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Female Bonding as a form of female resistance in Susan Glaspell's Play *Trifles*

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Letter of Recommendation

Mrs. Shusma Gautam has completed his thesis on “Female Bonding as a form of female resistance in Susan Glaspell’s Play *Trifles*” under my supervision. She carried out her research paper from Jan 2015 to August 2015. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Female Bonding as a form of female resistance in Susan Glaspell’s Play *Trifles*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Shusma Gautam has been approved by the undersigned members of research committee.

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Abstract

This thesis makes an analysis of Susan Glaspell's play *Trifles*. This research tries to illustrate the stereotypical gender differences that are comprehensively presented in *Trifles*, and discuss the evolution of the concept of the female detective triggered by the changes in stereotypical gender roles. It also raises highly problematic questions about the appreciation of female intelligence, the lack of respect and mistreatment of women, as well as those aspects of marriage concerning physical and emotional isolation and dependence. It engages the ideas from the works of Simon de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, Gilbert and Gubar.

Susan Glaspell presents in *Trifles* forms of nurturing sisterhood, that is, a friendship based on sincere commitment. She expresses and exposes the injustice, agony, pain, and sufferings of the people who are unnoticed and ignored. It talks about the female solidarity to resist the patriarchal oppression. Mrs. Wright murders her husband to free herself from the domination since her marriage. To protect Mrs. Wright two female characters Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters form a tie and hide the evidences of Mrs. Wright's murder. Female bonding challenges the norms and conventions of patriarchal society.

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I. Recognizing Exploitation and Female Resistance in *Trifles*

This research focuses on Susan Glaspell's play *Trifles* show how hierarchies are constructed on the issues of sex and sexual identity in 1920s American society.

Employing the lead of the feminism, the research argues that the play dramatizes the female bonding as a final solution to the unfair treatment towards female. Through the bond between the women, this play shows how binaries can be brought to the end.

Susan Glaspell's play *Trifles* is about two women discovering the real reason why Mrs. Wright murdered her husband, they discovered it by just worrying over what the men called trifles. Mrs. Wright lived a lonely life. She was isolated and depressed. In the play, two women, Mrs. Peter and Mrs. Hale gradually uncover the motive for a murder, while their male counterpart are blinded by ignorance and insensitivity.

The play involves a murder investigation, John Wright has been found strangled in his bed and his wife, Minnie Wright has been suspected of committing the murder. The play is about repression of Minnie by her husband and expression of sympathetic feelings of two female, questioning traditions regarding the males' role. It is a story of courage of Minnie to murder her husband for freedom. It is a story of integrity and finding a voice of the voiceless. A woman is accused of parricide and playwright uses an investigation, by women characters, into the murder to present a feminist exploration of the condition of women's lives in a patriarchal society.

Glaspell stages her heroine in a power struggle with patriarchy which emphasized the domestication of women as a source of security for the welfare of the household. According to mainstream culture, maintaining traditional feminine behavior was often imagined as important in the stability of the home. If such tradition is not observed it

often leads to disastrous consequences as in the example of Mrs. Wright. The house, closely identified with women and their environment, becomes important as a location of the domestic struggle. However, the violence in the Wright's home undermines old-fashioned perceptions that blame inappropriate female conduct as the reason behind the destruction of a stable home.

Glaspell recognizes the gender dichotomy and demonstrates an empathy with it in her work. The presence of the female sphere determines the perception and the concept of justice as well, and it sheds light on stereotypical differences between the sexes. How the interpretation of actual situations is influenced by the learned behavioral patterns of women and men. It subscribes them to their stereotypical roles defined by their social realities. Simon de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* argues that "in accordance with the universal rule I have stated the categories in which men think of the world are established from their point of view, as absolute: they misconceive reciprocity, here as everywhere. A mystery for man, woman is considered to be mysterious in essence".

This play is a crime story that offer opportunity to observe gender confrontation in the issues of identifying and interpreting clues. It raises the questions of justice and morality. This research tries to illustrate the stereotypical gender differences that are comprehensively presented in *Trifles*, and discuss the evolution of the concept of the female detective generated by the changes in stereotypical gender roles.

Susan Glaspell's play focuses on the themes of social boundaries, gender-based differences of perception and the question of truth versus justice. It also raises highly problematic questions about the appreciation of female intelligence, the lack of respect

and mistreatment of women. It deals with those aspects of marriage concerning physical and emotional isolation and dependence.

Susan Glaspell used domestic violence as a motif to arouse questions concerning motives that lead women, who are relegated to the house, to become physical aggressors. In *Trifles*, the simple farmhouse which appears as a background to this domestic violence situation becomes an instrument that directs the audience not to condemn the wife for the crime. The motive displayed through the careful inspection of the domestic space reveals a life of abuse. Mrs. Wright wanted to play a greater role than the ones prescribed by the society. She is portrayed as rebelling against traditional roles especially marriage.

The nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of several prominent female literary figures, such as Kate Chopin and Fanny Fern. Chopin and Fern wrote about the inequality of the sexes and the inability of women to live their own lives without reliance on men. Susan Glaspell, who struggled with similar themes and concerns, inherited a rich legacy from these women. Glaspell began to write openly about women's issues. Glaspell questioned the traditional gender roles, both in her life and in her writing. Linda Ben-Zvi in her article "‘Murder, She Wrote’: The Genesis of Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*" writes

Glaspell herself was a founding member of heterodoxy, a racial group of women activists who were prominent in the feminist movement of New York in the year 1910-1920. It was within this atmosphere Glaspell found encouragement for her interest in creating female characters who desired to free themselves from the stereotypical roles into which they had been cast. (160-161)

Susan Glaspell was socially and politically active and played an important role, as part of the Provincetown Players, in staging plays that deal with women, their problems and their environment.

Glaspell belongs to a radical group that believed in the new thought and opposed conservative, small town politics. Glaspell's dissatisfaction with the state of the theater's inability to challenge the audience prompted her enthusiasm for experimenting in the theatre.

Glaspell participates in the canon of literature and brings attention to the female issue of subordination. She is challenging the literature that was dominated by males. American literature in Glaspell's time was dominated by male. Glaspell shatters this. She is participating in a genre of art that was viewed as predominantly male. Also, she not only gave her female characters a participatory role, they had the most important role, while the men were secondary and almost needles.

Ben-Zvi writes Glaspell's play *Trifles* besides joining to this mainstream phenomenon of presenting murder stories definitely has a gender- based social conflict in its centre, because "women who kill evoke fear because they challenge societal constructs of femininity, passivity, restraint and nurture, thus the rush to isolate and label the female offender, to cauterize the act. Her behavior must be aberrant, or crazed of it is to be explicable." (141). since Glaspell was deeply influenced by feminist ideas, the motif of the female murderer in her interpretation became interwoven with social issues concerning the status and boundaries of women in a patriarchal society. Thus, one of the main themes of *Trifles* is the problematization of social boundaries on the level of the female characters of the play.

