

**VERACITY, TENACITY AND MASTERY OF LEADING  
WOMEN CHARACTERS IN WORKS BY PAUL GREEN,  
LILLIAN HELLMAN AND TENNESSEE WILLIAMS**

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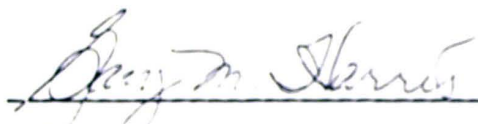
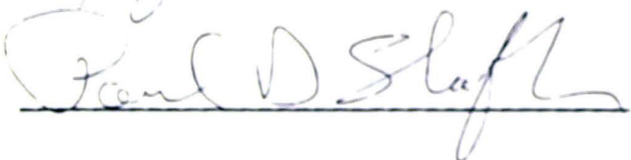
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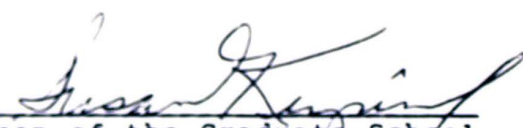
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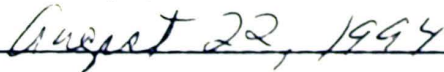
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VERACITY, TENACITY AND MASTERY OF LEADING  
WOMEN CHARACTERS IN WORKS BY PAUL GREEN,  
LILLIAN HELLMAN AND TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

A Thesis  
Presented for the  
Master of Arts  
Degree  
Austin Peay State University

Robert H. Wilds

August 1994



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my major professor, Dr. Joe Filippo for his guidance, patience and friendship and the other committee members, Dr. Paul Shaffer and Gary Harris for their considerable help during my stay at Austin Peay State University. I would also like to thank Dr. Ellen Kanervo for insisting that a dog is never too old to learn to use a word processor, my wife, Sherry, for teaching me how and my daughter, Elizabeth, for giving me time to use one.

## ABSTRACT

This research examines a major woman character in one work by each of three major Southern playwrights. The purpose of this study is to find and analyze examples of the characteristics of veracity, tenacity and mastery as exhibited by Patsy Tate in Paul Green's The House of Connelly, Regina Giddens in Lillian Hellman's The Little Foxes and Amanda Wingfield in Tennessee William's The Glass Menagerie. The texts of each of these plays were examined to find examples of each of the aforementioned characteristics. The characteristics also were put into context by an examination of the biographical backgrounds of each writer as well as the Myth of The Woman which began in the American South prior to the Civil War and which continues to the present.

It was concluded that characteristics which have been construed as negative may be considered as positive traits when situations in the play are viewed from the character's perspective. The traits of veracity, tenacity and mastery result in attempts by these characters to better themselves or their families.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This Southern Woman . . . merely to mention her name was to send strong men to tears or shouts. At the last, I verily believe, the ranks of the Confederacy went rolling into battle in the misty conviction that it was wholly for her that they fought. (Cash, 1941, p. 86)

The character of the Southern woman has become well known in American literature. Who cannot name some of the characteristics that might be assigned to one of these famous characters--the tenacity of Carrie Watts in Horton Foote's The Trip To Bountiful, the single-minded purposefulness of Carnelle in Beth Henley's The Miss Firecracker Pageant or the sensuous vitality of Maggie in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof by Tennessee Williams? Indeed, Robert Harling has written a play populated with Southern women characters and has given it the title by which their real-life counterparts have long been known, Steel Magnolias.

The purpose of this study is to examine three types of personality traits found in Southern women characters: mastery, tenacity and veracity. In order to accomplish this, one character from one play by each of three renowned Southern playwrights will be analyzed. Those included in

this study are: Patsy Tate in The House of Connelly by Paul Green, Regina Giddens of The Little Foxes by Lillian Hellman and Amanda Wingfield from Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie.

To facilitate clarity of analysis, three key terms need to be defined. Mastery, for the purposes of this study, is the ability to assess a situation and take control, to keep that which is cherished--the family, a plantation, personal hopes and goals together when others are not able to do so or may be in active opposition.

The second term, tenacity, is the willingness to endure hardship, discouragement and defeat until a successful end is achieved. It may also be construed as the ability to re-cast an unfavorable outcome so that it can be viewed in a more favorable light by the character herself.

The third and final term, veracity, simply means telling the truth. Whose truth is to be told, however, often complicates this characteristic. Moreover, the truth can remain unspoken altogether. Veracity may then become the ability of a character to assess herself, or her brother or husband, analyze weaknesses and strengths and use them to gain the desired advantage or result.

The Southern woman has been the subject of many studies and much research. Although some of the characteristics defined in this reasearch are easily seen by scholars and casual readers, they are sometimes difficult

for researchers to quantify. As Richard King (1980) explains in his work, A Southern Renaissance, the Southern family romance is never expressed in a literary way but has to be found between the lines of Southern literature. The woman, King notes, is caught in a double bind in these novels about Southern life since she must remain meek and submissive to the men around her; yet, in her duties as mistress of the house and mother to her children she must display "...competence, initiative and energy. But she remains a shadowy figure, always there and necessary, but rarely emerging in full force" (p. 35).

The idea of the fictional Southern woman as a surreptitious but certain power is noted by many scholars, among them Mary P. Ryan (1982), who wrote in The Empire of The Mother, "The white heroine (in novels written between 1830 and 1860) was submissive, meek and self-sacrificing, armed only with loving smiles and gentle persuasion. These weapons were sufficient, however, to direct husbands along the path of virtue" (p. 134).

Long before the mythical Southern husband had begun to be manipulated by his unassuming, yet powerful wife, heroines themselves had been divided into groups by storytellers. So-called local colorists drew a distinction between upper class and plain folk characters (Skaggs 1972). The upper class heroine developed into what has come to be known through fiction as the Southern Belle, who has been



described as "...the young, unmarried daughter of a landed family...She is exuberant, a bit vain and rather naive" (Seidel, 1985, p. 3).

The Southern Belle best known to people around the world is Scarlett O'Hara from Margaret Mitchell's Gone With The Wind. In this fiery, triumphant character are embodied all the traits that make the Southern woman such an intriguing fictional character. As Pat Browne (1970) noted in Heroines of Popular Culture:

Scarlett succeeds by virtue of her willingness to play according to rules established by men--and she is not above bending those rules with her considerable feminine charm and wiles to her own advantage. Scarlett is a paradox, for she can only survive by working and thinking like a man, yet as a woman she is acutely aware of the importance of maintaining social approval and avoiding censure. With such conflicting emotions, to survive foremost, to succeed and to appear the ever refined Southern Belle, Scarlett becomes the quintessential American heroine: she can reconcile her paradoxical desires and she grows in the process.

(p. 120)

This tact that Scarlett takes, to remain on the surface the soft Southern Belle while working behind the scenes to control her fate is the same method used by Southern women

real and fictional. Reconciling the need to compete with men and yet retain her honored place in society remains central to the Southern heroine even as the character has changed over the decades. The Belle is a symbol of the South itself, as Kathryn Lee Seidel (1985) points out in The Southern Belle in the American Novel, "Early on, writers saw the belle as their ideal South, pure and noble. More self-conscious and critical modern Southern writers use the darker side of the belle to indict the Old South or to describe the new" (xiv).

It is into this darker side that modern playwrights of both comedy and drama delve. For example, Amanda in Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie, the prototype of all his Southern women characters, is a failed Southern Belle herself. She faces the same types of challenges as does Scarlett O'Hara, but is unable to overcome them because Amanda lives in a world that no longer recognizes the values she holds dear. Her attempts to hold onto a past of gentility may be covered with the veneer of a gentlewoman's refinement, but underneath, as Signi Lenea Falk (1961) notes in Tennessee Williams, "seems to go a kind of prissy affectation that is sometimes only a mask for a passionate but frustrated nature" (p. 71). In the belles of earlier fiction, this frustration might have been turned to good works or, at least, to attempts to remedy the situation through manipulation of those in power, but to a failed

Belle such as Amanda, frustration leads only to escape by withdrawal from reality (Davis 1977).

Southern women characters in modern comedy also may turn away from or, at least, warp reality through their quirkiness. The three sisters in Beth Henley's Crimes of the Heart, for example, retain some of the outward mannerisms of the Belles of earlier fiction but are, as reviewer Richard Corliss (1992) noted, composed of "sugar and spice and every known vice" (p. 80). The vices Corliss refers to range from assault to promiscuity, yet through them all these sisters retain at least one characteristic exhibited by Belles since their creation in the minds of writers, loyalty to their family (Simon 1981).

This loyalty may have forced the mythical Belle to remain in the background but in story after story it also forced her to find the strength to use her powers to save her family. As Lucinda H. MacKethan (1990) writes in Daughters of Time, "How could a person brought up to be soft and yielding, warm and self sacrificing dare to intrude herself on the public mind? How could she presume? Yet strategies of presumption could be, had to be, found" (p. 5).

The strategies that women found have been studied in various ways, by authors such as Will Brantley (1993) in his work Feminine Sense in Southern Memory, which provides biographical information on Lillian Hellman, but no



discussion of the other authors who are the focus of this work. Elizabeth Jane Harrison (1991) studies female authors in her work Female Pastoral, but provides no examination of the work of Lillian Hellman. Southern women themselves are examined in works as diverse as The Southern Belle in the American Novel by Kathryn Lee Seidel (1985), to New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin compiled by Jean Fagin Yellin (1986) in which new light is shed on women's role in the anti-slavery movement; neither, however, deals with the characters which are the focus of this research.

Southern family life is chronicled in several different studies and is included in a collection of short stories titled Homecoming--The Southern Family in Short Fiction (1990) which introduces works by various Southern authors. Jay Hubbell (1960) examines characters in novels in his work Southern Life in Fiction and the fantasy of domestic life as portrayed in fiction between 1630 and 1860 is covered in Annette Kolodny's The Land Before Her (1984). Mary Kelley (1984) has studied the portrayal of American domestic life on the nineteenth century stage in her work Private Woman, Public Stage.

The American South itself is the subject of many studies. Among those that examine fictional characters in works about the region are Michael Kreyling's Figures of the Hero in Southern Narrative (1987), which, along with Writing the South, Ideas of an American Region by Richard Gray

(1986), do not contain any plays among the works in this study. The same is true for Edward D.C. Campbell's The Celluloid South (1981), which examines Southern characters as portrayed on film, and A Collection of Classic Southern Humor by George William Koon (1986) which includes examples of humor by Southern writers but provides only limited analysis of each work.

Scholars also have put the characters of the American South into historical context, outlining the role of the woman on the farm in The Rise and Fall of the Plantation South by Raimondo Luraghi (1978) and studying contemporary works in Nineteenth Century Southern Literature by J.V. Ridgely (1980). Neither of these works discusses the authors of the works that are the subject of this research.

