Six Plays Study Guide

Six Plays by Florence Henrietta Darwin

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

A number of the six plays in this collection are among the most well known in the American contemporary repertoire (that is, plays produced in the twentieth century and later). One in particular, The Little Foxes, is considered by many to be one of the most ruthlessly drawn portraits of greed and ambition in the history of theatre. Strongly developed characters, intense drama, and occasional forays into vivid poeticism can be found in all six of the plays, which explore several common themes, many of which are explored through dramatization of social concerns. These themes include the dangers of giving in to fear, the need for power, and the pain of loneliness.

The first play in the collection, The Children's Hour, became infamous in its time for its exploration of an up-to-then taboo subject - lesbianism. A pair of female teachers, the emotionally volatile Martha and the more coolly reserved Karen, are accused by a vindictive student of having an "unnatural" relationship. Their efforts to fight the damage to their reputation and their work caused by these accusations end in failure, with the school (of which the women had dreamed of running all their lives) closing. Martha, however, eventually confesses that for her at least the accusations are true - she does care for Karen "in that way". Karen rejects the expression of love, and Martha kills herself. The play ends with the clear implication that the remorseful Karen is about to do the same.

The second play, Days to Come, is perhaps the least known of the six plays in the collection. While the action of the play is anchored in the story of a labor dispute in a small town, it can in fact be seen as a modern take on the classical tragedy. A good, well intentioned man (Andrew Rodman) falls from his position of high moral and personal status when he allows weakness and greed to govern his actions in bringing in violent strikebreakers to end the labor dispute triggered by the walkout of his employees. Along the way, he is forced to confront the failure of his marriage, the loss of his close relationship with the town and its citizens, and his own failure to live with integrity.

The Little Foxes is by far the author's best known work. It is the story of a venal, greedy, self interested trio of Southern siblings (Ben and Oscar Hubbard and their sister, Regina Giddens) who will stop at nothing, including murder, in order to achieve their goals of money and power. Regina is one of the most well known, and the most ruthless, villains in theatre history. The climactic scene of the play, in which she simply sits back and watches as her husband desperately struggles to get to the medicine that will save his life, is justifiably renowned for its stark portrayal of human brutality.

The story and central character of Watch on the Rhine are both powerful contrasts to those of The Little Foxes. The play, set in the midst of World War II, tells the story of a German resistance fighter, Kurt Muller, and what happens when he arrives at the American home of his wife's wealthy American family en route to a return to Europe to continue his mission. While there, he encounters the self-interest of the family (which he transforms, by his actions, into selflessness) and a blackmailing aristocrat-in-exile whom

he eventually kills in order to preserve the integrity and secrecy of his mission. As Kurt himself suggests, he has done a bad thing in a good cause, which doesn't make the mad thing any better but does illustrate how important the good cause is.

Another Part of the Forest is a story of the earlier lives of the Giddens siblings from The Little Foxes - Ben, Oscar and Regina. Their emerging greed and self-interest is juxtaposed with that of their father Marcus, presumably the primary influence from whom they learned to be who they are. The frank, sometimes even joyful, callousness of that side of the family is contrasted to the desperate compassion of Lavinia, Marcus' husband and the children's mother, who throughout the play is desperate to atone for a sin that turns out to be more Marcus's than hers. Eventually, the tables of power and status are turned, with elder sibling Ben gaining control over the lives not only of his two siblings, Regina and Oscar, but also that of their suddenly weak father. Lavinia escapes into a new life that is part fantasy and part lifelong dream.

The final play in the collection, The Autumn Garden, is quite different in tone and dramatic content. Where the action of the other plays is, to varying degrees, anchored in the ambitions and determinations of its central characters, Autumn Garden is more reflective, less dynamically dramatic, and more of an ensemble piece. This is not to say there are not moments of drama - all the complex relationships in the piece have their sources of intense tension. But the play, with its story anchored in the mid-life reunion of four former friends, is more about a state of being, the point at which middle-aged men and women look back on their lives, see their failures rather than their successes, and wonder what the future can holds after a past that, for whatever reason, seems empty.

The Children's Hour, Act 1

The Children's Hour, Act 1 Summary

As Mrs. Mortar half-listens, Peggy reads Portia's "The quality of mercy..." speech from Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice". Karen comes in, and as she comments to one of the girls about her missing bracelet, Mary arrives late. Although Mrs. Mortar accepts her explanation, Karen confronts Mary about her frequent lying. When Mary says she's ill, Karen sends her to lie down and asks Mrs. Mortar to get Martha to call Joe.

Martha comes in, having made the call. Karen and Martha discuss Mary, how poor a teacher Mrs. Mortar (Martha's aunt) is, and Martha's unhappiness about Karen's engagement to Joe. As Karen reassures her, Joe arrives, going immediately with Karen to look at Mary. Mrs. Mortar returns, and Martha reluctantly tells her it's time for her to leave the school. The angry Mrs. Mortar accuses Martha of being "unnatural" in her jealousy of Karen and Joe.

As Mrs. Mortar makes a melodramatic exit, Joe comes back in, and reassures Martha that Mary (whom conversation reveals is his cousin) is all right. He also reveals that he knows Martha is upset about his engagement to Karen. Martha apologizes and goes out. Karen and Mary come in, and Karen announces that Mary and her roommates (Peggy and Evelyn) are to be separated. As Peggy and Evelyn come in, having been fetched by Martha to hear the news, Joe taunts Mary about her tearful manipulative-ness and goes out with Karen.

A tantrummy Mary cries out that "they can't get away with treating [her] like this", and breaks one of Karen's ornaments, a gift from Joe. She then tells Peggy and Evelyn that she's planning to leave the school for her grandmother's. Conversation also reveals that Peggy and Evelyn heard the "unnatural" part of the argument between Martha and Mrs. Mortar.

The Children's Hour, Act 1 Analysis

The first point to note about this section of the play relates to the play's opening moments. The speech quoted is renowned not only for its poetry, but for its passionate advocacy for mercy. The quote here, therefore, is an ironic foreshadowing of the action to come, given that Mary, Mrs. Telford, and at times even Karen fail to show mercy to those who need it most. Other elements of foreshadowing include the reference to the missing bracelet, which foreshadows the pivotal role that bracelet plays later in the narrative. Finally, there Mrs. Mortar's reference to the "unnatural" relationship between Martha and Karen, with the word "unnatural" in particular coming back later to haunt the action and the lives of the characters.

This leads to the second key point about this scene, and about the play in general. In considering its references to lesbianism and the role it plays in both the action and the lives and relationships of the characters, it must be remembered that this play was first written and produced in the 1930s. This was a time when same-sex relationships of all sorts, including between two women, had nowhere near the level of public acceptance or awareness that they have today. This is why the accusation is so damaging, the reactions of the public so intense, and perhaps most tellingly, Martha's Act 3 pain in revealing the truth of her feelings is so torturous for both her and Karen. At the time, lives were literally ruined by both the accusation and experience of same-sex attraction, making the play a daring portrayal of a situation that, even now in some parts of the world, can have the same effect on the lives of those experiencing it.

The Children's Hour, Act 2

The Children's Hour, Act 2 Summary

Scene 1 - When Mary is told by her grandmother, Mrs. Tilford, that she is to go back to the school, Mary reveals the conversation overheard by Peggy and Evelyn and sees that the word "unnatural" has upset Mrs. Tilford. After Mary has gone, Mrs. Tilford telephones Joe and asks him to come over, and then makes another call.

Scene 2 - A few hours later, conversation between Mary and the arriving Rosalie reveals that a number of other girls have been taken out of the school as the result of telephone calls made by Mrs. Tilford. Conversation also reveals that Mary knows that Rosalie borrowed the missing bracelet from a classmate and hasn't returned out of fear. Mary blackmails her into promising to do whatever she (Mary) says.

Mrs. Tilford and Joe arrive, and after the girls are sent out, Mrs. Tilford starts to tell the increasingly impatient Joe what she's concerned about. They are interrupted when Martha and Karen arrive to confront Mrs. Tilford. The angry Martha accuses Mrs. Tilford of being careless with their lives, while the hurt Karen tells Joe that Mrs. Tilford has been saying she (Karen) and Martha are in love. Mrs. Tilford eventually admits that she got her information from Mary. As Martha threatens Mrs. Tilford with a lawsuit for libel, Joe demands that Mary be questioned.

When Mary comes in, questioning by Joe and Karen reveals that she can't have seen the things she says she saw. The cornered Mary tells her confused aunt that Rosalie was the one who saw Karen and Martha together, and that she (Mary) was just covering for her. Rosalie is called in, and is manipulated by Mary into saying she did see Martha and Karen together.

The Children's Hour, Act 2 Analysis

The play deepens and sharpens its examination of the issue of lesbianism in this act, with the actions of Mrs. Tilford and the unseen parents exemplifying the broader societal reactions of the time. It also deepens its examination of self-interest, a theme explored here in the actions of Mary and Mrs. Tilford, whose narrow minded self-servingness can be seen as foreshadowing that that of the other self-servers in this collection, all of whom appear in later plays. These characters include Andrew and Wilkie in Days ..., the Hubbard family in ...Foxes and ...Forest, Teck in ... Rhine, and Nick in ... Garden. It's also important to note, however, that Karen and Martha are also acting out of self-interest. Granted, their goals (the fulfillment of their dream) are perhaps more admirable and less greedy or destructive, but they are essentially doing the same thing - fighting with increasing desperation to achieve what they believe to be a self- and identity-defining purpose. Here, the struggles of Karen and Martha foreshadow those of more noble, conflicted characters like Whalen in Days..., and Kurt in ... Rhine.

At this point, it's worth commenting on the vividness of the various characterizations this writer's work in general and of the plays in this collection in particular. Each of the characters throughout the plays is vividly individualized. This is particularly true of the women, who are all very different. Key examples in this play are the portrayals of the volatile, intense Martha, the thoughtful Karen, the self-indulgent Mrs. Mortar, the vindictive Mary (who might be perceived as a sketch of the equally selfish Regina in ...Foxes and ...Forest), and even the various schoolgirls. Of particular interest here is Mrs. Tilford. In her initial appearances she comes across as almost the stereotypical rich matron, but her transformation in the forthcoming Act 3 renders her as much more complex than initially suspected. This transformation is echoed in Fanny in ...Rhine, but not duplicated - Fanny, another example of the author's skill in characterization, is a very different sort of woman.

All that said, male characters created by this writer tend to be portrayed with less subtlety and depth. In other words Joe, like many of the men in this author's work, tend to be a bit flat, more of a function than a fully realized human character. Exceptions are Whalen and Andrew in Days ..., Kurt in ... Rhine, and Griggs and Crossman in ... Garden.

The Children's Hour, Act 3

The Children's Hour, Act 3 Summary

In the now abandoned schoolroom Karen and Martha sit deep in thought. Mrs. Mortar arrives, back from her acting tour. Bitter conversation with Martha reveals that she and Karen attempted their lawsuit and lost, at least partly because Mrs. Mortar refused to testify to what she meant by her overheard comments (see Act 1). Mrs. Mortar attempts to apologize, but Karen and Martha send her out.

As Mrs. Mortar goes, Joe comes in, talking about how much better things will be once they've all moved to Vienna, where he has a job lined up. After Martha goes out, Karen tells Joe to think about whether he truly believes in the relationship, and he agrees. After he goes, Martha comes back in, becomes upset when she discovers what Karen has done, and eventually confesses that she loves Karen in the way that had been suggested. When Karen refuses to accept it, Martha goes, and a moment later, a gunshot is heard and Karen discovers that Martha has shot herself.

Soon afterwards, Mrs. Tilford's maid arrives, saying Mrs. Tilford wants desperately to see Karen and Martha. Karen eventually agrees, and Mrs. Tilford, seeming much older and frailer, comes in and tells Karen that Rosalie and Mary confessed that their story was a lie. Mrs. Tilford offers to help Karen and Martha rebuild their lives, and at first, Karen angrily refuses her offer, saying that Martha is dead, but eventually she changes her mind and accepts. As Mrs. Tilford leaves, Karen sits on the window, apparently planning to enjoy the weather.

The Children's Hour, Act 3 Analysis

There are important elements of plot at work in this act. The first is the transformation of Mrs Tilford, which is triggered by the offstage revelation of Mary's duplicity. Modern dramaturgy, with its emphasis on showing drama rather than telling about it, would suggest that not having Mary's confession take place on stage is a weakness. There is also the revelation of Mrs. Mortar's selfishness which in turn relates to the play's central narrative and thematic focus on same-sex attraction. Specifically, Mrs. Mortar's reluctance to get involved speaks of societal distaste for the subject, a component of the main point of this act, the fact that it is the high point of the play's exploration of the subject of lesbianism, as Martha and Karen are both forced to confront the true nature of Martha's feelings.

The main point to note here is that Martha's anguish and Karen's horrified rejection are typical of the time, in terms of both societal reaction to, and artistic exploration of, the issue of same-sex attraction. As previously discussed, same sex attraction (which was believed to be a psychiatric disorder for decades), was a taboo subject in the society of the time, as it continues to be in some contemporary circumstances. Then - in the study

of gay/lesbian literature (including drama), it has become almost a joke that for decades, in American literature at least, homosexual characters had no option but to end their lives, either literally or figuratively (i.e., in solitude, insanity, self-loathing, or terminal depression). This play, and the main characters' experience of such attraction, is often cited as an example.

There is, however, an important question of perspective to be considered here. The author has an evident interest in social justice. Consider the sympathetic exploration / portrayal of the labor movement in Days ..., the fight against Fascist oppression in ...Rhine, and Alexandra's professed determination to fight economic oppression at the end of ...Foxes. Might the dramatization of the suffering associated with same-sex attraction in ...Hour in fact be a plea for tolerance and compassion, rather than a condemnation of the attraction itself?

Days to Come, Act 1

Days to Come, Act 1 Summary

Conversation between Hannah and Lucy hints at an uncomfortable situation in the Rodman home, in the business the Rodmans own, and in the town where the business is located and where the family lives. Conversation also includes a reference to Joe Whalen, who Hannah says is rooming with her sister at a boarding house in town. Cora comes in, complaining about (among other things) how Hannah's sister is giving room and board to "a bad character".

As Hannah goes out in a huff, Ellicott and Andrew come in separately, with conversation revealing that a group of men is arriving by train shortly, and that Andrew and Ellicott disagree about the intention that's brought them there (at this point, the intention isn't identified). As the apparently preoccupied Julie comes in, Cora tries to distance herself from the situation.

Alone with Julie, who says she's been out for a walk, Ellicott tells her both he and Cora saw her in town "near the strike office". Conversation reveals that Julie has discovered something in her life that she really wants, and at that moment, Joe Whalen appears, accompanied by Firth. Conversation reveals that Whalen is a union organizer, that Firth and the men who work for Andrew have been on strike for three weeks, and that Firth has been friends with Andrew (who loves the town) for a long time.

Andrew comes in, and Firth confronts him with a rumor he just heard - that Andrew is bringing in scab labor. Andrew tries to justify his actions, Firth argues that loyalty is more important, and Whalen suggests that both Firth and Andrew are being unrealistic. Firth realizes that Andrew isn't going to change his position, and goes out angrily.

At that moment, the men arrive. While Ellicott goes to meet them, Whalen urges Andrew to give the workers the wage increase they desire, saying the new arrivals will only make matters worse. Andrew says he simply can't afford to do that, and greets the men (Wilkie, Mossie, and Easter). Leaving them to their meeting, Whalen is shown out by Julie, as Andrew, Ellicott and Wilkie go in to lunch. Conversation between Mossie and Easter suggest that they don't care much for Wilkie, and in fact don't care much for each other - at one point, Easter flings a letter knife at the knuckle-cracking, woman-demeaning Mossie

Days to Come, Act 1 Analysis

Like The Children's Hour, this play dramatizes a social concern - in this case, one that personally affected a broad range of both the play's audience and the public at large. It's important to remember that the play was first written and performed in the mid 1930s, a time when America was just beginning to emerge from the social and economic turmoil of the Great Depression. Thus, its narrative setting within the context of a labor dispute,

and its exploration of all three of the collection's main themes (relating to fear, power, and loneliness) are all indicative of the author's awareness of one of the main social issues of the day, and also its effects on the individuals involved.

It's important to note at this point that the author's sympathies are mostly, but not entirely, leftist - that is, she is not sympathetic only to the laborers. Granted, most of her critical empathy lies in that direction, but Days to Come is notable for its inclusion of rich people with a conscience. While the spoiled Cora and the crooked Ellicott are vivid examples of what might be described as the author's anti-wealth perspective, Julie and Andrew are both examples of how the author's views are not entirely black and white. Granted, Andrew's conscience doesn't fully kick in until it's too late for him to do any real good. Nevertheless, he is redeemed from utter playwright (and audience?) condemnation by his good intentions, apparent from the beginning. In other words, the characterizations of the wealthy characters here, particularly Julie and Andrew, are examples of the author's previously discussed skill at creating and defining complex, multifaceted characters. It's interesting, meanwhile, to contrast this somewhat sympathetic portrayal of those with money (and the similar portrayals of David and Fanny in ...Rhine) with the utterly selfish Cora and Ellicott here, as well as the Hubbards and Giddens' in ...Foxes and ...Forest.