Breaking all the norms, conventions and the confinements of the society, Minnie Wright's murders her husband. The play takes place in kitchen, the domestic sphere, and everything around reveal the lives of women. The play involves a murder investigation, John Wright has been found strangled in his bed, and his wife, Minnie, has been suspected of committing the murder. These two main characters never appear in the play; instead, the play focuses on the county attorney, George Henderson, who has been called into investigate the murder; Henry Peters, the local sheriff; Lewis Hale, a neighboring farmer; and Mrs. Peter and Mrs. Hale, wives to the two local men. While these three men were busy in searching the clues, the two women discover bits of evidence in the trifles the suspect wife left in her kitchen: baking, cleaning and sewing. Because the men ignore the women's world, they remain blind to the truth, which is in front of their eyes. Women use their intelligence to subvert the law and affect justice; women have a different kind of power. Women's power, subtle and indirect, is one of the important element. Bonding is the manifestation of women's strength.

Glaspell writes at a time when the boundaries between the private and public spheres were beginning to break down. Women are caught in a position of liminality for they were neither completely domesticated nor fully accepted in the marketplace. The theme of the play is therefore, a longing for freedom no matter what befalls upon. The quest of freedom is not given up even if it cost the life of one's husband.

The whole play takes place in the farmhouse where Minnie Wright spends her life, day in and day out. Her own home represents her isolation from the rest of the world. It represents her loneliness, repetitive housework, married life and her life in general. The setting of the play reveals the lives of women since it takes place in a kitchen, the

domestic sphere. The research tries to explore the oppressed life of Minnie and her rebellious act of killing her husband for solitude, for freedom.

Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters conceal the pieces of evidence. They probably have complex reason: first of all because of compassion. Secondly because they fear, that Mrs. Wright may not get a fair trial in front of a jury composed only of men. And lastly they might wish to strike back to the men, to control a situation in a world dominated by men, by secretly displaying some power over them.

The play has been responded in various ways since it is released. Many critics had criticized the movie from their own perspectives. Karen Alkalay-Gut, in “Jury of Her Peers: The Importance of Trifles,” also finds the gulf between male and female perceptions of judgment to be central to the play. Alkalay-Gut believes that

the unfolding evidence not only unites the women, but highlights the division between woman’s concept of justice, which entails social and individual influences, together with the details that shaped the specific act and the prevailing law which is general and therefore inapplicable to the specific case. As the distance between the laws of the kitchen and the outside world increases, the women realize that the breach negates the possibility of a fair trial for Minnie Wright. (9)

Here in this research, the researcher has tried to bring forth the patriarchal discrimination. Throughout the play the female characters are not given much importance. The self-claimed male superiority denied the role of women character in the investigation of the murder. The bird and the bird’s cage reveal the mystery of the murder but the male just ignored it calling it trifles.

An entirely different path is taken by Linda Ben-Zvi, who, in “Murder, she wrote: The Genesis of Susan Glaspell’s *Triffles*,” asserts that *Triffles* is less on innate gender disparities than on assigned gender roles. Suggesting that their common erasure provides the impetus for woman’s actions, not women’s natures, she believes the question of guilt or innocence is irrelevant; what is on trial in the play is female disenfranchisement” (157).

Women during the time of Glaspell were deprived of the right to vote. Even in the case of profession they were not permitted to serve on juries. The two female characters of the play Mrs Peter and Mrs. Hale concealed the motives of the murder. Since women were deprived of the right to vote or the right to serve on juries, Glaspell’s women have taken the right for themselves. Thus, the female enactment of judicial power subverts traditional concept of law and justice.

Marsha Noe’s *Reconfiguring the Subject/Recuperating Realism: Susan Glaspell’s Unseen Woman* which makes the ultimate statement on the indeterminate status of women in Glaspell’s world by focusing on Minnie’s absence.

The dramatic device of a protagonist who is present only by implication centers attention on woman and the ways in which the patriarchy marginalizes her. The absent woman makes a mockery of male authority; not only does she elude the male gaze, and, consequently, his control, but she calls into question the andocentric judicial system. (38)

Glaspell shows the judicial system of the then society and makes her characters to take the role of judges. Glaspell calls into question the andocentric judicial system. She makes Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale the judge to justify Mrs. Wright’s act of murdering her

husband. They trace the chain of cause-and-effect behind Minnie's action before assigning guilt. Minnie being alienated from her husband, powerless and silenced by her marriage is an unseen woman long before she murders John Wright. There are conflicts between law and justice in *Trifles*.

Veronica Makowsky, in *Susan Glaspell's Century of American Women: A Critical Interpretation of Her Work*, sees the conflicts between law and justice in *Trifles*. According to Makowsky, Minnie's actions afterward "indicate the ineffectual nature of her act"; her voluntary removal from the center of the kitchen to the fringes of the room seems to be self-punishment, an awareness of "her marginalized and outlaw status; she realizes that men still have overwhelming power. Minnie, who ends imprisoned, reflects Glaspell's uneasiness with women who seek autonomy. Law triumphs over justice" (55).

As a methodological tool, the research has taken the lead of feminist leading works of Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, Gilbert and Gubar *The Madwomen in the Attic*. In this research the researcher has attempted to show how the women have been exploited by so called male based society and their effort to avoid all binaries for the equal right and prosperity. Throughout history, women have always struggled to gain equality, respect and the same rights as men. The patriarchal ideology has permeated the social structures of societies throughout the world and as a result women are still struggling for rights that most men take for granted.

In patriarchal society, a man seems to say that to be true woman; she must accept herself as other. So, to come out of her anxious life and to create her position, every woman should fight against the autocratic patriarchal society. In order to seek for their identity and the place where they should be treated as equal to man, feminism and

feminist theory was born. Glaspell seems to come up with appeal for women to come out of their anxious life and to create their position every woman should fight against the autocratic patriarchal society.

Feminism is all about giving agency and voice to the female. It emerged to deconstruct the boundary of hierarchy and marginalization created by male to establish a sense of equality between male and female, providing them equal opportunity as male. Feminism came out to ensure the rights of female, the right to live life on their own. It is a perspective that appeared against the patriarchy to uplift marginalized and other women by subverting male based society. Drucella Cornell in his book *At the Heart of Freedom* says:

Feminism refers to political, cultural, and economic movement aimed at establishing greater right and legal protections for women. Feminism includes some of the sociological theories and philosophies concerned with issues of gender difference. It is also a movement that campaigns for women's rights and interests. (34)

Feminism involves various movements/ theories and philosophies, all concerned with issues of gender difference that advocate equalities for women and that campaign for women's rights and interests. Feminist critics attempt to explain women's situation, to understand gender asymmetry, or to understand unequal distributions of privileges and power using gender as an element of their analysis.

