CHAPTER VII

DESTRUCTIVE POSTURES OF THE JUNGLE-CREATURES:

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In Another Part of the Forest, (1946) Hellman returns to the milieu of the Hubbard family twenty years prior to the action of The Little Foxes (1938) to trace the origins of the villainy and greed that destroyed their lives. It may well be called the prologue to the first play. Hellman’s aim is to look into their family background and to find out what it was that made them the nasty people they were. The play chronicles the life of the Hubbards in 1880 prior to their ‘little foxes’ incarnation. It reveals a harsher world with greater animal death-grips and destructive postures of the jungle-creatures.

Naturally, Hellman lays great emphasis on the social ostracizing of the Hubbards and their impulse to get ahead financially to compensate for their loneliness. Even twenty years of time does not transport them to the age of innocence inasmuch as their evil natures are already well-cultivated. Although the play has its own independent life, it is remarkably enhanced by our fore-knowledge of the despicable and fascinating Hubbards. It is more analytic and less concentrated in the picture of evil.

In Another Part of the Forest, we see the beginnings of the family’s internal struggle for power and domination, a struggle which is meant to particularise the
ruthless economic power and domination which they wield over their community. The Hubbards are grasping vicious predators feeding off the ‘Reconstruction South’ as they claw their way upward. They come to us essentially as merchants in a broken agricultural economy. It reveals not only the dubious ways in which the Hubbards accumulated their wealth but also the ways in which women function as commodities.

The play centres on the family patriarch, Marcus Hubbard, a self-made man who becomes rich during the civil war by charging outrageous sums for necessities. His sons, Ben and Oscar and his daughter, Regina, play the same game of grabbing and back-stabbing as they do in *The Little Foxes*. All the same, there is a heightened level of sadism and acquisitiveness all around. It emphasizes Hellman’s theme that not only are the sins of the father passed on to the sons, but the capacity for sinning as well.

*Another Part of the Forest* may be said to be a Marxian study of the decline of the Southern feudal aristocracy and the rise of the capitalist exploiter. The play is concerned with materialism, amorality and the New South in two periods of time. Despite Hellman’s obvious concern with social evil, here she seems to be preoccupied with abstract evil, even to the point of caricature.

Set in June 1880, in Alabama, *Another Part of the Forest* delves deep into the imaginary past to unearth the psychological factors that made Regina and her brothers
the predatory creatures they became as a result of their father’s sadistic, driving ambition for wealth and power. The saga of the Hubbards begins with Marcus Hubbard, the father, a tyrannical manipulator of his entire family. He made a fortune through illegal commerce during the Civil War and is now replacing the aristocratic Bagtry clan as the chief force in the region. His family, however, provides little assistance to his ambitions. Marcus’ wife, Lavinia Hubbard, is weak-minded and preoccupied with religion. Ben the eldest son and heir is a rebellious and ambitious enemy who opposes him at every turn. The second son, Oscar Hubbard, is half-witted and has fallen into a vulgar love with a prostitute, Laurette Sincee. His daughter, Regina, is conducting a secret affair with John Bagtry of the aristocratic family. Regina has displaced her mother, Lavinia, in her father’s affections and father’s attachment to his daughter is given incestuous overtones and there is more than a hint that Ben is a jealous rival of his father for Regina, as well as for his money. However, the entire town despises them and they have become pariahs in their own town.

In contrast to the Hubbards are the Bagtrys - Birdie, her mother, and her cousin, John Bagtry. They are the ‘land and cotton poor,’ starving on their plantation, Lionnet. And, because of their aristocratic heritage and manners, they are a thorn in the side of the Hubbards. Marcus, encouraged by Ben, plans to gain control of the Bagtry plantation through secretly lending money to the daughter of the family -the childish and light-headed Birdie Bagtry. He leaves the affair in the hands of Ben, who
tries to trick him by pretending that the loan is for ten thousand dollars, but keeping five thousand dollars for himself. Oscar too is involved in this cheating as he wants money to go to New Orleans with the local whore, Laurette.

