

**SOCIAL CRITICISM IN NOVEL *BABBITT* BY SINCLAIR LEWIS**



**A THESIS**

*Submitted to Faculty of Cultural Science Hasanuddin University in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain a Sarjana Degree in English Literature  
Study Program*

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With reference to the letter of the dean of Faculty of Cultural Sciences Hasanuddin University No.369/UN4.9.1/KEP/2020 regarding supervision, we hereby confirm to approve the undergraduate thesis draft by Fita Andriani (F21116016) to be examined at the English Department of Faculty of Cultural Sciences.

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THESIS  
SOCIAL CRITICISM IN NOVEL *BABBITT* BY SINCLAIR LEWIS

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It has been examined before the Board of Thesis Examination on December 3<sup>th</sup>,  
2020 and is declared to have fulfilled the requirements.

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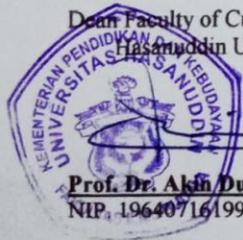
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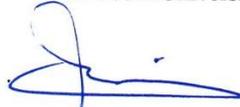


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Today, December 3<sup>th</sup>, 2020 the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by FITA ANDRIANI (No. F21116016) entitled, **SOCIAL CRITICISM IN NOVEL *BABBITT* BY SINCLAIR LEWIS**, submitted in fulfillment of one of the requirements of undergraduate thesis examination to obtain Sarjana Sastra (S.S.) Degree at the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

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## DECLARATION

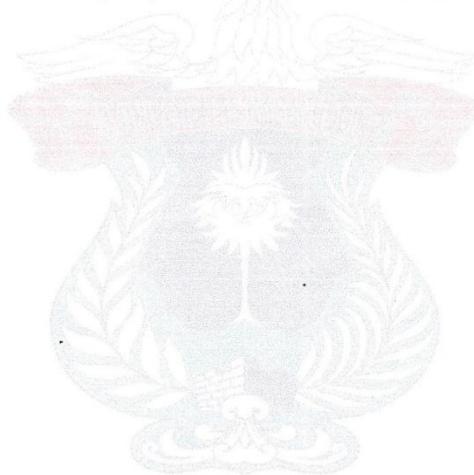
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## PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN SKRIPSI

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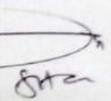
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Menyatakan bahwa Skripsi yang berjudul “Social Criticism in Novel *Babbitt* by Sinclair Lewis” adalah BENAR merupakan hasil karya saya sendiri, bukan merupakan pengambilan tulisan atau pemikiran orang lain.

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(Fita Andriani)

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2. **Prof. Dr. Akin Duli, M.A** as the dean of faculty of cultural science.
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May Allah SWT always be with them and give His mercy, guidance, and blesses for them. Overall, the writer hopes this thesis can give a bit contribution to the English Department students.

Makassar, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020

The Writer

## ABSTRACT

**FITA ANDRIANI.** *Social Criticism in Novel Babbitt by Sinclair Lewis*  
(Supervised by **M. Syafri Badaruddin** and **Abidin Pammu**)

The purpose of this research is to analyze social criticism by looking at American social conditions as reflected in novel *Babbitt* and the problems experienced by the characters in the story.

This study uses a genetic structuralism approach that discusses the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of literary works. The data were analyzed by using descriptive qualitative methods. The source of this research is the novel *Babbitt* by Sinclair Lewis published by *The New American Library of World Literature* in New York in 1962.

Based on the results of the analysis, the writer found criticisms submitted by the author on the social conditions at that time. The social conditions reflected in novel *Babbitt* include economic development, technological growth and lifestyle. The social criticism conveyed by the author in the story is about a culture of materialism that makes everyone only oriented towards money. Another criticism conveyed by the author is about moral degradation by committing law-breaking action, hypocrisy, corruption, and collusion. And finally, the criticism conveyed is about the commercialization that touches the realm of religion and the standardization of life for the middle class who live based on social standards and conformity so that they lose their freedom, identity and happiness.

