

The SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Fred Lewis, about 1900, Sauk Centre, MN

THE OTHER LEWIS: FRED KERMOTT LEWIS

Ted Fleener

Harry Sinclair Lewis and Claude B. Lewis are well documented in the history of the Edwin J. Lewis family. As the first American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, Sinclair was obviously the best known of the three children of Edwin and Emma Kermott Lewis. His brother Claude's life as a well-known physician placed him in a prominent role in that era of Minnesota medicine and history. But what about Fred K. Lewis, the other Lewis brother?

— The Other Lewis *continued on page 6*

IMPOSSIBLE ICI: RAYMOND QUENEAU'S TRANSLATION OF *IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE*

Frederick Betz
Southern Illinois University—Carbondale

"I am currently translating for the NRF a dreadful book by Sinclair Lewis—oh, my goodness!" This negative comment in a letter, dated November 17, 1936, to his literary agent, Frank Dobo, is the only time that Raymond Queneau (1903–76) mentions in his correspondence with Dobo (Bagoly¹) that he was working on a translation of *It Can't Happen Here* for the series *Nouvelle Revue Française*, published by Gallimard in Paris. Dobo had recommended Queneau's first novel, *Le Chiendent (The Bark Tree)* for publication by Gallimard in 1933 (Lécureur 198), and Queneau would become, over the next few decades, one of Gallimard's most celebrated house authors, with such notable works as *Exercices de style* (1947) and *Zazie dans le métro* (1960). Queneau's correspondence with Dobo reveals Queneau's growing interest in British and American literature (Lécureur 198–200), and his translations of Maurice O'Sullivan's *Twenty Years A-Growing* (1936) and Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* led to his appointment in January 1938 as editor of Gallimard's series of translations of works by contemporary British and American authors.²

If, as appears to be the case, Queneau aspired to this editorship with Gallimard, it seems odd that he would select for translation a book that he considered to be "dreadful" (*terriblement mauvais*). However, in light of his own fiction

— Impossible ici *continued on page 7*

The Sinclair Lewis Society will be hosting a conference and celebration in 2010 to celebrate the 80th anniversary of Sinclair Lewis becoming the first American to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Please send suggestions for panels and other activities to Sally Parry at separry@ilstu.edu.

An official call for papers will be in the spring 2009 issue of the *Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter*.

IN THIS ISSUE

FEATURE ARTICLES

- 1 The Other Lewis: Fred Kermott Lewis
by Ted Fleener
- 1 *Impossible ici*: Raymond Queneau's Translation
of *It Can't Happen Here*
by Frederick Betz
- 3 Habeas Corpus (Part I)
by Sinclair Lewis
- 5 The Opera of Elmer Gantry
- 9 Lewis and the 150 Best Minnesota Books
by Patrick Coleman
- 11 *It Can't Happen Here* and *A Cool Million*
by Sally E. Parry

DEPARTMENTS

- 3 Contributors
- 4 New Members
- 15 Sinclair Lewis Notes
- 17 Sinclair Lewis Scholarship
- 18 Web Notes
- 21 Sauk Centre News
- 22 Collector's Corner

The SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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HABEAS CORPUS (PART I)

Sinclair Lewis

"Habeas Corpus" was published in the Saturday Evening Post on January 24, 1920. It tells the story of Bulgarian cigar store owner, Leo Gurazov, whose thoughts are revolutionary, if not his actions. In this first episode, Gurazov decides that he might be happier back in Bulgaria if he where he might be appreciated for his wisdom and business success.

What's interesting about this story is that it was published the same year as Main Street, but seems to have been written several years earlier, as Lewis was finding his voice. Note the way that Lewis seems to be working too hard to make his characters talk. They snap, grumble, bray, chirrup, and wail.

"HABEAS CORPUS"

Nothing is very old in the Middle-Western city of Vernon, but in Mississippi Street remain the gloomy stone buildings erected by the early fur traders and a mysterious ancientness clings to the dark irregular way. Halfway down it the only wooden Indian now left in Vernon patiently offers his bundle of the very best oak cigars in front of a stuffy tobacco shop. Within the shop are dim recesses, nose-tickling dust from dry tobacco leaves, cigar boxes in toppling piles, a great deal of arguing and no system whatever.

The proprietor is Leo Gurazov, the swart Bulgarian. He reads history and economics in four languages. He feels superior to these stupid Yankees and he tells them so. He is an overwhelming talker. His monologues burst out in a black flood. He shouts, he grunts, he cackles, he sneers; he scratches his beard and curses the Government—any government. And while he talks his business drifts away to the glittery new store on the corner, where the clerk smacks down change and fresh cigarettes instead of conversation.

Gurazov must have been a waiter in Bulgaria. He drifted through France and Russia as a young man and was sent out to a trading station in Siberia with nothing much to do but read and play solitaire. After a couple of years of loafing by the porcelain stove he became fat and sallow, so that his small black beard stood out on his puffy face like a frostbite on a pear.

He was too indolent to check his stock, but he was a willing talker. There was a convict camp not far distant, and when trusties who had been revolutionists in Moscow came over he talked all the white night over tea and cabbage soup. He borrowed their surreptitious books and became extremely violent—as far down as the roots of his tongue. The rest of his padded body didn't think much of these jails and barricades of which his friends were always gossiping.

The first inspector to toil over the icy desert to his station took a glance at the ledger and discharged him. Gurazov unhappily drifted to China and the South Seas. He drank rum with beach combers and strange women. He disliked bloodshed—it was so energetic, so interruptive to ceaseless burring conversation—but rather than work he let himself be caught up in an exciting plan to go blackbirding in the Solomon Isles. In a boat with two dead men he floated between glittering sea and glaring sky for what may have been a week or a year, raving the while in four languages that his brain was bleached dry and that if he was ever picked up he would become a religious. Yet he certainly was somewhere near the bund of Hong-Kong when Cap'n Alec McGallup's head was crushed by a square face of gin. All this he later admitted to Nick Benorious, of Vernon, boasting of himself as a dangerous saboteur.

He landed in America on a thin-waisted Russian tramp steamer, a steward in a filthy jacket, much given to smoking

————— Habeas Corpus *continued on next page*

CONTRIBUTORS

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

These people include Frederick Betz, Patrick Coleman, Roger Forseth, George Killough, John Koblas, Jacqueline Koenig, William Kraemer, Joyce Lyng, Nancy Masterson-Newkirk, Samuel Rogal, Dave Simpkins.

Habeas Corpus *continued from previous page*

cigarettes on the gratings in fiddley, where firemen's neck scarfs hang drying and the smell is of rust and coal. He was a shambling, furtive, bloated, insignificant Mongol Slav with no undergarments; immensely snarled at by the first officer and occasionally kicked in a reflective way by the second. But he was also the only scholar aboard and in his bunk in the dark cuddly that was always full of the reek of the galley he had an English grammar, a translation of Balzac's *Droll Tales* and a coverless copy of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*.

After ten years, during which he was a bum in every wandering box car on the windy plains and a motorman in Omaha, a lunch-room waiter in Des Moines and a comparatively steady cigar maker in Vernon, he was the owner of this tobacco shop. He was known as a voluminous talker to every loiterer in town. But to his clerk, Becky Tchernin of the hot eyes and the light foot at radical dances, he was known chiefly as a nagging, bellowing boss. To himself he was an adventurer.

In every city you will find men who twenty years ago wandered in Abyssinia or Alaska and who still after two decades of nothing more perilous than catching commuting trains regard themselves as wild ones, likely at any time to take up aviation. While the cells of Gurazov's body completed their subtle change into fat and inertia he believed that he was young and desperate. And he was tired of cigar selling. The chain stores and the modern counters in drug stores made him tireder. Every customer whom he lost to the bright new shops, every complaint that his wares were stale and himself insolent, showed him what a rotten country this was for an intellectual.

When the Bolsheviki got control of Russia he read of the romance of Trotzky and was thoughtful and a little jealous. His own Bulgaria showed signs of a like revolution. With his languages, his—unappreciated—brains, his knowledge of American and Russian customs and politics, he could be the

Trotzky of Bulgaria. Yes, and more than that. Why, Trotzky, commander of the red army, had been nothing but a poor newspaper man in New York cafés, while Gurazov was a great businessman and scholar.

He would return to Bulgaria! He would show these bonehead citizens of Vernon! He would be chief commissar of Bulgaria—anything he chose. When he landed he would whisper to the new government that the other returned Balkan-Americans, mechanics from Bridgeport and buttermilk sellers from New York—did not understand the real America. He, Gurazov the great, knew all of the West. He would admit that he had been much honored and asked for advice by mayors in rather vague cities between Chicago and Victoria. But he would not be fool enough to ally himself with any one political wing at first. He would be wary till he had looked over the country, then identify himself with the strongest faction.

There was one trouble with his plans—how the deuce could he get to Bulgaria? Even if he managed a passport he had no money for transportation. The store barely paid Becky's wages and his own food and clothing.

When the armistice had been signed and Trotzky had remained in power for a year Gurazov was still stuck in Vernon, insignificant and unappreciated, while in Europe there awaited him the power of kings.

II

Into Gurazov's shop dotted Nick Benorius, the secretary of the Vernon socialist local—a gruff, nervous, ruffled-haired little man. He slapped a paper on the counter and demanded, "Comrade, we're getting up a fund for the defense of the Hindus who are in danger of deportation. Will you give three dollars?"

Habeas Corpus *continued on page 13*

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the new members who have joined the Sinclair Lewis Society since the last issue.

Bob Blackerby
Tulsa, OK

Barbara Gustafson
Cleveland, OH

Rebecca Reagan
Claremont, CA

Michael Callahan
Elgin, IL

John L. Harris
Fort Worth, TX

THE OPERA OF ELMER GANTRY

Elmer Gantry, a new American opera by Robert Aldridge and Herschel Garfein, was successfully produced at the Nashville Opera in November 2007 and as part of the Peak Performance series at Montclair State University in January 2008. Thanks to Nancy Masterson-Newkirk, Development Communications and Marketing Coordinator at Montclair State, the Sinclair Lewis Society received copies of the excellent reviews from the *New York Times*, the *Star-Ledger*, the *Montclair Times*, *Opera News*, as well as a feature article from the *New York Times* (see the spring 2008 issue of the *Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter* for a summary of that article).

