

READING MINNIE'S QUILT: DECODING DOMESTIC MATERIAL CULTURE  
IN SUSAN GLASPELL'S *TRIFLES*

MIRIAM LÓPEZ RODRÍGUEZ<sup>1</sup>  
Universidad de Málaga

(Resumen)

En 1916 Susan Glaspell (1876-1948), miembro fundador de los Provincetown Players, escribió la obra teatral *Trifles* en la que se dramatiza la llegada de tres hombres –el abogado George Henderson, el comisario Henry Peters y Lewis Hale, un granjero vecino– y dos mujeres –la señora Peters y la señora Hale– a la entonces vacía granja Wright. Los hombres están en búsqueda de pruebas que expliquen el asesinato de John Wright y el grado de participación de su esposa en el crimen. Las mujeres van a recoger algunos efectos personales de la Sra. Wright, quien está en prisión preventiva en la cárcel del condado, siendo la principal sospechosa del asesinato. Como lo explica Linda Ben-Zvi, la obra de teatro está basada en el asesinato real de un granjero en Iowa, cuando Glaspell cubría la noticia como reportera en el periódico local *Des Moines Daily News*. El resultado de los veintiséis artículos que escribió sobre el caso sirvieron como punto de partida para la obra teatral que se analiza en este artículo.

.....

In 1916 Susan Glaspell (1876-1948), founding member of the Provincetown Players, wrote the one-act play *Trifles* which dramatizes the arrival at the then empty Wright farm of three men—County Attorney George Henderson, Sheriff Henry Peters and Lewis Hale, a neighboring farmer—and two women—Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale.<sup>2</sup> The men are searching for evidence that will explain the murder of John Wright and his wife's involvement in it; the women are gathering some personal belongings to take to Mrs. Wright who, as prime suspect of the murder, is waiting for trial at the county jail.

The play, as Linda Ben-Zvi explains in "Murder, She Wrote: The Genesis of Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*", is based on a true story: "the murder of a sixty-year-old farmer named John Hossack on December 2, 1900, in Indianola, Iowa. Glaspell covered the case and the subsequent trial when she was a reporter for the *Des Moines Daily News*" (21). Throughout the twenty-six articles she wrote on the case, from December 3, 1900 to April 10, 1901, and following the prevailing trend against female offenders, Glaspell was a harsh critic of Margaret Hossack, accused of bludgeoning her husband with an axe as he

---

1. The author wishes to thank Dr. Barbara Ozieblo and Dr. Ruth Stoner, University of Málaga, for their comments on this essay.

2. Notice the three men are given names and surnames while the two women are identified by their husbands' surnames. Throughout the play, Mrs. Hale calls the prime suspect Minnie Foster, that is by her maiden name, while the men always refer to her as Mrs. Wright. This way of addressing married women by their husbands's surnames seems to stress the female loss of legal identity after marriage. For more information on the relevance of names in *Trifles*, see Linda Ben-Zvi's article.

slept.<sup>3</sup> Glaspell helped to shape the image of the killer wife as a cold-hearted insane murderer. However, after visiting the Hossack farm and interviewing friends and relatives, Glaspell changed her attitude and

became more sympathetic [...] Too late, Glaspell tried to sway public opinion with sympathetic reporting and headlines such as 'Mrs. Hossack May Yet Be Proven Innocent.' But in spite of her efforts, Mrs. Hossack was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor; two years later, however, unconvinced by the evidence, a second jury ordered her release. (Oziebło 28)

Years later, Glaspell, probably feeling guilty over her part in the public “lynching” of Mrs. Hossack, decided to write a play that would criticize the social system which denied women the same rights as men, but at the same time demanded greater duties of them. This one-act play, *Trifles*, was followed a year later by a short story, “A Jury of Her Peers,” in which Glaspell tried to analyze further some of the elements she considered had not been made clear enough in *Trifles*. These two works were undoubtedly her attempts “to clear Mrs Hossack’s name and make amends for her tardy understanding and her inability to help at the time” (Oziebło 29). In connection with this feeling of guilt on Glaspell’s side, it must be emphasized that in *Trifles*’s first performance by the Provincetown Players in August 8, 1916, Glaspell kept for herself the role of Mrs. Hale, the one character whose interventions are always to defend Minnie Wright and who feels guilty over not offering Minnie the friendship she should.

