

The Power of Women's Emotions in Trifles with The Feminist Perspective

Feminist Bakış Açısıyla Trifles Oyununda Kadınların Duygularının Gücü

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Abstract



Susan Glaspell's play *Trifles* is a striking piece of theater that offers a powerful feminist analysis of women's living conditions, social roles, and inner lives in the United States in the early 20th century. This play, which incorporates elements of the detective genre and offers profound social critique, questions gender roles through a sensitive lens of women's experiences. The play revolves around a murder case in a farmhouse, and the women's careful observation and empathy, combined with the traditional male investigation, begin to reveal the truth behind the case. In this context, Glaspell highlights women's emotional intelligence and intuitive awareness of social norms. The central character of the play, Minnie Foster Wright, is not only a murder suspect but also a symbol of the repressed lives of women of the period. As the female characters recognize and interpret everyday objects in Minnie's home—a broken bird cage, a missing stitch, a dead bird—the loneliness, emotional violence, and lack of communication within her inner world become apparent. The male characters' disdain for these details, dismissing them as unimportant things, creates a critical irony within the context of gender roles. In this respect, the play reveals how women's experiences, often perceived as unimportant, are actually meaningful and revealing. *Trifles* demonstrates how the traditional patriarchal order narrows women's living spaces, while also revealing how women develop resistance to these oppressions through empathy, observation, and silent solidarity. The female characters' ability to grasp the emotional reasons behind a murder through details that men overlook or ignore not only enables a solution to a crime but also raises awareness of women's social invisibility. In this respect, Glaspell not only depicts the physical and emotional oppression women face, but also defends the legitimacy of an alternative source of knowledge by bringing women's knowledge production, emotional intuition, and everyday experiences to the stage. Glaspell's dramatic structure, constructed through dialogue, reveals the women's internal conflicts, their silent struggles, and their socially suppressed subjectivities. In this sense, *Trifles* is not merely a theatrical text; it is also an intellectual manifesto demonstrating the role women's voices, observations, and emotions can play in social transformation. Glaspell's work invites the audience not only to discover the truth behind a murder but also to deeply question the historical and social oppressions women face. *Trifles* stands out as a rich work, both literary and intellectual, as a product of Susan Glaspell's efforts to make visible the unseen lives of women, a pioneer of feminist theater. This work, which depicts the emotional turmoil women experience by weaving it through the details of everyday life, is notable for its narrative style that questions gender norms, centers on empathy, and respects women's inner worlds. *Trifles* remains a cornerstone of feminist literature and a compelling work that brings to the stage the invisible pain and silent struggles experienced by women.

Keywords: women's emotions, drama, *Trifles*, feminism

Extended Turkish Abstract



Susan Glaspell'in *Trifles* adlı oyunu, 20. yüzyılın başlarında Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde kadınların yaşam koşulları, toplumsal rolleri ve içsel dünyalarına dair güçlü bir feminist analiz sunan çarpıcı bir tiyatro eseridir. Hem poliseye türünün