In terms of technical storytelling, the first act of this play functions well to set up its plots (principally the labor plot and the Julie/Whalen romantic subplot) effectively and engagingly. At times the exposition (setting up of the situation and/or foreshadowing) veers dangerously close to being heavy handed and obvious, but the author's skill at writing dialogue and creating conflict is, for the most part, an effective disguise. A key point of foreshadowing comes at the end of the act, when Easter's throwing of the knife foreshadows a similar action at the end of Act 2 Scene 1, at which point the action suddenly throws the action of the play in a different direction altogether.

Days to Come, Act 2

Days to Come, Act 2 Summary

Scene 1 - This scene takes place four weeks after the action of the previous scene, meaning that the strike has been on for seven weeks. Easter becomes increasingly angry as Mossie repeatedly wins at two-handed poker. Meanwhile conversation with Wilkie reveals their efforts to make trouble in the strike have all failed. Later, after Hannah has revealed that she's been smuggling food to the starving strikers, Cora tries to start an argument between Andrew and Julie, but Andrew tells her to stop.

After Cora has gone, Andrew confesses to Julie that he longs for things to be as they were between them. Julie tells him she can't be what he wants her to be, and goes for another walk. After she's gone, a confrontation between Mossie and Easter results in Mossie's death when Easter throws a knife into his chest. Wilkie comes in, sees what's happened, and at first is angry, but after a moment has an idea, and tells Easter to dispose of the body "in the right place".

Scene 2 - This scene is set in the strike office in another part of town "immediately following Scene 1". Conversation between Whalen and Firth reveals that Whalen is concerned that fighting is going to break out, and that he wants Firth to restrain himself and the men. Firth agrees, and goes.

A moment later, Julie arrives, and conversation with Whalen reveals that she is desperate for someone to talk to. After an honest conversation about how uncomfortable they both are with both the idea and the fact of wealth, they discover that one of Wilkie's men (Easter) has dumped a dead body (Mossie) by the headquarters, presumably with the intention of starting conflict with the strikers. Julie leaves, agreeing to say nothing. Whalen then telephones Firth, telling him what's happened. Having received assurances from Firth that the strikers will remain calm, Whalen hangs up and awaits arrest.

Scene 3 - Back in the Rodman home, Julie accuses Wilkie and his men of framing Whalen and the strikers. Wilkie hints that if Julie speaks about what she knows, she risks being accused of being involved in the murder. As Julie absorbs the situation, Andrew and Ellicott come in, and there is the sound of distant gunfire.

Days to Come, Act 2 Analysis

The two most noteworthy points about this act relate to the author's two main skills at dramatic storytelling. The first is developing an effective plot, with each character's actions and reactions escalating the stakes and dramatic tension, creating increasingly challenging obstacles for the character, and above all linking them to the characters' emotional state of being and/or journeys of personal transformation. This, in turn, relates to the author's second, and perhaps even more effective, skill - creating multi-

faceted, unexpectedly changing characters. Key examples in this act both involve Julie. The first is her scene with Andrew, in which both characters are revealed to think and feel in ways that audiences and readers alike would find unexpected, but nonetheless profoundly human. The second is her scene with Whalen, in which the depth of his bitterness and her longing, both of which are, in different ways, manifestations of the three themes of the plays in this collection.

Days to Come, Act 3

Days to Come, Act 3 Summary

Early morning conversation between Andrew and Julie reveals that the gunfire and fighting went on through the night, that Whalen is in jail, and that the whole situation with the strike arose because Andrew's been borrowing large sums of money (from Ellicott, among others), simply to keep the business afloat. Julie confesses that she was with Whalen the night before, meaning that he couldn't have been the killer. Andrew telephones the judge and ask for Whalen to be released.

Firth comes in, carrying a gun and speaking in a tired, dazed manner of how betrayed (by Andrew) he feels, and how he and the other workers feel they can't go on fighting. Whalen comes in and reminds everyone that violence is often the result when strike breakers like Wilkie come into a town. As Firth leaves, he says things have changed between Andrew and his beloved town.

As Julie is telling Whalen that she's told Andrew the truth of what happened, Wilkie comes in, followed shortly by Ellicott. Conversation reveals that Wilkie and Whalen both recognize that Easter is the real killer, and what happened is part of the game they both knew they were playing. As Whalen leaves, he urges Julie to forget everything that happened the night before. Wilkie soon follows, telling Andrew that he (Andrew) was naïve. As Ellicott and Andrew argue over what happened with the strikers, and as Andrew and Julie simultaneously argue over what happened between Julie and Whalen, Cora makes accusations about Julie and Ellicott. Andrew speaks of the secrets and hatred at the core of his life, of how he's lost everything important to him, and gives Julie her freedom. As Julie goes, Cora comments that everybody's been saying things they don't mean, and that nothing will look so bad after a good night's sleep. Andrew suddenly, and furiously, shouts at her to get out.

Days to Come, Act 3 Analysis

The play takes quite a cynical turn in this act, developing a tone of resigned distaste for the destructive, life-is-cheap mentality that the author seems to be suggesting is at the heart of much human experience ... at least, the experience of business and money. This mentality is also present, and much more vividly so, in both ...Foxes and ...Forest. It's also present, albeit to a lesser degree, in ...Rhine, in which the actions of the blackmailing Teck seem to originate from the same emotional/spiritual place as those of Wilkie in this play and the Hubbards of ...Foxes and ...Forest. It's interesting to note that in this play, while the characters of Julie, Whalen and Andrew are all multifaceted, there is no redeeming character - there is no open-hearted, loving, self-less character to simultaneously provide contrast to the selfish and hope to the audience. In ...Foxes the contrast is provided by Birdie, Alexandra and Addie ... in ...Rhine, by almost all the

characters other than Teck ... and in ...Forest, there is the younger version of Birdie and Lavinia.

In other words, and in this context, Days to Come can be seen as the most cynical of the plays in this collection, even more so than the notoriously venal ...Foxes. This is a significant irony, in that it is in many ways also the most obviously concerned with social injustice. This interplay of cynicism and idealism can be taken in one of two ways - either that the struggle against injustice must continue (in which case it is similar to ...Rhine), or that there is no way for the struggle to succeed, and injustice will triumph (in which case, it is similar to ...Forest).

Finally, it's worth noting that in some ways, the character of Andrew might be considered a classically tragic one - that is, an essentially good and moral human being brought to destruction by a single tragic flaw. In this case, Andrew's intentions are certainly good, as is his connection to the town and its people. On the other hand, he is flawed by his naïvete - about money, about people, and about the world.

The Little Foxes, Act 1

The Little Foxes, Act 1 Summary

As Addie and Cal tidy the sitting room, Birdie hurries in and asks Cal to run an errand for her. Before Cal can do as she asks, Oscar comes in and tells him to ignore her. As Birdie protests, the other members of the dinner party come in - Regina, Ben, Marshall, Alexandra, and Leo. As they all have a glass of port, there is polite conversation between the Northerner Marshall and the Southern Hubbards, which reveals a business deal between them all. Eventually Marshall says his goodnights. Leo and Alexandra are told to drive him to his hotel, while Ben and Oscar see them all out.

Alone with Birdie, Regina exults in the success of her and her brothers' plan for wooing Marshall, with conversation revealing her plans to move to Chicago (Marshall's home city), a plan that surprises Birdie, who wonders what Regina's husband Horace will say. Oscar and Ben come back in and tell Regina that the time has come for her to live up to her share of their bargain - an influx of cash from her elderly, ailing banker husband (Horace). Regina tells her surprised brothers that she and Horace want a bigger share of the profit - Horace knows, Regina says, how desperate her brothers are, and therefore feels that he has the right. Oscar becomes angry, but Ben calms him down, saying he'll agree to Regina's terms as long as Horace's money comes sooner rather than later.

Leo and Alexandra return, and Regina manipulates Alexandra into traveling to Baltimore to bring the ill Horace home from hospital. Alexandra is reluctant, but Regina, Ben and Oscar insist. Ben goes out to take care of Alexandra's train ticket, and Oscar and Leo walks out with him. Meanwhile, Regina goes upstairs to pack for Alexandra. Birdie tries to warn Alexandra about what Oscar and Ben have planned, but is interrupted by Oscar, who sends Alexandra upstairs. As she goes, Oscar slaps Birdie, making her cry out.

The Little Foxes, Act 1 Analysis

The Little Foxes is easily the most famous, and most popularly performed, of the plays in this collection and of all the author's works in general. The reasons for its fame (notoriety?) are its stark, ruthless portrait of ruthlessness (in the characters of Ben, Oscar and Regina) and one particular aspect of that portrait - Regina's murder, by deliberate negligence, of her husband Horace. More on that in the analysis of the act in which it occurs (Act 3).

For now, there are several other important elements to note. The first is the contrast of the play's characterizations with those of the other plays. Unlike the rest (particularly Days..., ...Garden and ...Rhine), the characters in this play (and its companion play, Another Part of the Forest) are less multi-faceted - that is, in terms of their emotional lives. They are quite multi-faceted when it comes to the tactics they employ to achieve

their ends - in other words, there is the clear sense that they can, and will, go to almost any lengths to get what they want. This isn't necessarily, however, about depth of character. It is, more likely, about depth of desperation.

The point must be made here that there is a difference, in terms of characterization, in terms of depth and variety. As discussed in the analysis of Children's Hour, the main characters in all the plays are all very different people - there is no one, for example, like Regina in any other play (notwithstanding the younger version of the same character in ...Forest). There are hints of Regina's ruthlessness in Mary in ...Hour, and of her pragmatism in Nina in ...Garden, but in none of these plays is there anyone like Regina. This is, by the way, perhaps another reason why the play is so famous - it could easily be argued that nowhere in dramatic literature is there anyone like Regina. Even Medea, the classical Greek character who murders her own children to take revenge on her husband, is less of a monster of (female?) humanity than Regina Giddens.

The Little Foxes, Act 2

The Little Foxes, Act 2 Summary

As Oscar and then Leo arrive for breakfast, conversation (first with Addie, then with Regina) reveals that Alexandra and Horace are late returning home. Conversation between Oscar and Leo reveals that Leo can gain access to the thousands of dollars in bonds that Horace keeps in his safe deposit box, and that Horace very rarely looks into it. Their conversation is interrupted by the arrivals of Ben and Regina, Ben worrying about Horace and Regina assuring everyone there's no reason to be concerned, leading them all into the dining room for breakfast.

A moment or two later, Alexandra and the very-ill Horace come in. As Addie fusses over them both, Alexandra plays nurse, telling Addie to be particularly careful with Horace's medicine. After Alexandra goes upstairs to clean herself up, Horace demands to see Regina, her brothers, and Leo. At first they all come in to greet Horace, with conversation eventually revealing that Horace he has no intention of giving Ben and Oscar his money. As he goes upstairs to rest, Regina follows him angrily, ignoring Ben's admonitions to be kind. Ben, Oscar and Leo plan for Leo to "borrow" Horace's bonds, and shortly after the plan is complete, Oscar and Leo leave. Meanwhile, the upstairs conversation between Regina and Horace has become louder and angrier. Eventually Regina comes out of Horace's room, still angry but assuring Ben that Horace will hand over the money. Ben taunts her with the suggestion that he has another alternative, and laughs as he leaves. As Regina reacts with angry disbelief, Horace comes out and taunts her that she's not going to get the money and status she's always wanted, adding that he's not going to let her and her brothers destroy the town. Regina says she hates him and can't wait for him to die.

The Little Foxes, Act 2 Analysis

The plot thickens to a considerable degree in this act, in which the actions of the older characters, and even one of the younger ones (Leo) all reveal their essential venality, greed, self-interest, and ruthlessness. In this context it's interesting to consider the character of Horace. In his own way, he is as manipulative and as power-hungry as Ben, Oscar and Regina (and, as the action of this act indicates, Leo). There is some doubt, in fact, as to whether he is any different at all. His only redeeming feature is his love for Alexandra, but the question here is this - does the end (ensuring a good, safe life for his daughter) justify the means (viciously manipulating his nephew, his wife, and her brothers)?

Meanwhile, at this point it's worth looking at the role money plays in this and in other plays in the collection. The plots of all six, albeit to varying degrees, turn on the question of who has money, who has the power associated with it, and what the loss of both the money and the power does to the individuals who want and/or need it.

The Little Foxes, Act 3

The Little Foxes, Act 3 Summary

Horace tells Cal to go down to the bank and make a statement about the bonds and his lawyer in front of Leo. As Cal goes, Horace tells Addie that after he dies, she is to take the envelope of cash in his room and leave with Alexandra. After initially resisting, Addie promises. Cal comes back and tells Horace that when he went and said what Horace told him, Leo got angry and excited, but was forced to stay at the bank by the manager. At that moment, voices are heard from outside, and Horace sends Cal and Addie away.

Regina comes in, and Horace tells her he knows that Leo took the bonds and gave them to Ben and Oscar, revealing his plan to ensure that Regina gets no money after he dies. Regina taunts him and he becomes upset, but is unable to pour himself his medicine. Regina doesn't help him, merely watching as Horace tries to get up the stairs to his extra supply, but collapses. Only then does Regina call for Cal and Addie, who appear and take Horace into his room. Addie rushes out to fetch the doctor.

A moment later Leo arrives, desperate to see Horace but told by Cal he can't. Oscar and Ben then arrive, and the frantic Leo explains that Horace knows about the bonds and has had a heart attack. The quick thinking Ben realizes that their safety depends on whether Horace told Regina about the bonds, and quickly comes up with alternative plans. A few moments later Regina comes out of Horace's room and tells her brothers that Horace told her about the bonds and about his plans for the three of them. She then tells them that unless they agree to give her seventy-five percent of the profits from the Marshall deal, she'll tell both the police AND Mr. Marshall what they've done.

When the somber appearance of Alexandra makes Regina, Ben and Oscar realize that Horace has died, Ben and Oscar realize they have no choice but to agree to Regina's terms. Oscar and Leo go out angrily, but Ben realizes that Regina has essentially beat them at their own game, and suggests that she's just doing what the world is doing. After he goes, Alexandra tells her that she (Alexandra) is going away and not coming home. Regina tries to make peace with her, leading Alexandra to ask whether her mother is frightened. As Regina leaves without answering, Addie takes Alexandra's arm in an expression of comfort and support.

The Little Foxes, Act 3 Analysis

While all the plays in this collection have intricate plots (and, in the case of ...Garden, a number of them), the plot of ...Foxes is by far the most intricate. The questions of who knows what, who is playing what game, and who has what degree of power over whom can seem complicated, and in production have to be dealt with skillfully and cleanly. That said, there is something undeniably, and powerfully, engaging about the plot developments in this act - each of the characters is caught in a situation of desperation,

leading both them and the audience to wonder what the characters are going to do next and how the situations are going to resolve.

By far the most powerful resolution of narrative tension in the play (not to mention of the plays in this collection, not to mention many plays in theatre history) is the resolution of the Horace/Regina conflict ... specifically, her sitting back and watching as her husband, with increasing desperation and failing body, struggles to live. There are several important elements at work here. First is the sheer intensity of Regina's ruthless selfishness, or selfish ruthlessness - as previously discussed, not even Medea comes across as being as monstrous as Regina. Second, there is the thematic resonance of Horace's struggle, which can be seen as a metaphoric representation of the struggle of personal, and/or industrial, and/or financial, integrity against the relentless steamrollers of ambition and greed. Finally, there is the simple, archetypal fact that Horace is struggling to live, the enacting of a desire that every human being can identify with, meaning that Regina's act of callousness is all that more enthralling to watch, in that members of an audience, on a profoundly primal level, are left wondering how someone can be so inhuman.

All that said, the play does end with a glimpse or two of hope. The first appears in the character of Alexandra, who vows to continue what seems to be her father's struggle for integrity. This struggle can perhaps be seen as a continuation of the same sort of moral struggle that defeats Martha and Karen in ...Hour, that motivates Whalen and Firth at the same time as it perplexes Andrew in Days ..., and simultaneously defines Kurt and Sara in ...Rhine at the same time as it changes Fanny and David in the same play. Meanwhile, the second glimpse of hope in this play is Addie who, throughout the play, has (like other servant characters in the collection, specifically Hannah in Days..., and Coralee in ...Forest) displayed a compassion and forbearance that many of the higher status characters could do with emulating.