**Keyword:** Social Criticism, Genetic Structuralism, Social Condition

## ABSTRAK

**FITA ANDRIANI.** *Social Criticism in Novel Babbitt by Sinclair Lewis*

(Dibimbing oleh **M. Syafri Badaruddin** dan **Abidin Pammu**)

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kritik sosial dengan melihat kondisi sosial Amerika yang direfleksikan melalui novel *Babbitt* dan masalah-masalah yang dialami oleh para tokoh dalam cerita tersebut.

Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan strukturalisme genetik yang membahas unsur intrinsik dan ekstrinsik karya sastra. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Sumber data penelitian ini adalah novel *Babbitt* karya Sinclair Lewis yang diterbitkan oleh *The New American Library of World Literature* di New York tahun 1962.

Berdasarkan hasil analisis, penulis telah menemukan kritik yang disampaikan pengarang terhadap kondisi sosial pada saat itu. Kondisi sosial yang tercermin dalam novel *Babbitt* meliputi pertumbuhan ekonomi, teknologi, dan gaya hidup. Kritik sosial yang disampaikan pengarang dalam cerita yaitu tentang budaya materialisme yang membuat setiap orang hanya berorientasi kepada uang. Kritik lain yang disampaikan adalah tentang degradasi moral dengan melakukan tindakan melanggar hukum, hipokrit, korupsi, dan kolusi. Dan yang terakhir, kritik yang disampaikan adalah tentang komersialisasi yang menyentuh ranah agama dan standarisasi hidup kelas menengah yang hidup berdasarkan standar sosial masyarakat dan kesesuaian sehingga menjadikan mereka kehilangan kebebasan, jati diri dan kebahagiaan.

**Kata Kunci:** Kritik Sosial, Strukturalisme Genetik, Kondisi Sosial

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the writer discusses an introduction that consists of background, identification of the problem, the scope of the problem, research question, the objective of the problem, and sequence of writing.

### **1.1 Background**

Literary works is an illustration of life that reflect a social reality which is described through the perspective of the author. Literary works is a means of entertainment, but it can also be a medium to convey the author's feelings in response to social conditions and confusion at certain times. In literature, many things can be learned such as phenomena that occur in society including conflicts between human life, various settings, and criticism that would be conveyed by the author. In addition, literary works should be able to dismantle the depravity of social values and humanity, gaps, and discrepancies in society so that they can change the mindset of readers in dealing with social phenomena. Therefore it is common for literary works to be contained in the form of criticisms that reveal irregularities in society.

Social criticism in literary works signifies the great influence of a social condition on the author so that the work is very reflective of the condition of society. Social criticism in literary works is a highlight of something that happens in people's lives, that criticism usually has some aspects of history, social culture, economics, politics, etc. According to Nurgiyantoro (2010:109), criticism is the

evaluation and analysis in terms of form and content through the process of considering evaluating, and deciding. Social criticism also arises based on the authors' concern about social inequality so that it can cause problems in society. The author can realize criticism in the form of character made in it which illustrates a social reality. One of the authors poured out social criticism in his work is Sinclair Lewis who came from America.

Sinclair Lewis is an American novelist born in 1885. By 1921 he had published six novels until 1930, Sinclair Lewis became the first American author to be awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. As the greatest and famous writer, Lewis often expresses criticism of the American social conditions in his works. One of his famous works is *Babbitt*, who describes the great expectations, social suitability, and competition in American society in the early 20th century. In this work, through the character of Babbitt, Lewis describes how the American businessman at the time and how the ambition of everyone who just wants to make money.

The writer intends to analyze one of Sinclair Lewis's novel, entitled *Babbitt*. This novel tells about a real estate man named George F. Babbitt who is a successful businessman, striving socialite, respected community member, family man, conservative political orator, and active church member. Babbitt becomes unhappy with the ritualized and highly conformist life that he is leading and attempts to make it more gratifying. In this novel, it can be seen how the lifestyle of the American middle-class businessman at the time.

The reason why the writer analyzes this novel is that it is an award-winning novel as one of the best American satire novels. And then, this novel is very relevant to the current state of society such as dissatisfaction, corruption, law-breaking action, consumptive behavior, individualism, and materialism. And the last, through this novel, it be can found out how the economy and social life of American society at 1920s. Based on the things, this novel research becomes interesting to do.

