



## Some linguistic lines of thinking on Trifles by Susan Glaspell (the play and its film adaptation)

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## Some linguistic lines of thinking on *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell (the play and its film adaptation)

presentation at the **American Theatre Lab**

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Université de Toulouse 2

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### 1 Use of KNOW

#### 1.1 as a main verb: dialectal features in complementation

KNOW

- (1a) +Ø (=implied direct object)
  - I don't know ([Ø])
  - goodness knows ([Ø])
- (1b) + noun phrase
  - Did you know [*John Wright*]
  - Not to know [*him*]
  - you know [*juries when it comes to women*]
- (1c) +*that*-clause (or zero complementizer)
  - I want you to know [Ø I had my hands full yesterday]
  - I knew [Ø they must be up]
  - when she knew [*that* you had gone for the coroner]
  - that's all I know [*that* you don't]
- (1d) +*wh*-clause direct objects
  - as if she didn't know [*what* she was going to do next]
  - not knowing [*what* to say]
  - I dunno [*what* it is], but it's a lonesome place and always was.
  - you know [about *how much* he talked himself]
  - We don't know [*who* killed the bird]
- (1e) +*whether*-clause
  - (*whether* implying a choice between two options, like *either, neither, other*)
  - I don't know [*whether* she did or not]
- (1f) +*as* complementizer (in turns by MR HALE, MRS HALE, MRS PETERS) = **if** or **whether**
  - I didn't know [*as* what his wife wanted made much difference to John]
  - I don't know [*as* there's anything so strange]
  - I don't know [*as* she took one] >>>> in film: I don't know [*as* she got one]

#### 1.2 as a discourse marker: phatic use

it expresses (real or coerced) interspeaker common ground, with an evidential meaning

- (2a) You know, it seems kind of sneaking.  
They're superstitious, you know.
- (2b) and you know [*Frank*] [=you/we can trust him]  
you know [*juries when it comes to women*]

## 2.1 defining relative *that*-clauses expanding a noun phrase

- (3a) MRS HALE: “Just pulling out **a stitch or two** [*that's not sewed very good*].”  
MRS HALE: “**that deputy sheriff** [*that came out to make the fire*] might have...”  
MRS HALE: “Like **a raw wind** [*that gets to the bone*]”  
MRS HALE: “**a thing** [*that sang*]”  
MRS HALE: “I think there's **some** here [*that's all right*], Mrs Peters.”  
CO ATTRN: “keep an eye out for **anything** [*that might be of use to us*].”  
CO ATTRN: “there was **nothing** [important] here—  
**nothing** [*that would point to any motive*].”  
CO ATTRN: “**something** [to make a story about]—  
**a thing** [*that would connect up with this strange way of doing it*]”
- (3b) MRS PETERS: “And then **her little shawl** [*that always hung behind the door*].”  
MRS PETERS: “slipping **a rope** around his neck [*that choked the life out of him*].”
- (3c) >> MRS PETERS: “there was **a boy** [ $\emptyset$  took a hatchet]  
MRS PETERS: “It was **an awful thing** [ $\emptyset$  was done in this house that night]”

it needs a finite (conjugated) verb in the main clause in the utterance

## 2.2 *whether*-clauses

*whether* implies a choice between two options, and is part of the series *either, neither*

- (4) MRS HALE: I don't know [*whether* she did *or* not]  
ATTR: Well ladies, have you decided [*whether* she was going to quilt it *or* knot it?]  
MRS HALE: She—she may never know [*whether* it was broke *or* not.]

### 2.3 *if-complementizer*

- (5) MRS HALE: I *wonder* **if** she was goin' to quilt it or just knot it?  
 HALE: I'm going to *see* **if** I can't get JW to go in with me on a party telephone  
 HALE: so I said I had come in to *see* **if** John wanted to put in a telephone

## 2.4 *as* complementizer after negative main verbs (“know”, “see”)

-it functions as *if/whether* in Standard English, but **restricted to negative main verbs**

-does not occur in turns by COUNTY ATTORNEY and SHERIFF because they do not use negatives of “know”