Watch on the Rhine, Act 1

Watch on the Rhine, Act 1 Summary

Pre-breakfast conversation between the nervous, dithery Fanny and the tart-tongued Anise reveals that Fanny's daughter Sara, who married a German and has lived in Europe for twenty years, is expected home with her family later that morning. As Fanny reflects on her love for her dead husband Joshua and on how unlike him David is, David finally saunters in. Fanny comments that the house is going to feel crowded, since the aristocratic Teck and Marthe (a childhood friend of Sara's) are also staying with them. As Fanny is hinting that David has been flirting with Marthe, Marthe comes in, ready for breakfast. As Fanny goes out (breakfast is being served on the terrace), Marthe and David discuss how nervous David is about seeing Sara after so long. At that point, as David goes to breakfast, Teck comes in, with conversation between him and Marthe revealing that she is concerned about the company Teck is keeping during his poker games in Washington. Teck warns her to not think to much about what he's doing and why, and also to not make any kind of "plans" with David. He goes out to breakfast and a moment later, Marthe follows.

Soon afterwards, Sara, Kurt and their children (Babette, Bodo and Joshua) arrive. Kurt watches quietly as Sara reflects on her happy memories and the children play. Anise comes in and is overjoyed to see Sara, quickly running out to get Fanny, who comes in and greets Sara warmly. She is soon followed by David, and as they have their reunion, Fanny reacts badly when Kurt says they're only there for a short time. Kurt carefully explains, with help from Sara, that he is an Anti-Fascist resistor, leading Fanny to apologize. Marthe and Teck come in, and are introduced to Sara and Kurt. Before the obviously curious Teck can ask too many questions, Kurt and Sara go out to breakfast with Fanny and David.

Teck inspects Sara and Kurt's luggage, wondering why Kurt's suitcase is unlocked while his briefcase is locked. When Marthe warns him to stay away from Sara and her family, he speaks threateningly to her.

Watch on the Rhine, Act 1 Analysis

Again in this play, the author's skills at characterization, and at creating drama out of those characterizations, are highly evident. The self-indulgent Fanny and David are clear, and dramatically compelling, contrasts to the much more selfless Kurt and Sara, as are the manipulative Teck and the impulsive, superficial Marthe, with almost inevitable conflict arising out of who these characters are and what they want. This, in essence, is a definition of good drama. Furthermore, while the characters in this play may appear to share be certain traits with similar types of characters in other plays, they ultimately emerge as unique, fully rounded individuals in their own right. There are, for example, resemblances between Fanny and Mrs. Tilford in ...Hour and Mrs. Ellis in

...Garden, between David and the similarly two dimensional Joe in ...Hour, and the worldly-wise Sara and Nina in ...Garden. The different emotional and social contexts of the play, however, not to mention the narratives the plays chart, develop the characters in very different, but no less effective, ways.

Another motif, or repeated narrative element, familiar from other plays in the collection is the author's interest in social justice. Here the question is explored on a somewhat larger canvas, with Kurt's activism being much more political, overt, and above all world-oriented than the sub-textual activism in Days to come. It must be remembered, however, that this more overt activism is, in all probability, a product of the world environment in which the play was written and produced - specifically, in the midst of World War II.

Watch on the Rhine, Act 2

Watch on the Rhine, Act 2 Summary

On an evening about ten days later, Fanny and Teck play cards, Sara does needlework, and the children play. During conversation, Teck reveals that he is planning to leave, and pointedly wonders whether Kurt also feels it's time to move on.

As Fanny chatters about plans for Babette's impending birthday party, David and Kurt come in. Fanny comments that she heard about Teck playing poker at an embassy in Washington, and mentions the names of the other players. David comments that one of them is a munitions dealer and the other a Nazi. This leads Kurt to sing a German war song, hinting that he and men he was marching with gave it new lyrics when they were resisting the Fascist army.

As Anise takes the children to bed, Marthe comes back in loaded with boxes. Fanny, she says, gave her some money to spend on new clothes for the children, for Sara, and for Marthe herself. The happy moment is interrupted by a long distance telephone call for Kurt. After he goes out to take it, tense conversation reveals that Marthe is leaving Teck for David, and that Teck has come to accept he cannot control her anymore.

A moment after Marthe goes out, Kurt comes back in. He tries to keep the contents of the telephone call a secret, but Teck suggests that Kurt has just been told what he already heard at his poker game - that three important members of the Anti-Fascist league in Germany have been arrested. Teck then hints that he would accept a bribe to not reveal Kurt's whereabouts, and that he knows what's in the locked briefcase. After Teck goes out, Kurt reveals that Teck is telling the truth about what the phone call was about, and that the briefcase contains a large sum of money gathered in America in support of the Anti-Fascist movement. He also reveals that he intends to go back to Germany to try to rescue the captured resistance fighters. Sara expresses her support for him and their cause.

Watch on the Rhine, Act 2 Analysis

Once again in this act, money plays a key/defining role in the action - specifically, as a catalyst for manifesting the struggles for power that many of the characters are entering into, albeit for quite varied reasons.

While several of the plays contain at least one and often more important sub-plots (Autumn Garden, it could be argued, is ALL subplots), ...Rhine contains possibly the clearest example of how a sub-lot is intended to function. There are two main points to consider here. The first is that events in a sub-plot can be employed as a mirror and/or illumination of action and/or meaning in the main plot. Specifically, the Marthe / David / Teck sub-plot, in which Marthe (and, to an extent, David) struggles for personal freedom and realizes it at least partially through the intervention of David, can clearly be seen as

a reflection of the Kurt-as-resistance-fighter plot. Specifically, the goals of the resistance in Germany, struggling against cultural Fascism, have echoes in Marthe's struggling against the personal Fascism imposed upon her by Teck, with David's intervention in her struggle paralleling Kurt's intervention in the struggle back home. Meanwhile, the second effective use of subplots comes when they are used as a source of motivation for the main plot. In this case, the tension in the Teck and Marthe relationship, in which Teck feels power slipping away from him, can be seen as at least a partial trigger for his determination to GAIN power over Kurt.

Watch on the Rhine, Act 3

Watch on the Rhine, Act 3 Summary

As Kurt plays the piano, David tries to convince him to let someone else attempt the rescue. As Kurt refuses, Teck comes in, saying he'll accept a sizeable cash bribe, to be taken from the cash in the briefcase, to stay quiet about Kurt. Kurt refuses, saying that cash is for the resistance. Teck then comments that if he doesn't get a bribe, neither Kurt nor the money will ever reach their intended destinations, and hints that he'll instead accept a bribe from David and Fanny. Fanny goes to fetch the cash she keeps in her safe, while David goes to write a check. Kurt voices his belief that the bribe, no matter where it comes from, will make no difference. He then beats Teck into unconsciousness. Joshua appears, watching as Kurt drags Teck out into the garden.

Joshua assumes that the time has come for the family to run as it has had to do in the past. Sara reassures him that it's not true and sends him to look after the other children. Shortly after he goes, David and Fanny return. Sara tells them Kurt is leaving, alone, Kurt comes in, reveals that Teck is dead, attempts to explain to David and Fanny why he did what he did, and then tells Sara he wants to see the children. As she goes to get them, Fanny comments on how her husband (Joshua) believed in fighting for human dignity. As the children come in, Fanny tells Kurt that the cash she was going to use for Teck's bribe can go to the resistance.

Kurt then speaks a tender farewell to his children, confessing that although he's fighting for a good cause he's done something bad. As he embraces Babette and Bodo, Joshua announces his intention to follow him someday. Sara embraces her husband, urges him to come back if he can, and watches him go. After he's driven off, Sara and the children go out.

Left alone, Fanny and David acknowledge how much has changed, and how much has to look as though it's the same. "We will manage," Fanny says. "I'm not put together with flour paste. And neither are you - I am happy to learn."

Watch on the Rhine, Act 3 Analysis

There are several important elements to note in this, the climactic act of the play. The first, and perhaps most powerful, is the violence that erupts out of Kurt when confronted by the stark, inevitable truth of Teck's desperation for both power and money. Up to this point, Kurt has projected an air of quiet but determined pacifism, but once his act of violence explodes into the lives of his family, it becomes clear just how determined he is. The irony, of course, and it's an extraordinarily powerful one, is that he recognizes his actions as a bad thing - in other words, for him the end does NOT justify the means. This puts him in direct opposition to many characters in other plays in this collection - specifically, the Hubbard/Giddens circle in ...Foxes and ...Forest, Nick in ...Garden,

Andrew in Days..., and Mrs. Tilford before her redemption in ...Hour. On the other hand, his powerful conscience and strong personal sense of integrity make him similar to Karen in ...Hour, whose betrayal of her own sense of integrity leads her to profound remorse (over what she inadvertently does to Martha) and, as the ending of the play implies, to suicide. An interesting question here is whether Kurt, in acting on his determination to go back to Germany in spite of facing so many potential fatal obstacles, is himself acting out of a kind of death wish.

Of almost equal power, and certainly equally unexpected, is Kurt's farewell to his children. Wise, profoundly pained, deeply noble, idealistic but ultimately very very human, his speech is easily one of the most effective pieces of characterization and writing in the collection. It's made made all the more so by its juxtaposition with the act of desperate, remorseless violence that has preceded it (which was, it must be noted, itself preceded by Teck's act of desperate, remorseless greed). To look at it another way - Kurt's passionate evocation in this speech of the power and necessity for an individual sense of universal justice is a direct response not only to the evil he has personally encountered in the play, but the equally destructive evil the author and her audiences have encountered in ...Hour, ...Foxes/...Forest, and Days.

A small but important point to note is the way in which the author uses the name of Joshua for both the idealized but socially conscious grandfather and the idealistic, pragmatic child of Kurt and Sara. In other words, it's not just the name they have in common. Finally, there is the evident transformation and growth of Fanny and David, both of whom grow into a singular, lived experience of the world beyond their pampered lives. Here it's important to note the similarities and differences with characters in other plays. Mrs. Tilford in ...Hour undergoes a similar transformation, albeit one achieved too late to do any good. Meanwhile, Cora in Days... is placed in similar circumstances to Fanny and David (i.e., confronted with awareness of moral conflict) but refuses to even consider the possibility that she might be wrong.

Another Part of the Forest, Act 1

Another Part of the Forest, Act 1 Summary

Stage directions describe the play's setting, the Hubbard house in 1880s Alabama, as having an emphasis on "Southern Greek" style.

Early on a Sunday morning, as Regina and John argue about the frequency of his visits, Regina says she has a plan that she wants to talk about with him. They are interrupted by the arrival of Lavinia and Coralee, home from church. As Lavinia chatters about it being her birthday, Marcus appears, frightening John off. Regina makes him promise to meet her the following night.

Ben comes, with conversation between him and Marcus revealing that Marcus wouldn't give Ben the money to purchase a business. Marcus receives word that Oscar is suspected of being involved in a Ku Klux Klan attack. Marcus calls Oscar out and confronts him, but Ben comes out and gives Oscar an alibi. Marcus offers five hundred dollars to pay for the attacked man's medical bills, but it is refused. Marcus then gives Ben the five hundred dollars, saying he must have use for it.

As Lavinia and Regina come out, conversation reveals that Regina has plans to move to Chicago, and that both she and Marcus resent Ben's plans to marry her to the wealthy Horace Giddens. Meanwhile, Lavinia pleads with Marcus to fulfill a promise made on her birthday last year to have a talk with her. Marcus tries to escape into the house, but Lavinia follows him. Meanwhile, Ben and Oscar taunt Regina about the foolishness of her ambitions. After Regina angrily goes in, Ben taunts Oscar about his (Oscar's) girlfriend's lack of class. Their conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Birdie who, after Ben has told Oscar to go inside, asks for a loan of five thousand dollars to help meet her family's expenses. Ben invites her and John to the music evening the following night so they can talk to Marcus. Birdie agrees, and Ben gets Oscar to take her home.

After Oscar and Birdie have left, Marcus and Regina come out, ready for their picnic. Ben tells Marcus about the proposed loan, inflating the amount to ten thousand dollars. At first Marcus is reluctant but is persuaded, and prepares to leave with Regina. They are interrupted by Lavinia, who almost hysterically asks that Marcus talk with her. He refuses, leaving with Regina. After they go, Lavinia pretends to Coralee (who followed her out) that Marcus is going to allow her to follow her dream of going to teach black children, an atonement for an unnamed sin.

Another Part of the Forest, Act 1 Analysis

As discussed in "Characters - Another Part of the Forest", the central characters in this play are the younger versions of the characters in "The Little Foxes", displaying virtually identical traits of greed, ruthlessness, and selfishness. There is a certain degree of

explanation for their natures and behavior here - specifically, the sense that they learned how to be who and what they are, and how to behave, from their manipulative father. There is, however, no sense of lost and/or transformed innocence - in fact, the reverse is suggested quite strongly, that even as children Ben, Oscar and Regina were forced to play games of manipulation and conceit in order to win the attention of their father.

In this context, it's interesting to consider the character of Lavinia, a touchstone of desperate honesty and integrity, albeit betrayed, against which the appalling crookedness of the rest of her family is measured. There is the strong sense that she has been driven close to insanity by the situation in which she finds herself - specifically, by her struggles to find a way to actually live with the uprightness she believes to be right and necessary. It's also interesting to consider here the character of Birdie, whose younger self, like the other characters from ...Foxes portrayed here, is in many ways virtually identical to her older self portrayed in the other play. The one key difference is that here, and particularly in the second act, she shows flashes of strength and courage that have been, it seems, emotionally beaten out of her by the time of her life portrayed in ...Foxes. There she has spirit only when she is apart from those who have, over the years, held her back. Here, she is portrayed as fanning the dying embers of integrity and courage. There, in ...Foxes, the embers have cooled into ashes.

Finally, it's worth taking a look at comments made repeatedly in stage directions describing the set - the home in which the Hubbards live, which is frequently described as having a Classical Greek sensibility in design and decoration. There are decorative Greek columns on the outside of the house, several Greek statues inside, and a certain sparseness of ornamentation that has definite echoes of a more Spartan perspective (Sparta being a city/state in Ancient Greece renowned for its utilitarian, minimalist approach. There are a couple of possible values to this visual sensibility. One is that Classical Greek philosophy valued thought over feeling, and Marcus certainly does have the sense of emotional immaturity about him; in other words, he's lived his life as a thinker rather than a feeler, a description that certainly seems to fit with his attitudes towards business. By contrast, however, there is the intensity of his affection for Regina, his irritation with Lavinia, and his distaste for his sons. These are all intense feelings that, for a man who apparently is drawn to a philosophy of emotional restraint, might reasonably feel disconcerting ... which, in turn, would at least partly explain the intensity of his reactions when confronted with aspects of life he doesn't like.

The other possible value and/or resonance of this Greek sensibility has to do with Marcus's valuing of / respect for war, which is perhaps quite telling. In its classic period, relationships between Greek city states were defined by their warlike perspectives on themselves and equally warlike relationships with each other, relationships that persisted even in peacetime. The point here, of course, is that Marcus's home is filled with war, albeit of a different sort. The weapons are money rather than swords and spears, the combatants are children and siblings rather than rival city states, and the goal is personal power rather than philosophical and/or spiritual domination (which was, at a fundamental level, the goal of the various combatants in Greece).

Finally, there is some question as to whether the author intends Marcus's story to be perceived as a tragedy in the Classical Greek sense - the story of an essentially good man brought to destruction by a single flaw. It's possible to perceive this archetypal narrative line at work, at least to some degree. Marcus may not be an entirely "good" (read: selfless, noble) man, but he is at least not ill intentioned. That said, his eventual destruction, his economic prosperity, IS triggered by a weakness - his greed for money, which led him to a reckless decision that set in motion the fateful chain of events described by Lavinia in Act 3. Ultimately, however, it seems that if the author DID intend Marcus' story to be a tragedy, she undermined her own intention by making him less of a fully noble character than traditionally tragic heroes like Oedipus, Macbeth, or Willy Loman.

Another Part of the Forest, Act 2

Another Part of the Forest, Act 2 Summary

The following evening, as Marcus entertains a pair of professional musicians, Oscar comes in with the trashy Laurette. Conversation reveals he wants to marry her and move to New Orleans with her, that Laurette is a prostitute, and that she doesn't really love him. John and Birdie come in, and as John is taken out to listen to the music, Ben takes a moment to ensure that Birdie knows she is only to thank Marcus for a loan of five thousand, saying that the other five thousand will be kept for her in case she needs it. He also gives Laurette some punch, adding some brandy to "make it mean more".

A quarrel almost breaks out between John (who recalls the Civil War with fondness), and Marcus (who responds with deep contempt to John and his attitude). After everyone else has gone in to supper, Regina tries to get John to go along with her plans for moving to Chicago, but John says he doesn't want to marry her. Conversation also reveals to Regina the truth about the loan arrangement between Ben and Birdie. Alone with Marcus later, Regina tells him what she has discovered about the loan and that she suspects Ben is taking the extra five thousand dollars for himself.