On the other hand, Media-Made Dixie by Jack Temple Kirby (1978) does examine Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie as part of a study that runs from early film director D.W. Griffith's Birth of a Nation to Erskine Caldwell's Tobacco Road to television shows such as Andy Griffith and The Waltons. Kirby does mention the character of Amanda as one who lived in a past that may or may not have ever. His work, however, does not mention either Paul Green or Lillian Hellman or their works The House of Connelly and The Little Foxes.

The History of Southern Literature edited by Louis Rubin (1985) analyzes all three playwrights and the plays

that are the subject of this research in an essay on modern Southern drama. Green, Hellman and Williams, moreover, are all listed as being of major importance and The House of Connelly, The Little Foxes and The Glass Menagerie are included among their works. Mr. Rubin's analysis does not include the characters of Patsy Tate, Regina Giddens and Amanda Wingfield or of the character traits they manifest throughout their respective plays.

The many works cited above have examined and categorized Southern women both real and fictional in various ways, but will not be a source of examination in this study. Rather, this work will be restricted to an investigation of mastery, tenacity and veracity by Southern women characters in the three groundbreaking Southern plays already cited.

This research will involve a detailed analysis of the myth of Southern womanhood which underlies types of characters discussed above and in the remaining chapters of this work. Once the historical groundwork is laid, the lives and influences on playwrights Paul Green, Lillian Hellman and Tennessee Williams will be examined. Then, a detailed examination will be made of the characters Patsy Tate from Green's The House of Connelly, Regina Giddens from Hellman's The Little Foxes and Amanda Wingfield from The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams, to determine from the dialogue they speak, the dialogue spoken about them by



characters precisely how, when and where these women exhibit mastery, tenacity and veracity in their respective plays.

## Chapter 2: The Myth

Woman!! The center and circumference, diameter and periphery, sine, tangent and secant of all our affections.

--A toast at Georgia's Centennial  
Celebration, 1830  
(Cash, 1941, p. 87)

The view of Southern women in literature is wrapped in layers of myth about the South itself. The myth of the Old South is among the most appealing to writers and, as one historian notes, "the minute investigations of historians, the political scientists and even sociologists have not succeeded in destroying it or even seriously modifying it" (Gerster, 1974, p. 113).

What is included in this myth? Scholars have found it difficult to express in any consistent theoretical or literary way. Some suggest that it must be found between the lines of Southern literature since the myth constitutes "values, attitudes and beliefs that White Southerners expressed in their attitudes toward the region itself, the family, the relationship between the races and sexes and between the elite and the masses" (King, 1980, p. 27).

Historians, however, can trace some of the origins of the myth and have determined that by the 1830's, influenced by European Romanticism, the Southern cult of chivalry had

developed and, by 1850, several subcults had emerged including enthusiasm for manners, women and military affairs (Osterweiss 1949).

Followers of the cult of chivalry idealized women. Southern women were admonished to be simple and unaffected, pure in speech and gracious as the kind of woman envisioned in a poem of the day:

A perfect woman, nobly planned,  
to warm, to comfort and command,  
and yet a spirit still and bright,  
with something of angelic light.

(Hundley, 1979, p. 72)

This poem mentions the Southern woman's ability to command, which is what many of them were expected to do in the largely agrarian South of pre-Civil War days. With plantations isolated from each other the family became the center of life. Moreover, there developed an unusually intense affection and respect for the women of the family "upon whose activities the comfort and well-being of everybody greatly depended" (Cash, 1941, p. 85).

If this was not enough, the lady of the house was often required to work like a field hand. She was asked to be mother, nurse, administrator and hostess while fulfilling the most difficult of all roles "that of beautiful, innocent, incapable and devoted wife, the exemplar of all virtues and forgiver of all vices" (Carter, 1950, p. 69).

These virtues were used as ammunition in the war of

words that preceded the start of hostilities in the Civil War. Propagandists used the ideal of the Southern woman to contrast what they saw as the relative merits of life in the North and South and of slavery versus abolition. Southern women were portrayed as kind and moral in contrast to the image of women active in the abolitionist movement in the North (Smith 1985). Southern sociologists attempted to demonstrate what they viewed as the false position of women in the North as contrasted with the place of honor their sisters held in Southern society. One wrote,

So long as...(woman) is nervous, fickle, capricious, delicate, different and dependent, man will worship and adore her...we would infinitely prefer to nurse a sickly woman to being led about by a masculine blue stocking.

(Fitzhugh, 1854, p. 220)

The ideal of the Southern woman, therefore, served as welcome fuel for advantage seekers.

Scholars were quick to point out as well the position of honor that such women wielded by remaining delicate, different and dependent. It was not only to the woman's advantage, authors wrote, to remain in their assigned roles, it was also their duty to remain out of the worldly places reserved for men,

For since to the family belongs the education and gradual elevation of the race, it is most important that mothers should be pure, peaceable,



gentle, long-suffering and godly--which they can never be if permitted or inclined to enter the lists and compete with selfish and lustful man for the prizes of place and public emolument.

(Hundley, 1860, p. 74)

Thus, the idea was put transmitted to the Southern woman that it was upon her calming influence that the existence of civilization itself depended.

Reinforcement of the idea that women should remain above the everyday struggles of life even came from Southern pulpits. Moves that women might make for independence had to be made discreetly or even deviously, because only men were given the option of speaking their minds freely and openly (Wyatt-Brown 1982).

Southern husbands, moreover, could be formidable, so women often were required to speak their minds in the manner of Mrs. John C. Breckenridge, wife of the Confederate general, who approached her husband on a matter of military business by saying, "I have no right to say anything except privately and as you advocate free speech I may venture an opinion" (Wyatt-Brown, 1982, p. 249).

By the same token, Southern women who were forced to speak and act circumspectly often became adept at using the considerable power they maintained over their husbands. As essayist Hodding Carter (1950) notes,

Behind their drawing room manners and  
engaging adoration, these women were a

tough breed. So were their daughters and so are their granddaughters; and what I am most awed by is their ability to make their menfolk think otherwise (p. 69).

So, even with limits on their ability to speak and act publicly, the ability these women had to achieve the results they wanted was enormous.

The Civil War provided a test for the myth of the Southern woman. The destruction it brought resulted in an even higher premium on the values of stoicism and inner strength. Women were expected to nurture a capacity to bear burdens with grace, courage and silence. Thus, to appear poised, forebearing and hopeful, especially when things went wrong, was to please friends and relations. In fact, it signified inner stamina (Wyatt-Brown 1982).

While men of the South marched off to war, Southern women, for the most part, faced the horror of war at home. So, to the duties of mother and manager were added the responsibilities of survival itself. Stories of sacrifice during the war years only helped to reinforce the myth, as Hodding Carter (1950) explains,

"...out of those harrowing years of the Southern ordeal the artificiality of the past was reinforced by a true chivalry of sorrow, by affection and respect of man for grieving woman and woman for broken man" (p. 69).

Men and women who had shared the horror of war at the front

and at home could now share respect.

The defeat of the South made reliance on myths even more important, for the region was haunted by specters of defeat, shame and guilt. The myths were important as morale boosters and to justify the South in the eyes of the world. Much of the history of the time reflects efforts to achieve that justification through romantic fiction (Cash 1941).

The idea of feminine courage and honor found expression in legends of heroism in Civil War recollections and novels and in the memories of those who went away to fight the war. One veteran, H.M. Hamill (1913), spoke to students at Emory College in Atlanta in 1904:

War grew firm and fierce and relentless.

There were hunger and wounds, pale faces in hospital and sharp death of many at the front and sleeplessness and heartache and holy privation and unfailing courage and comfort of Southern Womanhood at home. (p. 7)

The legend of the unfailingly loyal Southern woman grew ever greater as the war became romanticized with the passage of time.

As the war brought privation, reconstruction brought different challenges. Some essayists who still cling to the idea of the Old South write that for a Southern woman who had surrendered family and freedom, reconstruction was no more possible than physical resurrection of thousands of slain Confederate dead (Weaver 1968). Others, however,



advance the idea that Southern women were the prime forces behind reconstruction. Hodding Carter (1950) notes that

The true reconstruction of the South was accomplished by the wife and mother in the desolate home and not by force of bills and constitutional amendments. And if the ultimate horror should descend upon us all there will surely be heard at its end, somewhere in the radioactive wilderness of the survivors...a voice saying with unmistakeable inflection and unchanging purpose...Honey, I've found some nice bricks for the chimney. but it'll take a strong man like you to stack them up, cause I'm just so helpless (p. 78).

Even during what was, for the people of the South at the time, an apocalypse, The Southern woman was required to look to rebuilding for the future.

The force of will of the Southern woman which Carter (1950) credits with spurring reconstruction came in spite of an even greater constraint on her ability to show her competence to the world at large. While the Civil War had made Southern women more self-reliant, reconstruction made it even more imperative that they hide that self reliance behind a mask of femininity in order to bolster the sagging self respect of returning Confederate veterans. In addition, women were forced to compete among themselves for



the men which they now greatly outnumbered. Coquetry, charm and the ability to attract became practical necessities for women who sought a mate.

There was also a conflict between the sexes which had to be overcome by feminine wiles. There were, in many instances, reports of tensions in the Southern family which demanded that the male be all-knowing and powerful and that the woman, particularly if she were more capable of performing traditionally male functions, to keep quiet about it. Diarist Mary Chestnut wrote at the time, "It is the habit of all men to fancy that in some inscrutable way their wives are the cause of all the evil in their lives" (Wyatt-Brown, 1982, p. 249). Men who understand this intrusion by their wives into traditionally masculine roles may begin to resent the women who save them. This resentment is seen in the plays which are the focus of this study.

The ideal of feminine courage and honor almost parallels that of men in the South under similar circumstances of war and reconstruction and it finds expression in recollections and novels. Subsequently, other forms of Southern literature, notably the play, manifest the same idea (Wyatt-Brown, 1982).

Use of the theatre to express the myth of Southern womanhood was to be expected in light of the state of literature of and about the South during the days after the Civil War. This state of mind was examined by a group of

southern writers during the 1930's. Known as The Agrarians, they noted, in part, "The Southern mind...was personal and dramatic rather than abstract and metaphysical; and it was sensuous because it lived close to a natural scene of great variety and interest" (I'll Take My Stand, 1930, p. 171).

There are few dramatic minds that match those of Paul Green, Lillian Hellman and Tennessee Williams whose works The House of Connelly, The Little Foxes and The Glass Menagerie live "close to a natural scene of great variety and interest" (I'll Take My Stand, 1930, p. 171). The dramas of these great writers were influenced by their backgrounds and the myths that surrounded their homeplaces, the subject of Chapter Three of this study.

