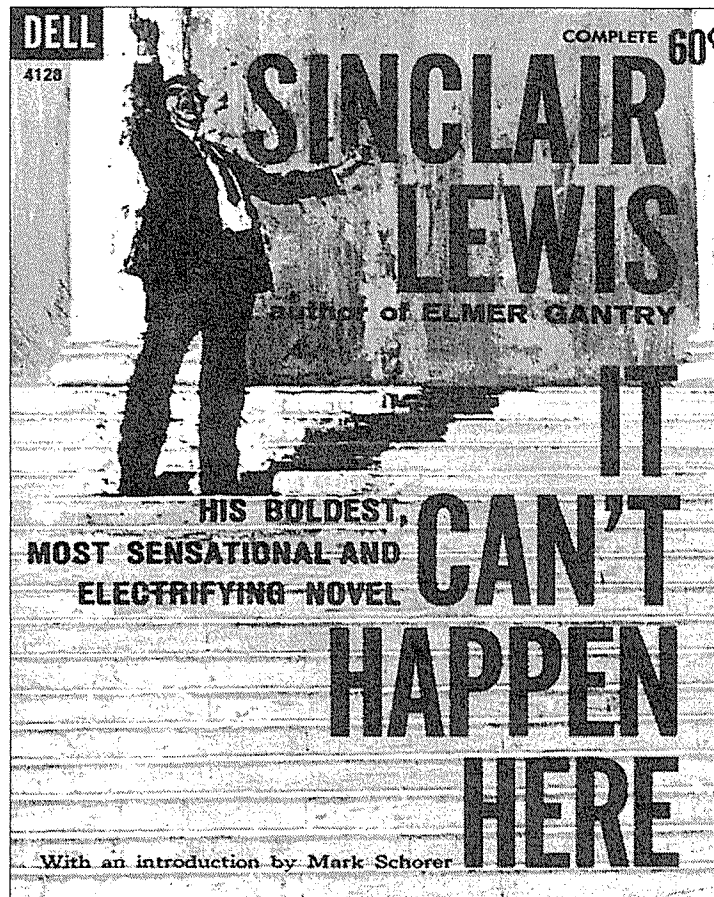


# The SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME EIGHT, NUMBER 1

FALL 1999



*It Can't Happen Here* (published in 1935)

## CALL FOR PAPERS FOR ALA

The Sinclair Lewis Society is planning to hold a session on Lewis at the American Literature Association conference in Long Beach, California, May 25-28, 2000. We welcome abstracts on any aspect of Lewis's work.

Please send abstracts to George Killough, Department of Languages and Literature, College of St. Scholastica, 1200 Kenwood Ave., Duluth, MN 55811 or e-mail: gkilloug@faci.css.edu. The deadline for submission is January 15, 2000.

## CALL FOR PAPERS LEWIS CONFERENCE 2000

The Sinclair Lewis Society is planning to hold a conference in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, Sinclair Lewis's hometown, July 12-14 to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the publication of *Arrowsmith* as well as Lewis's winning of the Pulitzer Prize. The conference will be held at the beginning of Sinclair Lewis Days, an annual five-day event in Sauk Centre.

There will be panels on various Lewis novels and short stories, a showing of the 1931 film version of *Arrowsmith* with Ronald Colman and Helen Hayes, videos of the C-Span programs on Sauk Centre and the CNN program on Steinbeck and Lewis, a tour of Sinclair Lewis's Boyhood Home, and possibly a trip to St. Cloud to see the Lewis Family Papers and the home of Dr. Claude Lewis, Sinclair Lewis's brother.

Papers will be considered on a variety of topics related to Lewis. The year 2000 will also be the 80th anniversary of *Main Street* and the 65th anniversary of *It Can't Happen Here*. We hope to have panels on those novels, on the theatrical adaptation of *It Can't Happen Here*, and on *Hike and the Aeroplane*, Lewis's only adolescent novel.

Proposals for panel discussions, abstracts of papers, and suggestions for activities for the conference are all due by April 30, 2000, but they are welcomed much earlier. Please send them to Sally Parry, Executive Director, Sinclair Lewis Society, Box 4240, Department of English, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4240 or e-mail: separry@ilstu.edu or fax: (309) 438-5414.

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## TROUBLE ON MAIN STREET

By Sally E. Parry  
Illinois State University

Sometimes teachers have trouble getting students interested in a text when they think that the events in a novel or short story occurred in a distant time and have little application to their modern lives. This, although I hate to admit it, can be a first reaction to *Main Street*. One way that I have used to encourage students to continue reading and being engaged in the novel is to require short writing assignments that ask students to predict what will happen at certain points in the book, using their knowledge of narrative conventions.

For high school and beginning college students, teachers can discuss narrative expectations in general terms, referring to fiction, movies, or television shows of various genres and how we as readers and viewers often have certain expectations about what the characters will do and what the outcome will be, based on our experience of similar texts. For more advanced students, reference to critical works like Wallace Martin's *Theories of Narrative* can help provide a theoretical context for why, when they read or watch something, they often will anticipate what will happen next, and sometimes be disappointed if their expectations are not met.

When I taught *Main Street* last fall to a group of college seniors who were all majors in English, some of them did not seem very interested in what was happening in Gopher Prairie early in this century. Some of this lack of interest I attributed to their real concern about graduating and finding a job. However, what I wanted to make clear to them was that Carol was undergoing a similar experience at the beginning of the novel and that her concerns were not all that different from theirs. She

*Parry's Teaching Lewis continued on page 4*

### CONTRIBUTORS

The editor of The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter would like to thank everyone who contributed to this issue by writing articles or sending in notes.

These people include: Frederick Betz, Martin Bucco, Robert Fleming, Roger Forseth, Ralph Goldstein, George Killough, Jacqueline Koenig, Joyce Lyng, Robert McLaughlin, Roberta Parry, Steve Pastore, and Robert Sheckler.

## THE ROAD TO UNDERSTANDING AND REFORM IN *KINGSBLOOD ROYAL*

By Robert Sheckler

Throughout his literary career, Sinclair Lewis was critical of white culture in Midwestern America. His earliest great novel, *Main Street* (1920), characterizes Midwestern society as "a rigid ruling of the spirit by the desire to appear respectable. ...It is dullness made God" (284). *Kingsblood Royal* (1947), one of his last novels, explores the rigid social hierarchies of the Midwest with respect to the disenfranchisement of non-whites. Lewis contrasts this modern conformist Midwestern culture to the racially heterogeneous culture of the pre-American Midwest through the letters of a Negro frontiersman, Xavier Pic. The main action of the book occurs when Pic's great-great-grandson, Neil Kingsblood, tries to redefine himself after discovering that he is one thirty-second part Negro. The reactions of Neil's social circle to his revelation expose the modern Midwestern social hierarchy that defines race in, to use McLaughlin's term, a binary fashion: both black and white exist, but never in the same person. Lewis's hope for the future of the Midwest lies in the small, racially mixed group of people who overcome the binary view of race imposed on them by Midwestern society and accept Neil as a product of several different racial backgrounds. While most people in Neil's town, both black and white, regard him as simply a Negro, Neil's struggle for identity allows him to discover, along with a few friends and neighbors, that he is neither black nor white, but a cultural hybrid. Although Lewis sharply satirizes and condemns the Midwestern social hierarchies that perpetuate the binary view of race, he betrays his lingering hope for Midwestern society through his portrayal of those people, like Neil and Vestal, who stumble into a pluralistic view of society and fight these oppressive hierarchies. *Kingsblood Royal* does not show that Lewis was completely disillusioned with the Midwest; instead, the book both reveals his hope that Midwestern society can still produce people who will question social hierarchies, and it urges those people to take action against social hierarchies and fight to topple them.

*Sheckler's Understanding Kingsblood Royal continued on page 8*

## NEW BOOK ON DREISER AND VEBLEN

Clare Eby, a former member of the board of directors of the Sinclair Lewis Society and an Associate Professor of English at the University of Connecticut at Hartford, has recently published *Dreiser and Veblen, Saboteurs of the Status Quo* (University of Missouri Press, 1998). Eby shows that both authors anticipated many topics that preoccupy cultural critics today: the cultural role of the intellectual, the relationship of science to society, the place of consumption in modern life, and the intersection of class, gender, and power. By placing Dreiser's and Veblen's works into dialogue, she brings together the concerns of literary analysts and social scientists.

### The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter

The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter is published twice a year with help from the Publications Unit of the English Department at Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4240.

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wants to maintain an intellectual life once she has married and for graduating seniors that is also an important thing to think about. It's true that many of Carol's attempts to deepen her intellectual life are thwarted, sometimes by people who aren't as interested in literature and drama as she is, but sometimes by Carol's reluctance to invest more than just a little time or energy in things that she thinks are important, such as beautifying the town or creating waiting rooms for farm wives.

At two points in our reading of the novel, I asked students to write one-page position papers in which they were to predict what would happen next. This assignment obliged them to take some sort of stance on the narrative and how they felt about Carol's various dilemmas which they might be facing in a short while themselves.

The first assignment was given after Carol had developed a strong friendship with Guy Pollock. I asked them, given the dissatisfaction that Carol felt about her relationship with her husband, whether or not she might have an affair sometime during the book. About a third of the class thought no, although some thought she might be tempted by a person she felt was her intellectual equal. Several thought that she would have an affair with Guy, one thought she might have an affair with Miles, and another suggested that she might have an affair with Vida Sherwin.

Three students opted for a more dramatic response. One wrote as Will, sadly aware that his marriage was not going well, and corresponding with Dear Abby about what he should do. Another wrote as Guy, acknowledging that the Village Virus had already gotten him and that he did not have the energy for an affair. The most amusing response was in the form of a newspaper story in which Carol steals Viagra for Will in order to make their sex life more exciting.

The second assignment was written in response to the end of the novel. I asked if Carol could be reasonably content living in Gopher Prairie, given what she had gone through, or whether she would continue to be a restless person who is constrained by society and its expectations of women. About two thirds of the class felt that she would remain in Gopher Prairie, many hoping that her children, especially her daughter, would carry out her desire to be "a bomb to blow up smugness." One thought her daughter might become a social reformer, another hoped she would become involved in the civil rights movement. Of those

who wrote about her son, one was afraid he would become a bully like Cy Bogart, another predicted he would become a hero in World War II.

Of the remaining third of the class, most predicted that Carol would leave. One thought she would move to Minneapolis with her children, another felt she would open a bookstore in another town, and a third, more dramatically, had Carol leaving, but only after killing Will! The saddest response had Carol dying shortly after return, due to causes associated with extreme depression.

In retrospect I feel that these assignments helped my students relate more to Carol and her desires and disappointments in life, and to think more deeply about their own futures. Students who are of traditional college age are often impatient with Carol and her many failed attempts to be happy. Whenever I teach *Main Street*, I tell my students to read it again in ten years and see if they feel the same way about Carol as they do now. Experience in the world will make a big difference. I hope that they return to the novel and will think more kindly of her in light of their own experiences. ✍

## NEWS FROM 1927

The *Duluth News Tribune* on January 26, 1927 ran a story entitled "Sinclair Lewis Suffers Collapse from Overwork." They picked up an AP story from New York that read, "Sinclair Lewis, novelist, is in the Harbor Sanitarium here suffering from a nervous collapse, the *New York Evening Post* says. He was stricken last night at a dinner with friends in the Hotel Algonquin. His publishers said Mr. Lewis's collapse was brought on by overwork on a new novel."

Mark Schorer, in discussing the incident in *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life*, comments that while working on *Elmer Gantry*, "the combination of hard work and hard frivolity exhausted him once more, so that he was compelled to spend three days in the Harbor Sanitarium in the last week of January" (469-70).

## SINCLAIR LEWIS AND LEWIS CARROLL

By Martin Bucco  
Colorado State University

In his survey "This Golden Half-Century, 1885-1935" (*Good Housekeeping*, May 1935), Sinclair Lewis asserts, "We have done well in the matter of writers." He then catalogs forty-four literary geniuses "whose entire or principal activity belongs to our own fifty years" (*MFMS* 268). Beginning randomly enough with Tolstoy, Ibsen, Strindberg, Shaw, and James, Lewis ends even more haphazardly with Hemingway, Lewis Carroll, Pirandello, Joyce, and (dragging in the Dreyfus Affair) Zola. But why, one wonders—a slip of chronology? a bit of tomfoolery? an alcoholic haze?—does Sinclair Lewis claim for "our own fifty years" Lewis Carroll? The Reverend Charles L. Dodgson (1832-1898), the eccentric Oxford mathematician who wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), belongs not to 1885-1935 but to the previous half century.

In explicating "Jabberwocky" in *Through the Looking-Glass* (249), Humpty Dumpty points out the poetic beauty of the portmanteau word *slithy*—a combination of lithe and slimy. The pocket hero of *Our Mr. Wrenn* (1914) discerns next to his table in an Armenian-American restaurant a "pale slithy [*sic*] lady in black, with lines of a torpedo boat..." (39). Later in London, at a Tottenham Court tea-room, William Wrenn hears playful Istra Nash exclaim, "Isn't this like *Alice in Wonderland!*" (137). Playing Alice to William's Dormouse, Istra tries to replicate Lewis Carroll's "Mad Tea-party." The butter is fine, but Istra grows bored for want of Mad Hatter and March Hare.