The rest of the party comes back in from the dining room. Conversation leads Marcus to speak dismissively of Oscar, and the drunken Laurette to accuse him of profiting off the war. After the offended John goes, Birdie pleads with Marcus to be compassionate, mentioning a "massacre" that John was witness to. Marcus tells her that he's decided to not give her the loan. She angrily leaves, followed shortly by the neglected musicians. After they've gone, Marcus confronts Ben with the truth about the loan and Oscar about the foolishness of his relationship with Laurette. When Marcus reacts fearfully to Oscar's threat of violence, Ben and Lavinia both taunt him, referring to events "that night". Oscar storms out, but Ben stays and hears Marcus tells Regina how much he's looking forward to going to Europe with her. Ben tells Marcus about her plans for Chicago, and her sexual relationship with John. The furious Marcus slaps him and then banishes him as he has just banished Oscar. Ben goes out, and Lavinia runs after him. Regina tries to comfort Marcus, but when he rejects her, she that if he refuses to acknowledge John she will never come home again.

As Regina goes, Lavinia comes back in, saying Ben refuses to talk to her. Regina tells her to get ready to go to Chicago, but Lavinia says she's going to do missionary work. Marcus furiously tells her he will never let her go, and threatens to have her locked up.

Another Part of the Forest, Act 2 Analysis

At this point in the play, it might be useful to consider a second repeated element of the stage directions describing the Hubbard home (the first being its Greek sensibilities as discussed in the Analysis for Act 1). This second element is repeated reference to the

house being designed and built according to the tastes of someone else but taken over by the Hubbards. What this does is create a visual reinforcement of what is discussed in ...Foxes as an essential characteristic of the Hubbard family - the taking over of a more genteel, easygoing way of life by the venal, grasping ways of capitalism. In fact, dialogue reveals in both plays that the Hubbards themselves are an embodiment of a social/economic movement at play in the Southern United States of the time, full-blooded northern capitalism overpowering the equally full blooded southern celebration of the good life (a life admittedly built upon the backs of black slaves).

In terms of narrative elements, the first point to note about this act is its perhaps surprising revelation that Marcus is a musical artist - or at least has ambitions to be. This gives him a certain depth, a certain shading of humanity missing from the rest of his characterization here and certainly missing from his children. His desperate eagerness to be approved also gives him a certain vulnerability, a certain weakness that foreshadows his relatively easy surrender to Ben in Act 3. His reaction to Oscar's threat of violence can also be looked at in this light, as a hint that for all his determination to control, Marcus is in fact a frightened, anxious human being.

Meanwhile, it could be argued that Regina's love for John and Oscar's desperate desire for Laurette (or more accurately the freedom from his father that she represents) are manifestations of a youthful genuine feeling that, by the time they become the adults of ...Foxes, has been bullied out of them by life - or at least by Ben. It must be noted, however, that both Regina and Oscar love selfishly - they want John and Laurette (respectively) to fit into their plans for love and relationship and the future, not be who they (John and Laurette) actually are. In this way they are actually no different from Marcus, who wants everybody in his life to function and/or relate to him on HIS terms and in the way HE wants. Here again, this seems to be a vivid explanation of how and why his children came to be who and what and how they are - they are merely living according to the example set for them by their father.

Finally, this act contains a few examples of foreshadowing that are perhaps somewhat more heavy handed than other examples in other plays. Specifically, the references to the "massacre" and to "that night" are so blatantly full of hints at hidden secrets (as is Lavinia's reference to sin at the end of Act 1) that an audience might well feel hit over the head with a dramaturgical brick, rather than drawn subtly and inevitably into the action.

Another Part of the Forest, Act 3

Another Part of the Forest, Act 3 Summary

The next morning, Lavinia tells the departing Ben that it's time to confront Marcus about his past, referring to her Bible as she tells how Marcus, as part of his war-profiteering activities, unwittingly led Northern soldiers to a hidden squad of Southern soldiers who were then slaughtered (the "massacre" referred to in Act 2). She also reveals that she and Coralee wrote down what they saw of Marcus's creation of his false alibi in Lavinia's Bible, and that the envelope of cash that Marcus used to bribe the lawmen involved is still full and still in Marcus' desk. Ben hurries inside. After Lavinia has called Marcus out, Ben returns with two envelopes and a pistol. He tells a servant to take the second envelope to Birdie and then tells Marcus he knows about the massacre, telling Lavinia that he (Ben) will pay for her to start her mission. As Lavinia goes in to pack, taking her Bible with her, Ben blackmails Marcus into signing over the entire family business. As Marcus goes upstairs to write the letters of transfer, Ben settles down in his father's chair and orders breakfast.

Oscar and Regina appear, and Ben tells them the family situation has changed, saying they can be with those they think they love (Laurette and John) or do what he says, have money and be happy that way. Oscar, he says, is to marry Birdie, while Regina is to marry Horace Giddens. They initially resist, but then find themselves with no choice but to do as he says. Marcus comes out and tries to get Regina to go away with him, but she refuses, sitting down alongside Oscar to have breakfast with Ben, who taunts his father about the way things are changing.

Lavinia stops by on her way out of the house with Coralee, giving her children and husband gifts. Ben and Marcus both ask for her Bible, but she refuses to hand it over and leaves, saying she'll pray for them all.

Another Part of the Forest, Act 3 Analysis

Dramatically and narratively, the third act of ...Forest is full of powerful confrontations, intense drama, and telling gestures. The last is worthy of particular note - specifically, in the stage direction indicating that at the end of the play, Regina sits next to Ben rather than her once adored father. There are several layers of meaning at work here. First, the audience learns, in a way far more effectively than they would through just words, that Regina's allegiance has shifted. There is an undeniable echo here of the picture at the climax of the third act of ...Foxes, in which Regina merely sits and watches as her husband desperately struggles for life. In other words, what both moments evoke is a sense of meaning in action and/or inaction- a picture, as they say, is worth a thousand words. The second layer of meaning in Regina's gesture is that it suddenly becomes clear how relatively shallow her professed, intense devotion to her father actually was.

Finally, and not unrelatedly, the moment makes it perfectly clear just how selfish she really is.

Other powerful confrontations/revelations include the details of the sinful past / the "massacre" / that night that have been laid so heavily throughout the play, details that unfortunately come across as a little anti-climactic. Part of this is the result of their being so heavy-handedly laid out in the early part of the play, but part of it is also because the impact of the moments described by Lavinia is diluted by the way in which she describes them - specifically, her rambling, disjointed, somewhat insane way of stringing the story together. In other words, despite the horror of the events described, the means of description triggers the sense that it was not, in fact, as big a deal as Lavinia makes it out to be.

The Autumn Garden, Act 1

The Autumn Garden, Act 1 Summary

The first act introduces the characters staying as summer guests at the Tuckerman house "in a summer resort on the Gulf of Mexico". There is the quietly acerbic, slightly bitter General Griggs and his chatty, superficial Southern wife Rose (who, as private conversation reveals, are beginning the process of divorcing). There is the Ellis family - son Frederick (an aspiring writer), mother Carrie (domineering but insecure) and grandmother Mary (opinionated and outspoken). Conversation reveals that Frederick is working with a fellow writer named Payson, and that Carrie feels that the family is suffering because the two men are spending too much time together. The establishment is run by Constance (flighty and anxious) with the help of her niece Sophie (an immigrant from Germany - nervous, lonely and homesick). Conversation reveals that Sophie and Frederick are planning to marry, and that Carrie isn't happy about it.

Finally, there is Mr. Crossman, a solitary middle aged man who spends his time quietly by himself. Conversation reveals that Crossman, Carrie and Constance all grew up together, along with another visitor - Nick, a painter just back from traveling in Europe with his sophisticated wife Nina. Conversation reveals that Nick and Constance were once involved, but that Constance never married. Conversation between Nick and Nina, meanwhile, reveals that Nick wants to paint Constance's portrait - he had already painted it several years before, but wants to paint a new version and display the two paintings side by side to illustrate the passage of time. After Nina goes to bed, Nick asks Constance whether she will let herself be painted again. At first she refuses, saying she doesn't want the two versions of herself to be seen side by side, but then agrees.

Conversation between Nick and Constance is interrupted by Sophie, who comes down to make up her bed on the sofa - Nick and Nina are using her room. Later, after Nick and Constance have both gone, Crossman (who has had just enough alcohol to be blunt) tells Sophie that she should go back home as soon as she can. Sophie confesses that she would like nothing more, but feels that she has no choice but to stay. When he sees how upset she has become, Crossman apologizes and goes out.

The Autumn Garden, Act 1 Analysis

This play is, in some ways, different from the others in this collection. While the other plays also have a large number of characters, there is the sense that there are still central protagonists and antagonists with the other characters serving in essentially supporting roles. A related point is that in the other plays, there are main plots and sub-plots. Here there is the sense that there are no supporting characters and no subplots. All the characters, all the relationships, and all the various stories arising from both are of equal dramatic, if not thematic, importance. In short, this is a true ensemble piece of theatre.

There is also a significant difference between this and the other plays in terms of tone. Its drama and conflict are still intense, the depth of feeling in each of the characters is still significant, and the stakes and obstacles with which they play out their stories are still high. But there is nevertheless the sense about this play, its characters and its stories, that everything is a bit more gentle. In painting terms, the tone is of pastel or water color, rather than oil or acrylic. In musical terms, the tempo is allegro, slower and more evenly paced, than the more driven, the more speedy allegretto. In short, the play's overall emotional sensibility is reflective rather than assertive, contemplative rather than confrontational.

That said, the play also has similarities to the collection's other plays. For example, all the characters, in their various ways, deal with issues related to fear, the need for power and/or some kind of control in their lives, and the pain of loneliness. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the author again displays her skills at creating diverse characters. Each of the characters here is different from those in other plays, and indeed from the other characters in this play.

The Autumn Garden, Act 2

The Autumn Garden, Act 2 Summary

Scene 1 - Early on a Sunday morning about a week later, Nick paints Constance's portrait and tells her that while he and Crossman were out drinking, Crossman confessed to being in love with her. Later, after Constance has gone upstairs to change for church, Nick tells Carrie that he saw Frederick in a travel agent's with Payson, who he says has a bad character and reputation. Later, Nina takes Nick to task for interfering with people's lives, but he tells her that if she doesn't like what he's doing she can go away.

Meanwhile, conversation between Sophie and Frederick reveals that their relationship is one of convenience rather than of love - it is, Sophie acknowledges, "the only way". After Sophie goes, Carrie confronts Frederick with her knowledge of his plans to bring Payson along on the family's trip to Europe, and said that if Payson is to go, the family will not. Frederick stands up to her and says Payson going no matter what. After he's gone, Mrs. Ellis firmly tells Carrie that she has to make Frederick see things her way, and threatens to cut off both their allowances. Carrie is forced to agree to her terms.

At the end of the scene, Nina goes out on a day-long picnic with Crossman (who, to his great surprise, has just been called "darling" by Constance) and Griggs (who has just told Rose of his intention to leave their marriage whether she gives him a divorce or not).

Scene 2 - Later that night, Carrie worries about Frederick, who has been gone all day. She is later surprised to hear from the returning Frederick that Payson isn't coming to Europe with them after all - when Payson learned that Frederick's allowance was to be cut off if he did, he (Payson) revealed that all he wanted from the friendship was Frederick's money. Mrs. Ellis and Sophie both comfort Frederick, leaving the confused Carrie alone with Constance, who confesses that she has always envied Carrie for her certainty. Somewhat bitterly, Carrie tells her not to bother. Nick, meanwhile, has gotten increasingly drunk and argues with Nina about his behavior. He tells her it's time for her to leave the relationship "for good and forever", the implication being that she's threatened to leave before but has always come back.

After Nick and Nina go out, Constance and Sophie come in to prepare Sophie's bed. Constance confesses that she'll be lonely once Sophie leaves, but that she (Constance) has the possibility of a loving relationship with Crossman. After Constance leaves, the drunken Nick comes back in and tries to seduce Sophie, hinting that there's something wrong with Frederick. She eventually leaves him to sleep in her bed, where he asks her to "have a little pity. I am old and sick."

The Autumn Garden, Act 2 Analysis

Perhaps in keeping with the play's overall more reflective sensibility, the action of its various plots tends to be significantly less forward moving than those of the other plays. There is less of a sense of narrative drive, of forward momentum. While it's true that within the various subplots there is a degree of action (there can be no truly effective drama without that sensibility), there is much more of a sense that the narrative drive is inward. In other words, it feels very much like that the play is peeling away the onion-like layers and masks of repression and secrecy the characters have put up around themselves and their lives, revealing inner truths as opposed to expressing them through more outwardly directed action. Clear examples of this include the revelations of how beneath her expressions of affection Carrie sees Frederick as a kind of possession, how beneath his expressions of bravado and confidence Nick feels "old and sick", and how beneath her efficiency and sensibility Constance is profoundly lonely.

An interesting note at the conclusion of this act is Nick's passing reference to something being "wrong" with Frederick. There is no other reference to this in the play, which begs several questions - does Nick just say this as a tactic in his seduction of Sophie? Or if there is something wrong with Frederick, what is it - and why doesn't Nick come right out and say what it is? On one level, the first is perhaps the simplest explanation. On another level, however, it's possible to read between this and several other lines in the play and come to a conclusion. Frederick, it must be pointed out, bears several of the characteristics that were at the time (the late 1940s) attributed to male homosexuals - domineering mother, absent father, artistic sensibility, emotional sensitivity, and intense male friendship. Add to these characteristics the fact that both he and Sophie acknowledge that their marriage is one of convenience only, and there is the very distinct possibility that in his warning to Sophie, Nick is hinting that Frederick is gay. At the time, however, male homosexuality was even more distasteful to the public at large than female homosexuality (explored by this author in Children's Hour), so for the author to make the point out loud (rather than hinting at the possibility in the way she does) would be considered extraordinarily scandalous.

The Autumn Garden, Act 3

The Autumn Garden, Act 3 Summary

The following morning, Sophie sits by Nick, who is asleep on the sofa. They are discovered by Mrs. Ellis, who rouses Nick and tries to send him upstairs. Constance comes in and, in an angry reference to the nosy neighbors across the street, complains that Nick has been the cause of unfriendly gossip. Sophie explains that nothing bad happened, and Nick backs her up. Constance refuses to believe Crossman's assurances that everything will be all right, and goes, followed shortly by Crossman. When Nina comes in, Nick convinces her to reconcile. After he goes upstairs, Nina goes out on the porch, apologizing to Frederick and Carrie (who are just coming in) for what the gossip about Nick and Sophie is going to do to the Ellis family's reputation.

Sophie comes in, also apologizing for creating "bad gossip" and convincing Carrie and Frederick that it's best for them to move on as planned and that she will join them later. After they go, Mrs. Ellis comes and tells Sophie that Carrie and Frederick are too attached to each other to allow Sophie to come between them - in other words, there will be no marriage. As Constance comes in, Sophie apologizes to her for creating difficulty. After Constance and Mrs. Ellis go out, Sophie asks Nina (who hasn't left) for five thousand dollars, saying that if it is not given to her she will say that Nick seduced her, and adding that she will use the money to go home. Nina eventually agrees, and goes off with Crossman to have a check cashed at the bank.

As Sophie goes, Rose and Griggs come in, Rose saying that a doctor diagnosed her as having a severe heart weakness. She tells Griggs she needs him to stay with her for just one more year - after that, she says, she'll give him his divorce and let her illness take its course. He agrees, but after she goes out and as Crossman returns, and Griggs confesses that he's at a turning point in his life. The two men agree that they've frittered away their lives, with Crossman saying he's done it deliberately, where Griggs just allowed it to happen. Griggs goes out to take care of Rose, the woman he now confesses he doesn't like.

Constance comes in, commenting to Crossman on how happy Sophie suddenly seems and how awful Nick's portrait has made her look. She then comments on how strange, but how right, it seems that Nick has left - without warning and without saying goodbye, as he did years before. She berates herself for having loved the ideal of him for so long, comments on how she feels she has wasted her life, and then asks Crossman to marry her. Crossman, in a long poetic speech that echoes Griggs', tells her that he has deliberately shut himself off from his life and that he's no longer in love with Constance. He apologizes to her for leading her to believe he loved her, saying he hates liars, especially those who lie to themselves. Constance reassures him - "Most of us lie to ourselves, darling," she says. "Most of us."

The Autumn Garden, Act 3 Analysis

There are several important points to note about this act of the play. The first is the important truth in Constance's final line - how "most of us lie to ourselves". It is perhaps fitting that it is also the last line of the collection, given that many of the characters throughout the various plays lie to themselves, and create difficulties for themselves and others as a result. Martha in ...Hour, almost everyone in Days..., Regina and her siblings and husband in ...Foxes, Teck in ...Rhine, and the entire Hubbard clan in ...Forest - all fall victim to the self delusion referred to by Constance in this moment.

The second important point can be found in Griggs' speech to Crossman about reaching a point of self-evaluation. Where Constance's line sums up a theme about the collection, Griggs' line sums up a theme about this particular play - all the characters in ...Garden, in one way or another, have come to this place of examination and questioning in their lives.