- (6a) I don't **see** [*as* it's anything to laugh about].  
 I didn't **know** [*as* what his wife wanted made much difference to John]  
 Well, I don't **know** [*as* Wright had], either.  
 I don't **know** [*as* there's anything so strange]  
 I don't **know** [*as* she was nervous]  
 I don't **know** [*as* she took one]
- (6b) in film: MRS HALE: I don't **know** [*as* she got one]
- (6c) MRS HALE: I declare I **believe** [ $\emptyset$  that's the only one].  
 in film MRS PETERS: you don't even **know** [*that* he did it]

### 3 The distribution of “know” across the characters in *Trifles*

“female” and “male” below refer specifically to “persons identifying as heterosexual female/male in their community”

#### 3.1 the distribution of “I KNOW” across “male”/“female”:

- (7) -they make up roughly half the occurrences of “know” in the play as well as the film  
 -“I don't know” is exceedingly rare for “male” in the play and nonexistent in the film:  
     MR HALE uses it three times, always with reference to MRS WRIGHT  
     eg. “and then she stopped and looked at me—scared, (...) I **dunno**, maybe it wasn't scared. I wouldn't like to say it was.”  
 -“I don't know” is used twice as frequently by “female” characters than “I know” in both the play and the film adaptation

#### 3.2 discourse marker “you know” (or “I know”)

- (8a) SHERIFF: (...) She was to take in some clothes for her, *you know*  
 MRS HALE: *You know*, it seems kind of sneaking.  
 MRS PETERS: They're superstitious, *you know*.

> “common ground” (solidarity) between “male” and “female” characters, respectively

- (8b) SHERIFF: and you know [*Frank*]  
 CO ATTRN: you know [*juries when it comes to women*]

> they express common ground among “male” characters

- (8c) CO ATTRN *I know, I know*  
 MRS HALE ...and you never really can, *you know?*

> both seem to express *lack* of common ground!!!

#### 3.3 3sg KNOWS

- (9a) play (3 further occurrences do not refer to MRS WRIGHT, I've disregarded them here)  
     HALE: Well, as if **she didn't know what she was going to do next**.  
     ATTRN: when **she knew that you had gone for the coroner?**  
     MRS HALE: (...) Why, it looks as if **she didn't know what she was about!**
- (9b) film (they invariably refer to MRS WRIGHT, with a negative reading)  
     SHERIFF: Oh no, what would 'she **know** about pleas?  
     MRS HALE: it looks as if she didn't **know what she was doing**  
     MRS HALE: what did she **know** about anything?

#### 3.4 1/3pl KNOW

- 3.4.1 play - **we** is used **inclusively** to mean “MRS HALE+MRS PETERS”

- (10a) all 3 occurrences are:

“we don't know” (all with MRS PETERS)

3.4.2 film - **more varied**: “we do know”, “we don't know”, “they know”, “they don't know”(10b) *we* is used inclusively (we = MRS PETERS+MRS HALE)

MRS PETERS            We don't **know** that  
 MRS HALE            Not any more than we **know** she did anything

(10c) emphatic *we* is used exclusively (we = MRS HALE+other farmer's wives)

MRS HALE            But we do **know** about living...

(10d) *they* always refers to “male”

MRS PETERS            They **know** about these things.  
 MRS HALE            I can tell you a lot of things they don't **know** anything about.

4 *they was* versus *they were*

(11a) indefinite referent (generic use of THEY)

MRS HALE:            “Well, I guess John Wright didn't wake when **they was** slipping that rope under his neck.”  
 MRS PETERS:        “She said she wanted **an apron**. (...) She said **they was** in the top drawer in this cupboard.”  
 MRS PETERS:        “If **they hadn't** held me back I would have”  
 MRS PETERS:        “Not till **they brought** her yesterday.”

(11b) definite referent (specific use of THEY)

MRS HALE:            “Wonder how **they are** finding things upstairs. ”  
 MRS HALE:            “I wish if **they're** going to find any evidence they'd be about it.”  
 MRS PETERS:        “**They say** it was such a—funny way to kill a man, rigging it all up like that.”  
 MRS PETERS:        “Of course **they've** got awful important things on their minds.”  
 MRS PETERS:        “**They're** superstitious, you know. **They leave**.”  
 SHERIFF:            “**They wonder** if she was going to quilt it or just knot it!”  
 CO ATTRN:            “ Oh, I guess **they're** not very dangerous things the ladies have picked out.”  
  