Having offered a summary of the plot and a succinct historical background, it should be explained before going any further that the aim of this article is to analyze the over-analyzed *Trifles* from a cultural materialistic point of view in order to prove Glaspell’s use of domestic artefacts as evidence of John Wright’s murder and, furthermore, as justification of such murder. The term “Cultural Materialism”, also known as “Material Culture Studies”, was coined by anthropologist Marvin Harris (1927-2001) who, in 1968 in his book *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, first introduced the notion of a scientific research method that explores the relationship between artefacts and the people who design, create and use them (Lim, pages unnumbered). Cultural Materialism is an interdisciplinary approach which combines anthropology, archaeology, history, geography, museology and literature among other disciplines. For the creation of this research strategy Harris blended notions from White’s Cultural Evolution, Steward’s Cultural Ecology, Skinner’s Behavioral Psychology, Marx’s Historical Materialism and Hegel’s Dialectic Materialism. This combination of disciplines and approaches lead Harris to consider that all human systems consist of three interwoven levels: infrastructure, structure and superstructure. The infrastructure deals with the modes of production (production of food and other forms of energy) and reproduction (expanding, limiting and maintaining population size), the structure with the domestic and political economies (regulating reproduction, basic production, socialization, education and enforcing domestic or social discipline respectively) and the superstructure with the behavioral (arts, games, sports) and mental elements (values, emotions and traditions) of a culture. Bearing this classification in mind,

---

3. For more information on society’s attitude towards female murderers see Ann Jones’s *Women Who Kill*.

the objects employed by Glaspell in *Trifles* fall within the category of the domestic economy as they are all connected with the home and family life. The study of this type of domestic artefacts by means of a cultural materialist approach is usually termed Domestic Materialism (Lim).<sup>4</sup>

Throughout history, from the first Christians who decorated their houses with a mosaic of a fish to the American prisoners of the Vietnam War who used Morse code by blinking their eyes during televised questioning to communicate they had been tortured, people deprived of their freedom have always resorted to alternative means of communication which allow them to "contact" either with the outer world or with those in similar circumstances. And that is exactly the function of the objects found in Minnie Wright's kitchen; they are her means of telling her "sisters in arms" what she has gone through. And, in the same way in which the Romans did not pay any attention to a mosaic with a fish in it, since this was a rather common design, and in the same way in which the Vietnamese torturers ignored the excessive eye blinking of their prisoners, the three men on stage in *Trifles*—Henderson, Hale and Peters—overlook all the clues to the murder that Minnie Wright left behind. Only their wives, who as Mrs. Hale states share many of Minnie's daily experiences ("We [women] all go through the same things—it's all just a different kind of the same thing," [*Trifles* 1133]), can decode the hidden message.

Minnie Wright's absence is Glaspell's way of symbolizing that women were not given the right to speak for themselves, especially when facing the judicial system. Not being allowed to express herself freely, either by her husband or by the police officers and lawyers, Minnie can only communicate her truth through the objects which formed her daily routine.<sup>5</sup> All these elements refer to the traditional "duties" of woman: cleaning, cooking and sewing. They are all related to the domestic sphere. This, together with the fact they are all found in the kitchen, is evidence of Minnie's limited life; in fact, the only time we hear of Minnie leaving the farm it is to be taken to jail, just another prison, suspect of murdering her husband.

Minnie's confinement to the house was made even worse by her husband's prohibition of her participation in the church chorus ("She used to sing. He killed that, too" [1132]) and the local charity ("She didn't even belong to the Ladies Aid" [1128]),<sup>6</sup> and his refusal to have a phone in the house ("I spoke to Wright about [a party telephone] once before and he put me off ... I didn't know as what his wife wanted made much difference to

4. For more information on Cultural Materialism see, among others, Marvin Harris's *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture* (New York: Random House, 1979) and Thomas J. Schlereth's *Material Culture: A Research Guide* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985).

