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SIBLING RELATIONS IN LILLIAN HELLMAN'S *TOYS IN THE ATTIC*

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Abstract

Lillian Hellman's 1960 play Toys in the Attic is noteworthy for its turbulent sibling dynamics and exploration of the theme of incest. As such, the play allows the critic to analyze a horizontal relationship other than marriage or the vertical relationship of parent/child that are so common in drama. The depiction of the sisters Carrie and Anna Berniers and the manner in which they interact with their brother Julian also dramatizes the limitations that women face in familial interactions. Carrie, in particular, pays a penalty for her incestuous feelings for her brother and her attempts to control his marriage, but siblinghood at the same time provides a molding ground for her gender identity. Thus, she ultimately affirms the constrained situations faced by women in family life, and does so in the realm of sibling interactions alone. But like the stored toys in the attic from which the play takes its name, Carrie's interrelationship with her siblings is a type of sequestering that shows the continuing limitations imposed on women.

Keywords: Lillian Hellman, *Toys in the Attic,* Sigmund Freud, Psychoanalysis

Lillian Hellman's plays are remarkable for their sexual tension both within and outside the boundaries of marriage, but the plays should also be considered in relation to sibling dynamics. Hellman may not be the only playwright to depict the unhappy marriage as a topic for drama, but her turbulent interactions between siblings on stage are her unique means of achieving theatrical effects. In fact, Hellman's drama often demonstrates Michel Foucault's

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assertion that the family unit is "the crystal in the deployment of sexuality" that serves as an active site of sexual alliances in which "sexuality is 'incenstuous' from the start" (108-109).

Indeed, Hellman's privileging of the sibling relationship in her familiar play *Toys in the Attic* is a theme that requires us to revisit the psychoanalytic background, because theorists and playwrights alike have often devoted more attention to vertical relationships than horizontal ones. One need only consider Sigmund Freud's celebrated analysis of the mother-son dynamic in *Oedipus Tyrannus* to see that vertical relationships have been the predominant focus of analysis. Even when sibling interrelationships are central to the plot of classical plays, such as *Antigone* by Sophocles, the relationships are often not only benign but in fact idealized. While the horizontal sibling relationship has been largely passed over, the lateral conjugal relationship has been isolated from blood relationships as an independent gender relation presented in stereotypically accepted gender roles. As Juliet Mitchell claimed, the preoccupation of psychoanalysis with vertical familial interactions, lines of ascent and descent between ancestors, parents and children, and its neglect of horizontal relationships, the sibling and conjugal relationships, indicates a "social imaginary" which "can envisage only vertical authority" (*Siblings* xv). All the lateral relations take their cue from sibling relationships, as Mitchell pointedly and perceptively sums up as the "verticalization" tendency:

> Recent analysis has pointed to the absence of women in the brotherhood of men, in particular in the ideal of fraternity which characterizes the social contract of contemporary Western societies. Brotherhood has been seen as one of the faces of patriarchy. My own view is that, although it is an aspect of male dominance, it is importantly different—the assimilation of 'brotherhood' to patriarchy is an illustration of the way all is subjugated to vertical understandings at the cost of omitting the lateral. Indeed, I have come to think that this 'verticalization' may be a major means whereby the ideologies (including sexism) of the brotherhood are allowed to operate unseen. (*Siblings* ix)

This tendency toward verticalization that ignores sibling relationships, according to Mitchell, results from our emphasis on childhood at the expense of adulthood as the formative part of human experience, and is reinforced by the central mode of the therapeutic investigation in psychoanalysis.

Because psychoanalysis has focused on vertical familial interactions and has neglected horizontal relationships, including sibling relationships, there has been "a massive repression of the significance of all the love and hate of sibling relationship and their heirs in marital affinity and friendships" (Mitchell, *Mad* 77). A paradigm shift from the near-exclusive dominance of vertical comprehension to the interaction of the horizontal and the vertical in our psychological understanding is needed. A few good beginnings have been made in feminist researches, and it has been widely acknowledged that the intricate interweaving of

early horizontal and vertical family relationships is to surface in later marital and family relationships. The quality of earlier family relationships, vertical as well as horizontal, is to be internalized and projected as the central determining factor in one's later choice of partners. In the study of early family experience, the significance of earlier horizontal sibling relationship has been highlighted, as Coles comments:

> If the partners have previously been unable to deal with their destructive envy of a sibling whom they wish to displace or to incorporate as an extension of themselves, then the choice of a partner that repeated or reverses that lateral relationship is likely to fall at the same hurdle. (207)

Further observation in the study of siblings provides evidence that sibling relationships and their contribution to developmental outcomes can be understood only in the context of processes involved in other family relationships. Among these, marital relationships of the same lateral nature are siblings relations are the most inseparable. (Hetherington 70).

