

Chapter IV

ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the writer analyzes the setting of Main Street, especially the town setting, and the small town people, since he wants to explore and understand the way Sinclair Lewis, the author of this novel, satirizes American small town in the twenties and in general. Then the writer of the thesis continues with the analysis of the main characters of this novel and the conflicts which build the plot of the story, since he wants to know further about the conflicts and the problems between those small town people and the main characters, especially Carol Kennicott, who has the specific characterizations. At last, the writer will analyze the autobiographical elements of Sinclair Lewis, which are reflected in the story and are dominant enough in determining the satire in this novel.

IV.1. Town Setting

The beginning of the story of Main Street takes place at the college in Minneapolis, where Carol Milford, later becomes Mrs. Kennicott, studies, and in St. Paul where she works as a librarian in a public library. She is the main and most important character in this novel.

There is also the setting of Washington D.C., almost in the end of the story. However, most parts of this novel take place in Gopher Prairie, a small prairie town in Minnesota. Gopher Prairie and its inhabitants are always in the background of the story.

Her meeting with and marriage to Dr. Will Kennicott leads Carol Milford to Gopher Prairie, a wheat -prairie town in Minnesota. Dr. Will Kennicott is a native - of the town. While Carol herself is not intimate with - the prairie villages, although she was Minnesota - born. Carol, whose childhood was in Mankato, spent almost five years in Minneapolis and Chicago for college and library school. When Carol meets Will, she has been working in the public library of St. Paul for almost three years.

After returning from their honeymoon in the Colorado mountains, the Kennicotts approach Gopher Prairie - by train. They have decided to move there. Firstly Carol is overcome by the smell, dirt, and squalor of the train and its passengers. All what she sees and views from the train is the sordidness and ugliness of the countries - they are passing. She realizes that she has to be used - to such condition of the town which will be her new - home, together with her husband, as the country doctor. Her husband cannot see those ugliness, since he is used to it. According to Will Kennicott, Gopher Prairie is a beautiful small town with the beautiful views which - it has.

"It's a darn pretty town, ...
and there's two of the dandiest lakes you
ever saw,"

(Chapter 2, p. 12)

As a native, he also loves the town and is proud of it.

"It's a good country, and I'm proud of it."

(Chapter 2, p. 15)

On their trip to Gopher Prairie by train, Carol and Will Kennicott are arguing and have different opinions about the condition of the towns they view from the train.

"Just look at them!"

He grumbled, "Why, what's the matter with 'em? Good hustling burgs."

"But they're so ugly."

"Oh, they're not so bad." was all he answered.

(Chapter 3, p. 19)

Just before reaching Gopher Prairie, Carol sees the prairie, which is flat in giant patches or rolling - in long hummocks. It is September, hot and very dusty. The grass beside the railroad have been burnt over. The valley is relieved by clumps of oaks with patches of short wild grass.

The scenery of the prairie which is seen by Carol around the town of Gopher Prairie is the real characteristic of Minnesota areas. The natural vegetation of Minnesota may be divided into three general categories: needle - leaf forests, hardwood forests, and the biggest

part is tallgrass prairie. But the most fertile soils for agriculture of most of the people in the state are found in the grassland and prairie regions.

Minnesota is not flat. It is far less flat than the province of Quebec. Most of it is prairie, but the prairie roils and dips and curves; The most obvious beauty is the lakes.

(Minnesota, the Norse State,
from 'The Nation', 1923, The Man
from Main Street, p.274)

Will Kennicott assures his wife, Carol, that Gopher Prairie is special and different from the others, and also far more interesting. Although he admits that Gopher Prairie is not a paradise which is as beautiful as St. Paul, Will is quite sure that the town has a good future. He also assures her that Carol is the woman that the people of the town need to improve it, since she is the highly educated woman with rebellious spirit in improving the town.

"What we need is women like you to jump on us. It'd be you that would transform the town."

(Chapter 2, p. 13)

When the train is entering the town, Carol looks out to the houses on the outskirts which are dusky old red mansions with wooden frills and gaunt frame shelter like grocery boxes, and the new bungalows with concrete foundations imitating stone. The newlyweds are welcomed by some of Will's friends who drive them to their home.