## **1.2 Identification of The Problem**

1. The social conditions of American society are reflected in the novel.
2. Social problem which are criticized in the novel.

## **1.3 Scope of The Problem**

As the scope of the problem in this thesis, the writer focuses on social criticism in the novel *Babbitt*. The writer found the reflection of social conditions America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **1.4 Research Question**

1. What kinds of social conditions are reflected in *Babbitt* ?
2. How is the social criticism of America reflected in *Babbitt* ?

## **1.5 Objective of The Problem**

1. To explain the social conditions are reflected in *Babbitt*.
2. To explain the social criticism of America Reflected in *Babbitt*.

## **1.6 Significance of Study**

### **1. Theoretical Significance**

The writer expects that this research can contribute by giving a further understanding of genetic structuralism approach as one of the literature analysis approach.

### **2. Practical Significance**

The writer hopes that this research will be useful for fellow students, especially those in the English Department of Hasanuddin University, who are also interested in analyzing literary work using sociological approach.

## **1.6 Sequence of Chapter**

The first chapter is the background of the study. The writer explain the reason why the writer choosing the novel *Babbitt* and concentrates in the social criticism, identification of the problem, scope of the problem, statement of the problem, objective of the writing, and sequence of chapter. The second chapter discussed the theory that supports this analysis, previous study, and genetic structuralism which is used in this analysis, and social criticism in literature. The third chapter contains this writing methodological design, source of data, method of collecting data, method of analyzing data, and research procedures. The fourth chapter discusses the result of the research

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of theoretical discussion which includes of the previous study, genetic structuralism and social criticism theory.

#### 2.1 Previous Study

Previous study is used to know the other thesis relevant to this analysis. Based on the observation the writer discovered some studies related to this analysis. Several writers have discussed similar issues and approach of this study. They are Retnansih (2014) *Kritik Sosial Dalam Roman Momo Karya Michael Ende*, Ajitirta (2015) *The Social Criticism in Stowe's Tom's Uncle Cabin*, and Handayani (2019) *The Influence of The Social Condition on The Main Character in Babbitt by Sinclair Lewis*, Three of the thesis have similarities and differences.

Firstly, this study has relevance to previous studies that have raised social criticism. One relevant study was carried out by Retnasih (2014) entitled "*Kritik Sosial Dalam Roman Momo Karya Michael Ende*". She used a sociological approach to discuss social problems such as economic problems which include social inequality, unemployment and the nature of consumerism, criticism of low education, cultural issues about social class and indifference to society, moral issues surround criticism of greedy attitudes, and many more. The similarity between this research and the writer's research are both of this research analyze

social criticism. The differences of this research are the object of research and the approach used is sociological.

Secondly, the relevant study carried out by Ajitirta (2015) entitled "*The Social Criticism in Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin*". This thesis describes the social conditions in America before the Civil War. The analysis shows that it can be seen as a natural condition that occurred in America at that time. This study used the genetic structuralism approach which coordinates intrinsic and extrinsic elements. The similarity of this research with the writer's research are both of this research analyzes social criticism and using genetic structuralism as approach. The different between this research are the object.

Lastly, in Handayani (2019), entitled "*The Influence of The Social Condition on The Main Character in Babbitt by Sinclair Lewis*". This study aims to describe the portrayal of the main character in the Babbitt novel. This study also explains the influence of the main character in the novel, George F Babbitt is a picture of a middle-class society that is influenced by social class. In this study used structuralism approach that analyzes intrinsic elements in the novel. The similarity between this research and the writer's research are both of this research using the novel Babbitt by Sinclair Lewis as the object of research. And the difference is this theses used structuralism theory.

## **2.2 Genetic Structuralism**

In this study, the writer used the genetic structuralism approach which was introduction by Lucien Goldman, an expert from France in 1936. Genetic

structuralism approach is an approach which combines two main elements in literary work namely intrinsic element and extrinsic element. Intrinsic is the elements that is builds up the work itself, such as characterization, setting, plot and themes. Extrinsic is the elements that supports the buildings of literary works and called a sociological aspect. This theory developed in France always emphasizes the historical background, human fact, and worldview. To understand what and how the world view is in Goldmann's concept of genetic structuralism theory is a concept called homology. This theory believes that there is a homology between the structure of a literary work and the social structure of society, because fatigue is the result of human activity (Goldmann, 1977: 139). It can be said that apart from having elements that build literary works themselves, literary texts also represent social structure of society realities that led to the emergence of literary works.

