

A Jury of Her Peers: Aspects of Setting

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Susan Glaspell uses a vivid setting in "A Jury of Her Peers", which was based on the original one act play "Trifles". In the story, the setting conceals a crucial piece of incriminating evidence. Her use of setting describes the place where the story occurs, the changes in character of Mini Wright, her unfriendly marriage, the symbolism of canary, the conflict between men and women and the voice of Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peter which made them the peers of Mrs. Wright. A strong inner conflicts seen in the two women in Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers".

The story takes place in a small lonesome town. This town is behind most modernization and lacking ways of communicating with larger town. Most people in this town are farmers. Actually the story takes place in Wright's house. This house is in lonesome place and "its down in a hollow"(192) from where the road cannot be seen. The kitchen is "messy"(190). Most of the things are half done, "not finished"(190).

Minnie Wright was Minnie Foster before marriage. We learn from Martha's recollections that Minnie was a sensitive person, a lover of music - a cheerful sort

who laves colorful clothes. "She participated in communities activities. She used to sing real pretty. But everything changes after her marriage. Now she has cheap belongings with her. As the lover of music, she bought a cheap canary. She wore shabby clothes. "Wright was close! She exclaimed, holding up a shabby black skirt that bore the marks of much making over" (189).

Her little shawl indicates that she did not have any other choices. All her belongings show her struggles as a miserable life. The broken stove, the repaired chairs, the messed up old fashion cupboard, no indoor plumbing, and dirty towels portray that she was having extreme discomfort and dissatisfaction in her gloomy house.

The lonesomeness of a hard life - without love, without children, without company, without conversation had ruined her married life. She was very depressed for being alone in the home. Because of not having children, it was a "quite house"(192). She shows her fear of Wright and also her certainty that she will never get the telephone with which she might have communicated with the

outside world. Mr. Wright was "close" (184) and he did not want a telephone in his house and he said "Folks talked too much any way"(184). Mr. Wright was not a villain. He is known as "a good man"(192): he does not drink, he keeps his word, he works hard, he pays debt. But exigencies of a difficult existence have made him "a hard man"(192). He did not like the bird because it sang. So he killed the bird. This is the curliness of him to kill his wife's bird. Her limited choices for her clothes like little shawl, and her shaggy clothes how that her husband did not buy good dresses for her. During the inquiry with Mr. Hale, he says, "She just nodded her head, not getting a bit excited, but rocking back and forth"(185). This proves her dissatisfaction in her married life.

The use of the setting is an accessory to the murder. Mr. Wright was infuriated with the singing canary and he killed the bird. But the canary livened Mrs. Wright's life; it brought company and it seemed to be her baby. The canary was only solace in the solitude house for Mrs. Wright.

"She was going to bury it in that pretty box" (194) shows her great adoration in that canary. This broke her patient and accelerated her anger, and

she killed her husband by wrinkling his neck by the rope. She killed her husband in a cold passion. Although "there was a gun in the house"(189), she used the rope to kill him in the same way he killed the bird.

The author gives the clear picture of contraction between men and women. The men feel superior to the smaller world in which, they think, the women live. They minimize the difficulties of housekeeping. Sheriff Peters laughs "for the insignificance of kitchen things"(186). And Mr. Hale explains that, "women are used to worrying about her trifles"(186).

But Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peter talk about the incident. They are able to find the truth of the murderer. The truth lies between two women. Mrs. Hale feels herself as an accessory to the murderer and she says "I wish I had come over to see Minnie Forster sometimes"(192). "Another side, the lawmen in this story speak straightforwardly and directly, and these speeches suggest that their characters are similarly orderly. Their constant ridicule of the two women, however, indicates the men's limitations."

Mrs. Hale has the support of Minnie Wright from her approach, and she tries to hide all those evidences

against Minnie Wright and "She threaded a needle and started to replace bad sewing with good"(191). She has a great attitude of sympathy to Minnie Wright because of her own hard live. On the other hand, Mrs. Peter says, "The law is Law"(190), and "The Law has got to punish crime"(194). But later she understands Minnie's plight and her response in strangling her husband, even though she does not admit these things directly she helps to conceal the evidence with Mrs. Hale.

At the beginning, the two women have different views, but they both create the rapid covering over the evidence at the end.

"The main character of two women in Glaspell's have a theoretical obligation to the law, but they recognize a stronger personal obligation to the accused killer, Minnie. Hence their silence about the incriminating evidence they uncover is an action showing their roundness and dynamism."

The setting portrays the image of Mrs. Wright and the way she changed after her marriage. During her marriage life, she was not happy because of her husband. Later this made her to kill her own husband. Whether she did right or

not is an arguable question but the story is in her side. Although a successive silent bond has been created between Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peter which enables them to recognize their feelings, and it directs the readers' sympathy rather than against the murderer.