

## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS

In analyzing Babbit, the important purpose is to describe the middle class life and to discover what factors of the middle class' life which is criticized. Here, the middle class is represented by George F. Babbitt, the main character. This analysis is also to prove that the sociological theories about middle class are found in the novel.

#### A. Analysis as seen from the plot

The exposition of the story begins with the description of one morning in Zenith at Babbit's modern house. As usual Babbitt awakes with unhappy feeling, for he has inner conflict about his dream. He is always busy with his morning activity. Preparing his clothes with his wife, Myra, then having breakfast with his children, Verona, aged 22, Ted-Theodore Roosevelt Babbitt, aged 17, and Tinka-Katherine Aged 10. Then

Babbitt drives to work. In the afternoon Babbitt has a luncheon date with his closest friend, Paul Riestling, in Zenith Athletic club. There he meets several of his friend. After lunch Babbitt returns to work and takes a prospective customer out to see a property. He returns home after work for dinner.

Two great events take place for babbitt in the spring of 1920. In the first place, Babbitt is able secretly to purchase several real-estate options for himself and the company executives before the street Traction Company publicly announces its plans to extend a certain street-car line. This deal is sure to bring in a big profit. The other event is a formal dinner which Mr. and Mrs. Babbitt decide to give. They invite their friends, and Babbitt has always enjoyed being a host, and when everyone has gone, Myra proudly beams with pleasure and starts chattering about what a success party and how well everything went.

Babbitt and his wife visit Riesling next evening in their modern apartment. Then he decides to go to Maine with Paul for their relaxation. They begin their journey by boarding

the new york express. After two more weeks they prepare to return to Zenith. Babbitt decides to expand his recreational activities. However, he is unable to spare the time for this.

As a member of the state association of real estate boards, Babbitt is selected to be one of the Zenith's Official delegation on The annual convention of the organization in Monarch. Babbitt has to make a long speech then he has become one of the most popular and well known figures at the convention.

In the autumn, election time comes once again. Babbitt volunteers his services as an orator of the Prout's campaign. Although Babbitt is a prominent citizen, he is not fully satisfied, for he has not been invited to join exclusive club in Zenith. He also looks forward to his university class dinner since he will then have an opportunity to mingle with such Zenith aristocrats as Charlie McKelvey and Irving Tate. Early in December the Babbitts ask the McKelveys to dinner. But unfortunately it was a failed dinner. Babbitt dissapointed that he is not accepted by McKelvey and their circle. Babbitt is asked to form a committe to devise ways to

enlarge the Sunday school, he is agreed to help. One afternoon, there is a committee meeting in the Eathorne mansion. Babbitt suggests his idea for school improvement and it is accepted by the committee. Babbitt, is scandalized to discover that his son and the adolescent friend drink and smoke, and behave in what he feels is an unhealthy adult manner. Babbitt's family problem increases when Myra's parents sell their house and move to downtown hotel so he has to spend a dull evening every week for they are lonely. His mother and his half brother also visit to their home and stay for nearly a month. Babbitt is ill for a while in February and enjoys the solitude and attention of being in a sick bed. He reviews his affairs while recovering, but as soon as he well again, he returns to the old routine.

In June when Mrs. Babbitt and Tinka go east to visit relatives. He is free for a while, but this does not make him any more comfortable. It is the rising action of the story when he decides to make a rebellion and will do only that which he really wants to do. One day he meets Tanis Judique, a very chic and sophisticated woman of Babbitt's age. He interests in her, so

does he interests in Ida Putiak, one of the manicurists in Babbitt's barber shop. In August Myra comes back to Zenith. Babbitt has not missed her, eventhough he acts to seem enthusiastic about his wife return. Then Babbitt decides to spend his vacation alone in Maine Woods, but he tells his wife that he is going to New York on a bussiness trip. On the train for home, he encounters Seneca Doane, an attorney. The speak together and Babbitt surprised to discover that Doane is not the revolutionary monster that he is portrayed as by the conservative bussinessman of Zenith.

Late in September a major strike takes place in Zenith. All of Babbitt's friends and associates angrily oppose the workers. But Babbitt speaks out in behalf on objective evaluation of the issues. His friends are worry about him and fear that he becomes a radical.