Third, there are the perhaps surprising layers of character and feeling revealed in response to the events that start the act. These include Sophie's blackmailing of Nina (which has echoes in it of Regina in both ...Foxes and ...Forest), Mrs. Ellis' pragmatism (which has echoes of that of the older female characters in other plays - eventually by Mrs. Tilford in ...Hour and Fanny in ...Rhine), and the acceptance of both Constance and Nina of the realities at work in their lives. This has echoes of Julie in Days..., Birdie in ...Foxes, and Sara in ...Rhine.

Finally, there are the points raised by this act's climactic examination of the power and effects of gossip. First - is it completely believable, in this day and age, that everyone should be so upset by negative gossip, or the possibility of negative gossip? Even if it isn't in the context of today, in the context of the time it was completely believable, which leads to the second point about gossip, and the play's dramatic focus on it. Is it perhaps a manifestation of the author's concern with social justice? Granted, that concern isn't playing out on the same sort of global scale as it does in ...Rhine, or on the personal scale that it does for Martha and Karen in ...Hour. But there is the sense nevertheless that the author is making the suggestion that for people to react as they seem to be doing, to make the leaps to conclusion that they do, is as unjust in its way and in its context as the injustices reported on in ...Rhine and, perhaps most tellingly, in ...Hour. For is it not exactly the same kind of reaction to rumor that, at least in part, destroys the dreams of Martha and Karen for their school?

Characters

The Children's Hour - Martha Dobie and Karen Wright

These are the two central characters in The Children's Hour, with questions about the nature of their relationship forming the core of both its plot and its theme. Both are in their late twenties, both are teachers, and both are the co-founders of a school for mid-teen girls. At the beginning of the play, Karen is calm, serene, and friendly but firm with the girls. Martha, by contrast, is more highly strung, more volatile and not as good a teacher - there is the sense that Karen is the more dominant personality, the more responsible and the more effective. As the action of the play unfolds, however, the relationship shifts - Karen, because she is so bewildered by what has happened, becomes less effective, more reactive and more quietly upset than the more aggressive and more confrontational Martha. Both, however, are committed to their work and to their friendship, the beginning of a series of parallels between the two women.

By the beginning of Act 3, when Karen and Martha have been socially, financially, and professionally ruined, the two characters are on essentially equal emotional footing - the second parallel between them. They have lost their school, their dreams have fallen apart, both are bereft of possibilities, and both are trying to stitch together a life out of the shreds of what hope has been left to them. It may seem that Karen is worse off, because she has also lost her chance of happiness with Joe, but there is the sense that there is still something positive in her actions in letting him go. This is her apparent concern for his well being (in that she doesn't want him to spend the rest of his life married to someone of whom he can never be sure) and the well being of their relationship. But is this an act of generosity or of martyrdom?

Some might say, in that context, that Martha's confession to Karen is the example of how the experiences of the characters parallel each other. In other words, there is the sense that in the same way Karen has expressed her love for Joe, Martha expresses hers for Karen. Neither expression of love is received particularly well (another parallel), and although the ending of the play (Karen perched on the windowsill) is ostensibly ambiguous, there is the very strong sense that she too is going to end up committing suicide (still another parallel).

In short, Karen and Martha are co-protagonists, sharing similar emotional journeys as they pursue quite similar objectives in the face of the same opposition from the same antagonists, including the opposition they face from inside themselves.

Mrs. Mortar

Mrs. Mortar is Martha's aunt, a flighty, selfish woman whose thoughtlessness and self-righteousness brings trouble into the lives of the central characters not once (with her comments about the "unnatural-ness" of their relationship) but twice (when she refuses

to interrupt her, admittedly deluded, theatre tour to testify on their behalf. Her name can be seen as deeply ironic - while mortar is the name of what keeps bricks and other sorts of construction material together, her actions drive Martha and Karen, and incidentally Karen and Joe, apart.

Mary Tilford

Mary is a student at Martha and Karen's school. Spoiled, selfish and manipulative, her determination to do whatever it takes (lie, bully) to have whatever she wants (usually power over others) is the catalyst for the destruction of Karen and Martha.

Mrs. Tilford

Amelia Tilford is Mary's indulgent grandmother. Family is profoundly important to her, as evidenced not only by her loyalty to Mary but also her affection for Joe, both of which lead her into a series of well-meaning but ultimately misguided choices. Here again, the reader might perceive irony in the choice of Mrs. Tilford's first name - "Amelia" is a derivative of the word "ameliorate", which means to "make better", or to "ease". While Mrs. Tilford thinks she is making the right choice to make things better (for her granddaughter, for the other girls at the school, ultimately for Karen and Martha) she is, in fact, making things much worse.

Joe Cardin

Joe is a physician, Karen Wright's fiancé, Mary Tilford's cousin, and Mrs. Tilford's grandson. A genuine, honest, well meaning man, he does his best to live according to what he believes to be the truth and to influence others to do the same. Ultimately, however, he proves to have a strain of weakness in his character, revealing himself as unable to withstand the pressure of his doubts about Karen and her feelings for him.

Evelyn, Peggy, Rosalie

These three characters are students at Karen and Martha's school. All three are easily manipulated by Mary after initial efforts at resistance, and all three play important roles in Karen and Martha's eventual destruction.

Days to Come - Andrew Rodman

Andrew is the play's central character, a man whose well-intentioned struggle to do the right thing (by his family history, by his town, by his friends, and by his own essentially good character) is corrupted by a fundamental moral weakness - his misunderstanding of what the right thing actually IS.

Andrew wants to believe the right thing is loyalty (to history, to friends, to family) but in fact and action has allowed himself to believe the right thing is preserving the image of success, of prosperity, and of quality of product. In other words, Andrew has fallen into the trap of believing in what could be argued is the superficial version of the so-called American Dream (visible success and prosperity). This is opposed to, it could also be argued, the TRUE American dream - the universal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, with liberty and justice for all. In this, and in many other ways, he is also blindly naïve, an aspect of his character illustrated by his refusal to see the truth/reality of the outside workers.

It's important to note, however, that Andrew is a very complex character. Existing in parallel with his weakness and corruptibility is a compassionate sensitivity to the situations of Julie and Thomas Firth (as well as Firth's fellow workers). He has within him a genuine, trusting empathy that functions in powerful contrast to what ultimately comes across to a lack of empathy for himself. His determination to live up to the image and standard set up for him by his father prevents him from being as genuinely, and as wisely, compassionate towards himself as he is towards his wife and his friend. Ultimately, he is a profoundly flawed, and therefore profoundly intriguing, protagonist.

Julie Rodman, Cora Rodman

Julie is Andrew's wife, in many ways as searching, as troubled, as confused, and ultimately just as victimized by the events of the play as her husband. The difference between the two is that Andrew has found the meaning in his life (his relationship with the town and its citizens) that Julie, as she says to both Whalen and her husband, has been searching for all her life.

Cora, meanwhile, is Andrew's spoiled, selfish, highly strung sister, completely insulated from reality by selfishness. She perpetually sees herself as a victim, when she is in fact a manipulative, whining, self-interested bully. Her lack of compassion is a powerful, vivid contrast to Andrew's empathy and consideration. There is the sense that she is everything Andrew (and probably Julie) wishes desperately to avoid becoming.

It's interesting to contrast Julie's self-absorption with Cora's - while both women tend to be more focused on themselves and their own (security? happiness? desires?) than on those of other people, Julie at least sees other people as a source of hope, of joy, and/or of inspiration. Cora, by contrast, sees other people as a means to an end, said end being her self-indulgent needs and wants. Julie also is honest about herself, her feelings and her situation. Cora, on the other hand, is a liar, self-deluded and paranoid. Both, however, are externalizations of certain aspects of Andrew, the most important man in both their lives - Julie represents his searching, sensitive, compassionate loneliness ... Cora represents his self-blindness, his family pride, and his inability to see reality.

Thomas Firth

Firth is a worker in Andrew's factory, a long-standing friend and ally who feels profoundly betrayed not only that Andrew is bringing in outside laborers to take away the workers' jobs, but that a strike (over low pay) was even necessary. His sense of betrayal deepens when violence, triggered by Wilkie's frame-up of Whalen, results in the violent death of his (Firth's) beloved daughter, an action which leads him (Firth) to bluntly tell Andrew that his relationship with his beloved town has changed forever. He is, in many ways, an externalization of Andrew's troubled conscience.

Leo Whalen

Whalen is a union organizer, brought in by Firth and the other workers to help them organize and run an effective strike. Well-intentioned but realistic and pragmatic, Whalen is a man of integrity, sympathetically portrayed as having a clear-eyed awareness of Andrew's personal perspectives and desires and the more cynical, more hidden perspectives of Wilkie and the other outside laborers. Whalen's act two conversation with Julie reveals the troubled live circumstances that have brought him to this sense of realism, a perspective that helps him realize the truth of who Julie is and therefore enables him to encourage her towards the same realization.

Henry Ellicott

Ellicott is Andrew's lawyer, an advocate for the importing of the outside workers and, as the story eventually reveals, the source of much of Andrew's operating funds. In other words, the latter informs the former - because he is an under-the-table investor in Andrew's company, Ellicott has a vested interest in the factory's ongoing operations, in the breaking of the strike. In addition, there are indications in the first act that Ellicott has feelings for Julie, a situation that makes Andrew his dupe on a personal as well as a professional level. Ellicott is portrayed as corrupt and self-centered, characteristics which make him the mirror, or shadow, image of Andrew's well-intentioned honesty and long-lost, but still aspired to, integrity.

Wilkie, Mossie, Easter

These three characters are members of the large group of "laborers" brought in by Ellicott and Andrew to break the strike at Andrew's brush factory. As the narrative eventually reveals, the laborers are in fact mercenaries, hired to make the strikers look bad and turn the tide of public and legal opinion in Andrew's favor.

All three men are uneducated, corrupt, and tough. Wilkie is particularly shrewd, cynical, and above all ruthless, all characteristics in vivid evidence when he uses the body of card-cheater Mossie, murdered by hot tempered Easter, to frame union leader Whalen and, in turn, use as an excuse for the violence subsequently enacted on the strikers.

Hannah, Lucy

Hannah and Lucy are the Rodman family's two servants. Hannah is the cook, older and more worldly, Lucy is younger and gullible. Throughout the play, Hannah is simultaneously sympathetic to the striking workers and to Andrew, knowing he's been put in an impossible position. In Act 3, Andrew describes Hannah as knowing the "secrets" he, Ellicott and Cora have shared since their childhood, but gives no real sense of either what those secrets are or what, if anything, Hannah does with them or with her knowledge.

The Little Foxes - Regina Giddens

Regina is the play's central character, its protagonist - but a vivid example of how a protagonist isn't always "a good guy". Granted, she shares many of the characteristics of the "good guy" protagonists (intelligence, determination to achieve a goal, resourcefulness when faced with opposition). But while her goal isn't necessarily a "bad" one (prosperity and pleasure), her tactics and ruthlessness as she strives to achieve that goal put her firmly in the category of villain (one of the most well-known villains, in fact, of twentieth century theater). She is conniving, selfish, manipulative, and if not guilty of murder by the play's conclusion, at the very least guilty of manslaughter (i.e., her deliberate inaction when Horace suffers his climactic heart attack in Act 3). She demonstrates a complete lack of remorse, instead using Horace's illness and death as tools to manipulate her brothers - in other words, as means to her own selfish ends. She and her brothers, as Ben suggests, are in some ways demonstrations of what happens when the spirits of competitiveness, and entrepreneurship, not to mention the desire for material success, become too powerful to be restrained. In other words, Regina and her brothers are, on some level, similar to Andrew Rodman in Days to Come, in that they can be seen as representing the dark side of the so-called "American Dream".

There is another parallel between Regina and a character in "Days to Come" - specifically, between Regina and Julie. Both women refer to being driven by a sense of emptiness and loneliness, by a desire for something more in their lives, some kind of meaning. But where Julie's lonely emptiness takes her in search of connection with other people, Regina's emptiness drives her to a ruthless search for material success to fill it, such as money, possessions, etc. Here again, Regina can be seen as a manifestation of the dark side of the "American Dream", one aspect of which is having success, the realization of that dream, manifest in money, power, and possessions.

Ben and Oscar Hubbard

Ben and Oscar are Regina's two brothers (Ben is the eldest, Oscar is the middle child, Regina is, at forty, the "baby" of the family). Ben is single, Oscar is married to Birdie and has fathered Leo. Ben is the more aggressive of the two, the more outspoken, pragmatic, autocratic, and quick thinking (traits he shares with Wilkie in Days to Come). Oscar has his share of those characteristics, particularly when it comes to his

relationship with his wife Birdie. Perhaps because he is unable to take out his frustrations (at being less intelligent and/or easier to manipulate) on his brother and sister, he takes them out on his wife. Ultimately, when it comes to business in general and the relationship with Marshall in particular, Ben is by far the dominant brother, although by the end of the play, the status quo has changed, with Ben and Oscar having realized that they have been out-manipulated by their once dismissed, badly underestimated little sister.

Birdie Hubbard

Birdie is Oscar's wife, a delicate, sensitive soul who was married for the money, for the land, and for the social prestige she and her family could bring to the merchant-class Hubbard clan. Raised in a traditionally "genteel" Southern family, Birdie longs for a return to the way things were, but is repeatedly reminded, particularly in the way that her husband forces her to live, that her life is never going to be what she dreams of. This is perhaps the key reason why she drinks as much and as often as she does, her alcoholism being passed off by Oscar as a tendency towards having "headaches". She is, in several ways, a vivid and dramatically valuable contrast to Regina.

Horace Giddens

Horace is Regina's husband, older than she is but not necessarily elderly. He is physically weaker but morally stronger and at least as intelligent, although he is in some ways emotionally naïve. He doesn't, for example, either perceive or anticipate just how venal, self-interested, and downright murderous his wife is. In many ways, his situation is similar to Birdie's, in that their spirits and lives are both dominated by the controlling ambitions of the Hubbard family - in Birdie's case, Oscar - in Horace's case, Regina.

Leo Hubbard and Alexandra Giddens

Leo is the son of Oscar and Birdie, while Alexandra is the daughter of Horace and Regina. The greedy, violent, easily manipulated Leo is very much like his father and resembles his mother very little. On the other hand, Alexandra has aspects of both her parents in her - the intelligence of both, the ruthlessness of her mother (albeit channeled in a more positive direction, towards the care of her father) and the sensitivity of her father (who, after all, keeps a fragment of his musical past in his safety deposit box). Leo and Alexandra are, for much of the play, steered towards an eventual (inevitable?) marriage that Alexandra resists passionately and which Leo, who seems content to take what he can when he can, doesn't seem to care much about. At the end of the play, there is the very clear sense that while Leo is going to remain thoroughly a Hubbard (that is, a materialist and capitalist), Alexandra is headed in the opposite, more humanist, more compassionate direction.

Addie, Cal

These are the two black servants of the Giddens family. The caring, devoted Addie seems to have the more emotional, intimate relationship with those whom she serves, while Cal seems to be a little less intelligent and more emotionally distant. Addie's compassion, like Birdie's vulnerability, is a telling, valuable contrast to Regina's hard selfishness, making her a much more appealing maternal character than Alexandra's biological mother, Regina.

Marshall

This character, the northern businessman whose desire to work with Ben and Oscar is the catalyst for the play's action, appears only in the first act. There is something patronizing and judgmental about him, and his attitudes towards the South and its people, that suggests that he is as calculating as the Hubbard brothers and their sister, out for only what they can take ... and take advantage of. There are hints of sexual, or at least intimate, attraction between him and Regina that add a layer of emotional interest to Regina's manipulations, and eventual murder, of her husband.

Watch on the Rhine - Kurt Muller

Kurt Muller is the play's central character and protagonist, the motivator of its main plot and the embodiment of its core theme. In his initial appearances, he comes across as gentle, loving, pained, and deeply tired - in other words, as more than slightly passive. As the action of the play unfolds, however, it becomes clear that this apparent passivity is, in fact, a profound watchfulness and wariness, traits that would appear to have developed in him, out of necessity, during his struggle against Fascism. The action of the play also makes clear that he is a man of deeply intense feeling (love for family and friends) and of conscience. Both aspects of his character are vividly, and powerfully, apparent in his farewell speech to his children. Not only does he reveal the depths of his feeling for them, but also his compassion for the situations in which he's placed them. He also reveals that he knows he's done things that are against the larger moral, human law, and that even though he's done those things in the name of a good cause, they're still bad things. He is a man of intense, quiet, unshakeable moral strength and courage, of compassion, passion and integrity. All these are measuring sticks by which other characters in other plays in this collection, many of whom are also struggling with integrity, can be effectively and tellingly measured.

Sara Muller

Sara is Kurt's wife, the mother of his three children, and a primary source of personal support as he struggles, both individually and as a member of the larger resistance, against the Fascism raging through Europe at the time the play is set. She is deeply in love with her husband and devoted to the well-being of her children but intelligent

enough and wise enough to know the reasons why their life has to be as hard as it is - she is, in her own way, as committed to her husband's cause as he is. She has a warm relationship with her brother (David) and a somewhat testy relationship with her mother (Fanny), and by the end of the play has earned even more closeness with David and, perhaps for the first time, true respect from Fanny.