In a review by Mark Thomas Ketterson (November 18, 2007), *Opera News* praised the Nashville production's performances, especially of Keith Phares as Elmer and Jennifer Rivera as Sharon (these actors also performed the roles at Montclair State and were uniformly well-received in all the reviews) and compared it to such twentieth-century operas as *Susannah* and *Baby Doe*.

Most of the reviewers mentioned the successful way in which composer Robert Aldridge drew on traditional music to create gospel tunes, hymns, and marches that are original yet resonant of these musical styles. Several of the reviews made comparisons to *Porgy and Bess*. Critics also noted that both Aldridge and Garfein have an interest in religion connected to their fathers. Aldridge's father is a southern Presbyterian minister and Garfein is the son of a Holocaust survivor.

As Vivien Schweitzer in the *Times* noted:

A 1960 movie review in the *New York Times* of *Elmer Gantry*, based on Sinclair Lewis's scathing 1927 satire about a womanizing preacher, noted that "the sleaziness of some forms of evangelism is not too pressing an issue these days." That, of course, was before the

improprieties of Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker and Ted Haggard made embarrassing headlines.

With the growth of commercialized megachurches and presidential candidates who trumpet their faith, an operatic *Elmer Gantry* seems particularly timely, perhaps even more so than when its creators...began working on it seventeen years ago.

She commends the "populist score" and remarks that:

Just as the film offers a more likable title character than the book's loathsome, conniving, and perennially heartless protagonist, the operatic Gantry is a more appealing character, though still seriously flawed.... The creators of *Elmer Gantry* have said that they want to give "nonbelievers a twinge of belief" and "believers a twinge of doubt." Though unlikely to have atheists on their knees, the opera is a tunefully entertaining and thoughtful piece of theater. (*New York Times* Jan. 25, 2008)

Bradley Bambarger, in the Newark *Star-Ledger*, praised the way that "the opera straddles satire and sentiment—as well as the genres of opera and musical theater—with a warmth and thoughtfulness that carry one along."

And Tanya Drobness of the *Montclair Times* (Jan. 17, 2008: D3) compliments the focus on "the misuses of Evangelical Christianity. Yet, the opera has a way of grasping the glory of faith in America."

The structure of the opera is very similar to the movie, but the focus seems to have been more on faith than on the love story between Elmer and Sharon Falconer. The opera ends, much like the movie, with Sharon and her tabernacle going up in flames. ✍

NOVEL ANNIVERSARIES

The Man Who Knew Coolidge—80th

The Prodigal Parents—70th

Ann Vickers—75th

Gideon Planish—65th

The Other Lewis continued from page 1



Fred Lewis, 1879-80?,
Ironton, WI

Fred, the first son of Edwin and Emma Lewis, was born October 1, 1875, in Elysian, Minnesota. The family later moved to Ironton, Wisconsin, where Dr. Lewis practiced medicine. Claude, the second son, was born there in 1878. On June 25, 1883, the Lewis family moved to Sauk Centre, Minnesota, and thus began the lifelong relationship between Fred and Sauk Centre. On February 7, 1885, on a cold and bitter day, Harry Sinclair Lewis was born in Sauk Centre, and the triumvirate of brothers was complete.

Fred, while quiet in the background, was always in some way a part of the life of his famous brother. Fred's youngest son, Robert, kept a newspaper clipping of an article, "Sinclair Lewis' Brother Calls Gantry 'Terrible,'" which was most likely printed in late 1927 or early 1928, though there is no newspaper name or date on the clipping. In the article, Fred shared some insight into the life and childhood of Sinclair. "He was just an ordinary small town boy, but very awkward," said Fred. "There were three sons," Fred continued,

Harry was a bookworm. When father asked him to mow the lawn, it would take him all day. With a book under his arm, he would push the mower to the edge of the lawn and then sit down and read. Finally he would rise, push the mower to the other side of the lawn and read some more. Why either Claude or myself could finish that job in two hours, but for Harry it was a day's job.

Father provided a dictionary for us and urged that we look up every word that puzzled us. Harry astonished everybody with his knowledge of big words, even Claude and me. But he didn't care for hunting and fishing, like other boys, much to the disgust of our father. So when Claude and I went fishing at Hoboken Creek, he was satisfied to remain home and read.

The rest of the article is devoted to Fred's observations on what was the latest book by Sinclair, *Elmer Gantry*. Fred mentions that he liked *Main Street*, *The Trail of the Hawk*, and *Arrow-smith*. He was not much impressed with *Elmer Gantry*, with its attacks on religion and charlatanism. He said,

When Harry sent me my copy of *Elmer Gantry* and

wrote that he was leaving for Europe, I replied "After writing that you had better go to Europe, for there probably will be a lynching party in the country for you."

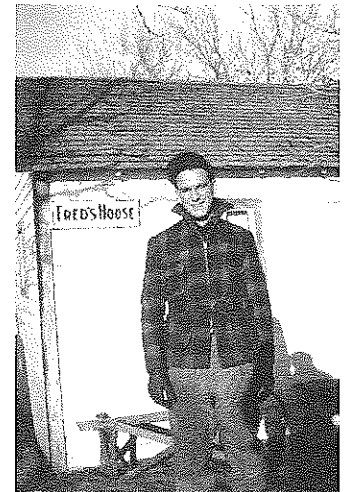
But *Main Street* pleased Fred, although he admitted he had to read 60 pages before it got interesting. Fred did not recognize as many of the characters in *Main Street*, said to be folk of Sauk Centre, as he did in *The Trail of the Hawk*.

It has been noted by a family member, and is mentioned in the newspaper article, that Sinclair gave each of his brothers a signed first edition of every book he wrote. On one occasion, after the death of their father, Sinclair presented his brother Fred with his Buick as a present (Lingeman 287).

So what else do we know about Fred, this quiet man who lived and died in small-town Minnesota? We know he attended dental school from September 1895 to December 1896. Mark Schorer relates in his biography of Lewis that the school was in Chicago. It appears that Fred did not enjoy dental school.

Fred married Vendela (Winnie) M. Hanson from Little Sauk, Minnesota, on October 18, 1901. Sinclair's interesting account of the wedding is given in the Schorer biography (19). The couple had four sons: Ted, Don, Carl, and Robert. Fred was the head miller and manager for Central Minnesota Power and Milling in Sauk Centre. He also worked as a miller in Bertha and Long Prairie, Minnesota. He received a certificate for a first class engineer's license in June of 1916. This allowed him to operate steam engines and boilers at mills and power plants.

Fred enjoyed reading Zane Grey books and his collection of them is still in the possession of the family. He loved hunting and fishing and bought land at the head of Sauk Lake from the Great Northern Railroad. A cabin was built there and Fred hung a sign, reading, "Fred's House" on its side. His grandson, John Lewis, owns the cabin today. And yes, the sign declaring it "Fred's House" is still on the cabin.



Fred's oldest son, Ted Lewis,
at the cabin on Sauk Lake

The Other Lewis continued on next page

The Other Lewis *continued from previous page*

He died unexpectedly of a heart attack on the porch of his home at 534 Lake Street in Sauk Centre on January 15, 1946. He was 70 years old. The bleak and cold day of the funeral was a precursor to the bitterly frigid day some five years later when Sinclair's ashes would be committed to the soil in the same family plot in Stearns County. Sinclair was in Minneapolis when he received the word of his brother's death, and he later attended Fred's funeral. He wrote to a friend on January 20, 1946, "The sad thing was that my older brother, Fred, died suddenly last Tuesday, from a coronary. He was so much older than I and so different in his interests that I did not know him very well and the only really sad thing about it to me was the thought of how many amusing things and pleasant places he has missed in his life" (Schorer 19).

Except for his time as a young man away at dental school, Fred never spent much time away from Sauk Centre. He worked, raised his family, lived, and died in the small community where he had grown up. He loved his family and his community and seemed to have a quiet peace in his life. It has been reported that Claude once observed that, in his own way, Fred was happier with his life than either he or Sinclair. Fred, while not as well educated or famous as his brothers, made a good life for himself on the Minnesota prairie. Sometimes less is more.



I would like to thank Pat Lewis, granddaughter-in-law of Fred Lewis, for her invaluable assistance in putting together a brief sketch of Fred's life. I would also like to thank Dr. Sally Parry for encouraging me to write a piece about Fred Lewis.

Works Cited

- Lingeman, Richard. *Sinclair Lewis: Rebel from Main Street*. New York: Random House, 2002.
- Schorer, Mark. *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961.
- "Sinclair Lewis' Brother Calls Gantry 'Terrible,' But Famous *Main Street* Author Keeps on Sending Books Home—Was Awkward Boy." From scrapbook of Robert Lewis, circa 1927/1928. ✍

Impossible *ici* *continued from page 1*

and literary criticism, it is reasonable to assume that Queneau was critical of the sheer length (458 pages), the loose form and structure, the numerous characters, the wealth of detail, and the inconclusive plot of *ICHH*. By contrast, for example, Queneau's novel, *Odile*, published by Gallimard in the same year as *Impossible ici*, is a slim volume of only 114 pages in English translation, and it illustrates the circular structure and play with number of chapters that Queneau recommends in his "Technique du roman" (28–29).

No doubt Queneau chose to translate *ICHH* in fall 1936 because he felt Lewis's novel would be a timely publication against the contemporary political background in France. In the early 1930s, Queneau had written for the left-wing *La Critique sociale*, a publication of the Cercle communiste démocratique directed by the anti-Stalinist Boris Souvarine (Lécureur 138), but by 1935 he had parted company with this circle (Lécureur 144, 146). In the summer of 1937, Queneau would write extensive notes for a *Traité des vertus démocratiques*, based on the republican virtues of "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" (Lécureur 47). The *Traité* was published only posthumously, but

it reveals Queneau to be "a convinced anti-fascist" (Lécureur 47) at the time.