In one of Sinclair Lewis's better short stories, "Young Man Axelbrod" (*Century Magazine*, June 1917), sixty-five-year-old Knute Axelbrod, an idealistic Yale freshman, learns that one of the idolized professors assigns *Alice in Wonderland* to too-earnest students. Knute immediately buys a used copy and, back in his Ivy League dormitory, chuckles, rolls, and roars, for something in the "grave absurdity of the book appealed to him." Too soon, however, Ray Gribble, Knute's "soft white grub" of a Philistine

roommate, walks in and crushes the old man's healthy joy in this "fine, funny book" by pooh-poohing it as "silly nonsense" (*SSS* 291).

Something of Lewis Carroll's bizarre world also reveals itself in two important novels of the 1920s. In *Main Street* (1920), the heroine's early Mankato hearth mythology—Lewis/Carroll's "tam htab" and "skitamarigg" out of Lewis Carroll's "toves" and "borogoves"—is innocent of night criminals (7); but in *Gopher Prairie*, Judge Milford's fanciful daughter sees the dark ancestral furniture as "a circle of elderly judges, condemning her to death by smothering" (31). Swathed not in legal but in religious theory, the introverted seminarian Frank Shallard, however, is bemused in *Elmer Gantry* (1927) "by the mysteries of Revelation, an Alice in Wonderland wearing a dragon mask" (119).

Lewis Carroll again crops up in two novels of the 1930s. Jessup Whitehead's *The Steward's Handbook and Dictionary* is to Myron Weagle in *Work of Art* (1934) "what an anthology of Shelley, Milton, Chaucer, Byron, Swinburne, and the lyrics of Lewis Carroll would have been to a young poet who, reared in the sticks, had never seen any verse save Longfellow and Bryant" (95). At the Hotel Crillon in New York, hotelier Myron had learned an "Alice-in-Wonderland arithmetic" in keeping with Lewis Carroll's quaint symbolic logic: which is better—ten dollars a day you collect or one hundred a day you don't? (328). As in business, so in politics. In *It Can't Happen Here* (1935), the problem in totalitarian mathematics is: which is better—burning ten books you understand or one hundred you don't? Whose copy of *Alice in Wonderland* is consumed in the Corpo bonfire—and why?—remains a mystery to the novel's protagonist, Doremus Jessup—a "littlish" man, with a small gray mustache, a small gray beard, and a wife who calls him Dormouse (269).

Finally, as in his first novel, Sinclair Lewis summons the spirit of Lewis Carroll in his last. In *World So Wide* (1951), jauntily grotesque Lorenzo Lundsgard smiles like someone who "loves little children and

*Bucco's Lewis and Carroll continued on page 6*



quotations from *Alice in Wonderland*" (159). Indeed, Lewis Carroll is a treasure-trove of familiar quotations, and the American satirist's collocation will remind some readers of the English parodist's amiable little crocodile in chapter two (35):

How cheerfully he seems to grin,  
How neatly spreads his claws,  
And welcomes little fishes in  
With gently smiling jaws!

Postmodern criticism seems doomed to "find" in the don's fairy tales ever deeper and darker anxieties and perversions. One trusts that this mild attention to Sinclair Lewis's easy-going literary indebtedness to Lewis Carroll will not subject the man from Sauk Centre to Freudian analysis as imaginative as anything in *Wonderland*. ✍

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## PRESIDENT CLINTON AS ELMER GANTRY?

Roger Rosenblatt, in an editorial for *Time* (August 31, 1998: 80), made a lengthy comparison between the troubles of President Clinton and those of Elmer Gantry. "He is Elmer Gantry in the flesh and in the heart, and his heart is many chambered. The hero of Sinclair Lewis's great novel about oversize human frailty, made into an even better movie that starred Burt Lancaster and his aggressive teeth, was, like Clinton, a born embracer: 'He had a voice made for promises.' Discovering his calling as a revivalist preacher, Gantry rose to prominence on the words, 'Love is the morning and the evening star.' That was his sermon, which did double duty as his seduction line for women. Eventually his wandering eye brought him down; his once adoring congregation hurled eggs and spat in his face. The nonapologetic address he gave his public—'Brothers and sisters: Goodbye!'—was short and sweet."

Rosenblatt contends that Gantry was a tragic figure

"because his energy and charm were destined to be played out in an arena where conflicting behavior was condemned as hypocrisy." He claims both men are preachers and sinners and liars. Gantry, he says, "understands that the truth contains lies and that both are confused in love.... [In the film Gantry says] 'words and ideas come pourin' out like riled-up strangers. I feel so powerful and full of love, I'm about to explode. I do explode. And then I just about love everybody!' The reporter adds, 'Especially the girls.'"

"The point that Lewis made with Gantry was that the preacher was also a man," says Rosenblatt, although he seems to think that Gantry was more truly sorry than President Clinton. To conclude, he writes, "in a burst of exasperation, Falconer [an evangelist and Gantry's lover], sounding like much of America these days, says to Gantry: 'Tell me a good strong lie that I'll believe. And then kiss me!' Then they go to bed." ✍

## SEXY FAY WRAY

The January 1999 issue of *Playboy* lists Fay Wray as one of the hundred sexiest women of the century. Although movie buffs most remember her for playing King Kong's love interest (1933), she also worked with Sinclair Lewis in the 1940s as a dramaturg, offering him advice and counsel as he was writing plays.

## ROBERT INGERSOLL AND SINCLAIR LEWIS

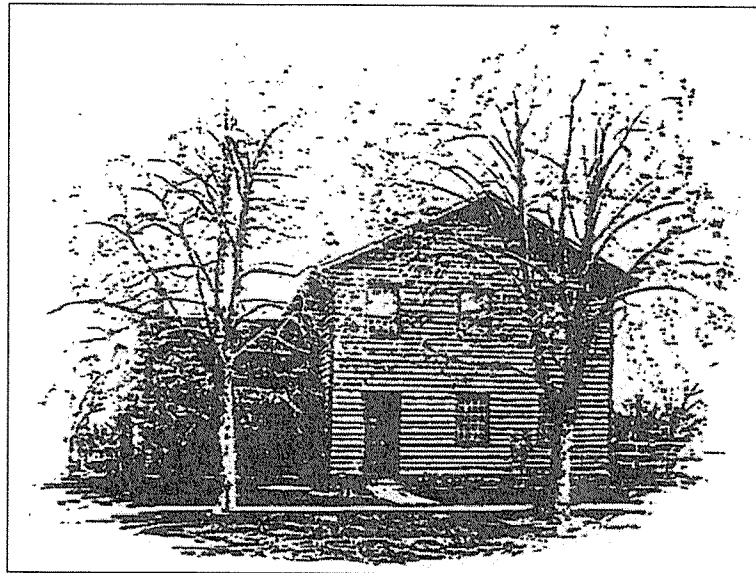
Did you ever wonder who it is that the fierce radical Bone Stillman reads in *The Trail of the Hawk*? Stillman, a literary ancestor of the Red Swede Miles Bjornstam in *Main Street*, is feared by the townsfolk because he was "...the man who didn't believe in God. Bone Stillman read Robert G. Ingersoll, and said what he thought. Otherwise he was not dangerous to the public peace; a lone old bachelor farmer" (22). When Carl "Hawk" Ericson peeks in the window of Stillman's shack, he sees "lithographs of Robert G. Ingersoll, Karl Marx, and Napoleon" (23). Although Carl actually develops intellectual curiosity after becoming friendly with Stillman, the specter of Ingersoll is brought up later in the novel as well. Carl attends Plato College, a conservative and pretentious Midwestern school. The one faculty member who is willing to talk about ideas such as socialism and evolution, Professor Frazer, is forced to resign for even mentioning these "radical" ideas. At morning chapel, the president of the college denounces Frazer: "Well, when you think they are clever, this Shaw and this fellow Wells and all of them that copy Robert G. Ingersoll, just remember that the cleverest fellow of them all is the old Satan, and that he's been advocating just such lazy doctrines ever since he stirred up rebellion and discontent in the Garden of Eden" (110).

Lewis must have admired Ingersoll greatly to have him classed by one of his characters as in the same

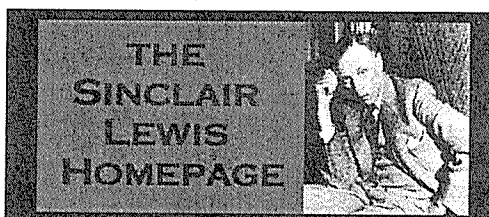
league as Wells and Shaw. Although Robert Ingersoll (1833-1899) may no longer be as famous as he was in the last half of the nineteenth century, he was one of the most influential speakers and writers of his day on a wide variety of moral issues. He was born in Dresden, New York, on August 11, 1833, but spent most of his life in Peoria, Illinois; Washington, D.C.; and New York City. He was the nation's most successful orator, heard by more Americans than any human being before the advent of motion pictures, radio, and television.

Ingersoll was nationally famed as an attorney and litigated some of the foremost cases of his era, including the Star Route trial. He spoke against slavery and the Religious Right of his day, and later became a hero during the Civil War. He was a Republican activist who spoke to packed houses on politics, ethics, human freedom, fairness for minorities and women, freedom of thought, and religion.

He campaigned for every Republican presidential candidate but one from Grant to McKinley and his "Plumed Knight" speech nominating James G. Blaine for the presidency set a standard by which political oratory was measured for more than a quarter of a century. He was admired by a wide variety of progressive thinkers including writers and scientists like Mark Twain, Thomas Edison, Edgar Lee Masters, and Luther Burbank. ✍



*Birthplace of Robert G. Ingersoll, Dresden, NY.  
Orator, Lawyer, Civil War Colonel, Patriot, Free Thinker  
1833-1899*



**Biography      Bibliographies      Films**  
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<http://www.ilstu.edu/~separry/lewis.html>

Lewis does not want the Midwest to be reformed by an outside influence; he appreciates the good parts of the Midwest and its culture, and so hopes that it will be internally reformed in a way that will preserve its virtues intact. Lewis satirizes New York tourists who find “everything west of Pennsylvania contemptible” (*Kingsblood Royal* 3); he does not look to the East to change Midwestern society, but instead looks to typical Midwesterners like Neil. Until Neil discovers his racial heritage that changes his world forever, he and his family represent the typical, complacent, white inhabitants of the Midwest. Their racism is habitual, not ferocious, and exhibits enough contradiction to show that they spend little enough time worrying about the issues of race. Lewis satirizes their complacent reliance on society for their ideas about race and other issues of social propriety, but he saves his condemnations not for people like Neil and Vestal, who are well meaning though ignorant, but for the social hierarchies that perpetuate their ignorance and wrong-headedness. Lewis wants the Neils and Vestals of the Midwest, who he thinks are inherently good, to realize their reliance on discriminatory social hierarchies and lead a reform that will preserve the distinct character of the Midwest and its unique virtues.

Lewis values the Midwest because, before it was incorporated into the American Republic, it possessed a unique, racially heterogeneous culture in which Negroes, white Europeans, and Indians lived together without the constraint of racism and strict social hierarchies. Recent scholarship, especially Richard White's *The Middle Ground* (1991), has supported the existence of this pre-American “middle ground.” Lewis shows the “middle ground” through Xavier Pic's letters, which establish “that Natives, French, and [African Americans] were alive and getting along together in the Minnesota region prior to the arrival of the Americans” (Watts 99). Pic's letters chronicle the decline of the “middle ground” during the colonization of the Midwest by the Anglo-Saxons of the East. Watts argues that “plurality and social equality” were replaced by Eastern “colonizing corruptions” such as the imposition of racism by rigid social hierarchies (96). Lewis harkens back to this pre-American pluralistic society and hopes that it will serve as a model for the reformation of the modern Midwest, its descendant.

Despite its descent from a racially mixed and tolerant culture, Lewis recognizes that modern Midwestern

society values conformity and social hierarchy, not heterogeneity and tolerance. Neil knows nothing of the “middle ground” or of his ancestors' part in it, until he starts to look into his background at the instigation of his father, who wants to increase his family's Anglo-Saxon prestige by exploring their connection to the rigidly hierarchical British royalty. Bored with this, Neil switches his inquiries to his mother's French line, which is as close as he gets to willingly exploring his racial heterogeneity. When his maternal grandmother, the feisty Julie Saxinar, first tells Neil about Xavier Pic, his Negro ancestor, he even begins to invent a persona for Pic as a “pink-cheeked and ribald roisterer with a short and curly golden beard,” which fits his conception of a mildly exotic but still solidly heterogeneous past (*Kingsblood Royal* 57). Because of the conformity required by Midwestern society, Neil does not even consider the possibility that his ancestors might have been racially mixed; instead, he makes them fit his conception of himself as a regular white man in a properly homogeneous white society.