Feminism strives to demolish patriarchal society's norms and values which are against the nature. Feminism is all about a wide ranging complaints against the patriarchal monopoly. It emphasizes on economic and political equality of women and

revolt against gender roles, stereotypes and discrimination against women laid down by patriarchy based on the presuppositions that women are irrational, fragile, and submissive.

Kate Millett writes in the introduction to a revised edition of her feminist classic *Sexual Politics* that her purpose in writing the work was to restate and reestablish the fact of institution built on status, temperament, and role, a socially conditioned belief system presenting itself as nature or necessity. Historical patriarchy in modern terms and for my generation, to see it is political.

Feminism is not a homogeneous and singular concept but is rather a multidimensional and diverse grouping of heterogeneous ideas that are often contradictory to each other. However diverse the ideas may be, all are concerned with women's inferior positions in society and the discrimination faced by them because of the social, economic, political or cultural order, the evolution of numerous distinct forms of feminism includes many concepts of women's suffocation and sufferings.

Feminist raised questions about why women are being forced into a position of subordination, and their affairs looked at with marginal importance. Susan Glaspell's play *Trifles* depicts the plight of women and their subordination while subversively commenting on the negative effect this had on the female psyche.

Trifles provides a solution to many of the inherent problems the feminist scholars bring to light. She writes about the alienation of women and how a patriarchal society is silencing. Women's voices are not heard and when they are, their opinions and concerns are dismissed, regardless of their importance. Glaspell uses the relationship between her male and female characters to exemplify this. She challenges the notion of the male

writer point of view in that she, simply by writing and challenging, is taking on the male characteristic of action as opposed to silence. She also plays with the duality of the notion of woman, angel and devil. She constructs a character that could be seen as the angel and devil, but subversively comments on society pushing the woman into these roles they find so disagreeable. This further leads into the idea of constructionist and essentialist where girls identities are constructed while boys are innate, causing a future of oppressive relationships.

Finally, talking about the chapter divisions, the study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is the introduction that has tried to introduce the issue and the hypothesis of the study to show the appropriation of its hypothesis as the workable one for the research project. It gives the brief introduction of the whole project with some information about the play, its scholarly criticisms and theory through which the study will be conducted. The second chapter is the textual analysis which gives the overview of the actual reading of the play through the feminist insight the issues of gender and race; here the various theorists are taken into account to bring for the marginalized and silenced voice of the play. While the third chapter is the conclusion of the entire research that restates the finding of the study.

II. Female Tie Against Patriarchal Suppression in *Trifles*

Women's common experience of oppression urges them to form bonds in order to fight back the impact of class and gender. Female friendship helps women counteract the effect of patriarchy. Female bonding provides them with comfort, security and even healing. Female bonding draws the attention of some theorists who analyze and examine women's relationships and the different challenges facing them. Feminist theory must take into account the forces maintaining the survival of women as well as those that maintain the subordination of women. A theory of female friendship is meant to give form, expression, and reality to the ways in which women have been living.

Susan Glaspell presents in *Trifles* forms of nurturing sisterhood, that is, a friendship based on sincere commitment. She expresses and exposes the injustice, agony, pain, and sufferings of the people who are unnoticed and ignored. Her works deal with the plight of women living in the patriarchal society. The form of sisterhood usually extends to female solidarity, which involves more women benefit from this care and nurturing. Although female friendship heals wounds resulting from prejudice and secures women's survival, it faces various challenges that threaten its accomplishments.

Glaspell's play describes the plight of women who suffer different forms of oppression and portrays female friendship as a strategy for fighting back against prejudice. It demonstrates that women can fight the attempts to subjugate them and succeed into overcoming and surviving.

The play *Trifles* written by Susan Glaspell attempts to break the hierarchies of patriarchy through the different characters. The play portrays the patriarchal discrimination of the American society in 1920s. Minnie Wright, the major character of

the play tries to break the convention of patriarchy by killing her own husband. She dares freedom even in the cost of the life of her husband. The tie among the female characters becomes the keystone of the play. Female bonding offers a way out to raise their head against the patriarchal subjugation and energy to fight against the law and system of society making their survival possible. Throughout the play female characters are protesting against the patriarchal domination. Female bonding can be found as the strong weapon against every sort of discrimination.

Living with a cold, silent husband, who will not let her wife communicate with others, must have been really difficult for a cheerful woman like Minnie Wright. For years she endured this subordinate, emotionally murderous state, and possibly has never rebelled against her husband's will. But when she bought canary, she revolted against the tyrannical control of John Wright, what he could not endure. The bird was able to bring some happiness into Minnie's life, the very thing John Wright was unable to do, and realizing his failure might have made him even more bitter and cold. One would imagine that the anger caused by his own incapability of happiness, and the noise the canary made that irritated him so much, might lead to a violent quarrel, when John Wright killed the bird.

The accused woman does not appear on stage and is only introduced through a careful scrutiny of her kitchen. The play stages two women, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale, in Mrs. Wright's private home in charge of providing Mrs. Wright with some of her personal items while she awaits trial. Mrs. Hale repeatedly voices her indignation at the sheriff and the other men, who were intruding on the woman's privacy. "You know it

seems kind of sneaking. Locking her up in town and then coming out here and trying to get her own house to turn against her!” (9).

However the story does not say whether Minnie has actually witnessed the strangling of her bird, only to enter into another reverie. As a result of this sudden traumatic event she suffered a psychological trauma. When something terrible happens to us suddenly time seems to stop. The physical world, our surrounding becomes a queer setting, everything seems surreal. This altered state of consciousness is a passive response to a trauma, often characterized by an emotional numbness, when clear thinking may be difficult or impossible. Mr. Hale noted about Minnie Wright.

HALE: I didn't hear or see anything; I knocked at the door, and it was all quiet inside. I knew they must be up, it was past eight o'clock. So I knocked again, and I thought I heard somebody say, 'Come in.' I wasn't sure, I'm not sure yet, but I opened the door— this door and there in that rocker— sat Mrs. Wright

COUNTY ATTORNEY: What—was she doing?

HALE: was rocking back and forth. She had her apron in her hand was kind of —pleating it.

HALE: Well, she looked queer.(2-3)

Trifles is a play which revolves around a study of the confining environments that frustrate the full development of human potential It reveals the complexities of women's lives and subverts assumed notions of women's social powerlessness.

In Minnie Wright's case the strangling of the canary was so deeply carved in her mind, that it was rather necessary to kill his husband in the same way. The day he killed

the canary determined the fate of John Wright, although I think when she killed him, Minnie Wright was not acting out of pain, or anger. She seems as if she is not having any regret when she strangled her husband. After she killed John Wright she did not try to escape.