In May 1936, the Popular Front of Socialists, Communists, and Radicals, led by Léon Blum, had come to power, but "during the year that the Popular Front was in power, the appeal of fascism was at its peak in France" (Soucy 35). The conservative backlash to the left-wing legislation passed by the Popular Front and to the sit-down strikes of 1936 resulted in huge increases in membership in extreme-right organizations, particularly the Croix de Feu (CF), led by retired Colonel François de La Rocque, who simply converted his organization into the Parti Social Français (PSF) after it was banned by the government (Soucy 38). By November 1936, the CF/PSF had 600,000 members, making its party membership larger than that of the Socialists (200,000) and the Communists (200,000) combined. In 1937, the CF/PSF had nearly a million members (Soucy 38, 114). Although La Rocque claimed that his movement was now thoroughly democratic (Soucy 112), the CF/PSF had all

Impossible *ici* *continued on next page*

Impossible ici continued from previous page

the trappings of an authoritarian and paramilitary organization (Soucy 108). La Rocque regularly criticized the Popular Front with inflammatory rhetoric (Soucy 116), and in August 1936 he wished General Franco success in his attempt to overthrow the Spanish Republic (Soucy 117). However, the Popular Front fell not as a result of fascist threats, but rather because the Radical Party refused in April 1937 to continue to support Blum's fiscal policies, and without the support of the Radicals, Blum could not remain in power (Soucy 35). With the fall of the Popular Front in June 1937 and a new government alliance with the right-center, bourgeois panic declined (Soucy 241), the major fascist organizations, the PSF and Jacques Doriot's Parti Populaire Français (PPF), lost membership (Soucy 119, 245), and the fascist threat in France receded (Soucy 35, 119).

The high point of French fascism in the 1930s was, then, the period between May 1936 and April 1937, when the Popular Front was most threatening to conservative interests in France (Soucy 35–36).³ *Impossible ici* was published by Gallimard on April 30, 1937, first in a limited edition of 40 copies and then in at least a second edition of an unspecified number of copies. In the prepublication blurb (Vient de paraître), it is stated that *ICHH* was written by Lewis "in support of the candidacy of Franklin Roosevelt for the presidency," which was probably not specifically true, as Lewis did not become a strong supporter of FDR until after the start of World War II (Parry 123), but which is more likely suggested by the timing of the play version of *ICHH* in October 1936 (Betz 38–40). Indeed, the blurb notes "a play version quite different from the novel was adapted by John Moffitt and the author [Lewis]" and "performed in more than fifty [sic] cities simultaneously," and that "it is going to be translated into French and performed in Paris under the title *Pas de ça chez nous*."

At least two reviewers of *Impossible ici* mention the French play version, but give incomplete information, which also conflicts with the chronology given in the blurb. The review in the *Revue bibliographique et critique* concludes with the observation: "Based on *Impossible ici*, a play has been performed during the past few months in France under the title *Pas de ça chez nous*" (Voluray), and in the review in *Le Populaire*, it is noted that "a play has been adapted from the novel: *Pas de ça chez nous*, which has recently been performed at the Théâtre du Peuple" (E.). Since *Impossible ici* appeared only at the end of April 1937, it would have been impossible to perform a play version based on it "during the past few months." More likely, *Pas de ça chez nous* (Not In Our House) was based on the Federal Theatre playscript of *ICHH*, dated September 18, 1936; indeed, a playscript entitled *Pas de ça chez nous* can be

found in the Bradley Collection (Box 38, Folder 2) at the Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas–Austin.

This undated playscript by Jacques Chabannes and Sabine Benitz is an adaptation rather than a translation, for while it retains the three acts of the play version of *ICHH*, only Act II has the same number of scenes, and a fourth section appears to resemble the final scene of Act III in the original. As Molly Schwartzburg notes, in some scenes, moreover, there are different characters and conversations. Chabannes makes no mention of *Pas de ça chez nous* in his memoir *Je les ai connus (de A B Z)*, but he lists it in the bibliography as having been performed at the Théâtre de la Renaissance (Paris) in 1957 (240). However, the inconsistent chronological listing of the plays he had produced suggests that this is a misprint, that it should correctly read 1937. In any case, no contemporary reviews of *Pas de ça chez nous* have been found to date.

The pre-publication blurb also announces that "with the permission of the author" (*d'accord avec l'auteur*), "the French translation of *Impossible ici* has been abridged, with the elimination of numerous passages, in particular those which concern certain details of purely American politics and which would require for their comprehension more footnotes at the bottom of pages than would be suitable for a novel." Queneau cut not only numerous passages, but also three whole chapters, which amount to approximately 20% of the original text, and which allowed him to keep explanatory footnotes to a minimum (see *Impossible ici*, pp. 19, 32, 62, 75, 101).

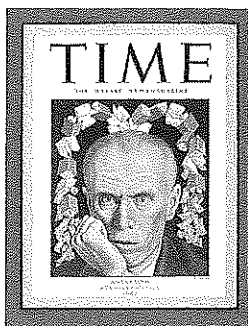
Many passages that Queneau cut contain lists of names of historical or contemporary figures with whom French readers would perhaps not be readily familiar (e.g., in *ICHH*, chapters 1, 5, 16 [American humorists], 20 [recently exiled or self-exiled Americans], 22 [imprisoned journalists and critics of the Corpo regime], 23, 32). Queneau also cut, for example, passages quoted from Windrip's memoir *Zero Hour* in chapter 4 and used as epigraphs for chapters 5 through 20, omitted three pages in chapter 7 describing the parade for Windrip at the convention, and the song about Windrip written by Adelaide Tarr Gimmitch to the tune of "Yankee Doodle Dandy," and reduced "The Fifteen Points of Victory for the Forgotten Men" from four pages (*ICHH*, chapter 8) to just one page. More substantial and significant omissions are the three chapters: chapter 9 concerning Windrip and comparisons with Huey Long, chapter 29 on comparison with Nazi Germany and Doremus Jessup's "biology of dictatorships," and chapter 35 on the succession of Windrip, Sarason, and Haik, when

Impossible ici continued on page 10

LEWIS AND THE 150 BEST MINNESOTA BOOKS

Patrick Coleman
Minnesota Historical Society

PONTIFICATIONS AND BOOKS 11, 12, AND 13



Pat's Pontification #1: If you are a Minnesota writer who makes the cover of *Time* magazine (for your writing, Jesse, for your writing), you *have* to be on the 150 Best Books list. If *Time* confers two covers on you, you get two books on the list.

So let's add three books using this foolproof method of choosing Minnesota's best books:

Sinclair Lewis. *Main Street: The Story of Carol Kennicott*. New York: 1920.

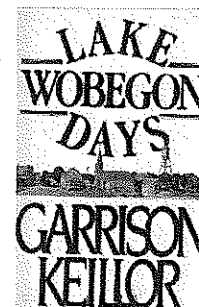
Sinclair Lewis. *Babbitt*. New York: 1922.

Garrison Keillor. *Lake Wobegon Days*. New York: 1985.

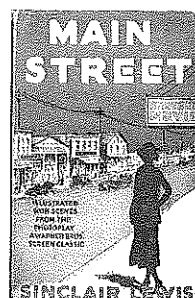
Lewis is the 600-pound gorilla of Minnesota literature. Try as you might to ignore him, he is going to have to be dealt with. And for good reason! He is still relevant and still a good read, which is not something you can say about most 88-year-old American literature. If you read Lewis in school, I would encourage you to reread him. Like *Huck Finn*, these books change significantly each decade of your life. *Main Street* was taught as a novel about the small-mindedness of small towns but it is, perhaps more importantly, the first feminist novel. Carol asks, in chapter 16, "What is it we want—and need?... I think perhaps we want a more conscious life. We're tired of drudging and sleeping and dying. We're tired of seeing just a few people able to be individualists."



My only difficulty here was whether to list Lewis's canonical works or my favorites. Personally, I love Lewis's worst book, *Mantrap*, where an effete Eastern lawyer goes to the north woods for an adventure that ends in a canoe chase through a burning forest. Fabulous! I also love *It Can't Happen Here*, Lewis's most political novel about fascism coming to America. But then



there is Pat's Pontification #2: when Hollywood thinks you are culturally iconic enough to make your Minnesota novel into a film three times, as is the case for *Babbitt*, your book automatically makes this list.

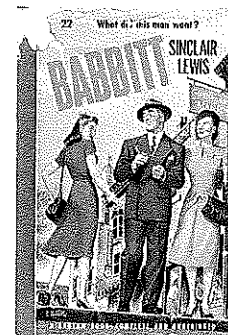


Just down the road (15.21 miles to be exact) from Gopher Prairie is, of course, Lake Wobegone. With a deft and lighter hand, Keillor updates Lewis's cultural criticism and re-presents Minnesota to the world. Touted by *Time* as the new Mark Twain, I think of Keillor as the new Sinclair Lewis.

Please allow me one more pontification while I'm on a roll. Pat's Pontification #3: When a book spawns published parodies, it is a good indication that the author has struck a significant nerve and the book should be considered for the Best 150 list. Come into the Minnesota Historical Society Library and read parodies of all three of these titles: *Ptomaine Street*, *The Triumph of the Nut*, a 1923 book containing a parody of *Babbitt*; and *Fascist Home Companion*.

2 RESPONSES TO "PONTIFICATIONS AND BOOKS 11, 12, AND 13":

1. Lori Williamson says: Okay, but given limited time, which do you reread first...*Main Street* or *Babbitt*?
2. Patrick Coleman says: *Dodsworth*. No *Cass*. No better read *Main Street*. Oh, this is hard. I really love Lewis. ☺



Impossible ici continued from page 8

"America really did begin to suffer...under the 'Scientific Totalitarian State'" (427).

Omitted as well are passages that contain perhaps overly sarcastic criticism of France. For example, in chapter 29 Jessup's observation in his "biology of dictatorships" that it had not been "very different...under the blessings of liberty and fraternity in the French Revolution" (345) or in chapter 31 the article quoted in the English translation from the (fictitious) journal *La Voix littéraire* (Paris), which concludes with the lament: "Alas that France and Great Britain should still be thrashing about in the slough of Parliamentarianism and so-called Democracy, daily sinking deeper into debt and paralysis of industry, because of the cowardice and traditionalism of our Liberal leaders, feeble and outmoded men who are afraid to plump for either Fascism or Communism..." (386).

