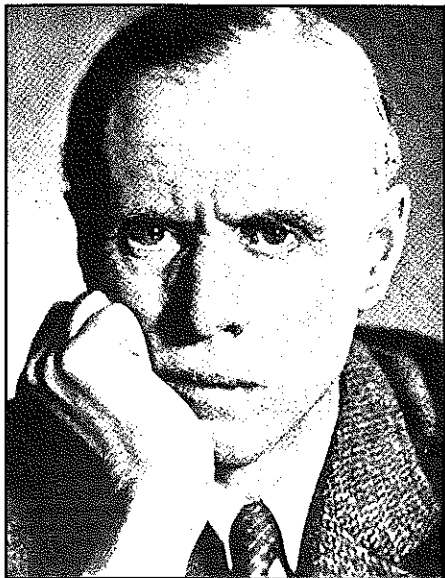


The SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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SPRING 1998

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Sinclair Lewis. Jacket photo from *Kingsblood Royal*. Random House (1947).

CONFERENCE CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARIES OF LEWIS'S *BABBITT*, *KINGSBLOOD ROYAL*

By Dave Simpkins

from *Sauk Centre Herald*, July 22, 1997

If you like Sinclair Lewis, you would have loved the Sinclair Lewis Conference held in conjunction with Sauk Centre's Sinclair Lewis Days.

About 40 Lewis enthusiasts, professors and writers came to this academic conference to read scholarly papers and share their interest in America's first Nobel Prize winning author.

"Oh this is just wonderful," said Sally E. Parry, Executive Director of the Sinclair Lewis Society, located at Illinois State University. Parry and her husband, Robert McLaughlin, teach English Literature at Illinois State and hosted the conference. "It is just wonderful to see so much enthusiasm and respect for Lewis from younger people here," she said.

The event came to Sauk Centre to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the publishing of *Babbitt* and the 50th anniversary of *Kingsblood Royal*. The presenters agreed Lewis was the leading chronicler of the jazz age and social change that was occurring during the roaring twenties.

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LIFTING THE SCHORER CURSE: THE BURDEN OF A BIOGRAPHY

By Richard Lingeman

Delivered in Sauk Centre, Minnesota as the keynote address
of the Sinclair Lewis Conference on July 18, 1997

It's good to be back in Sauk Centre. This is my fourth visit here, so it's almost my second home town. My real home town is Crawfordsville, Indiana, which also boasts a famous author—Gen. Lew Wallace, who wrote the novel *Ben-Hur*. Crawfordsville produced some other best-selling writers at the turn of the century, all of them now forgotten—unlike Sinclair Lewis. Because of its high density of authors, Crawfordsville became known as the Athens of Indiana, as opposed to all the other Athenses in this country. I can't help but wonder what Sinclair Lewis would have made of that.

Like a lot of small-town boys, I read *Main Street* and had that shock of recognition as though he had written about my own town. Recently I discovered this reaction is not limited to Americans.

John Leonard, the books editor at *The Nation* magazine, where I work, told me that on a State Department-sponsored lecture tour he was invited to speak in Taiwan on Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. It turned out that a professor at Taiwan University was a fan of the novel and wanted to translate it into Chinese. He asked John to come all that way so he could quiz him on the meaning of the exotic and inscrutable Midwestern slang words Lewis used. While attending a banquet in the Philippines en route, John mentioned his Taiwan mission to two internationally famous novelists. Ah, *Main Street*, they said. They had loved it. Gopher Prairie reminded them of the villages where they grew up in Peru and Hungary.

Apparently small-town boys are all alike the world over. At any rate, I too read *Main Street* and then *Babbitt*. I loved the satire in the latter and immediately identified at least two men in my home town who could have been the models for George F. Babbitt.

Now jump forward in time to 1961. I was in New York trying to become a writer, without much success, and working for a satirical magazine—the Lewis influence I guess—which was a big success except at making money. It was during that period of my life that Sinclair Lewis and I had another encounter, in the pages of a new biography by Mark Schorer. After reading it I was almost sorry we had ever met.

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SOCIETY AND FOUNDATION JOIN TO SPONSOR SUCCESSFUL SINCLAIR LEWIS CONFERENCE

By Sally E. Parry

After nearly two years of planning, the Sinclair Lewis Society and Sinclair Lewis Foundation sponsored a successful conference July 17 and 18 in Sauk Centre, Minnesota. The conference celebrated the 75th anniversary of the publication of *Babbitt* and the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Kingsblood Royal* and attracted nearly fifty scholars, collectors, and fans of Sinclair Lewis from all over the country.

