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Toward a more cohesive self: Women in the works of Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman

Brown, Linda Ginter, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1991

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TOWARD A MORE COHESIVE SELF:
WOMEN IN THE WORKS OF LILLIAN HELLMAN AND MARSHA NORMAN

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By
Linda Ginter Brown, B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1991

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For Don,
with love and gratitude
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INTRODUCTION

And if I fight, then for what?
For nothing easy or sweet, and I told you
that last year and the year before that. For
your own challenge, for your own mistakes and
the punishment for them, for your own
definition of love and of sanity—a good
strong self with which to begin to live.

Hannah Green
I Never Promised You
a Rose Garden

Just as history has chronicled changes in the
representations of women in society, so dramatic
literature has reflected those changes. Beginning with
the classical Greek theater and moving forward to the
twentieth century, women's roles have reflected the
environments in which they found themselves and the op­
tions that were available to them. Whether or not they
could make choices or exert power often depended on the
role society dictated to them.

Increasingly, playwrights' representations of
womanhood have become more complex. With danger of
personal disintegration a legitimate fear, psychic survival becomes paramount. Two American playwrights, Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman, reflect this concern with psychic survival in their works. My contention is that with Hellman the search for a more cohesive self is unsuccessful, involving a blurring of psychic boundaries, whereas with Norman, a greater move toward a fully cohesive self occurs.

My focus in this study will be on the struggle which the women characters experience during their quests for psychological wholeness. In an interview conducted the year before Hellman's death, Norman noted Hellman's influence on her life. Hellman, the most revered female voice in American theater, whose work spans five decades from 1930 to 1984, helped her to know it was really possible to realize her dream of becoming a writer. With Hellman she had met a kindred spirit, one who also experienced what Hellman termed the "stubborn, relentless, driving desire to be alone as it came into conflict with the desire not to be alone when I wanted to be" (Hellman, Unfinished Woman 12). Although of different generations (Lillian Hellman published her first play in 1934; Marsha Norman published hers in 1978), these two writers have created, in parallel ways, dramatic representations
of women and their struggles to achieve cohesive selves. As a basis for my investigation, I use a psychoanalytic/feminist critical approach, drawing particularly on the work of Nancy Chodorow, whose modifications of object-relations theory emphasize the relation of the psyche to the social context in which it develops. Object-relations theory reflects a theory of self which focuses on the pre-oedipal dyad of child and first love object, the mother or primary caretaker, rather than on the oedipal triangle of mother, father, and child.

Chodorow's application of object-relations theory is influenced by the work of psychoanalyst, Heinz Kohut. In his practice Kohut noted quite different complaints from his patients than those of Freud's. Instead of difficulties arising from obsessive compulsive disorders, Kohut began to hear patients expressing fears of emptiness, boredom, and anxiety: they were narcissistic personalities expending energy on protecting the self.

In Kohut's view, the psychological structure of the self is made up of two poles, one representing a person's skills and abilities, the other representing goals and ideas. The successful cohesion of these two poles depends upon integration of what Kohut calls
the child's "grandiose self" and the "idealized parent imago." When defects occur at any point during the integration of these psychic structures, narcissistic personality disorders arise. According to Kohut:

The equilibrium of primary narcissism is disturbed by the unavoidable shortcomings of maternal care, but the child replaces the previous perfection by (a) establishing a grandiose and exhibitionistic image of the self, the "grandiose self," and (b) by giving over the previous perfection to an admired omnipotent (transitional) self object, the "idealized parent imago." (Kohut 25)

Empathic mirroring on the part of the mother (or primary caretaker) serves to help integrate these archaic structures into the adult personality. However, if the process is impeded at any point, the person cannot experience the other as clearly differentiated, but "rather as a missing part of the self, that is, as a self-object" (Layton and Schapiro 4). If the child is not granted this empathic mirroring, the need to merge with an idealized self-object will continue.

Building on this basic premise of object relations theory, Chodorow explores the development of the self and shows that it occurs relationally. For Chodorow, differentiation or separation/individuation is not synonymous with difference or separateness. According
to her, "... Adequate separation, or differentiation, involves not merely perceiving the separateness, or otherness, of the other. It involves perceiving the person's subjectivity and selfhood as well. Differentiation, separation and disruption of the narcissistic relation to reality are developed through learning that the mother is a separate being with separate interests and activities that do not always coincide with just what the infant wants at the time" (Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory 103)

True differentiation must involve two interacting selves. "If the mature self grows only out of the infant as a self," asserts Chodorow, "the other need never be accorded their (sic) own selfhood" (Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory 104). Since women are primary caretakers of infants, this view has particularly disturbing ramifications for society's perceptions of women. If we, as daughters, refuse to allow our mothers their autonomy, the developmental process of both women will continue to be impeded.

Another aspect of object-relations theory posits that during the process of developing a sense of separateness, the infant internalizes representations
of others in relation to itself. Chodorow writes:

Images of felt good and bad aspects of the mother or primary caretaker, caretaking experiences, and the mothering relationship become part of the self, of a relational ego structure, through unconscious mental processes that appropriate and incorporate these images. With maturation, these early images and fragments of perceived experience become put together into a self. As externality and internality are established, therefore, what comes to be internal includes what originally were aspects of the other and the relation to the other. . . . These unconscious early internalizations. . . . may remain whole or less fragmented, or they may develop a quality of wholeness. . . . The central core of self is, internally, a relational ego, a sense of self-in-good relationship. (Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory 105-06)

Although a mother experiences both sexes as part of herself, she experiences the male child as a more clearly differentiated other, the female more as an extension of herself. The male child will eventually repress his sexual feelings for his mother, but the female will retain the pre-oedipal bond with her mother and will continue to define herself relationally (67).

This self-in-relation is evident in the works of both Hellman and Norman, but especially in the works foregrounding mother and daughter relationships. It can be seen both in the way the mothers and daughters interact as well as in the way certain other characters seek "idealized other-objects" in their relationships.
In her private life Heilman struggled to find the "missing link," the perfect part which could make her whole. That she was unable to do so is evidenced by her memoir, An Unfinished Woman, in which she realizes she never achieved what she longed for—a complete sense of self. She notes, "I do regret that I have spent too much of my life trying to find out what I called 'truth,' trying to find what I called 'sense.' I never knew what I meant by truth, never made the sense I hoped for. All I mean is that I left too much of me unfinished because I wasted too much time..." (6).

Hellman's search for the "idealized other" sprang from her unsatisfying relationship with her mother. She writes:

I was puzzled and irritated by the passivity of my mother as it mixed with unmoveable stubbornness... My mother's deep fear of her mother did not override her deep love for my father, although the same fear kept my two aunts from ever marrying and my uncle from marrying until after his mother's death... My mother was dead before I knew that I loved her very much.

(Unfinished Woman 6-7)

Sophronia, Hellman's black nurse became the object of the young girl's affections, but this relationship did not provide the empathic mirroring necessary for integration of a fully realized self. Although Hellman
was so smitten with her nurse she told Sophronia she would give up living with white people if she could come and live with her, Sophronia was emotionally "cold" and could not give the needed nurturance. Hellman writes: "... I came to know as she grew older and I did too, that she did feel a kind of contempt for the world she lived in and for almost everybody, black or white, she had ever met ... " (Unfinished Woman 9).

For this study I have chosen to focus on five of Hellman's plays: Another Part of the Forest, The Little Foxes, Days to Come, Toys in the Attic, and The Children's Hour. I have chosen these works because they particularly lend themselves to an object-relations analysis and because of the psychological developmental issues for women they reflect. The plays comprise a wide range of her work, including some less successful plays as well as some of the more critically acclaimed ones. The first two have mothers and daughters physically present and interacting; in the latter three, the women's mothers are not there physically but are embodied in the presence of the "idealized other."

All of these female characters exhibit, some more than others, evidence of fragmented selves who are unable to achieve a measure of wholeness necessary for
what Kohut calls a "mature narcissism." Because they are unable to do so, they lack, to use Chodorow's term, a sense of "self-in-good relationship." They remain emotional invalids, always searching for someone else to supply the "missing link."

Like Lillian Hellman, Marsha Norman depicts mother and daughter relationships in much of her work. Although at this point in her career, she has not written her memoirs, she certainly has discussed the pivotal stance her relationship with her mother and other significant "caretakers" have had on both her personal and professional life. She notes, for example, in Interviews With Contemporary Women Playwrights, the tremendous impact her great-aunt, Bubbie, had on her as a child, and has also emphasized the need for more works focusing on mothers and daughters. When questioned about whether she explored her own relationship with her mother in her plays, Norman replied: "You don't think I've done that? . . . Do you think I got this mother out of thin air? Do you think I made this mother up?" (quoted in Betsko and Koening 338).

Norman further underscores the importance of a woman's understanding her relationship with her mother by noting:
I am also finding in my own personal life a new route to understanding the women in my history—Mother, Bubbie, my various aunts—but that's only possible once my identity is established and it's clear to them and a source of joy to them that I am not living the life that they hoped I would live. The choices you make out of freedom are the best ones. I am that much of a natural rebel that if somebody said to me, 'Marsha, you must or you should choose a woman to do the lights because it's important,' you would have such a fierce rebellion out of me that it would be terrible. I would call off the whole thing. I really resist other people telling that I should... (quoted in Betsko and Koening 340)

The fact that Norman feels her identity is clearly established seems to influence the way her female characters fight to "save themselves." While in Hellman, further fragmentation occurs, Norman's women move closer to a fully developed self. They "bond" with their idealized other, thereby internalizing and incorporating images which, ultimately, contribute to more of a sense of wholeness.

Of Norman's works, I have chosen three—Getting Out, The Laundromat and 'night, Mother. Like Hellman's works, they particularly lend themselves to an object-relations analysis, and they are useful because of the psychological developmental issues for women they reflect. They represent works which have been critical successes as well as those which have been less well received. Two of them focus upon mother and daughter
relationships, but all of Norman's depictions show women with clearly established identities moving toward more integrated selves than do Hellman's.

Chapter One, "The Mother/Self," focuses on both authors' portrayals of the mother and daughter relationships. In Another Part of the Forest the mother and daughter relationship is in no way satisfying to either woman. Lavinia Hubbard, weak, ineffectual, and guilt-ridden, has spent her life in fear. Incomplete herself, she cannot empathically mirror her daughter, Regina. Unable to receive the needed nurturance from her mother, Regina inflicts her narcissistic rage upon those around her. Her search for self evidences fragmentation as she manipulates others in order to gain control over her life. In The Little Foxes Regina, now a grown woman, sees her daughter, Alexandra, as a narcissistic extension of herself; however, her inability to allow Alexandra to idealize and merge with her as a "self object," i.e. a missing part of the self, causes Alexandra to seek what she needs from her father. According to Kohut, "If the child recognizes that he/she cannot receive what is needed from one parent, the child will turn to the other to try to get it" (185).
In Norman's *Getting Out* the divided selves of former inmate, Arlie Holsclaw, now Arlene, forge a new identity. She accepts her mother even though her mother permitted her father to abuse her. She realizes her mother is a victim as she notes: "She's dyin'. Somethin's eatin up her insides piece by piece, only she don't want you to know it. Ha. Ha" (21).

Chapter Two, "The (M)Other/Self" explores how the mother, although not physically present, influences relationships with the "idealized other." In Hellman's *The Children's Hour*, Martha, the spinster schoolteacher, exhibits evidence of arrested narcissistic development in her relationship with her roommate and partner, Karen, her "idealized other." Her realization that, subconsciously, she does have sexual feelings for Karen is so devastating she "smashes the mirror," her "idealized self-object/other," by committing suicide. *Toys in the Attic* features two maiden sisters, Anna and Carrie Berniers, who focus all their emotional energy on their younger brother, Julian. Neither woman achieves a fully cohesive self, although Anna reflects a glimmer of insight when she remarks: ". . . After a while I will ask myself why I took my mother's two children to be my own" (780).
In Norman's *The Laundromat Alberta*, in her late fifties, functions as an "idealized other" to Deedee, a young woman trapped in an unsatisfying marriage to a factory worker, Joe. Deedee has a mother who "hovers" and tries to keep her daughter a little girl rather than allowing her to mature. Ultimately, Alberta empowers Deedee to be true to herself, to leave Joe, as she tells Deedee: "Your own face in the mirror is better company than a man who would eat a whole fried egg in one bite. . . but it won't be easy" (Norman 38).

Chapter Three, "The Hungry Self," investigates how both authors use food to manifest the hunger for power and psychic cohesion in the selves of the female characters. The last work Hellman published, with Peter Feibleman, was a cookbook, and Norman's works are replete with food images. *Days to Come* portrays Cora Rodman, who hungers for power because she has been displaced in the family structure by her sister-in-law, Julie. Cora fixates on food, insisting she needs "something sweet," and a "bigger piece." Cora searches the pantry for food and allows: "I shall eat as much as I please" (84).

In Norman's *'night, Mother* hunger is key to the play's action. Jessie Cates has lost her appetite for life. Unlike her mother, Thelma, subsisting on sugary
snowballs and peanut brittle, Jessie can find nothing that tastes good. Even the comforting cocoa that Thelma makes no longer satisfies, and Thelma's assertion that "It's a real waste of chocolate. You don't have to finish it" (45) foreshadows her acceptance of her daughter's decision to commit suicide.

In the work of both playwrights the women suffer because a sense of power is denied them by their lack of choices regarding the way in which they can define themselves. With Hellman this suffering manifests itself in a rage which is either turned inward upon the self, whereby no sense of cohesion can be achieved, or it is directed outward toward others, whereby close relationships are destroyed. With Norman the women have more firmly established identities and move toward more fully integrated selves.

As contemporary women struggle to define themselves anew, they battle to break with a patriarchal past which relegated them to a low status in society. However, they face a more difficult task than merely making themselves over into the fully cohesive selves they yearn to be. Psychically fragmented and often docile, they have been used to having society dictate their roles to them.
Psychoanalysis, particularly object-relations theory, offers a way to study these psychic splits and possibly to answer why women would want to split off an unwanted aspect of themselves. In my study I have found that, although society plays a crucial role in how women view themselves, criminal charges cannot be placed entirely at the door of cultural essentialism.

James Grotstein's, *Splitting and Projective Identification*, addresses this issue. In his work he notes that women often feel fragmented because they have not acquired a secure sense of self from an empathically supportive object. While splitting is a psychic given, the goal becomes one of fitting together the pieces which will result in psychic wholeness. This struggle, I believe, is paramount for women because of the ongoing sense of connectedness and primary identification they experience with their mothers. By careful and complete analyses of these previously mentioned works, using Chodorow's object-relations theory as a basis of inquiry, I hope to illuminate the way in which modern drama reflects the struggle for women to achieve fully cohesive selves.

Certainly, any critical stance is open to charges of reductionism. Chodorow's object-relations approach is no exception. Those who criticize her findings on
the grounds that they are culturally specific and cannot be generalized to other cultures and other societies are correct. Chodorow's findings do apply mostly to white middle-class, Western women. Likewise, Lacanian feminists, who view the unconscious as the basic structure of psychic life, rightly report that Chodorow's approach neglects the unconscious.

Nevertheless, those criticisms, valid as they are, do not constitute sufficient grounds to dismiss Chodorow's findings altogether. Chodorow's object-relations methodology is useful because it focuses upon critical developmental issues for women. She calls to task present child-rearing practices which have more far-reaching ramifications than a female's self-development, serious though that may be.

Chodorow's work deserves attention because she has laid important groundwork. Researchers simply cannot continue to ignore how gender prominence relates to certain configurations of psychological development and emotional life. Object-relations feminist theory is an important research tool because it focuses upon a person's developmental experiences and as Chodorow notes, "... because it incorporates an understanding of gender characteristics like the self-in-relationship that are not necessarily available as gender
conceptions" (Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory 197) in other psychoanalytic theories.

Researchers, whether from traditional schools of psychoanalysis or from the more contemporary psychoanalytic feminist framework, must consider more carefully their findings and must be more willing to examine other viewpoints which diverge from theirs. They must be willing to revise their theoretical approaches to the study of human development as much as is needed. They need to determine what factors are detrimental to a human's psychic development, whether female or male. That challenge to researchers is, indeed, a powerful one, and Chodorow's work offers a legitimate place from which to begin.
Notes


2 See Chodorow's Chapter "Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Psychoanalytic Psychology of Women" in Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989) 178-198. Chodorow seems more willing to consider other approaches and calls for a "melding" of critical methods. Her previous work, The Reproduction of Mothering, is more absolutist.
Chapter I
The Mother Self

"Motherhood is something you never get over." This solemn avowal, recently intoned by a friend over lunch as she stabbed her cherry tomato, epitomizes the power with which we embue motherhood. No other institution is exalted to such heights nor denigrated to such depths. No other person affects us so much; our relationship with her forms the structure for all others throughout our lives. Whether we love her or hate her, we cannot escape her influence. This fact is particularly true for women. We may even take drastic steps to "divorce" our mothers, as some women recently did on the Oprah Winfrey talk show, but this symbiotic relationship which eventually redefines itself for males is never truly severed for the female. The tie which binds so tightly also chokes and strangles. The milk which nourishes us at her breast somehow turns rancid and bitter.
America's foremost female playwright, Lillian Hellman, foregrounds mother and daughter relationships in much of her work. However, critics seldom note this theme when dealing with her plays. Characteristically cast as strongly anti-Fascist, Hellman's work supposedly mirrors her responses to the social and moral issues of the times in which she was writing. Reviewers alternately praise her ability to depict the "good guys versus the bad guys," or they castigate her as a melodramatist at the bottom of the heap when it comes to dramatic respectability. Seldom do they address what has come to be termed, for lack of a better phrase, "feminist concerns," although some critics have begun to write about those issues in recent years.

Nevertheless, a majority of her plays do feature mothers and daughters at the center of the action. This fact is hardly surprising if one considers the background of Hellman's relationship with her own mother. Raised mostly by her black nurse, Sophronia, Hellman admits in her memoir Unfinished Woman, "My mother was dead before I knew that I had loved her very much" (7). Julia Newhouse, the delicate southern belle from an aristocratic Alabama family, could not handle the lively, impetuous, often angry, Lillian, so Sophronia was given the task of bridling the "devilish
"Heilman gave her childhood allegiance to her father's family, but later notes, "But as I made my mother's family all one color, I made my father's family too remarkable, and then turned both judgments against my mother" (5).

Over half of Heilman's plays contain mothers and daughters, some more remarkable than others. Two that feature mothers and daughters at the forefront are Another Part of the Forest, and the perennial favorite, The Little Foxes. Of the plays in Heilman's oeuvre, these two contain the most intriguing mother and daughter relationships, from a critical standpoint. Although The Little Foxes opened in 1939, almost seven years before Another Part of the Forest in 1946, the story of the Hubbards begins twenty years before in June of 1880, where Heilman starts the saga of a sadistic family which makes even the Ewings of Southfork seem upstanding by the most generous standards. By examining these two plays in tandem, one can witness the development of Regina Hubbard, the woman who appears as the daughter of Lavinia in Another Part of the Forest and then reappears as the mother of Alexandra in The Little Foxes. Secondarily, Heilman coyly alluded to the possibility that there might be some "distant connection" to her mother's family when
the play first opened; later, in *Pentimento* she admitted she had based the Hubbards on her mother's family (142).

The play takes place in Bowden, Alabama in June, 1880. Marcus Hubbard, the mean patriarch, has made his money as a smuggler during the Civil War. Unknowingly, he led Union soldiers to a camp of local boys, causing them to be killed. Only his wife, Lavinia, knows his secret. Regina, his daughter whom he adores, is desperately in love with John Bagtry, an ex-Confederate officer who is trying to find a way to go to Brazil and fight. She wants to leave the plantation and move to Chicago with Bagtry. Enter cousin Birdie who needs a loan to keep her family plantation from ruin.

Ben, Regina's brother, gets his father's approval for the loan but ups the amount by $10,000 and pockets the difference without his father's knowledge. When Ben exposes Regina's wish to marry Bagtry, Regina retaliates by telling Marcus how Ben has juggled the books. Ben is booted off the plantation. Before he leaves, Lavinia, still in her guilt-ridden "never never land, "tells Ben she knows a dangerous secret about his father, Marcus. After much prodding and finally promising to help her build a school for her beloved black children, Lavinia tells him the secret. Ben
confronts his father, threatens to expose his secret, and takes over the reins as head of the family. Now all must be subject to his wishes. As the play ends Regina switches allegiance from her father to her brother as she moves her chair next to Marcus over to Ben.

Ironically, Hellman chose names for these female characters which are connected to royalty and which connote strength. According to Virgil and Livy, Lavinia was the daughter of King Latinus, the last wife of Aeneas. The name also became popular during the 18th century after the Scottish poet, James Thomason, retold the biblical story of Boaz and Ruth (a decidedly strong woman) using the names of Palemon and Lavinia. Regina is the feminine derivative of the Latin word regan, meaning regent, one who rules or reigns. Neither character's actions during the play reflects her name's original meaning.

As one examines the relationship between Lavinia and Regina during the play's progression, one witnesses the development (or arrested development as the case may be) of a woman struggling with the psychic boundaries of ego development—in other words, a self in search of its owner. We can see how crucial this relationship is. The mother and daughter relationship
between Lavinia and Regina is in no way satisfying to either woman. Lavinia Hubbard, weak, ineffectual, and guilt-ridden has spent her life in fear. Psychically incomplete herself, she cannot empathically mirror her daughter Regina. As critic Sharon Friedman notes, Lavinia is consumed with guilt for not revealing her husband's trespasses and gradually retreats into a world of fantasy (84). Unable to receive the needed nurturance from her mother, Regina inflicts her narcissistic rage upon those around her and manipulates others in order to gain control over her life. While some may see these actions as those of a woman with a strong ego, they actually indicate a fragmented self in search of cohesion.

If ever there was an example in modern dramatic literature of a woman lacking in autonomy, that woman is Lavinia Hubbard. She yearns for recognition and acceptance, and her child-like qualities make her a candidate for being nurtured herself instead of providing that commodity to her children. Thin, nervous, and afraid, with a "high sweet voice," she seeks acceptance from her black servant, Coralee, and her statement to John Bagtry at the beginning of the play that, "There's got to be one little thing you do that you want to do, all by yourself you want to do
it" (347) indicates her desire for validation, for some sense of a psychically whole self which is not continually at the mercy of others.

However, this desire is unattainable for Lavinia. Completely dominated by her abusive, overpowering husband, Marcus, she lives in fear that he will not keep his promise, which he swore to on her Bible, to let her leave to go teach the black children in the Piney Woods. In The Future of Difference, Jessica Benjamin addresses the issue of the master/slave relationship between a man and woman as she notes Georges Bataille's use of Hegelian analysis to discover the psychic split between the person being violated and the one who does the violating. Benjamin writes:

The fact that the woman allows her boundary to be broken and the man breaks it is consonant with the positions each gender traditionally takes in differentiating with the mother. The girl tends to experience her continuity and merging with the mother, and the boy to assert his boundaries. The male position is to make the woman an object, both by his violence toward her and his rational self control. Bataille's notion of each partner representing one pole in a split unity, a part of an interdependent whole, suggests that the roles can be reversed. Both partners know and require their opposite half. (55)

The fact that Lavinia somehow feels that she deserves no better and that she must atone for the sin with which she has lived for thirty-seven years, and
the fact that she knows Marcus paid a judge to lie about his whereabouts the night of the Union/Confederate massacre, manifest themselves in her desire to teach the black children and, thereby, to absolve herself of guilt for her past. What she seeks subconsciously is to merge with her mother and to reestablish the safety and comfort of the first home she had, her mother's womb. She tells Coralee, "Just to go back where you were born and help little children grow up knowing how to read books... I'm going to be very happy, happy" (367). By establishing the school and teaching at it, she will not only atone for her guilt, but she will satisfy deep-seated longings to reconnect with her mother in that primal symbiotic state where she was part of her mother—where she was safe. Hellman gives us no clues as to the personality of Lavinia's mother, but if Lavinia were a real person instead of a literary character it would not be too large a leap to theorize that she was unable empathically to mirror Lavinia during the crucial pre-oedipal years of her development. The text suggests her arrested development by providing numerous examples of her child-like behavior even though it was Lavinia who taught Marcus to read music. Her role as a "child" is highlighted by examples of her asking Regina
if she, Lavinia, is properly dressed and by asking Coralee's permission to try the punch.