On the other hand, Queneau retains the first paragraph of Jessup's ruminations in *ICHH* (chapter 36): "He was afraid that the world struggle today was not of Communism against Fascism, but of tolerance against the bigotry that was preached equally by Communism and Fascism. But he saw too that in America the struggle was befogged by the fact that the worst Fascists were they who disowned the word 'Fascism' and preached enslavement to Capitalism..." (432), which could be read in *Impossible ici* (chapter 33) as veiled criticism of such French fascist organizations as the CF/PSF and the PPF, who claimed to be "republican" and "democratic" rather than "fascist" (see Soucy). In light of Queneau's own non-ideological stance and his hope for "a true democracy," as expressed in his *Traité des vertus démocratique* (cf. Lécureur 175), it is surprising that he then omits the next two paragraphs, including Jessup's "Liberal" conviction "that everything that is worth while in the world has been accomplished by the free, inquiring, critical spirit, and that preservation of this spirit is more important than any social system whatsoever" (433).

In order to retain the prophetic thrust of Lewis's novel, Queneau shifted the narrative time of 1936-39 in *ICHH* to 1940-43 in *Impossible ici*. Nevertheless, the reviewer in *Le Populaire* (Paris) for June 15, 1937, notes that fortunately (*heureusement*) the fascist takeover portrayed in the novel has not occurred (*n'a été une anticipation*); indeed, there was no fascist takeover in France after the fall of the Popular Front in June 1937 (E.). Yet the reviewer in the *Journal de Bruges* (Belgium) for November 20, 1938, argues that it is logical that just as Roosevelt is turned out of office, "people like 'Blum' are replaced by those like 'Hitler,'" that "after the 'Popular Front,' with its strikes and marches, it is fascism that takes the reins of the American government," or that "Berlin [comes] after Moscow," meaning that fascism follows communism

(Godchaux). And the reviewer in *L'Avant-poste* (Verviers, Belgium) for January-February 1938 considers the novel to be "prophetic not only because the action is supposed to begin in 1940, but also because the book heralds for the Great Republic a period of struggles, misfortunes, and errors culminating in the advent of the right, of fascism" (Alvarez).

Although the "Great Republic" refers to the United States, it could also allude to the strife-ridden French Third Republic, which finally came to an end in July 1940 after the fall of France in June, and which was replaced by the Vichy regime under Marshal Philippe Pétain, "a man who...ended representative government in France, repressed political liberties, and chose to collaborate in Hitler's New European Order" (Soucy 120). Both La Rocque (CF/PSF) and Doriot (PPF) supported the Vichy regime, largely motivated by a desire to see the French political left crushed once and for all (Soucy 120, 245). In light of the German occupation and the collaboration of the Vichy regime from 1940 to 1944, *Impossible ici* could be considered a prophetic novel of a fascist takeover in France.

Impossible ici could also be viewed as a novel of resistance, whose "liberal" hero, Doremus Jessup, "is one of those who resist to the end" (Loiseau), anticipating John Steinbeck's *The Moon Is Down*, "easily the most popular work of propaganda in [Nazi] occupied Western Europe" (Coers xiii) and "hailed as the epic of the Norwegian underground" (Coers xv). The French clandestine edition of *The Moon Is Down* was released under the title *Nuits Noires* in February 1944, six months before the liberation of Paris; its printing of 1,500 copies was the largest during the war undertaken by a Parisian underground press aptly named Éditions de Minuit (Midnight Editions). According to the French patriotic press, the impact of *Nuits Noires* in occupied France was "immense and incontestable" (Coers xviii-xix).

Therefore, it is all the more noteworthy that the reviewer in *La Marseillaise* (Paris) for November 23, 1944, considers *Nuits Noires* to be "the sequel and the response" to *Impossible ici*, in which Jessup "already was a resister." Lewis's novel has, in the reviewer's opinion, both "great power" and "often poetic quality, as in the last sentence": "And still he goes on in the red sunrise, for a Doremus Jessup can never die." However, *Nuits Noires* is not only "shorter" and "more concentrated," but also "more deeply moving" than *Impossible ici*. *Nuits Noires* "touches us more," for Steinbeck "tells us a story that could be ours as well...with sobriety, and at the same time with an emotion that evokes for us *The Silence of the Sea*" (Benedick). The reviewer refers to the short novel *Le Silence de la mer* (1942) by Jean Bruller, under the code name Vercors, which was the

Impossible ici continued on next page

IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE AND A COOL MILLION

Sally E. Parry
Illinois State University

Several critics have compared Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* (1935) to Nathanael West's *A Cool Million* (1934) because in both novels a fascist takeover of the United States occurs. Having read both recently, I can assure readers that they are not very similar. *A Cool Million* is like a more fantastic version of *Candide*, with an incredibly naïve young man, Lemuel Pitkin, attempting to amass the American Dream of a cool million and instead spending time in jail, losing various parts of his body, and finding out that his girlfriend has been kidnapped by white slavers. At one point in the novel, Lem falls under the influence of Shagpoke Whipple, a former president of the United States (and former convict) who decides to create "Storm Battalions" to support the "revolutionary middle class" (112). This is the closest that the novel comes to *ICHH*. There is even a tailor to the National Revolutionary Party who specializes in all the accoutrements of "American" dress: "Coonskin hats with extra

long tails, deerskin shirts with or without fringes, blue jeans, moccasins, squirrel rifles, everything for the American Fascist at rock bottom prices" (113).

Eventually the country is taken over by the National Revolutionary Party and Pitkin dies, dismantled in his attempts for a fortune. "His teeth were pulled out. His eye was gouged from his head. His thumb was removed. His scalp was torn away. His leg was cut off. And, finally, he was shot through the heart" (179). Pitkin is held up as a martyr for the cause. Although there is a fascist takeover of the country, as in *ICHH*, the style of writing is so satirical that one can't take it seriously, unlike the fearsome activities of Windrip and his cronies. (*A Cool Million* and *The Dream Life of Balso Snell*, both by Nathanael West, were published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in paperback in 2006. The above quotes are from this edition.) ✎

Impossible *ici* continued from previous page

first volume to be published in the Éditions de Minuit (founded by Bruller). With its message that the French people should abstain from communicating with the Germans, *Le Silence de la mer* quickly became a symbol of mental resistance against the Nazi occupiers (Brown and Stokes 11–12).

With their focus on *Impossible ici* as a prophetic novel or as a novel of resistance, contemporary reviewers pay little attention to the French translation itself. The reviewer in the *Revue bibliographique et critique* notes that "the nuanced skill of Raymond Queneau makes the novel of the United States pass for one of France" (Voluray), while the reviewer in the *Bulletin les lettres* observes, somewhat smugly, that "this uneven book... has the good fortune to have been translated into good French (and, it appears, pruned) by M. Queneau" (L.). And although Loiseau in *Études anglaises* commends Queneau for retaining the "vigor" of Lewis's style, he thinks that "perhaps" Queneau "exaggerates a little" in his "search for equivalents in slang and swearwords." However, the reviewer gives no examples, but instead appends a few minor mistranslations.

In light of Queneau's experimentation in his own fiction with transcription of spoken French (what he called "le néo-français") and play with words and spelling (see Shorley and Thiher), it would be interesting to examine such experi-

mentation in *Impossible ici*, all the more so as Lewis himself was a gifted mimic and recorder of American speech, perhaps most notably illustrated in *Babbitt* (1922). In chapter 1, for example, Emma Jessup's nickname for her husband Doremus is "Dormouse," but since the French equivalent 'le loir' bears no resemblance to 'Doremus,' Queneau has her using the musical scales to call him "Do-ré-mi." In chapter 8, Queneau cleverly, and perhaps more effectively, renders "Busy Berzelius" as "ce buzzinnesman de Windrip." In chapter 15, Queneau substitutes "c'est un réac" (slang for "a reactionary") for "He's a Cho-vinis" (*ICHH*, chapter 16), transcribed from the French loan word "chauvinist"! By changing "vous" to "fous" in "Comment allez-vous?" (chapter 24), Queneau finds a way to approximate "Howryuh?" (*ICHH*, chapter 25). However, he makes no attempt to formulate equivalent transcriptions for "Sorkeepyouwaiting" and "Strouble?" (*ICHH*, chapter 23), but rather simply gives the formal translations "Excusez-moi de vous avoir fait attendre" and "Qu'est-ce qui ne va pas?," respectively. Such examples suggest that Queneau may have found it to be a stimulating challenge to translate *ICHH*, even though he thought it was "a dreadful book"!

Impossible *ici* continued on next page

Impossible ici continued from previous page

Notes

¹For information and documentation I wish to thank Suzanne Bagoly, Director of the Centre de Documentation Raymond Queneau (Verviers, Belgium), and Molly Schwartzburg, Curator of British and American Literature, Harry Ransom Research Center, the University of Texas at Austin.

²Among the works in this series is Lewis's next novel, *The Prodigal Parents* (1938), which appeared under the title *Les Parents prodigues* (translated by Joseph Sorin) in 1939. According to Lécureur, Queneau recommended the novel "without enthusiasm," but "advocated" its publication because he thought there might be interest in the novel (224). Queneau's calculation was no doubt based on Lewis's critical treatment of communism, but his lack of enthusiasm was shared by contemporary reviewers of *The Prodigal Parents*, which is generally considered to be Lewis's weakest novel of the 1930s (Parry 104–06).

³Other French historians believe that fascism was never a serious political force in France in the 1930s and that the fascism that did exist came more from the left than from the right; see, e.g., Eugen Weber (140), who, however, does agree that the threat from the right was greatest during the year the Popular Front was in power (152–53). Soucy is persuasive in analyzing fascist "double-talk," the social and economic conservatism of such mass movements as the CF/PSF and the PPF, and police reports to the French Ministry of the Interior, which "often tell us more about the underlying dynamics of French fascism than do French fascist speeches, newspapers, and books" (11).

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Habeas Corpus *continued from page 4*

"Let 'em deport 'em! I ain't interested in no Hindus," snapped Gurazov.

He was at outs with his former socialist friends. He had not supported their antiwar platform. Gurazov was antiwar but he was also antijail. He could see nothing at all to having policemen poking into his shop and sending him to Leavenworth. It was too comfortable to sit behind the counter and get in a stretch when he reached for a pack of cigarettes.

Nick Benorius telescoped his neck like a turtle drawing into its shell, while he grumbled, "Do you know what it means if these fellows get deported? You're a swe-I-I-I socialist!"