### Chapter 3: The Authors

The people of the South are what I know and love best, and I have written as well as I can. The rest is for the actor and the reader.  
(Green, 1939, xii)

Paul Green can be counted as one of the South's most important modern playwrights. Much of his later success came in his so-called Symphonic Dramas such as The Lost Colony and The Wilderness Road which have become guides for succeeding outdoor dramas to follow (Gassner, 1931). When he began his career in the 1930's, he was hailed as a master of finding and describing the varied characteristics of his home region.

Paul Green was born near Lillington, North Carolina on March 17, 1894. The son of a farmer, he was a champion cotton picker and baseball player before he entered The University of North Carolina to earn bachelor's and master's degrees. He took further graduate study at Cornell before returning to Chapel Hill to teach philosophy and theatre. His ancestry, upbringing and early experiences, particularly among Black families who lived nearby and with whom he freely interacted, prepared him well to deal with the contemporary scene in the South (Lazenby 1970).

Green's play, The House of Connelly, deals with a

decaying family that must depend for salvation on the marriage of its eldest son to a determined, hard working tenant farm girl. The marriage results in the death of the old family and the beginning of a new, stronger one with fewer ties to the past. The use of the play to underscore what was actually happening in the South at the time was not lost on the critics. One such critic, Joseph Wood Krutch, (1931) wrote in The Nation:

Here is a civilization which is dying and should die; a civilization which was founded upon arrogant privilege and which revealed its rottenness through shameful, illegitimate misalliances which it commonly tolerated. But it was a civilization which had its elements of beauty as well as its pride and its fortitude and Mr. Green makes us feel all these things (p. 408).

Both the beauty of the Old South and the ugliness of the system that supported it are part of Green's play.

The very title of the play, in Green's mind, served as a metaphor for what was happening to the South of his youth. In fact, he relates the story of how the germ of the idea for The House of Connelly came to him after he visited an old woman sitting on the porch of a decaying home. The woman first attracted Green's (1963) attention when he noticed a large sore on her face:



I came away impressed with this old house representing a certain type of Southern architecture and this old lady sitting in the gloom-filled hall with a sore on her face symbolic of a sick region. And, driving away I decided I'd write a play about the Old South . . . and I thought well, I'll write this play, and I'll have a by-line on it called 'The Lady With the Sore on Her Face.' That shows how bitter my thinking about the Old South was and my rebelliousness. (p. 42, 43)

Though The House of Connelly was not subtitled to honor the lady with the cancerous face, Green's anger toward his home region is evident in his use of two sets of characters to represent the Old South.

The first is comprised of Big Sis and Big Sue, two Black women who act in the manner of a Greek chorus throughout the play. In the ending Green originally wrote for his work, these women literally strangle the master's new wife to keep her from upsetting the balance of power on the plantation.

The second pair of women who represent the ways of the Old South are Geraldine and Evelyn, sisters to the young master of the house, who eventually leave the only home they have known throughout their lives rather than continue to live in a house that soon will be dominated by a new sister-in-law who comes from a lower class. While Big Sis and Big Sue represent the virulence of a society that is

unwilling to change, Evelyn and Geraldine represent that part of society that is unable to adapt. Their characteristics are typical of the ladies of their class who Paul Green must have known. As a critic for The New Republic noted after viewing the opening night performance on October 14, 1931:

Sometimes a detail though tiny is so startlingly Southern that none but a Southerner could savor its exactness. I will take but one instance, that where the older sisters, speaking of how they had tried to do their part by their brother and of their many efforts say, 'we talked to him.' You must be born in the midst of Southern training where young ladies are taught what is their duty toward the men in their family...if you are to know how perfect that touch remains. (p. 235)

The reviewer understood the idea transmitted to all Southern women of Evelyn's and Geraldine's class that they must not make demands upon the men of the family. That idea is so embedded that they are unwilling to take action against their new sister-in-law, Patsy Tate, even though it means loss of their position. Patsy, on the other hand, is more interested in making a new and better life for herself and her family than in preserving the now-fading traditions which bind the Connellys. Patsy is representative of The New South which Green saw rising from the destruction of the

Civil War. This study focuses on the mastery, tenacity and veracity Patsy shows in attempting to force changes and, by so doing, create a better position for herself.

The second author whose work is included in this study not only wrote about Southern women of strong character, she was one. Lillian Hellman was born in New Orleans on June 20, 1905 but moved with her family to New York in 1912. During her youth, six months each year were spent in New York and six months in New Orleans in a boarding house run by two aunts (Falk, 1978). These women had a profound effect on young Lillian, as she explained later in her book An Unfinished Woman (1969):

I think I learned to laugh in that house and to knit and embroider and sew a straight seam and to cook . . . how to kill a chicken without ladylike complaint about the horror of dealing death.  
 . . . I was taught, also, that if you gave, you did it without pity and didn't boast about it  
 (p. 17, 18).

The self-effacing strength of the Southern woman is a trait Hellman would carry with her throughout her career.

One aunt in particular, Jenny, may have taught young Lillian not to suffer fools gladly. Jenny is described as a large, heavy woman with a volcanic temper who had little use for people outside her family, particularly, as one writer puts it, the boarders in her house " . . . whom she openly ridiculed with a brand of teasing that sometimes cut



cruelly" (Wright, 1986, p. 24). In fact, Hellman herself notes years later that, "I loved and admired Jenny and saw things too much through her eyes" (Wright, 1986, p. 25).

When Hellman's eyes focused on the idea of a play about a Southern family, they focused on one dominating woman as well as another who embodies some archetypical elements of the woman of the Old South who knows her place and keeps her emotions to herself. In addition to these two characters, Regina and Birdie, there is a young girl, the daughter of the domineering mother, whose strength is finally proven at the end of the play.

The woman character around whom the action of the play revolves is Regina Giddens, sister to the pungently corrupt Hubbard clan. According to Hellman biographer Richard Moody (1972), Regina is "...a magnificent embodiment of evil: cold, hard, determined and beautiful, larger than life but grounded to the life that made her" (p. 104). More than a match for her conniving kin, Regina stops at nothing to obtain for herself the kind of life she wants. She is almost masculine in her drive for power or might have been considered so before the Women's Liberation Movement. Today, she would probably be thought of, as was Lady MacBeth, as unsexed (Lederer 1979).

Some of Regina's drive may reflect parts of Lillian Hellman's life. She lived part of the time in the South but always felt the pressure to succeed when she returned to the North. Having been brought up to be a lady, but with a



desire to climb trees and fish and hunt, Hellman eventually would have to reconcile femininity and aggression in her own consciousness (Falk, 1978).

Far less aggressive and therefore consigned to an unfulfilled life is the character of Birdie Hubbard, Regina's sister-in-law. Birdie defers completely to her husband's wishes and then drinks to excess to cover her unhappiness. This character, biographers note, Hellman wrote from experience modeling the gentle, helpless Birdie on her own mother (Falk, 1978).

Moreover, there is the character of Alexandra Giddens, Regina's daughter. She suspects Regina stood by and watched her father die, she has seen her mother's sibling conflict that threatens to tear the Hubbard clan apart. When the play finally ends we are left with the question, what sort of girl is Alexandra? Will she leave the family or stay and become like her mother?

In the text of the play, Hellman has Alexandra say she will leave. Even so, Hellman informed interviewers in 1965 that she did not intend Alexandra's leaving as a repudiation by her of the Hubbard clan, "She did have courage enough to leave but she would never have the force or vigor of her mother's family" (Phillips & Hollander, 1965, p. 45).

Still, Alexandra does exhibit the characteristic that embodies strength, according to Hellman herself. It is a characteristic that the playwright and her creation Regina also share, the ability to make up your own mind. "That's

the only thing it (strength) is--to take nobody's word and think for yourself," Hellman says (Berger, 1981, p. 10).

The mother of author Tennessee Williams apparently thought for herself and tried to think for her son for much of his life as well. "I am not Amanda," said Edwina Dakin Williams (Williams, 1963, p. 149), speaking of the character Amanda Wingfield in her son's classic The Glass Menagerie. The playwright himself acknowledged that the work was autobiographical, and other members of his family, notably his brother Dakin, say the events of the play are "a virtual literal rendering of our family life at 6254 Enright Avenue, St. Louis" (Spoto, 1978, p. 114). Tennessee Williams (1972) wrote of the first meeting between his mother and Laurette Taylor, the actress who was portraying Amanda in the original staging of the play. Mrs. Williams came backstage at the Chicago theatre where the play was being presented and was greeted by Taylor saying: "Well, Mrs. Williams, how do you like yourself?" (p. 85).

Edwina Dakin Williams was said by some writers to embody " . . . the genteel sensitivity, a love of the beautiful and, above all else, decorum" (Prenshaw, 1977, p. 7). However, Tennessee Williams (1972) seemed to have a different view of the woman on which he modeled Amanda. He once described her as marching into his hospital room like "a little Prussian officer in drag" (p. 219). He also noted that "Mother always did what she thought was right and she

has always given herself due credit for it even though what she did was all but fatally wrong" (p. 85). He once confided to a friend that he could stand his mother for only fifteen minutes at a time "then I have to flee" (Spoto, 1987, p. 346). His friend Laura Freeman understood:

Edwina infantilized everyone. It was clear there was a terrible rage in Tennessee against her . . . Edwina was a great woman and a terrifying woman and every woman she saw was in competition with her in the lives of her children. She was the dominant Southern Belle (Spoto, 1978, p. 346).

Her domination was so complete that Williams was said to feel as though a great burden had been lifted from him when Edwina finally died (Spoto 1978).

Williams (1972) was born among Southern Belles like his mother at Columbus, Mississippi on March 26, 1911. He was greatly influenced by his maternal grandmother whom he called one of the living Roses of his life, the other being his sister Rose. The place where he was born also helped shape his writings. Williams believed there was "a greater sense of honor and decency" (Williams, 1963, p. 213) in the South than in other sections of the country, and he resisted the idea that his characters were particularly evil or degenerate simply because they came from the South:

I assure you that the South is the country of my heart as well as my birth. If I were writing about Yankees, I promise you I would find every bit as



much 'damnation among them--and not as much charm...I don't think of my little people as damned...not as long as they keep courage and gallantry. These are important and very Southern qualities bred in the bones of the people I wrote about such as Amanda Wingfield.

(Williams, 1963, p. 213).

Amanda may be courageous and gallant to some but others have found a darker side to her.

Because Amanda refuses to face reality, some critics believe she has consigned her children, Tom and Laura, to a similar fate (Davis 1977). Tom must eventually escape "not only from the shoe warehouse but from Amanda's demands which tie him to it (Weales, 1965, p. 25)". Amanda, who is the prototype of all of Williams' Southern women, brings "to the play a sense of a world that, like herself, has long since faded (Boxill, 1987, p. 63)." It is a world that, as Jeanne McGlinn (1977) writes,

...represents a time when men were chivalrous and women were respected, admired and pampered.

Amanda affects the pose of superiority granted by this code to women, along with the flirtatiousness of the genteel lady who could attract and allure, giving a man hopes of reward without committing herself (McGlinn, 1977, p. 512).