Lavinia longs for nurturance. Her desire to find that validation as a young child evidences itself with the revelation about her relationship with her grandmother. Her statement to Regina near the end of Act I indicates that she sought emotional support from her grandmother when she could not obtain it from her mother. She tells Regina:

Regina, when you don't frown you look like my Grandmama—the one who taught me to read and write. And 'twas might unusual, a lady to know how to read and write in the piney woods. (374-75)

It is interesting to note also that Lavinia will assume the role of a mother, i.e. teacher, a mother who will affect lives positively instead of one who has little impact on her children—as in the case of her own children. She agrees with Marcus that she's difficult to live with and that they were not meant to be together because being there with him in that house makes her feel as if she has sinned. Time and time again she says she wants to make good her sins before she dies. Her assertion that she does not fear death is another indication of her desire to return to the womb. In death she will be reunited with her mother.
Since Regina finds herself saddled with an emotionally dysfunctional mother, a weak, submissive woman who cannot take her place in partnership as the feminine head of the household, she must make certain choices. The outcome, her psychic wholeness—a cohesive self if you will—depends on whether the self she constructs is based on what her mother mirrors to her or what she reflects to herself. Indeed, Regina finds herself in the middle of an oedipal crisis—how to differentiate herself from her mother in order to have a better life, yet still remain connected.

Object-relations theorists posit several possible solutions to this psychic dilemma for the daughter: "she may reject the mother as a competitor for the father, or in more feminist terms, as an instrument of the patriarchal economy; she may identify with the mother in her desire for the same object—the father; or she may not make the switch at all, but remain fixated on the mother and presumably, develop 'abnormally' by keeping women at the center of her erotic (in the most expansive sense of the word) desire. Regardless of which scenario takes place, the pre-oedipal bond is never completely severed for the daughter" (Moore 6). Moore asserts that because woman is seen as inferior in our society, a daughter can come
to resist her mother or can strongly identify with her mother, indicating strength in unity. Either choice entails risks since fusion with the mother can lead to an undifferentiated self and denial of otherness. Total rejection can lead to what can be termed narcissistic self-destruction. Even if women do not go to these extremes, "lack of rigid boundaries between self and others at this early developmental stage can lead to more fluid ego boundaries for adult women" (Moore 7). The ramifications of such an occurrence are far-reaching for "[g]irls emerge from this period with a basis for 'empathy' built into their primary definitions of self in a way boys do not, but it can also mean that women may have difficulty even locating their own desires because the needs and desires of others have primacy" (Chodorow 167). Such consequences can be seen in the picture Hellman paints of the mother and daughter relationship between Lavinia and Regina in *Another Part of the Forest*.

The seeds for the scenario in which Regina Hubbard finds herself were sown during the pre-oedipal phase of her development. Her desire to merge, i.e. to fuse, with John Bagtry via marriage exemplifies her need for connection. Life with Bagtry in Chicago promises safety and stability, not to mention relief from a
doting and overly protective father as well as her conniving brothers. Her only chance to get away from this stifling environment is to marry. Her status as a female depends upon it. Since she is female or "other," she is objectified—devalued by this society. Marriage offers a chance to replace that original maternal connection.

Even more curious is Regina's choice of Bagtry as a husband. Sixteen years her senior, he exudes a certain charm characteristic of the landed southern gentry worn down by the rigors of war. Poor, with no hope of making Lionnet into the once thriving plantation of earlier years, he yearns for a change of scenery—Brazil to be exact. In Brazil he will be able to recapture the glory days when he had hopes of success—when his life was more exciting. Marriage to tempetuous Regina and a move to Chicago do not figure in his game plan. Constantly worried about his aunts' survival and about his ability to make Regina behave "sensibly," he seems almost "feminine" in the most perjorative sense of the word. Perhaps "prissy" is more to the point. His willingness to bed her is tempered by his acquiescence to proper appearances. God forbid that someone should see them kissing on the front porch. When the opportunity presents itself in
the form of Ben's loan to Birdie, Bagtry wastes no
time making his get-away.

Why Regina would choose such a weak and submissive
lover is no mystery if we look back to the pre-oedipal
phase of her development. Freudians would focus on the
oedipal stage, noting that Regina's task is to kill
(psychologically) her mother and take her place at her
father's side. In the family dynamics, she has
certainly moved herself to first place in her father's
affections, but the model for a potential husband was
fashioned in her mother's arms. Like Lavinia, Bagtry
is weak-willed, fearful, and flighty. Paradoxically,
he feels he will be safer on Brazil's battlefields than
in Regina's arms. Both he and Lavinia are fleeing and,
ironically, they are the only two in the play who reach
their destinations. Regina's hope for escape to a
safer environment, both physically and psychically, is
thwarted. Even more depressing is the fact that she
is psychically at risk. Her chances for autonomy are
diminished given that she has Lavinia for a mother.
Because of the forces within the patriarchal culture
which have shaped her responses as a mother, Lavinia
remains unable to nurture Regina successfully.
Essentially, since Regina cannot change mothers, she
must deal with the one she has. Hellman herself
concurs, as evidenced by her cryptic statement to Peter Feibleman: "Can't elect where you're born. You're stuck with your father and mother whether you like it or not" (Lilly 18). Unfortunately, if a woman does not receive strength and nurturance in the beginning—the framework for a cohesive self—she is bound to look for it elsewhere.

Regina's relationship with her mother, Lavinia, is one of tolerance interspersed with fits of irritation. She accepts the fact that her mother lives in a guilt-induced fantasy land, and she seems protective of her at the same time. When Lavinia insists that she will soon leave to teach at her black school, Regina chides, "Oh, Mama, are you talking that way again? (366). She exhorts Lavinia:

Put on your nice dress, Mama. It will do for tonight. We must order you new things. You can't go to Chicago looking like a tired old country lady—. (371)

Her words indicate her desire to change her mother into the woman Regina wishes herself to be—a new woman, not bound by the dictates of the patriarchal household in which she finds herself. Interestingly enough, Hellman gives us no clues as to why Regina thinks Lavinia is going to Chicago with her or even why she would want her to do so. Ostensibly, it is because a young woman could not properly travel alone at that
time, but even after Ben blasts her plan to meet Bagtry in Chicago by telling Marcus, Regina still includes Lavinia in her plans. After delivering her ultimatum to Marcus that she will "do it her way" or he won't ever see her again, she tells Lavinia, "Mama, I think we'll be leaving for Chicago sooner than we thought. We'll start getting ready tomorrow morning. Good night" (377).

Regina is in for a difficult battle, and her mother is no help. Since Regina cannot make decisions from a position of strength, she resorts to manipulation. While some people might argue that it takes a woman with a strong ego to manipulate these men, Regina's behavior really indicates a fragmented self striking out at the patriarchal restrictions forced upon her. Because she has not experienced satisfactory nurturing—the framework for a cohesive self—she exhibits "... profound anxieties of a self in danger of fragmentation and unable to find, or to believe in, the external mirror of cohesion it so desperately needs" (Layton and Schapiro 59-60).

The quiet, cool anger boiling within often erupts in her relationships with brothers Ben and Oscar but is seldom vented on her father. Indeed, Regina's relationship with her father can be characterized as
exceedingly close—almost one of lover to lover, instead of father to daughter. Regina makes his happiness her primary business. By keeping him happy, she hopes to con him into financing her trip to Chicago as well as her eventual marriage to Bagtry. She meets Marcus' call for coffee with, "Going to brew it myself, honey" (348), but when he questions the dresses she's extravagantly purchased she offers, "... I'll send back the dresses... Let's take our lunch and go on a picnic, just you and me. We haven't done that in a long time" (349). She is secure in the knowledge that she can manipulate Marcus into giving her what she wants. As she tells Ben, "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... Goodness gracious, that's been working for the whole twenty years I've been on earth" (379). After she tells Marcus about Ben's plan to cheat him out of the loan's proceeds to Birdie, she further scolds Ben with, "You know Papa always wins. But maybe you'll have your time someday. Try to get along, both of you. After Mama and I leave you'll be here alone together" (380).

Regina's seeming devotion to Marcus disappears, however, after Ben reveals Regina's sexual liaison with Bagtry. To his explosive demands insisting, "How
could you let him touch you? When did it happen? How could you?—Answer me!" Regina wearily replies, "... Are they questions that can be answered?" (395). She attempts to bargain with him, begging him to let her go away and then offering to come back to Bowden and make her home. As he angrily rejects her proposal, she delivers an ultimatum, "If I go that way I won't ever see you again. My way we can be together" (395).

When the family dynamics change and Ben gains control of the family fortunes by threatening to expose Marcus' sin of aiding and abetting the enemy, she switches allegiance. Her realization that Ben is "in Papa's chair, eating breakfast at Papa's table on Papa's porch" (415), signals a change in her actions. From sweetness and light, she explodes in rage, threatening Ben by asserting: "You can't stop my going and you're not going to stop it" (416). She vows to find out what's happening to make Ben so powerful, and when she does she tells him she will pay him back "with carnival trimmings." However, Oscar realizes how flimsy her threats really are as he cautions: "You sure got Mama's blood. Little while now, and you're going to be just as crazy as Mama" (418). Both women want to leave the family, but Regina's desperate machinations will not prove any more successful that Lavinia's weary
requests have. From Oscar's viewpoint, it is only a matter of time until she is reduced to submission like her mother.

To be a woman in this phallocentric culture is to be powerless. Regina realizes how little power she really has when Ben concedes that she will get to Chicago "someday" and, Regina answers: "When I'm too old to want it" (419). Marcus's feeble request to "Pour me a cup of coffee, darling," is granted, but as he positions his chair next to hers, the stage directions indicate that Regina rises, crosses the room, and sits next to Ben. Interestingly, Hellman, who cast and directed the play, considered several endings. One ending has Regina ignore Marcus as he attempts to sit by her, but she then moves over to make room for him beside her. Hellman's final choice indicates that Regina's next battle has begun. In order to survive, she must now manipulate her brother. 

Ironically, Lavinia gets her wish. Ben makes good on his promise to allow her to leave to teach at her black school, but Regina must marry Horace Siddens, a wealthy land-owner---an arrangement Ben has engineered. Unfortunately, the die is cast. The rage which Regina experiences as a young woman will follow her into adulthood as a wife, and later as a mother to
Alexandra. Ultimately, in *The Little Foxes*, this unaddressed rage leads her to be marked as a murderess and to earn a reputation as one of the worst (or best, depending upon your point of view) bitches in modern dramatic literature.

*The Little Foxes*, which was actually written and produced before *Another Part of the Forest* (it was produced Feb. 15, 1939), takes place in the spring of 1900. The Hubbard siblings, Regina, Oscar and Ben, have made plans to form a partnership with Mr. Marshall, a wealthy Chicago businessman in order to build a cotton warehouse. Horace Siddens, Regina's husband, who is at Johns Hopkins being treated for a heart ailment, has not yet agreed to put up one third of the needed money. When Regina finds out that Ben and Oscar plan to proceed without her, she dispatches her daughter, Alexandra, to bring Horace home. Upon his arrival, Horace refuses to take part in the venture. In the meantime, Oscar's son, Leo, has "borrowed," at the request of his uncles, Horace's railroad bonds from his safety deposit box to put up as collateral for Mr. Marshall. By doing so, the brothers can squeeze Regina out. However, Horace discovers the theft and tells Regina. When she threatens to use this knowledge against her brothers, Horace says he will foil her
attempt by saying he lent them the bonds. Regina will eventually get them—but by inheritance.

As Horace experiences chest pain, he reaches for his medicine and falters. Regina refuses to pick it up, and she refuses to call for help. When he is almost dead, she summons the servants to take him upstairs. Then she confronts her brothers and threatens to have them thrown in jail unless they take her in as the biggest partner. As the play ends, Alexandra is suspicious about what has happened to her father. Regina's overtures to her are rebuffed. She informs Regina she is leaving and will not return.

Although The Little Foxes is Hellman's most well-known and most often produced play, it is not her favorite. In Pentimento she notes it was the most difficult to write, partly because of the failure of Days to Come, but also because of the connection to her family (142). Critics' reactions are mixed. Joseph Wood Krutch lauds Hellman's gift for characterization, but allows that the play may seem less perfect than The Children's Hour "... because it is less inevitable in its development and occasionally more melodramatic in its action than it should be ..." (244). George Nathan credited Hellman with "... writing the truest and most honest play on her theme that it was possible
Leo Gurko, in The Angry Decade, says the play was a "superb illustration of President Roosevelt's oft-repeated thesis that property rights must not be put above human rights," but he also maintains that the play did not influence the political thinking of the tens of thousands who saw it (171). Gurko may be glossing over Foxes' influence. Certainly, the play addresses issues of evil and greed as portrayed by the money-grubbing Hubbards. At the same time, Hellman was well aware of the necessity of a woman being economically independent. Although Hellman would not characterize herself as a feminist writer, Sharon Friedman points out that Hellman's portrayal of Regina underscores the way in which powerlessness of women may instigate the most demoniac behavior. According to Friedman, "the characterization of Regina illustrates one way in which a woman might respond to her economic powerlessness when confronted with a situation where only power matters" (54).

Hellman imbues Regina, the mature woman, with the same characteristics as the younger Regina. Ever manipulative, Regina can be aggressive or exceedingly coy, depending upon the situation. From the play's first production, critics have castigated her for
being supremely selfish, conniving, evil, amoral, and even demonic. Carl Rollyson notes that Hellman had sown the seeds of Regina's character in her original notebook, outlining plots and character sketches:

Good looking but not attractive. Has headaches and uses them whenever necessary; she is an insane housekeeper; wipes her fingers on walls, floors, etc. to see if they are clean. If she loves anybody, it is her son, but she is strict with him too. She is not interested in the daughter. Has always been angry that her husband isn't richer than her brothers; but he is rich enough for her not to be put aside by them. Ben or Oscar has a carriage she likes and wants. Perhaps all through play wants to move to bigger town. (125)

Hellman dropped the son and gave Alexandra a bigger role in later drafts; in one draft Hellman has Horace banned to a third-floor sewing room and then to their former slave quarters. Through various revisions Hellman refined and reworked Regina's characterization, but as Rollyson notes Regina's "... sense of rivalry with her brothers, her high-strung perfectionism, and her desire to have a prominent place in a world far larger than the one she inhabits are abiding qualities in the final version of the play" (125).

Although later versions toned down Regina's conniving nature, both Tallujah Bankhead, who played Regina in the original play, and Bette Davis, who starred in the film, built upon Hellman's work and
created some rather ruthless interpretations of Regina. A number of reviewers saw Bankhead's portrayal as vicious and menacing. Grenville Vernon called her performance remarkable and noted, "Her Regina is a figure who might have stepped out of the pages of Balzac" (525). Bette Davis received equally enthusiastic responses to her performance. Bosley Crowther attested: "The play's original viciousness has been preserved, abetted by the 'relentless' camera of William Wyler and the acting of Bette Davis" (3).

This "across-the-board" strong response to Regina's character deserves further investigation, and by employing an "histrionic sensibility" to examine the play, one must Constantine Stanislavski's central question, "What is the action?" key to Regina's character. In other words, what is it that Regina wants most? The answer is "to empower herself." She wants to gain some measure of power which her present position in the family structure prevents. Since she cannot achieve that desire, she decides that she must get to Chicago. Chicago represents freedom, a new life, away from the restrictive familial bonds of her brothers. Chicago represents a chance for Regina to belong—a chance to have a life she will never have if she remains under Ben's and Oscar's thumbs. Chicago
Chicago also represents a chance for Regina to be economically independent.

On a psychic level, however, Regina is looking for a "self"—her "self." She seeks a healing connection she has thus far been unable to experience. Because Lavinia has been unable to nurture her, Regina must construct a self based on what she reflects to herself rather than what Lavinia has mirrored to her. Within Lavinia's tainted legacy lie the roots of Regina's low self-esteem which manifests itself throughout the play in fits of rage. Her behavior indicates the acting out of what Kohut calls the "grandiose self," and an inability to progress to a mature narcissism. However, this inability never causes Regina to lose sight of her main goal. Her relentless will to succeed and obtain some measure of the power bestowed upon males in her patriarchal culture permeates her actions and attitude.

She has a game-plan, and that plan involves the manipulation of men. Men hold the key to her survival. From the play's beginning, Hellman hammers home the reality that a woman must "handle" a man in order to achieve her goals. As authors Elaine L. Levin and Lynn Thaxton note, historically, "the major message the southern female child receives is a mixed message of
the importance of gaining covert strength through deviousness and manipulation" (83). In Regina's case, she must win over Mr. Marshall, which she has already stunningly achieved, Ben, Oscar, and, finally, husband, Horace.

From the first Regina focuses her feminine wiles upon Mr. Marshall, complimenting him by insisting they had saved the best bottle of port for his visit and assuring him that they were eager to read of Mrs. Marshall in the society pages "even down here." Although Mr. Marshall is impressed by Regina, it is obvious from the start that Regina is excluded from the family business deal by Ben's answer to Marshall's inquiry with a curt "Oscar and me. (motions to Regina) My sister's good husband is a banker" (143).

Certainly Regina recognizes that custom dictates a woman leave the room while the deal is sealed when she remarks, "I hope you don't find my brothers too obvious, Mr. Marshall. I'm afraid they mean that this is the time for the ladies to leave the gentlemen to talk business" (145). Even daughter Alexandra's fervent plea, "May I drive tonight, Uncle Ben, please? I'd like to" (147), is rebuffed. The place of females is this southern patriarchal culture is firmly established. A woman's hopes always rest upon being in
the good graces of a benevolent male, no matter how talented and aggressive she may be. Regina realizes this necessity as evidenced by her reply to Birdie as Mr. Marshall departs, "And there Birdie, goes the man who has opened the door to our future... You were charming at supper Birdie. Mr. Marshall certainly thought so" (147). Regina now knows that her goal, firmly fashioned in her youth, will finally come to pass in her adulthood. She instructs Birdie, "Don't look so scared about everything Birdie. I'm going to live in Chicago. I've always wanted to. And now there'll be plenty of money to go with" (148).

However, her euphoria is short-lived. Ben's announcement that Regina is excluded from the profits because husband, Horace, has failed to put up one-third of the needed funds, causes Regina to take action. She knows Ben and Oscar are not concerned with her well-being, but with maintaining control. Rather than retreat, she beats them at their own game by maneuvering herself to a stronger negotiating position. Demanding a larger share, she maintains:

... I don't know about these things. It would seem that you put up a third you should only get a third. But then again, there's no law about it, is there? I should think that if you know your money was very badly needed, well, you just might say I want a bigger share. You boys have done that. I've heard you say so. (153)
Where the extra share comes from is of no consequence to her. Only success is important as she notes, "... Well, you should know me well enough to know that I wouldn't be asking for things I didn't think could get."(154) Ben's final offer of forty per cent, the extra to be taken from Oscar's share, infuriates Oscar until Ben intimates that a possible marriage between Alexandra and Oscar's son, Leo, would keep the money in the family.

Critics who castigate Regina for sacrificing her daughter err in their interpretation. For example, Barrett Clark maintains that Regina is ready to "sell" Alexandra, to give up everything in order to achieve what she wants (91). At no time does Regina actually accede to Ben's proposal. Her machinations all conform to her master plan. She neatly sidesteps the issue by allowing that "there are considerations," and when pushed by Oscar she only promises to think about it noting, "Yes, Oscar. You have my word that I will think about it. Now do leave me alone" (156). She only appears amenable to a possible marriage with Leo in order to appease the "masculine mafia" who control her life.

Aside from Mr. Marshall and her brothers, Ben and Oscar, the man who most controls Regina's destiny is
her husband, Horace. Because he controls the family purse strings, Regina must have his consent, however astute her business acumen. Therein lies the challenge for Regina since their marriage has been only one of convenience for many years. She knows Horace is unlikely to leave Johns Hopkins, where he is being treated for a heart ailment, because she wants him to put up a share of the needed funds for Mr. Marshall's business proposition. So she sends Alexandra to persuade him to come home.

Upon his arrival she is solicitous, cautioning him to rest while chiding the others lest they upset him. The awkward moments appear when the two are alone. Regina tells him, "... I wanted to come and be with you in the hospital, but I didn't know where my duty was" (172). After a failed attempt at reconciliation, Horace refuses to participate, even though he maintains to Ben and Oscar that it is a good deal. This recalcitrant attitude escalates Regina's anger as she demands, "... I want to know his reasons now. ... We shall leave it at that! We have waited for you here like children. ... waited for you to come home ... we'll talk about it now. Just you and me" (178).

Regina's insistence upon a face-to-face showdown is not motivated by a demonic urge. Rather, it is the
desperate action of a woman fighting for survival. Unlike her mother, Lavinia, whose way was to escape through fantasy and madness, Regina takes the direct approach by confronting Horace. However, her behavior toward him is entirely solicitous at first. It is only after she realizes he intends to ruin her plans for escape by siding with her brothers that she refuses to get help when his heart fails. While one certainly cannot completely condone her actions, still one must accept Horace's behavior as a mitigating factor. Sharon Friedman notes that if one must label Regina a demon, her behavior is largely a response to the limited options of a woman's life, particularly the obstacles that leave her economically dependent (81).

In their work, Understanding Women, Luise Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach show that the internalization of the female social role denies women the possibility of a positive self-concept. They give three requirements of a woman's social role: 1. she must defer to others; 2. she must always be connected to others. 3. she must learn to anticipate other's needs (7-9). What Regina does is to put her needs first. It is more than just the money and the getting away. Money is simply a tool. It is what the money represents underneath. She has to get away to save
herself. To survive she has to assume a masculine role, much like Hellman felt she had to assume in order to succeed in a patriarchal culture. Regina now has the power to create her own life, and she uses that power.

In letting Horace die, it is possible that Regina is sub-consciously cutting the symbiotic knot with Lavinia, the mother who left her high and dry twenty years before to go off and teach her little black children in the Piney Woods. Regina's struggle is not with Horace, nor even with her bastardly brothers. It is within herself. Her feelings of powerlessness manifest themselves in destructive ways because she is restricted to the role the patriarchal culture has defined for her. A class system which assigns her second-class citizenship serves as a catalyst for action. She will claw her way out no matter how difficult her climb.

This "freedom-at-all costs" focus strongly influences her relationship with her daughter, Alexandra. Although Hellman does not depict a particularly close mother and daughter relationship in this play (nor in any of her plays), it is evident that Regina cares for Alexandra. As already mentioned, she will not allow her to marry Leo. That she accedes to
the possibility is only to pacify Oscar's demands. From the first Hellman portrays Alexandra as the dutiful daughter, primed to please her elders with the good manners and proper decorum expected of a southern young woman. Only seventeen, she experiences a rite of passage as Regina permits her a drink of port in Mr. Marshall's honor. At the same time, one notes a quiet determination within Alexandra's character coupled with a bold courage. For example, she would like to drive the horses (while escorting Mr. Marshall to the train station), a masculine privilege, although her Uncle Ben will not allow her to do so. This courage and determination permit her to challenge Regina when she informs Alexandra she will bring Horace back whether she wants to or not. She maintains, "No, I couldn't. If I thought it would hurt him" (158). To her Aunt Birdie, who fears they may make her marry Leo she replies," That's foolish Aunt Birdie. I'm grown now. Nobody can make me do anything" (159-60). Always solicitous of her father's well-being, she assumes an advocate's role by refusing him coffee upon his return home. She tells Addie, "... I'm the nurse now" (169). When Horace and Regina fight over the bonds, she pleads with Ben, asking him to make Regina stop. When that fails, she directly confronts Regina
asking, "How can you treat Papa like this? He's sick. He's very sick. Don't you know that? I won't let you" (181).