Horizontal sibling and conjugal relationships are closely related in Hellman's plays. Although the current study focuses on *Toys in the Attic,* sibling trios also figure into the Hubbards of *The Little Foxes* and *Another Part of the Forest.* In the latter two plays, the circumstances of the main character, Regina Hubbard, is complicated by her relationship with her brother Ben, who has arranged a marriage between Regina and Horace that is doomed to fail. Likewise, Julian Bernier's marriage to Lily in *Toys in the Attic* is entangled with his incestuous sibling relations. For the female Hellman characters in sibling relationships, whatever the subsequent fate of their adult relationship with their brothers, the seed-time of their capacity to love other men was laid down in the love they held for the siblings.

I. Entangled Sister-Brother relations

Unlike the mythic narrations of brother-sister bonds such as the filial devotion at the heart of Sophocles' *Antigone*, the psychoanalytical exploration of brother-sister relationships, typified by Freud's case history of a lifelong struggle between an older sister and a young brother (the Wolf-Man)[1] seems to recount a mutual suffering of resentment of the other's apparently privileged position in the family, and an inability to outgrow the shared jealousies. Psychoanalytic orthodoxy seems to have accepted Freud's view that all sibling relationships are based upon "primal hatred," while dismissing at the same time the importance of siblings in the inner world (Coles 2).

[1] The real name of the Wolf Man is Sergei Pankejeff, a patient of Sigmund Freud who gave him this case name to protect his identity. The case of the "Wolf Man," published under the title "From the History of an Infantile" (1918). played an important role in Freud's formulation of his theory of psychosexual development. However, though Freud declared Pankejeff "cured" of a childhood trauma manifested in his haunted dreams of white wolves after having witnessed his parents having intercourse, Pankejeff himself disputed Freud's claim as false.

From an object-relations psychoanalytical perspective, on the other hand, sibling love and attachment, or even the "secret complicity" of incestuous desire between siblings, "plays an essential part in every relationship of love, even, between grown-up people" (Klein 224). In the object-relational framework, sibling relationships, within which the construction of selfhood is constantly challenged by the difficulties of being simultaneously an individual and a social animal, with the desire for autonomy versus the desire for connection in early stage of psychical development, promote a defensive mental organism implanted in later adult relations, especially marital or sexual relations. Passionate love or primal hatred, the sibling relationship bears an undoubted importance in one's inner world and later establishment of sexual relations.

Juliet Mitchell suggests in her research on sibling love and violence that "children in Western societies are thought to commit incest with each other because of insufficient parental care and control" (*Sibling* xvi). In modern child studies, the psychoanalytical concern for childhood trauma presupposes a sense of psychical annihilation induced from sibling relations. This sense of nonexistence is created by the threat to one's existence as a small child posed by the new baby or the older sibling, and it consequently results in sibling power struggles. Therefore, Mitchell asserts that "looking at siblings is looking anew at sex and violence" (*Sibling* xvi).

The modernity of family culture, advanced by the rise of industrial society and the mainstreaming of the nuclear family (with a single male breadwinner per family established as the objective of modern family ideology), the family became the ideal place to site an investigation of gender cultures, of domination, subordination, collusion and resistance. It is within the family, and especially with the brother-sister relationship, that the child

> …first discovers his or her identity, first encounters inequalities of treatment based on gender assumptions, and first learns what is expected of an adult male or an adult female in the culture to which the child is still an apprentice…(and therefore in the brother-sister relationship) the patterns of rivalry, envy and jealousy, on one hand, and sexual fantasy, idealism, and sublimated devotion on the other, allowed novelists and poets to probe a vast range of intimate feelings that would have been taboo in standard heterosexual relations. (Sanders 9-10)

Although childhood experiences of the siblings are not directly depicted in Hellman's plays, the retrospect of early family memories contributes to the viewer's understanding of the adult relationships of the characters. The marriage between Julian and Lily's marriage in *Toys in the Attic* may take place in the present-time of the play, but we are privileged to peer into the dynamics of the earlier relationship between Julian and his sister Carrie Berniers.

