

Analysis of a jury of her peers

Literature



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A Jury of Her Peers Elaine Showalter's commentary on Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" features diverse viewpoints on American women writers. According to Showalter, American women writers should not any longer demand a justice and judicial system that has relieved stand on women. While responding to Glaspell's story, Showalter writes that there should be no need for special juries to preside trial in cases in which women are the defendants. The best defense, according to Showalter, should involve full revelation of the evidence in an open and transparent trial process. Glaspell's story features a depiction of the past patriarchal and male-dominated judiciary system in American society during the 1870s and 90s (Showalter 259). It presents an account of the trial of Minnie for the murder of John Wright, her husband. While searching the house, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale finds a lead to evidence, a strangled canary in her sewing box, which would be important during the trial. They, however, conceal the evidence to ensure Minnie does not face trial for the murder before a male dominated jury. According to Showalter, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale formed a jury to judge their peer, Minnie (Mrs. Wright).

The story is an advocacy against superiority of men in the society. Men assume high degree of superiority as evident from the perception that the wife of a Sheriff, Mrs. Peters, is married to the law. There is evident conflict in gender roles between men and women in the society. Women are disgusted by the control exercised by men on them. That prompts Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale to conceal evidence against Minnie in an attempt to prevent her trial by men (Glaspell 3). The two women openly discuss Mr. Wright's abusive characters, an expression that they are unhappy and disgusted of his conduct. That also implies their advocacy for the rights of

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women in the society and condemning men's patriarchal behavior.

Showalter's position on the issue is justified. In the contemporary America, the judiciary is not patriarchal and male dominated as compared to that during 1890s. In contemporary America, the women constitute part of the juror. Unlike the past, women do not need to seek the judgment of their peers outside the judicial system because they are currently represented in the juror. From Glaspell's account of the murder case on how the women concealed evidence to abort trial, it is imperative to redefine peers as applicable in the case. As emphasized by Showalter, there it is vital to define the term peer, whether it implies similar sex, race, religion or commonality of language. However, reforms in the American judicial system do not demand groupings in terms of peers to guarantee justice to the defendant as illustrated in the case of Mr. Wright's murder. In accordance with Showalter's viewpoint, the U. S. constitution does not have provisions for trials of women by women, being a perceived right as evident in the case of Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale. It is clear that the trial of Mrs. Wright would have been fair if her "peers" did not conceal evidence that would be useful in the case.

Showalter highlights the actions of Lucy Stone in 1893, when she demanded a jury of her peers in the trial of Lizzie Borden. Stone argued that only women would understand Borden's actions and, therefore, constitute the perfect jury in her murder case. Showalter condemns such advocacy in contemporary America and refers to it as unjustified. The jury in Minnie's case would have acquitted her if the reason were convincing. That is similar to contemporary America's judicial system. In America, women face similar trial process as men.

Works Cited

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Glaspell, Susan. *A Jury of Her Peers*. Digireads. com Publishing, 2004. Print.

Showalter, Elaine. *A jury of her peers: American women writers from Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proulx*. Hachette UK, 2009. Print.