5. In this sense Minnie Wright reminds us of another killer wife, the Helen Jones of Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal* (1921), who is not allowed to express herself by any of the representatives of the patriarchal system.

6. According to Elaine Hedges, "the Ladies Aid would have been a female society associated with the local church, in which women would have spent their time sewing, braiding carpets, and quilting, in order to raise money for foreign missionaries, for new flooring or carpets, chairs or curtains for the church or parish house, or to add to the minister's salary [...] Through the female friendships they fostered they helped women" (61).

John" [1125]). This isolation, which can be considered a form of solitary confinement, is such that her nearest neighbor, Mrs. Hale, had not seen her in almost a year. As French scholar Luce Irigaray argues "Men control women by keeping them apart from each other. Robbed of their community, they are also deprived of their sense of self, turned into objects rather than subjects" (quoted in Elsley 55). But Glaspell insists that Minnie's confined situation is not an exception: both Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale remain in Minnie's kitchen throughout the entire play while the three men wander around the house and the barn as symbolic evidence of their far greater mobility.

It is this very difference between male and female spheres—the freedom of the men versus the restricted life of the women—that makes it possible for Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters to decode the information provided by the domestic objects which formed Minnie's world. To the men they mean nothing, mere trifles, that can be overlooked or diminished as their wider world includes "bigger" things; to the women they are everything, as although they may not overtly suffer from an abusive husband, they do certainly suffer from an abusive society which imposes on them restrictive norms simply because of their gender. Therefore, they can empathize with Minnie and "read between the lines." For the County Attorney, the Sheriff and Mr. Hale domestic material culture is not only a language they cannot decode, they don't even realize there is a message hidden in it; as Mr. Hale states: "Women are used to worrying over trifles" (1126). Exactly the same thing has been done by generations of literary critics and scholars who have overlooked domestic material culture as insignificant because, as Marilyn Ferris Motz explains, "prevailing attitudes in our society have placed a higher value on customary male activities than on customary female activities" (2).<sup>7</sup>

In relation to this concept, anthropologist Edward T. Hall declared in the late 1950s that "men and women grow up in cultures that can be considered distinct [...], they perceive and experience the world somewhat differently" and that "women are likely to perceive details where men are likely to 'see whole pictures'" (mentioned in Forrest & Blincoe, 238). And it is precisely this male inability to pay attention to the little details of Minnie's life that enables them to discover the truth about what happened in that farm because, as Kiernan Ryan indicates "to understand human beings [...] we need to grasp them as 'cultural artifacts', whose significance is to be found inscribed in the specificity of local circumstance and concrete detail" (1).

In *Trifles* the stage is full of objects chosen by Susan Glaspell/Minnie Wright to convey her message: the stained hand towel, the broken stove, the cracked preserve jars and the unfinished quilt. These objects are either ignored by the men ("Nothing here but kitchen things" [1126]) or used to criticize Minnie as a housewife ("Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?" [1126]). It is precisely the men's patronizing attitude which makes Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale to forget their class differences and to come closer together, both physically and emotionally, and eventually form a bond of sisterhood with the absent Minnie.

With regard to the stained towel, there are at least two ideas that should be considered. First, it symbolizes Mr. Wright's disrespect for his wife's world and work: coming from outside the house he entered Minnie's space to spoil one of her working tools.

