

Example of middle-class sensibility in the bigamist and high noon. term paper

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



- The Bigamist

As the American middle class of the 1950's went, *The Bigamist* (Ida Lupino, 1953) is one of the few movies that typify the post war middle class sensibility in the country. The economy was flourishing, as a result of which, the suburban middle class started growing fatter around their waist, and some of them even had more money than they knew what to do with. It is often said that " Laziness is the Devil's workshop". This may hold true to the American middle class in general, though in the context of *The Bigamist*, one may say that Harry Graham (Edmond O'Brien) is working his socks off - not so much in the office, but more to keep his dual aspect of his life a secret from his respective wives.

At the start of the movie we see Harry and his wife, Eve (Joan Fontaine) are trying to adopt a child, which is completely normal for any person from any strata of the society. What captures our interest in the very first scene is the fact that Harry is a little squeamish about letting Mr. Jordan (Edmund Gwenn) investigate their private lives. Eve on the other hand is more than happy to put her private life under scrutiny. It seems as though Eve is the one who really wants to have the child, and not Harry. What makes things even more interesting is that we are later told that Harry is the one who had in fact raised the issue of adopting a child.

This is another aspect that defines the stereotyped middle class mentality. As Eve and Harry could not have a child, the former drowns herself in misery at first, but soon afterwards finds her redemption in her husband's business. What Lupino portrays poorly however, is that how Eve could be the fierce businesswoman (as we hear Harry telling Mr. Jordan) and the perfect wife (as

we see in the second scene) at the same time. As middle class wives go, she is probably the perfect one - she is caring, loves her husband, takes good care of the household, and can handle her business too. She is perhaps the best wife any middle class husband of the 50's could ever be inclined to have. Ironically however, she is infertile, and cannot have a child of her own, which brings her marriage with Harry under question.

Eve, as we see, drowns herself in her husband's business and neglects the one person whom she has married, as a result of which we find a rather zombified Harry roaming the streets of Los Angeles. This thirst for emotionally connecting with someone, a thirst which has been induced in Harry by his wife, brings Harry to striking up conversations with strangers in a bus.

What typifies the American middle class sentiment in Eve is that she is always looking to move forward in life - after a successful marriage with Harry, and after the latter has a stable source of income and has amassed a bit of a little fortune, she wants to have a baby; when she finds out that she cannot have one, instead of wallowing in self pity, she decides to drown herself in her husband's work; and finally when she had finds enough emotional stability after recovering from the shock of never being able to have a child of her own, she decides to adopt a child. All these show a person who always wants to move forward in life. Or at least someone who wants to put her regrettable past behind her and keep on going, no matter what may come. Due to this mentality, we are left with a feeling that Phyllis (Ida Lupino) is the one who would take Harry back instead of Eve, as eve knows how to move on.

- High Noon

The middle class sensibility in *High Noon* (Fred Zinnemann, 1952) is a little different from that of *The Bigamist*. The main difference between the middle class sensibility of the respective movies are that one deals with people from the suburban middle class society, while the other deals with the rural middle class society. *The High Noon* is in fact all about the middle class of Hadleyville, a small town in New Mexico, where there is just one man to enforce the law, only one train arrives the whole day, and the anti-socials have more sway on the townspeople than the men of law.

Will Kane (Gary Cooper), the local lawman (who is about to retire), on his wedding day, finds out that Frank Miller, a thug whom he had imprisoned a few years back has been released from prison, and is coming back to Hadleyville for the sole purpose of exacting his revenge on Kane. The good Townspeople of Hadleyville urge Kane to flee with his newlywed wife, Amy Fowler Kane (Grace Kelly). The Townspeople in this regard are ever fearful of the evil force that is looming large on the horizon, a feeling that has been portrayed brilliantly by Zinnemann, through the repeated use of the railway tracks scene.

As Will comes back to take over the mantle of the Marshall for one more day to provide the people of Hadleyville with shelter from Frank Miller's fire, we find that most of the Townspeople are unwilling to jump into the fray to help the one man who has risked everything (even his wife) to save them. Most of them give their family as an excuse to Will for not helping him defend the town against Miller.

When Will goes to the Church to get help, he finds that there always are a

couple of people ready to join the force to defend their town. But the rest of the people within the Church raise an argument that Miller is coming to Hadleyville for the sole purpose of killing Will Kane, and that if the latter had left town, the people would not be in any kind of danger. The middle class mentality that is typified in this particular attitude of the Townspeople is that they do not want to enter someone else's quarrel - even if he is someone who had helped them at a time when they were most vulnerable.

This type of mentality can be found in the middle class all over the world.

The people have lost their sense of belonging, and that of togetherness.

They merely want to progress economically, and would not even lift a finger to help a friend who is in dire need. At some level, High Noon is also about one man standing up to the forces of evil. This is perhaps the forerunner of all the famous comic-book stories (like Spiderman or Batman) that we have come upon in the recent era. However, whether in a small town like Hadleyville, or in huge metropolitan cities like New York or Gotham, very few of the Townspeople are willing to help their savior.

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