Ben invites Birdie and John Bagtry to his father’s ‘musicale’ and also makes Oscar invite his love, Laurette. Ben, who is always jealous of his father’s love to Regina wants to thwart Regina’s desire of marrying John Bagtry. And he also plans to get his father enraged at Oscar for his affair with the prostitute. In return, Regina exposes Ben’s finagling. When Marcus discovers the deception, a fierce struggle breaks out between father and son. Marcus orders Ben to leave the house.

In the third act, Ben bids his mother, Lavinia, goodbye as he is going to leave the house as per his father’s orders. At this point, Lavinia babbles Ben to take her with him, as she always wants to go away and start a school for black children. She has persuaded her husband, Marcus, for starting this school, but Marcus has paid no heed. Lavinia also reveals to Ben that she knows a secret that is dangerous to Marcus.

Ben is reluctant until his mother gradually gives him the information about his father’s past that could hang Marcus if it became known in the town. The townspeople already hate him for exploiting them during the Civil war, by selling the badly needed salt, smuggled through the blockade, for extraordinary black-market prices. Moreover, the townspeople have suspected that he led the Union troops to a camp where
Southern boys - sons and brothers of the local folks - were training and where the Yankees slaughtered twenty-seven boys, including John Bagtry’s twin. Marcus has always had an alibi to protect him from the charge, but Lavinia has the proof that his alibi is false. It is written in her Bible, along with her own and Coralee’s eyewitness account of Marcus’s whereabouts on the night of the massacre. Ben coaxes it from her and in exchange promises to finance her school and take care of Coralee, the black servant.

Armed with this knowledge, Ben becomes the tribal chief. He forces his father to escape hanging, to sell him the family business for one dollar. He gives Birdie Bagtry a promised loan on Lionnet and insures that the plantation will come eventually to the Hubbards by clearing the way for Oscar to court Birdie. John Bagtry is out of the way too, for the money will enable him to go to Brazil, his long cherished wish. Ruling his family with an iron hand, he marries Regina to Horace Giddens, a young clerk who lives in Mobile, and is thus far away enough not to have heard the scandal of her affair with John.

In the final moments of the play, Marcus, now stripped of power, goes to sit by his daughter, but she ignores him and crosses to a chair near Ben. As the curtain comes down, Regina, now knowing where her bread is buttered, acknowledges Ben’s superiority. Thus, in one terrifying act, the later destinies of this family of foxes are determined and the sequel now seems to stand out in bold illumination.
Thus, Hellman, with her psychoanalytic perception, succeeds brilliantly in showing that evil begets evil through family dynamics - the influence of parents upon children and the creation of pressures within the family that required outside release. There is a kind of malevolent magnificence in the scenes in which brother, sister and father pit their wits and unbridle aggression against one another devoid of humanity or affection.

*Another Part of the Forest* like *The Little Foxes*, is known for its tight plot-construction, leading to a violent climax that is the result of evil doing. But, unlike the other plays of Hellman, *Another Part of the Forest* is the only 'end play' in Hellman's canon. Here Hellman introduces two strong individual portraiture - Marcus and Lavinia - who are the parents of Ben, Oscar and Regina. But, as the play progresses, these two are dropped out of the main conflict. As in *The Little Foxes*, the conflict between Regina and Ben forms the main action of the play. So the structure of the play is not concerned, as Bigsby rightly observes, "with uncovering a set of experiences or perceptions which could explain their character and their actions but simply with exposing a hidden part which can be utilised to shift the balance of power."¹

Suspense is built powerfully till Lavinia's final revelation of a piece of suppressed information in the last act. This piece of hidden information becomes a central part of the play's dramatic strategy and is hinted at throughout and then flourished at a critical moment. Again, as in The Little Foxes, the crucial reversal centers around a character's learning a piece of information which can be used as "a lever against the rest of the family in this never-ending competition for superiority."²

Thus, the climax of the play and the defeat of Marcus is brought about by Lavinia, his downtrodden wife. The audience has the pleasure, rare in a Hellman play, of watching virtue triumph or at least find its own reward. By the end of the last scene, the later action of the plundering 'little foxes' appears inevitable, illuminated by the lightning flash into their past.

Another Part of the Forest is remarkable not only for its tight plot-construction but also for its superb characterization. The characters in Another Part of the Forest easily surpass those of The Little Foxes in their vicious treatment of one another. And, as Joseph Wood Krutch notes, "by comparison the first play would have to be ranked as an idyll."³ As in The Little Foxes, Hellman is uninterested in drawing sympathetic

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characters or generous human emotions, and presents "sharply etched characters who fascinate in their malignancy."  