 HALE:                “I knew **they must** be up, it was past eight o'clock.”  
 CO ATTRN:            “You mean that **they didn't** get on very well?”  
 MRS HALE:            “Men's hands aren't always as clean as **they might** be.”  
 MRS HALE:            “I wish if they're going to find any evidence **they'd** be about it.”  
 MRS HALE:            “How soon do you suppose **they'll** be through, looking for the evidence?”  
 MRS HALE:            “Maybe **they would**—maybe **they wouldn't**.”  
 MRS PETERS:        “**They may** be through sooner than we think”  
 MRS PETERS:        “*Wouldn't they* just laugh!”  
 MRS PETERS:        “*wouldn't they* laugh!”

(11c) problem case:

MRS PETERS:        “Not to know him; I've seen him in town. **They say** he was a good man.”

## 5 The construction of persuasion in discourse

### 5.1 In the play

MRS PETERS is in “discovery mode”, MRS HALE is “in the know”

**turn** = enter men saying they've established it was their own rope

*before the turn:*

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| MRS PETERS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-talks about her <i>recent</i> interaction with Mrs Wright &gt; makes observations</li> <li>-makes frequent references to the law</li> </ul>  |
| MRS HALE   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-starts to call into memory personal memories (her sewing when tired)</li> <li>-uses her life experience on farm and on knowing John Wright (in interaction with the COUNTY ATTORNEY and then with MRS PETERS)</li> <li>-probes MRS PETERS' stand on the murder</li> <li>-recalls <i>distant</i> memories (cherry picking, her sister, Mrs Wright in young life)</li> <li>-begins to make observations on location</li> </ul> |

*climax in the plot:*

- MRS HALE makes a discovery: finds box and the bird
- MRS PETERS pronounces the diagnosis

*after the turn:*

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| MRS PETERS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-remembers her kitten in her childhood</li> <li>-insists on not knowing who killed the bird/the man</li> <li>-stillness &gt; personal memory of the death of her baby when in Dakota</li> <li>-makes a tentative reference to law having to punish crime</li> <li>-deflects: the men would laugh</li> </ul>   |
| MRS HALE   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-continues to talk about farm life and John Wright</li> <li>-projects herself in Mrs Wright's position</li> <li>-picks up her own analogy between Mrs Wright and the bird               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; birdsong &gt; bird killed = stillness</li> </ul> </li> <li>-pronounces the analogy [his neck] [choked the life out of him]</li> <li>-reaches back to her shared adolescence with Mrs Wright               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; reaches back to the fruit preserves</li> </ul> </li> <li>-pronounces a validatory verdict: “knot it”</li> </ul> |

## 5.2 Strategy in the film adaptation

MRS PETERS

- does not give personal memories
- does not refer explicitly to the law and punishment but to morality (she uses “wrong”, “it’s not for us to decide how important it is”, “we have no right to do that at all”, “I got to tell them”, “I can’t lie to Mr Peters”)
- her first (and only?) initiative is “to take the quilt to her”
  - > which leads to MRS HALE’s discovery of the bird

MRS HALE

- is matter-of-fact
- in the action (she reminds MRS PETERS to wrap things up, which she does not do until the end, she looks for the preserves, she pulls out a stitch or two, “We can hide it”)
- is self-reflexive (personal memories, with Mrs Wright and of Mr Wright) (“I sometimes sew all wrong when I’m just tired”)
- projects herself in Mrs Wright’s position

TURN = scene with men trying to imitate the murder upstairs and they haven’t found signs of anger around here

after the turn:

the oppositions/contrasts:

- what was wrong or right?
- the exchange about the excuse (MRS HALE remembers how things were)
- MRS HALE makes a contrast between the case at hand and her crime (=not coming to Mrs Wright’s rescue)
- living in the heart of town and living on a farm like this
- having to lie versus keeping quiet
- “I wasn’t even thinking about you” - “Then start thinking about me”

MRS PETERS pronounces the “decision” (=“she was going to knot it”)

## The film conversations

MRS PETERS asks MRS HALE if she thinks Mrs Wright did it  
 “No”

MRS HALE “It’s wrong to come here and try to turn her whole house against her”  
 MRS PETERS does not reply!!

