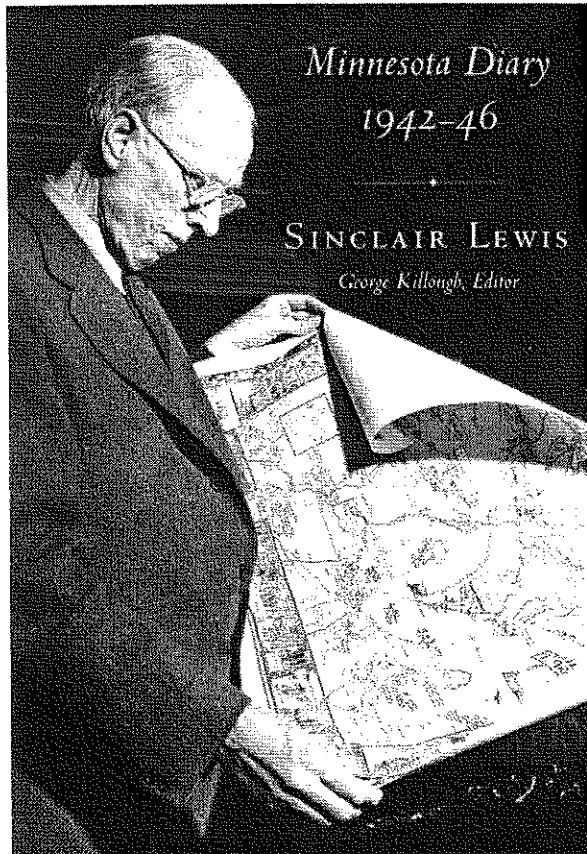


# The SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME NINE, NUMBER TWO

SPRING 2001



## MINNESOTA DIARY IS PUBLISHED

The Minnesota Diary that Sinclair Lewis kept between 1942 and 1946 has been published by the University of Idaho Press. George Killough, the editor, spent years tracking down the references that Lewis made, speaking with people about the city of Duluth in the 1940s, others who knew the Lewis family and Sauk Centre, and some who are actually mentioned in the diary.

The diary is a labor of love for Professor Killough, who was attracted to the private side of Lewis. In the diary, he commented on nature, including his interest in the writings of Henry David Thoreau, his connections with the state of Minnesota, and current events. As Killough says at the end of the introduction, "If Lewis thought he had

Minnesota Diary continued on page 2

## MODERN LIBRARY TO REPRINT *KINGSBLOOD ROYAL*

In news that is sure to delight all readers of Sinclair Lewis, the Modern Library has announced its intention to reprint *Kingsblood Royal*, Lewis's 1947 novel of race relations in America. The paperback book will be on sale in mid-April with a price of \$12.95. The new introduction is by Charles Johnson, award-winning author of the novel *Middle Passage*. Modern Library has kindly permitted the newsletter to print an excerpt from the introduction:

All in all, *Kingsblood Royal* is a perennially astonishing book, for Lewis, a chronicler of American life since 1912, deploys the full range of his satirical and mimetic gifts, his naturalist's fidelity to detail, and his amazingly careful research into black life to exhaustively catalogue the entire gamut of WASP practices and toxic, sociological fantasies. To put this bluntly, Lewis absorbed more African-American history than most blacks knew in 1947 (and today). And, as if this were not enough, he writes with such devastatingly accurate insights into the absurdity of what W. E. B. DuBois called the twentieth century's central problem, "the color line," that after fifty-four years *Kingsblood Royal* reads as if it might well have been written yesterday—and by someone with a master's degree in Black Studies. No less noteworthy is the fact that this savage novel appeared at the very moment Americans concluded, with much self-congratulation, a world war to stop the greatest "race man" of all time, Adolf Hitler, and a full generation before the color-blind civil rights movement inspired blacks and whites to challenge northern enclaves of bigotry and middle-class banality like Grand Republic....

Yet while this book follows a template Lewis developed in earlier novels such as *Main Street* and *Babbitt*—the story of an idealistic "insider" gradually transformed into a nonconforming social rebel who exposes some form of hypocrisy in American culture—it must be judged, in the final analysis, as less a novel than a corrosively effective polemic. Composed in

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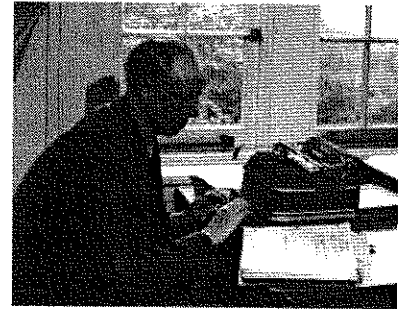
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just begun to capture a uniquely American character in *Babbitt*, this diary should provide enough glimpses of the private Lewis to allow readers to feel the same optimism for discovery about this significant American author.”



Larry Oakes, in a feature article on the *Diary* in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, January 7, 2001, notes that the “newly published Lewis diary suggests he also had a quiet, reflective side that came through in loving, lyrical observations about the home state he apparently never got out of his system.” Lewis lived in several places in Minnesota during this time, including two years in Duluth, which many critics see as the model for Grand Republic, the city featured in *Cass Timberlane* and *Kingsblood Royal*. Although Mark Schorer, in his biography of Lewis, dismissed the diary as inconsequential, Killough sees it as balancing the negative portrayal that Schorer created. Schorer concentrated on Lewis’s “legendary faults,” many of them connected with his alcoholism. “But Lewis also was friendly, generous, funny, honest, playful, loving, reflective and optimistic,” Killough said.

Lewis was never content to stay in one place too long, and by 1946 he had sold the house in Duluth and later bought one in Williamstown, Massachusetts: Thorvale Farm. Killough notes that in the *Diary*, Lewis “was chronicling his search for a home.... In his own peculiar way, he was trying to understand who he was, where he came from, and what direction he should take.”

*Minnesota Diary, 1942-46*, is published by the University of Idaho Press, 1-800-847-7377, for \$39.95, 293 pages. A full length review by Roger Forseth will appear in the fall 2001 issue of *The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter*. ✍

### CONTRIBUTORS

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

These people include Frederick Betz, Martin Bucco, Frank Day, Clare Eby, Roger Forseth, Ralph Goldstein, Laurel Hessing, Brooke Hessler, James Hutchisson, George Killough, Jacqueline Koenig, Richard Lingeman, Joyce Lyng, Robert L. McLaughlin, Roberta Olson, Roberta Parry, Peter Paulino, Adrienne Short, Modern Library Publicity, Dave Simpkins, Fr. Raymond Steffes, and John L. Washburn.

# HUH: KNOWLEDGE, TRUTH, AND READING AGAINST THE TEXT IN *ARROWSMITH*

Robert L. McLaughlin  
Illinois State University

One of the more frequently used words in Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith*, even more frequently used than *phage*, is the three-letter exclamation, *huh*. Not exclusively, but most often used in the thoughts and dialogue of Lewis's protagonist, doctor-researcher-scientist Martin Arrowsmith, the word serves to betray Arrowsmith's rural, Midwestern origins. *Huh* is a pretty simple word, but in the novel it signifies in a variety of ways: it can signify surprise (huh!); disgust (huh); skepticism (huh); and confusion (huh?). Its repeated presence strikes me as important because it reminds us that we, like Arrowsmith, receive new information—new knowledge—in the context of the knowledge we already have. Thus results our surprise, disgust, skepticism, or confusion as we try to process this new knowledge in terms of what we already know.

Keeping this in mind, I'd like to bring in two quotations from Lewis's fiction.

First:

"More and more, as I think about history...I am convinced that everything that is worth while in the world has been accomplished by the free, inquiring, critical spirit, and that the preservation of this spirit is more important than any social system whatsoever. But the men of ritual and the men of barbarism are capable of shutting up the men of science and of silencing them forever." (*It Can't Happen Here* 312-13)

Second:

Gradually Martin's contemplation moved beyond Almus Pickerbaugh to all leaders, of armies or empires, of universities or churches, and he saw that most of them were Pickerbaughs. He preached to himself, as Max Gottlieb had once preached to him, the loyalty of dissent, the faith of being very doubtful, the gospel of not bawling gospels, the wisdom of admitting the probable ignorance of one's self and of everybody else, and the energetic acceleration of a Movement for going very slow. (*Arrowsmith* 227)

These passages seem quite similar in content: both argue for the importance of skeptical, critical thinking; both point out the dangers in unquestioningly accepting the received wisdom of institutionalized systems; both suggest the value of the individual and, especially, of nonconformism; both might be read as a credo for the iconoclastic Sinclair Lewis. But despite these similarities in content, there are significant differences in context. The first passage is spoken by Doremus Jessup in Lewis's 1935 novel *It Can't Happen Here*. It marks the climax

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of Doremus's political education as he moves from comfortable and vaguely progressive newspaper editor to underground resistance leader, a movement motivated by his reaction to a fascist takeover of the U.S. government. Indeed, the novel balances the big-picture story of how it happened here with the individual story of Doremus learning how to relate to and how to oppose this new sociopolitical situation. The second passage, from *Arrowsmith*, comes about half-way through Martin's movement from medical student to doctor to research scientist and expresses his conviction, a conviction he learns and relearns throughout the novel, that the pursuit of knowledge can take place only outside large- and small-scale sociopolitical contexts. Put simply, truth is available only to those who drop out of the various social relations, necessarily contaminated by competing interests, which distort and subvert truth.

All this is a roundabout way of getting to my argument for this paper: I don't buy it. As a text, *Arrowsmith* seems to want us to see Martin's abjuring of job, wife, child, and every other social relation and retreating from every distraction to a cabin in Vermont to pursue pure knowledge as a triumph. This reading is reinforced not only through Martin's struggles but through the valorized philosophy of Max Gottlieb and the novel's pioneer imagery: just as America was created and defined as a nation by pioneers, who, through courage, drive, and stubbornness, continually moved from the safety of communities to new spaces, the scientist-pioneer must remove himself from his various communities to discover new knowledge. But, as I said, I don't buy it. This reading seems at odds not only with *It Can't Happen Here* but

with everything else Lewis wrote, where his iconoclasm, his critical spirit, no matter how scathing, always seems to be in the service of an almost naive optimism that Americans can be better people and that American society can live up to its promise. In other words, Lewis's fiction seems immersed in ideology, unarguably social.

In my reading of *Arrowsmith*, I'm reminded of his previous novel, *Babbitt*. One of the triumphs of *Babbitt* is Lewis's manipulation of the reader. After spending much of the novel creating a critique of George F. Babbitt and all he stands for, Lewis's narrator encourages a sense of anxiety as Babbitt starts to break out from Babbittry—asking questions, rejecting the received wisdom of the status quo, awakening intellectually and emotionally, becoming something of a bohemian—and a sense of relief and happiness when he gives up his rebellion and settles back into his life. A tension is created between the two contradictory readings the novel encourages: Babbitt triumphant in Babbittry and Babbittry as the corruption at the heart of the middle class. Perhaps by accepting the novel's presentation of Babbitt's return as a happy ending, we're being tricked into implicating ourselves in Babbittry. Perhaps in order to "get" the novel, we have to read against the reading it encourages.

I think a similar but more subtle process is at work in *Arrowsmith*. The text encourages a reading in which we endorse scientist-pioneer-hermit Arrowsmith as he seeks pure knowledge, but the text also offers a counter reading, in which knowledge is the product of the relationship of competing interests and cannot exist outside the context of social relations.

Huh...*Arrowsmith* continued on page 9

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY

The Sinclair Lewis Society is accepting nominations for officers, including President, and an advisory board for the next three years. If you are a member and would be willing to serve, or would like to nominate a member, please write to: The Sinclair Lewis Society at Box 4240, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4240; fax 309 438-5414; or e-mail: [separry@ilstu.edu](mailto:separry@ilstu.edu) and let us know

by August 1, 2001. Elections will take place in September 2001.

The President and Board of Directors help set policy for the organization, contribute to the newsletter, and help with the organization of conferences and panels. All who would like to be more involved with the work of the Sinclair Lewis Society are encouraged to place themselves in nomination.

## WRITERS AT WORK: A VISIT WITH BARNABY CONRAD

Brooke Hessler  
Texas Christian University

"Mr. Lewis," I asked, "just what are my duties? I'm not really qualified to be a secretary."

"Your duties," he said, "are to get up every morning at five-thirty and work on that goddamn book of yours!"

—Barnaby Conrad, *Name Dropping* (188)

As a doctoral student wrestling with the last chapters of her dissertation, Conrad's summer of intense writing and equally intense leisure with Lewis struck me as a dream come true. Like many members of the Sinclair Lewis Society, I had the good fortune to chat with Barnaby during last summer's Sauk Centre conference. Those who have read Mark Schorer's mammoth biography of Lewis may remember his description of Conrad as the young man of "gregariousness and social grace" (766) who lived and worked with Lewis at Thorvale Farm during the summer of 1947. Although I often disagree with Schorer's perspective on Lewis, I certainly agree with this rendering of Conrad. He charmed everyone he met—perhaps especially those of us who caught his late-night piano medley in the hushed lobby of the Palmer House Hotel.

Of all the tales he shared, to me the most memorable were those of the young writer at work with his mentor. Conrad did indeed rise by 5:30 to tackle his manuscript, keeping pace with one of the most self-disciplined authors of his time. As he described Lewis's daily routine—suddenly his own as well—it was clearly the life of a craftsman. While Lewis's stories are rich with romance and insight, the manuscripts themselves did not spring full-formed from his imagination in the manner of the fabled romantic poet. He truly labored at them. Indeed,

Lewis's meticulous notebooks and journals map each phase of his careful research into the characters and contexts of his novels.<sup>1</sup> Over the years I have used photocopies from these notebooks in the classroom to give my students a glimpse of Lewis's "anthropological" approach to writing. What they seem to appreciate most, however, is knowing that a Nobel Prize-winning author had to brainstorm, plan, develop, discuss, and revise his texts just as they do.

I asked Conrad what he learned most about writing from Lewis. He quickly replied, "to affix the seat of your pants to the seat of your chair." Something else he learned was the willingness to part with massive chunks of text: "After reading the first seventy-five pages of my first novel, he told me to throw out



Layne Moore, Christina Schulz, Robert McLaughlin, Sally Parry,  
Rebecca Cooper, Conference Coordinators

the first seventy-three pages." Lewis himself abandoned large sections of text on the advice of his editors, among them his wives Grace Hegger and Dorothy Thompson. (One of my students' favorite pages of the "Babbitt Notebook" features a broad "X" slashed across a full page of typed narration; in the margin is a caricature of a woman holding her nose.) Conrad attributes some

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Writers at Work continued from page 5

of his own diligence and editorial ruthlessness to his apprenticeship with Lewis. By the time he departed Thorvale, Conrad had completed his first novel, *The Innocent Villa*, which was published within a year. A highly successful and prolific author, Conrad regularly gives lectures and personal guidance to other creative writers. He founded and directs the acclaimed Santa Barbara Writers' Conference.

