters cherish illusions of going to Europe till they realize by the end of the play it has been nothing but a dream.

Julian arrives and showers them with impressive gifts: fur coats, a piano, a new refrigerator, the mortgage of their house and two tickets to Europe.

Instead of rejoicing they become puzzled over those gifts and try to guess the source of Julian's money. Act Two shows the confrontations between Lily, Julian's fragile and mystical wife and her mother, Albertine Prinne. The latter is a wise, rich woman with a strong character. Albertine Keeps a Negro chauffeur as a lover and this makes Lily jealous. Albertine mentions Lily's "night exercise" (TA, p. 714) which was described by her daughter as a mystical experience in the slums of New Orleans, where she has exchanged her diamond ring (Julian's gift) for a "knife of truth". Albertine tries to talk sense to Lily. Meanwhile Julian arrives and tells Albertine the source of his fortune: through blackmail he will sell a piece of swampland which Mr Warkins, a powerful lawyer and tycoon, needs to use in a business venture. As he tells Albertine this, he feels a sense of self-assertion, a sense of being, for the first time, closer to the mystique of success that his sisters made him believe in. But his sisters and wife would rather that he remain financially dependent on them. Lily feels insecure about Julian's fortune because she believes Julian married her for her money. Carrie's incestuous desires towards him makes her afraid of loosing Julian forever. By the end of the second act we have the two sisters' confrontation with the truth: Anna tells Carrie that Julian has

once slept with Charlotte Warkins, revealing the source of Julian's fortune. She also reveals to Carrie, the latter's incestuous desires towards Julian, blaming her lust for Julian's estrangement. In the third act Julian is close to fulfilling his romantic dream of rescuing a lost and unhappy lady (Mrs Warkins) from a rascal (Cyrus Warkins) and at the same time becoming rich in the bargain. But Carrie's malevolence induces Lily to telephone Mr Warkins and tell him the truth about her husband's previous relationship with Mrs Warkins. Warkins sends two thugs to beat up Julian and Mrs Warkins. As the play ends Julian comes back defeated and once again economically dependent on his sisters and wife.

In her first speech Carrie tells Anna that she had gone to the cemetery. Carrie associates her parents with the Old aristocratic South. She says that they were buried at Mount Olive instead of burying them at Mount Great Hope where the "new, rich people" (TA, p. 607) were buried. This distinction [illegible] New South which belongs to the Reconstruction period.

It is ironical indeed that the post-Secession bourgeoisie buries people in Mount Great Hope. To this class Lily and Albertine Prinne belong. But Lily's marriage to Julian, Carrie's never-do-well brother and their experience in the Northern community was unsuccessful. Thus their financial failure in Chicago implies, symbolically, that there is no hope for the Southern economy.

Even the sisters, Anna and Carrie, who cherish dreams of success for their brother, recognize by the end it was but a delusion. Unlike in TLF where Miss Hellman seems to praise the

Reconstruction ethos of progress, here she is rather ironical showing that it was but an illusion and what remains of the Southern economy is decadence. In her description of their house as "solid, middle class of another generation"... "everything in need of repairs" (TA, p. 685), and in Julian's successive financial breakdowns, she shows not only nostalgia for the past but a tragic consciousness of its unfulfillment. As economy goes so do the characters. When Carrie cherishes dreams about escaping their old house and going to Europe, Anna is more realistic and complains over her problems with rich people at a sale. Both remember the past: their ancestors, like Marcus Hubbard, were not killed in the war because of their father's cowardice. Carrie remarks Julian's disliking his father's way of looking at war, which is a sign that Julian, like John, cherishes chilvaric dreams about the war and its heroic Southern image.

Anna, Carrie and Julian are authentic middle class Southern types. In the first act, Albertine Prinne, comes to say that the couple is arriving that afternoon. Albertine is a strong character who doesn't care about Southern racism. She informs the sisters that she has seen Lily without Julian in New Orleans. Albertine comments on the sisters as being "Southerners". She also stresses that the sisters are "doubles", she cannot distinguish whether one or the other is speaking. As Miss Hellman states, Albertine is

> "the second most important character - who almost dominates the play." [1]

Albertine sees through people. She lives secluded from reality: lives by night and sleeps by day. She is the character who

endures because she doesn't trouble anybody, preserves her individualism and faces the truth while the others are deluded.