öğelerini barındıran hem de derin bir toplumsal eleştiri içeren bu oyun, kadınların deneyimlerine duyarlı bir bakış açısıyla toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini sorgular. Oyun, bir çiftlik evinde yaşanan bir cinayet vakası etrafında gelişir ve erkeklerin yürüttüğü geleneksel soruşturmanın yanı sıra, kadınların dikkatli gözlemleri ve empati temelli yaklaşımları sayesinde olayın ardındaki gerçekler ortaya çıkmaya başlar. Glaspell, bu bağlamda, kadınların duygusal zekâsının ve toplumsal normlara karşı geliştirdikleri sezgisel farkındalığın altını çizer. Oyunun merkezindeki karakter olan Minnie Foster Wright, sadece bir cinayet zanlısı değil, aynı zamanda dönemin kadınlarının bastırılmış hayatlarının bir sembolü olarak kurgulanmıştır. Minnie'nin evinde yer alan gündelik eşyalar – kırık bir kuş kafesi, eksik bir dikiş, ölmüş bir kuş – kadın karakterler tarafından fark edilip anlamlandırıldıkça, onun içsel dünyasında yaşanan yalnızlık, duygusal şiddet ve iletişimsizlik açığa çıkar. Erkek karakterlerin ise bu ayrıntıları “önemsiz şeyler” olarak görüp küçümsemeleri, toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri bağlamında eleştirel bir ironi oluşturur. Oyun, bu yönüyle önemsiz gibi görülen kadın deneyimlerinin aslında ne kadar anlamlı ve açıklayıcı olduğunu gözler önüne serer. *Trifles*, geleneksel ataerkil düzenin kadınların yaşam alanlarını nasıl daralttığını gösterirken kadınların empati, gözlem gücü ve sessiz dayanışma yoluyla bu baskılara nasıl direnç geliştirdiklerini de ortaya koyar. Kadın karakterlerin, erkeklerin göremediği ya da görmezden geldiği ayrıntılar üzerinden cinayetin ardındaki duygusal sebepleri kavrayabilmesi, yalnızca bir suçun çözümünü değil, aynı zamanda kadınların toplumsal görünmezliğine karşı bir farkındalık yaratmayı da sağlar. Bu yönüyle Glaspell, sadece kadınların maruz kaldığı fiziksel ve duygusal baskıyı anlatmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda kadınların bilgi üretme biçimlerini, duygusal sezgilerini ve gündelik hayat deneyimlerini sahneye taşıyarak onları savunur. Glaspell'in diyaloglar üzerinden kurduğu dramatik yapı, kadınların yaşadığı içsel çatışmaları, sessiz mücadelelerini ve toplumsal olarak bastırılmış öznelliklerini açığa çıkartır. *Trifles*, bu anlamda, yalnızca bir tiyatro metni değil; aynı zamanda kadınların seslerinin, gözlemlerinin ve duygularının toplumsal dönüşümde nasıl bir rol oynayabileceğini gösteren düşünsel bir manifestodur. Glaspell'in eseri, seyirciyi yalnızca bir cinayetin ardındaki gerçeği keşfetmeye değil, aynı zamanda kadınların yaşadığı tarihsel ve toplumsal baskılara dair derinlikli bir sorgulamaya davet eder. *Trifles*, feminist tiyatronun öncülerinden biri olarak kabul edilen Susan Glaspell'in kadınların görünmeyen yaşamlarını görünür kılma çabasının bir ürünü olarak hem edebî hem de düşünsel açıdan zengin bir yapıt olarak öne çıkar. Kadınların yaşadığı duygusal karmaşaları, gündelik hayattaki detaylarla örerek anlatan bu eser, toplumsal cinsiyet normlarını sorgulayan, empatiyi merkezine alan ve kadınların içsel dünyasına saygı duyan bir anlatı biçimiyle dikkat çeker. Glaspell'in güçlü anlatımı sayesinde *Trifles*, feminist edebiyatın temel taşlarından biri olmanın yanı sıra, kadınların yaşadığı görünmez acıları ve sessiz mücadeleleri sahneye taşıyan etkileyici bir yapıt olarak değerini korumaktadır. Oyun; toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri, yalnızlık, baskı, özgürlük ve kadın dayanışması gibi temaları ele almaktadır. Ayrıca erkeklerin kadınların yaşamlarına verdikleri önemsizliği eleştirir ve kadınların zayıflık olarak görülen özelliklerinin aslında onları birbirine bağladığına dikkat çeker. Glaspell genellikle yalnızca bu eserle anılsa da, onun daha geniş yazınsal üretimi dikkate değerdir. Eserlerinde sessizlik farklı işlevler üstlenir ve tek tip bir şekilde yorumlanmamalıdır. Bununla birlikte, bastırılmış ifade biçimleri ve toplumsal cinsiyet kurguları gibi yinelenen temalar öne çıkar; parçalanmış diyaloglar ve temsil alanı için mücadele eden karakterler aracılığıyla betimlenir. Glaspell'in metinleri, sessizliğin söyleme dönüştüğü anları sergileyerek, dilsel sınırların ötesindeki ifade zenginliğini gözler önüne serer (McBride, 2006, 160). Susan Glaspell'in *Trifles* adlı eseri, yalnızca toplumsal normlara meydan okumakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda kadınların duygularının ve düşüncelerinin karmaşık toplumsal dinamikleri anlamada ve yönlendirmede taşıdığı derin önemi de vurgulayan güçlü bir feminist dram olarak öne çıkar. Minnie Foster karakteri ve kadın bakış açılarının incelikli yansıtılışı aracılığıyla Glaspell, 20. yüzyılın başlarındaki Amerika'da kadınlara yönelik küçümseyici tutumları keskin bir biçimde eleştirir. Glaspell, cinayet soruşturmasını kadınların çok katmanlı yaşamlarını irdelemek için bir mercekle kullanır ve ataerkil sistemler içinde maruz kaldıkları ihmal ve dışlanmanın katmanlarını ustalıkla açığa çıkarır. Özünde *Trifles*, kadınların gücüne, direncine ve entelektüel yetkinliğine dair güçlü bir tanıklık olarak öne çıkar; cinsiyet hiyerarşisine dair hâkim anlayışlara meydan okur ve kadınların seslerinin yalnızca duyulmakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda değer gördüğü daha adil bir toplumun savunusunu yapar. Glaspell'in ustalıklı anlatımı, yalnızca edebî bir haz sunmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda toplumsal adalet ve değişim arayışında kadınların seslerini güçlendirmenin önemine ve cinsiyet eşitliği için verilen mücadelenin sürekliliğine dair eleştirel bir düşünüm de uygundur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: kadınların duyguları, drama, *Trifles*, feminizm