When our discussion ended, I actually returned to my hotel room, affixed the seat of my pants to a chair by the window, and wrote feverishly for about a half hour. After reading this text, I crossed out all but a few sentences, then went to the bar for a drink. "Next," I vowed, "I'll begin setting the alarm clock."

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For those readers interested in viewing Lewis's manuscripts and

notebooks, I highly recommend a visit to the Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center in Sauk Centre, MN, as well as the Lewis archives at St. Cloud State University and Yale University. A number of pages from Lewis's notebooks and typescripts for *Main Street*, *Babbitt*, *Arrowsmith*, *Elmer Gantry*, and *Dodsworth* are reproduced in Jim Hutchisson's marvelous *The Rise of Sinclair Lewis, 1920-1930*.

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Some of the participants at the Lewis 2000 Conference in Sauk Centre

## SINCLAIR LEWIS AND THE BOOK

Martin Bucco

Colorado State University

“As for me and my house,” Sinclair Lewis informed the American Association of Booksellers in 1936, “we shall serve the Lord in books” (“Enemies” 2014). Characters who love, hate, or are indifferent to books and reading occupy many of the satirist’s pages. Some rooms are walled or stacked or littered with books, some altogether bereft. Learning something about the body and soul of a book from having admired his father’s copy of *Wilhelm Meister*, Lewis liked to have books—old familiar volumes and attractive new works—around him. What fixes your class, liberal Doremus Jessup tells communist Karl Pascal in *It Can’t Happen Here*, is not what you earn but how you spend—“bigger funeral services or more books” (247).

Lewis’s novels reveal his feelings not only about certain writers but also about books as physical objects. During the 1906 Christmas shopping rush, the twenty-one-year-old Lewis clerked in the book section of New York’s Siegel-Cooper department store (Schorer 115). Sensing from behind the lingerie counter at Wanamacy’s the pleasure of proximity to books, good Nelly Croubel in *Our Mr. Wrenn* at one time wanted to work in the book department (249). At Professor Henry Frazer’s tea in *The Trail of the Hawk*, Carl Erickson sees on an oak table, “exquisite books from England, bound in terra-cotta and olive-green cloth with intricate gold designs, heavy-looking, but astonishingly light to the hand; books about Celtic legends and Provençal jongleurs” (68). Unlike the stained textbooks and shallow novels that constituted his experiences of literature, Carl suddenly believes in culture. In Paris, *Dodsworth’s* Sam sees a cornucopia of inexpensive books “bound in paper of a thin-looking yellow” (114). When romantically inclined Christine Gaus in *Cass Timberlane* asserts that the hero likes his fireside and chess and books, Cass replies that she means his “old books, that smell of leather!” (75).

While Lewis disliked tatty books—like the backless ones in the Digamma Pi house in *Arrowsmith* (17)—he also eschewed costly books and sham books. He liked honest, readable, well-made volumes like those he helped select

for the Limited Editions Club. Addressed to the general public rather than to scholars, these books contain lively introductions but no editorial apparatus. For the collector, however, reading books is small beer compared to gathering them. No such die-hard would choose a modern edition of, say, *The Scarlet Letter* printed on good paper in a sturdy binding over a first edition of this work in a highly distressed condition. In the world of *Collectanea*, where a passion for rare books is no guarantee of a passion for great ones, old bookmakers like Aldus and Elzevir are superior to old scribblers like Dante and Shakespeare. As a reviewer of books and a drummer for readership, Lewis attracted tomes like a magnet. But he ranked the amassing of books simply for their rarity with the collecting of “walking sticks, match books, or the shirts of movie heroes” (“Note” 103). Ironically enough, “Sinclair Lewis”—as this publication amply shows—is highly collectable today. In their collectomania, the “young-old” aristocrats of *Babbitt’s* Zenith no doubt dream of a past more beautiful than the present (391). Although in London his pretentious wife buys elegant English memoirs for the apartment *escritoire*, *Dodsworth’s* Sam never could be one of those touring American businessmen who rounds up first editions in Europe (127). One of the many seductive collectibles for sale at Emmanuel & Co. department store in *Ann Vickers* is the kind of book scorned by *true* readers—an edition of Apuleius on hand-made Japanese paper (224). In *Main Street*, Lewis laughs behind his hand at the “Illustrated Gift Edition” on Juanita Haydock’s square varnished table (87). Lying in state in *Babbitt* is also a standard, illustrated bedside book that no one ever opens (14). And precisely arranged on the mahogany table in the Floral Heights living room rest three sizable gift-books which only the Babbitts’ younger daughter, little Tinka, has read (91). Unaware that young Jinny reads serious literature, Christine Gauss comments in *Cass Timberlane* that she can’t imagine the Grand Republic judge “with a gilt-and-satin copy of ‘Mademoiselle Fifi’ or whatever it is your Virginia reads” (75).

Oddly, one finds only in the first two of Lewis’s post-Nobel Prize novels (*Ann Vickers* and *Work of Art*) several energetic—even elaborate—“book” metaphors. Unlike her choice of an abortion for her first pregnancy, Ann

————— Sinclair Lewis and the Book *continued on page 8*

Sinclair Lewis and the Book *continued from page 7*

Vickers chooses to continue her second pregnancy—perhaps because this was Barney Dolphin’s “definitive edition...not the limp-bound version that might have been issued with Lafe Resnick as father” (477). Rejecting, however, Barney’s idea of living abroad, Ann says that she prefers her work with convicts in America: “Kittie Cognac is like a novel I’ve read three quarters of. I want to read the rest” (479). But more ingenious are the images in *Work of Art* that support the novel’s controlling metaphor of Hotelier-as-Poet. Awed initially by an 1880s bill of fare listing more than a hundred dishes, sensible Myron Weagle ultimately balks: “The poet was privileged to peep through glass at a volume of sonnets, printed in gold on blue-dyed vellum and bound in scarlet silk—and suddenly his common sense flashed out and he wanted it bound in morocco and printed in honest black on decent white!” (100). At one point, Lewis asks if the young hotelman is not weary of so much work and study. Answer: “Is any poet weary or dolorous when he sits up till dawn over a newly come parcel of books?” (111). “Lit’ry” brother Ora’s output of five books in fifteen years seems to Myron thin, especially the little guide book and the small dream book—“trickles of mint-flavored text around large raw hunks of illustration” (312). Finally, in

the spring of 1927, Myron looks upon his Works—Black Thread Inn—“bound in gray shingle” (373). Lewis depicts him later making the rounds of his creation: “The poet reading the first typescript of his epic, astonished by his own elegance!” (377). Only then does it dawn on Myron that the timing is all wrong—he has brought forth his epic “just at the beginning of this period of prose...” (399).

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### Modern Library *continued from page 1*

roughly 16 months, with a first draft in only five,<sup>1</sup> *Kingsblood Royal* has the feel of a barn-burning tract.... But even though it is flawed and failed as a fully realized work of fiction, it succeeded in shocking the million and a half readers of *Kingsblood Royal* from their mid-century racial slumbers...and it added a new dimension to the novel of “passing” established as a literary sub-genre by two generations of distinguished, black American authors.

One final observation by Lewis deserves our attention.

“Actually,” he wrote in his essay “the ‘race question’ is only a small part of *Kingsblood Royal*, but it is the part that will stand out.”<sup>2</sup> When this author, whose earlier works critically examined a variety of twentieth century institutions such as the medical profession (*Arrowsmith*), organized religion (*Elmer Gantry*), big business (*Dodsworth*), American fascism (*It Can’t Happen Here*), and social welfare (*Ann Vickers*)—when he thought about Neil Kingsblood he saw a young man whose “romantic and rather terrifying courage” had not been blunted by “the banal

slickness of electric refrigerators and tiled bathrooms and convertible coupes,” in other words, all the detritus of contemporary lives mired in conformity, lies, materialism, hatred and anti-intellectualism....

That “terrifying courage” of the individual confronting the tyranny and torpidity of the tribe is constantly held up for admiration in his *oeuvre* and, for Sinclair Lewis, is the deeper—and perhaps truly universal—meaning of *Kingsblood Royal*.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mark Schorer, *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 748.

<sup>2</sup> All quotes from Sinclair Lewis’s essay, “A Note about *Kingsblood Royal*,” originally published in a 1947 essay in *Wings*, the Literary Guild Review, are taken from *The Man from Main Street*, ed. by Harry E. Maule and Melville H. Cane (New York: Random House, 1953), 36-41.

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Huh... *Arrowsmith* continued from page 4

As Martin goes along his medical pilgrim's progress, from the Medical College at Winnemac, through being a general practitioner in Wheatsylvania, through public health service in Nautilus, through specialist medicine at the Rouncefield clinic, finally to scientific research at the McGurk Institute, the novel introduces and then complicates a series of intellectual, medical, and social conflicts within which Martin must function. To list only a few, these conflicts include: scientific knowledge vs. literary knowledge; idealism vs. the sureness of science; medicine as public service vs. medicine as business; public relations or image vs. fact; practical results vs. pure research; preventative public health vs. curing illnesses; humanitarianism vs. experimentation. One particularly important conflict, connected to the novel's early-established pioneer vs. community and pioneer vs. museum imagery, is that between received knowledge and scientifically proven knowledge. As a student at Winnemac, Martin, we're told,

had learned from Gottlieb the trick of using the word "control" in reference to the person or animal or chemical left untreated during an experiment, as a standard for comparison; and there is no trick more infuriating. When a physician boasted of his success with this drug or that electric cabinet, Gottlieb always snorted, "Where was your control? How many cases did you have under identical conditions, and how many of them did not get treatment?" Now Martin began to mouth it—control, control, control, where's your control? where's your control?—till most of his fellows and a few of his instructors desired to lynch him. (40)

His instructor in prescription medicine responds to his challenges of how anyone knows that certain prescriptions treat certain illnesses by saying,

"How do they know? Why, my critical young friend, because thousands of physicians have used it for years and found their patients getting better, and that's how they know!...

"If I did not hesitate to waste the time of the other members of this class, I would try to convince you that my statements may be accepted, not on my humble authority, but because they are the conclusions of wise men—men wiser or certainly a little older than you, my friend—through many ages." (40-41)

The problems with both positions are clear. Just because something has been believed for years, that doesn't make it true. (Or is the earth really flat? Are the Cubs re-

ally going to win the pennant?) But, on the other hand, can a doctor in good conscience withhold treatment—a treatment he or she has every reasonable expectation of being effective—from a patient so as to have a control, so that he or she can know absolutely? We see here, quite early in the novel, the dilemma that will face Arrowsmith on St. Hubert.

Add to these conflicts specific to Martin's medical rites of passage the political and economic conflicts that exist between classes in most any community and the competing interests that result from individuals or groups fighting for resources or recognition. (I'm told such competition goes on even in English departments.) The novel ends up creating a complex social and intellectual field of action in the midst of which Martin seeks to define himself as a doctor and/or scientist and to articulate a relationship to the truth. The novel chronicles his successes and failures, mostly failures, in this quest.

Lewis's setup here reminds me of Michel Foucault's conception of the workings of power and knowledge. Foucault argues that power, far from operating in a one-way, binary-based flow—that is, power flowing from the powerful to act on the powerless—operates instead through the interaction of various social relations. Here, the location of power is ambiguous: a group or institution seeks to force its will on others; the others resist and develop techniques of resistance; the initial group or institution revises its own techniques in response to this resistance; and so on. Think of a person with a dog: Where in that relationship does the power reside—with the master or the pet? Most likely, power exists throughout the relationship and is in continual negotiation. Knowledge, for Foucault, is the product of the complex interaction among these relationships. These relationships create the conditions of knowledge, that is, the conditions or the rules under which a statement will count as true or false. As societies change and as power relations change, the conditions by which knowledge is constituted change, as does knowledge itself.

Martin's successes and failures in his quest to define himself and to articulate a relationship to the truth are based in his ability to negotiate the complex intellectual and social arena Lewis has created for him. Much of his difficulty in this is suggested by his initial physical description: "his hair and restless eyes were black, his skin unusually white, and the contrast gave him an air of

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passionate variability" (2). This suggests to me Martin's tendency to see issues in black and white instead of more subtle shades of gray. Later, after Martin's night of ca-rouising with public-health expert Gustav Sondelius, the narrator tells us, "And the great god Sondelius had slain Dean Silva, as Silva had slain Gottlieb, Gottlieb had slain 'Encore' Edwards the playful chemist, Edwards had slain Doc Vickerson, and Vickerson had slain the minister's son who had a real trapeze in his barn" (184). We're told three things here. First, that Martin does indeed need a god to worship, an authority of some kind in whom he can base his values and find a context within which he can judge the world in the absolutes of black and white. Second, Martin seems unable to worship more than one god at a time. Each new influence that comes into his life must replace the previous one completely, an unhappy consequence of thinking in absolutes. Third, Martin is, as his description claimed, passionately variable: his pattern of worship and apostasy, his periodic overhauling of his values, would seem to undercut the confidence he places in absolutes.

In fact, Martin's confidence in absolutes—black and white, right and wrong, truth and lies, integrity and hypocrisy—leaves him repeatedly ill-equipped to function in the various social contexts in which he finds himself. At Winnemac, Wheatsylvania, and Nautilus, his refusal to recognize that any legitimate interests are at work besides his own leads to his repeated failures to accomplish good. As a believer in absolutes, he is above negotiating in the messy social world, but the work of a doctor and public-health official is in that social world. The rhetoric

of Lewis's narrator encourages us to admire Martin because he sticks to his ideals and refuses to play along with or compromise with the small-minded, self-interested, and hypocritical people around him. Leora characterizes him as a "lie hunter" (218), a manifestation of the free, inquiring, critical spirit so important in a democratic society. But as readers, we can't help but notice that Martin fails almost everywhere he goes, alienating the community he'd hope to serve, often needlessly. (In Wheatsylvania, would it hurt him to put the stupid bumper sticker on his car?) We readers might also be disturbed that the ideals he sticks to are so frequently, as we've seen, in flux.

In the climactic section of the novel, St. Hubert can be seen as something of a microcosm for the social situations in the rest of the novel. The plague reaches epidemic status through the unfortunate comingling of the same kinds of interests Martin has been unsuccessfully negotiating the whole novel: the economic interests of the tourist industry; the public relations interests of the politicians; the business-as-usual attitude of the doctors; the status-driven ignorance of race and class divisions. Into this mélange comes public-health standard-bearer Sondelius, whose zealotry approaches dictatorship, the image-consciousness of the McGurk Institute, and the objective research scientist Martin Arrowsmith, accompanied by the shade of Max Gottlieb. This high-pressure mixture of interests edges toward hysteria as the death rate accelerates far beyond any normal social situation.