We may also trace biographical hints about Miss Hellman's relationship with Hammet. Their relationship on the personal as well as on the political level made no compromise with external reality, but manifested withdrawal and self-fulfillment in isolation.

About the sisters and the wife, Miss Hellman declares:

> ... "they find that the man they wanted to be independent - they haven't wanted him that way at all. They loved him for being the kind of Schlemiel that they brought him up to be." (2)

Doris Falk traces also biographical hints about the characters, relating them to Pentimento: Anna and Carrie would be Miss Hellman's Aunt Jenny and Hannah; Albertine would be drawn from her great-aunt Lily and her mulatto chaffeur. Lily, according to Falk. is drawn from her memoirs' in An Unfinished Woman: at the age of twelve the playwright had the fear of losing love. She felt ambivalence towards money, rejecting and at the same time recognizing its power.

Miss Hellman declares about Lily:

> "the girl is kind of sadly wacky, not crazy, but fey, disjointed, and sweet and lost." (3)

When Lily arrives she acts strangely because she feels insecure about Julians' love for her.

Unlike Nina Denery, who uses money to her advantage with her husband, Lily feels insecure about it and is afraid of losing Julian now that he has become rich. Albertine mentions

Lily's ordeal in the New Orleans slums, and her exchange of Julian's gift (a diamond ring) for a "knife of truth". Lily is jealous about Henry and Albertine's love affair and is completely lost now that Julian may leave her.

Before their arrival Carrie communicates that she has sent a money order of one thousand dollars to Julian.

There is also an ironic counterpoint when Julian arrives with precious gifts: fur coats, two tickets to Europe and the paid-off mortgage on the house. He thinks that in this way he repays them for the loans he has previously squandered.

But Julian had misinterpreted their dream of success: neither of the three women would like him to be successful and his incapacity in business was their weapon to keep him dependent upon them.

In Carrie's speech on the Second Act there is a Chekhovian haze: her self-realization that youth has faded. Adler has written an article where he compares TA with Chekhov's The Three Sisters: the sisters who believed in an impossible dream just to realize later on that it was but a delusion. What they have always wanted is the status quo ante restored.

Like Rose Griggs who uses her heart ailment as a bribe to save her marriage, Lily's sadomasochistic impulses lead her to hurt herself with the knife of truth to oblige Julian to sleep with her. Like Lavinia, in APF, Lily's religious mania drives her almost crazy and leads her to denounce her husband's

blackmail which resulte in his economic defeat by Cyrus Warkins.

Unlike Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman, Julian hasn't dreamed the wrong dream but his sisters did it for him. As he says:

> "Anybody asked what I missed most in Chicago I'd have said a bayou, a bowl of crayfish, a good gun for a flight of wild ducks coming over - going to buy a little place up there, first thing." (TA, p. 721).

Julian wants a simpler life, close to nature. He plays the role of the 'unwilling blackmailer' because his values ("aversion to money goddess" - TA, p. 751) had been corrupted by a materialistic social ethos through his sisters. He shares characteristics of John Bagtry and Nick Denery, a blend of modern Southern Cavalier: protective towards his ladies and at the same time very dependent on them in pursuing their dream of success.

Julian's defeat is foretold by Albertine, when he tells her that his fortune derives from his blackmailing Warkins:

> Albertine - "I know tycoons are not romantic about money and the happiness it buys." (TA, p. 726).

But blackmailing Warkins into buying two acres of swampland brings Julian a feeling of self-assertion:

> "It's bad for a man to feel gone... Like a miracle. I go in to see this bastard shaking, and I come out knowing I did fine, knowing I'm going to be all right for ever." (TA, p. 723).