"Ah!" remarked Gurazov, and waddled out to the back room, which was at once his private cigar factory and his bachelor chambers.

A word stuck with him. Deported! He was not an American citizen. If he were deported to Bulgaria he would have a free ride and all the more credit with the Balkan radicals because he had been a martyr in America. He stopped rolling cigars. He pounded the heel of his puffy palm on the table. It sounded almost as squashy as a ripe tomato. He pounded inertly—a Balkan Buddha run to fat.

Becky Tchernin, his clerk, crept along the dark aisle from the store to demand, "Juh order those Semelik cigarettes? Fellow here for 'em."

Snatched from his dream refuge, Gurazov brayed, "Get out of here! I won't stand it no more! Me waiting on lowlife Yankees."

"Don't talk to me like that or I'll go back to the candy factory—and customers like me," Becky said calmly.

"No, I don't want you should do that. But go away. Don't bother me, Becky. I'm thinking."

It was great thinking and difficult. Gurazov cursed himself for having been so cautious in his references to the war that there was no reason for deporting him. Why hadn't he written articles denouncing Pershing? Why hadn't he stood in with Nick Benorius, who had been investigated half a dozen times? Well, it wasn't too late. Thus it was that Gurazov the cigar maker became seditious and in the very act of jerking his black felt hat down on his bushy head threatened the unconscious state. He clumped seven blocks over to Nick Benorius' office at socialist headquarters—a cubby-hole, a pile of pamphlets, a typewriter, an anemic desk, a picture of Karl Kautsky.

Nick was painfully typing a letter. He looked up with disfavor and gobbled: "What do you want? What do you want?"

"Nick, I was wrong—I want to subscribe a dollar to the Hindu defense fund. I am sorry I seemed like I was mean. I

had oh, such a pain in the stomach."

"Where's the dollar?"

"I—I ain't got it with me, but right away I sign to pay it. Nick, I got a fine idea. Dollars? Huh! What we should have is a big parade demanding the release of all comrades held for deportation."

"Sure! Is that what you call a new idea? But none of the boys are going to jail just for——"

"Jail! They should be proud to go to jail!"

"But they ain't going to jail just to make you proud because they go to jail. I don't notice you in no great hurry going to none. You stayed good and safe all through the war."

"I was wrong. And now—I will lead a parade! With banners! Terrible! I will make a speech defying the Government! Let them arrest me!"

"You poor nut, they'd deport you."

"Would they? Sure?"

"Well, good chance of it."

"What I care? I am not afraid of martyrdom!"

"Oh, you ain't, ain't you? Well, you go right out and martyr yourself! You pick the first cop you see and say 'Hoch der Kaiser!' You'll get martyred soon enough. About once a day somebody comes by the office and wants me to put on my hat and go out and get beat up. But I never thought you were one of the nuts. I thought you were left wing in meetings and no wing at all when the cops came round. I don't know what your game is, but I know it's foolish. Hey! Wait! Sign up for that dollar!"

Gurazov stood outside socialist headquarters and raged:

"This is a swell country, where a man can't ever be a martyr! And it cost me a dollar. Benorius—dirty coward! We would kick him out in Europe."

Miserably he hitched back toward his store. On the way he glanced at I.W.W. headquarters. Though a number of I.W.W. leaders had been arrested during the war, they kept up their propaganda among lumberjacks and their sign stared out black and white between a Chink laundry and the Norske Eating House. Ah, here were people who had nerve! Gurazov thrilled and grinned and rolled into the room.

It was bare and quiet. About a paunchy little stove were three wobblers—young men in mackinaws, sweaters, plush caps—now harvest hands, now swamper and gandy dancers, now strike orators and noisy singers in the jails of a dozen states. The readers stared at Gurazov as contemptuously as

—————Habeas Corpus *continued on next page*

Habeas Corpus *continued from previous page*

Gurazov stared at customers. It confused him. He smiled to be friendly, then scowled to be revolutionary and marched to the desk where a lanky man was writing a letter on a sheet of note paper scarce larger than his long knuckly hand.

"You the secretary?" chirruped the amateur revolutionist.

"Yup."

"Can I interrupt you, comrade?"

"Who are you?"

"I am Gurazov—member of the Socialist Party. I want _____."

"So you're a yellow socialist, are you? What do you want here?"

"I want to start a demonstration on behalf of—of the I.W.W. prisoners that will shake Vernon to the depths and _____."

"Oh, you're a depth shaker, are you? Well, go on out and shake. Pick out a good street corner and shake all night. So long! I'm writing a letter."

"You don't get me, comrade." Gurazov beat his chest. It did not sound very terrifying, but the gesture was good. "I offer you my help. Let them deport me! What do I care?"

"Well, I don't know as I care a whole lot myself. I don't know nothing about you, friend. But I know I can start plenty of trouble and class war without any scissors bill like you butting in. Who are you anyway? What's your game?"

"I told you—I am a socialist."

"That's darned little recommend to a wobbly. You socialists are scared of direct action."

"The others are. Me, I am not! I am through with socialists! I denounce them!"

"All right, hire a hall. Say, friend, you look to me like a stool pigeon. You better pad your hoof out of this. I don't want to scab on no street cleaners, but I'm going to dump you in an ash can. Then you can go back and tell the police or the businessmen or whoever sent you that we ain't tipping them off on any rows we may be thinking of starting."

The lean secretary was uncoiling from his chair, his rough pads outstretched toward Gurazov. The misunderstood rebel started toward the door with much haste and dignity. He glared back and shouted: "Capitalists! Cowards!"

He stood outside wailing: "It ain't right! To call Gurazov an agent provocateur! When I want to stay out of trouble they all want me to do some foolishness, but now—traitors! Gutter pups! I'll show 'em what a real Balkan red can do! But—but—I didn't think I'd have to work so hard to get into jail. Woosha! I'm almost out of breath."

III

The indomitable Gurazov returned to his store, had a row with Becky, insulted one or two customers, paddled out to the back room, cleared a pile of bills, a pinochle pack, a pair of celluloid cuffs and a cold boiled potato off the table he used as desk and dining table, rolled up his sleeves, puffed, licked his lips, grunted and began to write sedition. He produced three hundred words of dynamite. The workers, he wrote, must wait no longer. If their unions or parties did not support them let them rise in twos and threes. Let them seize post offices, banks, treasuries. Then the revolution would burst out at once.

He signed it, he jocularly told Becky that she wasn't so much of a fool as she looked and he popped out to a print shop over a delicatessen store. It was a one-man shop, and the one man wasn't much of a printer. He was glad if he got an auction bill and a letterhead in a day. But he had admired Gurazov's conversation and sometimes mildly guessed maybe things weren't like they ought to be.

When he had read Gurazov's manuscript—standing at the case under an electric bulb, following the script with his head moving and the paper near to his short-sighted eyes—he complained, "Say, mister, this is dangerous. It'll get you into trouble."

"If anybody asks you is Gurazov afraid say he stands here fearless. How much you charge to make a little book of that?"

The job cost him ten dollars for a hundred and fifty copies—cheap fare to Bulgaria and a fat commissarship. He exulted over the smudgy four-page pamphlet when it was done. He rushed into the store, banged one on the counter, shouted at Becky, "There! You think I am a four-flusher! You see? I am an author! I am a red! I take my place with Trotzky!"

Becky read the pamphlet and admired.

"My, it's swell! Who wrote it for you?"

"And there's folks that wonder why I never got married!" yelled Gurazov, loftily bearing away his pile of pamphlets. ✍

*"Habeas Corpus" will be continued
in the spring 2009 issue.*

DEPARTMENTS

SINCLAIR LEWIS NOTES

The *New York Times* asked a group of writers to recommend books for the presidential candidates for the June 1, 2008 *Book Review*. Stacy Schiff, author of *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America*, recommended “three copies please of *Main Street*. All talk of the Scranton lace-making relatives aside, none of these candidates have been there in awhile” (13). She also recommends Lampedusa’s *The Leopard*, Roth’s *The Human Stain*, *The Quiet American* for Senator McCain, *Middlemarch* for Senator Clinton, and *The Great Gatsby* for Senator Obama.

Leslie H. Gelb, in a review of *The Man Who Pushed America to War: The Extraordinary Life, Adventures, and Obsessions of Ahmad Chalabi* by Aram Roston (Nation Books, 2008), notes that Roston compares Chalabi to “an amalgam of Don Quixote, Captain Ahab, and Elmer Gantry.” Chalabi fabricated evidence for the invasion of Iraq, and Gelb realizes, “Chalabi manipulated our dreams with all the intuitive force Elmer Gantry conjured up to woo the souls of Middle Americans” (*New York Times Book Review* April 27, 2008: 21).

Books: A Memoir by Larry McMurtry (Simon & Schuster, 2008) regales readers with how the novelist became a bookseller. According to reviewer James Campbell (*New York Times Book Review* July 27, 2008: 14), he “entered the business with serious intent around 1960 when he was offered five excellent collections of modern literature ‘for a little over \$100 a collection.’ The writers in question were Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Sinclair Lewis, Edwin Arlington Robinson, and John Steinbeck. The volumes lacked Hemingway’s first book, *Three Stories and Ten Poems*, published in 1923 by Contact Editions, and similarly rare items by Faulkner and Lewis, ‘but all the other books were there, and they were there in exceptional condition’” (14). McMurtry has kept on as a bookseller, although Campbell finds his memoir more of a draft than a finished product.

From Peter Filichia’s “Diary” on *TheaterMania* from May 12, 2008: Gantry (Feb. 14, 1970) — “Robert Shaw and Rita Moreno were so miscast as the evangelist and Sister Sharon that if a collection had been taken during the revival meeting scene, the plates would have remained empty” (Watt, *News*).

Thomas H. Benton, the pseudonymous columnist in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, wrote in his May 30, 2008, column, “The Professor as Pitchman,” about feeling like Elmer Gantry as he made a presentation to prospective students and their parents:

Seated on a stage, waiting to give a presentation on “How I Teach” for my college’s admissions office, I thought about a scene from the film version of Sinclair Lewis’s *Elmer Gantry*, starring Burt Lancaster as a salesman turned tent-revival preacher. In the scene, he recalls one of the steps on the road to his conversion:

“What are you selling today, Elmer, some gold-plated vacuum cleaners?” “No sir,” I said. “You can get better vacuum cleaners at Sears and Roebuck. And you can get ‘em cheaper. But you can’t beat our electric toasters at any price.” And the man sat down and wrote me the biggest order of the year. I didn’t make that sale, Lord, you did.