Their house is stuffy and outdated one. It is a Mid-Victorian house. It is a square smug brown house. A narrow concrete walk up to it. The prairie stretches away on every side.

Carol goes for a walk to inspect the town. Here the vivid description of Gopher Prairie is given. Through the eyes of Carol, all of the scenery which can be seen are only the ugliness of the town. They are the dirt, the mud, and the smell of Main Street.

Main Street with its two-story brick shops, its story-and-a-half wooden residences, its muddy expanse from concrete walk to walk, - its huddle of Fords, and lumber-wagons, was too small to absorb her ... There was no park to rest the eyes ... There was no other sound nor sign of life.

(Chapter 4, p. 26-27)

Carol walks thirty-two minutes and completely covers the town. There is no court house with its grounds. The Bon Ton Store - Haydock and Simons' is the largest - the only cleanest shop in Main Street. The others are - less attractive, such as Dyer's Drug Store, with a regular corner building, Greek Candy Store with the oily - smell of nuts, Nat Hick's Tailor Shop, a fly-buzzing saloon with thick voice trolling out dirty songs, the hotel office with the bare unclean floor, the small wooden motion-picture theater, Billy's Lunch with an odor of onions and the smoke of hot lard. There are the raw red-brick Catholic Church, the National Bank, the post office,

Christian Science Library which open daily free, and the school building. For Carol, the town in general is full of unapologetic ugliness. It is the planlessness, the flimsy temporariness of the buildings, and their faded unpleasant colors. When Carol reaches home escaping from Main Street and her husband asks her opinion about the town, she hides her depressed feeling toward it. It is very difficult to give answer. She was able to say, with a self-protective maturity new to her, "It's very interesting", (Chapter 4, p. 30).

Carol comes to Gopher Prairie in September, at the end of summer. The town and its prairie are very hot, dry, and dusty. But in late November and all December it snows daily. The thermometer is at zero and may drop into twenty below. While in May the steady rain pours for days. The town's roads are 'a furrowed welter of mud, hideous to view, and difficult to cross' (p. 105) At the end of spring the mud roads are powdery dust. Then in June and July the heat is stifling in Gopher Prairie. The town is entering the hot summer season.

All of the detailed description of Gopher Prairie and the seasons of it are almost the same with the ones of Sauk Centre, Sinclair Lewis' birthplace. Sauk Centre in the end of the 19th century was a bare and unlovely town. This town was surrounded by the prairie farming land dotted with Minnesota's thousands lakes. In summer it was hot and dry. The temperature might rise to

110 degree, in winter it could dip to thirty below zero. In the popular image, Minnesota is a land of dusty summers, rugged winters, flour mills, and iron mines. It is also a land of innumerable lakes.

Although the facts show that Gopher Prairie is a shabby, dusty, and muddy prairie town, most of its citizens think and consider that the town is a beautiful place to live in. They, of course, think so, because they are the natives of the town, who used to live there for all of their lifetime. Among those natives are Dr. Will Kennicott, Sam Clark, a millionaire Percy Bresnahan, Mr. and Mrs. Dawson, and Harry Haydock. They are even proud of their hometown. Not only the natives love the town, but a Swedish farm girl named Bea Sorenson also admires Gopher Prairie and decides to stay there. She becomes Carol's maid. However, there are also some natives of Gopher Prairie who admit the ugliness of the town such as Vida Sherwin, who has the background of education which is almost the same with the one of Carol Kennicott. According to Vida,

"Of course it's ugly. Dreadfully!"

(Chapter 5, p. 50)

These people have the fair judgement about the town. They also have the ideas similar to the Carol's one.

IV.2. Small Town People

The town people which Carol Kennicott firstly

meets are the other passengers of the local train which brings them to Gopher Prairie. She and Will Kennicott, her husband, are together with the farmers and their untidy families, the workmen going to new jobs and some salesmen.

