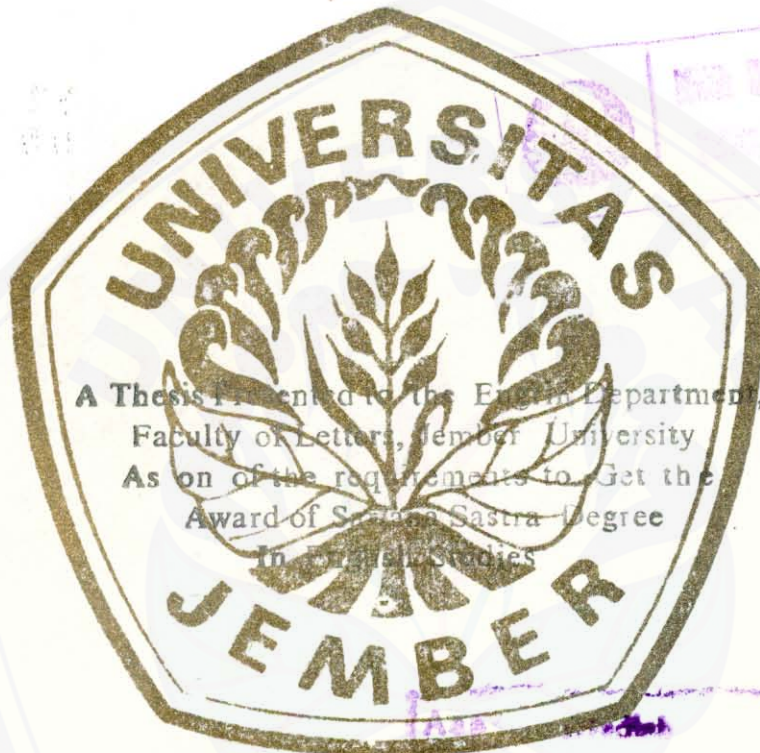


# A STUDY ON FEMINISM THROUGH THE FEMALE CHARACTERS IN SUSAN GLASPELL'S *TRIFLES*



A Thesis presented to the English Department,  
Faculty of Letters, Jember University  
As one of the requirements to Get the  
Award of Sarjana Sastra Degree  
In English Studies

Asas: ...  
Terima: ...  
No. Induk: ...  
31 JAN 2005  
822  
JAR  
✓  
9

**MUKH. SARWONO**  
960110101102

UNIVERSITY OF JEMBER  
FACULTY OF LETTERS  
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
2004

**APPROVAL SHEET**

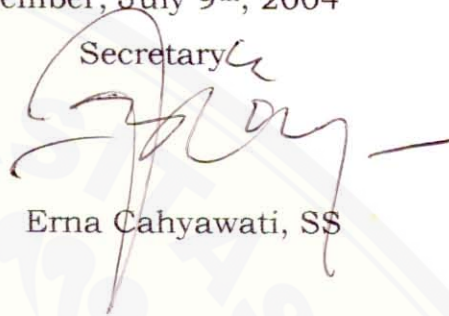
Approved and received by the Examination Committee of the  
English Department , Faculty of Letters, University of Jember

Jember, July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2004

Chairman

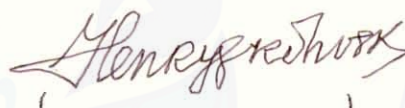
  
Drs. H. M. Busyairi

Secretary

  
Erna Cahyawati, SS

The Members:

1. DR. Henriono Nugroho, MA.



2. Drs. Wisasongko, MA.



3. Drs. Moh. Ilham



MOTTO

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ  
مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا  
وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً  
(النساء: ١)

O, mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread abroad multitude of men and women .

(Holly Koran. An-Nisa :1)

I would like to dedicate this thesis to:

My beloved parents: H. Nurhasan Kabir and Hj. Siti Fatimah  
Subaitun

My beloved parents in-law: Imam Sudjai and Roestini

My beloved brothers and sisters: Nur Hayati, Mursyid, Supriyono,  
Latifah, Binti Fatimah, Mohtar, Ali, Budiono Ihsan, Sri Utami,  
Rini Winarti, Endang Fatmawati, Rizal Kurnia, Liyantina  
Hasan.

My beloved second family: Titik Sumiati and In'am Fauzi

My Wife: Ristna Faizza, SKG.

My Best Friend: Laily Syifa, SS, Nila Susanti, SS, Ririn Kurniawati,  
SS, Setya Budi, SS, Agus Wibowo, ST.