One afternoon Tanis Judique calls him and it continues with making a relationship between them. He compare his wife and Tanis, and he found his wife comes out second best. Be becomes bores of her. Moreover he bores with his friends and try to fiend a new society. Babbitt rela-

tionship with Tanis soon becomes the subject of whispered gossip and public scandal. Meanwhile he refuses to be The Good Citizen League's member. He faced with serious problem of being good husband and still keeping his ties with Tanis and her friends. Nevertheless Babbitt's relationship with his wife become worse. But finally he realizes that Myra is far more decent and honest person than any member of the bunch and he finds that his relationship with tanis is something foolish. He sees no point to continue their relationship.

The crisis happens because his relationship with his wife become worse and another conflict is come, He got an ultimatum from the Good Citizen league. He refuses the ultimatum and soon he got the consequences of his refusal. Babbitt feel defeated in all areas. In confusion he tries to see Tanis, but she is cold and unfriendly. His wife does not fully understand the situation and cannot help him. He becomes more fearfull.

The climax happens on one night, Babbitt lies awake, bemoaning his fate. He chastizes himself for having lost tanis and is sorry that

his relationship with his wife is such a poor one. He recognizes that he and Myra have no chance for a reconciliation unless he ends his rebellion against conformity, but his pride will not allow him to be bullied into changing his views.

As the falling action, his wife abdominal pains makes him know that they are well suited to be husband and wife and highly dependent on each other. For Babbitt surprises, his old friends behave friendly and they are concerned about Myra and visit her in hospital. Babbitt soon have his friend back and makes an active part of The Good Citizen league activity. Everything returns to normal. It is the suspense of this story.

At denouement of the story, he advices Ted, to do what really he wants. He has to ignore the opposition of the relatives and to live his life as he thinks best. The most important thing, he must be unaffraid of the convention and influences of the outside world and to do what one sees as the right course for himself. Babbitt says he is sorry for learned this lesson so late in his own life.

The plot gives information about what usually happens in middle class life. All of the events shows the middle class life and how they spend their life. Babbit, as a person who awares about his class, faces some conflicts which were commonly undergone by middle class people. He has inner conflict because he is a tired bussinesman. He also has conflict with people around him, his family, his friends, and his his busines relations.

The description of middle class life through the plot in this story is close to reality since it imitates the real life. They tend to shows happy marriage life, although they have bad condition of their marriage. Babbitt pretends to be a good husband , in order not to make a problem. Instead of his marriage life, he makes an affair with another woman, but of course with his guilty feeling to his wife. He considers that he makes a little lie to his wife.

His predominant fear-not from any especial fondness for her but from the habit of propriety-was that his wife would learn the affair. He was certain that she knew noth-



ing specific about Tanis, but he was also certain that she suspected something indefinite. (p.266)

The author also criticize the christianity of American middle class. They are christian, but they don't have enough understanding about the religion. They believe partly in god and partly to their efforts to get money. They become members of church which is, again, related with their prestige. The contrast between theory and practice in life of the clergyman and the church members. A fine church building does not guarantee the quality of its members. A well known priest with his powerful sermons does not determine the genuine of charities life. The teaching of christianity is blurred by materialism. It refers to the status of its members. Here, Babbitt's church is references to its members. Babbitt gets an advantage by being a member of committee to devise ways to enlarge the sunday school. He takes profit from it by making a private loan from Eathorne's bank, his new friend of the committee, in order to finance a dishonest and clandestine real estate deal he is involved in. Babbitt's main

idea about religion is primitive and hazy; he believes in a supreme being who has created man and who tried to make him perfect, but somehow failed, he believes that good men will go to a very plush and comfortable heaven after death, and that bad ones will go to hell. He is sure that he is one of the good men. Besides, it is good for business if prospective customers see that one is an active church goer.

Sinclair Lewis primarily satired on business commercial culture because America was essentially a business country, since business was the most powerful and pervasive interest in American life. (Hofstadter, 1963:63)

Therefore business man become prominent figure, particularly if they enter politics or public administration. business appreciate by people whose life for the material success. It is to gain wealth. Success is usually measured in term of wealth and material possession which give a person power, prestige, and security.

(Biezans, 1960: 74 )

In Babbitt, businessman are portrayed as philistines and ruthless exploiters as well. They compete with each other to have after the wealth

as a way to happiness. The stiff competition makes they ignore the bussiness ethics and justify any device such as doublecross, etc to gain more profit. In Zenith, unfair competition is usual since money is the main purpose in bussiness.

The motivation of the bussinessman are money, power, and prestige. They have kept it in their mind. They might speak about politic, but it can not be denied that they do it because it will give advantage for them, as Babbit do in Prout's champaign. When Prout is elected, Babbitt is rewarded for his champaign work by being given secret advance information about the extension of a paved highway in the city. This will be great value to him in the real estate bussiness.