This was the first conference focusing on Lewis since the centennial conference in 1985, held in St. Cloud, Minnesota. You'll be reading a lot about the conference in this issue, from abstracts of most of the papers presented, to Richard Lingeman's keynote address, to excerpts from a diary by conference attendee Jacqueline Koenig. Our thanks to Fred Armstrong, who served with Lt. Wells Lewis during World War II, for contributing funds for the conference.

Many people contributed to the success of the conference and should be congratulated for their wonderful work. In Sauk Centre, Roberta Olson, president of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, was invaluable in coordinating activities, making various kinds of arrangements, and providing enthusiastic support. Also to be thanked are the other officers of the Foundation, Secretary Colleen Steffes, Treasurer Irene Trisko, and board members Alice Broman, Katie Broman, Ken Lewis, Patricia Lewis, Chris Thomas, Jim Umhoefer, Marcy Weitzel, and Joan Walter. Joyce Lyng gave wonderful tours of the Boyhood Home. June and Jim Rutten, the owners of the Palmer House, were very helpful in providing lodging arrangements, meeting attendees' needs, and supplying terrific food. Thanks to the Sauk Centre City Hall for providing meeting space, and the Lutheran Church for allowing us to show movies in their sanctuary as well as giving us the space for the keynote address. The conference was certainly the success that it was because of the fine speakers, and the assistance of Sinclair Lewis Society officers, James Hutchisson, president; Robert McLaughlin, secretary-treasurer, and board members Roger Forseth and George Killough. Erin Hollis and Jill Cornelius, recent English graduates from Illinois State University, helped with much of the on-site locations work, from handing out badges and information to transporting conference members to various sites. Erin Hollis also was responsible for designing brochures, programs, badges, and tickets. Finally, Robert McLaughlin, board member and husband of the executive director, provided incredible support in organizing the conference, driving up to Sauk Centre, and listening to well over a year of discussions on the conference.

Enjoy the information on the conference and keep July 2000 open to help us celebrate the 75th anniversary of *Arrowsmith* and Lewis being awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

ABSTRACTS: FROM PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE SINCLAIR LEWIS CONFERENCE

Babbitt:

The Literary Dimension

Presented by Martin Bucco

Sinclair Lewis routinely typifies his characters by their literary attitudes. Reviewing his years at the state university, Babbitt tells his son, Ted, that the time he put in studying French and poetry was time lost. The idea of literary perfection is beyond Babbitt's perception. Like his father (but not like his older sister), Ted disdains "lit'ature." Looking through Verona's books for something to read, Babbitt rejects Vachel Lindsay, Joseph Conrad, James Branch Cabell, H.L. Mencken, and Joseph Hergesheimer—writers whom Lewis boosted.

Babbitt encounters his favorite literature in the daily newspaper. In his pocket-notebook he keeps clippings of editorials from the *Zenith Advocate*, as well as verse by Zenith adman-poetaster T. Cholmondeley Frink, whom Babbitt ranks with Rudyard Kipling and Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

Attuned to the religion of business and the business of religion, Babbitt conventionally views the Holy Bible as Great Literature, and he even vows to "read some of it again, one of these days." Wholesome family magazines also claim Babbitt's attention—when he does not feel anxious or crave a cigar. Fulfilling his notion of the Solid Citizen, he takes his wife and little daughter, Tinka, to the movies at least once a week, for Babbitt likes to look at bathing beauties, cops, cowboys, fat comedians, puppies, kit-

tens, and babies—images aimed at the divine-average boobus Americanus mind of a twelve-year-old. At one point Babbitt soberly resolves to take an interest in the theater beyond musical comedy.

A strong advocate of Business English, in letters and advertisements that pull, Babbitt respects bigness, as in all else, in words. One important entrance into Babbitt's world is via good—i.e., racy or dialectal—story-telling. The novel's central "literary" discussion takes place one evening at the Babbitt dinner party and surrounds the mighty triumvirate of Vergil, Dante, and Shakespeare—verbal horseplay which Lewis later ties to the Dantean night scene in which Babbitt watches an intoxicated Chum Frink wandering forlornly through the streets of Zenith.

Although Babbitt the deluded philistine gruffly asserts that "Shakespeare and the rest" ought not be part of an up-to-date school system, Babbitt the go-getting conformist later exclaims, in a wondrous display of ludicrous duplicity, "By golly ...wouldn't be so bad to go over to the Old Country and take a squint at all those ruins and the place where Shakespeare was born."