Before it’s over, Elmer is sliding across the stage like he’s stealing third base, and—with terrifyingly insincere charisma—he’s brought the congregation to that old-time religion.

I’ve seen a few professors who can do that sort of thing for the admissions people, but I don’t think I have a talent for it.

Although Benton does come to grips with an approach that makes him comfortable, the gist of his essay warns against the dangers of boosterism and pandering; that speakers should not try to please parents and students so much that they promise anything in order to increase the size of the freshmen class (C1).

William Grimes, in the May 23, 2008, *New York Times*, writes about a recent book edited by Peter Boxall, *1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die* (Universe, 2006). Patterned after the very popular *1001 Places to See Before You Die*, this British book dares readers to start reading in earnest: "An ambitious reader might finish off one a month without disrupting a personal reading program already in place. That means he or she would cross the finish line in the year 2063. At that point, upon reaching the last page of title No. 1,001, *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro, death might come as a relief." Sinclair Lewis is represented twice, for *Main Street* and *Babbitt*.

Boxal, of Sussex University, "asked 105 critics, editors and academics—mostly obscure—to submit lists of great novels, from which he assembled his supposedly mandatory reading list of one thousand and one." The list is very heavy on British writers, although Grimes notes: "The United States gets a fair shake, and there may even be some overcompensation. Philip Roth shows up with no fewer than seven novels, including *The Breast*, and Edith Wharton is honored for four novels in addition to the two big ones, *The House of Mirth* and *The Age of Innocence*." The list reminds me in many ways of the lists that the *American Book Review* has done over the last couple of years for the best first and last lines of novels.

Go to http://www.listology.com/content_show.cfm/content_id.22845/ for the complete list and be alternately inspired and horrified by the choices. (My total of novels read is about 215.) There are 69 books listed for this century, which is not even 10 years old. Some of the choices are eccentric, but that's the point of these lists—to create controversy.

The notorious Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire of 1911 was a tragic event that Sinclair Lewis would have been aware of since this was a time when he was living in New York City. In *Triangle: The Fire that Changed America* by David Von Drehle (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003), the craze for shirtwaists (women's blouses) and the expansion of factories to manufacture them is explored. Lewis is quoted as praising the Gibson Girl, the ideal of feminine beauty at the time. Created by the illustrator Charles Dana Gibson, and almost always wearing shirtwaists, Lewis noted she was, "the Helen of Troy and Cleopatra of her day" (45). The fallout from the fire, which lasted about 15 minutes and killed 146 people, most of them women in their teens and early twenties, contributed to the careers of several people important in the New Deal, including Al Smith, Robert F. Wagner, and Frances Perkins. Perkins, who became the Secretary of Labor under Franklin Roosevelt and the first woman to hold a cabinet post, was investigating social problems at this time and "befriended the young writers

Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis, and both of them were soon infatuated with her" (198).

The *Arizona Republic* published a column by Floyd Johnson, a self-described "Depression-born, unreconstructed FDR-Democrat" who recently retired as a used- and rare-book seller in a suburb of Phoenix (May 4, 2008: V6). As a "passionate observer of politics," he recommended five books on "the loss of liberties in America and the rise of authoritarianism." *It Can't Happen Here* tops the list. His description: "The novel envisages a 'folksy' right-wing populist president who uses security threats to consolidate dictatorial powers, destroy civil liberties, and establish a fascist state." The other four books on the list are *It Can Happen Here: Authoritarian Peril in the Age of Bush* by Joe Conason (St. Martin's Press, 2008), *The End of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot* by Naomi Wolf (Chelsea Green, 2007), *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic* by Chalmers Johnson (Henry Holt, 2006), and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* by Hannah Arendt (Harvest, 1973).

Images of Germany in American Literature by Waldemar Zacharasiewicz (U of Iowa P, 2007) was recently reviewed in the *Journal of American Culture* (30.4 [2007]: 453–54) by Claude Desmaris. He notes that the book surveys portrayals of Germans, including stereotypes from both the 19th and 20th centuries:

In the interwar period the image of Germany is shown to be instrumentalized in American culture conflicts in writers from Pollard and Mencken to Dreiser, Wharton and Henry James, while Weimar Germany later serves either as a political weapon against American conservatism and the war propaganda in Sinclair Lewis and Thomas Wolfe, or to promote cosmopolitan and experimental lifestyles. (453)

Even bloggers are talking about Sinclair Lewis these days. *2Blowhards*, described as a blog in which "a group of graying eternal amateurs discuss their passions, interests and obsessions, among them: movies, art, politics, evolutionary biology, taxes, writing, computers, these kids these days, and lousy educations." The webmaster started a string with the following:

As for The Great American Novel, I'm not sure that there ever was such a thing. Rather, it was a semi-mythical Quest that writers with a couple of

halfway decent-sellers under their belts wanted to take on. Maybe the whole idea was simply a joke. Still, I've seen it mentioned for about as long as I can remember.

Actually, the notion of encapsulating a large nation in a single novel seems absurd. And it was absurd even in the time of Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis; Small-town Minnesota or big-city Illinois are not each other, nor are they Pennsylvania coal-mining country, the Deep South or Monterey's canneries.

Not everyone picked up on the Lewis reference, although there were other suggestions for the GAN. Tatyana writes, "But don't discard Lewis or Dreiser; they were my windows (albeit—I thought—a bit outdated) into American life, seen from across the oceans. After 16 yrs of living here, I can honestly say they are right on the money in more cases than not. Take *Elmer Gantry*, for instance. It's such a perfect analysis of Obama's popularity (if not in all its aspects), anything that's being said about him now comes as old news."

SINCLAIR LEWIS SCHOLARSHIP

Roger Forseth, in a review essay, "You Can Go Home Again. Sinclair Lewis: Biography and Short Fiction" [*Resources for American Literary Study* 31 (2007): 331–35], discusses very favorably Richard Lingeman's biography *Sinclair Lewis: Rebel from Main Street* (Random House, 2002) and *The Minnesota Stories of Sinclair Lewis*, edited and with an introduction by Sally E. Parry (Borealis, 2005). The review speaks well of Lewis and notes that Lingeman's "portrayal of Lewis's times and the author's place in them makes the book well worth reading as social and literary history" (333). Lewis was a popular writer throughout his career, and his books sold very well, even in the 1940s with *Cass Timberlane* (1945) selling more than a million copies, and *Kingsblood Royal* (1947) selling more than a million and a half. Forseth's critique of the previous Lewis biography by Mark Schorer is that "the man who mattered had been left out" (332). Lingeman presents "with fairness and clarity...the two most complex subjects that confront the biographer of Lewis: his women and his drinking" (332). Despite the fact that Lewis was very homely, women were attracted to him. Marcella Powers, a young woman who had an affair with Lewis late in his life, wrote fondly of Lewis

after his death, and "the sense of affection and gratitude here is similarly echoed in the reminiscences of him left by his two wives" (333).

The review of *The Minnesota Stories of Sinclair Lewis* recalls Lewis's affection for his home state:

Indeed, if all politics is local, then all literature is also, and in a very real sense Lewis never, as I have suggested, left home. He single-handedly put Minnesota on the cultural map, at first satirically and in the end with affection. Owing to him, the state became not only a recognizable place but also a character: the stolid, outwardly unemotional northern European immigrant carving a new life out of an often forbidding environment. (333–34)

There are two new editions of Lewis novels out from Signet. George Killough has written a new introduction to *Main Street* (2008), a book, he writes, that "became a defining vision of small-town culture that influenced the way observers understood America" (5). Killough sets the novel in context, in terms of Lewis's life, American publishing, and Midwestern America early in the 20th century. Lewis wrote about both the drabness of the Midwest and the "suggestions of old-world magnificence" (12). His ambivalence (and Carol's as well) about Gopher Prairie is a dominant theme in the novel:

If transplanted German Catholics could come so close to expressing the soul of medieval Europe in a beautiful material way, why could not Midwestern villages express the soul of America equally well?... The stunning spires of Stearns County had shown the young Lewis that human communities have greater potential, and that is why his and Carol Kennicott's protest spoke so directly and why they both kept hope alive. (13)

Sally E. Parry has written an introduction to *Arrowsmith* that connects the novel to Lewis's life, especially his relationship with his father and his brother, both doctors. *Arrowsmith* provides a window on how the medical profession was changing in the first part of the 20th century, although the questions that are raised about research and its practical applications are still germane:

Although many critics have applauded Arrowsmith's final journey to the woods to finally become the independent researcher and scientist that he has always wanted to be, this decision comes at the cost of ignoring human society, both in his personal life

and in the broader suffering he experienced on St. Hubert. Robert McLaughlin notes that although on one level Lewis may have admired Arrowsmith's decision, it is not one that he would have personally been comfortable with. Lewis's choice would have been to stay involved with humanity, messy as it is, rather than live apart from it. (xii)

For those readers interested in finding out more about Emma McChesney, Edna Ferber's businesswoman and traveling saleslady from the beginning of the 20th century ("If George Babbitt Were a Woman" in the *Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter* 13.2 [2005]), see "The Matriarchal Mentor: Edna Ferber's Emma McChesney as Both 'New' and 'Woman'" by Scott D. Emmert (*MidAmerica* 33 [2006]: 66-77). Emmert asserts:

It is certainly possible, therefore, to read the Emma McChesney stories in feminist terms, and Ferber/McChesney's credentials as a feminist ring clearly in Emma's assertion that "[a]ny work is woman's work that a woman can do well" (*Roast Beef, Medium, "Knee-Deep in Knickers"* 258). Arguably, however, as a character Emma may have been popular because she did not overtly challenge masculine and feminine roles. Instead, she successfully reconciles those roles within the business world. Like many heroes in popular culture, she is an ideal of successful negotiation of opposites without loss of self. She builds an individual reputation, becomes a celebrity in a man's world, while not losing the opportunity to be a wife and mother. She is, in short, the woman who has it all — which remains a contemporary fantasy for women at a time when more women work outside of the home than ever before. She would very likely appeal to readers of popular fiction today, something that would please her creator, the crowd-pleasing Edna Ferber, to no end. (75)

The Stearns History Museum published an article on Sinclair Lewis in its March 2008 publication *Crossings* (34.2). "Positively *Main Street*: A Revision of Sinclair Lewis's Best Seller," by Andrew Ries, who completed an internship at the museum in 2007. The article focused on the publication of *Main Street* and its reception:

The criticism that Lewis received because of the book was widespread, and was not limited to the small towns that Gopher Prairie was allegedly mocking. The town of Alexandria refused to carry the book in its library, claiming that the publicity that neighboring

Sauk Centre was receiving was unfair.... However, after the initial backlash towards Lewis, Sauk Centre realized that not only were copies of *Main Street* selling in droves, but the town was garnering loads of free advertising because of it. (7)

Lewis, in an interview with the *Sauk Centre Herald* on May 26, 1921, responded to the criticism from his neighbors "by saying that he 'loved' Sauk Centre and 'grieved for its faults'" (8), promising to turn his eye toward larger cities in the future.