Amanda's insistence on living in a world that is now as broken as Laura's glass unicorn is the only way she knows to cope with the real world that seems to be closing in on her.

The characters crafted by Green, Hellman and Williams and discussed above all spring from Southern roots planted in the soil of the myth of Southern womanhood. The next chapter of this study begins the examination of how Patsy, Regina and Amanda use mastery, tenacity and veracity to survive and succeed.

#### Chapter 4: Patsy Tate

Big Sis: White trash make merry 'cause  
her got him at last.

Big Sue: Yeh, she got everything. Got  
Mr. Will, got the House of Connelly,  
got all.

(Green, 1930, p. 207).

Paul Green's work, The House of Connelly, revolves around the fortunes of the Connelly family. Once proud owners of a prosperous plantation, they are now facing financial ruin due in large part to the weaknesses of the Connelly men who are unable or unwilling to force their tenant farmers to work efficiently. The patriarch of the family is dead and leadership has fallen to his son, Will, who is forced to try to make a success of the plantation for the sake of his mother, uncle and two sisters. A marriage to a wealthy society Belle is viewed by his family as one sure way Will can save the family home and tradition.

Will resists this marriage and is drawn instead to the daughter of one of his tenants, Patsy Tate. Patsy possesses the characteristics of strength and determination that Will lacks and, through a series of maneuvers, she convinces Will to marry her. Will's addled uncle commits suicide and his two sisters leave the plantation rather than live with Patsy

as mistress of the house. As one sister says: "He knows he's choosing between us. He chooses her" (Green, 1930, p. 206).

Critic John Gassner (1930) noted the obvious imagery provided by the play's two main characters, Will Connelly and Patsy Tate. Gassner writes in the preface to the acting edition of the play that the two are "representative of two opposing social classes drawing to a close at the end of the 19th Century" and that the play itself "interprets a struggle between the old and new South--the old South of culture and lost causes, and the new South of the bourgeoisie and a future filled with hopes" (Green, 1930, p. 170).

In Green's original ending, the malevolent spirits of the Old South in the persons of two Black servants smothered Patsy. Green (1963) explains that, "The young woman, who represents a new kind of life trying to be born in the old, decadent South, was strangled by two old jealous Negro household servitors" (p. 48). Despite Green's explanation, the original producers of the play, The Group Theatre, demanded a happier ending and so prevailed on Green to write an alternative in which Patsy and Will face down the Negro servants and then face the future together. As Patsy says, "We have our life to live and we'll fight it to the end. Nothing shall take it away from us" (Green, 1930, p. 215).

The new ending may have pleased the young actors of The

Group, but it did not make the playwright happy. As Green biographer Vincent Kenney (1971) explains:

The shift to a happy ending was forced upon him by the 'yea-saying' group who manipulated art for social ends; by a coterie, he said, who saw in the play only a socialist affirmation. The original ending became his final choice, one right out of life, in which Patsy is the symbol of the 'creative processes of life and the brave optimism of youth for a new day,' but she is killed on her wedding night by the Black executioners, 'the Goddesses of the Southern hearth, protectors of the old way of life and enemies to the new' (p. 32-33).

Patsy's death speaks to the struggle of a New South; an ending that allows her to live and prosper speaks only to a false idea of a utopian society, according to Green. During the course of the play, Patsy exhibits all of the characteristics of the Southern woman that are the focal points of this study: veracity, tenacity and mastery. This examination begins with passages indicating her veracity.

### Veracity

Almost from the beginning of the play, it is obvious that Patsy has her eyes open and is taking the true measure



of the Connelly home as well as the Connelly family. Her interest is noted by the two Black women who will eventually come into conflict with her:

Big Sue: That new tenant gal picking old  
pokeberries. Unh-unh, sees us.

Big Sis: Do that. Been moved on this plantation  
three weeks and sees everything.

(Green, 1930, p. 174).

Though Big Sis and Big Sue may view Patsy's vision as a threat to them, primarily because she has seen them shirking their duties on the farm, it quickly becomes clear that Patsy's vision is not limited to actual events.

Patsy makes her wishes known, even if at times they can only be implied. When she and her father speak about the state of the Connelly plantation, Patsy begins to reveal her vision for the place:

Tate: . . . I knew the Connelly farm when I  
lived in this neighborhood as a boy. I  
wished you could have seen it then.

Patsy: I do.

(Green, 1930, p. 177).

Patsy is telling her father that her vision for the place goes beyond what actually exists and includes a return to prosperity. To this point in the play, Patsy has not revealed how she sees herself fitting into the future of the Connelly home. It soon becomes clear, however, that she envisions herself as the mistress of the manor.

If she is to achieve her goal of dominance then she must necessarily come into conflict with some members of the Connelly family. Her ability to see the Connelly family members as they truly are helps her take the measure of the forces arrayed against her.

One of Patsy's first brushes with the family comes in what should be a joyous setting. She has come to the Connelly home as part of a group of carolers. A short scene of revelry takes place and Patsy asks Will to join the carolers as they make their rounds to other homes. This invitation is met only by nervous laughter and a suggestion by Will's sisters that Patsy leave. As she does, she asks, "Why are you all so . . . so solemn?" (Green, 1930, p. 186). This short exchange helps to underscore the differences between Patsy and the Connelly clan, differences which Patsy has seen instinctively.

The Connelys are oppressed by the past and burdened with a system that limits their options in the face of financial ruin. As Will's mother says, "The Connelys have stood more than poverty without losing their pride" (Green, 1930, p. 182). This pride, however, serves to freeze Will into inaction and, in contrast, fails to impress Patsy. As she looks at the portraits of the long-dead ancestors which dominate the Connelly living room, she makes her true feelings known by saying, "Oh, you look mighty grand. But you don't scare me a bit, not a bit. All right, me against you, all of you" (Green, 1930, p. 197).

The veracity with which Patsy views the Connelly ancestors extends to the current Connelys as well. When Uncle Bob attempts to seduce her during a garden party, Will comes to her rescue, aid that Patsy knows is unnecessary. She has measured Uncle Bob and is able to laugh about the attack and say, "That's all right. I'm not afraid of him" (Green, 1930, p. 189).

Although Patsy appears not to fear the Connelly family members, she does seem to fear a continuing poverty for herself and her family. She determines that to prevent this she must marry Will Connelly and she sets out to trap him, which she admits when she tells him: "I saw all this great plantation going to ruin. I wanted it, wanted to make something out of it. I loved you because you stood for all I wanted" (Green, 1930, p. 210). Yet, she is truthful enough to admit that the trap she has set for Will has caught someone else: herself. She tells Will:

I think about the farm now and what we can do with it but always there is something else there, you yourself. I want to belong to you. Then I think about you and there's always the farm and I want to rule over everything and make it great and beautiful! I'm all mixed up inside. I want to obey you, be your wife, have your children. I love you now, you yourself, Will. You understand me, don't you? I swears it's the truth.  
(Green, 1930, p. 202).

patsy truly assesses her situation. She has fallen in love with the man she had hoped only to possess and manipulate. Her changing feelings do not, however, change the ultimate goals which she doggedly pursues throughout the play.

### Tenacity

Patsy is willing to work long and hard to achieve her goals. Her tenacity is remarked upon by other characters in the play, albeit at times in a derogatory manner, as in the beginning of the play when Big Sis and Big Sue make their feelings about the tenant girl known in the following exchange:

Big Sue: Poor White trash.

Big Sis: Like all of 'em--scrounging and  
a-gouging--poor white trash!

Big Sue: Pushing up in the world--reaching  
and a-grabbing at the high places  
of the quality and the roof over our  
heads.

(Green, 1930, p. 174).

Thus, even those who fear Patsy must admit however grudgingly that she is a tenacious striver.

Uncle Bob marvels at Patsy's willingness to work saying, "Yonder's Patsy Tate hoeing away with them niggers in the boiling sun. What a woman!" (Green, 1930, p. 199).



Bob's admiration turns to lust which is rebuffed by Patsy. In spite of his own rejection, he maintains the presence of mind to know that only tenacious workers such as Patsy and her father can save the plantation, In fact, he even suggests to Will that he turn over the plantation to the Tate family or to Patsy herself (Green, 1930, p. 183).

Another member of the Connelly clan who observes Patsy at work is Will's mother. Mrs. Connelly recognizes Patsy's true intent and warns Will about it and the fortitude she exhibits in moving toward her goal. Mrs. Connelly warns her son: "She's set out in cold blood to become mistress of Connelly Hall and you're helping her to it" (Green, 1930, p. 195).

Even Patsy's own father does not appear to understand the true depth of her ambition. Early in the play she tells him he will have his own farm someday and he responds:

Tate: No, I won't. I'll die the other  
fellow's man--a tenant. You will  
to.

Patsy: (sharply) I won't.

Tate: Oh, but you'll come to it.

Patsy: No.

(Green, 1930, p. 177).

There is no equivocation in Patsy's response. She is determined not to end up as her father has, beholding to a land owner for his livelihood.

Patsy's tenacity is finally challenged as the play draws to a conclusion. Will's sisters have left the plantation rather than live there with Patsy as mistress of the house. Will is conscience stricken and speaks of going after his sisters and bringing them home. Patsy meets this challenge with an impassioned plea to let the sisters go so that the life she and Will will share can begin:

Patsy: To grow and live and be something in this world, you've got to be cruel--you've got to push other things aside. The dead and the proud have to give way to us--the living. We have our life to live and we'll fight for it to the end. Nothing shall take that away from us. Right now we have to decide it, Will. Let them go. It's our life or theirs. It can't be both.

(Green, 1930, p. 210).

Patsy realizes that as long as Will's sisters remain, the old ways will remain with them.

Patsy's tenacity brings different results depending on which ending of The House of Connelly one reads. In Green's preferred ending, Will rebuffs Patsy's argument and goes to retrieve his sisters. This leaves Patsy to the merciless and ever-present Big Sis and Big Sue, who proceed to strangle their would-be mistress. In the ending cobbled together to please the original producers of the play, Patsy

convinces Will to let the sisters leave and Big Sis and Big Sue are put in their place:

Will: Miss Patsy's my wife now.

Big Sis and Big Sue: (hesitating) Yessuh.

Will: Then you do what she tells you.

Big Sis and Big Sue: (as they take each other by the hand and go into the kitchen) Yessuh, Mr. Will.

(Green, 1930, p. 215).

The support of her husband in this ending gives Patsy something she has been seeking throughout the play: mastery of Connelly House and the people who live in and around it.

### Mastery

Patsy reveals herself to be an aggressive person from the outset of the play. She makes an immediate impression on Will by demonstrating her proficiency with firearms when she kills two doves while Will has been unable to shoot any. Patsy's father explains:

Tate: She's about as good as Daniel Boone when it comes to guns. She is that.