MRS PETERS Oh, she was piecing a quilt  
 MRS HALE Oh, Mary, look at that sewing!  
 MRS PETERS Sarah, what are you doing?  
 MRS HALE Nothing, just pulling out a stitch or two that isn’t sewed very good  
 MRS PETERS We have no right to do that, no right at all  
 MRS HALE Nonsense  
 MRS PETERS Sarah, I have to tell the sheriff, I’ll just have to  
 MRS HALE Nothing to tell, about sewing that isn’t there  
 MRS PETERS You shouldn’t touch that

MRS HALE Nonsense, I sometimes sew all wrong when I’m just tired  
 MRS HALE reminds MRS PETERS to wrap things up  
 MRS HALE I expect you’d find [paper and string] in that cupboard

MRS PETERS Did she have a bird?  
 MRS HALE: Why, I don't know, I've not been out here for so long. There was a man around last year selling canaries cheap, but I don't know as she got one; maybe she did. She used to sing real pretty herself  
 MRS PETERS Somebody must have been real rough with it  
 MRS HALE understands the connection > she projects herself into what it must have been like living on the farm with a man like John Wright (sort of deflection)  
 MRS PETERS suggests taking to quilt to her, MRS HALE acquiesces > she discovers the box and the bird in it  
 MRS PETERS Somebody wrung its neck  
 > they understand

TURN scene with men trying to imitate the murder upstairs and they haven’t found signs of anger around here

MRS HALE in a hurry “It’s a real pretty pattern, don’t you think so, Mary?”  
 “I wonder, was she going to quilt it or just knot it?”  
 SHERIFF they wonder if she was gonna quilt it or knot it

MRS PETERS Sarah, I got to tell him  
 MRS HALE Oh, no, you know what they'd say, don't you?  
 MRS PETERS I know... He killed her bird, that's what made her angry, that's the motive they're looking for.  
 MRS HALE And you’re going to give it to them?  
 MRS PETERS What else can we do?  
 MRS HALE We can hide it. I'll just put it in my bag and I need never know a thing about it.  
 MRS PETERS Sarah, that’s wrong, terribly wrong  
 MRS HALE Was it right for him to kill her bird?  
 MRS PETERS We don't know that, why you don't even know that he did it  
 MRS HALE No, I don't...Not any more than we know ‘she did anything either. So we don’t need to say a thing about it



MRS PETERS They know about these things.

MRS HALE I can tell you a lot of things they don't know anything about.

MRS PETERS but it was a bird, not a human being

MRS HALE Maybe it meant more than any other human being to Millie

MRS PETERS but it's wrong to kill somebody for a bird

MRS HALE Oh, that wasn't why... You never knew her when she was a girl

MRS HALE She was seventeen years old, what did she know about anything?

MRS HALE Who said anything about an excuse? I was just telling you about the way it was

the contrast between living right in the heart of town as opposed to living on a farm

MRS HALE But we do know about living for twenty years out on a farm like this

MRS HALE ...and you never really can, you know?

MRS PETERS I never heard that Mr Wright was really a bad man

MRS HALE Depends on what you call bad. You never knew him, did you?

MRS PETERS not to say know, I've seen him in town

MRS HALE I should have come, because I knew... There's a crime for you! A real crime! Who's gonna punish me?

MRS PETERS I didn't mean to reproach you, Sarah

> MRS PETERS I can't lie to MR Peters

MRS HALE You don't have to lie, just have to keep quiet

MRS PETERS I'm sorry, Sarah, don't blame me too much

MRS HALE I'm not blaming you, you have to do, what you have to do, I guess

goes on to evoke the jars of fruit preserve

MRS PETERS Then start thinking about me a little

ENTER men

SHERIFF reproaches the ladies for not having wrapped things for Mrs Wright

CO ATTRN Well, ladies, what did you decide?