Ries concludes that Carol was prejudiced from the beginning towards the town and was never able to give it a fair shake:

While *Main Street* is not a ringing endorsement of small towns, it can be perceived as more positive than once believed. The story of *Main Street* would have been drastically different had it been taken from the viewpoint of Will Kennicott or any other of the life-long townspeople. Lewis described the town as it was and let Carol judge it. Whether or not she was wrong in her judgment, the town was what it was. Though Carol desperately tried to add a touch of refinement, it was resistant to change. The town was not to blame for Carol's depression, but her own pre-determined mindset. To look past Gopher Prairie's faults required Carol to accept her own mistakes in judging the town. If she ever did come to that conclusion, her view of Gopher Prairie would have been much more positive, and the town may have accepted Carol as one of their own. (9)

WEB NOTES

Over 94,000 people have accessed the Sinclair Lewis website in the last five years since the website was revamped. There has been a lot of interest in Lewis's political views, especially on fascism, as well as his general interest in popular culture. Here are some of the questions that have been received recently.

Look for a brand new design for the Sinclair Lewis Society website in 2009. Aimée Bullinger, an associate of Hile Group Inc., has agreed to create a new look for the site, including easier navigation and more graphics. This will be a work in progress and should make it easier to add new information in a timely fashion. We hope to incorporate a new feature,

“Teaching Sinclair Lewis,” to encourage more teachers to use Lewis in their classrooms and create a new generation of Lewis aficionados. If you have other features you’d like us to consider, please e-mail Sally Parry at separry@ilstu.edu.

I have been cleaning out some old boxes of books and have run across a copy of *Main Street* by Sinclair Lewis. It has my grandfather’s aunt’s name in the inside cover and on the cover page says, “Compliments of Sinclair Lewis and Samuel Margolis Feb 9, 1921.” Sinclair Lewis’s name is in a different pen and appears to perfectly match samples of his signature found online. I am curious though of the relationship between Lewis and Margolis [*sic*]; why they would have been signing the book together. From a quick investigation, Margolis appears to have been a figure in New York during the appropriate time, but I don’t see a connection. Please let me know any thoughts you have. The book is in good condition. I don’t know specifically what constitutes condition, but there is nothing falling out or dog-eared or frayed.

[Lewis certainly knew Margolies, who was a painter and etcher in New York at this time and studied at the Cooper Union. He wrote to Alfred Harcourt, his publisher, in 1921: “Sam Margolies writes me that a relative of his met the Gordon Selfridge of London, who proved to be much interested in M. St. Why don’t you call up Sam about this & send the news over to to Hodder Stoughton. He mite be the cause of several thousand selling in London” (in *From Main Street to Stockholm: Letters of Sinclair Lewis, 1919–1930*. Ed. Harrison Smith. New York: Harcourt, 1952. 63).

Lewis had been involved in the publishing business for nearly ten years by the time that *Main Street* was published and knew a lot of people doing illustrations, which is probably how he knew Margolies. Congratulations on finding such a neat artifact.]

This is an attempt to verify a trivial item in a book written by Lewis. The main character supposedly awoke from a dream and realized that he had been dreaming about “Tiny” or “Teeny Hedin.” If this could be verified it would be personally valued. I would like to know the name of the book and the name of the character.

Sauk Centre gave a reception for Lewis in his “later” years. In the receiving line at one of the events, my father was greeted by Lewis with a firm handshake and smile with a greeting “Teeny Hedin! How are you?” My father was obviously flattered and pleased.

An anecdote: Several years after the death of Lewis,

someone doing research on his life appeared at the First State Bank and requested information from my aunt, a cashier. She directed him to a nephew of Lewis, a bank customer, who was a few feet away writing a deposit slip. When questioned, the nephew did not move but did loudly respond, “Never heard of him!”

Thank you for your time. [Samuel Rogal reports: The answer to your e-mail inquiry will be found at the very end of chapter 1, page 60, of Mark Schorer’s biography of Lewis. To my knowledge, no character by the name of Hedin exists in Lewis’s fiction. One will find, in his 1919 novel *Free Air*, a minor character named “Teenie,” the landlady and waitress at the Pellago Tavern in Montana. I do not remember if she dreams.]

Have you ever heard of this book—*Sinclair Lewis: Final Voyage*? It’s listed on the back cover of the book that John Koblas and David Page edited.

Volume I: *Sinclair Lewis & Mantrap: The Saskatchewan Trip*

Volume II: *Selected Letters of Sinclair Lewis* (Mainstreet Press).

[John Koblas responded: Yes, *Final Voyage*, the third book in the Lewis trilogy, was completed, bound and published by the publisher. We had an awful dispute with the publisher and the books sat on skids for years and never came out. I don’t know what happened then—probably all destroyed unfortunately. I have never seen a copy but it was published.]

I began with *Babbitt* and in the last two months I have read ten of Lewis’s books. I am now a huge fan. I find his writing so very entertaining. I find I need to carry a pocket dictionary when I read his works. He has such a wonderful command of the language.

An interesting quote from Sinclair Lewis submitted by Joyce Lyng: “People will buy anything that’s one to a customer.”

I stumbled on the Society by accident and have just sent in the membership form. I have purchased many of Lewis’s books; however, I have been unable to locate *Hike and the Aeroplane*. Do you have any suggestions? [So good to hear from any Lewis fan. *Hike and the Aeroplane* is a hard book to find. When it was published as an adolescent novel, it had a limited run, and most of those books, like any books for kids, have been beaten up

and thrown out. There have been two limited editions beyond this, the last one from YaleBooks about ten years ago. All are out of print and rather expensive on *abebooks* and other sites. Most people spend the money, find the book by chance, or see if they can get it from a library.]

Can anyone tell me where Sinclair Lewis wrote something about New London, Minnesota, to the effect that that quaint village reminded him of a New England fishing village? This is a rough paraphrase. [Response from Dave Simpkins: I'd bet that he might have written that in his diary from the 1940s. He made an attempt to settle in his home state and did a series of trips around the state writing about the places and the people he met. He considered buying land in Otter Tail County near Inspiration Peak, which he also wrote about. The diary was published a few years ago by George Killough.]

I am trying to find the meaning or significance of a recent finding. I have acquired (via my mother) a first edition copy of *The God-Seeker*. On the inside cover is inscribed:

To Susan Burgess, without whose inspiration, this book would never have been written, Good Luck!
Godspeed! Bless you, dear. Yr. obdt servt. Sinclair
Lewis (his mark)

I have tried researching who Susan Burgess was to no avail... any ideas? [*The God-Seeker* is very late Lewis and is not as common as some (it sold about 30,000 copies). I've done some checking and have not run across the name of Susan Burgess in any of the biographies. I'll send your query to the Sinclair Lewis listserv and see if anyone has a response.]

I am finishing up a feature documentary about the actress Fay Wray for theatrical, TV, and DVD release. I am a NYC filmmaker but am in Wellington, New Zealand, doing the postproduction now—actually in the last few weeks. I have a nice section in the film about Mr. Lewis, but Fay talks about the correspondence between them, and I wondered if you might have any of the letters? I am hoping to include scanned copies, as I already have Clifford Odets's and others and would hate for Mr. Lewis's section to be lacking.

Thank you for getting back to me as soon as you comfortably can.

Very best regards,
Rick McKay

Watch for Rick McKay cohosting *Broadway: The Golden Age*—back on public television around the country.

For 2008: *Fay Wray: A Life* is heading into postproduction soon in New Zealand in time to open in late 2008, the year of *King Kong's* 75th anniversary!

For 2009: *Broadway: Beyond the Golden Age*—the story of Broadway in the 60s and 70s from 1959–81, Part II of McKay's Broadway Trilogy, starring 100 Legends, including Robert Redford, Glenn Close, Liza Minnelli, Dick Van Dyke, Vanessa Redgrave, Angela Lansbury, Sydney Poitier, Patti LuPone, John Lithgow, Shirley MacLaine, Stephen Sondheim, Bernadette Peters, and the original casts of *A Chorus Line*, *Raisin in the Sun*, *Follies*—as well as more extremely rare, never-before-seen, lost footage from road-way performances!

For 2010: *Broadway: The Next Generation*—Broadway from 1981 to the Present, Part III of McKay's Broadway Trilogy, starring 100 new Legends, including Alec Baldwin, Audra McDonald, Betty Buckley, Bernadette Peters, Alan Cumming, Kristin Chenoweth, Cherry Jones, Ben Vereen, Patti LuPone, John Lloyd Young, Karen Ziemba, Sutton Foster, Amanda Plummer, Liev Schreiber, Jeff Goldblum, John Barrowman, Peter Gallagher, Phylicia Rashad, Debbie Allen, Richard Thomas, Ann Reinking, Tovah Feldshuh, Matthew Morrison, and many more—as well as more extremely rare, never-before-seen, lost footage from Broadway performances!

www.broadwaythemovie.com & www.rickmckay.com

QUERIES FROM STUDENTS

I came across the website for the Sinclair Lewis Society while doing research on Lewis for my American literature research paper. It has been extremely helpful with finding information for my project. In many books and articles, the authors note how Lewis's early writing tended to be more romantic in tone, while his novels ended up being more cynical and satirical. What do you think caused the change in his writing style? Any input or response you have would be greatly appreciated. [Thanks for writing. It's true that Lewis's earlier writing was much more sentimental, although I think to a great extent it was because of the publications he was writing for, many of which, like *Cosmopolitan* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, wanted short stories that had a happy or at least morally appropriate ending. Some of his early novels are modeled to a great extent on other writers—there are aspects of H. G. Wells in *Our Mr. Wrenn* and of Theodore Dreiser in *The Job*. Lewis gains his real voice with *Main Street* which is sharply satirical but also aware of the many voices that exist within a small town. I think that he

carries this idea of multiple viewpoints throughout much of his writing. Dorothy Thompson wrote that Lewis was a “disappointed democrat,” which strikes me as very astute. He had a sense of what society ought to be like and felt compelled to expose the difference between what could be and what is.]

