

The SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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FALL 2005



John-Paul Lewis, grandson of Sinclair Lewis, with Sue Ellen and Charlotte Jeanne Lewis, at the Sinclair Lewis Days Parade

SOCIETY SPONSORS THIRD LEWIS CONFERENCE IN SAUK CENTRE

ROBERT L. MCLAUGHLIN
ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

For the third time in the past ten years, the Sinclair Lewis Society joined with the Sinclair Lewis Foundation to sponsor a conference dedicated to the life, works, and influences of the author of *Main Street*. This most recent conference was held July 13–15, 2005, in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, and celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of Sinclair Lewis becoming the first American to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Over fifty scholars and fans gathered in Lewis's hometown for academic papers, movies, and social activities.

The conference kicked off on the afternoon of Wednesday, July 13, with a business meeting of the Lewis Society in the Pub of the Palmer House. This was followed that evening by an address by the keynote speaker, John-Paul Sinclair Lewis,

Third Lewis Conference continued on page 12

ERUMAA GANTORII¹

RUSTY ALLRED

In any of his novels, did Lewis pen a more distinctive pair of opening lines than these?

Elmer Gantry was drunk. He was eloquently drunk, lovingly and pugnaciously drunk. (9)

For a number of years I have been wondering what they look like in Japanese.

In previous papers I have attempted to answer similar questions, as regards *Arrowsmith* and *Main Street*, by retranslating to English various quotations of Japanese translations of those works. While these exercises proved interesting, I continually struggled to make fair translations. Given my familiarity with the originals, it was equally difficult not to be too critical of the translation, and not to ferret out the original meaning that the English-to-Japanese (hereafter E-J) translator may have failed to embed. For these reasons, when I was finally able to procure a copy of the Japanese translation of *Elmer Gantry*, I arranged to have a few passages translated back to English by a talented translator colleague who did not have significant familiarity with the original, and who promised not to refer to it. In this paper I use these English retranslations to analyze the Japanese translation of *Elmer Gantry*.

For example, the result for those famous first lines is as follows:

Elmer Gantry was drunk. When drunk, he became eloquent, friendly, and contentious. (Translation, V1, 4)

The E-J translator made no effort to render the likes of “eloquently drunk” in Japanese; these constructions were lost both

Erumaa Gantorii continued on page 13

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The SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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THE GERMAN TRANSLATOR OF *IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE*

FREDERICK BETZ

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY AT CARBONDALE

In his biography of Sinclair Lewis (1961), Mark Schorer notes in passing that "*It Can't Happen Here* had been translated, almost unbelievably, into German as *Das ist bei uns nicht möglich* and been promptly banned" (628). More precisely, the German translation, by Hans Meisel, was published in 1936 by the German exile Querido Verlag in Amsterdam (*Querido Verlag 1933-1950*, 253), and was, of course, immediately put on the Index by the Literature Chamber of the Third Reich (*Liste 84*). *Das ist bei uns nicht möglich* was republished only decades later, in the German Democratic Republic (Leipzig/Weimar 1984), where it was celebrated as one of the earliest American anti-Fascist novels and as a significant contribution to progressive and humanistic world literature (Afterword 428). After the reunification of Germany, the translation was reissued again (1992), but without the ideologically slanted Afterword, in which it was also argued that *It Can't Happen Here* demonstrated the helplessness of the Liberal (Doremus Jessup) who rejects both Capitalism and Communism, but has no alternative program to offer in the face of the Fascist threat (443). With or without the Afterword, however, the question remains: Who was Hans Meisel? A brief profile reveals why he would have been interested in translating *It Can't Happen Here* and why Lewis's novel is relevant to Meisel's own literary and scholarly work.

Meisel was born James Hans Meisel in Berlin in 1900. His father, Albert Meisel, was, in the formal designation, a "Prussian citizen of the Jewish faith," and his mother, Lilly, was the daughter of Louis Herzenberg, owner of a large manufacturing firm in Riga, Latvia, whose Jewish community was large, rich, and religious, but assimilated to the German upper crust

(Herzenberg). Hans Meisel studied at the Fichte-Gymnasium in Berlin, then at the universities of Berlin and Heidelberg, where he earned his doctorate in 1922. In his Afterword ("Nach 45 Jahren" ["45 Years Later"]) to a reprint edition (1972) of his first novel, *Torstenson: Entstehung einer Diktatur* (1927), Meisel recalls that he was so bored with his doctoral dissertation on the Socialist agricultural worker unions in Germany (Täubert 384) that he started writing the novel after reading Alfred Döblin's novel about the leader of a religious revolution in 18th-century China, *Die drei Sprünge des Wang-Lun* (1915), and boldly thinking: "I can do that too!" ("Das kannst Du auch!") (301).

In his novel, Meisel traces the rise of a military dictatorship in the Baltic state (which was historically not yet a Soviet Republic), led by General Torstenson, who is "neither a revolutionary nor a Caesar," but rather "a political realist," who "calculates his moves behind the scenes." Torstenson is not, as Meisel notes in hindsight (Afterword 301-02), a forerunner of Hitler, but rather perhaps of General Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970), who maneuvered his way to power as the French Fourth Republic fell in 1958 over the war to keep Algeria a French colony, or of General Kurt von Schleicher (1882-1934), the Defense Minister and last Chancellor of the Weimar Republic in 1932, who tried, in vain however, to create another coalition government to prevent Hitler from coming to power in January 1933. Meisel's novel contains most of the major themes of his subsequent literary work and scholarly studies: modern, especially, military dictatorships, power,

————— The German Translator *continued on next page*

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 Rusty Allred, Frederick Betz, Martin Bucco, Dan Chabris, Dana Cook, James and Birdie June Fish, Roger Forseth, Kathy Gum, James Hutchisson, Jacqueline Koenig, Mary Kronos, John-Paul Lewis, Joyce Lyng, Richard Lingeman, Robert L. McLaughlin, Roberta Olson, and Dave Simpkins.

The German Translator *continued from previous page*

violence, leaders and masses, political theorists and activists, and revolution and counter-revolution. These themes are also illustrated in *It Can't Happen Here*, in which Colonel, then General, Dewey Haik, on the one hand, and General Emmanuel Coon, on the other, were perhaps of more interest to Meisel than Berzelius Windrip or Lee Sarason.

From 1925 to 1933, Meisel served as a local and feuilleton editor for the most prominent liberal newspaper in Berlin, the *Vossische Zeitung* (cf. Täubert 373); he may have met or observed not only the Mann brothers (Heinrich and Thomas), but perhaps also Lewis and Dorothy Thompson in 1927 (Schorer 487–88, 491). Following the “succès d’estime” of his first novel, which shared the prestigious Kleist Prize in 1927 (Sembder 98–99), Meisel wrote three minor plays, including two comedies, *Geschäft* (1928) and *Störungen* (1929), which were premiered in Berlin and Dresden, respectively, and *Fahnenflucht* (Desertion) (1930), which portrays a young civil engineer in Berlin who briefly flirts with the idea of “deserting” (77) to Communism, but comes to the conclusion that “the oppressed” today are no longer “the workers” but rather “we” of the bourgeoisie, who must band together for the sake of (our) “freedom” (97).¹

Following Hitler’s consolidation of power in 1933–34, Meisel and his family (wife Ann [divorced 1939, died 1948] and son Albert [1929–97]) emigrated to Florence, then to Vienna in 1936, and finally to the United States in 1938, following Hitler’s annexation of Austria. During these years, Meisel earned his living in part as a translator, translating, among other works, Lewis’s *It Can’t Happen Here* (1935) in 1936 and Giuseppe Antonio Borgese’s *Goliath: The March of Fascism* (1937) in 1938 under the title *Der Marsch des Faschismus*. How Meisel received these translation assignments remains unclear, but perhaps they resulted from contacts through Meisel’s publisher, S. Fischer Verlag, in Berlin, or the two German exile publishers, Querido (Fritz H. Landshoff) and Allert de Lange,

in Amsterdam. S. Fischer Verlag’s most famous author was Thomas Mann (1875–1955), who had won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929, one year before Lewis became the first American to win the prize. Mann’s novella *Mario und der Zauberer* (1930), translated into English as *Mario and the Magician* in 1930–31, was widely interpreted as a political allegory of Italian Fascism and therefore banned in Italy (*Erläuterungen und Dokumente* 43). In February 1933, Mann and family fled Germany to Switzerland and then emigrated to the United States. Borgese (1882–1952), who was to marry Mann’s youngest daughter Elisabeth in 1939, had witnessed the rise of Mussolini, the March on Rome in 1922, and the consolidation of the Italian Fascist state in 1929. He emigrated to the U.S. in 1931 and taught Italian literature and political science at Smith College (1932–35) and the University of Chicago (1936–47). The work of a passionate anti-Fascist, *Goliath* traces the historical and intellectual background of Italian Fascism only to conclude that Mussolini’s movement amounted to “an outburst of emotionalism and pseudo-intellectualism” born of Italy’s moral deterioration (218; cf. Diggins 484–85).

From 1938 to 1940, Meisel served as Thomas Mann’s private secretary in Princeton and handled Mann’s vast correspondence with German refugees,² many of whom wrote to Mann for help or advice in coping with their new freedom but public neglect in America (Mann, “America and the Refugee” [1939]).³ In a letter of December 6, 1938, to his publisher Gottfried Bermann Fischer, Mann notes the capable assistance of Dr. Meisel, who had so brilliantly translated (glänzend übersetzt) the book (*Goliath*) by Borgese (*Briefwechsel* 194). When Mann and family moved to Pacific Palisades, California, in 1940, Meisel turned to academia and taught first at Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania from 1940 to 1942,

————— The German Translator *continued on page 15*

NEW MEMBERS

A hearty welcome to these new members who have joined the Sinclair Lewis Society since the spring 2005 issue.

Carol Dahlquist
Roseville, MN

Edward Dauterich
Stow, OH

Michael C. Dooling
Middleburg, CT

Rob Hardy
Northfield, MN

Allen Hess
Asheville, NC

Carl Iverson
Carmel, CA

Roger K. Miller
Janesville, WI

Scott Noble
Falcon Heights, MN

Evan Perrault
Colgate, WI

Edward Rico
Madison, WI

Marcie Weitzel
Sauk Centre, MN

THE LORINDA MYSTIQUE

MARY KRONES

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

More than two decades after the Great Depression, Betty Friedan decided to tackle what she described as the "problem that has no name," the result being one of the famous instigators of the feminist movement, *The Feminine Mystique*. In her attempt to locate the source of the boredom experienced by housewives nationwide, Friedan looked at national women's magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*. She found that while women's magazines advocated women staying home in post-World War II America, these same magazines in the 1930s celebrated the independent career woman:

The majority of heroines in the four major women's magazines...were career women—happily, proudly, adventurously, attractively career women—who loved and were loved by men. And the spirit, courage, independence, determination—the strength of character they showed in their work as nurses, teachers, artists, actresses, copywriters, saleswomen—were part of their charm. (Friedan 38)

Around the same time that *Good Housekeeping* was proclaiming the merits of the "New Woman," Sinclair Lewis wrote his controversial novel, *It Can't Happen Here*. Although the novel concentrates mainly on the thoughts and trials of one average American, Doremus Jessup, as America turns from democracy to fascism, the women in Doremus's life—wife Emma, daughters Mary and Sissy, and mistress Lorinda—also contribute in some way to Lewis's vision of fascist America. More than any other character, Lorinda encompasses the independent, career-minded "New Woman" that was heralded in 1930s media. However, in the novel as well as the real America of the 1930s, there were many who felt that women belonged only in the home. In analyzing Lewis's portrayal of Lorinda, I have come to the conclusion that Lewis intended her to act as a commentary on the social status and capabilities of women during this time period.

The differing opinions about women's roles is introduced in the very first chapter, where, at the Ladies' Night Dinner of the Fort Beulah Rotary Club, Mrs. Adelaide Tarr Gimmitich claims that women have done nothing with the vote, that all women belong in the home, and, "As that great author and scientist, Mr. Arthur Brisbane, has pointed out, what every

woman ought to do is to have six children" (Lewis 6). Here we meet Lorinda Pike for the first time. We find out that she is a widow and manager of the "super-boarding-house that called itself "The Beulah Valley Tavern"" (Lewis 6). While she is described as a beautiful woman, the main focus is on her outspoken nature:

But on a public platform her voice became brassy, her eyes filled with embarrassing fury. She was the village scold, the village crank. She was constantly poking into things that were none of her business, and at town meetings she criticized every substantial interest in the whole county.... Now, at this moment when everything should have been all Service and Sunshine, Mrs. Lorinda Pike cracked the spell by jeering:

"Three cheers for Brisbane! But what if a poor gal can't hook a man? Have her six kids out of wedlock?" (Lewis 7)

Lorinda is far from Mrs. Gimmitich's ideal of the perfect woman, but she is the epitome of the New Woman.