Patsy: Pshaw. Father raised me up same as

a boy to ride and hunt, Mr. Will.

Will: Yes, good training, I reckon.

(Green, 1930, p. 176).

These male characteristics evidence themselves in Patsy's aggressiveness toward Will.

Her mastery over Will comes in stages. First, she kisses and presumably seduces him, then she begins to take control of the running of the Connelly plantation. When Will believes he has come to the end of his financial rope and the only option he has is to run away, Patsy masters the situation:

Patsy: I could help you. And you could help me.

You'd be running away like a coward if you left. You'll do it. I'll help you--we'll do it--work--work--together. I know how to work with the earth. I know her I could teach you.

(Green, 1930, p. 190).

Patsy proves a good teacher and control of the plantation begins to pass into her hands.

Soon, in fact, Will calls his tenants together to let them know that they must work harder and that he intends to reverse the fading fortunes of the farm. However, the real power behind the change of heart is clearly revealed when Patsy arrives bringing with her work assignments which far surpass the amount of work called for in Will's plan:

Patsy: Look at Duffy's plot. I've marked off



sixty acres for him.

Will: He's never farmed more than twenty-five.

Patsy: Him and his crowd ought to tend sixty.

Will: Yes, that' so.

(Green, 1930, p. 196).

Through a combination of sexual skill and business acumen, Patsy takes control of Will. "You're so clever. The poor Connelys are the simple ones," he says. She responds: "What I have done is not clever. Any woman would tell you that" (Green, 1930, p. 197).

In fact it is one of the Connely women, Will's mother, who fully grasps the extent of Patsy's mastery over her son. She warns him that Patsy will use any device to gain what she wants--control of the Connely farm: "It's the Connely land and the Connely name she wants. Only selfishness and greed would make a woman violate herself" (Green, 1930, p. 196). Patsy, however, appears unfazed saying, "She'll see different later when everything is going fine" (Green, 1930, p. 197).

When pressure from his mother pulls Will away from Patsy and into dalliances with other women she refuses to be beaten. Instead, she takes a desperate gamble and threatens to leave the plantation:

Patsy: Yes, I'll go away and leave you! I can't stay here any more. I'll let you run things for a while. And you'll see what I've done these months. You've never had

such a crop on this plantation, have you?  
(Green, 1930, p. 202).

This passage highlights the power that Patsy has over Will and the entire Connelly household. She has made the plantation profitable and she has made the Connelly name respected again.

Eventually Will relents, brings Patsy back to the plantation and marries her. By the time that happens both are well aware of just what their relationship involves:

Patsy: You'll learn to love me, won't you?

Will: And you me maybe. How beautiful you are.

Patsy: Kiss me. I do love you, Will. Think of  
all we have to do!

Will: And I'll follow the leader as best I can.

(Green, 1930, p. 208-209).

Their marriage is born out of Patsy's tenacious drive and Will's desperation to save the Connelly fortune.

Will may believe that by following the leader he has ensured the future of the Connelys, but he is unaware of the masterful endgame strategy Patsy is plotting. Her plan involves rejuvenating the Connelly fortune and then supplanting the Connelys themselves. She shares the developing plan with her father in the dining room of the Connelly home:

Patsy: (taking his arm and standing by the table)  
Will can sit there at the head. I'll sit  
here. (in a low voice) You there--

(pointing) the boys--so--and so. (she turns and eyes her father in a sort of naive triumph).

Tate: (looking at her in astonishment) I'll be plagued!

Patsy: And they'll have rooms of their own to sleep in now.

Tate: Think of that. I dunno--maybe everything'll be all right. God bless you.

Patsy: And that makes me happier than the rest.

(Green, 1930, p. 209).

Patsy's plan to change the House of Connelly into the House of Tate is well on the way to completion when she encounters the two women she is unable to master, Big Sis and Big Sue.

In Green's original ending, Big Sis and Big Sue literally crush Patsy's plan by strangling and smothering her. However, in the alternate ending, Patsy's mastery over Will is complete. He is convinced not to pursue his sisters, "Yes, let them go. Let the past die. It's our life now--our house" (Green, 1930, p. 215).

Throughout the play, Patsy exhibits the characteristics of veracity, tenacity and mastery as defined by this study. It is only by her use of these traits that the House of Connelly in any form is saved from destruction.

## Chapter 5: Regina Giddens

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.

Sol. 2:15

If Patsy Tate is poor white trash grasping and clawing to obtain what her social betters possess, Regina Giddens is rich white trash who has attained wealth but is hungry for more. The Hubbard clan from which Regina springs are not Southern aristocrats but come from humble beginnings and have propelled themselves into the landed gentry through industry and a fortunate marriage. Birdie, who is married to one of Regina's brothers, is from a family that is among "the highest tone plantation owners in the state" (Hellman, 1939, p. 11).

The Little Foxes might even be considered the story of the Connelly clan after Patsy Tate took over. It is a saga that was repeated often when aristocratic families sought to change with the times as commerce replaced farming as the key to wealth. Some families simply could not make the change as Ms. Hellman writes in her play in an exchange between Northern industrialist William Marshall and Southerner Ben Hubbard. Marshall observes that Southerners "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." Hubbard responds, "A great many Southerners don't" (Hellman, 1939, p. 9).

Ms. Hellman was well aware of life in the South during this period. Aside from her own upbringing as a six month per year resident of New Orleans, she did extensive research before writing The Little Foxes. In fact, she hired an assistant and compiled a notebook of more than 115 typewritten pages of information on topics such as the cotton economy, the industrial South and the agricultural South (Rollyson 1988).

In spite of this groundwork, Ms. Hellman claimed the Southern setting for The Little Foxes was simply fortuitous and that she was "representing for you the type of person who ruins the world for us" (Beebe, 1939, p. 44). However, later in the same interview, she concedes that some of the play's believability is dependent on its locale:

I also wanted a certain naive or innocent quality in some of my characters which I could find in the South but which would have been quite out of place in any other American setting (p. 45).

It was a setting with which she was quite familiar. In fact, the play may have angered various members of her kin, because Hellman confided later in life that some of her relatives threatened to sue her for libel after the play premiered (Falk 1961).

Whether her family was hurt or not, Ms. Hellman could

do little to change the thrust of the play. She had a complete and unremitting integrity (Nathan 1939) and simply chose to write about the ideas and atmosphere ingrained in her own life (Moody 1972). She was her own master.

Who will be the master is central to the plot of The Little Foxes. Action centers upon the Hubbard family and their willingness to do anything, legal or illegal, moral or immoral, to achieve their goal, which is the accumulation of more wealth. The instrument to that end is a new cotton mill to be built in partnership with a Northern industrialist. The action of the play revolves around schemes that the Hubbards undertake to raise their portion of the money needed to build the mill.

The play swirls around Regina who is smart, good looking and funny . . . "winning attributes in a heroine. She is strong, allowing no one to push her around and is continually resourceful in getting what she wants" (Wright, 1986, p. 153). These same attributes were noted about Ms. Hellman herself. She was described in a speech at her funeral by longtime friend Jules Feifer as being "...bad at letting things pass. Her toughness was a matter of pride, principle, ego and a hardnosed vision of the way things ought to be and she didn't mind a fight" (Feibelman, 1988, p. 224).

Both Hellman and her creation, Regina Giddens, demonstrate the characteristics of veracity, tenacity and mastery that are the focus of this study.

veracity

Regina's truthfulness can be brutal. In some instances she may use her sharp tongue to keep under control with one simple line, as when her nephew Leo tells a visitor that he keeps an eye on things at the bank when Horace, Regina's husband and owner of the bank, is away. A simple, "Really, Leo?" (Hellman, 1939, p. 9) is enough to send the young man backpedaling.

Her veracity is also revealed in matters of money. She makes it very clear to everyone that money is her primary motivation. When her brother Ben tells the Northern businessman who they hope will build the cotton mill that money isn't everything, the businessman responds, "Really, well I always thought it was a great deal." Regina adds, "And so do I, Mr. Marshall" (Hellman, 1939, p. 13). Regina later tells Marshall that he has opened the door to her future by agreeing to the cotton mill deal that will allow her to move to Chicago. "I've always wanted to," she says, "And now there'll be plenty of money to go with it" (Hellman, 1939, p. 15). Regina is candid when she notes that one thing money will mean to her is social acceptance in larger cities of the world where her family will not even have to learn to fit into society because, "You will be rich and the rich don't have to be subtle" (Hellman, 1939, p. 18).



It is not only in the love of money that Regina's honesty shows. It is also in the knowledge of how business and commerce actually work, even of the subtleties that can help cement a deal. For instance, Ben tells everyone how important it is to have their business with Marshall concluded over a drink:

Ben: . . . we've all done business with men whose word over a glass is better than a bond. Anyway, it doesn't hurt to have both.

Oscar: (to Regina) You understand what Ben means?

Regina: Yes, Oscar. I understand. I understood immediately.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 16).

It is in the business that is transacted outside the framework of signed contracts that Regina excels.

Regina understands the facts that underpin the mill deal. Her brothers may threaten to cut her share but she knows, in truth, they will not seek outside financing since, as she tells her brothers, " . . . strange partners sometimes want a great deal" (Hellman, 1939, p. 20). In fact, Regina herself wants a great deal, more than twice what her brothers have offered, and she is truthful enough to let them know that she appreciates the weakness of their position. In spite of the fact that brother Ben complains



that she is " . . . holding us up, and that's not pretty, Regina, not pretty" (Hellman, 1939, p. 22), he gives in to her and increases her share.

Regina must convince her husband, Horace, to accede to the mill scheme. And, once again, it is up to her to put the facts plainly and truthfully to her reluctant husband when he returns home from a sanitarium where he has been taking treatment for an ailing heart:

Ben:        It could wait. Horace may not feel like talking today.

Regina:    What an old faker you are! You know it can't wait. You know it must be finished this week. You've been just as anxious for Horace to get here as I've been.

Ben:        I suppose I have. And why not? Horace has done Hubbard Sons many a good turn. Why shouldn't I be anxious to help him now?

Regina:    Help him! Help him when you need him, that's what you mean.

Ben:        What a woman you married, Horace.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 44).

Ben and the other brothers may seek to approach Horace gingerly about the mill plan but Regina knows the truth: the deal must be finalized quickly with Horace's participation or Regina will be left out and her plans for the expected wealth will come to nothing.

This desire for money, truly expressed, colors all of Regina's relationships. She makes plans to use her friendship with Marshall to further her social status which can only be achieved with millions of new dollars. As she tells Birdie: "You know what I've always said when people told me we were rich. I said I think you should either be a nigger or a millionaire. In between, like us, what for?" (Hellman, 1939, p. 15).

Regina's true feelings about other members of her family often come through in the form of cutting remarks designed to leave her one up in the game they are all playing. For instance, when it is suggested that her nephew Leo marry her daughter Alexandra, Regina's disdain for her family bubbles to the surface:

Regina: There's a lot of things to consider.