Martin Bucco is a Professor of English at Colorado State University. He has written numerous books, essays, and reviews on American Literature and criticism. In addition to scholarly articles on Sinclair Lewis, he is the editor of Critical Essays on Sinclair Lewis (1986) and the author of Main Street: The Revolt of Carol Kennicott (1993) and the Introduction/Notes to the Penguin Main Street (1995).

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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 Fred Armstrong, Frederick Betz, Roger Forseth, Philip J. Harwood, James Hutchisson, George Killough, Jacqueline Koenig, Robert McLaughlin, Roberta Olson, Roberta Parry, Steve Pastore, Christine Roane, Site Promotion Specialist for *The Christian Science Monitor*, Rodger Tarr, Ray Lewis White.

The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter

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Minnesota Department Of Transportation

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF MINNESOTA'S MAIN STREET

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) is developing several possible design solutions for the reconstruction of Main Street in Sauk Centre, Minnesota. The TH 71 Main Street Advisory Committee was formed in February 1997 to represent the various interests and to assist in the development of solutions and has been meeting monthly since April. This Committee is comprised of city officials, businesspersons, and representatives of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, Mn/DOT, the Minnesota Historical Society, and the Sauk River Watershed District.

This article is being submitted to inform the Sinclair Lewis Society and other interested persons of the current status of the project.

Why is Mn/DOT doing this project?

The City of Sauk Centre needs to rebuild many of the utilities that are located under Main Street. While the street is opened for these improvements, Mn/DOT was requested by the City of Sauk Centre to develop and evaluate possible solutions for the reconstruction of Main Street to improve safety, mobility, and access for persons using this roadway.

What are the issues facing Main Street?

The condition of the pavement along Main Street is substandard in many places. Utilities under the roadway are in need of repair or replacement. Operational and safety problems exist at several intersections due to unrestricted access and the absence of lane markings. Local and tourist traffic projections also indicate that motorists will need to be served with a more efficient facility or congestion problems will worsen. Improvements need to be made, but at the same time, the historic district and national preservation requirements will need to be considered for all the concepts being investigated.

How are residents, businesses, and interested persons being informed of Main Street plans?

The Advisory Committee meets on the second Monday of each month. Meetings are open to the public. Meeting minutes are available and a mailing list has been established.

A public meeting and open house was held on September 22nd at Sauk Centre City Hall. Residents, businesses, city, county, and state officials were invited and apprised of the activities that have taken place to date on the project. The meeting was an opportunity to informally discuss the different design concepts that have been developed thus far. It was also an important way for the Advisory Committee to receive

feedback from the community on the various issues and for them to voice opinions about what's being considered for the project and offer other possible solutions to the problems.

A survey was distributed to participants at the meeting and is also available at Sauk Centre City Hall. Persons attending the meeting were encouraged to forward concerns to Mn/DOT. Results of the survey are available from Mn/DOT.

PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Project Advisory Committee approved 14 goals and objectives for the project. These goals and objectives provide the basis of determining how well the proposed solutions will work.

They are as follows:

- ◆ Handle Traffic Adequately for 20 years
- ◆ Safety
- ◆ Design compatible with historic district designation
- ◆ Maintain adequate/convenient access to businesses
- ◆ Traffic flow—clarify—make understandable
- ◆ Appropriate design for specific areas
(3-4 areas have different uses, character, traffic)
- ◆ Reduce truck traffic (bypass?)
- ◆ Maintain adequate downtown parking
- ◆ Historic Signing—
Sinclair Lewis House, Interpretive Center
- ◆ Transportation as an asset to improve/enhance
community and historic district
- ◆ Sensible historic preservation—in context
- ◆ Walks—pedestrian friendly
- ◆ Fiscally responsible project
- ◆ Public support for preservation goals

CONCEPTS BEING CONSIDERED FOR IMPROVING MAIN STREET

Five concepts (and a no-build, for the purpose of comparison) are currently being considered to improve Main Street.

They include:

Concept 1, which would increase capacity along Main Street by adding 2 additional lanes for traffic (for a total of 4 lanes) and also include left turn lanes;

Concept 2, which would maintain the current 2 lanes of traffic and include left turn lanes;

Concept 3, which would restripe the existing pavement with a centerline and include other safety markings;

Concept 4, which would redirect the flow of local traffic to streets that parallel Main Street; and

Concept 5, which would bypass the community with a new alignment for Highway 71.