HALE: Why, I don't think she minded—one way or other. She didn't pay much attention. I said, 'How do, Mrs Wright it's cold, ain't it?' And she said, 'Is it?'—and went on kind of pleating at her apron. I said ' I want to see John.' And then she—laughed. I guess you would call it a laugh. . . . Can't I see John?' 'No', she says, kind o' dull like. 'Ain't he home?' says I. 'Yes', says she, 'he's home'. 'Then why can't I see him?' I asked her, out of patience. "Cause he's dead", says she. 'Dead?' says I. She just nodded her head, not getting a bit excited, but rocking back and forth. 'Why—where is he?' says I, not knowing what to say. She just pointed upstairs—like that I got up with the idea of going up there. I walked from there to here—then says, 'Why, what did he die of?' ' He died of a rope round his neck', says she, and just went on pleating at her apron. (3)

Mrs. Hale or Mrs. Peters realize that they are alike Minnie Wright, only born to be slightly luckier. Being in the same female sphere, they share a common fate, and this sense of community gives them encourage to oppose traditional, conceptual law, and follow their own female law. From the point of view of the abused housewife the murder can be justified. There are not only two ways of understanding a story but also two ways

of understanding justice as well— Stephen in his article “Gender Ideology and Dramatic Convention in Progressive Era Plays 1890-1920” writes

Women have a certain knowledge or wisdom that men do not want or value. By their decision, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters disrupt or subvert conventional law, but they maintain the image of moral leaders by adhering to an alternate or “higher” moral code. Conventionally as women and men have very different perspectives, the way they handle information is also dissimilar, just as their concept of morality and justice. (53)

In the case of Minnie Wright law is one thing, and justice is another Minnie Wright murdered her husband, which was a crime, but John Wright systematically and slowly murdered Minnie Wright. Stephen further writes

Law is never equal with justice or with morals, but it is a traditionally accepted language, that reflects on power relations and social structures. Law represents the powerful public authority, governed by men, its decisions based upon facts, while morality is the immaterial, private forum for women, inside the female sphere, where decisions are made according to emotional arguments. The male dominance of the law, the court rooms and trials was such a powerful stereotype, that there is no wonder the other side of the scale, morality became identified with females, even in the theatre. (53)

Conventionally as women and men have very different perspectives, the way they handle information is also dissimilar, just as their concept of morality and justice.

Glaspell's tale of Minnie responding against the conventions that embody the fundamental values is set in early 1920s, America. *Trifles* is a one-act play that takes place in a farmhouse in rural Iowa. It is based on a real murder case when she was working as a young reporter in a newspaper and later she used the story as the basis of her play *Trifles*. The play tackled one of the important issues of that period which is the feminist perspective. The play takes place in kitchen, the domestic sphere, and everything around reveal the lives of women. The play involves a murder investigation, John Wright has been found strangled in his bed, and his wife, Minnie, has been suspected of committing the murder.

Throughout the play the difficulties of a woman to live a life on her own is being lively expressed. The research being based on the Play *Trifles*, through the perspective of strong female tie, tries unrevealing the solution of every kind of oppression. Patriarchy is portrayed as the antagonistic forces in the play where female tie is the weapon against the domination in the conflict between the oppressor and oppressive. Adrienne Rich defines patriarchy as

Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial- social, ideological, political system in which men- by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male. (12)

So far the female bonding in the play is concerned, sisterhood is found as the solid arms against the patriarchal suppression. The case of hiding the evidences of murder by Mrs. Peter and Mrs. Hale is the best example of female bonding.

This particular kind of sisterhood refers specifically to an asexual relationship between women who confide in each other and willingly share their true feelings, their fears, their hopes, and their dreams. Enjoying, understanding, and supporting each other, women friends of this sort are invaluable to each other. With such love, trust and security, it is difficult to imagine any woman without such a genuine support system as that found in genuine sisterhood.

The patriarchal domination that has been rooted from the time immemorial has given the women the ideal model. The ideal model that is projected for a woman is to be surrounded by hypocritical homage and estranged from all real work spending idle hours primping and preening, obsessed with conspicuous consumption, and limiting life's functions to simply a sex role. A woman who stays at home, caring for children and the house often leads an extremely sterile existence. Her interests and her understanding of the world become her own and she cannot develop herself as an individual, having been reduced to only a biological function. The married women are determined to live inside their house.

Patriarchy at the beginning is an ownership of a particular sex but it gradually spreads its areas of suppression and gives birth to other forms of suppression. Initially, in patriarchies there are division of role in the house and then the clash in different spheres such as community, class, rank and finally the state occurs. Patriarchy is the source from which all sorts of discrimination originate. Kate Millet in *Sexual Politics* writes "Patriarchy was accompanied by ownership of persons, beginning with women and progressing to other form of slavery, the institutions of class, caste, rank, ruling and

propertied classes, the steady development of an unequally distributed wealth, and finally the state” (156).

Glaspell presents marriage as problematic in her play. This patriarchal agent causes women much trouble by keeping them oppressed. The lack of a stable couple in Mrs. Wright demonstrates the failure of marriage. This failure raises the question about the stability of marriage. These experiences encourage women to free themselves from oppressive unions and assert themselves as free women. As the play point out the suffering and injustice women face in marriage, they also denounce the overall oppression exercised on them. Glaspell writes

MRS HALE: Not having children makes less work—but it makes a quiet house and Wright out to work all day, and no company when he did come in. Did you know John Wright, Mrs. Peters?

MRS PETERS: Not to know him; I’ve seen him in town. They say he was a good man.

MRS HALE: Yes— good; he didn’t drink, and kept his word as well as most, I guess, and paid his debts. But he was a hard man, Mrs. Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him—Like a raw wind that gets to the bone. (11)

These different forms of oppression urge women to form bonds in order to fight back. Indeed, female friendship allows women to face adversity and challenge the attempts to subjugate them. Glaspell acknowledges the potentiality of female friendship and encourages women to make connections in order to fight patriarchy. The successful sisterhood relationships she portrays reflect her stand on female bonding.

Power has a lot to do with why these social divisions exist and are maintained. In the case of gender, men are in general benefit from this social division. Men are given more access, more privilege, and more value. A man must be masculine to climb up the ladder of hierarchy. A primary masculine trait that upholds patriarchy is domination. Masculinity does not necessarily involve domination, but domination is a highly valued masculine trait. Patriarchy allows and encourages men in general to control things that are deemed weaker or lower in the hierarchy. Patriarchy has the tendency of othering female. Simon de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* writes

There are different kinds of myths. This one, the myth of woman, an immutable aspect of the human condition—namely the division of static myth. It projects into the realm of Platonic ideas a reality that is directly experienced or is conceptualized on a basis of experience; in place of fact, value, significance, knowledge, empirical law, it substitutes a transcendental idea, timeless, unchangeable, necessary.