Once again blackmail has to do with a "hidden secret"

in the past: it has only been possible because Mrs Warkins, who has once been Julian's mistress, told him her husband's secret.

Like in APF and TAg blackmail also serves a good purpose: Mrs Warkins, like Lavinia or Sophie, will be rescued from a loveless engagement.

But Julian is always the romantic Cavalier seeking a life closer to nature:

> Julian - "Maybe I should have stayed. They said I was better with a muskrat boat than any Cajun, better with a gun. A nice little shack and a muskrat boat, all the bobwhite you could ever want." (TA, p. 736).

Once again he reinforces his simpler way of life, his nostalgia for a closer contact with nature, his romanticism about it as being better than being a tycoon.

But Carrie's wickedness when she discovers Julian's past relationship with Charlotte Warkins, insinuates to Lily that Mrs Warkins is going to follow them to New York and induces Lily to telephone Mrs Warkins unveiling the blackmail to him.

Carrie, like Blanche Dubois in Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire, shows the divided psyche of the author.

Blanche plays the refined delicate lady and the flirtatious adventuress. She is at once fragile, modest, graceful, delicate; at the same time she is the vivacious adventuress who flirts and dares and teases. Like Blanche Dubois, Carrie is divided between the mystique of the Southern

woman, which implies domestic virtues and self-sacrifice and her selfish, incestuous desires for her brother which conduct Julian to his downfall.

Miss Hellman shows love (in this case, incestuous love) as a power to subjugate people to one's will.

Like Miller she also shows the paradox of the myth of success: money and greed bring tragic events to people.

There is also a confrontation between the characters which shows Miss Hellman's deep psychological insight: Anna tells Carrie about her incestuous feelings for Julian, and Carrie states that she hates Anna.

On the other hand, Albertine advises Lily:

> "the pure and the innocent often bring harm to themselves and those they love and when they do, for some reason the injury is very great." (TA, p. 721).

Albertine's prophetic words are followed by Lily's call, which sets up Warkins' revenge. He sends two thugs to slash both of them. When Julian arrives he is beaten and hurt in his pride. But he still shows his gentlemanly behavior: he feels pity for Mrs Warkins' defeat. Unlike the Hubbards he displays a code of honour: he hasn't betrayed the blackmail secret. He cannot guess the truth, but he's abashed thinking himself a failure as a businessman.

Now Julian distrusts Carrie and almost sees the truth:

> Julian - "You're smiling. What the hell's there to smile at? You like me this way?" (TA, p. 750).

He also gives a speech which reinforces his reprobation of blackmail:

> Julian - "Old saying, money is a real pure lady and when the world began she swore herself an oath never to belong to a man who didn't love her. I never loved her and she guessed it." (TA, p. 751).

In a hopeless way, Julian like Bagtry has cherished Quixotic illusions about himself. Finally he expresses what is to become the Southern condition itself:

> "I've never been beaten in my life. ... (Softly, desperately). Nobody ever beat me up before. May be once it starts ..."(TA, p. 751).

We would conclude that Julian's experience matches the Southern condition: once its agrarian economy has been destroyed by the Civil War, the South tried, hopelessly, to recover and match the Northern pattern unsuccessfully.

As Horton and Edwards observe in Backgrounds of American Literary Thought most of the Southern writers show in their works themes which are in their essence the stuff of tragedy: "the reality of the dream, the unshakable hold of the past, the Lost Cause, the sense of personal and social guilt,... the dark night of the soul in that tortured and tragic land." (4)

It seems to us that TA sums up in its title these tragic assumptions: because the attic is the place where you keep old remembrances. Etymologically, "toys" is a) an object for children to play with or b) a special breed of dog kept as a pet.

And all the characters in TA belong to this special breed (Southerners) and represent its economic and social decadent condition.

Julian's moral confusion between Northern materialistic values and Southern code of honour is displayed in the plot. As Julian says, he doesn't adore the "money goddess" but at the same time he tries to come to terms with the mystique of success his sisters wanted for him.