Act III reflects Alexandra's realization that she needs to "divorce" herself from her mother. During the "tea party" with Birdie, Horace, and Addie, Alexandra asks her father, "... when you feel better, couldn't we go away? I mean, by ourselves. Couldn't we find a way to go?" (189). Alexandra's insight into the family's dysfunctional nature is evidenced by her statement:

I guess we were all trying to make a happy day. You know, 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... (189-90)

Alexandra realizes that Regina is somehow responsible for Horace's death, and at the play's end she confronts Regina by telling her she is not coming to Chicago. Surprisingly, after a heated exchange, Regina acquiesces. In the two most important speeches of the play mother and daughter, albeit somewhat begrudgingly, accord each other a certain amount of autonomy. Regina insists:

Alexandra, I've come to the end of my rope. Somewhere there has to be what I want, too. Life goes too fast. Do what you want. I'd
like to keep you with me, but I won't make you stay. Too many people used to make me do too many things. No, I won't make you stay. (206)

For Alexandra, all the pieces of the puzzle finally fit. She tells Regina:

You couldn't, Mama, because I wanted to leave here as I've never wanted anything in my life before. Because now I understand what Papa was trying to tell me. All in one day Addie said there were people who ate the earth and other people who stood around and watched them do it. And just now Uncle Ben said the same thing. ... I'm not going to stand around and watch. I'll be fighting as hard as he'll be fighting (Rises) someplace else. (206)

This direct challenge to her mother is met with acceptance by Regina, who backs off from her confrontational stance. Telling her daughter, "I don't want us to be bad friends, Alexandra" (206), she extends a metaphorical olive branch, an invitation for Alexandra to come and talk and even sleep in her mother's room. Her desire to connect once more with her daughter in a symbiotic bond temporarily overcomes her wish to maintain complete control. In the play's last line Alexandra counters Regina's invitation with a question, "Are you afraid, Mama?" (207). In the stage directions, Hellman notes that Regina moves up the stairs and out of sight. Addie, smiling, begins to put out the lamps.
While fear may be a rather strong term here, it is true that Regina realizes Alexandra, flesh of her flesh and blood of her blood, cannot be manipulated like the others in the family. Regina's narcissistic personality will go to whatever lengths necessary to protect its fragile self—even to letting her daughter go. Nothing must stand in the way of getting to the promised land—Chicago.

The answer as to why Alexandra does not feel it necessary to manipulate others in order to gain control of her life lies in her relationship with Addie, her black nurse. By incorporating positive images of Addie, the wise and witty black woman who raised her, she achieves more of a cohesive self than other women characters in Hellman's works. Unlike Hellman, who was raised by her black nurse, the emotionally cold and distant Sophronia, the character of Alexandra internalizes aspects of the other and the relation to the other, thereby developing a quality of wholeness "... a sense of self-in-good relationship" (Chodorow 106). Alexandra is not different from her grandmother, Lavinia, in that she wishes to "do one little thing. . . all by yourself you want to do it" (347). To her credit, she does it. And without relying on a man's good graces. When she cannot obtain the love and
closeness necessary for mature development from her mother, she capitalizes on other relationships in the family besides Addie—namely, her Aunt Birdie and her father, Horace. Obtaining necessary validation from those persons allows Alexandra to have a composite mother surrogate. In addition, by refusing to be a party to her mother's "crime" and by leaving, she separates from her mother.

Examining the mother/daughter relationship in these two plays, permits us to witness the far-reaching ramifications of failing to honor the self. As Nathaniel Branden notes in *Honoring the Self*, "chronic tension conveys a message of some form of internal split, some form of self-denial or self repudiation, some aspect of the self being disowned or held on a very tight leash" (10). Hellman makes it stunningly clear. Regina refuses to become a prisoner of the choices made for her. While her behavior may seem extreme or bizarre, she is only protecting her self. For, as Branden notes, "the drama of our life is the external reflection of our internal vision of ourselves" (87). Because of Lavinia's inability to mirror to Regina the appropriate nurturance and to set boundaries which would give her a positive sense of self, Regina is denied psychological wholeness. She
has not achieved psychological separateness and remains as the infants described by Eichenbaum and Orbach as "still yearning and still in need of the psychological umbilical cord with mother" (24). While Hellman gives us no clues as to Alexandra's outcome, we can surmise that she has a better chance of experiencing more definite boundaries because of her validation by Addie, the chief component of her composite surrogate mother.

The issue at hand is much larger than an interpretation of any literary text. The continued mothering exclusively by females encompasses significant effects. What is necessary for healthy development is what D. W. Winnicott calls "good enough mothering," or what Eichenbaum and Orbach term "the continued meeting of needs so a woman can feel connection without merger" (43). Unfortunately, as Chodorow asserts, as long as only women mother, the goal remains elusive at best. Every woman needs to ask herself as she views her reflection, just whose hands are holding the mirror? If we cannot change the patriarchal culture in which we find ourselves so that all children can experience nurturing by both female and male, women are forever doomed to depend upon being in the good graces of some man while fighting desperately to protect the self (hers) being attacked. The outlook is grim. If
significant changes in child-rearing are not initiated, women will continue to be second-class citizens, forever fighting to achieve some internal sense of boundaries. Elena Giannini Belotti, in Little Girls, says it best:

... The essence of the mother penetrates the little girl and is absorbed by her. This means that everything depends on what the mother is like. But however exceptional she may be, she remains a woman; a being with lower social value than the man's, for whom tasks of secondary importance are reserved. If this is the model the girl must interiorize, girls have little reason to rejoice. (17)

One hopes that society and its views of parenting are changing. Otherwise, others, too, risk becoming as Hellman did, "unfinished women."

Unlike most of the mother-daughter relationships portrayed in Lillian Hellman's works, Marsha Norman's plays establish women who are able, at least in some measure, to work through the pain and suffering necessary to make peace with their mothers. Through this process, they achieve more cohesive selves. Usually women of humble circumstances, they recognize the truth and meet it "head-on." Each experiences a sense of "closure," of coming to terms with who, what, and even, where she is in life, and all come much closer to a "psychic wholeness" than do Hellman's characters.
That they are able to reach this enviable state hinges upon the psychologically healthy attitudes they are finally able to retain toward their mothers. Each woman realizes, if only subconsciously, that her mother is not the omnipotent, all-powerful mother who can give her what she wants, who can nurture her and then give her up to the world, who can successfully mirror to her the qualities she needs to become an independent person. Likewise, she realizes, at least in some part of herself, that her mother was never successfully "mirrored." Rather than continue the cycle that threatens to keep females forever victims of a "mother's milk" so poisonous it often cripples one's psyche forever, she lays to rest the childhood vision of the "perfect mother." While she may harbor some residual anger, she can mourn what was never possible and then get on with her life. She focuses her energy upon finding another "mother/object" with whom she can bond.

Norman's character in her first play, Getting Out, is a prime example. Unlike Jessie, in the Pulitzer Prize winning play, 'night, Mother, who kills herself rather than live out the drudgery of a life she will have with her mother, Thelma, Arlene seeks to
reestablish ties with her mother after she is paroled from prison. She longs to partake of family Sunday dinners, complete with Mama's pot roast and necessary nurturing. She longs for what never was, for what can never be. While her mother may have cooked a culinary "piece de resistance," the ingredients necessary for a healthy relationship are still missing. To Arlene's credit, she finally realizes this sad fact and eventually turns to a more positive "mother/object," her upstairs neighbor, Ruby. However, her journey to this important step in self-validation involves a long, tortuous process.

Brought up in a dysfunctional family, Arlene's psyche is so shattered it splits into two identities: Arlie and Arlene. Arlie, the angry, rage-filled child is the victim of familial abuse. Raped by her father, neglected by her mother, and ignored by her siblings, Arlie has no one to whom she can turn. As is the case in many dysfunctional families, an abused child becomes abusive. Angry at her father for the sexual abuse he has inflicted upon her, she also subconsciously blames her mother for her refusal to recognize it. Arlie's only way to deal with the tragedy is to split herself. She becomes the incorrigible Arlie, lashing out at everyone around her.
First produced in Louisville, Norman's hometown, at Actor's Theater, Getting Out reflects Norman's recollections of a young girl she met while working at a state hospital for the mentally disturbed. Louisville Times critic, Dudley Saunders, called the opening night production "...frightening, disturbing, often unpleasant, emotionally wrenching." (C16). Patricia R. Schroeder's assessment of the set, which includes a realistic cheap apartment surrounded by a catwalk of stairs and prison cells, illuminates the depth of Arlene's spiritual imprisonment:

This playing area is both literal and metaphorical: it is used to enact remembered scenes from Arlene's prison days, but it also visually illustrates the restrictions placed on Arlene in the world outside the prison. By constructing a prison-like, interior proscenium arch to parallel the exterior arch of the stage, Norman has visualized in a theatrical context Arlene's continuing imprisonment in limited and limiting social roles (Schroeder 106)

At the play's beginning, Arlie recounts in freakish and sadistic narrative, the dismemberment of her peer's pet frogs. In a scene so powerful it evokes an image of the ancient rite of sparagmos, where a victim is dismembered in order for the necessary rebirth or regeneration of the land, Norman metaphorically sets the stage for us, as participants, to envision Arlie as sacrificial victim. The hurt Arlie
seeks to inflict her rage onto something or someone else. Her childhood act of frog-killing becomes a prelude to her subsequent life of prostitution and petty crimes which eventually leads to prison.

All her young life Arlie seeks acceptance but finds betrayal. As a popular song denotes, she is "Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places." None of her personal relationships validate her worth as a human being: not Carl, her former pimp, who seeks to reestablish their "business partnership," nor Bennie, the prison guard, who eagerly volunteers to drive her to her apartment so she will not have to ride the bus, nor her prison acquaintances, including the women. The only exception is the prison chaplain, who gives her a new name, Arlene. His kindness to Arlie results in the hope of a rebirth, of a new Arlene. He lets Arlie know that she can become a new creature, that she can resurrect the strong side of her self, the new Arlene, who can live in peaceful co-existence with the old Arlie. But before Arlie can realize that hope, she must come to terms with the person who has betrayed her most of all--her mother.

Upon her release from prison, Arlene seeks to establish a relationship with her mother, indicating a longing for connection and a wish to return to that
primordial state where they were one. No matter that her mother did not contact her in prison, nor come to her rescue while she was abused by her father. Arlene, still hoping somehow to fulfill her fantasy of that "perfect mother," attempts a reconciliation. That driving primordial force, so powerful it overrides logic and common sense, decides the path Arlene takes. Past cruelties, however severe, are sublimated into the far recesses of the mind. While one might think they ought to matter, they do not. As Judith Viorst notes in *Necessary Losses*, even children who have been badly burned at the hands of their sadistic mothers still cry for them, still want them above any kinder persons a social service agency might provide (17).

Throughout the play, Arlene experiences her former self, Arlie, through flashbacks. Norman's stage directions indicate the psychic pain which resurfaces for Arlene when hearing her mother's knock:

_Arlie hears the knock at the same time and slips into the apartment and over to the bed, putting the pillow between her legs and holding the yellow teddy bear Arlene has unpacked._ (14)

As Arlene's awful memory of being raped by her father and ignored by her mother resurfaces, Norman sets the stage for the failed mother/daughter reunion. She tells us that the mother _"looks strong but is badly_
worn," and it is evident that, although Arlie has assumed her true self, Arlene, her mother remains unchanged. Her mother's refusal to embrace Arlene symbolizes her unwillingness to offer much needed affection. Likewise, it indicates her uneasiness at being in a one-on-one situation with her daughter. Although Arlene's statement that she doubted whether her mother would come is answered by a cryptic, "Ain't I always" (15), Arlene's mother erects a barrier in order to defend herself against Arlene's possible penetration. She will bring her towels and a teapot, but real affection, real connection remain a fantasy.

The first words from Mother's mouth are not ones of motherly devotion and positive regard. They are critical and demeaning, suggesting a person battling low self-esteem herself. Her indictment, "Didn't fatten you up none, I see. . . You always was too skinny. . . shoulda beat you like your daddy said. Made you eat" (15), indicates a woman who accepts abuse as a way of life. At the same time it shows her inability to accept her daughter's new identity. In flashbacks Arlie's painful cries recount the rape and her subsequent denials insist "... My bike hurt me. The seat bumped me" (15), but her mother defends Arlene's father asserting, "He wasn't a mean man,
though, your daddy" (15). Arlene's reminder, "I remember he beat you" (15) is met with a proud, "Yeah . . . and he was real sorry a coupla times" (15). Clearly, within the family structure abuse is not only tolerated but accepted as a given.

Critics such as Esther Harriott indict Arlene's mother for leaving when she learns the man's hat upon Arlene's bed belongs to Bennie, the prison guard, but her mother's anger encompasses more than just finding out about this new male relationship in Arlene's life. She will leave because she cannot accept Arlene's new identity as a strong woman—a complete metamorphosis from the weak, troubled child she once knew. The idea of a completely transformed Arlene troubles her mother. Beaten by her husband and overwhelmed by her recalcitrant children, she feels burdened by her mothering responsibilities. A grim life of poverty coupled with few parenting skills makes children seem like "bad news" all around. As she relates the story of picking up Arlene's brother, Pete, at the Detention Center, she tells Arlene," . . . All I gotta do's have somethin big goin on and I git a call to come after one of you. Can't jus have kids, no, gotta be pickin em up all over town" (17). A foreshadowing of her travail at becoming a mother is evident as she recounts an episode
of nausea while pregnant with Arlie:

. . . I'd been eatin peanut brittle all day, only thing that tasted any good. Then in he come with this chili an no sooner'n I got in bed I thrown up all over everwhere. Lucky I didn't throw you up, Arlie girl. Anyhow, that's how come us to get a new spread. This one here. (19)

Clearly, Arlene's mother feels children are a burden, not a blessing, and she fears having them infringe upon what little life she has left. As Arlene inquires about her sister Candy, her mother makes it clear she is glad Candy's gone because she "got her outta my house" (15). What she wistfully longs for is what Arlene herself is working toward—a self to call her own. Her remark, "I didn't always look so bad, you know" (19), and Arlene's validation, "You was pretty" (19) serve to underscore previous possibilities, admittedly remote, which are no longer options. Children mean work, and Arlene's mother is not equipped to handle the headaches and heartaches that come with the territory. While one is hard-pressed to mount an enthusiastic defense for Arlene's mother, it is obvious to even the most judgmental that she, too, is a victim—a victim of a patriarchal society which fails to recognize a mother as a person in her own right.

Jessica Benjamin, in *The Bonds of Love*, notes the importance of the child's seeing the mother as an independent subject and not merely an extension of the
child's ego. Benjamin suggests:

... it must be acknowledged that we have only just begun to think about the mother as a subject in her own right, principally because of contemporary feminism, which made us aware of the disastrous results for women being reduced to the mere extension of a two-month old. Psychology in general, and psychoanalysis in particular, too often partake of this distorted view of the mother, which is so deeply embedded in the culture as a whole. No psychological theory has adequately articulated the mother's independent existence. (23)

Likewise, Nancy Chodorow, in her most recent work, Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory, backs up Benjamin by noting that "perceiving the particularity of the mother must involve according the mother her own selfhood" (87). Certainly, this denial of her own selfhood influences Arlene's mother's inability to deal with the circumstances life has dealt her and contributes in large measure to her subsequent betrayal of Arlene.

Her ultimate betrayal of her daughter does not begin with the failed reunion at the apartment after Arlene's parole. Rather, it begins with her plea to Arlie's principal to put the incorrigible Arlie "away somewhere," which translates into a trip to a reform school. Actually, Arlie is betrayed twice. Not only is she sent away from home, away from the only mother she has ever known, she also carries the burdensome
knowledge which has caused her to "act up"—the secret sin of her father's incestuous attacks. Even such traitorous behavior does not quench the daughter's love for her mother.

In a poignant scene, Norman paints a picture showing just how strong the primordial pull is in this basic relationship. As Arlene's mother leaves the apartment to retrieve a broom from her cab, Arlie appears in a flashback. She valiantly defends her mother to another child, vowing that she is NOT skinny, has curly hair, and drives the cab to buy her family "stuff," "cause we don't take no charity from nobody, cause we got money cause she earned it" (21).

As Arlene peers into the mirror, looking for some positive attribute to encourage her, Norman shows us the power a mother's assessment often has over us as women:

(Closing the mirror, dejected, afraid Mother might be right). But you're too skinny and you got stringy hair. (21)

Sadly, mother's indictment, whether true or false, is often taken as gospel. This pervasive, and yes, outrageous, notion of the all-powerful mother sets up a dichotomy whereby the daughter ultimately suffers, and the mother cannot win. In a pathetic move Arlene makes another attempt to reestablish a bond as she
asks, "You still cut hair?" (21) only to be ignored by her mother. The truth, that Arlene's mother is incapable of meeting her needs, that she never was and never will be, as D. W. Winnicott terms it, a "good enough mother," and that she is troubled by that knowledge (if only subconsciously) is clearly shown by Arlie's subsequent flashback as she recounts, "Wanna know what I know about mama? She's dyin. Somethin's eatin up her insides piece by piece, only she don't want to know it. Ha. Ha" (21). Both women are caught in a downward spiral which ultimately culminates in separation.

However, before that occurs Norman reiterates numerous times the difficult time Arlene's mother has accepting her new identity, and Arlene's continuing attempts to reconcile. Her query, "So, you're callin yourself Arlene, now?" followed by "They call you Arlene in prison?" (21) is answered by Arlene's admitting, "Not at first when I was bein hateful..." (21).

This truth stated by Arlene incites another mournful diatribe:

. . . I ain't hateful, how come I got so many hateful kids? Poor dumb as hell Pat, stealin them wigs, Candy screwin since day one, Pete cuttin up old Mac down at the grocery, June sellin dope like it was
Girl Scout cookies, an you. . . Thank God I can't remember it all. (22)

Arlene's mother cannot accept change. She will always have a hateful Arlie. If she cannot escape her circumstances, she can surely blot them from her mind. Neither will she welcome reminders from the past. Arlene's pitiful ploy, "Maybe I could come out on Sunday for. . . You still make that pot roast?," (22) is ignored, then rebuffed with a firm, "Sunday . . . is my day to clean house now" (22). Arlene's fervent hope for motherly nurturing, complete with home cooking and warm hugs, is a dream. Her sad attempts to reconcile are attempts to recapture something that existed only in her child's mind.

Mother's effort to soften the rejection by maintaining that she would have written but "didn't have nuthin to say and no money to send" only serves to escalate the degenerating relationship. Arlene's revelation that she made money in prison is met with suspicion. True to her past behavior, Mother immediately judges Arlene guilty of lesbian activity, and Arlene's smug, "You jus can't make it by yourself" (22) does nothing to calm her fears. Her cruel assessment of Arlene's capability of ever getting back Joey, the baby she gave up for adoption, further twists the knife in Arlene's psyche. She cannot possibly
envision Arlene as a capable mother. Instead, she reminds her of what "she was like when she was a kid ". . . tellin lies, saying your daddy made you watch while he and me. . . you know," and then berates her for her former relationship with her pimp, Carl.

However, the straw which finally breaks the camel's back occurs when her mother finds Bennie's hat upon the bed. Arlene's truthful reply that Bennie, the prison guard, just drove her home from prison because she gets sick on the bus is met with an all inclusive, "I knew it. You been screwin a goddam guard" (25). Piling evidence upon evidence, Norman shows us that Arlene's mother will never believe her daughter because "no man alive gonna drive a girl five hundred miles for nuthin" (26).

In her mind, Arlene is going to have to pay him some way for the favor. She refuses to accept Arlene's firm avowal, "I ain't like that no more" (26). Indeed, she cannot. Her acceptance of the role of the all-powerful mother, which society places upon her, validates her pronouncement of Arlene's inability, in her eyes, to change. Mother sees all, knows all. As she relates, ". . . I'm your mother. I know what you'll do" (26). If mother says we cannot change, it is a foregone conclusion. It matters not what we want.
Mess up once; mess up always. She does not offer a smidgen of confidence in Arlene's new identity, and by her blind ignorance she summarily crushes any hope of reconciliation. She tells Arlene:

I knew it. Well, when you got another bastard in you, don't come cryin to me, cause I done told you. . . You took my spread without even sayin thank you. . . You're hintin at comin to my house for pot roast just like nuthin ever happened, an all the time you're hidin a goddamn guard under your bed. (26)

If she accepts the new Arlene, it means that Arlene is no longer like her mother. Arlene "smashes the mirror." She no longer exactly mirrors the object/mother. Her newly found strength poses a threat. Arlene assumes a position of control; she has power, goals, even a new name. Mother does not know how to deal with this new person. She wants to believe Arlene is still "the same hateful brat." Since she views her daughter as an extension of herself, Mother can only see this "new birth" as frightening. Something has happened for which she has no explanation.

Even so, Arlene still longs for her mother's approval, just as we all do, if we are completely honest with ourselves. It matters not whether we are fifteen or fifty or whether we are successful women in our own right, we still seek approval from our mothers;
likewise, we all struggle with viewing our mothers as individuals. We are our mother's daughter from the time we slip from the womb until they pull the shroud over us. When her mother turns away, delivering her final rejection, "Don't you touch me!," Arlene is stunned. A cold anger arises from deep within her as the wild, hurt, uncontrolled Arlie re-surfaces. As the two disparate selves battle, Arlene cautions Arlie twice, "No! Don't you touch, Mama, Arlie," then again repeats, "No, don't touch Mama, Arlie. Cause you might slit Mama's throat" (27).

As Leslie Kane notes, the feelings Arlene experiences toward her mother "do not stem from tonight's encounter but from years of betrayals and rejections, not the least of which is Mother's lack of intervention and protection when, as a child, Arlene, was sexually assaulted by her own father" (259-60). Indeed, Arlene's fear of killing her mother underscores not only the hurt and pain at the failed reconciliation, but serves to illuminate the anguish and betrayal she feels because of her years as an incest victim.

In a thought-provoking article in a recent issue of Signs, Janet Liebman Jacobs focuses upon research which addresses the nature of the mother-daughter relationship within incestuous families. Jacobs
details several possible roles which a mother may play in such a family including:

1) mother as colluder;
2) mother as voyeur;
3) mother as helpless dependent;
4) mother as victim. (23)

Of those four categories, one may surmise, although somewhat reductively to be sure, that Arlene's mother might fall into number four—that of victim. This mother "is prone to ignore or deny her daughter's victimization in order to maintain a thinly constructed sense of self-worth and the pretense of a tolerable reality" (Liebman 27). Certainly, denial is present within Arlene's family structure, both from Arlene and her mother. However, using an object-relations approach as an investigational tool, we can see both mother and daughter as victims of a patriarchal family structure which gives the primary role of nurturer to the mother. Because society gives her the sole responsibility of child-rearing, she becomes all powerful in the child's mind. If she is so powerful, a child's reasoning says she ought to be able to intervene and stop the incestuous assaults from the father/perpetrator. Often, however the mother is not even aware of the child's dilemma. Suggests Liebman in a discussion applying Chodorow's views:
the incest victim therefore experiences the powerlessness of women in the most personal and painful ways, first through her own victimization and then through the knowledge of her mother's ineffectuality. The rage that comes to dominate her relationship with her mother is the anger of betrayal as well as the anger of deception as the illusion of maternal omnipotence is destroyed in the face of the real power relations of paternal control and dominance. (508)

Because the daughter has internalized her mother's powerlessness, it is crucial that she separate (512). Since female victims of incest often turn their anger inward upon themselves, anger at the mother can actually facilitate the necessary separation and can provide a source of empowerment for the victim (512).