More important than its self-imposed conformity, Midwestern society imposes stereotypes on groups outside of society, especially racial groups, and expects those groups to conform to its ideas about them. Neil, because he is a product of his society, has set ideas about how people of other races should act, think, and feel. His racial stereotypes are first challenged when Julie brings up the fact that Pic may have been part Indian and that his wife was certainly a Chippewa squaw. Neil's views are simple and stereotypical; he thinks that Indians are “very fine people... good at canoeing and the tanning of deerskins” (*Kingsblood Royal* 59). Since Neil thinks that all Indians are wild and uncivilized, he has trouble understanding how he and his solidly boring family could have Indian blood. Neil does not challenge the veracity of stereotypes about Indians; these stereotypes have been imposed on him since childhood and he has no reason to question them. Instead, Neil immediately starts to imagine that he and his family exhibit stereotypical Indian characteristics. When he thinks about Vestal, who is not his blood relation, as an Indian, Neil realizes that the Indian characteristics he has been noticing are just products of his imagination. Still, Neil does not challenge society's racial stereotypes; although the question of whether or not he has Indian blood is troubling, it is not important enough for him to challenge ideas about other



*Sheckler's Understanding Kingsblood Royal continued from page 8*

racism that he has held since his youth. Neil is not a malicious person, nor is he dishonest; rather, his initial inability to challenge racial stereotypes points to the power that Lewis believes social hierarchy exercised in the Midwest.

Although Lewis condemns Midwestern society's internal imposition of conformity and external imposition of racial stereotypes, he was not disaffected with the Midwest as a whole. Watts sees Lewis as disillusioned with the character of a Midwest that has been so thoroughly colonized by Eastern social and racial hierarchies that heterogeneity has all but disappeared. Parry agrees that "these same [Midwestern] towns depressed [Lewis] because, despite their potential, too often the inhabitants tended to perpetuate the social hierarchies, prejudices, and indifference that were prevalent in the cities of the eastern seaboard and Europe" ("Gopher Prairie" 16). Certainly Lewis was critical of Midwestern cities because of their insistence on perpetuating discriminatory social hierarchies, but he did not give up hope for the region. He condemned Midwestern society, but his portrayal of Neil's search for identity, after he discovers his black racial heritage, shows that Lewis believed the Midwest could still produce people who valued racial heterogeneity and fought against social hierarchy.

Neil comes to value racial heterogeneity through a process of self-redefinition initiated by his discovery that Xavier Pic was a full-blooded Negro. This discovery overshadows any lingering anxiety Neil has about having Indian blood; society viewed Negro blood as such a taint that people "having even one drop" were considered "one-hundred-percent [Negroes]" (*Kingsblood Royal* 64-65). Society "[defined] itself by means of oppositions"; a person could not be both black and white at the same time (McLaughlin, "Teaching" 4). Neil himself initially falls prey to this binary view of race; immediately after discovering that his ancestry contains Negro blood, Neil starts to think of himself as a black man and imagines that he exhibits the obvious stereotypical physical features of a Negro. Ironically, Neil's socially imposed inability to see himself as anything but a black man makes it easier for him to discard the stereotypes associated with Negroes. Just minutes after discovering his race, Neil thinks:

All right. If Bid is a Negro, then everything I've ever heard about the Negroes—yes, and maybe everything I've heard about the Jews and the Japs

and the Russians, about religion and politics—all of that may be a lie, too. If you are a Negro, you be one and fight as one. See if you can grow up, and then fight. But I've got to learn what a Negro is; I've got to learn, from the beginning, what I am! (*Kingsblood Royal* 67)

He discards his inner identity as a white man because of society's insistence that "he can't be both [black and white] or a mixture; if he were, then the opposition makes no sense" (McLaughlin "Deconstructing" 2). Society's insistence on a binary view of race forces Neil to discard his white identity and take up an identity as a black person, which he does not fully understand since he has only been exposed to stereotypes about black culture and not the culture itself.

Lewis understands that since racial pluralism is not acknowledged as part of modern Midwestern society, a product of that society, such as Neil, must be re-educated to grasp the concept of racial plurality and understand its value. Neil's search for identity is an expression of his inability to integrate the discovery of his black racial heritage with his life as a "normal" white Midwesterner. To achieve this integration, Neil must first reject the stereotypes that he holds about black society and appreciate its full variety. He gets to know black families that are "disappointingly like his own" (Fleming 219) and young black professionals who consider themselves "American and blatantly proud of it" (*Kingsblood Royal* 190). While he forges strong friendships with these middle-class families and individuals, Neil is still con-

*Sheckler's Understanding Kingsblood Royal continued on page 10*

## NEW MEMBERS

*The Sinclair Lewis Society welcomes the following new members who have joined since the publication of the Spring 1999 newsletter:*

Northeast Minnesota  
Historical Center  
Archivist Patricia Maus  
Library 375  
University of Minnesota  
in Duluth  
10 University Drive  
Duluth, MN 55812

McIntosh & Otis  
353 Lexington Avenue  
New York, NY 10016  
(This firm is the now  
literary executors of the  
Sinclair Lewis estate)

Robert Scheckler  
74 Fresh Pond Parkway  
Cambridge, MA 02138-3334

Alyce Olson  
217 Railroad Avenue Court  
Sauk Centre, MN 56378

Wade A. Smith  
3084 Breezeway Dr.  
Rockford, IL 61109

fused by the lower-class members of black society who “remain exotic primitive figures” (Fleming 219). As he comes to view these lower-class blacks as people, rather than looking at them through the stereotypes he has grown up with, Neil discovers that they’re “swell friends” and “much decenter...and much smarter” than many members of polite white society (*Kingsblood Royal* 257). Eventually, Neil’s open-minded approach to experiencing black culture allows him to appreciate its truly heterogeneous nature, although he persists in rejecting white society because its insistence on the binary view of race precludes him from remaining part of it while also identifying himself with black society.

Lewis does not accept Neil’s initial rejection of white society as a whole; like Neil, Lewis condemns the social hierarchies that preclude racial plurality, but rejecting white society as a whole would implicitly deny its own inherent heterogeneity and virtues. For Lewis, Neil represents the seed of “the middle ground”: he is not black or white, but instead he is a mixture of Negro, Indian, French, Scotch, and English. Neil’s search for self-definition is the search for racial heterogeneity in the modern world. If Neil is not able to reconcile his racial heterogeneity, then there really is no place in Midwestern society for anything but racism and social hierarchies. Parry argues that Lewis is completely disillusioned with the “Midwestern ideal of creating a place where equality and democracy can exist” by the end of *Kingsblood Royal* (“Gopher Prairie” 25). While Lewis may be disillusioned with the present state of the society, he still has hope that people like Neil can fight to bring back the old Midwest and the “middle ground.”

Lewis shows his belief that racial plurality is viable in the modern Midwest through Neil’s attempts to integrate black and white society for himself. Initially, Neil attempts to keep his life in white society separate from his life in black society, but later on he realizes that he must integrate the two. Neil decides to face the white community’s prejudices while affirming his place in the black community by declaring his black blood at a meeting of the men of polite white society. He proclaims that he is “very cheerful about being a Negro...and about the future of our race” (*Kingsblood Royal* 229). Neil realizes that declaring his race will have great social and financial consequences for himself and his family, but he cannot live with the hypocrisy of valuing the black community while still declaring that he is completely white. Lewis affirms the value of Neil’s racially

hybrid nature, since Neil fights to stay a part of white society even after he has declared that he is also a part of the black community. Neil’s insistence on trying to integrate his life as a white man with his experiences in black society points to Lewis’s belief that the racial plurality of the “middle ground” has been suppressed by the social hierarchies of the modern Midwest, but not entirely eradicated.

Lewis’s hope for the new emergence of the “middle ground” in Midwestern society relies not only on the integration of different cultures by cultural hybrids like Neil, but also on the acceptance of cultural integration by people, like Vestal, who belong solidly to one cultural background. Vestal’s decision to stay with Neil and incorporate his racial heterogeneity into their family is the most telling mark of Lewis’s hope. Initially, Vestal is unable to integrate Neil’s black heritage with her conception of him as the average white man whom she married; she sees him as “two people: the boy [she] married and a Negro whose interests [she doesn’t] know at all” (*Kingsblood Royal* 334). Ultimately, Vestal accepts Neil as a racial hybrid and decides “to choose her redefined family over public opinion” (Parry, “Boundary Ambiguity” 76). Vestal’s decision shows Lewis’s belief that people of different racial backgrounds can live together and fight together for the rebirth of racial plurality in the Midwest.

The last scene of the book depicts a rebirth of the “middle ground” in the midst of mob violence engendered by racism and the insistence of Midwestern culture on upholding social hierarchies and the binary view of race. Neil and Vestal are joined by a group of black and white friends to help them protect their right to live in their own house. This small group that consists of blacks, whites, and cultural hybrids like Neil, represents Lewis’s belief that the racial plurality of the “middle ground” has a place in the modern Midwest. The mob, that “bubbles on a dark cataract of hate” (*Kingsblood Royal* 345) is the end product of Midwestern racism and intolerance. The mob does not attack Neil because he has done anything wrong, but simply because Midwestern social hierarchies do not allow black people to live in a good white neighborhood. By refusing to leave their house, Neil and Vestal implicitly challenge the social hierarchies on which Midwestern society is built. Although the formation of the mob is Lewis’s most vehement condemnation of Midwestern social intolerance,

*Sheckler's Understanding Kingsblood Royal continued on page 11*

*Sheckler's Understanding Kingsblood Royal continued from page 10*

the hope that Lewis sees in the rebirth of the "middle ground" overshadows his disillusionment with Midwestern society. Lewis most clearly states his belief in the viability of racial plurality in this last scene. Here Vestal fully accepts Neil as a racial hybrid; she says to the police officers who have come to arrest the Negroes, "Didn't you know I'm a Negro, too?" By identifying herself as a Negro, though she is racially white, Vestal affirms Neil's racial heterogeneity and actively participates in it. Neil's willingness to fight for his rights and his friends' willingness to support him show "that one's race is no longer something that has to be hidden, that black people will defend their rights if necessary, and that well meaning whites will join their Negro neighbors in a just cause" (Fleming 220). Thus, Lewis shows that he has not given up on the Midwest. He believes that the time is now right for the rebirth of the racial and cultural plurality of the "middle ground" and that both blacks and whites should fight to topple discriminatory social hierarchies. The last scene of the novel does not show Lewis's disillusionment; rather, he simply recognizes that the rebirth of the "middle ground" will not come without a long, hard fight. Nevertheless, the last words of the novel affirm that the Midwest is going in the right direction; like Neil, Vestal, and their supporters, Lewis hopefully asserts that "We're moving" (*Kingsblood Royal* 348), that the reform is beginning, and that one day soon racism will be the exception not the rule. ✍

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## THOREAU AS A SOURCE FOR CHUM FRINK?

Sinclair Lewis Society member Ralph Goldstein brings up a possible source for the name T. Cholmondeley Frink, Zenith's best poet and author of the syndicated column "Poemulations" as well as creator of "Ads that Add" (*Babbitt* 111).

Mr. Goldstein discovered information about Thomas Cholmondeley. "While searching the net for evidence to prove to my students that Henry David Thoreau led an active public life, I found a list of letters from 1857-1862. There were three letters written to T. Cholmondeley in 1857. My mind was reeling: Who was he? What might be the connection to Lewis's Chum Frink? I discovered the answer to the first question in F. B. Sanborn's *Life of Thoreau* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1917). Thomas Cholmondeley was an 'English scholar, colonizer, and country gentleman' who met Thoreau through mutual friends,

sent him books on 'Hindoo' philosophy, encouraged him to be more socially active, and didn't like Walt Whitman. He died at age 40 while on his honeymoon in 1864.

"Connecting this guy to Chum Frink is a more difficult problem. The various books consulted in Claremont's Honnold Library revealed nothing. The several references to Thoreau in Schorer's biography of Lewis shed no strong light; there is, however, a tantalizing mention of Lewis's 'Dictionary of Names for Characters in Fiction,' an enormous list diligently collected over the years. I suspect that this dictionary might be in the collection at Yale. The search continues."

The newsletter thanks Ralph Goldstein for this possible fascinating connection. Given George Killough's scholarship on Lewis's interest in Thoreau and his works, this connection may be quite solid. ✍

## THE NOBEL PRIZE LITERATURE BUREAU

Stan P. A. Gipman is a Nobel watcher who has founded The Nobel Prize Literature Bureau, a non-profit enterprise that is not affiliated with the Nobel Foundation or the Swedish Academy. The Bureau sends free all kinds of information on the 95 Nobel Prize Winners in Literature (9 women and 86 men).

He writes, "I visited The Sinclair Lewis Homepage; this site is one of the best I have found on the Nobel Laureates for Literature. My compliments." The following books focus on Lewis as a Nobel laureate:

1. Frenz, Horst, *Nobel Lectures Literature 1901-1967*, Amsterdam/New York: Elsevier, 1969. 270-83. (Citation, Presentation by Erik Axel Karlfeldt, Banquet remarks, "The American Fear of Literature" by Sinclair Lewis, Autobiography and Biographical note).
2. *Nobel Prize Library: Yasunari Kawabata/ Rudyard Kipling/Sinclair Lewis*, New York: Gregory, 1971. 237-372. (Presentation Address, "The Man Who Knew Coolidge," "A Letter from the Queen," and *Babbitt* (excerpt), "The Life and Works of Sinclair Lewis" by Mark Schorer, and "The 1930 Prize" by Gunnar Ahlström, translated by Dale McAadoo.)
3. *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook 1985*.
4. *Dictionary of Literary Biography Documentary Series I*.
5. *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism: Volume 13, 23, and 39*.
6. *Discovering Authors: Modules: Most-studied Authors Module and Novelist Module*.
7. *Major 20th-Century Writers*.
8. *World Literary Criticism*.
9. Wysson, Tyler (ed.), *Nobel Prize Winners*, New York: Wilson, 1987. 627-30.
10. *Contemporary Authors*, Vol. 133, Detroit: Gale, 1991. 229-34. (Sketch by Kevin S. Hile with much bibliography.)
11. *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 102, Detroit: Gale, 1991. 188-95. (By Victor Lasseter with much bibliography.)
12. Espmark, Kjell, *The Nobel Prize in Literature: A Study of the Criteria behind the Choices*, Boston: Hall, 1991.
13. Di Renzo, Anthony, *If I Were Boss: The Early Business Stories of Sinclair Lewis*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1997.