We do not meet Lorinda again for several chapters, until Doremus decides to visit her at her boarding house. Here, we discover that Lorinda and Doremus are having an affair. This fact further complicates Doremus, who is married to a traditional woman while in love with a New Woman. It is obvious that what Doremus loves about Lorinda is her intelligence and her passion—the things his wife Emma lacks. That Lorinda's attraction lies in her mind as well as her body predates Friedan and her thoughts on the heroines found in women's magazines in the 1930s:

These heroines were usually marching toward some goal or vision of their own, struggling with some problem of work or the world, when they found their man.... Her passionate involvement with the world, her own sense of herself as an individual, her self-reliance, gave a different flavor to her relationship with the man. (Friedan 38)

The different understandings that Doremus has with Lorinda and with his wife Emma reaffirm Friedan's findings

The Lorinda Mystique continued on next page

The Lorinda Mystique *continued from previous page*

about individuality creating a "different flavor" in relationships. Lorinda provides Doremus with the kind of intellectual and passionate companionship he cannot experience with Emma. While Lorinda is well-versed with the Windrip campaign, Emma has to constantly ask Doremus, "but what does it mean?" Lorinda is friendly with the unsuspecting Emma, but she remains very proud that she is a passionate career woman rather than a dull housewife:

"But who'd ever suspect that the local female crank, the suffragist, the pacifist, the anti-censorshipist, the friend of Jane Addams and Mother Bloor, could be a libertine! Highbrows! Bloodless reformers! Oh, and I've known so many women agitators, all dressed in Carrie Nation hatchets and modest sheets of statistics that have been ten times as passionate, intolerably passionate, as any cream-faced plump little Kept Wife in chiffon step-ins!" (148)

Yet, due to Buzz Windrip's presidency, Lorinda must aspire to be the same "Kept Wife" that she looks down upon. In his "Fifteen Points of Victory for the Forgotten Men," Windrip proclaims:

All women now employed shall, as rapidly as possible, except in such peculiarly feminine spheres of activity as nursing and beauty parlors, be assisted to return to their incomparably sacred duties as homemakers and as mothers of strong, honorable future Citizens of the Commonwealth. (Lewis 78)

The return of women to the home "where they belong" is not unique to Windrip's version of fascism; the Nazis in 1930s Germany encouraged women to embrace their femininity by becoming entirely domestic. Friedan, after being told by several women's magazine editors that women were not interested in current events, was reminded of this ideology:

As I listened to them, a German phrase echoed in my mind—"Kinder, Kuche, Kirche," the slogan by which the Nazis decreed that women must once again be confined to their biological role. The whole world lies open to American women. Why, then, does the image deny the world? (Friedan 37)

These sentiments echo Lorinda's. Although she is forced to give up much of her independence, she refuses to accept her "biological role" as a housewife, remaining a single career-minded woman and becoming very active in the almost exclusively male-run underground resistance against Windrip

and his Corpos.

The differences between the two women in Doremus's life, Lorinda the career woman and Emma the housewife, are at first seen as comically binary, but become more complex as the novel unfolds. Emma is portrayed as dutiful and dull, annoying but genuine, and her commitment to the health and safety of her husband and children is seen as admirable, by both Doremus and Lorinda. Yet, in the end, it is Lorinda who is the more loyal of the two, at least in regard to Doremus; while Lorinda is plotting and completing Doremus's escape from prison into Canada, Emma leaves to stay with her son and refuses to join her husband in Canada. That Lorinda is closer to Doremus, the hero of the novel, than his wife, supports the belief that Lorinda as the New Woman, with her intelligence, strength, and individuality, is the positive social role for women.

But the question remains, does Lorinda act as commentary against the anti-New Woman mentality? For while the New Woman was praised in the 1930s by many, she was also criticized for being cold, anti-feminine, and anti-family. In other words, how closely does the novel portray attitudes toward women in the 1930s? While Lorinda is indeed closer and more loyal to Doremus, Emma's loyalty to her children and her grandchild complicates the position of Lorinda and Doremus, who ignore young David while they carry on their adventures. Does this caregiver role not require the same strength and self-sacrifice so idealized in Lorinda? Lorinda and Emma embody the range of social roles of women of the 1930s, and expose the problems that each extreme, career-focused and motherhood-focused, encompasses.

This leads us back to the original question about gender roles in the novel. But can we trust the novel to accurately portray history? Can any novel accomplish such a feat? Annette Kolodny claims, "literary history (and with that, the historicity of literature) is a fiction" (302).

But we never really reconstruct the past in its own terms. What we gain when we read the "classics," then, is neither Homer's Greece nor George Eliot's England as they knew it but, rather, an approximation of an already fictively imputed past made available, through our interpretive strategies, for present concerns.... What distinguishes feminists in this regard is their desire to alter and extend what we take as historically relevant from out of that vast storehouse of our literary inheritance and, further, feminists' recognition of the storehouse for what it really is:

————— The Lorinda Mystique *continued on next page*

The Lorinda Mystique *continued from previous page*

a resource for remodeling our literary history, past, present, and future. (Kolodny 304)

Based upon these parameters, it is perhaps better to view Lorinda not as a symbol of women in the 1930s, but simply as a woman. In order to critique the roles of women at the time, Lewis had to portray Lorinda as the anti-housewife, the "feminized radical" (Lewis 453), and risked creating characters that were oversimplified binaries. Because of this Lorinda is a problematic heroine. But, as Kolodny points out, feminist critics today have the opportunity to remodel our literary history. Thus, perhaps Lorinda can be viewed as simply an alternative female role model from Emma, both within the era in which

she was conceived and within the era in which she is now being read.

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ON A FIRST NAME BASIS

MICHAEL CARROLL DOOLING

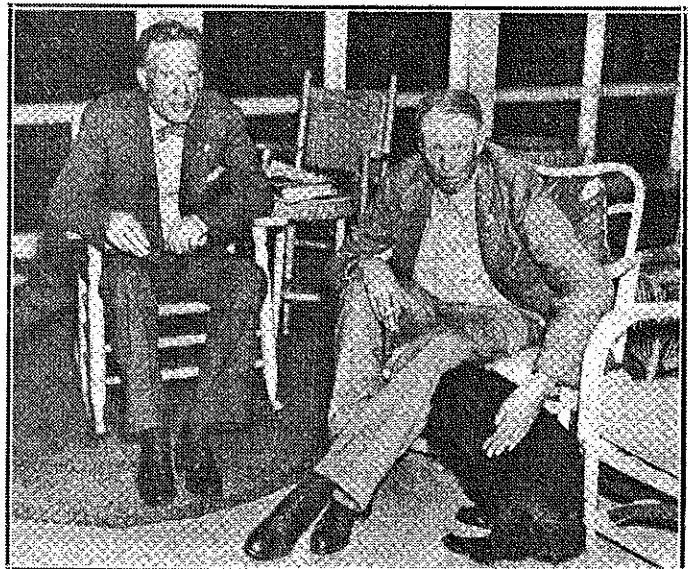
As a college man, Harry had only a scant number of acquaintances who could have been considered friends. It is ironic that a man who was such an arrogant loner in his early life could have turned into such a popular and important personage just a few years later. His years at Yale University branded him as an academic and social outcast and he was perceived by his classmates as abrasive, unworldly, and lacking social grace. One of his professors, William Lyon Phelps, later reflected, "As an undergraduate, he never bowed down to the idols of the place—as he cared nothing either for athletics or for social rewards" ("Eleven Honorary Degrees" 15). In the classroom, he was an enthusiastic student often dominating class time with his hand waving and eagerness to talk and was regarded with disdain by the other students from whom he distanced himself. Nevertheless, he developed a small circle of friends while doggedly pursuing a literary career.

In spite of his social shortcomings, he managed to nurture a few close relationships. Perhaps the best known was his first Yale friend, Allan Updegraff, whom he wrote about frequently in his diaries. He was also befriended by another classmate during his freshman year and their friendship lasted the remainder of his life. This robust young man named Elias Robert Stevenson was raised and educated in New Haven where he graduated as valedictorian of his class at Hillhouse High School. Unlike many of his colleagues, he was not the son, grandson, or nephew of a Yale alumnus, nor was he bestowed with the financial support to pursue his scholarly interests. Instead, he struggled to pay for them. His father having died

when he was but six years old, and "leaving [his] mother with too little money" ("E. R. Stevenson" 12), he worked his way through college earning every dollar for his education. In later years, he fondly recalled entering Yale with \$36 in his pocket, working his way through college in a variety of jobs and graduating with \$6 in his pocket and no debts.

A career in journalism was Elias's vision and in pursuit of this, he obtained part-time employment at the nearby New

— On a First Name Basis *continued on next page*



E. Robert Stevenson and Sinclair Lewis, courtesy of Waterbury Republican-American

On a First Name Basis *continued from previous page*

Haven *Journal and Courier*—along with his friend Harry. During their first weeks at the newspaper job and true to form, Harry reputedly said to telegraph editor Arthur J. Sloane, “I realize it’s just my luck that I’m studying Homer, while you fellows never had a chance to get educated. Eh?” (“I’m an Old Newspaper Man”). However, his penetrating sarcasm didn’t find its mark for it was Art Sloane who had the last word this time and retorted, “‘Eh,’ Greek particle derived through Sanskrit from the primitive Iranian” (“I’m an Old Newspaper Man”). In spite of his attempts to get the better of Sloane, Harry and Art remained friends for many years.

Harry became intrigued with the idea of European travel; during his first semester, he wrote in his diary, “It’s a trifle startling to learn that many of my class have been to Europe and to hear them talking familiarly and calmly of the Matterhorn or the Rhine” (Personal Diaries, Oct. 18, 1903). At the end of his freshman year he invited Elias to join him on his first trip to Europe, to which Elias replied, “How can I get to Europe without any money?” Harry responded, “by cattleboat, we’ll work our way across” (“E. R. Stevenson” 1). Less adventuresome than Harry perhaps, and certainly more in need of cash for the following year’s tuition, Elias declined. Harry went without his friend on this jaunt that landed him in Liverpool, earning his way across the Atlantic by watering and feeding cattle, and returning in time for the start of classes the following semester.



Yearbook photo of E. Robert Stevenson

Elias successfully pursued his degree and contributed articles to the *New Haven Register*, *New Haven Palladium*, *Black Cat*, and *Argosy*. During his junior year he held a First Colloquy appointment and in 1907 proudly graduated with his class. Harry also continued to write, publishing his works in numerous literary magazines and in his junior year becoming one of the editors of the *Yale Literary Magazine*, popularly called the “Lit.” In spite of his successes, Harry left Yale dur-

ing his senior year “‘thoroughly bored,’ he wrote later, with years of sitting in classrooms sucking in secondhand wisdom” (Schorer 110). He departed in October of 1906 to work at Helicon Hall—Upton Sinclair’s socialist cooperative-living experiment in New Jersey. He was joined by his friend Allan Updegraff and they worked as janitors as they sought a Utopian life. Their digression was short and Elias later commented, “It took hardly more than a month to disgust him (Harry) with the long-haired individuals there” (“Sinclair Lewis, Author” 3). Upon his departure, Harry published an article about his experiences in the *New York Sun*.

Not having completed his coursework on time, restless Harry was excused from the commencement exercises with his class of 1907. In the 1907 Yale yearbook, he was listed as a “non-graduate” with an abridged biography and without the traditional photograph. He completed his work the following year and through special faculty courtesy was recorded as having graduated with his ’07 class. He was also elected “most original” and “most eccentric” by his classmates—less a compliment than statement of fact. When Harry received an honorary Doctor of Literature degree from Yale in 1936, his former English professor (the eminent William Lyon Phelps) turned his eccentricities into a compliment when he praised Harry as an “extreme individualist” (“Eleven Honorary Degrees” 15).