All concepts will also include appropriate aesthetic design treatments and be respective of the historic designation of Main Street.

TH 71 MAIN STREET ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND STUDY TEAM

The Main Street Advisory Committee is comprised of Katie Broman, Sinclair Lewis Foundation; Bob Essler, Sauk Centre Utilities; Mayor Paul Theisen and Council member Jim Fish, City of Sauk Centre; Keith Polipnick, Sauk Centre Chamber of Commerce; Dennis Heinen, Bob Polipnick, and John Wiese, Sauk Centre Business Community; Bob Mostad, Sauk River Watershed District; Ed Idzorek and Allyson Brooks, Mn/DOT; and Dennis Gimmestad, Minnesota Historical Society. Scott McBride, OSM Associates, is leading the consultant study team.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The next steps in the process will involve selecting the best concept or components of the concepts and forming a preferred alternative for further development. The concepts that do not best address the project goals and objectives will be eliminated from further consideration. A "scoping decision" document will be prepared which will explain the preferred alternative for further development and the schedule for its implementation.

The current schedule is as follows:

- Advisory Committee Recommends a Preferred Alternative—Fall 1997
- Mn/DOT Staff and Sauk Centre City Council Approval—December 1997
- Mn/DOT Commissioner of Transportation Approval—Early 1998
- Secure Project Funding—Fall 1998
- Project Design—1999–2000
- Construction (if decision is to build): 2000–2001 (depending on funding availability)

CAN I GET INVOLVED?

WHOM DO I CALL IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

The Main Street Advisory Committee and Mn/DOT welcome your suggestions and ideas. There will also be another public meeting and hearing held prior to the selection of a preferred alternative.

For further information, contact:

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St. Cloud, MN 56303
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or

Scott McBride
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5775 Wayzata Boulevard, Suite 300
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e-mail: osm@wwave.com

CALL FOR PAPERS: 1998 AMERICAN LITERATURE ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

The Sinclair Lewis Society is planning to hold a session at the 1998 American Literature Association conference that is scheduled for the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday after Memorial Day weekend. The conference will again be held at the Bahia Hotel in San Diego.

We welcome submissions on any aspect of Lewis's work. Please send an abstract by January 30, 1998 to: **James Hutchisson, English Department, The Citadel, Charleston, SC 29409, or by fax at (803) 953-7084, or by e-mail to: hutchissonj@citadel.edu.** All submissions will be acknowledged. An announcement of session participants will be made before the end of February 1998.

The hotel will be offering special conference rates. Preregistration information will be mailed to program participants about two weeks before the general mailing to all ALA members.

NEW ARTICLES ON LEWIS

This update will be provided at intervals
to complement the annotated bibliography in
Sinclair Lewis: New Essays in Criticism

"SINCLAIR LEWIS'S VIEW OF NATURE IN *MANTRAP* AND *THE GOD-SEEKER*."

Mamoru Takahashi

International Budo University Journal 11 (1995): 55-61.

Although Sinclair Lewis is known as a satirist, he was not only interested in people but also nature, and described its traces in many of his novels. In his early novel *Free Air*, his attitude toward nature is pastoral. After he served out his apprenticeship and established fame in *Main Street*, he wrote *Mantrap*, which was written for his own amusement after the hard work of *Arrowsmith*. In *Mantrap*, his attitude toward nature is the same as that of Cooper and Thoreau—he contrasted nature with civilization and praised the beauty of nature. In *The God-Seeker*, his attitude toward nature is spiritually the same as before, but his novel shows his limit—he could never get out of civilization and fully defend nature.

Abstract provided in English.

Full text available only in Japanese.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATIONS DEADLINE SET FOR MARCH 15, 1998

The Sinclair Lewis Society is accepting nominations for officers and 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 and let us know by March 15.

We would like nominations for President, Secretary, and Board of Directors. Elections will be carried out in connection with the Spring 1998 issue.

LEWIS T-SHIRTS AVAILABLE

Wish you could have come to the Sinclair Lewis Conference, but were unable to do so? The Sinclair Lewis Society still has some T-shirts available for sale. They are black with the word Babbitt in large letters and Sinclair Lewis Conference, Sauk Centre, Minnesota, July 1997, in smaller letters on the front in red, and the words Kingsblood Royal on the back in script that looks like the dustjacket of the novel. The T-shirts are available in large and x-large for \$15 each plus \$3 postage and handling. Please make checks out to The Sinclair Lewis Society and mail to: The Sinclair Lewis Society, Department of English, Box 4240, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4240.