Joshua, Babette and Bodo Muller

Joshua (fourteen), Babette (twelve) and Bodo (nine) are Sara and Kurt's three children. All three are intelligent, articulate, serious and precocious. They are also apparently content with the insecurity of their family life. Joshua is more aware than his younger siblings of his father's work and responsibilities, and at the end of the play commits to following in his footsteps, literally and figuratively. Babette fusses over her mother's appearance, likes pretty dresses, and enjoys cooking - in contemporary terms, she might be described as a "girly girl". Bodo takes himself very seriously, wanting to present himself as more mature and more skilled than he actually is. He is also the most naïve of the three children, at times coming close to getting his father into trouble with his unguarded comments about the family's life in general and his father's work in particular.

Fanny Farrelly

Fanny Farelly is Sara and David's mother. In her early sixties, Fanny is opinionated, used to having things her own way, emotionally volatile, and more than a little self-absorbed. She is devoted to the (somewhat idealized) memory of her late husband Joshua, dead for several years at the time the play begins. She initially comes across as superficial and selfish, but on several occasions throughout the play, particularly at the end, she reveals that she not only gives lip service to her husband's high ideals, but lives them herself.

David Farrelly

David is Fanny's son and Sara's younger brother, portrayed in the play's early stages as something of a drifter - not working too hard, not committed too intently when he does work, not attached to any particular relationship. His early description of his closeness to Sara foreshadows his actions later in the play when he offers his support for Sara and Kurt, an action which also shows him (like his mother) to have something more in him than initial impressions would suggest.

Marthe and Teck de Brancovis

Marthe and Teck are married Rumanian aristocrats, refugees from the Nazi march across Europe. Marthe is several years younger than Teck, more emotional, less concerned about the realities of their now impoverished life. She seeks refuge in the

attractions and escape offered by an extra-marital relationship with David. In other words, where Marthe seems to be more interested in ignoring the realities of their situation, Teck is more realistic, determined to actually make something of their new lives. This determination leads him to recklessly, and opportunistically, attempt to gain cash from Kurt by blackmailing him. It's ironic, however, that in the same way Teck warns Marthe to not underestimate him, Teck in turn underestimates Kurt, and ends up dead as a result.

Anise

Anise is Fanny's sharp-tongued, outspoken maid. The two women have an intense, long-standing, almost love/hate relationship, although there is the sense that their arguments, and the feelings of anger, frustration and resentment that fuel them, are generally short and quickly forgotten.

Another Part of the Forest - Marcus Hubbard

Marcus Hubbard is the play's central character, and like his daughter Regina in The Little Foxes, is a vividly portrayed example of how a protagonist isn't necessarily, or automatically, the good guy. He does have his moments of humanity - there is, for example, the almost-heartwarming eagerness he displays at the beginning of Act Two for his music to be liked (it's interesting, in this context, to note that nowhere in the text does it suggest that his music is any good - or, for that matter, that it's awful). He is also, in general, less vindictive and less overtly manipulative than Regina and her brothers. Finally, there is the sense that his love for his daughter is genuine, if a bit obsessive - there is no sense that Regina, either in Little Foxes or in this play, is capable of genuine love for anyone. Undoubtedly, however, there are also traits and attitudes that Marcus has clearly passed on to his children - opportunism, ambition, and the desire to control, all of which lead to his eventual destruction.

There are two interesting, if somewhat under-explained, elements of Marcus' character. The first is his apparent devotion to classical Greek ideals. Stage directions contain references to Greek statuary and other antiquities, while dialogue specifically refers to his affection for, and intention to live within, the Greek culture. It's not entirely clear, however, exactly what aspects of Greek culture and thought appeal to Marcus, nor is it clear why that appeal is so intense. For further consideration of this aspect to his character. The second under-explained aspect of his character is the guilt that he does, or does not, feel about his role in the massacre of the Southern soldiers foreshadowed throughout the play and described by Lavinia in Act 3.

Lavinia Hubbard

Lavinia is Marcus' wife, and has clearly become dissociated, at least to some degree, from reality. There are few indications, if any, of who she was before the events of the war she describes in Act Three, events that clearly changed both her inner perceptions

and the way she outwardly related to the world around her. Nevertheless, there is the clear sense that those traumatizing events deepened an already powerful religious conviction, and that years of carrying what she describes as a "sinful" secret have twisted that conviction into a kind of psychosis, or skewed perception of reality. Neither is there a sense of the kind of mother she was to her three children - which, in a way, may in fact itself be a statement. In other words, because she is never described as being either a good mother or a bad mother, or related to as either, it may be safe to conclude that she wasn't much of a mother at all, an idea supported by the intensity of her religious beliefs and, to a degree, by the ruthless coldness of her selfish children.

Ben, Regina and Oscar Hubbard

The three Hubbard siblings originally appeared in The Little Foxes, where they were portrayed as being in their forties and fifties. Here they are approximately twenty years younger, but no less grasping or manipulative - it's interesting to wonder,

in fact, whether the events of Another Part of the Forest can, or perhaps should, be interpreted as the first time they really exercised their vicious power over one another. While there are hints throughout both plays that the core characteristics that define them (Ben's ruthless craftiness, Regina's selfishness, Oscar's impulsiveness) have been with them all their lives, there is also the clear sense in Another Part, that for the first time, all three are confronting, and being confronted by, serious tests and limits.

Considering the three characters solely within the context of this particular play, the main point to note is the sense that their relationships with each other and their parents are intensely competitive, jealous and without affection. Their father has clearly set them against each other, perhaps intentionally or perhaps not - he was either deliberately manipulative or profoundly obtuse. In either case, their determination to claw their way past each other to gain both his favor and success in the eyes of the world around them can be seen as something more than simple sibling rivalry. These young people have the lust to control bred deeply into them.

John and Birdie Bagtry

Like the Hubbard siblings, Birdie appears in The Little Foxes, where she is married to Oscar and has become an alcoholic, using liquor to camouflage her feelings of fear of her husband, grief over the loss of her family home, and distaste for the family she has become part of. In Another Part of the Forest, her longing for a better life and, above all, her intense vulnerability can be seen as the foundations of who she becomes later in life in the earlier play.

John Bagtry is Birdie's cousin. In the same way as she represents the lost gentility of the South here and in The Little Foxes, John represents its idealism and confidence, or rather, its loss of them. While he speaks and generally behaves well, there is the very clear sense that he is mentally and emotionally unwell, obsessed with his experiences of the war that forever changed the world in which he lives.

Both Birdie and John, therefore, represent the sort of people that the exploitative Hubbard family and people like them find it all too easy to manipulate and control in order to achieve their

Coralee

Coralee is Lavinia's servant and confidante. Quiet, supportive, long suffering, she and Lavinia share the secret of Marcus's behavior during and after the massacre, making their bond one of conspirators as well.

Laurette

Laurette is Oscar Hubbard's prostitute girlfriend. Outspoken, touchy and resentful, her drunken outburst at the Hubbard's music party in Act Two is a catalyst for further deterioration of relationships within the family, and also for further awakening of audience curiosity in the family's secrets.

Isham, Penniman, Jugger

These three characters appear only briefly - Isham in the first act, Penniman and Jugger in the second. All three are essentially catalysts for the action - Isham provides information that triggers a change in Marcus' attitudes towards Oscar, while Penniman and Jugger's sycophantic attitudes initially help Marcus in his quest to appear cultured and civilized but eventually trigger him to reveal just how uncivilized he can be.

The Autumn Garden - Nick and Nina Denery

As previously discussed, the characters in The Autumn Garden make up what is commonly known as an "ensemble cast". There is no central protagonist and no central antagonist, although there are characters of each sort in each of the narrative's many plots. The various circles of character and plot intersect and interrelate, but the linkages between them are forged not by narrative line but by theme and tone ... and by one other element, the presence of a catalyst for the action in each plot and/or set of relationships. That catalyst is Nick Denery.

Nick is the sort of character whose basic character, intentions, and actions trigger changes in the lives/stories of the other characters without actually realizing any change himself. He awakens Constance and Sophie to truths of their existence; he spurs Rose to action that, in turn, transforms her relationship with her husband; and he brings information into the lives of Carrie, Frederick and Mary that changes the intentions of the former two and awakens the need for honest action in the latter. Does Nick have his own story, his own narrative line? Evidence presented in the play suggests that he doesn't, and herein lies the function of his wife Nina. This is to point out to Nick and to the audience through action and dialogue that this is all his life really is, coming into the

circles of other people, creating trouble and affecting change, trying to awaken himself, but never actually changing, growing, or evolving.

Nina, for her part, is caught in the same sort of pattern. Although she doesn't get as involved in the lives of the other characters as Nick does, she ends up in a similar position - virtually unchanged. While the way she confronts him does seem to suggest that this is the first time her feelings of frustration and loneliness have led her to this point of intensity, the action that follows her confrontation ultimately suggests that this is the pattern of behavior SHE follows - an intense venting of feelings followed by reconciliation and self-denial.

Constance and Sophie Tuckerman

Constance is one of the quartet of friends whose lives and memories are at the core of the play's reflective sensibility (the others are Nick, Carrie and Crossman). There are two ways of looking at her - as a character she is either enigmatic and reserved, or simply under-developed. The evidence of the author's skill at characterization, here and in the other plays in this collection, would seem to suggest the former - specifically, that she keeps herself, her feelings and her desires under very firm control. Her journey, by the end of the play, finally sees a degree or two of her reserve breaking down, to the point where she's able to outspokenly respond to what has happened to her - the paintings, Nick leaving, Crossman's rejection.

Sophie, meanwhile, is Constance's niece, and to some degree has acquired her skills at restraining her true feelings. Sophie is less experienced at it, however, and at times lets her feelings show unrestrainedly, often to the consternation of those around her who, more like Constance, aren't accustomed to dealing with such emotional honesty. The most surprising thing about Sophie is the ruthless streak that she reveals in Act Three (where she attempts to blackmail Nina into giving her money). There is almost the sense here that she is a little girl caught up in an adult game that she doesn't quite understand, but is nonetheless determined to win. This sudden surge of adulthood is, like Constance's sudden surges of open revelation of feeling, triggered by the presence, actions, and ultimate self-serving-ness of Nick Demery.

Carrie, Frederick, and Mary Ellis

This trio of characters form an interesting triangular relationship - son Frederick dominated by mother Carrie who is, in turn, dominated by HER mother Mary. Frederick and Carrie each struggle for various kinds of independence, but Mary clearly has too strong a will, too much wisdom, and too much intelligence for either Carrie or Frederick to be successful.

As individuals, Mary Ellis bears clear similarities to other older female characters in this collection. She has, in particular, the imperiousness of Fanny in ...Rhine and the eventual compassion of Mrs. Tilford in ...Hour. Where she is quite different from either of those characters is in her clarity of insight and the depth of her wisdom - neither Fanny

nor Mrs. Tilford learn theirs until late in the action of their respective plays. Mary Ellis, however, has hers right from the beginning, and gets the other characters into trouble, with themselves and each other, by speaking her mind about what she sees, intuits, and knows.

Carrie and Frederick, meanwhile, have an almost stereotypical relationship - domineering mother, sensitive son struggling to realize freedom, both eventually coming to terms with the fact that they are too mutually dependent to let go of their relationship. Granted, they have relatively little self awareness about their situation - or, at least they express little self-awareness. It's very possible that their actions are, for the most part, external masks and/or rationalizations - that on some level they know how co-dependent they are, but are only playing games of confrontation in order to reinforce their mutual need.

Edward Crossman

Crossman is, in some ways, similar to Nick Demery, in that both men interact with the other plots in the play (Constance coming to awareness, Carrie and Frederick cementing their bond, Sophie discovering her independence, Rose and Griggs discovering their chained-together-ness) and affect them without having stories of their own. Crossman's purpose in the overall narrative, however, goes one step further than Nick's, in that his observations and commentary on the action and the other characters give the play its semi-poetic sensibility and its thematic heart. In other words, it's Crossman's speech in Act 3 about having let life pass him by that illuminates and defines the action and relationships that have been previously portrayed.

Rose and General Griggs

Rose and her husband the General are the outsiders among this group of characters, unconnected as they are to the circle of friendship and shared experience that binds Carrie, Constance, Crossman and Nick. This perhaps partially explains why the flighty Rose acts as she does - specifically, as though she's trying to attract the attention of people to whom she wants to be important. In other words, there is a sense about Rose that she is rather like the unpopular kid in school trying to fit in with the cool kids ... including her husband. There is some question, in this context, of whether her eventual revelation of serious illness is truth or, in fact, yet another desperate attempt to get someone to pay attention.

The General, meanwhile, is one of the most interesting characters in the play, and perhaps even in the collection. This is because he never outright explains why he wants his divorce. On one level, Rose is certainly irritating enough that an audience will fully understand. But on another level, there is clearly something significant going on in the General's spirit that has wounded him spiritually, to the point of being unwilling and/or unable to continue with the façade that he has been living. In other words he, like many of the other characters (the self-deluded Rose and Nick being the primary exceptions),

are awakened to truths about themselves that cause them to at least begin moving past their being stuck. How far forward they're able to move is another question entirely.

Objects/Places

The Children's Hour - The Wright-Dobie School for Girls

This is the school set up and run by Karen and Martha. Established in a rural area (there are several references, in fact, to the school being part of a farm), the school is a fulfillment of a life-long dream for the two lifelong friends, with its disintegration serving as a metaphoric representation of the disintegration of the friendship that brought it into being. A classroom in the school is the setting for the first and third acts of the play.

Karen's Ornament

In Act 1, when Mary accidentally/deliberately destroys an ornament given to Karen by Joe, it serves as metaphoric foreshadowing for the destruction of the school, of the relationship between Karen and Joe, of the friendship between Martha and Karen, and eventually of their lives.

The Missing Bracelet

This bracelet belongs to one of the other students in the school, was borrowed by Rosalie but never returned, and was believed to have been stolen. The truth of what happened to it is a catalyst for much of the drama - Mary knows that truth, and blackmails Rosalie into doing what she wants (i.e., ruin Martha and Karen).

Mrs. Tilford's Living Room

The second act of the play takes place in the home of the wealthy, influential Mrs. Tilford - specifically, in her living room. The room is the setting for the confrontations between truth and lies that form the dramatic core of the play. An interesting point to consider here is the fact that for Karen and Martha, their struggle for the truth takes place in an arena, for lack of a better term, outside of their familiar environment. In other words, they take their fight to its source, rather than having the source come to them. This indicates a determination to fight (for the truth) that other actions, other choices, might not.

Days to Come - The Living Room of the Rodman Home

The action of the first and third acts, as well as the first and third scenes of the second act, takes place in the expansive, expensive family home of the Rodmans, owners of the brush factory that provides employment and income for most of the working class people of the town. The relative opulence of the setting, described in stage directions as

bordering on the "cold", can be seen as an effective contrast to the relative shabbiness (which, interestingly, might also be described as "cold) of many of the events that take place there, and of the intentions motivating them.

Strike Headquarters

By contrast, the small and shabby headquarters of the striking workers (seen only in Act 2, Scene 2) is the setting for some of the play's most touchingly portrayed acts of compassion and vulnerability. It's interesting to note that structurally, the scene at strike headquarters takes place at the exact physical center of the play - one act and one scene before, one act and one scene after. Does this perhaps suggest that the content of this scene is at the moral and/or emotional center of the play?

The Deck of Cards

The apparently marked state of the cards used by Mossie and Easter in their card game is the trigger for the confrontation between the two men that results in Mossie's death which, in turn, sends the action of the play in a different direction. In other words, the deck is an important catalyst for the action.

Cora's Ceramic Animals

Even though they are referred to infrequently, Cora's collection of ceramic animals (described in stage directions as being arranged with cold precision) is one of its most important symbols. The collection metaphorically represents the precisely arranged network of self-delusions and lies, particularly in Andrew, Cora and Ellicott, that have sustained the lives and reputations of the Rodman family and their business to the point of the play's beginning, that sustain them throughout the action, and may or may not sustain them after the curtain falls. There may, in fact, be a suggestion of meaning in the fact that the collection is of animals - the actions of Wilkie and his men, and therefore of Ellicott and Andrew (the men who bring them into the action) can clearly be seen as being "animalistic", at least to some degree.

The Little Foxes - The Giddens Home

The action of the play takes place entirely in the one place - the living room of Horace and Regina's expensively furnished, expensively constructed, yet new-feeling home. The sense here is that the house is a visual and metaphoric echo of the new attitude and way of functioning in business described by Ben, in contrast to Lionnet.