Martin's dilemma on St. Hubert is established earlier, when he had given phage to some doctors at a New York hospital to try out on their patients, and Gottlieb had dressed him down: "You want to be a miracle man, and not a scientist?" (316). The dichotomy is most baldly stated here: one can be a doctor and work to relieve people of pain and to cure them of illnesses, or one can be a scientist and discover the truth, in this case about the fundamental nature of phage. Martin can't be both a doctor and a scientist on St. Hubert: he must be one or the other exclusively. As Martin prepares to leave for St. Hubert, Gottlieb gives him this last advice:

"Be sure you do not let anything, not even your own good kind heart, spoil your experiment at St. Hubert. I do not make funniness about humanitarianism as I used

## NEW MEMBERS

*The Sinclair Lewis Society welcomes the following new members who joined since the publication of the Fall 2000 newsletter.*

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## DELICATE FELLOWS AND FUGITIVES FROM RAGE: THE AMERICAN NOBEL LAUREATE

Ralph Goldstein  
Damien High School  
California State University, Los Angeles

To a true-blue professor of literature in an American university, literature is not something that a plain human being, living today, painfully sits down to produce. No; it is something dead; it is something magically produced by superhuman beings who must, if they are to be regarded as artists at all, have died at least one hundred years before the diabolical invention of the typewriter.... Our American professors like their literature clear and cold and pure and very dead. (Lewis, "American Fear" 12-13)

Not from recent debates over theoretical approaches or multicultural inclusion, these words are from Sinclair Lewis's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech in 1930, later reprinted under the title "The American Fear of Literature." Warning at the outset that he would "be a little impolite regarding certain institutions and persons" of his native land, Lewis avenged the denunciations heaped upon him by some members of academia and the clergy (4). His angriest complaint, however, was directed at colleagues engaged primarily in glorifying the nation, writers afraid to expose faults or "express life and beauty and terror" (8). Ambivalent toward his homeland, Lewis called it "the most contradictory...depressing...stirring, of any land in the world" (9).

Now as we mark the fiftieth anniversary of Lewis's death, those of us who introduce students to his work know that his vision of American beauty and terror remains alive. Not dissuaded by critical assessments that call Lewis's novels museum pieces, we teach young people who keenly feel the tension between conformity and rebellion, a central theme of *Babbitt*. Their quest for peer acceptance can lead them to exchange demeaning racial and ethnic jokes like the members of Zenith's Chatham Road Presbyterian Church. They can see the link between George's passion for the most up-to-date alarm clock, cigar lighter, and car and the current frenzy for the latest computer upgrade, digital equipment, and the hideous affront to nature known as the Sports Utility

Vehicle. They can regard George's capitulation to the Good Citizens League, albeit less vivid and grotesque than the attacks on personal freedom depicted by Orwell and Huxley, as more insidious. "Look upon what you might become," I invite my students, "and despair." Treated this way, Lewis's novel can nudge some students beyond the perennial favorite, *The Catcher in the Rye*. Few graduates of college preparatory high schools have the nerve of a Holden Caulfield, Ted Babbitt, or Bill Gates to say no to college. But as most of our students go off to major in business, engineering, or computer science, we can hope their brief exposure to Lewis might give them pause. Where a young man or woman abandons unselfish ideals in favor of a self-serving career, where corporate interests pave wilderness in the name of progress, where there are corrupt, charismatic preachers or underhanded influences on medical research, Lewis lives.

It was Lewis's spirited, self-critical idealism that caught the attention of the Nobel committee. Following the mandate of Nobel's will, and interpreted in various ways since the first literary prize in 1901, winners must exhibit "an idealistic tendency" (qtd. in Espmark 9). Presenting Lewis to the Swedish Academy, Erik Axel Karlfeldt praised the author for reserving his sharpest satiric attacks for institutions, not individuals. Karlfeldt called the making of the "pompously utilitarian" Babbitt into an almost lovable individual "a triumph almost unique in literature" (273).

Before concluding his speech, Lewis saluted three writers from the United States: Eugene O'Neill, William Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway, all of whom he praised for their own idealistic pursuits and abandonment of tradition. Later recognized by the Swedish Academy, these writers shared a view of America that was, to use Lewis's terms, often "contradictory, depressing, and stirring." Like Lewis, the three future laureates experienced polarized highs and lows; each suffered from alcoholism, extreme bouts of depression, and marital dysfunction. John Steinbeck, a native-born laureate not mentioned by Lewis in 1930, endured similar personal difficulties.

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to; sometimes now I t'ink the vulgar and contentious human race may yet have as much grace and good taste as the cats. But if this is to be, there must be knowledge. So many men, Martin, are kind and neighborly; so few have added to knowledge. You have the chance!...

"You must not be just a good doctor at St. Hubert. You must pity, oh, so much the generation after generation yet to come that you can refuse to let yourself indulge in pity for the men you will see dying....

"Let nothing, neither beautiful pity nor fear of your own death, keep you from making this plague experiment complete." (354)

Of course, once immersed in the messy social context of St. Hubert, Martin finds it difficult and then impossible to keep any clear distinctions. Because of the pressures of the various interests around him, because of the arguments and then the death of Sondelius, and most important because of the death of Leora, Martin throws over the role of scientist and becomes a doctor, helping whomever he can. His justification is the context in which he's trying to function. Thinking back on Gottlieb's final advice, "It came to him that Gottlieb, in his secluded innocence, had not realized what it meant to gain leave to experiment amid the hysteria of an epidemic" (375). And on his journey back to New York, he says, "Men who never had the experience of trying, in the midst of an epidemic, to remain calm and keep experimental conditions, do not realize in the security of their laboratories what one has to contend with" (400).

It is at this point, I think, that the novel creates the most tension between possible readings. The people of St. Hubert, the ones who lived, anyway, and the McGurk Institute, think Martin is a hero and the phage a medical miracle. Martin sees himself as a traitor to science. What is the reader to think? Has Martin failed again, in the one social situation from which he couldn't run away to a new job? Or has he compromisingly but effectively negotiated the conflicts of his social context to achieve a contingent success? True, the fundamental nature of phage is still unknown, and its effectiveness as a cure for the plague is not absolutely, scientifically proven. But the circumstantial evidence, much like the evidence about prescription drugs Martin scoffed at back at Winnemac, suggests that it works. Perhaps absolute knowledge about anything is impossible and contingent

knowledge is the best we can hope for. Where does the novel leave us?

Martin's point of view is clear, and the rhetoric of the narrator seems to encourage us to agree with him. Martin rejects the adulation thrown his way and rejects, it seems, the lessons St. Hubert offered him about functioning within a social context and the contingent nature of knowledge. He seeks instead to remove himself as completely as possible from any but the most personal kind of intellectual and social contexts, heading off for the Vermont woods in the hope, apparently, that in a practically contextless situation, he will be able to pursue and perhaps even discover pure knowledge, absolute truth. Although he recognizes that this plan will make him "less human" (447), there the novel leaves him, apparently in triumph. But I wonder if the novel is also suggesting a counter reading, where we should see Martin most triumphant at that point where he is most human, on St. Hubert when he gives phage to all who need it.

I was thinking about *Arrowsmith* last summer when I was in Germany touring Peenemünde, the spot on the Baltic where Wernher von Braun and a host of other scientists developed the V-2 rocket, a terror weapon that killed thousands of people in London and Antwerp, and the Mittelwerk, an underground assembly-line factory where the V-2 was manufactured and where over 20,000 slave laborers were worked to death. Von Braun and his cohorts, who became good American citizens after the war, justified themselves by arguing that they were interested only in reaching the stars, in pursuing the pure science of rocketry; they tried rhetorically to remove themselves from their social context of Nazism and war. As Doremus Jessup learns, such emotional and intellectual blinders and know-nothing rhetoric serve the needs of fascism, not a democratic system. I don't think Doremus would escape with Martin into the Vermont woods, but I can see him helping line people up for their phage injections. For that matter, I can see Lewis helping too; I don't think he'd have lasted long in the woods.

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In sharp contrast to most of the native-born laureates, there is an absence of self-destructive behavior in the Nobel Prize winners who immigrated to the United States. Fugitives from Nazi or communist regimes, their very existence threatened by external forces, Isaac Singer, Czeslaw Milosz, and Joseph Brodsky were strengthened by their struggle to leave their respective homelands and establish themselves here. Although Canadian-born Saul Bellow was not exposed to the same level of persecution, he shares with the other émigrés an obligation and will to survive in a post-Holocaust world. Knowing first-hand the oppressive nature of American racism, Toni Morrison, the most recent U.S. laureate, seems energized by resisting it through her work. American colleges and universities, taking a belated cue from Lewis, have made their schools less "cold" and "dead" by inviting the immigrant laureates and Morrison to work inside.

The experience of the more recent laureates suggests that there is not a necessary link between American literary achievement and self-destruction. My exploration of this question begins with a look at a comment by H. L. Mencken written in 1924. Perhaps with his then-friend Lewis also in mind, Mencken stated:

It is almost as safe to assume that an artist of any dignity is against his country, i.e., against the environment in which God hath placed him, as it is to assume that his country is against the artist. The special quality which makes an artist of him might almost be defined, indeed, as an extraordinary capacity for irritation, a pathological sensitiveness to environmental pricks and stings. He differs from the rest of us mainly because he reacts sharply and in an uncommon manner to phenomena which leave the rest of us unmoved, or, at most, merely annoy us vaguely. He is, in brief, a more delicate fellow than we are, and hence less fitted to prosper and enjoy himself under the conditions of life which he and we must face alike. Therefore, he takes to artistic endeavor, which is at once a criticism of life and an attempt to escape from life.

So much for the theory of it. The more the facts are studied, the more they bear it out. In those fields of art, at all events, which concern themselves with ideas as well as with sensations it is almost impossible to find any trace of an artist who was not actively hostile to his environment, and thus an indifferent patriot. From Dante to Tolstoy and from Shakespeare to Mark Twain

the story is ever the same. Names suggest themselves instantly: Goethe, Swift, Dostoevsky, Carlyle, Moliere, Pope—all bitter critics of their time and nation, most of them piously hated by the contemporary 100 percenters, some of them actually fugitives from rage and reprisal. (562-63)

One of Lewis's strongest allies in the 1920s, Mencken called *Babbitt* "the best American novel, saving only *Huckleberry Finn*," that he had ever read (qtd. in Hobson 229). By 1932, however, Mencken said that Lewis was "hopeless," "completely sunk," a "sad mess" (370). What accounted for Lewis's descent, in Mencken's eyes, was not merely the alcohol, but also "a very active inferiority complex," and environmental pricks and stings that included the "stigma of Sauk Center [*sic*]," and Lewis's "two poisonous wives" (369). Mark Schorer's lengthy discussion of Lewis's decline contains anecdotes like the following from Lewis's second wife, Dorothy Thompson:

Sometimes he walks up to his small son, hardly more than a baby, and takes him by the shoulder. "Don't you be a writer," he tells the child. "Writing is an escape from something. You be a scientist" (573).

After he won the Nobel, Lewis stated: "This is the end of me. This is fatal. I cannot live up to it" (543).

Concern about failing to sustain their achievement is common among the native-born laureates who followed Lewis, and may have contributed to their alcoholism. Frederick Karl, one of Faulkner's biographers, advances a number of other theories to explain excessive drinking by American writers. One of them holds that drinking and writing are compatible, "that both are part of an oral mechanism—mouth for words, mouth and digestive system for alcohol" (130). Another theory suggests that American writers drink to assert their manhood, to distinguish themselves while engaging in what the culture regards a "feminine" activity, writing literature in an age that rewards scientific achievement and physical development among males. Still another theory views silent, solitary drinking as exemplary of American individualism, "the cowboy on the range, the frontiersman with no one to look to except himself, the independent man or woman who eschews connections" (131). While Karl is not fond of any of these theories, he recog-

nizes a link between creativity and self-destruction. The alcohol that stimulates the brain and sparks "imagination, perception, or vision," also advances the compulsion to self-destruct. "The two are interlocked," he claims, "so that drink is as necessary to life as is creation; and creation is itself part of a death act, an element of self-destruction" (131).

Studies by psychiatrists Felix Post and Arnold Ludwig indeed found a higher incidence of alcoholism and depression among American and British writers than in the general population. Post cites the link between melancholia and creativity as going back to Aristotle (553), and Ludwig reminds us that Plato termed the inspirational drive "divine madness" (1). As for the cause of the higher incidence of alcoholism among American writers, Ludwig cryptically cites "cultural expectations in the United States" without much explanation beyond seeing the penchant of writers to meet together in an alcoholic milieu, a pub, bar, or café, as a cause for their drinking (134).

What the psychiatrists ignore is the often bitter, cynical, inward nature of modernism. The native-born laureates have in common at least an absence of, or, in some cases, hostility to religious faith that might have sustained them. Underpinning its portrait of a charlatan, a part of the narrative in Lewis's *Elmer Gantry* questions the divinity of Christ and the validity of the Gospels. The loss of faith plays out significantly in O'Neill's work, particularly *Lazarus Laughed* and *Dynamo*.

In *The Great God Brown*, O'Neill pits in a losing battle his pagan-like Dion Anthony against what he called the "masochistic, life-denying spirit of Christianity" (qtd. in Gassner 395). Commenting on *The Hairy Ape*, O'Neill said the play centered on "man and his struggle with his own fate. The struggle used to be with the gods, but is now with himself, his own past, his attempt 'to belong'" (393).

Interviewed in 1946 when *The Iceman Cometh* premiered, O'Neill showed himself to be, as Mencken might have put it, "an indifferent patriot." "I'm going on the theory," O'Neill said, "that the United States, instead of being the most successful country in the world, is the greatest failure" (401). Set in a bar, this play is arguably O'Neill's bleakest.

Hickey's desire for oblivion is something William Faulkner could understand. Calling each one of Faulkner's drinking bouts "a prolonged gesture of suicide," Frederick Karl sees them as "further linked aspects of his creative

imagination" (13). Like Roger Forseth, who comments that Lewis excelled only at writing and drinking (595), Karl calls Faulkner "a man made for perhaps three elements: writing, silences, and drinking" (13). Faulkner's enduring work prominently features suicide, betrayal, incest, madness, adultery, and lack of redemption. In his delirium on the day he takes his life, Quentin Compson meditates on the New Testament urging to "wake up," particularly the chapter from the Book of Mark which tells of a miracle performed by Jesus, removing the demons from the self-flagellating man who called himself "Legion." Quentin's demons, unfortunately, would not go into the swine. Coincidentally, about two decades later, J.D. Salinger's young protagonist cites "that lunatic and all, that lived in the tombs and kept cutting himself with stones" as his favorite person in the Bible after Jesus (99).