The author also shows the moral decay of the middle class. It is described when they drunk after the business annual convention ends. They behave as if they have little self-control. They speak roughly and do what they can not do at home.

They called for drinks till the manager insisted that the place was closed. All the

while Babbitt felt a hot raw desire for  
more brutal amusements. (144)

Another middle class' moral decay is in slightly dishonest real estate deal. As it is described in Babbitt's personality that he is a successful businessman, but unfortunately he is ignorant of the most elementary and important matters pertinent to real estate, such as the principles of scientific sanitation, the nature of adequate educational facilities, and fire service. Babbitt is aware of the need of these things, but he has never bothered to investigate them carefully.

#### B. Analysis as seen from Babbitt's character

The physical characteristics of Babbitt is described by the author in chapter one of the novel.

His large head was pink, his brown hair thin and dry. His face was babyish in slumber, despite his wrinkles and the red spectacle-dents on the slopes of his nose.

He was not fat but he was exceedingly well fed; his cheeks were pads, and the unroughened hand which lay helpless upon the khaki colored blanket was slightly puffy.  
( p. 6 )

He is 46 years old and a kind of unromantic person. As a successful businessman from upper-middle class in society, so he always put on his best appearance. It seems that he is conscious with his class. He is proud to be a prominent citizen and he wants to be a perfect one.

Babbitt's spectacles had huge, circular, frameless lenses of a very best glass; the ear pieces were thin bars of gold. In them he was the modern businessman; one who gave orders to clerks and drove a car and played occasional golf and was scholarly in regard to salesmanship. The gray suit was well cut, well made and completely undistinguished. It was a standard suit.

He loves his family, but sometimes he disliked his family situation and he disliked himself for disliking them. He tries to give the best to his wife and his children. He feels tired about his

family, for they always depends on him. He gets tired about his family'problem as well as his bussiness affairs. Eventhough, he is a kind of hard worker, that's why know he stands in middle class level in society.

When I was a young man, I made up my mind what I wanted to do, and stuck to it trough thick and thin, and that's why I'm where I am today.

while he read law he worked as a real estate salesman. He saved money, lived in a boarding house, supped on poached egg on hash. (p.75)

Babbitt is a succesful real estate broker because he is reasonably honest and depenable, has a good sales personality, and is diligent. He understands real-estate values and he is not above making a slightly shady deal once in a while, if it is profitable and has and air of respectability. As the result, Babbitt firm is one of the most prosperous in Zenith.

Babbitt is a highly virtuous man. He advocates and praises the wisdom of many laws, although he does not always observe them. He is a regular contributor to his church although he

is the sort of man who never bothers to think much about religion. He is a member of one Zenith's largest and richest churches-Chatham Road Presbyterian.

He has serious problem with the cigar. He tends to stop it, but he can not do it at all, for he always take it if he gets nervous. His trouble is not only about real-estate business, but also about his wife. He is not happy with his marriage, but he can do nothing to make it better. Later, he decides to make a rebellion. It gives him new understanding about life.

Babbitt is presented as a character with two side of appearance. His inward and outward life is different. In public appearance, he is a prosperous and glamorous bussinesman, but in his personal life, he is an empty and tired businessman.

Babbitt is categorized as round character, because he has developing way of thinking. He learns something from his life which is described along the story. First he is described as a man who suffers from his daily life and then he makes a rebellion but it does not bring him to a better condition. Then he finds what is

important in his life. He changes his opinion about his life and at the end of the story he is happier than in the early on the story.

In this novel he is considered as a stereotype from middle class level because of his wealth, power and prestige portrays the middle class man. He is business' minded like other businessman and he faces problem that usually happen on them.

Babbitt as a person from middle class needs to be accepted as a prominent citizen. He will feel guilty and little absurd if he can not make a close acquaintance with other persons or other social groups. That's why, as the tradition of middle class, he becomes member of some lunch-club. His clubs and associations were food comfortable to his spirit. As a bussinessman in Zenith it was required that he should belong to one, preferably two or three, of the innumeros "lodges" and prosperity-boosting lunch-club. Then he will get many advantages from his membership. It was good for business, since lodge-brothers, friends in club, frequently become customer. Besides he is able to be relax from the tiring business. He can meet with other



people from different professions, such as Colonel, Judge, and Professor. In the club is also necessary for him to make a long talk, especially with his best friend Paul Riesling. Other relaxations he usually does are movie and sport, such as baseball, golf, bridge and motoring. From this activity, the nervousness which accumulates week by week is reduced.