Those passengers of the train which are mostly the peasant men have showed their sordidness to Carol - and her husband, who among the passengers stand out as cool, clean, and prosperous. Among the other passengers are a soiled man and woman who munch sandwiches and throw the crusts on the floor, a large brick colored Norwegian who takes off his shoes and props his feet in their thick gray socks against the seat in front of him. The two facing seats, overflowing with a Slovenian iron-miner's family, are littered with shoes, dolls, whisky bottles, bundles wrapped in newspapers and a sewing bag. To each of these passengers his seat is his temporary home.

Seeing the passengers in those bad conditions - has distressed Carol. She has always maintained that - there is no American peasantry. What Carol is facing now are the facts that they are peasants and they do not have 'good manners'. According to Carol,

"They're so provincial. They're - oh, so sunk in the mud."

(Chapter 3, p. 18)

Will Kennicott assures his wife by telling that the people of Gopher Prairie are good people inspite of

their 'not so good' appearances and manners. He even describes his hometown people as the best people on earth - and the squarest people. He seems so proud of Gopher Prairie and its people since he says it several times to Carol. He, however, admits that the town is not a paradise and he does not expect his wife to think so.

The train is entering Gopher Prairie and the rail-way station, Carol sees that the platform is crowded with unshaven farmers. She has the impression that all of the men have dead eyes, toothbrush mustaches, coarse voices, and large rough hands. Among other people there are some friends of Will Kennicott who are welcoming them. They are Dave Dyer, Jack Elder, Sam Clark, Harry Haydock and Juanita. They are all waving their hands and smiling. Their hands, their smiles, their shouts, and their affectionate eyes overcome Carol. She realizes and admits at that time that those friends of her husband are very friendly.

When Carol is looking and inspecting the town, again she is overcome by the unshaven farmers on the main street and in front of the shops. She meets a young man loafing before a shop, a middle-aged man who has a way of staring at women, and an old, but not clean farmer - whose face looks like a fresh potato from the earth. None of them have shaved for days. Carol also notices in the doorway of Billy's Lunch a young man audibly sucking a toothpick. In front of the saloon, there are some farm-

wives who are sitting on the seats and waiting for their husbands to become drunk and ready to start home.

While Carol is inspecting the town and its main street, she does not realize that she is being observed by the people on main street. She does not know that the whole town is discussing about her dress and even her body. She is being dragged naked down main street. Then she learns from Vida Sherwin, one of Carol's few friends that the town people are always watching and gossiping about her. At the party at Sam Clark's Carol feels that she is being evaluated and criticized from all sides. They are always criticizing her every movement. Even when she is attending a religious service in church, in chapter 8, Carol is also being criticized on how she dressed which is considered too well and too irregular for Gopher Prairie's standard. Whenever she enters a store, or sweeps the back porch of her house, or stands at the bay window in the livingroom, it seems the people are always peeping at her.

The Jolly Seventeen is one of the social clubs of Gopher Prairie. It is the country club. The members of which ranges from fourteen to twenty-six. Most of the members of the Jolly Seventeen are the young married women, with their husbands as associate members. Once a week they have a woman's afternoon - bridge, once a month the husbands join them for evening - bridge, and twice a year they have dances. The other club is The Thanatopsis.

town. Will Kennicott's comment about Carol is, "You have ideas without having lost feminine charm." (Chapter 2, p. 13) Carol is also full of the spirit to rebel against the unsatisfactory town conditions. Guy Pollock, one of Carol's few friends, considers her as a person having full of rebellious spirit, "You're the spirit of rebellion." (Chapter 13, p. 120).

As a young woman who came from a big city and the wife of the country doctor, Carol tries hard to introduce something new and to introduce culture to Gopher Prairie. However, it is difficult for her to reveal her ideas in reforming the town, since she is just a woman against the whole town and the whole people of it. We all know and realize that one person, especially a female, cannot reform the whole town. This is the satire which is made and created by Sinclair Lewis through his main woman character in Main Street. Lewis intended to criticize American women in general and their position in society especially in the twenties. Since in the beginning of the twentieth century, women in the United States of America did not have 'voice' in society. The women suffrage had not become a law and women had far fewer choices of occupation than they do today. This novel itself was published in 1920, but written earlier.