If you are interested in mugs from the conference, please contact the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, Hwy I94 and Hwy 71, Sauk Centre, MN 56378, (612) 352-5201.

SOCIETY UPDATES WEBSITE

The Sinclair Lewis Society has revamped its website to reflect new trends in website development. There are now a number of icons to click on to find information on such things as Lewis's life, publications, and the new biography. More pictures have been added, including some from the July Sinclair Lewis Conference in Sauk Centre. Upcoming additions include biographical material on Grace Hegger Lewis and Dorothy Thompson, information on new publications and conferences, and some proposed design solutions developed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation for the reconstruction of Main Street in Sauk Centre (see the article in this issue for more information).

The Society would like to thank recent Illinois State University graduate Amanda Robertson for all her work in creating the much more visually interesting website, and Laurie Walczak, a current master's student in English at Illinois State, for her help in keeping the website updated.

THE VOICE OF LEWIS

Several readers of the newsletter have expressed interest in hearing the voice of Lewis. If anyone is aware of sound or film recordings of Lewis, including home movies or newsreel footage or perhaps a Caedmon recording, please contact the Society and let us know.

NEW MEMBERS

The Sinclair Lewis Society wishes to welcome the following new members who joined during 1997.

Isabel Lewis Agrell
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You can visit the Sinclair Lewis Society website at <http://www.ilstu.edu/~separry/lewis.html>

A Diary of The Sinclair Lewis Conference

July 17-18, 1997

By Jacqueline Koenig

Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the publication of *Babbitt* and the 50th Anniversary of the publication of *Kingsblood Royal*, fifty people, or more, attended each event and took pleasure in being on Main Street. All of us shared that mutual understanding of the feeling of being there on *the street*. Nowhere in the country do I feel as close to an author as I do on Main Street, owing I suppose to the fact that it is the title of a cherished book. And, if you know how I chase after authors, that's saying quite a lot. I've stood in Jack London's sleeping porch, I've reveled in Jeffers's garden overlooking the sea, I've lived in Muir's High Sierra, I've toured Steinbeck's boyhood home and Lewis's, yet nothing compared with getting back to Main Street.

Thursday, July 17

We were welcomed at City Hall first by Jim Hutchisson, President, The Sinclair Lewis Society; Roberta Olson, President, Sinclair Lewis Foundation, who exclaimed, "Welcome to Gopher Prairie!" and introduced us to Lesley Lewis, Sinclair Lewis's granddaughter; and Sally Parry, the Executive Director of the Sinclair Lewis Society.

Sally was in Sauk Centre twelve years ago, at the Lewis Centennial. She told us Fred Armstrong, who served with Wells Lewis in World War II, contributed funds to this conference, thus enabling us to pay only \$50 for this conference, including two luncheons and two dinners at the Palmer House.

I was sorry to hear Stephen Pastore didn't come. He wrote the Sinclair Lewis bibliography and owns the largest collection of Sinclair Lewis material in private hands. To a collector, sorry isn't a strong enough word.

Roger Forseth, of the University of Wisconsin, Superior, informed us that the important collections of Sinclair Lewis's papers are at (1) Yale, (2) St. Cloud State University, (3) Macalester College of St. Paul, and (4) Wilson Library, University of Minnesota at the twin cities.

Forseth gave us some of the FBI file on Sinclair Lewis. October 24, 1939, Sinclair Lewis and his "niece" Marcella Powers went to the FBI and were escorted on a special tour of the bureau. Sinclair Lewis told them he would like to write about a director of the FBI. They took Lewis and Powers in a limo to an outside FBI facility, where Sinclair Lewis spent the whole day.

Patricia Schenk, University Archivist, St. Cloud State University, takes care of the Lewis Family Papers, including the new collection of letters from Lewis to Marcella Powers. The collection was started in 1920, by a man named Burlingame. It includes letters by Sinclair Lewis to

family members, letters to Claude Lewis's daughters, inscribed books, a script of *Angela Is Twenty-Two*, letters from Grace Hegger, letters of Dorothy Thompson, newspaper clips, letters to Ida Compton, and letters to Marcella Powers. Schenk acknowledged, "I'm not a Lewis scholar, but I've learned a lot in the last year and a half."

