BLUNT SATIRE TO THE MALE-DOMINATED AMERICAN SOCIETY AS SEEN IN SUSAN GLASPELL’S TRIFLES

AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra in English Letters

By

HARIYUS KRISTIAN VALENTINO

Student Number: 034214083

ENGLISH LETTERS STUDY PROGRAMME
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LETTERS
FACULTY OF LETTERS
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Hariyus Kristian Valentino
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ABSTRACT

HARIYUS KRISTIAN VALENTINO. Blunt Satire to the Male-Dominated American Society as Seen in Susan Glaspell’s *Trifles*. Yogyakarta: Department of English Letters, Faculty of Letters, Sanata Dharma University, 2008.

Male-domination issue becomes a big and interesting discussion up to now. There are a lot of literary works that deal with this issue; one of them is Susan Glaspell’s *Trifles*. This undergraduate thesis focuses on the playwright’s blunt satire to the male-dominated American society. This play contains an ironic story about the ability of women, who were underestimated by men, in solving the problem in a murder case. The phenomenon and characteristics of each character show obvious satires which make this play worth studying.

This undergraduate thesis analyzes two main problems; first is analyzing the presentation of the characteristics of each character, which are also the representations of the American society in 1900’s. Those characteristics will then be analyzed further to reach the understanding of the second main problem that Susan Glaspell bluntly satirizes the male-dominated American society.

The process of the analysis was conducted through library research using related books and internet resources. Finding theories from the books, the first problem formulation, which is analyzing the characters, was conducted using theory of character and characterization. By using the approach of sociocultural-historical background and using the theory of satire, those characters were analyzed further to understand the blunt satire of the playwright to the male-dominated American society.

There are seven characters in the drama who have certain characteristics used by the playwright to satirize the society. Mr. John Wright, who was murdered, is described as a hard and authoritative husband who forbade his wife entering the public sphere but home. Mr. Henry Peters, the sheriff, is described as a rude man who often insulted women using harsh words. Mr. George Henderson, the county attorney, is described as an intelligent young man who looked down on and underestimated the women. Mr. Lewis Hale is described as an uneducated farmer who also mocked the women every time they shared their opinions. Mrs. Wright, the suspected murderer, is described as a cheerful girl when she was single, unfortunately changed after married. Mrs. Hale is described as a rebellious wife who disagreed that women were inferior to men. The last character, Mrs. Peters, is described as an obedient wife who was afraid of her husband, but in the end she could understand that actually women were not what men thought about them. Those characters are the representations of the male-dominated American society. Through the characters, the playwright bluntly uses ironical phenomenon, exaggeration and laughter to satirize. Besides, this drama is considered as a satire since it aims to correct the society. From the conducted analysis, it is proven that Susan Glaspell’s *Trifles* is a blunt satire to the male-dominated American society.
ABSTRAK


Isu tentang dominasi kaum pria telah menjadi bahan pembicaraan yang marak dan menarik sampai saat ini. Tidak sedikit karya sastra yang mengangkat tema ini; salah satunya adalah Trifles, karya Susan Glaspell. Skripsi ini difokuskan pada sindiran yang blak-blakan dari sang pengarang terhadap dominasi kaum pria pada masyarakat Amerika. Drama ini menyuguhkan ironi kaum wanita yang kemampuannya direndahkan oleh pria dalam memecahkan masalah pada suatu kasus pembunuhan. Fenomena dan karakteristik tiap tokoh memuat sindiran yang jelas sehingga membuat drama ini layak dipelajari.

Skripsi ini mempelajari dua pokok masalah; yang pertama mempelajari karakteristik tiap tokoh yang merupakan cermin masyarakat Amerika pada tahun 1900an. Karakteristik tersebut kemudian dipelajari lebih lanjut untuk mencapai pemahaman dari masalah pokok kedua bahwa Susan Glaspell, secara blak-blakan, menyindir dominasi kaum pria pada masyarakat Amerika.

Analisa naskah drama dilakukan dengan studi pustaka menggunakan buku-buku terkait dan media internet. Setelah menentukan teori yang diperoleh dari buku terkait, rumusan masalah pertama dianalisa dengan menggunakan teori karakter dan karakterisasi. Dengan menggunakan sudut pandang latar belakang sosial dan sejarah dan dengan menggunakan teori satir, tokoh-tokoh tersebut kemudian dianalisa lebih lanjut untuk memahami sindiran sang pengarang terhadap dominasi kaum pria pada masyarakat Amerika.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Male-domination issue becomes a big and interesting discussion up to now. The contradictory opinion between the society that applies patriarchal system and women who struggle to be equal with men has never come to a conclusion. Women movements try to make women to be equal with men. Most feminists hold a belief that women as a group are treated oppressively and differently from men and that they are subject to personal and institutional discrimination. They also believe that society is organized in such a way that it works in general, to the benefit of men rather than women (Mills, 1995: 3). This situation has a big effect in the world of literature. There are many feminist authors who write some literary works to show their idea and also to fight against the authority of the society that applies patriarchal system.

In relation to the study, the literary work to be analyzed is a play entitled *Trifles* that was written by Susan Glaspell. This play was written in the year of 1916. This play contains only one act, but it has a very deep meaning. The deep meaning of the play is presented through the characters in it.

Those characters are used as an instrument for Glaspell to sharpen her criticism that is shown in a very obvious and blunt way, and this criticism is interesting because it is a rare and unusual one. She has the bravery and courage to include her thought and her way of thinking about her community at that time.
Unlike other literary works in the early 20th century, *Trifles* has obvious and palpable satire to the patriarchal system applied in American society. There are many satirical literary works, but unfortunately, they are not as blunt as *Trifles*. Glaspell more directly examines the values and behavior of the society she brings to the stage and considers the relationship between truth, power and gender (Barnet, 1994: 948). Susan Glaspell bluntly criticizes the society although at that time women’s movements were still considered taboo and forbidden. Susan Glaspell broke the rule that she clearly shows her satire and criticism to the society through her work. She shows that the society has something improper and unfair between the life of men and women. She shows that women, who are underestimated, oppressed and looked down have the power beyond their silence and shyness. Besides, she also shows the arrogant way of men in considering women’s opinion as trifle is wrong. It is the first reason of this study.

The second reason is that the inequality between men’s and women’s life is still being a controversy up to now. It can be seen that now there are many feminist movements that struggle for women to be equal with men in all aspects of life, and Glaspell points her satire to the society which applies patriarchal system. The patriarchal society is also obviously shown in her play. Men in this story have power to order women to do what men want. They have the authority to be the first, while women are placed behind them as a kind of an unimportant thing. Glaspell shows the audience that “trifles” of the women’s world are signs of a reality wholly unreadable to the men, precisely because it is a world they regard as feminine, and therefore unimportant and uninteresting. *Trifles*, that is, works to
subvert out notions of reality and truth by suggesting how such ideas are constructed within a specific social order, the masculine order of modern society. *Trifles* is, at least in part, about patriarchal society that foolishly underestimates the intelligence and resourcefulness of women (Barnet, 2001: 18).

Both male and female characters in the story are all having significance that Glaspell actually wants to convey. All those male and female characters have different characteristics that represent the patriarchal system applied in the society. Through those characters, Glaspell shows the reality in the society that male domination clearly happens. She also shows the arrogant way of men in deciding and considering everything as they want, and the way women accept it and fight against it.

**B. Problem Formulation**

1. How are the characters presented in the story?

2. In what way do the characters satirize the male-dominated American society?

**C. Objectives of the Study**

The first objective of this study is to see the presentation of the characters showed in the play. By knowing the characters of the roles in the play, the second objective, that is to understand the way those characters satirize the male-dominated American society will be found.
D. Definition of Terms

Definition of Terms is used to give understanding about the meaning of some words used in this study. Besides, it functions to avoid misunderstanding and to give a path for the readers to understand this study. There are several terms that are used in this study as follows.

1. Satire

Satire can be described as “the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation” (Abrams, 1985: 187). Holman and Harmon define satire as “a literary manner that blends a critical attitude with humor and wit for the purpose of improving human institutions or humanity” (Holman and Harmon, 1986: 447).

2. Blunt Satire

A style of literature which uses exaggeration, representation, irony and laughter obviously aims at correcting the misbehavior of certain society, human institution or individual by making it ridiculous in a straightforward way.

3. Male-domination

In Humm’s *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*, it is stated that domination is “the power of one group or individual over another group or individual” (Humm, 1990: 55). In this study, male-domination means the power of men over women.
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL REVIEW

A. Review of Related Studies

Bryan D. Bourn in his “A Feminist Criticism of Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*” states that to understand *Trifles*, it is necessary to identify and understand the play's two major metaphors. The first of these is the bird/bird-cage metaphor. Mrs. Hale describes Minnie, before her marriage to John, as "kind of like a bird herself— real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and— fluttery". The comparison in this context is between Minnie and the bird. The bird is caged just as Minnie is trapped in the abusive relationship with John. Other major metaphor is the quilt. The quilt represents Minnie's life. Mrs. Hale sums up the women's feeling when she replies to the county attorney's question about the quilt, saying "we call it— knot it, Mr. Henderson", which means to end the abusive (http://www.hongik.edu/~yhyo/glaspel.html, Saturday, May 26th 2007).