Lionnet

Lionnet is the cotton plantation once owned and run by Birdie's family. To the Hubbard family, it represents the outmoded, indulgent attitudes and history of the pre-Civil War American South, attitudes and history that they (the Hubbards) are rebelling against with their business and profit centered philosophy. "Twenty years ago," says Ben Hubbard, "we took over their land, their cotton and their daughter." It's interesting to note that Lionnet is only described, never seen. This gives the sense that for the audience as well as for the Hubbards, that world is gone. This idea is reinforced by the fact that Lionnet is never actually physically described, but is referred to only in emotional and spiritual terms (loving ones by Birdie, condescending ones by Ben and Oscar).

Horace's Bonds

Horace's thousands of dollars in bonds, kept in the bank and stolen by Leo, are an important catalyst (trigger) for the unfolding action of the play, becoming a tool by which Ben and Oscar achieve their goal of setting up business with Marshall, but by which Regina, albeit more indirectly, achieves her goal of prosperity and power.

Horace's Medicine

Horace's heart medicine is another important catalyst in the action, specifically in Act Three, when Horace's accidental spilling of one source and Regina's deliberate refusal to help him to another trigger Horace's collapse and eventual death. In other words, Horace's medicine plays an integral role in defining the action and repercussions of the play's climax.

Watch on the Rhine - Fascism

Fascism is a form of socio-political ideology, defined as embodying and expressing the views of far-right nationalism. Characteristics include broad, and very tight, state control over the lives of citizens and individuals, the belief in the innate superiority of a single ethnic and/or political group, a disregard for democracy, and submission to the power of rhetoric, often as voiced by a single, charismatic leader. The power and influence of Fascism peaked in 1930s Italy and Germany and was virtually defeated as the result of World War II, but has resurfaced (albeit in small pockets) in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

The Farrelly Home

The play is set in the large, expensive Farrelly home in the outskirts of Washington DC - specifically, in its eclectically furnished, but well kept, living room.

Washington DC

The house in which the action of the play unfolds is located in the outskirts of Washington, where some of its offstage action takes place. The proximity of the nation's capital, with its politicians and power games, gives an additional level of suspense and intrigue to the action.

The Portrait of Joshua Farrelly

In the living room of the Farrelly home, the portrait of patriarch Joshua (Fanny's late husband, David and Sara's father) hangs in a prominent place. Fanny refers to it frequently, the portrait serving as a trigger for her (idealized?) memories of her husband and their life together. The portrait represents the moral example that Fanny believes Joshua to have been (and in some way still is) to his children, an example that at the beginning of the play they fail to meet, but by the end of the play they have surpassed. In other words, the portrait is a metaphoric representation of the moral yardstick by which Fanny measures Sara and David, and in some ways her three grandchildren (Joshua, Bodo and Babette).

Kurt's Briefcase

As the dangerously curious Teck notices, Kurt's briefcase is locked while his other luggage is open. Later, it's revealed that the briefcase contains several thousand dollars of cash, scraped together from piecemeal donations to help the Anti-Fascist cause. While it's never explicitly defined what the money is specifically for, there is the clear sense that Kurt is supposed to, one way or another, get the money and/or the support it can purchase to the Resistance. His determination to use it for exactly that, rather than for a bribe to ensure his personal safety, is a manifestation of the depth of his commitment to his cause.

Another Part of the Forest - The Hubbard House

Acts One and Three take place in the multi-leveled exterior of the house, while Act Two takes place in the living room. The house is described in stage directions as being designed and constructed according to the taste of someone other than the person who currently lives there, who has (again according to stage directions) decorated it with an evident preference for Classical Greek art and philosophy.

The Ku Klux Klan

This organization of white men was formed in the aftermath of the American Civil War (see below) to defend against what was perceived (by the Klan) to be the encroachment of black people on their way of life. Officially outlawed but often privately supported, the

Klan flourished for several years, their trademarks being white robes that masked the faces of its members with pointed hats, burning crosses on the lawns of those the Klan believed to be supporters of blacks, and lynching of both blacks and whites that the Klan believed broke racial laws.

The American Civil War

In the late 1800s, a war was fought in the USA between states in the North and South. The conflict was triggered by disagreements over the value of slavery - essentially, the North rejected it, the South defended it as an essential element of its way of life. The North eventually won, triggering a sea change in the life and ways of the South that, in some ways, continue to be felt down to the present day.

Lavinia's Bible

Throughout the play, Lavinia is portrayed as being deeply religious and aware that she has been / is living in sin. The details of that sin (her remaining quiet about her husband's betrayal of personal, Southern, and religious integrity) are written in her Bible which, when she reveals the family secrets it contains, becomes a key focus of / catalyst for Ben turning the tables on his manipulative father and gaining control of both the family and its business.

The Autumn Garden - The Tuckerman Guest House

The main living area and outdoor porch of a "handsome but a little shabby" house "in a town on the Gulf of Mexico, a hundred miles from New Orleans". This setting suggests that the action of the play, like the lives of the characters playing it out, is somewhat removed from the uncomfortable actualities of the real world.

The Portraits of Constance

The two paintings, one of Constance in her youth and the work-in-progress of her in her middle age, can be seen as metaphoric representations of one of the play's main themes - the tension between who the characters were, or believed themselves to be, when they were young, and who / what they have aged into.

Themes

Social Justice

Each of the plays, in various ways, explores questions related to a lack of social justice in the actions (often ill-considered, often selfish) of the characters. Children's Hour is, in many ways, a cry for justice on behalf of those whose lives have been destroyed by rumor, and of course of those whose gender attraction lies outside what is generally perceived as "normal" and/or "natural". Days to Come is also a call for insight into and compassion for not only the most obvious victims (the strikers) of the injustice it portrays, but also those who may have perpetrated that injustice (i.e., Whalen, Andrew) unwittingly. Finally, Watch on the Rhine is a portrayal of the selflessness, courage, and fearless honesty and/or integrity that, the author seems to suggest, must live at the heart of the fight against social injustice

The Little Foxes and Another Part of the Forest examine this theme from a slightly different angle, with both plays portraying characters who, for the most part, have little or no sense of social justice at all. The sense here is that the author is portraying just how ruthless, determined, and selfish those who oppose such justice can be - in other words, she is perhaps saying to those who fight for such justice, "Look how vicious the enemy can be".

Finally, there is The Autumn Garden which, with its multiple plots and ensemble cast of complex characters, is less concerned with the larger concept of social justice and more concerned with what might be described as small-town justice - or rather the IN-justice of gossip and small thinking.

In their examinations of this question, all six plays give the very strong impression that there is one single emotional experience at the core of all their various representations of social injustice: fear.

The Motivating Power of Fear

n all six plays, characters struggle with fear. First, there is the fear of loss. Children's Hour (i.e., Martha and Karen) is, in many ways, all about this sort of fear, in that Mary acts out of fear of losing status at the school while Martha and Karen, perhaps more importantly, act out of fear of losing respect, reputation, and their dreams. Days to Come is all about fear - of the loss of income (the strikers) and the loss of reputation (Andrew and, ironically, Wilkie). In their own, very different ways, Little Foxes and Another Part of the Forest are also all about fear - that of people afraid of the loss of money and control. Then there is fear of power - the individual's own (Kurt in Watch on the Rhine), the power of hate-filled social action (the Fascism in Watch..., the gossip in Autumn Garden), or the power of those with money (Foxes, Forest). Finally, there is the fear of life and/or existence outside their own sphere of safety and/or influence. This

fear is felt by, and motivates, the actions of Mrs. Tilford and Joe in Children's Hour, Andrew in Days to Come, Birdie in both ...Foxes and ...Forest, Lavinia in ...Forest, and almost all the characters in both Watch on the Rhine and Autumn Garden. Meanwhile, in this context it's also important to note how the characters react to the fear in their lives -whether they fight both it and its effects, or whether they give in. Perhaps the most vivid depiction of giving in to fear can be found in Martha in Autumn Garden, although it could be argued that even an apparently strong character like Regina in both ...Foxes and ...Forest does what she does because, even for a moment, she has given in to fear. By contrast, there are the characters who don't give in to fear, who continue to fight no matter what they're facing or how frightened they are. Here the most vivid example is Kurt in ...Rhine, although it could be argued that the apparently defeated Birdie in both ...Foxes and Forest struggles, in her own way, to overcome and even transcend the triggers of fear in her life.

The Pain of Loneliness

One particular fear that manifests throughout all six plays but is not referenced above is the fear of loneliness. Again, all the characters, to one degree or another in all the plays, experience this particular fear, which is perhaps more about the fear of the pain they believe to be associated with loneliness, rather than the loneliness itself. Fear of this pain is one of the reasons Martha kills herself and one of the reasons Karen lets go of Joe - she's afraid that once their married, his suspicions and doubts will make their relationship more lonely than fulfilling for her. In Days to Come, Andrew is afraid of a different kind of loneliness, the kind caused by the loss of the respect of his beloved town. In ...Foxes the specter of loneliness is a little more difficult to discern (it's certainly very apparent in the lives of the same characters in ...Forest), but it's there. This is particularly true if one considers the possibility that Ben, Oscar, Regina, and even Horace are so desperate to retain power and money in order to fill the gaping loneliness for honest human relationships at the heart of their lives.

Meanwhile, the pain of loneliness, and fear of that pain, is at the core of the life and experience of every single character in Autumn Garden. All of them feel empty, all of them reach in various ways for a kind of company that will fill that empty loneliness and, perhaps ironically, all of them have come, in their various ways, to accept, unhappily or otherwise, that loneliness of one form or another is going to be with them the rest of their lives.

Finally, there is Watch on the Rhine which, like Autumn Garden, is full of characters who are acting out of fear of loneliness. In their own ways, Fanny, Kurt, Sara, Marthe, David, and even young Joshua all act the way they do out of loneliness, but the difference between these characters and many of the others is that they realize there are worse things to fear and then achieves transcendence of that loneliness in the face of embracing a larger purpose.

The Need for Power

The final common characteristic in all the plays is the way in which the characters strive to achieve power. Some of them are doing so in order to have power over others, others to claim power (either lost or never had) for themselves), and many are in search of power in the name of having it for its own sake. It may be that all these various drives for power are connected to, or the result of, one of the other above mentioned themes. Those struggling against social injustice are struggling for power with those who have greater, more threatening power, while those who are struggling with fears of various sorts strive for power so they can either conquer their fears or instill fear in others (and therefore increase their power). There is also the sense that characters often discover power that they didn't realize they had - both "good" power (Kurt in ...Rhine, Alexandra in ...Foxes, Lavinia in ...Forest) and "bad" (Teck in ...Rhine, Mary in ...Hour, Sophie in ...Garden). In terms of loneliness, there is the sense that the characters may be using power, and the quest for it, to fill the previously discussed emptiness at the core of their lives. This is perhaps most apparently true of Marcus in ...Forest, who for whatever reason has replaced an emotionally intimate and respectful relationship with everyone in his family with one based on power and the fear it engenders.

Ultimately, though, the suggestion at the heart of the examination of power in all the plays is that when all is said and done, struggling for power, gaining it, and keeping it are all exercises in futility. This is perhaps most evident in the final moments of ...Foxes, a play more overtly about power and manipulation than any of the others. Regina, who at the play's conclusion has more power than she has ever had in her life, discovers that she has lost the one thing that she has at least given lip service to valuing - the love of her daughter. Like her father in ...Forest, Regina has discovered that having power un-tempered with compassion and the warming potential of human relationships, is not as fulfilling as she has always believed it to be.

Style

Point of View

As is indicated by the collection's thematic emphasis on questions of social justice, there is the very clear sense that the author is writing from a place of concern with issues relating to the inappropriate use of power over those who have little - which is, essentially, what social IN-justice is. In other words, in all these plays the author dramatizes the conflict between those who want and/or have power for their own purposes, and those who want/have it in order to advance the greater good. Examples of the former are Teck in ...Rhine, Wilkie in Days..., Nick in ...Garden, and members of the Giddens/Hubbard families in ...Foxes (Regina, Ben, Oscar, Horace) and ...Forest (Regina, Ben, Oscar and Marcus). Examples of the latter are Martha and Karen in ...Hour, Whalen and Firth in Days..., Alexandra in ...Foxes, Kurt and Sara in ...Rhine, and Lavinia in ...Forest. Most of the other characters in ...Garden are less interested in larger social issues than they are in spiritual survival for themselves.

There are also several characters who seem to embody the hope for transformation inherent in the author's various explorations - in other words, the author's belief that the cause of social justice can be advanced through the spiritual transformation of an individual. These characters include Mrs. Tilford in ...Hour (even though her increased open-mindedness extends only to the fact that Martha and Karen had been falsely accused - there is some question as to whether she has been transformed enough to accommodate Martha's lesbianism). Other such characters include Andrew (even though his transformation comes too late) in Days..., and Fanny and David in ...Rhine.

Setting

The key element to note about the plays' various settings is the time in which they were written, and by implication therefore set. ...Hour, Days..., and ...Foxes were all written in the 1930s, at a time when America and indeed the world was in the midst of a deep economic depression. This gives particular contextual weight and importance to the economic issues at the heart of the action in the latter two plays. Meanwhile, the Thirties in America were even more socially conservative than contemporary America, meaning that the exploration of same-sex attraction in ...Hour was daring and even shocking. It's interesting to note that a film of that play wasn't made until the more liberal early sixties, while films of several other plays in the collection were made within a few years of their original productions.

Watch on the Rhine, meanwhile, was written in 1940 and first produced in April of 1941, at which point America was not yet involved in World War II but was nonetheless aware of the Nazi/Fascist march to power, and the resistance to that march, that was at its core. In other words, audiences were fully aware of the threat to liberty that Kurt was fighting and that is perhaps represented by Teck. It might not be going too far to suggest

that the play is, on some level, a call to America to join the war (which it did not do until December of 1941 following the attack on Pearl Harbor). Another Part of the Forest was written and produced in 1946 after the war was over, and does not on first glance seem to have much to do with that event. It might not be going too far to suggest that in its stark portrayal of the vicious self-interest and greed that motivates the Hubbard family, the play is on some level a condemnation of those who exploit war and its suffering for profit.

Finally, Autumn Garden was written in the very early 1950s, a time in which the survivors of the war were simultaneously looking back on their experiences and their lives and facing the beginnings of the boom in prosperity that came about in the 1950s. In other words, America of the time was at a turning point, a period of powerful and deep transition, a similar point at which the characters in Autumn Garden find themselves. Their experiences are, in a sense, dramatizations of "the state of the union" of the time.

Language and Meaning

For the most part, the language used in these plays is fairly straightforward. There are occasional moments of poeticism, the most noteworthy being Kurt's farewell to his children in Act 3 of Watch on the Rhine (arguably the most emotionally powerful section of dialogue in the entire collection). There are also occasional moments in which the exposition, or the setting up of the play's situations and relationships, is perhaps not as well disguised as modern dramaturgy (playwriting technique) would prefer. In general, however, the language used is that of real human beings in real situations speaking in a way that sounds like real human beings would speak.

By far the most interesting point about the play's use of language, however, is the way it's used to define character and action. As referenced several times in this analysis, the author is profoundly skilled at creating characters with well differentiated intentions, traits, and personal journeys. This skill is even more noteworthy because the works here are all plays, meaning that the author only has the medium of dialogue with which to define the characters and their motivations. There is no prose, no objective third person narrator to explain who a person is, what they're feeling, and why they're doing what they're doing. All the audience/reader has is what the characters say, which in turn indicates what they're doing, which in turn illuminates reasons and perspectives for those actions to take place. In other words, meaning is sub-textual, inferred and/or intuited rather than portrayed overtly.

Structure

On the most apparent level, the structure of the three plays follows the traditional, some might say old-fashioned, three act format (more contemporary dramaturgy holds that two acts, and in many cases no act divisions at all, is preferable). Each act rises to a point of climax, with the intention that the audience is sent out into intermission with a

curiosity, perhaps even a longing, to know what's going to happen next. Each of the climaxes is more intense than the previous one, with the climax of each play's third act being the highest and most emotionally / thematically intense of all. The third act climax in ...Hour is the revelation of Martha's same sex attraction to Karen, while in Days... it is Andrew's revelatory explosion of temper (perhaps the weakest of the third act climaxes in the collection). In ...Foxes, the climax is Regina watching Horace die, in Rhine it is Kurt's farewell to his children. The point to note in the latter is that it is defined as the climax because it is the emotional and thematic high point of the play (as opposed to the killing of Teck, which is admittedly powerful and unexpected but which is neither as emotionally powerful nor thematically resonant as the farewell speech). In ...Forest, the third act climax is Marcus' very, very late in the play - in fact, in its final moments, where Regina's choice of where to sit leaves no doubt of how the struggle for power in the Hubbard family has ended. Finally, the third act climax in Autumn Garden is Sophie's attempt to blackmail Nina into giving her money, a summing up of all the characters' actions in struggling to redefine their futures by escaping from their pasts.