The aforementioned diverse connotations attributed to brother-sister relationships indicate that such interactions vary in importance among societies, at least as far as institutional and value arrangements are concerned. However, all societies share the same

sibling incest taboo. What is worth focusing is the phenomenon surmised from the reports of ethnographers that though brother-sister incest is no less important a taboo, it "occurs more frequently than mother-son or father-daughter incest" (Cohen 184). The reason for the discovery is comprehensible in that brothers and sisters normally grow up in intimate and intense emotional relationships and, more importantly, they are members of the same "boundary-maintaining system and sub-system within the family" (Cohen 185). Therefore, as British anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski [2], discovers in his research on the matrilineal Trobrianders[3], brothers and sisters of the same mothers must be separated from each other from an early age "in obedience to the strict taboo which enjoins that there shall be no intimate relations between them" (57). The discovery of the strict brother-sister incest taboo in human cultures from early matrilineal tribal stage extends to patriarchal society.

Feminist critics interpret the sibling incest taboo, prohibiting sexual intercourse and marriage between cross-sex siblings and other close kin, as inherently motivated by the patriarchal "reciprocal gift exchange" and "reciprocal marriage exchange" in which "a woman's role in social life is limited to her sexual and reproductive role as wife," and to "a sign of the exchanges between her husband and her brother" (Weiner 67). It is this patriarchal notion of women as reciprocal gifts in societies that accounts for the functional necessity of "trading women out" in that "when they remain in relation to their natal families, especially their brothers, their endogamous position may allow them to exercise immense political power" (Quilligan 24). Therefore, sister-brother incest is at once "sacred and profane, politically dynamic and rigorously disguised, the ultimate solution to legitimacy and the most feared compromise" (Weiner 17). Modern industrialization, bringing the notion of the male breadwinner family into Western family ideology and eliminating women's and children's economic options, further encourages the tabooing of brother-sister incest.

The sibling incest taboo is the keynote in the brother-sister relationship in *Toys in the Attic,* in which the sister Carrie has suffered severe childhood trauma in an orphaned household prior to the time of the play, and is unable to extricate herself from incestuous desire.

II. The Berniers Sibling Trio and the Hysterical Sister Carrie

[2] Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942), is an important 20th-century anthropologist, whose ethnography of the Trobriand Islands described the complex institution of the Kula ring and became foundational for subsequent theories of reciprocity and exchange. His approach to social theory was a brand of functionalism emphasizing how social and cultural institutions serve basic human needs. His illustration of the high status enjoyed by Trobriand women has been the target of feminist esteem as well as feminist criticism.

[3] The Trobrianders, are people inhabiting on the Trobriand Islands located in the South Pacific. They are noted for their elaborate intertribal trading system.

Toys in the Attic portrays a sentimental picture of a lone male, Julian Berniers, in a household of females in New Orleans. The play explores the destructive aspects of sibling love and uncovers dark implications of sibling relationships that have been stored and forgotten, like childhood toys in the attic – and hence the title. Julian's marriage to a very rich but childish girl a year earlier and their subsequent move to Chicago was assumed at first to herald a better life for the siblings, with Julian escaping his limited opportunities and frustration, and the two sisters gaining a certain freedom by no longer having to watch over their brother. However, Julian soon loses the shoe factory bought for him by his widowed mother-in-law Albertine, and the young couple are soon living in near-poverty. The play begins on a normal working-day, with the two sisters discussing their long-dreamed plan of going to Europe, as well as the sudden return of the young couple, laden with costly gifts for everyone. Julian's newly found wealth becomes the origin of the secret anguish for both his sister Carrie, who see in the sudden wealth the loss of Julian's dependence on them, and his young wife Lily, who fears, with an acknowledgement of Julian's crooked dealings, the loss of her husband. Anna is intuitively worried about Julian's welfare due to the secrecy surrounding the money, but is willing to accept the benefits.