Another critic, Elizabeth M. Evans concerns Susan Glaspell’s *Trifles* is affected by Glaspell’s life with her husband, George Cook, who was “a practitioner of free love”, and who was difficult to live with because of his many affairs. Besides, after they resided in Greenwich Village in New York, she was influenced by a group of friends who were intellectuals, socialists, feminists and radicals. Glaspell herself was a founding member of Heterodoxy, a radical group of women activists who were prominent in the feminist movement of New York in the years 1910-1920. It was within this atmosphere that Glaspell would be
encouraged to create female characters who desired to free themselves from the stereotypical roles into which they had been cast (http://itech.fgcu.edu/faculty/wohlpartment/alra/glaspell.htm, accessed on Saturday, May 26th 2007).

It is different from Lisa Crocker who believes that the unfolding evidence not only unites the women, but highlights the division between “women’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.” She also states that the women are “clearly secure” about the correctness of their actions; their “secretive manners is one of superiority” (http://itech.fgcu.edu/faculty/wohlpartment/alra/glaspell.htm, accessed on Saturday, May 26th 2007).

Julie Claypool in her essay that is quoted in Bressler’s Literary Criticism sees that this play contains three binary oppositions, with each binary oppositions being connected to and interwoven with others. She states that the most obvious of the three centers on the relationship between women and men-in this case, how Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale interact with each other as opposed to how they do so with their husbands. Part of the way they relate rests heavily on the second binary opposition, the concept of freedom versus oppression that provides a motive both for Mr. Wright’s murder and for the protection the two ladies lend his wife at expense of the destruction of evidence. The evidence falls into the women’s hands because male and female opinion differ in what each gender deems as noteworthy, thus revealing the third binary opposition. The men, for example, consider their
wives’ interest in fruit preserves and quilts as merely “trifles.” Yet it is by paying attention to these small things that Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters stumble across the material sought by the men (Claypool as cited in Bressler, 1998: 102).

In this study, the writer does not develop one of those three studies above. He has new opinion about the same text, however it has a relation with Claypool’s essay. He analyzes how the characters in *Trifles* bluntly satirize the society of America which was a male-dominated society. However, all those four studies are used as the references for him to enrich this study.

**B. Review of Related Theories**

In this study, the writer uses three theories. They are Theory of Character and Characterization, Theory of Satire and the last is Theory of Feminism.

**1. Theory of Character and Characterization**

According to Abrams, characters are “the persons presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say-the dialogue-and by what they do-the action”. He also defines character as the name of a literary genre, which is a short, and usually witty, sketch in prose of a distinctive type of person (1981: 20). From that statement, it can be seen that the reader can understand what kind of person are they from the dialogue and the action done by the characters.
Holman and Harmon define character as a complicated term that includes the idea of the moral constitution of the human personality (Aristotle’s sense of *athos*), the presence of moral uprightness, and the simpler notion of presence of creatures in art that seem to be human beings of one sort or another (1986: 81).

According to Murphy there are nine ways in which an author attempts to make his characters understandable to, and come alive for, his readers. They are

a. *Personal description.* The author can describe a person’s appearance and clothes.

b. *Character as seen by another.* Instead of describing a character directly, the author can describe him through the eyes and opinions of another.

c. *Speech.* The author can give us an insight into the character of the persons in the book through what that person says. Whenever the person speaks, whenever he is in conversation with another, whenever he puts forward an opinion, he is giving us some clues to his character.

d. *Past life.* By letting the readers learn something about a person’s past life, the author can give us a clue to events that have helped to shape a person’s character. This can be done by a direct comment by the author, through the person’s thoughts, through his conversation or through the medium of another person.

e. *Conversation of others.* The author can also give clues to a person’s character through the conversations of other people and the things they say about him. People do talk about other people and the things they say often give a clue to the character of the person spoken about.
f. Reaction. The author can also give us a clue to a person’s character by letting us know how that person reacts to various situations and events.

g. Direct comment. The author can describe or comment on a person’s character directly.

h. Thoughts. The author can give us direct knowledge of what a person is thinking about. In this respect he is able to do what we cannot do in real life.

i. Mannerisms. The author can describe a person’s mannerisms, habits or idiosyncrasies which may also tell us something about his character (1972: 161-173).

In the lyric, the essay, and the autobiography, the author reveals aspects of his or her own character; in the biography and the history, the author presents the characters of actual person; and in the fiction (drama, novel, short story, and narrator poem), the author reveals the characters of imaginary persons. The creation of these imaginary persons so that they exist for reader as lifelike is called characterization (Holman and Harmon, 1986: 81).

There are three fundamental methods of characterization in fiction: first is the explicit presentation by the author of the character through direct exposition, either in an introductory block or more often piecemeal throughout the work, illustrated by action. The second method is the presentation of the character in action, with little or no explicit comment by the author, in the expectation that the reader will be able to deduce the attributes of the actor from the actions. The last method is the representation from within a character, without comment on the character by the author, of the impact of actions and emotions on the character’s
inner self, with the expectation that the reader will come to a clear understanding of the attributes of the character (Holman and Harmon, 1986: 81).

2. Theory of Satire

This study focuses on the satire, so that the writer needs a guidance to understand the satire of the author in the play. To analyze further about the satire in the play, the writer needs to know what satire is.

Abrams states that satire is “the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation” which uses laughter as a weapon. However, the laughter here does not mean something hilarious which can make people laugh out loud, but usually using irony and exaggeration which will ridicule the individual or the institution it criticizes. He also states that satire occurs as an incidental element within numerous works whose overall mode is not satiric in a certain character or situation, or in an interpolated passage of ironic commentary on some aspect of the human condition or of contemporary society (1981: 187-188).

Holman and Harmon have different meaning of satire. They define satire as “a literary manner that blends a critical attitude with humor and wit for the purpose of improving human institutions or humanity.” According to them, satire is of two major types: first type is formal (or direct) satire, in which the satiric voice speaks, usually in the first person, either directly to the reader or to a character in the satire, and the second one is indirect satire, in which the satire is
expressed through a narrative and the characters or groups who are ridiculed not by what is said about them but by what they themselves say and do. Most great literary satire uses the second type of satire (1986: 447-448).

3. Theory of Feminism

Dalla Costa’s statement which was quoted in Davis’ *Women, Race and Class* supports the housewives’ strike to get their freedom from the home and their husbands’ oppression, as what feminists struggle for.

We must reject the home, because we want to unite with other women, to struggle against all situations which presume that women will stay home...To abandon the home is already a form of struggle, since the social services we perform there would then cease to be carried out in those conditions (1983: 240).

Women’s writing and feminism have always been closely related because ‘women’s writing’ is a critical category - a product of discourse about the texts women have written - and not the intention of the writers themselves. Women’s writing is a critical, not an authorial, category. There are some exceptions in the late twentieth century, but it is safe to say that not all female writers are feminist and this is especially true of pre-nineteenth century writers. Feminist theory therefore defines the object of study, which is women’s writing, but the relationship between the two goes deeper than this. Many texts by women express the same concerns as feminist theory: the unique experience of women in history, the notion of female consciousness, the definitions of gender that limit and oppress, and the cause of women’s liberation from those restrictions (Madsen, 2000: ix).
Feminism appears since women are being assumed as a lower class than men. Politics, social, and economics are some areas where women have been defined as inferior to men. Those facts make the feminists seek equal rights for women and to give them equal status to men. They want equal opportunities to compete with men.

Feminism, according to Humm in *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory* incorporates both a doctrine of equal rights for women (the organized movement to attain women’s rights) and an ideology of social transformation aiming to create a world for women beyond simple social equality. Feminism is the ideology of women’s liberation since intrinsic in all its approaches is the belief that women suffer injustice because of the sex (1990: 74). The main goal of feminism is to gain equality for women in every aspects of life. In addition, feminism can move practically or theoretically to achieve equal rights and social transformation for women.

Sara Mills, in her *Feminist Stylistics* gives her idea that most feminists hold a belief that women as a group are treated oppressively and differently from men and that they are subject to personal and institutional discrimination. Feminists also believe that society is organized in such way that it works, in general, to benefit of men rather than women; that is patriarchal (1995: 3).

Maggie Humm in her *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Feminist Literary Criticism* states that there are three basic assumptions that feminist criticism seems to share. The first is that gender is constructed through language and is visible in writing style; and style, therefore, must represent the articulation
of ideologies of gender. The second assumption is that there are sex-related writing strategies. The last assumption is that the tradition of literary criticism, like the economic and social traditions of which it is part, uses masculine norms to exclude or undervalue women’s writing and scholarship (1994: 4-5).

Humm also shares the four aims of feminist criticism. First aim is showing the way women in the text are often represented according to prevailing social, cultural and ideological norms. This means this criticism is thematic, focusing on women’s oppression as a theme in literature and assuming a woman reader to be a consumer of male-produced works. Second aim is addressing the invisibility of women writers. Third is offering readers new methods and a fresh critical practice, and the last is to make us (women) act as feminist readers by creating new writing and reading collectives (1994: 7-8).

This theory will help the writer in considering the value of feminism due to the study is analyzing about the satire of the author of the play towards the society, especially the gender issues.

C. Review on the Historical Background

Considering that the topic of this study deals with the society, it is needed to understand the condition of the American society. This part contains the review of feminism in America and the women’s position in America.
1. Feminism in America

It is important to underline the fact that feminism in America has a long history and is not the invention of the twentieth century. Without this fundamental historical understanding, debates that continue today cannot be fully appreciated in all their intellectual complexity.

The history of Feminism in America is divided into two parts, first is what so called as ‘first wave’ which began in the 1840s and the second is the ‘second wave’ which emerged in the early 1960s.