The point to note about all these climaxes is that in these plays, as is the case in most drama, is that they are high points of experience in the lives of the characters, in their personal struggles to achieve their individual goals. Often in non-dramatic literature, the climax is of idea, theme, or image. The point is not made to suggest that these elements are absent from dramatic climaxes - on the contrary, the most effective dramatic climaxes are also effective on these levels as well. But the fact remains that the effectiveness of a dramatic climax is primarily dependent upon the intensity with which the desires and intentions of the characters involved have been portrayed to that point. In other forms of writing, this is not necessarily, or automatically, the case.

Quotes

"Karen: It's funny. We always talk about [Mary] as if she were a grown woman. Martha: There's something the matter with the kid ... she causes trouble here; she's bad for the other girls ... it's a feeling I've got that it's wrong somewhere ..." The Children's Hour, p. 14.

"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 ... you're fonder of Karen ... and it's unnatural, just as unnatural as it can be. You were always like that even as a child ... well, you'd better get a beau of your own now - a woman of your age." Ibid, Mrs. Mortar to Martha, p. 20

"I'll think of something to tell her. I can always do it better on the spur of the moment ... Grandma's very fond of me, on account my father was her favorite son. I can manage HER all right." Ibid, p. 28, Mary to Peggy and Evelyn.

"...one time Miss Dobie was crying in Miss Wright's room, and Miss Wright was trying to stop her ... we couldn't help hearing because ... their room is right next to ours ... almost always Miss Dobie comes in after we go to bed and stays a long time. I guess that's why they want to get rid ... of me ... because we hear things." Ibid, p. 38, Mary to Mrs. Tilford.

"Martha: Try to understand this: you're not playing with paper dolls. We're human beings, see? It's our lives you're fooling with. OUR lives. That's serious business for us ... Mrs. Tilford: You've been playing with a lot of children's lives, and that's why I stopped you ... I know how serious this is for you, how serious it is for all of us." Ibid, p. 48

"...everybody lies all the time. Sometimes they have to, sometimes they don't. I've lied myself for a lot of different reasons, but there was never a time when, if I'd been given a second chance, I wouldn't have taken back the lie and told the truth. You're lucky if you ever get the chance." Ibid, p. 52 - Joe.

"We've been sitting here for eight days asking each other the time. Haven't you heard? There isn't any time any more." Ibid, p. 59 - Martha.

"It's like that dark hour of the night when, half- awake, you struggle through the black mess you've been dreaming. Then, suddenly, you wake up and you see your own bed or your own nightgown and you know you're back again in a solid world. But now it's all the nightmare; there is no solid world." Ibid, p. 61 - Karen

"Karen, there are a lot of people in this world who've had bad trouble in their lives. We're three of those people. We could sit around the rest of our lives and exist on that trouble, until in the end we had nothing else and we'd want nothing else. That's something I'm not coming to and I'm not going to let you come to." Ibid, p. 66, Joe.

"Karen: But this isn't a new sin they tell us we've done. Other people aren't destroyed by it. Martha: They are the people w ho believe in it, who want it, who've chosen it. We aren't like that. We don't love each other." Ibid, p. 70

"I have loved you the way they said ... there's always been something wrong. Always - as long as I can remember. But I never knew it until all this happened ... You've got to know it. I can't keep it any longer. I've got to tell you how guilty I am ..." Ibid, p. 71 (1) - Martha

"I don't know how, I don't know why. But I did love you. I do love you. I resented your marriage; maybe because I wanted you; maybe I wanted you all along; maybe I couldn't call it by a name ... I never felt that way about anybody but you. I've never loved a man. I never knew why before. Maybe it's that." Ibid, p. 71 (2) - Martha

"It's funny; it's all mixed up. There's something in you, and you don't know it and you don't do anything about it. Suddenly a child gets bored and lies - and there you are, seeing it for the first time ..." Ibid, p. 72 - Martha

"You've done a wrong and you have to right that wrong or you can't rest your head again. You want to be 'just', don't you, and you wanted us to help you be just ... you want to be a 'good' woman again, don't you?" Ibid, p. 76 - Karen.

"There isn't a man living who doesn't know about the woman who allows herself anything, but who invents the one rule that will keep her this side of what she thinks is respectable. She'll lie, but not on Thursday. She'll sleep with you, but not immediately after lunch." Days to Come, p. 89 - Ellicott to Julie.

"I've hoped for a very long time that everybody or anybody would mean something. Things start as hopes and end up as habits." Ibid, Julie to Ellicott.

"All labor organizers are racketeers, Mr. Ellicott, as you and I both know from the papers." Ibid, p. 91 - Whalen to Ellicott.

"As a lawyer, I have found that for my client's own good, it is often wise not to ask his permission on little details." Ibid, p. 104 - Ellicott to Wilkie.

"I always thought loneliness meant alone, without people. It means something else." Ibid, p. 107 - Andrew to Julie.

"Andrew: Why do people always think it's lucky to find out the simple things long after one should have known them? Julie: Because each year you can put off knowing about them gives you one more year of peace." Ibid, p. 107.

"I worked well because I worked one way, without thinking about any other. They worked one way, without thinking about any other. How do I set that right again?" Ibid, p. 109 - Andrew.

"Didn't anybody ever tell you that Christians ain't supposed to act like Christians?" Ibid, p. 113 - Whalen to Firth.

"Haven't you ever wanted to talk to somebody you thought knew more about things than you did, and you just hoped the talk would start and - there wouldn't be any questions about why you came?" Ibid, p. 117 - Julie to Whalen.

"Do you think you can love the smell that comes from dirty skin, or the scum on dishes, or the holes in the floor with the bugs coming through - or the meanness and the cowardice that comes with poverty? I hate the poor, Mrs. Rodman. But I love what they could be." Ibid, p. 118 - Whalen.

"You're a noble lady, and I'm frightened of noble ladies. They usually land the men they know in cemeteries." Ibid, p. 125 - Wilkie to Julie.

"... somebody's been killed and that somebody worked for me. If I'm going to stay in business I can't let people get the idea they can slice up my folks ... I'm the police here, Mr. Rodman, and if I wasn't worrying about finishing a job I was hired for, I'd have to think of that." Ibid, p. 127 - Wilkie to Andrew.

"We can't fight you when you fight like this. It's our town more'n it's yours. Our folks came and built it. We can't watch it go like this ..." Ibid, p. 135 - Firth to Andrew.

"...I never worked for a man before who believed I could come in, run his factory, and break his strike without walking on anybody's toes...it's not a tea room business. You ought to have know that ..." Ibid, p. 140 - Wilkie to Andrew.

"...last night I lost the place and the land where I was born ... I lost what I thought I was ..." Ibid, p. 145, Andrew.

"... I suppose it is all true ... that you Southerners occupy a unique position in America. You live better than the rest of us, you eat better, you drink better. I wonder you find time, or want to find time, to do business." The Little Foxes, p. 155 - Marshall.

"You know what I've always said when people told me we were rich? I said I think you should either be a [slave] or a millionaire. In between, like us, what for?" Ibid, p. 161 -Regina.

"I can't believe that God wants the strong to parade their strength, but I don't mind doing it if it's got to be done." Ibid, p. 169 - Ben.

"Sometimes a young fellow deserves credit for looking round him to see what's going on. Sometimes that's a good sign in a fellow your age. Many great men have made their fortune with their eyes." Ibid, p. 179 - Oscar to Leo.

"In twenty-two years I haven't had a whole day of happiness. Oh, a little, like today with you all. But never a single, whole day. I say to myself, if only I had one more whole day then - and that's the way [Alexandra will] be ..." Ibid. p. 207 - Birdie.

"I was lonely when I was young ... Not the way people usually mean. Lonely for all the things I wasn't going to get ... I wanted the world. Then, and then ... Papa died and left the money to Ben and Oscar." Ibid, p. 211 - Regina.

"You couldn't find a jury that wouldn't weep for a woman whose brothers steal from her. And you couldn't find twelve men in this state you haven't cheated and who hate you for it." Ibid, p. 221 - Regina.

"The century's turning, the world is open. Open for people like you and me. Ready for us, waiting for us ... there are hundreds of Hubbards sitting in rooms like this throughout the country. All their names aren't Hubbard, but they are all Hubbards and they will own this country some day. We'll get along." Ibid, pp. 222-223 - Ben.

"I like to disturb folks." Watch on the Rhine, p. 232 - Fanny.

"I don't understand infidelity. If you love a man, then why? If you don't love him, then why stay with him ... thank God, I was in love." Ibid, p. 233 - Fanny.

"We've come to the end of a road. That's been true for a long time. Things will have to go one way or the other. Maybe they'll go well, for a change." Ibid, p. 239 - Marthe.

"We will have plans when the hour arrives to make them." Ibid, p. 244 - Kurt.

"...there are ways and ways of loving." Ibid, p. 248 - Fanny.

"I don't know the language of rooms like this any more. And I don't want to learn it again." Ibid, p. 252 - Sara

"By this time all of us must know where we are and what we have to do. It's an indulgence to sit in a room and discuss your beliefs as if they were a juicy piece of gossip." Ibid, p. 260 - Sara

"Herr Muller does not give me the feeling of a man who settles down. Men who have done his work, seldom leave it. Not for a quiet country house." Ibid, p. 262 - Teck.

"... why must our side fight always with naked hands. The spirit and the hands. All is against us but ourselves." Ibid, p. 283 - Kurt.

"This money ... was not given to me to save my life, and I shall not so use it. It is to save the lives and further the work of more than I. It is important to me to carry on that work and to save the lives of three valuable men, and to do that with all speed." Ibid, p. 289 - Kurt.

"Shame on us. Thousands of years and we cannot yet make a world. Like a child I am. I have stopped a man's life." Ibid, p. 296 - Kurt.

"... I will keep my hope that we may make a world in which all men can die in bed." Ibid, p. 296 (2) - Kurt.

"The world is out of shape ... and until it gets in shape, men will steal and lie and ... kill. But for whatever reason it is done, and whoever does it - you understand me - it is all bad. I want you to remember that. Whoever does it, it is bad." Ibid, p. 299 - Kurt.

"Men who wish to leave have the best chance to live. I wish to live. I wish to live with you." Ibid, p. 300 - Kurt to Sara

"There is something too austere, too pretended Greek about the portico, as if it followed one man's eccentric taste and was not designed to be comfortable for anyone else." Another Part of the Forest, p. 307 - Stage Direction.

"Why should you be with them? When I want to meet you, I go and do it." Ibid, p. 308 - Regina to John.

"I was only good once - in a war. Some men shouldn't ever come home from a war. You know something? It was the only time I was happy." Ibid, p. 310 - John.

"I can't remember the years before, and the years after have just passed like a wasted day. But the morning I rode off, and for three years, three months and eight days after, well I guess I remember every soldier, every gun, every meal, even every dream I had at night ..." Ibid, p. 349 - John

"We weren't ever meant to be together. You see, being here gives me - well, I won't use bad words, but it's always made me feel like I sinned. And God wants you to make good your sins before you die. That's why I got to go now." Ibid, p. 365.

"You're not marrying a man who didn't love you. You can't go away, or at least not on my money, and therefore a willful girl can't have a willful way. You're not in love; I don't think anybody in this family can love. You're not a fool; stop talking like one. The sooner you do, the sooner I'll help you." Ibid, p. 388

"Happiest year of my life was when my husband died. Every month was springtime and very day I seemed to be tipsy, as if my blood had turned a lovely vin rosé." The Autumn Garden, p. 401 - Mrs. Ellis.

"...sometimes I think no people are quite so moral about money as those who clip coupons for a living." Ibid, p. 403 - Frederick.

"Sometimes it is wise to let things grow more roots before one blows them away with many words ..." Ibid, p. 409 - Sophie

"...as one grows older it is more and more necessary to reach out your hand for the sturdy old vines you knew when you were young and let them lead you back to the roots of things that matter." Ibid, p. 420 - Nick.

"...lonely people talking to each other can make each other lonelier. They should be careful because maybe lonely people are the only people who can't afford to cry. I'm sorry." Ibid, p. 430 - Crossman.

"I can smell it: it's all around us. The flower-like odor right before it becomes troublesome and heavy. It travels ahead of you, Nick, whenever you get most helpful, most loving and most lovable. Down through the years it runs ahead of us - I smell it - and I want to leave." Ibid, p. 440 - Nina to Nick.

"...you're a toucher: you constantly touch people or lean on them. Little moments of sensuality. One should have sensuality whole or not at all. Don't you find pecking at it ungratifying? There are many of you: the touchers and the leaners." Ibid, p. 451 - Mrs. Ellis.

"There'll be no more of what you call my 'homecomings'. Old friends and all that. They are damn bores, with empty lives." Ibid, p. 478 - Nick.

"All right. Think what you want and I'll be what I am. I love you and you love me and that's that and always will be." Ibid, p. 479 - Nick to Nina.

"That big hour of decision, the turning point in your life, the someday you've counted on when you'd suddenly wipe out your past mistakes, do the work you'd never done, think the way you'd never thought, have what you'd never had - it just doesn't come suddenly. You've trained yourself for it while you waited - or you've let it all run past you and frittered yourself away." Ibid, p. 490 - Griggs.

"I've kept myself busy looking into other people's hearts so I wouldn't have to look into my own." Ibid, p. 494 - Crossman.

Topics for Discussion

General - discuss the ways in which fear manifests in, and defines the actions of, the characters in each of the six plays.

General - discuss the ways in which the need for power, and reactions to its use, manifest in, and define the actions of, the characters in each of the six plays.

General - discuss the ways in which loneliness, or the fear of loneliness, manifests in, and define the actions of, the characters in each of the six plays.

General - analyze, and comment on, the role of money in each of the six plays in the collection. How does it define power? Status? Success? Failure? Identity?

General - obtain and view some of the films made from the plays in this collection, particularly Children's Hour, The Little Foxes, and Watch on the Rhine. What changes have been made in the transition from stage to screen? What effect did these changes have on the story? Do the plays make effective films?

General - outline the main plots and sub-plots of the six plays in this collection. Discuss the relationships between the two kinds of plot in each play - in what way do the sub-plots reflect and/or illuminate the action in the main plots? In what ways do events in the sub-plots motivate the action in the main plots?

The Children's Hour - In what ways does the content of Martha's confession (i.e., the self-condemnation) no longer apply to contemporary societal perceptions of homosexuality? In what ways does it still apply?

How have the play's apparent attitudes towards homosexuality (the reactions of Mrs. Tilford, Martha's suicide) changed? How have they remained the same?

Is Karen wrong to react to Mrs. Tilford in the way she does at the end of the play? Why or why not?

Is Karen's letting go of Joe an act of selfless love or of self-pity and self punishment?

What do you think happens at the end of the play - does Karen jump from the window and end her life? Does she merely sit there and give herself room to absorb everything that's happened? Does she look out to a new future?

Days to Come - What is your response to the character of Andrew and his situation at the end of the play? Is he to be blamed? Pitied? Vilified? Something else? Knowing his situation, do you agree with his actions (in bringing in the outside workers) or disagree?

Do you agree that Andrew is a classically tragic character? Why or why not?

What is your perspective on trade unionism? How do you react to the attitudes and actions of those who support unions (Whalen), those who don't (Wilkie, Ellicott), and those who find themselves caught in the middle (Andrew)?

Debate this statement. "The conflict between worker and employer in Days to Come, in its ideology and its apparently inevitable violence, is the unavoidable outcome of the capitalistic philosophy espoused by Ben and Regina in The Little Foxes, and by Marcus and Ben in Another Part of the Forest."

The Little Foxes - in what ways is the character of Birdie a telling contrast to Regina? What characteristics of the one are highlighted by the presence, attitudes and actions of the other?

Many would argue that Ben's vision of unchecked capitalism has in fact come to pass, at least in Western culture and society. Would you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Throughout The Little Foxes, there are several references to blacks as "niggers". Keeping in mind that use of the term was broadly accepted, both at the time the play was written (the 1930s) and the time in which it's set (the early 1900s), what do you think should be done in a contemporary production of the play? Does the director/producer present the piece as an artifact of its time, or change the language to reflect contemporary perspectives? And if s/he does, does that choice reflect or change the essential intention of the playwright?

Watch on the Rhine - Do you agree with Kurt's assertion that a bad thing, even done in a good cause, is still a bad thing? Why or why not?

Who defines what a "good cause" is? Is there a universal, standard, archetypal good cause? The central theme of the collection (arguing in favor of human dignity and integrity) would suggest that there is. Do you support this contention? Why or why not?

Contrast the character of Kurt with the central characters in the other plays - Karen and Martha in "The Children's Hour", Regina in "The Little Foxes", Andrew in "Days to Come". In what ways do their strength, integrity, courage and morals measure up to Kurt's? In what ways do they fail?

Another Part of the Forest - What role, if any, do you think guilt plays in motivating Marcus' actions and attitudes?

Is Lavinia insane, or merely desperate?

Do you think Marcus' actions are as sinful as Lavinia and Marcus believe them to be? Why or why not?

Autumn Garden ... As the play's various narrative lines unfold and layers of experience of feeling and/or intention are revealed, what personal truths are revealed in the characters of Sophie? Mrs. Ellis? Nina? Crossman? Griggs? Rose? The others?