Babbitt feels happy only in his friendship with his closest friend, Paul Riesling. It shows that happiness is not identified by material thing.

### **C. Analisis as seen from the setting**

#### **C.1 Setting of time**

The story happens between April 1920 until September the next year. At that time, due to historical background, America had only recently emerged from its 19th century isolation to become a triumphant victor in World war I. The United states suddenly discovered that it was a major world political power and that its industrial and financial might were unsurpassed. Following the war, a wave of prosperity and self confidence swept the country. Because of this

things, the majority of American people developed an egotistical belief in the superiority of themselves and their institutions. In the 1920's, America was chauvinistic, smug, intolerant, reactionary, and materialistic; it had contempt for anything foreign and, in its search for conformity, distrusted and opposed anything that was unfamiliar or new.

Throughout the 1920s, private business received substantial encouragement, including construction loans, profitable mail carrying contracts, and other indirect subsidies. It is also the time of immigration and urbanisation. It seemed as if prosperity would go on forever, until the great fall of stock market crash in 1929.

## C.2. Setting of place

The place in the story of Babbitt are in The City of Zenith, Babbitt's House, Babbitt's office, and some others places in Zenith.

### The city of Zenith:

Zenith is an imaginary city in America. It is a developing city, where there still the old building and others which are new generation,

such as factories and skyscrapers. It is characterized by business world.

The city was full of grotesqueries, but the clean towers were thrusting them from the business center, and on the farther hills, were shining new houses, homes—they seemed—for laughter and tranquility.

They live in Zenith, the city where is characterized by American commercial culture. They are not native Zenith but they achieve in that city where the business enterprises at this middle level not only thrives but to which it gives the chief cultural characteristic.

#### Babbitt house:

Babbitt house is a Dutch Colonial house in that residential district of Zenith known as Floral Heights. It is a modern and luxury house.

The Babbitt's house was five years old. It was all as competent and glossy as this bedroom. It had the best of taste, the best of inexpensive rugs, a simple and laudable architecture, and the latest conveniences. Throughout, electricity took the place of candles and slattery heart-fires.

There are two generations of buildings in Zenith, and Babbitt's house is a new one. The old buildings are built before 1880.

Babbitt's Office:

Babbitt office in the Reeves building, a modern, downtown skyscraper. It is filled with luxury furniture.

The setting of this story generally depicts a town where the middle class takes big part and controls the role of the town. They become prominent and prosperous citizens. Zenith becomes a place for people to realize their dream since they can achieve their success in the city, just like Babbitt.

The life of middle class level which is represented by Babbitt's life are characterized with the use of finest things and the best qualities of goods. He has all of luxurious things to satisfy and to comfort their life. Besides, the desire of using all expensive things thight to awareness of the class. They need it to support their status.

It delighted him, as always; it was the neat yard of a succesful businessman of

Zenith, that is, it was perfection, and made him also perfect. He regarded the corrugated iron garage. For the three-hundred-and-sixty-fifth time in a year he reflected, "No class to that tin shack. Have to built me a frame garage. But by golly it's the only thing on the place that isn't up-to-date.!" While he stared he thought of a community garage for his acreage development. (p.8)

Sinclair Lewis criticized the luxurious of middle class life by his single sentence: "In fact there was but one nothing wrong with the Babbitt house: It was not a home." (16)

He wrote that those all exclusive things are useless. Nothing of that modern furniture which made Babbit happy.

He hadn't even any satisfaction in the new water cooler! And it was the very best water cooler, up-to-date, scientific, and right-thinking. It had cost a great deal of money (in it self a virtue).

The house, which is in the exclusive area of the town, indicates his position in society. He proud with his home,

so that inviting their relatives to have dinner with them become their prestige. It is their domestic manners. They have their own friend and relatives from the same class and they do not make any close relationship with different class.

"well, you are certainly not that but- Oh, Georgie, you don't suppose we have to invite them to dinner at our house now, do we?".....

But as they never saw the Overbrooks, they forgot them, and after a month or two they said, "That really was the best way, just to let it slide. It wouldn't be kind to them to have them here. They'd feel so out of place and hard-up in our home. (166)

People believes the middle class life is the perfect one, but Sinclair Lewis shows them that middle class life is not satisfied. Maybe they have material succes, but they don't have spiritual life. They lack of some qualities of joy, truth and beautifulnes, since they are obsessed with a love of things. It was their symbol of excellence.

## **CHAPTER IV**

## **CONCLUSION**