William Faulkner admired *The Catcher in the Rye* and sympathized with its main character who searched, as Faulkner put it, "to find man and wanted something to love, and he couldn't" (qtd. in Karl 983). Like Holden, Faulkner was hospitalized for depression and exhaustion exacerbated by heavy drinking. The American writer next honored in Stockholm, Ernest Hemingway, later underwent twenty-five electroshock treatments during his two stays at the Mayo Clinic. Believing that he was the target of FBI and CIA surveillance, frail, withdrawn, with a liver swollen from years of alcoholic indulgence, Hemingway would take his own life soon thereafter. Philip Young, one of Hemingway's biographers, urges us to pay more attention to Hemingway the writer than to Hemingway the man. He cites a comment from *A Farewell to Arms* as illustrative of Hemingway's life and work: "The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places" (qtd. in Young 262). Yet Hemingway was not strong in the broken place where his youthful practice of Catholicism once was. Hemingway's pessimistic religious vision is reflected in Jake Barnes's half-hearted attempts to pray. As she sits with Jake Barnes in a bar at the conclusion of *The Sun Also Rises*, Brett comments about the kindness of barmen and how good she feels "deciding not to be a bitch." She muses, "It's sort of what we have instead of God" (245).

After the publication of *Sun*, Hemingway's mother sent him a letter questioning his interest in "loyalty, nobil-

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ity, honor and fineness of life" (qtd. in Lynn 357). Upset by the profane language, she said she found every page loathsome. "If I should pick up a book by any other writer with such words in it," she told him, "I should read no more—but pitch it in the fire." Hemingway responded a couple of months later:

I am sure the book is unpleasant. But it is not *all* unpleasant and I am sure is no more unpleasant than the real inner lives of some of our best Oak Park families.... The people I wrote of were certainly burned out, hollow and smashed—and that is the way I have attempted to show them. ("To Grace Hemingway" 243)

A reference to T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" deleted from the manuscript of *A Farewell to Arms* indicates that Hemingway was working with Eliot's poetry in the 1920s. It is somewhat ironic that the poet whose early work epitomized the modernist vision escaped the personal deterioration suffered by his American counterparts. The cover of *Time* magazine on March 6, 1950 suggests how his conversion from Unitarianism to Anglican Catholicism was crucial. One hand holds a martini, the other a crucifix; underneath the caption wonders "No middle way out of the Waste Land?" (qtd. in Ackroyd 137). The devotional language of *Ash Wednesday*, typical of Eliot's later work, depicts a process of purging alienation and isolation through religious commitment. Unfortunately attached to Eliot's religious principles is his anti-Semitism. While his apologists claim that he differs little from other polite bigots of the time or that he linked Jews with the liberal Unitarians he despised or that we must separate the speakers in his poems from Eliot the man, his comments on tradition in *After Strange Gods* are explicit. "Reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable," he maintained. "And a spirit of excessive tolerance is to be deprecated" (19-20).

Three of the Nobel laureates to follow Eliot and Steinbeck were naturalized Americans attracted to the United States by its spirit of tolerance. Bellow, Singer, and Brodsky, three "free-thinking Jews," did not exhibit Eliot's piety, but a Baghdad newspaper still complained of the "Zionization" of the Prize after the first two won (Espmark 162).

Saul Bellow's early heroes have ambiguous commitments to religion, family, and self, experiencing the

uncomfortable American circumstance for immigrants of being free but having unclear notions of how to use the freedom. More recent Bellow heroes find consolation in literary success while someone close to them deteriorates. In *Humboldt's Gift* and now in *Ravelstein* we witness the self-destruction of Von Humboldt Fleisher, based on Delmore Schwartz, and Abe Ravelstein, based on Allan Bloom. It is enough for each autobiographical protagonist that he survives. While not suffering the dissipation of the native-born laureates, Bellow shares with Hemingway the record for most marriages, with four.

Unlike Bellow, who immigrated at age nine, Isaac Singer came to the U.S. as an adult. Without friends or family, without steady work, and sensing that his native Yiddish was a dying language, Singer was pitched into a depression that kept him from writing anything for seven years (Kresh 142). Emerging from it, he created a tragicomic body of work that has universal appeal. Not religiously devout, Singer nonetheless consistently explored man's relationship with God. Not unlike that of Mark Twain, Singer's work took a grimmer, misanthropic turn in his later years.

Like Singer, Lithuanian-born Czeslaw Milosz fled Poland to escape political difficulties and establish himself in the West. The following excerpt from his essay "On Exile" sheds light on his ability to flourish as a writer.

A loss of harmony with the surrounding space, the inability to feel at home in the world, so oppressive to an expatriate, a refugee, an immigrant, paradoxically integrates him in contemporary society and makes him, if he is an artist, understood by all. Even more, to express the existential situation of modern man, one must live in exile of some sort. (245)

The next exiled laureate, Joseph Brodsky, had long-lasting quarrels with Soviet authority. Abandoning formal education at 15, he studied with Anna Akhmatova and educated himself while drifting through so many jobs that he was arrested multiple times for the Soviet crime of "social parasitism." The transcript of his 1964 trial depicts a judge rejecting Brodsky's claims of being a poet because he "did not try to finish university where they prepare, where they teach...." Brodsky interrupts by saying that he "didn't think you could get

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this from school.”

Judge: How, then?

Brodsky: I think that it...(confused)...comes from God. (“The Trial” 6-7)

The authorities detained Brodsky in mental hospitals and forced labor camps before they let him leave the country. Ambiguous about his Jewish identity, Brodsky irritated some Western Jews by including Christian imagery in his poetry (Benedict 20). His interest in Eliot’s work indicates sympathy for a fellow exile. Brodsky saw exile as a badge of honor and regarded literature as “a dictionary, a compendium of meanings for this or that human lot, for this or that experience.... Its function is to save the next man, the new arrival, from falling into an old trap” (33).

The “old trap” that Toni Morrison strives to reveal and eliminate is that which ignores the existence of African-American life in its fullness. Which one of the departed native-born laureates, the delicate fellows, would be most enthusiastic about Morrison’s achievement, her enchanting stories, her heroines who eke out some measure of triumph? Weary of seeing iconoclastic characters lose battles, critical of racial and religious prejudice and dissatisfied with his own attempt in *Kingsblood Royal* to address the issue of race, condemning from the Stockholm lectern the absence of “life,” “beauty,” and “terror” in American literature, Morrison’s fellow Midwesterner Sinclair Lewis would be most delighted by her work.

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# SINCLAIR LEWIS FOUNDATION

A NON-PROFIT CORPORATION



OPERATING THE LEWIS BOYHOOD HOME MUSEUM

Highway 194 and Highway 71  
Sauk Centre MN 56378 • 612-352-5201

February 21, 2001

To members of the Sinclair Lewis Society and their friends and supporters:  
"You can't go home again."

We've often heard that said in reference to recapturing our roots. Yet Sinclair Lewis often returned to Minnesota, choosing to live in a handful of communities in the state while he produced some of his best work.

He also made pilgrimages to his hometown of Sauk Centre, stopping to reminisce in the frame house on present-day Sinclair Lewis Avenue where he grew up.

The Boyhood Home, which has withstood the footsteps of Red as a boy and as an internationally famous novelist, is showing its age, however. The toll of time and Minnesota winters is showing in the shingles and siding (not to mention the porches, pillars and windows).

The Sinclair Lewis Foundation of Sauk Centre has chipped away at "band-aid" repairs over the years because we cannot afford the total cost of the renovation that is needed to preserve the integrity of the house.

In short, the time has come to give the Lewis Boyhood Home a major facelift.

Here's what needs to be done: re-shingle the roof, repair interior water damage from the leaky roof, replace the siding (and add insulation in the process), repair drafty windows, replace rotting porch pillars and woodwork, and spruce-up the landscaping. All of this needs to be done in a fashion that preserves the historical and interpretive accuracy of the era in which Lewis lived in the home.

This is where we need your help. The project estimate is about \$48,000. When completed at this cost, the home will look the same but will be able to stand like new for generations to come.

We would like to construct a tasteful stone bench and a circle of flagstone bricks by the flagpole in the front yard. Each brick would be inscribed with the name of those who donate \$1,000 for the project. The bench will bear the name of the largest donor(s). We will post a plaque in the home with the names of those who donate \$500 or more.

Novelist Pearl S. Buck, upon visiting the simple home of Red Lewis's youth, asked "Why should that fiery, honest, impatient spirit have come of such a house...?" A house that she described as a "...sober, comfortable, middle-class house."

Lewis buffs from around the world still stand silently, as did Pearl S. Buck, in front of the Boyhood Home.

Our hope is that this renovation project will restore the simple strength of the home that bore the running footsteps and held the quiet daydreams of America's first novelist to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. Our dream is that Red himself would approve of the work and appreciate the generosity of those who helped to make it a reality.

If you would like to help, and know of others who may be interested, please contact Roberta Olson, president of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, today at 960 Lilac Dr., Sauk Centre MN 56378; 320-352-6119.

What better way to honor Sinclair Lewis in his hometown than by doing the best job that we can in preserving his Boyhood Home?

We may not be able to go home again, but we can ensure that the "...comfortable, middle-class house" that sheltered the "...fiery, honest, impatient spirit" of young Red Lewis will shed the prairie storms and summer sun of Sauk Centre for decades to come.

On behalf of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, thank you for your support in the preservation of an American icon in the midst of "Gopher Prairie."

Roberta Olson, President  
Sinclair Lewis Foundation

## NEWS FROM THE SINCLAIR LEWIS FOUNDATION

The Sinclair Lewis Foundation held their annual meeting and birthday celebration in Sauk Centre on February 7th, honoring Lewis's 116th birthday. Birthday cake, refreshments, and door prizes followed a short business meeting.

The Foundation operates and maintains the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home and Museum, as well as sponsoring other activities in Lewis's name. It is a non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving the memory of Sauk Centre's most famous citizen and encouraging the study of his literary works. The Boyhood Home has been restored to the turn of the last century and has the distinction of being declared a National Historic Site. There were 1,170 visitors who toured the home last season and 3,685 who visited the Sinclair Lewis Museum at the Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center.

The Boyhood Home is in need of major repairs:

the roof needs to be resingled, the wood siding, window shutters and front porch need repair and paint, and in the house woodwork needs to be repainted and wall-paper needs to be repaired where the roof has leaked. The Board applied for a matching grant from the Minnesota Historical Society and is encouraging contributions to raise money equal to the value of the grant awarded to them for the project. [See the letter from Roberta Olson of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation on the opposite page.]

Please join the Foundation and/or contribute money to the repairs on the house. Dues are \$10 for a single, \$7 for a senior citizen, \$12 for a couple, and \$20 for a business. The membership cycle begins and ends on February 7th each year. Dues can be sent to Irene Trisko, Treasurer, Sinclair Lewis Foundation, 314 Pendergast St., Sauk Centre, MN 56378. If you have questions about the project, please call 320-352-2624.

### List of Sinclair Lewis Souvenirs for Sale

*Main Street*—6.35  
*Babbitt*—6.35  
*Arrowsmith*—6.35  
*Dodsworth*—5.25  
*Elmer Gantry*—8.50  
*It Can't Happen Here*—7.40  
*The Job*—16.25  
*Ann Vickers*—16.25  
*Free Air*—13.00  
*If I Were Boss* /business short stories —21.70  
*Sinclair Lewis Remembered* by Isabel Lewis Agrell —17.00  
*Sinclair Lewis, The Journey* by Roberta Olson—10.60  
*Sinclair Lewis at Thorvale Farm* by Ida Compton—5.00  
*Sinclair Lewis, Home at Last* by John Koblas—10.00  
*Sinclair Lewis, A Descriptive Bibliography* by Stephen Pastore—63.85  
 BOOKMARKS/Lewis Stamp/Book Charm—5.40  
 PAGE WEIGHT/Lewis Stamp—14.50  
 MAGNET/Lewis Stamp—4.20  
 KEY CHAIN/Lewis Stamp—4.80  
 BAG TAG/Lewis Stamp—4.75  
 BOOKMARK/Lewis Picture/List of Novels/Laminated—1.00

NOTE CARDS/15 in a box/with envelopes—5.75  
 MEDALLIONS/Gold, silver, bronze, pewter—3.00  
 MUG /75th Anniversary publication *Main Street*—5.00  
 MUG/Conference for *Babbitt & Kingsblood Royal*—6.40  
 SINCLAIR LEWIS BOYHOOD HOME WOODEN REPLICA—12.80  
 FIRST DAY COVER LETTERS/Lewis Stamp hand cancelled/centennial year 1985—2.15  
 POST CARD /Lewis Stamp/hand cancelled/centennial year 1985—1.50  
 POST CARDS/Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home/color—35

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ATTN: JOYCE LYN

P.O. BOX 222

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Shipping and handling cost is \$5.00. Prices include sales tax.

The Sinclair Lewis Foundation has a large number of Sinclair Lewis's novels in hard cover also. To obtain the list please write to Joyce Lyng at the above address and she'll send you the list which will include the cost of each book. Thank You!

## LEWIS AND CLAUDE WASHBURN

John L. Washburn

My father, Claude C. Washburn of Duluth, was a great friend of Sinclair Lewis, and I have four letters from Lewis to Claude. In one he tells of finishing *Main Street* and then, later, he sent my father and mother a copy of *Main Street* with an inscription on the fly leaf suggesting that they look at page 67. On page 67 of the first edition of *Main Street* you will see that Claude Washburn is mentioned.

If anyone has information about their relationship, I would be glad to receive it because I am preparing a biography of my father. I cannot find out when the two authors became friends. When I was a child I remember Lewis, who had passed out on a sofa in our house in Italy. He was drunk. I asked, "What is that man doing there?" "Just sleeping" was the answer.

Two of my classmates at Harvard and I started the North Shore Players, a summer theatre, at Marblehead, Massachusetts, in 1939. Marcella Powers was in the Lewis play and all I can remember was that his face, without makeup, was ravaged by some sort of skin disease. He was a lousy actor and all of us, being young, were disgusted at his relationship with this pretty young girl, also a very poor actress. I am very sorry now that I didn't remind him that I was the little boy he had met in Rapallo and ask him to tell me about his friendship with Claude. However, I never said anything to him about his past friendship with my father and now I'm sorry that I didn't, as he might have given me some interesting anecdotes about how they met and other stories about their relationship.