MRS PETERS We decided she was going to knot it

## 5.1.1 MRS PETERS builds her strategy, until the turn,

(12a) on her memories of her *recent* interaction with Mrs Wright and *on-location* observations:

- MRS PETERS to MRS HALE “Oh, her fruit; it did freeze”  
[1<sup>st</sup> observation and 1<sup>st</sup> memory: justification for bringing it up]  
> this refers backwards in time, to move the plot forwards
- MRS PETERS “She had bread set”  
[2<sup>nd</sup> observation: discovery]  
> this leads to the next topic
- MRS PETERS “She said she wanted an apron”  
[2<sup>nd</sup> memory; becomes matter of fact, uneasy in the house]  
> this refers backwards in time, to move the plot forwards
- MRS PETERS “what was needed for the case was a motive”  
[3<sup>rd</sup> memory, in combination with the other aspect of her argumentation strategy]  
>
- MRS PETERS “She was piecing a quilt”  
[3<sup>rd</sup> observation]  
> move the plot forwards
- MRS PETERS I sometimes sew awful queer when I'm just tired  
[1<sup>st</sup> time she evokes own memory]  
> but then goes on to pick up where she'd left off: wrapping things up
- MRS PETERS remembers Mrs Wright was afraid of cats  
[4<sup>th</sup> memory]

(12b) and to refer to the world of law, always implying an *authority*

- MRS PETERS “Of course it's no more than their duty”  
MRS PETERS “what was needed for the case was a motive”  
MRS PETERS “The law is the law”  
MRS PETERS “Of course they've got awful important things on their minds”  
MRS PETERS “I don't think we ought to touch things”  
**MRS PETERS pronounces the diagnosis**  
MRS PETERS “The law has to punish crime”

## 5.1.2 MRS HALE builds her strategy, until the turn,

(13a) on her *personal* experience (both on a farm and of John Wright)

- MRS HALE farmers' wives always have their hands full  
MRS HALE a lot to do on a farm  
MRS HALE not a cheerful place  
MRS HALE: “Well, I don't know as Wright had [the housemaking instinct], either.”  
MRS HALE: “No, I don't mean anything. But I don't think a place'd be any cheerfuller for John Wright's being in it.”

MRS HALE bread (=farm activity)  
 > reminds her of the fruit preserves introduced by MRS PETERS  
 > picks up her line of argumentation which sets her on a train of thoughts on her own experience of last summer's cherries  
 MRS HALE Maybe the cat got it

(13b) on *probing* MRS PETERS' stance (often by asking questions)

MRS HALE "I'd hate to have men coming into my kitchen, snooping around and criticising"  
 MRS HALE "Do you think she did it?"  
 <asking for information, but she might also be asking for confirmation for what she thinks and what she formulates a turn later: "I don't think she did.">  
 MRS HALE "What do you suppose she was so nervous about?"

(13c) but then starts making *on-site* observations too (and making discoveries)

MRS HALE "Look at the sewing" > pulls at a knot  
 MRS HALE "Look at its neck"  
**MRS HALE finds box and the bird**

(13d) and recalling her *distant* memories (often in connection with Mrs Wright)

MRS HALE evokes her own sister  
 MRS HALE "I wish I had come over sometimes" > "Did you know John Wright?"

MRS PETERS to MRS HALE “Oh, her fruit; it did freeze”

[1st observation: she explains her reason for introducing the topic=justification for bringing it up]

> SHERIFF, HALE “women are used to worrying over trifles”

MRS PETERS                      She had bread set

[2nd observation: discovery]

MRS HALE bread (=farm activity) reminds her of the fruit preserves > picks up her line which sends her down a train of thoughts on her own experience of last summer’s cherries

CO ATTRN to ladies not much of a housekeeper

MRS HALE a lot to do on a farm

CO ATTRN remark on roller towel

MRS HALE

CO ATTRN neighbours

MRS HALE farmers' wives always have their hands full

not a cheerful place

CO ATTRN lacked homemaking instinct

MRS HALE: Well, I don't know as Wright had, either.

CO ATTRN: You mean that they didn't get on very well?

MRS HALE: No, I don't mean anything. But I don't think a place'd be any cheerfuller for John Wright's being in it.