Such is the case with Arlene. Whether her mother knew or did not know about the assaults, it remains stunningly clear that Arlene must allow this anger toward her mother to surface. "The mother-directed rage represents a first stage in coping with the intense feelings engendered by the abuse" (Liebman 512). By acknowledging the rage and rejection, Arlene can take that necessary step toward survival. She can assert her autonomy and get on with her life--a life which will no longer include Mother. Her hunger for pot roast, a metaphorical longing for nurturance at her mother's bosom, will never be satisfied because her mother is emotionally incapable of giving Arlene what
she needs. Asserting her personal power, Arlene finally cuts the umbilical cord which threatens to strangle. Instead of again turning the anger she feels inward, she acknowledges it and transfers her need for connection, for another object-relation, to Ruby, her upstairs neighbor who becomes her mother-surrogate. Arlene must transfer her allegiance to another person. As Chodorow, in her most recent work, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*, avows, "Through their early relationship with their mother, women develop a sense of self continuous with others... the basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world" (91). Ruby can assume the role of nurturer, a surrogate-mother who will validate the new Arlene.

Unlike Arlene's mother, Ruby embodies the qualities one would hope to find in any "good enough mother," qualities which are necessary for successful mirroring. Ruby is honest, forthright, affirming, realistic and generous. She is empathetic rather than judgmental, as evidenced by her concern over Candy's plight. An ex-con herself, she knows the territory; she extends a hand to Arlene but does not push, for she recognizes Arlene's hesitancy, a hesitancy based on memories of lesbian inmates who befriended Arlie in hopes of returned favors. Instead, Ruby allows Arlene
time to build a certain amount of trust in the relationship. That trust firmly entrenched, Ruby shows her the truth—that the path to one's true identity involves assuming control over one's life, however difficult that decision may be. She recognizes Carl and Bennie, the pimp and prison guard, for the "no-goods" that they are and tells Arlene, "... You can wash dishes to pay the rent on your slum, or you can spread your legs for any shit that's got the ten dollars" (59).

Likewise, Ruby functions as Arlene's Demeter, the mythical goddess who rejoices when her daughter, Persephone, is finally returned from the pits of hell. In arguably the play's most poignant scene, Ruby rocks Arlene as a mother rocks her child, while Arlene confesses how she tried to stab Arlie with a fork while in prison—her pathetic attempt to rid herself of her evil nature. As Kane notes, Ruby "smoothes her hair, and rubs her back, giving Arlene the warmth she so desperately needs" (261).

As the play ends, the two disparate selves, Arlie and Arlene, are finally reconciled, and we see Arlene's triumph. The two factions warring within her psyche have finally coalesced into a more cohesive self. She now has a new object-relation, but more importantly she
is able to put the past to rest and get on with her life. Metaphorically speaking, she has found a new player for the game. Her mother no longer holds all the aces, as evidenced by the last scene where Arlie reminds Arlene of the time she was locked in her mother's closet and peed in all her shoes. As Timothy Murray points out, the effects of darkness and the lockup, a womb-like existence, as well as the sexual significance of peeing in her mother's shoes, highlight Arlie's relation to her mother (381). However, as Arlie relates Mother's question, "Arlie, what you doin in there?," and Arlie and Arlene simultaneously repeat, "Arlie, what you doin in there?" Norman shows us that Arlene now has her power. Stage directions at the play's end reveal that Arlene is "still smiling and remembering" as the "light dims on her fond smile as Arlie laughs once more" (65). She is finally comfortable within herself. The hurt child, Arlie, and the mature Arlene have melded into a confident young woman who now has the peace she so painfully sought. Once again, Norman shows us a woman who survives. Her survival may not be high-level, but she does reach a certain self-knowledge which enables her to triumph. She lays the past to rest as she embraces the future. As she and Ruby make plans to play cards later that
evening, we know Arlene has, indeed, experienced the "new birth" which the chaplain explained during her incarceration.

In summary, both Hellman and Norman, working from different historical vantage points, capture the essence of a woman's struggle to achieve a cohesive self. Both writers fashion strong female characters who fight to fill that often illusive "hole in the soul."

Using psychoanalysis as a basis for investigation, particularly Chodorow's theory of object-relations, facilitates our understanding of how women's identities are formed. These revelations, which show what can happen when growth is impeded at certain points, can serve as a catalyst for social change. By studying the depiction of mother and daughter relationships in dramatic literature, we have a clearer understanding of how our present patriarchal system can derail a female's fight for psychic cohesion.

Even Lillian Hellman, who vehemently resisted the term "feminist writer," insisting that she did not write with her genitals, recognized the profound effect her relationships with her mother and nurse had upon her. Hellman spent an entire lifetime reacting to the narrow definition of a woman society allowed her.
She seethed with an inner rage which spilled over into many of her female characters.

Heilman's "literary daughter," Marsha Norman, who recognized the "truth" Heilman told and who credits Heilman with giving her the courage to become a writer, was able to break away from her fundamentalist background. Although they do not understand her work, Norman's mother and other significant female family members affirm her. Norman has made peace with her past, and, not surprisingly, so do the majority of her female characters. Reflecting society's changing attitudes toward the depiction of women in dramatic literature, Norman has become an important prophet, pointing out the possibilities available to contemporary women.

Armed with these insights, we must accept the challenge before us. We must acknowledge our psychological legacy, that women are strongly connected to their mothers, and that mothers are victims of this symbiotic bond as much as daughters. We must realize that we need to affect change, using our new knowledge about how women's identities are formed to put in place new methods of child rearing.

As we break with our pasts, we can become the women we were meant to be. Mothers can descend from
their pedestals and lay down their burden of the "Great All-Knowing Mother." Daughters can stop wasting their energy on "mother bashing." After we have said our goodbyes, and grieved for our separation, we can get on with our lives. We no longer need suffer because we are making progress toward our goal--previously an illusion--fully cohesive selves.
NOTES


2 See Carl Rollyson, Lillian Hellman: Her Legend and Her Legacy (New York: St. Martin's, 1983) gives an excellent discussion in Chapter 13 on Another Part of the Forest which shows Hellman's process as she considers the various endings before deciding to have Regina move from her father to brother Ben. Hellman's emphasis was always on Regina's ability to control her own destiny. Rollyson suggests that most of the versions deal with how Regina can separate from her father.

3 Scholars disagree concerning Lavinia's role. Rollyson (243-247) maintains that Hellman makes her an agent of change. He views her from a position of strength, calling her "shrewd" because she refuses to part with the Bible where she recorded Marcus' underhanded dealings against the Confederate soldiers. Rollyson posits that Lavinia "finally turns against him because he will not allow her any sort of autonomy" (247). Actually, Lavinia operates more out of desperation than from a position of strength; she still must collude with her son in order to leave. Doris Falk, Lillian Hellman (New York: Ungar, 1978) calls Lavinia neither saintly nor crazy, but suggests that her character was Hellman's "way of setting things to rights with the ghost of her own eccentric, misunderstood mother, who had been a source of irritation and embarrassment at times to her daughter" (61).

5 See Esther Harriott, *American Voices: Five Contemporary Playwrights in Essays and Interviews* (Jefferson, N. C.: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1990) 78. Harriott focuses upon the fact that "... Norman's characters are at a critical point, when events of the past intersect with events of the present to bring about the need for a change in direction for the future. In that change lies the possibility of their redemption" (147).

Chapter II

The (M)Other Self

"Yours the voice
Sounding ever in my ears"

Madeline Mason-Manheim
"To My Mother"

A woman may move half-way across the world, even to Timbuktu, but she will never completely separate psychologically from her mother. That she may wish to is another issue altogether. No matter how successful she may be, she can never truly leave her mother because of the connection women experience as a result of having been nurtured primarily by a female caretaker. That connection forces her to seek that mirror image in other relationships. Her mother may be dead, but parts of her will appear in the people with whom the daughter chooses to interact. Within her "idealized other," she searches for unconditional love, nurturance, and acceptance, as well as the ability to let her be a whole self psychically—to let her be Other.

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In his work, *The Analysis of Self*, Heinz Kohut asserts that the "maintenance of self-esteem--and indeed of the self--depends on the unconditional availability of the approving mirroring functions of an admiring self-object or on the . . . opportunity for a merger with an idealized one" (21). Because, at some point in the daughter's pre-oedipal development, the mother, or primary caretaker, has failed to merge successfully, the daughter's need to find an empathic "self/object" (idealized other), is paramount. She persists in this search until one is found.

Certainly Lillian Heilman sought an "idealized other," one who would accept and nurture her as neither her mother nor her nurse could. Even though Heilman fiercely loved Sophronia, her black nurse, she found her cold and unaccepting. Eventually, Sophronia sought employment with another New Orleans family when Hellman was still a young child. Rebellious and manipulative throughout her adult life, as well as her childhood, Hellman finally found her "idealized other," in her thirty-odd year relationship with her lover and teacher, Dashiell Hammett. According to Kathie Carlson, in *In Her Image: The Unhealed Daughter's Search for Her Mother*, "Women also try to take care of their unhealed inner daughter by trying to find a mother in a
man. . . Much of the neurotic attachment and dependency that women get into with men is rooted in the needs of the unhealed child" (67). Although Hellman is almost always characterized as a hard-hitting, no-nonsense type woman, i.e. masculine, her need and desire for Hammett during their often stormy relationship is evident. Hellman supports this assertion in Unfinished Woman where she attests that she needed a "cool teacher," someone who could handle her outbursts of rage (53). In other words, she sought nurturance which she was denied in her earlier relationships with her mother and Sophronia, her nurse.

This chapter explores how the mother, although not physically present, influences relationships with the female characters' "idealized other." In her first play, The Children's Hour, Hellman's character, Martha Dobey, exhibits evidence of arrested narcissistic development in her relationship with roommate and business partner, Karen Wright, her "idealized other." The knowledge that she does have sexual feelings for Karen so devastates her that she "smashes the mirror" by committing suicide. As Carlson attests, "Another level of yearning for the lost mother that is prominent in the psychology of adult women is yearning for the mother we never had: a revalued, powerful, strong
positive woman to be connected to and to have come from" (20).

First produced in 1934, The Children's Hour was a stunning success and was successfully revived in 1952 during the reign of McCarthyism. The play provides an examination of the lives of two schoolteachers, Karen and Martha, who have been friends since college. Karen is planning to marry Joe now that the school is finally solvent. The fly in the ointment is Mary Tilford, a "problem child," who, for reasons no one can discern, constantly lies. Her most potent lie, that Karen and Martha have a lesbian relationship, causes her grandmother, Mrs. Tilford, to call the other parents and insist that their daughters be withdrawn from the school. Karen and Martha's law-suit against Mrs. Tilford fails because Martha's aunt, Lily Mortar, does not return to provide essential testimony about the truth of the two women's relationship. In the end, Karen loses Joe, and Martha blows her brains out with a bullet when she realizes that, subconsciously, she does have lesbian feelings for Karen. At the play's end, Mrs. Tilford comes to apologize. Since she has uncovered the truth—that Mary threatened to expose her classmate Rosalie for stealing a bracelet if she did not corroborate Mary's lie—she offers restitution.
Her offer comes too late, and as the curtain descends, Karen half-heartedly says, "I'll go on somehow, I suppose" (71).

The play has its genesis in a situation which actually occurred. As Hellman was casting about for an idea for her first play, Dashiell Hammett directed her to a book written by William Roughhead in 1931. The book recorded a number of little-known lawsuits. *Closed Doors, or The Great Drumsheugh Case*, told the story of a lawsuit involving two teachers in a girls' school who were charged with lesbianism because of the insinuations of a "malicious child." Critical reaction, though enthusiastic, tended to focus upon the forces of good and evil and the implied lesbianism in the play. Hellman later wrote that, "On the stage a person is twice as villainous as, say, in a novel. When I read that story I thought of the child as neurotic, sly, but not the utterly malignant creature which playgoers see in her" and that "This is really not a play about lesbianism, but about a lie." Robert Garland called it "an ardent and arresting study in abnormality" (7). Although Robert Benchley criticized Hellman for her tendency to pile tragedy upon tragedy like O'Neill, he praised Hellman for her courageous
writing (34). Joseph Wood Krutch, who criticized the last act, answered charges about the lesbian theme noting, "Whatever the original intention of the author may have been, it is plain enough that the play as it stands is a play about a Machiavellian child, not a play about two women falsely accused of a Lesbian attachment" (610).

While The Children's Hour does address the issue of good and evil, it also provides yet another example from Hellman's work of an "unfinished woman." Martha exhibits all the classic symptoms of a woman who has failed to receive the necessary strength and nurturance—the framework for a cohesive self—in the beginning of her life; thus, she is forever bound to search for that self elsewhere. Strong-willed, nervous, and high-strung, Martha places an unfair burden upon her relationship with her colleague, Karen. Only Karen can satisfy whatever Martha perceives to be her needs. Although it is true that Karen and Martha become prisoners because of Mary's lie—indeed, they lose everything they have struggled for—they would have had to face their relationship eventually. Mary's lie just hastens the process. Both women realize the need to "set Mary straight." At the same time, both realize that they need to unload Martha's aunt, the
aging actress, Lily Mortar, who serves no useful function in the school's operation.

Curiously, Hellman gives us no clues about Martha's mother, although she clearly sets the tone for Martha's relationship with her aunt. This failure on Hellman's part to include, even remotely, any mention of Martha's mother possibly indicates a failed relationship—one where, to borrow Kohut's terms, a fragmented or fragmentation-prone self has refused (or been unable) to provide the empathic mirror by which the daughter can grow and thrive. In any case, Martha's malevolent reaction to her aunt can safely be described as odious at best. The two are as compatible as oil and water.

When Karen responds to Martha about Aunt Lily's test of great acting which is to do Hedda Gabler on one foot, with "You must have had a gay childhood," Martha bitterly replies, "Oh, I did. I did, indeed. God, how I used to hate all that—" (13). Clearly, Martha's present animosity toward her Aunt Lily is nothing new.

Past familial ties pose no threat, however, when it comes to pleasing Karen and doing whatever is necessary to continue their relationship. What stands in the way is Karen's fiancé, Joe. Martha feels him encroaching upon her territory as is evidenced in her
question, "Isn't he always on his way over here?" (14), but Karen's calm reply that they are, after all, going to be married only serves to threaten Martha more. When she hears that they may marry at the end of the school term, her distress is all too evident. Nervously playing with a book on the table, she asks, "Then we won't be taking our vacation together?" (14). Martha does not want there to be a threesome as she tells Karen, "I had been looking forward to someplace by the lake--just you and me--the way we used to at college" (14).

Obviously, Martha is afraid. If Karen and Joe marry, Martha will lose her "idealized other." As Layton and Schapiro note, "If there is loss or massive disappointment in the idealized self object, the person will be forever dependent on others to provide ideals. Because of the structural deficit, however, the narcissistic person will not experience the other as other, but rather as a missing part of the self, that is, as a selfobject" (4).

Certainly, Martha uses her relationship with Karen to control. Her possessive attitude reflects a deeply felt fear that she will be displaced in Karen's affections if she and Joe marry. Most of all, she fears losing her empathic object relation--Karen. Struggling
to maintain that all necessary status quo, at least in her mind, Martha lashes out at Karen, insinuating that the school will deteriorate if Karen proceeds with her plans. The dialogue between the two shortly before Joe arrives underscores the accelerating tension as well as Martha's terror at the unfolding events. Martha begins:

It's been so damned hard building this thing up, slaving and going without things to make ends meet--think of having a winter coat without holes in the lining and now when we're getting our feet, you're all ready to let it go to hell. (15)

Karen's no-nonsense reply, which reiterates that her decision will not affect the school and that Martha is "... making something out of nothing" (15), does not even phase Martha. Discounting every word Karen has just spoken, Martha replies, "It's going to be hard going on alone afterward" (15) and Karen's sharp observation, "For God's sake, do you expect me to give up my marriage?" (15) only underscore Martha's subconscious feelings. That is exactly what Martha desires. Driven by fear, she is unable to perceive the reality of the situation; for Martha, her "safety net" will no longer exist.

James M. Masterson, discusses this irrational fear, which he terms "abandonment depression," in his recently published work, The Search for a Real Self,
Masterson writes:

... the clinging may no longer be to the real mother, but to another person who represents security and approval. In effect, we expect someone to take care of us like a parent whether that person wants to or not. In either case the false self argues convincingly that clinging is the only reliable strategy to avoid feeling guilty. (69)

Even Lily Mortar, Martha's irascible aunt, rightly realizes Martha's fear because of the behavior transformation Martha exhibits when Joe's around. An aging actress from the "gilded age," Aunt Lily trains her young charges in elocution and proper manners, but, in truth, she serves no real function in the school. Both women want her to leave. Temperamental and testy at Martha's seemingly generous offer to send her to England, where she can visit friends and former haunts from her halcyon days, she shocks Martha with her insightful observation:

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

Aunt Lily's potent perception only adds more fuel to the fire as she notes:
You're fonder of Karen, and I know that. And it's unnatural, just as unnatural as it can be. You don't like their being together. You were always like that even as a child. If you had a little girl friend, you always got mad when she liked anybody else. Well, you'd better get a beau of your own now—a woman of your age. (18-19)

Martha's vitriolic response to Aunt Lily's accusations is tempered by the sounds made by Evelyn and Peggy who listen outside the door; momentarily, after Martha dismisses the girls, Joe shows up and Aunt Lily exits as she gives Martha "a half-malicious smile."

Even Joe realizes Martha's unhappiness at the approaching marriage:

... You and I have something to fight about. Every time anything's said about marrying—about Karen marrying me—you—I'm fond of you. I always thought you liked me. What is it? I know how fond you are of Karen, but our marriage oughtn't to make a great deal of difference—. (21)

Martha's immediate "God damn you," followed by her "... I'm sorry. I'm a fool, a nasty, bitter—" (21) underscore her conflicting emotions. As Joe hugs her, Karen appears, and Hellman fashions the plot twist for the eventual downfall of the school as Mary manipulates the other girls and finds a foolproof way, blackmail, for leaving school.

Act II accelerates the action which serves to hasten the disintegration of every meaningful relationship in the play. Imaginative Mary, who slyly
intimates that Karen and Martha have a lesbian relationship, tells her grandmother:

Well, a lot of things I don't understand. But it's awful, and sometimes they fight and then they make up, and Miss Dobie cries and Miss Wright gets mad, and then they make up again, and there are funny noises and then we get scared. (36)

Critic Allan Lewis, writing in American Plays and Playwrights of the Contemporary Theatre, describes Mary as a "malicious brat," and suggest that she "destroys good people in a world where evil is too prone to be accepted" (106).

When the showdown at Mrs. Tilford's finally occurs, as Karen and Martha arrive, Karen struggles with telling Joe just what the ruckus is all about, "That—that-Martha and I are—in love with each other. Mrs. Tilford told them" (44). Interestingly enough, Martha is the more vocal one: she exhibits more raw emotion, almost as if she has more to lose by facing such serious allegations. When Karen does finally become more emotionally overwrought, Martha gets deadly serious, slowly confronting Mrs. Tilford with, "So you thought we would go away... there must be something we can do to you, and whatever it is, we'll find it." Martha is ready to fight, and as "monster Mary" bullies Rosalie into supporting her lie because she fears Mary
will tell about a bracelet she stole, one has hope that Martha's fierce determination, coupled with Karen's courage and Joe's support, will provide whatever is necessary for the women to survive this awful attack. Unfortunately, it is not to be.

In Act III, the disintegration of the school, due to Mary's lie, as well as the unraveling of every important relationship in the play is complete. As the curtain rises, one is struck with the change which has taken place. Though physically unchanged, the room is dull and lifeless, much as its two inhabitants. Time stands still now because of the isolation both women experience. They cannot go to any store or make any public appearance because of what they have suffered. Karen recoils at the stare and snicker of the delivery boy, and Martha struggles to maintain herself by hanging on to everyday rituals such as a bath or meals or combing one's hair. She tells Karen, "You wake up in the morning and say to yourself, the day's not entirely empty, life is rich and full: at five o'clock I'll comb my hair" (53).

Martha's loyalty and support for Karen as her "idealized other," are emphasized by the sarcastic castigation she heaps upon Aunt Lily when she returns as though nothing has happened during her absence.
Martha's "Where the hell have you been?" (56), as well as her acrid, "You've come back to pick the bones dry. There's nothing here for you" (58), elicits a sniffling whine from Aunt Lily: "How can you talk to me like that?" (58). But Martha's stinging reply, "Because I hate you. I've always hated you" (58), reveals the puissant emotion with which she regards this female family figure. Only Karen can provide the connection she desires. However, Martha's subsequent discovery, that Joe has, indeed, left Karen serves to hasten the play's precipitous decline to overwhelming tragedy. With this unwelcome news, Martha realizes that any attempt to leave and seek a new life is now destroyed and that she, by virtue of the unfounded charges, has played a major part in the dissolution of Karen's future happiness. Karen's "He thought that we had been lovers" (63) is met with unbelief, anger, and denial from Martha as she struggles with feelings buried so deep within her psyche she doesn't realize she has them. She denies any hint of sexual feelings for Karen as she counters,

... I don't love you. We've been very close to each other, of course. I've loved you like a friend, the way thousands of women feel about other women. ... It's perfectly natural that I should be fond of you, that I should-- (65)

This remark only elicits a listless, "Why are you
saying all this to me" (65) from Karen. Martha's shocking reply, "Because I love you" (65) is finally followed by her horrible confession, "I have loved you the way they said" (65). Karen's deliberate attempt to absolve Martha of any guilt is met with one of the most important speeches of the play--Martha's realization that she does have an overpowering need of Karen that is not satisfied by the usual relationship most women friends enjoy. Her poignant plea reveals the depth of her anguish as she tells Karen:

I've been telling myself that since the night we heard the child say it; I've been praying I could convince myself of it. I can't, I can't any longer. It's there. I don't know how, I don't know why. But I did love you. I do love you. I resented your marriage; maybe I wanted you all along; maybe I tell it by a name; maybe it's been there ever since I first knew you--. . . I never felt that way about anybody but you. I've never loved a man before. . . I never knew why before. Maybe it's that. . . I feel all dirty and--. . . I can't stay with you anymore, darling. (65-66)

This realization, that she does have sexual feelings for Karen, culminates in suicide, and, for all intents and purposes, ends the play's action.

Critics such as Brooks Atkinson and Eric Bentley correctly criticize Hellman's addendum where Mrs. Tilford arrives to attempt proper restitution for the destruction of so many lives. It is Martha's
overpowering need to destroy herself which should elicit our deepest sympathies and end the play.

In an insightful article which discusses the powerful conflict between nurturance and autonomy in mother-daughter relationships, Jane Flax suggests a possible reason for Martha's radical behavior:

The power of women's erotic memories and wishes for the mother may not be expressed in a directly sexual form. They may not even be available to consciousness. But their power is strong enough to frighten any woman in whom they are even semiconsciously aroused. (183)

Karen has provided the empathic mirroring Martha needed, yet Martha fears autonomy. First she fights Joe for territorial rights to Karen; then she agrees to go live with them, if only temporarily, in Vienna. Yet most of all, she fears the knowledge of this newly-cast relationship with Karen. Indeed, she is waging an internal struggle much more life-threatening than the one Mary's sinful lie has placed upon her. She ultimately loses because this threatening knowledge has caused an unhealable rift in the relationship. Karen can no longer function as the "new mother," i.e. "idealized other." As Flax asserts, "Only through relationships with other women can women heal the hurts suffered during their psychological development" (179), which supports Chodorow's assertion that women view
themselves relationally. However, for Martha the damage is done. She makes the decision to "finish" herself with a bullet, but like her creator, she, too, remains an unfinished woman. Her only hope lies in death—a state where she may, again, return to the womb-like safety she once experienced within her mother's body. Her worldly struggle here has ceased.