Introduction

The focus of feminism is women, gender equality, and their positions in society. In this context, many topics are widely discussed, such as the roles of women inside and outside the home, the oppression and exploitation they are exposed to, gender differences, the patriarchal structure of society, and the suppression of male domination. The fact that these discussions continue today is a sign that these problems still exist. As a result of the debates opened by feminism about women, new words, actions, perceptions and theoretical approaches have emerged (Taş, 2016, p. 164). This indicates that feminism itself is in a constant state of change and development. Feminism is a movement that fights for women's rights and improving their social positions. Therefore, the ongoing debate about women's place and rights in society shows that feminism continues to grow as a strong social movement. This understanding reflects Simone de Beauvoir's (2011) idea that womanhood is shaped by society rather than biology. Butler (2022) similarly explains that gender is something people perform through repeated behaviors and expectations. In addition, Cixous (2009) highlights that

women express knowledge and experience in emotional and intuitive ways, which helps us better understand the silent knowledge of the female characters in *Trifles*. Feminism is an interdisciplinary concept that advocates that women should have equal rights with men in all fields, and that it struggles to improve women's position in society. Considering that every woman has subjective experiences and perspectives, different women can make different definitions of feminism. Therefore, it is not possible to limit feminism to a single definition (Doğancı and Tuncay, 2020, p. 1328). In feminist literary studies, scholars like Millett (2016) and Showalter (2012) explain that patriarchy influences both language and the way women are represented in literature. Based on these ideas, this study views Glaspell's *Trifles* as a work where women's emotions and perspectives create new meanings and challenge male-centered thinking.

Literature is one of the oldest arts in history and occupies an important place in social life. It is a tool that people use to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Therefore, literature plays a crucial role in promoting gender equality and is closely connected to feminist thought. Feminism is a movement that focuses on women's rights and social positions. Literature is important to feminism as a field where women speak, share their experiences, and give messages about gender roles in society. According to Moran (2001), literary theories are grouped into four main categories: world/society-oriented, author-oriented, text-oriented, and reader-oriented. Feminist literary criticism is most closely associated with the reader-oriented category.

The struggle against gender discrimination, the problematization of womanhood, the challenges of being a woman in the public sphere, and the denial of female identity within a patriarchal order gave rise to feminist theatre, as women utilized the art of theatre as a medium of resistance. In this context, it can be argued that women succeeded in making their voices heard through theatre (Güler, 2022, p. 69). Feminist literature reflects the perspective of women on the challenges, discrimination and oppressions faced by women. It aims to contribute to gender equality in society and to empower women in society. Feminist literature has clearly shaped the field of theatre, with many playwrights using a feminist perspective to explore the challenges women face in society. Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* is one such example. These plays have helped raise awareness about women's roles and rights and have pushed back against the idea of women as secondary or lesser figures (Kök, 2019).

Born in 1876 in Davenport, Iowa, Susan Glaspell appears to have done little to impress her with male figures in her family; on the other hand, she is the inspiration for many of the powerful female characters in her plays as her mother and grandmother (Jabboury, 2007, p. 1). Glaspell earned a Ph.D in Philosophy from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. She worked as a reporter for the Des Moines Daily News after graduation. Upon returning to Davenport in 1902, she transitioned into writing fiction, drawing from her experiences at the paper for inspiration. Her work at the newspaper provided her with enough material to embark on a new career as a fiction writer, prompting her to leave the paper behind (Ben-Zvi, 1992, pp. 143-144). It is thought by researchers that Glaspell wrote this play inspired by an investigation into a murder while doing journalism (Ben-Zvi, 2005; Saei Dibavar & Saai Dibavar, 2022; Köşker, 2020). Glaspell's plays draw upon the experiences she acquired through her family's migration to the West. Her passions, such as independence and idealism, were combined with the American family structure. Therefore, there are often female characters who live in the countryside and cannot express themselves. Unfortunately, these characters cannot easily find a way out. However, Glaspell has managed to intensely reflect the feminist critical approach to the most famous play *Trifles* in a short text. In this success, her involvement in opposition groups, her relationship with her husband, and the influence of freedom provided by her style of marriage played a major role (Yamaner, 2005). Glaspell's plays, particularly *Trifles*, are considered timeless pieces of literature. Not only was the play revolutionary in its portrayal of women's conditions in the 19th century, but it also paved the way for contemporary interpretations of gender, feminism, and spatial discourse (Karagöz Gümüştubuk, 2019, p. 406). Susan Glaspell's ideal feminism became more known for her single curtain *Trifles* play and later turned into a short story called *A Jury of Every Peers*. The title of *Trifles* is simple and seems quite contradictory to the subject and situations of the game. Unimportant things are very

