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Expressionism in Susan Glaspell's *Trifle*

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Abstract:

The main purpose of this research paper is to show how Expressionism is influential to postwar American literature, especially to the one-act play entitled *Trifles* (1916) written by Susan Glaspell (1876-1948).

America witnessed a new period of special culture and art during the second half of the twentieth century, especially after the second world war. The traditional forms of art have failed to satisfy the wishes and aspirations of the new artists who deliberately look for new forms to express their attitudes towards the new state of life to be lived after grave wars that have caused humanity great losses on many and various levels. Thus, they have felt the need to break away with the existing traditional modes of expression. Hence, there appears new dramatic movements like existentialism, surrealism and Expressionism. The latter movement advocates the expression of the enthusiastic emotional state of the artist reacting to the anxieties of the modern world. The title one-act play *Trifles* can be regarded as a very well example illustrating the aims of this new movement and anticipating its appearance.

Expressionism in Susan Glaspell's *Trifle*

Expressionism is an artistic movement, which appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century comprising diverse styles and techniques and especially emphasizing the artist's liberty to convey attitudes and emotions through nontraditional and usually nonrepresentational means. It advocates a theory or practice in art whose objective is to depict the subjective emotions and responses aroused in the artist by objects and events. One element basic to expressionism, according to J. L. Styan (1978: 1) is a "rigorous anti-realism," who proceeds to say that the modern expressionist is very "subjective, imposing his own intense, and often eccentric view of the world on what he painted. In the theatre, such subjectivity can keep an audience critically alert, but if it is too private, the reason may reject it entirely" (Ibid.).

Expressionism, as pointed out by Ian Ousby (1996: 136), was first coined by the French painter Julian-August Herve in 1901; It was later applied to movements in other arts. Herve (Ibid.) rejects impressionism and its aim

of portraying external reality, in an attempt to present a subjective experience. The term has often been applied to theatrical works like German dramas and the American ones written by Eugene O'Neill and Elmer Rice, not to mention the British O'Casey. It emphasizes the spontaneous, automatic, or subconscious creation.

The artists who have achieved an original voice through a movement's new concepts can be called avant-garde, among whom the expressionists advocate that man has to look deep into his inner self in order to revive the dead and broken down pieces of his nature, as it is pointed out by Stephen Polcari (1993: 22), who further believes that Existentialism offers the Expressionist artist a philosophy of action, which basically explains that man is to be defined by his actions for which he is definitely responsible in one way or another (Polcari: 365).

Trifles is the most representative literary work by Susan Glaspell that reflects the plight of man's attempt to actualize his identity. The playwright has written this play to express a woman's will to gain her freedom and rights by killing her husband. The dominant theme of the play is feminism; however, there are many implied themes that are intertwined with it, which can be touched upon in relation to expressionism later on in this paper. Glaspell uses a bunch of figures of speech like symbol, metaphor, and pun to clearly achieve her dramatic purpose to the audience.

Expressionists try to find ways, through aesthetics, to overcome the universal dilemmas and nihilistic attitudes that have been posed as threats to end the human thought and heritage. They try to achieve this goal through defining a particular American culture in general and the kind of culture closely related to myth and symbol. The belief in culture as the primary basis for the study of society and its individual has been essentially based on both the study of anthropology and psychology; they are two disciplines which dominated the Western thought in the 1930s. L. L. Langness (1987: 1) lies much emphasis on the study of man and his culture in order to understand his essence and find solutions to his problems, and as it is shown in his wording:

The scientific study of human beings- that is of the human creature viewed in the abstract: male, female, all colors and shapes, prehistoric, ancient, and modern. Anthropology is simply the attempt of human beings to study and hence to understand themselves at all times and all places.

Consequently, American artists were bound to look for answers when searching for meaning behind the culture, nature, and identity of man.

Anthropology is therefore regarded as most significant through which the traits of man are unfolded, and which are necessary for the understanding of the American culture for which a historical design or model can be made, tracing it back to its origins and myths. This model or design set for the study of the American man and culture is called by Polcari (4) as the "historical pattern."