However, Hellman intentionally chooses to focus on the female characters. As she later explained, "I can write about men, but I can't write a play that centers on man… I've got to… make it about the women around him, his sisters, his bride, her mother" (*Pentimento* 206). Hellman's highlighting of the four women in the play in relation to the male character leads us to the safe conclusion that Julian is the focus of the women in the play, while the women are the focus of the play itself. The four women form two parallel sets, with Julian's unmarried sisters Carrie and Anna pairing together, and his wife Lily and her mother Albertine forming the other pair. In such a way, each pair consists of an older woman who is rational and capable, and a younger woman who is neurotic and incompetent. Thereby, the two sisters center on their brother Julian in his unmarried state, while the mother-daughter pair is united to Julian within the marriage bond. In both cases, however, Julian functions as a mirror when he reveals contrasting selves before them. Inspected from another angle, the obvious incestuous feelings of Carrie, exposed implicitly by her own excessively fussy manner towards Julian's marital life, and explicitly by Anna's crude censure of relief, is contrasted with Lily's hysterical anxiety of losing Julian and her constant need to be comforted by Albertine. Thus, the two pairs form symmetrical relationships of conflict and power.

The Berniers family is a typical sibling-headed orphaned household, with the elder sister Anna supporting the family as a surrogate parent, the younger sister Carrie providing certain financial continuity to the family dynamics, and their younger brother Julian relying on them repeatedly to extract him from his financial difficulties. Essential to the understanding of the sibling incest are the family contextual factors in that sibling incest, if having unavoidably

occurred, must have occurred within the specific context of a family that did not or could not provide a safe environment for its members. Children like the Berniers, with parental absence, have the maximum likelihood of committing sibling incest because of insufficient parental care and control.

The Berniers brother and sisters have thus formed a sibling-headed family (an uncommon family structure that makes sibling relationships all the more intense), but nonetheless providing the three with longstanding stable interrelationships. The early supportive relationship among the siblings in the parentless atmosphere becomes even more prominent due to the four-year age gaps among the siblings[4]. From an object relations psychoanalytic perspective, the orphan status of the siblings plays a significant as well as diverse role in their individuation. The female siblings' constrained and empowered participation in negotiating a web of familial and social relations redefines their notion of family. The only brother, young Julian, carries the ideological weight of a fatherhood that has long been absent in the Berniers household. The father is never mentioned among the siblings except in reference to his joint tomb with the mother. For her part, the mother is the center of the children's common memory of parental care during childhood, which can be explained as the result of patriarchal baby-nurturing style. The family misfortune that resulted in the death of the parents is not mentioned, but the deficiency of adequate fatherhood memory provides powerful material for psychoanalysis of the personality formation of the siblings. As the house image of the Berniers is symbolically maternal, the family provides the siblings, especially the younger ones, an imbalanced environment of a love object that lacks a paternal image.

Anna, the first born, began to play the role of parental caregiver in the early days of the sibling-headed household, and has been always aware of her duty and burden of being the senior sibling. Her premature abandonment of adolescence to assume the role of surrogate parent has contributes to her self-sacrificing, desexualized maternal-sister image. Her constant regret of and mistrust in Julian's business acumen has always been subdued by her hope for Julian to become a success in life. After Julian's marriage, Anna tries to stay out of his life as much as possible, and this is fully manifested in her sensible and calm reaction to the Europe plan and to Julian's sudden return.

Nonetheless, Anna is isolated from the trio as a nagging, severe and even unloving sibling, a substitute for a dominant mother in the house. Yet, her power of dominance is never in full play, but instead is constantly tested by Carrie. For example, in a scene from Act I, she and Carrie have a conversation in the coat department with Anna's elderly customers. Carrie's indifferent mockery of the old ladies and her neurotic fuss about sexual romance are contrasted to Anna's low-pitched calmness and sensibility, thus establishing a mother-

[4] At the time of the play, Anna is 42, Carrie 38 and Julian 34.

daughter dynamic between the two siblings. Anna is fully aware of Carrie's restlessness over Julian's marriage and her intent to interfere in his life, and this worries her more than the question of Julian's future business success. In fact, her continual need to support her frustrated younger brother has brought Anna to the point of exhaustion, but she resigns herself as best she can. Julian's approaching marriage, which will presumably lead to his independence from the parental/sibling relationship, brings Anna relief, though not necessarily satisfaction.

Anna is fully aware and persistently reminds Carrie that they should not "run after Julian and Lily and intrude on their lives" (Hellman, *Toys* 11). She is even more aware of and frightened by the persistent and even monstrous attachment of Carrie to Julian, and this is her most significant worry. Knowing that her rule as a parent-substitute is her fate, and that her advancing age is also an issue, Anna denies herself any hope of marriage or sexual involvement. Her attachment to Julian is free of any incestuous hint, but she has also sacrificed her prime years taking her mother's two children and raising them as her own. Her final resolution is to leave for Europe by herself.