In the play *Trifles*, men stay at the top of the hierarchical pyramid where they possess every power to dominate others. Men are searching for evidences to prove Mrs. Wright as a murderer of her husband. Mrs. Wright is kept in a custody and is not given chance to clarify the cause. Male characters are preoccupied with the logic that Mrs. Wright is the murderer. What sort of justice and fair trial one waits out of such system?

From tradition women are born to get married though they don't want to get. Every moment they have to answer every questions poured from the unknown too. But in this play Mrs. Wright act rebelliously. She tastes the sweet of freedom even if it costs the

life of her own husband. Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale, who share the same predicament too reject the prevailing system and deny giving the clue of the evidences they found.

Glaspell's interest in the depiction of domestic violence in *Triples* shows her feminist ideals of advocating female bonding and her professionalism as a journalist who tries to be objective in portraying murder. Glaspell as a playwright has clearly pointed out the dichotomy between men and women in rural life and the two women, with their sense of higher purpose, band together to protect another woman from what is clearly the injustice of man's law when applied to women. Glaspell made her character play the role in the criminality by making Minnie Wright's to murder her husband for freedom.

Thus, for the women the only possible avenue for struggle is through bonding together as several critics have noted. This play serves to unite woman in sisterhood when confronted by male oppression. It evokes fear because the female acceptable codes are broken the women's transgressions becomes a theatrical thrill because a murderer tests society's established boundaries.

Sisterhood as a female bonding is the crucial part of the play. Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale share the bond of sisterhood with Mrs. Wright. This female-female relationship prepares a ground to revolt against the patriarchal norms and values. So, they hide the evidences of the murder which male are searching. They internalize the pains of Mrs. Wright as their own and empathizes her. A bond of sisterhood brings all women under the same umbrella. Female bonding is the strong weapon to get victory over. If women are genuine for the struggle to improve the lives of all women, then they have to assume their responsibility for eliminating all sorts of repression. And this assumption can be fulfilled by the female tie.

The discriminations that are presented in the play bear the struggles, the struggle of a woman to live on her own. And the very struggles are necessary part of uniting women in a bond called sisterhood. However, the bond of sisterhood works effectively to save one another's existence.

Ann Judith in *Sisterhood is Powerful* explores the importance of collectivity of power. Instead of fighting in isolation, she advises to gather the power in one form to protest against the suppressions. She writes:

What we must do now is resist collectively instead of in isolation. We can pool our financial resources to reduce the danger of summary firings; we can share our child-rearing responsibilities to free each other's time for action. We can support each other emotionally and become sisters in oppression and, finally, in victory. (110)

Judith urges every woman to support each other emotionally to fight against the domination. The moral support will lead them towards victory.

Female bonding renders one sure way of bringing about ultimate success, for the sharing of one's life experiences often gives what is needed for that success. Where there is a coming together of body, mind, and spirit, there is victory. The mutual support and sharing provide an opportunity to learn, grow and take advantage of the exchange.

Female friendship is non-sexual relationship between women base on giving and receiving emotional and moral support, sharing stories and experiences, caring and nurturing each other. This form of relationship may occur between any women and does not necessarily involve sibling or mother-daughter relationships. Women friends provide for each other dependability that goes beyond the concern of self and aims at reaching out

to sisters in an attempt to help and elevate them. Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale use their friendship to hide evidences of the murder of Mr. Wright. Their act of concealing the evidences results in the failure of the male to find the evidences of Mr. Wright murderer.

Their eyes meet. A look of growing comprehension, of horror. Steps are heard outside. Mrs. Hale slips box under quilt pieces, and sinks into her chair.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Well ladies, have you decided whether she was going to quilt it or knot it?

MRS PETERS: We think she was going to—knot it. (14)

The bonding of Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale help them to fight insecurities. Their rebellious act against male domination becomes stronger with the common bond and commitment. This bonding helps them build and strengthen their self-esteem. These women friends not only share and support each other but try to help their fellow bonds; they may not even believe in feminist principles, but their experiences or environment urge them toward female solidarity.

MRS PETERS: We mustn't —take on.

MRS HALE: I might have known she needed help! I know things can be —for women. I tell you, it's queer, Mrs. Peters. We live close together and we live far apart. We all go through the same things—it's all just a different kind of the same thing.

The play shows that suppressed characters try to find out a way thereby presents a challenge to the domination or dominant ideology, whether it is racism or patriarchy or something else, for their identity and existence. When the suppression reaches at its

climax then the suppressed people search the way out of it. In the play *Trifles* the female characters criticize male for intruding in the kitchen. Mrs. Hale repeatedly voices her indignation at the sheriff and the other men, who were intruding on the woman's privacy. Glaspell in *Trifles* writes:

MRS. HALE : Well I don't see any signs of anger around here.

Wonder how they are finding things upstairs. I hope she had it a little more red-up there. You know, it seems kind of sneaking.

Locking her up in town and then coming out here and trying to get her own house to turn against her!" .

MRS. PETERS: But Mrs. Hale, the law is the law. (11)

The title of the play *Trifles*, is a symbol reflecting how men view women. A "trifle" is something that is small, of little value or importance or of no consequence. Throughout the play, Glaspell uses dialogue which allows us to see the demeaning view the men have for the women.

MRS PETERS: (to the other woman) Oh, her fruit; it did freeze, (to the LAWYER) She worried about that when it turned so cold. She said the fire'd go out and her jars would break.

SHERIFF: Well, can you beat the women! Held for murder and worryin' about her preserves.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I guess before we're through she may have something more serious than preserves to worry about.

HALE: Well, women are used to worrying over trifles. (8)

Men are trivializing the many tasks and details that women are responsible for. The irony of the play is that while the men are running around looking for clues the women have discovered the key to the mystery among what the men consider silly women's work. In his ignorance of how crucial women's duties are, he implies their unimportance. In the former reference to his and to the sheriff's wives, Mr. Hale presents the argumentative conflict that will prove prevalent throughout the course of the play. Beauvoir argues that there is struggle between male and female in the mission of being essential. In *The Second Sex* she writes

Through eroticism, love, friendship, and their alternatives, deception, hate, rivalry, the relation is a struggle between conscious beings each of whom wishes to be essential, it is the mutual recognition of free beings who confirm one another's freedom; it is the vague transition from aversion to participation. To pose woman is to pose the absolute other without reciprocity, denying against all experience that she is a subject, a fellow human being.