The journey that the American artists have taken is a journey of self-discovery and self-awareness. They want to show, in their works, a return to the primitive as a way to understand their present existence; they also endeavour to exhibit their works to the public to be apprehended, so that they can understand the didactic lesson which they aspire to express, and therefore the American artists would, relying on the cultural model which they create, manage to give rise to the appearance of the rebirth of a Western culture and arts. It may be suggested that that journey is symbolically portrayed in Glaspell's *Trifles* through Mrs. Wright's attempt to restore and maintain her rights as a woman first and as a human being next. Her attempt in doing so could only be achieved by killing her husband.

Mrs. Wright's crime may then be considered a rebirth in so far as it is conducive to the kind of freedom which she has long been deprived of, for in her time women are considered second class citizens or a commodity belonging to their husbands. By exposing such a situation as this in her fictional arts, Glaspell would generalize the American socio-cultural values into universal themes of history. In other words, it is considered a violent shriek to the entire world of women. This means that *Trifle* exposes the wish of the individual to revolt against those long witnessed ideals of society, of which the concept that the males should dominate the females in every aspect of life. Styan (3) sums up the place of man among the expressionists, and as follows:

Ideologically, expressionism in the German theatre was at first a drama of protest, reacting against the pre-war authority of the family and community, the rigid lines of the social order and eventually the industrialization of society and the mechanization of life. following Nietzsche, it glorified the individual and idealized the creative personality.

In their literary works, American writers try to portray socio-cultural issues on a large scale for the American public's edification and self-discovery, whose main concern is to expose the character of man revolting against the old conventions and traditions which lead nowhere

but to oppression and backwardness. What matters most for them is the entity and welfare of the individual.

Glaspell' *Trifles* is a one-act play about a mysterious murder. The criminal cannot be easily detected and thus the investigators whose job is to find out the criminal have failed in their task. Two investigations are held into the murder, of which one is official held by males, the Sheriff and the County Attorney; the second, unofficial held by two female, the Sheriff's wife Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale that is Mrs. Wright's neighbor. The two women know Mrs. Wright and they arrive to her cold and gloomy home to collect some clothes and personal things for her. The County Attorney Mr. Henderson and the Sheriff Mr. Peters endeavor to find out what has transpired on the day when John Wright is murdered. They have questioned the neighbours, of whom Mrs. Hale tells them that Mrs. Wright, John's wife, has been acting strangely when she is found in the kitchen. After interrogation, they have left Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale in the kitchen.

Instead of focusing on the males' role in the play and their quest to solve the case, Glaspell spotlights the females' image in the kitchen. So, when the men leave the kitchen to continue their search upstairs, the ladies begin to find out evidence as to who has killed Mr. Wright by examining the surroundings, especially Mrs. Wright's trifles. The rising action of this play begins when the men leave the women alone in the kitchen. It seems that Glaspell allots much importance to female characters that are portrayed as being much more intelligent than their husbands, Mr. Henderson and Mr. Peters. Glaspell (1990: 9) herself declares in her introduction to her "A Jury of her Peers," a story adaptation of *Trifles*, that the two "women soften toward each other as they begin to express their empathy for Minnie Wright—her isolation, her stingy and cold husband and her broken stove." They begin to use their tactic to investigate who the murderer may be, enquiring about so many things, asking themselves many questions and referring to many things. They have engaged in a little talk and comment on the fact that the kitchen is left in a mess after the murder.

It is worth noting that Mrs. Peters, while looking through the cupboard, realizes that Mrs. Wright has kept many things in the kitchen. Meanwhile, the County Attorney Mr. Henderson and the Sheriff Mr. Peters hear what the two women are talking about and they laugh at them, unknowing that the two women are making valuable conclusions. The two women have concluded that the murderer is Mrs. Wright herself. They think that when Mrs. Wright is sewing in the kitchen, she is confronted by

her husband who hates birds. She does not want her bird to be discovered. But he discovers and immediately kills it by breaking its neck. The two women come to the conclusion that the killing of the bird is a sufficient motive for Mrs. Wright to kill her husband who is now in her eye a murderer of one of God's creatures and who should be punished. The women have made up their mind that they are not going to reveal anything to the official investigators. Even when the County Attorney asks where the bird is, they give him the answer that a cat might eat it:

MRS. PETERS: (in a false voice). My, it's a good thing the men couldn't hear us. Wouldn't they just laugh! Getting all stirred up over a little thing like a—dead canary. As if that could have anything to do with—with—wouldn't they *laugh!* (She crosses to the fire and sits.) (Trifles: 192)