Carrie, four years younger than Anna and four years older than Julian, is the most entangled among the three siblings, seriously disturbed and traumatized by her childhood. Her psychopathology is an expression of traumatic self-object internalization that is acted out in her present relationships. The abrupt loss of parental love, coupled with the inadequacy of her relationship with her sister, has directed her emotional overreliance on Julian. As Bank explains,

> A young child needs a stable, reliable environment or "object constancy"; a child cannot be totally self-reliant. In our view, a brother or sister close at hand becomes a likely candidate to be what warm and reassuring important external object… The child who can fuse and merge with another person, will feel more whole, more integrated, and less vulnerable to the vagaries of an uncertain world. This blending of aspects of oneself with those of another makes any child feel that he or she is more complete. (31)

The most common psychoanalytic interpretation of this fantastic vision of completeness accomplished by sibling incest suggests that sibling sexual incest is a wish to return to a fantasy of a pre-Oedipal fusion with the mother. Carrie's incestuous tendency results from her taking of Julian as the reassuring external object, and her recognition of this sibling loyalty as her sole way of accomplishing family obligations. Carrie's strongly reminiscent mood, her excessively frequent visits to the parents' cemetery, and her aversion to the family house, are indications of her traumatic complex. Her sense of identity loss in the context of the falling apart of the family explains her anxiety towards Julian's marriage. Her manipulations of Julian's marriage and financial gains express not only her physical desire for Julian, but her emotional attachment to the affiliation-model of the original family that

provides her sense of belonging. Therefore, her incestuous desire is more emotional than sexual.

Carrie's aversion of the family house from early childhood when their parents were still alive, and her assimilating encouragement of Julian into a common antipathy of the house, can be interpreted as a psychologically subconscious attempt to expiate her trauma. In early childhood, she carried the dishes out on the steps with Julian to stop having supper with their parents "in that awful oak tomb" (Hellman, *Toys* 7). Carrie's later habitual visit of her parents' cemetery when she confronts problems and worries, with her symbolic attempt to escape the parental house, depict her paradoxical complex towards her childhood experience and adolescence lacking parental protection, her unaccomplished eagerness for love, and her subsequent feeling of having suffered from infidelity. Feeling herself as being abandoned, Carrie regards the memory of the short-lived familial scene in the house as a constant reminder of her traumatic regret; her spiritual reliance on the comforting effect of lingering on to the cemetery is her resisting approach for remission.

Carrie's exclusion of Anna from her alliance with Julian as victims of family misfortune is due to her regarding of Anna as a mother-substitute who is the successor of family responsibility rather than a passive victim. On the other hand, Anna's maternal responsibility is shared by Carrie when she is old enough to help support the orphaned family, and this in turn complicates Carrie's role in the family. Carrie believes that Anna does not understand her feelings, while Julian is her life-long soul-mate. As Anna has always realized, and eventually points out in her farewell speech to Carrie, the Berniers' sibling relationship is planned by Carrie as a game, like a kinder-party, in which everyone plays his/her role as assigned by the director. This perspective helps us with a convincing interpretation of the play's title "Toys in the Attic" as a childhood game of fantasy. The dramatic basis of Carrie's tacitly dominating role as the organizer of the game is lain early in Act I, when the two sisters recollect childhood memory of having supper on the steps, thereby identifying Carrie as a dominant and fanciful girl.

Lily's destructive innocence seems to be another toy of innocent childhood that highlights the theme of the play. To convey the destructive power of domestic love and cold truth, the two hysterical women in the play, Carrie and Lily, complement each other by intensifying the stifling tension in the house. Modern psychoanalytical methodology seems to have influenced Hellman in her depiction of the hysterics, regarding hysteria not attached to any specific gender, but to specific traumatic experiences. In light of Freud's unequivocal assertion about hysterical symptomatology, established as early as 1888, that a hysteric's life history is the source of hysterical symptomatology, Lily's obvious hysterical disorder, including her psychogenic movement disorder and speech disorder, cannot be ignored as temporary the role of past trauma source for. According to Freud, even if