Gipman has made a list with the 35 Nobel Lectures in English. Not every Nobel Prize Winner did deliver a Nobel Lecture. The rights of this lecture were given to the Nobel Foundation.

Nobel Lectures 1901-1998:

1. 1908: Rudolf Eucken, Germany, "Naturalism or Idealism?"
2. 1923: William Yeats, Ireland, "The Irish Dramatic Movement."
3. 1930: Sinclair Lewis, USA, "The American Fear of Literature."
4. 1938: Pearl Buck, USA, "The Chinese Novel."
5. 1950: Bertrand Russell, Great Britain, "What Desires are Political?"
6. 1951: Pär Lagerkvist, Sweden, "The Myth of Mankind."
7. 1957: Albert Camus, France, "Nobel Lecture."
8. 1959: Salvatore Quasimodo, Italy, "The Poet and the Politician."
9. 1963: Giorgos Séferis, Greece, "Some Notes on Modern Greek Tradition" (see: Frenz, Horst, *Nobel Lectures Literature 1901-1967*, Amsterdam/London/New York: Elsevier 1969).

10. 1968: Yasunari Kawabata, Japan, "Japan, the Beautiful and Myself."
11. 1970: Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Russia, "Nobel Lecture" (given in 1980).
12. 1971: Pablo Neruda, Chile, "Towards the Splendid City."
13. 1972: Heinrich Böll, Germany, "An Essay on the Reason of Poetry."
14. 1975: Eugenio Montale, Italy, "Is Poetry Still Possible?"
15. 1976: Saul Bellow, USA, "Nobel Lecture 1976."
16. 1977: Vicente Aleixandre, Italy, "Nobel Lecture 1977."
17. 1978: Isaac B. Singer, USA, "Nobel Lecture 1978."
18. 1979: Odysseus Elytis, Greece, "Nobel Lecture 1979."
19. 1980: Czeslaw Milosz, Poland/USA, "Nobel Lecture 1980" (see: Allén, Sture (ed.), *Nobel Lectures Literature 1968-1980*, Singapore/London/Hong Kong: World Scientific, 1993).
20. 1982: Gabriel García Márquez, Colombia, "The Solitude of Latin America."
21. 1983: William Golding, Great Britain, "Nobel Lecture 1983."
22. 1985: Claude Simon, France, "On the End of the Novel."
23. 1986: Wole Soyinka, Nigeria, "This Past Must Address Its Present."
24. 1987: Joseph Brodsky, Russia/USA, "Nobel Lecture 1987."
25. 1988: Nagieb Mahfuz, Egypt "Nobel Lecture 1988."
26. 1989: Camilo José Cela, Spain, "Eulogy to the Fable."
27. 1990: Octavio Paz, Mexico, "In Search of the Present" (see: Allén, Sture (ed.), *Nobel Lectures Literature 1981-1990*, Singapore: World Scientific, 1990).
28. 1991: Nadine Gordimer, South Africa, "Writing and Being."
29. 1992: Derek Walcott, Saint Lucia, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory."
30. 1993: Toni Morrison, USA, "Once upon a Time."
31. 1994: Kenzanburo Oë, Japan, "Japan, the Ambiguous and Myself."
32. 1995: Seamus Heaney, Ireland, "Crediting Poetry" (see: Allén, Sture (ed.), *Nobel Lectures Literature 1991-1995*, Singapore: World Scientific, 1997, and also *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook 1991-1995*).
33. 1996: Wislawa Szymborska, Poland, "The Poet and the World."
34. 1997: Dario Fo, Italy, "Against Jesters Who Defame and Insult." (With cartoons!!!)
35. 1998: José Saramago, Portugal, "How Characters Became the Masters and the Author Their Apprentice" (see: *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook 1996-1998*).

### Call for Papers for *Midwestern Miscellany*

*Midwestern Miscellany* will be devoting an issue to Sinclair Lewis, guest edited by Sally Parry. She welcomes essays on any aspect of Lewis's life and work. Essays should be no more than 25 double-spaced pages. Documentation should be MLA style. Deadline for completed essays is September 1, 2000. Authors published in *Midwestern Miscellany* must be members of the Society for Midwestern Literature or must become members prior to publication of their essays. Send e-mail to [separry@ilstu.edu](mailto:separry@ilstu.edu) or fax (309) 438-5414.

For information on the Society for Midwestern Literature, please write David Anderson, Bessey Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1033



## NEWS FROM SAUK CENTRE

### SINCLAIR LEWIS DAYS

Sinclair Lewis Days this year was a big success, highlighted by a Pie and Ice Cream Social, a parade, and fireworks. Other activities included a Kiddie Parade, a Children's Concert, a street dance featuring Bob and the Beachcombers, a Heart of the Lakes Bike Tour, a Craft Show and Flea Market, a Softball Tournament, and a production of *Peter Pan* put on by the Prairie Fire Children's Theatre. There was also food for the soul as well as the stomach. An ecumenical service was held at the Episcopal Church of the Good Samaritan, a polka mass was held at St. Paul's Catholic Church, and the American Legion sponsored a pancake breakfast.

The Miss Sauk Centre Pageant was another highlight of Sinclair Lewis Days. There were nine contestants who competed for the title. Candidates were judged on pre-pageant involvement, personal interview, talent, evening gown, and overall impression. The winner, Kate Bellefeuille, sang and did sign language to the song "Hero" by Maria Carey. Miss Sauk Centre of 1980, Cindy Sunderman, a current Mrs. Minnesota candidate, was the Grand Marshall for this year's Sinclair Lewis Days parade.

Sinclair Lewis Days also featured a Treasure Hunt this year. Contestants were looking for a Sinclair Lewis Days magnet and the winner, Mark Hokanson, who located the magnet on a pop machine in the Sinclair Lewis Campgrounds, received \$100 in chamber bucks. The clues were:

Monday:

I'm in a place where many venture  
From both far and near.  
Sinclair Lewis Days is a time  
Which comes just once a year.

Tuesday:

My place has been part of our town  
For generations to enjoy.  
Just watch out for the children,  
Every girl and boy.

Wednesday:

There are three days left  
And many sights to see.  
I'll bet you wish you knew  
Where to find me.

Thursday:

Take the path to find me.  
And make sure everyone pays.  
You'll see mallards, sportsmen  
And fish near the blaze.

Friday:

If this clue finds you  
Then I know I didn't drop.  
This job of writing clues is tough,  
I think I need a pop.

### BUT WHAT OF THE INTERPRETIVE CENTER?

The city of Sauk Centre is seriously considering moving the Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center and Museum to some undisclosed place and making the site available for a commercial business such as a fast food restaurant. The Sinclair Lewis Foundation and other concerned citizens are urging interested people to express their opinions to the local newspaper. If, after reading the information about the proposed forced move of the Interpretive Center by the city of Sauk Centre, you are concerned, then please write to the *Sauk Centre Herald*, 522 Sinclair Lewis Avenue, Sauk Centre, MN 56378 or fax them at (320) 352-5647. All letters to the editor must be signed to be published. You may also address letters to Joe Heinen, City Clerk, 405 Sinclair Lewis Blvd., Sauk Centre, MN 56378.

A former resident of Sauk Centre, Juleen Trisko-Schneider, wrote to the *Sauk Centre Herald* earlier this year, and said in part, "I would be disappointed if the decision was made to move the center to some out-of-the-way site so that the city could woo a Perkins, Target, or other corporation. Right now as people come off the highway, they see a beautiful park and have a chance to learn something about the man who made Sauk Centre different from all of the other small towns along the highway. Why would we want to lose that uniqueness in order to become just like any other little city on the route?"

## CHAMBER, INTERPRETIVE CENTER IN GOOD LOCATION

From: Sally E. Parry  
Executive Director  
Sinclair Lewis Society

Originally printed in the Sauk Centre Herald on August 10, 1999.

I write with some concern about the proposed removal of the Chamber of Commerce and the Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center from their present location. As a Sinclair Lewis scholar and executive director of the Sinclair Lewis Society for the past five years, I have had several occasions to visit Sauk Centre. One of the things that I've always admired about the community was that they were proud of their most famous native son. Having the Interpretive Center right off the highway where other people can find out about Lewis and the rest of Sauk Centre is an inspired idea. Otherwise people might just drive by, figuring they can stop for a quick meal at any other exit.

Sauk Centre is unique because people look to it as the original source for *Main Street*. It would be a shame for the city to move something that reminds everyone of why the city is so special, not only to its citizens but to the whole world.

## SAUK CENTRE IS THE PLACE TO BE

The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* picked Sauk Centre as its recommended getaway spot on March 28, 1999 (G10). "The Pulse of Main Street," written by Jim Umhoefer, a free-lance writer and member of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, begins with one of Lewis's most famous quotes: "This is America, a town of a few thousand, in a region of wheat and corn and dairies and little groves. The town is, in our tale, called Gopher Prairie, Minnesota, but its Main Street is the continuation of Main Streets everywhere."

Most of the article discusses Lewis's influence on his home town and its identity. "Witness such names as Sinclair Lewis Park, Gopher Prairie Motel, Main Street Press, Main Street Theater, Main Street Realty. The local sports teams are called the Mainstreeters." Umhoefer admits that Lewis is still not appreciated by everyone in Sauk Centre, although many are glad of the business that comes from being associated with Lewis.

"Next year is the 80-year anniversary of the publication of *Main Street*. There will be reporters in town to do their take on the world's most famous Main Street. Some will come to prove their own biases about the downside of small-town life.

Others will be more open to how Sauk Centre has changed in 80 years yet has still kept its sincere handshake and unself-conscious charm."

The article mentions where to stay, where to eat, what to see and do, and the website, [www.saukcentre.com](http://www.saukcentre.com). Umhoefer ends with some of the nicest words Lewis ever wrote about his home town. "It was a good time, a good place, and a good preparation for life."

## ANNUAL SINCLAIR LEWIS WRITERS' CONFERENCE

The 1999 Sinclair Lewis Writers' Conference was held Saturday, October 9 at the Sauk Centre Junior High. Participants came from all over Minnesota to attend workshops held by writers Patricia Hampl, Chris Welsch, and Brent Olson and to hear Keynote Speaker Jon Hassler talk about "Writing Your Memoirs." He shared his own experiences in writing memoirs and also discussed how other authors have dealt with the process. Hassler is a Professor Emeritus of St. John's University in Minnesota and author of 12 books including *Staggerford* (1977) and *A Green Journey*, which was an NBC movie of the week with Angela Lansbury and Denholm Elliot in 1990.

The workshop sessions were held three times during the conference so that all participants could hear each of the guest speakers. Patricia Hampl, Regents' Professor at the University of Minnesota and a MacArthur Fellow, spoke on "Memory and Imagination." She is the author of two memoirs, *Virgin Time* and *A Romantic Education*, and two volumes of poetry. Chris Welsch, a travel reporter for the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, spoke on "Basics of Travel Writing from an Editor's Point of View." He is the winner of five Lowell Thomas awards for writing and photography and spoke on the nuts and bolts of breaking into the travel market, contacting editors, and targeting work to specific audiences. Brent Olson writes a syndicated weekly column on rural lifestyles from a western Minnesota perspective. His talk, entitled "From the Heart: Writing a Rural Lifestyles Column," focused on how to write columns and essays, especially in a rural setting.

The 1999 conference is the tenth annual and is a tribute to Lewis, who took time to help other writers hone their craft. The major purpose of the conference each year is to encourage and inspire Minnesota writers. Sponsorship is provided by The Loft, with funding provided by the Blandin Foundation; The Minnesota Humanities Commission; The Central Minnesota Arts Board; The Stearns County Historical Society; and the Sinclair Lewis Foundation. ✍

## SINCLAIR LEWIS AND THE WEB: INFORMATION AND REQUESTS

The Sinclair Lewis site remains popular with students, book collectors, and readers of Lewis. Since October 1998, the website has had over 17,000 visitors. Below are recent questions to the Sinclair Lewis website. Material in brackets are either answers that were sent or comments by the editor. Hope you enjoy reading them as much as I enjoy receiving them.

(SL)

I am a project manager at Primary Source Media (div. of Gale Group) in Woodbridge, CT. We publish educational CD-ROMs and subscription-based on-line material. We will need to get permission to use an excerpt of one of Sinclair Lewis's works. I would appreciate it if you could let me know how to reach the Estate of Sinclair Lewis for a permission request. [The Lewis Estate should now be addressed c/o McIntosh & Otis, 353 Lexington Ave, New York, NY 10016.]