important to women, but stupid things to men. Susan Glaspell expresses the difference in gender perspectives with the words of the male characters, which is a matter that causes the men in the game to reject Mrs. Wright's idea of researching the kitchen because it's something feminine that isn't worth looking for, unlike women (Jawad, 2020, p. 28).

The play takes place in the kitchen environment of a farmhouse, and everything around it offers clues about women's daily lives. A farmer named John Wright is found murdered in his bedroom and his wife, Minnie Wright, is arrested on suspicion. County Attorney George Henderson, local sheriff Henry Peters, and a neighboring farmer Lewis Hale come to investigate the murder at the house. In addition, the sheriff's wife (Mrs. Peters) and Lewis' wife (Mrs. Hale) are also in the house. While these three men search for clues in the farmhouse, the two women also discover important clues about Minnie's living conditions and mood. Through the play, men are criticized for not paying attention to women's housework and their lives. Women complain about men's cruel and irresponsible behavior. Eventually, based on the pieces of evidence Minnie left in her bedroom, the women conclude that she may have committed the murder. However, the women develop empathy for the loneliness and ill-treatment that Minnie lives in her farmhouse and keep her guilt hidden.

The play deals with themes such as social gender roles, loneliness, oppression, freedom, and women's solidarity. It also criticizes the insignificance that men give to women's lives and draws attention to the fact that the weaknesses of women connect them to each other. Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* highlights the profound significance of silence, contrasting it with the limitations imposed by conventional language. While Glaspell is often only associated with this one work, her broader body of writing deserves attention. In her works, silence serves varied functions. However, recurring themes of silenced expression and gender constructs emerge, depicted through fragmented dialogue and characters grappling for representational space. Glaspell's texts showcase moments where silence breaks into discourse, unveiling the richness of expression beyond linguistic constraints (McBride, 2006, p. 160).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* from a feminist perspective by examining how women's emotions, intuitions, and everyday experiences are represented in the play. The research aims to reveal how female characters, positioned within a patriarchal social order, negotiate oppression, loneliness, and restrictions while also building solidarity and pursuing freedom. By focusing on the details dismissed by men as "trifles," the study highlights how Glaspell transforms women's overlooked experiences into powerful sources of meaning and knowledge, thereby situating *Trifles* as a significant contribution to feminist literature and theater.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design based on textual analysis. The play *Trifles* was examined through a feminist literary framework, focusing on the symbolic objects, dialogues, and character interactions that reflect women's lived experiences. Thematic content analysis was applied to identify and categorize central themes such as gender roles, loneliness, oppression, freedom, and women's solidarity. These themes were then interpreted in the light of feminist theory (Ferguson, 2017; Gross, 2013; Stacey, 1993). The interpretation of these themes is deeply informed by established feminist theory. The analysis of Minnie Foster Wright as a symbol of the repressed lives of women and the effect of marriage on her identity (Minnie Foster vs. Minnie Wright) are framed by Simone de Beauvoir's concept that womanhood is shaped by societal expectations rather than biology. Furthermore, the contrast between women's successful use of intuition and men's dismissal of "trifles" is interpreted through Hélène Cixous's assertion that women express knowledge and experience in emotional and intuitive ways, thereby defending the legitimacy of women's knowledge production as an alternative source of knowledge. The study also examines how female characters perform gender roles and navigate the imposed limitations on gender. The research ultimately compares the distinct roles and perspectives of male and female characters, demonstrating how women's emotional

intelligence and intuitive awareness challenge and subvert patriarchal norms, contributing to broader discussions of social transformation. In addition to textual and thematic analysis, this study adopts a feminist interpretive framework grounded in the works of Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, and Hélène Cixous. The analysis was carried out in three stages: (1) identifying recurring symbols and linguistic patterns that represent gendered hierarchies, (2) coding the themes of social gender roles, loneliness, oppression, freedom, women's solidarity, and (3) interpreting these codes through feminist theoretical lenses. As Hooks (2000) argues, feminist criticism should not only reveal women's oppression but also articulate strategies for transformation. Accordingly, this study interprets *Trifles* as a site of resistance where women's emotions and intuition serve as epistemological tools challenging patriarchal logic. To ensure validity, feminist hermeneutics was used to triangulate textual evidence, theoretical interpretation, and contextual understanding.