In the description of the opening scene of the play, Glaspell mentions that the abandoned kitchen of John Wright is gloomy and "left without having been put in order . . . unwashed pans under the sink, a loaf of bread outside the breadbox, a dish towel on the table-- other signs of incomplete work".(7)

Isolationism is an important clue in the murder case. Mrs. Wright's farmhouse is located in a hollow, down in the woods, which puts her in a secluded place. Mr. Hale came to talk to Mr. Wright about a "party telephone"

HALE: Harry and I had started to town with a load of potatoes. We came along the road from my place and as I got here I said, I'm going to see if I can't get John Wright to go in with me on a party telephone. I spoke to Wright about it once before and he put me off, saying folks talked too much anyway, and all he asked was peace and quiet—I guess you know about how much he talked himself; but I thought maybe if I went to the house and talked about it before his wife, though I said to Harry that I didn't know as what his wife wanted made much difference to John—” (8)

This is an example of how Mr. Wright did not want himself and his wife to have contact with anyone in town. The image of the “party telephone” is a very significant symbol because of its relation to the question of justice. This matter unfolds at the end of the play where Mrs. Hale learns that the “greater crime... is to cut oneself off from understanding and communicating with others, and in this context John Wright is the greater criminal and his wife the helpless executioner.

With the entrance of the five characters of the play, the women seem less acquainted and never call each other by their first names. But when the men made their first disparaging remarks about Minnie's housekeeping and women's “worrying over trifles”(8). This movement is a symbol of the women's bond, which will be indicated with the word “knot” later at the end of the play.

(HALE goes outside. The SHERIEF follows the COUNTY into the other room. Then MRS HALE rises, hands tight together, looking intensely at MRS PETERS, whose eyes make a slow turn, finally meeting MRS

HALE's . A moment MRS HALE holds her, then her own eyes point the way to where the box is concealed. Suddenly MRS PETERS throws back quilt pieces and tries to put the box in the bag she is wearing. It is too big. She opens box, starts to take bird out, cannot touch it, goes to pieces, stands there helpless. Sound of a knob turning in the other room. MRS HALE snatches the box and puts it in the pocket of her big coat.)

Glaspell undercuts the authority and questions the power of male. The men enter and leave the room. Ben- Zvi writes "Physically crisscross the stage as they verbally crisscross the details of the crime, both actions leading nowhere, staged to show ineffectuality and incompetence" (155).

After the men have made a cursory search of the Wright kitchen determining that there was nothing of importance, "[n]othing here but kitchen things,"(4) Henderson, the County Attorney, washes his hands at the sink. Glaspell then writes:

COUNTY ATTORNEY: (...[Henderson] washes his hands.

Starts to wipe them on the roller-towel, turns it for a cleaner place.)

Dirty towels! (kicks his foot against the pans under the sink.) Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?

MRS. HALE: (stiffly) There's great deal of work to be done on a farm.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: To be sure. And yet (with a little bow to her) I know there are some Dickson country farmhouses which do not have such roller towels. (He gives it a pull to expose its length again.)

MRS. HALE: Those towels get dirty awful quick. Men's hands aren't always as clean as they might be. (38)

Henderson then asks Mrs. Hale about her relationship with her neighbor, Minnie Wright, and why they seldom visit each other. Was it because Mrs. Hale did not like Mrs. Wright? Hale answers:

MRS. HALE: I liked her all well enough. Farmers' wives have their hands full, Mr. Henderson. And then-

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Yes-?

MRS. HALE: (looking about) It never seemed a very cheerful place.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: No-it's not cheerful. I shouldn't say she had the homemaking instinct.

MRS. HALE: Well, I don't know as Wright had, either. (4-5)

Henderson, the actual and symbolic agent of the law, prescribes a patriarchal social narrative of farmers' wives with "homemaking instinct[s]" while ignoring the actual conditions the women often work under and his own double standard. He dirties his hands, and then criticizes Mrs. Wright for having a dirty roller-towel in her kitchen. He kicks the pans beneath sink, disturbing their storage, and then observes that Mrs. Wright was a housekeeper. Mrs. Hale, drawing from her own experience, challenges Henderson's narrative construction with her own. She points out that husbands are equally responsible for the cleanliness and cheerfulness of a home. Henderson ignores her alternative. In fact, it is important to note that the men consistently ridicule the women's concerns and trivialize their work-and the women are acutely aware of this.

Taking the name of the husband is also important in *Trifles*. Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters are not given first names. The role that society has cast them in is one that is defined by their husbands. Mrs. Peters, who is married to the sheriff, is viewed in those terms, not as an individual.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I guess they're not very dangerous things the ladies have picked out. (Moves a few things about, disturbing the quilt pieces which cover the box. Steps back) No, Mrs. Peters doesn't need supervising. For that matter, a sheriff's wife is married to the law. Ever think of it that way, Mrs. Peters?

MRS. PETERS: Not—just that way.

SHERIEF: Married to the law. (7)

Mrs. Peter tries to reinforce that identity until she is faced with the brutality of what John Wright did to Minnie. She says, "I know what stillness is. The law has got to punish crime, Mrs. Hale" (14). The difference is that she is talking about the crime committed against Minnie, not the murder. Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters find Minnie's birdcage in the cupboard, but they do not realize the importance of it until they find the dead bird with its neck twisted to one side.

The bird is caged just as Minnie is trapped in the abusive relationship with John. Alkalay - Gut in "Jury of Her Peers: The Importance of Trifles" asserts that John Wright figuratively strangles the life out of Minnie like he literally strangles the bird. Minnie understood her husband's action as a symbolic strangling of herself ... It is not just because he killed the bird, but because Minnie herself was a caged bird... and he strangled her by preventing her from communicating with others (6). When John kills the

bird, he kills the last bit of Minnie, and he makes a mistake in doing so. The broken birdcage that was found is one of the most profound symbols in the play because it represents Minnie's liberation from John. Just like the bird, Minnie has now freed herself from John by killing him. The broken birdcage represents Minnie's freedom from the restrictive role of Mrs. Wright. Once she is free she takes her revenge for all of the years of abuse and oppression. She strangles the life out of John like he strangled her spirit and her bird. The birdcage metaphor also represents the role of women in society; the bird being woman and the cage is the male dominated society.

Glaspell paints not only a picture of Minnie's life with John, but by extension the lives of all women who live oppressed under male domination. In *Trifles*, the male characters are regarded as intellectually superior to their wives, who are patronized as rather childish for their concern in domestic detail. But, as a matter of fact, Glaspell makes a feminist leap as she portrays her female characters with such an ample cunning to secretly and humbly triumph over male prejudice.

There are evidences that prove the Mrs. Wright's motives to kill her husband and to escape from imprisonment. The two women stand together away from the men, which immediately puts the men against the women. Mrs. Hale's and Mrs. Peters' treatment from the men in the play is reflective of the beliefs of that time. These women aware of the powerless slot that has been made for them, manage to use their power which enables them to succeed in protecting Minnie, the, accused wife. Such a premise defines women through masculine precepts and confirms the male value system, authenticating the power of the public sphere by the perceived need to replicate it.. Bonding is both a manifestation

of women's strength and its source; perhaps Glaspell wished to show the women of her time that they had more power than they realized.