(SL)

I would like to know the date on which Sinclair Lewis received the Nobel Prize. [December 10, 1930.]

(SL)

Greetings! *Writer's Digest* in its November issue will list the 100 Best Writers of the 20th century as determined by our readers, staff, and editorial advisory board. Nominees were rated on their influence on the writing world; the quality of their work; and the degree to which their writing exhibits originality or experimentation. Sinclair Lewis is among the writers on the list. At our Web site ([www.writersdigest.com](http://www.writersdigest.com)), we plan to run the names of the 100 Best Writers along with links to sites about the writers. We plan to include your site in the list about Sinclair Lewis.

(SL)

Driving back from Bozeman we saw the sign...I did not only read him, I loved him. I may not have read everything, but almost. The latter days were not the same as

the earlier stories. I've often thought I read everything he wrote...but then I was in my 20's and I knew everything! Recently, I just saw a movie about a bear and Anthony Hopkins in the wilds and I knew I had reference to some executive who went to the store and bought his hunting equipment to get away, etc.... I remember his departure down river in the canoe after the trials and challenges. Yes, I'm an Old Sailor who read these books at sea. I forgot the name of this one...could you help me out? [Sounds like *Mantrap* to me. It was set in the 1920s in Canada and was about a lawyer who went to the wilderness to relieve stress, fell in love with a woman married to an outdoorsman and they ran away together. There was a silent film version with Clara Bow.]

(SL)

I am the webmaster of SmarTown.com, the new exciting educational resource centre on the net developed by Strategic Technologies Pte. Ltd., a Singaporean IT company. SmarTown.com aims to be the educational resource centre in Southeast Asia with 100,000 and more, top quality educational links, products, and services. We are inviting webmasters from all over the world to be part of this exciting venture, and asking them to introduce other useful sites to us. We have found that your site at: [www.ilstu.edu/~separry/lewis.html](http://www.ilstu.edu/~separry/lewis.html) has valuable educational information, and therefore we would be pleased if you could confirm that we create a link from our site to your site so that we can provide the user with a link to your quality content. Feel free to visit our site at: [www.SmarTown.com](http://www.SmarTown.com) to see how we plan to link to your site. We would be most grateful if you can let us have your consent.

—Thank you for your permission. I've created the link and you will be able to see it from 14/8/99. To see it, please visit [www.SmarTown.com](http://www.SmarTown.com). Once you have logged in, go to our Students' Club from the main menu. In the Students' Club, under Subjects, click on Arts to check out your link.

(SL)

I am looking for information on Lewis the poet and any on-line collections of his poetry. [Outside of the poem

“Launcelot” there is no poetry by Lewis that I am aware of on the web.]

(SL)

I am researching Lewis to try to figure out why he is seldom listed among the great novelists of the 20th century. On a list of 100 top American novels he is mentioned once maybe at #66 for *Main Street*. On an English language listing he is not mentioned at all. Why are Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck, and Fitzgerald mentioned but no Lewis? What has happened to his reputation?

(SL)

The site is wonderful! I am impressed with the amount of information it contains and the ease with which one can use the links. I am a retiree member of a Pen & Plate organization writing an essay on Lewis for presentation to the organization. My research attempts to address the question: “Why isn’t Sinclair Lewis better remembered as a great 20th century novelist?” As a young man growing up, I read *Arrowsmith* with inspiration, *Babbitt* with delight, and *It Can’t Happen Here* with fright. Why aren’t these books better remembered in lists of 100 best books of the century? Why do we read only about Hemingway, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, and Steinbeck? Lewis’s characterizations are graphic, vivid, and lovely. Why aren’t these things remembered by literary analysts?

—Thank you for your reply. I like your quote from *It Can’t Happen Here*. I am pleased that there is a new biography coming out as the Schorer is poor—poorly written, not cohesive, and really doesn’t give much of a feeling for the author. For me, as a boy growing up in the thirties, *Arrowsmith* was inspirational and *Babbitt* and *Main Street* opened my eyes. I liked the style of the characterizations. And to think that *It Can’t Happen Here* was written in 1935 is just amazing and for me it is still very relevant. I have quoted it all of my adult life when discussions of extremist groups are seen as only foreign problems. It is a shocker and should be read today. My daughter took a “Modern Novel” course at Vanderbilt in the ‘70’s and Sinclair Lewis was no part of it.

We have a unique program here at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, a small public liberal arts college, which is a program for seniors (over fifty qualifies, how about that) and permits peer teaching so some of us retirees get involved in teaching, a

wonderful “second career.” PhD’s in literature will teach Faulkner for example. Men taking the course will say, “It doesn’t make sense to me!” and the teacher will say, “Read it Again!!” Hemingway and Steinbeck have all been read so they are not course matter. However, for me, Sinclair Lewis told tales about the midwest where I grew up and they were real, live stories. I could see the town and the people and hear their conversations. And then, the editor in *It Can’t Happen Here* was the small town editor hero just like the Westerns portrayed heroic editors in the movies. These were people of principle, like Arrowsmith. Steinbeck had his victims of bad times and Hemingway had his victims of war and testing, but Lewis had his heroes of everyday life in America. Why oh why don’t we look to them for heroic stature instead of the fairy tales about George Washington and his cherry tree? Well, you know how I feel. And so, I will work on an essay for my Pen and Plate Club to extol the relevance of Sinclair Lewis.

(SL)

Back in the 1940’s or thereabouts, I lived in Canada. My Dad had business daily during the summer, in what is called the Muskoka District, part of Ontario. We used to make deliveries to Sinclair Lewis’s summer cottage. My brother and I would go with Dad on his daily trips, often times only one of us at a time. I can’t say that I know where the exact location would have been. I wish I could. We used to travel from Orillia to Bala and Sudbury, mostly through Gravenhurst and around the lake from there. We would go alternate routes around the lake. I was doing a little exploring of Stephen Leacock tonight and remembered Sinclair Lewis. I had to go to [www.Canada.com](http://www.Canada.com) to find anything with his name on it, and I’m glad I came tonight. Thank you, I will return again some day.

—I was just a small child at the time, so I really don’t have any recollections of Sinclair Lewis, just that he was one of my Dad’s customers at his cottage in the Muskoka District in Ontario, Canada. We lived in Orillia at the time. It was probably the late 30’s/early 40’s.

(SL)

Thank you for your website. It has touched me deeply. I had only vaguely heard of Sinclair Lewis and in a round-about way was doing research on Minnesota at

[www.InformationPlease.com](http://www.InformationPlease.com). It mentioned the author, his period of writing and subjects. I went to InfoSeek, arrived at your site, and read the entire excerpt of *Main Street*. I can only ineloquently sum my reading experience as wow! Few writers today (at least not the popular ones) come close to the human understanding I read in those few pages. Thank you for taking the time and effort to expose people to this author.

(SL)

I recently found *Kingsblood Royal* at a flea market here in New York. Why is it almost impossible to find this book anywhere? [It has been out of print for years.]

(SL)

I recently came across a book I was hoping you may be able to help me with. It is by S. S. Lewis and the title is *Eumeemie: A Legend of Cannon Falls*, published in Cannon Falls, Minnesota in 1911. Is this Sinclair Lewis? Any help would be appreciated. [No relation.]

(SL)

I'm an old Sinclair Lewis fan and have read *Elmer Gantry* numerous times. IMHO, the movie was well acted but inexcusably changed the story line. I firmly believe that a remake, sticking more closely to the book, would be very well received—perhaps as a TV miniseries. Here's my cast:

Elmer Gantry: Woody Harrelson  
Eddie Fislinger: Tom Hanks  
Lulu Bains: Alicia Silverstone  
Floyd Naylor: Jim Carrey  
Sharon Falconer: Jaclyn Smith or Jane Seymour  
Cleo Benham Gantry: Helen Hunt

I'd like to get some feedback from all of you. Feel free to suggest alternative cast members. Lowell J. Satre, Jr. [AkaJakeJr@aol.com](mailto:AkaJakeJr@aol.com).

—In re-reading my original post (after refreshing my memory), I realize that I really wanted Tom Hanks to play Frank Shallard. I can't say who should play Eddie Fislinger. The main problems I have with the changes in the movie are these: 1. Lulu Bains allegedly becomes a prostitute and talks about exposing Gantry's past when he comes to the big city. What actually happens to her is

less melodramatic but more true to life. 2. Sharon Falconer is made into the female lead, which is not necessarily so in the novel. Please share my ideas with the Sinclair Lewis Society. I'd welcome their feedback.

(SL)

AHEAD-multimedia in Stockholm has made a splendid CD-ROM on Alfred Nobel. The name of the CD-ROM is Alfred Nobel: The Man and the Prize. It contains more than 1000 photographs, animated and narrated sections with design, music, video, virtual reality film clips, and information about the time when Alfred Nobel lived. There are sequences from Stockholm and Oslo today, where the Nobel festivities take place each year on the 10th of December. All the Nobel Laureates since the prize was first awarded in 1901 are represented, and there are links to useful websites on the Internet. The address:

Ahead Multimedia AB  
Box 24135 SE-10451  
Stockholm Sweden  
E-mail: [info@multimedia.se](mailto:info@multimedia.se)  
On-line: [www.multimedia.se](http://www.multimedia.se)

(SL)

Some twenty-five years ago I was a graduate student at Indiana State University with a major in American Literature. Sinclair Lewis's satire on American mercantile mentality and the pretentious faith of the main character in "Boosterisms" and the superior ethics of businessmen has always made Lewis one of my favorite authors. The novel *Babbitt* was a pinprick in the balloon of smug notion that the business of America is business, though when one looks at the corporate world of America today, it is easy to see that little has changed in that outlook. Recently I read in the ABC News Internet page that schools are being encouraged to link up with businessmen, that these great sage leaders of American society will somehow lead all of us to the promised land and certainly teach our youth about the "wonderful" future that awaits them in finance and marketing. Never mind that many of these youth are still struggling with their reading skills and do even worse in math. But no worries, one doesn't need to be a rocket scientist to work as a checkout clerk at J.C. Penney or sell shoes or even clerk in a bank. Boosterism is alive and well.

I met the owner of a chain of "Wendy's" hamburger restaurants a few years ago, a fellow I knew in



my callow youth who went to high school with me. He is independently wealthy now, having made a fortune in the fast-food industry and is looked up to by other members of his community as the paragon of virtue and a man to be reckoned with. He lives like an American Prince, traveling to Paris for the winter months and boating on the Ohio River aboard his 50 ft. cabin cruiser. He typifies a new generation of Babbitts. I failed in the race for material success. Oh, how I wish now that I had heeded common sense back in the early 70's and abandoned any foolish notions of being a writer or a literature teacher. Why didn't I go into "Restaurant and Hotel Management" like any sensible young man and reap great financial reward? Perhaps it is just envy that tears away at my soul. I can barely afford to eat at a Wendy's burger stand at lunch time. It is more economical to eat a peanut butter and jam sandwich from home.

As I said, I've just started reading *Babbitt* again for the first time in many years and it is more delightful now than back in grad school. Sinclair Lewis will never be highly esteemed among the leaders of America's business community. Back in Terre Haute the guys in the Business School would look aghast at anyone who admitted to being an English major. That was admitting that one lacked proper ambition. That one was possibly a bohemian at heart or a dreamer. Not someone who understands how to think in terms of "widgets" and market shares. For many years now I've lived in Japan and made a living as an ESL teacher. I've discovered that *Babbitt* thrives here too. The ideal salaryman or corporate footsoldier is the very incarnation of Babbitt, singing songs of praise to his corporate family and attending nightly drinking parties to bond with fellow employees! Well, I'll end here. Just wanted to say hello and tell you what a joy it is to rediscover Lewis and *Babbitt*. Next I want to read *Main Street* again and *Dodsworth* for the first time. I should very much enjoy this novel since I am a native Hoosier who grew up in England and recall still how very difficult it was to gain acceptance in the British community where we lived for five years. We were always thought of as "that Yank family" that moved in down the street.

(SL)

I am a reporter at the *Waterloo Courier* in Iowa. Over the weekend, I was informed of a little-known secret about my newspaper's history. Sinclair Lewis worked here for 10 weeks in 1908 after graduating from Yale. Apparently, he was fired for overreaching editorials that

were too cosmopolitan for this small Midwestern town. Unfortunately, no one here thinks it's a big deal (although we run reams of gushing praise for Robert Waller, who taught business courses at nearby University of Northern Iowa, of *Bridges of Madison County* fame). I've been working here since graduating from Northwestern in 1997, and I was quite angry, actually, that Lewis's contribution to Waterloo was dismissed, especially when the Midwest boasts quite a few journalists-turned-literary giants like Hemingway and Twain. Anyway, I surfed the web to find the Sinclair Lewis Society site and I'm very excited about scanning the microfiche archives at my paper for Sinclair Lewis stories. I was hoping you would have a better idea of exactly when he worked in Waterloo to make the job easier because newspapers didn't use bylines back then. I would, of course, be more than happy to share with you any information I unearth (in case a biographer didn't find it before). [Lewis worked at the *Courier* in 1908.]