My Almamater

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Merrily, I would like to give my profound gratitude to Allah SWT, the Almighty and the Most Merciful God for the blessing given to me during the work of finishing my thesis. And then, I also thank to the people who have given contribution to my thesis, they are:

1. The Dean of the Faculty of Letters, Drs. H. Marwoto and The Chairman of the English Department, Dr. Samudji, MA, who have been very helpful to permit me to compose this thesis
2. My first advisor, DR.Henriono Nugroho, MA and my second advisor, Drs. Wisasongko, MA for their valuble advice, great attention and patience to the work of finishing my thesis.
3. My advisors after the examination of this thesis, Drs. HM. Busjairi, Drs. Moh. Ilham, Erna Cahyawati, SS, from whom I attained generous guidance, assistance, and great patience in finishing this thesis.
4. All the lecturers in the Faculty of Letters, University of Jember who have contributed their precious knowledge.
5. All the librarians, both in the Faculty and Central Libraty who have permitted me to use the facilities.

Jember, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2004

Mukh. Sarwono

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>FRONT PIECE</b> .....	i
<b>APPROVAL SHEET</b> .....	ii
<b>MOTTO</b> .....	iii
<b>DEDICATION PAGE</b> .....	iv
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	v
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	vi
<b>CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
1.1 The Rationale .....	1
1.2 The Problem to Discuss.....	2
1.3 The Scope of the Study.....	3
1.4 The Goals of the Study.....	3
1.5 The Method of Analysis.....	4
1.6 The Organization of the Thesis.....	4
<b>CHAPTER II THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR AND SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY</b>	
2.1 The Biography of the Author.....	5
2.2 The Synopsis of the Play.....	11
<b>CHAPTER III THE MEANINGS OF THE TERMS</b>	
3.1 The Meaning of Feminism .....	14
3.2 Feminism in Literature.....	17
<b>CHAPTER IV A STUDY ON FEMINISM THROUGH THE FEMALE CHARACTERS IN SUSAN GLASPELL'S <i>TRIFLES</i></b>	
4.1 Mrs. Wright.....	19
4.1.1 Mrs. Wright's Marriage .....	20
4.1.2 Mrs. Wright and the Society.....	24
4.2 Mrs. Hale	
4.2.1 Mrs. Hale's Marriage.....	29
4.2.2 Mrs. Hale and the Society .....	31
4.3 Mrs. Peters' Point of View in Law Equality .....	34

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION.....	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	39





**CHAPTER I**  
**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 The Rationale**

Literature, broadly defined, can refer to just about anything written and printed. It means that all the writings across the world can be included into literature. The literary work in this thesis is an imaginative literature. We can say that literature refers to the reflection of human life. Hudson (1965:10) states that:

“Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they experienced about it, when they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us”

Therefore, by reading and appreciating a great literary work, we able to gain knowledge that exists around us and in the world, for example, science, culture, philosophy, religion, politics and many things. The final aim of literature is to enlarge our view and to judge something good or bad. Literature also enables us to influence our life and it helps to make us human. Robert (1989:2) says:

“Literature provides an objective base for our knowledge and understanding, it helps us connect ourselves to the broads of cultural, philosophic and religious world of which we are apart”

Literature is classified into three genres namely; prose, poetry and drama. The focus in this thesis is drama, the form of literature designed to be performed on stage by actors. The word drama means “action” or “deed”. In this thesis, ‘drama’ is used as synonym of plays. Reaske (1966:4) explains:



“Drama is furthermore designed for theatrical presentation that is although we speak of drama as literary work composition, we must never forget that drama is designed to be acted on the stage”.

Susan Glaspell, the writer of *Trifles*, is one of the American woman playwrights. She has a lot of experiences along her life including in theater rehearsal and feminism movement. She wrote several plays, among them pioneering work of feminist drama. According to Makowsky (1988:50), as a feminist, she often expresses the idea of feminism in her works such as *Fidelity* (1915), *The Outside* (1917), *Woman's Honor* (1918), *Bernice* (1919), *The Verge* (1921), *The road to Temple* ( 1927), *The Morning is Near us* (1939), and the Pulitzer Prize- winning *Alison's House* (1930). She hopes that improvement in the women's status and rights will encourage depiction of woman, so she treats her female and male characters fairly. She has courage to express her idea of feminism although the position of women at that time brings disadvantages and the society cannot accept the idea of feminism.