CO ATTRN avoids discussion of the topic

MRS HALE I'd hate to have men coming into my kitchen, snooping around and criticising

MRS PETERS Of course it's no more than their duty

MRS PETERS She had bread set (2nd observation: discovery)

MRS HALE bread (=farm activity) reminds her of the fruit preserves > picks up her line which sends her down a train of thoughts on her own experience of last summer’s cherries

MRS PETERS <returns to her memory of having to get things ready>

MRS HALE <continues her train of thought about her experience of John Wright>

MRS PETERS She said she wanted an apron

<becomes matter of fact, uneasy in the house>

MRS HALE Do you think she did it?

<asking for information, but she might also be asking for confirmation for what she thinks and what she formulates a turn later: I don't think she did.>

MRS PETERS what was needed for the case was a motive

MRS PETERS The law is the law

MRS PETERS “She was piecing a quilt”

MRS PETERS Of course they've got awful important things on their minds

MRS HALE look at the sewing > pulls at a knot

MRS PETERS I don't think we ought to touch things

MRS HALE what do you suppose she was so nervous about?

MRS PETERS I sometimes sew awful queer when I'm just tired

> she goes on to pick up where she'd left off: wrapping things up

She finds birdcage

MRS HALE the cat got it

Sends MRS PETERS to remember Mrs Wright was afraid of cats

MRS HALE evokes her own sister

I don't like this place

I wish I had come over sometimes > did you know John Wright?

MRS HALE comes back to the bird, analogy btw Mrs Wright and the bird

> comes back to the quilt

MRS PETERS picks up this argument and MRS HALE finds box and the bird and is shocked by its neck but it's MRS PETERS that pronounces the diagnosis

Turn= enter men saying they've established it was their own rope

MRS HALE goes on with personal approach

MRS PETERS her kitten > I would have hurt him

MRS HALE projects herself in Mrs Wright's position (isolation)

He killed her singing too

MRS PETERS we don't know who killed the bird

MRS HALE I knew John Wright

[his neck] [choked the life out of him]

MRS PETERS we don't know who killed him <as if to reassure herself in her understanding of what might have happened>

MRS HALE goes on with the bird and how it could change things > still

MRS PETERS I know what stillness is -her baby that died

MRS HALE changes the topic to come back to the evidence

MRS PETERS the law has to punish crime

MRS HALE reaches back to their shared adolescence > reaches back to the fruit preserves

MRS PETERS deflects: the men would laugh

ATTRN: "she was not going to quilt it"

40 occurrences in the play (+1 elliptical with HALE):

CO ATTRN	= 4	4 affirmative (you know juries)
HALE	= 8 (+1)	(including one for MRS WRIGHT and HARRIS)
		3 affirmative (in his own speech)(including 1 solidarity reading?)
		5 negative but virtually all attributed to other speakers and to the interaction with MRS WRIGHT: MRS WRIGHT, HARRY
		1 negative (elliptical) referring to CO ATTRN
SHERIFF	= 4	3 affirmative (you know Frank) + 1 discourse marker “you know”
MRS HALE	= 11	7 negative (+1 you know)
		> I knew John Wright (2x)
		> I might have known she needed help
		> I know how things are for women
MRS PETERS	= 12	8 negative (+1 you know)
		> I know what stillness is

## ANNEXES

### 1 Exhaustive list of occurrences of “know” in *Trifles*

SHERIFF: (...) and you **know Frank**.

SHERIFF: (...) I want you **to know I had my hands full yesterday. I knew you could get back from Omaha by today** and as long as I went over everything here myself—

HALE: (...) I guess you **know about how much he talked himself**; but I thought maybe if I went to the house and talked about it before his wife, though I said to Harry that I didn't **know as what his wife wanted made much difference to John**—

HALE: (...) I **knew they must be up**, it was past eight o'clock.

HALE: Well, as if she didn't **know what she was going to do next**.

HALE: (...) 'Why—where is he?' says I, not **knowing what to say**.

HALE: (...) 'I don't **know**', she says. 'You don't **know**?' says Harry.

CO ATTRN: And what did Mrs Wright do when she **knew that you had gone for the coroner**?

HALE: ...and then she stopped and looked at me—scared, (<stage directions>) I **dunno**, maybe it wasn't scared. I wouldn't like to say it was.