Findings

Social Gender Roles

The gender system tends to prioritize men over women while dividing people into two gender categories. This system presents a hierarchical set of roles in modern society based on praising masculine qualities and degrading feminine qualities (Cranny-Francis, et al., 2017, pp. 1-2). This dynamic is also evident in *Trifles*, particularly through the characters Mr. Peters and his wife. At the beginning of the play, Mrs. Peters is introduced only in relation to her husband, and the same is true for Mrs. Hale. They are presented primarily as the wives of the men, rather than as individuals in their own right. Bem (1974) emphasizes that this male-centered thought deeply affects cultural discourse, social institutions and psychology of individuals. Susan Glaspell's play *Trifles* shows how women are seen and perceived in a time when men behave in accordance with their gender roles. Below, some gender roles in the play are explained with examples:

Women Doing Housework

The play tells the story of a group of people investigating a murder committed on a farm. In this research, it is shown that women are only assigned to help with housework. That is, while women do housework such as cooking, cleaning and knitting, the men work outside to solve the murder. The idea that "women are used to doing housework, while men have more important matters to attend to" is highlighted when a male character says, "Dirty towels! Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?" (Glaspell, 1916, p. 9) to the female characters who were looking around the house for clues.

Ignoring Women

In the play, it is shown that the social roles of women are ignored. For example, while the men searched for evidence to solve the murder, the women stayed at home and also gathered some clues that would help them solve the murder. However, the fact that men ignore these tips they collect and discard them as worthless is an indication that women are ignored. The societal structure that is used to disregarding women's feelings as individuals is revealed when Count Attorney says, "I guess before we're through she may have something more serious than she preserves to worry about." And it continues with Mr. Hale and Sheriff, "Well, women are used to worrying over trifles." (Glaspell, 1916, p. 3). Sheriff, "They wonder if she was going to quilt it or just knot it!" (Glaspell, 1916, p. 5).

Male Domination

Mrs Peters: Oh, what are you doing, Mrs Hale? Mrs Hale: Just pulling out a stitch or two that's not sewed very good. Bad sewing always made me fidgety. Mrs Peters: I don't think we ought to touch things. Mrs Hale: I'll just finish up this end. Mrs Peters? (Glaspell, 1916, p. 6). These dialogues refer to an example in the play *Trifles* that highlights the theme of male dominance. At the beginning of the play, the prosecutor and sheriff do not allow the women to wander around the farm and conduct research at home. This can be interpreted as a sign that men believe women are ineffective. Later, the conversation between Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters shows that women can play an active role in solving

the case. However, Mrs. Peters' statement that "we shouldn't touch things" reflects social norms that limit and render women ineffective under the pressure of men. In this context, the paragraph emphasizes that male dominance operates based on societal norms that promote the idea that women are useless and limit their potential.

Power is complex, shaped by who uses it, against whom, under what conditions, and influenced by various social and cultural factors. Historically, it has been closely tied to gender roles, with male-dominated discourses portraying men as inherently superior and framing power as a masculine trait, limiting women's access to authority (Bozkurt, 2025, p. 23). Women's emotions play a very important role in *Trifles*. In the play, the female characters are the ones who take care of the housework and pay attention to the small details that the men often ignore. Although the men come to the town farm to solve the murder, the women come closer to solving the murder, noticing the small clues left at the crime scene. This emotional and intuitive power of women is one of the main messages of the play. The play emphasizes how hard a life women live while dealing with household chores and that they are often underestimated by society. It also shows that even the simple things that women do in daily life can be important and reveal many things. The relationship between female characters is another example of their emotional strength. Women understand and support each other, while it is difficult for men to understand the difficulties in women's lives. This highlights another aspect of women's emotional strength. In *Trifles*, the importance of women's emotional power is emphasized. Women are attentive, intuitive and understanding, even when dealing with household chores. The work points out that the emotional power of women should be appreciated more by the society. Susan Glaspell can be regarded as a playwright who envisioned a better future for women, especially considering her primary aim to give women the center stage in her plays. Through her works, she aimed to bring about a positive change in the status of women in society. In her play, *Trifles*, Glaspell sheds light on a world where women are confined by the patriarchal norms and are forced to abide by their husband's rules without any say of their own. She highlights the gendered spatial divide, where men enjoy freedom in both public and private spaces, while women are limited to the traditional feminine space, the kitchen. In this way, *Trifles* is not only revolutionary in its portrayal of women's conditions in the 19th century but also relevant in contemporary discussions of feminism, gender, and spatial politics (Karagöz Gümüştubuk, 2019, p. 406). During and before the 17th and 18th centuries, gender roles were tightly defined and women had only limited roles in society, such as mother and wife. The expectation of women to stay at home and take care of housework was present in almost all cultures (Donovan, 2012). It is stated that the author does not bring the character of Minnie to the scene to focus on topics that are not related to her guilt or innocence, but instead focus on issues beyond the subject of blame. The signification of the character's presence through the empty swing chair in Minnie's home engages the viewer concerned with her plight. In addition, the fact that the play takes place in the kitchen, which is in the private area where Minnie lives, instead of the courtroom, also addresses the reasons why women's lives are not represented in court (Ben-Zvi, 1992, p. 154). In its simplest terms, the attire, professional pursuits, domestic and public organization, decision-making mechanisms, and many other aspects of women's and men's lives are perceived as manifestations of natural differences. This understanding also highlights the social construction of gender categories, indicating that the concepts of female and male are socially constructed (Alptekin, 2008, p. 22).