Sometime before graduating from college, Elias dropped his biblical first name and became known by his middle name Robert—formally E. Robert Stevenson, but “Bob” or “Steve” to his friends. Harry, on the other hand, had garnered a variety of nicknames. Always “Harry” to his parents, he was known as “Hal” to his Sauk Centre friends, then “Ginger,” “Bonfire,” “God Forbid” to the staff at the “Lit,” and finally he received the name by which he was most often referred—“Red.” Harry also dropped his first name for professional use and his personal diaries reflected this change in name preference. Each of his early diaries (1903–1905) was signed either “Harry S. Lewis” or “H. S. Lewis.” His 1907 diary dropped any reference to “Harry.” Instead, he boldly signed it “Sinclair Lewis.”¹

Upon graduation, both these Yale men pursued their writing careers. After a brief stint teaching English, E. Robert Stevenson became city editor for the *Springfield Republican* in Massachusetts. Eight years later he moved to Waterbury, Connecticut where he was named Editor of the *Waterbury Republican* and in 1927 was promoted to editor-in-chief, remaining with the Waterbury paper until his retirement in 1949. During

On a First Name Basis *continued on page 17*

CLEARING THE SMOKE: BABBITT'S "CURIOUS INSCRIPTION"

MICHAEL CARROLL DOOLING

A recent article, "Babbitt's Mysterious Inscription," in the *Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter* (Fall 2004) cites speculation by Ingrid Wilson that George Babbitt's inscription "D.S.S.D.M.Y.P.D.F." is a reminder to himself to stop smoking. I have found substantial support for this theory amidst Sinclair Lewis's personal papers, specifically Lewis's manuscript for *Babbitt* containing numerous editorial changes in his own hand. The typed manuscript, housed in Yale's Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, includes several versions of the relevant sentence. Unfortunately, none of them deciphers the inscription. But fortunately, within his text changes are several revealing clues as to its meaning. The following quotations show the development of the sentence containing the cryptic initials. It should be noted that in all cases, the paragraph that follows always starts with, "But he had no cigarette case."

Original Manuscript Before Revisions:

"...notes to be sure and do things which there was no slightest chance he could forget to do." (No inscription follows)

Manuscript with Revisions in Lewis's Hand (in italics):

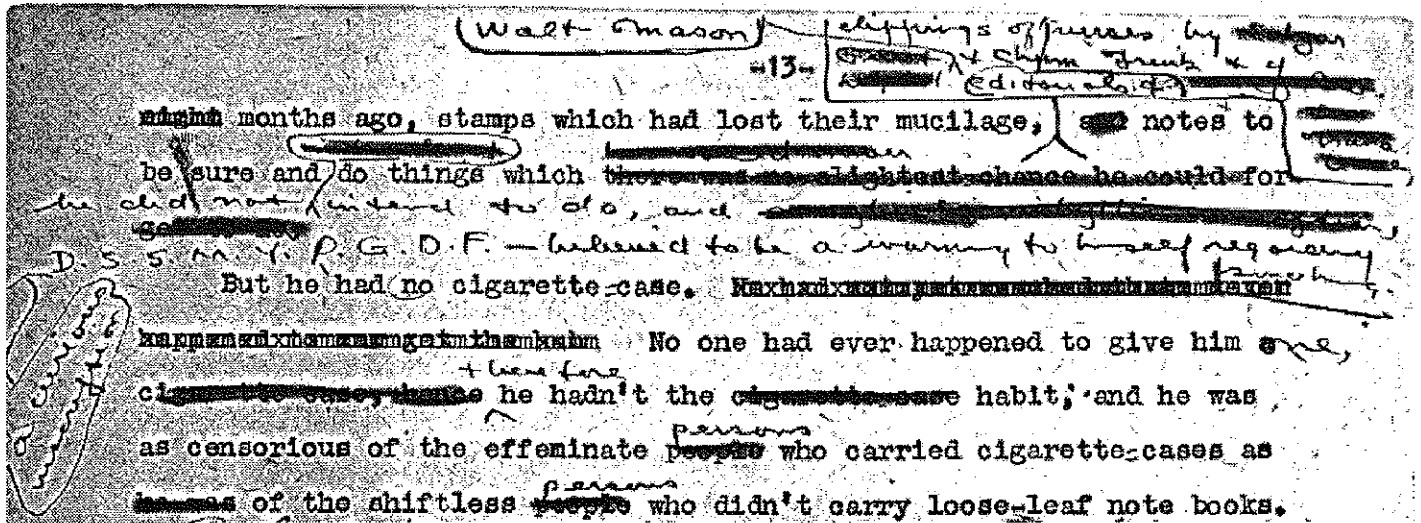
"...notes to be sure and do things which there was no slightest chance he could forget to do *he did not intend to do, and a sybillic-sybillic inscription, a curious inscription, D.S.S.M.Y.P.G.D.F.—believed to be a warning to himself regarding smoking.*"

First Edition Text:

"...notes to be sure and do things which he did not intend to do, and one curious inscription—D.S.S.D.M.Y.P.D.F" (10).

By comparing the original manuscript with the printed version we find several important clues as to the meaning of the inscription. First, somewhere between Lewis's manuscript and the first printed edition of the book, the inscription changed. The original manuscript had a slightly different grouping of

———— Babbitt's "Curious Inscription" *continued on next page*



The "Inscription" passage from the Babbitt manuscript, courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University

Babbitt's "Curious Inscription" *continued from previous page*

nine letters in the inscription:

Original Manuscript: D.S.S.M.Y.P.G.D.F.

First (and subsequent) Edition(s): D.S.S.D.M.Y.P.D.F.

Second, the use of the word "sibyllic" is written with two spellings in Lewis's hand (apparently uncertain of the correct spelling). This word, meaning "prophetic," and his initial use of it may mean the message indicates something to come later in the work. He changed "sibyllic" to "curious," perhaps to make it more widely understood but perhaps the inscription was less prophetic than he originally planned.

Finally, Lewis's revised wording (that never made it into print), "believed to be a warning to himself regarding smoking" makes it perfectly clear what he intended by the original inscription (and undoubtedly the modified one that appeared in print). Why he or his editor deleted this explanatory phrase in the published version is open to debate—perhaps he felt he had made the meaning of the inscription too obvious to the reader.

It appears that Ms. Wilson is on the right track in her interpretation of the inscription. "Don't Smoke So Damn Much" is a very possible decipherment of the first 5 letters in the

printed version ("Don't Smoke So Much" in the manuscript). The last few letters of the manuscript version of the inscription—G.D.F.—looks to me like "God Damn Fool." Babbitt wasn't prone to using the Lord's name in vain, so perhaps that explains why Lewis deleted the "G" from the printed inscription. Also, Lewis tended to use the term "damn" in the text of *Babbitt* about twice as often as he used "damn." Given these thoughts, I submit the following decipherment for your consideration:

Manuscript: D.S.S.M.Y.P.G.D.F.

Don't Smoke So Much You Poor God Damn Fool

First Edition: D.S.S.D.M.Y.P.D.F.

Don't Smoke So Damn Much You Poor Damn Fool

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TWIN FARMS UPDATE

Twin Farms, the former home of Sinclair Lewis and Dorothy Thompson, keeps being written up in travel literature as among the most exclusive resorts in the country. Lisa Kalis in the *New York Times* Travel section (December 12, 2004) notes,

[A]t Twin Farms in Barnard, Vt., the room rates—\$1,500 to \$2,070 per night—include three meals, afternoon tea, beverages, wine from the 30,000-bottle cellar and outdoor activities, including downhill skiing at the inn's private slopes. There's no check-in, since payment is handled before arrival (an escort meets guests in the courtyard), and no menus, so guests must fill out a survey on their food preferences before arrival.

Having no menu doesn't seem to limit the dining options: a dish recently featured on the inn's Web site

was described as "Long Island foie gras served on a pressed salad of mesclun greens encased in a dried apple ring, garnished with steamed garden leeks and a balsamic drizzle."

Anne Black Cone, the hotel's marketing assistant, said that guests, perhaps those without a country estate to call their own, like the feel of being in a place that seems to cater to every whim.

"They want to come here and use it as a second home," she said. "It's perceived as value for the money." (3)

And Christine Muhlke, also of the *Times*, notes that "Twin Farms...has a 24-hour, never-say-no philosophy, whether it's orchestrating 10 minutes of fireworks for a birthday or recreating the Twelve Days of Christmas for a potential fiancée." ☞

MORE COMMENTS ON *THE PLOT AGAINST AMERICA*

Other responses to Philip Roth's *The Plot against America* include a review by David Gates in *Newsweek*, "It Can't Happen Here" (September 20, 2004: 56), which, despite the title, doesn't mention *It Can't Happen Here* as an influence. However, Kay Lockridge, in a letter to the editor (October 4, 2005) mentions the absence of Roth's literary predecessor:

Surely David Gates is aware of Sinclair Lewis's 1935 book, *It Can't Happen Here*.... I'll bet that Philip Roth, author of *The Plot Against America*, is. Lewis predicted the fascist takeover of America. With the benefit of hindsight, Roth has updated this theme yet sets his plot in 1940. Is Roth afraid to suggest that what Lewis predicted may be coming true in the United States today? Both books must give readers pause before what may be the most important election in American history. (20)

Pierre Tristram from the *Daytona Beach News-Journal* is another writer who commented on the connection between the two novels prior to the last presidential election. He writes:

In 1935 Sinclair Lewis imagined an America taken over by a dictator on a tide of populist promises. Not much more than the title of the book is remembered today: "It Can't Happen Here." The words have been used a few times to suggest that a second Bush term would bring the nation as close as it's ever been to a dictatorship, given the disappearance of Congress as a branch of any consequence since 2001 and the cloning of the federal bench in President Bush's image. It's a wild exaggeration. Things aren't nearly that bad. But they're bad enough.

Another letter to the editor, this one after David Brooks's op-ed piece "After the Vote: Reading Tea Leaves" (November 6), by Larry Deblinger of Nyack, New York in the *New York*

Times (November 9, 2004), states:

David Brooks seems to believe that the regional divide between the most urban and the most rural-suburban states on the electoral map has been overstated, and that a larger issue was safety from terrorism. If that is true, then why did the people in the nation's largest cities and Washington, who live daily with the very real threat of terrorism, vote overwhelmingly for John Kerry, while people in the most remote areas, least likely to be attacked, vote overwhelmingly for George W. Bush?

The electoral evidence clearly indicates that there is a major, meaningful urban-rural divide in this country. We must face this fact squarely to understand it and to forge a road to national unity. I, for one, shall begin by reading the novels of Sinclair Lewis.

Ruth Wisse in *Commentary* (December 2004) discusses Roth's novel in light of Lewis as well. Her review, "In Nazi Newark," thinks more highly of Roth than Lewis:

To compare *The Plot against America* with its forgotten predecessor, Sinclair Lewis's 1935 best-seller, *It Can't Happen Here*, is to acknowledge how much more plausibly Roth has portrayed his imagined America. The substantiality of the Roth family, and the use of 'himself' as a child narrator, go a long way toward establishing credibility.... Roth also has it over Lewis in supplying a much more convincing rationale for the advent of a proto-fascist President. Sinclair Lewis's demagogue, Buzz Windrip—modeled on the Louisiana politician Huey Long—is far less convincing as an American idol than Roth's aviator-hero, who, instead of drumming up bigotry, appeals to the quintessential American desire for peace. (67–68) ✍



SINCLAIR LEWIS

GET TO KNOW THE MAN BEHIND THE NOVELS

www.english.ilstu.edu/separry/sinclairlewis



Third Lewis Conference *continued from page 1*

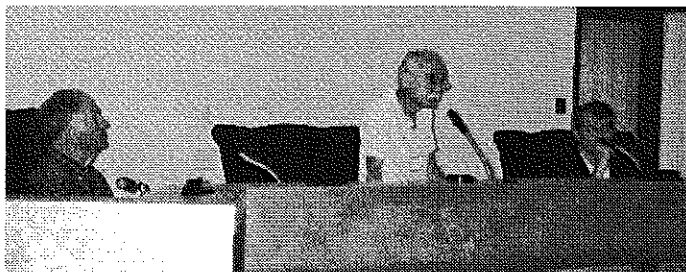
grandson of Sinclair Lewis and Dorothy Thompson. Mr. Lewis, who lives in Washington, DC, has bachelor's and master's degrees in International Studies and has worked in lobbying, public relations, and real estate. He is also the author of two historical novels, *Buffalo Gordon* and *Buffalo Gordon on the Plains*; he is currently writing a novel about Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition into Egypt and the Holy Land. He was making his first trip to Sauk Centre since his childhood, when he visited the town with Dorothy Thompson.



John-Paul Lewis on Main Street (photo by Roberta Olson)

Mr. Lewis's address, "Medievalism in America: The Slow Death of American Enlightenment," invoked his grandparents' sense of outrage and directed it at the arrogance of U.S. foreign policy.

The academic portion of the conference began Thursday at Sauk Centre's new city hall, with welcoming remarks from Roberta Olson, representing the local Sinclair Lewis Foundation, and Frederick Betz and Sally Parry, president and executive director respectively, representing the Sinclair Lewis Society. The morning papers focused on Lewis's novels of the 1920s. Juleen Trisko-Schneider, a native of Sauk Centre, presented "Growing Up Main Street—Sinclair Lewis: Our SOB"; Roger Forseth presented "Internal Exile: Carol Kennicott as Expatriate"; Frederick Betz presented "A novel filled with jackasses and jackals": Animal Imagery in *Elmer Gantry*"; Quentin Martin of the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs presented "Commercialized Culture: Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* and the Age of Advertising"; and W. Kirkland Symmes presented "Historian of the '20s; Prophet of the 2000s."