Among the Hubbards - Marcus Hubbard, Ben Hubbard, Oscar Hubbard, Lavinia Hubbard and Regina Hubbard - Marcus, Ben and Regina are vigorous and unforgettable characters. Marcus, who is the father and head of this Hubbard clan, is a self-made man who got his smuggling started during the Civil war. During the war, he inadvertently led Union troops to an encampment of local boys, who were killed. He ostracized Alabama townspeople and started dominating the town. Cruel, cold-blooded with a sardonic wit and a partly pretentious feeling for culture, he cares only, and then half-incestuously, for his daughter, Regina. Disappointed in his sons, Marcus placed in Regina his hopes for someone to share his love for culture. Marcus scorns and ridicules his wife, Lavinia, and becomes Oscar’s model for his treatment of Birdie in *The Little Foxes*. His treatment of his wife along with her knowledge of his guilty past has made her a violent hysterical. His contempt for his sons, the power-craving son Ben and the spineless Oscar, has made them bitterly hostile.

The sins of which Marcus stands convicted include greed, avarice, false pride, false witness, lack of love and incestuous desire, presumably unfulfilled. Like Faulkner’s Thomas Sutpen, Marcus wants to found a dynasty. But he laments the wicked offspring fate has given him. But he deserves no better. He is a sadist. The

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4 David Sievers, *Freud and Broadway*, p.284.
big fox could not have had, a family of anything but ‘little foxes.’ His downfall is the
downfall of an ignoble man. His retribution comes, at the hands of his own family,
not surprisingly, given Hellman’s attitude to evil and the framework of the Greek
tragedy which she has chosen for pattern.

Thus, in Marcus, Hellman creates what many critics regarded as her most
interesting character. A prototype of all the ironwilled tyrants in Tennessee Williams’
plays, Marcus is more complicated. He despises his sons and his feeling for Regina
is his downfall. Marcus is right when he describes himself as

an empty man from an idiot world. A man who believes in nothing and
never will. A man in space!\(^5\)

Ben Hubbard, the elder son of Marcus, is the most interesting of the Hubbard
progeny. He is the outcome of his father’s ruthlessness, the fulfilment of his father’s
spirit. Hellman as in The Little Foxes, again depicts Ben as a role-player, literally a
hypocrite. In Another Part of the Forest, Ben is already the Ben of The Little Foxes.
He is interested only in money and the power it brings and he has every reason to
hate his father. When he gains the upper hand he says to Marcus:

Don’t waste your time, or put yourself in further danger, or tempt me
longer. Even since you started your peculiar way of treating me, many
years ago, I have had ugly dreams. (412).

\(^5\) Lillian Hellman, "Another Part of the Forest," The Collected Plays (Boston -
All further references are to this edition and the page numbers are given
parenthetically at the end of the quotations.
With no concrete passions to cloud his judgement, Ben watches and waits for the others to make mistakes. He can even be sardonic about being unloved. At the end of the play, Ben usurps power from his father, Marcus, and he becomes a tyrannical chief of his family. In his ambition and ruthlessness, Ben thus proves himself equal to Marcus.

Regina Hubbard, the sister of Ben and daughter of Marcus, is the most interesting woman character in the entire Hubbard family. Hellman portrays Regina as a coquettish girl of twenty. She is in love and has an affair with the penniless John Bagtry at the beginning of the play. She hopes to get him to elope with her to Chicago, since she knows that neither her father nor Ben would even approve their marriage.

Regina is crafty and scheming. Although she is aware of her father’s incestuous attraction to her, she is perfectly willing to use her feminine charms to persuade him to grant her wishes. She plays the role of ladylike subservience to gain some advantage for herself and longs fiercely for the same power, which Ben, her brother, attains.

But, Regina is no match to Ben, because she still wants something human -- love. Although she assumes a mask with Marcus, she is fairly straightforward with Ben. Though Regina is as powerless as her mother, Lavinia, and Birdie, she does not
acquiesce. Instead, she uses the methods that she has seen the men employ. She plays her father and Ben off against each other, informing Ben about Marcus and Marcus about Ben so that she may gain the confidence of both. She becomes rock hard yet extraordinarily vital, a combination of cool villainy and hot desire that is developed in *The Little Foxes* into one of the most commanding and repellent female characters on the American stage.