Trifles embodies the problems of alienation women faced in the hands of a patriarchal society. The women's voice is silenced by the man's failure to recognize her concerns as legitimate. When presented with a concern from a woman, instead of paying attention, the men dismiss the women and their observations and silence them from speaking further. This alienates the women, placing them in a lower status.

Having come to the conclusion in solidarity with Mrs. Wright, the women finish cleaning the counter, hide the dead bird, and unravel the erratic sewing, erasing the signs so that evidence will be unavailable to the men and the law. This, in turn, has endowed them with an ethical or moral significance, their own obligation to protect Mrs. Wright from the judgment of an unjust system.

MRS PETERS: My, it's a good thing he men couldn't hear us. Wouldn't they just laugh! Getting all stirred up over a little thing like a—dead canary. As if that could have anything to do with—with—wouldn't they laugh!

(The men are heard coming down stairs.)

MRS. HALE: (under her breath) Maybe they would—maybe they wouldn't.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: No, Peters, it's all perfectly clear except a reason for doing it. But you know injuries when it comes to women. If there was some definite thing. Something to show—something to

make a story about— a thing that would connect up this strange way of doing it—”. (18)

Mrs. Hale, a neighbor who knew Minnie Wright in her youth, clearly transfers her own subjective experience to the absent woman and vice versa. For example, the men had ridiculed her concern, while in jail, for the jars of preserve in her kitchen. She had feared they would freeze in the cold of the empty farmhouse and indeed this was so:

(The COUNTY ATTORNEY, after again looking around the kitchen, opens the door of a cupboard closet. He gets up on a chair and looks on a shelf. Pulls his hand away, sticky.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: Here’s a nice mess.

(The women draw nearer.)

COUNTY ATTORNEY: I guess before we’re through she may have something more serious than preserves to worry about.

HALE: Well, women are used to worrying over trifles.”

(The two women move a little closer together.)

For Mrs. Hale, the men’s intrusion into Minnie’s kitchen becomes an intrusion into her own kitchen. “MRS. HALE: I’d hate to have men coming into my kitchen, snooping around and criticizing. (8)

Their bonding renders one sure way of bringing about ultimate success, for the sharing of one’s life experiences often gives what is needed for that success. Hence, where there is a coming together of body, mind, and spirit, there is victory.

She feels an element of unfairness in Henderson’s judgment about the roller-towel because it “[s]eems mean to talk about her [Wright] for not having things slicked up

when she had to come away in such a hurry” (8). Because she is disturbed by the men’s trivialization of Minnie Wright’s hard work, work so similar to her own, she envisions the absent Minnie Wright being similarly disturbed were she there to witness the scene herself. In the men’s absence, Mrs. Hale confides to Mrs. Peters: “She’ll [Wright] feel awful bad after her hard work in the hot weather. I remember the afternoon I put up my cherries last summer” (8).

Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peter’s movement towards each other, demonstrate the women’s awareness of the men’s encompassing critique. It is important to recognize that it is not the process of generalization which Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters find problematic. Rather, it is the chauvinist unfairness of the men’s observations and the inaccuracy of the men’s generalization which they challenge.

Mrs. Peters also empathizes with Minnie Wright through her own experiences. Discussing their discovery of Minnie’s dead pet, a bird whose neck they believe was broken by John Wright, Mrs. Peters draws upon an early experience of male cruelty which reveals her own capacity for violent retaliation and confesses it.

MRS PETERS: When I was a girl—my-kitten—there was a boy took a hatchet, and before my eyes—and before I could get there—
(covers her face an instant) If they hadn’t held me back I would have—(catches herself, looks upstairs where steps are heard, falters weakly)—hurt him.

MRS HALE: (with a slow look around her) I wonder how it would seem never to have had any children around, (pause) No, Wright

wouldn't like the bird— a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that, too. (16)

Similarly, remembering her own loneliness as a homesteader and the death of her first child, she empathizes with Mrs. Wright's isolation and loneliness saying, "I know what stillness is" (7). Glaspell's inclusion of Mrs. Hale's and Mrs. Peters' personal testimony and her presentation of their immediate experience emphasizes that Minnie Wright's condition is representative of a continuum of men's cruelty towards women and their neglect of women's experiences.

Glaspell demonstrates how the men's discourse systematically devalues women's domain, their labor, and their experiences, excluding them from what constitutes the socially significant. In the men's eyes Minnie Wright's kitchen, the domestic centre of the home can contain no important clues to the murder because there is "[n]othing here but kitchen things" (8). Mrs. Wright and the two women's concern about the exploded jars of preserves are "trifles" because the men do not see as significant the hours of women's labor required to make those preserves.

Mrs. Hale's web of pronoun ("I", "she", and "you") connects the three women into a community with shared experiences and personal narratives; they construct a new, communal, female subject. Mrs. Hale expresses to Mrs. Peters her own sense of community: "We live close together and we far apart. We all go through the same things- it's all just a different kind of the same thing" (17). The stage absence of Minnie Wright focuses our attention on her condition, her subject position, rather than her person. It also lends strength to Mrs. Hale's and Mrs. Peters' narrative of events and construction of

Minnie Wright's identity through the absence of any contradiction Wright might offer herself.

In this case Minnie Wright's story is transformed into a "public" story. The stories of Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters are the same. Mrs. Hale initially subscribes to the same social narrative of non-violent domestic femininity as the men. She tells Mrs. Peters, "I don't think she did. Asking for an apron and her little shawl. Worrying about her fruit"(9)

Man silences the woman. Mr. Wright silenced Mrs. Wright, not allowing her to sing, "Distorting" her life. There is a certain amount of "power that a marriage puts in the hands of men. "MRS. HALE: She come to think of it, she was kind of like a bird herself—real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and fluttery. How-she-did-change" (9) She was not only isolated in her home with her husband but her life was devalued, therefore she changed.

Mr. Wright wanted her to be silent which is reminiscent of what Gilbert and Gubar say that a woman should be waiting "silently, without calling attention to her exertions" as it would detract from her focus on others (601). *Trifles* also reads,

MRS HALE: I might have known she needed help! I know how things can be—for women. I tell you it's queer, Mrs. Peters. We live close together and we live far apart. We all go through the same things—it's all just a different kind of the same things. If I was you, I wouldn't tell her her fruit was gone. Tell her it ain't. Tell her it's all right. Take this in to prove it to her. She—may never know whether it was broke or not. (17)

Here, Susan Glaspell is pointing out the alienation that is a prevalent feeling amongst women. This feeling is induced by the patriarchal society that does not allow them to have a life of their own.

Glaspell's character Mrs. Wright sacrifices everything because that's what her husband demanded, which was the status quo. Gilbert and Gubar also state "For to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead. A life that has no story..." (602). Mrs. Wright is the embodiment of these ideas. She is isolated, alienated, and quiet; she's expected to be angel-like.

