

## Chapter V

## CONCLUSION

Literature is the reflection of the author's certain feelings, thoughts and ideas. Through literary works the author can criticize and satirize the life of certain society or about life in general. The literary work can be used as the medium to express the certain thought and idea of the author toward social life.

Sinclair Lewis as one of the greatest American novelists in the twentieth century and the first American who received the Nobel Prize for literature really concerned with many social issues and problems in his own society and his own country. Most of his great novels are dealing with social life. They are talking about the American life.

Lewis' Main Street, which was published in 1920, is the most successful and famous novel. The new but real image of American small town life had been offered in this novel. Lewis brilliantly describes the details of the ugliness of American small town and the provincial type of its society. These are the real image of today's American small town life. Sinclair Lewis really satirized and attacked the true nature of the life of the American small town.

As the kind of the author's expression, Main Street was written in the satirical form. The Lewis' satire can be showed through the aspects in this novel, - such as the town setting, the small town people, the two main characters and the conflicts which build the plot of the story. Those are considered as the main intrinsic aspects of this novel which show the satire of Lewis . There are also some autobiographical elements of Sinclair Lewis, especially in the town setting and in the character of Carol Kennicott, which are reflected in the novel and dominant enough in creating this satirical novel.

The town setting is emphasizing the bad sides of Gopher Prairie, the small town in Minnesota, and its surroundings. This novel mostly tells about the struggle of its leading woman character, Carol Kennicott, against the stuffiness and lack of beauty of life in Gopher Prairie. The town with its main Street is a bare, planless, and unlovely town. Through the eyes of Carol there is nothing which can be seen but the dirt, the mud, the smell the sordidness and the ugliness of Gopher Prairie. This satire reflects the true nature of Sauk Centre, Minnesota, Lewis' birthplace, and the American smalltowns in general.

The description of the small town people in this novel emphasizes the bad characterizations, the bad appearances and the bad habits. It is the description of the self-satisfied and unconformist society. They like to

and are always criticising and making gossips about everything. It is also emphasized the bad ways the town people treat Carol Kennicott, as the newcomer of the town. From the way they behave and socialize, it shows that the people of Gopher Prairie do not have appreciation of the finer things and are not interested in the improvement.

The character of Carol Kennicott in this novel itself is the satire which is created by Sinclair Lewis. It satirizes the women position in society in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Carol is a woman with a rebellious spirit and wants to make some progresses and to reform the whole town. On the other hand, in fact the women position in the time when this novel was written was less important in society than the one today.

Carol Kennicott in many ways is actually Sinclair Lewis himself in feminine guise. The life of Carol is almost like the Lewis' life. From the characterization of Carol it is showed that she has different background of life from the small town people. Being not used to the prairie environment and having a high education in big cities, Carol is always facing problems and conflicts in Gopher Prairie. She has already been depressed with the bad conditions of the small town on her first coming. She, then, always has conflicts in her social life in Gopher Prairie. In spite of their equal education, Carol also has many conflicts with Will Kennicott, her husband,

as the parts of the problems in their married life, since Will himself is the native of Gopher Prairie. Carol's conflicts, both with the people of the town and with her husband, are caused by their differences of point-of-views about life. Since there is no one to blame, the story of this novel is closed with some unfinished conflicts among them. However, most of the conflicts of this story have been solved. There is still the gap between Will Kennicott and Carol, which is wide enough. While the inner conflicts in Carol's mind toward the bad social conditions in Gopher Prairie, which have caused her hatred, have been run out. Her leaving to Washington for a while has given a chance for Carol to think and realize her mistakes in Gopher Prairie. All that they need is the more understanding among them.

In Main Street Sinclair Lewis had inserted some autobiographical elements of him which are not less important than those intrinsic aspects to support and strengthen his satirical purpose through this novel toward the life of American small town and its traditional people in the twenties.



It is the women's study club. According to Vida Sherwin, the *Thanatopsis* is,

"such a cozy group, and yet it puts you in touch with all the intellectual thoughts that are going on everywhere."

(Chapter 11, p. 94)

Carol is invited and voted into the membership of the group. The group is meeting to consider the whole field of English poetry.

Among the people of Gopher Prairie, who have the 'not so good' appearances, attitudes, and behaviours, Carol still can find and meet a few good and kind people. Beside the friendly buddies of Will Kennicott who have welcomed her and her husband at the station when they came to Gopher Prairie, and Vida Sherwin, her closest woman friend, which are mentioned above, in chapter 12 Carol considers that Guy Pollock is the gentlest person - which she has found in town. He speaks of her naturally, holds the chairs for her when they sit down for dinner, and he does not interrupt her when she is talking to him. Then Carol also really finds a kindness in Mrs. Westlake, who is actually a big - city woman and loves reading books. Like Carol Kennicott herself, Mrs. Westlake is one of the few persons in Gopher Prairie who are well - read and love reading books.

Then Carol Kennicott tries to bring and introduce 'culture' to Gopher Prairie. When she and the drama-

tic association, of which she is the leader and the chair, try to perform a kind of play to the people of the town, the reaction of them is very disappointing. Besides having the play of "The Girl from Kankakee" badly acted because of its actors who have a tendency to show off, the town's people themselves do not have an appreciation for art, especially a performance of play on stage, which is expected by Carol. Carol Kennicott is both the director and the player of that play, which is the final choice of a drama to be presented by them in the opera house of Gopher Prairie.