My father's novels are out of print, and I thought that simply writing a biography without a good sample of his work would not do him justice. The trouble is

that he was a very good writer, much better in many ways than Sinclair Lewis, who readily admitted the fact. Claude was unfortunately ahead of his time. But even if I have only a few copies of my effort printed, it should be of interest to the Minnesota libraries and maybe a few reviewers who, having read my condensations, might ask for a full reprint.

[Mr. Washburn sent the newsletter copies of several Lewis letters, including one in which he mimics the speech of son Wells. Two excerpts from the letters are reprinted below.]

In a letter Lewis wrote to Washburn December 4, 1920 he said, "I have already made a dismaying big book of notes about my next novel, which will be some what of the *Main Street* type, tho in detail utterly different. Then, by God, when they've all decided I can do nothing but accumulate details, I'll give 'em a book all reserve, suggestion, classic—a sharp personality against a background entirely implied.... With the probable result that the old boosters will curse me as having done something 'easy' and the old knockers (there are some) won't read it, and all will be merry."

In the same letter, Lewis wrote, "Your letter about *Main Street* and in especial about what the NY Globe reviewer cruelly calls 'Cultured Carrie' is bully. I don't entirely submit, but I don't of course for a minute think that Carol is anything like admirably sympathetic soundly tutored, or in the least clear what she wants (even when she's with Erik!) Only I like the girl better than you do—and if you'd ever lived in a Gopher Prairie you'd either like her better or, in defense of GP like her a lot less! I dunno—I'm not really so awfully superior to Carol even at her worst.... If I were couldn't write so feelingly of GP! It wouldn't matter to me!" ✍



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

<http://lilt.ilstu.edu//separry/newsletter.htm>



## SKETCHING UTOPIA: THREE REVIEWS

### Lewis's Song, "Main Street," A Highlight

by Peter Paulino

*Sketching Utopia* (book and lyrics by Laurel Hessing; music by Arthur Abrams; directed by Crystal Field; produced by Theatre for the New City, New York) explores a little known chapter in American social history. Based on the experiences and writings of a turn-of-the-century couple searching for the perfect place to raise a family and create art, Ms. Hessing examines the fervent idealism and bumpy human relationships within two experimental communities, Helicon Hall, founded by Upton Sinclair, and Bolton Hall. Most of the play's action is set at Helicon Hall, a seemingly Edenic place that still manages to contain a snake or two. (Not everyone, it seems, can accept Free Love along with communal living and a single tax.) And needless to say, there is much outside hostility directed against these social rebels, often with tragic consequences. Of interest to Sinclair Lewis fans is the fact that Lewis (known here as "Hal") left Yale to become a charter member of Upton Sinclair's utopian scheme. Actor Enzo Gentile gives a dynamic, sharply drawn portrayal of the young Lewis and his performance of the song, "Main Street," is one of the highlights of the evening. Other historical personages portrayed in the play include Emma Goldman, Teddy Roosevelt and Ogden Armour. While these utopian communities ultimately failed, *Sketching Utopia* assures us that the idealism that sparked them continues to burn.

### Designing Utopia

by Richard Lingeman

While not a great evening in the Theater, it was an uncommonly rewarding and lively one, dripping with creativity and originality. I went in with the usual skepticism about making a play out of this historical episode of Helicon Hall—not to mention a "play with songs." But Laurel Hessing, the playwright and SL Society member, brought off the former commendably—and the latter, via her lyrics and Arthur Abrams's music, sensationally. The direction by Crystal Field, who is executive director of the Theater for the New City, which mounted this production, deserves special commenda-

tion for injecting life, energy and pageantry into the show. Hessing, who has apparently researched deeply the history of the Free Acres, NJ, Experimental Utopian Artists Community, founded in 1910, ties its story to its predecessor, Upton Sinclair's cooperative.

The play opens in the present, among a family currently living where the Free Acres commune once existed, whose parental units are roiled up by the young people's participation in anti-homeless and anti-WTO demonstrations. This scene, with its pat generation-gap setup, comes across as a bit forced and didactic—until about a dozen cast members tumble on stage and gleefully sing a parody of the Chiquita Banana song—aimed at that company's exploitive labor policies and political conniving to get Europe to accept its products.

The underlying idea is to tie the radical idealism of the present with that of Upton Sinclair's day. Over an oral-history bridge erected by Aunt Jane, who tells the story of the kids' great-grandparents, the play flashes back to Helicon Hall. The great-grandparents, an artist and an actress, hear about Sinclair's experiment, go there, and are granted admission.

There follow more songs and ensemble numbers, with the highlight a chorus of meatpackers, who in their Mr. Big top hats and tails look like they stepped out of an Art Young cartoon in *The Masses*, singing the "Meat Packers' Song," reprising Sinclair's findings in *The Jungle* about sausage "with a little bit of pickles," constituted of spoiled meat plus the odd dead rat and human body part and even one unfortunate worker who falls into the cooking vat. Sinclair himself is a charismatic but troubled man as played by Philip Hackett, who ably conveys him physically and psychologically. His relationship with his wife, Meta, a poet, emblemizes a crack in the utopian facade—the inferior role of women, despite the colony's purpose of lifting the curse of housework. Upton is a womanizer who comes on to another female colonist, causing Meta to conclude that "free love" is window-dressing. Yeah: the man is free while the woman pays....

Sinclair Lewis is on the scene, a serious and earnest young man. His big number comes after a chorus

————— *Sketching Utopia continued on page 22*

Sketching Utopia continued from page 21

of locals hurl anathemas at the colony, branding it a hive of anarchists, free-lovers and communists. Upon hearing this he launches into an impassioned song, "Main Street," attacking the conformity of small minds. ("Everybody walks the line / everybody likes it and calls it fine.") The concept may not sound promising, theatrically, being a kind of summary of the message of the novel *Main Street*; but as powerfully delivered by Enzo Gentile, it gathers considerable impact. Some of the other songs are of lesser quality and performance, but the best of Hessing and Abrams's numbers have a cynical impudence reminiscent of Brecht and Weill's songs. As already mentioned, they are performed kinetically by the mostly youthful, certainly energetic cast with infectious joy, transforming themselves from Chiquita Bananas to meatpackers to frenetic gypsies. As political theater, *Sketching Utopia* overcomes occasional didacticism to bring alive the passionate idealism that is its theme. The personal stories that interweave with the historical story are less effectively dramatized, particularly the relationship between Meta and Sinclair. We are never given time to know and become involved with the individual characters, who never quite become individuals, despite the actors' good work. Those minor weaknesses aside, *Sketching Utopia* kept me on the edge of my folding chair in the New City's unluxurious venue on Manhattan's Lower East side. The theater lobby—its brick walls adorned with free-form paintings and graffiti, along with curious statuary and stand-alone columns—is an installation in its own right.

### The Second Life of Helicon Hall

by Clare Eby  
University of Connecticut

On Sunday, February 11, I attended a matinee of *Sketching Utopia*, written by Laurel Hessing, with music composed by Arthur Abrams and directed by Crystal Field, at the Theater for the New City in New York. Expecting this musical about the Helicon Hall community that Upton Sinclair founded with money earned from the huge success of *The Jungle* (1906) to be largely of academic interest—but intrigued with the prospect of seeing Sinclair Lewis and other favorite authors on stage—



Detail from poster

I was in for a delightful surprise. The theater was intimate, the cast lively, the plot engaging, the costumes splendid, and the songs surprisingly effective. Although *The Jungle* was the play's primary literary reference point, Sinclair Lewis aficionados may be pleased to hear that a song entitled "Main Street" provided a pithy summary of the novel's concerns. Playwright Hessing clearly did her research, for many of *Sketching Utopia*'s details conformed to facts I already knew (Upton Sinclair's *Autobiography* was clearly a leading source), while introducing me to figures about whom I knew little if anything.

The story of the Helicon Hall experiment was wrapped within a present-day frame that introduced the primary theme of the difficulty of maintaining utopian ideals within a capitalist social order. The first act, set in a New Jersey suburb in 1999, featured songs about life: "At the Mall," "WTO," and "Chiquita Banana." This introductory frame also introduced the audience to characters who were descended from Undena Eberlein, the first historical person to be developed at length.

Undena (played by Elizabeth Anne Ruf), who struggled to maintain her acting career while also being a wife and mother, introduced the play's abiding interest in women's longing for autonomy. She and her hus-

Sketching Utopia continued on page 23

ing Utopia continued from page 22

Ernest, a painter (played by Michael Vazquez), and the Helicon Hall community, hoping that it would be an opportunity for them both to pursue their dreams while ensuring cooperative and loving care for their families. Hessing seems to have been particularly interested in Helicon Hall's women; Upton Sinclair's first wife, Meta, also receives a generous part, although the actress playing her (Victoria Linchon) seemed one of the weaker links, beautiful but awkward in her delivery. There is an undeniable poignancy to Meta's story, as told here: after her husband tells her about his affair with another Helicon Hall resident, Meta confronts her self-destructive dependence on her famous husband and the failure of her marriage. Yet a discussion at the end between Meta and Undena about the ways for women to become fully free came across as somewhat wooden.

Overall, though, the play was engaging and, contrary to my usual reaction to musicals (I perversely tend to skip the songs), I eagerly awaited them. The juxtaposition of "Meat Packers' Song" with "Meat Workers' Song" was especially good, and the stock villainy of the meatpackers—portrayed in black suits, with curly mustaches and producing the requisite sausage with visible human body parts—will be the image that will remain with me from the play. Also appealing was the inclusion of the utopian anthem, "Free the Land," and the Helicon Hall servant Minnie (played by Jane Fanning) with those same evil black-suited actors and their assessment of the utopianites: "Anarchists, Socialists, Vegetarians." Good and evil were drawn in the play, yet effectively complicated by difficult issues, such as the matter of women's rights and the fragility of utopian ideals in practice.


Although Upton Sinclair (played memorably by Michael C. Hall) was the logical as well as the dramatic center of *Sketching Utopia*, and the burning down of Helicon Hall under mysterious circumstances served as the play's climax, the playwright did an excellent job of weaving together a multiplicity of stories. That commitment, which the actors embodied (most of them in multiple roles), perfectly complemented the play's themes while also paying tribute to the spirit of Helicon Hall. The Sinclair Lewis character (played by the wonderful Enzo Gentile) articulated what was at stake in the play now: "We are a few artists sketching utopia."

The sentiment was especially effective because "Hal" (as Lewis was called at the time to minimize confusion with Upton Sinclair) came into the audience to deliver the message, thus making his dream *our* dream. In the performance I attended, Hal even sat down with the audience. He also explained in his "Main Street" song that the forces of evil so aptly concretized in the black-suited meatpackers did not begin and end with rich capitalists. Rather, evil permeates every Main Street, every Gopher Prairie—everywhere that the forces of complacency, compromise, and boosterism win out over independent thought and the artistic spirit.

I wonder what a viewer less familiar with the historical background would make of the play. Certainly the actors lost no opportunity to reach out to the packed audience, encouraging us at the end to keep "sketching utopia" in our own lives. Moved, I could not leave the Theater for the New City without shaking the hand of Upton Sinclair. Thankfully, he obliged me. ✍

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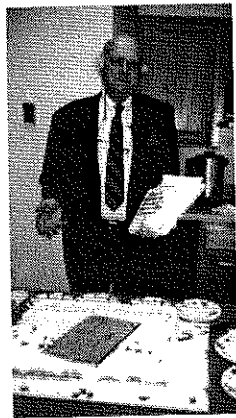
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## SINCLAIR LEWIS FOUNDATION: REPORT OF 2000 ACTIVITIES

The year 2000 was a busy one for the Sinclair Lewis Foundation. We sold the Birth Home, and co-hosted the 2000 Sinclair Lewis *Arrowsmith* Conference in July.

The Foundation sold the Birth Home at a price of \$51,900. We have invested \$48,898 in CDs at interest rates of 7.05 and 6.45 percent. Plans are to use the interest, and as little of the principal as possible for the long-range repair and upkeep program at the Boyhood Home. We are keeping the funds in savings with an eye to the future if the Foundation finds it will have to move to a new location.

The academic conference on *Arrowsmith* was held in July, in conjunction with Sinclair Lewis Days. The conference is hosted by the Sinclair Lewis Society of Illinois State University, with Prof. Sally Parry as the coordinator. College and university professors from around the country converged on Sauk Centre to present their papers on *Arrowsmith*, *It Can't Happen Here*, and *Hike and the Aeroplane*. Barnaby Conrad, Carpenteria, Calif., who had served as Sinclair Lewis's secretary in 1947, was the keynote speaker. He was wonderfully colorful, gracious, charming and knowledgeable, and gave us a lot of inside information on Lewis. Conrad is a famous author, artist and former bullfighter, and his contribution made the conference more interesting. We were also excited to have the attorney for the Lewis family, Eugene Winick, New York City, in attendance, to show him what the Foundation is about. We are anticipating a 2002 conference based on *Elmer Gantry*.



Barnaby Conrad  
Photo by S. Parry

The Foundation hired Philip Wright and Kevin Nagle of St. Cloud State University to redo the videotape being used at the Interpretive Center. We kept the original video script and many of the original slides, but added a lot of color with live shots of the Lewis sites in Sauk Centre: Main Street, the Boyhood Home, and the Interpretive Center. Music was also added in the background. The video was shortened from 18 to 12 minutes, better in keeping with today's hurried lifestyles. The cost was about \$1,300.

The 2000 Writers Conference was held in October with Jim Umhoefer as the coordinator. Doug Wood was the keynote speaker, and presenters were David Murphree on non-fiction; Marjory Dörner, character development; and Al Sichertman, *Minneapolis Tribune* columnist and feature writer. As usual, the conference was well attended and well received. Thanks to Jim for a job well done! Jim wrote several grant applications and received grants from The Loft, Minnesota Humanities Commission, and the Stearns County Historical Society.

The Foundation participated in the Sinclair Lewis Days Parade, entering the 1929 Model A Ford owned and driven by Chester Kolaskie. Our tour guides, Joyce Lyng and Alyce Olsen, rode in the parade.

Daniel Chabris, Madison, Conn., donated three boxes of books, 87 of them, valued at about \$3,500 to the Foundation. Some have been placed on display at the Boyhood Home and at the Interpretive Center, and others are in the archives for reference.

Isabel Lewis Agrell, niece of Sinclair Lewis, died Aug. 12, 2000, in Prescott, Ariz. Her family donated several items to the Foundation which are being stored in the archives at this time.

### COMING IN 2001

The Minnesota Historical Society has requested the return of 20 items on loan at the Boyhood Home. The board received a grant to pay for replacement items for those to be returned. Alice Bromen had been working on locating and buying items from area antique stores to replace those items.