However, for the other women who still struggle with issues of nurturance and autonomy, Flax's advice (and Chodorow's as well) to begin today the attempt to recreate ourselves rings crystal clear. Regardless of the hand our unsatisfying relationships with our mother has dealt us, no matter how much she may still psychically control us, our identity is at stake. We must mother ourselves, must nurture ourselves, must seek out those relationships, both personal and political, which can help to heal the psychic split we we have all experienced to some degree. Most of all, we must begin.

Indeed, we must. For if we fail to begin, we will be tempted either to pull the trigger as Martha, or manipulate men as Regina in Another Part of the Forest and The Little Foxes, or we will doom ourselves to a fate as did Hellman, always searching for the "truth," yet never really knowing what we mean by "truth," and risking fragmented selves who remain unfinished women.
The evidence that Hellman's search continued surfaces in her highly-successful play, *Toys in the Attic*, which was given the 1960 Drama Critics Circle Award. The idea for the play came from Hammett, who suggested that she write about a man whom people want to be rich and successful, but who realize, when that success comes, that they do not want him that way. Hellman relates in *Pentimento* that she could only fashion the story if she changed it to focus on the women surrounding that man—women who assert that they want him to succeed, but actually need his failure for their survival (170).

Set in New Orleans, the play revolves around two sisters, Anna and Carrie Berniers, and their younger brother, Julian. The sisters, ages forty-two and thirty-eight respectively, have consistently made sacrifices for Julian even though they continually fantasize about taking a trip to Europe "someday." When Julian, who marries the young, nubile girl-child, Lily, suddenly reappears one year later with bulging pockets and extravagant gifts, including the paid-up mortgage and tickets to Europe, both Anna and Carrie are dismayed. Julian, with the help of his former lover, Charlotte Warkins, has purchased land which Mr. Warkins needs for a developmental deal he is
overseeing. By helping Julian, Mrs. Warkins can come up with the necessary finances to leave her brutish husband and begin a new life away from New Orleans. By the same token, Julian will have enough finances to repay his sisters for their sacrifices and start a new, lavish life for Lily and him.

Their carefully plotted plan disintegrates when Carrie overhears Lily's mother, Albertine Prine, and her live-in black chauffeur, Henry (who happens to be Mrs. Warkins' cousin), speculating on the possibilities that Mrs. Warkins is giving the money to Julian. Because of her tremendous jealousy where Julian is concerned, Carrie lets Lily know that Julian is seeing Mrs. Warkins. Confused and naive, Lily calls Cyrus Warkins and asks him to tell his wife that she can have Julian if she will let Lily have him one more year. Then she ignorantly reveals the meeting place where Julian and Mrs. Warkins will cement the deal and exchange the money. Warkins' thugs find and beat Julian badly, after which he returns to find Carrie and Anna sympathetic and comforting. The family's former status quo has returned, except, as Albertine points out, there are four family members now and not three as Carrie remembers.
Generally, critics gave the New York production approving reviews. John Chapman called it "vigorous and absorbing drama" (7). George Oppenheimer praised it as "a rich and rewarding shock treatment administered to a sick season" (17). Some were less enthusiastic. Brooks Atkinson appreciated the dramatic candor of the play but suggested that it was one of Hellman's "minor works." Robert Brustein allowed that Hellman's "new flirtation with Freudianism" was a departure from her previous plays, yet its theme—"that 'there's something sad in people not liking what they want when they get it'—is one that comes periously close to homily" (New Republic 22).

Characteristically, critics focus upon the evil fostered upon Julian, all in the name of "love." Notes Katherine Lederer in Lillian Hellman:

There is plenty of "love" in the play, but love is destructive when the giver and the recipient fail to understand its nature—and their natures. And money is destructive when it forces the characters out of their comfortable, familiar life-lies, lies begun in their childhood, their origins forgotten like toys in an attic, but still subconsciously directing their behavior. (94)

Regardless of Hellman's focus on the family relationship and the purposed evolution of evil couched in the guise of love, the fact remains that, once again, a mother, albeit a dead one in this case, lies at the heart of much of the behavior we see in this
dysfunctional family. Indeed, Anna's and Carrie's need to have Julian dependent upon them reflects their search for an "idealized other," a "brother/mother" who will need as well as nurture them and who will give unconditional love in a way their original mother never could. As Chodorow notes in Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory, "What comes to be internal includes what originally were aspects of the other and the relation to the other" (105). Eichenbaum and Orbach discuss, not only the importance of this mother/infant relationship, but its power as well as they assert that the mother "is embedded in almost magical terms" (17).

Furthermore, Anna and Carrie are examples of a doppelganger, a double representing two halves or two aspects of the same person. This phenomenon is evident early in the play as Albertine Prine, Julian's mother-in-law, arrives searching for Lily. While talking with both sisters, she confuses one with the other and muses, "Sometimes I can't tell which of you is speaking... Your manner, Miss Carrie, is so, well, so Southern. And then, suddenly, you are saying what I had thought Miss Anna might say. It is as if you had exchanged faces, back and forth, forth and back" (727).

Hellman paints a compelling picture of Anna as the maternal, sensible side, while Carrie represents the
repressed sexual side. Anna splits off from Carrie eventually when she takes the ticket to Europe, readies herself to leave and notes, "Someday I will ask myself why I took my mother's two children to be my own" (746). Her answer, from an object-relations standpoint, is obvious. She does so because she wishes to reproduce that initial pre-oedipal bond in the form of an "idealized other." Loving Julian, the baby brother, results, at least psychically, in maternal approval and is a bond which furnishes necessary nurturance to an unmarried woman with no life of her own. After all, as Anna tells Julian in Act I, "You are our life. It is we who should thank you" (736).

At the same time, Carrie, the younger sister, wishes, subconsciously, to become her brother's lover. Even Anna recognizes this wish as she tells Carrie, "You lusted and it showed" (771). However, Carrie, in her own mind, represses that sexual desire. Even Lily, Julian's young wife, knows as she tells Carrie about Julian's childhood rememberance from Gus that "Carrie left her vagina in the icebox" (775). As Jane Flax suggests:

The power of women's erotic memories and wishes for the mother may not be expressed in a directly sexual form. They may not even be available to consciousness, but their power is strong enough to frighten any woman in whom they are semiconsciously aroused. (187)
Carrie's desire for Julian surfaces in her behavior toward Lily. Angry that Julian's marriage has usurped her position as his "Carrie-pie," Carrie causes the collapse of Julian's new-found independence. Both selves only reunite when Julian returns a broken man. Carrie soothes him with her pretty purr, coaxes him to take a nice bath, and promises him some good, hot soup for comfort. As Katherine Lederer asserts, "Julian's success forces Carrie to face the truth that she preferred him dependent" (98).

Anna agrees that they really did not want all the fancy presents he had originally bought. All is well. Julian can begin again in the bosom (decidedly a key word here) of his loving family. The three are a team again. However, Albertine pointedly reminds Carrie that now there are four to which Carrie reluctantly accedes.

Memories of mother are present from the play's beginning. Carrie's memories are, however, more positive than Anna's. In Act I, both women discuss plans to sell the house and take the long-awaited European trip. Carrie notes that she has never liked the house, nor has Julian:

That's why we used to have our supper out here on the steps. Did you ever know that's
why I used to bring Julian out here, even when he was a baby, and we'd have our supper on the steps? I didn't want him to find out about the house; Julian and I. Nice of Mama and Papa to let us, wasn't it? Must have been a great deal of trouble carrying the dishes out here. Mama had an agreeable nature. (719)

Interestingly, Hellman mentions in her memoirs that the only time she ever saw her Aunt Hannah (her brother's sister) show any temper occurred when Hellman's mother insisted that she finish her dinner. Hannah said she had decided at age twelve to quit eating with people and her grandma. She brought the young Hellman a tray to the steps of the front porch (Unfinished Woman 29).

Anna's crptic reply "I carried the dishes out" (719), coupled with her admonition to Carrie to put flowers on Mama's relatives' graves herself speaks volumes. Carrie's firm retort that ". . . Mama would want us to. . . " elicits no concern from Anna. She replies, "I don't know what the dead would like. Maybe Mama's changed" (723). Anna does not have the same compulsion to respect Mama's wishes as Carrie seems to have. Anna further distances herself from her mother in Act II. After Julian's disastrous attempt to lavish presents on his loved ones during a ridiculously extravagant party, Carrie admonishes Anna the next
morning, "How could you have slept last night? Mama used to say you could sleep through anything" (744). Anna's reply reveals the tension in the mother-daughter relationship as she notes, "Mama believed that lack of sleep was a sign of good breeding. Do you remember the time she said she hadn't slept for two years? Yes, I heard Lily, if that's what you mean" (744). Mama makes her attitude plain. Anna does not measure up. At the same time, Carrie's constant wish to accede to a dead mother's wishes, coupled with an overpowering desire to control her brother's life, indicate a wish to reinvent Mama in a different time. Perhaps, this time Mama will come closer to reaching that icon of virtue captured in the myth of the "all perfect mother."

Each sister assumes a certain persona evident throughout the play. Anna exhibits behavior which one characteristically associates with a maternal disposition. For example, Anna, acting in a motherly fashion, chides Carrie, telling her to close her dress when Albertine Prine comes to visit. Likewise, when Julian arrives bearing outrageous gifts and flippantly dismisses the failure of his shoe factory in Chicago, Anna admonishes, "Don't be flip with me, Julian" (732). She exudes a common-sense approach which many of us associate with our mothers' solutions to our problems.
When Carrie castigates her for eating, even though Carrie is worried sick about Julian, Anna maintains that one must carry on, telling Carrie, "I think it's best to continue" (729). Her maternal instinct makes itself known as well in the scene where Julian has just left to consummate the business deal with Cyrus Warkins, which will make him independently wealthy. Anna, too, places her hope on Julian, her "idealized other." In a particularly poignant statement she asserts, "... I wanted to be around the children he will have. I wanted something nice to grow old for. I held on to that and prayed for it. (very softly) This time he will go forever" (737). Anna's despair is evident. Speaking from a psychic standpoint, she stands to lose more than a brother--but a mother as well. That all important bond, symbolized in the presence of the "idealized other," is in danger of being broken.

For Carrie, the concept of her "idealized other," manifests itself in her subconscious longing to play the role of Julian's lover, even, perhaps, his wife. When Julian finally arrives, with his girl-child wife, Lily, in tow, Carrie calls out, "Yes, that's your Carrie on the porch. I can still jump. Shall I jump, and you will catch me?" (730). This behavior seems
rather ridiculous for a thirty-eight year old woman. Clearly, Carrie longs to be in Julian's arms. At the same time, she works to keep him dependent upon her (and Anna) by always slipping him money when his financial ventures fail, as they eventually do.

Curiously, Carrie seems to know much about marriage, especially since she is a single woman. When Anna questions her as to how she could possibly know that Lily could not be pregnant, she smugly replies, "I just know" (695). Obviously, on a subconscious level, Carrie wishes to be married to Julian. She would be the good wife, one who would never keep secrets from her husband. In a conversation during which Anna challenges her knowledge that a good wife tells her husband everything, Anna squashes her assertion:

We don't know anything about a good marriage or a bad one. I read somewhere that old maids are the true detectives of the human heart. But I don't want to be a detective of other people's hearts. I'm having enough trouble with my own. (745)

Carrie's jealous reply that, "... Julian pampers Lily as if she were a child. He never treated us that way, always boasted of our good sense" (745), elicits Anna's observation, "He didn't marry us" (745). However, they wish he had.
This concept of Julian as the "idealized other," permeates the entire play, but it reaches crescendo proportions in the last act during which Anna and Carrie fight over Lily giving away her gaudily awesome wedding ring to a fortune teller and taking the "knife of truth" in return. Carrie has found out that the money, which Julian has suddenly come into, has something to do with Charlotte Warkins. Her fear of having to face Julian's sexual life with other women (besides her) is evident as she rages at Anna's revelation that Julian and Charlotte were lovers years ago. Carrie is consumed with anger as much as any wronged wife who has just found evidence of her husband's paramour:

You've made it up, you always made up things like that. It didn't happen. He was an innocent boy—(Anna laughs. Carrie unbuttons the neck of her dress as if she were choking) He would never have told you. He would have told me. He was closer to me—there he is, another man, not our brother, lost to us after all the years of hard work and care, married to a crazy little whore who cuts her hand to try to get him into bed— . . . (765-66)

In her view, Carrie has been wronged—wronged by Julian and by Anna, her "other half," as well. Her hopes, upon which she fashioned her life, have been dashed by Anna's mean-spirited revelation. Furthermore, she must come face-to-face with her sexual longings for
her brother/mother when Anna hammers home the most frightening point of all as Carrie demands:

Let's go and ask him. Let's go and ask your darling child. Your favorite child, the child you made me work for, the child I lost my youth for— you used to tell us that when you love, truly love, you take your chances on being hated by speaking out the truth . . . . (766)

Anna's reply says it all when she plunges the knife a little deeper by announcing, "... I'll take that chance now and tell you that you want to sleep with him and always have. Years ago I used to be frightened that you would try and I would watch you and suffer for you" (766).

Carrie's anguish reveals the pain felt as a part of herself, Anna, splits off from her. In a barely audible whisper she gasps, "You never said those words. Tell me I never heard those words. Tell me. Anna. (When there is no answer) You were all I ever had. I don't love you anymore" (766). Anna's reply reveals the solemnity of the exchange as she gravely notes, "That was the chance I took" (766). What has held them together, what has made them function as a fused self, has been their focus on nurturing and needing Julian as their "idealized other." With Anna's shocking revelation comes the disintegration of the two halves which have comprised the psychic self
In Act III, the dead mother resurfaces in a poignant family encounter as Anna prepares to leave, now by herself, for the long awaited trip to Europe. Simultaneously, Julian announces that he and Lily are leaving on a trip and suggests that "... maybe we should be alone for a while. That's all" (768). Then he tells Anna and Carrie that he will be depositing twenty thousand dollars in the bank that morning.

Anna realizes that their grip on Julian is slipping away. They no longer control any part of his life. As Carl Rollyson notes, in a reference to Hellman's sparse style and what Walter Kerr called her "intuitively-shaped language," the actors had a tremendous responsibility to convey the tension present.

Rollyson records the notes of Anna Revere, the actress playing the part of Anna, from her rehearsal script:

Anger at Carrie is a result of frustration in losing Julian. She sets out to go because there is now no family—She lived for her family and now there is no family so she'll live for herself. (383)

For her part, she must move on and make plans without Julian, her "idealized other," and without Carrie, now a missing part of her self. Curiously, Mama, once again, makes her relationship to Anna clear in Anna's painful remembrance:
The leaf came in the spring, stayed nice on the branch in the autumn until the winter winds would blow it in the snow. Mama said in that little time of holding on, a woman had to make ready for the winter ground where she would lie the rest of her life. A leaf cannot rise from the ground and go back to the tree, remember that I remembered it. But when I came there was nothing I could do.

Poignantly, Anna realizes she has disappointed Mama. Her best effort was not good enough, and even Julian's gentle touch and reminder that "Mama was mean" is not enough comfort.

Hellman's portrayal of the two sisters as psychic beings desperately trying to hold onto this "maternal" bond with their brother is further pointed out in Carrie's shrill response that, "Anna says something about Mama when things are wrong. Always. Mama wasn't mean to you. Just to us" (769). In this one sentence, Hellman shows us an example of a mother unable to nurture her daughters, her mirror images.

To his credit, Julian attempts to soften the blow by noting, "Did you think I liked it that way? Did you? Mama had a tough time, I guess. That makes people mean" (769). Julian may not be conversant with psychological theory, but, unwittingly, he has put his finger upon one of the bedrock theories underpinning the modern psychological development of women— that a mother cannot give necessary nurturance and
self-esteem, cannot imbue her daughter with a cohesive self if she never had one herself. His role of the "idealized other," is epitomized by Hellman's description of his comforting statement to Anna:

You're still on the tree, still so nice and pretty, and when the wind does come, a long time from now, I'll be there to catch you with a blanket made of warm roses, and a parasol of dollar bills to keep off the snow. (769)

It would not be too large a leap to translate the above passage into a mother's lullaby to her child. No matter what storms life serves up, a mother can be counted upon. A mother always loves you. A mother is there when you need her/him. Through her tender, nurturing, dependent relationship with Julian, Anna is recreating the bond she wishes she could have had with her mother. However, she realizes that the bond is about to be severed forever because of Carrie's lustful wish to possess Julian. She tells Carrie:

This time he will go forever. You lusted and it showed. He doesn't know he saw it, but he did see it, and someday he'll know what he saw. (With great violence) You know the way that happens? You understand something, and don't know that you do, and forget about it. But one night years ago I woke up and knew what I had seen in you, had always seen. It will happen that way with him. It has begun. (771)

The split of the sisters' two selves is almost complete. Not even Carrie's assertion that Anna is
really the frailer of the two, unlike what most people assume, and that Anna cannot survive without her, will budge Anna. Their dialogue reveals that both know the roles they have played, that they have not been truthful with one another, that they have continued to live in a house they both hate and always have simply because of Julian. Anna is adamant about her choice to leave. She tells Carrie, "I don't wish to find a way to live with you. I am a woman who has no place to go, but I am going, and after a while I will ask myself why I took my mother's two children to be my own" (781).

Only when Julian's fantastic plan fails do the two selves reunite, not in any sense of cohesiveness but, rather, a mutually dysfunctional arrangement which, in its own twisted way, permits the sisters to perform as before. Although they were precariously close to separating, they can reunite. The factor which has permitted them to function in tandem--Julian's dependency--is once more evident.

During the last scene, Hellman, in a stunning portrayal, draws a picture of Carrie oozing comforting thoughts much as any wife might comfort a husband who loses a job, or a mother soothe a hurt child. When Julian returns battered, bruised, and broke, Carrie and Anna are not alarmed. In fact, Carrie asserts that,
"Things can happen... bad things happen to people. Doesn't mean anything" (785).

What frightens and alarms Julian, however, is Carrie's way of speaking to him as she soothingly, and sexually too, suggests, "Why don't you go rest darling? Good hot bath--" (785). In her demeanor as well as her speech, Carrie reveals her happiness at the turn of the events. Julian perceptively realizes something has happened to change Carrie so radically from the angry sister who yelled because he came home bearing outrageous gifts into an understanding supporter. He demands:

Why you start to purr at me? As if I'd done something good--You're smiling. What the hell's there room to smile at? You like me this way?. . . Pretty all this. And the mortgage, and the tickets to Europe, and all the fun to come. Pretty, wasn't it? (785)

Carrie brings Anna back into the picture by telling Julian she and Anna did not want his gifts and by having Anna affirm, "No, we didn't want them" (786). Carrie is in control once again. She and Anna will merge their respective selves and assume their roles again in order to nurture Julian. What he experienced is not so bad if he can come home to his loving sisters. After all, as Carrie maintains, "Let's be glad nothing worse happened. We're together, the three
of us, that's all that matters" (786). Conveniently, she forgets Lily, Julian's wife. Only Albertine's cryptic, "I counted four," elicits a correction, "I mean the four of us" (786). Regardless of the reality of Lily's presence, Carrie clearly sees that the status quo has returned. Life will proceed just as before Julian was married, and Carrie and Anna will maintain that important bond of the "idealized other," so important to their psychic survival. They will maintain some sense of power. Even Albertine, Lily's mother, knows that the threesome will prevail because she knows that someday Carrie will reveal Lily's part in his demise to Julian. She questions Carrie, "Someday you will tell him about Lily? Then there will be three of you. Before you tell him, let me know. I will want to come for her" (786). Clearly, Albertine knows that Lily's place in the family structure is at risk.

Curiously, by holding onto Julian, Anna and Carrie can hold onto their mother as well. Although she sleeps in her grave, she is, nevertheless, present. The umbilical cord, in some fashion, has not been cut. Even Hellman was aware of that intense longing which can manifest itself in a woman's life no matter what her age. In her memoir, Unfinished Woman, Hellman talks of Sophronia, her childhood nurse, as well as
Helen, her black, female companion of later years and unequivocally states her love for them. In a wistful declaration she maintains, "And in this period of nobody grows older or fatter, your mummie looks like your girl, there may be a need in many of us for the large, strong woman who takes us to what most of us always wanted and few of us ever had" (27). Clearly, that is the wish of Anna and Carrie. Unfortunately, they could not get what they needed. Therefore, they are bound to maintain their bond with Julian. It may be dysfunctional, but it is the only way they can survive.

On the other hand, Marsha Norman's female characters, unlike Hellman's, progress further in their psychic journey. Ultimately, they come closer to a more cohesive self. Norman accomplishes this feat in ways similar to those of her literary progenitor—particularly in cases where a female suffers because of family relationships. Many times that relationship is foregrounded through a mother and daughter. Norman's first effort, Getting Out, serves as an example in which the daughter's identity surfaces as a completely split self—both Arlie and Arlene. Thelma and Jessie Cates, the mother and daughter in Norman's Pulitzer Prize winning 'night, Mother, also wrestle with
problems surrounding the daughter's identity. Unlike Arlie, however, Jessie opts out of life through a carefully planned suicide rather than remain in an unfulfilled life. In both these works the mother is present and on stage. However, in, The Laundromat, Norman presents us with an absent mother— one who never appears on stage but who controls the daughter's life nevertheless.

Third and Oak, two one-act plays consisting of The Laundromat and The Pool Hall, was Norman's second dramatic work. Coming on the heels of the critical acclaim surrounding her first effort Getting Out, Third and Oak received decent, if not overly enthusiastic reviews. The first one-act, The Laundromat, focuses on the meeting of two women, Alberta and Deedee, who arrive early in the morning, three a. m., to wash their clothes. Alberta, recently widowed, is reticent at first; Deedee, her younger counterpart, is boisterous— a real chatterbox. In the time they are together, they minister to one another and both leave the laundromat in better emotional shape than when they first entered. The Pool Hall centers around Shooter, a black disc jockey who appears briefly in The Laundromat, and Willie, an aging pool shark, who owns the pool hall and who is determined to run Willie's life. Deedee appears
briefly toward the end of *The Pool Hall*, but, for all intents and purposes, is a main character in *The Laundromat*.

Characteristically, critics focus on the suffering of all four characters and how Norman manifests that suffering throughout the play. *Louisville Times* critic Dudley Saunders, applauds Norman's ability to focus upon the characters' loneliness, characterizing them as "richly detailed, believable, vulnerable," and notes, "We care about them" (C9). Vince Staten, in a review of the HBO production, agrees that both women achieve some "common emotional base," but he chides the production for "spinning too slowly," overwhelming the viewer with the "endless details of the women's mundane lives." Writing in the *Saturday Review*, Kate Stout allowed that *The Laundromat* did not approach the authority and depth of *Getting Out*, but that it would be remembered for its "moments of exquisite detail," as well as its "wry one-liners."

While reviewers rightly suggest that the play focuses upon each woman's respective loneliness and her attempt to deal with the relationship with her husband, it serves a more useful purpose, from a critical standpoint, to examine the play in terms of the "idealized other" concept. Unnurtered and unfulfilled,
Deedee turns to Alberta who assumes the role of "surrogate mother," an idealized other who can put before Deedee possibilities of which she never dared dream.