HALE: (...) Soon Harry got back, and then Dr Lloyd came, and you, Mr Peters, and so I guess that's all I **know that you don't**.

CO ATTRN: (...) I **know there are some Dickson county farmhouses** which do not have such roller towels.

MRS HALE: Well, I **don't know as Wright had**, either.

SHERIFF: (...) She was to take in some clothes for her, you **know**, and a few little things.

MRS PETERS: (...) Funny thing to want, for there isn't much to get you dirty in jail, goodness **knows**.

MRS PETERS: (*in a frightened voice*) Oh, I don't **know**.

MRS HALE: (...) Wonder how they are finding things upstairs. I hope she had it a little more red-up up there. You **know**, it seems kind of sneaking. Locking her up in town and then coming out here and trying to get her own house to turn against her!

MRS HALE: (*resentfully*) I don't **know as there's anything so strange**, our takin' up our time with little things while we're waiting for them to get the evidence.

MRS HALE: (...) Why, it looks as if she didn't **know what she was about**!

MRS PETERS: Oh—I don't **know**. I don't **know as she was nervous**.

MRS HALE: Why, I don't **know whether she did or not**—I've not been here for so long. There was a man around last year selling canaries cheap, but I don't **know as she took one**; maybe she did. She used to sing real pretty herself.

MRS HALE: I **dunno** what it is, but it's a lonesome place and always was.

MRS HALE: (...) Did you **know John Wright**, Mrs Peters?

MRS PETERS: Not to **know him**; I've seen him in town. They say he was a good man.

MRS PETERS: I don't **know**, unless it got sick and died.

MRS HALE: (...) You didn't **know—her**?

MRS PETERS: Well, not now. They're superstitious, you **know**. They leave.

CO ATTRN: It would have to have been someone who **knew just the—**

MRS PETERS: (*moving uneasily*) We don't **know who killed the bird**.

MRS HALE: I **knew John Wright**.

MRS PETERS: (*with rising voice*) We don't **know who killed him**. We don't **know**.

MRS PETERS: (*something within her speaking*) I **know what stillness is**.

MRS PETERS: I **know what stillness is**.

MRS HALE: I might have **known she needed help**! I **know how things can be**—for women.

MRS HALE: (...) She—she may never **know whether it was broke or not**.  
 CO ATTRN: But you **know juries** when it comes to women.

*similar verbs*

MRS HALE: That's just what Mr Hale said. There was a gun in the house. He says that's what he can't **understand**.

HALE: We must 'a looked as if we didn't **see** how that could be, for after a minute she said, 'I sleep sound'.

CO ATTRN: Ah, loyal to your sex, I **see**. But you and Mrs Wright were neighbors. I suppose you were friends, too.

MRS HALE: **I don't see as it's anything to laugh about.**

MRS HALE: I wish I had come over to see Minnie Foster sometimes. I can **see** now—

MRS PETERS: Well, you mustn't reproach yourself, Mrs Hale. Somehow we just don't **see** how it is with other folks until—something comes up.

MRS HALE: I declare I **believe** that's the only one.

## 2 Occurrences of “know” in the film adaptation

HALE What happened?



MRS WRIGHT I don't **know**  
 HALE You don't **know**?  
 MRS WRIGHT I don't **know** what happened.  
 HALE You must **know**, you were here.

MRS HALE I've **known** Millie since we were children together

MRS HALE Why did you marry him?  
 MRS WRIGHT I don't **know**.

CO ATTRN  
 SHERIFF Oh no, what would 'she **know** about pleas?  
 SHERIFF Well, you lawyers **know** more about these things than I do  
 SHERIFF Maybe, but I'd still like to **know** how

MRS PETERS I **know** it's silly of me, but I 'would like company

MRS PETERS It's not that  
 CO ATTRN I **know**, I **know**

MRS HALE: (...) Why, it looks as if she didn't **know what she was doing**

MRS PETERS Did she have a bird?  
 MRS HALE: Why, I don't **know**, I've not been out here for so long. There was a man  
 around last year selling canaries cheap, but I don't **know as she got one**; maybe she did.