They are first cousins and...

Oscar: That isn't unusual. Our grandfather and grandmother were first cousins.

Regina: And look at us.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 23).

In fact, Regina often treats her brothers poorly.

Regina is just as direct with her husband Horace. Although she does say she is glad to see him when he returns from the hospital, she makes it clear she is not interested in trying to rehabilitate their marriage. When Horace tells her he has been thinking about their life together, Regina

responds, "Thinking about you and me after all these years? You must tell me everything about it--some day" (Hellman, 1939, p. 41). Given what Regina knows about Horace's health, some day is as much as saying not in this lifetime.

Later, after Horace has made it clear he has no intention of investing in the mill, he and Regina talk about their lives together with Regina's veracity again cutting through any pretense:

Regina: You hate me very much.

Horace. No.

Regina: Oh, I think you do. Well, we haven't been very good together. Anyway, I don't hate you either. I have only contempt for you. I always have.

Horace: From the very first?

Regina: I think so.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 65).

In fact, this contempt began even before their marriage, as Regina reveals that she married Horace only because "Papa died and left the money to Ben and Oscar" (Hellman, 1939, p. 65). Soon, even the intimacy of their new marriage began to deteriorate, helped along by a lie Regina told and Horace accepted:

Regina: Remember when I went to Doctor Sloan and I told you he told me there was something the matter with me and you shouldn't touch me any more?

Horace: I remember.

Regina: But you believed it? I couldn't understand that. I couldn't understand that anybody could be such a soft fool. That was when I began to despise you.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 65-66).

That disgust grows until Regina tells Horace the absolute truth about the way she feels toward him. "I hope you die soon," she says to him, "I'll be waiting for you to die" (Hellman, 1939, p. 53).

The depth of her disdain may only become apparent to Horace as he is dying from a heart attack. Instead of trying to comfort him, Regina, true to form, tells him exactly what her thoughts are at the time, "...I couldn't have known you'd get heart trouble so early and so bad. I'm lucky, Horace. I've always been lucky. I'll be lucky again" (Hellman, 1939, p. 66). And, Regina reveals the truth about herself by refusing to get Horace's medicine. Instead, she simply stands by and watches him die.

### Tenacity

Any woman who can resist the pleas of a dying man for aid must be tenacious in the desire to reach the goal that his death will help her accomplish. Regina's tenacity is evident in her relationships with the rest of her family as



well. Her brothers comment on this tenacity, couching it in terms of Regina's powers of persuasion. They speak of the possibility of Horace refusing the mill deal, "He hasn't shown any signs of loving it yet," says Oscar, to which Leo responds, "But he hasn't listened to Aunt Regina yet. Oh, he'll go along" (Hellman, 1939, p. 32).

Horace is forced to listen the very moment he returns from the hospital. Regina immediately focuses conversation on the mill offer, and even though Horace is in obvious pain and discomfort, she will not relent:

Regina: I'd like Ben to tell you something.

Horace: Tomorrow.

Regina: I'd like to now. It's very important to all of us. Important to our beloved daughter. She'll be a very great heiress--

Horace: Will she. That's nice.

Regina. Ben are you finished breakfast?

Horace: Is this the mill business I've had so many letters about?

Regina: Horace would like to talk to you now.

Horace: Horace would not like to talk to you now. I am very tired, Regina---

Regina: Please. You've said we'll try our best with each other. I'll try. Really. But please do this for me now.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 43-44).

Even though Horace complains that he is tired, Regina uses first the promise of financial reward for themselves and their daughter and then the implied promise of improved relations between herself and Horace to keep the discussion of the mill project on track.

In spite of all her attempts, Horace refuses the opportunity to invest in the mill. At first, Regina is incredulous but she soon returns to her tenacious attempts to change Horace's mind:

Regina: We shall not leave it at that. We have waited for you here like children. Waited for you to come home.

Horace: So that you could invest my money. So this is why you wanted me home? Well, I had hoped--if you're disappointed, Regina, I'm sorry. But I must do what I think best. We'll talk about it another day.

Regina: We'll talk about it now. Just you and me.

Horace: Please, Regina. It's been a hard trip. I don't feel well. Please leave me alone now.

Regina: I want to talk to you, Horace. I'm coming up.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 47).

Regina hounds Horace into the confines of his sickroom as she attempts to change his mind.

Even when daughter Alexandra tries to intercede on her father's behalf, Regina is relentless in her demand for answers and in the belittling of her husband:

Regina: . . . All my life I've had to force you to make something of yourself.

Horace: Let me alone.

Regina: I won't let you alone. If I'd let you alone you'd still be working for someone else.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 51).

Regina's refusal to leave Horace alone eventually contributes to his death and leaves the way open for her to achieve what she wants: investment in the mill and the financial freedom that will bring.

But Regina must fight another battle with her brothers before her dream can finally be realized. Her brothers threaten to exclude her, but she counters with a threat to expose the theft of some bonds from her husband, bonds that were surreptitiously used as a means of completing the mill agreement. Exposure would mean ruin and jail for her brothers, but Regina is tenacious and relentless. "There are people who can never go back who must finish what they start," she says, "I am one of those people" (Hellman, 1939, p. 75).

Mastery

It is inevitable that a woman as tenacious as Regina will master most of the situations and people around her. She is in control of even the smallest details of her household, as we learn in the beginning of the play. Two servants are discussing the choice of wine to be served to an important guest, as one reminds the other, "Miss Regina told me to get out that bottle, that very bottle for the mighty, honored guest. When Miss Regina changes orders like that you can bet your dime she got her reasons" (Hellman, 1939, p. 5).

The discussion of the choice of wine underscores the point that Regina maintains her mastery by being certain that she controls every situation in her house. This attention to detail proves its worth in this instance since the proper wine adds to the charm which seems to captivate Mr. Marshall, who remarks, "Your port is excellent, Mrs. Giddens," to which Regina responds, "Thank you, Mr. Marshall. We had been saving that bottle, hoping we could open it just for you" (Hellman, 1939, p. 8).

Regina's ability to take charge is particularly highlighted in the relationship she has with her brothers. When they try to use Horace's reluctance to commit to the project as an excuse to cut Regina out of the mill venture, she demonstrates how completely she understands the



situation and the deep desire Ben and Oscar have to keep the business within the family. Regina plays on these fears, turns Horace's fears into a bargaining chip and takes control of the situation:

Ben:        So you believe that he has deliberately held out for a larger share? Well, I don't believe it. But I do believe that's what you want. Am I right, Regina?

Regina:    Oh, I shouldn't like to be too definite. But I could say that I wouldn't like to persuade Horace unless he did get a larger share. I must look after his interests.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 21).

Regina's correct assessment of the situation and her willingness to take control result in the brothers agreement to increase her share of the mill from one-third to forty percent.

The battle with Regina's brothers is a continuing one. They conspire to steal bonds that would make her participation in their business venture unnecessary. Her own husband agrees not to press charges for the theft in order to foil Regina's ambition. Just as it appears that Regina is finally beaten, she once again takes control:

Regina:    You will come back in this room and sit down. I have something more to say.

Ben: Since when do I take orders from you?

Regina: You don't--yet.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 73).

It is, of course, only a matter of time before they do begin to take orders from her.

Far from backing down in the face of her brothers' threats, Regina counters that she will send them to jail unless they not only include her but also increase her share to seventy-five percent. Although the brothers assert that there is no proof that they stole Horace's bonds, Regina is unfazed and in control, "I won't need any," she counters. "The bonds are missing and they are with Marshall. That will be enough. If it isn't, I'll add what's necessary" (Hellman, 1939, p. 75).

Regina shows just how far she is willing to go to maintain mastery over her brothers and their business by explaining that even if a jury should find the brothers innocent of theft, she will take her story to Mr. Marshall who will almost certainly pull out of the business venture, resulting in ruin. Her intentions having been made clear, she closes discussion on the subject:

Regina: You'll do no more bargaining in this house. I'll take my seventy-five percent and we'll forget the story forever. That's one way of doing it and the way I prefer. You know me well enough to know I don't mind taking the other way.

Ben: None of us has ever known you well enough, Regina.

Regina: You're getting old, Ben. Your tricks aren't as smart as they used to be.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 76).

Ben and Oscar have no choice to accept Regina's deal. As they leave her house, she again asserts her mastery over them, "I'll see you tomorrow," Ben says. "Oh, yes. Certainly. You'll be sort of working for me now" (Hellman, 1939, p. 77), Regina responds.

Regina is also the master of most of the other people with whom she comes in contact, including her daughter Alexandra. That mastery even extends to the belief that a marriage can be arranged between Alexandra and her cousin Leo, even though Alexandra and her father Horace both oppose such a union. These objections do not matter to Regina, who firmly believes she can take complete control of the situation if she chooses:

Regina: I assure Oscar that I will think about it seriously.

Oscar: That is not an answer.

Regina: You are in a bad humor and shall put me in one. I have said all I am willing to say now. After all, Horace has to give his consent, too.

Oscar: Horace will do what you tell him to.

Regina: Yes, I think he will.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 24).

While Regina may be certain that she can control Alexandra even to the point of selecting a marriage partner for her, that issue is never settled in the play.

Still, Regina is not above using deception to control her daughter. Alexandra balks at bringing her father home from the hospital before he is well. Her doubts are echoed by a servant who suggests that Horace may be too sick to travel. Regina quickly takes control:

Alexandra: I couldn't make him think that he had  
to come home for me if he is too  
sick---

Regina: You couldn't do what I tell you to do,  
Alexandra?

Alexandra: No I couldn't if I thought it would  
hurt him.

Regina: But you are doing this for your Papa's  
own good. You must let me be the judge  
of his condition. It's the best  
possible cure for him to come home and  
be taken care of here. He mustn't stay  
there any longer and listen to those  
alarmist doctors. You are doing this  
entirely for his sake. Tell your Papa  
that I want him to come home and that  
I miss him very much.



Alexandra: Yes, Mama.

(Hellman, 1939, p. 26).

In this situation, Regina must sacrifice veracity for continuing mastery over Alexandra. Other members of the household help reinforce the mastery Regina has over Alexandra. "Come on, baby," says Addie the maid, "Your Mama's waiting for you and she ain't nobody to keep waiting" (Hellman, 1939, p. 28).

Finally, though, Regina's mastery over Alexandra begins to loosen. The play closes with Alexandra questioning her mother about how her father died and what, if any, role Regina played in his death. Regina tries once again to take control of Alexandra by reminding her of the new life that waits for them when the riches from the mill business begin to arrive. Alexandra is not tempted, however, and tells her mother:

I want to leave here. As I've never wanted anything else in my life before. Because I understand what Papa was trying to tell me. All in one day. Addie said there were people who eat the earth and other people who stood around and watched them do it...I'm not going to stand around and watch you do it...I'll be fighting...some place where people don't just stand around and watch (Hellman, 1939, p. 78).