*Trifles* expresses women's fears and hopes of modern times and feminist. Makowsky (1998: 50) states:

“The drama advocates what has become known as the cult of domesticity: the idea that women's sphere was limited to the home, but that within this sphere she was empowered to create morality, comfort, and sympathy”.

In *Trifles*, Glaspell tries to ascertain why this myth is such a failure that drives a farm wife, Minnie Wright, to murder her husband. It happens when he is supposedly safe in his bed. Then, two potentially detective women, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, confront

with the crime in the scene to solve Mrs. Wright's case. This thesis discusses the three women from feminism point of view.

From the statement above, it is interesting to discuss the idea of feminism through the female characters in the drama. Feminism influences women's life and makes better position for women. Furthermore, feminism brings equality so that women have the equal position as men.

### **1.2 The Problem to Discuss**

Literary study and the other knowledge always develop from time to time. Many writers set up a certain literary standard, which is according to their point of view considered to be good. Feminist study also wants to set a standard whether literary works are good or bad from feminist point of view. The study focuses on the following problems: a. Is there any idea of feminism applied in the female characters in the drama? b. How do the female characters behaviour depicted in the drama? c. How far does Susan Glaspell convey her idea of feminism in *Trifles*? The field of feminism analyzed in this drama is human rights of female characters.

### **1.3 The Scope of Study**

The scope of study limits the analysis in order to avoid broader and unfocussed discussion. The analysis is focused on the idea of feminism through the female characters. It describes representation and the view about marriage and human rights of law and equality.

#### **1.4 The Goals of Study**

The goal of writing this thesis is to gain and to increase understanding on *Trifles* and its author. Susan Glaspell especially tries to show how the representation of female characters in the drama is. The other aim of writing this thesis is to present a clear and detailed evidence of the idea of feminism in drama. It is also hoped to explain the interesting idea in Glaspell's works.

#### **1.5 The Method of Analysis**

The writing of the thesis is entirely done by means of library research and inductive method. The library research is a research carried out by observing some books to collect the data and information in relation to the discussion of this thesis. The inductive method is used to analyze the data in this thesis. Shaw (1987:10) stated:

“Induction seeks to establish a general truth. The inductive process begins by using observations of a number of facts, it classifies these facts, looks for similarities among them, and from a supposedly sufficient number of those particulars draws a conclusion or leads ‘into’ or ‘up to’ a principle. Once stated, the principle is supported by other facts and particulars”.

#### **1.6 The Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter I is the introduction of the thesis. Chapter II describes the biography of Susan Glaspell as the author of the play and the synopsis of the play. Chapter III is the meanings of the terms used in the title. Chapter IV is the analysis on the feminism through the female characters in *Trifles*. Finally, chapter V is the conclusion of the thesis.



## CHAPTER II

### THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR AND THE SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

#### 2.1 The Biography of the Author

Susan Glaspell was born in Davenport, Iowa, the daughter of Elmer S. Glaspell and Alice Keating Glaspell. The date of her birth is traditionally given as July 1, 1882, but some sources have placed it in 1876, which is more likely, since the later date would make her a college graduate before the age of seventeen. She was educated in the Davenport public schools and the Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, at which she earned a bachelor's degree in 1899. She later did graduate work in English at the University of Chicago.

One day after her graduation, she joined the staff of the Des Moines *Daily News* as a political reporter. She also wrote for the Des Moines *Capital*. She was eventually given a regular column, which appeared under the heading "The News Girl." Among her colleagues was Lucy Huffaker, later to be a well-known journalist in Chicago, who would remain a lifelong friend. While still in college, Glaspell had begun submitting short stories to magazines but most of them came back as she said but few of them stayed. After two years, she left newspaper work and returned to Davenport to pursue a fulltime career as a writer, which had been her ambition since her grammar school days.

Glaspell began to enjoy considerable success in getting her stories to "stay" with the editors to whom she sent them. Most of her work in this time was aimed at a popular market with a largely she

met her female readership. Her stories tended to focus on the efforts of the young women to find attractive and wealthy husbands. Even when she drew upon her observation of politics and politicians, the characterizations and conventional, and the ending of the tales were usually happy, no matter what plot twists might be necessary to achieve such an outcome. In 1909, she published *The Glory Of Conquered: The Story of the Great Love*, a novel written in much the same vein as her shorter fiction of the period. On the proceeds from this book, she was able to spend the following year touring Europe with Lucy Huffaker.