Forced To Cut Off Communication With Others/Loneliness

In *Trifles*, the solitude of the character Minnie Foster Wright is processed quite clearly. Minnie is a happy and social woman before marriage. But after marriage, her life changes greatly due to the pressure and violence of her husband. At the beginning of the play, Minnie learns that she is imprisoned at home and cannot communicate with anyone. This shows how lonely she is. When two women arrive at Minnie's home, they question her loneliness and start looking for clues about her.

Women discover many things in Minnie's home, and these things reveal the depths of her loneliness. For example, women notice that Minnie cares carefully about the bird and has made a private home for her. This shows that Minnie shares her loneliness with her only friend, the bird, and

she struggles to protect that friend. But eventually, the women discover that Minnie's bird has been killed. This shows how lonely she is and how desperate she feels. In *Trifles*, Minnie's loneliness is a result of the challenges and disappointments she has experienced. However, this loneliness has also revealed its inner power. By taking care of her bird and protecting her, Minnie has found a goal for herself and survived.

Some examples of sentences from the play that illustrate the theme of women's loneliness in *Trifles*:

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. 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 town girls singing in the choir. But that—oh, that was thirty years ago. This all you was to take in? (Glaspell, 1916, p. 4). This passage highlights how Minnie's life has changed since she married, and suggests that she has become increasingly isolated. When the women discover Minnie's birdcage, they remark on how well-cared for the bird was. Mrs Peters: No, she didn't have a cat. She's got that feeling some people have about cats—being afraid of them. My cat got in her room and she was real upset and asked me to take it out (Glaspell, 1916, p. 6). This detail underscores Minnie's attachment to the bird and her desire to keep it safe. After the women find the dead bird, they speculate about what might have happened: "Looks as if somebody must have been rough with it." (Glaspell, 1916, p. 6). Near the end of the play, Mrs. Peters comments on how alone Minnie must have been: "I know what stillness is. When we homesteaded in Dakota, and my first baby died—after he was two years old—and me with no other then—...I know what stillness is." (Glaspell, 1916, p. 8). Mrs. Peters can relate to Minnie's loneliness and isolation, which adds poignancy to the play's conclusion.

Oppression

In Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*, the theme of oppression is quite prominent. Especially the pressure on the female characters is the main theme of the work. The play draws attention to the gender discrimination in society and the position of women in society. Minnie Wright lives under the pressure of her husband. Due to pressure from her husband, Minnie is unable to express herself and is deprived of her own freedom. Minnie's story reflects the oppression that many women experience under the male-dominated structure of society. In the play, the insignificance of women's place and thoughts in society is one of the elements that strengthens the theme of oppression. Male characters do not pay attention to the words and actions of women and ignore their thoughts. This causes women to feel pressured. As a result, the theme of oppression in *Trifles* reflects the oppression of women resulting from gender discrimination. The fact that the female characters cannot make their own voices heard and their thoughts are considered unimportant are factors that strengthen the oppression.