The absence of Mrs. Wright and the horrible way whereby the bird is killed and the discovery of the dead body of both Mr. Wright and of the bird give the story a dream-like and nightmarish atmosphere, which points to one of the essentials of expressionism. Besides, the entire family, including the bird appears to be the victim of the abnormal behaviour of both husband and wife. In this regard, the women manage to scrutinize the details that may reflect and express even the mental state of the protagonist, now in jail, who has been isolated from society and constrained by her husband's way of life and of thinking. This is made in line with Freud's and Jung's concepts concerning the behaviour of man. Styran (3) has his say in this regard:

On top of this [expressionism], the advent of Freudian and Jungian psychology in the first quarter of the century constituted a challenge to the playwright to disclose and reproduce his secret and hidden states of mind.

The bird kept in the cage is a symbol of Mrs. Wright kept and restrained in Mr. Wright's house, and therefore the killing of the bird indicates that as if Mrs. Wright had been killed, which might have made her to avenge her husband's crime. Thus, she has enough justification to kill her husband. This is why the expressionists look for ways, methods, or even sources, to emphasize the power of the individual and to be able to redefine aesthetics by highlighting the mental and psychological realms of human nature in an age of uncertainty and postwar damage. And this image is clearly stated in the opening scene of the play when describing the kitchen:

It is a gloomy room, and left without having been put in order. There are unwashed pans under the sink, a loaf of bread outside the bread-box, a dish-towel on the table and other signs of incompleted work. (*Trifle*: 175)

Most important is the image of the kitchen in which the evidence of Mrs. Wright's crime is found; the disorder in the kitchen is symbolic of the disorder and chaos in her mind, which has been confused by her husband's bad treatment. According to expressionism, the setting of the play should expose only those images which are closely related to the main theme of it, and as it is explicated by (Styan (4):

in expressionistic drama "settings avoided reproducing the detail of naturalistic drama, and created only those starkly simplified images the theme of the play called for. The décor was often made up bizarre shapes and sensational colours.

Mrs. Wright wants a new rebirth in her life away from the male's influence upon her. Her killing of her husband is regarded as a new life for her. Expressionism points to the duality and unity of opposites, of consciousness and unconsciousness, and the cycles of birth, death and renewal, not to mention the emphasis on the concept of evolution. These themes have been unfolded and tackled by postwar writers to point out postwar problems and find out solutions for them. The significant idea of rebirth is well expressed in the play when the County Attorney questions Mrs. Hale about Mrs. Wright's behaviour, investigating the crime:

COUNTY ATTORNEY: And how did she—look?

HALE: Well, she looked queer.

COUNTY ATTORNEY: How do you mean—queer?

HALE: Well, as if she didn't know what she was going to do next. And kind of done up. (*Trifles*: 177)

The last two words "done up" in the aforementioned quotation refer to the sort of relief and release on the part of Mrs. Wright. In other words, Glaspell suggests that Mrs. Wright starts a new life by getting rid of the oppressing power represented by her victim, her husband, which points to a departure from slavery and male's control. In a word, it is a rebirth on the part of Mrs. Wright. Therefore, it is a sort of transformation, which is the first and foremost theme in the play and which is one of the perquisites of expressionism. According to expressionists, the theme of transformation—mental, physical, or social—suggests a process whereby

man moves from one state of life to a better one—from sadness to happiness, from drudgery to relief, or from *death* in life to a rebirth. To expressionists, the theme of change is closely related to man's existence, which implies that man changes in every moment, and which also implies that man is capable of changing his conditions according to what he finds necessary for happiness. In this regard, the process of change is symbolically represented by Mrs. Wright's swinging movement when sitting on the rocker moving back and forth reflecting either her impatience and nervous mental state, or a way to stay peacefully. Before her marriage she is a very cheerful person, being free and independent, energetic and full of life. But she has been satiated with all sorts of suppression, oppression and miserable treatment caused by her husband. The deceased husband Mr. Wright has imposed upon her many domestic rules and detached her from the outside world. Her husband 's treatment creates in her inner self a kind of a wish to revolt against him, and the only way to free herself from that rigid life is to finish his life; in so doing she feels that she has restored her rights for the sake of freedom and dignity as a human being:

COUNTY ATTORNEY: What—was she doing?