Genetic structuralism starts with the concept of human facts. Genetic Structuralism based on the hypothesis that all human activity is an effort to have a rational answer to such circumstances. Therefore, to establish a balance between the subject of action and in this case, the environment, the object it carries. At this point, however, even though all human groups function on their members' consciousness, efficacy, and behavior, only the acts of those groups are capable of driving the development of culture (Goldmann, 1977: 156-160). It can be said that literature is the author's response to the surrounding environment related to human activities.

Human facts are all the results of human activity or behavior, both verbal and physical. These facts can take the form of certain social activities, certain political activities, as well as cultural creations such as philosophy, fine arts, sculpture, and literary arts (Faruk, 1999 : 12). This is the same as the culture used in social sciences. Thus, human facts, just like culture, can be in the form of certain social or individual activities, including cultural works, such as painting, musical, composition, and also literary work.

Goldman also developed the concept of a worldview that could manifest itself in literature and philosophy. According to him, a categorical structure that is a complex whole of ideas, aspirations, and feelings, which connect member of particular social groups is called the worldview (Faruk, 1999: 2).

By using this genetic structuralism approach, it will be known the world view of the author. According to Goldmann, an author cannot possibly have his own views. He voiced the world view of a social group, trans-individual subject (Fananie, 2000: 117). It can be said that literary works will represent the worldview of the authors as members of society.

Based on this opinion, the author's socio-cultural life will influence the literary work written, as Damono said that the socio-cultural background of the author can influence the creation of his works, because basically literature reflects social conditions both individually and collectively (Damono 2013 : 42). The author is part of a particular community and the author channels his reactions to socio-cultural phenomena as well as expresses what is in his mind about an event.

The author's social and cultural life will bring up the author's worldview. This is because the author's world view is formed from the author's view after interacting with the views of social groups in society.

Thus, it can be stated that genetic structuralism is a literary study that links literary structures to societal structures. So that a study cannot eliminate the elements of society that have built a literary work to understand a literary work as a whole.

The genetic structuralism consists of an intrinsic and extrinsic element describe a bellow:

### **1.6.1 Intrinsic Element**

Structural element used to split the structural after the analysis to make it more arranged in a simple element. Those elements include the characters and characterization, plot, setting, point of view, and the theme is explain as follow:

#### **a. Character and Characterization**

According to Richard (1995:127), character is someone in a literary work who has some sort of identity (it needn't be a strong one), an identity which is made up by appearance, conversation, action, name and (possibly) thoughts going on in the head.

Character based on definition of the word is a character that characterizes those attributes. A person who is explained not as an individual personality but as

an example of some vice, or virtue, or type, such as bumpkin, a happy milkmaid. Holman in Narwanti (1999 : 10).

According to Abrams (1970:20), characters are the people portrayed in a dramatic or narrative piece, who are perceived by the readers as having qualities of morality and nature reflected in what they say, in conversation, in what they do.

According to Holman and Horman in Narwanti (1999:10), Characterization is the development of fictional characters that appear as lifelike for the readers.

#### b. Plot

The plot is a series of events that emphasizes the effect relationship (Forster, 1970: 87). Based on Wellek and Warren:

The plot (or narrative structure) is itself composed of smaller narrative structure (episodes incidents). The larger and more inclusive literary structures (the tragedy, the epic, the novel) have developed historically, from earlier, rudimentary, from like the joke, the saying the anecdote, the letter; and the plot of a play or novel is structure or structures (1973:217).

Plot is the narrative structure consisting of a series of events encountered by the perpetrator. Plot is the foundation of literary work. Measure how the story's action will be interrelated, how the story's actions are connected to other actions.