---

7. For more information on scholarly disregard for domestic material culture see Wood & Adams and Davis.

A kitchen towel is used to dry one's hands after washing up or cooking but not to wipe off the dirt from working outdoors. I don't mean to say simply that John Wright was a dirty person who should have washed his hands first, that's obvious, but to stress that his use of his wife's towel implies a total lack of respect for her. At a time all housework had to be done by hand—no washing machines, no driers and no miraculous detergents that dissolve all stains—washing clothes was one of the toughest chores for farm women. Therefore John Wright not only does not help his wife but makes her work harder. Secondly, this could be Glaspell's way of indicating that Wright has dirty hands—metaphorically and literally speaking—which suggests his abuse may have been not only mental but also physical. As Mrs. Hale indicated: "Men's hands aren't always as clean as they might be". This insinuation brings us back to the Hossack case since during the real trial there were rumors of physical abuse that were never investigated.<sup>8</sup> Glaspell, after interviewing close friends and relatives of the Hossack household, found out Mr. Hossack used to beat his wife regularly (Ozieblo 28).

The men go on to discover the broken stove, which they feel also illustrates Minnie's failure as a housewife. However, they choose to ignore that repairs around the house have traditionally been considered part of man's work, therefore John Wright's inferred failure to repair the broken stove is just another unfulfillment of his marital duties. The fact that the stove does not work properly implies the house is not warm enough and thus, John is a "cold" person who ignores Minnie's comfort. Also cooking becomes a harder task for her as it will take much longer to prepare meals, which does not stop Minnie from preparing preserves or baking bread. As will be explained later, Glaspell contrasts Wright's not mending the stove with Minnie's quilting a bedcover, that is, Glaspell stresses how Minnie does not give up the idea of a warm cozy home and therefore must compensate her husband's coldness by creating a warming object. That the broken stove will make cooking harder for Minnie is further evidence of Wright's disrespect for her work and his disregard for her wellbeing. The two immediate consequences of not repairing the stove are the "unhomininess" of the house—felt by the five visitors—and the cracking of the jars of preserves because of the extremely cold temperature.

Once again Glaspell utilizes domestic material culture with a symbolic value. Those preserves must have taken Minnie hours and hours of work—especially if we bear in mind the state of the stove; both time and effort are wasted due to her husband's nonfulfillment of one of his duties ("She'll feel awful bad after all her hard work in the hot weather" 1128). In spite of his harshness and abuse, Minnie goes on providing food while his carelessness destroys her attempts at saving their home: those living on isolated farms depended on preserves to survive the winter. Minnie did her part to secure nourishment but the lack of warmth caused by Wright's behavior jeopardizes their survival. All his wife's attempts of *preserving* their marriage are undermined by him.

Of all the objects trivialized by the male characters and "read" by the female, the quilt is probably the one with more information in it as I consider it to be both literally and

---

8. Glaspell exemplifies the authorities' unwillingness to investigate possible marital abuses through the County Attorney and his repetition of the sentence "Let's talk about that later" whenever there is any insinuation of foul play on John Wright's side (*Trifles* 1125 and 1127).

figuratively a multi-layered symbol.<sup>9</sup> First, the fact that Glaspell specifically mentions the choice of pattern is important: I do not believe the log-cabin design was chosen for its simplicity, as some authors have suggested<sup>10</sup>; but instead, for its name and the implications it has. If Glaspell wanted a really simple pattern that could be easily made by a person working alone she could have chosen the so-called “crazy quilt” but obviously its name would have implied madness as an excuse for Minnie killing her husband, and that is definitely what the playwright was working to avoid.<sup>11</sup> Minnie Wright is not, like Helen Jones in Sophie Treadwell’s *Machinal*, a mentally unstable wife who cannot cope with married life; Minnie did not kill him because she is crazy (that would put the blame on her), she killed him because he was ruining her life, he was destroying her.

Madness would have been an “acceptable” excuse for the three men on stage—and for the patriarchal system they represent—as data evidenced that isolation induced madness in many. The rate of insanity in rural areas, especially for women, was a much-discussed subject in the second half of the nineteenth century [...] the farm population supplied the largest proportion of inmates for the nation’s insane asylums [...] farmers’s wives comprised the largest percentage of those in lunatic asylum” (Hedges 59). However, Glaspell makes it clear that it was not murder but a case of self-defense, therefore the “crazy” pattern is out of the question.