Upon her return, she began her romantic relationship George Cram Cook, whom she had met several years earlier in Davenport. Cook a former professor of English literature at the University of Iowa, was, in conformity to his socialist ideals, supporting his second wife and two children by truck-farming and raising chickens. The influence of his ideas upon Glaspell's thinking was shown in *The Visioning* (1911), a novel in which a sheltered young woman from a privileged environment becomes more understanding of the behavior of people close to her when she realizes how the circumstances of their earlier lives have influenced their feelings and behavior. Glaspell's relationship with Cook is also reflecting in *Fidelity* (1915), a novel concerning a woman affair with a married man. The protagonist of the novel ultimately renounces her love out of her fidelity to her ideals. Glaspell, on the other hand, was married Cook on April 14, 1913, after had obtain his divorce.

After the marriage, Glaspell and Cook moved to Provincetown, at the tip of Cape Cod in Massachusetts (they would spend winters in New York). There, in a small wooden building on the end of the pier,

they established the Provincetown Players, a little theatre group which influenced upon the development of American drama would prove in calculable, since it offered the first productions of the work of Eugene O'Neill, universally acknowledged as the greatest dramatist America has ever produced. The Players would also have a great impact upon Glaspell's own literary career, in that she now began to write for the stage, the medium in which she would achieve her greatest popular and artistic success. Over the next five years, both in Provincetown and in New York Greenwich Village, the Provincetown Players produced a number Glaspell's plays, including both one-acts ( among them "Trifles," which was remarkably, the first play she wrote entirely her own ) and full-length works. In 1922, she accompanied her husband to Greece so that he might fulfill an ambition to become a classical scholar. There they lived at Delphi on Mount Parnassus, where Cook immersed himself in the life of the region until his death from septicemia, at the age of sixty, in January 1924. Glaspell commemorated his life and work in her memoir *The Road to the Temple* (1926).

While still in Europe, she met a writer named Norman Matson, whom she married in 1925. Together they wrote a play called *The Comic Artist* (1927). Several years later, in the midst of period that also saw the publication of more novels, came *Alison's House* (1930), a drama in which the brother of the recently deceased poet (The Alison of the title) achieves, through the medium of his sister's unpublished works, a reconciliation with his grown daughter. This play, inspired in the part by the life of Emily Dickinson, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1931. In the same year as the professional triumph, Glaspell's personal life was proceeding less

successfully, as she and Matson were divorced. Despite the quality of some of work for the stage and its highly positive reception, she wrote no more plays after *Alison's House*. Instead, she concentrated her literary energies on her first love, fiction.

In contrast to the level of productivity she had always maintained, Glaspell published no new work between 1931 and 1939, but issued more novels thereafter, in the last decade of her life. She died of pneumonia in Provincetown on July 27, 1948.

Glaspell's legacy, in terms of her influence and her continuing presence in American literature, is at best a slender one. She is usually cited in connection with the story of Provincetown Players, but more as facilitator of the emergence of Eugene O'Neill than as an artist in her own right. Her survival as an author is confined to a handful plays. Her novels have never been reprinted and forgotten. It is unlikely that anyone but a specialist in her work-of which there are few-could name one of them. Even the author of the only full-length study of her work concedes that she was a minor writer, one who possessed talent but not genius, and whose achievement was limited by her grounding in the sentimental standards of the time in which she came to maturity. "*Trifles*", despite the present unfashionability of its realistic technique, continues to find its way into anthologies, and thus to keep the name of Susan Glaspell alive as more than historical footnote. Glaspell's play *Trifles* she tells a story of mystery and intrigue, surrounding an apparent murder. The setting is in the early twentieth century and it appears to be cold, may be late fall of winter. Either way the mood is chilling; cold like the death that has set the tone of the play. Although a death or murder had taken place, Glaspell was not trying to make it the main theme. The main point

she was leading to was the plight that so many woman faced during this time in history. Glaspell illustrated how in the early twentieth century woman were a second class and sometime were treated as such even by the men were married too. Mrs. Wright was not the only one Glaspell was trying to make a point for the suffrage that women endured in the early twentieth century. She cleverly make her point through the other two female characters in the play, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale. This play demonstrates the sentiment that men had for women, whose responsibility for the upkeep of the house was the women's.

To her credit Susan Glaspell had written 13 plays, 14 novels, and about 50 short stories, articles and essays. She is also only the second woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize ( the first was Zona gale for "Miss Lula Bett in 1921), winning it for Alison's House in 1931.

Certainly until the feminist movement began again in the 1960's the American stage had few women characters as vibrant, strong and rebellious as those Glaspell created in the teens and twenties. Glaspell's protagonists are women; they are superior to the male characters and have a disturbing habit of arrogating to themselves divine power life and death. Clearly, Glaspell's female characters threaten patriarchal authority. Glaspell commitment to women was her commitment to all movements for social change and justice.