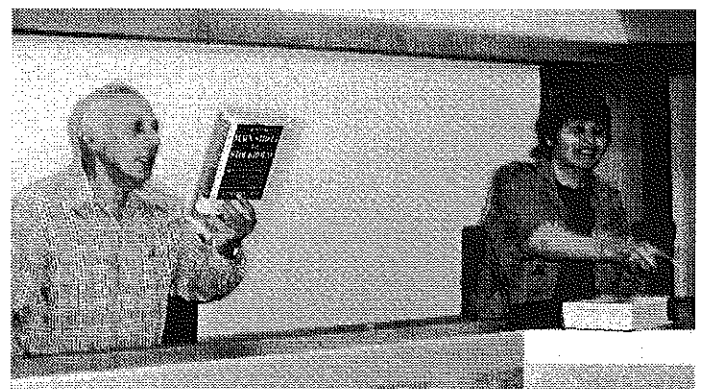
Frederick Betz addresses conference goers, as panelists W. Kirkland Symmes and Quentin Martin sit on either side of him

After lunch, the focus turned to Lewis's short fiction. Todd Stanley presented "Sinclair Lewis: Short Shrift on the Short Story," and Sally Parry presented "I'm a Stranger Here: Sinclair Lewis and the Immigrant Voice in *Main Street* and the Minnesota Short Stories." These were followed by the world premiere performance of "Main Street Goes to War," a radio script Lewis wrote in 1942 but which was never produced. Among the brave conference-goers who brought Carol, Will, and the inhabitants of Gopher Prairie to life were Frederick Betz, Maureen Roen, Tom Raynor, Jörg Thunecke, Sally Parry, and Robert McLaughlin.

The late afternoon was spent at a tour of the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home, courtesy of the Lewis Foundation, and the evening brought a showing of the hard-to-find *I Married a Doctor*, the 1936 film version of *Main Street*, starring Josephine Hutchinson and Pat O'Brien.

Friday morning offered a focus on *It Can't Happen Here*. Jörg Thunecke and Frederick Betz presented "We're headed toward a kind of fascism—it's our own brand, made in the USA: A Comparison of Two Cautionary Tales: Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* and Philip Roth's *The Plot against America*"; William Kraemer presented "Buzz Windrip and the Winds of Treason"; and Tom Raynor presented "A Message for a 'Burning World': Dorothy Thompson, Sinclair Lewis, and *It Can't Happen Here*." The midmorning break was enlivened by Martin Bucco's auction of pieces from his Lewis collection, with the proceeds benefiting the Society. These papers were followed by a playing of an audio recording of *It Can't Happen Here* (abridged) by Michael Lewis, an actor who was Sinclair's son and John-Paul's father.

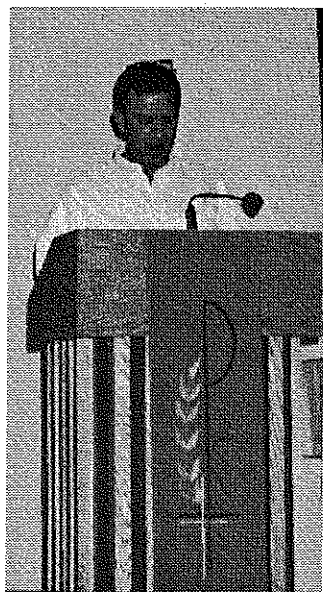
————— Third Lewis Conference *continued on next page*



Martin Bucco and Sally E. Parry at the conference auction

Third Lewis Conference *continued from previous page*

The afternoon session began with a focus on Lewis's relationship with Dorothy Thompson. Robert McLaughlin spoke about *Strangers*, a 1979 play by Sherman Yellen about the Lewis-Thompson relationship, and Maureen Roen spoke on the effort to have Thompson inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame. Finishing up were George Killough, who shared



John-Paul Lewis gives keynote address at the 2005 Sinclair Lewis Conference

his research into the places and people Lewis knew when he lived in Duluth in "On Another Home Front: How to Present Lewis to Duluth Service Clubs," and Martin Bucco, who spoke about Lewis as a critic of his own work in "Sinclair Lewis on Sinclair Lewis."

The last official event of the conference was the Friday evening screening of the 1936 film version of *Dodsworth*, starring the brilliant Walter Huston.

The conference-goers departed Sauk Centre on Saturday, after thanking John-Paul Lewis, his wife Sue Ellen, and

daughter Charlotte Jeanne for their participation in the conference; the members of the Lewis Foundation, Jim Umhoefer, Patricia Lewis, Colleen Steffes, Irene Trisko, Alice Broman, Marcy Weitzel, Donna Uphus, Roberta Olson, and Joan Wolter for their support; and conference organizers Sally Parry and Joyce Lyng for all their hard work. The conference-goers are already looking forward to the next conference. ✍



Sally E. Parry (conference coordinator), John-Paul Lewis, and Robert L. McLaughlin (conference coordinator) (photo by Roberta Olson)

Erumaa Gantorii *continued from page 1*

in Japanese and, obviously, in the retranslation to English. It is not always possible, or advisable, to try to replicate a linguistic trick in a foreign language. Therefore, this degree of variation is to be expected.

The primary goal of this analysis is not to locate translation errors per se. Rather, I am interested in the following question: "How did the E-J translator represent Lewis's complex ideas and, in particular, his humor?" With this in mind I preselected passages from the original to compare in Japanese.

What I found in *Elmer Gantry* is a competent translation, but with a few slight misses, and a few blatant errors. Read on to see passages of each type.

For example, one rather complex passage came through the translation in excellent shape:

It was not her eloquence but her healing of the sick which raised Sharon to such eminence that she promised to become the most renowned evangelist

in America. People were tired of eloquence; and the whole evangelist business was limited, since even the most ardent were not likely to be saved more than three or four times. But they could be healed constantly, and of the same disease. (208)

Sharon made her mark as the most famous evangelist in America not because she was eloquent, but because she had the power to heal the sick. People were fed up with eloquence, and besides, not even the most ardent could be saved more than three or four times, so evangelism had its limits as a career. But the sick were always sick, always having the same illness cured. (Translation, VI, 344)

Languages do not map one-to-one. Instead, each English word can map to a number of Japanese words. And any one of those

Erumaa Gantorii *continued on next page*

Erumaa Gantorii *continued from previous page*

Japanese words maps back to a list of possible English words. Given that, it is remarkable that this passage came through the double translation so well.

Now consider the following passage:

His reasoning had been introverted, turned from an examination of men as mammals and devoted to a sorrow that sinful and aching souls should not more readily seek the security of a mystic process known as Conviction, Repentance, and Salvation, which, he was assured by the noblest and most literate men he had ever known, was guaranteed to cure all woe. His own experience did not absolutely confirm this. (120)

This passage came through the double translation as follows:

Frank had stopped seeing people as mammals and looked into their hearts; he found it extremely sad that suffering sinners had to push forward in search of grace within the mysterious process of recognition of their sins, attrition, and salvation. This is because the most sophisticated and wisest people Frank knew had confidently told him that this mysterious process healed any and all worries, without fail. Yet his own experience had not fully proven this fact. (Translation, V1, 195-96)

There are, perhaps, a few differences between these two, but notice also how the short sentence comes through double translation mostly intact. Clearly, there are more degrees of freedom in a longer sentence.

The E-J translator missed the point slightly on the following passage:

Elmer had enough money to take him to Eureka. All the way there he warmed up the affection with which a borrower recalls an old acquaintance who is generous and a bit soft. (228)

Elmer had enough money to get that far. Along the way, he remembered his old friend's generosity and slight sentimentality, and felt affection for Frank. (Translation, V2, 14)

While most of the information is present, the humor of this passage is lost, and the reader gets the wrong impression regarding Elmer's feelings toward Frank.

Probably the most serious outright error found is in the following passage. Pay particular attention to the part about going to hell:

"Even if some details of dogma aren't true—or even all of 'em—think what a consolation religion and the church are to weak humanity!"

"Are they? I wonder! Don't cheerful agnostics, who know they're going to die dead, worry much less than good Baptists, who worry lest their sons and cousins and sweethearts fail to get into the Baptist heaven—or what is even worse, who wonder if they may not have guessed wrong—if God may not be a Catholic, maybe, or a Mormon or a Seventh-day Adventist instead of a Baptist, and then they'll go to hell themselves! Consolation? No!" (123)

"Even if some of the finer points of doctrine differ a little—even if they all do—think of how much comfort religion and the Church bring to the weak!"

"Comfort? What comfort? Cheery agnostics who believe death is the end suffer more than upstanding Baptists who worry that children and cousins and lovers won't be coming to their Baptist heaven—or worse, that their assumptions were wrong and God turns out not to be a Baptist after all, but a Catholic, a Mormon, an Adventist? Preposterous! That's why they're bound for hell! Comfort? How absurd!" (Translation, V1, 201-02)

The passage comes through double translation largely intact, but with one glaring error that is clearly in the Japanese translation. It appears the E-J translator made one wrong turn in an otherwise very competent translation. It is an unfortunate error, however, because it leaves the passage confusing and diminishes its impact.

To date I have reviewed two translations of *Arrowsmith*, one of *Main Street*, and now this one of *Elmer Gantry*. The following list summarizes my findings:

1. Translation of *Main Street*: a marvelous translation that reads like Lewis but in Japanese. After being out of print for a time, this translation is currently available new in Japan.
2. Translation and abridgment of *Arrowsmith*: an excellent translation. Its primary shortcoming is its abridgment to around half the original length. This translation is also available new.
3. World War II translation of *Arrowsmith*: a competent translation which does not quite read with the ease

Erumaa Gantorii *continued on next page*

Erumaa Gantorii *continued from previous page*

of a Lewis novel. The information is all present and reasonably accurate, but the translation has a brute force feel. This book is rare.

4. Translation of *Elmer Gantry*: a competent translation that reads nicely overall but has a few mistranslations, some of them serious. This book is also rare, but the Burt Lancaster movie is widely available in Japan, possibly due to Lancaster's enduring popularity there.

It is unlikely that I will find Japanese translations of any other Lewis novels, although I plan to keep searching. I also have translations of several of his short stories.

The German Translator *continued from page 4*

and then at the Albertson College of Idaho at Caldwell from 1942 to 1945. In 1945, Meisel was appointed Lecturer in Political Science at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, where he advanced to full professor in 1956 and retired in 1971.

After co-editing *Germany under Occupation: Illustrative Materials and Documents* (1947) and *Materials for the Study of the Soviet System* (1950), Meisel published *The Genesis of Georges Sorel: An Account of His Formative Period followed by a Study of His Influence* (1951), the first major study in English of this political theorist (1847–1922), known primarily for his *Reflections on Violence* (1908; English, 1914) and admiration for both Lenin and Mussolini as revolutionary leaders. In 1958, Meisel published *The Myth of the Ruling Class: Gaetano Mosca and the "Elite,"* the purpose of which was "to show how Mosca (1858–1941) began as a champion of contemporary antidemocratic thought (because the democratic way as he conceived it led straight into the Marxist bog), and how he ended up by shrinking from the consequences of his own ideas when the Duce, an ex-Marxist, took him at his word" (Preface). Meisel followed with *The Fall of the Republic: Military Revolt in France* (1962), a brilliant narrative and study of the fall of the Fourth French Republic (1940–58) "brought about by its own army, and about the struggles of the Fifth against renewed attempts of the same army to impose its will upon the government of Charles de Gaulle" concerning the future of Algeria as a French province (Preface).⁴ Three years later, Meisel edited *Makers of Modern Social Science: Pareto and Mosca* (1965), introducing Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923) as two dissenters from Marx who argued that a classless society was both undesirable and impossible, and that in all societies, no matter how civilized, two classes of people always appear, a

Notes

1. A phonetic rendering of "Elmer Gantry" as it is written in Japanese.

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class (or elite) that rules and a class that is ruled (Introduction). In 1966, Meisel published his last scholarly work, *Counter-Revolution: How Revolutions Die*, a collection of case studies of revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries, including such figures of the 20th century as Mussolini, Hitler, T. E. Lawrence, General Franco, and General de Gaulle, followed by Meisel's pragmatic "Conclusion" that there is "A Surfeit of Answers" to what constitutes both a revolution and a counter-revolution.

In 1970, Meisel published *A Matter of Endurance: A Novel* about the French army revolt in 1958, which he had analyzed in his study of *The Fall of the Republic* (1962). The plot is conveyed primarily through dialogue between characters, but this late novel lacks the descriptive brilliance and evocative power of Meisel's first novel, *Torstenson*, in which Meisel was able to draw on personal experience of the people and milieu of Riga, where he visited with his family most summers before World War I. These visits are recounted in Meisel's memoirs of his early years, published under the title *Eine Gondel ganz aus Glas* in 1984. Those years were, as he notes in his Afterword (169), idyllic compared to what would follow after 1914, but he concedes that the pre-war years were perhaps not as sunny as he had first recalled, for there were already dark clouds on the horizon. After the October Revolution (1917) and Lenin's consolidation of power (1922), Meisel's grandparents, who had left Riga for St. Petersburg, were forced to flee again, this time to Berlin, where both died, "fortunately," as Meisel notes without irony, "before the next catastrophe," when many of his other relatives died in the Second World War or the Holocaust.

Meisel retired in 1971 and moved in 1984 to Bellevue,

The German Translator *continued on next page*

The German Translator *continued from previous page*

Washington, where he died in 1991 (*New York Times*, 12 March 1991). In 2001, Weidle Verlag (Bonn) published Meisel's novel *Aguilar oder die Abkehr* (Aguilar or The Renunciation) about a young salesman and would-be writer (Juan Aguilar) who, after temporarily losing his voice in an automobile accident, pretends to remain mute (hence the original title *Die stumme Zeit* [The Silent Time]) as he witnesses the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). Meisel had submitted the manuscript under a pseudonym (Gil Gardian) to a novel competition sponsored by the American Guild for German Cultural Freedom in 1938. By coincidence, Thomas Mann was one of the judges, but although he highly recommended it, it was never published in Meisel's lifetime (Weidle Verlag Catalog).⁵ In 2004, Weidle Verlag reissued *Torstenson*, which may help to revive interest in this early masterpiece by the German translator of *It Can't Happen Here*.⁶

Notes

1. All three plays were published by S. Fischer Verlag in Berlin. The two comedies are unavailable via interlibrary loan in the U.S., while *Fahnenflucht* is unavailable in Europe. The only available copy of the third play is in the Library of Congress (Washington, DC), and it contains emendations in pencil which could only be those of Meisel himself! For discussion of *Störungen* and *Fahnenflucht* see Täubert 374–75.
2. This appointment was arranged by Mann's oldest daughter Erika; see Mann's diary entry for 20 November 1938 (*Tagebücher 1937–1939* and footnote on 731).
3. This article was drafted by Meisel; see Mann's diary entry for 18 October 1939 (*Tagebücher* and footnote on 840).
4. If the military revolt in France "sounds too fanciful, too much like Sinclair Lewis's fantasy of the late 1930s, called *It Can't Happen Here*," Meisel assures the reader at the beginning of his study that "that is exactly what happened to the government of France in 1958, on May 13" (17).
5. See also Mann's diary entry for 18 April 1939 (*Tagebücher* and footnote on 792, where it noted that as of 1980 *Aguilar* had not been published). It appears (see acknowledgment at end of *Aguilar* [2001]) that Weidle Verlag (Bonn) obtained the manuscript from Meisel's widow (Marianne, whom Meisel had married in 1940) and their daughter Claire through John M. Spalek, Professor Emeritus of German (SUNY-Albany) and specialist in German exile literature. The Afterword (by Klaus Täubert) reveals that Meisel had also written another novel in German in 1970–71, but that it has remained unpublished. Entitled *Leviathan*, this novel about the 1920s and 30s in Europe draws on themes from the work of Georges Sorel, but also from the English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes's famous treatise of the same title (1651), in

which Hobbes had advocated absolute monarchy as the only way to control the inherently selfish, aggrandizing nature of human beings. For discussion of four more unpublished novels by Meisel see Täubert (2000): 380–82.

6. The Signet Classic paperback edition (1993) of *It Can't Happen Here* contains an excellent Introduction (7–13) by Perry Meisel, Professor of English at New York University, who, however, is not related to Hans Meisel (personal communication of 16 December 2004).

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On a First Name Basis *continued from page 8*

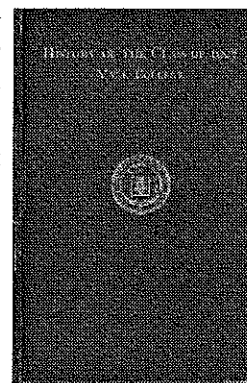
his reign, he received the nickname—"the hell-raising editor" ("E. R. Stevenson" 1)—the result of investigative work he and his newspaper performed in 1940. The newspaper's crusade against a corrupt mayoral administration was spearheaded by Stevenson and captured the Pulitzer Prize for the *Waterbury Republican* in 1940, to date the only Pulitzer to be awarded to a Connecticut newspaper for "meritorious public service."

Paralleling the career path of E. Robert, Sinclair also landed his first full-time post with a newspaper—the *Daily Courier* in Waterloo, Iowa. While employed in this tiny newsroom he wore three caps—editorial writer, telegraph editor, and proofreader. He found the editorial work stifling and felt stranded in this prairie community where he found life dull and trifling. He suffered a mere ten weeks in the news business and was suddenly relieved of his duties when the managing editor fired him the same day his successor arrived on the train. Lewis once wrote of his unsuccessful experiences in the newspaper business and gave himself a nickname similar to that of Stevenson, calling himself "Harry the Demon Reporter" ("I'm an Old Newspaper Man"). Thereafter, Sinclair Lewis had a series of successes publishing articles for magazines.

When his first book was published in 1912, Lewis adopted yet a different name—Tom Graham. The book, entitled *Hike and the Aeroplane* was a boys' adventure story and met with only modest success and only 1,000 copies were printed.

Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library possesses a copy of this title inscribed "To Sinclair Lewis / from the author / Tom Graham, his altered ego." Encouraged that he could make a living from the pen, his career soared during the next few decades and he produced more than twenty powerful novels.

In 1922, Lewis returned to New Haven for his fifteenth college reunion. Undoubtedly the most famous member of the class of '07, he was asked to speak at the reunion dinner. According to Mark Schorer, Lewis's biographer, he prefaced his address by saying "When I was in college, you fellows didn't give a damn about me, and I'm here to say that now I don't give a damn about you" (334). Lewis then proceeded to name names and how they had snubbed him during their college days. During that reunion, Lewis and Stevenson decided to pay a visit to an old friend:



Yale yearbook
from 1907

Stevenson one evening stood beneath Lewis' window in the old Vanderbilt dormitory in the court on

On a First Name Basis *continued on next page*

On a First Name Basis *continued from previous page*

Chapel Street. In answer to his call Lewis came down in his pyjamas, sat on the court curb and smoked a cigarette. It was 10:30 o'clock, a perfect June night. Stevenson looked at Lewis' pyjamas, unorthodox street garments, and nonchalantly proposed, "Let's ramble down Chapel Street." There was not even a quiver of hesitation in Lewis. In pyjamas and slippers he went along to the street, through the lobby of the Taft Hotel, to Chapel Street and so to Temple and the newspaper plant of the *Journal-Courier*.... There a brief visit was paid to Arthur J. Sloane, managing editor, where days of undergraduate reporting were recalled. (Schorer 334)

Like his college friend years later, Lewis was also awarded a Pulitzer Prize. In 1926, when he was awarded the prize for *Arrowsmith*, he declined it on philosophical grounds. His eminent standing among his classmates was solidified in 1930 when he was awarded the Nobel Prize. He was the first American author to be awarded the prize for distinction in world literature, a triumph that precipitated his gradual decline.

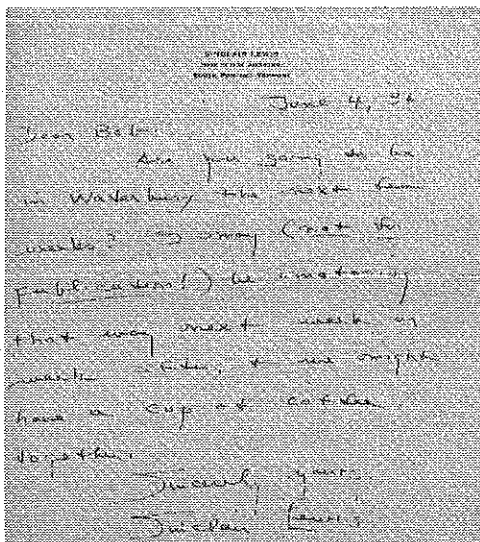
A few years later Lewis paid homage to Stevenson in his writing. In his novel *It Can't Happen Here*, Sinclair Lewis modeled the book's pivotal character (a liberal, small-town newspaper editor named Doremus Jessup) after his enduring friend Elias. Lewis described Jessup (and one wonders, also Stevenson) as "a pretty smart fella but kind of a cynic" (3).

For many years, Lewis contemplated writing a novel on organized labor; as far back as 1927 he envisioned his novel with the working title *The Man Who Sought God*. In June 1936, he visited Waterbury, Connecticut and toured the brass mills.

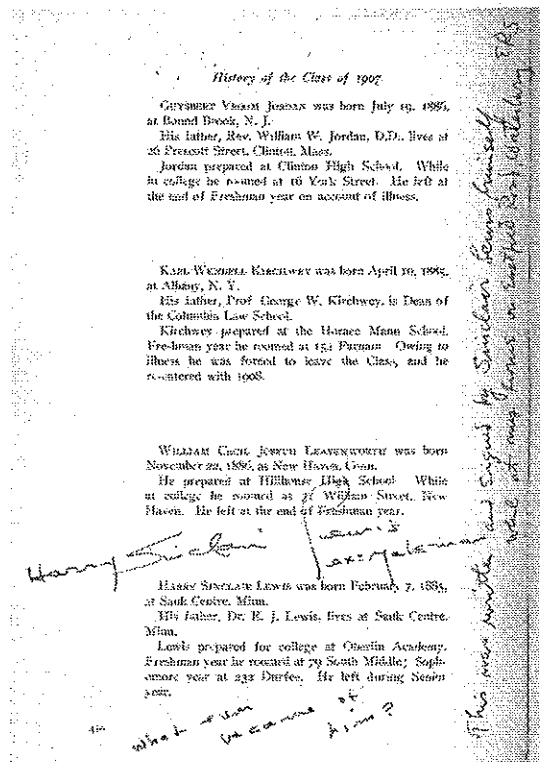
His visit was to be low-key and "not for publication" ("To E. R. Stevenson"). During his stay, he was the house-guest of E. Robert Stevenson. "Not for publication" are not words in a newspaperman's lexicon and his visit presented a photo and interview opportunity for the local

newspaper. A photo of the two classmates appeared in the local newspaper one day, followed by an interview with the visiting celebrity the next ("Sinclair Lewis Now Gathering" 1). During Lewis's visit to Waterbury, he signed Stevenson's Yale yearbook. Stevenson had obtained the signatures of nearly everyone in the class but had not gotten Lewis to sign it. When Lewis finally signed his name, he wrote, "Harry Sinclair Lewis / ex: Yale man / What ever became of him?" After Lewis's departure, the *New York Times Book Review* got wind of his visit:

Mr. Sinclair [sic] declined to discuss the nature of his next novel, but he made no secret of the fact that he was spending hours on end going through the Waterbury brass factories. Since it is not likely that he contemplates entering the brass business, one may conclude that he is at least prospecting for fiction material. (*New York Times* 13)



Letter from Lewis to Stevenson



From the Yale yearbook

Lewis never completed his labor novel though it obsessed him for many years, visiting the Waterbury brass factories again late in 1946. According to his friend and sounding board on this novel, Ramon Guthrie, "Red seems never to have put the labor novel entirely out of his heart. In 1947—twenty-two

On a First Name Basis *continued on next page*

On a First Name Basis *continued from previous page*

years after it has first occurred to him, he revamped the original title to *The God-Seeker*. When Aaron Gadd, the hero of this historical novel of early Minnesota, invites his employees to form a union, it is almost surely a faint remembrance of the novel he never wrote" (82).

Lewis and Stevenson maintained contact over the years and corresponded with one another regarding reviews, political stances, and social matters. Interestingly, in his correspondence, Lewis variously addressed Stevenson as "Bob" and at other times "Steve." Lewis, on the other hand, was rarely referred to or addressed as "Sinclair" (and certainly not "Harry") by any of his friends. Rather, he was simply referred to as "Red."

In many ways, the two friends served as a balance for one another—Stevenson furnishing the warmth in their relationship, while Lewis provided the fire. But during the cold winter of 1951, their friendship drew to a close with Lewis's death, hastened by his two other enduring companions, alcohol and nicotine. Lewis died of a chronic heart ailment in a clinic on the outskirts of Rome. Upon Lewis's death Stevenson recalled his cattle boat invitation, "I regret that I didn't go with Red. I've been fortunate and happy in my career. But I still think Red Lewis had the right idea" ("E. R. Stevenson" 1).

He indeed felt that his lost opportunity to travel when he was young was a lesson not to be forgotten. In 1937, a cub reporter from the *Waterbury Republican* had the same urge to travel to Europe but needed more time off than his allotted vacation time would allow. He was not only granted the summer months off but before his departure for Italy received an extra \$2.00 with his paycheck, compliments of Mr. Stevenson.²

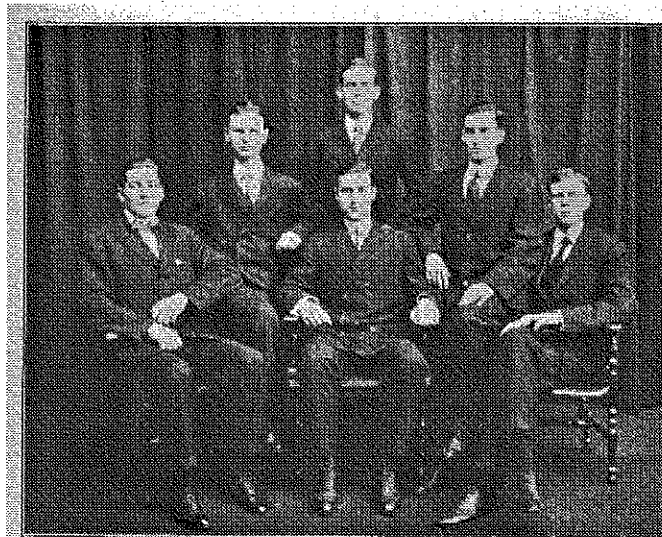
A kind professional and prosperous family man, Stevenson proceeded to lead a long and active retirement—at one point traveling to Europe as part of a long-awaited round-the-world tour. On a warm Sunday in July of 1979, E. Robert Stevenson quietly passed away at the age of ninety-three. A few faded letters, an autographed yearbook, and a handful of crumbling newspaper clippings are the only remaining relics that trace the course of the lifelong friendship of Harry and Elias.

Notes

1. Lewis apparently didn't keep a diary during 1906 and summarized the major events of that year at the beginning of his 1907 diary.
2. Interview with Sando Bologna.

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THE "LIT." BOARD.

The "Lit" Board; Lewis is seated far right

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DEPARTMENTS

BOOK NOTES

Check out *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* by Kevin Boyle (Henry Holt, 2004). There seem to be many parallels with *Kingsblood Royal*. It's based on the true story of a black doctor, Ossian Sweet, who moved into a white neighborhood in Detroit in 1925. A mob of his neighbors gathered to drive him out of the area, and someone from Sweet's house fired at the crowd. One white man was killed and another wounded. The police, who had done nothing to stop the mob, arrested Sweet and ten of his friends. Clarence Darrow defended Sweet who was eventually acquitted after eight months and two trials. Not until 1968 did Congress approve legislation that barred racial discrimination in the selling and financing of homes.

Ben Yagoda, author of a biography of Will Rogers, comments in the *New York Times Book Review* on the increasing use of subtitles in books of nonfiction. He finds that the subtitle "An American Life" was first used by Mark Schorer in 1961 for his biography of Sinclair Lewis. Since then the people (all men) who have biographies subtitled "An American Life" include Daniel Boone, Ralph Bunche, Benjamin Franklin, Ben Hogan, William Dean Howells, Burt Lancaster, Jesse Owens, Joe Papp, and Dr. Spock (February 20, 2005, 31).

In Robert B. Parker's murder mystery *Double Play* (2004), Bobby, the narrator of the chapter named after him, muses on his knowledge of race, most often connected in childhood with candy or phrases that described variation from the norm. He admits that his first position on racial equality, was, when as a teenager, he asserted that he would be glad to have sex with Lena Horne. "The questions of whether Lena Horne would have wanted sex with any of us was never considered. Later I would read *Kingsblood Royal*, and watch *Home of the Brave* and find my suspicions about racial attitudes confirmed" (75).

In *Windows on the World* by Frédéric Beigbeder (Miramax

Books/Hyperion, 2005), the author has fashioned a protagonist who resists his Babbitt-like fate. As *New York Times Book Review* critic Stephen Metcalf notes, "Beigbeder has created an American alter ego, Carthew Yorston, a middle-aged Texas real estate agent whose life to this point has been guided by a dread of domestic entrapment. 'I wanted to be the antithesis of George Babbitt, that dumb schmuck incapable of escaping his family and his town'" (April 17, 2005, 10).

There's a new edition of *Whistle Stop* (1941) by Maritta Wolff that's just been released by Scribner. According to David L. Ulin in the *Chicago Tribune* (April 17, 2005, 14: 1):

The story of a lower-class family living in a small town outside Detroit, *Whistle Stop* was a World War II-era sensation, described by Sinclair Lewis as "the most important first novel of the year" and later adapted into a movie starring Ava Gardner and George Raft. Not long after the film's release, [Maritta] Wolff moved to Los Angeles, where she lived with her second husband and had a son. At her death [in 2002], she had not published any new work in 40 years.

Scribner is also releasing her unpublished novel *Sudden Rain*. Apparently she had a dispute with her publisher, possibly about promoting it, and when she refused, the publisher dropped the novel. Ulin describes *Sudden Rain* as "a deft, accomplished slice of life, a novel that, in its subtle yet unrelenting fashion, peels back the privileged surfaces of its characters to expose them in their complicated humanity."

SINCLAIR LEWIS NOTES

The News Sheet of the Grolier Club (June–August 2005) has a front-page article on the club's exhibition program, "one of the oldest and most prestigious series of book and print exhibitions in the country." It notes that the club "receives kudos in the Fall 2004 issue of the *Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter*, which credits the Grolier's 1985 'Sinclair Lewis Centenary'

exhibition (organized by Dan Chabris) with launching the modern revival of interest in Lewis's works."

Frank Rich asserts that the relevance of *Elmer Gantry* is still very much with us. In "A High-Tech Lynching in Prime Time," about a judge-bashing rally called "Justice Sunday" that was held in April 2005, he states,

It may not boast a plume of smoke emerging from above the Sistine Chapel, but it will feature its share of smoke and mirrors as well as traditions that, while not dating back a couple of millenniums, do at least recall the 1920s immortalized in *Elmer Gantry*. These traditions have less to do with the earnest practice of religion by an actual church, as we witnessed from Rome, than with the exploitation of religion by political operatives and other cynics with worldly ends. While Sinclair Lewis wrote that Gantry, his hypocritical evangelical preacher, "was born to be a senator," we now have senators who are born to be Gantrys. One of them, the Senate majority leader, Bill Frist, hatched plans to be beamed into tonight's festivities by videotape, a stunt that in itself imbues *Justice Sunday* with a touch of all-American spectacle worthy of *The Wizard of Oz*. (*New York Times* April 24, 2005, 4:13).

The box quote reads "Tonight's *Elmer Gantry* rally has a gay agenda."

In a tribute to Saul Bellow, A. O. Scott, in "Saul Bellow, America's Poet of Urbanity," (*New York Times* April 10, 2005, 4:14) notes "Many, if not most, of the major American Realist novelists in the first half of the 20th century were, by birth or breeding, Midwesterners: Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Willa Cather, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald. In the second half, a large number of the nation's important writers—literary critics, journalists and sociologists, as well as novelists—were Jews. It was Saul Bellow's good fortune—and the source, perhaps, of a portion of his greatness—to have been both Midwestern (bred, if not born, that happened in Canada) and Jewish."

In "Fewer Summers by the Lake," *Minneapolis Star Tribune* writer Robert Franklin notes that a number of the small Minnesota resorts are closing, with many of them turned into retirement or vacation homes. One of these resorts, Halcyon

Harbor, was visited by Sinclair Lewis. The new owner of the property, Gary Martini, will keep intact the cantilevered cliff house where Lewis once wrote (May 29, 2005, A1, 4).

Central Minnesota has its share of treasures, as reporter Allie Shaw noted in "Treasures Found at Roadshow, Where Something Old is Nothing New" (*Minneapolis Star Tribune* 2004). Appraisers from the PBS series, *Antiques Roadshow*, came to St. Paul last summer and found such items as a jersey worn by Willie Mays when he played for the minor league team the Minneapolis Millers, a Gustav Stickley chair worth \$40–50,000, and a "letter that author Sinclair Lewis wrote to a Commodore typewriter salesman. Turns out the salesman's relatives showed up on Saturday with the letter neatly preserved in a scrapbook. It's worth between \$500 and \$700, according to Kenneth Gloss, an appraiser of books and manuscripts. But the owners decided it was worth keeping in the family, Gloss said, proving that sentimental value is priceless."

The Minnesota company Paideia, L.L.C. has put out a small book, *Believe Again in America*, which includes the following quote by Sinclair Lewis: "Intellectually I know America is no better than any other country; emotionally I know she is better than any other country." Editor-publisher Phyllis Stenerson was quoted by the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* as saying that her primary concern in publishing the book is to encourage "good government" (July 26, 2004).

A *New Yorker* capsule review of a showing of *Dodsworth* at the Film Forum summarized it as follows: "While other writers were turning out novels ridiculing American materialism and glorifying the expatriate existence, Sinclair Lewis conceived a businessman-hero and showed him to be a true dreamer, while his culture-mad wife, longing to be enriched by life in Europe, was a foolish horror. Sidney Howard made a play of Lewis's novel, and Walter Huston gave a legendary performance as the hero. He also stars in the 1936 movie version, which was produced by Sam Goldwyn with great care and taste; William Wyler is the director. There's only one problem, really, but it's central: the movie follows the stage version too closely. It looks programmed and underpopulated, though in an elegantly stylized way. Ruth Chatterton plays the wife and Mary Astor is the woman who appreciates *Dodsworth's* real value" (September 23, 2002: 26).

From Joyce Lyng: Someone e-mailed you asking about the Lewis family's/Sinclair's religion. It was Protestant (the family belonged to the Congregational Church now known as the First United Church of Christ in Sauk Centre). My family also belongs to that very same church. I was also a member of this church until I met and married a Lutheran. My husband Heman and I were married in this church in 1951.

September 5, 1921: From the Sigma Tau Delta (English Honor Society) website. The Chamber of Commerce of Richmond, VA, petitions for the renaming of Main Street to remove the stigma aroused by Sinclair Lewis's novel.

SAUK CENTRE NEWS

The 2004 Report of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation notes another busy year:

- The Sinclair Lewis Writers' Conference was reinstated in 2004 and included speakers Thomas Pope, Freya Manfred, Ron Lovell, and Jim Umhoefer.
- City improvements to Sinclair Lewis Avenue were completed in front of the Boyhood Home, and the yard was restored and resodded. Landscaping of the Boyhood Home was also completed.
- Several fundraisers including a "Spring Fling Variety Show" and one by Foundation members Philip Matthews and Dennis Olson of Fargo, North Dakota, brought in needed funds.
- In 2004, 8,245 visited the Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center, and 446 visited the Boyhood Home. Visitors came from as far away as Germany, France, Argentina, Finland, Mexico, Norway, India, and the Philippines.

Upcoming events mentioned include The American Village in a Global Setting: An Interdisciplinary Conference in Honor of Sinclair Lewis and Ida K. Compton to be held in October 2005 at St. Cloud State University and sponsored by the estate of the late Ida K. Compton (to be covered in the Spring 2006 *Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter*), the 2005 Sinclair Lewis Writers Conference with speakers Bill Holm, Jim Heynen, Catherine Watson, and Cathy Weber-Zunker, and the Sinclair Lewis Conference to be held July 2005 to celebrate the 75th

anniversary of Lewis winning the Nobel Prize for Literature (see page 1).

Last year the Bryant Library in Sauk Centre celebrated the centennial of its Carnegie Building, according to Dave Simpkins, publisher of the *Sauk Centre Herald*. In an article, "Lewis and the Bryant Library" (July 13, 2004: 8), Simpkins notes the affinity Lewis had for his hometown library. Lewis came from a family of bookworms. When Lewis's father Dr. Edwin Lewis, moved to town with two wagons, one was filled with household and medical supplies and the other with books.

The tall thin Lewis spent much of his time with his nose in a book. It was his job to split firewood. He created a method of propping a book in the crotch of a tree. He would read a few paragraphs, chop a few logs, read and chop, read and chop.

It is said he read all the books in the library collection before graduating from high school in 1904.

When Lewis and his wife Gracie returned to Sauk Centre for the summer of 1916 the *Sauk Centre Herald* reported, "Lewis had gained recognition as one of the most compelling young fiction writers in the country," whose latest novel, *The Trail of the Hawk* was "among the year's best sellers."

After a talk at the Commercial Club the *Herald* reported Lewis was a "rapid fire talker"....

Lewis gave a benefit lecture to raise money for the library, giving a talk on "the real inside of how the modern literature of today is made." Donations totaled 25 cents.

After *Main Street* was published, many in Sauk Centre protested against having the novel on the shelves of the library. However, these concerns lessened after Lewis won the Nobel Prize.

In the 1930s, Lewis sent about 80 books to the library including his best sellers, books sent to him to be reviewed and books he felt Sauk Centre would enjoy reading. Many of these books were autographed by the authors.

Lewis wrote the books were a payment for the debt he owed the library for providing him with so much entertainment and knowledge while he was growing up.

Inscribed on the jacket of a copy of *Main Street* was, "To the Bryant Library, Sauk Centre, with love and with lovely memory of the days when its books were my greatest adventure," Sinclair Lewis, New York, Nov. 6, 1937. An article in the *Minneapolis Journal* hinted this was in atonement for the ruckus the book created.

The *St. Cloud Times* listed the Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center and Museum in Sauk Centre as an Outing of the Week last year (February 29, 2004).

WEB NOTES

Over 45,000 people have accessed the Sinclair Lewis website in the last two years since the website was revamped. There has been a lot of interest in Lewis's political views, especially on fascism, as well as his general interest in popular culture. Here are some of the questions that have been received recently.

I'm wondering if you can explain something to me. I'm re-reading *It Can't Happen Here* and I ran across a reference in chapter 9 where Lewis refers to Goebbels as "Wotan's Mickey Mouse." This may have had some significance in 1935, but I'm having a hard time figuring out just what it means. However, I'm betting you can tell me. :)

[I'm not sure that I do know. Lewis refers to Hitler as Wotan since in German mythology he's the chief god. Since Goebbels is in a dark sort of way a comic figure—grossly overweight and easy to make fun of, he becomes the Mickey Mouse figure in the German hierarchy. That's my best guess.]

I'm preparing a documentary history of Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*. As you know, Lewis was an early admirer of the novel. His public remarks on the novel and a personal letter to Wolfe are important documents. I certainly want to use them. I'd be most grateful if you could tell me the name of the executor of Lewis's literary estate.

[The contact for questions dealing with rights for the Sinclair Lewis estate is: McIntosh & Otis, 353 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10016; (212) 687-7400.]

I said I'd get back to you about the television series *Window on Main Street*. I saw the pilot in '61. The series was discontinued after the pilot aired. Here's a cut and paste:

(CBS Primetime, 1961–1962) After his long-running role on *Father Knows Best* and before his long-running role on *Marcus Welby, M.D.*, Robert Young

played a recently-widowed novelist who returns to his home town in this short-running series which he co-produced; a number of other familiar faces from TV series played in the cast including Ford Rainey, Constance Moore, and Tim Matheson. One character was a doctor.

Was it Sinclair Lewis who, when speaking to a group at Columbia University, stated... "how many of you want to be writers... Then why aren't you home writing!"

[Lewis said this more than once; most famously at the University of Wisconsin.]

My wife got on Google and came up with these quotes...are they for real?

"When fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross"—Sinclair Lewis

I'm very concerned about fascism. Sinclair Lewis wrote in 1935 that fascism if it comes to the U.S. will be "wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross."

"When fascism comes to this country it will come wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross."—Sinclair Lewis

"When fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross."—Sinclair Lewis

[All these versions are based on a quote from *It Can't Happen Here*]

I heard on a radio talk show a quote attributed to Sinclair Lewis. I thought it was great. It goes something like this. "Fascism marches in wrapped in the flag and carrying a cross." Is that one of his?

Do you know the month in 1922 when Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* was published? I need the month for a timeline of the twenties I am working on.

I have been trying to find authenticated facts regarding the publishers of Sinclair Lewis books. For example, I own a *Main Street* which is supposedly a first printing, second issue. However I see different descriptions when I look at the multitude of sellers on-line all claiming they have first editions. I think I've

narrowed it down to Harcourt, Brace and Howe in 1920 but does the second issue really have the missing tail on the "Y" on page 387, and the battered type on the "the" on page 307 and the funny page "54"? Or is it a subsequent printing? I'd really like to know the criteria to look for on true first editions. I'd also like to figure out when other publishers like Grosset and Dunlap, and Collier and Son, published Mr. Lewis's books. Is there a publication to help me weed through the numerous Sinclair Lewis books I own?

[*Sinclair Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography*, by Stephen R. Pastore (1997) is the only book-length bibliography and it does have some problems in terms of completeness.]

I have a copy of *Work of Art* published by P.F. Collier & Son of New York. The only notation of publishing date is the statement "Copyright, 1934." Can you tell me if Collier was the first publisher of this book?

[*Work of Art* was first published by Doubleday, Doran.]

Don't know if you saw this or not—a new book by Auchincloss coming out in June from University of South Carolina Press. One of the writers listed is Sinclair Lewis. Here's the link: <http://www.sc.edu/uscpres/>. Look for "Writers and Personality."

I heard this morning that Sinclair Lewis is celebrated for his writings that tell how silly it is to think that there is a god. I also heard that he died an unhappy alcoholic. Are either of these statements true? If they are both true it would seem he may have missed something?

I just discovered the works of Sinclair Lewis and was wondering if Mark Schorer's biography of Sinclair Lewis is accurate and recommended? I would appreciate any suggestions you have on the subject.

STUDENT QUERIES

I'm doing a project on Lewis and I need to know what his influences are. Do you know?

I am a junior at a Southern California high school researching Mr. Lewis's style. I was wondering if I might quote you as to his distinctive diction—an aspect which I have found under-addressed in the course of my discovery.

[I'd be glad to be quoted on Mr. Lewis's style. He had a great ear for the way that the average person (especially the average person of the 1920s) spoke and the subjects that he or she spoke about. In addition, he was also quite a mimic, so that when he was working on the speech patterns for a particular character, George Babbitt, for example, he would often try to speak in Babbitt's voice as a way to see how the rhythms worked. I'm told that this was both fascinating, and annoying if he kept it up too long. If you read a lot of Lewis's writing, you'll notice slang, dialect, and popular culture references that really situate characters in their time.]

Thanks for your prompt reply. Your quotation will work quite well in my research paper. I agree with you—he certainly had a good ear for the semantics befitting each character's position in twenties society—whether it be, a preacher (Gantry) or a businessman (Babbitt)—and used it as a wonderful satirical tool.

My name is Suhaimi, an undergraduate at MIT, majoring in mathematics. I am currently taking a course in American Classics, offered by the MIT History Department, in which we look at several American classical works (fiction, music, paintings, film, documents) through historical perspectives. I am planning to write a 10-page, final paper on Sinclair Lewis's novel, *Elmer Gantry*. I stumbled on the Sinclair Lewis Society website as I was researching for materials, and I write this email to seek your opinion as a scholar in Mr. Lewis's works. Apart from the FAQs given on the site, I wonder if you can help me out with these specific queries:

1. Are there any scholarly works that study *Elmer Gantry* through a historical perspective? Or Sinclair Lewis's novels in general?
2. Are there any scholarly works that deal specifically with *Elmer Gantry*? (not necessarily historical)
3. What do you think are the most significant effects—whether social, political, or religious—that E.G. had on the American populace during that time?
4. Other than dramatization of the main roles in the novel, do you think that the representation of American history or social structure or societal sensibilities in the novel accurate? To what degree?
5. Does the dramatization of the main roles in *Elmer Gantry* reflect the sensibilities of the society at that time?

For school we are researching the twenties and I chose Sinclair Lewis since I don't know much about him I thought it would be interesting to learn more about him. One of the sources my teacher wants us to have is an interview. Since I don't know anyone who knows a lot about him I was hoping that you could answer my questions that I have about Sinclair Lewis. If you could kindly answer them and email me back I would greatly appreciate your time you took to answer. If I could get them as soon as I can that would be great.

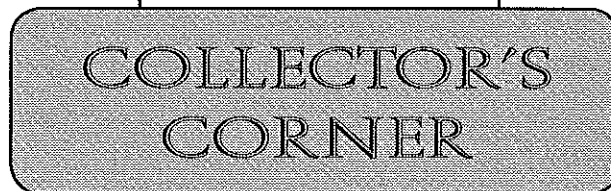
1. What do you think was the appeal of Sinclair Lewis's writings?
2. Why weren't any of his earlier writings, like his first novel *Our Mr. Wrenn*, popular?
3. What book(s) do you think reflects most on his life?
4. Has Sinclair Lewis won any awards other than the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize?
5. How many kids did Sinclair Lewis have?
6. Did his love life reflect on any of his books?
7. Did he ever intend to have his novels made into movies?
8. Has his love life been portrayed in any of his books?

9. Did his family agree with the goals and dreams of being a writer?
10. Do you think he achieved his life to the fullest?

I am an Italian PhD candidate in History of Art and I am doing research at the Evergreen House Foundation-The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore (MD). I am writing an article about Alice Warder Garrett, wife of the American Ambassador to Italy (between 1929 and 1933), John Work Garrett. I have found a newspaper clipping saying that in 1930: "the ambassador has been greatly interested in the translation [in Italian] of a number of the latest American novels by such authors as Sinclair Lewis, Booth Tarkington, Sherwood Anderson, and others." Do you have any evidence of this in the archive? Is there any letter or archival material about Mrs. or Mr. Garrett and Sinclair Lewis?

[The Garretts are not mentioned in either the Lingeman or Schorer biography.]

—Collector's Corner features catalog listings from book dealers as a sampling of what publications by Lewis are selling for currently. [Thanks to Jacqueline Koenig for her contributions to this section.]



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LIST 54

123. Lewis, Sinclair. Broadside. "Our Literary Ambassador' Sinclair Lewis first American to win the Nobel Prize, in his most recent photograph by Trude Fleischmann of Vienna. His new novel, *Ann Vickers*, has been published in thirteen

languages." \$1250.

Broadside. Approximately 9" x 1½". Very good. Inscribed by Lewis above his picture: "To Maude Currie, Sinclair Lewis. Bernard, Vermont May 15, 1933."

124. —. Autograph note signed "Sinclair Lewis." \$450.

A brief autograph note signed, one page dated August 20, 1937 on his Stockbridge, Massachusetts stationery to Willis Birchman, who was attempting to compile a biography of illustrator Ralph Barton. With original envelope. In full: "Dear Mr. Birchman: I really knew Ralph Barton only as a friend of George Jean Nathan. Sincerely yours, Sinclair Lewis."

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SALE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2005, 1:00 PM

237. Lewis, Sinclair. Autograph letter signed by Sinclair Lewis, plus the corresponding typed letter addressed to Lewis and a 1929 booklet by Lewis. \$500/800.

2 pages, 14 lines, dated September 16, 1932 from Semmering, Austria, addressed to Mr. Rathbun: "By all means write of the ministry as good shepards. But truly would that be a 'rebuttal to Elmer Gantry?' In that book several fine & spiritual pastors are praised. Is it a service to a noble company, then, to praise the scoundrels among them also? Sincerely yours, Sinclair Lewis." 7" x 5 1/4" on a folding sheet.

Also, a typed letter addressed to Sinclair Lewis (care of The Red Book, New York), which Lewis's autograph letter is a reply to; containing 7 paragraphs (last one carrying over to other side). In it is written: "Because a certain ministerial friend of mine had seen... a certain story of mine... he [suggested a]... wild enterprise... No less than that I should essay a reply, a rebuttal as the courts would say, to Elmer Gantry. I gathered that my friend did not like Elmer—I had never read Mr. Gantry—but have since, and you'll have to be broad minded enough to admit that —er—well, you did things to the ministry which were not ladylike. Empathically no!" Goes on to defend the ministry, discusses views on Ann Vickers and other opinions of church and Elmer Gantry. *Plus, a scarce and early Lewis booklet, *Cheap and Contented Labor: The Picture of a Southern Mill Town*. Original wrappers. First edition, a second issue (with quotes for *Dodsworth* on title page). United Feature Syndicate, 1929. (Front cover detached, rear nearly so, marginal darkening). Together, 3 items. Original folds to letters, slight wear; a few tiny dark spots to typed letter; else very good.

238. Lewis, Sinclair. *Cass Timberlane*—3 copies in variant jackets. New York: Random House, 1945. \$300/500.

Two in grayish cloth, one in light green cloth, each lettered in gilt, variant jackets (one red, one blue and one green). First editions. Complete first printing set with all three variant first printing jackets. Short tears and light creases to jacket edges, other mild wear; slight wear to volumes; else clean and bright copies overall; near fine in very good or better jackets.

SALE

THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 2005, 1:00 PM

221. Lewis Sinclair. *Dodsworth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace,

1929. \$100/\$150.

First edition. Blue cloth, stamped in orange. Copyright page states: "Published March 1929." Also, includes the following publisher's typos: "colonial" on page 42, line 20; "strenth" on page 162, line 1; and "nours nours" on page 205, line 25. Spine a bit sunned and slightly leaning, mild rubbing; front hinge cracking, other light wear, previous owner's signature; still very good.