Julian is also the chivalrous gentleman who protects his ladies, lavishing impressive gifts on them and tries to relieve their economic shortcomings in his business deal. He also displays a sense of Southern honour when after being beaten up by Warkins' thugs he wants to assure Mrs Warkins that he hasn't betrayed their blackmail secret. Blackmail in this play is used as a means to solve individual problems of the characters (Mrs Warkins' and Julian's troubles) and it is not linked to a historical context like in her previous plays.

In his final defeat Julian admits that he didn't really believe in cold materialism and his code of honour prevailed over his financial interests. He is not able to follow the same path taken by ruthless entrepreneurs like Cyrus Warkins because his sense of honour wouldn't allow him to do it.

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(1) - Richard G. Stern - "Lillian Hellman on Her Plays", Contact 3, 1959, page 117.

(2) - Ibid. page 118.

(3) - Ibid. page 117.

(4) - Rod W. Norton and Herbert W. Edwards - Backgrounds of American Literary Thought, Prentice Hall, Inc., New Jersey, 1974, page 450.

CONCLUSION

Lillian Hellman's plays are crowded with characters who have a code of honour. There is also a sense of guilt about a hidden secret in their past which makes them subject to blackmail. They feel ashamed when they must face the truth about themselves and their ill-doings. Those moral assumptions in Hellman's plays imply her Calvinistic or at least morally deterministic outlook on their lives.

Because of their sense of guilt people are subject to blackmail and they are, in a Hawthornesque way, actually destroyed by the truth.

The American economic pattern changed after the Civil War from one of individual enterprise into one of mass production, machine technology and financial capitalism. Miss Hellman shows in the Hubbard plays (TLF, APF) that man in his greed for money and power, has exploited his fellows, has deserted god for Mammon, and has invoked the machine (e.g. cotton mills in TLF). The post-war South is marked by the growth of an amoral and impersonal ethics as the instrument of man's rapacity.

Man has drawn from science the text that justified his actions: the evolutionary thesis of the"survival of the fittest". Thus life under the banner of evolutionary thought was a struggle for survival as grim and less hopeful than before. This deterministic doctrine allowed unfair competition, blackmail and cheating as the means where by "the strong" pile up huge personal fortunes (e.g. Hubbards in TLF and APF), crushing with their predacity economically less-favoured people.

Heredity also plays an important part in this deterministic view of society: it portrays Darwin's doctrine of "natural selection", which holds that in the struggle for existence the advantage goes to those organisms which deviate from the norm and whose deviation is best adapted to their environment. Translating this doctrine to the social context we see that Marcus's behavior (e.g. acquiring a fortune through illicit way in APF) fits the ethos of Southern Reconstruction. It will also be reproduced in his children's behavior (TLF), who will be morally corrupted, cheating and blackmailing each other in this never - ending competitive contest. In their predatory universe there is no place for the old values like honor and dignity. (represented by Birdie, Bagtry and Horace).

Although Lillian Hellman seems an engaged playwright in earlier plays like WR and DC and to some extent in APF and TLF where she rebuilds the Southern Reconstruction ethos of progress, she finally declares herself not strongly radical in politics:

> "It saddens me now to admit that my political convictions were never very radical, in the true, best, serious sense." (An Unfinished Woman, p. 101)

She also admits her non-orthodoxy in her relationship with Hammet in An Unfinished Woman:

> "A woman who was never to be committed was facing a man who already was. For Hammet, as he was to prove years later, Socialist belief had become a way of life... I was trying, without Knowing it, to crack his faith, sensed I couldn't do it ..." (p. 102)

She also adopted a moral position in the House Un - American Activities Committee defence. She declared that she would testify for herself but would not tell the Committee about anybody else. As she declares in Scoundrel Time:

> "My 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... There was nothing strange about my problem, it is native to our time; but it is painful for a nature that can no longer accept liberalism not to be able to accept radicalism." (p. 110)

Miss Hellman admits here that she was not a radical, but, like her "engage" heroes she has a sense of personal responsibility towards others which will take her to a famous declaration:

> "I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashion". (Scoundrel Time, p. 90)

She presents her idealistic code of honour, willing to tell the truth about herself but unable to tell "on" people. In doing so, she refuses to be manipulated by the system into

becoming a "friendly witness", collaborating with the HUAC committes as did Miller, Elia Kazan and Clifford Odets.