(SL)

My mother collects the works of Mr. Lewis and in my search for a birthday gift for her I have located a copy of *Tennis as I Play It* by Maurice McLoughlin (as ghost-written by Mr. Lewis) and would like to purchase it if it is truly a FIRST EDITION as indicated by the seller. However, I was wondering if you could provide me with the publication date and copyright date of that work, since there appears to be some confusion as to whether it is 1913 or 1915, or if the work was copyrighted in 1913 and not published until 1915. All other points attributed to the first edition seem to be present. If you can help me, I certainly would appreciate it! [*Tennis as I Play It* was published in 1915 by the George H. Doran Co. I don't know if there is a separate copyright date. There are two sizes, one is 9 3/8" x 6 1/4" x 1 3/8," the variant is 8 3/8" x 5 1/2" x 1 3/8". The cover is green buckram with a variant in light olive. The lettering gilt with a black variant. I'm not sure that much more is known. The book I consulted, *Sinclair Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography*, doesn't know the status of the dust jacket. There is still some controversy over Mr. Lewis's connection to this book. Some collectors, like Stephen R. Pastore, are convinced that Lewis was the ghostwriter. Others are not so sure.]

(SL)

So what do you personally find so great about Sinclair Lewis?

(SL)

What is Babbitt's first name?

(SL)

I have seen your site. It is very good and informative. My wife has also submitted the Ph.D. work on "Sinclair Lewis and Nineteen Twenties" with particular reference to social and political issues in his novels during the decade at Mohan Lal Sukhadia University, Udaipur in India.

(SL)

I am delighted to discover the S. L. homepage and all it contains. I am from St. Cloud, Minnesota, a graduate in English from St. Cloud State University, and my maiden name is Parry! What a coincidence! I taught high school English for years in Minnesota, Texas, and Tennessee, where I now live. I am the book club coordinator for a large independent bookstore in Nashville, and have just finished *Main Street*, our June selection. Of course, I've read it before, as I have all the major novels. And we studied *Babbitt* last year, also in my Classics Club. No special other comments right now, but a question, if you have the time to e-mail an answer: What is S. L.'s place now in the American canon? Is he still sometimes thought of with Faulkner, Hemingway, etc. as we used to hear? Being away from an academic setting, it's hard to know. Also, being here in the South, I feel closer to Southern writers these days. But growing up 20 miles from Sauk Centre, and going there many times stays with me, and S.L. is one of my all-time favorites.

(SL)

This story is, I think, an important sidelight on SL, and should certainly be more prominently available in his bio and bibliographies. I now want to pass along to you today's results of a search done by my daughter, who is a cataloguer at the LOC: I found it in *Great Short Stories of the 20th Century*, edited by Martin H. Greenberg and Charles G. Waugh, New York: Avenel Books, 1987. The title is "You Know How Women Are."

(SL)

Can you tell me easily the European editions of *Babbitt*—I was especially interested in what was translated before Sinclair Lewis was awarded the Nobel Prize. If you have handy *Main Street* translations as well, I would be grateful.

(SL)

I have been looking at a newly published book on the history of architecture in the U.S. The book contains pictures and material (text) on the Lewis family home in MN where Sinclair grew up. The book discusses the dining room, stating that a china cupboard contained a bowl that was brought over on the Mayflower by a family ancestor. This is of interest to me as my husband and I are both direct descendants of Mayflower Pilgrims and are both members of the Mayflower Society. Can you provide me with any info on Sinclair's Mayflower family history?

(SL)

I have just gone over the interview with Richard Lingeman about the upcoming biography. My great uncle was Mr. Lewis's secretary/editor many years ago. I have little family information to go on, some photos, and a typewriter used by Mr. Lewis. The typewriter is in remarkable condition after all these years and is just sitting in storage. If you would be interested in giving it a good home, let me know.

(SL)

Sinclair Lewis was a friend of my mother's and grandmother's. And, I have a book, *The Adventures of Paul Bunyan*, personally inscribed by him to my mother and father. It reads, "To Jean and Neil on their wedding, this story of the hero of our Northland, with the love of, Sinclair Lewis, Christmas Day, Duluth, Minnesota, 1945." For insurance purposes, I'm trying to determine its value. Do you have any idea who would be able to do that for me?

(SL)

Staff members of the AFI Catalog of Feature Films are updating information in our database for a number of films produced in the 1920s. The original AFI Catalog entry for the film *The Ghost Patrol* did not give origi-

nal source information for the short story on which the film was based. Would you possibly have information on when the original short story was published and in what magazine? Any help would be greatly appreciated. ["The Ghost Patrol" is a short story written by Sinclair Lewis which originally appeared in *The Red Book* in June 1917. It is considered one of Lewis's better short stories and was reprinted in *Selected Short Stories of Sinclair Lewis* in 1935. There is also a reprint of this collection published by Ivan R. Dee in 1990.]

(SL)

My mother has always claimed that she was in Sinclair Lewis's writing class at the University of Wisconsin in the late 1930s. Can you possibly tell me if Lewis ever taught at Wisconsin? [She certainly could have been since he did briefly teach there.]

(SL)

I'm one of several contributors to a book on human diseases and conditions aimed at 10 to 12-year-olds. One of my topics is diphtheria, and I've been asked to say a little something about "Sinclair Lewis/*Arrowsmith*." I put in a request today to track down what appears to be the only copy of *Arrowsmith* in all of Switzerland. But until it arrives, here's my question: Does *Arrowsmith* have anything to do with diphtheria? All the references I've found in Medline, on the Web, and elsewhere mention bubonic plague, but no one says anything about diphtheria. If anyone could set me straight on how diphtheria figures in *Arrowsmith* (if it does), I would be more grateful than I can say. [Arrowsmith treats a little girl with diphtheria in chapter 15, but the anti-toxin is brought too late and she dies. He also treats dysentery, tuberculosis, staph infections, rheumatism, and bubonic plague during the course of his career.]

(SL)

Hi I'm John Stevenson, Administrator of [www.fictionsearch.com](http://www.fictionsearch.com), the reader and writers' search engine. I have visited your site as a result of either yourself or someone on your behalf having submitted your site to be included in our database. Fictionsearch is a community search engine and only lists sites that have

a relevance or interest to the writing and reading community. This mail is to let you know your application was successful and your site can now be located through our search facility at: [www.fictionsearch.com](http://www.fictionsearch.com).

### Student Queries

I am a student at Miami University. My theatre class is doing an intense research project on the play *It Can't Happen Here*. We are looking for any type of information on this play. We know it was performed on Oct. 27, 1939 in several different cities. If you have any type of reviews that might have been published, please contact me.

(SL)

I'm a student at Jackson High School doing a report on Sinclair Lewis and would like to know, specifically, who Sinclair Lewis influenced. If you could help me out I would really appreciate it.

(SL)

I'm a grade 12 student and in my English program we were given an oral presentation in which we have to choose a famous author to talk about. I chose Sinclair Lewis. So I was wondering if you would be so kind as to send me a copy of the newspaper, so I could include it in my presentation and show my teacher and classmates.

(SL)

I am reading your book about *Main Street* and I want to ask one question, what is the best way to analyse your book, if it is possible tell me some advice or merely explain me what the main point of the novel. Nevertheless, I am asking for this because I don't know so much English and sometimes it is difficult for to read your book, but I want to know more about this story because it brings me the attention.

(SL)

After visiting your informative website, I was wondering if you could help me gain some more information. I am becoming a literary specialist on Sinclair Lewis for my English class. I understand you are very busy, but

your help will be greatly appreciated. Part of my project includes an interview, and I was hoping you could answer a few questions that follow. Once again, I thank you for your time and effort.

1. What was your favorite novel by Lewis and explain?
2. Why do you think Lewis has not received a great deal of attention?
3. In *Main Street*, Lewis ridiculed those who were content with their provincial life. How would Lewis react to our society's constant unrest and constant need for improvement?
4. Do you feel Lewis lived according to the themes of his major novels? Has society learned anything from his works?
5. Why do you feel Lewis refused to accept the Pulitzer Prize for *Arrowsmith*?
6. If you could ask Lewis one question, what would it be and why?
7. How has Lewis's social satires influenced our society?
8. History obviously affected his writing, from Prohibition to the Depression. If Lewis were alive today, how would today's events inspire him?
9. If you could describe Lewis in one word, what would it be and why?
10. Critics say his death was a part of his lonely life. His death among strangers supposedly showed Lewis's lack of a home. Where, if anywhere, do you think Lewis would feel at home?

(SL)

I'm doing a critical review of the style and writing of Sinclair Lewis. I've read a couple of his books and I have searched the 'net for some critical reviews of his works to aid me in my quest for term paper perfection. I was wondering if you have any sources of critical state-

ments, reviews, analysis, or anything else about Lewis that could aid in my conquest....

(SL)

I am writing a research paper on Sinclair Lewis and I was wondering if you could help me out with my research. I am writing about why Sinclair Lewis received the Nobel prize, and if you should have any information about this, please respond as soon as possible.

(SL)

I am a Junior attending Heidelberg American High School in Heidelberg, Germany. I am writing an I-Search paper for my Honors English class on the works and criticisms of Sinclair Lewis. I have been able to find much on the works, and a few critiques, but it would be most helpful if I could receive some correspondence with an expert on the subject. If anyone could send any information about Sinclair Lewis, it would be much appreciated, and would be properly recognized in the Bibliography section of the paper. Some possible questions that you may be able to answer are, What do you think as a contemporary critic of the decrease of popularity of the works by Sinclair Lewis? Do you have a favorite novel or piece of literature by Sinclair Lewis that you believe stands out from the rest? Why do you believe this? Thank you very much for your time, and any answers to this letter would be very much appreciated.

(SL)

I'm from India. Right now I'm doing some research on Sinclair Lewis's literary works, so I would like to know exactly about the background of that era so that I can gauge what motivated him. If possible, do give the address of the sites from where I could avail this information.

(SL)

I was wondering if you could give me your take on the character of Babbitt and his evolution as a person. All info would be appreciated.

—Thank you very much for your response. Not only is your information very useful in my paper, but I also get bonus points for receiving a response from a critic. If

you don't mind, I have just a few more questions. What do you think of Sinclair Lewis not accepting his Pulitzer Prize award? Was he trying to make a point, or are the books right in saying that he was just mad about Edith Wharton winning it the year before? I was reading a critique written by Sheldon Norman Grebstein, and in it he stated that "Even now, as we begin to get perspective on his career and achievement, we tend to see him as a kind of literary phenomenon, an accident, a second-rate writer who by some miraculous conjunction of the times and his own special but small talents managed to capture our attention for a moment and then deservedly slid into oblivion." What are your thoughts on this? How many current active members are there in the Sinclair Lewis Society? Thank you very much for your help thus far. These questions are not necessary, but for my own gain in knowledge. I would love to have some more information about this subject.

(SL)

What I need to know is: What was the basic overall opinion about Lewis, and did like all his books have the same type of theme and whatnot. I need quotes about some criticism about Lewis and his writing, not so much in individual books, but basically overall. Hope this is clearly. I was wondering if you could help me out on what the critics thought of Sinclair Lewis, I need some quotes about him from the critics and I am having trouble finding some, so if you could help me out I would be gravely thanked. I need them soon though. Please help not to sound harsh. A hopeful Student.

(SL)

I'm writing an essay on *Babbitt*, and was wondering if u can help me better understand the book. I've started reading it and don't quite understand where to find the answer to my essay question. The question is as follows: Babbitt is a man torn between conformity to the material culture of the 1920s and rebellion against its consequences. The novel traces Babbitt's journey as he seeks to discover and resolve this conflict. What role do the female characters play in Babbitt's journey?

(SL)

Hi. I need some info about the book *It Can't Happen Here* for an assignment I'm doing in school. I didn't

have a chance to read the book because someone very dear to me has been diagnosed with terminal cancer, but I do still have to turn in the answers to the questions about this book. The questions are due tomorrow, I just found you. I hope that you can/will help me!

—Thank you soooo very much for responding so quickly!!!! I skimmed the book as best as I could, and managed to get a 90 on my paper!!! Thank you anyway!

(SL)

Sinclair Lewis fans are encouraged to call up [www.gutenberg.net/authors/i-lewis/sinclair.html](http://www.gutenberg.net/authors/i-lewis/sinclair.html) on the World Wide Web. The full electronic texts of *Main Street* and *Babbitt* are now available. The site hopes to eventually have 10,000 e-texts by various authors.

THE SINCLAIR LEWIS  
SOCIETY NEWSLETTER  
WELCOMES CONTRIBUTIONS

*The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter* welcomes contributions about Sinclair Lewis's work, life, and times. We also welcome essays about teaching Lewis's novels and short stories. Send books for review, notices of upcoming conferences, reports on presentations and publications relating to Lewis, discoveries of materials (correspondence, manuscripts, etc.), descriptions of collections in libraries, and all other items to:

Sally Parry, Editor  
*The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter*  
Dept. of English  
Box 4240  
Illinois State University  
Normal, IL 61790-4240



## IN MEMORIAM

Paul Gitlin, the lawyer and literary agent who for years represented the estate of Sinclair Lewis, died in late December 1998 at the age of 83. He was a partner in the publishing law firm Ernst, Cane, Berner & Gitlin. Melville Cane, one of the founding partners of this firm, represented Lewis during his lifetime. Gitlin also represented the estates of other prominent American authors including Thomas Wolfe, Upton Sinclair, Ayn Rand, and Raymond Chandler. His specialty was copyright law, including how copyright law should apply to radio broadcasts. Among his other well-known clients were Harold Robbins, Mario Puzo, Sidney Sheldon, and Barbara Taylor Bradford. Scholars who wish to contact the Lewis estate should now do so through McIntosh and Otis, 353 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10016.