> …there is a complete analogy between traumatic paralysis and common, non-traumatic hysteria.…In the latter there is seldom a single major event to be signaled, but rather a series of affective impressions—a whole story of suffering…(and) every hysteria can be looked upon as traumatic hysteria in the sense of implying a psychical trauma, and that every hysterical phenomenon is determined by the nature of the trauma. (Breuer and Freud, 34)

With symptoms of hysteria enormously varied, a conclusive definition of the term has never been unanimously accepted, and there are growing "reductions in the number of cases where hysteria can legitimately be diagnosed" (Merskey xi). However, one well-accepted aspect of hysteria is that

> …the greatest fear is being left alone, being abandoned to float about on one's own without contact, without handholds, and without connectedness. In hysteria the feeling of being alone is like not existing at all. (May 78)

Lily's fear of being abandoned by her mother and her husband is most evident in the play as the source of her illusions and her emotional disorder. Her childishness results from her sense of insecurity generated in her relationship with her mother. Lily's memories, some of which are artificially-produced false ones, her "knife of truth," are easily aroused as a weapon of torture. Her religious delusion over "the knife of truth" exchanged by her wedding ring from an old drug-addict, and her self-damaging act of cutting herself with "the knife of truth" to cheat Julian into bed with her as a way to gain a power over him, are convincing symptoms of hysteria. By malingering and self-injury with deliberate imposture, Lily achieves not only attention and care from Julian, but also a sense of satisfaction. Her cheating actions can be further analyzed in the sense as a deliberate imposture involved in hysteria, in which "the imposters have high, unattainable ego ideals and use their imposture as a means of defense against the anxiety associated with feelings of inferiority" (Merskey 100).

Lily's attempted suicide in adolescence further confirms her habitual resort to self injurious behavior as a tool of manipulation.

> LILY. (*To* HENRY.) Leave me alone. I told you that last night. (*Sits bench.*) I told it to you years ago when I rolled down the hill. I meant to roll down the hill and kill myself, but you didn't know it. (Hellman, *Toys* 45)

Lily's attempted suicide represents a motive directed towards life, rather than death, which is typical of a so-called hysterical personality, with "an insatiable urge for love and attention" from close people. This, coupled with hysterical manipulative traits, exploits "the appeal effect of the suicidal act for this purpose" (Stengel 97). Lily's passive-dependent, histrionic and sensitive-aggressive personality can only be comforted and soothed by a securing sense of being needed. The haunting scene of Albertine in bed with Henry and her painful sense of insecurity can be relieved only when Julian is in bed with her. Her indulgence for a sexual

life, her shameless attempt of keeping Julian in her bed, and her declaration of satisfactory sexual experience with Julian, is the means of providing proof of her existence.

The motives of the marriage are mixed and never cleared up in the play, although there is a hint that Julian may have married Lily in return for money from her mother to finance his sister's eye operation, while Albertine may have encouraged her daughter's marriage in order to be left alone with her Negro lover. In Lily's view, her marriage to Julian is never a union of love and trust, but rather a contract of multiple benefits: Julian has married her for money; she has married him for a new trustee replacing her mother; and more importantly, Albertine has planned Lily's marriage for the sake of an undisturbed relationship with Henry.

Hellman's depiction of Lily's hysteria is non-feminist in the sense that hysteria is constructed as a disturbance of femininity in an unflattering way. However, with the depiction of the rationality and immobility of the elder ladies in the play, Hellman's construction of hysteria can be seen as benign toward femininity because it reminds readers of the mutability easily associated with female nature, or the orthodox view that rudimentary hysteria is the temperament of a woman. Moreover, unlike the archetypal visual image of female hysterics as inspected and cued by male viewers and physicians, Lily's hysterical behavior is under inspection of the females in the play, with the only male protagonist, Julian, totally ignorant of her hysterical inclination.