The so called as ‘first wave’ of American feminism began in the 1840s and was commonly marked by the first Women’s Rights Convention, held in Seneca Falls in 1848. This 1848 Seneca Falls Convention marked the beginning of the political struggle for women’s rights. During this time, there were many organizations that stood for women’s struggle such as National Woman’s Suffrage Association, American Woman’s Suffrage Association, League of Women Voters, and Congressional Union which finally became Women Party. Women Party was the first which proposed the Equal Rights Amendment to congress in 1923 – “Men and Women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction”. This move was unsuccessful, however this did lay some of the intellectual groundwork for the second wave of American feminism in the 1960s (Humm, 1993 as cited in Madsen, 2000: 1-6).

The second wave of American feminism emerged in the early 1960s and focused upon an indictment of male sexism and the domestic oppression of women. The central to the efforts of early second wave feminism were the raising
of women’s consciousness of gender oppression and raising as a political issue the personal experience of that oppression (Madsen, 2000: 8-9).

The movement, from a first wave feminism to a second wave feminism is a radical and visionary formation. The first wave which is principally concerned with equalities continued to the second wave which uses women’s difference to oppose the ‘legalities’ of a patriarchal world. In the first moment women are objects, sometime victims of mistaken social knowledge. In the second moment women are challenging that “knowledge” from the strength of their own experience. Yet what remains constant throughout both waves of feminism is the idea that women are unequal to men because men create the meanings of equality.

2. Women’s Position in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century of America

The position of women in colonial America was determined by hierarchical worldview of the Puritan colonists. As men deferred to God and his ministers, so women should defer to men. Puritans believed that the inferiority of women was a mark of original sin, manifest in physical weakness, smaller stature, intellectual limitations and a tendency to depend upon emotions rather than the intellect. Women should be confined to the domestic sphere, nurturing children, maintaining the household and serving their husbands (Madsen, 2000: 2).

In the early nineteenth century, American women only made beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with their children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside their
husbands at night, etc and they were afraid to ask even of themselves the silent question "Is this all?" (Friedan, 1997: 15). They thought that the neurotic, unfeminine and unhappy woman who wanted to be poets or physicists or president was a pitiful woman. They thought that women should be at home to take care of the house and family. They were not allowed to be included in politics. This thought was planted deep inside their mind so that they could accept anything they got from the men and society although actually it was unfair for them. In the following years, women in colleges decreased over and over to get married in their young age, and it was obviously different compared with men, because they thought it was not needed to have high education while they would not use it in their future time as wives.

Briefly, in the nineteenth century a woman in America was unable to vote, and after marriage had no control of her property (in some states the law compelled employers to pay a woman’s wages directly to her husband) or her children. Nor could she make a will, sign a contract or instigate legal proceedings without her husband’s consent. Her status was similar to that of a minor or a slave. It was in connection with slavery that the organized movement for women’s rights had its origin, when the American abolitionist movement split over women’s right to participate (Madsen, 2000: 2-3).

In the world of literature, both waves affected feminist writers in the way of writing their books. They were getting braver and braver to express their feminist idea. Kate Millet, Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer were famous of their writings and they address the sex caste system as
represented in literature and culture, and their writings balance critical analysis with moral debates. Other writers who had shared their feminist idea into their works are Olive Schreiner with her *Woman and Labour*, Virginia Woolf with her *A Room of One’s Own*, Winifred Holtby with her *Feminism Divided*, etc. (Humm, 1992)

D. Theoretical Framework

This section reveals the use of theories in analyzing the problem formulation. Those theories are theory of character and characterization, theory of satire and theory of feminism.

The first theory, character and characterization, is used since the first problem formulation deals with the description of the characters. As the characters will be explored in the analysis, the writer tries to find as many supporting sources as the writer can obtain.

The second theory is the theory of satire. Since the title of this study is about the satire that Glaspell points to the society, this theory will be very useful to help the writer to find out the answer of the second question in the problem formulation in the first chapter.

The last theory is feminism theory. As the story of the play contains a matter of feminism that is presented through the characters, this theory is useful to help the writer to answer the questions in the problem formulation. This theory gives clue or guidance to the writer in analyzing the play.
Besides those three theories, the writer also uses the review on the historical background considering that the topic deals with the society of America in the early 20th century. This review helps the writer to understand the condition of American society, especially the women’s world. By understanding the historical background of the society, the writer will be helped in analyzing the text to answer the problem formulations in the previous chapter.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Object of the Study

The object of this study is a play taken from Barnet’s *An Introduction to Literature* entitled *Trifles*, which was written by Susan Glaspell in the year of 1916. This play consists only one act. However, it contains a big issue which becomes a contradiction up to now, male domination.

The story takes place in Wright’s house and it is about the mystery of a murder. The essence of the story is very obvious and easy to understand. This murder becomes a mystery since the characters do not know who the murderer is, until one of the women characters finds a key to the solving problem.

B. Approach of the Study

In this study, the writer uses Sociocultural-historical Approach. Rohrberger and Woods state in their book *Reading and Writing About Literature* that “Critics whose major interests is the sociocultural-historical approach insist that the only way to locate the real work is in reference to the civilization that produce it” (Rohrberger and Woods, 1971: 9). In this case, they define civilization as the attitudes and actions of a specific group of people and point out that literature takes these attitudes and actions as its subject matter.

This approach is used because the writer thinks that this is the most appropriate approach to be used to analyze the text of the play, considering that
“literature is an expression of society” (Wellek and Warren, 1956: 95), and also the focus of the study that is analyzing the satirical part of the text toward the male-dominated American society. The writer chooses this approach as the perspective to see, understand and also analyze the text of the play. It is necessary to investigate the social background in which a work was created and which it necessarily reflect because “literature is not created in an emptiness and expresses ideas significant to the culture that produce it” (Rohrberger and Woods, 1971: 9).

C. Method of the Study

In examining the problem formulation of the study, the writer took a library research or a desk research. The writer also did read some books to gather the data. The data were taken from two sources, primary and secondary sources. For the primary source, *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell was taken as the focus of the analysis. There were several steps that were taken to finish this study. The first step, the writer read the play and understood it. Second step, the writer tried to find some books of theories and extrinsic data to support the process of the analysis, and also some books of criticism to support the hypothesis. The writer also did the browsing to look for some information related to the study in the internet. These books and information from internet were used as the secondary sources to gather the data. The third step, the writer decided the formulation of the problems and determined the suitable theories to analyze the study. They are theory of character and characterization, theory of satire and theory of feminism. In analyzing the play, the writer used sociocultural-historical background. This approach was used in the study to examine Glaspell’s *Trifles* as the literary work.
by viewing the socio-cultural and historical background in America in the early 20th century. The last step was analyzing the two problems formulation of the study. The first problem formulation was analyzed by using theory of character and characterization. Finding the characteristics of each character, the writer analyzed it further by using the theory of satire to understand the way Susan Glaspell satirizes the society. Finally, considering the analysis that has been done, the writer drew the conclusion.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the first thing to do is explaining and expounding both the male and female characters presented in the text of the play. There are seven characters that will be discussed in this part, they are Mr. and Mrs. Wright, Mr. Henderson, Mr. and Mrs. Peters, Mr. and Mrs. Hale. This analysis focuses on the portrayal of the male-dominated society and the gender inequality through those characters. After knowing the presentation of the characters, it is important to discuss the blunt way of the playwright in satirizing the society.

A. Description of the Characters

1. The Characteristics of Mr. John Wright

Mr. Wright is the husband of Minnie and who was murdered. According to Mrs. Hale, his neighbor, he was a good man and did not drink as what men did in that time. He also did his responsibility to pay the debts he had. Mrs. Hale said that Wright’s house was quiet, and it means that he was a calm person who did not like cruelty in his family.

MRS. PETERS. Not to know him; I’ve seen him in town. They say Wright 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…(in Barnet, 1994 : 909)

Everyone must have good side of personality, however, everyone must also have bad side of personality, so as John Wright. In another side, he was a hard person. People would not enjoy the time of day with him. He did not like
something crowd but silence. It was right that Wright’s house was quiet that he did not do something that physically cruel. However, quiet here does not mean peaceful, but empty, lack of conversation. This situation happened because he never talked about his job or his duties to his wife when he was at home. He preferred silence to having conversation with his wife, therefore, the house seemed to be quiet. This hard character of John Wright was the way he showed his masculinity, strength and authority that no one could drive him.

MRS. HALE. … But he was a hard person, Mrs. Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him – like a raw wind that gets to the bone. (in Barnet, 1994 : 909)

From the statements of both Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, we can take a clue that Mr. John Wright was a serious man, did not like crowd and cheerfulness. Hard person must be very strict and no-mercy character. What he wants must be obeyed without any complaint. He would do anything he wants, and would forbid or even destroy what he does not like. Mrs. Hale said that being with him is just like getting raw wind that gets to the bone and this means that she was really discomfort with him.

That Mr. Wright was a man who did not like something noisy is supported in Mrs. Hale’s statement in the text that she thought a place would not be cheerful if Mr. Wright is being in it.

MRS. HALE. No, I don’t mean anything. But I don’t think a place’d be any cheerfuller for John Wright’s being in it. (in Barnet, 1994 : 906)

This statement empowers the evidence that Mr. Wright was not a person who liked noisiness.
MRS. HALE. …No, Wright wouldn’t the bird – a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that too. (in Barnet, 1994 : 910)

From the statement above, we can see that Mr. Wright was a hard man. He could not accept what he did not like. See for example, the bird, the only thing that could make his wife entertained with its voice, he killed it because of the noise that he did not like without any consideration to his wife. He did not consider and did not care about his wife whether she would be sad or not, to vanish something she liked. The only thing he thought was throwing away anything he hated.