Being always talked and criticized by the people of Gopher Prairie, Carol Kennicott finds and receives various comments about herself. Some friends of Will

Kennicott say that she is the swellest girl that h a s ever come to this town . As the bride of Dr. Kennicott, they also say that she is so quick and bright. While according to the women of the Jolly Seventeen, the country club of Gopher Prairie , Carol has the ideas which are too much ahead of that time. She is considered as a woman who is talking so much about getting all she can out of life. They think she is an odd bird, a woman who always talks about something almost impractical. It seems almost impossible for the town people to accept all of her ideas. In contrast with Carol is Vida Sherwin, who also wants to improve the town, however, Vida's plan is more realistic and reasonable. Carol may be impractical but she is hardly ridiculous. However, most of those people admit Carol's beauty. Bea Sorenson considers that Carol is the most beautiful and accomplished lady in the country. Mrs. Westlake has pronounced Carol a very sweet, bright, and cultured young woman. Carol receives not only the recommendations, but she also gets some derisions from Mr. Valborg, Erik Valborg's father. He hates her since he thinks it is Carol who has made the unnatural affair between his son and her. In chapter 33, he says that she is a dirty city woman with her fine face, fine ways, and fine dresses.

IV.4. Plot and Conflicts

After knowing and understanding the setting o f

place, society, and especially the characters, we now step on the analysis of plot and conflicts. All fictions, including novels, consist of conflicts in their story. Conflicts build the plot of novels or other forms of fiction. From the plot we will know how the main character develops in the story, how the leading character brings the story, what happens with the main character, what events are going on in the story, how the story is reaching the climax, and how the story ends.

The elements of a plot are: exposition, conflict, climax, and resolution or conclusion. The exposition is the presentation of the informations necessary for the plot. It is the introduction to the characters, their relationships with one another, the physical background and situations. Good exposition is brief. The conflict is the essence of the story. The exposition should set up a situation in which conflicts arise. The conflict may be one of man against nature, man against man, or man against himself. Conflicts set up at least two opposing forces. The climax is a turning point in the whole actions of a plot. While the resolution is the rounding-off of the action. It is the conclusion of the conflicts of the story.

The plot of Main Street is episodic, since this novel is divided into parts or chapters. Each chapters gives different event and different action. Most parts of this novel are dealing with Carol's rebellion against

Gopher Prairie and its people. In the other parts her battle is with Will Kennicott, her husband, as the conflicts of married life and also deals with her extra-marital love affair with Erik Valborg.

Chapter 1 and chapter 2 of this novel are the exposition. It is the presentation of all of the informations which necessary for the plot. The details of the main character, the physical backgrounds, the setting of places, and the situations in which the conflicts arise are introduced. Here the author introduces his principal character in this novel, Carol Milford, later become Carol Kennicott. She is a highly educated and rebellious girl. The Boldgett College with its students where Carol studies and Carol's contemporary thinking are all mentioned in these introductory chapters. Her family background is brought in to explain her intellectual freedom, her developed reading tastes, her interest in reform and in a career of town planning. It is also introduced her romance with Dr. Will Kennicott of Gopher Prairie and the background for her marriage with him. The author now is leading up to the main parts of the novel, Carol's life in Gopher Prairie and the conflicts which are involved.

In chapter 3 and chapter 4 it is still introduced the setting where the most parts of the story take place, that is Gopher Prairie. The details of this small town and its inhabitants are all mentioned in these chap

ters. She is depressed by the ugliness and the sordidness of the town and its surrounding which she and her husband view from the train, by the untidy other train passengers and the town people whom she meets, by the old-fashioned house in which she is to live, and by the ugliness and the planless town. These are Carol's first conflicts which arise in her mind. Then Sam Clark is having a party to welcome the Kennicotts. The party at Sam Clark's house, which is Carol's first social evening in Gopher Prairie, is a disappointment, since she feels that she has not dressed properly and that she is being evaluated and criticized from all sides by the other women. She finds that the men of Gopher Prairie are also gossiping of her attitudes and performance.