Carrie shares with Lily a hysterical personality and strong desire for control. The confrontation between Lily and Carrie is the climax of the play, which parallels the two neurotic women. In their mutual defiance in Act III, Lily initiates her infuriating inquiry of Carrie's sexual experience with her "girlish confidences," and is finally defeated by Carrie with her deliberate luring Lily to believe that Julian has married her for money urgently needed to pay for Anna's eye operation. Lily's girlish confidence in her sexual attraction and right to Julian, flaunted in front of Carrie, a spinster who she believes to be sexually inferior, collapses at the first blow of Carrie's deliberate narration of their inseparable sibling ties. On hearing Lily's declaration of her marital right as a wife, to "take Julian any way," anywhere she can have him, Carrie plays the trump and totally raptures the initiative by pretending to downplay and expose Julian's longstanding affair with Mrs. Cyrus Warkins. At this moment of power stalemate of mutual destruction, Lily retaliates with a deadly strike against Carrie by scorching Carrie's secrecy of suppressed sexual desire from early adolescence, and more significantly by retelling Julian's ridiculing of Carrie's masturbation experience in childhood. It is this final attack, the last straw that crushes Carrie, which inflames her passion to destroy Julian's marriage and fortune. In a teasing and indifferent manner, Carrie succeeds in persuading Lily to phone Mr. Cyrus to upset Julian's plan with Mrs. Cyrus. The destruction of Mrs. Cyrus, their common enemy, seems to have buried the hatchet between Carrie and Lily. While Lily attacks Julian with her innocence, Carrie is a conscious director of the conspiracy with a manipulating ability foreshadowed in her sibling relationships.

Carrie's incestuous desire for Julian is a subterranean torrent in the play until it abruptly surfaces when Anna exposes it during a quarrel, crying that "you want him and always have. Years ago I used to be frightened and I would watch you and suffer for you" (Hellman, *Toys* 59). Taking the age gaps among the three siblings into consideration, it is easily deduced that Carrie is different from Anna and Julian in having suffered a traumatic change in adolescence. Her experience of being parentless differs from that of Anna, whose fixed position as a substitute parent never vacillates. In her experiencing of the joys and sorrows of adolescent development, Carrie's mutual need for nurturance with Julian provides a breeding ground for her non-interacting incestuous desire without substantial sexual deeds. However, the experience may become traumatic as she develops a sexual identity and a sense of shame. Her masturbation by keeping her "vagina in the icebox," her sexual fantasies, and her sense of shame from incestuous imagination, all contribute to her mounting instinct of pretending sexual modesty. She is trying to keep her life in sexual fantasies, and convince herself that Julian's marriage is an exchange for familial welfare. It is when Anna brutally lays bare her incest secrets, and when Lily aggressively ridicules her unsatisfied sexual desire, that Carrie's pride and self-respect are smashed to pieces. Only by destroying Julian and depriving him of independence may Carrie pacify the storm.

The fear and anxiety of both Carrie and Lily originate from their suffering of "object inconstancy" in their early object relations, and a consequent "separation anxiety," as explained in object-relational psychoanalysis. Separation anxiety is an overwhelming emotion for children before achieving object consistency, which is the ability to carry the image of the important object-love. Early establishment of object- constancy is significant for the development of personhood, demanding early integration of both positive and negative experiences that children have had with the adult to make a whole image of the person, and further requiring a surplus on the side of positive experiences. When object constancy fails to form, separation anxiety will stay permanently in the one's personhood.

> This causes the children to maintain a hyperaroused and hypervigilant state in which they attempt to ensure their own survival. When children spend large amounts of time in this state, they become unable to relax, even when the stressors are not present… they are also likely to lack self and object constancy, trust in adults, the ability to acquire frustration tolerance for age-appropriate challenges, the capacity to connect to and express a range of feeling, the ability to engage in secondary processes such as language and symbolic play, and the ability to feel empathy…Children who have been abused or seriously neglected are often unable to achieve a typical degree of object constancy. (Koplow 12-3)

The description of children with separation anxiety explains the hysterical symptoms of Lily, too. She is tortured by the fear of being abandoned in both her mother-daughter and marital relationships. Her sense of inferiority to Henry, a black lover of her mother, and to Mrs.

Cyrus, the elderly lady Julian once had an affair with and is currently trying to swindle, is a symptom of her "hypervigilant" anxiety of assuring her own existence. Carrie's parents-absent childhood forces her taking of Julian as the reassuring external object to maintain "object constancy," while the awkward and helpless transition into early maternal role in adolescence, and Julian's marriage, hinder her object constancy and worsen her separation anxiety.

Lily's mother, Albertine, shares with the older Anna the same wisdom, insight, reasonability, the courage to face reality, and most significantly, a frustrating coercive maternal responsibility. The awareness of the destructive power of love is another insight that the two women share.