Those characteristics of Mr. Wright emphasize that he was a dominating person in his family. He could order anything he wanted to do without considering another member of the family, his wife. He commanded anything that goes on in the family. By doing this, it is proven that he was superior to his wife. He did not give space even for his wife to enjoy her life as a woman. His absolute power beyond his wife made her oppressed.

MRS. HALE. Wright was close. I think maybe that’s why she kept so much to herself. She didn’t even belong to Ladies Aid. I suppose she felt she couldn’t do her part, and then you don’t enjoy things when you feel shabby. She used to wear pretty clothes and be lively, when she was Minnie Foster, one of the girls singing in the choir. But that…oh, that was thirty years ago... (in Barnet, 1994 : 906)

As what Mrs. Hale said above, we can see that John Wright had affected Minnie’s life. He changed her life from her virgin life which was lively and cheerful into a close family which was totally different from her past life.

In relation to the male-dominated society, Mr. John Wright is one example of the authoritative persons in that time. As a man, he had the authority
to decide everything in his family. He had no consideration about his wife. He never talked to his wife in deciding everything in his family. He did not care about what happened in his wife’s life. He did not feel that actually what he had done to his wife was a kind of disaster for her. She was really oppressed with the rule he made in the family which must be obeyed. Although Mr. Wright was a good man in the matter of habit, meaning that he did not do any crime and what usually bad man did at that time such as drinking, but he did something that gave bad effect to other. In this case, the object of the effect of his hard personality was his wife.

John Wright had big influence in the life of his wife. From the text of the drama, it is shown that his wife did not join the Ladies Aid that usually done by wives, while when she was young and virgin, she was cheerful, and it was obvious that some time when she became a wife, she would also join it. The reality said oppositely that she totally changed after she married to John Wright. This shows that John Wright affected her conduct of life when she was single into the new one.

2. The Characteristics of Mrs. Wright

Mrs. Wright was the one who was suspected as the murderer of Mr. Wright by strangling his neck. She is not included in the text of the drama, so is Mr. Wright. Although they are the center of the story, the character of Mr. and Mrs. Wright are only told by other characters. However, as what is stated by Murphy in the second chapter that we can understand the characters as seen by
another and from the conversation of others, the writer uses this theory to find the presentation of those characters.

Applying the theory stated by M.J. Murphy, it is found that Mrs. Wright was cheerful, lively, liked to sing and wore pretty clothes when she was Minnie Foster. She was one of the singing girls who sang in the choir when she was single. She was real sweet and pretty, but timid and fluttery, just like the bird she used to have.

MRS. HALE. She-come to think of it, she was kind of like bird itself-real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and-fluttery. How-she-did-change… (in Barnet, 1994 : 909)

MRS. HALE. She used to wear pretty clothes and be lively, when she was Minnie Foster, one of the town girls singing in the choir. But that…oh, that was thirty years ago… (in Barnet, 1994 : 906)

Unfortunately, she did change after marrying John Wright. She was not cheerful anymore after getting along her life with John Wright. The hard character of John Wright affected the way of life of Minnie Foster into the new character of Mrs. Wright. Mr. John Wright who was introvert and did not like noise, created a quiet and silent house, and automatically she had to live there and went to where the wind blew in that house. She had no chance to make any cheerfulness she had had when she was young. She surrendered to follow the rule in order to conform to the oppressive situation. Moreover, they had no children which could make the house a little brighter. She only had a bird, a canary, which could entertain her with its voice. It was the only thing she loved in that house. Something sounding, singing and could give her peace when she was in trouble, something which could reduce her loneliness when she was home alone.
MRS. HALE. Wright was close. I think maybe that’s why she kept so much to herself. She didn’t even belong to the Ladies Aid… (in Barnet, 1994: 906)

From the sentences above, Mrs. Hale said that Mrs. Wright did not even belong to the Ladies Aid. This shows that she spent much time inside the house and made few interactions to others. Even the Hales, the closest neighbor of the Wrights, they did not know much about John Wright and his wife.

John Wright was a close and introvert person and he never brought the company matters to his house. This made the condition in the house more silent and quiet. John Wright was comfortable with this kind of quiet situation in his house. As the opposite, his wife was tortured. Her real cheerful life must be changed into silence and quiet one. For years she had to accept this kind of life with her husband. She was tortured, oppressed and depressed with the life given by her husband. She could not do her part as a woman like what others could. She lived in her house without any relationship to her neighbors, even her closest neighbor, The Hales. Moreover, she did not belong to the Ladies Aid, a women’s group that sponsored by a church, regularly met to sew and quilt to earn money that was used for charity. This changing proved that she was affected by her husband. Her life with John Wright was a kind of prison for her because it was limited by his rule that woman should be home, taking care her husband and the house, not in the public sphere.

From her marriage with John Wright, she got no joy and happiness. All she had was just tears and sadness with no one to share and no shoulder to cry on.
The only thing that could reduce her sadness and her loneliness was the singing bird in the cage.

On the other side, Mr. Wright did not like birds because they sang and made noise. The noise of the bird would just put him off. Therefore, he killed that canary by strangling its neck with a rope. Automatically, this harsh action made his wife upset and disappointed. The only thing she had was vanished by her own husband. She had nothing at all to be enjoyed then. She was more depressed with this kind of situation. She felt that she was killed for the second time, first John Wright had killed her freedom and the second he had killed the only thing she loved in this world. She had reached the tip of the iceberg, and she could not bear her anger anymore. She wanted to fight against this oppression and take revenge to what her husband had done to her and her lovely canary. Finally, she decided to kill him as what he did to her bird, by strangling him when he was in a deep sleep.

MRS. HALE. That’s just what Mr. Hale said. There was a gun in the house. He says that’s what he can’t understand. (in Barnet, 1994: 907)

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. (in Barnet, 1994: 910)

From the statements above, it is shown that Mrs. Wright was really depressed with the death of her canary. After her freedom was killed, the only thing she liked got the same destiny too, killed. She got her limit of her patience and committed to take revenge by strangling her husband as what he did to her canary, although there was a gun in the house. Logically, people will shoot
somebody when there is a gun in his or her hand to make it easier to kill, but it was different from Mrs. Wright. She preferred to strangle rather than to shoot. First, she wanted to end the misery she got from him, and second she wanted him to feel the same treatment her canary got. This shows that her anger was really in a high tension so that she killed her husband the same way as what he did to her canary. For her, killing her husband by strangling his neck was comparable to the death of her canary and worthier than using a gun. This means that she had buried and neglected all the oppression she got from her husband. She accepted and obeyed everything driven by her husband until the tragedy of the death of the canary. This tragedy was the turning point of her mind and she ended it all by killing him as the oppressor and the killer of her freedom.

HALE. Well, as if she didn’t know what she was going to do next. And kind of done up. (in Barnet, 1994 : 904)

HALE. …And then she – laughed…( in Barnet, 1994 : 904)

From the statement above, Mrs. Wright intentionally murdered her husband because she wanted to take revenge for her freedom and her lovely canary that he killed. Besides, she wanted to be free from his oppression she got all those times. Moreover, Mr. Hale saw that she looked like a kind of done up, and then laughed. This is the proof that she had no regret in doing it and her laugh means a relief of being freed.

The character of Mrs. Wright represents the women feminists in the American society whose mission is to fight against the patriarchal society. She was the object of the patriarchal society that she could not be free during her life with John Wright. As human being, she had the limit of her patience and finally
she ended all the oppression she got. The patriarchal system applied in her family which was driven by her husband was over after colonizing for years. She showed him that it was true that he was strong and the canary was weak, so was she, but she could also be strong to end the oppression. By the bravery and strong will, she could end the misery in her life.

3. The Characteristics of Mr. George Henderson

George Henderson was the county attorney who was young, respected and honored. Mr. Henderson was a strict person. He could not let anything in John Wright’s house being touched without any supervision. He always asked someone to watch over everything brought by the women when he was looking for the motive upstairs. As a county attorney, he did investigate everything he thought might help to find the motive.

COUNTY ATTORNEY. Yes, but I want to see what you take, Mrs. Peters, and keep an eye out for anything that might be of use to us.
MRS. PETERS. Yes, Mr. Henderson. (in Barnet, 1994 : 906)

Mr. Henderson thought that what Mrs. Peters brought was not dangerous, because she only brought a quilting and an apron. He thought that a sheriff’s wife was married to the law, meaning that she would not do oppositely to her husband. He thought that Mr. Peters was a husband who had a character like law, who would rule his wife over anything so that she would not disobey him. While actually there was a box inside the quilting which was the sign of anger they were looking for.
COUNTY ATTORNEY. Oh, 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? *(in Barnet, 1994: 911)*

Mr. Henderson was the county attorney who was more educated rather than other characters in the drama. He was different from Mr. Hale, a farmer who was not educated. He was also a man who was willing to hear what women explained to him about the condition of Wright’s family. He listened the story told by Mrs. Hale and responded it kindly without using harsh words.

MRS. HALE. *[Shaking her head.]* I’ve not seen much of her of late years. I’ve not been in this house—it’s more than a year.
COUNTY ATTORNEY. And why was that? You didn’t like her?
MRS. HALE. I liked her all well enough. Farmers’ wives have their hands full, Mr. Henderson. And then—.
COUNTY ATTORNEY. Yes—? *(in Barnet, 1994: 905)*

Every character in the drama was loyal to him and they did what he ordered to do. However, sometimes he underestimated what women thought because he thought that what women were talking was trifle. Although he did it indirectly, but it was obvious that he looked down on women’s opinions.

