

# The strangulation of women in patriarchal society

Sociology



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16 April The Strangulation of Women in Patriarchal Society One bird's strangulation leads to one man's strangulation. The causes of the cycle of violence are clear in Susan Glaspell's "Trifles." The causes are patriarchy and hypermasculinity. Because of patriarchy, John Wright is conditioned to be a hypermasculine being, the kind of husband who finds it acceptable to dominate his wife. I feel revolted in how John has psychologically abused his wife, and I cannot help but feel that he deserved his fate. "Trifles" shows through the setting, characters, wording, and symbolism that living in a patriarchal society strangles women because it removes their fundamental freedoms that allow them to live a meaningful life.

The setting represents oppression through signifying control and seclusion, while the characters demonstrate strict gender norms and roles. Mrs. Hale describes the house as not "cheerful" because of John Wright's presence in it. The bird is Minnie's only source of happiness, and even that is taken away from her. John controls his wife too much that she loses free will, and so she is unhappy and lonely. The house is also located "down in a hollow and you don't see the road," which represents seclusion (Glaspell 7). Minnie is in a hollow, and she soon becomes hollow too. Aside from the setting, characters are important in describing the lifelong effects of patriarchy on women's psyche. Society destroys Minnie's humanity because of how her husband treats her. Wright changes her from being a figurative and literal singing bird to a lonesome, discontented wife. Mrs. Hale remembers her as Minnie Foster who wears "pretty clothes" and sings in the choir (Glaspell 5). After being married, Minnie is no longer Minnie, but Mrs. Wright. The title defines her existence and curtails her being. It saddens me that her gender roles and norms are so ingrained in her that in jail, all she wants is her apron, a symbol

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of domesticity. She might have killed her oppressor, but she is still imprisoned as a wife.

Words and symbolism depict the tension in the story, as they demonstrate the contrasting effects of gender norms on men and women. Words have double meaning to show the binary opposition between masculinity and femininity. Mrs. Hale repeats what Mrs. Peter has said: “ His neck, choked the life out of him” (Glaspell 9). She implies that before Minnie killed John, John already killed her first and choked the life out of her by imprisoning her in their home and taking away her free will. Furthermore, when Mrs. Hale tells the men that Minnie was going to “ knot it” (Glaspell 10), it means that she and Mrs. Peters are going to tie up the loose ends of the story with their silence. Symbolism further depicts the contesting social positions of men and women. Men undercut the value of women through undermining their social roles and responsibilities. The Sheriff says: “ Nothing here but kitchen things” (Glaspell 3). The kitchen represents women because it is their domain, and the Sheriff dismisses it in the same way that society dismisses women in public life. Furthermore, the male characters are more worried about who killed John than why he is killed, because they value a man’s life over a woman’s freedom. After Mrs. Peter notices that Mrs. Wright’s preserves are frozen, Hale remarks: “ Well, women are used to worrying over trifles” (Glaspell 3). Trifles stand for women’s position in society. Words and symbols emphasize the uneven social positions of men and women because of their gender.

While reading the work, some of my questions are: 1) Why do the men think that the kitchen is unimportant to their investigation when their only suspect is Mrs. Wright, a woman? 2) Do trifles also refer to the kind of society that <https://assignbuster.com/the-strangulation-of-women-in-patriarchal-society/>

patriarchy produces? 3) How will Mrs. Peters feel after hiding important evidence, being the wife of the Sheriff and all?

Work Cited

Glaspell, Susan. "Trifles." 1916. 1-10. Print.