The statement "women are used to worrying over trifles." (Glaspell, 1916, p. 3) is significant in the context of Susan Glaspell's play, *Trifles*. The play explores the theme of gender roles and power dynamics, and the idea that women's concerns and contributions are often dismissed or undervalued. This is highlighted in the play when the male characters are dismissive of the female characters' interest in seemingly insignificant details related to the murder investigation, labeling them as trifles. The play challenges the notion that women are only concerned with trivial matters and instead portrays them as astute and perceptive individuals whose contributions are often overlooked due to gender bias. The passage "I know what stillness is. When we homesteaded in Dakota, and my first baby died—after he was two years old—and me with no other then—...I know what stillness is." (Glaspell, 1916, p. 8) highlights the oppressive silence that can be felt in times of grief and loneliness. This silence is a common experience for women who are often expected to bear their emotional burdens silently and without complaint. Additionally, the line "She was kind of like a bird herself—real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and—fluttery." (Glaspell, 1916, p. 7) characterizes Minnie as someone who is easily dominated and oppressed by her husband.

According to feminism, traditional family structure can have many benefits for men and children, but women are often exposed to sexual, emotional, social and economic pressures within the family. Women have to endure these pressures as well as the benefits they provide to men and children in the family (Pilalis and Anderton, 1986). Therefore, feminism adopts an approach that recognizes diverse family structures and social relations grounded in gender equality. In the context of the play, Minnie Wright appears to have been emotionally abused, although there is no explicit evidence of physical abuse (Angel, 2003, p. 549).

Freedom

The play *Trifles* emphasizes the theme of freedom in relation to women's individual freedoms. The play depicts how women characters' freedom is limited due to societal pressures and limited opportunities. However, it also shows how women characters increase their freedoms by supporting each other and working together. For example, when Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale come together to collect evidence at Minnie's home, they empathize with each other and understand the difficulties that Minnie faces. This unity helps women to fight against societal pressures and increase their own freedoms.

The bird, which is an important symbol in the play, reflects the theme of freedom. The killing of the bird can be interpreted as a sign of Minnie's husband controlling her and suppressing her. However, the killing of the bird also symbolizes Minnie's struggle to achieve her individual freedom. These examples demonstrate that the theme of freedom in the play is related to women's efforts to fight against societal pressures and increase their own freedoms. There are more examples of sentences from the play that illustrate the theme of freedom in *Trifles*:

"Mrs. Hale, the law is the law." (Glaspell, 1916, p. 5). This line demonstrates the restrictive nature of the law, which can limit individual freedoms and perpetuate social inequality.

"Oh, I wish I'd come over here once in a while! That was a crime! That was a crime! Who's going to punish that? (Glaspell, 1916, p. 8). Here, Mrs. Hale expresses her regret at not having supported Minnie more in the past. This passage highlights the idea that individual freedom can be increased through acts of kindness and solidarity.

"She was kind of like a bird herself—real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and—fluttery. How—she—did—change." (Glaspell, 1916, p. 7). This passage characterizes Minnie as someone who is trapped and oppressed in her marriage, but who yearns for freedom. The metaphor of the bird is used again to symbolize her journey to independence. These sentences demonstrate how the theme of freedom is explored in *Trifles*. The play shows that individual freedom can be limited by social structures and expectations, but that it can also be increased through acts of solidarity and personal growth.

Women's Solidarity

In the play *Trifles*, the relationship between women starts off as timid and distant, but gradually evolves into a strong sense of solidarity and understanding. The women's shared experiences and exchanges play an important role in strengthening their relationship. For example, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters initially have concerns about their differences in social status. However, as they begin to talk about their memories and experiences of Minnie Foster's life, they start to understand each other better. By sharing each other's feelings and experiences, the women create a sense of solidarity that brings them together and strengthens their power. In particular, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters provide a different perspective from the men's point of view, and play an important role in understanding Minnie Foster's life and achieving justice. Thus, *Trifles* focuses on the strengthening of solidarity and relationships among women. Despite the pressures of society, women support each other and fight for a common goal.

Some examples of sentences from the play that illustrate the theme of women's solidarity in *Trifles* in the following:

"I wish you'd seen Minnie Foster when she wore a white dress with blue ribbons and stood up there in the choir and sang" (Glaspell, 1916, p. 8). This passage shows Mrs. Hale reminiscing about Minnie's past and how it brings the two women closer together.

"Oh, I wish I'd come over here once in a while! That was a crime! That was a crime! Who's going to punish that?" (Glaspell, 1916, p. 8). Here, Mrs. Hale expresses her regret at not having supported Minnie more in the past. This passage demonstrates how the women's relationship deepens as they share their thoughts and feelings with each other.