COUNTY ATTORNEY. *[Facetiously.]* Well, Henry, at least we found out that she was not going to quilt it. She was going to— what is it you call it, ladies?
MRS. HALE. *[Her hand against her pocket.]* We call it— knot it, Mr. Henderson. *(in Barnet, 1994: 911)*

From the statement above, Mr. Henderson indirectly underestimated the women’s opinion about the quilt that it was unimportant, while it was actually the sign of Mrs. Wright to knot the oppression she got which means to end it. The men did not found anything that might be of use to find the motive upstairs, while
the women found the evidence of the sign of Mrs. Wright’s anger by examining even an unimportant thing. His statement seemed to adore what women had got by praising about the quilt, while actually he underestimated it and he thought that all of them did not get anything to find the motive.

Mr. Henderson was also a man who defended his manhood when a woman had a bad comment about men. He thought that Mrs. Hale was loyal to her sex which means that she always defended women from men because she argued that men’s hands were dirty. This means that, as a man, Mr. Henderson did not agree when men were blamed for their fault or disability. He twisted it by arguing that women would always be loyal to their sex.

MRS. HALE. Those towels get dirty awful quick. Men’s hands aren’t always as clean as they might be.
COUNTY ATTORNEY. Ah, loyal to your sex, I see. But you and Mrs. Wright were neighbors. I suppose you were friends, too. (in Barnet, 1994 : 905)

4. The Characteristics of Mr. Henry Peters

Henry Peters was a middle life Sheriff who joined to look for the motive of the murder of Mr. Wright. He was loyal and did what was ordered by Mr. Henderson. He had a tendency to be a bootlicker when he explained to him just what happened in that house the day before.

COUNTY ATTORNEY. By the way, has anything been moved? Are things just as you left them yesterday?
SHERIFF. [Looking about.] It’s just the same. When it dropped below zero last night I thought I’d better send Frank out this morning to make a fire for us-no use getting pneumonia with a big case on, but I told him not to touch anything except the stove- and you know Frank.
COUNTY ATTORNEY. Somebody should have been left here yesterday.
SHERIFF. Oh-Yesterday. When I had to send Frank to Morris Center for that man who went crazy-I want you to know I had my hands full yesterday, I know you could get back from Omaha by today and as long as I went over everything here myself- (in Barnet, 1994 : 902)

Mr. Peters explained something which was not necessary to be explained because he wanted to cover his fault for not being in that house the day before. He told Mr. Henderson about his full hands to get his pity.

Mr. Peters was also a man who treated woman unkindly, especially when women were talking about the preserves needed by Mrs. Wright. He did not understand what the importance of those preserves was. Underestimating women’s important needs shows that he did not pay much attention to them. He was also a rude person, seen from the words he used when he insulted the women. He gave rude words to the women while he did not understand why they did that. This also means that he did not respect women.

SHERIFF. Well, can you beat the women! Held for murder and worryin’ about her preserves. (in Barnet, 1994 : 905)

5. The Characteristics of Mr. Lewis Hale

Mr. Hale was the Wrights’ closest neighbor, a middle life farmer who used to pick up John Wright to join in the party telephone. Mr. Hale was an uneducated person that he often said something which had no relation to the topic of the conversation.

COUNTY ATTORNEY. Well, Mr. Hale, tell just what happened when you came here yesterday morning.

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 once before and he put me off, saying folks talked too much anyway, and all he asked was peace and quite-I guess you
know about how much he talked about 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-

COUNTY ATTORNEY. Let’s talk about that later, Mr. Hale. I do want to talk about it, but tell now just what happened when you got to the house. (in Barnet, 1994: 902-904)

Mr. Hale thought that women were used to worrying over trifles. He underestimated the women’s worry about the preserves needed by Mrs. Wright. He thought that all of those preserves were unimportant and it was not needed to be worried about. This was also said by Mr. Peters that he did not understand why women worried about something trifle. That Mr. Peters and Mr. Hale did not understand what women needed was the proof that they were careless even to their own wives. They did not understand what was the importance of something trifle which actually women wanted. Mr. Hale represents a man who was careless and did not pay much attention to his wife. The worse, he underestimated the thing woman needed. Ironically, things that were underestimated by men were the signs to reveal the motive of the murder.

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. (in Barnet, 1994: 905)

6. The Characteristics of Mrs. Peters

Mrs. Peters was a slight wiry woman with a thin nervous face, calm and not a cruel character. Mrs. Peters was an inferior wife who thought that men were smarter and had much more brilliant idea compared to women. She believed that women were created lower than men that men could decide the best for
everything. That was why she thought that they must obey and follow everything decided by men.

From her dialogue, it can obviously be seen that she was a good and nice woman. She used an interjection “My” rather than other insulting words that usually spoken by people when they got something discomfort.

**MRS. PETERS.** My, it’s cold in there. (in Barnet, 1994 : 906)

Mrs. Peters was a wife who thought that she, as a woman, was inferior. Probably, there was no “Ladies first” in her mind that she always gave way to men. She pretended to be fine, while actually she was cold because she thought that warm place was not for women.

**COUNTY ATTORNEY.** [Rubbing his hands.] This feels good. Come up to the fire, ladies.

**MRS. PETERS.** [After taking a step forward.] I’m not-cold. (in Barnet, 1994 : 902)

The stage direction of Mrs. Peters shows that actually she was cold, but she was afraid and reluctant to be in a comfort place. She thought that a comfort place was for appropriate persons, men.

In the beginning of the story, she was loyal to men. She accepted what was said by men even it was cruel and hurt her feeling. Moreover, she defended men’s argumentation as if she was under men’s control. She defended men when Mrs. Hale was upset about their coming inside the kitchen and criticizing. She thought that it was their duty to check out all rooms in the house.

**MRS. HALE.** I’d hate to have men coming into my kitchen, snooping and criticizing.

**MRS. PETERS.** Of course it’s no more that their duty. (in Barnet, 1994 : 906)
Mrs. Peters was a wife who really did worship the law. She was the representation of a woman who was ruled and limited by men. Her husband, the sheriff, had given her the doctrine that law must be obeyed, no matter what happened, even it would damage her as a woman.

MRS. HALE. [Who is standing by the table.] Well, I don’t see any signs of anger around here. [She puts her hand on the dish towel which lies on the table, stands looking down at table, one half on which is clean, the other half messy.] It’s wiped to here. [Makes a move as if to finish work, then turns and looks at loaf of bread outside the breadbox. Drops towel. In that voice of coming back to familiar things.] wonder how they are finding things upstairs. I hope she had it a little more red-up 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. (in Barnet, 1994 : 907)

She also defended men when Mrs. Hale resentfully did not understand what was strange about their attention to little things to be laughed about. She accepted the underestimating laughter of men because she thought that they had much more important things to be worried about rather than little things she and Mrs. Hale discussed.

She was loyal and followed all things ordered by men whether she must or must not do. This was a proof that she got used to obey men’s rule no matter what happened.

MRS. HALE. [Mildly.] Just pulling out a stitch or two that’s not sewed very good. [Threading a needle:] Bad sewing always made me fidgety.

MRS. PETERS. [Nervously.] I don’t think we ought to touch things. (in Barnet, 1994 : 908)

Her defense to men and her obedience represent the effect given by men, especially her own husband, which gave this doctrine deep inside her mind. Mrs.
Peters did not have self confidence to act or to give opinion to the men. She was afraid because men had dominated her world. She preferred to be silent and did what a woman should do because she had already agreed that men’s opinion were always better than hers. She always accepted what men said about women without trying to confront it, although what men were talking about was sometimes hurting.

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. (in Barnet, 1994 : 905)

From the dialogue above, it is seen that Mrs. Peters did not defend herself when the men mocked her. She did not have courage to say anything. She was only quiet and accepted the mocking because she thought that it was true that women were unimportant and men’s idea was more brilliant. Moreover, the man who mocked her was the sheriff, her own husband, that she did not answer anything. This proved that she was afraid to her husband. She did not have bravery to argue or to tell her idea to her husband. She just accepted everything even it would give harm to herself. Her mind was colonized by a dogma that men, including her husband, were always right and she believed in it that she did not fight against that dogma.

Being oppressed by her own husband, Mrs. Peters became silent and less critical. She had less opinion because she got used to accept and follow men’s
ideas. The answer given by Mrs. Peters when asked by Mrs. Hale about Mrs. Wright was the proof that she did not get used to think and to decide.

MRS. HALE. [Abruptly moving toward her.] Mrs. Peters?
MRS. PETERS. Yes, Mrs. Hale?
MRS. HALE. Do you think she did it?
MRS. PETERS. [In a frightened voice.] Oh, I don’t know. (in Barnet, 1994: 907)

However, being with Mrs. Hale who was a rebel to the patriarchal society, Mrs. Peters developed her thought and changed into a more critical and sensitive person. She opened her mind and saw the truth that women were not inferior than men. She could feel the oppression and depression of Mrs. Wright as what she felt. Finally, she joined Mrs. Hale to hide the evidence of the motive because she knew the feeling of being oppressed.

COUNTY ATTORNEY. Oh, 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?