Clifton Fadiman, writer, editor, and television personality, died in June 1999. He was an editor at Simon and Schuster for many years as well as the book editor for the *New Yorker* from 1933 to 1943. He was the host of both the radio and television versions of *Information Please* as well as several other early television shows.

He reviewed a number of Lewis's novels favorably, including *Dodsworth*. In 1941 he joined with Lewis, Carl Van Doren, and Alexander Woollcott to form a book selection group called the Readers Club which was to choose a worthy book each month that had not met with strong reception in its first publication. Lewis wrote prefaces for eight of the novels chosen by the club and after Woollcott's death, he, with Fadiman and Van Doren, collaborated on an anthology called *The Three Readers*.



Andrew Breen Myers, a Washington Irving scholar and member of the faculty at Fordham University for many years, died October 16, 1998. He was best known as a consultant to Sleepy Hollow Restorations which included Sunnyside, Irving's summer home in Tarrytown. He also edited the authoritative 1983 edition of Irving's *Alhambra*. He was a strong mentor and supporter of scholars working on less popular authors. The editor of the newsletter is especially indebted to him for supporting her interest in Lewis and guiding her dissertation, *Sinclair Lewis: The Darkening Vision of His Later Novels*.

## A LEWIS HOUSE IN CONNECTICUT



A house formerly owned by Sinclair Lewis

Roger Forseth's sister, Ruth Mary Scheidel, recently met a classmate of hers, Helen Keller Gunderson, and learned that Mrs. Gunderson's daughter had been living in a house owned by Sinclair Lewis in Hartford, Connecticut. She sent a picture of the house and also noted that Mrs. Gunderson's daughter, who has since moved from this house, is a Sinclair Lewis fan and has collected all of his books but one.

## SINCLAIR LEWIS NOTES

Critics' Choice Video has just released *Fun and Fancy Free* (1947), two animated Disney classics. "Bongo," the story of a circus bear, based on a children's story by Sinclair Lewis, is narrated by Jiminy Cricket, who was introduced in the 1940 film *Pinocchio*. Cliff "Ukulele Ike" Edwards is the voice of Jiminy Cricket and Dinah Shore sings the songs and provides narration. The other animated short is a retelling of "Jack and the Beanstalk" with Donald Duck, Goofy, Jiminy Cricket, and Mickey Mouse. This is the last film in which Walt Disney provides the voice for Mickey. The story is told by ventriloquist Edgar Bergen to his alter ego Charlie McCarthy. This video is available for \$26.95 by calling Critics' Choice at 1-800-367-7765.

(SL)

The Ogunquit Playhouse in Ogunquit, Maine, is still going strong fifty years after Sinclair Lewis appeared in summer stock there. Lewis appeared as Doremus Jessup in the stage version of *It Can't Happen Here*, and although the critics were relatively kind to him, most recommended that he not give up writing for a career on the stage. This year's season included: *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Deathtrap*, *A Majority of One*, and *Light Up the Sky*. For more information on the theater, visit their website at: <http://www.ogunquitplayhouse.org> or call (207) 646-5511.

(SL)

Columbia University Press has released *A Century of Arts & Letters: The History of the National Institute of Arts & Letters and the American Academy of Arts & Letters as Told, Decade by Decade, by Eleven Members*, edited by John Updike. This book is a celebration of the one hundredth birthday of these two intertwined institutions and of the battles that have been fought over time about who to include and what the organization should stand for. In his review in the *New York Times Book Review* on May 31, 1998, Frank Kermode wrote, "In any self-elected body there are bound to be members whose merits have grown invisible to posterity, and also baffling omissions (one such was F. Scott Fitzgerald). But

the power of [Robert Underwood] Johnson and his associates (Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia, prominent among them) was such that Sinclair Lewis's attack in his unmannerly Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 1930 seems perfectly justified: by its election procedures, the Academy 'cuts itself off from so much of what is living and vigorous and original in American letters' and 'can have no relationship whatever to our life and aspirations'" (13).

(SL)

In a review of Mark Caldwell's *A Short History of Rudeness: Manners, Morals, and Misbehavior in Modern America* (Picador, 1999), Roger Kimball discusses the decline he sees in manners in American life. He notes, however, that many Americans have a desire to know how to do things properly, as is evidenced by the many advice columns that exist. He even points to the publication of Emily Post's *Etiquette* in 1922 and says that "it surprised everyone by becoming a huge best-seller, rivaling the most popular novel published that year, Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*" (*Wall Street Journal*, July 13, 1999).

(SL)

John Updike and Norman Mailer have written condescendingly about Tom Wolfe's new novel, *A Man in Full*, that it's too entertaining to be considered real literature. Mailer also contends that the book is a literary failure because Wolfe is a journalist. In "A Snubbed Tom Wolfe Parries With 2 Men of Letters" (*New York Times*, December 10, 1998: B1, B11), Martin Arnold notes that some of these attacks on Wolfe may stem from the jealousy of authors who have not had a recent best-seller. In connection with Mailer's assertion that journalism has hurt Wolfe's style, Arnold says, "Forget Defoe (considered in his time by many to be but a grub street journalist), Thackeray, Balzac, Dickens, Dostoyevsky, Dreiser, and Mailer himself. To say nothing of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, who provided the research for Mr. Mailer's *The Gospel According to the Son* (Random House, 1997). All did considerable reporting at the be-

hest of their literary calling. Mr. Wolfe pointed out that Sinclair Lewis actually got on the pulpit and preached before he felt ready to write *Elmer Gantry*."

(SL)

In 1957, Richard Bissell wrote the novel, *Say, Darling*, a lightly disguised version of his experiences as a novelist whose best-seller becomes the basis for a Broadway musical. The real novel was *7 1/2 Cents* and it became the highly successful musical *The Pajama Game*. In *Say, Darling* (which also was turned into a play with music), the novelist is put up at the Algonquin Hotel in New York so that he can collaborate on the writing of the libretto for *The Girl from Indiana*, the musical to be based on his novel. While waiting to be contacted by the producers, he finds himself reading a history of the Algonquin Hotel, written by Frank Case and published in 1940. The novelist's eyes light on a passage that shows how to be in the know: "Here are a few names known to everyone... together with the handier affectionate terms used by their intimates:

Sinclair Lewis: Red  
Brailsford Felder: Tom  
Samson Raphaelson: Raph" (45).

Unfortunately, by 1957, knowing Lewis's nickname wouldn't have done him much good.

(SL)

In a kind and generous obituary of Meg Greenfield, the *Newsweek* columnist who died in May of cancer, George F. Will wrote that her ironic view of the Washington scene involved "discerning, and not being disconcerted by, life's inevitable incongruities." Her first column for *Newsweek* in 1974 was about the transcripts of the Nixon tapes. She wrote, "It's not as if nobody told us. Shakespeare told us and Dickens told us and Mark Twain and Will Rogers and Sinclair Lewis told us." In being one of those people who warned us "to beware of people who are both self-righteous and unforgiving of others," Meg Greenfield will be sorely missed (*Newsweek*, May 24, 1999, 83-86).

(SL)

Harry H. Long writes in his "Music in Films" column, in the April 1999 *Classic Images*, that the music of *Elmer Gantry* has been released on CD. He notes that "[Aaron] Copland's influence is also stamped all over *Elmer Gantry*; so surprisingly is that of Miklos Rozsa and Bernard Herrmann. In fact, the music seems to be some sort of collaborative project of the three men which they decided to sign with the name of André Previn. While there are no outright lifts, their sounds are so closely aped that it goes beyond mere influence. Well, if you're going to copy, copy from the best, and frankly this CD is a cracking good listen, derivative or not. Bonus tracks include a terrific trumpet solo of 'Onward Christian Soldiers'" (12).

(SL)

Robert Lipsyte, in a *New York Times* sports column entitled "Sports and Sex Are Always Together" (July 11, 1999), speaks approvingly of how the women's World Cup team has marketed itself. "There is a wonderful midland Babbitry to the selling of the World Cup team. The enthusiastic complicity of the players evokes the car washes and bake sales that many of them once ran to raise money for their youth traveling teams. They are on a mission, for their sport and for themselves, and if that means a little cheesecake (or a lot in at least one case), sacrifice is the name of the game" (25).

(SL)

Northwestern University Press has recently reissued *Peyton Place* by Grace Metalious. When it was first published in 1956, Carlos Baker in the *New York Times Book Review* wrote "Sinclair Lewis would no doubt have hailed Metalious as a sister-in-arms against the... bourgeois pretensions of allegedly respectable communities" (reprinted June 13, 1999, 32).

(SL)

Eugene Jolas was a journalist, poet, and editor who was a part of literary Paris in the 1920s. Yale University Press has just released *Man from Babel*, his uncompleted memoir, edited by Andreas Kramer and Rainer Rumold. After Jolas arrived in Paris, he was asked to take over Ford Madox Ford's literary column, "Rambles through Literary Paris." "During interviews and by attending read-

ings, he met everyone—James Joyce, François Mauriac, André Breton, Gertrude Stein, Sinclair Lewis, André Gide—and quickly became not only an observer but an actor in the Paris scene” (Robert Kiely, “Lost Man of the Lost Generation,” *New York Times Book Review*, January 3, 1999, 20). Jolas founded and edited the journal *transition* which published a number of avant-garde works including fragments of “Work in Progress” which later became *Finnegan’s Wake*.

(SL)

In our last issue, there was a query from someone who had accessed the Sinclair Lewis website and asked if Lewis had said or written something like “You can’t legislate morality.” We had no luck with our sources, nor did Fred Betz, a Sinclair Lewis Society member. However, he did find a quote from H. L. Mencken that has the same intention. “No one ever heard of the truth being enforced by law. Whenever the secular arm is called in to sustain an idea, whether new or old, it is always a bad idea, and not infrequently it is downright idiotic.” The quote was taken from a website at: <http://www.freedomsnest.com>.

(SL)

Jeffrey Lunden and Arthur Perlman, the composer and lyricist for such musicals as *Wings*, about a stroke victim who has trouble speaking her thoughts; *Another Midsummer’s Night*, a contemporary rift on Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; and *The Little Prince*, based on Saint-Exupéry’s novel; started writing musicals while in high school. Among their early attempts was *Zenith*, a musical version of *Babbitt*.

(SL)

In a review of *The Prince’s Tale and Other Uncollected Writings* by E. M. Forster and edited by P. N. Furbank (London: André Deutsch, 1999), Robert Craft notes that in his *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951), Forster nominated Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, T. E. Lawrence, and James Joyce as “the leading writers of our age” (1918-1939). Craft responds that “Forster was apparently not considering continentals (Kafka, Musil) for this rather passé pantheon, and he seems to have been deaf to new voices (*A Handful of Dust*), as well as to Americans,

apart from Sinclair Lewis, who happily ‘mistrusts the Y.M.C.A.’ and is ‘against heartiness,’ although, like other ‘quick, spontaneous writers,’ he is ‘apt, when the spontaneity goes, to have nothing left.’ As might be expected, Forster is more enlightening on an English best seller, Jan Struthers’s *Mrs. Miniver*, than on any of Lewis’s books” (*New York Review of Books* May 6, 1999, 39).

(SL)

We are now celebrating the centenary of Thorstein Veblen, and, says critic Adam Gopnik, it is because “he appeals, oddly, to two current fashions in intellectual life: the fashion for cultural studies and the fashion for evolutionary psychology. The contributors to the new book, *Thorstein Veblen in the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Douglas M. Brown, make the case that, in effect, Veblen did more than anyone to turn the study of capitalism from production, power, and prediction to consciousness, consumerism, and culture.” Veblen’s critique of consumerism may have come in part from his roots. “It’s both odd and apt that the three most eloquent satirists of America on display in the first half of the twentieth century—Veblen, Fitzgerald, and Lewis—were all Minnesota boys abroad” (*New Yorker*, April 26 and May 3, 1999, 176). See page 3 of the newsletter for a description of another book on Veblen by Clare Eby.

(SL)

*The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, in its spring 1999 newsletter, created its own list of the most significant twentieth-century books of fiction in English, in reaction to the Modern Library’s list. The Heath list was based on responses from people who read their newsletter, primarily college and university teachers of American literature. In their admittedly unscientific poll, the editors, including Paul Lauter, discovered that the list “displays a far broader range not just of authors (far more women and writers of color), but of the kinds of experiences readers think are significant” (2). After the newsletter lists the top 40, it mentions all 337 books that received votes by readers. *Main Street* and *Babbitt* each received two votes. The most votes received by any novel was Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* with 29.

(SL)

L.A. Theatre Works, a Los Angeles-based theater company, has been recording plays on tape and now has a library of over 250 plays. Their first project was a 14 1/2 hour unabridged studio recording of *Babbitt* with 90 speaking parts and 70 actors. It took a year and a half to record, but it led to a wide variety of plays recorded by well-known actors. The plays, which have been on sale to the public for the last four years, include *Julius Caesar* with Stacy Keach and Paul Winfield, *The Glass Menagerie* with Calista Flockhart, Julie Harris, and John Goodman, and Walter Matthau, Hector Elizondo, and Charles Durning in *Mastertgate*. See "The Sweet Sound of Success" by Lou Harry in the September 20, 1999 *In Theater* (26-27) for more information about this organization.