HALE : She was rockin' back and forth. She had her apron in her hand and was kind of—pleating it. (*Trifles*: 177)

The images surrounding the circumstances of the murder have been scrambled, and at the same time the official investigators have not found any concrete evidence to indict any one. Nevertheless, the audience's or the reader's attention is constantly shifting from one idea to another; that is to say, attention is focused on the contrast between the image of oppression practised by the murdered husband and the image of freedom dreamed by Mrs. Wright, which are paradoxical images that serve the push-and-pull technique often employed by expressionist dramatists. Throughout the images of *trifle* things seen in Mrs. Wright's home, which are symbolic of her chaotic mind and the murder itself, Glaspell manages to let the spectators enter into the mind of the criminal and infer the causes that lead to the end of Mr. Wright; by means of images and symbols, the reader is made to imagine and figure out the physical activity of murder, and its effect on his mind. Mrs. Wright's rocker may be symbolic of her fluctuating tendency whether to kill her husband or not, which culminates in the final act of the crime. The rocking chair also serves the push-and-pull concept already mentioned. Mrs. Hale says "I knocked again, and I thought I heard somebody say, 'Come in.' I wasn't sure, I am not sure yet, but I opened the door...and there in that rocker—

(*pointing to it*) sat Mrs. Wright. (*They all looked at the rocker*) (*Trifles: 177*).

Mrs. Hale has thoroughly examines the inner emotional effects of Mrs. Wright after the crime is discovered, and describes to the County Attorney what she has seen. She realizes in Mrs. Wright an amalgamation of both great joy and frightfulness maybe caused by Mrs. Wright's restoration of freedom and the aftermath of her crime respectively, which points to the sensibility of her inner self, and as follows:

HALE: She moved from that chair to this one over here (*pointing to a small chair in the corner*) and just sat there with her hands held together and looking down. I got a feeling that I ought to make some conversation, so I said I had come in to see if John wanted to put in a telephone, and at that she started to laugh, and then she stopped and looked at me—scared.
(*Trifles: 179*)

Therefore, the push-and-pull image is also explained explicitly in the situation in which Mrs. Wright seen by Hale now sitting quietly and peacefully, now looking devastated, and then her behavior shifted from sadness to hysterical manifestations of laughter intertwined with feelings of fear. All these mixed feelings altogether are expressionist elements that reflect the unstable mental state of the wife.

Glaspell does not overlook the happiness-oriented life of Mrs. Wright before she is married, whose name then was Minnie Forster. But after her marriage she is made to be isolated from the outside world and to suffer from the kind of life imposed upon her by her husband—oppression, isolation and drudgery. she has to stay indoors, embroidering, cleaning, sewing and doing all domestics tasks, and as a result she has felt oppressed and crippled. Mrs. Hale says:

MRS. HALE (*above table c. examining the skirt*). Wright was close... I think maybe that's why she kept so much to herself. She didn't even belong to Ladies' Aid. I suppose she felt she couldn't do her part, and then you don't enjoy things when you feel shabby. She used to wear pretty clothes and be lively, when she was Minnie Foster, one of the town girls singing in the choir. But that—oh, that was thirty years ago.
(*Trifles: 183*)

The sense of alienation, detachment and dislocation makes Minnie rebel against all social barriers to bring back her freedom even though the outcome is devastating. From the structural point of view, Glaspell has

portrayed every minute detail skillfully to contribute to the main action of the play. Even her description of the setting is made in accordance with the main theme of the play—the atmosphere is gloomy, cold, sad, bleak and dark, being a symbol of the decay from which Minnie tries to run away, and as indicated in Mrs. Hale's words:

Mrs. Hale: I could've come. I stayed away because it weren't cheerful, and that's why I ought to have come. I – I never liked this place. Maybe because it's down in a hollow and you don't see the road. I dunno what it is, but it's a lonesome place and always was. I wish I had come over to see Minnie Foster sometimes.

(*Trifles*: 187)

Astonishingly enough, the female characters find out many clues and symbols leading them to the identity of the killer but they decide not to reveal the evidence represented by Mrs. Wright's *trifles* that may condemn her, because they feel sorry for her and are very well aware of the fact that she has been victimized by her deceased husband. They have discovered the dead bird Mrs. Wright likes most, which may sure be killed by her husband, and therefore Mrs. Wright has got a strong motive to kill him. Mrs. Hale says "I wish if they're going to find any evidence they'd be about it. I don't like this place" (*Trifles*: 187).