Though, at times Hellman's characterization of women may appear harsh, she affords her audience the opportunity to explore the conditions of a woman's life which may lead to manipulating, possessive and emasculating behaviour. As Hellman probes the background of Regina's character, she finds a lonely girlhood at least partly the cause of her later rapacity. No wonder, the Regina of twenty years later knows only ruthlessness. She has suffered from a feeling of aloofness since childhood days and has known nothing to make her appreciate the warmth of human affection. Thus her coup in *The Little Foxes* may be seen as the culmination of many years of having had to claw her way to the inner circle. She is "a woman in a seething microcosm of a man's world the dynasty of Marcus Hubbard." Hence to despise Regina is to despise a typhoon.

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Sharon Friedman, 'Feminism as Theme,' *American Studies*, Vol. 25-26, 1984-85, p.83.
Oscar Hubbard is the last character to be mentioned in the vicious Hubbard clan. Oscar is shown as a pathetic weakling in love with a prostitute, Laurette Sincee in the pattern of Freud's comment on 'love for a harlot.' Oscar is simple-minded. He is deeply and sincerely in love with the town-whore and wants to marry her and take her to New Orleans. He reminds us of his son, Leo in *The Little Foxes*, when he emerges onto the porch stuffing a biscuit in his mouth. He too, is forced by Ben to marry Birdie at the end of the play.

Lavinia, the down-trodden wife of Marcus Hubbard, lives like Birdie of *The Little Foxes*, according to the dictates of men. She is unlike her children. Though broken and half-crazed from living with a man who shows only contempt for her, she is a good woman, deeply religious in a child-like sense. Hellman describes Lavinia as a "Woman of about forty eight, stooped, thin delicate looking." (346) Lavinia's character is modelled on Hellman's mother who was a sweet eccentric.\(^7\)

Lavinia, like Glaspell's Minnie Wright of *Trifles*, fears the brutality of her husband. Her actions are governed first by her husband, Marcus, and then by her son, Ben. Marcus scorns and ridicules her whereas her children treat her with complete contempt. Lavinia, who lacks both intellect and education, is a mass of confused guilt

\(^7\) In creating Lavinia, Hellman may have used something of her mother's vague but sincere religiosity as described in *An Unfinished Woman and Pentimento*. 178
and is nearly insane. She always lives in a dark world of her own without any sunshine or light. As she tells Coralee she "spent a life afraid." (366)

Though Lavinia and Coralee share the secret of her husband’s sin, Lavinia keeps it to herself till the climax of the play. Out of her overwhelming sense of guilt which makes her almost mad, she turns to religion for peace of mind. She recognises the culpability of Marcus, which she feels has brought a curse upon her family, and wishes to take some responsibility for it. She says:

I got to do a little humble service. I lived in sin these thirty seven years. (367).

Though Lavinia is portrayed as a neurotic woman, she is a woman of principle under all her submissiveness. She knows well that her marriage is on the brink of collapse and tries her best to keep it from falling by being a devoted wife. When Marcus threatens to send her away to a mental hospital, Lavinia makes up her mind to escape. Lavinia is at last free and happy. With a beaming face she tells her family:

I’ll be thinking of you and I’ll be praying for you, all of you. Everybody needs somebody to pray for them, and I’m going to pray for you all. (421)

To each of the Hubbards she gives a memento - a pin to Regina, her prayer book to Oscar, her father’s watch to Ben, and her wedding ring back to Marcus. To conclude with Doris V.Falk, "Lavinia’s character adds a new dimension to the Hubbard Saga
and her presence in the play means that some good blood has been brought into the Hubbard clan."8

The Bagtrys -- Birdie Bagtry, her mother and her cousin, John Bagtry -- fall a total contrast to the Hubbards. Because of their gentle nature they always hate Hubbard machinations. Birdie is portrayed as a girl of twenty with seedy clothes and frightened face.9 Birdie is presented as the penniless daughter of the aristocratic Bagtry who is forced to come and ask Ben to arrange a loan to save the family plantation, Lionnet. She is unmarried and unable to sell her cotton and thus support those who work for her. She is a pathetic victim of fading aristocracy who tries her best to retain her family property.