Glaspell was already a successful novelist when she met Cook. While her relationship with Cook allowed her an avenue for accessing radical ideas, it also paradoxically, embroiled her in traditional gender roles. She was living in the community passionately concerned with socialism and feminism and was supported by a group of friends



who were intellectuals, socialists, feminists and radicals (Makowsky:24). Glaspell herself was a founding member of Heterodoxy, a radical group of women activist who were prominent in the feminist movement of New York in the year 1910-1920 (Ben Zvi: 211). It was within this atmosphere that Glaspell would be encouraged to create female characters who desired to free themselves from stereotypical roles into which they had been cast.

According to Glaspell's recollection during their stay in Greenwich, George Cram Cook needing materials for "The Players" first season in New York, demanded Glaspell write a play (Makowsky: 24). Searching for ideas, Glaspell turned to her experiences as reporter in Iowa, combined with her feminist philosophy and her life with Cook. She credits her influence for challenging her to change from fiction to drama and to "over throw convention " in her form and content ( 24) the results is the play that she is best known for "*Trifles*".

## **2.2 Synopsis of the Play**

In Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*, she tells a story of mystery surrounding an apparent murder. This play presents most of qualities of local colour writing: exact detail, local speech, and customs, a strong sense of peace. The setting is in the gloomy kitchen and left without having been put in order, in the farmhouse of John Wright. He is the man who was murdered mysteriously. The kitchen shows the signs of incompleted work- unwashed pans under the sink, a loaf of bread outside the breadbox, a dish towel on the table and other signs. It is in the early twentieth century in a small New England village.

Firstly, the play presents the five characters. Henry Peters, a sheriff, Lewis Hale, a neighbouring farmer, George Henderson, a county attorney, Mrs. Petters and Mrs. Hale. They come to investigate the murder of John Wright, the man who was killed mysteriously.

They begin to examine everything in the kitchen and explore everything can develop the investigating process. They try to recollect and relate many signs they have found.

In the morning before the investigation process. It is told in the play, Mr. Hale and Harry, the men who report the case to county attorney, start to go to town with a load of potatoes. They come a long the road from Hale's place and as they got to John Wright's House. Mr. Hale is going to see John Wright to go in with him on a party telephone. When they come to John Wright's house they do not hear or see anything after long time. As they knock at the door, but it still quiet inside. They know that John and Minnie Wright must get up, because the time is eight a clock. That is not their habit to get up late. Worrying about them, Mr. Hale and Harry decide to open the door. When they enter the house Mrs. Wright tells them that John Wright is dead. They cannot believe what Minnie has said and take this bad news to local county attorney and the sheriff. County Attorney and Sheriff decide to go to John Wright's house as soon as possible.

They come to John Wright in view minutes and begin to examine everything in the kitchen. They analyze the broken cage, the dead canary with its broken neck and the condition of the kitchen. They make a relationship between the signs and the death of John Wright and their everyday life.

While the men bluster about looking for "clues", Mrs. Petters and Mrs. Hale are able to probe into emotions of Mrs. Wright. From

the details of Mrs. Wright's house keeping and the dead canary found in work basket, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale assume that Mrs. Wright has strangled her husband because the broken neck of her canary—the one thing that gives her joy and spirit for life in her prisoned soul. It is told in the story that Mrs. Wright is lively and happy before her marriage. Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale even talk about her beauty of her voice and how she used to sing in the church choir. Over the years her husband seems to break her down and take her in a “prison house”. The only thing that seems to make her happy is a sweet singing canary. When she finds the bird is dead with broken neck, she comes into big angry. One and only way to free out her pressured soul is snapping and killing her husband.

The investigation comes into climax when they find a relation between the canary's broken neck and the death of John Wright at first and the second, the prisoned soul of Minnie Wright and disordered kitchen. They can conclude easily that Minnie Wright kills her husband because of her hatred of her husband's behaviour. Minnie Wright is driven to murder her husband by the breakdown of her lively spirit that exists before she is getting married. By the end of the play, the women conclude to what happen in the Wright's household. These women decide not to share this information to men. The men, in their opinion, will not understand or take into consideration of these events that led up the murder.

