



Lillian Hellman: An Imperious Life (Jewish Lives)

Dorothy Gallagher

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Glamorous, talented, audacious—Lillian Hellman knew everyone, did everything, had been everywhere. By the age of twenty-nine she had written *The Children's Hour*, the first of four hit Broadway plays, and soon she was considered a member of America's first rank of dramatists, a position she maintained for more than twenty-five years. Apart from her literary accomplishments—eight original plays and three volumes of memoirs—Hellman lived a rich life filled with notable friendships, controversial political activity, travel, and love affairs, most importantly with Dashiell Hammett. But by the time she died, the truth about her life and works had been called into question. Scandals attached to her name, having to do with sex, with money, and with her own veracity.

Dorothy Gallagher confronts the conundrum that was Lillian Hellman—a woman with a capacity to inspire outrage as often as admiration. Exploring Hellman's leftist politics, her Jewish and Southern background, and her famous testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee, Gallagher also undertakes a new reading of Hellman's carefully crafted memoirs and plays, in which she is both revealed and hidden. Gallagher sorts through the facts and the myths, arriving at a sharply drawn portrait of a woman who lived large to the end of her remarkable life and never backed down from a fight.

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