In order to examine successfully the relationship which develops between these two female characters, and to see how Norman's characterization differs from Hellman's, one needs to ascertain her technique. Norman is uncannily perceptive about the emotional forces which influence her writing. She notes:

> . . . pieces that moved me were those about people in search of unseeable parts of themselves. I realize now that it's no accident that Getting Out is about an attempted reconciliation between an earlier, violent self and a current passive, withdrawn self. . . . (In Their Own Words (181)

Like Hellman, she concentrates on the pain and suffering of individuals. While Hellman railed against evil forces which cause such suffering, such as the love of money, Norman approaches her work through the inner workings of the self. Early on she felt compelled to ask that age-old question with which philosophers have struggled since time's beginning: "Why do good people suffer?" In fact, Norman first published an article, as a high school junior, dealing with that subject. During an interview with Robert Brustein she refers to Plato's allegory of the cave and calls it a
central principle in her work, noting "that's the pain I'm talking about, and I talk about it all the time" (Dramatist's Guild Quarterly 14).

Norman underscores the importance of finding the proper form to contain a play's story. In In Their Own Words Norman attests:

With Getting Out, for example, I knew I wanted to write about this woman who'd just gotten out of prison, but I realized that it's not enough just to write about her, you have to know who she was. Well, as soon as you say that sentence you have the form: put the other person on stage. So you have this amazingly stable little triangle with the two of them and the point of reconciliation. . . The same thing is true in 'night, Mother--you have Mama and Jessie and the door behind them. The piece I'm working on now has six people in it but three have exactly that kind of relationship. There is an amazing feeling dealing with a triangle, which people have known for thousands and thousands of years. (185)

To see how this approach plays out in her work, one can look at another device she uses, that of the unseen character who never appears on stage, but who, nevertheless, impinges upon the play's action. Unlike a novel or short story which is written to be read, a play is written to be acted. Through the actors' presentations of the dialogue and details, we, as the audience, hear the story we need to hear. According to Norman, "I have a theory that what we do in the theater is say, 'This is how this person talks, and this person
is going to talk about some things you know about. You will be able to tell the difference between them and you by comparing what they say with what you would say'" (Dramatist's Guild Quarterly 13).

Details contained in that dialogue develop the characters off stage. From Hellman we know that Anna's and Carrie's dead mother thought it a sin to sleep well. From Norman's details in 'night,Mother we are convinced about Jessie's relationship to her dead father, the old faded blue man in the easy chair. Norman tells us that "all kinds of things that let you know he is a specific individual. . . ultimately, what convinces you about characters is what they care about, what they would not do without'' (Dramatist's Guild Quarterly 19). Likewise, through dialogue and detail, we know much about Deedee's mother and their tenuous relationship even though the mother never appears on stage. Before long, we also know why Deedee will look to Alberta to fulfill the role of the idealized other. At the same time we can observe how Deedee helps, Alberta, in a reciprocal function, during her time of grief.

Deedee's mother is overly critical with a capital "C." She has little faith in Deedee's decision-making abilities, whether those decisions involve dirty
laundry or dirty husbands--a woman whose motto is "Cheer up," but who denigrates Deedee by withholding approval. As a result, Deedee suffers. Critic Leslie Kane notes, "There is not much nurturing: her mother even charges for soap" (262).

From the beginning, Norman reveals that Deedee can never please her mother. Deedee's appearance at the laundromat in the wee hours of the morning is not usual. Normally, she washes her clothes at her mother's, who has "matching Maytags," but, confides Deedee, "she don't ever say how she likes seeing me, but she holds back you know. I mean, there's stuff you don't have to say when it's family" (62). Later on, after she and Alberta both acknowledge the real reasons that they are at the laundromat at three o'clock in the morning, Deedee offers to fold Alberta's wash, revealing just how critical her mother is of similar efforts: "Let me really, I know this part. Mom says you can't blow this part so I do it. She still checks though, finds some reason to go downstairs and check the heat I set. I don't mind, really. Can't be too careful" (75). The intimation is clear. Deedee cannot be trusted with even a simple task like folding clean clothes.

If she cannot be trusted to fold clothes properly, it is no surprise that her choice of men leaves much to
be desired. While well-intentioned, traditionally mothers often look askance at their daughters' choices for husbands. After all, mother knows best. Interestingly, Norman has revealed in interviews that her blue-collar mother dreamed of her marrying a doctor. For Deedee's mother that "prince charming choice" comes in the guise of a future businessman. Deedee blurts out to Alberta that, "My mom thinks Joe's a bum," but she thoroughly rejects mother's choice of a suitable mate. Perceptively, Deedee sees right through her mother's manipulations as she tells Alberta:

No, really, she kept paying this guy that worked at Walgreen's to come over and strip our wallpaper. She said, 'Deedee, he's gonna be manager of that drugstore someday.' Hell, the only reason he worked there was getting a discount on his pimple cream. She thought that would get me off Joe. No way, we've been married two years last month. Mom says this is the itch year (66)

Whether or not her mother's choice would have made it from the drugstore to Wall Street remains unknowable, but, ironically, mother is right.

Joe, Deedee's choice of a husband, epitomizes male chauvinism. A factory worker who makes trucks, he is characterized by Deedee as a man who can just about fix anything. As she tells Alberta, "He's real good with his hands" (62). What he's not good at, though, is treating Deedee like a human being who matters. He
constantly works over-time in order to fix up his '64 Chevy with which he will purportedly win enough money to allow them to start their family. As Deedee asserts, "... He's really lookin' forward to that—winnin' a big race and havin' me and the kids run out on the track and him smilin' and grabbin' up the baby and pourin' beer all over us while the crowd is yellin' and screamin'" (67). Furthermore, Joe really does not know or, perhaps, care to know Deedee's deepest thoughts, nor does he consider her feelings. The audience knows from Deedee's description of their apartment over the Mexican restaurant across the street that Joe considers what he likes foremost. Deedee describes the blue light in the window as one Joe gave her and notes, "He thinks blue is my favorite color," (62), as she relates the reason that they live over a restaurant—because it has a bar that stays open till four in the morning. That way Joe can easily obtain his beer when he wants it. As she tells Alberta, "He hates to run out for beer late. He don't mind running down" (63).

Norman provides yet another example of his lack of emotional connection to his wife during the time Alberta and Deedee discuss buying presents for their respective husbands; this conversation between the two
women also connects their mutual experiences. After Alberta, somewhat haltingly, describes her failed attempt to present husband Herb with garden tools for his birthday, Deedee launches into a sad discussion of Joe's behavior regarding gift-giving. Speaking in a pained voice, Deedee notes that "Joe never likes the stuff I give him," (68) and she discounts Alberta's comeback, "Oh, I'm sure he does. He just doesn't know how to tell you," (68) by relating a painful recount of how Joe, in effect, gives her away.

Her carefully planned anniversary surprise disintegrates into emotional torture when Joe gives away the doll she has specially ordered for him—the doll with her face superimposed upon it, complete with attached card which reads, 'From one livin' doll to another. Let's keep playin' house till the day we die.'" (69). His response at such a heartfelt gesture is to laugh "so hard he fell over backward out of the chair and cracked his head open on the radiator. We had to take him to the emergency room" (69). What ends up hurting Deedee so much is Joe's seemingly generous gesture of giving the doll, which Deedee brings along, to a sick little girl in the emergency room. Although Joe feels good about his gift, Deedee feels forsaken. Even Alberta realizes this truth as she notes, "But it
was your present to him. It was your face on the doll" (69), and her disclosure that one time Herb had really wanted a hat instead of the fishing pole Alberta gave him does nothing to assuage Deedee's pain. Her assurance that "... it was his present as soon as I gave it to him, so if he wanted to give it away, that's his business" (69) is undercut by her immediate insight, "But he didn't like it. I could tell" (69). Instead, Alberta's inquiry as to whether or not Deedee likes Joe's gifts to her elicits the real problem—his philandering ways. The real reason she is washing her clothes at three o'clock in the morning is because Joe has run out on her. Perceptively, Alberta realizes the truth even though Deedee tells her:

... You think he just didn't come home, is that it? You think I was over there waitin' and waitin'in my new nightgown and when the late show went off I turned on the radio and ate a whole pint of chocolate ice cream, and when the radio went off I couldn't stand it anymore so I grabbed up all these clothes, dirty or not, and got outta there so he wouldn't come in and find me cryin'. Well, (Firmly), I wasn't cryin'! (74)

Although Deedee may not be crying, she most definitely is hurting. She has been treated as an object since high school days, and as Esther Harriott suggests:

Now she plays that role for her husband. Deedee is like the pre-Arlene Arlie, who was a pushover for Carl, and her name—not short for anything else, she tells Alberta—has
the same connotations as Arlie's. It is not a full-fledged name and its bearer is not treated as a full-fledged person. (136)

Clearly, mother was right. Joe is no prince. He gives away her gifts, keeps her at home, philanders with other women, and focuses on his needs. Many would agree his leaving would be no great loss. However, to Deedee it is. She needs connection. A fragmented self, she needs someone to validate her existence—someone who will let her know she counts. Unfortunately, her mother was unable to imbue her with a whole sense of self, and Deedee still seeks that cohesion in her relationship with her husband. As Chodorow notes, "A girl cannot and does not completely reject her mother in favor of men, but continues her relationship of dependence upon and attachment to her" (87). In addition Jane Flax asserts, "Women's unresolved wishes for the mother are the truth behind Freud's claim that what women wish for in a husband is their mother. The depth and intensity of these longings fill intimate female relationships with extraordinary powers to damage and to gratify" (181). What becomes stunningly clear is that Deedee is not waging a war against husband Joe even though she tells Alberta she is "pissed as hell at that sunuvabitch" (70). Rather, her battle is with her mother for not
granting her unconditional love. What she can do to win that battle remains the most pertinent question of the play. The answer lies with Alberta. Like Ruby in *Getting Out*, who fulfills the role of a surrogate mother, so does Alberta. As this "idealized other," she functions as a self object from whom Deedee can draw strength.

At the same time, she is strengthened by Deedee for, Alberta, too, is hurting. She washes her clothes at this laundromat on the other side of town because she is trying to deal with her husband's death. Some of the play's most poignant moments revolve around Alberta's desperate wish to hold onto her husband. Mel Gussow, writing in the *NY Times Magazine*, reports Jon Jory's recollection of the moment where Alberta finds the beach ball in the basement and refuses to deflate it because it "holds his breath." Jory noted that "You could hear a sigh from the audience" (34).

Likewise, her inability to wash the shirt he died in provides another connection between the two women. As Kane concedes, Deedee "... sees Joe's shirts as a symbol of the dirty sex he soiled their marriage with," while, "Alberta views Herb's dirty shirts as his only tangible remains" (263-264). Deedee, through her role as a "surprisingly attentive and compassionate
"listener," gives Alberta courage to confess that her husband died months ago (Kane 265).

Through her grief, Alberta reveals that Herb liked to garden and had a sense of humor even though he was often underfoot such as the times he stood around watching her prepare the meals. Although they often misunderstood one another's likes and dislikes, such as the time she notes she bought the fishing pole instead of the hat he wanted, one gets the sense of two people very much in love, who are willing to deal with each other's idiosyncracies from a position of mutual respect. They have no children and, in effect, Deedee becomes Alberta's daughter, if only for a short time.

By assuming this role of the "idealized other," she opens up possibilities for Deedee to consider—possibilities which have life-changing potential. The primary reason Alberta is able to function in this capacity is because of the relationship she had with her mother. Once again, Norman establishes a character who influences the action, but who remains offstage. In this case, the mother is dead, but the audience knows from Alberta that they had a solid bond. Because she cared so much, Alberta took early retirement from her teaching job in order to minister to her dying mother. In a tender and poignant vignette, Alberta
endears her mother to us as she relates that she read *Wuthering Heights* to her five times that year. According to Alberta, she would always offer the same insight when the book was ended: "She'd say, 'I still don't see it. They didn't have to have all that trouble. All they had to do was find Heathcliff somewhere to go every day. The man just needed a job. (Pause) But maybe I missed something. Read it again'"(66). Certainly, Alberta and her mother enjoyed one another's company, and Alberta considers it no great sacrifice to take early retirement if her mother needs her.

Deedee wishes for someone like Alberta to mother her. In fact, she tells her, "I wish Mom were more like you" (75) . . . Smart. Nice to talk to. . . Mom's just got me and giant-size Cheer. And she don't say two words while I'm there. Ever. I don't blame her I guess" (76). Significantly, Alberta is a teacher, and Deedee needs to be taught. Norman does not divulge the subject or grade that Alberta taught, only that she taught in Columbus, Ohio, but Deedee immediately feels bound to watch her grammar, telling Alberta, "I better be careful. No ain'ts or nuthin'" (65). Even though Deedee is uncomfortable about her grammar, Alberta confides, "You can't say anything I haven't heard
before" (65). However, the knowledge Alberta has to offer comprises far more important information than simply supplying the name Roosevelt when Deedee falters in her attempt to name seven presidents, although she could easily name the seven dwarfs. Alberta builds up Deedee's self-esteem.

Throughout the play, she probes into Deedee's relationship with Joe and voices her distinct disapproval about some of his actions, such as ploughing most of their money into a racecar, but, unlike Deedee's mother, she does it in a non-critical way. When she tells Deedee, "People just can't always be where we want them to be when we want them to be there" (70), Deedee voices her disapproval. Alberta's reply, "You don't have to like it. You just have to know it" (70), provides an important truth. As Esther Harriott asserts, "This is a key statement. Facing the truth, always a high value in a Norman play, is the first step for each of these women in 'getting out of their respective traps'" (137).

While Alberta presents the truth to Deedee, she does not impose her will. Deedee can accept or reject the advice Alberta gives at any time. When Shooter invites Deedee over to the pool hall, ostensibly for a cup of tea, Alberta gives Deedee a knowing look which
translates into a decided no. Although Deedee dismisses Shooter's invitation with "He's just playin', Alberta counters, "He was not playing"; she takes a stand, noting "If you don't want to know what I think you can stop talking to me" (73).

However, Deedee does not want her to stop talking because she needs someone to understand the loneliness she experiences being married to Joe. Alberta attempts to offer a remedy to her situation by offering, "You're young and pretty. You have a wonderful sense of humor. . . and you'll have children someday. . . you could get a job" (76). Deedee reveals that Joe does not want her to work since he is the head of the household. Nevertheless, she addresses envelopes on the sly and keeps the money at her mother's, who borrows it from time to time in order to make up for Deedee's use of her washer and dryer. Even though Deedee longs for a "real job," she is afraid. Being in an emotionally abusive relationship is far safer than facing the unknown. Alberta's admonition to tell Joe "how you feel," elicits a strong reply, "He'd leave me," to which Alberta acknowledges "Maybe" (76). What Deedee desperately needs is someone to present a possible solution—a way out of a seemingly unsolvable situation. Deedee sees no way out. She has been dumped
by a cheating husband, and Alberta's observation that "At least you have some money saved," and "Your mother would let you stay with her till you got your own place" (77) provides no viable answer. After all, as Deedee firmly declares, "She's the last person I'm tellin'" (77).

But Deedee has to tell someone. Someone has to listen to her story. Alberta listens and offers a way out—a hard one, but a possibility at least. Like Norman's other female characters, such as Arlie who will have to work at a minimum paying job in order to maintain her self-respect, and Jessie, who commits suicide in order to maintain control, Deedee must make a difficult choice. But as Alberta tells her, "Being alone isn't so awful. I mean it's awful, but it's not that awful. There are hard things" (80).

Norman skilfully underscores the poignancy of Deedee's search for a self, her complete self, in the speech where Deedee focuses upon her overwhelming loneliness. She tells Alberta, "Sometimes I bring in a little stand-up mirror to the coffee table while I'm watching T.V. It's my face over there, when I look, but it's a face just the same" (70). Deedee needs connection, and she needs it now. The priceless insight Alberta offers opens Deedee's eyes to
heretofore inconceivable solutions. Alberta suggests that maybe, just maybe, Deedee ought to consider "going it alone," that "going it alone," might not be all that terrible. Above all, she compels Deedee to action, telling her that she should "...go home before you forget how mad you are. You don't have to put up with what he's doing. You can if you want to, if you think you can't make it without him, but you don't have to" (80). For Deedee, this revelation is astounding and somewhat frightening. However, to carry off this admittedly scary confrontation, she only need remember Alberta's admonition, "Your own face in the mirror is better company than a man who would eat a whole fried egg in one bite. ... but it won't be easy" (80). With this powerful speech at the play's end, Norman presents the inevitable truth--if one is willing to take the risk, one need not be afraid. Being able to maintain one's own integrity--a true and complete sense of self--involves hard choices. Nevertheless, if someone can point a possible way, options appear. As Alberta tells Deedee when she tries to repay the money she used to start the washer, "Everybody deserves a free load now and then,"(81) and Deedee's avowal that she welcomes some "peace and quiet. ... yeah, peace and quiet. ... Too bad it don't come in cans" (81), suggests that she
may find just that. Her search may not be as easy as opening a flip-top softdrink, but as Alberta tells her early in the play, "... You are not dumb child, and don't let anybody tell you you are, okay?" (78).

Although Deedee appears briefly in the next play, *The Pool Hall*, her main action revolves around her meeting with Alberta in the laundromat. Both women minister to each other. Certainly, Deedee assuages Alberta's loneliness and ultimately pushes her to reveal her inability to let go of Herb by refusing to wash the shirt he last wore. She brings Alberta out of her shell by curbing her chattiness and becoming an active listener to Alberta's pain. But the biggest gift involves the gift Alberta presents Deedee—the gift of seeing the truth. Alberta makes Deedee see that change is possible. Whether or not Deedee will act upon that knowledge remains unseen, but at least she has an option she has not known before. These important revelations, that she is pretty, that she is intelligent, and that she can change, are all revelations that Deedee's mother could never make known to her. Like Arlie and Jessie, Deedee may have to remove herself from the family unit in order to survive.

As the curtain descends the audience does not doubt Deedee's ability to persevere. While we do not
know for certain what steps she will take, we feel more confident about her abilities than we did at the play's beginning. To postulate that she will immediately become a more confident, self-assured young woman who may enroll in college is pushing it. But it would not be going too far astray to suggest that she will probably leave the abusive relationship with her husband Joe. At least, she knows she has a choice—a different choice than the one she was saddled with at the play's beginning. Certainly, her new knowledge propels her farther along the journey to a more cohesive self than before. Through her brief interaction with her "idealized other," Alberta finds the strength and positive regard she was missing. At the same time, Alberta finds more strength with which to face the world as a widow.

In conclusion, both Heilman and Norman portray women characters who search for their mothers in the relationships they form with "idealized others." Since a woman can never truly leave her mother because of the connection women experience as a result of having been nurtured primarily by a female caretaker, she seeks that mirror image in others. In all three plays, whether Heilman's The Children's Hour or Toys in the Attic, or Norman's The Laundromat, the mother is
absent from the stage. Whether she is presumed dead as in Hellman, or simply insensitive as in Norman, she impinges upon the action in a crucial way. Each female character, Martha, Carrie, Anna, and Deedee, seeks love, nurturance, and acceptance from an "idealized other." They search for a person who can help them become more cohesive selves. Only with Norman's Deedee does that possibility seem viable.
NOTES

1 Hellman said that, although Hammett influenced her development as a person, she was more dependent upon him for help with her writing. Later, she admits that she was "very dependent" upon him. See Marilyn Berger's interview, "Profile: Lillian Hellman," Conversations with Lillian Hellman, ed. Jackson R. Byer (Jackson: U of Mississippi P, 1986) 232-273.


3 See Brooks Atkinson, "Children's Hour," New York Times 2 Dec. 1934, sec. 10: 1, and Eric Bentley's comment on the 1952 revival, "Hellman's Indignation," New Republic 5 January 1952: 30. Bentley maintains that the play's material suggests two stories, one of heterosexual teachers accused of Lesbianism, and the enemy being a society which punishes the innocent. The other story is one of Lesbian teachers accused of Lesbianism with the enemy being a society which punishes Lesbians. Hellman spends the greater part of the play on the first story, so when the issues of Martha's Lesbian feelings for Karen surface at the end the audience, who has shared Hellman's indignation up to that point, is bound to feel cheated.

4 See Vince Staten, "Norman's Laundromat Spins Slowly," Louisville Times 29 March, 1985: Bl. Staten focuses upon the HBO production directed by Robert Altman and discusses the commonality between the two women. He likens Norman's technique to a Bobbie Ann Mason story with brand names like Dr. Pepper and Cheer being found everywhere.

See Marsha Norman, "Why Do Good Men Suffer?," *Kentucky English Bulletin* 13 (1964): 12. This article was published while Norman was in the 11th grade. Some would maintain that her focus has not changed much in the ensuing years.
Chapter III
The Hungry Self

"Food is my drug of choice."

Oprah Winfrey
Talk Show Host

One does not have to search far to find examples showcasing contemporary society's love affair with food. Store shelves contain abundant supplies for those with the wherewithal to purchase. Restaurants cater to clientele at both ends of the economic spectrum. Bookstores report continually increasing cookbook sales even in shaky financial times. Television shows featuring cooking segments garner large audiences.

At the same time, more than ever before, health problems related to diet demand attention. Rising numbers of anorexics, bulimics, and compulsive overeaters struggle to survive their twisted relationship with the food necessary to sustain their existence. Women comprise the majority of this struggling population. These battles belie the real issue—the
need to find a true self in the midst of a false society. The hunger which haunts these women is not of physiological origin. It does not connote any quest to appease what Maslow called the most basic human need, (along with thirst), but rather a psychic one. Perched on the edge of the twenty-first century, women hunger to heal that "hole in the soul." They fight not to fix their Oedipal crisis, as Freud posited, but rather to find their true selves. Fragmented and confused, they search for the missing piece. Like Humpty Dumpty they have fallen from the wall and cannot put themselves together. Psychically, they long for a cohesive self. Food metaphors depicted in women's writing reflect that psychic search. Both Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman use this "culinary approach" to foreground a number of their female characters' struggle with psychic issues. By examining their works, one can see how certain female characters use their relationship to food to symbolize the gnawing psychic hunger each experiences.

Reading Hellman's memoirs is tantamount to sitting at a banquet of culinary metaphors. Hellman's passion for food permeates many pages, starting with her childhood memories in New Orleans and ending with her last publication, *Eating Together: Recollections and Recipes*, a cookbook co-authored with Peter Feibleman
and published after her death. In *Unfinished Woman* she relates how she cleaned the crayfish for the delicious bisques her aunts would make and how she learned to kill a chicken without "any ladylike complaints" (13). Her reputation for hospitality is well-known, along with marvelous parties at her home on Martha's Vineyard. Robert Brustein designates her preoccupation with nourishment as "perhaps reflecting her blocked maternal instinct" (45). Even Marsha Norman, who interviewed Hellman shortly before she died, was invited to bring her husband and come back for dinner when Hellman was better able to cook. Her penchant for parties is well-documented, for unnurtured herself, Hellman sought to appease others' hunger. Her writings attest to that commitment.

Ironically, one of Hellman's weakest plays contains an abundance of food images. *Days to Come*, Hellman's second play, opened in December, 1936 to generally negative reviews. Hellman's uneasy fears about the play turned to horror on opening night. Her inability to "stomach" the production manifested itself as she vomited in a side aisle near the back of the darkened theater. Audience response ranged from lackluster to outright disgust, with William Randolph Hearst leaving, along with his six friends, during the
middle of the second act. New York Post critic, John Mason Brown condemned the play, charging Hellman with writing a "dull, incredible, muddled drama" (18). Robert Coleman, New York Daily Mirror critic, contended that Hellman used "staccato and stuffy dialogue" (4). Charles Dexter, writing in the Daily Worker noted that Hellman sympathized with the worker's plight but was unable "to get under the skin of her characters" (7).