These sentences demonstrate how the theme of the relationship between women is explored in *Trifles*. The play emphasizes the importance of women supporting each other and finding solidarity in the face of societal oppression. Glaspell cleverly creates a power struggle and intellectual challenge between the male and female characters in her play, highlighting the male characters' constant belief in their superiority due to their mindset and duties, compared to the female characters' domestic chores and attitudes. This struggle results in the male characters being unable to detect the playfulness of the process of discovery, and consequently failing to uncover the truth, while the female characters demonstrate their ability to detect the domestic crime and sympathize with Minnie. Glaspell's dramatic narrative employs a process of deferral, resulting in the production of multiple meanings, allowing the female characters to decode the crime and Minnie's unhappy marriage. However, at the end, they choose to remain silent about it (Köşker, 2020, p. 433). Glaspell's brilliance in her writing is revealed in the moments of sympathy and ultimately identification expressed by the husbands towards the accused woman. In the latter half of the drama, these outbursts of empathetic compassion transform the play from a traditional domestic murder mystery to a much sharper reflection on the coercive dynamics of patriarchal authority (Hilton, 2011, p. 148). The women are dramatically examining the serious wounds of Minnie's caused only by the actions of Mr. John Wright. They sympathize with Minnie not only on a human level, but also on the basis of the belief that domestic violence is almost always asymmetrically on the side of women (Jawad, 2020, p. 34).

Two women wandering around the kitchen to check Minnie's leftover stuff, perceive and uncover more details about unfinished tasks. After this, Mrs. Peters will play the role of a curious observer, while Mrs. Hale will intervene repeatedly, connecting past areas to the present area of the story through time jumps and providing explanations, justifications, and emotional clues and allowing corresponding responses. In conclusion, the women solve the murder and do not tell anyone. The play makes a clear statement that what men consider to be insignificant or trifling are in fact vital and essential, particularly when they are pieces of evidence in a homicide investigation (Karagöz Gümüşçubuk, 2019, p. 402).

Conclusion

Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* stands as a compelling feminist drama that not only challenges societal norms but also underscores the profound significance of women's emotions and thoughts in navigating complex social dynamics. Through the character of Minnie Foster and the nuanced portrayal of women's perspectives, Glaspell offers a piercing critique of the dismissive attitudes towards women prevalent in early twentieth-century America. The play serves as a poignant commentary on the roles and experiences of women during that era, illuminating their resilience, agency, and capacity for understanding and empathy amidst oppressive societal structures. Glaspell artfully employs the murder investigation as a lens through which to explore the multifaceted lives of women, unveiling the layers of neglect and marginalization they endure within patriarchal systems.

The delineation of domestic space into male and female domains is evident through staging and character groupings. Despite the kitchen being a quintessential female space, male intrusion underscores the pervasive dominance of men. Women's responses, such as halting conversation upon men's arrival, hint at reluctant acceptance. Yet, kitchen scenes highlight stark differences in perspectives between genders, particularly in notions of law and justice. This tension forms a central

theme, urging reflection on societal norms marginalizing women's voices in matters of justice (Wright, 2002, p. 230).

The discovery of the dead bird triggers suppressed memories of Mrs. Peters's childhood rage towards someone who cruelly killed her kitten. As she connects the bird with Mrs. Wright and her own past, Mrs. Peters realizes the bird will be used to portray Mrs. Wright as irrational for reacting strongly to small matters. This realization propels Mrs. Peters out of her passive role as the sheriff's wife into someone committed to justice, prioritizing fairness over strict adherence to legal procedures. By hiding the bird, she takes a stand against the men's attempts to sensationalize the case, asserting her authority as someone who distributes life's outcomes, not merely the sheriff's spouse (Russell, 1997, p. 89).

In essence, *Trifles* stands as a compelling testament to women's strength, resilience, and intellectual agency, challenging dominant gender hierarchies and advocating for a more just society in which women's voices are not only acknowledged but genuinely valued. Glaspell's nuanced narrative does more than entertain; it provokes critical reflection on the persistent struggle for gender equality and the necessity of amplifying women's perspectives in the pursuit of justice and social transformation. Beyond its literary significance, this study contributes to feminist literary criticism by illustrating how emotional knowledge operates as a valid form of resistance and epistemology. It reveals how *Trifles* forges a connection between early twentieth-century feminist thought and contemporary gender debates, demonstrating that women's emotional and intuitive insights are not merely sentimental responses but potent sources of understanding and change. In doing so, the study reaffirms the enduring relevance of feminist theory for interpreting literature as a powerful vehicle for social critique and empowerment.

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Both authors contributed equally to the study, each providing 50% of the overall work.

Conflict Declaration

The author(s) declare that no material or moral benefit was received at any stage of the preparation or submission of this article.

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