MRS PETERS Sarah, I got to tell him  
 MRS HALE Oh, no, you **know** what they'd say, don't you?  
 MRS PETERS I **know**... He killed her bird, that's what made her angry, that's the motive  
 they're looking for.

MRS HALE I'll just put it in my bag and I need never **know** a thing about it

MRS PETERS We don't **know** that, why you don't even **know** that he did it  
 MRS HALE No, I **don't**...Not any more than we **know** she did anything  
 MRS PETERS They **know** about these things.  
 MRS HALE I can tell you a lot of things they don't **know** anything about.  
 MRS HALE You never **knew** her when she was a girl  
 MRS HALE She was seventeen years old, what did she **know** about anything?  
 MRS HALE But we do **know** about living for twenty years out on a farm like this  
 MRS HALE ...and you never really can, you **know**?  
 MRS HALE Depends on what you call bad. You never **knew** him, did you?  
 MRS PETERS not to say **know**, I've seen him in town  
 MRS HALE I should have come, because I **knew**... There's a crime for you!

ATTRN I don't understand it

### 3 Occurrences of IF in the play

*as if*

HALE

We must 'a looked **as if** we didn't see how that could be

as if she didn't know what she was going to do next.  
 We must 'a looked **as if** we didn't see how that could be  
**so** I said I had come in to see **if** John wanted to put in a telephone  
 MRS HALE it looks **as if** she didn't know what she was about!  
 MRS HALE Looks **as if** someone must have been rough with it  
 MRS PETERS **As if** that could have anything to do with—with—wouldn't they *laugh*!

*if*-conditional

MRS HALE **If** I was you, I *wouldn't* tell her her fruit was gone.  
 ATTRN **If** there was some definite thing.  
 MRS HALE I wish **[[if]** they're going to find any evidence] they'd be about it].  
 HALE I *thought* maybe **if** I went to the house  
 MRS HALE **If** there'd been years and years of nothing, then a bird to sing to you, it would be awful—still, after the bird was still.  
 MRS HALE **If** I was you, I wouldn't tell her her fruit was gone.  
 CO ATTRN **If** there was some definite thing. Something to show—something to make a story about—

*if*-complementation

HALE I'm going to see **if** I can't get John Wright to go in with me on a party telephone  
 HALE I thought maybe **if** I went to the house and talked about it before his wife  
 MRS HALE I wonder **if** it's all gone.  
 MRS HALE I wonder **if** she was goin' to quilt it or just knot it?  
 SHERIFF They wonder **if** she was going to quilt it or just knot it!  
 MRS HALE I wish **if** they're going to find any evidence they'd be about it.  
 MRS PETERS I wonder **if** her patches are in here—and her things.  
 MRS PETERS **If** they hadn't held me back I would have—(...)—hurt him.

4 **that**-clauses

complementing SAY, KNOW, MEAN, BE CONVINCED, etc, introducing a clause:

HALE: "...though I **said** to Harry *that* [I didn't know as what his wife wanted made much difference to John]"  
 HALE: "I **got a feeling** *that* [I ought to make some conversation]"  
 CO ATTRN: "And what did Mrs Wright do when she **knew** *that* [you had gone for the coroner]?"  
 CO ATTRN: "You're **convinced** *that* [there was nothing important here—nothing that would point to any motive]."  
 CO ATTRN: "You **mean** *that* [they didn't get on very well]?"  
 CO ATTRN: "I'm **not satisfied** *that* [we can't do better]."  
 CO ATTRN: "...at least we **found out** *that* [she was not going to quilt it]."  
 MRS PETERS: "Mr Henderson **said** coming out *that* [what was needed for the case was a motive; something to show anger, or—sudden feeling]."

in film MRS PETERS: you don't even **know** [*that* he did it]  
 MRS HALE: Not any more than we **know** [ $\emptyset$  she did anything]

*as* used in other structures:

ATTRN: Are things just **as** you left them yesterday?  
 HALE: We came along the road from my place and **as** I got here I said...  
 HALE: **as if** she didn't know what she was going to do next  
 HALE: so Harry went fast **as** he could to Rivers' place  
 MRS HALE: Men's hands aren't always **as** clean **as** they might be.  
 MRS HALE: he didn't drink, and kept his word **as** well **as** most