We have prioritized the Foundation's focus, which will be the care and upkeep of the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home. Phase One will be the reroofing project this spring for which we are seeking matching grants from the Minnesota Historical Society. Phase Two, either in the fall, or in 2002, will be replacing the home's siding, porch columns and some windows. Phase Three will be to refurbish the interior, including replacing wallpaper that received water damage from the leaky roof, and repainting where needed. We will be conducting a fund drive to help with this project which will total about \$35,000 or more, over the three years. ✍

## SINCLAIR LEWIS NOTES

Here's a query from an interested Lewis fan. Anyone having information about Lewis staying with Pope Pius XII in the late 1940s should contact Dave Simpkins at davesimpkins@saukherald.com. He has heard about Lewis visiting the Pope but would like confirmation.

—SLSN—

James Atlas, in his introduction to *Bellow: A Biography* (Random House, 2000), notes that writing a "biography is a process of immersion...[acquiring] an ever-deepening intimacy with his subject, discovering in the process how contradictory and, in the end, unfathomable we all are, both to others and ourselves. The relationship isn't always smooth: to disapprove, to feel exasperation, resentment, even hatred, are all parts of it. But to feel a lack of engagement is fatal; witness Mark Schorer, who in the process of writing his compendious biography of Sinclair Lewis, came to loathe his subject."

—SLSN—

The *Zagat 2001 Guide to Top U.S. Hotels, Resorts and Spas* lists Twin Farms in Barnard, Vermont, as one of the best small inns or lodges in the country. A night at the 14-room inn runs about \$850. Twin Farms was owned for many years by Sinclair Lewis and Dorothy Thompson. Who knows what they'd think of this?

—SLSN—

On a C-SPAN Book TV show in December, Tom Wolfe talked about Sinclair Lewis as he received the Thomas Wolfe Award. The modern Tom Wolfe spoke with approbation of Lewis's Nobel Prize speech where he praised Thomas Wolfe and his *Look Homeward, Angel* as "worthy to be compared with the best in our literary production." The modern Wolfe also speaks well of Lewis in his autobiographical *Hooking Up* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000). In a review of the book in *The New York Times Book Review* of November 5, 2000, Maureen Dowd says, "In defending his own brand of reported novels, which he says are in the tradition of Dickens, Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Balzac and Zola,...[Wolfe writes that America] 'needs novelists

with the energy and the verve to approach America the way her moviemakers do, which is to say, with a ravenous curiosity and an urge to go out among her 270 million souls and talk to them and look them in the eye.'" Sinclair Lewis spotters will see a number of references to Lewis. See especially p. 161 in the essay "My Three Stooges," the Stooges being John Updike, Norman Mailer, and John Irving, all of whom sneered at Wolfe's last novel.

—SLSN—

Another contemporary writer who mentions Lewis fondly is Thomas Mallon in his *In Fact: Essays on Writers and Writing* (Pantheon, 2001). William H. Pritchard, in his review in *The New York Times Book Review* of January 14, 2001, writes "The short accounts of some American novelists read today by only a minority, John Dos Passos, John O'Hara, Sinclair Lewis, are not such as will lead to a revival of their work, but the Lewis essay contains observations made telling through Mallon's vivid phrasing. Lewis, an author bent on being 'a sort of anti-chamber of commerce,' allows for 'gentle moments' in the midst of his satiric denigrations but these moments 'tend to be carried in and deposited like a hot towel by some minor character who disappears before you can thank him.' Such writing has the effect of enlivening rather than withering its subject."

—SLSN—

"Are We as Happy as We Think?," an op-ed article in *The New York Times* from May 7, 2000 by Alan Ehrenhalt, was written during the presidential campaign and notes that this is "a bad time to be a social critic." He recalls other times in twentieth-century American history where the middle class seemed to be well off financially, but in poor shape in terms of a social conscience. He quotes H. L. Mencken, Walter Lippman, and Michael Harrington, as well as Sinclair Lewis, who warned during the summer of 1928 that "'within a year, this country will have a terrible financial panic.' It was a remarkable prediction little noted by anyone."

—SLSN—



Mary Bodne, ex-owner of the Algonquin Hotel in New York, died last March at the age of 93. She and her husband owned the hotel for 41 years and catered to celebrities ranging from Beatrice Lillie and Eddie Cantor to Gertrude Lawrence and Sinclair Lewis. Lerner and Loewe wrote *My Fair Lady* there while the Bodnes owned the Algonquin, and Mrs. Bodne retained long friendships with entertainers such as Lawrence Olivier, Ella Fitzgerald, and Brendan Behan. The hotel was sold in 1987 to the Aoki Corporation and resold in 1997 to the Camberly Hotel Company. Mrs. Bodne lived at the hotel until her death.

————— SLSN —————

*The Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 28, 2000) reports on a new course at Princeton University: American Studies 351, "The Big Money: America's Ambivalence about Wealth." The course, taught by Marcia Y. Cantarella, explores the mixed feelings that students have about acquiring wealth and centers these concerns in the 1920s, which Professor Cantarella sees as having many parallels to today. The primary text is John Dos Passos's *The Big Money*, and students also read Lewis's *Babbitt*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Barbara Ehrenreich's *Fear of Falling*, Frederick Lewis Allen's *Only Yesterday*, and excerpts from nonfiction and newspapers. There are also four required films to watch: *A Place in the Sun*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Ragtime*, and *How to Marry a Millionaire*.

————— SLSN —————

In a column on mysteries in the January 28, 2001 *Washington Post*, Maureen Corrigan writes about *Cold and Pure and Very Dead* by Joanne Dobson (Doubleday, 2001). The "catchy title [is] from a quote by Sinclair Lewis: 'Our American professors like their literature clear and cold and pure and very dead.' As that reference suggests, Dobson is adept at weaving learned allusions, academic satire and literary pastiche into her mystery." The novel focuses on English Professor Karen Pelletier, who is coming up for tenure at Enfield College and "when a visiting *New York Times* reporter asks her for her pick as the best novel of the 20th century, she impishly nominates *Oblivion Falls*, a Peyton Place-like blockbuster of the 1950s by reclusive author Mildred Deakin." After the interview is published, the sales of the book boom, the reporter is found dead, and Mildred

Deakin is the chief suspect. Corrigan recommends it highly.

————— SLSN —————

Norman Podhertz has written *My Love Affair with America: The Cautionary Tale of a Cheerful Conservative* (Free Press, 2000). In a review by Joseph Dorman in *The New York Times Book Review* of July 16, 2000, he notes that Podhertz seems to be mellowing in some ways, but that this autobiography is truly "a complex portrait of 20<sup>th</sup> century intellectual life. Podhertz provides a particularly sharp-edged overview of the longstanding ambivalence intellectuals have shown toward American culture since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, from Henry Adams's aristocratically inspired vitriol against American vulgarity to Sinclair Lewis's scorn for middle-class values to the left-leaning New York intellectuals' attacks on middlebrow culture."

————— SLSN —————

*Babbitts and Bohemians: From the Great War to the Great Depression* (1997) by Elizabeth Stevenson is selling well in paperback with a new introduction by the author. The author explores the new sense of self and the world during this period, locating this sense in the writings of Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, H. L. Mencken, and William Faulkner, among others. She also writes of entertainers, the Harlem Renaissance, the hero worship of Babe Ruth and Charles Lindbergh, and the stock market crash.

————— SLSN —————

The newspaper *The Carmel Pine Cone* usually features a number of ads on real estate. One that appeared on September 29, 2000, used a story about the poet George Sterling, who quit his job in insurance and real estate and moved up to Carmel to be creative. The ad says that others, like Mary Austin, Jimmy Harper, Jack London, Sinclair Lewis, and Upton Sinclair, did the same and implies that if you, the reader, wanted to be creative, you'd buy real estate in Carmel too!

————— SLSN —————

Liz Smith's autobiography, *Natural Blonde: A Memoir* (Hyperion, 2000), sets up the context for her birth, February 2, 1923. "I like to think of this time as The Booth Tarkington Era. Dogs still slept in dusty town streets

without getting run over. Little boys, like Penrod and Sam, fished with a string and a bent pin. The combustion engine was just beginning to pollute the atmosphere, replacing the smell of horse manure. Sinclair Lewis had created the fictional all-American nothing—George Babbitt. Mark Twain was still considered a children's storyteller rather than a radical great of American literature."

—SLSN—

*Classic Images* of August 2000 featured a poster of the 1923 film of *Main Street* on its cover. The copy reads "Sinclair Lewis won a Nobel Prize for literature thanks

to the popularity of his novels in Europe where readers, shocked by the rise of American power after World War I, found solace in Lewis's jaundiced views of American life. Lewis was an abusive alcoholic who was unpopular with his neighbors, so naturally Hollywood usually watered down his novels as they did with the 1934 version of Lewis's caustic *Babbitt* starring Guy Kibbee. *Main Street* is a typical Lewis story of a high-minded woman, played by Florence Vidor, who marries a small town doctor (Monte Blue) and suffers the censure of her neighbors when she tries to 'uplift' them." [A complaint about the presentation of Lewis has been sent to the magazine.] ✍

## MIDWESTERN MISCELLANY TO PUBLISH TWO ISSUES ON SINCLAIR LEWIS

To the delight of the Sinclair Lewis Society, the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature's journal, *Midwestern Miscellany*, has agreed to publish two issues on Sinclair Lewis. The first issue applies a variety of theoretical paradigms to Lewis's novels and includes the first two scholarly essays on *Hike and the Aeroplane*, Lewis's only adolescent novel. This issue will be published as the Fall 2000, vol. XXVIII issue sometime later this year. The contents are as follows:

"Deconstructing Culture in *Kingsblood Royal*," Robert L. McLaughlin, Illinois State University

"Constructing Masculinity in *Hike and the Aeroplane*," Caren J. Town, Georgia Southern University

"'war is a horrible thing': Looking at Lewis's Political Philosophy through *Hike and the Aeroplane*," Sally E. Parry, Illinois State University

"'Snowy talker father': Nativism and the Modern Family in *Babbitt*," Ellen Dupree, University of Nevada, Reno

"*Babbitt*: The Literary Dimension," Martin Bucco, Colorado State University

The second issue will feature essays situating Lewis and his characters within their culture and demonstrate the continued importance of Lewis as a writer and social critic. The expected contents are:

"The Idea of Europe in Sinclair Lewis's Novels," Robert E.

Fleming, University of New Mexico

"'Here is the story THE MOVIES DARED NOT MAKE': The Contemporary Context and Reception Strategies of the *New York Post*'s Serialization (1936) of *It Can't Happen Here*," Frederick Betz, Southern Illinois University

"Walden Pond and Tin Lizzie: Sinclair Lewis Records the Great Plains," Roger Forseth, University of Wisconsin-Superior

"The Language of Protest: *It Can't Happen Here* and *Native Son*," Rebecca Cooper, Northern Illinois University

"Mrs. Babbitt and Mrs. Rabbit," Brenda Gabioud Brown, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma

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*Midwestern Miscellany* is edited by David D. Anderson and is published bi-annually by the Center for Midwestern Literature and Culture at Michigan State University.

For information or if you have any questions about *Midwestern Miscellany*, please write to:

The Midwestern Press  
The Center for the Study of Midwestern  
Literature and Culture  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1033

## LEWIS AND THE WEB: INFORMATION AND REQUESTS

*The website has had over 48,000 visitors since October 1998, showing that interest in Sinclair Lewis is still quite strong. The responses received are from all over the world; in this most recent selection, queries have come from Indonesia and Italy. Recently, the webmaster received three e-mails from people with personal connections to Mr. Lewis and so this section will lead off with them.*

My name is John Flowers. I visited the Sinclair Lewis Website after recently learning about my family's association with Sinclair Lewis during the World War II years. My late grandmother, Josephine, and father, Jonathan, stayed at Lewis's Thorvale Farm for more than a year during WWII while my grandfather Max Flowers (92, still alive) served in the Pacific Theater of operations. My father (born in 1938, died 1992) used to call him "Skinny" Lewis. We have a copy of *Treasure Island* that Lewis autographed for my father. He also signed a first-print copy of *Kingsblood Royal* for my grandparents, whom he referred to as "my closest neighbors." A signed photo of Lewis (whom they called "Red") still hangs in my grandfather's living room. Lewis tried to help my grandfather break into the stage and Hollywood during the 1940s. My father is a graduate of Yale Drama School. [The editor has asked Mr. Flowers if he would be willing to write more reminiscences for the newsletter.]

———— SLSN ————

My name is Davide Contini. I am a nephew of Adolfo Contini who was a close friend of Sinclair Lewis and Vincent Sheean during their life in Italy. To remember Mr. Lewis I would like to put a plate on my home wall, close to that I put to remember Mr. Sheean, the text should be (sorry for my English):

IN MEMORY OF SINCLAIR LEWIS

1885 - 1951

THE FIRST AMERICAN TO BE AWARDED THE  
NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE IN 1930

———— SLSN ————

Doubt most will not remember me, but I lived in Sauk Centre for nearly 20 years. I was co-owner of the Palmer

House and very active in the earlier years of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation. A lot of water has gone over the dam in Sauk Centre, and I am thrilled to see the foundation is still alive and well. I was a member for many years even after I left Sauk Centre.

Just wanted to let you all know, keep up the good work. Our society is becoming so crass, the past and literary history is declining. I am in Texas now and still miss the great city of Sauk Centre and the many friends I made while living there.

Sincerely: Allan Tingley

Hi to any who may remember me.

———— SLSN ————

Congratulations!

Your website: <http://lilt.ilstu.edu/separry/lewis.html> has been selected as a featured site in Lightspan's StudyWeb® as one of the best educational resources on the Web by our researchers. You will be able to view it in our People & Places:Biographies:Pulitzer Prize Winners:Specific Individuals section very soon.

StudyWeb® is one of the Internet's premier sites for educational resources for students and teachers. Since 1996, our expert reviewers have scoured the Internet to select only the finest sites to be included in StudyWeb's listing of educational links. Each site in StudyWeb® includes a detailed review describing its editorial and visual merits. If you are unfamiliar with StudyWeb®, please check us out at: <http://www.studyweb.com/>.

Inclusion in StudyWeb® will increase your exposure and attract new visitors to your site; our reviews have been featured on Webcrawler Select, The Lycos Top 5%, Education World and many others, and StudyWeb® updates are provided to media and educational resources around the world.

We invite you to display the prestigious 'StudyWeb® Academic Excellence Award' icon, which is only offered to sites included in the StudyWeb® directory. It is available at: <http://www.studyweb.com/>. Thanks—and again, congratulations!