According to Elaine Hedges, “the log cabin quilt came to symbolize both the hardships and the heroisms of pioneer life. More specifically, it became a celebration of women’s civilizing role in the pioneering process” (64)<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, the choice of pattern reinforces the point made above concerning the cracked jars: Minnie is trying to make a home, whereas her husband ruins all her efforts. If Mr. Wright were, as his surname suggests, the right man, Minnie could have finished the quilt, that is, she could have completed the log-cabin design, i.e., she could have created a home. However, her husband’s attitude (making her work take longer hours, killing her bird, forbidding her to meet other women) prevents her from succeeding.

Returning to this idea of Minnie as the *homemaker*, another element that should be taken into account is Glaspell’s mention of the red cloth used for the central square of each quilt block.<sup>13</sup> According to patchwork tradition that was the usual color for it and every

9. Most bedcovers, whether quilted or knotted, were a textile sandwich made of a patchworked top, a cotton or wool filling, and a plain cloth backing.

10. Among others, Marta Fernández Morales in her essay “The Two Spheres in Susan Glaspell’s *Trifles* and *The Verge*.”

11. A crazy quilt combines pieces of different shapes, sizes, and colours which follow no pattern. It was usually the first type of quilt to be made by young girls (Robertson 13 and 51). In the late 1800s and early 1900s the crazy quilt became a fashionable decorative element, used as a sofa throw rather than a bedcover, “typically produced by urban middle-class women” with more expensive fabrics such as silk and velvet, and “embellished with gold thread” (Plante 162).

12. For more information on the log cabin pattern see *American Patchwork Quilt*. Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas.

13. The only occasion in which the central square of the log cabin pattern was not made with red fabric was in the quilts used to help runaway slaves; in this case the central square was yellow—the African color to symbolize life. Seeing a quilt with a central yellow

initiated spectator would know it symbolizes the hearth, therefore there was no need to mention it unless to remind the audience once more that Minnie did her part to give warmth to their home while her husband did not bother repairing the broken stove.<sup>14</sup>

A third significant element of the quilt is that, unlike other patterns, the log cabin block characteristically uses short and narrow strips of cloth that are sown together alternating light and dark shades around a central square.<sup>15</sup> This means the quilter does not require big pieces of cloth but can make use of textile leftovers and therefore economize and recycle even more. This highlights both Minnie's good housekeeping—therefore proving Henderson, Peters and Hale in the wrong—and John Wright's stinginess, already suggested by Mrs. Hale when she sees the shabbiness of Minnie's clothes.<sup>16</sup> But it also illustrates the concept of quilting as “the occupational therapy of its day,” because, as Beverly Gordon explains, “experimental research on the effect of scale manipulation has indicated that miniaturization increases one's sense of control and alters one's perception of time” (65). Thus, the quilt was Minnie's way of making shorter the long hours spent on her own (“It's a lonesome place [...] Not having children [...] and Wright out to work all day and no company when he did come in”, 1131) and it was also the one object that gave her some sense of control in a situation in which she was a helpless victim of her husband's abuse. The quilt allowed Minnie to create order out of chaos, to give a vent to her artistic nature, to add a spot of beauty to the ugliness of her married life and, as Andrew F. Wood and Tyrone L. Adams put it, to obtain “the sense of liberation that emerges from choice” (226). Maybe John Wright dominated her life economically and legally but at least in the quilt she could choose how to combine colours and prints. As an anonymous woman quilt maker explains:

You can't always change things. Sometimes you have no control over the way things go [...] you have to do the best you can with what you got. That's what piecing is. The materials is passed on to you or is all you can afford to buy . . . that's just what's given to you. Your fate. But the way you put them together is your business. You can put them in any order you like. (Arpard 20)

---

square was the indication that people in that house assisted slaves in their escape northwards; of course, only those involved with the Underground Railroad knew this hidden meaning (Tobin & Dobard).

14. While analyzing the quilt, it should be remembered that at the time Susan Glaspell wrote *Trifles* and “A Jury of Her Peers,” the late 1910s, the United States were experiencing the so-called Colonial Revival with its regard for folk art, including patchwork; therefore, readers and spectators would be fairly familiar with the different patterns and their significance. See the introduction to *American Patchwork Quilt*.