Alexandra seems ready to become her own woman, one who knows what she wants and how to get it. After all, she has learned from the master, her mother.

As for Regina herself, one is left with a grudging admiration for her. As evil as she is, she has nerve, she has intelligence and she has self command. She knows herself and who she is (Adler, 1969). Though her actions result in the loss of a husband and a daughter, the characteristics of veracity, tenacity and mastery that she exhibits result in the outcome she wants, Regina will be wealthy and have her new life in cities far from the home and family she finds oppressive.

Chapter 6: Amanda Wingfield

Tennessee Williams: You can't mix sex and religion...but you can always write safely about Mother.

Edwina Williams: Ah, can you, Tom?

(Williams, 1963, p. 148).

When Tennessee Williams wrote his play The Glass Menagerie, he picked a subject he knew quite well: his own family. He had the same type of attract-and-repel relationship with his own Mother that Tom, the son in The Glass Menagerie, has with his mythical mother Amanda. For instance, Williams assigned half of the royalties from the play to his mother (Spoto 1967), yet he relates an incident when he was hospitalized and asked his mother, "Why do women bring children into the world and then destroy them?" (Williams, 1972, p. 219).

One entry from Williams' childhood diary indicates the depth of the impact his mother had on him. It reads simply, "Horrible day--Mother sick" (Williams, 1963, p. 254). There must have been many such days since Williams (1972) records that his mother, at times, "seemed to have a moderately controlled hysteria all her life and in her family" (p. 116) which resulted in instances of mental and nervous

breakdowns. In spite of, or perhaps because of these, Williams' mother "always did what she thought was right and she has always given herself due credit for it even though what she did was all but fatally wrong" (Williams, 1972).

Just as Williams' mother at times failed to grasp reality, so his creation Amanda resorts to fanciful flights to days of her past glory when she was belle of the ball. Williams writes that Amanda, "having failed to establish contact with reality...continues to live vitally in her illusion" (Engle, 1955, p. 60). As one critic writes, Amanda's illusions, "animate her present, becoming her point of reference for all goodness and truth. The present, on the other hand, existed for her only to the degree that it could be verified by reference to her Southern Past" (Shalland, 1990, p. 43).

The code by which Amanda lives revolves around gentlemen callers and widows well provided for and young men of character and promise. It is part of a myth from which she cannot escape and results, as one critic explains, in her being "vulgar, nagging and unreasonable. But she is also desperate, pathetic and gallantly hopeless in a fight against overwhelming odds" (Krutch, 1945, p. 424). Amanda would like to remain loyal to the myth, but no one in her current world even acknowledges the validity of the long-dead world she recalls (Colanzi, 1992).

Amanda's manner is often used to mask a passionate and



frustrated nature (Falk, 1961), and although she might be considered fallen grandeur, whiny, moody and frowsy, writers note the ability she has to control those around her " . . . the power to dominate. It is domination from which . . . her son finally escapes, but is destined to hold and crush her daughter until the day she dies" (Garland, 1945, p. 235).

Amanda must dominate her family because she is engrossed with herself, "vain to the point of being comical about (her) appearance and position in society" (Gunn, 1990, p. 316). Yet her domination is born from a desire to make things beautiful for herself and her family even if the beauty she remembers is a " . . . confusion of wish and reality consistent with the play's premise that memory is primarily seated in the heart" (Boxill, 1987, p. 64).

It is this desire that makes her tenaciously hold onto the past and the dreams she has. In fact, Williams (1987) describes Amanda as, "A little woman of great but confused vitality clinging frantically to another time and place . . . certainly she has endurance and a kind of heroism" (p. 21). In the same character descriptions, Williams (1987) lets us know how Amanda's endurance affects her children, particularly Tom. Williams writes, "His nature is not remorseless, but to escape from a trap he must act without pity" (p. 22). The trap Tom flees is baited with Amanda's recollection of her past and armed

with her drive to make her children conform to those memories.

Although Amanda's view of reality is skewed, her desire to maintain it is no less intense. She employs veracity, tenacity and mastery to try to achieve that goal.

### Veracity

Despite her detachment from reality, Amanda is able to focus on the truth at times. She is able to take the measure of her children and make telling, often cutting, remarks about some of their attributes of which even Tom and Laura may not be aware. When Tom flares at her for correcting the way he eats his dinner, Amanda responds, "Temperament like a Metropolitan star!" (Williams, 1987, p. 31). At the early point in the play where this occurs it may seem temperamental of Tom to react so strongly to Amanda's comments. "It's you that make me rush through meals with your hawklike attention to every bite I take," Tom says. "Sickening--spoils my appetite" (Williams, 1987, p. 31).

Amanda also sees through the fiction Tom lives out by pretending to go to the movies every night. She challenges him by saying, "I think you've been doing things that you are ashamed of . . . Nobody goes to the movies night after night . . . Come stumbling in. Muttering to yourself like a

maniac" (Williams, 1987, p. 51). She is correct in this assessment to the extent that Tom leaves home each night not simply to escape to the fantasy of film but to escape from the reality of his life and the realization that his own dreams are slipping away. He tells Amanda, "Every time you come in yelling that Goddamn 'Rise and shine! Rise and shine!' I say to myself, 'How lucky dead people are!' But I get up. I go! For sixty-five dollars a month I give up all that I dream of doing and being ever" (Williams, 1987, p. 52).

Amanda later admits that she understands Tom's frustration at having to work at the warehouse but reminds him of the truth of life as she views it: "like everybody in the whole wide world--you've had to--make sacrifices, but--Tom--Tom--life's not easy, it calls for--Spartan endurance!" (Williams, 1987, p. 62) That which is sought is Spartan endurance tempered with what Amanda considers to be nobler ideas. Tom claims his instincts as a man--to hunt, to love, to fight, are being stifled at the warehouse. Amanda again gives him a lesson in the truth of life as she views it:

Amanda: Don't quote instinct to me! Instinct is something that people have got away from! It belongs to animals! Christian adults don't want it.

Tom: What do Christian adults want, then, Mother?

Amanda: Superior things! Things of the mind  
and the spirit! Only animals have to  
satisfy instincts!

(Williams, 1987, p. 64).

Amanda feels Tom's desire to indulge his baser instincts can only lead to tragedy for her family.

Amanda finds evidence of this impending disaster in several small events, including Tom's failure to pay the light bill and in the final confrontation between Mother and son at the end of the play. Amanda's view of the truth leads her to believe that Tom has played a trick on her by knowingly bringing home an engaged man as a caller for Laura. The truth, as Amanda sees it, is that Tom has selfishly done this to hurt her:

Amanda: Don't think about us, a mother deserted,  
an unmarried sister who's crippled and  
has no job! Don't let anything interfere  
with your selfish pleasure! Just go, go,  
go to the movies.

Tom: All right, I will! The more you shout  
about my selfishness to me the quicker  
I'll go, and I won't go to the movies!

Amanda: Go, then! Go to the moon--you selfish  
dreamer!

(Williams, 1987, p. 136).

Amanda's view of life is so self-centered that Tom finally



knows he cannot live inside its boundaries. So, in order to survive and to find and create his own truth of life, Tom is eventually forced to leave home.

His sister, however, cannot leave. Amanda also focuses her insight on Laura and comes up with versions of the truth that are, at times, related to reality and at others, are rooted in Amanda's own self-centered version of the way things are. When Amanda discovers that Laura has not been attending business school, she paints what is to her mind an accurate reflection of dependency for Laura:

Amanda: I've seen such pitiful cases in the  
South--barely tolerated spinsters  
living upon the grudging patronage of  
sister's husband or brother's wife!--  
stuck away somewhere in some little  
mousetrap of a room--encouraged by  
one in-law to visit another--little  
birdlike women without any nest--  
eating the crust of humility all  
their life.

(Williams, 1987, p. 43).

Amanda is certain this maudlin future of dependence awaits Laura. Her view of life admits only one acceptable alternative: A husband must be found for her daughter.

The news of the coming of the Gentleman Caller moves Amanda to great preparation of the meal, the home and of

Laura herself. She demands that her daughter pad her breasts, "because, to be painfully honest, your chest is flat" (Williams, 1987, p. 86). Laura protests, complaining that her mother is intent on setting a trap to catch a young man. "All pretty girls are a trap, a pretty trap," Amanda responds, "And all men expect them to be" (Williams, 1987, p. 86). Eventually when the trap is sprung and the hunted animal escapes to be caught in a different snare, Amanda is left with her own true, if understated assessment of the situation: "Things have a way of turning out so badly," (Williams, 1987, p. 134) she says faintly.

### Tenacity

In spite of the fact that things seem to have turned out so badly in Amanda's life, or perhaps because of it, she tenaciously pursues the things she wants to see happen whether they are her son's grooming habits or her daughter's future. She is tenacious in her attempts to get to the bottom of a problem or situation. She turns this tenacity on both of her children. Of Laura, she demands the truth about her truancy from business school:

Amanda: Fifty dollars tuition, all of our plans--my hopes and ambitions for you--just gone up the spout, just gone up the spout like that...Laura,

where have you been going when you've gone out pretending that you were going to the business college?

Laura: I've just been going out walking.

Amanda: That's not true.

Laura: It is. I just went walking.

Amanda: Walking? Walking? In winter?

Deliberately courting pneumonia in that light coat?...you did all this to deceive me, just for deception?

(Williams, 1987, p. 41).

This exchange demonstrates to what lengths Laura will go to avoid her mother's probing demands.

Again Amanda turns her dogged determination on Laura when she decides that her daughter must be married. Amanda choreographs every move of this mating dance even to the point of forcing Laura to answer the door when the Gentleman Caller arrives despite the fact that the girl's crippling shyness would keep her from doing it:

Laura: Mother--you go to the door!

Amanda: What is the matter with you, you silly thing?

Laura: Please, you answer it, please!

Amanda: I told you I wasn't going to humor you, Laura. Why have you chosen this moment to lose your mind?

Laura: Please, please, please, you go!

Amanda: You'll have to go to the door because I can't.

Laura: I can't either.

Amanda: Why?

Laura: I'm sick!

Amanda: I'm sick, too--of your nonsense!

(Williams, 1987, p. 91).

This is a contest of wills that the shy, retiring Laura cannot hope to win. No matter how ill the idea of going to the door actually makes her, Amanda will force her to do it as a part of her overall plan to trap the Gentleman Caller.

Similarly, the battle over whether Tom will procure a Gentleman Caller is one that Tom must finally lose to his insistent mother. Initially, Amanda holds out the hope of freedom for Tom if, and when, Laura finds a man to take care of her. She says, "you'll be free to go wherever you please, on land, on sea, whichever way the wind blows!"

(Williams, 1987, p. 65). With this idea planted in Tom's mind, she moves in relentlessly until he agrees to bring home a Gentleman Caller:

Amanda: Down at the warehouse, aren't there  
some--nice young men?