7. The Characteristics of Mrs. Hale

Mrs. Hale was another woman who joined the investigation to find the motive of the murder. She was larger than Mrs. Peters and would ordinarily be called more comfortable looking. She was the only woman in the play who disagreed that women were lower than men. She had a rebellious character that was always offensive when she was underestimated. Unlike Mrs. Peters who did not have courage to argue about her opinion, Mrs. Hale bravely gave comment on men’s underestimation.
MRS. HALE. I’d hate to have men coming into my kitchen, snooping and criticizing. (in Barnet, 1994: 906)

MRS. HALE. [Who is standing by the table.] Well, I don’t see any signs of anger around here. [She puts her hand on the dish towel which lies on the table, stands looking down at table, one half on which is clean, the other half messy.] It’s wiped to here. [Makes a move as if to finish work, then turns and looks at loaf of bread outside the breadbox. Drops towel. In that voice of coming back to familiar things.] wonder how they are finding things upstairs. I hope she had it a little more red-up 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! (in Barnet, 1994: 907)

Although she was only a farmer’s wife, Mrs. Hale had a brilliant mind and idea in giving comment and suspicion on what she and Mrs. Peters found in the kitchen. This means that she was a smart woman who had a developed mind to think about and to investigate something.

MRS. HALE. [Examining another block.] Mrs. Peters, look at this one. Here, this is the one she was working on, and look at that sewing! All rest of it has been so nice and even. And look at this! It’s all over the place! Why, it looks as if she didn’t know what she was about! (in Barnet, 1994: 908)

MRS. HALE. [Her own feeling not interrupted.] If there’d been years and years of nothing, then a bird to sing to you, it would be awful-still, after the bird was still. (in Barnet, 1994: 910)

Mrs. Hale demonstrated the women’s empathy to Mrs. Wright early in the play by defending her from the Attorney’s criticism about her housekeeping. She defended Mrs. Wright about the dirty towel because she knew the full hand she got as a farmer. Moreover, she told her defense by fighting back to Mr. Henderson that men’s hands were not always clean as they might be. This shows that Mrs. Hale was a rebel who did not accept men’s humiliation to women.
COUNTY ATTORNEY. [With the gallantry of a young politician.] And yet, for all their worries, what would we do without the ladies? [The women do not unbend. He goes to the sink, takes a dipperful of water from the pail and pouring it into a basin, 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 housekeeper, would you say, ladies?

MRS. HALE. [Stiffly.] There’s a great deal of work to be done on a farm. (in Barnet, 1994 : 905)

MRS. HALE. Those towels get dirty awful quick. Men’s hands aren’t always as clean as they might be.

COUNTY ATTORNEY. Ah, loyal to your sex, I see. But you and Mrs. Wright were neighbors. I suppose you were friends, too. (in Barnet, 1994 : 905)

The developed mind and thought of Mrs. Peters was because of the effort of Mrs. Hale to make her realized that women were not inferior compared to men. Mrs. Hale wanted Mrs. Peters to realize that her thought about men was wrong. Everytime Mrs. Peters defended men about their arrogance, Mrs. Hale always answered and explained in opposite words, and therefore Mrs. Peters was affected by her rebellious character.

MRS. HALE. I'd hate to have men coming into my kitchen, snooping around and criticising. [She arranges the pans under sink which the Lawyer had shoved out of place.]

MRS. PETERS. Of course it's no more than their duty.

MRS. HALE. Duty's all right, but I guess that deputy sheriff that came out to make the fire might have got a little of this on. [Gives the roller towel a pull.] Wish I'd thought of that sooner. Seems mean to talk about her for not having things slicked up when she had to come away in such a hurry. (in Barnet, 1994 : 906)

That she was a rebel is also seen from her statement when she described the character of Mr. Wright. She described him as he was someone whom she
hated most. This means that actually she did not really like him because of his character and therefore she could feel the oppression suffered by Mrs. Wright.

MRS. HALE. … But he was a hard person, Mrs. Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him – like a raw wind that gets to the bone. (in Barnet, 1994 : 909)

MRS. HALE. No, I don’t mean anything. But I don’t think a place’d be any cheerfuller for John Wright’s being in it. (in Barnet, 1994 : 906)

By giving attention to what men called trifle things, finally Mrs. Hale found the evidences and motive of the murder. The evidences showed that Mrs. Wright killed him because she was depressed with the way her husband treated herself, her life and her surrounding. She killed him to take revenge for her lovely canary, end those sufferings and wanted to be free. Finding the evidences and motive of the murder, Mrs. Hale suggested Mrs. Peters not to show them to the men, because she could feel the sufferings of being oppressed. She did not want her to be burdened and to experience suffering again if she was jailed and Mrs. Peters agreed to do that.

B. Susan Glaspell’s Satire to the Male-dominated American Society through the Characters

In the previous part, the writer has examined the characteristics of the seven characters in the play, and in this part, the writer will discuss the way Susan Glaspell satirizes the society through those seven characters. The characteristics of the characters are the representation of the characteristics of people in America in early 20th century that women were always under men’s order. She describes that
those characteristics are created by the patriarchal system and she uses them to show that actually those are improper because they do not give benefit to both men and women.

This part will be divided into two parts; first, satire through the male characters and second, satire through the female characters. As what is stated in the second chapter, that according to Holman and Harmon, satire is “a literary manner that blends a critical attitude with humor and wit for the purpose of improving human institutions or humanity”, the writer applies it to examine the satire part of the play through the characters by analyzing the part of the story which has the characteristics of satire such as exaggeration, irony, humor, representation and purposes to correct the society.

1. The Satire through the Male Characters

There are four male characters in the text of the play; they are Mr. John Wright, Mr. George Henderson, Mr. Henry Peters and Mr. Lewis Hale. These four characters have different personalities which represent certain purpose to criticize the male-dominated American society.

Mr. George Henderson, the County Attorney, is the youngest and the most educated person. In the way he investigated the case, he often criticized women’s works that they did not work well and humiliated their opinions. He did not give any appreciation to women’s hard jobs to take care of the house. Sometimes he underestimated women’s opinion indirectly, by praising it while actually looking down on it.
Mr. Peters and Mr. Hale, who had less education than him also did humiliate the women for their trifles. They did not understand how hard for women to conduct their lives; being in the domestic sphere, nurturing children, maintaining the household and serving their husbands. They always thought negatively in every women’s opinion. Moreover, Mr. Peters used harsh words to insult his own wife when she told them about the frozen fruit. Mr. Hale trivialized it because he thought it was an important thing to talk about.

MRS. PETERS. [To the other woman.] Oh, her fruit, it did freeze. [To the County Attorney.] 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.

HALE. Well, women are used to worrying over trifles. (in Barnet, 1994: 905)

Seen from those three characters, Glaspell shows that both educated and uneducated men would underestimate and humiliate women no matter what they were. She reveals that this kind of treatment is improper. They thought that women deserved to be trivialized because they did not feel how tiring women’s jobs were. They would still humiliate women unless they experienced it. Besides, they would be upset if their wives did not cook or take care the house properly, whereas they trivialized it. Due to the previous chapter, this is considered as a satire since this scene represents the real world in America at that time that men underestimated women. Through this scene, the playwright wants the readers to see the moral value that the way men treated women at that time was not relevant to what they were supposed to do. Men trivialized women’s preserves which, actually, were also men’s needs.
Mr. Henderson also said that Mrs. Peters was married to the law. In this scene, she shows that in that time men had the same characteristic with “law” which must be obeyed in order not to be punished. What men said must be done and what men wanted must be fulfilled. That was the truest rule, and Mrs. Peters was one of the women who attended that rule. However, here Glaspell conveys that obeying the rule as what Mrs. Peters did, does not have any advantage but sufferings. From the text, Mrs. Peters is described as a slight wiry woman with a thin nervous face, and everytime men humiliated her, she just accepted it although it would hurt her heart. This description shows us that her condition was terribly poor. Obeying that law did not make her happy, safe and peaceful. Oppositely, disobeying this rule as what Mrs. Hale did, such as always confronted men everytime they mocked her, is the much better thing to do, because she would not be suffered by that rule as what Mrs. Peters experienced. Seen from the characteristics of Mrs. Hale, it is proven that by disobeying and confronting that rule, a woman would ordinarily be called more comfortable looking which means that she did not feel oppressed by her husband. She would feel more relax and freer in the way she conducted her life because the rule did not inhibit her.

In this scene, Susan Glaspell introduces two options to the readers which one should be picked up, following the “law” which ends in sufferings as what Mrs. Peters experienced, or disobeying it which ends in a more comfortable situation as what Mrs. Hale felt. By introducing these two options, she aims at showing the moral corruption of the American society at that time that women would always be humiliated and she hopes they realize that they did not deserve
to be so and furthermore she wants them to change it. This purpose is relevant to one of the characteristics of satire stated by Holman and Harmon which implies moral judgment and corrective purposes.

Other satire which can be seen from the male characters is that the men entered the room first and they took the warmest part of the room, while the women only stood close together far away from the fire. Men did not show “ladies first” attitude by entering the room first and did not have a concern about the women behind. This action means that men dominated places in a house. They thought that men were master who must be respected and women were servant who must follow them.

Besides, in the way they communicate, men also dominated the conversation when they were in one room. They even did not give space for women to share their ideas. Women were shut every time they wanted to give their opinions. They would be trivialized even when they gave just an idea. Women started to speak again only when they were asked or ordered to speak. However, they had an active conversation when they were not in the same room with men. Women would not be gagged to talk when they were left with no man. These behaviors are the proof that Susan Glaspell wants to show that at that time men dominated women’s world. This is also a representation of men at that time that they limited women’s participation in every aspect of their life. This representation is not merely a mirror which shows exactly the same visible condition. It is not only to show the readers the condition of the society in America at that time, but it penetrates the visible condition to certain purpose.
which is to correct this misbehavior society. Through this representation, it is hoped that men would not limit women’s participation anymore, and women would not just stand up doing nothing but participate.