Finally, the play tries to illustrate women in the early of mid twentieth century that are mainly relegated to the house, as Minnie Wright. The upkeep of the house and the maintenance of their husbands are the most part of their only job. Their works are thankless or appreciateless.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MEANINGS OF THE TERMS

Before having further discussion, it is very important to give clear descriptions about the terms used in this thesis. It will help the readers both to understand the given explanation in the study and to avoid misunderstanding about the topic. Explaining the terms makes easier in analyzing the matter of feminism in Susan Glaspell's play *Trifles*. Feminism in literature is also discussed in a different subchapter, after the description of feminism in general in order to have a more comprehensive analysis in this thesis. The terms are discussed in details in the following parts.

#### **3.1 The Meaning of Feminism**

Fights against social unfairness and discrimination in a long lifetime of human history is always an interesting and urgent thing in order to build a conception and thinking process for society in the future.

Women in all over the world have experienced discrimination and oppression in the family, workplace, society and political rights. This condition has still been existing up to now. Their rights as a citizen of a nation and a human being have been denied within patriarchy (rule of father's line and domination). Women have been treated as the second class and they have unequal position to men. They have authority concerning with their physical conditions and lives. This authority is taken over by their fathers and husbands after their marriage.

One thing that we have to know is that it must be separated between *gender* and *sex*. It will be important to avoid its bias. *Sexual* is the essential characteristic of two kinds of human beings (male and female) based on their physical and biological aspects. These characteristics stick on his or her body as a nature. As examples: men (masculine) with their pennies, beard, and sperm, and women with (feminine) their breast, vagina and reproduction instruments. *Gender* is the characteristic quality or assemblage of qualities pertaining to the type of sex (Mills.1992: 79) that sticks on their type of sex constructed by culture (Fakih: 8). Torill Moi describes *gender* as patterns of sexuality and behaviour imposed by cultural and social norms as an institutional structural system (O'Neill.1999: 114). Example: men (in essential masculinity) virile strength, vigour, assertive.

Women (in essential of femininity) with their passivity, docility, and weakness socially determined expression of what are considered to be innately in gender attributes, virtues and deficiencies as displayed through costume, speech, behavior, bodily adornments and attitude (Mills.1992: 79).

Women have less access in education, equal employment opportunity, controlling their own reproductive lives, political rights and rights in property. Women have been taught to believe that their only aim in life is just to be good wife and mother. If, they cannot gain the aims, it means that they cannot be perfect women. So, they do not need high education. Women's place is at home, or in other word, their private sphere are doing housekeeping, rearing children, not in the public sphere. Politics and professional life are defined as the male sphere.

These unequal condition encourage women to oppose and to improve for reaching equal rights between men and women also called feminism. Theresa Billington-Greig says (in Ruth 1995:5):

“Feminism is a movement seeking the organization of the world upon a basic of sex-equality in all human relation; a movement which would reject every differentiation between individuals upon the ground sex, would try hard to set up the recognition of the common humanity of women and men as the foundation of law and custom”.

Feminism is a social movement that seeks to change the traditional role and image of women, to end sexism and to reach women equal rights with men (Mackenzie.1993:156). Sugihastuti in *Feminist Literary Criticism* (1995:18) argues that feminism is a theory of equality of men and women in politic, economy, and social or social organization to advocate women's rights and interest. In other words, feminism means the faith in women, the advocacy of the rights of women, or prevalence of female influence. *Webster Third New International Dictionary* gives an explanation that feminism is the theory of political, economic, and social equality of the sexes-organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interest, specifically, the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century movement seeking to remove restrictions that discriminate against women (1981: 837). Another meaning of feminism as noted in *Grolier Encyclopedia of Knowledge* (vol. V.1994: 235) means advocacy of women's rights to full citizenship- that is, political, economic and social equality with men. Also, Torill Moi says, feminism or political labels indicate support for the aims of the new women's movement which emerged in the late 1960's.

Feminism does not accept the cultural images of women as incompetent, irresponsible, weak, submissive, passive, and irrational creature.

### **3.2 Feminism in Literature**

It is significant to explain feminism in literature to reach deep understanding about the topic chosen. Literary studies always develop simultaneously with the development of knowledge. The growth of feminism and the rising of women's consciousness influence literary studies. All the years literary studies have been dominated by men, assumed that theory is sexist and based on men's point of view. Theory that claims universality must include the feminist consciousness. Feminists want to attack misrepresentation and stereotyping in fiction. They want to build healthier representation of women in fiction. As men have shaped literary values and conventions, the writers address their readers as if they are men.