> ALBERTINE. You are a pure girl and I believe you. Now listen: I am going to give you a good-bye present. Try to make use of it: the pure and the innocent sometimes bring harm to themselves and those they love and, when they do, for some reason that I don't know, the injury is very great. (Hellman, *Toys* 76)

The sincere advice of Albertine for Lily voices the latent crisis of love in the play, and the destructive power of love lies in "the knife of truth" that people such as Lily are striving for. Both Anna and Albertine have tried by all manner of means to protect the marriage of Julian and Lily, even by white lies, because wisdom tells them the fatal lethality of innocent truth. When the story stumbles to the starting point at the end of the play, with the three siblings bonding together again, nobody has changed except Julian, whose pride and dignity are shattered. The two older women return to their original states of insistence and endurance; Carrie gains back her pretended tenderness, frailty and vulnerability; Lily, not inspired by her mother's advice with obstinate worship of the power of truth, is doomed in the near future to be expelled from the Berniers circle.

Julian is the most naive victim in the play because of his early sexual affair with an older woman, and also because of his marriage to a child-bride. He is thus a symbolic representation of psychological victimization of a brother in the incestuous sibling relationship. He suffers psychological maltreatment when confronting Carrie's masturbation with a hazy notion of sexuality, a form of incestuous abuse, which attracts him to women much older than he is. His later marriage to the child-like Lily is a compensating behavior to gain sexual self-esteem, as his crazy financial compensation for his sisters to gain his pride. Julian, with his financial failure and latent marital failure apparent by the end of the play, becomes the worst defeated victim in the homosocial alliance of women, whose victimization interestingly forms "a traffic in man," an analogy to "the traffic in women." Julian, whose feelings and needs are ignored, becomes objectified as a possession for trade among the women.

As a boy who lacked a father, Julian may have received adequate compensatory care from his sisters, but is nonetheless denied a father-model in his Oedipal crisis that would normally "enable him to shift in favor of an identification with his father." As Nancy Chodorow illustrates, a boy's gender role identifications process are not continuous with the pre-Oedipal:

> A boy, in order to feel himself adequately masculine, must distinguish and differentiate himself from others in a way that a girl need not—must categorize himself as someone apart. Moreover, he defines masculinity negatively as that which is not feminine and/or connected to women, rather than positively. This is another way boys come to deny and repress relation and connection in the process of growing up. (174)

In this sense, Julian's repression of reliable relations with his sisters is his attempt of achieving his sense of masculinity and self-respect. His disconnection from the sisters is not literally achieved by his marriage, but is affirmed by his economic independence, which worsen the separation anxiety of Carrie.

While Julian's future misfortune is predicted at the end of the play, the two sisters' future life is easily overlooked. Carrie's sexual seduction and desire for Julian, an open secret with the two sisters, is doomed to generate shame, guilt and suffering. Julian's final failure forces Anna back into a life from which she has always tried to escape. She thereby resolves to "watch" Carrie, and "suffer" for her (Hellman, *Toys* 59). Carrie, despite being the short-term winner with her cunning scheme having succeeded, is sure to suffer the most, with deepening dissatisfaction, increasing disillusion, and an unquenchable sense of shame and hatred. Lacking the heroic elements of sibling love as expressed in myth and literature, the sibling intimacy of the Berniers is distinctively emotional, passionate, painful, and stifling.

Conclusion

When we read a Lillian Hellman script such as *Toys in the Attic,* we cannot help but note with admiration her subtle sense of geometrical aesthetics and her balance of intricate geometrical patterns in her depiction of women for a cohesive female identity. Her depiction of the sisters in sibling relationships provides a good illustration of her organic structure. To perpetuate the gratification of the original role developed in its family of origin, such as the one Carrie strives to hold, siblinghood provides a molding ground for one's gender identity.

Carrie achieves with determination her domineering power over the men in the household, but her achievements are never meant to be eternally guaranteed. Instead, Carrie is distained and rejected by her elder sister, and thus must guard her fragile fruits of victory. She is faced with a doomed disillusionment in a society that judges her badly, and ultimately she pays the price in the loss of her reputation as a devoted sister. But the vulnerability of Carrie in her sibling relationships, although competitive and incestuous, ultimately affirms

the constrained situations faced by women in family life. Carrie's scheming sabotage against her brother's enrichment and marriage, a metaphorical house of confinement for the male body, is a countermeasure for her own entrapment. It is by scrutinizing the status of women as depicted in *Toys in the Attic*, that Hellman has taken imprisonment as a foundational nature of female existence in family life.

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