In the other scene, men also underestimated the women’s opinion about the quilt, whether she was going to quilt it or knot it. They thought that it was a trifle that was not needed to be paid attention to. They ignored it as it would not give any help in finding the evidence. However, the women still talked about it because they knew that it had a relation with Mrs. Wright’s feeling. The quilt was messed up all over the place and it was the sign that Mrs. Wright was confused and did not know what she was about. In the end of the story, men still returned to that issue about the quilt indirectly to underestimate the women that women were worrying over trifles. In fact, this issue showed Mrs. Wright’s decision to quilt it or to knot it. To quilt means to continue what she experienced in her life, which was oppressed and depressed by her husband and try to survive in it. To knot it means to end the oppression given by her husband. Mrs. Hale answered men’s question that Mrs. Wright decided to knot it, which means to end the abusive life treated by her own husband. However, they did not understand that it was a clue to the solving problem because they thought it was women’s thing and had no relation at all to the case. Therefore they neglected it. It means that Glaspell satirizes the society by showing that men always underestimate women although in fact women do not deserve to be so. The arrogant way of underestimating women is what Glaspell wants to convey that it is an absolute fault. Things that men considered as trifles should not be underestimated. On the contrary, it was a
worth thing to be paid attention to. This conveyance is bluntly aimed to criticize and correct the mistaken social knowledge in the society. Glaspel satirizes the arrogance of men in the way they humbled women’s opinion by showing that it is a big mistake which make them scorned.

The description of Mr. Wright’s personalities is also a mean to criticize the society. Mrs. Hale said that Wright’s house was quiet and seemed to be a peaceful family. However, it did not mean that they were happy as what it seemed. In this case, quiet means lack of communication. Mr. Wright was a person who did not like noisiness and cheerfulness, and it was the opposite of Mrs. Wright. Since he was an authoritative and hard person who could ask or forbid everything, his wife must obey him with no excuse. This situation happened for years that Mrs. Wright was changed into a wife who was forced to follow her husband’s steps. She accepted this until the time she found him killed her canary. This time was the moment she changed her mind not to be ruled anymore. She decided to take revenge by strangling him as what he did to her bird. He died and she got her freedom.

From this scene, Susan Glaspell satirizes the society by using the hyperbole in the way Mrs. Wright ended the sufferings by killing her husband. Besides, she also exaggerates the effect for the doer of oppression, died. She does not want women to kill men who oppressed them, neither she makes sure that the oppressors would die. She uses the exaggeration to make the readers conscious that oppression would end in sorrow. This exaggeration is a blunt satire generally to the society which applied patriarchal system that allowed men to rule women.
because it automatically drives the readers to know the effect of being oppressed and be aware of that kind of situation, therefore it is hoped that the readers would not do it.

In the text of the play, the way men looked for the evidence is the most obvious satire to the society. Men did the investigation by giving attention to big things that they thought logically might be useful. They did not pay attention to small things that did not have any relation to the murder, including things in the kitchen. They thought that it was impossible to find evidence in the kitchen because there would be only women’s things in women’s place which they thought it was inconsequential. Moreover, they underestimated women who joined the investigation because women were worrying over trifle things that they thought might not be useful to help finding the evidence. In the end of the story, their attention to the big things did not yield anything. Ironically, women who were underestimated found the sign of anger that they were searching for in the kitchen, a place that men thought it was no use to be investigated.

This ironical case shows the blunt satire of the playwright to the men who got used to look down on women’s opinion. Whereas, the fact says different that women and their things were not as trivial as men thought. The trivialis of women was the clue to the thing they were looking for. The way those male and female characters in satirizing the society is clearly seen by giving a little attention to the different way male and female looked for the evidence. Men who were arrogant in investigating the case and even make light of women did not get anything, while women got the whole. Referring to Abrams statement, this can also be said as a
satire since the ironical phenomenon ridiculed the men which would cause laughter. The failure of men in finding the motive of the murder ridiculed themselves because they were overconfidently convincing that they would find it. This ridiculous incident creates laughter to the readers, and this is the way Glaspell satirizes the men who overconfidently trivialized women.

2. The Satire through the Female Characters

The three female characters in this play, Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale have each function that Glaspell uses to satirize the society. She uses those female characters to describe the condition of the women in that time that they were oppressed and depressed by their husbands.

Mrs. Wright who was the only suspect of the murder of Mr. Wright was one character that Glaspell uses to satirize the society. Mrs. Wright, whose single name was Minnie Foster, used to be a cheerful girl who liked to sing. She used to sing in the choir when she was single. Unfortunately, it changed after the marriage with John Wright. She could not do her part to sing anymore. She changed because her husband asked her to do so. She totally changed that she was not Minnie anymore. There was no cheerfulness and happiness pictured in her face after she married to John. She was lonely, no friend to share her sadness to, no shoulder to cry on, no one. All she felt was quiet and silent. All of these sufferings were the effect of the oppression, inhibition and reticence given by her husband. That was why she needed something to cheer her up. The only thing which could entertain her, the canary, was also killed, just like her freedom to be a woman.
which was also killed. When John killed the bird, he destroyed the last bit of personality that Minnie had held for herself.

The image of Minnie Foster who was cheerful and changed into a silent and oppressed woman is used to show, by contrast, what John Wright had done to Minnie. This condition represents wives in that time that they were authorized and inhibited by their husbands that they could not do their part as women. As what is stated by Madsen, in the nineteenth century of America, women had no control of their properties or their children after marriage. They were unable to vote, nor could they make a will, sign a contract or instigate legal proceedings without their husband’s consent. Their status was similar to that of a minor or a slave. This kind of reprehensible situation is what Glaspell satirizes. She bluntly shows the imbalance position between men and women in that time, that men were always on the top of women, with a hope that the readers would get the point that this is an improper situation. In addition, they would not perform such situation in their daily life.

Subsequently, Mrs. Wright decided to end her husband’s life because she could not tolerate his acts anymore. Mr. Wright had abused her real personality and freedom, therefore she killed him to escape from this abuse. This action brought her to an end of her sufferings and she got her freedom to be a woman because no one would inhibit her anymore.

In this case, Susan Glaspell indirectly invites women (especially wives) to be brave and courageous to end the sufferings that they got from their husbands. Glaspell shows the result of the bravery and courage is freedom and relief. She
shows the effect of struggling against patriarchal system is free from oppression and away from sufferings they used to experience. This blunt description of the result when a woman fought against patriarchy is not merely seen as a story, but more as a satire to criticize the male-dominated society which expectedly will make them back to the way as the crow flies. Glaspell wants the reader to get the moral value from this scene that no one deserves to oppress or being oppressed, both men and women, because it will create trouble and end in grief. This aim is the proof that Glaspell dreams of a better society with no oppression. This aim is also pertinent to Holman and Harmon’s opinion that satire purposes to improve human institutions or humanity.

The other character that Glaspell uses to satirize the male-dominated society is Mrs. Peters. She was the Sheriff’s wife who was loyal to men. She thought that men were more intelligent than women. She also thought that women deserved to be underestimated by men for their triviality. Men stated that women should be home, taking care of the house and absent in the public sphere. Her husband had set that dogma deep inside her mind that she had to accept anything done by men, especially her husband. She was filled up with a thought that men were superior and women were inferior. As a result, she believed that the patriarchal norm was true and she had no bravery to confront and oppose it. She obeyed it by staying home and did not join the public sphere in order to be safe from the fury of her husband.

Feeling safe to be home, taking care of the family, Mrs. Peters became less critical, undeveloped and less intelligent. She had no experience to improve
herself to see that actually women were not inferior. She got used to follow men’s rule and did not decide anything herself so that she could only give less important opinion. It was because she did not get used to think for an idea and therefore her mind did not develop. Once she shared her idea, it was not considered a brilliant one. This situation made men underestimated her when the investigation happened.

In the beginning of the play, she was very loyal to men. She even defended men when Mrs. Hale disagreed with their underestimation to women. It means that she thought women deserved to be mocked. She would accept anything treated by her husband without any protest, even it would hurt herself.

However, it changed after she was being with Mrs. Hale. Her mind developed to see the truth that actually women were equal to men. There was no difference in intelligence between them. Finally, she joined Mrs. Hale to hide the evidence they found because they understood the oppression suffered by Mrs. Wright. As a woman, Mrs. Peters sympathized the sufferings to be mocked, oppressed, depressed and underestimated of Mrs. Wright. She knew how it felt to be under men’s hands.

In this case, Glaspell shows the life of Mrs. Peters who was also oppressed by her husband and accepted all those sufferings. Nevertheless she could be free after joining other woman who did not have the same character with her, Mrs. Hale. From this scene, it is seen that Glaspell indirectly invites all women to join with other women who struggle for their rights as women. She wants them to share and warn each other when one of them was in a wrong way. In this case,
Mrs. Peters was in a wrong way because she believed that women were inferior to men so that she was obedient to her husband even she was mocked. Moreover, she shows the condition of Mrs. Peters in the beginning of the play, that she was loyal to her husband although she was oppressed, as the result if women do not move to struggle to get the equality. A woman will suffer the oppression when she never commits to fight and struggle to get free from those sufferings.

Other female character is Mrs. Hale who was a rebellion to the male domination. She was offensive when she was mocked by men in that investigation. She was the representation of a feminist who did not want to be oppressed by men. Everytime men underestimated women, she bravely answered and confronted it because she thought that women were not like the way men thought about them.

From her physical looking, she was larger than Mrs. Peters and would ordinarily be called had a more comfortable looking. It is different from Mrs. Peters who was a slight wiry woman with a thin nervous face. This statement shows that a wife who was oppressed was thin and nervous, while a woman who bravely struggled for her freedom had more comfortable looking.