Sinclair Lewis met Marcella Powers in 1939. She was in a play with Sinclair Lewis, and helped Lewis with his lines. I had wondered about the dedication to *Kingsblood Royal*, "To S.S.S., who first heard this story." Schenk informed us it was a private amusement between Lewis and Powers, such as "Small Time Spies," "Sweeter Than Sugar," that kind of thing. *Angela Is Twenty-Two* is the play Lewis wrote when asked if they were lovers. Schenk believes, "The bed was not very long important to the relationship."

I've stood in Jack London's sleeping porch, I've reveled in Jeffers's garden overlooking the sea, I've lived in Muir's High Sierra, I've toured Steinbeck's boyhood home and Lewis's, yet nothing compared with getting back to Main Street.

Schorer alleged Sinclair Lewis went into a rage when Marcella announced she was marrying someone else. "The rages of the relationship in Schorer do not show up in these letters," Schenk has found. St. Cloud has a letter Sinclair Lewis wrote Marcella at this time, and it is very matter of fact, wishing them well.

Lewis's son, Michael, visited Sinclair Lewis in Duluth. Lewis frequently took Michael to the Gall Lake area on fishing trips where Sinclair holed up in a cabin to write. "Michael is too much like Dorothy," Lewis wrote in letters to Marcella.

Schenk explained how St. Cloud State University got the Marcella Powers letters. Marcella left the letters to Mary Branham, her friend. Ten years ago they were put into the safe at the St. Paul University Foundation. A year ago someone approached Pat Schenk with photocopies of the letters and asked if St. Cloud was interested in buying the letters. St. Cloud paid \$6,000 purchase price for the 261 letters. What a bargain!

Sinclair Lewis was 54 and Marcella Powers was 18 when they met. Sinclair Lewis set her up in an apartment in New York, sent her a check every month and got her an editor's job at *Good Housekeeping*. She moved to New Mexico with her second husband and died March 1985.

Each child of Marcella's inherited \$1,000; and the bulk
continued on page 15

of her estate went to her friend Mary.

George Killough introduced the next panel. James Hutchisson filled in for Stephen Pastore. Hutchisson's paper was "Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis." In March 1930, both Dreiser and Lewis were invited to New York City. At a dinner, Sinclair Lewis publicly accused Dreiser of stealing Dorothy's material on Russia. Both had been there. Dreiser slapped Sinclair Lewis then asked Lewis if he'd like to repeat that accusation. Lewis did; and Dreiser slapped him again. Just eight months later, Sinclair Lewis took the Nobel away from Dreiser.

Two or three months ago Hutchisson wanted to write that Dreiser had influenced Sinclair Lewis. He'd read six letters Lewis wrote to Dreiser. Their paths crossed some in the 1910s. In 1914, Lewis wrote a complimentary letter on Dreiser's book and sent Dreiser *Our Mr. Wrenn*. One month later, Sinclair Lewis reviewed a Dreiser book in a St. Louis newspaper. That same year, "The Passing of Capitalism" was published in *The Bookman* by Sinclair Lewis. In 1925, Lewis sent Dreiser his new book, *Arrowsmith*. Word got back to Dreiser that Sinclair Lewis had been sent a review copy of *An American Tragedy* and didn't review it. Sinclair Lewis, instead, wrote Dreiser, "Surely this will be the American book that Nobel cannot ignore." In 1930, Lewis sent Dreiser a draft of his Nobel speech. In a covering letter, Sinclair Lewis complimented Dreiser.

In 1945, the day after Dreiser's death, Sinclair Lewis wrote the widow, "While the public remembers only our disagreements, we know better."

Steve Pastore, being a businessman, will publish these letters. In the question and answer period, we learned that Steve Pastore bought a box of Dreiser materials sight unseen, and these Sinclair Lewis letters unexpectedly fell out!

Robert McLaughlin read a paper by Valerio C. Ferme, University of California-Berkeley, "From Stereotype to Social Critique: *Babbitt's* Italian Fortune during the Fascist Years." [Abstracts of the papers by Valerio C. Ferme, Catherine Jurca, Martin Bucco, and Jane Lamm Carroll are published elsewhere in the newsletter.]

James Hutchisson discussed his book, just out, on Sinclair Lewis. In it, he talks about Lewis's notes, drafts, outlines, etc. housed at Yale. He wrote the book to show how Lewis converted things around him into fiction. Schorer characterized Lewis as, "fly by the seat of your pants, crank out the books." Hutchisson found this inaccurate, saying, "Sinclair Lewis was a meticulous composer of novels. He was a shrewd and unusually industrious novelist." Jim found a gold mine in the manuscripts.

