movies...

Hellman Film Lacks Original Force

By Tom Maugh

When Lillian Hellman first wrote "The Children's Hour", it was a smash success on Broadway. Hollywood snatched it up soon afterwards, but Industry morals dictated such drastic changes in the plot that it was scarcely recognizable. In the latest release of the film, William Wyler, who also directed the first production, has shot more closely to the script. Even this version, however, lacks the force and vitality of the original play.

Basically, the plot involves two young women teachers who are falsely accused of lesbianism by one of their students, an eight to ten year old girl. ensuing events consequently ruin both girls' lives, causing one to lose her family, and the other to take her life. It is interesting to note that in the first film production, the plot was changed so that the girl was accused one of the women of attempting to steal the other's fiancé, a change in plot which completely eliminated most of the quality of the story.

Author Hellman's play derives its force mostly from perversion of human nature, particularly the guiltlessness of the world which will accept the machinations of an eight-year-old brat as pure truth, the inability of one of the girls' fiancés to believe in her honesty, and the weakness of a fungoid monster. Tenseness pervades the whole story, while it draws from the full gamut of emotions from the audience, from disgust at the credibility, from the children's parents to abhorrence of the eight-year-old monster.

Although most of the reflected light of the critics seems to fall on Audrey Hepburn, Shirley MacLaine stole the acting laurels as far as I am concerned. Straying far from her usual singing roles, Miss MacLaine gave an emotionally-wrought performance worthy of an Oscar. The role was written for her and her playing of the monster, her making up lies, blackmailing her playmates, and per

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