The theme of return to origin as a necessity to determine human nature is evident throughout the play. It is a search for the "elemental forces, the original forms and times, the primal emotions, the eternal sources of human life, history, and behavior" as shown by Polcari (33). The impact of this theme is to be seen through the various interpretations of the primitive, considered significant in both anthropology and psychology. Therefore, both husband and wife have to know and understand what their needs are. Usually males are the breadwinners of their families, but this does not mean that they can leave their wives to take care of household and children without fulfilling what women need—giving them opportunities to participate in social environment and relationships. Here, Glaspell tells us that women need freedom and equality in society. They need social engagement aside from their household activities. Besides, women can also do something unexpected if they are voiceless and deprived of their rights.

In *Trifles*, the male characters are regarded as being superior to their wives, who are treated as dolls and puppets. However, Glaspell truly empowers Mrs. Wright to get her freedom and actualize herself as a human being. Glaspell presents her female characters as being witty, clever and intelligent that are able to do what men cannot. Expressionism

advocates the idea of continuity, the organic continuity of humanity through time, space, and history. The human continuum is responsible to transport man's "universal eternal inner life" (Polcari: 34) from the origins of man to his present day.

The other theme that is central to Expressionism is the representation of the conflict of human life. The artist should be aware that life is filled with chaos and disorder, as well as hope and happiness (Polcari, 34). Art is then revealed as continuity of a paradoxical world. This duality of life was inspired by surrealism. An example of this conflict is shown in the conversation between Mrs. Hale and the County Attorney, which reflects the everlasting male-female problem and the superiority of one sex upon the other.

All the themes of the play, when combined together contribute to one major theme which is the theme of a desired new beginning, which is in line with the expressionist belief in creating new possibilities for a better life. For instance, the return to myth, metamorphosis, evolution, psychology, especially Jungian psychology and the power of the unconscious as a creative process are all a number of pertinent topics that look towards rebirth.

Trifles suggests that men tend to be aggressive and self-centered; in contrast, women are more helpful, understanding, patient, and sensitive to the needs of their near relatives. The image of the repression is clearly stated in the lines below when Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale are talking about the dead husband. Mrs. Hale's view about Mr. Wright is that "he was a *hard man*....Just to pass the time of day with him—(*She shivers.*) Like a raw wind that gets to the bone" (*Trifles*: 188).

The title of the play *Trifles* is both suggestive and symbolic; it is suggestive in the sense that the clues leading to the criminal are detected throughout examining the trifles kept in the kitchen of Mrs. Wright, which are unknown to the official investigators who are supposed to discover this matter themselves as long as they are considered *superior* to women in every respect; and the title is symbolic of the males' point of view concerning women whom they consider to be trifles at the time the this play is written. To add, the title is ironic in that the wives of the two investigators turn to be not *trifles* at all: they prove themselves to be more significant than their husbands. Women have fought for gaining the right to vote for decades, and only in 1920 they got it, which gave them new chances to improve their conditions on many and various levels. It was a rebirth for them. Expressionists aspire for the "recovery of a new life with

a new understanding" (Polcari: 35), so that mistakes to be done by people will never be repeated, and therefore no more sufferings are brought about on the part of the oppressed.

David Anfam (2003: 81-82) realizes that expressionism supports the idea that psychology is a "cornucopia of visionary and poetic images with an existential edge, especially since Jung claims that myth issues from the same depth as art." Besides, Jung's psychology reflects the continued interest in anthropology and mythic tales like the one contained in *Trifles*, in which the protagonist's conflict becomes an inner journey whereby one descends into unconsciousness, making the past alive again, confronting problems and traumas and emerging from this introspected ordeal a better self; that is, it is the death of the old self and the rebirth of the new one (Polcari, 43). This theory reflects the exact mental state of Mrs. Wright, who has attempted to gain her freedom and starts a new life by killing her husband. Accordingly, the unconscious level of her mind (Mrs. Wright's psyche) has an advantage over her consciousness, since the unconscious psychic life is connected to the primitive and ancient life to produce a developed and renewed conscious self. The collective unconscious gives her the ability to portray the wanted psychic life created in the unconscious mind and permits the manifestation of her oppression.