Hutchisson showed slides, beginning with Lewis's gigantic outline for the book *Babbitt*. Lewis wrote it out scene by scene and thought, when he sat down to write the novel, it would write itself. Lewis found this not to be true, but, nevertheless, the plans were always helpful and always done. Lewis did more than twenty pages of research on clothes of the particular period. He drew a remarkably detailed map of

downtown Zenith (that didn't exist), and then a page of key index to his fictional map. Jim found a detailed map of Babbitt's house and his office building.

Lewis did at least two drafts. He very carefully went back through the typescript and took out psychological implications. He always put in psychological aspects and almost always removed most of them.

At the afternoon tour of Sinclair Lewis's boyhood home, we were treated like VIPs, indeed a privilege and a joy to this group so emotionally charged with this author.

Just walking west on Sinclair Lewis Avenue to the home is a delight; so, when the ropes came down and we were invited to wander through all the rooms of the house and take photographs, it was a truly unforgettable experience.

Two tours were conducted for us. My guide was Joyce Lyng. Last year she visited Thorvale Farm in Williamstown, Massachusetts, where Sinclair Lewis lived in the late forties. Oh, that this whole group gets to go there some day! The visit must have been the highlight of Joyce Lyng's life. She beamed from ear to ear as she told us about it. Another thrill for her is the new photograph hanging in Dr. Lewis's home office. Stephen Pastore, Lewis collector, sent her the print, a headshot of Sinclair Lewis taken at the time he married Grace Hegger (1914), so Lewis is a very young twenty-nine years of age. I don't remember ever seeing the photo before. It is spectacular. Lyng treasures it, and she had it framed with a nameplate and hung. They moved Sinclair Lewis's childhood picture to the family room to make space for this one in his dad's office. Joyce proudly told us this \$1,200 print spent a night on her home freezer.

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In the parlor I took a photograph of Sinclair Lewis's granddaughter, Lesley. She had just been interviewed and photographed by Kris Bergquist and Jason Wachter of the *St. Cloud Times*. They had taken a dozen photographs of her in each room of the house, of which two very fine enlarged colored prints adorned the newspaper the next day.

At age 36, this is the first time New Yorker Lesley has visited Sauk Centre. She, of course, was born after her famous grandfather's death. Her father, Michael, was the son of Sinclair Lewis and Dorothy Thompson. Lesley told me being in this house is an indescribable experience for her.

At the house, I sat for a time on the staircase just inside the front door, steps so narrow you can hardly sit on one. Later I held the banister, which has always been there, thinking, "He touched it!" It is an intimate house.

We were told that when John Steinbeck was doing *Travels with Charley* he planned to stop and talk to people in Sauk

Centre to see how they treated Sinclair Lewis in his home town, because Steinbeck was going to Salinas and wondered how he would be received. But, we were told, Steinbeck lost his nerve and drove straight through Sauk Centre.

That evening, at the keynote address, at the Lutheran Church, Lesley sat behind me and showed me her very fine photograph on the front page of Tuesday's *Sauk Centre Herald*. The picture of Lesley was taken last Christmas. Before the keynote address, Lesley came before us, saying something like, "I've come here to give you a contemporary look at the Lewis family. I live on Long Island, and like in *Kingsblood Royal*, I see swastikas on buildings. Through history, some things never change." Lesley presents herself very well. Her grandfather would be proud.

Richard Lingeman, our keynoter, is a senior editor of *The Nation* and an author whose books include two on Theodore Dreiser. He's writing a biography of Sinclair Lewis to be published by Random House. This is his fourth trip to Sauk Centre, which he calls "my adopted home town." His actual home town is Crawfordsville, Indiana, also the home of Lew Wallace who wrote *Ben-Hur*. [See page 1 of the newsletter for the text of Lingeman's speech.]

In the question and answer period, we learned that Lingeman thinks he's about halfway into writing the biography. He's up through *Main Street*. He hopes to take some time off from his job. He's done the research.

Asked how long he thinks his biography will be, he answered, "It'll be as long as it needs to be," then admitted, "Maybe 200,000 or 300,000 words."

Lingeman asked this audience about aspects of Lewis's Sauk Centre life. He would like to know more about his mother. Was he kept away from his mother as she was dying of tuberculosis? And, how strict was his father? I'd like to know more about what people here think.