Tom: No!

Amanda: There must be--some...

Tom: Mother--

Amanda: Find out one that's clean-living--  
doesn't drink and ask him out for



sister.

Tom: What!

Amanda: For sister! To meet! Get acquainted!

Tom: Oh, my go-osh!

Amanda: Will you? (he opens the door. She says imploringly) Will you? (he starts down the fire escape) Will you, dear?

Tom (calling back): Yes!

(Williams, 1987, p. 66-67).

Tom cannot resist the entreaties of his mother. He knows that Amanda is so tenacious she will not stop until she has acquired what she wants.

### Mastery

Amanda's tenacity is one of the primary ingredients that make her the master of her household. Some of the desire for this control came from her own experience with her husband, a man she could not master. She admits that her love for him took control of her, at least for a while. She tells Tom: "that innocent look of your father's had everyone fooled. He smiled--the world was enchanted" (Williams, 1987, p. 78). She is determined not to let her children fall prey to such charms saying, "No girl can do worse than to put herself at the mercy of a handsome appearance" (Williams, 1987, p. 78) or, worse, become the charmer her husband was. She tells Tom:

It's terrifying! More and more you remind me of your father! He was out all hours without explanation! --Then left! Goodbye! And me with the bag to hold. I saw the letter you got from the Merchant Marine. I know what you're dreaming of. I'm not standing here blindfolded.

(Williams, 1987, p. 65)

In order to keep Tom in line she tries to control even the career choices he will explore.

Amanda complains about Tom's table manners and even censors his reading material. She tells him:

I took that horrible novel back to the library--yes! That hideous book by that insane Mr. Lawrence. I cannot control the output of diseased minds or people who cater to them--but I won't allow such filth brought into my house! No, no, no, no, no.

(Williams, 1987, p. 50)

Amanda, therefore, makes it clear that she cannot control the world outside her doors but she can and will decide what will take place within her walls.

When cajoling and confiscation do not work, Amanda is not above using guilt to keep Tom in line. She turns that formidable weapon on him when he apologizes to her for an argument they had the night before:

Tom: Mother I--I apologize. I'm sorry for what I said, for everything that I said, I didn't mean it.

Amanda: (sobbingly) My devotion has made me me a witch and so I make myself hateful to my children.

Tom: No, you don't.

Amanda: I worry so much, don't sleep. It makes me nervous!

Tom: I understand that.

Amanda: I've had to put up a solitary battle all these years. But you're my right-hand bower! Don't fall down, don't fail!

Tom: (gently) I try, Mother.

(Williams, 1987, p. 60).

Guilt may keep Tom in line for a time. Ultimately, however, the conflict between Amanda and Tom is for very high stakes: his life. He must disappoint her in order to have one of his own.

Laura, however, is unable to escape. She must remain with her mother. In their continuing battle Laura may win an occasional skirmish, as when she refuses to attend business school, but the field is almost always swept by her mother. Amanda uses various strategies to keep Laura under control. Guilt is one which takes the form, as Laura describes it, of, "that awful suffering look on your face like the picture of Jesus' mother in the museum" (Williams, 1987, p. 42).

Amanda also remains in control by simply twisting the facts so that they fit the outcome she is trying to achieve. When Laura protests that she might not be able to find a husband because she is a cripple, Amanda responds:

Nonsense! Laura, I've told you never to use that word. Why, you're not crippled, you just have a little defect--hardly noticeable, even! When people have some slight disadvantage like that, they cultivate other things to make up for it--develop charm and vivacity--and charm! That's all you have to do!

(Williams, 1987, p 44-45)

This skewed view of reality and the promise of a better life it holds, is one way Amanda is able to master the situation and keep Laura under her control.

Another tool that Amanda uses to control Laura is the use of pressure and threat. Amanda resorts to this tactic when Laura says that she might not be able to greet the Gentleman Caller if he turns out to be the young man in high school with whom she was infatuated:

Amanda: It won't be him! It isn't the least bit likely. But whether it is or not, you will come to the table. You will not be excused.

Laura: I'll have to be, Mother.



Amanda: I don't intend to humor your silliness, Laura. I've had too much from you and your brother, both! So just sit down and compose yourself till they come.

(Williams, 1987, p. 89-90).

And Laura, who is a timid soul, can do nothing but comply because she is unable to take the one step that would free her from her mother's domination, and that is to leave home.

But the person Amanda must control the most tightly is herself. When conditions pose too great a threat, her answer is simply to change the situation in her mind. She returns to a time when she was in control and was the object of interest to young men:

Amanda: One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain-- your mother received seventeen gentlemen callers. Why, sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all. we had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house.

Tom: How did you entertain those gentlemen callers?

Amanda: I understood the art of conversation.

Tom: I bet you could talk.

Amanda: Girls in those days knew how to talk, I can tell you.

(Williams, 1987, p. 33).

When Amanda cannot realistically master a situation she simply turns in her mind to the past. In this way she is like her son who, when faced with a similarly disheartening situation, attempts to avoid it. In his case, however, he turns not to a recalled glorious past but to a fervently desired glorious future.

Does Amanda Wingfield exhibit the characteristics of veracity, tenacity and mastery? Her vision of the truth may be refracted through the prism of her Southern upbringing, but she tells the truth as she sees it. She pursues her goals whether they include selling magazine subscriptions or planning her daughter's future with dogged determination. Moreover, she maintains mastery in her home even though this domination ultimately leads to the loss of both of her children. One is lost to the adventure that beckons from the outside world; the other is lost to the safety and anonymity that call from her own created world, the world of The Glass Menagerie.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

But where, dear Silent Ghost, are put away,  
The wise and lovely things you used to say,  
Behind the stove or underneath the stair,  
in lemon scented or rain-washed April air?

from "Dear Silent Ghost"

an early poem by Tennessee Williams  
(Williams, 1963, p. 251).

Tennessee Williams, Lillian Hellman and Paul Green have created three extraordinarily strong, dominant Southern female characters that are the focus of this work. Behind Amanda Wingfield, Regina Giddens and Patsy Tate stands the Silent Ghost of the American South and the cult of the woman that grew up there. It is a ghost conjured from contradiction about the role women must play and how this role is then reflected in literature. Characters that are developed against this backdrop and authors who grew up in front of it are almost certain to be complex individuals. This study has identified part of the composition of that complexity. Reviewers often focus on the bad aspects of these characters: The mental dislocation of Amanda, the ruthless manipulation of Regina and the cold calculation of Patsy. This study, however, has examined the same characteristics and found in them the positive attributes of

veracity, tenacity and mastery. Amanda, Regina and Patsy are all both cold and loving. They must use whatever methods are available to them to benefit themselves or the ones they love.

Patsy Tate, the tenant farmer's daughter who dreams of a better life, uses her veracity to correctly assess her own situation and that of the Connellys. This ability to see and speak the truth is a double-edged sword since it allows Patsy to cut through layers of charade and show, but also results in the making of enemies, most notably Big Sis and Big Sue, which results in her destruction.

Patsy's tenacity also has its good and bad sides and must necessarily bring her into conflict with other characters. She works to make the plantation a success with the goal of becoming mistress of a prosperous farm. Yet this same quality brings her in conflict with those who are interested in maintaining the status quo. In one ending, tenacity pays off with the sisters expelled from the plantation and Big Sis and Big Sue cowed. In the original conclusion, however, Patsy's tenacity serves only to push Will from her as he pursues his sisters and leaves her to the mercy of Sis and Sue.

In both versions of the play Patsy achieves what she wants: mastery over The House of Connelly. Once again, however, in order to take control she has had to alienate some people who live on the plantation. There may be a



record harvest on the farm, but the tenants will have to work harder to produce it and this requirement, forced in large measure by Patsy, has upset the societal balance. Society must either change, as it does in the second ending of the play, or the forces of reaction must crush the reforms instituted by Patsy, as they do in Green's preferred finish.

Though Regina Giddens may seem to have impure motives for her actions, some good can be seen even in her. She is painfully honest when it suits her purpose, which results in a cementing of the relation between her family and the industrialist but also contributes to the competition between her and her brothers for the upper hand in the business deal that follows. She is also honest enough to finally let her husband know her true feelings about him which was leading to a bad result from her point of view until fate intervened in the form of a heart attack.

Regina's tenacity also brings mixed results. Her determination keeps the business deal on track and maintains a lion's share of it for her. This is a favorable outcome for her and her daughter who will eventually benefit from money generated by the mill. However, her tenacious pursuit of a larger share for herself results in alienating not only her brothers but the very daughter who will become and heiress through her mother's efforts.

Regina's ability to control those around her has good

results from her perspective. She finishes with a large share of the business and mastery over her brothers. Even the death of her husband, who Regina neglects, is a favorable end from her point of view in that she has lost a husband for whom she never cared while keeping his property and position. Her domination, however, does result in the loss of her daughter who chooses to free herself from her mother.

Of the characters who are the focus of this study, Amanda's motives seem to be the most pure. The things she does are done to benefit her children. When she tells the truth about Tom's table manners or his smoking or his nights out she is trying to nudge him toward improvement. Those same remarks, however, serve only to nudge Tom out the door and into a new life away from Amanda.

Amanda's tenacious pursuit of what she believes to be a better life for her family may have been the only thing that kept her family going after the departure of her husband. Again, it ultimately results in the destruction of the family when Tom is forced to leave.

As far as controlling her life is concerned, Amanda is able to do that only at certain times. She may be able to control the reading matter that comes into the house but she cannot control Tom's mind. Ultimately her attempts to do so may force her into delusions about the past and Tom into leaving home. Mastery, then, may have good results from

Amanda's point of view only when she is able to recall the days when, as a young woman, she was in control and being courted by dozens of gentlemen callers.

It is easy and understandable enough to condemn these three women for their actions. This study, however, has examined those actions and found them in characteristics to be, at the least, recognized and admired. We may not want our daughters to grow up to be the kind of women who cheat their families in business but who would not want his daughter to have the initiative to keep herself from being cheated? No good parent wants his children smothered by his love but who does not want a good, secure future for his children? Few would want their daughters to attempt to destroy things as they are but who would not want his daughter to work to change things for the better?

Amanda, Regina and Patsy can be put on both sides of the equation. What this research has demonstrated is that for every negative the case can be made for a positive, especially when actions are viewed through the eyes of the characters themselves. Accordingly some bitter and even destructive acts, when viewed in the context provided by this research are shown to spring from motives that flow from the characteristics found in each of the characters who are the focus of this work.

While this study has examined these characteristics in three strong, Southern women characters, additional research

could be undertaken to contrast these three characters with similar characters from other geographic parts of the United States. A contrasting study could be made of male characters in similar plays to determine if the characteristics are present in them and, if so, to what extent and the methods through which male characters display veracity, tenacity and mastery.



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