Carol has difficulty in extracting money from her husband, Will, for household expenses. This is her first conflict with her husband facing the problem of married life. Will Kennicott usually considers himself the master of the house.

"Why - something the matter?"

"Yes! ... I have to beg you for money. Daily! It was yours (your fault). And mine. I now humbly beg you to give me the money with which to buy meals for you to eat ... Do you understand? I can't go on being a - slave."

(Chapter 6, p. 56)

Those are the dialogue between will Kennicott and Carol,

which shows that Carol is weary of being treated like a slave begging money from her husband. Then Will gives her fifty dollars, and promises to do better. Her husband's deep rooted loyalty to his native town is also in comprehensible to Carol.

In winter, Carol tries to organize skating and skiing parties. She wants to go rabbit hunting with her husband, but the women of Gopher Prairie are more interested in playing bridge than in outdoor sports. She has a sense of not being liked. Carol also cannot have an outside employment. She finds out that to the villagers, it is a taboo for a doctor's wife to look for an occupation. Suddenly she realizes that she has nothing to do, a woman with a working brain but no work.

Carol is accepted into The Jolly Seventeen. This country club consists of a group of young married women in Gopher Prairie. Once a week they have women's afternoon-bridge. At one of the afternoon-bridge session, Carol offends the other women by disagreeing with them about the wages of servants. They think that she pays too much to Bea Sorenson, her maid.

"How much do you pay?" insisted half a dozen.

"W-why, I pay six a week," she (Carol) feebly confessed.

They gasped, Juanita protested, "Don't you think it's hard on the rest of us when you pay so much?"

Carol was angry, "I don't care!"

(Chapter 7, p. 69-70)

Carol and the other women of this club are also disagreeing and arguing about the care of library books. Then she goes home and weeps in terror.

The women's study club, Thanatopsis, is meeting to consider the whole field of English poetry in one session, and Carol is invited. Carol finds that the program is so dull and statistical that she makes a few suggestions about the future programs. The next morning Carol considers the city hall as a possible starting point for the town improvement. However, the other women have their own ideas. Mrs. Dyer and Mrs. Matt think that a new school building is the most important need of Gopher Prairie. While the minister's wife wants a new and larger church. Then Carol replaces the city hall project with the project concerning the poor people. The plan is likewise rejected. The other women think this idea is impractical. Since then Carol realizes that the people of Gopher Prairie are not very interested in improvement, and she finds the lack of tolerance for poverty in them. She is also not able to comprehend the slow growth of public opinion, since it seems they usually wait for the new ideas from someone else.

Chapter 14 is really the Kennicotts' arguing and quarrel of their married life. Each of them enumerates the faults of the other. From Will's point of view, Carol is 'unkind' and ungracious to his friends. She thinks of him as unappreciative of the finer things, jea

lous of fellow practitioners, and stingy with cash. As the result of their argument, Dr. Will Kennicott agrees to give his wife a bank account in her own name and to build a new house as soon as he is financially able. Carol develops a deeper appreciation for her husband and more ability to cooperate with him in his work.

Carol's idea of the Gopher Prairie Dramatic Association is born. Carol is enthusiastic about recreating the strange things of the world which she finds in the small town in plays. "The Girl from Kankakee" is the final choice of a drama to be presented in the opera house of Gopher Prairie. As director and player, Carol puts all her time and energy into the project. She feels beaten when this play is badly acted and after she learns about the lack of good appreciation for fine art, including her play, from the people as the audiences.

In the end of chapter 19, it is described that Carol feels that a baby is coming. She realizes that with a baby, life at last promises to be interesting. However she also realizes that with a baby for hostage, she can never escape from Gopher Prairie. Then the baby is born. He is named Hugh. He is a thin healthy child with a large head and straight brown hair. For two years after Hugh was born, Carol is a part of the town. Her opinion seems dead. She has no desire to escape. Her attention is focused on Hugh. She has already begun to plan her son's college education. To Carol the town seems un-

changing, while her own life has changed. The presence of the baby has made her take Gopher Prairie and the Kennicotts' old-fashioned house seriously as natural place of residence.