15. The different ways of alternating dark and light strips of cloth have given way to several variations of the log-cabin pattern such as Sunshine and Shadow, Streak of Lightning, Straight Furrows, Barn Raising and, significantly enough, Courthouse Steps.

16. For more literary references to quilting as evidence of good housekeeping see, for example, Lydia Maria Child's *The American Frugal Housewife* (quoted in Laurel Horton's *Quilting in America* 45).

The fourth characteristic of the quilt to focus on is the knotting of it, since this aspect plays an enormous part in the story. Being a textile sandwich of three layers, quilts demanded some way of keeping all the elements together; this could be done in two ways: either by quilting it or by knotting it. Quilting demanded a big frame in which to set the bedcover and many hours of fine stitching which was usually done by a group of women known as a quilting bee. This team work “not only [offered an] opportunity to the ambitious quilt maker to get her quilting done for the season, but it was the most important social event of the neighborhood” (Robertson 57).<sup>17</sup> Knotting, however, was easier, faster, and could be done by a single person. Forced into isolation by a husband who did not allow her to attend the church chorus or to join the local charity, Minnie could not count on any female assistance for quilting her bedcover so she had to resort to knotting it by herself. That is, if Minnie had enjoyed a circle of female friends that helped her overcome her loneliness and suffering she would have succeeded in keeping a home and would not have knotted a rope around her husband’s neck. Therefore it is only right that her neighbor, Mrs. Hale, feels responsible for not helping Minnie and not visiting her for more than a year previous to the murder, exactly the same way Susan Glaspell must have felt for not taking immediately Mrs. Hossack’s side during her trial.

Two other implications of the knotting are that Minnie began her life with John Wright by marrying him, in other words, by *tying the knot*. This is literally how she finishes her life with him, with a knot, only this time it is around his neck. Finally, when the County Attorney—with his patronizing attitude—asks Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale whether Mrs. Wright was going to quilt or knot the bedcover, the men on stage may not fully understand Mrs. Peters’s tongue-in-cheek answer—“we think she was going to ...knot it” (204)—but “the audience certainly does” (Ben-Zvi 39). The significance of this answer—a comic element—does not rest in its inclusion in a rather somber story but in its feminist implication: the two women, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale, have overcome their initial alliance to patriarchy and decided to help Minnie the only way they can. Thanks to a newly born feeling of sorority, they are willing to defy societal conventions and “not only solve the mystery but also develop their sense of identity as women with Minnie Wright and demonstrate their sisterhood with her by acting to protect her from male law and judgement” (Hedges 49). In other words, “it is the women who have the last laugh” as they have defeated the patriarchal system that oppresses them by “*knot[ting]* or bond[ing] themselves together” (Hedges 61, emphasis mine).

And let’s not forget that the process itself of solving the mystery resembles that of quilting with Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale putting together small pieces of information till they can get the whole picture of what life was like on the Wright’s farm; “sewing” together the pieces left behind by Minnie they have been able to tie up the loose ends, or we should say they have *knotted them up*.

Through the analysis of all these objects and their symbolic implications we have again and again come across the concept of guilt, but significantly enough it is never associated with Minnie Wright, the murderer, but with John Wright, the murdered one.

---

17. With regard to the quilting bee, Elizabeth Wells Robertson explains “it was far more refined and ‘genteel’ than other gatherings such as the ‘apple paring’, ‘cornhusking’ or the ‘thrashing’, because to it the guests could wear their best Sunday clothes [. . .] It was the most popular form of feminine hospitality” (57).



Mrs. Wright is never presented by Glaspell as guilty of any misbehavior or breach of her marriage vows while Mr. Wright is guilty of not protecting her, not honouring her, not providing for her the home he was supposed to. Being the guilty party he has been condemned to die by the rope, but not hanging from it on a public scaffold but strangled in the couple's bed (the place for greater intimacy) as fit punishment for what was not considered a "public" crime but a "private" one. The abuse suffered in the domestic sphere is avenged this way, which stresses once more women's lack of protection in a legal system created by men. From the point of view of both the women on stage and the playwright, killing John Wright is not a murder but a justifiable homicide or as Elaine Hedges puts it "a tyrannicide" or "justified revolution" (79).