In literary works, women are depicted as sexual object, weak, submissive and passive creature, and often show male supremacy. The representations of women are negative. Sugihastuti says that feminist criticism is understanding process of women position and representation as drawn in literary works (2002:17). Selden (in Nugraheni.1998:21) says that feminist criticism wants to disturb the certainties of patriarchal culture and to create a less oppressive climate for women writers and readers.

Toril Moi in *Feminist Literary Criticism Theory* states:

“Feminist Criticism is a specific kind of political discourse: a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature, at least not if the latter is presented as

no more than another interesting critical approaches of war in medieval poetry (1986:205).

If feminist criticism is characterized by its political commitment to the struggle against all forms of patriarch and sexism, it follows the fact of being female is necessarily guarantee a feminist approach. It is a truly fact, but still need to be said that not all books written by women writers, exemplify anti patriarchal commitment. This is particularly true for many early works on women writers, which often indulge in precisely the kind of patriarchal stereotyping feminist want to combat. A female tradition in literature criticism is not necessarily a feminist one.

In an incisive essay "*Are Women's Novels are Feminist Novels?*", Rosalinda Coward ( in Toril Moi.1986:207) discusses the general confusion of feminist with female writing, both within the women's possible to say that women centred writings have any necessary relationship to feminism. In otherside, Sugihastuti (2002: 5) argues that in literary criticism we have to act and read "as a woman". It is also not about to criticize women, womens critics, critiques about women and critiques about women writers. Its point is the readers realize there was a distinction in different sex on meaning and 'catching meaning' in literature.

Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* is furthermore designed for theatrical rehearshal we called drama. *Trifles* is presented to carry out the feminism idea of the author. The problem is 'what is feminist play or feminist drama?'. Janet Brown ( in Brenda Murphy.1999:155) gives a clear explanation about it.

"What is feminist drama? At first glance this question suggests a binary split: a play is or is not feminist,



depending on its rhetorical or didactic intention or, in other words on its politics. But just the feminism movement itself has, in this century, repeatedly emerged as a political movement and then seemingly disappeared, diffusing into mainstream of American thought, so has feminism on American drama. Play writing, performance and dramatic theory today offer a feminist political critique through the act of dramatic speech, of costume and visual image, of performance itself. Just as feminists of the sixties and seventies discovered that 'the personal is political', so in the nineties, the political nature of all performance has emerged as a major theme. In the twentieth century, drama that is feminist intention has exhibited a commitment to telling the stories of silenced and marginalized women, celebrating women's community and the moral concerns and social criticism that arise from women's experience. The eighties and nineties have built on this tradition and added a broadened spectrum of political concerns, a questioning of language and visual images and icons, and specific concerns with performance itself as an expression of gender and radical identity."

Susan Glaspell in her work *Trifles* invites the readers and the audience to read 'as women' as what Sugihastuti has told. She implicitly shows gender inequalities at the time, women are the second class and inferior. The main goal is the reader and the audience understand women position and attempt them at the right place as they wish for it. This thesis wants to analyze the representation of female characters and to show the author of the play, that is Susan Glaspell. She conveys the idea of feminism in *Trifles*.

CHAPTER V  
CONCLUSION

*Trifles* is one successful works of Susan Glaspell besides *The Verge* (1921), the Pulitzer Price winning *Alison's House* (1930), *Fidelity* (1915), *The Morning is Near Us* (1939) and *Jury of Her Peers* (1916), a short story version of *Trifles*. *Trifles* contains of single act, in which Susan Glaspell succeeds to establish human life's problem, especially women in written material, performs the play on stage. This play is teeming with symbols, although it is just a single act play. Many critics call it as the best one-act play.

In *Trifles*, Susan Glaspell tells a story of mystery and intrigue, surrounding an apparent murder, but this crime is not the main point of the play. The major value emphasizes on women problems at the time in order to reflect feminism, as the theme of this play, as most of her works' theme. The discussion of this thesis concerns much with the feminism reflected by female characters as well as Susan Glaspell wants to illustrate how women in the early twentieth century were placed second class and some times were treated as such slave even by the men they were married to. Women in the early mid twentieth century were mainly relegated to the house. The upkeep of the house and maintenace of their husbands' family was the most of their job. Sometimes, they fall down into slavery. Susan Glaspell deconstructs gender roles by giving female characters knowledge that empowers them within 'women sphere'. The three characters are Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters. Both of them take special characteristic and different behaviour. Mrs. Wright is described as a 'prisoned' woman and a

victim of patriarchal roles. She, lately known, kills her husband because of psychological violence of him. However, this kind of psychological violence happens commonly as a social behaviour at the time. Mrs. Wright and her husband, John Wright are the part of society, so that, many critics call it as 'social unfairness' in gender inequality. Mrs. Wright is symbolized as a 'canary' in a 'bird cage' and 'an ill stitched quilt'. That symbols represent the women in most part of the world.