Among Carol's few friends in Gopher Prairie, the closest woman friend is Vida Sherwin, a high school teacher, who later marries Raymond Wutherspoon. In a flashback, it is mentioned that Vida had a special relationship with Dr. Will Kennicott before his marriage. A year before Will was married to Carol, Vida was his girl friend. She was thirty-four and Will was about thirty-six. Then Will went to the city while Vida waited for him and she was in a longing. When she heard that Will was to marry a young and pretty girl from the city, Vida was in despair. Vida and Carol then meet each other in Gopher Prairie. Naturally Vida hates and loves Carol, since she is able to make a good friend with Carol. Later Vida admits honestly her feeling about Will to Carol.

"I was - I liked Will terribly well. One time at a party - oh, before he met you, of course but we held hands, and we were so - happy. But I didn't feel I was really suited to him. I let him go. Please don't think I still love him!"

(Chapter 31, p. 277)

Then Erik Valborg is introduced, a Swedish farm boy who is working in Nat Hick's tailor shop. Like Carol he loves beautiful things and finds no intellectual com-

panionship in Gopher Prairie. When she meets Erik Valborg at the tailor shop, Carol learns that he is interested in dramas and has a desire for culture. Erik has rough hands. She has been attracted only by the strong hands that are fine and suave, like those of her father. She found that there is nothing of the beloved father's image in Will Kennicott, her husband. Carol becomes better acquainted with Erik. She realizes that she is interested and fond of Erik Valborg. Carol is drawn more deeply into the affair with Erik. It is the serious extra-marital love affair of Carol Kennicott.

The mediocrity of Gopher Prairie and the bad habits of small town people is again emphasized with the town gossip about the 'back street' romance between Carol Kennicott and Erik Valborg, who is five years younger than Carol. Carol herself being a married woman, it is an unnatural affair that occurs between a man and woman for a small town like Gopher Prairie. Erik meets Carol when her husband is not at home or is still on a country call. Carol has become the small town gossip. Vida Wutherspoon has warned Carol about her romance with Erik Valborg. While Maud Dyer takes a chance by trying to attract Dr. Kennicott away from Carol. These are such unstable conditions for their marriage.

Then one evening, Carol and Erik Valborg are caught by Will Kennicott. It is like a breaking storm for them. Once home, Dr. Kennicott puts a stop to the roman-

ce and makes plain to his wife the kind of life she will lead if she marries to Erik as an artist.

"Suppose he goes back to tailoring, and you're his wife. Is that going to be this artistic life you've been thinking about?"

(Chapter 33, p.295-296)

After argueing for a while, Will succeeds to assure his wife and make her promise never to see Erik again. Carol also realizes that she will not break her marriage with Kennicott. The next morning Erik Valborg leaves Gopher Prairie by train.

The train is again used as a symbol of escape - from an unsatisfactory environment, when the Kennicotts escape from Gopher Prairie because of Carol's fear of receiving a serious threat from Mr. Valborg, Erik's father. They leave Hugh with Aunt Bessie. In April, in a bad weather the Kennicotts return to Gopher Prairie. They note every small improvement in the town. Except for the reunion with little Hugh, Carol feels more depressed than ever, since nothing has changed.

The actions of this story is now reaching to the top. America is engaged in World War I and Carol is doing Red Cross works and volunteer nursing . Gopher Prairie is booming because of the war price of wheat. Mr. Blausser is brought in to head the campaign of boosting the town. He and his commitee decide that Gopher Prairie is not only the wheat centre, but also the perfect site for facto

ries. Realizing that the future of Gopher Prairie will not be the same with what she dreams of, that is the modern town with its beautiful and planned buildings and houses, Carol feels that there is no more for her to do. Will Kennicott and Carol have a big disagreement. Carol is very sure that she does not belong to the town anymore. She just wants to leave the town and its main street and she is going to take Hugh with her. Carol thinks that she does not ask any permission. Will tries to stop his wife, but he really understands and knows about the hard life she has had in Gopher Prairie. All that she wants is to get free from her depression and to lead her own life.