John Bagtry, the cousin of Birdie, is an ex-Confederate Officer. He is essentially a man of honour, an officer and a gentleman, who was happy only during the war when he was in the army. He is loved by Regina, who plans to flee with him to Chicago. However, John’s affair with Regina is beginning to pale at the end and all he wants now is to go to Brazil to fight in a war brewing there. At the end of the play, Ben enables him to leave Regina and go to Brazil. With only one desire to go

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9 Hellman’s mother, Julia New House, is said to be the model for Birdie both in *Another Part of the Forest* and *The Little Foxes*. See *Pentimento*, p.80.
to Brazil, John Bagtry is a burnt-out case, something like Chekhov's Ivanov, in his relation to the young and vital Regina.

An important feature of Hellman's art of characterization in *Another Part of the Forest* is her experimentation with moving towards a more internal examination of women. The three central women of the play - Lavinia, Birdie and young Regina - live more or less according to the dictates of men. Lavinia, consumed with guilt for not speaking out about her husband's lies and wrong-doings, gradually retreats to a world of fantasy. Birdie, a passive and vulnerable member of the dying aristocracy, is forced to marry Oscar to remain solvent. Even Regina, the most formidable woman, is made to please her father and then Ben, who marries her off to Horace Giddens, in spite of her liking John Bagtry. Whatever 'wholesale wickedness' is contrived among the Hubbards, Hellman shows how the social and economic powerlessness of women puts them at a disadvantage. This reveals Hellman's most realistic and objective portrayal of women in the play. She seems to be one with Virginia Woolf in suggesting that economic independence is absolutely necessary for the full flowering of woman's individuality and assertion of her position in society.

Like *The Little Foxes*, *Another Part of the Forest* is essentially a realistic play. Hellman writes the play as she sees the world, past or present. The connection between the drive for wealth and power and the surrender of conscience is genuinely complex. Greed and egotism raised to the level of social strategy are things that
Heilman has observed at close quarters and portrayed in the play *Another Part of the Forest.*

Heilman has the unusual ability to choose themes ordinarily associated with tragedy and fit them into a familial context where the facts of tragedy are really the facts of life. As in Ibsen's *Ghosts,* the sins of the father are passed on to the son. From father to son, the evil is bequeathed as if it were a birthright. As G.J.Nathan observes, "Heilman is not working in symbols but in terms of sharp realism."  

*Another Part of the Forest,* like *The Little Foxes,* contains an unrelieved view of an evil universe. *Another Part of the Forest* is written in the years following the Great Depression and is socially relevant as it is meant to expose the evils of materialism in a competitive society. The basic historical social struggle against which the play of the Hubbard family is cast is that between the Old South and the New South, between Agrarianism and the new order which desired to imitate the North for the purpose of moving the region into the modern world. From the beginning to the end of the play, the contrast is stated and reiterated by character after character in scene after scene.

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The play chronicles, as Joseph Wood Krutch points out, the "decline of the Southern feudal aristocracy and the rise of the capitalist exploiter. There are no admirable characters because, by antecedent premise, there cannot be any. Dying aristocrats must be dim-witted and rising capitalists must be villainous because otherwise the dialectic process could not have taken place as it did."11 Like Faulkner or Penn Warren and later Tennessee Williams, Hellman seems to know all too clearly the corruption hidden by neo-classical facades and romantic lies.

The realistic mode of the play is happily matched with its all-pervasive dramatic irony. The audience know what Regina’s real plans are, what the real deal Ben has made with Birdie, and what evidence Lavinia has to hang Marcus. Ben, for example, does not want Birdie to talk to Marcus about the loan. When Birdie says she would never talk business at a party, Ben replies sardonically:

Good Breeding is very useful. (379)

The audience also know before Regina and Oscar that their plans will be thwarted.