Second, Mrs. Hale is a wife of Henderson Hale, neighbouring farmer of John Wright. Basically, her condition is closely the same as Mrs. Wright. But, Susan Glaspell develops this character by giving a little knowledge and ability in investigating a case to give 'a special image' on this character. Mrs. Hale, like the common women in the time, is relegated to the house in wifhood and motherhood business. As it likely seems, Glaspell tries to perform another side of women in common, within their limited sphere, they can do something valueable outside home. She also tries to take 'social attention' that women are not comfortable in the condition.

Third, Mrs. Peters is described as an educated woman who has better opportunities to express herself rather than two other female characters. When the investigating process, she controls all the step of investigation process. Mrs. Peters is performed as an ideal woman in feminism point of view. Glaspell's idea of feminism works through the three characters.

At least, there are five messages we can pull out from '*Trifles*' such as:

1. 'Gender differences' produce 'gender inequalities'. It will construct an image that viewing women as a second class in society.
2. Women have to be seen as a normal human being as the same as men. They have to be placed at the same position and same degree with men although they have several physically differences. But, it is not the reasons to keep women 'subordinated' under men roles.
3. The cultural construction in viewing women must be changed.
4. Actually, women are able to work in the same position of men if they have opportunities to do.
5. A system, which one segment of the society dominates and oppresses another, cannot be tolerated forever.

Finally, it can be concluded that this play tries to ascertain feminism values to fight against men domination and oppression. The female characters can be an illustration of uncomfortable life under pressure that potentially produces new social conflicts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. 1981. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Inc
- Baidhawiy, Zakiyuddin. et all. 1997. *Wacana Teologi Feminis (Feminist Theological Discourse)*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar Offset.
- Fakih, Mansour. 1996. *Analisa Gender (Gender Analysis)*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar Offset
- Graddol, David. et all. 1989. *Gender Voices*. Pasuruan: Pedati
- Hidayat, Rachmat. 2004. *Ilmu yang Seksis (Sexism Science)*. Yogyakarta: Jendela
- Hornby, A. S. 1974. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press
- Hudson, W. H. 1965. *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*. London: George G. Harrap and Co.
- Kennedy, X. J. 1992. *An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. London: David Campbell Publishing. Ltd
- Mikesel, W. H. et all. 1952. *Psychology of Adjustment*. Canada: D. Van Nostrand Company inc.
- Mills, Jane. 1992. *Womanwords*. New York: Macmillan. Inc.
- Moi, Toril. 1986. *Feminist Literary Criticism*.---:---
- Murphy, Brenda. et all. 1999. *American Women Playwrights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Mufidah, Ch. 2003. *Paradigma Gender (Gender Paradigm)*. Malang: Bayumedia Publishing
- Reaske, C. R. 1966. *How to Analyze Drama*. New York: Monarch Press
- Scott, W. S. 1962. *Five Approaches of Literary Criticism*. New York: Macmillan Company
- Sugihastuti. et all. 2002. *Kritik Sastra Feminis (Feminist Literary Criticism)*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar Offset

Wellek, Rene. 1977. *Theory of Literature*. New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich  
Publisher

Wallace, R. A. et all. 1990. *Feminism and Sociological Theory*. California: SAGE  
Publications Inc.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *Women's History in America*. Ohio: Women International  
Center

[http://us.f128.mail.yahoo.com/ym/ShowLetter?MsgId=3171 1401751 10396 1127  
888 0...](http://us.f128.mail.yahoo.com/ym/ShowLetter?MsgId=317114017511039611278880...)

<http://eichner@chumal.cas.usf.edu>

[http:// www.hongik.edu/~yhyo/glaspell.html](http://www.hongik.edu/~yhyo/glaspell.html)

<http://vvcslionline.cc.va.us/EssayDraftDropBox/-essays/00000029.html>

<http://www.oup.-usa.org/isbn/0195078667.html>

<http://www.allfreeessays.com/student/free/triflesd.shtml>

<http://www.missouri.edu/~eglel/engl208/1096.html>

[http://www.library.marist.edu/dilib/english/american/literature/20thC-amer-  
authors/glaspell...](http://www.library.marist.edu/dilib/english/american/literature/20thC-amer-<br/>authors/glaspell...)