I am currently a student at Leonia High School in New Jersey. I am doing a research project on Sinclair Lewis’s novels *Main Street* and *Babbitt* and was asked to briefly interview a credible source. I obtained your e-mail address through the Sinclair Lewis Society site and was hoping to get your opinion on a few things regarding Lewis.

Here are a few questions:

1. How would you describe the novels *Main Street* and *Babbitt*? In what ways are the books labeled as “realist” books?
 2. Why do you think Sinclair Lewis wrote the way he did, such as a “rambling plot”?
 3. What do you think the major themes of the books are?
 4. Do you think these two novels are similar in any way or how are they different?
 5. Looking over your page of quotes, why did you choose these certain quotes? How significant were they to the themes of the books? [Thank you for writing. I’m glad to answer the questions as best I can, although I encourage you to look at other critics as well.
1. Both novels are mostly realist in the sense that the description of the places, the people, and the language is very specific to the place and time. Lewis had a good eye and ear and was able to reproduce the sights and sounds of the era very well. Sometimes when Lewis was working on novels he would travel around speaking as one of his characters (like George Babbitt) to make sure he was in the same linguistic mind as that person. These novels also both function as satire since they hold up for criticism many of the attitudes of the characters and make fun of them.
 2. Life is rambling and hence his novels are. Both main characters are trying to learn how to live in an environment they are not totally comfortable in. There are many false starts from both Carol Kennicott and George Babbitt as they attempt to find comfort, in Carol’s case with theater, with children, with Eric; and in George’s case with outdoor life, with Paul, and with Tanis. Neither is very successful, but they both come to accommodations with the hand they’ve been dealt in life.
 3. I hesitate to talk about major themes because I don’t like to reduce novels that I admire to sound bites. Having said that, *Main Street* certainly takes a look at the small town experience in a time when many were moving to urban areas and looking back romantically at the small town, something that Lewis undercuts. There is also the plight of women who, as Lewis writes of Carol, are often thinking women with no work. In that sense the novel takes a feminist approach to women’s experience in the early 20th century. There are also issues of class, of aesthetics, of education, depending on what lens one applies to the novel.

With *Babbitt*, the focus is obviously on the businessman in capitalist America. However, Babbitt undergoes a midlife crisis, which contributes to the novel being more than just a satire. There are issues too of class, of gender (both for women and men), education, and Prohibition.

4. I guess my answer is above since I speak of similarities there.
5. The quotes both illuminate aspects of the texts and of Lewis’s humor. Actually, the quotes were chosen by another member of the Sinclair Lewis Society, Rusty Allred, who provided them to me.]

SAUK CENTRE NEWS

At the annual meeting of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation in February 2008, it was announced that nearly 350 people visited the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home in 2007. Visitors came from 44 states and 12 foreign countries including Norway, South Africa, Sweden, Kenya, and Thailand. About 8,780 visited the Interpretive Center in Sauk Centre, with about half of them continuing on to view the exhibits in the museum.

The Foundation’s largest event was the Sinclair Lewis Writers’ Conference, held October 13, 2007, at the Sauk Centre High School Fine Arts Auditorium. The keynote speaker was Gary Paulsen, a world-famous young-adult novelist. Presenters at the small group sessions were John Koblas, who discussed writing history for print and television; Lois Greiman, who spoke on how to expand writing genres; and Victoria Kasten, who spoke on how to develop characters. This was the 18th annual writers’ conference and was attended by over 100 people.

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

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

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CATALOG 140

321. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927. \$1200.

First edition, first issue with "Gantry" spelled "Cantry" on the spine. Top edge soiled, and a gift inscription which has been partially erased on the front fly, very good or better in an about very good dustwrapper with chipping at the spine ends. A notable novel about a corrupt evangelist, memorably filmed in 1960 with Burt Lancaster and Shirley Jones, who both won Oscars, as did the screenplay of director Richard Brooks.

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CATALOG 62

40. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927. \$750.

First edition, first binding. An unusually fine, fresh copy in a bright, very good dust jacket. A sharp, excellent, clean copy of this literary high spot, and basis for the famous film that starred Burt Lancaster.

Joseph the Provider: Books Bought & Sold

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 90

Santa Barbara, CA 93102

Phone: (805) 683-2603

Email: joepro@silcom.com

LIST 66

127. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927. \$750.

First edition, first binding. An unusually fine, fresh copy in a bright, very good dust jacket (with some chipping at the top of the spine—not affecting the lettering—and three small chips on back panel). An excellent copy.

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SALE 381

THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 2008, 11 A.M.

265. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927. \$1200/\$2000.

Blue cloth lettered and stamped in orange, jacket. First edition, first binding, with the "G" in "Gantry" on the spine strongly resembling a "C." All jacket flap corners evenly clipped with the publisher's printed "\$2.50" price at the end of the front flap text (just above the publisher's imprint). Light edge wear and minor rubs to jacket; volume leaning a bit, slight shelf wear; hinges stiff (possibly repaired); very good in a near fine or better jacket.

266. —. *Hike and the Aeroplane*. Ed. Stephen R. Pastore. Intro. Sally E. Parry. Illus. Richard L. Price. Hawley: Yale-Books Press, 1999. \$400/\$700.

Blue cloth, lettered in gilt, color pictorial jacket. Copy "Q" of 26 lettered copies, with a separately-housed suite of illustrations inside folder (cloth-backed boards with pictorial cover label showing limitation letter) still sealed with original golden sticker.

Signed by the editor and artist on the limitation page. The extra suite of illustrations is not available in the "trade" edition (itself limited to only 200 copies). This is a special reprinting of Sinclair Lewis's first book (originally published in 1912 with his Tom Graham pseudonym). An entertaining aviation story. Fine.

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Fax: (617) 542-3263

Email: psbook@aol.com
info@sternrarebooks.com

MAY/JUNE 2008

178. Lewis, Sinclair. *Dodsworth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929. \$400.

First edition; trade issue (there was an advance issue bound in orange cloth). A very good copy in dust jacket.

Waverly Books

Dan Adams

948 9th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90403

Phone: (310) 393-4593

Email: waverlybks@aol.com

www.waverlybooks.com

LIST 153

84. Lewis, Sinclair. *John Dos Passos' Manhattan Transfer*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926. \$375.

Limited Edition. One of 875 numbered copies. Close to fine in slate grey boards, with cloth corners and spine. A superb copy of a title which seldom turns up in nice condition.

Books End

2443 James Street, Syracuse, NY 13206

Phone: (315) 437-2312

Email: booksend@twcny.rr.com

www.thebooksend.com

*This collection is from the library of Dorothy Thompson. Although some of these entries may have been sold by the time the Newsletter is published, this list gives a good sense of her reading and interests.*1. Hasenclever, Walter. *Dramen: Der Sohn Jenseits Die Menschen*, Berlin: Die Schmiede Verlag, 1924. \$150.

First edition. Signed and inscribed by the author (German expressionist writer; the Hasenclever Prize, given to a German author every 2 years, is named after him) to Sinclair Lewis, and dated 1925.

2. Zuckmayer, Karl. *Der Frohliche Weinberg (The Merry Vineyard)*. Berlin: Propylaen Verlag, 1925. \$125.

Inscribed and signed by the author to Sinclair Lewis: "Für Sinclair Lewis, Come Back, Carl Zuckmayer, 22.T.31."

3. Waxman, Percy. *The Black Napoleon: The Story of Toussaint Louverture*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931. \$200.

First edition. Inscribed and signed by the author to Sinclair Lewis: "To Sinclair Lewis, with good wished and a qualm or two, Percy Waxman."

4. Hallendorff, Carl, and Schuck, Adolf. *History of Sweden*. Stockholm: C. E. Fritze Ltd., 1929. \$200.

First edition. Inscribed and signed to Sinclair Lewis by Hallendorff.

5. Halifax, Robert. *The White Thread*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1913. \$150.

First edition. Warmly inscribed and signed by the author to Sinclair Lewis.

BOOKS INSCRIBED TO DOROTHY THOMPSON
AND/OR MAXIM KOPF6. Zuckmayer, Carl. *Die Langen Wege*. S. Fischer Verlag, 1952. \$100.

Softcover in dj (dj torn): Signed and inscribed: "To Dorothy and Maxim" by the author.

7. Weiskopf, F. C., ed. *Hundred Towers: A Czechoslovak Anthology Of Creative Writing*. New York: L. B. Fischer, 1945. \$40.00.

Hardcover, signed and inscribed: "To Dorothy Thompson and Maxim Kopf with the compliments of the editor, this little dose of the old country."

8. Zuckmayer, Carl. *Der Seelenbrau*. Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer, Verlag, 1945. \$50.

Signed and inscribed: "To Dorothy and Maxim."

9. Zuckmayer, Carl. *Der Gesang Im Feuerofen*. S. Fischer, Verlag, 1950. \$95.00.

Signed and inscribed: "To Dorothy and Maxim." Softcover.

10. Wierzynski, Casimir. *The Life and Death of Chopin*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1949. \$75.

First edition, signed and inscribed: "To Mr. and Mrs. Maxim Kopf, with admiration and hope that this book will find friends in them."

11. Pelligrini, Anglelo. *The Unprejudiced Palate*. New York: Macmillan, 1948. \$60.*The collection of books for sale from the library of Dorothy Thompson will be concluded in the spring 2009 issue. It includes many books inscribed to her by leading scholars of the day.*