The very structure of the play, like that of Shakespeare’s King Lear, is fraught with boomerang irony. In the words of Lederer Katherine, "had Marcus granted Lavinia’s request, she would not have been present to be the instrument of his downfall. Had Marcus let Ben have the money to invest in coal, Ben would not have schemed to get it through Birdie, would not have been thwarted by ‘Regina’s trying

to keep Bagtry from going to Brazil, would not have been ordered out of the house, and would not have gotten the information that gives him the upper hand. Regina's attempt to outwit Ben and keep Bagtry leads to her losing both Bagtry and Chicago and any freedom she had through her father's favouritism.¹² In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* too, 'boomerang irony' operates on similar lines though in quite different situations.

Without fully grasping the satiric base and ironic mode of the play, some critics have categorized *Another Part of the Forest* as a melodrama of social protest. For instance, George Jean Nathan thinks that Hellman had tried a "drama of hate and avarice in the Strindberg manner and had wound up with overwrought melodrama."¹³ J.M. Brown feels that Hellman sets before us "the fun - the good, tingling almost freak-show fun - of her melodrama which comes from the wholesale villainy of her characters."¹⁴ Leonard Unger observes that "*Another Part of the Forest* is melodrama employing a time-honoured combination: the family secret and the object by which it is revealed."¹⁵ And some critics even went further and assumed that Hellman had tried to write a tragedy and fallen short into melodrama.

This is made clear to us through what Heilman herself says in this regard in *Pentimento*:

I believed that I could now make clear that I had meant the first play *The Little Foxes* as a kind of satire. I tried to do that in *Another Part of the Forest*, but what I thought funny or outrageous the critics thought sad, touching or plotty and melodramatic.\(^\text{16}\)

Since everyone knew that Heilman is a social critic and a writer of melodrama, critics are prone to consider *Another Part of the Forest* a melodramatic study of the rise of capitalism. Also the ironic detachment that crops up in the play, which is rare in American drama, has been viewed with some misgivings resulting in failure to get out the purpose and tone of the play. What we have to remember is that *The Little Foxes* and *Another Part of the Forest* are in the tradition of Ben Jonson’s *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*. As Katherine rightly points out, "Like *The Little Foxes*, *Another Part of the Forest*, from its title to its curtain, is not a melodrama; it is not a tragedy, failed or otherwise. It is an ironic detached comedy."\(^\text{17}\)

It is interesting to note some similarities between Heilman’s *Another Part of the Forest* and Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* and Galsworthy’s *Forsyte Saga*. Marcus Hubbard’s futile attempt to establish himself as an aristocrat bears striking parallels to the efforts of Thomas Stupen in Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*.


\(^{17}\) Lederer Katherine, *Lillian Hellman*, p.71.
three years before *Another Part of the Forest*. In both Hellman’s play and Faulkner’s novel there are Greek tragic elements to portray a man who achieves great wealth through mysterious and suspicious means and launches a determined campaign to become an aristocrat. Both Faulkner’s and Hellman’s protagonists - Stupen and Marcus - have vague, ineffectual, flighty wives who finally effect a kind of escape from painful reality in mental illness. There are also parallels between their daughters. Regina, like Judith Stupen and Clytie, is strong-willed, although she does not share their moral strength. Both Marcus and Stupen have two sons, who, in different ways prove their undoing.

The Hubbard family in *Another Part of the Forest* and *The Little Foxes* which shows signs of becoming a literary dynasty is comparable to Galsworthy’s *The Forsyte Saga* (1921). Like Hellman, Galsworthy presents a vivid picture of the upper class people - the Forsytes- who have infinite love for property, social dignity, material wealth and power. As for the Hubbards, for the Forsytes what cannot be bought does not exist. The life of the emotions and the holiness of the heart’s affections are as closed to them as the life of pure thought. Theirs is a life of making money.

To conclude, *Another Part of the Forest*, like *The Little Foxes*, is a strong and exciting play, artistically chronicling the greed and hatred in members of the Hubbard family. The greedy machinations of the Hubbards are followed with a cold eye as if watching a Brecht-like epic. With its tight plot, vivid characters, realistic flavour,
ironic tinge and its caustic angry tone, *Another Part of the Forest* is more than just gripping theatre. It is one of the superb works of art in American drama, exploring deeply the origins of human evil with an understanding derived from psychoanalysis. In combination with *The Little Foxes*, it constitutes a unit which is, perhaps, Hellman's best contribution to the literature of the American theatre.