#### c. Setting

Setting is a description of place, time, or event in a literary work. The setting provides a concrete and clear basis for the story. This is important to give the reader a realistic impression, creating a certain atmosphere as if it really did exist and happened. Thus, readers find it easier to operate their imagination.

According to Abrams in Tressyalina (2016:109), the setting is the environment in which the event occurs, which includes the place, time, social, year, or historical period at the time the events are told. It also can be said that setting is divided into three, they are:

1. Setting of time : a time when the event in the story occurs.
2. Setting of place : another physical location or building that places the events in the story.
3. Setting of social : some of the fundamental components related to the psychological condition that occurs along with the plot itself.

In literary work, a story becomes more interesting because it took a certain atmosphere, place and time.

#### d. Theme

According to Nurgiyantoro in Wahyuni (2017:06), the theme is the core or basic idea of a story. From this basic idea, the author's story is built using intrinsic elements, such as plot, characterization and setting. Themes are the origin of the author's brain in telling the imaginary world he creates.

### **2.2.2 Extrinsic Element**

Extrinsic elements are elements that originate outside of the tale. Based on Wellek and Warren in Rokhmansyah (2014:33), it argues that elements of extrinsic literature include biographical elements; psychological element; environment circumstances; and a view of the author of life.

According to Nurgiyantoro in Maretha (2019: 79) communicated the same thing extrinsic elements include; a subjectivity state Author, Author Biography, psychological state, author of environmental conditions. Extrinsic elements are elements which themselves shape literary works from outside literature. There is no independent literary work, but there are still other externally linked influences in communities such as literary customs, environmental culture, literary readers and their psyche.

### **2.3. Social Criticism**

According to Abar (1999: 47) social criticism is a form of communication in a society that aims or serves as control throughout a social system or social process. It means that social criticism can be an important part to controlling the society or individuals. Deviations committed in society can be controlled by functioning social criticism. So, social criticism can also function as the development and maintenance of a social system.

According to Mills (1959:142), social criticism is a term that has been used to describe radical approaches to sociology. Mills also added that social criticism makes three demands on the social scientist. First, that issues be considered from a macroscopic viewpoint, second, that research has an historical perspective and third, that the social world be addressed critically.

Wilson (1984: 210) states that social criticism, which is an assessment or consideration of everything about society, everything in the form of norms, ethics, morals, culture, politics, and other aspects of community life. From this statement, social criticism can be interpreted as control, assessment, or consideration of

something about society that deviates from the order that should occur to improve the situation and maintain social stability. Besides, social criticism can also be an effort to determine the intrinsic value of society through various understandings and interpretations of social reality, namely by giving praise, stating mistakes, and giving consideration.

Furthermore, according to Ratna (2011: 335) among the main genres of literary works, namely poetry, prose, and drama, the genre of prose, especially novels, is considered the most dominant in presenting social elements. This is because the novel has complete story elements, and presents social problems that are relevant to daily life. So that literary works can be used by authors to communicate social problems in society.

The reaction shown by the author to the situation of society at that time could be in the form of social criticism. Social criticism can be a means of delivering messages to the public about a situation that is considered to deviate from social values. In other words, the social point through literary works can be interpreted as social control which can be considered by the community that something is wrong or deviates from what should have happened so that it can be considered in changing social circumstances and balance.

Peter and Sangeetha (2018:154) The word social criticism also refers to a mode of critique that locates the reasons for the prevailing malicious conditions in a society considered to be in a flawed social framework. It examines the literature in the cultural, economic, and social context in which it writes or receives literary pieces. Social critique is the act of using rhetorical means to comment on problems within a society.

Based on Peter and Sangeetha explanation above, it can be concluded that social criticism arises because of the social conditions experienced by someone in

society. Social critics arise due to irregularities that are not following the actual social situation. One of method that can be used to criticize is through literary works. Thus, literary works can function as a medium to express social problems and criticism so that better conditions can be created.

Based on explanations above, the writer intends to analyze social criticism by analyzing social problems that arise in a particular society's culture, especially in American society according to time, and the socio-cultural background of the author. The limits of social criticism discussed in this study are social criticisms that are based on social realities. Social reality that is criticized is a social reality that is considered to be distorted in society and in a certain time.