(SL)

Constance Rourke's 1931 cultural study, *American Humor: A Study of the National Character*, is revisited in a December 1997 article, "Why These Three Men Are Part of Your Soul," by Tony Scherman in *American Heritage* (53-63). Scherman contends that her work anticipated the entire field of American Studies because although Rourke was a literary expert, her "curiosity carried her beyond literature, into visual art, music, architecture, and handicrafts." She identified a number of archetypes in American culture and celebrated its richness. "To Pound and Eliot, Dreiser and Lewis, Lardner, Anderson and Mencken, America was a barren soil for the spirit, a plutocracy whose only native values were greed and expediency." However, she found that folk culture, in the form of the fast talking Yankee pedlar, the larger-than-life backwoodsman, and the Negro minstrel, happily informed much of American literature from Poe and Melville to Twain and James. Folklore and fable were a part of American culture that writers transmuted to make literature. "The prevailing tone of Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, wrote Rourke, was that of fable, everyday material invested with romance."

(SL)

In a tribute to Edwin Arlington Robinson in the *New York Times Book Review*, Ben Sonnenberg suggests that the poet deserves more attention. In his essay, "The Modernist from Maine" (July 18, 1999), he celebrates the publication of a new Modern Library edition of *The Poetry of E. A. Robinson*, edited by Robert Mezey. "With

great charm, he was doing in verse what a whole generation of American writers was doing in stories and novels, both before and just after World War I: 'lodging a piece of the continent in the world's imagination,' to borrow E. M. Forster's phrase about *Main Street*, by Sinclair Lewis" (31).

(SL)

In a review of *Walker Evans* by James R. Mellow, critic Peter Dailey in the *Wall Street Journal* (July 27, 1999: A21) notes that in some of Evans's photography "there is an undercurrent of satire." "The boosterism and complacency that Sinclair Lewis has satirized in *Main Street* were very much part of Evans's Midwest upbringing."

(SL)

Joe Collura, in a profile of the actress Wynne Gibson, in the Summer 1999 *Films of the Golden Age*, mentions that she starred in the film *Racketeers in Exile* in 1937. The picture was described as "an Elmer Gantry-like story of scams and profiteering evangelism" (57).

(SL)

Critic Stefan Kanfer in the *Wall Street Journal* (August 18, 1999) recalls Sinclair Lewis in a book review decrying the dumbing down of American culture. In an essay entitled "The Road from *Pinocchio* to *South Park*," Kanfer looks at *American Culture, American Tastes* by Michael Kammen (Knopf, 1999) and is dismayed at what the book reveals. "'Our American professors like their literature clear and cold and pure and very dead.' So proclaimed Sinclair Lewis in 1935 [sic—Kanfer should beware complaining too much when his own citation is incorrect. This quote is from Lewis's "The American Fear of Literature," his address on receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature on December 12, 1930]. He should be living in this hour, when doctoral candidates and pundits fall all over themselves in analyses of current American literature and, indeed, the popular arts in general. It is the classics that now appear to be clear and cold and pure and very dead. These days MTV gets far more attention than Aeschylus and Cicero."

(SL)



Kerry O'Malley, who last year played Sharon Falconer in the Chicago production of the musical of *Elmer Gantry*, is now on a television show. She plays the sister of the title character in *The Mike O'Malley Show*, a situation comedy on CBS.

(SL)

John Updike's new collection of essays, *More Matter: Essays and Criticism* (Knopf, 1999), includes essays on Edith Wharton, Sinclair Lewis, and Theodore Dreiser. In a favorable review in the *New York Times Book Review* (September 26, 1999), critic William H. Pritchard seems to enjoy the variety of Updike's musings and hopes there are further collections to look forward to.

(SL)

When Isadora Duncan arrived in Indianapolis in 1922, she was not greeted warmly, notes *American Heritage* (October 1997, 110-11). There was suspicion that she and her husband, poet Sergei Esenin, were Bolshevik agents. She had also raised eyebrows in Boston when, disappointed by poor audience reception, she criticized the "hidebound conventions" of New England and then exposed one of her breasts to the audience, crying, "This—this is beauty!" The mayor of Indianapolis, Lew Shank, "came across uncannily like a Sinclair Lewis caricature: 'Isadora ain't fooling me any. She talks about art. Huh! I've seen a lot of these twisters and I know as much about art as any man in America, but I never went to see these dances for art's sake. No, sir, I'll bet 90 percent of the men, or even 95 percent, who go to see these so-called classical dances just say they think it's artistic to fool their wives.... If she goes pulling off her clothes and throwing them in the air... There's going to be somebody getting a ride in the wagon'" (111).

(SL)

Earnest Hobrecht, an American writer who became a popular novelist in Japan after World War II, died in September 1999. He was a reporter for United Press International, who became "an improbable literary success" according to Douglas Martin (*New York Times*, September 26, 1999: 54). The United States Army banned American books after the war "out of fear that books like Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* that were critical of

American society might lead to Japanese derision of Americans, with possible political repercussions back home." Hobrecht wrote mainly romance novels that were translated into Japanese and had "hundreds of thousands of fans, many of them young women eager to learn how an American man might address matters of the heart." His books did not do well in the United States and when he returned to the U.S. in the 1960s he ran a number of businesses.

(SL)

Ideals Publications of Nashville has published *The Ideals Guide to Literary Places in the U.S.* by Michelle Prater Burke. The Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home is one of the places featured (112-13, 192). Most of the information is familiar, although she mentions Dr. E. J. Lewis as "reportedly burying amputated limbs in the backyard" (112). She describes Lewis as "[h]omely and gawky, ... Inept at hunting and fishing (his father's interests) and was more often seen with books than friends" (112). The house, she notes, is remarkable as "one of very few 1920s style, moderate-income homes preserved in the United States today" (113). She describes the design and decor, including Lewis's golf clubs, wallet, and the doctor's office, and includes a map with information about the area.

(SL)

In an amusing defense of the long novel called "Explain Yourself: If Writers Would Only Tell Us What They Mean, Life Would Be So Easy—and Boring" (*Chicago Tribune*, August 29, 1999, 14: 3), author Lynna Williams speaks up for literature that you have to work at to understand. She notes that quick summaries of literature and the "study guides" that often accompany them make novels "too easy, too quick, too unexamined." She offers a short quiz to make her point (match the number and the letter), only part of which is included here:

- |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1) Mrs. Rochester speaks!  | a) <i>Babbitt</i>           |
| 2) Mrs. Rochester shrieks! | b) <i>Wuthering Heights</i> |
| 3) One moor time!          | c) <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i> |
| 4) One Moor; no waiting    | d) <i>Jane Eyre</i>         |
| 5) Class participation     | e) <i>Othello</i>           |

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### Catalogue 66

145. Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922. \$12,500

Fine in a lovely and fresh about fine, price-clipped, dustwrapper with some slight chipping at the crown. Housed in an older, very good custom cloth folding box with leather spine label. Octagonal leather bookplate of noted violinist, composer, and book collector Efrem Zimbalist on the front pastedown. INSCRIBED BY THE AUTHOR, using most of the front fly: "To Efrem Zimbalist with the hope that this book will help him in his work—at least commercially. Sinclair Lewis." A superb copy of a modern highspot, a book that defined a uniquely American personality type, with a nice association.—*Johnson Highspots of American Literature*.

### Catalogue 65

71. Lewis, Sinclair, Grace Hegger. *Half a Loaf*  
New York: Liveright, 1931. \$450

Fine in attractive, just about fine, Pulitzer-designed dustwrapper with a couple of negligible small stains. Previously serialized in a magazine, this is the first book edition of this autobiographical novel about the harrowing life of the wife of a big-time author, by the first wife of Sinclair Lewis, and the dedicatee of *Our Mr. Wrenn*. By most accounts the novel is more true-to-life than her later non-fiction account of the marriage she wrote in 1955, *With Love From Gracie*. Reportedly Lewis

# Collector's Corner

stopped publication in England, threatening suit under strict British libel laws against several publishers who expressed interest in producing an English edition. Scarce.

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### Catalog 17

Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt* New York, 1922.  
\$8,500.

First edition, defining "hope" as the feeling you have that the feeling you have isn't permanent. INSCRIBED TO HARRY KORNER, a close friend of Lewis's, the recipient of presentation copies of Lewis's first editions from 1914 to 1929, an early champion of *Our Mr. Wrenn*, and Lewis's companion for a portion of the "Free Air" motor car trip. The book is fine. The fragile (and unrestored) dust jacket is quite attractive despite a small chip at the lower front corner, light wear at the extremities, and a short edge-tear on the back.

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Spring 1999

115. Lewis, Sinclair. *Cass Timberlane*. New York: Random House, 1945. \$95

FIRST EDITION. Fine bright copy in dust jacket with a few tiny nicks at edges. The 1947 film starred Spencer Tracy and Lana Turner.

Catalog 28

275. Lewis, Sinclair. John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926. \$75

First edition. One of 975 numbered copies. Scattered foxing through-out. Some fading to top edges of boards. Otherwise a very good copy. Not issued in printed dust jacket.

276. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927. \$2000

First edition. First issue with G resembling a C on spine of book. A fine fresh copy in dust jacket. Now scarce in this condition.

277. Lewis, Sinclair. *Sinclair Lewis on The Valley of the Moon*. Cambridge: Harvard Press for Harvey Taylor, 1932. \$250

First edition. Copy number 1 of 100 numbered copies signed by Harvey Taylor. Fine copy in wrappers.

278. Lewis, Sinclair. *Ann Vickers*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1933. \$250

First edition. Some spotting to cloth. Otherwise near fine in dust jacket with two tiny repairs along top edge. An attractive copy. The trade printing was only 2,350 copies.

279. Lewis Sinclair. *It Can't Happen Here*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1935. \$200

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1101. Lewis, Sinclair. *Ann Vickers*. Garden City: 1933. \$350

First edition, limited to 350 copies printed on rag paper. Blue cloth, gilt- and blindstamped front board and spine, dust jacket. Jacket browned and rubbed, cloth spine faded. Very good.

1102. Lewis, Sinclair. *Ann Vickers*. Garden City: 1933. \$250.

First edition. Blue cloth, gilt-stamped front board and spine, dust jacket. Jacket worn and browned at extremities (printed on both sides), cloth sunned at top. Good.

1103. Lewis, Sinclair. *Bethel Merriday*. New York: 1940. \$250

First edition. Red cloth, gilt- and black-stamped spine, dust jacket. Jacket spine slightly sunned, front panel slightly rubbed. Very good.

1104. Lewis, Sinclair. *Cass Timberlane*. New York: 1945. \$125

First edition. Grey cloth, gilt- and blue-stamped spine, dust jacket. Jacket worn at extremities, endpapers browned. Good.

1105. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: 1927. \$200

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1106. Lewis, Sinclair. *Gideon Planish*. New York: 1943. \$125

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1107. Lewis, Sinclair. *The God-Seeker*. New York: 1949. \$200

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1108. Lewis, Sinclair. *It Can't Happen Here*. Garden City: 1935. \$250

Black cloth, gilt-stamped spine, dust jacket. Jacket somewhat worn, soiled and rubbed, with tears to rear fore-edge. Good.

1109. Lewis, Sinclair. John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*. New York: 1926. \$200

First edition, one of 975 numbered copies. Blue cloth backstrip and corners over green paper boards, paper label on front. Top edge sunned. Very good.

1110. Lewis, Sinclair. *Kingsblood Royal*. New York: 1947. \$275.

First edition, limited to 1,050 copies signed by the author. Original russet cloth, gilt- and white-stamped front board, gilt-, black-, and white-stamped spine, publisher's slipcase. Fine.

1111. Lewis, Sinclair. *Kingsblood Royal*. New York: 1947. \$100

First trade edition. Light grey cloth, gilt- and black-stamped spine, dust jacket. Jacket rubbed spine sunned. Slightly skewed. Good.

1112. Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street*. New York: 1921. \$250

Later edition. Blue cloth, orange-stamped front board and spine. Some rubbing to spine and boards. Very good.

1113. Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street*. New York: 1921. \$2,500

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1115. Lewis, Sinclair. *Mantrap*. New York: 1926. \$500

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1116. Lewis, Sinclair. *Our Mr. Wrenn*. New York: 1914. \$3000

First edition. Original grey cloth, gilt-stamped front board and spine. Presentation copy to Harry V. Karner. Warm full-page inscription. Spine slightly faded. Still, near fine overall.

1117. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Prodigal Parents*. Garden City: 1938. \$250

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1118. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Prodigal Parents*. Garden City: 1938. \$1000

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202. Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. New York, 1922. \$316  
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203. Lewis, Sinclair. *It Can't Happen Here*. New York, 1935. \$250-350 WD

8vo, black cloth, rubbed; hinges cracked. FIRST EDITION. WARMLY INSCRIBED AND SIGNED BY LEWIS AND DATED MAY 21, 1936.

204. Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street*. New York, 1920. \$862  
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