As Garry Wills has written in his introduction to Scoundrel Time:

> "Lillian Hellman grew up in the South, a place of ambivalent moral ferocities, but also of intensest personalism. She is to ideology what Faulkner was to racism - too engaged in personal loves and hates to sort out hatred on a program. This cold face of ideology is so distant from Miss Hellman's moral world as to be almost invisible. She has spent her life creating vivid and individual people on the stage; the thought of a Mac Carthy intent on destroying whole classes and types of people is almost too horrible for her to contemplate. (Scoundrel Time, p. 30)

Miss Hellman reacts against Mac Carthy and his companions as a threat to human rights and furthermore she personally blames American intellectuals and liberals who did not react against him.

We have seen that blackmail, is closely tied to Hellman's idealist code of honour. Blackmail may be categorized in two ways: financial or emotional blackmail. In the first pattern the blackmailer seeks power, swindling and cheating people for the sake of money in order to get social privilege and financial profits. In the emotional blackmail pattern, the blackmailer uses people's emotion, and through flattery, sex and slander coerces the other to submit to his own will.

Blackmail in Miss Hellman's Southern plays involves Ruth Benedict's "shame culture" pattern: the individual feels

an exaggerated guilt before the agrarian community. As in "Northern' plays, blackmail implies a separation between the image and the reality, but it also specifically involves the Southern code of honour. As an example we have Marcus Hubbard in APF: the source of his fortune was considered illegitimate by Lavinia because he has stolen from the blacks and has led inadvertently the Union troops to the massacre. Lavinia wrote these events into the family Bible, a source of truth. Paradoxically Lavinia's concepts about righteousness of action and her code of honour lead her to blackmail her husband and obtain her freedom to found a Negro school at Altaloosa to expiate her family's guilt. Marcus feels so guilty before the community that he is afraid they could come to lynch him and submits to his wife's emotional blackmail. This is an example of blackmail used for a 'benevolent' end to cure blackmail.

"In other plays we also find blackmail which will have a benevolent end. In WR Kurt's intended bribe to the Nazi guards is an attempt to release the prisoners from the German camps. It is a kind of blackmail which has an humanitarian purpose: it is concerned with mankind welfare and it has not selfish objectives. Another example of blackmail with an honourable aim is found in TA when Julian blackmails Mr Warkins in order to help his former lover (Mrs Warkins) to escape from an unhappy marriage."

In her earlier Southern plays (TLF, APF) Miss Hellman shows the transition from a Southern agrarian to an industrial society. Relationships among the characters change to a mercenary basis and blackmail is an integrated theme in this deterministic outlook on reality. It seems to us that blackmail presupposes a kind of moral determinism, in which one

can never escape from the consequences of the past. In the Calvinist manner, the "sins of the Fathers" are 'visited' on the son's and the son's own sins are visited on himself later in life. As Marcus Hubbard (APF) has acquired his fortune cheating and blackmailing, so Ben uses like means to defeat his prototype. Later on, Ben's sins (cheating, blackmailing) are used against him by Regina (TLF) in their game to seize power.

On the other hand, Miss Hellman also examines the Southern society on a psychological basis, showing incestuous feelings in characters like Marcus Hubbard (APF) and Carrie Berniers (TA), portraying their narcissistic world view. For example, Marcus Hubbard bribes Regina (APF) with fashionable clothes in order to secure her affection. On the other hand Carrie (TA) bribes Julian with money because she nourishes incestuous feelings towards him and doesn't want to lose him. Miss Hellman portrays here the success of emotional blackmail because love has failed and been twisted into incestuous forms.

