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# From Stage to Page: Susan Glaspell's Re-imagining of her play *Chains of Dew* as the novel *Ambrose Holt and Family*

Cheryl Black\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Missouri – United States

## Abstract

Among writers of her era committed to transgressing genre boundaries, aesthetic cross-fertilization, and artistic syntheses of all kinds, Susan Glaspell stands out as perhaps the quintessential trans-literary dramatist of her era. She began her literary career as a journalist, published over fifty short stories in popular magazines, nine novels, fourteen plays, and a genre-blurring memoir/biography (*The Road to the Temple*). Passionately committed to the belief that "the arts fertilize each other," Glaspell frequently trans-genred her own works, transforming plays into short stories or novels and short stories or newspaper articles into plays. This paper offers a close, intertextual reading of her play *Chains of Dew* (1922) and her adaptation of it as the novel *Ambrose Holt and Family* (1931), with particular attention to their respective critiques of (both feminine and masculine) gender roles and the relationship between the works and their respective contexts. *Chains of Dew* offers an unsentimental view of marriage and maternity as Dotty, the doll wife (allusions to Ibsen's *Doll House* are many) comes to realize that her poet/banker husband's happiness depends on her remaining a "burden" to him that must be borne with heroic resignation. In the novel, a similarly situated doll wife, "Blossom," lives a similarly discontented life with her poet/businessman husband. The added titular character, her father-in-law Ambrose Holt, is a gender outlaw, a man who shirked his "masculine" responsibility to provide for his family, deserting his wife and son when Blossom's husband Lincoln was a child.

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\*Speaker