## REFERENCES

- American Patchwork Quilt*. Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas. [The volume consulted indicates no author and no date of publication].
- Arpard, Susan S. "Pretty Much to Suit Ourselves: Midwestern Women Naming Experience Through Domestic Arts." *Making the American Home: Middle-Class Women & Domestic Material Culture, 1840-1940*. Eds. Marilyn Ferriz Motz & Pat Browne. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988. 11-26.
- Ben-Zvi, Linda. "Introduction." *Susan Glaspell: Essays on Her Theater and Fiction*. Ed. Linda Ben-Zvi. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995. 1-10.
- Ben-Zvi, Linda. "Murder, She Wrote: The Genesis of Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*." *Susan Glaspell: Essays on Her Theater and Fiction*. Ed. Linda Ben-Zvi. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995. 19-48.
- Davis, Gayle R. "Gender and Creative Production: A Social History Lesson in Art Evaluation." *The Material Culture of Gender, The Gender of Material Culture*. Eds. Katherine Martínez & Kenneth L. Ames. Hanover & London: University Press of New England, 1997. 53-74.
- Elsley, Judy. *Quilts As Text(iles): The Semiotics of Quilting*. New York: Peter Lang, 1993.
- Fernández Morales, Marta. "The Two Spheres in Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* and *The Verge*." *Staging a Cultural Paradigm: The Political and the Personal in American Drama*. Eds. Barbara Ozieblo & Miriam López Rodríguez. Brussels: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2002.
- Ferrero, Pat. *Hearts and Hands: The Influence of Women & Quilts on American Society*. San Francisco: The Quilt Digest Press, 1987.
- Forrest, John and Deborah Blincoe. *The Natural History of the Traditional Quilt*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.
- Glaspell, Susan. "Trifles." *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*. Volume 2. Ed. Paul Lauter. Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998. 1124-1133.
- Gordon, Beverly. "Victorian Fancywork in the American Home: Fantasy and Accommodation." *Making the American Home: Middle-Class Women & Domestic Material Culture, 1840-1940*. Ferriz Motz, Marylin & Pat Browne, Eds. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988. 48-68.
- Hedges, Elaine. "Small Things Reconsidered: *A Jury of her Peers*." *Susan Glaspell: Essays on Her Theater and Fiction*. Ben-Zvi, Linda, Ed. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995. 49-74.

- Horton, Laurel et al., Eds. *Quilting in America: Beyond the Myth*. Nashville, Tennessee: Rutledge Hill Press, 1994.
- Jones, Ann. *Women Who Kill*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.
- Lim, Soo Kyung. *Cultural Materialism*. University of Indiana Website. December 2002. <<http://www.indiana.edu/~wanthro/mater.htm>>.
- Motz, Marilyn Ferriz. "Introduction." *Making the American Home: Middle-Class Women & Domestic Material Culture, 1840-1940*. Ferriz Motz, Marilyn & Pat Browne, Eds. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988. 1-10.
- Ryan, Kiernan, Ed. *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*. London: Arnold, 1996.
- Tobin, Jacqueline L. & Raymond G. Dobard, Eds. *Hidden in Plain View: The Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad*. New York: Doubleday, 1999.
- Oziblo, Barbara. *Susan Glaspell: A Critical Biography*. Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
- Plante, Ellen M. *Women at Home in Victorian America: A Social History*. New York: Facts on File, 1997.
- Robertson, Elizabeth Wells. *American Quilts*. New York: The Studio Publications, 1948.
- Wood, Andrew F. & Tyrone L. Adams. "Embracing the Machine: Quilt and Quilting as Community-Building Architecture." *Cyberghetto or Cybertopya? Race, Class, and Gender on the Internet*. Ebo, Bosah, Ed. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1998. 219-234.