(Carol): "Do you realize how big a world there is beyond this Gopher Prairie where you'd keep me all my life? I've been ruled too long by fear of being called things. I'm going away to be quiet and think. I'm going ! I have a right to my own life."

(Chapter 36, p. 313)

Carol's decision to leave Gopher Prairie and her husband and to set out for Washington by train in October, just before the war ends in November, alone with her son can be considered as the climax of the story. Carol has determined on Washington because it is less intimidating than New York City at that time. She hopes to find the streets in which Hugh can play and that she can be initiated into the world of offices, since she always

wants to work in big city. Carol finds employment in the bureau of War Risk Insurance. For the first time in years she can act without consulting Kennicott.

The story now leads us to the resolution of this novel. Carol's leaving to Washington is not merely her running away from the problems and conflicts which Carol faced in Gopher Prairie. In Washington Carol feels herself a whole person again, so that she can clarify her mind and thoughts. Gradually her horizon is broadened. Other towns which are worse than Gopher Prairie are represented in the nation's capital. Carol becomes conscious of the reasons for her mistakes in Gopher Prairie. She realizes that she has raged at individuals while the institutions are really to blame. The most important thing is that her hatred of Gopher Prairie has run out.

Will Kennicott comes to see his wife, Carol, thirteen months after her departure from Gopher Prairie. Will does not ask Carol to return to the town, but he indicates that he has been hoping so much that she comes back and he will be delighted to welcome her whenever she returns. He also tells her that he has always loved her more than anything else in the world. Will goes back to Gopher Prairie without Carol, but she does not hate the town anymore. She still spends five more months in Washington because of her job.

"At last," she rejoiced, "I've come to a fairer attitude toward the town ..."

I can love it, now."

(Chapter 38, p. 329)

When Carol finally does returns to Gopher Prairie, h e r second child is stirring within her.

By returning to Gopher Prairie by her own decision, Carol Kennicott finds that the town has not changed, except for the new school building, some new bungalows, and some garages. Few people of the town welcome her and her son, Hugh, and ask about Carol's experiences in Wa - shington. In August the second Kennicott baby is born. - It is a girl. By removing of all her hatred toward the - town, Carol's struggle with Gopher Prairie finally ends. She feels that she may not have won the battle against - it, but she has at least kept fighting.

From the plot of this story it is concluded that Carol Kennicott is the round character. She is not sta - tic, and dominant enough in bringing the story. She un - dergoes the changes in her life. In the beginning of the story when she comes to Gopher Prairie, she feels trap - ped and depressed with the town conditions, while at the end her hatred has gone when she returns to the town af - ter her Washington interlude.

IV.5. Autobiographical Elements of Sinclair Lewis

Main Street is the story of Carol Kennicott stru - ggle with the mediocrity and the ugliness of Gopher Prai - rie. Much has been mentioned before about Sinclair Lewis'

leading character, Carol Kennicott, of this novel. She is actually Lewis himself in feminine guise. According to Grace Hegger Lewis, 'If Flaubert said, "Bovary, c'est moi." , Lewis could well have said, "Carol, that's me." for he was more than approving of what Carol was trying to do to better Gopher Prairie.' (Dooley, D.J. , The Art of Sinclair Lewis, 1967, 63) Because the life of Carol Kennicott is almost like the one of Lewis, such as both were born in a small town, they were orphan since children, both were well-read and high educated in city college, both had desire for the creation of a beautiful town, both had to return to a certain small town which had such uncomfortable conditions, both received unsatisfactory treatments from the small town people and both wanted to reform the town and to rebel against those conditions. It can be said that in some ways Carol Kennicott is a self-portrait of Sinclair Lewis.

The relationship between Carol Kennicott and Gopher Prairie reflects the relationship between Lewis and Sauk Centre, as his native town. What Carol undergoes in Gopher Prairie is like what Lewis himself had experienced in Sauk Centre. During his youth, Lewis was dissatisfied with the town people who had considered him as a noisy eccentric to adults and an object of cruel jokes among young females. That's why he made only few friends in his own hometown. When he left the town for college, nothing had improved much. He was more than an outsider.