Here, Susan Glaspell exaggerates the physical condition of the wives that they will be looked like Mrs. Peters, thin and nervous which represents sufferings since they thought that they deserved to be oppressed and do not fight to get their freedom as women, and will be looked like Mrs. Hale who had a more comfortable looking since thought that it was fault. In the real world, being oppressed or not does not really affect the physical looking because it is
genetically inherited. Through this exaggeration, it is clearly seen that Glaspell intentionally wants to make sure to the readers that oppression really affects both physical and psychological aspects of women’s life. Therefore she does not want women to experience such kind of sufferings.

Mrs. Hale was also the representation of a woman who had a good influence to other women, in this case, Mrs. Peters. Mrs. Hale always showed her that women were not inferior to men and they did not deserve to be mocked for their behaviors. By her bravery, Mrs. Hale confronted men every time they humiliated women. Being with Mrs. Hale, Mrs. Peters changed from her previous way to conduct her life, into the new one. Her mind developed and she realized that actually women were not as bad as what men thought about them. She was also aware of and critical to the abuse given by men. She even defended Mrs. Wright by hiding the evidence she found which could worsen her in jail because she did not want her to suffer another pain anymore. She did this because she could understand how torturing of being oppressed was.

Susan Glaspell wittily satirizes the male-dominated society by revealing that men’s attitude towards women was a fault. The underestimate and mocking given to women were not proven because in fact something that they looked down had power they did not have. However, although they failed to find the motive, they still underestimated women’s opinion. This is proven from the end of the play that men keep mocking women’s opinion about the quilt.
COUNTY ATTORNEY. [Facetiously.] Well, Henry, at least we found out 
that she was not going to quilt it. She was going to- what is it you 
call it, ladies?
MRS. HALE. [Her hand against her pocket.] We call it- knot it, Mr. 
Henderson. (in Barnet, 1994 : 911)

The male characters as the representation of the society are also a mean to 
satirize because they ridiculed themselves by what they say or do. It was an irony 
because they were sure that they would find the motive of the murder, evenmore 
they underestimated women that they only worried about trifle things. In fact, they 
did not find anything, while women found it. It was the ironical phenomenon that 
Glaspell shows to reveal the fault of the society about the men and women. Those 
ironical phenomenon and representations are regarded as satire because they 
contain irony, exaggeration and flavored with dry humor which have purpose to 
correct and improve the humanity or institutions without direct attack.

Glaspell does not only satirize the society only through the actions and the 
characteristics of the characters, but also through things that have relation to them; 
the name of the characters. For examples, Mr. Wright represents “Mr. Right” 
which means that men were always right, Minnie which means “mini or 
minimized”. Glaspell uses those names to represent the condition of both men and 
women in that time that men were superior, authoritative and arrogant while 
women were inferior, oppressed and not confident. Men were leader, always right 
however, whenever, wherever, whoever and whatever they were, while women 
should follow them. In the end of the story, it was not proven that men were 
always right. However, that was precisely the opposite of the facts. The rightness 
of men was the weakness of themselves. Feeling that they were always right, they
became overconfident and underestimated women. Nevertheless it ended in their failure. On the other side, women, who were underestimated, and considered unimportant as the title of the play itself, *Trifles*, succeeded in finding the solving problem. This ironical phenomenon is used by Glaspell as a satire to criticize the male-dominated society.

Through all these satires, Susan Glaspell wants to show that men and women are actually equal. No one should oppress anyone, no one should humiliate anyone and no one should be the master of anyone because we are born the same. These satires are needed because the American society in the early nineteenth century was imbalanced. The patriarchal system which was applied in the society was on men’s side. It gave advantages to men, but loss and thrashing to women. Men could do everything, including ruling women, while women could do nothing but suffered the oppression of men. Therefore, Glaspell wants to correct it by satirizing the society of which in order to be a balanced society.

Regarding to Holman and Harmon’s statement about the type of the satire, *Trifles* is an indirect satire, seen from the characters in which the satire is expressed through a narrative and the characters or groups who are ridiculed not by what is said about them but by what they themselves say and do. The men characters who underestimated the women were ridiculed by what they did that they could not solve the problem.

All those characters in the play are the tools that Glaspell uses to satirize and criticize the society. By writing this satirical play, Susan Glaspell wants to show that men and women are actually equal. No one can oppress anyone and no
one wants to be oppressed. Both men and women have intelligence, strength, ability, ideas and pride. Underestimating each other is no use because it will end in sorrow.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

*Trifles* is a one-act play by Susan Glaspell. This play has seven characters; four male characters and three female characters. The female characters are Mrs. Wright (Minnie Foster), Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale. The male characters are Mr. John Wright, Mr. George Henderson, Mr. Henry Peters and Mr. Lewis Hale. Applying the theory of character by M.J. Murphy, the writer examines those characters through the things they do and say and what others say about them.

Mr. Wright was a silent but hard and authoritative person who could ask or forbid everything he wanted in his family. Mr. Peters was a sheriff who was rude and often used harsh words to insult them. Mr. Hale was an uneducated farmer who also treated women unkindly during the investigation. Mr. Henderson was the County Attorney who underestimated women’s opinion during the investigation. Those four characters are the representation of men at that time that both educated and uneducated men would always looked down on women.

Mrs. Wright was cheerful when she was a girl, but changed after the marriage because she was oppressed by her husband. However, she later on had the awareness to free herself from the restriction of her husband by killing him. Mrs. Hale was the only woman in the play who disagreed that women were lower than men and always had an initiative not to be driven by men. The last character, Mrs. Peters, was a loyal and obedient wife who finally developed her mind and saw the truth that women were not lower than men after joining with Mrs. Hale.
Those seven characters are used by Susan Glaspell to satirize the male-dominated American society that looked down on women. She uses ironical phenomenon to satirize such as the result of the investigation that men who were arrogant did not find anything, while women who were underestimated got the solving problem. She also uses representations to symbolize certain meaning, such as the name of the characters, Mr. Wright which means men were always right, Minnie which means mini or minimized, showing that women at that time were oppressed and depressed, the knotting of the thread which means to end the misery, and they have certain purpose to improve and correct the society. The women who were minimized wanted to end the misery they experienced from the men who were always considered right. She uses terms “killing” and “death” to exaggerate the story. This ironical phenomenon, representations and exaggeration part of the play are the proofs that this play is a satirical play. Related to the type of the satire, as what is stated in the second chapter, this play is an Indirect Satire because the satirical part are shown not by what is said about the characters but by what they say and do. However, although she does not use direct way to satirize the society, her message is actually directly shown through the exaggeration, irony and also humor in the story. Besides, considering that at that time such issue was still considered taboo, this way of expressing her idea can be said as blunt.

This thesis is conducted to show the real purpose of the playwright that she indirectly satirizes the male-dominated society which looked down on women. Besides, this thesis is also to show the parts of the play which are used by the playwright to satirize the male-dominated society and also to prove that men and
women are equal, in order to make a better society. Eventually, this thesis aims at showing that this play is a light but powerful one.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Summary of Susan Glaspell’s *Trifles*

John Wright was killed in his bed with a rope around his neck, strangled by someone. His wife, Mrs. Wright said that she didn’t know about his death although she slept next to him. She said that she was in deep sleeping when the murderer came and killed her husband. Mr. Hale and Mr. Harry, her neighbor noticed that Mr. Wright was dead when they wanted to see him, but they only met Mrs. Wright, who said that Mr. Wright was dead. They suddenly looked for a call to the sheriff to tell this case to him. In a view moment, the sheriff, Mr. Henry Peters with his wife, the county attorney, Mr. George Henderson, and Mrs. Hale accompanied Mr. Hale to come to Mr. Wright’s house to investigate what was the cause of the murder of Mr. Wright.

Firstly, the men, Mr. Hale, Mr. Peters and Mr. Henderson tried to talk about many possibilities about the causes of the case. Then the women tried to join the conversation by adding their opinion such as about the fruit, which weren’t freeze, or the quilt, but the men underestimated the women that they were used to worrying over trifles. Then the men decided to look for any possible evidences upstairs in Mr. Wright’s room, while women were ordered to stay in the kitchen, a place which was built for the women to work in.

The men upstairs didn’t get any evidence at all although they had given their best effort to find something, which could be the clue for solving the murder of Mr. Wright. They had opened their eyes widely to look for some
important things, which they thought would lead to the ending of the case. While women in the kitchen, they tried to examine even a small thing, which usually men thought it was unimportant. The women searched everything in everywhere include in the cupboard under the table. Finally they found a birdcage with broken door, and a box with a dead bird with its neck twisted in one side and strangled with a rope around its neck in it.

The women decided that this bird and this box was the clue to end the case. They thought that this bird was killed and strangled by Mr. Wright, because as what Mr. Hale knew that Mr. Wright didn’t like something noisy, just like this singing bird, which liked to sing and made some noises. It was the opposite with Mrs. Wright that she used to like singing. This little attention lead to the solving problem that the murderer of Mr. Wright was his own wife, Mrs. Wright who was oppressed, depressed and isolated by him, as the bird in the cage. She had no freedom at all to express her own feeling, or even her hobby to sing. In the time when she ran out of her patience, and when she had the best time to take revenge, she killed and strangled him as what he did to her lovely singing bird.

Finding the motive of the murder, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters decided not to let men know about it. They knew that this evidence would aggravate her in the jail. They did it because they did not want Mrs. Wright to be in pain any longer. They thought that it was enough for her to suffer the pain. They understand how torturing it was to be oppressed by husband. Therefore, as women who experienced the same suffering, they preferred to put the evidence out of men’s sight.