In her Northern plays, she portrays individuals who feel a sense of personal guilt about their private and public lives. They are entangled on their personal problems and seem unable to cope with the historical moment. Some of these characters are Alex and Emily Hazen (TSW), Andrew and Julie Rodman (DC), the Farrellys (WR). In those plays Miss Hellman shows Ibsen's influence, that is she presents problems of social significance and characters either act or remain as bystanders, alienated from the historical moment.

While Cassie (TSW), excuses their 'non-engagement' in politics on the grounds of ignorance and self-centeredness,

Sam points to her that they could have prevented world disaster if they had been committed. While the Farrellys(WR) succumb to Count Brancovis's financial blackmail, Kurt refuses it and murders the Count in order to go on in his fight against Nazism. Julie Rodman (DC) submits to Wilkie's blackmail, who threatens to lie about her relationship with Whalen, harming the second with his lies if she doesn't silence the truth. Whalen is not susceptible to blackmail and goes on in his fight against the factory - owner's exploitation. Hellman's engaged heroes also function as moral saviors of a community which is unaware of those perils.

In her Northern play, TCH a sense of inner guilt is linked to blackmail. Here blackmail has an element of truth in it despite its malicious nature: two innocent people are condemned by the community and isolated from it because of the evil workings of a child and her emotional blackmail of her powerful grandmother.

But Miss Martha thinks about the accusation and finally finds herself guilty of the charges of homosexuality. Because of her inner sense of guilt she decides to commit suicide. In this play, working in a devious way, blackmail shows up the truth. It also shows how relatively conservative this ending is: the women condemn themselves, they are not really the victim of male bias. Miss Hellman's finale to this play reinforces our viewpoint that she is a moralist who is often almost 'puritanic' in her conclusions.

The 'protestant ethic', we have seen, involves a peculiar fusion of Calvinism and business which may have had its origins in Luther's conviction that man can effect good

works merely by performing well his daily round of duties. Calvin's influence also lies behind the protestant business community's belief that there is no inconsistency between the acquiring of goods and the cultivation of an intense religious life. It seems to me this is one of the motives that leads Miss Hellman to praise the Southern ethos of progress in the Reconstruction period, even while she portrays the guilt of individuals who attempt to acquire fortunes through blackmail instead of honest enterprise. As examples we can recall Marcus Hubbard in APF and Julian in TA.

In her Northern plays Hellman follows Ruth Benedict's "guilt cultures" pattern: here the individual feels a sense of personal guilt in relation to his own actions. It is not the community who condemns him, rather he condemns himself. This may be seen in Andrew Rodman's crisis over his role as factory-owner, or in Julie Rodman's anguish (DC) flirting both with left (Whalen) and right - wing (Ellicott) ideologies. It is also portrayed in Mrs Tilford's sense of guilt (TCH) because of her unjust charges which lead her to offer money to Karen as a compensation for slander. Also we find the Farrellys(WR) who feel guilt for not given the Mullers the moral support they needed to fight against Nazism. In TSW, the Hazens feel guilt because they have acted in "bad faith", mixing up private and diplomatic affairs, seeing that they have collaborated to promote World War II.

In the shame culture pattern (e.g. Marcus Hubbard's behavior) the indivudal chooses to be identified with a public image of himself and acts in bad faith. Thus when Marcus Hubbard (APF) and Ben and Oscar Hubbard (TLF) feel guilt before the community because of a "hidden secret" in their past they act accordingly

denying to their selves any other possibility to create their essence by a continual process of selftranscendence through free choice. Acting in bad faith they are subject to blackmail and they do not fulfill all their possibilities as human beings.

On the other hand, Ruth Benedict's definition of guilt cultures is also linked to Sartre's concept of bad faith. Because here individuals like Andrew Rodman (DC), the Hazens (TSW) and the Farrellys (WR) also feel guilt because they escape their responsibilities towards commitment by accepting a ready-made, socially-acceptable image of themselves as their true and fixed identity. Being identified with a public image of themselves they mix up private and public life (WR, TSW, DC), appearance and reality (TCH) and they do not know how to perform their roles to change the historical moment (TSW, DC, WR). Because they act in bad faith characters like Alex, Cassie and Emily (TSW), the Farrellys (WR) and the Rodmans (DC) are suceptible to blackmail while people of 'good faith' like Sam (DC), Kurt Muller (WR) and Leo Whalen (DC) are not blackmailable.