Despite its lack of critical success and true worth as a play, Days to Come, according to Hellman scholar, Doris V. Falk, served as "a harbinger of Hellman plays to come" (49). Hellman's anger toward evil manifested itself toward ignorant characters such as those in Days to Come who do not really understand the workings of evil nor its consequences. Unlike the wily Hubbards in The Little Foxes or malicious Mary Tilford in The Children's Hour, later plays, which had their genesis in Days to Come, reflected, perhaps, an even more insidious type of evil. In those plays, such as The Searching Wind, The Autumn Garden, and Toys in the Attic, posits Falk, "Hellman is looking at the Rodmans of the world: the ineffectual ones who let evil and decay attack and destroy the lives of others, as it consumes their own vitality" (49).
This unsuccessful effort centers around the Rodman family, owners of a brush manufacturing company in Galion, Ohio and foregrounds the inherent conflict between management and labor. Although company CEO, Andrew Rodman, abhors the thought, a team has been brought in to break up the strike. Because Rodman has known the townspeople all his life, he believes reason will prevail. A weak and ineffectual man, he fails to see that his wife, Julie, is having an affair with family friend and lawyer, Henry Ellicott. However, Ellicott "owns" more than just Rodman's wife. He has manipulated Rodman into borrowing funds to keep the company afloat, taking company shares as collateral.

Whalen, a union organizer, counsels company workers to refrain from fighting with Wilkie, the strike-buster who arrives in town with two thugs, Mossie and Easter. Mossie kills Easter during a card game and plants the body at union headquarters to implicate Whalen. Julie, who hopes to initiate a "friendship" with Whalen, witnesses the plant as she is at his office when it occurs. Whalen is jailed, and in the ensuing ruckus, a company worker's child is killed. Firth, the child's father, confronts Rodman at the family home. Wilke is ordered to leave town. During the
entire episode, Cora Rodman, Andrew's maiden sister, worries about losing the company and how the strike will affect their family. Intensely jealous of Julie, she finally tells Andrew about his wife's lengthy affair with Henry Ellicott. After Ellicott leaves, Julie offers to leave or give Andrew a divorce, but he declines. As the curtain descends, he rather pitifully attests that they will live, "just as 'half-people' the rest of their lives—for days to come" (133).

While the political machinations of both management and labor ostensibly constitute the play's central action, the most interesting struggle, from a critical standpoint, focuses upon Cora Rodman, Andrew's spinster sister. While lamenting Heilman's ill-fated choice to include so many issues in one play, critics seldom mention Cora whom Grenville Vernon called an "acidulous old maid" (276). Carl Rollyson, in his lengthy study, Lillian Hellman: Her Legend and Her Legacy, terms Cora "... a puzzle in the play" (95) and suggests that Cora is tormented by the same issues as the other characters—what the strike means and how management and labor can find a way to coexist (95). He rightly observes that "She does not know how to begin to live her own life ... and that she exemplifies critic Joseph Wood Krutch's observation that Hellman is
a 'specialist in hate and frustration, a student of helpless rage'" (95). However, Cora's torment goes much deeper than the family's trouble with the strikers, and her ceaseless preoccupation with food and its preparation signals the reader that Hellman, once again, is presenting a fragmented self in search of cohesion. Cora's continual focus upon food symbolizes her struggle for personal power, an identity, and the need to fill the "gnawing psychic hunger" she experiences as part of the Rodman family structure. Clearly, getting to eat what she wants when she wants it metaphorically symbolizes filling a psychic void. In her work, The Hungry Self, Kim Chernin quotes a client who relates, "There is no I... There's just an immense hole at the center. An emptiness. A terror. Not all the food in the world could fill it. But, I try" (20). Cora also tries. From Act I, Scene I where she berates Hannah, the housekeeper, for cutting her piece of cake too small until the last scene of the last act, where she takes a bite of toast and chides everyone for "getting too excited," it is quite apparent that something is "eating" her.

That "something" is her response to the powerlessness she feels. More than anything, she desires a "place at the table," to be part of some
satisfying relationship, to be acknowledged as a person. No one, either in or out of the household, supports her emotionally. Consequently, her manipulative behavior reveals a desperate woman posturing for attention, begging to be heard, but, mostly, being ignored. Like numerous other female characters of Hellman's such as Martha in The Children's Hour, Anna and Carrie in Toys in the Attic, or Regina in The Little Foxes, Cora struggles to find some measure of personal power denied her in the patriarchal culture within which she must exist. Her relationship to food illuminates that struggle.

A thin, nervous woman of 42, she has never married but lives with her brother Andrew and his wife, Julie, in the house left by their parents, the founders of the Rodman family business. She snipes. She carps. She criticizes. Continually, her behavior belies an unhappy soul whether she harangues Hannah telling her, "... You didn't bring me enough butter on my tray this morning and I had a roll left over. ... there always seems to be something wrong with the breakfast tray" (79), or whether she tells Henry Ellicott, the family lawyer, "... I shall eat as much as I please. Just as much as I please" (130). Cora fears being shortchanged. Like Beckett's Hamm in Endgame, she
worries that supplies are running out. She fears that nothing can satisfy, that there will never be enough. Her nervous stomach mirrors her inward turmoil. Outwardly, she attempts to soothe herself with chocolate pepsin drops prescribed by her doctor—even medication meant to calm digestion needs a "sweet" coating. Cora cannot accept life "straight." She must seek solace in food for she cannot face the truth of a meager existence. Even sleep escapes her, for as she relates, "if a pin drops, it wakes me. I've always been like that" (81).

Interestingly, Cora has never married, nor has she "reproduced" herself through the birth of a child. Like her creator, she seeks nurturance from an Other who is missing from the picture. Although Hellman married Arthur Kober, the marriage was brief, and the child they conceived beforehand was aborted. Yet Hellman never stopped seeking nurturance, psychic food which would enable her to survive. Her relationship with Dashiell Hammett, her "idealized other," assuaged some of that hunger, but as Rollyson rightly suggests, "Always, something was missing for Hellman" (8), and "she was—even later in life—the type of person who liked to dress elegantly for dinner and then complain about the 'rat-fuck' food she was eating" (35).
Perhaps Hellman's attempts to find satisfying food belie a deeper fear—of losing herself OR reproducing herself. In her ground-breaking book, *Bitter Milk*, Madeline Grumet describes this fear when she describes childbirth as "the wrenching expulsion of the infant" which "... physically recapitulates the terrors of coming apart, of losing a part of oneself" (10). Perhaps Cora, as well as her creator, fears reproducing herself. If her search for a "replacement umbilical cord" has thus far been unsuccessful, she risks being unable to nurture any mirror image she may reproduce.

A useful construct to illuminate more fully Cora's struggle for a cohesive self is time—whether past, present, or future. In the past Cora's family unit was intact. Her biological mother would have been present, and the interloper, Julie, who marries her weak, ineffectual brother would not have yet intruded. Papa, who "knew how to run the company," would be alive and would certainly have been more effectual than his son, who has endangered the family fortune through his *laissez faire* attitude. However, Andrew's climactic speeches at the play's end reveal the loathing and contempt he harbors toward Cora as he tells his sister, "You hate me and I hated you from the day I was old.
enough to think about you. . ." (132). His uncharacteristic venomous outburst certainly suggests that Cora's childhood was less than ideal.

What Cora needs more than anything is a supportive relationship with a nurturing mother figure. If she can obtain this necessary connection, she stands a chance of becoming psychically whole. Without it, she risks continued fragmentation. As Chodorow notes, "a girl cannot and does not completely reject her mother in favor of men but continues her relationship of dependence upon and attachment to her" (Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory 53).

Hellman is strangely silent concerning the biological mother. No mention of her is made during the entire play, but a surrogate mother is present in the character of Hannah, the housekeeper. Arguably the play's strongest female character, Hannah bows to no one, not even Cora. Perceptive as well as powerful, she usurps pantry supplies to support the striking workers. Unlike Andrew Rodman, the company CEO, Hannah has a much more realistic view of the situation, realizing that a confrontation is coming. She notes, "I haven't lived in this house twenty years for nothing" (78). When Wilke arrives with his mafioso thugs, she refuses to answer the door. Even Andrew
acknowledges her role in the family's structure in the last scene as he relates, "Hannah shares the secrets of all of us. That's why Cora can't get rid of her, isn't it, Cora?" (132).

Cora's and Hannah's relationship centers upon food. In Cora's first speech, she asks Hannah, "Did you make something sweet?" to which Hannah accedes, "Chocolate cake. All over" (79). Characteristic of an adult's desire to reestablish a childhood memory, Cora seeks something sweet, not a vegetable or salad which might be better for one's arteries, but something like "mama used to make." Her food fixation leads her to inventory the food supply and her discovery that supplies are, indeed, low, sends her to Mossie and Easter for help in catching the responsible criminal. She concedes, ". . . very funny things are happening here. Things are missing from the pantry. Or is that too unimportant work for you? . . . When I looked into the closet I was amazed to find at least eight or ten dollar's worth of canned goods" (99).

As a surrogate mother figure, Hannah embodies what Melanie Klein referred to as a "good breast, bad breast" image. Klein, in opposition to her mentor, Freud, focused upon an infant's preoedipal, rather than oedipal, development. Because the infant cannot
distinguish between the mother and the breast during the earliest stages of development, the infant is inevitably frustrated and splits this "mother/breast object" into a "good breast" and a "bad breast" in order to preserve it psychically. Hannah, as "keeper of the food supply," controls Cora's physical nourishment. Moreover, when confronted about the thefts, she shows not one iota of remorse. Instead she insists, "I wish I could have taken more. People need it. Do what you want about it, Mr. Andrew" (100). Cora's concern that there be enough food available does not impress Hannah in the least. Hannah's position as a surrogate mother figure only enrages Cora. She finds no sustenance in their relationship, nor does she have anyone else who can meet her needs. As Chodorow posits, "... women ... need primary relationships to women as well as men" (Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory 77). In this motherless world, for Hannah refuses to fulfill her potential as a nurturing mother, Cora is bereft. If the past precluded any basis upon which to build the under-pinnings of emotional stability, the present presents little hope either. The sad reality is that Cora is pushed aside. Andrew's tired answer that he will not do anything about the theft further humiliates Cora and serves as a stunning
example that Cora deserves no place at the family table. Her opinions and actions are of no consequence. Just as she has no say in corporate decisions affecting family business, she has no say in the day-to-day management of the household budget. This "bread and butter" is off limits. Indeed, Cora has no say in anything that occurs in the Rodman household. Because she feels so powerless she lashes out at each combatant and then seeks solace in food. As Chernin suggests, an association exists between a woman's eating habits and her struggle for identity (xi); she maintains that one must return to one's roots to find what keeps us developmentally weak, "... the hunger knot in which identity, the mother-separation struggle, love, rage, food, and the female body are all entangled" (xiv). Cora fits Chernin's definition of a woman with an eating disorder, one who is "trying to fill an ill-defined 'gnawing hunger' whose real nature she cannot admit to herself" (24).

Even the murder of Wilkie's thug, Mossie, right in the Rodman home, cannot keep Cora from her appointed snack. In Cora's view, nothing can be done for a dead man, but hunger can be appeased. Loudly ringing the bell to summon Hannah, she insists, "... my milk and fruit aren't upstairs. We can't help it if he got
killed. Whatever we do now isn't going to do him any good. . . You forgot it, didn't you?" (117). Hannah's cryptic reply that, "I didn't think you'd starve. . . Funny, how you drink it. Just like you need it" (117), reveals not only Hannah's hard-hearted approach, but also Cora's overriding need for nurturance. To borrow a line from Arthur Miller's Linda Loman, "Attention must be paid." In this case, Cora's starving self demands it. While the others gather to discuss the previous night's horrific events, she sends back the improperly made hot chocolate. Her curt reply to Ellicott's query as to whether she must have her breakfast in the library symbolizes her attempt to sustain structure in her powerless life as she demands, "Mind your own business. I've had it here for thirty years. I shall continue" (130). Family and friends may manipulate her position, but Cora will not cave in so easily. If the hot chocolate will not soothe her psychic aches and pains, she will send it back to the kitchen until Hannah "gets it right." Just like Jessie in Marsha Norman's 'night, Mother, Cora longs for the days when warm cocoa with Mama would take care of life's woes. The fact that those days are a fantasy is beside the point. One can try. One can demand one's
place at the table as long as one's strength holds.

Cora's present sense of power is further diminished by her brother's wife, Julie. Before Julie married Andrew, Cora could function as the household's mistress. Her constant criticism of Julie's ability to coordinate household functions demonstrates her rage at being displaced. She loses no opportunity to illuminate Julie's incompetence as evidenced by her remark to the man who comes to plant the trees. Cora notes, "I told him that you always did that. Forgetting about things" (82). She further establishes her fear at relinquishing her perceived place as mistress of the household when she deliberately snubs Julie's "hoped-for" paramour, Leo Whalen, the union organizer. Julie's immediate caustic attack as she demands, "Don't do that in my house again" (92), only enrages her more. Cora does not accept Julie's place in the Rodman household. She underscores the rage she feels as she shouts, "How dare you talk that way? So now it's your house? My father built it, but it's YOUR house now" (92). As long as Julie remains, Cora's place at the table remains in jeopardy.

Cora holds a losing hand in this game with her sister-in-law unless she plays her high card and reveals Julie's long-standing affair with the family
lawyer, Henry Ellicott, as well as other clandestine "liaisons." However, her decision to reveal Julie's extra-marital liaison with Ellicott, causing Julie's fall from grace, backfires. Metaphorically speaking, Cora feels that if she can pull the chair out from under Julie, she can regain a place at the family table. Unfortunately, for her, the plan fails. Whether Andrew knew or did not know of his wife's deception is of no consequence to him now. In view of the fact that he bears responsibility for two murders, he has neither the energy nor the inclination to demand an explanation from Julie, even though Julie insists, "Let her say it. She's wanted to for a long time" (130). Andrew's lackluster reply, coupled with Julie's taunt, causes an emotional explosion which serves as a catalyst to bring the missing ingredient to the table—truth.

When Cora acknowledges that she has known about Julie's extra-marital behavior for years, she pinpoints the powerlessness his marriage has supposedly placed upon her. What has eaten away at Cora's insides is that Andrew has, unashamedly, squandered family money, half of which belongs to Cora, upon European trips, fashionable clothes, and a year's study in Paris for his wife. Cora resents that Andrew has had to borrow
thousands and thousands of dollars, resulting in deep debt, to make Julie happy.

However, Cora's bare-bones approach to truth elicits no appreciation from Andrew--or anyone else. Her strategy falters, and, as a result, her future as a Rodman family member appears dubious, at best. Each one harbors resentment toward her revelation, but Andrew's response epitomizes the seething hostility present as he insists, "It wasn't your business. It isn't your business now" (131). Instead, he discloses the denial in which each one, as well as Henry, participates, noting "...It was all there before. It can be said now" (132).

Sadly, Cora's response at the debilitating diatribes indicates no success on her part at filling the ill-defined "gnawing hunger" which eats away at her psyche. Her last speech, where she mildly suggests, "Things went entirely too far. It comes from everybody getting too excited. Now you go to sleep and nothing will seem as bad when you wake up. People said a lot of things they didn't mean. A lot of things they didn't mean. I'm sure of that" (133), indicates her inability to accept the truth. Her final gesture, as she summarily chomps down on a bite of toast signifies her continuing turn to food. Food denotes sustenance.
It comforts. The hot chocolate like Mama used to make or the tea and toast she brought when you were ill, conjures up a time—far removed—when needs were met, when hunger was fed. Cora's fixation on food represents an attempt to obtain the nurturing she never experiences in the Rodman family. Tragically, the food can never satisfy. It must be perfectly presented, and it must be in abundance. Supplies can never run out.

However, no abundance can ever appease the appetite within Cora. Hellman's characterization illustrates one way a woman may respond when confronted with the powerlessness of her life. As Chernin notes, these women are "filling the emptiness with food" (25). This preoccupation, for Cora, signifies the fear she feels when confronted with the obstacles before her—obstacles which leave her economically dependent as well as emotionally bereft. Cora wants what most women want—an identity which affords them some measure of power—a place at the table, but, just like other female characters in Hellman's works, she finds her chair missing. Like Lavinia, in *Another Part of the Forest*, who escapes her confinement through fantasies which substitute for the reality she finds unbearable, or Regina, in *Little Foxes*, who responds to her powerlessness by, in effect, murder, so Cora escapes
through food. In this motherless world, Cora has no means of escape. She has no idealized other with whom she can bond. She will simply, as millions of her sisters throughout centuries, have to make the best of a brutal situation. In order to do so, she will continue to keep the food pantry, and the hostile Hannah, under surveillance. In this play, which William Wright terms, "Hellman's most political play," Cora's character has no power base from which to muster a fight. Instead, she continues to struggle in a hostile and stifling environment. No other choices exist. Like her creator, Cora must remain "an unfinished woman," never finding the truth she needs to satisfy her appetite—the truth she needs to become psychically whole.

Like her literary progenitor, Marsha Norman, also foregrounds food in her plays, particularly the two most successful, Getting Out and 'night, Mother. Both female protagonists search for sustenance and nurturance. Arlene, in Getting Out, longs to be invited for her mother's Sunday pot roast dinner, and even though her mother ultimately rejects her, Arlene finds a friend, Ruby her upstairs neighbor, with whom to break bread. Jessie, in 'night, Mother, is not so fortunate. She can find no food which will satisfy,
and even though her mother tries valiantly to stop her, she kills herself in order to gain control over her meager existence.

In this Pulitzer Prize winning-effort, Norman, true to her "calling" as a storyteller determined to give a voice to people not normally heard, presents the painful existence of Jessie Cates, a woman without hope--without a "self" for which she constantly hungers. Critics categorically raved about this ninety minutes of intermissionless, riveting theater. Brendan Gill, writing in the New Yorker, termed it "a very good play indeed" (109), and Louisville Times critic, Dudley Saunders saw its Broadway opening at the Golden Theatre as "... refreshingly clean, honest and straightforward ..." (B8). Drama critic for the New York Times, Mel Gussow, allowed that "The play stands out as one of the season's major dramatic events," and described Norman as a powerful dramatist. Robert Brustein, writing in Who Needs Theatre?, likened Norman's technique and effect to that of Chekov and O'Neill, while noting that Norman's scene depicting the attempt to make hot chocolate "the old way," is her version of "J. D. Salinger's consecrated chicken soup" (66).
Mother and daughter, Thelma and Jessie Cates, live an isolated existence in a non-descript house on a lonely country road. Jessie, an unhappy overweight woman, about forty, suffers from epilepsy, but the "disease" which drives her to take her own life is far more insidious than this life-long affliction. Jessie is starved for a cohesive self, a sense of personal autonomy which has thus far escaped her. Because she has no "appetite" for life, she opts for death.

However, although suicide is certainly a factor, this play is not about suicide. Indeed, those who see it merely as a "death watch," instituted by a cruel daughter determined to "payback" her mother for a lifetime of wrongs, err in their judgment. 'night,Mother is a play about mother and daughter relationships, about psychic hunger, about tragedy, but also about triumph. With the final gunshot, Jessie assumes control over her life, and during the play's action she and Thelma connect in a way they never could before. At the same time, she separates from her mother—a task she has heretofore been unable to accomplish—and Thelma learns to let her daughter go.

Hunger, and the need to appease it, form the play's central metaphor. Both women experience psychic hunger brought about by the helplessness women have
historically experienced as part of a patriarchal culture which offers little hope for personal power. However, Marsha Norman's female characters differ from Lillian Hellman's. Unlike Cora Rodman in *Days to Come*, Jessie Cates does not hopelessly vegetate in a powerless position at the play's end. Ultimately, she gets what she wants—death—which releases her from the incredible boring existence she would have experienced if she opted to live. And actually, Mama gets what she wants, too. She finally communicates in a powerful way never before possible. Some mothers live and die without ever communicating with their daughters at such a deep level.

The kitchen becomes a metaphor for the play's action. Traditionally, we tend to view the kitchen as the heart of house, symbolizing mother, warmth, and nurturance. We break bread, which mother prepares, in the bosom of our family. We experience connection, and relationships which sustain our survival in the outside world. The kitchen, usually smaller than the other rooms in the house, functions as a womb—a warm and safe place. Memory conjures up images of mother fixing breakfast for us before we trudge off to school and taking cookies from the oven upon our return.
Norman begins the play's action in the kitchen where Thelma searches for the sugary snowballs she loves so well. The kitchen serves as a base from which to launch the battle to save the mother/daughter relationship. Here they will attempt to recapture what never existed through the cocoa-making ritual. The living room, as Jenny Spencer points out in Modern Drama, "underscores our sense of physical entrapment and psychological impasse in the ensuing action" (365). Their separation and Jessie's eventual stand for autonomy, however, are symbolized by Jessie's departure to the locked bedroom which Thelma cannot penetrate.

Thelma, too, starves for fulfillment. Norman's first stage directions tell us that Mama stretches to reach the cupcakes in a cabinet in the kitchen. She can't see them, but she can feel around for them, and she's eager to have one, so she's working pretty hard at it (5). Finding only a partial package with the coconut fallen off symbolizes Mama's life. Although she has never heard of Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, she most assuredly knows something's amiss. The "coconut is always falling off" for Mama, and this confrontation with her only daughter who is determined to kill herself will only confuse Mama more. Thelma loves candy; its sweetness temporarily satisfies and
she must see that the supply continues. The play's first speech solidifies this position as she tells Jessie:

MAMA (Unwrapping the cupcake):  Jessie, it's the last snowball, sugar. Put it on the list, O.K.? And we're out of Hershey bars, and where's that peanut brittle? I think maybe Dawson's been in it again. I ought to put a big mirror on the refrigerator door. That'll keep him out of my treats, won't it? You hear me, honey? (Then more to herself) I hate it when the coconut falls off. Why does the coconut fall off? (5)

Isolated upon a country road and burdened down with an epileptic daughter who never communicates, Thelma lives a meager existence. Candy, her little "treats," becomes a crutch to help her survive. As Sally Browder notes in Mother Puzzles, Thelma, too, "has had her share of disappointments" (110). Rejected by a "silent" husband who refused to even talk to her upon his deathbed, Thelma endures her pyromaniac, okra-eating friend, Agnes, just to have someone who will talk to her. "Sweets . . . provide Mama with the sensual gratification, and the sense of fullness she failed to obtain from her marriage" (Morrow 24). Kim Chernin's patient probably focuses upon Thelma's pain best: "There is no I. . . There's just an immense hole at the center. An emptiness. A terror. Not all the food in the world could fill it. But, I try" (The Hungry Self 20).
Food functions as a complex metaphor here, and Thelma's psychic hunger begs for appeasement. Chernin's assessment crystalizes this "psychic gnawing" for all women as she relates:

For food, after all, has defined female identity . . . It has defined more even than the history of mother/daughter relations and that early sorrow and disorder that began, for many of us, at the mother's breast. Dating back to our earliest impressions of life, recorded in the symbolic code of food imagery, the vanquished story of female value and power returns to us again and again in our obsession with food. . . . (197)

Rather than see Thelma as a "dodo" or a "caricature of a self-centered old baby," (Kauffman, "More Trick" 48), we need to understand her position in the play as well as Jessie's. Because she views Jessie as an extension of herself, she finds herself upon the horns of a major maternal dilemma. Now that her "extension" has announced plans to blow her brains out with "Daddy's gun," Thelma faces losing a part of her self, her daughter. At the same time, she also risks repudiation of her entire existence as a mother. As Chodorow asserts a mother, "... tends to experience boundary confusion with her daughter, and does not provide experiences of differentiating ego development for her daughter or encourage the breaking of her daughter's dependence" (Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory 59). Thelma valiantly tries to forestall the
inevitable, to find something that tastes good to Jessie, but Jessie rejects all offers. However, as they attempt to work through the psychological baggage which underlies every mother and daughter relationship, Jessie mounts an all-out effort to connect and make her mother understand this shattering decision. Ninety minutes of anger and accusations finally give way to acceptance and understanding.