Jungian unconsciousness, in the historical sense, means the representation of the psychic and behavioral heritage of mankind across time and space (Polcari, 43). Moreover, the Jungian unconsciousness sheds light on the theory of archetypes in "which forces and images from past cultures arise from the unconscious level of the historical psyche to alter and heal the modern individuals" (Polcari, 43). So, Mrs. Wright's stream of consciousness is described by her relation with the bird which symbolizes her captivity, and killing it is no more than humiliating and killing her freedom, metaphorically speaking. She feels that she is imprisoned, voiceless, and choked by her *cage*. Bigsby (2003: 19) declares that Glaspell's works compromise interdisciplinary subject matters which are "combined comedy and melodrama, symbolism and expressionism, feminism and a critique of feminism, social criticism and metaphysical enquiry."

Expressionists share with Jung the belief in the importance of psychic life in an age of postwar uncertainty, where change and evolution start from the inner life and the psyche of the individual. It is worth noting that Glaspell has written her play during very hard times in America in which women have been in search for their freedom, rights and identity. Although the existence of a psyche is a collaborative contribution of both Freud's and Jung's psychology, expressionists recognize Jung's

individual psyche as a "metonymy of historical events, struggles and fears" (Polcari, 45). Therefore, Jung's definition of psyche has a great impact on the expressionists' thought since it presents an analogy to the basis of their influences on anthropological studies.

Margit Sichert (in Herbert Grabes, 1997: 271), in her article entitled "Claire Archer—a 'Nietzscheana' in Susan Glaspell's *The Verge*," points out that Glaspell has been influenced by German expressionism which is vividly expressed in her works. Yvonne Shafer envisions that Glaspell has devoted her art entirely to producing American plays that are influenced by German techniques and staging, and that "in her use of expressionism Glaspell was far ahead of most American playwrights and it is only through a realization of the significance of expressionism in her plays that they can be fully understood" (Ibid).

Conclusion:

As a conclusion, *Trifles*, though regarded as an action one-act play, follows the lines of expressionism. Like an expressionist painter Glaspell manages to present a play in which the unconscious mind of the unofficial female investigators manage to spotlight the circumstances of a vague crime whose official male investigators fail to do so. The play is just the canvas drawn by the expressionist in which there is one clue to shed light on the truth which has to be discovered. In this play the audience can figure out the modern presentation of the woman throughout certain symbols or expressionistic images faithfully portrayed by the dramatist. To study the play and analyze it from the expressionistic point of view adds more understanding to Glaspell's art with its aesthetic elements. *Trifles* is an indication of the American artist's attempt to sustain and renew a very significant form of art for the sake of discovering new facts about man's life and experience.

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التعبيرية في مسرحية (الأشياء التافهة) لسوزان كلاسيل

م. أسماء مكرم م. كمال ويل

جامعة بغداد/ كلية التربية ابن رشد للعلوم الإنسانية

قسم اللغة الانكليزية

إنّ الهدف من كتابة هذا البحث هو تسليط الضوء على تأثير الحركة التعبيرية على الادب الامريكى لفترة ما بعد الحرب، لاسيما مسرحية الفصل الواحد الموسومة (الأشياء التافهة) (١٩١٦) التي كتبتها الكاتبة الامريكية سوزان كلاسيل (١٨٧٦-١٩٤٨).

لقد شهدت اميركا عهدا جديدا لأدب وثقافة مميزة خلال النصف الثاني من القرن العشرين، وعلى وجه التحديد بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية. لقد فشلت الصيغ التقليدية للأدب والفن في ان تشبع رغبات وطموحات الادباء والفنانين الجدد الذين تعمدوا البحث عن صيغ جديدة للتعبير عن مواقفهم إزاء الحالة الحياتية الجديدة التي طرأت بعد الحروب الخطيرة التي كلفت الانسانية خسائر كبرى على مستويات عدة ومتنوعة، ونتيجة لذلك فقد شعر هؤلاء الادباء والفنانون بالحاجة الى ترك صيغ التعبير التقليدية، الأمر الذي ادى الى ظهور حركات جديدة فيما يخص المسرح كالحركات الوجودية والسريالية والانطباعية. تعبر الانطباعية موضوع البحث عن الحالة الوجدانية الحماسية للأديب او الفنان الذي يتفاعل مع حالات القلق التي انتابت الحياة في العالم الحديث.

إنّ هذه المسرحية (الأشياء التافهة) عبارة عن مثال يوضح اهداف هذه الحركة الجديدة (الحركة التعبيرية) ويسهم في نشوئها وتطورها.