In her Southern plays, (APF, TLF, TAg, TA), the old Southern society with its code of honour and the new industrial South, with its imported, Puritan - commercial values - are both flawed and subject to blackmail. In the first case blackmail would reveal the decadent romanticism and exaggerated shame of the individual before the community (e.g. Julian in TA, Marcus Hubbard in APF).

In the second case, blackmail seems to expose the cold materialism of industrial society, the egotism of the Puritan capitalist who may pretend to believe in ideals but cares really only about money (e.g. Regina, Marcus and Ben Hubbard in TLF and APF).

Emotional blackmail belongs to the first, Southern context to a greater extent, while the financial variety is characteristic of a more cynical, less family - oriented industrial society.

Hellman holds a patriarchal conception of Southern society which is reflected in TLF and APF. It is also subtly portrayed in DC, whose title, as I have mentioned, is a quotation from Ecclesiastes: in that play the factory - owner is shown as a good paternalist and a moral aristocrat.

In her Ibsen - influenced plays, she presents social issues which raise ethical questions and ends a play with a discussion of the problems set forth in the play. For example, in TCH, she discusses in the conclusion the main issues of the play. Like Ibsen she deals with money as a major motivation and source of power. She also adopts Ibsen's meliorism, depicting believable characters who can act and change their destinies.

On the other hand, in her last two plays, (TAg, TA), Miss Hellman abandons the road towards "engagement" and adopts a Chekhovian outlook on reality. She presents a personalist, fatalistic viewpoint where the Southern community seems doomed to a tragic decay.

In those plays the Self becomes more important than the fate of the land and the characters seem unable to act, being driven by circumstances rather than by their will.

In her socially-concerned plays the heros had free will to act and choose their destiny, either staying as a bystander watching destruction (Birdie, Horace, the Hazens, the Rodmans) or they choose to fight oppression and an unjust system (Alexandra, Kurt Müller, Whalen, Sam).

While in the Ibsen-influenced plays (TLF, DC, WR, TSW) there are some idealists of "good faith" who are beyond blackmail (Alexandra, Whalen, Kurt and Sam) because they transcend their individual selves and fight for the welfare of mankind, in her last plays (TAg, TA) characters don't move beyond "bad faith".

Because of their "bad faith" Crossman, Julian and the others are led to self-deception: they accept some ready-made, stable consciousness of themselves as their true and fixed identity. They deny their commitment to a historical moment, thus evading their responsibility to create their essence by a continual process of self-transcendence through free choice. Thus in those last plays (TA, TAg) the characters are led to self-deception by their inaction, their refusal to believe in ideals, showing Hellman's fatalistic personalism which is not presented in her earlier plays.

In her Chekhovian-influenced plays (TAg, TA), her interests have shifted from outward climaxes to inward crises. Mood not plot was what mattered to her. Unlike her engaged plays, the character's plight does not raise ethical questions. They are frustrated egos, victims of themselves and seem to become the playthings of circumstances instead of directing their own lives.

For example, in TA, Julian's moral confusion is displayed. He tries to believe in the American myth of work and progress without any real objective to make them worthwhile.

Miss Hellman's view of life displayed in her plays and in her memoirs is that of an idealist defending civil rights and liberties and fighting evil which may be represented either by

the House of Un-American Activities Committee, or by the new bourgeoisie of Southern Reconstruction, or by Nazism and Fascism.

Despite Miss Hellman's crusading zeal, the presence of the blackmail theme reflects her personal sense of being something of a fraud - an 'unifinished woman' who feels she has not lived up to her own ideals and in some way betrayed herself. Thus it seems that whether in a Southern culture, or a Northern, os perhaps even in post-revolutionary society. Hellman would find it difficult to believe in life where people do not hide secrets, secrets which both defy and derive from the 'decent' life of good faith that she wants to assert.

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