When visiting the town again with his young wife from the city, he not only recalled all his own unsatisfactory experiences, but he saw the present and worse conditions of the town.

Today, Carol Kennicott seems like a fool, and so did Sinclair Lewis a long time before his career as a novelist. Like Lewis himself and like a 'culture' - hungry America, Carol wants to bring 'culture', to introduce something new and different, and to introduce the modern influences to Gopher Prairie. What she gets in this small town is the cold rejection of the culture which she has brought from city. Her ideas of improvement seem too much ahead of the time. The traditional and provincial people in the prairie town of Gopher Prairie are not ready yet for some progresses which Carol offered. That is the main difference between the people's point of view and Carol's.

Carol's expression of disappointment when combating with the bad conditions of Gopher Prairie is actually the expression of Lewis' own disappointment toward what the people of his own hometown had done to him. The problems and conflicts which are faced by Carol Kennicott in this novel are based on Sinclair Lewis' own experiences in Sauk Centre.

The relationship between Carol and Dr. Will Kennicott in this novel reflects the relationship between Sinclair Lewis and Dr. E.J. Lewis, his father. Dr. Kenni

cott's prototype is Dr. E.J. Lewis. There are also some reflections of personality of Dr. Claude Lewis, an eminent surgeon, who was the second son of the Lewis family. Like the elder Dr. Lewis, Dr. Will Kennicott, the husband of Carol, has had fine training and was capable of handling emergencies.

The medical world had been familiar with the life of Sinclair Lewis. Medicine had long attracted him as a subject, chiefly because of its considerable importance in his family background. Since his father and his brother, both were doctors. For them, Lewis had always felt an overwhelming respect. In a larger scope, he had given expression to his respect for their professional fidelities in the character of Dr. Will Kennicott in this novel.

The other autobiographical element of the author is the main setting of place of Main Street. Gopher Prairie, the small town where Dr. Will Kennicott brings his wife, Carol, after they married, is actually Sauk Centre, Minnesota, where Lewis was born. As a native who grew up in Sauk Centre, Lewis knew each details of the town - well. All of those details became the vivid descriptions of Gopher Prairie. The main street, the buildings, the shops and stores, city plannings or lack of it, social conditions, and the habits of its people are all described well in this novel.

The presence of all of the autobiographical elements of Sinclair Lewis in Main Street is no accident. -

Those elements are used to support and to strengthen the satirical purpose of Sinclair Lewis, the author, to the social condition of American small town through this novel. By writing the things and the social problems which are familiar enough for the author, he can easily describe, criticize, and satirize every sides of those things, especially the bad sides of them. Those autobiographical elements of the author in this novel did not make it the autobiographical novel of Sinclair Lewis. Since in this novel they had been combined with many of Lewis' ideas - and imageries in order to create the great story in the satirical way.

Among those autobiographical elements of Sinclair Lewis which is found in this novel, there are two elements which are dominant enough in determining and creating this satirical novel of Main Street. They are the character of Carol Kennicott, as the main and important character, and the town setting of Gopher Prairie.

As the representative of Sinclair Lewis, the author, the character of Carol Kennicott has undergone and experienced all of the unsatisfactory events and problems, which had been experienced by Lewis himself. Carol has got and received some unfair treatments from the small town people. Her depression and disappointment are what Lewis himself had felt as the result of the way the people of his hometown had treated him. Carol Kennicott determined the satirical purpose of this novel, since from

what she had experienced in Gopher Prairie the mediocrity, the lack of good appreciation of the finer things, and the ugliness of the small town and its people are emphasized.

Gopher Prairie as the main setting of the novel, is the representative of Sauk Centre, Minnesota. This town was Lewis' hometown. In this novel the vivid descriptions of the prairie town of Gopher Prairie and its main street are well-described. Through the eyes of Carol Kennicott, this small town is the planless, dirty, and shabby town without any park to rest the eyes. The prairie which is vast and empty stretches away on every side. In this satirical novel, the author emphasizes the dirt, the shabbiness, and all the bad sides of this small town. It is also the representative of American small towns in general.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION