

The SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME NINE, NUMBER ONE

FALL 2000

SUCCESSFUL SINCLAIR LEWIS CONFERENCE 2000

The second Sinclair Lewis Conference held in Sauk Centre was a big success for a number of reasons. Barnaby Conrad, Lewis's secretary in 1947, was there and in "Six Months with Red" spoke both amusingly and seriously about life with Lewis and his writing. [See Jacqueline Koenig's journal essay for more specifics on Conrad's talk and his visit.] Conrad's presence and his connection with Lewis made this a very special occasion, as he very obviously admired Lewis's work.

A second exciting occurrence of the conference was the chance to hear Sinclair Lewis's voice. During a visit to St. Cloud State University, conference participants visited the Lewis archives. Archivist Pat Schenk found two recordings of Lewis, one of a speech he gave during World War II and the other, a radio show for which he was the narrator. This second recording seemed to be a demonstration for a possible series about small town doings with Lewis acting as an *Our Town*-like commentator and starred Benita Hume, Ronald Colman's wife. Apparently the series was never made and it's clear that Lewis's voice was probably not made for radio. It was high-pitched, nasal, and had a midwestern twang. It was fascinating to listen to, but probably not for a national audience. While at St. Cloud, participants also had a chance to visit Claude Lewis's house, now the Alumni House for St. Cloud State University.

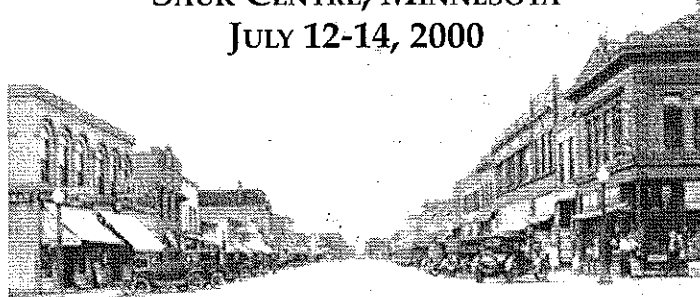
The papers were interesting and on a variety of Lewis texts. The first session, "Toward a Web Archive of Rare Lewis Texts," was a roundtable discussion led by H. Brooke Hessler, Dept. of English, Texas Christian University, Patricia Schenck, University Archivist, St. Cloud State University, and Roger Forseth, Dept. of English, University of Wisconsin-Superior,

————— Successful Conference *continued on page 6*

The Sinclair Lewis Society and the Sinclair Lewis
Foundation present

THE SINCLAIR LEWIS CONFERENCE

SAUK CENTRE, MINNESOTA
JULY 12-14, 2000



CALL FOR PAPERS FOR ALA

The Sinclair Lewis Society will be sponsoring a session at the American Literature Association Annual Conference, being held next year in Cambridge, Massachusetts, from May 24-27, 2001. Papers on any aspect of Lewis's work are welcome, with a maximum length of approximately 20 minutes (or ten typed double-spaced pages). Please send abstracts or complete papers to Professor George Killough, Department of English, Box 2285, 1200 Kenwood Ave., College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, Minnesota 55811, e-mail: gkilloug@css.edu, by Thursday, January 25, 2001.

The conference will take place at the Hyatt Regency Cambridge with conference rates of \$139 for a single or double room. The tentative schedule calls for the conference to begin at 8 a.m., Thursday, May 24 and end at 1 p.m., Sunday, May 28, 2001. The conference fee is \$100 (\$50 graduate students, independent scholars, high school faculty, and retired faculty) which includes opening and closing receptions and two luncheons. All those who are on the program are required to pre-register.

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TEACHING ARROWSMITH

By Sally E. Parry
Illinois State University

Because of the Sinclair Lewis Conference on *Arrowsmith* and to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Lewis being awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *Arrowsmith*, I thought I would teach the novel to a class of new English majors and minors this past spring. I started searching for a rationale to teach the novel and make it speak to the students in a number of ways. By foregrounding issues of power and language, I was able to provide the occasion for several lively discussions on a variety of topics from medical ethics to male-female relationships. This section of the course ended with the paper assignment below.

The assignment read:

For your second paper you will be applying Deborah Tannen's ideas about language, sex, and power, as expressed in *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* to Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith*. There are a number of conflicts between characters in this novel. You need to choose one conflict and then apply a linguistic analysis to it. You need to offer an argument with a thesis that will connect the novel to the theory. (Ex: Can this relationship be saved? Would men be happier if they only had to deal with other men? What role does/should the community have in people's lives? Why have friends at all?)

Lewis's writing certainly lends itself to discussion about language both in a social linguistic sense as well as in a Bakhtinian sense. The essays tended to focus on Martin's relationships with women, especially Leora, in an attempt to understand why Martin always returned to Leora and why she put up with what seems to be rather overbearing behavior.

— Parry's Teaching *Arrowsmith* continued on page 4

CONTRIBUTORS

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

These people include Frederick Betz, Martin Bucco, Marcia K. Buchs, Dan Chabris, Maya Dulinsky of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Roger Forseth, Mitch Freedman, Laurel Hessing, James Hutchisson, George Killough, Jacqueline Koenig, Joyce Lyng, Robert McLaughlin, Roberta Olson, Dave Simpkins, Eugene Winick, and Nancy Potter Woodson.

SINCLAIR LEWIS CONFERENCE 2000: A JOURNAL

By Jacqueline Koenig

Jacqueline Koenig is a member of the Sinclair Lewis Society Board of Directors and is attending her second Sinclair Lewis Conference in Sauk Centre. She has graciously agreed to allow parts of her journal to be published so that readers will get a sense of the conference from a participant's point of view.

Sinclair Lewis Society President George Killough, in his introduction, described Barnaby Conrad as a professional portrait painter, a bullfighter, and the last living writer who knew Sinclair Lewis.

Conrad began his talk just as he began the autobiography, *Fun While It Lasted* (NY: Random House, 1969):

In 1958, I was badly gored in El Escorial, Spain, while performing in a festival fight; the animal's horn went in nine inches, traversing the upper part of my left leg. (3)

He told us the poor bull doesn't have a chance. And although there is an art to it, one-third of bullfighters are killed.

Conrad graduated from Yale, and at age twenty-one became American Vice Consul in Spain. Eventually, he quit the State Department and went to Peru to become a bullfighter.

He painted portraits, played piano in night clubs. Incidentally, he told me, while he was inscribing my books in the pub, that he could play well. I knew he was itching to play for us. I understand that when Barnaby returned to the Palmer House, after the keynote address at the church, at 10 o'clock, he sat down and played. Not for long; he had an early morning flight.

Conrad said upon meeting Sinclair Lewis, "I was struck at how ugly he was—huge head, red face. But he was so dynamic, I never thought that again." Dorothy Parker wrote about "his remarkable, memorable

—Koenig's Journal continued on page 9

The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter

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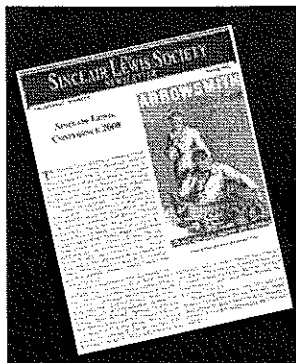
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Contact *The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter*
on the World Wide Web at:

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Parry's Teaching Arrowsmith continued from page 2

I've included some of the topics that were developed by the students because I think it shows in how many ways students found him relevant:

One student thought Martin loved Leora because of her simplicity and unconditional support of him, and that he only criticized her when he felt his status was threatened in society because his wife wasn't socially presentable. Another thought that Leora was the woman behind the great man and was very satisfied by this role.

Another student used Tannen to analyze one scene, where Leora takes Martin to dinner at her parents' house and how the conversation styles, her father's and Bert's bullying, and her mother's attempt to make peace, confirm certain stereotypes about the way men and women communicate. It made him wonder about the sorts of conversations he held every day.

"Martin is from Mars and Joyce is from Venus" looked at why the two did not have a very satisfying marriage, mostly because Martin didn't want to discuss his plans with her.

One student argued that Martin didn't want to compromise in his relationships and so refused to go back to Joyce because he valued his research over connection with another human being. The relationship threatened his major reason for existence and therefore had to end.

Two people suggested that Leora used male modes of communication. One suggested that she moved towards this style of communication in order to help Martin more, while another student used this change in communication style to discuss why she refused to accept Martin's explanation for why he didn't want her to go to the Caribbean with him. This second student rewrote some of

the dialogue to show how Martin might have gotten Leora to agree, but then said she probably wouldn't have agreed regardless of what he said.

Several people wrote about Martin lecturing Leora as a very male thing to do. Using Deborah Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand*, one student concluded that Martin enjoyed being the superior in their relationship and that it's very obvious from the way he's annoyed when Leora talks back to him in their first meeting in the hospital.

In "How to Handle a Woman: Martin's Relationship Difficulties with Women in *Arrowsmith*," a student contended that Martin's relationships with Joyce and Madeline were doomed to fail because their language emasculated him and took away both his linguistic and male power.

Another person felt moved by their romance to construct almost a soap opera. She found the two of them together made a whole person and that the freedom she gave him to do research actually allowed her to satisfy him.

Some people concentrated on the role of gossip in Martin's career. The conclusion of one paper noted that it is only when Martin is in the woods with Terry that he's freed from gossip and able to pursue his scientific research with "unfounded rumors and unnecessary obligations."

One very interesting paper contended that Joyce Lanyon, Martin's second wife, seemed so annoying in the novel because she was portrayed from a man's point of view. She noted that when Joyce is shown speaking, Martin's responses are not recorded so it makes it look like she is doing all the talking. The student argued that Joyce was "a strong woman who knew what she wanted, liked and disliked and she was not afraid to express it. The reason for the misrepresentation of Joyce can be summed up in something Tannen quoted a researcher as suggesting, 'that most people feel instinctively (if not unconsciously) that women, like children, should be seen and not heard....' [Tannen 77]. It seems that this propaganda Lewis buys hook, line and sinker."

The most interesting paper contended that Dr. Almus Pickerbaugh was a visionary. Although I initially dismissed this idea as peculiar, the student's argument was that he was creating exciting new ways to treat disease and was actually years ahead of his time. Because the author was a nontraditional student and a nurse, she was able to bring a wealth of experience to back up her contention in a very solid way. The paper, *Pickerbaugh Was a Genius!*, appears on page 7.

NEW MEMBERS

The Sinclair Lewis Society welcomes the following new members who have joined since the publication of the Spring 2000 newsletter:

Barnaby Conrad
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SHERLOCK HOLMES MEETS SINCLAIR LEWIS

By Martin Bucco
Colorado State University

Although the versatile Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) wrote historical romances, straight histories, and books on spiritualism, any character in Sinclair Lewis who reads "Conan Doyle" is reading something (from four novels and fifty-six short stories) about Sir Arthur's Master Detective Sherlock Holmes, in all likelihood the most famous alter ego in English fiction. In his early review of Algernon Blackwood's *John Silence* (1908) in the *Detroit Free Press* (21 March 1914), Lewis describes the novel's metaphysical doctor as "a Sherlock Holmes of mysticism" (6). To the laughing applause of the crew on the cattle-boat to Liverpool in *Our Mr. Wrenn*, pipe-smoking Harry Morton, deriding the know-it-all bully Pete, winds up his unruffled sally with "Watson, the needle, quick!" (72). Morton's facetious punch-line directing a phantom John M. Watson, M. D., to administer to the sleuth's cocaine-habit cuts two ways: on the one hand, it mocks the bully's illusion of knowing "so much more than the rest of us" and, on the other, Morton's own modest powers of Sherlockian deduction.

Doyle-Holmes crops up in eight other Sinclair Lewis novels. While duck-hunting in *The Trail of the Hawk*, young Carl Erickson, on the recommendation of his friend Ben Rusk, reads for an hour a paperback book wherein the prairie youth meets Sherlock Holmes for the first time (32). In 1903, young Lewis first delighted in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), the best of the Sherlock Holmes novels. At Terwillinger College, even *Elmer Gantry's* muscular evangelist owns two volumes of "Conan Doyle" (9). In *Dodsworth*, the tough-talking newspaperman Ross Ireland appreciates "Conan Doyle," although Lewis notes that this closet intellectual admires Joseph Conrad more (153). Lindsay Atwell, the scholarly lawyer in *Ann Vickers*, reads "Conan Doyle" on his Adirondack vacations (248). A copy of "Conan Doyle" is in hotel-keeper Myron Weagle's Westward Ho! suite in *Work of Art* (284). And in *World So Wide*, Hayden Chart,

touring London, fancies running into Sherlock Holmes (34).

An addict of "whodunits" generally and of English detective stories particularly, Sinclair Lewis uses the great ratiocinator most cogently in *Arrowsmith* and *Kingsblood Royal*. Walking in on Cliff Clawson, Martin Arrowsmith catches his roommate reading a Sherlock Holmes story under a medical textbook (61). But what is more important, Lewis later ties Doyle's sleuth to Martin's mentor: "However abstracted and impractical, Gottlieb would have made an excellent Sherlock Holmes—if anybody who would have made an excellent



Sherlock Holmes would have been willing to be a detective. His mind burned through appearance to actuality" (138). Thus Gottlieb the scientist and Holmes the criminologist—both endowed with uncanny powers of intuition and reason, both investigators of natural phenomena, both possessed with restless, searching brains—are brothers under the skin.

On the trail of his ancestors, Neil Kingsblood—who owns a set of Sherlock Holmes (11)—is, however, closer to the "normal" imperceptiveness of Dr. Watson. During his convalescence in wartime England, Neil had imagined coming and going through the pointed door of a nearby flint church the figure of Henry Baskerville, the hound-haunted heir to melancholy Baskerville Hall (42). The game is further afoot when Ash Davis, a pleasant, clear-speaking "colored man" later walks into the Second National Bank in Grand Republic to consult war veteran Neil Kingsblood about hiring "Negroes." In a Sherlock Holmes story a stranger might step out of the London fog...be admitted into the cozy Victorian clutter of 221 B, Baker Street...and be immediately informed by the deducing mastermind of his origins,

————— Bucco's Sherlock Holmes continued on page 9

Successful Conference continued from page 1

who has visited the major Lewis archives in the country. They contributed to this discussion of what kind of information might be made available on the web for scholars.

The second session, on *It Can't Happen Here*, featured three papers: Rebecca Cooper, Dept. of English, Northern Illinois University, on "The Language of Protest: Sinclair Lewis's Protest Novel, *It Can't Happen Here*, as an Influence on Richard Wright's *Native Son*"; Roger Forseth, Dept. of English, University of Wisconsin-Superior, "Two Notes to 'a low dishonest decade': Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* and Saul Bellow's 'The Hell It Can't'"; and Frederick Betz, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Southern Illinois University, on "Here is the Story THE MOVIES DARED NOT MAKE: The Contemporary Context and Reception Strategies of the *New York Post*'s Serialization (1936) of *It Can't Happen Here*."

The following day there was a panel celebrating *Arrowsmith*, with presentations by Liyan Yu, Harbin

Engineering University, P.R. China, Visiting Scholar, Michigan State University, on "The Truth: Seeking the Spirit of Dr. Arrowsmith as well as Sinclair Lewis Himself"; Dylan Barth, Illinois State University, "Dr. Arrowsmith's Retreat: Redefining Science in the American Wilderness"; and Robert L. McLaughlin, Dept. of English, Illinois State University, "Huh: Knowledge, Truth, and Reading against the Text in *Arrowsmith*." This last paper will be printed in the spring 2001 issue of the newsletter.

This session was followed by a panel on *Hike and the Aeroplane* with Caren J. Town, Dept. of Literature and Philosophy, Georgia Southern University, speaking on "Constructing Masculinity in *Hike and the Aeroplane*"; and Sally E. Parry, Dept. of English, Illinois State University, speaking on "'War is a Horrible Thing': Looking at Lewis's Early Political Philosophy through *Hike and the Aeroplane*."

The final panel, on Lewis and His Literary Connections, featured M. Ellen Dupree, Dept. of English, University of Nevada, Reno, "Snoway Talkcher Father": the Construction of the Middle-Class Family in *Babbitt*"; Martin Bucco, Dept. of English, Colorado State University, "Bernard Shaw in Sinclair Lewis"; Nancy L. Bunge, Dept. of American Thought and Language, Michigan State University, "Sinclair Lewis's Influence on Frederick Manfred"; and George Killough, Dept. of Languages and Literature, College of St. Scholastica, "Roman Catholicism, Sauk Centre, and Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*."

Many of these articles will be printed in *Midwestern Miscellany* in the next year. The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature has agreed to publish two issues focusing on Sinclair Lewis.

There are articles throughout the newsletter from the *Sauk Centre Herald*, the *Osakis Review*, and the journal of Jacqueline Koenig which will give readers more of a sense of what went on at the conference. The people of Sauk Centre, including the members of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, the pastors of the First Lutheran Church where the movies were shown, and the staff at City Hall were all very helpful. Finally, Rebecca Cooper, Layne Moore, Christina Schulz, and Calvin Thorne were invaluable on-site coordinators, helping with directions, driving, and general concerns of the conference participants. ✍



Barnaby Conrad in Sauk Centre

PICKERBAUGH WAS A GENIUS !

By Marcia K. Buchs
Illinois State University

Dr. Arrowsmith would have us believe that Nautilus Health Department Head, Dr. Almus Pickerbaugh, was a buffoon of the most disgusting sort in this Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Sinclair Lewis, but I suggest that he was a genius and a man way ahead of his time. Arrowsmith himself occasionally acknowledges the significance of Pickerbaugh's work, but in general, works very hard to engender in the reader the perception that his boss is crude, lacking in medical intelligence, and just a little crazy. What Martin Arrowsmith did not acknowledge was that our society's most successful and influential innovators are often accused, early in their work, of the very things Martin believes of Pickerbaugh.

This novel takes place in an era of rapidly changing medical times. Public health issues were coming to the forefront as recent discoveries about bacteriology were creating exciting new ways to combat disease. One of the hallmarks of this time was the development of formal health education. Simple health rules were printed and distributed. Prizes and buttons were awarded to children, a practice Pickerbaugh would have appreciated. Many of the rules were based upon fresh air, such as telling children to sleep with their windows open, exercise outdoors in the fresh air, and breathe through their nose with their mouth closed (Butler 48).

Pickerbaugh proposed similar rules in Nautilus. Martin's views on these types of rules were colored by his feelings toward his boss's use of "holy frenzy and bogus statistics" (Lewis 224). In chapter 21, we find that under Pickerbaugh's leadership, which proposed fresh air and sputum control, now known as effective ways of minimizing the spread of tuberculosis, the death rate from tuberculosis had decreased in Nautilus. In an attempt to prevent Pickerbaugh from placing him in an inferior position, Martin minimizes Pickerbaugh's success by taking "an anti-social and probably vicious joy in discovering that...the death rate in tuberculosis...had decreased at the same rate in most villages of the district, with no speeches about spitting, and no Open Your Windows parades" (Lewis 224-25). Martin considers

himself superior to Pickerbaugh in his expertise in epidemiology and would like to view himself "one-up" in this regard. However, when threatened by Pickerbaugh's success with methods Arrowsmith finds laughable, he engaged with Pickerbaugh as Deborah Tannen explains many men do; he protected himself from feeling "one-down" by discrediting Pickerbaugh's statistics (24). Pickerbaugh was on the right track with tuberculosis control. Before the advent of streptomycin in 1944, the best way to control TB was to avoid contact with the bacteria. Avoiding sputum and stale air were two of the simplest and most effective ways for the public at large to do that.

When Martin is first introduced to Dr. Pickerbaugh, Dr. Pickerbaugh immediately follows the dictates about male-to-male communication that Tannen reports. "I'm delighted to have a man with your scientific inclinations," he says to Martin in one of their first interactions. "Not that I should consider myself entirely without them" (Lewis 193). First he builds Martin up a bit with acknowledging his scientific reputation, but to avoid putting himself "one-down," Dr. Pickerbaugh qualifies his own reputation. Tannen asserts that this type of interaction immediately creates opposition within the relationship. "Two people can't both have the upper hand, so negotiation for status is inherently adversarial" (29). If Pickerbaugh had used this communication style as his primary way of relating to people, he would not have been nearly as successful in his crusade for public health.

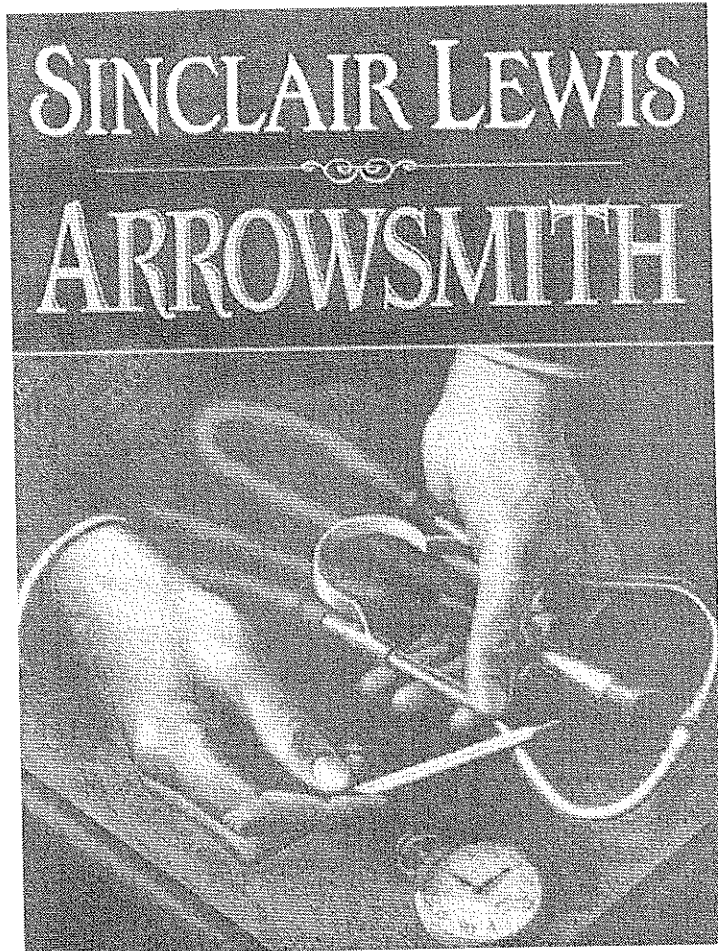
Later on, though, we find that Pickerbaugh is often able to put aside the need for superiority and operate in a more egalitarian manner. Martin hears this from the policeman at the all-night lunch-wagon. "We fellows on the Force all like him, and we have to grin, the way he comes around and soft-soaps us into doing a lot of health work that by law we ain't hardly supposed to do, you might say, instead of issuing a lot of fool orders. You bet. He's a real guy" (Lewis 208). He avoided the "one-up" position of giving orders and in the process added a whole cadre of health promotion helpers to the streets of Nautilus.

—————Buchs's Pickerbaugh Was a Genius continued on page 8

Buchs's Pickerbaugh Was a Genius *continued from page 7*

In another passage we hear Irve Watters's discourse on Pickerbaugh's unique approach to public health. "Pickerbaugh is a good active man and a fine booster but he's got a bad socialistic tendency. These clinics—outrageous—the people that go to them that can afford to pay! ...[T]hey get people into the habit of going to free clinics instead of to private physicians, and cut down the earnings of the doctors and reduce their number, so there are less of us to keep a watchful eye on sickness" (Lewis 211). Pickerbaugh disregarded this type of logic when advocating for free clinics. He acknowledged that public health would not bring him the wealth of other avenues open to him (which would place him in an "one-up" position). Instead he focused on the important role public health clinics would take in controlling infectious disease and improving health in the future.

Sinclair Lewis must have had a great time writing the health ditties that were Pickerbaugh's pride and joy, but created so much discomfort for Arrowsmith. They are pretty awful, but I contend that they prove that



Signet edition of Arrowsmith, 1998

Pickerbaugh was ahead of his time. Millions of dollars are spent today by both for-profit and not-for-profit agencies to promote health and health-related products. His poetry is reminiscent of commercial jingles and his focus on marketing was right-on. Society today has embraced his ideas on the importance of physical fitness, and his daughters, dressed in their "easy athletic costumes playing tennis in the backyard," could be compared to today's fitness club members (Lewis 197). We now know he was on-target with citing the dangers of irresponsible alcohol consumption, and if he had to cite statistics that were a little questionable to make his point, he would be in good company with today's elected officials.

Politically his intuition proved correct in that he advocated for having a Secretary of Health and Eugenics on the Cabinet. His multidisciplinary approach to health was revolutionary in its time. His focus on the need for physical activity, disease prevention, spiritual engagement, family values, and "A healthy mind in a clean body" (Lewis 202), all point to his ability to see beyond the health paradigms of his day.

Arrowsmith, deep down, knew he was dealing with genius in Pickerbaugh. In a depressed moment, when lamenting his previous failures, Martin thinks, "This pep and heartiness stuff of Pickerbaugh's is exactly the thing to get across to the majority of people the scientific discoveries of the Max Gottliebs" (Lewis 198). Unfortunately, Arrowsmith failed to take advantage of Dr. Pickerbaugh's astuteness. Martin let his narrow-mindedness and disgust for trite poetry interfere with his chance to learn from Almus. Pickerbaugh put it succinctly when, in an attempt to prepare Martin to succeed him, told him, "Your work is very satisfactory. There's only one thing you lack, my boy: enthusiasm for getting together with folks and giving a long pull and a strong pull, all together" (Lewis 247). It was apparent that much of the genius of Pickerbaugh lay not in his scientific skills, but in his ability to work together with people. Martin never quite figured that out. ✍

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Koenig's Journal continued from page 3

eyes...the face of a man who walked through flame throwers...God, what a lonely, unhappy, helpless man."

In 1947, Barnaby had returned to Santa Barbara to visit his folks and saw in the newspaper that Sinclair Lewis was in town. "I'd read all his books, and he'd read all his books, so I thought we'd have a lot in common. I wrote Sinclair Lewis, and he sent a car for me to come to tea. He asked me to bring seventy-five pages of the book I was writing.

"I gave him seventy-five pages. When I asked what he thought, he replied, 'Throw away the first seventy-three pages.' He asked for more.

"Mr. Lewis, I have to set the scene,' and Sinclair Lewis maintained, 'We read fiction for emotion.'

"Do you play chess?' he asked. I said, 'No.' He promised, 'I'll give you a month to learn and then you come to work as my secretary.'

"Marcella [Powers] had left him, and it was pathetic. We were rolling around in this Thorvale estate.

"My duties were to get up at 5:30 and work on my book." Conrad told us he was paid \$65 a week (his autobiography says \$45). "It wasn't all that easy, but it was great."

"I'm a terrible chess player; he wasn't much better." Conrad learned to throw the game if necessary; Sinclair Lewis got depressed when he lost.

The two men's Yale class reunions came in the same year ('07 and '44), and they went to New Haven. "All the way down, he grumbled, 'Bunch of Babbitts. What am I doing?' He had a wonderful time. People were delighted to see him. Got back into the car, and he talked himself into having a terrible time. He didn't fit in anywhere.

"I had my little room off the living room, and three

sides of the room were solid Sinclair Lewis books." He took down a book inscribed to Mr. Lewis signed by Tom Graham. [Laughter from the conference participants]"You guys all get it; you see, I didn't get it!" Tom Graham is a pseudonym Lewis used for his first book, *Hike and the Aeroplane*.

"I answered all his mail. He'd get dozens of letters." Lewis told Conrad, "If I answered all those letters, I wouldn't get anything done." "So I'd be Sinclair Lewis all morning! I signed them; I signed all the books that came in." We, collectors, gasped. Conrad said, "No, I didn't do that, but I could have."

Sally Parry tells me Conrad drew a portrait of Lewis in one book he signed for her and signed "Sinclair Lewis," in Lewis's hand under the picture, "by Barnaby Conrad." It's a good likeness.

As regards another memorable correspondent, Barnaby read page 289 of his autobiography:

"Look what this sonovabitch wants!" He handed it to me. It was from an attorney and it read:

Dear Lewis:

Have read some of your works and would like to ask a few favors. Please send me a list of your stories, your autograph, your picture and a letter describing your life. How many children you have and their names.

Thanking you, I am,


Yours truly,

James J. Sneath

"I think I'll answer this bastard myself," said Mr. Lewis

Koenig's Journal continued on page 10

Bucco's Sherlock Holmes continued from page 5

travels, associates, and so forth. "Had Neil been Sherlock Holmes," writes Lewis, "he might have detected in Dr. Davis's accent an Ohio boyhood, three years in England and France and Russia, friendships with tennis-partners and piano-teachers and laboratory-mates" (85). But to discover truths about mysterious Ash Davis, Neil (like Watson) must rely—as all readers of *Kingsblood Royal* know—on methods less nimble-witted and expeditious than those of the detective *par excellence*. 

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and the gleam of battle was in his pale eyes. "Barney, take a letter!"

Though I knew no shorthand, I managed to keep up with his exaggeratedly polite tone as he dictated as though conversing pleasantly to his new pen pal:

My dear Jimmy:

There was only one thing about your letter that I didn't like. It was so sort of formal. True, we have never met, and somehow I feel we are not likely to, but isn't this a democratic country? So let me call you Jim, and you call me Skinny or any other friendly name. No, Jim, I haven't got a photograph of me here, but I'll run down and have one taken. I'm preparing a letter about my life for you, but it's been a pretty long one and a pretty bad one. That'll take me several weeks. Meantime, Jimmy, I'm interested in lawyers. Kindly send me your photo, pictures of your home, your office, a list of your assets and liabilities, average income, and the books you've read since 1930, if any. Kindly inform me whether you've ever defended a bootlegger or an author, and why. How do you get along with your wife? Kindly explain the sex part in detail.

Yours affectionately,
Sinclair Lewis

Reminisced Conrad, "It was a never-ending feast of wondrous happenings!" Spoken like a true secretary who loved his boss.

"Norman Rockwell came, and we had lunch down by the pool. Writer Horace Cayton came. For Marcella, he'd bought the biggest bow and arrow set and target at Abercrombie. We had to use it. 'I paid a lot of money,' Mr. Lewis emphasized.

"'Come on, Barney,' Mr. Lewis said, handing the bow to me. 'See that toad?' I said as I drew back the notched arrow as far as I could, trying to remember how the counselor had said to do it at summer camp when I was twelve. I wanted to get the string back to my cheek as I knew one was supposed to, but I couldn't, so I just released the arrow any which way. The frog went 'orkkk' and died.

"Mr. Lewis's eyes popped! He turned on me and said, 'Why do you have to kill everything? First trout and now this poor beast!' 'Mr. Lewis, I really never thought I could hit it.' 'You're a bullfighter!' I said, 'But the frog wasn't charging me. You're eating chicken.' That's when Mr. Lewis decided we'd be vegetarians.

"He was childish. His manners were terrible. He'd swirl turkey, mashed potatoes and cranberries all together. 'Every other day I'd go to town and get him mysteries.

Lewis's schedule was 5:30 work, breakfast, 8:30 work, nap in the afternoon, and he wanted to read light fiction. One day, I met a pretty girl at the bookstore. I told her, 'I'm Sinclair Lewis's secretary.' [This was Ida Kay.] You could never be late. Dinner was at twelve sharp. I'm talking to this pretty girl. I've been monasteried up there. Suddenly I looked at my watch and realized I only had eight minutes to get home for lunch.

"I jumped into the car. The key wouldn't go into the ignition. I let the car coast down the street to a garage. When the mechanic working away at the ignition asked, 'Whose car is this?' 'Sinclair Lewis's,' I said. 'This isn't Mr. Lewis's car,' he said. 'He has a Buick.'

"I got the right car. I quelled Mr. Lewis's anger by telling him I met this gorgeous girl and I got into the wrong car. I tell him this story and he says, 'Invite her out to dinner.'

"I took her to Gloucester for a weekend. He'd fallen in love with her. He was sixty-two; she was a twenty-seven-year-old girl. Suddenly he said, 'Well, when you leave next week. ...'"

Ida Kay wrote Barnaby that Lewis took her to Europe. "He promised her the world. She did like him enormously.

"My book got published. Lewis had Bennett Cerf come up and told Bennett about my novel, *The Innocent Villa*, and it was published." Conrad called it his "passport to literary perdition."

"I got married and had children and taught school." Indeed, Barnaby Conrad carries a billfold full of photographs of his beautiful children and wife and shows them off like anyone else.

Mr. Lewis kept writing Conrad with affection, but chiding him, "I know you're not writing!"

Conrad saw Lewis one last time. Barnaby and his wife, Dale, were living in Paris. Lewis came to Paris for the first time in twenty years. Barnaby called him and Lewis wanted to take them to this wonderful little café on the Left Bank, where all the good artists and writers go and turned out to be a dreadful looking place; one student sitting at a table by himself. "Where's Madame Blanc?" he asked the waiter. "Well, she's been dead twenty years."

Lewis was certain this was not the place at all. Conrad went back there and saw the ledger and showed Sinclair Lewis the ledger with the signatures of John Dos Passos, Dorothy Thompson, Sinclair Lewis and all these famous

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SINCLAIR TAKES TEA

By Nancy Potter Woodson
Otterbein College

In 1946, Sinclair Lewis settled on his 750-acre property, Thorvale Farm, in Williamstown, Massachusetts. This farm, located in the gentle Berkshire Hills, was Lewis's dream of a permanent home. As his biographer Mark Schorer notes, "He was beset by a notion of manorial splendor: his house, his farmers, his pool, his tennis court, his view, his hills, his attendants—it was his home at last, and he would make it all as perfect as his image of it" (746). He had produced all the trappings of a country squire; however, like most of Lewis's plans, enactment proved too difficult to master.

Lewis, at his best, could be extremely genial and entertaining; but his behavior at most gatherings was erratic, even boorish, and he soon became alienated from both the community and Williams College, where once he had envisioned himself teaching classes of adoring students how to write fiction. He did manage, however, to forge a relationship with a local Congregational minister, Reverend George E. Beilby, Jr., of Williamstown, who persuaded Lewis to help form a church men's group for the purpose of discussing religious matters.

Religion had been a life-long interest for Lewis from the days of his early boyhood in Minnesota. Throughout his life, he conducted both formal and informal religious groups lecturing on the evils of sectarianism and the false prophets of religion. *Elmer Gantry's* world was never far from his mind. When Reverend Beilby mentioned to Lewis that the neighboring village of Blackinton had a small group of worshipers who were attempting to revitalize the Union Church there, he struck a sympathetic chord on several levels. At heart, Lewis's sentimental side always believed in America's small towns; they evoked the democratic ideal of simple, but noble values he wrote about often in his work. Also, as a strong believer in church union, attending the rededication ceremony at the Blackinton Union Church would prove an excellent opportunity for him to combine his interests of small town life and religion.

As an eleven-year-old parishioner of the Blackinton Union Church at this time, I was witness to the

excitement and flurry which preceded Lewis's visit. Rededicating the church to a promising vital future was exciting for the parish; but, hosting a literary giant, a Nobel Prize winner, generated frenzied preparations. Issues of the role Lewis would play in a rededication ceremony and the plan to introduce him to church members prompted animated meetings. An uneasy truce was agreed upon by the male contingent of the congregation: Lewis would participate only as an observer after being formally introduced prior to the ceremony by Reverend Beilby, who often served as a visiting preacher to the church; then, after the rededication, he would engage in conversation with a select few parishioners. Lewis was under no circumstances to be embarrassed with personal questions. This last stipulation was aimed at the more curious church members who wanted to know about the goings on at his large estate.



The subject of refreshments proved to be more difficult to agree upon, because, after all, this was an opportunity for the best cooks of the congregation to impress not only the "great man," but also each other. The Ladies' Guild eventually decided that a high tea would be best because "He's a well-traveled, educated gentleman, and they always take tea." Certainly Lewis's struggles with alcohol were unknown to this congregation, but he would have been pleased to acknowledge himself as the learned, genial country squire this group expected to entertain. The Union Church, a familiar white wooden example of New England Protestant churches, had only two primary areas: in the front was a large vaulted room with a modest altar and oak pews seating approximately one hundred parishioners and in the rear of the hundred-year-old building was a huge room which functioned as a place for church service, Sunday school, and parish entertaining. It was in this meeting room that the rededication ceremony would take place, since it was impossible for the ancient furnace to heat the actual church part of the building for more than

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four months a year. The meeting room emitted a cozy glow which may have reminded Lewis of similar meetings he had attended in his boyhood home of Sauk Centre, Minnesota. A potbelly stove warmed the room comfortably and high-backed oak chairs placed in a semi-circle informally faced a small lectern serving as an altar. There was no organ for hymns; instead, an ancient upright piano with questionable tuning stood in a corner symbolically reflecting the united nature of the diverse denominations comprising the church. When Emmy Franc, a former Lutheran, played for services, she offered a firm rendition of "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." The winter that Emmy contracted pneumonia, Mildred Smith, a Baptist, substituted with six weeks of "The Old Rugged Cross." The congregation sang heartily at the whim of the pianists.

On the day of Lewis's visit, the rededication ceremony proceeded smoothly. He arrived at the last moment with Reverend Beilby firmly in charge. Afforded a seat of honor at the front of the room with approximately fifty parishioners present, Lewis watched silently as the modest service progressed. Simultaneously, wonderful scents of lemon-scented tea and fresh-baked cakes wafted from the kitchen which opened into the meeting room. The Ladies' Guild had risen to the occasion of the visit with several flavors of spiced tea, small sandwiches, and delicately frosted cupcakes. The sentimental side of Lewis certainly appreciated the efforts of small town folks' strivings to produce gentility, fervent Protestant convictions, bustling good intentions, admiring focus on the famous guest. It was Sinclair's kind of party.

Once the ceremony concluded, the Ladies' Guild took charge, serving the much anticipated high tea; the room bristled with the motion of women filling steaming teacups and passing small plates of sandwiches. Innocent of his ambivalent feelings toward children, the Guild had selected me to present Lewis with his refreshments. It seemed a reasonable idea: a carefully dressed and coiffed little girl who had read every book in the small library, including all of Lewis's books, would strike a noninvasive note; besides, my mother was president of the Ladies' Guild.

From the time I first heard of my role in the Lewis visit, I was certain it would be a triumph. He would learn that I had read his works and admire my precocity; I would humbly smirk; my mother and father would

beam. When the moment finally arrived and I stood facing Lewis with teacup in my hand, however, the dream abruptly ended. Although I had seen pictures of him on the jacket covers of his books, they did not prepare me for the complete presence of the man. Tall and lanky with a deeply pitted, scarred face, he fixed his bright blue eyes on me with a cold, expressionless glance. He had to look down a considerable distance since I was unusually short, and his slightly bugged eyes were covered by rimmed glasses; still, his discomfiture was palpable, even to a child. He stood rigidly, unwilling to accept the teacup, and I, stricken by his stern gaze, was unable to take another step toward him.

The awkwardness seemed interminable, but it was finally broken by my hovering, anxious mother who interpreted his reluctance to mean, "He wants cold water, not hot tea." I was shoved back into the church kitchen where a glass of cold water was placed in my one hand, and a napkin with a strawberry-iced cupcake planted in the other. My appeals to have someone else deliver them to Lewis went unheeded; the plan would be implemented unchanged.

Lewis was still standing, but looked completely overwhelmed since the parishioners had not obeyed the "selected conversationalists only" rule. With his face turning from red to scarlet and his mouth agape, Lewis's entire frame rose above a bobbing of feathered and ruffled hats as Guild members pressed in on him. *Babbitt* and *Main Street* had converged on their creator.

My second attempt to serve Lewis failed as well. He seemed startled to find me standing in front of him again, but he did not accept the cold water or cupcake. We looked at each other apprehensively, each recognizing that we were victims of a bizarre tea ritual run amuck. He muttered something to Reverend Bielby standing loyally by his side. "Plain hot water, just hot water," said Bielby hopefully. Again, I was dispatched to the kitchen, but not before I placed the strawberry cupcake I still clutched on an empty chair. As I emerged from the kitchen slowly carrying the hot cup of water toward Lewis in a third attempt to serve him, I noticed he was now seated facing away from me. I was momentarily relieved until my eyes caught something pink peeking beneath the seat of his trousers on the chair. The great man, the literary giant, the chronicler of

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signatures. Lewis wouldn't look at it.

They got into a discussion with the student. "And what Americans do you read?" Lewis asked. "Hemingway, Steinbeck, Fitzgerald, and Sinclair... Upton Sinclair." He did not get to Sinclair Lewis.

In the taxi, Sinclair Lewis told them, "This is what I needed, Barney—a lovely little woman like this," referring to Barnaby's wife, Dale. Once before Lewis had made a similar overture on the occasion he took Conrad to dinner with Ross McDonald and his wife. Lewis said afterwards, "How I envy them." Barnaby asked, "Why?" Sinclair said, "I envy their marriage."

When they joined Lewis's brother, Claude, at a café later that evening, Sinclair told Claude the boy in the restaurant liked Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and Sinclair Lewis. He'd talked himself into this.

Sinclair Lewis died about a year later in Rome. A friend of Barnaby's saw a consular official down on her knees with a broom and pan "sweeping up Sinclair Lewis." Mr. Lewis's ashes had been put in a safe pending final disposal and the urn had fallen out and spilled!

Conrad says Mark Schorer gives an accurate impression of Lewis during the Conrad-Lewis relationship in his biography of Lewis.

In conclusion, Conrad said something like, I always felt he died wanting a friend. If he's looking down, if he knew what was going on this week, he would be grateful and get a lot of laughs and a lot of pleasure out of it.

Q&A

Q: What was he writing when you worked for him?

A: *Kingsblood Royal* had just been published.

Conrad didn't drink in Mr. Lewis's house. A Negro couple, the Perkinses, worked for Sinclair Lewis. Conrad went there every evening. They lived in a guest cottage. Conrad could drink there.

Q: George Killough asked, "You never saw him drink?"

A: I never saw him drink until Paris.

Conrad said a very bad man named Manson was Lewis's secretary in Italy.

Q: Did he talk about his family?

A: He mentioned Wells; just said he got killed in the war. Michael never visited. If asked about Dorothy, he was never bitter. He realized the marriage was a little strange. He related she awakened him by pulling the phone cord across his throat; she was talking to FDR.

"He kept telling me to call him 'Red,' but I always called him 'Mr. Lewis.'"

A reception with a "Barnaby Conrad" cake followed.

The next morning we began to confer in a more formal way. We were welcomed to the City Hall by George Killough, President, Sinclair Lewis Society; Roberta Olson, President, Sinclair Lewis Foundation; and Sally Parry, Executive Director, Sinclair Lewis Society.

Parry told us that Lewis biographer Richard Lingeman has turned in a large manuscript. It will probably be published next spring [now it's more likely for fall 2001]. As it is untitled, we were asked to submit ideas for a title. Lingeman was our keynoter three years ago. [The title will probably be *Sinclair Lewis: America's Angry Man*.]

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small-town American life, was sitting firmly on the strawberry-iced cupcake I had left on an empty chair.

For one moment, I prayed that the cupcake might not stick to his beautifully tailored dark suit; but that was futile. Everyone knew that when Edna Jones made frosting, it adhered to any applied surface and this cake would prove no exception. My choices for action were slim: confess or flee. I opted for the latter without a backward glance, never stopping until shaken and breathless, I arrived home to await my punishment.

It was not to happen. My mother never spoke of it, and gradually I came to conveniently believe that

Lewis had returned to Thorvale Farm without noticing the frosting. Perhaps he handed the suit off to his servant; maybe he howled in rage at another thwarted attempt to befriend townspeople. Throughout his restless life, he made plans which never came to fruition; or, if they actualized, he eventually ruined them somehow. Sinclair Lewis taking tea at the Blackinton Union Church was a predictable, momentary, annoying incident for him; it has been a life-long memory for me.

Works Cited

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The remarkable panels started with "Lewis Archives: Toward a Web Archive of Rare Lewis Texts," chaired by Brooke Hessler, from Texas Christian University's English Department. Hessler distributed a handout, "Sinclair Lewis Virtual Archive," showing Sinclair Lewis's "Babbitt Notebook." She is developing the first attempt at making Sinclair Lewis's notebooks and other rare texts available on the web, making Lewis's creative process available for those unable to visit the greatest Lewis collection at the Beinecke Library, Yale University. Hessler welcomes suggestions for this site under development and can be contacted through the Sinclair Lewis Society.

St. Cloud State University archivist Patricia Schenck brought us up-to-date on that university's important Lewis archive. I am a journalist/book collector who appreciates Schenck's participation in each conference.

Roger Forseth, Professor Emeritus of English, the University of Wisconsin-Superior, told us of manuscripts he had seen at different research libraries including a letter Sinclair Lewis wrote his dad, dated July 22, 1925. Lewis by this time had become very famous, but not to his own father. Dr. Lewis got long letters from "Hal," as the family and those who knew him intimately called Sinclair, and Dr. Lewis would scribble on the back and send them on to Claude, who was Dr. Lewis's favorite son.

Forseth saw Dorothy Thompson's letters written at the time the marriage was breaking up. She wrote at the top of each letter that it wasn't sent. She couldn't confront him about his drinking.

There are letters in existence between Lewis's first wife, Grace Hegger, and Thompson, his second wife, two wives who deeply loved Lewis but their marriages were destroyed by Lewis's drinking.

Dr. Forseth went to the Bancroft Library, on the Berkeley campus, to examine Lewis biographer Mark Schorer's papers, with a view toward evaluating the huge amount of Lewis material Schorer left the Bancroft. Schorer wrote everyone who knew anything about Lewis. He summarized every short story and was a thorough researcher. As he regaled us with all that he has seen, like a true researcher, Forseth told us it's an adventure to go to an archive.

Someone asked about published letters. *The Man from Main Street: Selected Essays and Other Writings, 1904-1950* (NY: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952) is all we have. There's no main project to do his letters. There are clippings files at Duluth Library, for instance.

We were privileged to have among us Mr. and Mrs. Gene Winick. Winick is an attorney for the administrator of Michael Lewis's Estate (Sinclair Lewis's literary estate), Macintosh and Otis, in New York City, who handle copyright clearances.

Winick spoke to how much could be put up on the web, referring to Hessler's proposed archive. We were reminded of the desire to preserve the rights for the estate. There are three grandchildren—John Paul, Gregory, and Lesley. John Paul Sinclair Lewis is, himself, a historical novelist. "Fair use" is to encourage scholars in an appropriate way. Now, with the web, everyone is an instant publisher. "Seeking permission is not punitive; rather, come to us for the proper clearance," Winick urged. He assured us he's not here to intimidate anyone, rather to encourage copyright development in the right way.

In the second panel, chaired by Frederick Betz, Southern Illinois University, Rebecca Cooper, from Northern Illinois University, talked about Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* as an influence on Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Dr. Forseth returned, this time to address Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* and Saul Bellow's "The Hell It Can't," which was published at Northwestern, in the student newspaper, February 19, 1936, four months after Lewis's novel. In an interesting observation, Forseth concluded he cannot think of two writers who contributed more to the "narrative century." The chair, Frederick Betz, discussed why MGM withdrew plans for a movie version of *It Can't Happen Here*. Lewis patterned the powerful yet vulgar, illiterate, idiotic Berzelius Windrip after Huey Long, whom *The Encyclopedia Americana* calls "One of the most bizarre and audacious figures in American public life in the 20th century." Huey Long was assassinated the year Lewis's political novel was published. The following year, Franklin Roosevelt was challenged for reelection. It all sounds to me as though, in today's course of events, filmmakers would have clamored to film the book.

Thursday afternoon we all trekked to St. Cloud State University where archivist Patricia Schenck put on a record, and—a first for most of us—we heard Sinclair Lewis's voice! Lewis was reading a script on radio, a pilot recording for a proposed radio program "American Playhouse" (29 minutes). On the flip side, Lewis was addressing the Opera Victory Rally, December 16,

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1944 (12 minutes).

Unlike any archivist I've ever seen, Schenck brought out the guides to the collection and a package of gloves, and we had leeway in what we could look at. I held in my very hands *Hike and the Aeroplane* (1912) inscribed by Lewis to his brother. This particular Lewis collection, with family connections, is unique.

Our second stop that afternoon was the house Sinclair Lewis's brother, Claude, built in 1926. It is now on campus and houses the St. Cloud State Alumni Foundation. The interior has been divided up into individual offices, and is too small for the Foundation's needs. The possibility exists for restoration, given its location along Barden Park, which the St. Cloud Historical and Neighborhood Preservation Association is trying to restore, plus its historical value. We were allowed to explore the whole house, including poking around in the attic! Did I hear shrieks from Patricia Schenck? She will meet the alumni people and transfer some of the things to the Lewis collection.

Sally and Bob rounded up a bunch of us to go to Hennington's, four miles out of town, on Fairy Lake, where I ate walleye. I sat beside Gene and Ina Winick, and learned Gene is on the National Steinbeck Center board, in Salinas, and we found we have mutual friends there.

This conference coincides with the 75th anniversary of the publication of Lewis's book *Arrowsmith*, for which Lewis won the Pulitzer Prize in 1925; and the second evening we saw the 1931 film of *Arrowsmith*, with Ronald Colman and Helen Hayes.

Ballantine Books *Video Movie Guide 1994* writes:

Mellifluous-voiced Ronald Colman is a young, career-dedicated research doctor tempted by the profits of commercialism in this faithful rendering of Sinclair Lewis's noted novel of medicine. Helen Hayes is his first wife—doomed to die before he sees the light. This is the first film to center seriously on a doctor's career and raise the question of professional integrity and morality versus quick money and social status.

Critics Mick Martin and Marsha Porter give the film a four-star rating—very good.

The John Ford film, as they say, is faithful to the book. This century, people have changed, but considering the film is nearly seventy years old, it's actually a treasure today, in my opinion. However much the film follows the book, the film script ending is changed. A



*Barnaby Conrad, Sally Parry, and Jacqueline Koenig
at the Sinclair Lewis 2000 Conference*

man sitting behind me thought the film was silly. "That was pretty good for an old film" I heard someone else say.

Friday morning, Liyan Yu discussed the frontier and how Martin Arrowsmith wanted to be a good country doctor in Wheatsylvania. Yu is a personable young woman, a visiting scholar at Michigan State University, from China. I liked and admired her a lot. She's in this country doing research on twentieth-century American literature.

Our next panelist, Dylan Barth, recently graduated with his Masters from Illinois State University. He pointed out the parallels between Henry David Thoreau and Sinclair Lewis. He examined Thoreau's *Walden* and Arrowsmith's Vermont.

Robert McLaughlin's artful title, "Huh: Knowledge, Truth, and Reading against the Text in *Arrowsmith*," moved Arrowsmith from student, doctor, to research scientist. McLaughlin calls it Lewis's medical *Pilgrim's Progress*. Where does the novel lead us? Martin seeks to remove himself to discover pure knowledge though he recognizes it will make him less human.

Caren J. Town, from Georgia Southern University, and Sally Parry, both of whom know a great deal about literature for adolescents, discussed Lewis's little-known book for older boys, *Hike and the Aeroplane*. Caren told us about the book, something scholars never do, simply because the book is not readily available. The only copy I've ever seen was the inscribed copy I'd just viewed in

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the SCSU archives. Neither my library nor my book dealer could produce one as I was preparing for this conference. When *Hike and the Aeroplane* was written, Lewis was not yet a major writer. He was working in New York City making \$100 a week, and was paid \$200 for writing this book. Parry told us Sinclair Lewis wrote poetry and short stories for children early in his career.

After lunch, Ellen Dupree, who teaches American literature and literary theory at the University of Nevada-Reno, reviewed *Babbitt* and the materialistic archetype the word has come to represent.

Martin Bucco, of Colorado State University, treated Sinclair Lewis's relations with other authors and, in particular, Bernard Shaw. All his life, Sinclair Lewis had Bernard Shaw on the brain. In 1923, Shaw came to tea in Lewis's flat in London. *Mantrap* and *Arrowsmith* both mention Bernard Shaw.

Nancy Bunge, professor at Michigan State University, referred to Sinclair Lewis's influence on Frederick Manfred. Manfred never left his home in Minnesota. After he met Lewis and read *Elmer Gantry*, Manfred gave up the idea of becoming a minister. Bunge surmised Lewis's greatest contribution to Manfred might have been that Lewis showed by example what could happen if one strayed too far from home.

George Killough, an English professor from Duluth, talked about Roman Catholicism, Sauk Centre, and *Main Street*. He found Lewis, in *Main Street*, felt hope is found in the American future instead of in the European past.

I cannot say enough about the quality and amount of work being done for literary conferences in America today. From the important technical expertise of our first presenter, Brooke Hessler, to the last, George Killough's grass-roots study of "Gopher Prairie," more than a dozen busy professors came to Minnesota to inform and absorb the finest work being done in the field of Sinclair Lewis studies. Colleges and universities across this country are in good hands, and, as Barnaby Conrad concluded, Sinclair Lewis would be grateful for these friends in the year 2000.

Following the last panel of the conference, the group adjourned to the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood home, always a highlight of the conference! It's a magical place with the best tour guides doing important work for their hometown author. We were a happy group, as the obligatory group photographs always indicate, taken in front of the Boyhood Home.

Book collecting was a big part of conversation at the closing dinner at the Palmer House. Pat Coleman, Curator for the Minnesota Historical Society, was at our table. The *Sauk Centre Herald* carried an article about him this week. Coleman had purchased two rare Sinclair Lewis books, *Arrowsmith* inscribed by Lewis to another Minnesota writer, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and an inscribed copy of Lewis's third novel, *The Job*. The first turned out to be a forgery, and the purchase price was refunded.

The Palmer House took good care of us. The hotel, where Sinclair Lewis once worked at the front desk, has been sold again; thus Palmer, the cockatiel, is gone.

In closing we were treated to a double feature. We watched a C-SPAN video, retracing John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley*, including the Sauk Centre part. Larry Woods was the man on John Steinbeck's trail and, since Steinbeck came to Sinclair Lewis's home with Charley, so, too, did Woods. Joyce Lyng, of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, gave Woods this special showing of the Boyhood Home. Both Lewis and Steinbeck knew disfavor in their home towns. Sauk Centre resident Ivy Hildebrandt said the town figured Lewis made them look small.

We saw MGM's 1947 *Cass Timberlane*, with Spencer Tracy, Lana Turner, and Zachary Scott. The Ballantine Books *Video Movie Guide 1994* gives this film only two stars—fair—and writes:

Sinclair Lewis's story of a prominent judge married to a voluptuous younger woman turns into a silly, superficial soap opera. The main problem is the cast. Spencer Tracy and Lana Turner are mismatched as the judge and his wife.

I hadn't seen any of the three films shown at the conference and loved having this opportunity. Suddenly, it's all over but the cake! Barnaby Conrad's cake brought us through the whole conference socials each evening, and it was good to the last bite.

Sinclair Lewis's friends came from far and wide to the tiny hamlet of Sauk Centre, as they do every year, to embrace America's first Nobel Prize winning author. Conference participants were from California, Georgia, Nevada, Texas, Colorado, Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

My appreciation to all for a good job. It's a lot of work for many people, who in so doing are furthering the work of one of America's greatest authors, Sinclair Lewis. ✍

ARROWSMITH AND MODERN MEDICINE

The *New York Times Book Review* of September 24, 2000, ran in its last page section, "Bookend," an essay by Howard Markel called "Prescribing *Arrowsmith*." Markel, the George E. Wantz Professor of the History of Medicine at the University of Michigan and author of *Quarantine! East European Jewish Immigrants and the New York City Epidemics of 1892*, feels that *Arrowsmith* would be a useful novel for current physicians to read because the issues Lewis brings up are still vital to the profession. Highlights of the essay appear below:

You can't pick up a newspaper today without feeling deluged by reports on miraculous medical discoveries. The authority of science is as much a part of our worldview as an even higher authority was for our grandparents. So intense is the belief in the medical profession's ability to cure our ills that it is striking to note it was only 75 years ago that a medical scientist first entered American literary consciousness in the exalted role of hero. Sinclair Lewis's 1925 novel, *Arrowsmith*, is the story of a physician's relentless search for truth. Unlike in other novels of this period or before it, the main character is no cleric, writer, or philosopher. He is not even a particularly great doctor. Lewis, aware of the wide public interest in medical progress (not unlike our current fascination with all things genetic), introduced millions of readers to a young man who dedicates himself to the hottest field of his day: bacteriology.

The novel's influence extends far beyond its immediate critical and popular success. I well recall how as a first-year medical student I raptly read about the adventures of Martin Arrowsmith when I should have been committing to memory the intricacies of the brachial plexus. Somehow it was comforting to recognize the same traits in Martin and his fellow students and teachers, from the purely mercenary to the honorable, that I saw daily in lecture halls and hospital wards. Indeed, my battered copy of *Arrowsmith* is annotated throughout with a repeated pen-scrawled comment: "Still true!" I am hardly alone: countless people have been inspired to research careers because of Martin's intense devotion to science. More significant, the novel records and predicts both many of the medical profession's successes and the problems that still torment it today. For all these reasons, I teach the novel every year to my medical students.

Markel continues by describing Lewis's introduction to bacteriologist Paul de Kruif and Dr. Morris Fishbein, the editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. De Kruif had just been dismissed from the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research (now Rockefeller University) because it had become clear that "his hands itched for a fountain pen instead of test tubes." Lewis and de Kruif agreed to collaborate on a medical novel and, Markel contends, "was essential to the novel. Nearly all the scientists, physicians and medical institutions portrayed in *Arrowsmith* were drawn from his experience. The result is a remarkably accurate (if not always complimentary) historical document."

"Perhaps the novel's greatest strength is its veracity of detail about a life in medicine, from the conflicts that arise between commerce and altruism to the design of scientific experiments." Markel cites the episode of the plague epidemic in the Caribbean that gives Martin an opportunity to test his newly discovered magic bullet, bacteriophage, which was not a fictional device, but eventually put aside in favor of antibiotics [see the last Lewis newsletter for a note on the revival of scientific interest in bacteriophage].

Apparently the incident where a lonely Leora finds a plague-laden cigarette in Martin's laboratory, smokes it, and dies, was based on an incident involving de Kruif's bacteriology professor, Frederick Novy, who "returned to Ann Arbor with some specimens after investigating a plague epidemic in San Francisco's Chinatown. Some weeks later his laboratory assistant, a medical student who rolled his own Bull Durhams, unknowingly contaminated a cigarette he was about to smoke. He developed plague but survived."

"Integral to *Arrowsmith* was Lewis's insistence that Martin be both a physician and a scientist, personifying a conflict that continues to trouble doctors and their patients. Who is more important in the conquest of disease: the compassionate, sympathetic healer or the cold, obsessive investigator trying to ascertain the cause of disease, who, if successful, would render the doctor obsolete?" Markel notes that ironically the other best-selling book about medicine published in 1925 was Dr.

— *Arrowsmith and Modern Medicine continued on page 19*

SINCLAIR LEWIS AND GEORGE SELDES

By Mitch Freedman

I've been on a Sinclair Lewis binge the past three years (I've read 12 of his novels, working on no. 13, as well as his business short stories and his essays collected in *The Man from Main Street*). I have long known that Mark Schorer's biography was unfair to say the least. Schorer even bashes one of my political heroes, George Seldes, whom I was privileged enough to have met over 10 years ago, not too long before he passed on.

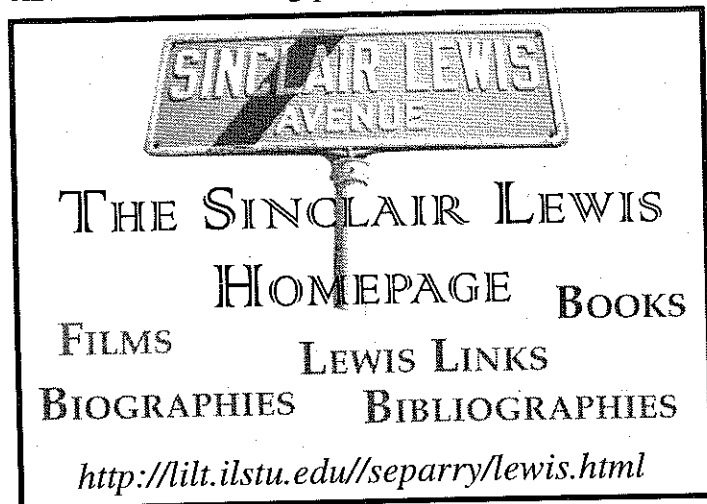
I met George Seldes twice. Once in 1989 and once in 1990. My wife and I were visiting Vermont each time. I simply called him, told him I had most of his books (I had all of them by the second time), all 21 of them, and said I'd like to meet him. He was 99 in 1989. He said sure thing. My wife and I met with him for about two or three hours each time. We shared a martini, which he made for himself every day at 4 p.m. He told me the story of how Sinclair Lewis gave him \$2500, or half the value of his Vermont house, so that George and his wife Helen (née Larkin) could be near "Red" and his wife Dorothy Thompson. My wife, not the history buff I am, said "It was like talking with history." And it was. We have wonderful photos of his house, him directly, and us with him.

Seldes was a delight, and definitely worthy of Red Lewis's praise. As an aside, George got into a literary scuffle with Dorothy in the late 1930s when he criticized her for not being pro-labor in his book *Lords of*

the Press. Dorothy got him to retract, I believe, because part of the criticism implied she was "paid" for such beliefs. Seldes's point was that columnists such as Westbrook Pegler, George Sokowsky, Fulton Lewis (no relation to Red), and even Dorothy based their positions to fit well with management, and therefore her columns were widely distributed. She perhaps knew that Seldes knew that Fulton Lewis and Sokowsky were on the take and that was perhaps why she was upset!

Seldes, however, rightly felt she should know better than to criticize labor and the New Deal. She denied being critical of labor as a philosophy, and denied being anti-New Deal. I think the record is pretty clear against her on that score.

One of the two things that impresses me about Sinclair Lewis is his depth of knowledge of people such as George Seldes, Victor Serge, and the continuing thread of feminism within his writings. Schorer's belief that Lewis needed Thompson for his feminist positions or that he needed her to help him write *It Can't Happen Here* struck me as ludicrous, when one reads either *The Job* or *Arrowsmith*, for example. Schorer's "afterwords" in the Signet pocket book series are a joke and miss the point of Lewis's brilliance, which brings me to the second "thing" which impresses me about Lewis's writings—and why he is in my view the greatest American writer of the twentieth century. That is his understanding of "business as a culture" and how America is creating an essentially new culture of business. Anthony Di Renzo, who edited Lewis's business-oriented short stories, gets it right, unlike Schorer. Perhaps that fellow and I, both of whom have hands-on experience with sales folks, marketers, entrepreneurs, executives, etc., can see this more clearly than those in academia? Schorer seems to think Lewis is simply being satirical or making caricatures. Ha! The stories and his novels read like *today* and as if he simply is transcribing tape recordings of how business folk really make decisions and how they think. Yes, there is some "license." But, there is much more a brilliant understanding of people, and particularly how people behave in business—and how it affects them in their overall lives. ✍



SINCLAIR LEWIS SINGS

Laurel Hessing, a member of the Sinclair Lewis Society, has written a musical play, *Sketching Utopia*, which has been announced for January 25th through February 11th at Theater for the New City in New York City and will be directed by Crystal Field. The Theater for the New City web site is found at <http://hometown.aol.com/TNCtheater/index.htm> and the play is listed under upcoming events. One song in it is called "Main Street" and is sung by Sinclair Lewis. Upton Sinclair sings a song about the meat packers.

The focus of the musical play is on Undena de Guibert Eberlein, who was born November 25, 1881, and her younger sister Davida. Undena, who had been trained as a teacher and taught in rural Illinois until she was about 20 years old, traveled to New York City to study acting. Shortly after arriving in New York, Undena met Ernest Eberlein, an artist/lithographer. They were married in 1904. Ernest Eberlein was a member of The Straight Edge at this time and Undena joined the community as well. The Straight Edge, named after the straight edge Christ must have used in his work as a carpenter, was based on the principle that business can be run according to The Golden Rule. Undena and Davida came from the very Main Street environment Sinclair Lewis described in his book of that name. And they left it far behind just as he did.

Undena and Ernest had a child, Betty, in 1905, and the couple, though still interested in communal

living, left The Straight Edge and New York City seeking more privacy and country living. Undena wanted to work as an actress. The couple joined Upton Sinclair's experimental community called Helicon Hall in Englewood, New Jersey. Here women could pursue their careers while their children were raised communally. Davida came to Helicon Hall too, where she contributed to the care of the children and of Betty who was still a toddler. Undena left for the vaudeville circuit, traveling from the east coast to San Francisco.

Undena, Ernest, and Davida absorbed many new ideas at Helicon Hall where they lived and shared the work of the community with writers Upton Sinclair and Sinclair Lewis. Here young Sinclair Lewis was called Hal to avoid being mixed up with Upton Sinclair. Hal had dropped out of Yale to become a member.

Helicon Hall burned to the ground in the winter of 1907. It was speculated, though never proven, that it had been firebombed, possibly by members of the Meat Trust as *The Jungle* had already been published, exposing the horrors of the abuses in the meat packing industry. The world would surely have lost incalculably if both Upton Sinclair and Sinclair Lewis had perished in the fire. Their loss to our country might have changed the course of history. Ernest, Davida, and baby Betty too barely escaped with their lives. Undena and Ernest eventually joined their third utopian community, Free Acres. ✍

Arrowsmith and Modern Medicine continued from page 17

Harvey Cushing's painstakingly detailed *Life of Sir William Osler*. This book also won a Pulitzer Prize and focused on a doctor who was famous for a "benevolent bedside manner."

While hilariously assailing the babbittry of the medical profession, Lewis captures the absolute passion for discovery required of a successful scientist. This is no mere job. It's a religion. In one of the book's most moving scenes, Martin prays in his laboratory... 'God give me strength not to trust to God!'

A satire of Judeo-Christian expressions of the ideal life, perhaps, yet sadly, today it's difficult to imagine a research scientist praying for anything so noble when there are patent applications for newly discovered genes to fill out and stock options to consider. As medical scientists and the biotechnology industry become increasingly intertwined, the doctor in me wishes he could prescribe a page or two of *Arrowsmith* each day to his more profit-driven colleagues. Perhaps Dr. Lewis could restore some health to the ailing condition of scientific idealism.

SAUK CENTRE NEWS

Sinclair Lewis Days

Sinclair Lewis Days, from July 10-16, 2000, of which the Sinclair Lewis 2000 Conference was a part, was a big success. Among the festivities were the Miss Sauk Centre Pageant, a dance, a flea market and craft show, a kiddie parade, fireworks, a pie and ice cream social, a basketball and softball tournament, and a production of *The Wizard of Oz*. There was also an American Veterans Traveling Tribute.

Lewis Would Have Loved Sinclair Lewis Days

Sinclair Lewis would have loved Sinclair Lewis Days.

Speaking at the Sinclair Lewis Conference held in Sauk Centre during Sinclair Lewis Days, Barnaby Conrad said the irascible Noble Prize winning author would have been "honored at his hometown having a festival in his name. He would certainly have laughed at much of it. He would enjoy meeting people, sharing stories of the old days and he would most certainly be very grateful."

I have often wondered what Lewis would really think of our community celebration. Conrad noted Lewis was a cynic and a social critic but he had a strong attachment to traditional American values and institutions. While he was critical of American life, he was also very proud to be an American, especially a Midwesterner.

Besides what better place would there be for an author to find material than at a town festival. It is where we gather to celebrate what is important to us.

He would have loved the literary conference in his name. Lewis liked helping young writers and literary scholars. Literature was his life and he was perhaps one of the keenest observers of his craft. He might even have given a talk of his own.

While Lewis had a high-pitched voice and he wasn't the most handsome man alive, he did have a way with words and an air of importance.

Since he was a bit of a charmer and a dynamic public speaker, I'm sure he'd have made a great Master of Ceremonies for the Miss Sauk Centre Pageant. Could you imagine what kind of questions he would ask the contestants?

Young Red Lewis took several bike trips along

much of the route which is now the Heart of the Lakes bike route and the Lake Wobegon Trail. His diaries report he once biked to Mass in Meire Grove and on another trip with his young friends he climbed the St. Boniface Church steeple in Melrose.

Lewis wrote many plays and starred in a few. He would have made a great wizard for the Prairie Fire Children's presentation of the *Wizard of Oz*.

During World War II, Lewis wrote several magazine articles and gave many speeches on defending freedom. He would have been touched by the Vietnam Memorial which does such a graphic job of telling us the personal sacrifice of war.

There is no record of Lewis enjoying parades but with the event going down the street named after him and in front of his boyhood home, I'm sure he would have enjoyed the spectacle of floats, music, and rescue vehicles on mobile display.

The flea market and craft sale would have caught his curious mind.

Like many of us, he would have finished Saturday night watching fireworks from the beer gardens. Here he would have taken the time to catch up on what is new in his old hometown.

He might even have dug up some hot gossip for another hit novel while he was here.

by Dave Simpkins

From the Sauk Centre Herald

Sinclair Lewis Writers' Conference

The Sinclair Lewis Foundation sponsored the Sinclair Lewis 2000 Writers' Conference on October 14, 2000, in Sauk Centre. This year's conference featured a children's storyteller and musician, a novelist, a newspaper columnist, and a creative nonfiction writer, all of whom have won awards for their work. The keynote speaker was Douglas Wood, author of *Old Turtle*, which won the American Booksellers' Association "Book of the Year" award. Several of his children's books are based on Native American legends, including *Northwoods Cradle Song*, *The Windigo's Return*, and *Rabbit and the Moon*, all published by Simon and Schuster. His speech, "The Human Spirit and Writing

Inspiration," focused on drawing inspiration for writing from the natural world.

David Mura, a poet, critic, and playwright, presented on the basics of creative nonfiction. He is the author of two memoirs, *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei* and *Where the Body Meets Memory: An Odyssey of Race, Sexuality, and Identity* and several books of poetry. Marjorie Dorner, author of a number of novels including several in the genre of mystery and suspense, spoke on how to create characters. Four of her novels, *Nightmare*, *Family Closets*, *Freeze Frame*, and *Blood Kin* have been translated into other languages. Al Sicherman talked about turning life into humor. He has had much practice at this, since he has written a variety of humor columns since the late 1960s. Many of his humorous columns focus on food and recipes and some of the best were collected in *Caramel Knowledge* in 1985.

The Sinclair Lewis Writers' Conference is in its 11th year and aims to encourage and inspire Minnesota writers. Named after Sinclair Lewis, the conference is a continuing tribute to a writer who helped other writers hone their craft.

In the Pink

One of the perks of being President of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation in Sauk Centre is the fact that I get to meet a lot of famous people, many of them authors and media people.

I was just telling John the other day that I wished I had kept a scrapbook with all the autographs of the people I have met over the years. It would contain a lot of memories and would be fodder for a lot of stories to "tell the grandchildren."

Maybe it's not too late to start that scrapbook.

Two weeks ago I had the privilege of meeting Barnaby Conrad, world-famous author and former bull-fighter, who served as the secretary to Sinclair Lewis in 1947.

Having such a famous person come to the conference gave me some nervous moments. Especially when Tuesday afternoon events unfolded that included the people who were to give Conrad a ride from MSP airport to Sauk Centre at 5:25 p.m. having a change of their own flight so that it would not come in until 7:25!

All's well that ends well, and Conrad was eventu-

ally picked up at the airport and transported to Sauk Centre. The burning question in my sleepless night was, would the man be upset by the experience and have a bad time at the conference?

So it was with misgivings that I arrived at the Palmer House Hotel early Wednesday morning, the day of Conrad's keynote speech, to check on conference details before coming to work in Osakis.

The Palmer House dining room was quiet, except for one man sitting alone at a table near the center of the room.

"Can that be Barnaby Conrad?" I asked myself, and I instantly knew the answer when he looked up for a moment.

"Here goes!" I said to myself, and determinedly marched up to the man's table and asked if he were Barnaby Conrad.

Of course he was! Barnaby Conrad himself, sitting alone at a Palmer House table, getting ready to eat oatmeal for breakfast. I introduced myself and suddenly found myself enjoying a cup of coffee with one of the most gracious and soft-spoken men I have ever met!

What a relief! Mr. Conrad was none the worse for wear. And when I told him who I was he immediately asked if Adam Olson, whom he had met the night before at the airport, was my son, and complimented me on the fine, helpful young man that he was.

Conrad charmed those around him, telling about his life with Sinclair Lewis. His conversation was peppered with famous names—kind of like a Who's Who of American Literature from the 1940s and 1950s. He mentioned names from Lewis's history like Marcella Powers, Ida Kay, Dorothy Thompson, and Grace Hegger. He mentioned names like Bennett Cerf, Norman Rockwell, and Artie Shaw. Never did he try to impress upon those around him that knowing those people elevated his stature in the world.

Conrad was a gentleman, and a gracious person. He spent a lot of time autographing books and other items for members who attended the conference, visiting with them.

He had great fun signing the "Sinclair Lewis" signature to the books as he had done those years ago as Lewis's secretary, along with his own famous autograph.

He complimented the Foundation and its work with the Lewis Interpretive Center, the Boyhood Home Museum, and the foundation and the co-sponsoring Sinclair Lewis Society for the work of holding the conference.

In my book, Conrad is truly a great man. Great men are polite, considerate, and friendly to those around them, despite their famous stature.

I was already a confirmed Barnaby Conrad fan before he kissed me on the cheek while saying thanks for the conference experience and good-bye before his return trip to California.

Thank you, Barnaby Conrad, for coming to Sauk Centre to keynote the conference. You have enriched our lives with your presence!

by Roberta Olson

From the Osakis Review

Lewis Aide Reveals Rough, Tender Boss

Sinclair Lewis was the most irascible, ugly, fastidious man Barnaby Conrad has ever met.

Sinclair Lewis was also a kind, engaging mentor who carried an air of greatness about him.

That is what the author of 27 books told a meeting of the Sinclair Lewis Society in Sauk Centre Wednesday as the keynote speaker at the Sinclair Lewis Conference held in conjunction with Sinclair Lewis Days in Sauk Centre.

Conrad worked as a secretary to Lewis for five months in the spring of 1947.

"My time with Lewis was a never-ending feast of wondrous happenings. I learned all I know about writing from that man. He had a way of being blunt, honest and encouraging at the same time," remembered Conrad.

"If Lewis could be here today, he would be greatly honored at his hometown having a festival in his name. He would certainly laugh at much of it. He would enjoy meeting people, sharing stories of the old days and he would feel very grateful," said Conrad to a group of 50 members of the Sinclair Lewis Society and the Sinclair Lewis Foundation.

Lewis had just finished his novel *Kingsblood Royal* and he was working on a screenplay when Conrad met him.

Conrad, a Yale alumni like Lewis, had just returned from Spain where he was a bullfighter.

"Lewis was always supportive of young writers and literary students. I was working on my first novel and he offered to read 75 pages of my book," said Conrad.

"He told me that work was very good but to cut

out 73 of the 75 pages saying, people don't read fiction for information, they read fiction for emotion," said Conrad.

Lewis asked him to become his secretary at Thorvale Farms. Conrad said Lewis was a multi-millionaire. Thorvale was a massive country estate with 750 acres of trout streams and rolling hills. The mansion had 24 rooms, a swimming pool, tennis courts, and a constant parade of guests from celebrities to local people.

"Lewis was very charming to strangers but he could be wicked with someone he felt was a snob. He loved a good debate," said Conrad.

Lewis rose early each day to write. In the afternoon he read serious material and he enjoyed reading mysteries at night.

Hyperbole: Lewis was good at hyperbole. He could grab a wild story out of the air and make you believe it. He also liked to tell tall stories about himself according to Conrad.

"I didn't believe him when he said he sold short stories to Jack London while he was still a high school student. I was straightening out a collection of his letters and there were a couple of letters from Jack London confirming what the old man had said," said Conrad.

One of Conrad's jobs was to review and answer fan mail. Lewis liked answering the presumptuous letters that allowed him to vent his acerbic side.

Lewis gave Conrad the authority to answer and sign Lewis's name. He could also autograph books and sign checks.

According to Conrad, Lewis could be very childish. He would play with his food, sometimes letting the ashes from his cigarette fall onto his plate. If he would lose at chess he'd storm off to his room without a word. Sometimes he would talk under his breath like a pouting child.

Since they were both Yale graduates they attended an alumni event together. "Lewis didn't really like the Yale alumni saying they were a bunch of Babbitts. Babbitts, people who acted like the character in his book *Babbitt*, were boisterous, surface men, but he could hold his own when he had to.

"He was in rare form with the Yale alumni. The hit of the party. But on the way home he mumbled all the

Sauk Centre News continued on page 23

IN MEMORIAM

Isabel Lewis Agrell, niece of Sinclair Lewis, died August 12, 2000, in Prescott Valley, Arizona, at the age of 83. She was the daughter of Claude and Wilhemina Freeman Lewis and the granddaughter of Dr. and Mrs. E. J. Lewis. She grew up in St. Cloud, Minnesota, and received bachelors and masters degrees from the Teacher's College at Columbia University. She was a supervisor and director of a Women's Resident Center in Duluth, director of a hospital nursery school, ran a nursery school for 6 years, and taught in the public schools. She and her husband Robert owned a gift shop in Crosslake, Minnesota, for 10 years.

She recently completed a book about her memories of Sinclair Lewis, *Sinclair Lewis Remembered*, which was well reviewed in the *Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter* by George Killough. The book includes family memories, photographs, and recipes, and is a charming memoir. She leaves behind three children and their families, including several grandchildren. Her husband, her sister Virginia Lewis, and brothers Freeman and Phillip Lewis, preceded her in death.

Her family has asked that any donations in her name be made to the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, P.O. Box 222, Sauk Centre, MN 56378.

Sauk Centre News *continued from page 23*

way about how much he disliked them saying something like, "They didn't have much time for me when I was in school but now they are all over me," said Conrad.

"He just didn't fit anyplace," added Conrad.

Lewis, twice divorced, didn't talk much about his two sons or his Sauk Centre family. He remained close to his brother Dr. Claude Lewis and they traveled together. He often talked about his second wife Dorothy Thompson and his mistress Marcella Powers who left him after 10 years for a younger man.

Tragic ending: Conrad said Lewis was pretty much sober for eight years but by 1949 he had begun drinking again. Conrad and his wife had dinner with Lewis and Claude in Paris.

"Lewis could inhale liquor. He didn't sip. His brother Claude said if he kept drinking he would be dead within a year. Well, he kept drinking and he soon died," said Conrad.

"It was a tragic ending. He died alone," said Conrad. "People were taking advantage of him and his money. He was sick and lonely."

"It was very tragic. Here was such a talented man, so successful professionally yet so personally alone," concluded Conrad.

by Dave Simpkins

From the Sauk Centre Herald

The books of
Barnaby Conrad
now available to
order...



MATADOR \$20

*NAME DROPPING—Tales of My San Francisco
Night Club* \$16

THE WORLD OF HERB CAEN \$35

*THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO
WRITING FICTION* \$20

*LEARNING TO WRITE FICTION
FROM THE MASTERS* \$16

For an autographed copy please send your name, address, and "signed to" request to:

Barnaby Conrad
8132 Puesta del Sol
Carpinteria, CA 93013

LEWIS AND THE WEB: INFORMATION AND REQUESTS

Over 37,000 people have logged on to the Sinclair Lewis website in the last two years. It's good to see that interest in Lewis is still vital, not only in schools but among readers of all sorts. Here is a selection of recent e-mails received from people who contacted the website. Material in brackets are either answers that were sent or comments by the editor. I hope you enjoy reading them.

Would anyone at the society please tell me the day in 1935 that *It Can't Happen Here* was published? I'm interested to know whether it was published before or after the assassination of Huey Long on Sept. 8, 1935. I seek this information for a book on my grandfather, who was a liberal Republican in Vermont in the 1930s. As you know, Doremus Jessup, the hero of *It Can't Happen Here*, was a Vermonter. I would most greatly appreciate any help. [*It Can't Happen Here* was published on October 21, 1935, after the assassination of Huey Long. However, Sinclair Lewis, who was abroad from the end of August until early October that year, cabled his publishers when he heard about Long's death and directed them to change any references to Long in the novel to "the late Huey Long." This makes for a couple of inconsistencies within the text.]

— SLSN —

Thank you for this homepage—I think Sinclair Lewis is probably the best American writer ever, my favorite being *Cass Timberlane*, the scene where he contemplates teaching his cat, Cleo, the art and strategy of chess. He is unmatched for dry, satirical wit and searching observations.

— SLSN —

Just wanted to say this is a great site. I have been a fan of Lewis's work ever since I read *Elmer Gantry*.

— SLSN —

Would like to see a concordance of Lewis's lines from books, opinions, & references for his book *The God-Seeker* on your website. [Some updating of the website is in store in the upcoming year.]

— SLSN —

I'm trying to do some research on Sinclair Lewis and would be so grateful if you could tell me if there was ever an "Elizabeth" in any of Mr. Lewis's writings or in his personal life? I know this is a very difficult question but thank you in advance for your trouble. [The question arises from a gold watch dated from 1928 and inscribed from Sinclair to Elizabeth. I couldn't find any person in his life with that name to whom he might have given a watch. The person who wrote says that there is a "hopeless romantic" aspect to this quest.]

— SLSN —

I think you have an excellent site with many great links. I noticed that you have a link for a bookstore comparison site; however, I have an online bookstore for you to check out that is not on that list. The bookstore is 21 North Main (www.21northmain.com). 21 North Main, a Minnesota-based company, is interested in developing a network of outstanding author pages that link to 21northmain.com. 21 North Main is a client of mine, and we feel that your site is the best Sinclair Lewis site around. 21northmain.com currently has more than 13 million books available from more than 3,000 book dealers, including almost 3,000 books by Mr. Lewis. Please check this site out and tell me what you think.

— SLSN —

I work at Writers and Artists Agency. Do you know who I might be able to contact to find out about rights to Sinclair Lewis' estate?

— SLSN —

I am trying to locate a book about Lewis that contains a letter from him with a particularly scathing account of dinner with Margaret Culkin Banning Salsich. Can you help me? [The Mark Schorer biography has several mentions of Lewis's meetings with her.]

— SLSN —

A recent patron claims that Sinclair Lewis was a guest of Pius XII at the Vatican in 1947 or 1948. Any of the literature I've scanned makes no mention of Lewis ever being at the Vatican. Any suggestions or help? The man

who gave me this story said he met Lewis at the Vatican garden cottage in March of 1947. He told me he visited with Pope Pius who was asked many questions of Sauk Centre and Lewis. He told him Lewis was sick and staying in the garden cottage. When he found Lewis, Lewis's nurse or helper said he wasn't feeling well and not to stay long. Sure enough Lewis was very distant, cordial but brief. Pope Pius has been in the news recently as people are taking another look at the church's relationship with Jews during WWII. He says the Pope spoke English, was very friendly and concerned about Lewis. I have found where Dorothy Thompson also met with the Pope occasionally and tried to draw his attention to orphans. So, I'm trying to find out why the Lewis connection. I'd appreciate any possible contacts that might help.

————— SLSN —————

I have found 4 of the Sinclair Lewis books from a group of books I have acquired, They are:

Ann Vickers PF Collier and Co. copyright 1932 & 1933

Arrowsmith PF Collier and Co. 1924 & 1925

Babbitt PF Collier and Co. 1922

Main Street PF Collier and Co. 1920

They are dark blue with gold writing on them and an imprint on the front that says Alfr Nobel with a picture. Could you tell me something about them, are they valuable or just reprints? [These books are part of a series of Lewis reprints published after he won the Nobel Prize.]

————— SLSN —————

I am writing on behalf of a small publishing company in New York to request some information regarding Sinclair Lewis and his Nobel prize. The company I work for, Thornwillow Press, publishes hand-made, hand-bound, limited edition books in runs of between 150 and 300 copies. We publish 2 titles a year, and our author list includes J. P. Donleavy, Walter Cronkite, Hugh Sidey, and James Merrill. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Nobel Prize in Literature (in 2001) we are trying to put together a beautiful hand-made collection of the Nobel lectures and speeches that have been delivered by the American winners, from Sinclair Lewis to Toni Morrison. I am writing to ask you about who owns the rights to the Nobel speeches and lectures, and how we could possibly gain permission to include Sinclair Lewis in our publication.

————— SLSN —————

I have a Sinclair Lewis 14 cent stamp. I found it in an old box and was wondering if you could tell me how old it is, if it is worth anything. And if not could you suggest to me someone who might be able to. [An uncanceled stamp is worth about 14 cents.]

————— SLSN —————

I have the original *Elmer Gantry* by Sinclair Lewis that was printed in the *New York Post* in 1927 here in one of my old books that I found when my husband and I bid on a mini warehouse full of items this man had. This man clipped out the whole original newspaper writing by Sinclair Lewis and glued them on the pages of this book. If you can give me any information on this, I would appreciate it. I also looked on the back of the newspaper clipping of the *Elmer Gantry* story and found newspaper items on Aimee Semple McPherson, the Lindbergh baby kidnapping and Chicago gang activity.

————— SLSN —————

I am just finishing *Elmer Gantry*, and I am looking for some commentary to read about it. Any suggestions?

————— SLSN —————

Hello, I am under the impression that *The Jungle* was written by Sinclair Lewis. Can you verify?

————— SLSN —————

I'm delighted to find this site. Sinclair Lewis doesn't deserve the neglect he's received. *Main Street* may change, but he's still a major writer. *Dodsworth* and *Arrowsmith* have been my favorite novels. Seeing your page is sending me back to the library to check out his books again.

————— SLSN —————

Because of a bet I need some information, please. Did Lewis Sinclair write a book in which we can find a figure called Homer Simpson who kills a little kid in the end? If this is so, did Donald Sutherland play this Homer Simpson and what's the name of the book? [The book is *The Day of the Locust* by Nathanael West. Donald Sutherland did indeed play Homer Simpson.]

————— SLSN —————

In 1964 or 1965 there was a television mini-series called, I think, *The American Novel*. One of those segments was *Babbitt*, and was partially filmed in Duluth,

Minnesota. The actor, Pat Hingle, was prominently featured, as I recall. Are you aware of any archival material on this? I can't recall which network ran these programs. Thank you.

———— SLSN ————

Without re-reading *Babbitt*, I'm trying to find the speech he gave to the Good Citizens League or the Boosters' Club. Can you tell me where to locate that in the text?

———— SLSN ————

We have an invitation, signed by Mr. Lewis, to his play *Angela is Twenty-Two*. Can you tell me when and where the play was first performed?

The invitation is a printed card approximately 2.5" x 4.0" and reads:

SINCLAIR LEWIS

invites

Mr. _____

to see his play

"ANGELA IS TWENTY-TWO

_____ (signature) _____

Signed

Apparently two or more sets were printed for "Mr.," "Mrs.," "Miss" unless an all male audience was expected. Based upon your information concerning Fay Wray, it is interesting that the card reads "his" play. Unfortunately, there is no name inserted into the "Mr." field.

———— SLSN ————

For what it's worth, I'm glad that you are taking issue with the unsympathetic nature of Mark Schorer's biography of Lewis. I still have a bad taste from reading it and that was twenty years ago. You mention that you are impressed with the quantity of Schorer's research—I remember being depressed by the quantity of his opinions. It could have been ghostwritten by Lewis's ex-wives' divorce lawyers. Anyway, I look forward to your book. [Actually the biography is being written by Richard Lingeman and should be out in the fall.]

P.S. I have read all of Lewis's books, most of them too many times to admit. In addition to his greatest hits of the twenties, *Kingsblood Royal* still haunts me—it was a favorite of my parents.

———— SLSN ————

In September of 1947 Sinclair Lewis visited my home-

town of Wheaton, Minnesota. I understand he was researching material for a new book. The book was never written, but I wonder if there are any references to this in his papers, journals etc.

———— SLSN ————

I was just cruising your Homepage and I must say it is great. Great Web Site.

———— SLSN ————

I am doing a research paper on Sinclair Lewis and *Babbitt*. I was wondering if you could e-mail me or send me the newsletter or any information you think I could use. i.e.—themes in Lewis's life and *Babbitt*, criticism of *Babbitt*, etc.

———— SLSN ————

I am writing because I bought a red, hardback book by Sinclair Lewis entitled *Bethel Merriday*. The reason I purchased it is because of the signature inside the book on the second page. It is signed Sinclair Lewis. I looked through your web page to try and find a signature to compare it to but I was unsuccessful. If there is anyway that you could assist me in my search it would be greatly appreciated.

———— SLSN ————

I am an antiquarian book and document dealer in New York. I have, for sale, what I deem to be a rather scarce Playbill from the Cort Theatre for the 1934 production of Lewis's *Jayhawker*.

———— SLSN ————

I wonder if you know about bartleby.com's site www.bartleby.com/people/LewisSin.html. I'm not involved with them in any way; I'm just a Lewis fan. Great site, by the way. [The site includes an on-line text of *Babbitt*.]

———— SLSN ————

I am writing from Italy. I have found in your site that there is "A Guide to Films Based on the Works of Sinclair Lewis" and I would like to know if, in this guide, there is a list of films or an analysis and/or reviews about the films. [Unfortunately no, although that may be a direction for the website in the future.]

———— SLSN ————

I need to find info about his actions in the political arena most importantly about his involvement in the Chicago,

IL vote scandal. [Lewis was not particularly involved in politics. He belonged to the Socialist Party when he was young and later America First in the 1930s, but voted for Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940s.]

————— SLSN —————

In which literary period was Lewis classified???

————— SLSN —————

I have an autographed copy of *It Can't Happen Here* that I may be interested in selling. It is published by The Sun Dial Press, Inc. Garden City/New York. The copyright date is 1935. The book states that it was printed at The Country Life Press, Garden City, N.Y., U.S.A. The book is discolored with age but is otherwise in good condition. I bought it at a rare book auction several years ago and do not know the current market value. Any help in determining the value would be appreciated.

————— SLSN —————

I just finished reading *Main Street* after having re-read *Winesburg, Ohio*. I am an Anderson fan and now a re-kindled Lewis fan. I loved *Dodsworth* and *Elmer Gantry*. In fact, reading *Main Street* has inspired me to write the novel I've longed to write about the contrast between growing up in a large city and settling in a small town. Of course, my view is totally different from that presented in *Main Street*. You may be interested in my web site devoted to Anderson at <http://andersonproject.winesburg.com/index.html> Pass along the URL to any you think may be interested.

Student Letters

I am working on a research project in preparation for my Masters thesis. I was wondering if you know of any interviews done with Sinclair Lewis that were published in magazines while he was alive. Did he ever comment about the character of Carol Kennicott after *Main Street* was published? I have a hard time accepting that he had a true understanding of the plight of women at the time and that it was his goal to show this through Carol. Instead, I believe that he was a keen observer of people and he put what he saw in the book for the rest of us to figure out. What have feminists said about the character?

————— SLSN —————

I'm doing a project on Sinclair in school. If you could, will you please e-mail me some information on him if you can!

————— SLSN —————

I am in the 11th grade. I am doing a research paper on *Main Street*. Principally I am looking, with some difficulty, for critical writings or essays on *Main Street*. I am not having much success. Can you give me some pointers on where I should search?

————— SLSN —————

I am a student at Johns Hopkins University. I am currently researching a term paper that looks at science in terms of truth seekers and scientists who are more concerned with the commercial aspects of discovery. The drive behind this topic is loosely based on *Arrowsmith*. I am writing to ask if there are any good sources of information on what Sinclair Lewis based his characters on. In short I'm asking if any real scientists during the time are directly related to *Arrowsmith*? If you have any ideas on where I might find such information I would greatly appreciate a response.

————— SLSN —————

I don't know if you can help me; I teach American Lit, and I'd really like to get a copy of the *Babbitt* movie. I was wondering if anyone you know has a copy that they might run off for me to share with my students, please? [The Lewis Society sent this teacher's class a copy of the film, but sad to say, the class didn't enjoy it much.]

————— SLSN —————

Thank you so much for the references on this subject [*Main Street*]. My paper is coming along, but I'm confused on what the thesis should be. I know it is what leads the report, though I have so much information on the economic, political, social aspects, etc., mentioned in the book, but I don't know what I should revolve the paper around. How was Lewis viewed in this time period? How is he criticizing small town life? I'm lost on where to begin writing. If you are not too busy, perhaps you could give me some suggestions. Have you written anything on this subject? If this will consume too much of your time, thank you again for your help.

————— SLSN —————

Hello, I am a Junior at Valley High School in Des Moines,

IA. I am doing a 6 page paper on an author who I really look up to and I decided to choose Sinclair Lewis as mine. My question to you is did Lewis ever write any short stories? If he did or didn't please email me back or send me a letter. I would appreciate it very much. [The publisher Ivan R. Dee, 1332 North Halsted Street, Chicago, IL 60622, www.ivanrdee.com, e-mail elephant@ivanrdee.com, has published *Selected Short Stories of Sinclair Lewis* with an introduction by James Tuttleton. It is \$12.95 in paper and is a reprint of his short story collection from the 1930s.]

— SLSN —

Where can I find out more information on *Elmer Gantry* than is found on this homepage? I am trying to do a report in high school and need more information as soon as possible. I have the book and have already read it for my report.

— SLSN —

I am currently reading *Main Street* for a research project. I was wondering if you could tell me how Sinclair Lewis presents himself in this novel (how his ideals, style, attitudes of the 20's are present in the novel). I don't know about his background or style as I have not read his other works, perhaps you could help me with some information.

— SLSN —

I'm a student of philology at Oradea University (Romania). I'm a fourth year student at the English-French section and the subject for my diploma paper is Sinclair Lewis. I write you because it is very difficult to find here critical studies, essays on Sinclair Lewis. I'm kindly asking for your help. If you could send me via e-mail critical essays on Sinclair Lewis or at least if you could provide me some internet sites where I could find all that.

— SLSN —

Thank you for the promptitude of your answer. I would

like to focus in my paper on Sinclair Lewis on his works during the 20's, especially on *Arrowsmith*, *Main Street*, and *Babbitt*. I am interested in critical studies mainly on these three novels. I would like to know more about the background of these novels. Also, another important point would be the characters that appear in these novels, not only the main characters (the way Lewis describes the American citizen of the 20's how real they are). I would be grateful if you could provide me some critical views in this direction. Some historical data regarding the American society of that period would be useful. Furthermore I'd be interested in some works on Lewis's art—means of realizing the satire, the irony, and the humor of Sinclair Lewis.

— SLSN —

I am a junior at Edward Little High School in Maine. I was wondering if you could send me some information about Sinclair Lewis. I am doing a research paper about him and his two novels *Main Street* and *Babbitt*.

— SLSN —

I am writing a literary research paper on Sinclair Lewis and need to find at least three short stories by him. Please help, I'm not sure where to start.

— SLSN —

I started out working on a paper about an author that I didn't want to write about. I thought Poe would be more interesting, but after researching Lewis, I'm hooked. I'm going to read all of his books now.

— SLSN —

Are the film versions of *Main Street* (*Main Street* and *I Married a Doctor*) available on video? [I wish they were. If anyone knows where they can be found, please let the newsletter know.]

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SINCLAIR LEWIS NOTES

Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* is briefly discussed by M. Keith Booker in *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature: Fiction as Social Criticism* (Greenwood Press, 1994). The discussion of the novel appears in a chapter called "The Bourgeois Dystopia after World War II" and includes extended analyses of *Walden Two* by B. F. Skinner, *Player Piano* by Kurt Vonnegut, and *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. Unfortunately Booker seems to misread *It Can't Happen Here* and says that Lewis is suggesting "that overzealous efforts to repeal Communism could lead to totalitarianism in America. Lewis's dystopian novel presents a detailed scenario through which right-wing extremists gain control of the government of the United States, justifying their totalitarian techniques largely through an appeal to the necessity of defending America against the Stalinist menace" (98). Given that Lewis's impetus to write the novel was to warn against home-grown fascism, Booker's analysis of *It Can't Happen Here* seems to be trying to make it fit into an argument he's making about American dystopias and communism even when there isn't much evidence for the claim.

———— SLSN ————

In Joseph Heller's posthumous, autobiographical novel, *Portrait of an Artist, as an Old Man* (Simon & Schuster, 2000), Lewis is one of several writers cited by the protagonist, Eugene Pota, an aging novelist, in a lecture titled "The Literature of Despair": "Sinclair Lewis, our first Nobel Prize winner for literature, who drank so heavily that H. L. Mencken—no teetotaler he—could not bear to be with him" (164-65).

———— SLSN ————

Kathleen Norris, in *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography* (Ticknor & Fields, 1993), discusses both the loneliness and spiritual fulfillment of living out on the prairies of North Dakota. She compares herself to writers like Willa Cather, Sinclair Lewis, and Louise Erdrich, who "have found it necessary to write about that world [of rural and small-town America] from a distance" (80). She, however, has come to the conclusion that she needs to live in Dakota to write about it. "The Plains are full of what a friend here calls 'good telling stories,' and our sense of being forgotten by the rest of the world makes it all the

more important that we preserve and pass them on" (5).

———— SLSN ————

Humanities, the magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities, mentioned the Sinclair Lewis Conference in its July/August 2000 issue. "Sauk Centre hosts the Sinclair Lewis Conference from July 12 to 14. This year's conference explores new scholarship on several of Lewis's books, including *Arrowsmith*, *It Can't Happen Here*, and the writer's only novel for adolescents, *Hike and the Aeroplane*. The conference takes place in Lewis's boyhood hometown and is sponsored by the Sinclair Lewis Foundation" (31). The magazine also included a picture of Lewis, courtesy of the Sinclair Lewis Society.

———— SLSN ————

The United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, has several connections with Sinclair Lewis. There is a sign discussing the burning of books by the Nazis in the spring of 1933, and among the writers mentioned are Jewish writers such as Einstein and Freud and non-Jewish American novelists including Lewis, Dreiser, London, Hemingway, and Dos Passos. Lewis is quoted as saying that "The authors of the burned books should feel nothing but satisfaction" that these books were considered dangerous. There is also a picture of Lewis and a mention of the book burning in *Time*. Dorothy Thompson is also represented at the Holocaust Museum, for saying that "for thousands and thousands [of refugees] a piece of paper with a stamp marks the difference between life and death." There is also a film clip of her returning from Germany in 1933, noting that "the Nazis are doing what they had said they would do for 13 years." Her voice is very cultured with a slight British accent, and she sounds a bit like Eleanor Roosevelt.

———— SLSN ————

This past spring, the *New York Times* published an article, "A Literary Ghost in the H.M.O. Debate," by Walter Goodman, who compares the "chronic discontent" that modern H.M.O. doctors feel to Martin Arrowsmith's concerns. He notes that doctors from both time periods are "trapped between the duty to practice

their profession conscientiously and the pressures of a market society." The essay focuses on Dr. Martin Solomon, a central figure in the PBS documentary series *Frontline*, who is disturbed that he must often put monetary concerns before patient concerns. Goodman notes that many of the doctors whom Arrowsmith encounters are self-serving, including one physician and teacher who tells his students that they should explain to the patient, and "also to his stricken and anxious family, the hard work and thought you are giving to his case, and so make him feel that the good you have done him, or intend to do him, is even greater than the fee you plan to charge." Arrowsmith hates the corruption of the practitioners around him and unlike Dr. Solomon, he is able to escape to the woods and do his own research rather than continue to confront "the slimy trail of the dollar."

— SLSN —

A female cult leader in southern Uganda has been called an African version of Elmer Gantry. According to an AP report published in the *Southern Illinoisian*, April 2, 2000, Credonia Mwerinde, the leader of a Christian fringe sect, masterminded the mass murder of over 900 people when her predictions to her followers of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God failed to come true. "Like an African version of the religious huckster Elmer Gantry, she founded a religious movement and sold her spiritual wares to the gullible and the searching, particularly among the ranks of disaffected Roman Catholics" (8C).

— SLSN —

The *New Yorker* celebrated the 75th anniversary of its first issue by doing a feature and illustration by Bruce McCall, "Midtown, Feb. 13, 1925, 11 p.m." (Feb. 21 and 28, 2000, 252-53). At the same time that the first issue of the *New Yorker* went to press, "George Gershwin ducks the opening performance of Ziegfeld Follies to rehearse 'Rhapsody in Blue' for tomorrow night's Aeolian Hall concert," "Dorothy Parker freshens up her drink," and "Sinclair Lewis punches out Theodore Dreiser in Edmund Wilson's living room" (252). Although many of the items listed for the night are silly, including the one on Lewis, Theodore Dreiser actually did slap Lewis in 1931 after Lewis claimed [quite rightly] that Dreiser had heavily plagiarized from Dorothy Thompson for his book on Russia. See Mark

Schorer's *Sinclair-Lewis: An American Life* for more information on this fracas.

— SLSN —

In a review in the *New York Times Book Review of Pastoralia*, a collection of short stories by George Saunders, published by Riverhead this spring, reviewer Lynne Tillman writes that these "exuberantly weird stories recount Americans' mostly futile attempts at self-improvement, the terrible dread of failure—or damnation" (May 28, 2000). "In all of his unsentimental stories, Saunders commiserates with the dispirited, the weak, the flawed. His engagement with have-nots is a kind of return...to the world of John Steinbeck, Sinclair Lewis, Thornton Wilder and the Theodore Dreiser of *An American Tragedy*—small-town, small-city, little-people writers....Imagine Lewis's Babbitt thrown into the back seat of car going cross-country, driven by R. Crumb, Matt Groening, Lynda Barry, Harvey Pekar or Spike Jonze. That'd be a story Saunders could tell" (8).

— SLSN —

James Tuttleton, the editor of the Ivan R. Dee edition of *The Selected Short Stories of Sinclair Lewis*, has written a critique on the ongoing culture wars, *A Fine Silver Thread: Essays on American Writing and Criticism* (Ivan R. Dee, 1998). In a review in the *New York Times Book Review* (Mar. 29, 1998), Andrea Barnet notes that although he may be curmudgeonly, once he "focuses on literature rather than on 'critical terrorists' who would distort its meanings, he provides close critical readings of writers from Poe, Henry James, and Edith Wharton to Sinclair Lewis, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald" (18).

— SLSN —

The new book *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* by Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks (Norton, 2000) takes its title from Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* although Lewis was warning about fascism rather than socialism. The book examines reasons why socialism has not worked in the United States as a force on its own, even though ideas and political techniques have been adapted by various political parties. It ends with a discussion of how democratic socialism has succeeded elsewhere in the world.

— SLSN —

Norman Podhoretz, in the *Wall Street Journal*, takes the occasion of the 4th of July to muse on historical attitudes towards patriotism (July 3, 2000), and in doing so criticizes writers who seem not too patriotic, because, he says, they do not like what the country has become, and by this he means that these writers feel alienated from a changing, vital country. "With a lonely exception or two like Walt Whitman, American writers have associated patriotism not only with scoundrels but with charlatans, demagogues, fools, nativist bigots and the 'boosterism' that critics like H. L. Mencken and novelists like Sinclair Lewis mercilessly ridiculed to such lasting effect." Podhoretz speaks up for "Those ordinary folk who continued to cling to such sentiments [and] were looked down upon with derision by their putative betters as small-town hicks, clones of Sinclair Lewis's George F. Babbitt, members of H. L. Mencken's 'booboisie.'"

BOOK NOTES

The Minnesota Historical Society has purchased a copy of *The Job*, Sinclair Lewis's third adult novel, at a rare book fair in San Francisco. The price was \$4,000, partly because it was a first edition with a promotional message on the dust jacket and partly because of its dedication by Lewis to "an artistic giant." In an article entitled "Anatomy of a Rare Book Sale: MN Historical Society Purchases Lewis's book *The Job*," in the *Sauk Centre Herald*, writer Harry Hanson notes that the Historical Society was being cautious in its buying of Lewis material because of a fraud connected with a purchase of *Arrowsmith*. Pat Coleman, curator of books for the Historical Society, had purchased a copy of *Arrowsmith* for \$8,500. "It contained a greeting to F. Scott Fitzgerald, a Minnesota writer who had always appeared unfriendly to Lewis, which made the book valuable. Lewis had written how he enjoyed reading Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. The message was proven to be a hoax by an official steeped in finding forgery. Coleman and the Board [of the Historical Society] got their \$8,500 returned."

————— SLSN —————

James Hutchisson, former president of the Sinclair Lewis Society, recently wrote *DuBose Heyward: A Charleston Gentleman and the World of Porgy and Bess* which has been published by the University Press of Mississippi. The book is a biography of the South Caro-

lina businessman and novelist, playwright and poet who wrote of the Gullahs of Catfish Row and inspired the Gershwin masterpiece, *Porgy and Bess*.

————— SLSN —————

Penguin Putnam has recently published two American literature anthologies that use fiction by Sinclair Lewis. *American Satire: An Anthology of Writings from Colonial to Present Times*, edited by Nick Bakalar, includes Lewis's "A Letter from the Queen," as well as a variety of fiction, poetry, and essays, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Celestial Railroad," Will Rogers's "A Day at the Democratic Convention" and "A Day at the Republican Convention," Dorothy Parker's "One Perfect Rose," Langston Hughes's "Ballad of the Landlord," and Molly Ivins's "New Heights of Piffle." *The Signet Book of American Humor*, edited by Regina Barreca, is an eclectic collection with writers as diverse as Bill Cosby, Judith Viorst, George Carlin, Benjamin Franklin, Mae West, and Robert Benchley. Lewis is represented by a selection from *Babbitt*.

————— SLSN —————

The Man Nobody Knows by Bruce Barton has been reprinted by Ivan R. Dee (\$12.95). This book, originally published in 1925, portrayed Jesus Christ as the world's first advertising man, a dynamic business executive who "picked up twelve men from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organization that conquered the world." This book was one of the best-sellers of the 1920s and an influence on Lewis as he wrote *Elmer Gantry*.

————— SLSN —————

Biking Minnesota, a publication of the Minnesota Office of Tourism which appeared in the March 2000 edition of *Minnesota Monthly*, mentions 16 state biking trails that crisscross the state. One of these trails, the Lake Wobegon Trail, runs between Avon and Sauk Centre, a distance of 28 miles. The trail is named after the fictional town of Lake Wobegon, created by humorist and radio personality Garrison Keillor. Among the sites connected with this trail are a café in Freeport which Keillor used to frequent, St. John's University near Avon, and of course the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home, gravesite, and "the bridge where he saved his brother's life and carved his initials" (B6).

PUBLICATIONS ON LEWIS

Martin Bucco has written an essay, "Kipling and Lewis," for the June 2000 *Kipling Journal* (17-23). In it he traces Lewis's admiration for Kipling, noting that references to Kipling appear in a number of essays by Lewis as well as in 15 of his 22 novels. For a number of Lewis's characters, including Mr. Wrenn in *Our Mr. Wrenn*, Sam Dodsworth in *Dodsworth*, and Hayden Chart in *World So Wide*, Kipling represents adventure and excitement. Characters in other books recite Kipling: Will Kennicott enjoys his wife Carol reading a Kipling poem in *Main Street* and Fred Cornplow in *The Prodigal Parents* quotes from "For to Admire," a poem that provides the title for Lewis's last novel, *World So Wide*. Bucco points out that Kipling, Scott, and Dickens were among Lewis's favorite authors, that Lewis praised Kipling's "social significance" in his Nobel Prize speech, and in 1948 in "No Flight to Olympus," Lewis named Kipling as a writer whom the literary novice should read.

————— SLSN —————

Professor Bucco has also had published "Mark Twain in Sinclair Lewis" in *American Literary Realism* 31 (Spring 1999): 88-91 and "Black Wolf and Shakespeare: Sinclair Lewis's *The God-Seeker*" in *Western American Literature* 34 (Fall 1999): 344. This latter essay comments on Black Wolf, a learned Sioux, who draws connections between Shakespeare's characters and various Dakota gods. Both of these essays are excerpts from Bucco's work-in-progress, *Literary Sinclair Lewis: The Novelist as Critic*.

————— SLSN —————

"Amerika and America: Nomenclatural Parallels in Kafka, Lewis, and Dickens" by R. L. Fleissner was recently published in *Germanic Notes and Reviews* 31.1 (Spring 2000): 8-13. The article was also mentioned in the *Dayton Daily News*. Fleissner writes, "I consider Lewis (more than Mark Twain) the American Dickens."

————— SLSN —————

Living Up to the Ads: Gender Fictions of the 1920s by Simone Weil Davis has recently been published by Duke University Press. In it she comments on the commodity culture's impact on popular notions of gender and identity during the 1920s. She contrasts material from advertising firms with the fiction of Sinclair Lewis, Nella Larsen, Bruce

Barton, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda Fitzgerald in such texts as *Babbitt*, *Quicksand*, and *Save Me the Waltz*

————— SLSN —————

Frederick Betz reviewed Stephen Pastore's *Sinclair Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography. A Collector's and Scholar's Guide to Identification* (YALEbooks 1997) for the *Bulletin of Bibliography* 57 (March 2000): 63-65. His essay welcomes the bibliography as part of the "contribution to the effort in modern scholarship to free Sinclair Lewis from the stifling influence of Mark Schorer's monumental biography" (63). Betz surveys other attempts at Lewis bibliography including Harvey Taylor's in 1933 and James S. Measell's in 1976 and concludes that Pastore's bibliography is more complete than the others, both in terms of descriptions of the volumes and the number of photographs of the books and their dust jackets. Where the volume falls short for Betz is in the numerous misprints, the limited commentary on reprints and foreign editions, and the lack of information on current values. He looks forward to the publication of *The Collectible Sinclair Lewis: An Annotated Catalogue of the Books by and about Sinclair Lewis* which Pastore is also writing.

————— SLSN —————

Textual Vehicles: The Automobile in American Literature by Roger N. Casey (Garland, 1997) discusses the ways in which the automobile has played a part in American literature. He includes elite and popular literature, and mentions the role of the car as mythic signifier in writings by, among others, Lewis, John Dos Passos, Erskine Caldwell, Jack Kerouac, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Vladimir Nabokov, and E. L. Doctorow.

FILM NOTES

Claire Trevor, an actress who won an Academy Award for her performance in *Key Largo*, died earlier this year at the age of 90. She was in numerous films from the early 1930s up until the early 1980s, including *Dead End*, *The High and the Mighty*, and *Marjorie Morningstar*. She received an Emmy in 1956 for her performance in the television production of *Dodsworth* with Frederic March.

————— SLSN —————

In an article on character actor William Frawley in the September 2000 *Classic Images*, author Michael Bernal

mentions that Frawley was featured in the film *Untamed* in 1940. This Paramount release, starring Ray Milland and Patricia Morison, was a technicolor remake of the silent *Mantrap* with Clara Bow, based on Lewis's novel.

— SLSN —

Classic Images also reports in the same issue in their feature, "This Month in Movie History—September," that in September 1936 actress Mary Astor was involved in a bitter child-custody battle, stemming partially from her very public affair with George S. Kaufman. She was afraid that public opinion was against her, but "when her name appeared on the screen during the credits of the film *Dodsworth*," at the premiere, she received an ovation and "wept tears of gratitude." Astor played the part of Edith Cortright in the film.

— SLSN —

In the June *Classic Images*, Charles Stumpf wrote a nice article, "Spring Byington: Eternal Spring," on the character actress who played Matey Pearson in the film of *Dodsworth*. He called her portrayal of Matey "one of her

better roles" for the sweetness with which she invests the character. Byington also played Essie Miller in the *Ah, Wilderness* (1935), Penny Sycamore in *You Can't Take It With You* (1938), Barbara Stanwyck's mother in *Meet John Doe* (1941), and Bertha Van Cleve in *Heaven Can Wait* (1943).

ON-LINE TEXTS OF *MAIN STREET* AND *BABBITT*

Sinclair Lewis fans are encouraged to call up <http://promo.net/cgi-promo/pg/cat.cgi> on the World Wide Web. The full electronic texts of *Main Street* and *Babbitt* can now be accessed from this site. The site hopes to eventually have 10,000 e-texts by various authors.

LEWIS ESTATE CONTACT

The contact for questions dealing with rights from the Sinclair Lewis estate is:

McIntosh & Otis,

353 Lexington Ave.

New York, NY 10016, (212) 687-7400.

The contact at the firm is Eugene Winick.

SINCLAIR LEWIS'S *MINNESOTA DIARY* IS PUBLISHED

George Killough, professor of English at St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota, has edited a detailed, entertaining, historical and biographical collection of diary entries by Sinclair Lewis, one of Minnesota's literary legends and America's first Nobel Laureate in Literature. *Minnesota Diary 1942-46* is that collection, hailed as "one of the most valuable publications by and about Sinclair Lewis in many years...."

Lewis is often remembered as the loud, cantankerous and very famous writer of *Main Street* (1920), *Babbitt* (1922), *Elmer Gantry* (1927) and *Dodsworth* (1929), among others. After winning the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1926, he declined the award.

Once, while in a Kansas City church, Lewis asked God to "strike him dead" to show that God wasn't the least interested in his impiety. What is most surprising about this talented Minnesotan was his quiet, reflective and pensive character that reveals itself in his diaries during 1942-1946.

It's amazing how much happier I am here than in Hollywood, a year ago, with all its Kate Hepburns and

Cedric Hardwickes and Romanoff Restaurants...

By revisiting Minnesota, Lewis hoped to capture the countryside of his youth. Killough says, "The return to Minnesota in 1942 resulted from an even more concentrated effort to put down roots in provincial soil. Rural Minnesota, after all, was his birthplace." And now we all have the opportunity to experience Sinclair Lewis's understanding of America, his old home of Minnesota.

To understand America, it is merely necessary to understand Minnesota. But to understand Minnesota, you must be an historian, an ethnologist, a poet, a cynic, and a graduate prophet all in one.

For book signings, lectures, or interviews with George Killough, please contact him at (218) 723-6163 or via email at gkilloug@css.edu. For more information, please contact the University of Idaho Press by phone at 1-800-847-7377, by fax at 208-885-9059, or uipress@uidaho.edu. Ordering information: ISBN 0-89301-219-X, clothbound, 320 pages, 9 photographs, index, \$39.95.

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

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20. Lewis, Sinclair. *Dodsworth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co, 1929. \$2500

First edition. Contemporary gift inscription else fine in exceptionally fine dustwrapper with just the faintest crease on the spine. Lewis's classic novel of a staid, retired car manufacturer who takes a trip to Europe with his wife and learns more about her, and their relationship, than he did in twenty years of marriage. Basis first for a stage hit, and then for the excellent 1936 William Wyler film featuring Walter Huston, Ruth Chatterton, Paul Lukas, Mary Astor, David Niven and Maria Ouspenskaya. Wyler, Huston, Ouspenskaya and the picture itself were all nominated for Oscars. A spectacular copy.

Spring Catalog 74

77. Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co, 1926. \$2850

First edition. An immaculate copy in fine, original cardboard slipcase with very slight wear at the extremities. One of 500 numbered large paper copies **Signed** by the author. Some references refer to an unprinted glassine jacket for this edition while others disclaim this; regardless, we've never seen a nicer copy.

Summer Stuff Catalogue 76

30. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Man Who Knew Coolidge: Introducing Lowell Schmaltz,*

Collector's Corner

friend of Babbitt and Constructive Citizen.
New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co, 1928.
\$475

First edition. Old gift inscription, fine in about very good dustwrapper with shallow chipping at the extremities.

173. Lewis, Sinclair. *Brief Autograph Note Signed ("Sinclair Lewis")*. \$450

One page dated 20 August 1937 on his Stockbridge, Mass. stationery to James 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."

227. **(Photoplay Edition)**. Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1922. \$300

Photoplay edition. Light wear, about fine in attractive, near fine dustwrapper. The book features stills from the 1923 Warner Brothers' film featuring Monte Blue and Florence Vidor, and the jacket advertises the fact.

Catalog 77

I believe that a generation or two of competent, enjoyable and readable authors have been unjustly overlooked for far too long, and those who are unaware of them are the poorer for it. The pantheon of writers that were for a greater or lesser time neglected includes a who's who of nearly every author now avidly collected—

Melville, Faulkner, Fitzgerald, John O'Hara and many others. Up until a very few years ago, you couldn't give away a Sinclair Lewis book on a bet. I increasingly find the neglected authors in this catalog more interesting and predict the dawn of a new century will renew critical and scholarly interest in them as well—luckily you've got us to get you there ahead of the stampede.

261. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Man Who Knew Coolidge: Introducing Lowell Schmalz, friend of Babbitt and Constructive Citizen*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co, 1928. \$125

First edition. About fine lacking the dustwrapper. A nice copy.

262. Lewis, Sinclair. *Dodsworth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co, 1929. \$200

First edition. A little light wear, a near fine copy lacking the dustwrapper. Cleaner than most unjacketed copies one encounters.

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153. Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1922. \$300

First Edition. From the library of Harpo Marx, the great clown of the Marx Brothers comedy team, and his wife actress Susan Fleming Marx, former member of the Ziegfeld Follies and star of early talking films like *Million Dollar Legs* with W.C. Fields. With a charming bookplate illustrated by Susan Marx with a drawing of Harpo in his comic character which reads: "FROM THE LIBRARY OF HARPO & SUSAN MARX." Very good copy without dust jacket.

154. Lewis, Sinclair. *Mantrap*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1926. \$350

Photoplay edition issued to coincide with the release of the silent film directed by Victor Fleming starring Clara Bow, Ernest Torrence, Eugene Pallette and Percy Marmont in Lewis's tale of romance and adventure in the Canadian Northwest. Some foxing, else very good in a dust jacket with some chipping mainly at bottom of spine. The front panel of the dust jacket is a color painting of Clara Bow and Percy Marmont in a woodland setting. Scarce in jacket.

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116. Lewis, Sinclair. *Our Mr. Wrenn*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1914. \$250

First Edition of Lewis's first book written for adults. Very good.

117. Lewis, Sinclair. "C-O-B-B" in *Irvin Cobb: His Book*. New York: privately printed, 1915. \$200

First Edition. Lewis's contribution is the longest in this tribute volume produced as a souvenir of a dinner in Cobb's honor at the Waldorf-Astoria. The evening's menu is laid in, with the complete guest list printed on the back. Top of spine chipped; very good to fine in a cloth slipcase.

118. Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1922. \$650

First Edition. Very good to fine in a dust jacket with a chip in the center of the spine, and some other small marginal chips and tears; minor internal archival

strengthening.

119. Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1925. \$2500

First Edition. One of 500 numbered and signed copies; a near fine copy in a publisher's slipcase with minor wear.

120. Lewis, Sinclair. *John Dos Passos' Manhattan Transfer*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926. \$500

First Edition. One of 975 numbered copies. Near fine in a custom cloth folder.

121. Lewis, Sinclair. *Cheap and Contented Labor*. New York: United Textile Workers, 1929. \$850

First Edition; first printing. Publisher's wrappers; only 300 copies printed. A near fine copy.

122. Lewis, Sinclair. *Dodsworth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1929. \$450

First Edition; advance issue; publisher's orange cloth; 900 copies printed. This issue differs from the trade edition in its binding and the addition of an advance notice printed on the endpaper. A very good to fine copy in a custom slipcase.

123. Lewis, Sinclair. *Dodsworth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1929. \$400

First Edition. Bottom of spine bumped, else fine in a dust jacket with minor wear and small chips.

124. Lewis, Sinclair. *Addresses by Erik Axel Karlfeldt...and Sinclair Lewis winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature on the Occasion of the Award of the Nobel Prize: Stockholm, December, 1930*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1930. \$250

First Edition. Wrappers; a fine copy. The text relied on the cabled copy sent to the *New York Times*. Lewis,

dissatisfied with this version, had the publisher destroy most of it, revising it for publication the next year.

125. Lewis, Sinclair. *The American Fear of Literature: Nobel Address Delivered in Stockholm, December 12, 1930*. Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt, 1931. \$125

First Separate Edition. Wrappers; a little spotted; very good.

126. Lewis, Sinclair. *Launcelot*. n.p.: Harvard Press, 1932. \$375

First Edition; publisher's wrappers. One of 100 numbered copies signed by the publisher.

127. Lewis, Sinclair. *Sinclair Lewis on the Valley of the Moon*. n.p.: Harvard Press, 1932. \$375

First Edition; publisher's wrappers. One of 100 numbered copies signed by the publisher.

128. Lewis, Sinclair. *Work of Art*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1934. \$300

First Edition. Near fine in a dust jacket with minor wear; in a custom cloth slipcase (spotted).

129. Lewis, Sinclair. *It Can't Happen Here*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1935. \$450

First Edition. A fine copy in a dust jacket with minor wear.

130. Lewis, Sinclair. *Gideon Planish*. New York: Random House, 1943. \$850

First Edition; advance copy in wrappers; a fine example in a custom cloth slipcase.

131. Lewis, Sinclair. *Kingsblood Royal*. New York: Random House, 1947. \$450

First Edition. One of 1050 numbered copies,

signed by Lewis. A fine copy in the original tissue dust jacket (chipped) and the publisher's slipcase (a little worn); in a custom cloth slipcase.

132. Lewis, Sinclair, and Dore Schary. *Storm in the West*. New York: Stein & Day, 1963. \$500

First Edition; advance issue; duplicated pages; bradbound; jacket proof cover laid in. Aside from a little edge wear, a fine copy in a custom cloth slipcase.

133. Lewis, Sinclair, and Lloyd Lewis. *Jayhawker: A Play in Three Acts*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1935. \$45

First Edition. Edges a trifle faded, else fine in dust jacket.

134. Lewis, Sinclair. "A Wisconsin Author" in *Democrat*, October 1942. \$45

Wrappers; very good to fine. An article about August Derleth originally delivered by Lewis in Wisconsin in 1937.

135. [Lewis, Sinclair]. Adler, Elmer. *Breaking into Print*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925. \$200

First Edition. Bookplate; two letters of editor Louis Untermeyer are laid in regarding the recipient's attempt to break into print. Very good in dust jacket, and in a custom cloth slipcase.

136. [Lewis, Sinclair]. American Academy of Arts and Letters. *An Exhibition in Honor of Sinclair Lewis*. New York: American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1952. \$75

First Edition. Wrappers; a fine copy.

137. [Lewis, Sinclair]. Harrison, Oliver. *Sinclair Lewis*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925. \$75

First Edition; wrappers. A fine copy.

138. Lewis, Grace Hegger. *Half a Loaf*. New York: Horace Liveright, 1931. \$250

First Edition. A very good copy; inscribed by the author; in a cloth slipcase.

139. Lewis, Grace Hegger. *Sinclair Lewis: An Exhibition*. Austin: Humanities Research Center, 1960. \$125

First Edition. Wrappers; one of 100 copies signed by Grace Lewis. A fine copy.

Inscribed and corrected by Lewis

140. Morgan, Louise. *How Writers Work: Sinclair Lewis: Creator of Babbitt*. Galley proofs for the article in *Everyman*, February 26, 1931. \$1250

Three pages; printed on rectos only; a little yellowed, but in excellent condition. Corrected by Lewis; inscribed at the top in his hand, "Louise - Just one change. See next page. I said the 26th. SL." On the following page, Lewis adds to a list of books "Insert Bennett's 'Imperial Palace.'"

141. Moses and Thurston. *Yale Verse*. New Haven: Yale Publishing Association, 1909. \$250

First Edition. Contains seven of Lewis's contributions to Yale literary periodicals. A near fine copy; in a custom clamshell box.

142. Parrington, Vernon Louis. *Sinclair Lewis: Our Own Diogenes*. Seattle: University of Washington Bookstore, 1927. \$75

First Edition. Wrappers; near fine.

143. Van Doren, Carl. *Sinclair Lewis: A Biographical Sketch*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1933. \$150

With a Bibliography by Harvey Taylor. First Edition. A fine copy in a very good dust jacket.

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