———— SLSN ————

I wonder whether you may be able to help me. I am writing a biography of the English author Algernon Blackwood (1869-1951). He met Sinclair Lewis at least once in August 1921 when Lewis was staying at Bearsted in Kent (about 8 miles from where I'm writing now) when Blackwood turned up with John Drinkwater and Henry Ainley. In his biography of Lewis, Mark Schorer says that Lewis wrote about these meetings in letters back to his father. Do you know if these letters have been published? Or, if not, where they are archived? I would like to know if Lewis made any comments about Blackwood and, indeed, whether he was acquainted with Blackwood's work? [In response to Mike Ashley, the editor checked and there is only one brief mention of Blackwood in *From Main Street to Stockholm*. It was recommended that he check the Lewis archives at Yale University.]

————— SLSN —————

Thank you for the excerpts from *Main Street* which have inspired me to get a copy of the book and read all of it.

————— SLSN —————

I recently came to discover Sinclair Lewis. I've enjoyed reading for years and I had bought several copies of his works to be read when I had the time. Well, I recently started reading *It Can't Happen Here* and I was immediately won over. As a result my interest was sparked and I found your interesting web site...a very nice job.

————— SLSN —————

I am a member of the James Jones Literary Society. I even had a short essay published last year by them. You as an English professor might be interested in the Society because of your interest in Lewis. Here is the link: <http://rking.vinu.edu.j.htm>.

————— SLSN —————

I am looking for a complete bibliography of the writings of S. Lewis. This would include books, articles, papers, etc. Does such a list exist?

Thank you.

Director, Chapel Hill Public Library [She was referred to the Mark Schorer biography.]

————— SLSN —————

I've been doing some research on Rebecca West and

found comments made on a review she did on *Babbitt*. Supposedly it was Sinclair Lewis's favorite review of the book. I only know that it was published in *The New Statesman*. If you have any information on how I can get this article, I would greatly appreciate it.

[The Rebecca West article on *Babbitt* was reprinted in *Sinclair Lewis: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Mark Schorer in 1962.]

————— SLSN —————

I've been a fan of Sinclair Lewis since high school. I can't understand why he has gone out of fashion. His satire still has a sharp bite. His stories are still compelling. His characters are memorable enough to make his works classics of world literature. His style is clear and vivid. Your page is such a great find. I wish you well with it.

————— SLSN —————

I am an associate editor at *Writer's Digest* magazine, an industry leader in magazines for writers. Each month we have a column called "Literary Trails" where we take a look at a well-known author's hometown and point out places of interest for people interested in the author and his background. This month, I am writing a column about Sinclair Lewis and I was wondering if you could help me find some photos to run along with the 1-page article. I am looking for three photos concerning Sinclair Lewis:

- I. Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center
- II. Lewis's boyhood home (said to be the setting in some of his novels)
- III. A photo of Sinclair Lewis Avenue

If you or someone else could please help me locate these photos, I would greatly appreciate it. I will be happy to send you a copy of the magazine once it is available and all photos will be credited per your recommendation. If you could get back to me as soon as possible, that would be wonderful as I am on a very tight deadline. [Joyce Lyng, the docent at the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home, kindly supplied the photographs.]

————— SLSN —————

Can you help me with this long-standing mystery? I'm a true *Babbitt*-eer. Honest, I've read it about fifty times at least. What, oh WHAT, do the letters in the inscription at the end of this passage stand for:

"Most significant of all was his loose-leaf pocket notebook, that modern and efficient notebook which contained the addresses of people whom he had forgotten, prudent memoranda of postal money-orders which had reached their destinations months ago, stamps which had lost their mucilage, clippings of verses by T. Cholmondeley Frink and of the newspaper editorials from which Babbitt got his opinions and his polysyllables, notes to be sure and do things which he did not intend to do, and one curious inscription: D.S.S.D.M.Y.P.D.F." [pp. 9-10, original edition of *Babbitt*]

[Ed: In the back of my mind there is something telling me that I know what it stands for, but in going through my notes I can't find it. I have a citation from 1940 "*Babbitt: A Mysterious Inscription*" by IGNOTO in vol 179 of *Notes and Queries*, page 11, but I can't find the volume in our library to find out what this person said. I e-mailed James Hutchisson, author of *The Rise of Sinclair Lewis*, to see if he knew and he said "I don't recall the scholar's hypothesis, but it's probably as good as any. There are no clues (so far as I can remember) to this in the original MS. I don't know if Richard [Lingeman] gives the answer in his MS or not. I don't think so; it would have stuck in my mind. My own theory was always that it didn't signify anything, just another practical joke by Red on his readers."]

#### BOOK VALUES

As I write this to you I am looking at a copy of a first edition of *Main Street* which is without a dust cover but in nice condition. On the inside first page is a sketch of a bottle of water labeled H<sub>2</sub>O "a bottle of Old Crow = a fuzzy stick figure." Underneath this it says: "To Beulah Lilienfield with memories of Milwaukee, E. Braistow, Wilmette, Down Town Club, Drexel Boulevard, Sinai? and signed Sinclair Lewis, March 21, 1921. Beulah Lilienfield was my grandmother who died at an early age, before I was born and who lived on the southside of Chicago. Are you aware of a time that Mr. Lewis spent in this vicinity? Can you give a ballpark estimate of what this book may be worth so that I can put it in the book when it is passed along?"

————— SLSN —————

Have *Main Street* 1st edition. What would it be worth? My grandfather left my mother old and rare books that

he collected. How do we go about finding out what they are worth? [Both of these queries were referred to James Lorson, a member of the Sinclair Lewis Society and book dealer. He can be reached at lorson@earthlink.net or at Lorson's Books, 116 West Wilshire Ave., Fullerton, CA 92832, tel. 714-526-2523.]

#### RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Do you know who represents the film/TV rights to Sinclair Lewis's work?

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

McIntosh & Otis  
353 Lexington Ave.  
New York, NY 10016  
(212) 687-7400

The contact at the estate is Eugene Winick.]

————— SLSN —————

I am trying to find out if the Film and Television Movie rights are available for *It Can't Happen Here* by Sinclair Lewis, published in 1935 by Doubleday New York. [This person was also referred to Mr. Winick. *It Can't Happen Here* would make a great film.]

————— SLSN —————

I am currently working on my Master's thesis at the Department of German, Pennsylvania State University. My thesis deals with a collection of letters to Alma Mahler-Werfel on the occasion of her 70th birthday in 1949. This collection was put together by Gustave Arlt, a special friend of the Werfels and faculty member of the Department of Germanic Languages, and is now at the library of Penn State. Among the 77 people who wrote letters to Alma Mahler-Werfel is Sinclair Lewis, whose letter you find at the end of this mail. I would like to publish this collection of letters on the internet because it is not only a birthday present for an interesting woman, but because the letters show the intellectual and cultural connections of the Californian exile. In order to be able to publish these letters I need the permission of the copyright holders. [The copyright information for Lewis was supplied as above.]

"To Alma Mahler, with whom I always remember sharing genial laughter in Vienna, in the Semmering, in New York, in Bronxville, in Beverly

Hills.  
Grüss die Gott!

Sinclair Lewis  
Thorvale Farm  
Williamstown  
Massachusetts  
July 14, 1949"

STUDENT QUERIES

I'm an Indonesian student who looks for the information about *Babbitt*. From now on, I write my final thesis analyzing the influence of the setting to the development of plot in Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*.

————— SLSN —————

Greetings! I am a 16-year-old junior at Boston Latin Academy in Boston, MA. I am writing my junior term paper on Sinclair Lewis and *Babbitt*. I was wondering if you know any places on the internet or certain books where I could find analytical essays, books, etc. on Lewis.

————— SLSN —————

I chose to read *Babbitt* for a school assignment. Now that the deadline is a couple weeks away, I need to find certain things to put into my paper. Your site has been wonderful with the timeline and biography. I was in fact wondering if you know of any sites that would have other critics' reviews of *Babbitt*. I haven't been able to find any so far. Any help you have would be wonderful.

————— SLSN —————

Hi! I am a senior in high school and was assigned to do a term paper on Sinclair Lewis. I am to read three of his works and write a paper suggesting similar themes or characters from the books I choose to read. Could you suggest three books by Sinclair Lewis that have similar themes or character traits? That would be extremely helpful to me!

————— SLSN —————

I am trying to find good sources of critiques of *Babbitt*. Do you know of any?

————— SLSN —————

Hi, I need someone's help. I'm looking for the Cliffs Notes to Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here*. If you can help me out, send it to me. [It doesn't exist. Read the book.]

————— SLSN —————

I'm in an AP English class in Seattle. We're doing an author project and I've chosen Sinclair Lewis. We will, after having read ca. 1000 pages of the author's production and ca. 100 pages of critical essays, write papers on an aspect that we find interesting about our author. I'm still reading his novels but will soon need to have my critical essays. I wonder if you have any, or if you know of any good source for critical essays?

————— SLSN —————

Dear H.S.L. fan,  
I am doing a research paper on Sinclair Lewis and I am wondering if you knew who or what the influences of his greatest works are? I am thinking it might be his parents, and his living places, and his personality. Please e-mail me with your opinions or websites that would be helpful. ✍

## The Sinclair Lewis Homepage

*Books* *Films* *Links*

*Biographies* *Bibliographies*

**LEWIS LINKS**

*Films* *Bibliographies*

*Films* *Books* *Bibliographies*

*Biographies* *Films* *Links*

**And More!**

*He was a consummate professional, a man containing a boy inside...*

<http://lilt.edu/separry/lewis.html>

—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.]

**Between the Covers  
Rare Books, Inc.**

35 W. Maple Avenue  
Merchantville, NJ 08109  
Phone: (856) 665-2284  
Fax: (856) 665-3639  
www.betweencovers.com  
mail@betweencovers.com

**CATALOGUE 78**

36. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Job*. New York: Harper, 1917. \$9500

First edition, first issue. Light wear to the extremities, near fine in a near very good dustwrapper with a chip at the crown affecting the title and some light damp stains on the spine. Preceded by a few minor novels, Lewis called this "my first real novel," and indeed it is considered his first distinguished work of fiction. It was also Lewis's first controversial book—not only was the central plot of Una Golden's struggle for a place in the world of business still controversial in 1917, but ancillary elements of the book such as divorce, birth control, and realistic and radical fiction were particularly problematic for conservative reviewers. A nice copy of an important novel which laid the groundwork for the Nobel laureate's later classics of realism and social criticism such as *Main Street*, *Babbitt*, *Arrowsmith*, *Elmer Gantry*, and *Dodsworth*.

**CATALOGUE 80  
MODERN FIRST EDITIONS & NEW ARRIVALS  
HOLIDAY 2000**

162. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Innocents: A Story for Lovers*. New York: Harpers, 1917. \$28,500

First edition. Fine in fine dustwrapper with very slight wear, housed in a chemise and full morocco slipcase. Inscribed by the author to a close friend, mentioning the flu epidemic then in progress, which killed

# Collector's Corner

50,000 Americans (and 40 million worldwide): "To Harry Korner personally delivered in Cleveland Oct. 23 1918, as a sure preventative to the flu. Sinclair Lewis." Korner was one of Lewis's companions on the cross country trip that resulted in Lewis's *Free Air*. An extraordinary example of the jacket: the delicate red and blue lettering and decoration on the spine is unfaded and red "oil lamp" device on the spine of the jacket is clear and recognizable, reportedly never the case on the handful of other existing examples of the jacket. Lewis's rare fifth novel, a sentimental love story between an older couple. Lewis's biographer Mark Schorer calls this his "hardest to come by. In the University of Minnesota copy [Lewis] wrote, 'I don't own a copy of this...I can't afford it.'" (*Sinclair Lewis: An American Life*. NY: 1961. 246) An achingly beautiful copy of a book exceptionally rare in jacket—probably the best copy in the world.

163. Lewis, Sinclair. *Work of Art*. London: Cape, 1934. \$125

First English edition. Fine in attractive, very good dustwrapper with a bit of fading to the spine and a number of small nicks and tears. The rise, fall and resurrection of an American hotel-keeper.

**CATALOG 82**

24. Graham, Tom [Sinclair Lewis]. *Hike and the Aeroplane*. New York: Stokes 1912. \$6500

First edition. Old, neat repair to the inside hinges, modest soiling, but a nice, very good or a little better copy with only a touch of the usually heavy rubbing. When encountered this cheaply produced children's book is generally found with the lettering and painted pictorial cover very well worn. This is a considerably better than usual copy, lacking the rare dustwrapper.

The very scarce, pseudonymous first book by the first American author to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

### **Robert Dagg Rare Books**

2087 Union Street, Suite 1  
San Francisco, CA 94123  
Phone: (415) 474-7368  
Fax: (415) 474-7382  
e-mail: daggbooks@worldnet.att.net

#### CATALOGUE 31

331. Lewis, Sinclair. *Mantrap*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1926. \$3500

First edition. Some light foxing to fore and bottom edges of pages. Some faint mildew spotting to cloth at spine. Otherwise a tight, near fine copy in the scarce dust jacket. The jacket has one 2-inch closed tear at top of front panel, and another which runs up the spine fold at bottom, then goes horizontally across the spine. There are two small chips, one at top of spine panel, and one near the center of the spine panel, obscuring the bottom half of the last four letters of the word "Author." Some additional minor loss at extremities of rear flap fold. An extremely rare book in dust jacket.

332. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1928. \$650

First edition. Page edges very slightly foxed. Some faint spotting to cloth, otherwise a tight crisp copy in a bright dust jacket, unchipped and unworn, but with a two-inch closed tear at bottom of spine panel (running one-inch up spine fold, then horizontally across spine panel) invisibly repaired. An attractive copy of this increasingly uncommon book.

333. Lewis, Sinclair. *Work of Art*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1934. \$150

First edition. A fine bright copy in dust jacket (neatly price-clipped).

334. Lewis, Sinclair. *It Can't Happen Here*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1935. \$225

First edition. A fine copy in a near fine dust jacket (a few tiny nicks).

335. Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street*. With a Special Introduction by the Author. Illustrations by Grant Wood. Chicago: Printed for the Members of the Limited Editions Club at the Lakeside Press, 1937. \$850

First illustrated edition. *One of 1500 numbered copies signed by the illustrator*. A lovely fine copy in the original glassine dust jacket and publisher's box (spine label slightly faded, minutely nicked at edges). It is very unusual to find the slipcase undamaged. Beautifully illustrated edition of this classic.

336. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Prodigal Parents*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1938. \$150

First edition. Fine copy in dust jacket with some minor restoration at head of spine panel.

337. Lewis, Sinclair. *Bethel Merriday*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1940. \$150

First edition. Fine bright copy in dust jacket with some very minor wear at edges.