"I don't care much for these plays. What I like is a good movie, and not all this talky-talk."

(Chapter 18, p. 171)

The quotation above is taken as the representation of the comment of the play audiences in the opera house. It seems they do not understand much about arts, especially the play, which is being acted on stage. The lack of good appreciation of art is also presented by Dr. Will Kennicott. As the native of Gopher Prairie in this novel, Will Kennicott is not interested in reading and enjoying poetry which Carol tries to introduce and offer to him, and enjoying an intellectual drama. It shows that the people of Gopher Prairie are without any vision or appreciation of the finer things of life including art.

### IV.3. The Main Characters

Main Street focuses on the environment rather than on the individuals. It focuses on what the characters see and experience rather than what they are and who they are. However, without the presentation of those characters, the readers will not see and understand the small town life which is emphasized by Sinclair Lewis.

This novel has a lot of characters as the representation of the town people, but only a few of them who are playing roles in creating the story. Among them are only two important characters in this novel. They are Carol Kennicott and Dr. Will Kennicott. As one of the main characters, the role of Dr. Kennicott is less important than the one of Carol in bringing the story, since Main Street is the story of Carol Kennicott's rebellion against Gopher Prairie and its inhabitants.

Carol Milford's childhood was spent in Mankato, Minnesota, which was not a prairie town. Her father who had come originally from Massachusetts was a judge in the town. Judge Milford chose to educate his children by letting them read a lot whatever they please, because he emphasized the reading books and high education for them. Carol's mother died when she was nine and her father four years later. At an early age, therefore, she had learned independence, both physically and mentally. Since she is an orphan, Carol is free to follow her own bent and to do what she wants.



Carol is a pretty girl with beautiful dark eyes and black hair. She has a slight body and quince-blossom skin. She has a talent for piano and violin, and often plays them in the chapel. She also has the ability to act in plays, to write and to manage organization. At various times during Senior years Carol decides to study law and writing motion-picture scenarios. She is interested in poetry, music, dance, and enjoys reading written plays of Bernard Shaw and Shakespeare.

Carol acquires a good formal education in Blodgett College, Minneapolis. After studying for four years she graduates from the college as a smart and well-read girl. She is interested in general culture and also in sociology. The reading in sociology leads her to a book of village-improvement, tree planting, town pageants and country clubs. She wants most of all to participate in village-improvement and to make some small town beautiful, "That's what I'll do after college! I'll get my hands on one of these prairie towns and make it beautiful. Be an inspiration," (Chapter 1, p.6). Then Carol decides to study professional library work in Chicago school. She feels that a person with a college education should use it for the world. She is also sure that she can have great influence in library work. In autumn after a year in Chicago and after graduation, Carol works as a librarian in the public library of St. Paul. Carol has worked in St. Paul for three years when she meets -

Dr. Will Kennicott.

Dr. Will Kennicott is an established doctor of Gopher Prairie. He had received his B.A. and M.D. degree at the university in Twin Cities and spent his internship in a hospital in Minneapolis. Will is twelve years older than Carol. His hands are strong. The palm soft, but the back weathered, showing golden hairs against firm red skin. His nose seems irregular and large. His neck is heavy and his speech is heavy too. He has intelligence, dignity, and rare ability to meet crises, especially those arising in his practices. Dr. Kennicott is a competent but practical-minded physician.

Will Kennicott represents Gopher Prairie in many of his attitudes. He is used to the ugliness, the dirt of the town, and its surroundings of the place where he was born. While Carol is thinking about beautifying Gopher Prairie, he may be thinking about hunting, land deals, or his cases. He is unappreciative of finer things including poetry. He is also very loyal to his native town and country. Will is the best sort of man which the small town produces.

Will meets Carol at the Marburrys' house. He falls in love with her, and they like each other. It is Will Kennicott who has introduced Gopher Prairie to Carol. Although he has been in Minneapolis and Twin Cities for his study, Will's heart and practice are in Gopher Prairie, his native town. He believes and assures Carol

that the town will have a great future. It only needs women like her to transform it. Will wins Carol by appealing to her long time desire for improving towns. One factor in Carol's decision to accept Kennicott's proposal is the opportunity to make her desire come true. First of all, she is interested in remaking Gopher Prairie. It leads them to the main part of this novel, Carol's life in Gopher Prairie.

Now Carol is facing the ugliness and the stuffiness of life in Gopher Prairie. According to her, the traditional people of the town are so provincial. Finding herself in the uncomfortable environment, Carol is depressed. Because of her spirit and desire to beautify small towns, Carol quickly realizes that she should rebel and struggle. Her background is of the city, not of the small town. As the daughter of a judge she has been brought up in a home where cultural reading is a habit. Carol is both sophisticated and well-read. She is also a perfectionist. She hates the mediocrity of the small town. It is natural that she rebels against the stuffiness, the planless, and the lack of beauty of life in Gopher Prairie.

Carol is the rebellious girl in this novel. She is a revolutionist, a radical, and therefore possessed of constructive ideas, since the reformer believes that all the essential constructing has already been done. She is full of the new and fresh ideas in remaking the -

## BIBLIOGRAPHY