Indeed, Jessie hungers for understanding, but more importantly, control. She loves her mother, but, ultimately, she leaves her. Unlike her mother, Jessie cannot subsist on the likes of sugary snowballs, peanut brittle and Hershey bars. She now knows that this present life will never provide the nurturance she needs to be a truly autonomous self. Her only hope is to separate from her mother and reunite with her father—in death. But before she goes, she "mothers" Mama by preparing her sweet supply. She also lists Christmas presents for Mama to give and directions for disposal of the body and careful explanations of funeral etiquette are fully explained.

While some may think Jessie incredibly selfish for subjecting Thelma to such agonizing torture, the fact is that Jessie cares deeply for Thelma. Her carefully planned evening reflects a desperate attempt to explain
why no food, not even rice pudding, can make such an isolated existence bearable as Jessie suggests, "How would you know if I didn't say it? You want it to be a surprise?" . . . (13). Jessie's refusal to allow Thelma to call Dawson, Jessie's brother, underscores the fact that what occurs, this night, in this house, is for mother and daughter alone. As Jessie notes, " . . . If Dawson comes over, it'll make me feel stupid for not doing it ten years ago. . . I only told you so I could explain it, so you wouldn't blame yourself, so you wouldn't feel bad. There wasn't anything you could say to change my mind. I didn't want you to save me. I just wanted you to know" (17,74).

Jessie wants Thelma to know that a place at her mother's table has not satisfied the psychic hunger she endures. No option Thelma offers appeals to Jessie. Supplies have run out. However, as Jessie methodically lines up the bags of sour balls, red hots, and licorice, she makes one last attempt to answer her questions and to recreate a sense of safety which never really existed. As she tells Thelma, "We could go on fussing all night. I mean, I could ask you things I always wanted to know and you could make me some hot chocolate the old way" (36). She adds a caramel apple to her request, and Thelma who allows that she "makes
the best caramel apples in the world" willingly accedes to Jessie's wishes. No request is too difficult for Thelma who desperately wants Jessie to stay as she asserts, "It's no trouble, what trouble? You put it in the pan, and stir it up. All right. Fine. Caramel apple. Cocoa. O. K. (37). Interestingly, this pan is the one Jessie instructs her to hold when she calls the police to report Jessie's death. Norman's stage directions tells us she grips the pan tightly "like her life depended on it" (89). As Lynda Hart notes, "Jessie's last request from her mother is for food. . . " and "This last bit of sustenance that mother and daughter share is highly charged with symbolic meaning as the pan Thelma uses to warm the milk becomes the object that will occupy her after Jessie's death" (76) . However, Hart pinpoints the problems daughters have in separating from mothers when she suggests that Thelma's insistence that Jessie have three marshmallows in her cocoa reflects Thelma's attempt to retain maternal control over Jessie. As Hart asserts, "Even with the knowledge of her daughter's imminent suicide, Mama cannot acknowledge her daughter as a separate adult. . . In this most basic of ways, Mama is asserting her power and denying her daughter's initiative" (76).
Mama wants to return to the "old way" when she retained control over her daughter. Now, the table is turned as Jessie asserts her autonomy through her refusal to eat even though she starves psychically. In this battle over what and how much to eat the two wills clash:

The child's efforts to impose her own will upon the world and to manipulate her environment are directed towards food very early in the development of a separate self. What will be eaten and how it will be prepared are questions that often form the basis of mother and daughter struggles. (Hart 76)

Unfortunately, however, their attempted ritual to recover their symbiotic relationship ultimately fails as both mother and daughter realize the cocoa cannot satisfy the deeper longing which exists. Significantly, the milk makes it taste bad. As both mother and daughter concede that it is, indeed, the milk, both women, together, confront their unfulfilled lives. Their mutual dislike of milk is one of the few traits mother and daughter share (Morrow 24).

Mama's avowal that "It's a real waste of chocolate. You don't have to finish it" (45) comprises one of the most important lines in the play. This statement suggests, at least on some level, Jessie's decision to halt her psychic "forage for food"; it also provides a connection to the play's last line "..."
Forgive me. (Pause) I thought you were mine" (89), where Thelma ultimately realizes that she and her daughter are not one, but two separate people.

While her dislike of milk reflects her rejection of the undulterated and healthful, it also suggests " . . . her dissatisfaction with motherhood which has proven no more rewarding than marriage" (Morrow 26). Now she faces coming to terms with a daughter's decision to reject the woman who bore her even though the men in her life, and not her mother, have abandoned her.

Thelma's rage at the realization that Jessie will never have an appetite for options her mother may offer erupts as she complains, "I should've known not to make it. I knew you wouldn't like it. You never did like it" (45). Nothing Thelma can do will satisfy Jessie and knowing that compels her to lash out in a tyrannical rage, threatening never to cook nor drink milk again. Her existence will be bolstered only by candy and tuna, and Jessie's maternal avowal that "You should drink milk" is met with a firm "Not anymore, I'm not" (54). Moreover, she demands an accounting from the flesh and blood which has turned on her as she insists, "Nothing I ever did was good enough for you and I want to know why" (55). Characteristically,
Thelma assumes, as a mother, it must be her fault if her daughter refuses the food proffered. Thelma cannot accept that Jessie feels that, "I cannot do anything either, about my life, to change it, make it better, make me feel better about it" (36).

No one has really taken time to know Jessie on any level except a surface one. All the men in her life, including her beloved father, have fled. Indeed, Jessie's identification with him, the "big, old faded blue man in the chair" (47), is so strong she uses his gun to complete her mission. Jessie could talk to him, even if it was only about why "black socks are warmer than blue socks" (48). Like her father, Jessie is both an epileptic as well as an introvert. Her desire to rejoin him in death is reflected by her wish to "hang a sign around her neck, 'Gone fishin,' like her daddy's." Jessie does not wish to stay around and chat forever. "Unlike Mama, Jessie accepts her father's introversion and complexity because she recognizes the necessary (and desirable) limitation of our ability to communicate with others" (Morrow 29). Jessie wants out, and she wants out tonight.

Although her father leaves her through death, Cecil, Jessie's husband, leaves because as Jessie tells it, he "made her choose between him and smoking"
Interestingly, although Jessie may refuse food, she enjoys smoking—an oral fixation. To Jessie this addictive but non-nourishing habit signifies "... the only thing I know that's always just what you think it's going to be. Just like it was the last time, right there when you want it and real quiet" (56). Jessie associates smoking "with power and self-determination. ... smoking offers Jessie a sense of predictability and control--if only negative control--over her destiny" (Morrow 29). Even this failed relationship reflects back upon Thelma because she is the one who engineered it in the first place. Afraid that Jessie would have a hard time "catching" a man, Thelma contracted with Cecil for a porch and ended up with a son-in-law who left her daughter for another woman. Like Cecil, Jessie's juvenile delinquent son, Ricky, also leaves her.

An incorrigible youngster, he steals, does drugs, and may commit murder in a matter of time. Jessie has given up any hope for Ricky as much as she has for herself. Still, she recognizes his shortcomings are hers too as she notes, "... Ricky is as much like me as it's possible for any human being to be. We even wear the same size pants. These are his, I think" (59). Likewise, she realizes her maternal failure with Ricky
as she tells Thelma, "You know who laid that floor. I did" (60), much as Thelma failed in building a proper foundation for her. Even so, Jessie reaches out to nurture Ricky through her decision to leave him her watch. When Thelma complains that he will just sell it Jessie admits she hopes he gets a good meal, and if he buys dope as Thelma threatens, she hopes "... he gets some good dope with it, Mama ..." (85).

The other man in her life, her brother Dawson, offers her no familial sense of community. In Jessie's view, Dawson calls her Jess, "just like he knows who he's talking to" (23), and he and his wife, Loretta, invade Jessie's privacy by opening the package containing her mail-order bra, the one with the "little rosebuds." The grocery account bears Dawson's name even though Jessie orders the weekly food, and she is tired of dealing with her own brother, who gives her houseshoes every Christmas which never fit.

Aside from family relationships, Jessie has no standing in the community either. Isolated, out in the country, her life consists of day-to-day rituals such as changing shelf paper, washing floors, and coordinating grocery deliveries. She cannot hold a job, not the telephone sales job nor the one at the hospital gift shop where she made the people "real uncomfortable
smiling at them the way I did" (35). The one satisfying job she liked, keeping her father's books, ended with his death. Jessie has had no real opportunity to practice socialization skills either, since she has never really been around people except in the hospital after a seizure. People avoid her. Even Thelma's okra-eating friend, Agnes, will not come to visit because she senses, "... Jessie's shook the hand of death and I can't take the chance it's catching... I'll come up the driveway, but that's as far as I go" (43).

As Jessie sees it, her best bet is to leave this incredible boring life. She has had enough of being subject to the convenience of other's people schedules and ideas of where her best interests lie. She has had enough of being at the mercy of possible epileptic seizures even though she has not had one in a year. On this particular night, she maintains perfect control. This control is reflected in her statement where she notes, "Whenever I feel like it, I can get off. As soon as I've had enough, it's my stop. I've had enough" (33). Her search for a cohesive self has ended in failure, and Jessie knows it. As she explains to Thelma, "That's what this is about. It's somebody I lost, all right, it's my own self. Who I never was.
Or who I tried to be and never got there. Somebody I waited for who never came" (76). Jessie is a woman "... in whom all desire is spent, not through satiation, but through the clear understanding of the world's false nourishment" (Hart 75). The only reason she remains is to make her mother understand why she had to make this radical decision. At the same time, she wishes to have her mother accept her as an autonomous adult and not the child she once was. "... Through both her actions and her words, we sense Jessie's sincere desire to make some connections with her mother as a separate fully human being before she goes" (Spencer 366). Even though Thelma makes one last ditch effort to assert her maternal power by proclaiming the inescapable eternal mother/daughter connection as she insists, "Everything you have to do has to do with me, Jessie. You can't do anything, wash your face or cut your finger, without doing it to me" (72), Jessie retains the upper hand. In a poignant moment, Jessie reveals the enormity of her newly-found independence by insisting, "Then what if it does! ... What if you are all I have and you're not enough? ... What if the only way I can get away from you for good is to kill myself? ... I can still do it!" (72).
In this gripping speech, Jessie speaks for all daughters everywhere. Her outburst metaphorically reflects the anger we feel toward this woman who can never fulfill our fantasy of the perfect mother. Jessie wants her mother to feed her, but Thelma is unable to provide the necessary nurturance. Her failure incurs Jessie's wrath:

Jessie expresses anger at her mother for not being able to fulfill her insatiable demands (you're not enough), anger at feeling powerless to change her situation any other way... anger for not providing her with an adequate sense of self, for controlling her life without giving it meaning. For women in the audience, it is anger that each of us has experienced. (Spencer 368)

Jessie's carefully orchestrated suicide finally separates her from her mother. She will not opt for a life of desperation like Thelma. Unlike her mother she will not seek succor in sugary sweets, and if she cannot control her life, she will certainly control her death. She has waited until the time was right for as she sees the situation, "I'm feeling as good as I ever felt in my life" (66). "She is convinced that suicide is the only authentic act available to her" (Keysser 165). With this courageous rebellion, Jessie repudiates the false self assigned to her by others. She becomes the director in her own life's drama; she establishes the boundaries between mother and daughter
as she responds to Thelma's poignant plea, "You are my child!" with the firm revelation, "I am what became of your child" (76). The infant self that drooled on the sheet and felt its mother's hand tucking in the crib quilt never progressed to any sense of psychic wholeness, never acquired a true sense of self. In Jessie's view, "... I'm not going to show up, so there's no reason to stay, except to keep you company, and that's ... not reason enough ..." (76). No cupboard held the requisite food needed to nourish Jessie's self. Nothing, not even cornflakes for breakfast, can keep her here.

As the play's action moves closer and closer to the bedroom door with each ticking of the clock, Thelma faces the awful moment of truth. Desperate and scared, she has summoned every conceivable argument to place before Jessie's metaphorical plate, only to have them pushed aside. She realizes her loss as she tells Jessie, "... who am I talking to? You're gone already, aren't you? I'm looking right through you!" (78). This statement by Thelma establishes her realization that Jessie has now smashed the mirror which bonds them together. Thelma, in looking at her daughter, no longer sees her own reflection. She sees a separate person. In an interesting anecdote,
Madeline Grumet focuses upon this shattering truth in *Bitter Milk* where she speaks of being surprised after childbirth as she looked in a mirror and saw her own reflection and not her child's (10). This cohesion, the "you are mine and I am yours" feeling, is so prevalent in mother/daughter relationships because of the way mothers view their daughters as extensions of themselves. The connection is so powerful that when they look at their daughters, they see themselves. This continuity is not present, as Chodorow attests, in mother/son relationships. Only by "smashing" that mirror can the daughter eventually own her reflection. As Sally Browder suggests, "Without some objective reference, some sense of oneself apart from others, one is totally at the mercy of other's experiences. One's sense of meaning is defined by other's choices. One's value is determined by how well one serves or provides for the needs of others" (111).

In the end Thelma realizes that she cannot possess Jessie no matter how much she loves her. The action which began in the kitchen ends with Thelma screaming and pounding at Jessie's locked bedroom door. With her anguished confession, "Jessie, Jessie, child . . . Forgive me. (Pause) I thought you were mine" (89), she faces the fact that she finally must relinquish
control. Even so, the symbiotic bond remains. The bullet which pierces Jessie's brain symbolically rips through Thelma as well. As critic Leslie Kane points out in *Feminine Focus: The New Women Playwrights*, Thelma's physical reaction to Jessie's shot as her body crumbles against the door confirms Thelma's previous statement about mutually felt pain (267).

Interestingly, in the film version, for which Norman wrote the screenplay, the last crucial line is omitted. According to Stanley Kauffman, through this omission Norman avoids suggesting the dramatic work that it could have been because:

> If the play were true—to Norman's characters as she wants us to think of them—it wouldn't exist. Either Jessie would shoot herself before it begins, or as soon as she discloses her plans, Thelma would collapse . . . Thelma's one impeccable line comes right after the shot. Against the locked bedroom door she sobs: 'Forgive me. I thought you were mine.' The drama that really leads to that line—of a clawing Electra complex, of the mother's mirror-image hatreds, and of pity overarching both—has not yet been written. (New Republic 26)

Unfortunately, Kauffman misses the point here. Rather than improve the play, this omission weakens the important truth Thelma realized while drinking the cocoa at the kitchen table—no mother can own her daughter. Ultimately, she must relinquish control no matter how much it hurts. That poignant realization
constitutes the true drama of the play—not a "clawing Electra complex."

Norman, however, offers a more pragmatic reason for the omission. In personal correspondence with me (through her agent, Jack Tantleff), Norman concedes:

... I chose to omit the last line because that kind of line is only permissible in the theatre, where the line between the real & the imagined, the said & the unsaid is more blurred. The line, as a piece of poetry, does not belong in the realism of the film. ... It was always my feeling that the line was what Thelma thought or felt at the moment. The only reason we hear it in the theatre, is because we are in the theatre. (... Correspondence 12 Aug. 1991)

Even so, whether or not Thelma only thinks or feels that she can no longer "own" Jessie, she still confronts that realization.

With the curtain's descent, Thelma grips the cocoa pan tightly as she calls Dawson for help. Jessie's journey, which began in the kitchen and ended in her bedroom is now complete. Nevertheless, both mother and daughter have connected in a way never before possible. They work through their mutual anger, digging through layers of guilt and remorse in order to salvage nuggets of truth. Each forgives the other. Jessie shows love for her mother by the acts she performs during these last two hours of her life. She prepares Thelma for the inevitable truth—that Jessie must assume autonomy
regardless of personal cost. Thelma, through overwhelming grief, finally does let go. Both communicate on a level many mothers and daughters never experience.

Neither is really to blame for the personal realities that bring them to this place this particular night. Thelma, like many mothers, can only offer what she has. As a participant in a patriarchal culture which places women in this no-win situation, she can hardly do more. Jessie, as a daughter, has to seek her true self—even if that quest ends in death. Both must seek their nurturance in the ways they know best. In this play, where hunger provides the controlling metaphor, Norman provides a tremendous sense of catharsis. However, she provides no answers to the contradictory lives mothers and daughters must face as long as women remain the primary caretakers in children's lives. She offers no solutions to unfulfilling lives due to societal constraints. She fails to challenge, as Jenny Spencer notes, "in any fundamental way the prevalent image of women in society—as those who reproduce, consume, and are consumed, who are powerless, inadequate, unworthy, and mutually destructive" (370).

Both Hellman and Norman, through these two plays, create representations of women working to fill that
psychic hunger experienced when faced with the limited options for self-determination present in patriarchal society. Hellman's character, Cora Rodman, remains powerless, still striving at the play's end to control her psychic food supply through manipulation of family members. Norman's character, Jessie Cates, assumes control of her life and chooses death rather than face an unfulfilled life like her mother's. Even though Jessie chooses death, she triumphs because she, alone, decides what constitutes her proper nourishment.
Notes

1 I am referring here to Abraham Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs," where he denotes what needs each person must satisfy before he or she can hope to reach the top of the list, self-actualization. Hunger (along with thirst) is the most basic. See Murray, Edward J., Motivation and Emotion (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1964) 110-11.

2 For a cogent discussion of Melanie Klein's work, I suggest the reader consult Hannah Segal's, Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein (New York: Basic Books, 1974). This work is a compilation of several lectures given at the Institute of Psychoanalysis in London by Segal and illustrated by her clinical experiences. Chapter Three, "The Paranoid-Schizoid Position," more fully explains Klein's view of how the infant splits the mother's breast.

3 See Mel Gussow, "Women Playwrights: New Voices in the Theater," New York Times Magazine 1 May 1983: 22-40. Gussow highlights Norman's quote, "'We are soldiers marching, and we must step on the mines. We are trying to clear the path, to tell you what's out there'" (25).
Conclusion

The importance of the pre-oedipal bond in a woman's developmental psychic history is paramount. This early relationship with the mother creates a powerful paradigm which impinges upon later life experiences. Examining female-authored dramatic works provides crucial insights for analyzing this all-important maternal connection and allows readers (and viewers) to see the struggles women have experienced as they work through this significant, yet often restrictive, relationship with their mothers. This bond, which is eventually redefined for sons, is never completely broken for daughters and affects future behavior. As Chodorow asserts:

Every step of the way, as analysts describe it, a girl develops her relationship to her father while looking back at her mother—to see if her mother is envious, to make sure she is in fact separate, to see if she can in this way win her mother, to see if she is really independent. Her turn to her father is both an attack on her mother and an expression of love for her. (126)

Simultaneously, as daughters strive to understand their developmental maternal histories and achieve some
sense of autonomy, it behooves them to understand and affirm the mother's subjectivity, and to be willing to accord their mothers more of a role than just that of an object available to satisfy a child's needs. Likewise, they need to understand the patriarchal culture which has influenced their mothers' responses to them as female children.

To that end, drama provides a powerful and important medium for portraying representations of women as well as the patriarchal constraints which have historically impeded their psychological development as fully functioning cohesive selves. Although a woman's experience occasionally has been acceptable subject matter for the American stage, the last twenty years have seen an increase in plays featuring such themes. In the past, the "Broadway Bobs," eager to please the masses and make a profit, often have chosen to ignore material deemed risky. However, women's voices, frequently inaudible in the past, are increasing in volume in American theater.

Certainly, our country's history includes a number of female playwrights who have made important contributions to the American theater, including playwrights such as Rachel Crowthers, Lorraine Hansberry, and Susan Glaspell. Their contributions cannot be denied.
However, one woman, who began assertively speaking her mind many years ago, Lillian Hellman, deserves special recognition for her part in placing female characters and their experiences center stage. While some might argue against crediting Hellman with any contribution to feminist theater (even Hellman resisted the label of feminist playwright), the fact remains that she played an important part in paving the way for the proliferation of plays focusing upon women's issues which we are now seeing in dramatic literature. Even though she was characterized as a "moral writer," and castigated as a "melodramatist," her works provided a foundation for women's theater. By showcasing female characters searching for psychic cohesion, she opened, more widely, a door in American dramatic literature which had, more often than not, been locked. In so doing, she went beyond melodrama.

Nearly forty years, later playwrights such as Marsha Norman have taken it upon themselves to open that door even wider. They are providing a vehicle in theater for women's voices to be heard. By featuring female characters such as Jessie Cates in 'night, Mother or Arlene Holtzclaw in Getting Out, who search for truth and are willing to face that truth no matter what the cost, playwrights such as Norman illuminate
women's psychic struggles in a powerful way.

Although Hellman was not consciously writing about feminist issues, she certainly addressed the fragmentation of women's psychic selves through the female characters she fashioned. Her view of the mother/daughter bond, although different from Norman's was, nevertheless, unique. Through characters such as Lavinia and Regina Hubbard, in *Another Part of the Forest* and *The Little Foxes*, Martha Dobie in *The Children's Hour*, Anna and Carrie Berniers in *Toys in the Attic*, and Cora Rodman in *Days to Come*, Hellman showcased the incredible battle women had to fight in order to find some measure of psychic cohesion within a patriarchal culture. She also showed, in various ways, how the mother/daughter bond influences a female's concept of self/other relationships.

Marsha Norman, writing at a later time, speaks to issues of female identity and shows female characters able to assume some measure of autonomy no matter what the cost to their primary relationship with their mothers. Arlene Holtzclaw in *Getting Out*, Deedee Johnson in *The Laundromat*, and Jessie Cates in *night'Mother*, all, in some way, confront their relationships with their mothers and move on. In doing so, they come closer to psychic cohesion than do
Hellman's characters. Nevertheless, Norman credits Hellman with being an important role model, a "... great, vibrant, feisty, swearing lady who had managed to make a life in that world" (Harriott 156).

Some feminists resist imbuing Norman with the title "feminist writer," but Norman speaks to those charges by asserting that "If it's a feminist to care about women's lives, yes, I'm a feminist writer" (Harriott 156). Norman realizes that, "[O]n the whole the American theater, dominated by men, does not perceive women fighting for their lives as a central issue" (In Their Own Words 187). However, she appreciates her fortune at being born during a time when she can give women a voice on the American stage. For her, this important task, to tell the truth, cannot be shoved aside until some more convenient time. She feels that she must "... capture the sunlight and focus it and burn the hole right through" (In Their Own Words 187). At the same time, she feels that her work is a political responsibility and that by writing plays such as 'night, Mother she proves "... that what happens to women is important, that the mother-daughter relationship is as deserving of attention as the father-son" ("Conversations with ..." 16).
Since the theater is traditionally charged with holding up a mirror to society, it needs to continue to bring issues central to women onstage. In doing so, it can play a tremendously important part in confronting the "Great Mother" myth so powerfully incorporated in the concept of institutionalized motherhood. All persons, both women and men, need nurturing. But given the restrictive patriarchal culture within which women must struggle, it remains difficult to pass along the particular kind of love which results in a strong sense of self in a daughter:

"... [T]his loving is not simply the old, institutionalized, sacrificial, "mother-love" which men have demanded: we want courageous mothering. The most notable fact that culture imprints on women is the sense of our limits. The most important thing one woman can do for another is to illuminate and expand her sense of actual possibilities. . . It means that the mother herself is trying to expand the limits of her life. To refuse to be a victim and to go from there. (Rich 220)

Both Hellman and Norman, with their own unique contributions to the American theater, reflect women's struggles to expand the limits of their lives. By doing so, they have "mothered" women through their words and provided important insights into the mother/daughter relationship.

However, the societal changes which have been realized thus far are only surface changes. The core
of society, deep down, the fundamental structure, has not changed. The mother/daughter relationship needs to be redefined until all mothers and daughters, regardless of socio-economic status, are given opportunities to achieve autonomy, and fathers can participate more fully in their children's lives as nurturers. Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman, through their female characters, voiced important truths. Other playwrights are making their voices heard as well. If the "conversation," keeps going, the theater will have served an all important role as a catalyst for necessary changes in society. One hopes that, perhaps, one day these goals will be accomplished.


____.  "Unpleasant Play."  Nation 148 (1939): 244.