338. Lewis, Sinclair. *Gideon Parish*. New York: Random House, 1943. \$150

First edition. Fine in bright unfaded dust jacket missing a few small chips at top and bottom of flap folds.

339. Lewis, Sinclair. *The God-Seeker*. New York: Random House, 1949. \$150

First edition. Some light soiling to page edges. Otherwise fine in dust jacket.

#### WINTER 2000

95. Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922. \$2500

First edition. First issue text. A solid, near fine copy in dust jacket with a few small chips at corners expertly restored. A very attractive copy of this scarce highspot.

96. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927. \$1500

First edition. First issue binding with "G" resembling a "C" on spine. Some light foxing to page edges.



Otherwise a near fine copy in dust jacket with a one-inch closed tear in corner of front panel and a few shallow chips at spine ends neatly restored.

### **Thomas A. Goldwasser Rare Books**

49 Geary Street, Suite 244  
San Francisco, CA 94108  
Phone: (415) 981-4100  
Fax: (415) 981-8935  
Email: goldwasr@pacbell.net

#### SUMMER 2000

170. Lewis, Sinclair. *Launcelot*. [N.p.] Harvey Taylor, 1932. \$300

Wrappers, stapled. First separate edition of a poem published by Lewis in *The Yale Literary Magazine* in 1904, one of 100 numbered copies. Fine.

171. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1928. \$350

Blue cloth. First edition. Fine copy in dust jacket with expert restorations to the edges and strengthening to the folds.

172. Lewis, Sinclair. *Sinclair Lewis on the Valley of the Moon*. [N.p.] Harvey Taylor, 1932. \$250

Wrappers, stapled. First edition, one of 100 numbered copies. Fine.

173. Lewis, Sinclair. *Work of Art*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1934. \$225

Blue cloth. First edition. A fine and bright copy in bright dust jacket with small paper tape repairs on the back.

### **Ken Lopez, Bookseller**

51 Huntington Rd.  
Hadley, MA 01035  
Phone: (413) 584-4827  
Fax: (413) 584-2045  
Email: klopez@well.com  
www.lopezbooks.com

#### CATALOGUE 111—MODERN LITERATURE

207. Lewis, Sinclair. *Mantrap*. New York: Harcourt,

Brace & Co., 1926. \$7500

A scarce novel from the most productive period of Lewis's career, the 1920s. Bookplate front pastedown and contemporary date on flyleaf; blended, nearly invisible dampstaining to lower board edges; a near fine copy in a very good, very slightly spine-sunned dust jacket with several small edge tears and dampstaining visible on verso. A notoriously difficult book to find in dust jacket at all, let alone as attractive a jacket as this one.

### **Pacific Book Auction Galleries**

133 Kearney Street, 4th Flr.  
San Francisco, CA 94108-4805  
Phone: (415) 989-2665  
Fax: (415) 989-1664  
Email: pba@pacificbook.com

#### SALE 212, THURSDAY AUGUST 10, 2000

61. Lewis, Sinclair. *Ann Vickers*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1933.

Blue cloth dec. in gilt, spine lettered in gilt, jacket. First edition. As the dust jacket states on the front flap, "This first edition of *Ann Vickers* is limited to two thousand, three hundred and fifty copies printed on rag paper." Moderate soiling to the jacket, a little crimped at spine ends and corners; vol. spine faded a bit, a few small faded spots to covers; very good or better condition, the jacket quite nice, fine. (200/300) \$287.50

62. Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1925.

Blue boards backed with cream buckram spine, paper spine label, t.e.g., others untrimmed. No. 286 of 500 copies. First Edition. Signed by Lewis on the limitation page. Some soiling to the spine, corners lightly rubbed, a few rubmarks to boards; rear hinge cracking at endpapers, front hinge darkened, else in very good or better condition. (400/700) \$517.50

63. Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927.

Blue cloth lettered in orange, jacket. First Edition. First printing, with "Purdy" in line 4, page 4 (later replaced by "Lyte"), and "my" in line 5, page 4

(later replaced by "any"). Jacket with large (around a half inch) chips at spine ends, 1/4 x 1/4" piece missing from lower edge of front panel, smaller chips at corners and top of front panel, some fading to the spine, all four corners of the flaps dipped (as issued?) and there is no price; vol. a little shelf worn, gently read, rubbing (insect damage?) to rear cover, old bookstore label on front pastedown, else very good in good jacket. (400/700) \$747.50

64. Lewis, Sinclair. *Dodsworth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927.

Blue cloth lettered in orange, jacket. First Edition. Just a touch of rubbing to vol. spine, else fine in fine jacket, very scarce thus. (600/900). \$1380

65. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927.

Blue cloth lettered in orange, jacket. First Edition, First Binding. Signed by Lewis on printed slip reading "I am sorry that I am going abroad before there are completed copies of 'Elmer Gantry' to inscribe, and I am asking my publishers to send you this copy with my warmest greetings." The slip is attached to the front free endpaper by a 2-cent stamp. Review slip laid in loosed, with rubberstamped dated Mar 10 1927. First binding, with the "G" in "Gantry" on spine strongly resembling a "C". Jacket with 1/2 x 1/8" chip/tear to spine head, short tear near spine foot, 2" tear with some minor paper loss to rear panel, light staining to rear panel and flap, neatly split through at rear fold (so flap is detached), partially split at front fold; vol. spine rubbed, bumps to lower corners of both covers, a little shaken, very good or better condition in like jacket. (1500/2500) \$3737.50

66. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927.

Blue cloth lettered in orange, jacket. Fourth Printing. Presentation copy inscribed on the front free endpaper, "To Len Lyons, who is more like Elmer Gantry than any one I know—except that women don't fall for him. Sinclair Lewis, D.D." Jacket with fairly large chips at spine head and top of front panel, a few tears, 1/4" piece missing from central front panel (affecting no lettering), several small edge chips, soiling to rear panel; covers, rubbed, leaning, about very good in very good

jacket. (400/700) \$920

67. Lewis, Sinclair. *Free Air*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1919.

Blue cloth dec. & lettered in lighter blue. First Edition. Light rubbing to the covers, a little more so to spine ends and corners; endpapers, flyleaves and fore-edges foxed, else very good. (150/250). \$97.95

68. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Innocents: A Story for Lovers*. New York: Harper, 1917.

Frontis. Green cloth lettered in gilt on front cover & spine. First Edition. Some rubbing and soiling to the covers, spine gilt dull, top corner of front cover bumped; inscription on front free endpaper dated Dec. 25, 1917, hinge cracking at p. 130, else very good. (150/250) \$115

69. Lewis, Sinclair. *It Can't Happen Here: A Novel*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1935.

Black cloth, embossed decoration on front cover, spine lettered in gilt, jacket. First Edition. A few short tears to the jacket, neat 1" split along front joint, a little soiling; vol. with slight bump to top corner of front cover, light offset to front endpapers, rear pastedown with crease which evidently occurred during the binding, else near fine in very good jacket. (100/150) \$97.75

70. Lewis, Sinclair. *Jayhawker: A Play*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1935.

Blue cloth, embossed decoration and lettering on front cover, spine lettered in gilt, jacket. First Edition. Jacket with light soiling, a bit of wear to edges and extremities, 1/8" x 2" piece missing from top of front panel; vol. with some fading to cover top and bottom edges, else very good in like jacket. (100/150) Unsold

71. Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1921.

Blue cloth lettered in orange. 17th Printing. Presentation copy inscribed on the front free endpaper, "To V.P. Newmark, from the striking face portrayed opposite, Sinclair Lewis," and on the front pastedown is mounted a gravure photo portrait of Lewis. Ink name of Valentine P. Newmark on the rear pastedown; occasional in underlines and marks to the text. Some fading and rubbing to the spine, other light shelf wear; shaken a

bit, some darkening to front endpapers, else very good. (500/800) \$632.50

72. Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1921.

Black cloth lettered in orange, jacket. 21st Printing. Jacket worn, tape repairs to joints and spine head on recto, paper repairs on verso, large chips along joints; foxing to the endpapers and fore-edges, else very good in fair to good jacket. (100/150) \$138

73. Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street*. Chicago: Limited Editions Club, 1937.

Illus. by Grant Wood. 9 3/4" x 7 1/4", cloth, slipcase. No. 1191 of 1500 copies printed at the Lakeside Press. Signed by Wood in the colophon. Slipcase with some wear and light dampstaining; vol. with very light dampstaining along spine and adjacent covers, adhesion mark to front pastedown, else very good in like slipcase. (200/300) \$184

74. Lewis, Sinclair. *Mantrap*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1926.

Blue cloth lettered in orange, jacket. First Edition. Jacket with 1 1/2" tear up front joint half way across spine, a few other tears, chips at spine head and corners; 1/2x1/4" hole in spine; vol. with light spotting to spine, foxing to page edges, light offset to endpapers; still near fine, bright and tight, in very good jacket. (400/700) \$1495

75. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Man Who Knew Coolidge; Being the Soul of Lowell Schmaltz, Constructive and Nordic Citizen*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1928.

Blue cloth lettered in orange, jacket. First Edition. Jacket torn 2" up rear joint and across spine strip, with tape repairs on verso, two edge tears (1" and 1/2") to rear panel, two pinholes and some rubbing spine foot; vol. with light spotting to rear covers, light offset to front pastedown, light foxing to page edges, else fine in near fine jacket. (500/800) \$316.25

76. Lewis, Sinclair. *Our Mr. Wrenn*. New York: Harper, 1914.

Light green cloth dec. & lettered in gilt. First Edition. Lewis's second novel, the first published under his real name. Light rubbing to the covers, most evident at

spine ends and corners, offset to the front endpapers from items previously laid in, else very good. (300/500) \$402.50

77. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Trail of the Hawk: A Comedy of the Seriousness of Life*. New York: Harper, 1915.

Color frontis. by Norman Rockwell. Blue cloth lettered in gilt on front cover & spine. First Edition. Presentation copy inscribed on front free endpaper "To Mr. C.R. Cromwell, from a fellow suffragist—& a fellow book seller. Sinclair Lewis, NY Oct. 25, 1915." Oddly, the "C.R." is written with a different pen; perhaps Lewis was uncertain of the initials and added them later. Lewis's second novel and third book, published a year and a half after *Our Mr. Wrenn*. The frontispiece, an early effort of Norman Rockwell, is signed in the plate "Norman P. Rockwell." Spine faded, light rubbing to ends; very good or better condition. (300/500) \$920

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SEPTEMBER, 2000

137. Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1925., \$17,500

First Edition; first state. A fine copy in an excellent example of the dust jacket, which has only minute wear and very shallow chipping at the top of the spine. Presentation copy; inscribed by the author, "To Efrem Zimbalist, with the hope that this book will help him in his work—at least commercially, Sinclair Lewis." With violinist and composer Zimbalist's leather bookplate (which has offset slightly onto the verso of the front flap).

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## CATALOGUE 38

965. Lewis, Sinclair. *History of the Class of 1907 Yale College*. Vol. II. Edited by Thomas A. Tully, Class Secretary. [New Haven: Privately Printed for the Class of 1907, 1913.] \$175

First Edition. Large 8 vo, blue cloth, 468 pages, illustrated. Sinclair Lewis, a member of the Yale Class of 1907, contributes a long, full page, autobiographical statement "of his career since 1907," concluding with, "Stokes will publish a boy's book of adventure by me in the fall, but it is not under my name; concerns aeroplanes. Still have the same desire to do the 'Great American Novel'—realistic and high-brow." A scarce, early book contribution by Sinclair Lewis. Endpapers moderately dust soiled and foxed, else text is fresh and clean, binding is faded on spine, front cover has some light soiling and white spotting, else a very good copy of an elusive Sinclair Lewis contribution.

966. Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920. \$250

First edition, *first issue* [with undamaged type on page 54 and 387]. 8 vo, blue cloth, pp. viii, 451. Binding is rubbed at tips of spine, spine coloring a bit dull, slight foxing on fore-edge, else very good, text is fresh and clean, binding otherwise quite bright.

967. Lewis, Sinclair. *Addresses By Erik Axel Karlfeldt And Sinclair Lewis On The Occasion Of The Award Of The Nobel Prize*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1931. \$225

*Why Sinclair Lewis Got the Nobel Prize*. Address by Erik Axel Karlfeldt, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, at the Nobel Festival December 10, 1930 and Address by Sinclair Lewis before the Swedish Academy December 12, 1930. First edition, *publisher's complimentary copy*. 8 vo, printed wrappers, 23 pages, stapled. A fine, bright copy. Laid into the pamphlet is publisher's complimentary sheet, one quarto page, stating: "In answer to the large number of daily requests from individuals all over the country for the complete text of Sinclair Lewis' address before the Swedish Academy on December 12, we have printed the enclosed booklet which contains this address... Since Mr. Lewis is the first American to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature, his address has special significance in the his-

tory of American letters... This booklet will be on sale at all bookstores..."; also present is a "Special Note," one (12mo) page, on Harcourt, Brace & Co. stationery, about the awarding of the Nobel Prize to Sinclair Lewis.

968. Lewis, Sinclair. *Dodsworth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1934. \$125

Dramatized by Sidney Howard. With Comments by Sidney Howard and Sinclair Lewis on *The Art of Dramatization*. Illustrated. First edition [of the dramatized version of *Dodsworth*]. 8 vo, cloth, pp. 1xxii, 162 pages. Owner's ink name, dated 1937, on front flyleaf; bottom edge of both covers has small ink spot, else a near fine copy in very good dust jacket. The uncommon jacket has a moderately faded spine, with light wear at crown, few nicks and small tears, else quite bright.

969. Lewis, Sinclair. *It Can't Happen Here*. A Novel. London: Jonathan Cape, 1935. \$85

First English edition. 8 vo, cloth, 413 pages (followed by ads). Extremities of binding a bit soiled, one corner slightly bumped, else a near fine copy in price-clipped, very good, dust jacket. Jacket spine quite browned, faint soiling to front and rear panels, else fresh and bright. A novel about the possibility of dictatorship in the United States.

A FINAL NOTE...

## LEWIS PANEL AT ALA CONFERENCE

The Sinclair Lewis Society will be presenting a panel at the American Literature Association Conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in May. The conference will take place from May 24-27, 2001, and be held at the Hyatt Regency Cambridge. The following papers will be presented: "Good Rough Fellows': The Dynamics of Male Friendship in Sinclair Lewis," Caren J. Town, Georgia Southern University; "What Has Love Done to Me?: The Man of Business Brought Low in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Sinclair Lewis's *The Job*," Sally E. Parry, Illinois State University; and "Discourse, Dialogism, and the Community Voice in Sinclair Lewis," Robert L. McLaughlin, Illinois State University.

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