The angel/devil binary is discussed by Gilbert and Gubar. The idea is that women have two sides to them. One side that is silent, submissive, obedient and the other that is a monster, conniving, and deceitful (605). Though Mrs. Wright could be critically looked at as being a product of this angel/devil binary, more importantly Glaspell is challenging the male's role in this binary. Essentially she is pointing out that by men placing women in a submissive role they are contributing to this angel/devil behavior they are critical of. "The fact that the angel woman manipulates her domestic/ mystical sphere in order to ensure the well-being of those entrusted to her care reveals that she can manipulate; she can scheme; she can plot- stories as well as strategies". (602)

Typically this is true because the male perception of women is that they should be angels, self sacrificing, and subordinate but criticize this because they also believe the binary opposition of women is the devil. They are eliminating an identifiable character for the female reader, alienating them. Glaspell however, allows the female reader to identify with her female characters. In *Trifles* the women are doing female things looking about the kitchen, paying attention to the sewing, noticing the rotten fruit. Essentially

everything that has to do with house hold matters. The men are outside looking for clues in the barn, completely unaware or unaltered by the fact that a woman could possibly have committed such an atrocious crime. After all, action is male and silence is female. Gilbert and Gubar quote from Eichner, “the ideal of significant action is masculine” and “women are defined as wholly passive, completely void of generative power” (599). Because women are viewed as having no power the men over look the evidence in the house; the house is for the women and their trifles.

Glaspell is drilling into the readers head that the men think women’s concerns are unimportant. As the story goes on, the women allude to the fact that Mr. Wright could have played a hand in the death of the bird Mrs. Wright loved so. Glaspell continuously points out the domination and control of the men and the psychological effects it has on the women. “MRS. PETERS: [In a whisper.] When I was a girl-my kitten-there was a boy took a hatchet, and before my eyes-and before I could get there-[Covers her face an instant.] If they hadn’t held me back I would have-hurt him” (9). Not only are grown men oppressive of women, it appears that Glaspell is also commenting on the societal values of child rearing, pertaining to sex.

Gilbert and Gubar further state,

two perspectives began to form, one “constructionist” or accepting of the idea that gender is made by culture in history, the other “essentialist,” more inclined to the idea that gender reflects a natural difference between men and women that is as much psychological, even linguistic, as it is biological. These roles the children learn, carry with them into their adult lives where women are oppressed and men are free. (529)

This further leads into the idea of constructionist and essentialist where girls' identities are constructed while boys are innate. For Gilbert and Gubar, "*Trifles* is a play which revolves around the study of the confining environments that frustrate the full development of human potential. It reveals the complexities of women's lives and subverts assumed notions of women's social powerlessness" (1351). One of the main questions *Trifles* asks is if the domestic ideology and its related gender oppression make women really powerless.

In fact, Minnie Wright's crime implies a transformation of the home. Isolated from the everyday world she is limited only into the rural realm of the male farm. Her life does not follow a progressive, linear change, but is repetitious, cyclical, and static.

The *Trifles's* plot advance dramatically by the Glaspell's distinct description of the two women's engagement into the identification and consequently active response. Mrs. Hale has known Minnie since she was young. Married to a neighboring farmer, she is aware of the oppression to which rural life condemns women. Her first reaction to Mr. Henderson's criticism of Minnie's failure to fit into the model of the ideal housekeeper triggers her immediate recognition of sisterly bonds within a cultural system meaningless to men and which the man's patronizing remark labels as her loyalty to her sex. Mrs. Hale, like the feminist reader, takes the part of the woman writer, Minnie, against patriarchal misreading that trivialize or distort her work. But the climactic moment of her recognition arrives when she discovers Minnie's sewing basket and the quilt she was piecing.

Mrs. Peters finds clues in her own life that replicate her neighbor Mrs. Minnie. The killing of the bird—the death and silencing of the singing voice of Minnie – allegedly

by John is the traditional strategy used by the male dominated society to keep itself in power. Mrs. Peters imagines Minnie's desolation when her bird had its neck wrung and remembers her own grief after a young boy killed her kitten and her loneliness after the death of her first child.

The female protagonists compel the patriarchal world to consider their feelings and situation as something more than domestic trifles. Beauvoir envisions a situation where female's feelings will be respected. In *The Second Sex* she asserts in all respect a return to the past is no more possible than it is desirable what must be hoped for is that the men for their part will unreservedly accept the situation that is coming into existence; only then will women be able to live in that situation without anguish.

Thus, many audience members witness women's ability to solve a murder case through trifles and find clues of Mrs. Wright's husband abuse through the compelling evidence that only the two female characters and members of the audience are allowed to observe, a mistake in her quilting work and a pet canary with a broken neck.

III. Deconstructing the patriarchal hierarchies in *Trifles*

This study uses a specific theory of female friendship that does neither concern sibling nor homoerotic relationships between women. It mainly focuses on the nurturing, caring, exchanges, giving and receiving counsel and sharing experiences. The friendship impacts the lives of the subjects as a whole and helps them resolve all sorts of problems. The sisterhood reaches out various aspects of the characters' lives and allows them to benefit from all their interactions and endeavors. The study also highlights the support and comfort between women which give them the opportunity to extend their friendship to female solidarity that involves more women who may also benefit from this sisterhood.

Mr. Hale, Mrs. Hale, Mrs. Peters, the county attorney, and the sheriff are the five characters of the play that introduce the audience to the crime that has just been committed. These five characters, while showing the audience, the house, and the background of the murder, they reveal how society was acting at that time and what was expected from the women.

Mrs. Wright follows the role mapped by her husband and is directed by society, her identity is lost somewhere along the way. However, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters quietly insist on preserving their own identities by protecting Mrs. Wright from the men who seek to convict her of the murder. There is the empathy of the women for each other. The three female characters, Mrs. Peters, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Wright are all products of an oppressive society which denies them their right to think and speak freely, as in the case of Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale, and denies them their right to a happy, free life as in Mrs. Wright's case. Mrs. Wright simply wants a companion and when her husband takes it away from her, she killed him.

Throughout history, a woman's role is to be obedient and respectful wife. Her main obligation is to support, serve, and live for her husband and children. So, the men in *Trifles* feel that the women cannot think, cannot act, and cannot do any harm to their investigative work. However, the women find lots of evidence. They do think, act, and interrupt the investigation. They find the very evidence that the men are looking for. The men's failure to solve the case and the men's insignificance in the play speak for themselves. This is a reversal of the characterizations of the women of that time period.

The primary objective of the research is to bring women to the mainstream and to resist the discrimination between male and female. Bringing up the female bonding as the strong resisting force against repression, the research aims at deconstructing the binaries of patriarchy focusing on two female characters- Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale. The myth that women are emotional and irrational is questioned and women are proved as intelligent and rational who can work far better than men. This blurred the patriarchal hierarchy. It questions the men's intelligence and valorize the women's capacity to work wisely.

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