222. —. *The God-Seeker*. New York: Random House, 1949. \$100/\$150.

First edition. Blue-green cloth, lettered in gilt, color pictorial jacket. Author's Minnesota frontier novel. Short tears and chips to jacket edges, mild rubbing; cloth soiled, spine a bit faded, shelf wear; bookplate of Imogene Barrett; else very good or better in a very good jacket.

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830. Sinclair Lewis. MB \$50.

Fountain pen signature, "Sinclair Lewis," on an off-white slip, clipped from the closing of a letter. Matted with a portrait of Lewis, to an overall size of 9" x 13". In fine condition.

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CATALOGUE 146

137. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927. \$1350.

First edition, first issue binding. Tiny bit of rubbing to spine lettering, else a fine clean copy with the lettering bright in a very good dust jacket which has been restored by a paper conservationist.

138. —. *Arrowsmith*. Illustrated with scenes from the motion picture. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1931. \$1500.

First edition. Signed by Sinclair Lewis on the flyleaf.

Photoplay edition issued to coincide with the release of the early sound film directed by the great John Ford and starring Ronald Colman, Helen Hayes, and Myrna Loy. A little darkening to gutters as usual, else very good in a very good dust jacket. The front panel of the jacket shows a striking color painting of a pensive Colman staring at his laboratory equipment and seeing the face of Hayes in a beaker. One of the more striking photoplay dust jackets, and very rare signed by the author.

139. [—]. Typed Contract from the Samuel Goldwyn Studios, producer of the film, *Dodsworth*. Los Angeles: 2 pages, quarto, November 18, 1942. \$125.

An interesting document detailing the terms of allowing the Motion Picture Relief Fund to do a radio broadcast adaptation of Sinclair Lewis's novel, *Dodsworth*, based on the screenplay of their 1936 film production of the novel. This contract is signed by M.A. Ezzell, Vice-President of the Samuel Goldwyn Studios, and accepted and signed by Huntly Gordon of the Motion Picture Relief Fund. The radio version was for Screen Guild Theater and their version of *Dodsworth* was aired February 2, 1943 with Walter Huston (who starred in the film, opposite Bette Davis, and Nan Sunderland).

CATALOGUE 144

5. *My Maiden Effort. Being the Personal Confessions of Well-Known American Authors as to their Literary Beginnings*. Garden City: Doubleday, Page, 1921. \$25.

First edition. Introduction by Gelett Burgess. A collection of the early works of 125 American authors, including George Ade, Gertrude Atherton, Mary Austin, Rex Beach, Irvin S. Cobb, Edna Ferber, James Montgomery Flagg, Hamlin Garland, Zane Grey, Joseph Hergesheimer, Richard LeGallienne, Sinclair Lewis, George Barr McCutcheon, Ernest Thompson Seton, Lincoln Steffens, Ida M. Tarbell, Booth Tarkington, Kate Douglas Wiggin, Owen Wister, Mrs. Woodrow Wilson, Harold Wright Bell, etc. This volume was published as a benefit for the Authors' League Fund for Needy Authors. Very good plus copy with a touch of foxing to the endpapers.

107. Lewis, Sinclair, Robert Nathan, and Peggy Bacon. *Off With Their Heads!* By Peggy Bacon. New York: Robert M. McBride & Company, 1934. \$95.

Signed by Peggy Bacon. A collection of caricatures of notables of the period drawn by Peggy Bacon, each accompanied by a portrait in words. Among the other celebrities depicted in the book are Dorothy Parker, Dorothy Thompson, Child Hassam, George Gershwin, Carl Sandburg, Lillian Gish, Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O'Keeffe, Diego Rivera, Bill Robinson, Djuana Barnes, Edmund Wilson, etc. Very good copy without dust jacket.

CATALOGUE 143

156. Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1920. \$1250.

First edition, first issue. Presentation copy signed and inscribed by the author: "To Mr. & Mrs. W. H. Carruth, with the Christmas greetings from Emporia [Kansas] of Mr. & Mrs. W. A. White [the author] & from Washington of Sinclair Lewis, Dec. 1, 1920." "Author William Allen White, [the Sage of Emporia], wishing to distribute autographed copies of *Main Street* among his friends as a Christmas present, sent Lewis a blank check to be turned over to Harcourt, Brace, the publisher" (Mark Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis*, 269). White, a huge supporter of Lewis's work, is quoted on the dust jacket of the first printing of *Arrowsmith* (1925): "Sinclair Lewis is one of the major prophets of our times." Marginal dampstaining on several leaves. Cloth, ends of spine, and joints a little worn, inner hinges tender. With numerous penciled annotations, mostly critical, on a number of pages and on rear paste-down by a previous owner, without dust jacket.

157. —. *Arrowsmith*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925. \$5500.

First edition. Inscribed and signed by Sinclair Lewis to the great film director John Ford. Inscribed by Lewis in pencil: "To John Ford, who made the best picture I have ever seen — 'Arrowsmith' I think it was called: Sinclair Lewis." On the rear endpaper are two pencil sketches of profiles of a man and a woman drawn by John Ford. Front hinge skillfully repaired, some rubbing at extremities, and some fading at spine, very good without dust jacket. Along with the film adaptations of *Dodsworth* and *Elmer Gantry*, John Ford's 1931 production of *Arrowsmith* for producer Samuel Goldwyn is considered one of the truest and finest adaptations of Sinclair Lewis's work. *Arrowsmith* was a box office and critical success eventually being nominated for four Academy Awards including Best Picture. Sinclair Lewis and John Ford liked each other, and even attempted in the late 1930s to work again together on a film.

158. —. *Arrowsmith*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925. \$950.

First edition. One of 500 deluxe large paper copies signed by Sinclair Lewis. Cloth-backed boards, paper spine label, top edge gilt. Tiny bit of dust soiling to spine, else a fine clean tight copy.

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MAY MISCELLANY 2005

131. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Job*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1917. \$350.

First edition. With "Published February, 1917/B-R" at bottom of copyright page. Minor bump to bottom edge of front

cover, else a particularly fine fresh copy of this early novel, lacking the rare jacket.

132. —. *Free Air*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1919. \$250.

First edition. Fine clean copy lacking the scarce jacket.

133. —. *Babbitt*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922. \$2750.

First edition. A fine copy in an unusually bright, clean dust jacket, completely unfaded, with some restoration at flap folds and base of spine (not affecting any lettering). Particularly attractive copy of this highspot.

134. —. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927. \$1750.

First edition. First issue binding with "G" resembling "C" on spine. A fine clean copy in a bright unfaded dust jacket with a few minor closed tears and a small triangular chip at bottom edge of rear panel.

135. —. *Dodsworth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929. \$500.

First edition. One of 500 copies bound up in orange cloth, stamped in black on spine, with front and rear covers blank, top edges stained black, and with printed statement on flyleaf: "This is a special edition presented to the trade in advance of publication and is not for sale." A clean, near fine copy. Probably not issued in printed jacket.

136. —. *Kingsblood Royal*. New York: Random House, 1947. \$500.

First edition. One of an unknown number of copies signed by Lewis on a specially printed bookplate issued at Kroch's Bookstores in Chicago. A fine copy in a fine dust jacket (a few tiny nicks). Highly uncommon.

EASTER MISCELLANY 2005

112. [—]. *History of the Class of 1907*. Yale College. Vol. II. Thomas A. Tully, ed. New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor Press, 1913. \$150.

First edition. Contains on pages 180–81 a 31–line autobiographical statement by Lewis, who at that time was employed by the New York publishing house of Frederick Stokes. Lewis ends by saying "Stokes will publish a boy's book of adventure [*Hike and the Aeroplane*] by me in the fall, but it is not written under my name; concerns aeroplanes. Still have the same desire to do the "Great American Novel"—realistic and high-brow." Some light wear and spotting to cloth. Otherwise a very good copy.

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316. Forster, E[dward] M[organ]. *Sinclair Lewis Interprets America*. Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1932. \$250.

First edition. Printed wrappers. One of 100 numbered copies printed for Harvey Taylor and signed by him. First appearance of an excerpt from an essay that was later collected in *Abinger Harvest*. Fine.

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CATALOGUE 25

318. Lewis, Sinclair. *Tennis as I Play It* by Maurice E. McLoughlin. New York: George H. Doran, 1915. \$1000.

First edition. Illustrated with photographs. Though nowhere cited in this book, this volume was ghostwritten by the then 30-year-old Sinclair Lewis only three years after he had published his first book. This copy bears a contemporary inscription by McLoughlin on the front endpaper. McLoughlin was considered the first great tennis star of the modern era. He was the number one-ranked American player from 1912–1914, captain of the winning Davis Cup team in 1913 and is enshrined in the Tennis Hall of Fame. An envelope containing three lengthy printed obituaries of McLoughlin from 1957 is pasted to the half-title page, otherwise this is a fine, bright, tight copy of this book which usually comes to market these days in woeful condition.

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LIST 56

129. (Lewis, Sinclair). *Yale Verse, 1898–1908*. Compiled

by Robert Moses and Carl H.P. Thurston. New Haven: Yale Publishing Association, 1909. \$90.

First edition. Lewis's very first book appearance—seven poems, published under the name Harry S. Lewis. A fine, bright copy.

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130. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Job*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1917. \$950.

First edition, first issue, of the author's fourth book. This copy is signed by Lewis on the front free endpaper. Fine (lacking the rare dust jacket).

131. —. *Free Air*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Howe, 1919. \$750.

First edition. This copy is signed by Lewis on the bookplate of collector Franklin M. Coryell which is mounted on the front pastedown. With a few roughly opened pages and a small rectangle of glue residue, still a tight, near-fine copy (lacking the rare dust jacket) of this early Lewis title, which immediately precedes *Main Street*.

132. —. *Main Street: The Story of Carol Kenicott*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Howe, 1921. \$450.

First edition, seventeenth printing. This copy is inscribed by the author on the front free endpaper: "To V.P. Newmark from the striking face portrayed opposite— Sinclair Lewis. The "striking face portrayed opposite" is a photograph of Lewis that is mounted to the front pastedown. With the recipient's ownership signature ("Valentine P. Newmark") on the back endpaper. A very good copy.

133. —. *Martin Arrowsmith*. London: Cape, 1925. \$950.

First British edition. This copy is inscribed by Lewis to progressive journalist, lawyer, and public servant Frederic C. Howe, author of *Confessions Of A Reformer* (Scribner's, 1925): "To Fred Howe, with the great affection of Sinclair Lewis." With Howe's ownership signature on the front pastedown. In the early 1920s, Howe established a "School of Opinion" on Nantucket Island whose "faculty" included Floyd Dell and Sinclair Lewis. Some offsetting to endpapers, a near-fine copy of this Pulitzer Prize-winning novel.

134. —. *John Dos Passos' Manhattan Transfer*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926. \$90.

First edition. One of 975 numbered copies (the entire edition). Fine (issued without printed dust jacket).

135. Lewis, Sinclair. *Mantrap*. Berlin: Rowholt, 1928. \$375.

First German edition. Printed wrappers. This copy is in-

scribed (in German!) by Lewis in the year of publication to the father of his friend, Ferdinand Reyher, who had been a guest at Lewis's wedding just the week before to Dorothy Thompson. Near fine.

136. —. *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*. London: Cape, 1928. \$175.

First English edition. This copy is in a variant binding of red cloth instead of the more usual blue. A fine, tight copy in a fine, bright dust jacket (price-clipped) with some internal tape strengthening at the edges.

137. Lewis, Sinclair. *Bethel Merriday*. New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1940. \$375.

First edition. This copy bears the author's personal presentation inscription on the dedication page to newspaper columnist Leonard Lyons and his wife. Above the dedication Lewis has written "To Len & Sylvia" and below it "Red / Sinclair Lewis." This novel is dedicated to drama critic Cornelius Traeger. The placement of the inscription on the dedication page and the lack of any added sentiments suggests that Lewis may have wanted to convey to this critic a similar sense of gratitude for his support. There is glue residue to front pastedown and endpaper, probably from a clipping or letter that was once attached, but this is otherwise a fine, fresh copy in a near-fine dust jacket.

138. —. *From Main Street to Stockholm: Letters of Sinclair Lewis, 1919-1930*. Harrison Smith, ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace 1952. \$50.

First edition. Advance review copy with publisher's dated review slip tipped in. Fine in a very nearly fine dust jacket (price-clipped) with a single, miniscule tear.

139. —. *Minnesota Diary, 1942-1946*. George Killough, ed. Moscow: University of Idaho, 2002. \$40.

First edition. Illustrated with photographs. A fine, unread copy in a fine, crisp dust jacket, virtually like new.

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99. Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922.

First edition; second state. A very good copy; inscribed by the author, "To Dr. and Mrs. Ball, with the affection of Sinclair Lewis." \$1250.

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