Friday, July 18

[Abstracts of the papers by M. Ellen DuPree, Jean Mullin Yonke, Robert McLaughlin, Brooke Hessler, Todd Stanley, Sally Parry, Frederick Betz, Nancy Bunge, and Jonathan Veitch are published elsewhere in this issue.]

In the evening, at the Lutheran Church, our diligent coordinators, Sally Parry and her husband Robert McLaughlin, had our evening films set to go.

We saw the 1934 film *Babbitt* with Guy Kibbee. In the film, Babbitt wakes slowly to the rev up of a car, much as in the book by the rattle of someone cranking a Ford. So much of the gist of the book is carried in the film, but the players do not give the film the quality of thinking through middle-class life that we garner from the book. The whole "feel" of the story is lost.

At the conclusion of the film, the Zebras come to Babbitt's house. Babbitt says, "I didn't know I was a Zebra anymore. I thought I was a black sheep." The family rejoices that he's a Zebra again. And, as the book ends, so ends the movie—Babbitt conforms.

Next, at our double feature, we saw Walt Disney's *Bongo*, the only cartoon based on a Sinclair Lewis short story. Poor little Bongo, the happy little circus bear, behind the scenes is kept under lock and key like a piece of property, "a bear in a gilded cage." He longed for freedom, whether it was the call of the wild, or whatever, "the call of the wild kept calling him." Bongo was cracking up, he was losing his grip. He had to get away.

At last he was free to smell the flowers. All the animals of the forest laughed at him, because he couldn't climb a tree. Insects came out, bats, lightning, storms. He didn't get any sleep. He was hungry.

continued on page 15



Conference attendees stand by the historic marker outside Lewis's Boyhood Home.

VERMONT'S AWARD-WINNING TWIN FARMS

HOW THE ONE-TIME HOME OF SINCLAIR LEWIS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF LOCAL COMMUNITY

By Jerry Weil

from *The Vermont Standard*

Twin Farms Inn in Barnard, recently chosen the best inn in the country according to a national hotel survey, has a definite mystique of catering to the rich and famous.

Despite this, the resort managers view the operation as an important member of the local community, as well as one which embodies the spirit of Vermont.

"I like to think that the award is not just a testimonial to our inn, but also to the beauty of Vermont and to the very special low-key charm of the people," says Beverley Matthews who, with her husband Shaun, manages the exclusive inn.

Vermonters have a tradition of quietness and an ability to mind their own business, according to Matthews. "And these traits are ideal for a staff serving our particular clientele," she explains. "Many of our guests are celebrities and they strongly value their privacy."

Staff people in exclusive inns, such as Twin Farms, are trained to meet these needs, according to Matthews. For example, you'll never find these staff people asking someone for an autograph.

Matthews has discovered that only a minimum amount of such training was required for Vermonters. "Discretion seems almost instinctual with Vermonters. A Vermonter would never even think of asking a guest for an autograph," she says.

Matthews is clearly proud of her staff of 56 people, 80 percent of whom live in the neighborhood of the inn, in towns like Barnard, Woodstock, Bethel, Pomfret, etc.

"Some people don't think of Twin Farms as part of the community and I can understand that," she says. "Because of the nature of our business, we are not open to the public. You can't just stop in for a drink," she adds.

Despite this, Matthews sees the inn as a committed member of its community. Not only does Twin Farms employ mostly local people, but the inn also uses local suppliers as much as they can. "We use local contractors, food suppliers, providers of office materials, kitchen equipment vendors, and more," she says. "Whenever we need anything, we try to buy it locally before going afield for it," she adds.

In a more glamorous vein, Twin Farms uses local businesses to provide flowers, limousines, photographers and other services.

Twin Farms also operates a local bakery outlet in Barnard that carries fresh bread and pastries every day that are baked at the inn. "We also use some of this space to sell gifts and we offer the opportunity for local artisans to display and see their hand-crafted products," says Matthews.

Twin Farm guests contribute substantially to the local retail economy. "Many merchants in Woodstock and other towns have told me that it's easy for them to spot a Twin Farms guest in their stores," says Matthews. "They are megashoppers and mega-spenders who think nothing of dropping hundreds, even thousands of dollars on merchandise that turns them on," she adds.

Twin Farms contributes an annual fundraising dinner to raise money for the Barnard Central School. The inn provides all food and labor so that 100 percent of the proceeds go to the school. Last year, \$2,500 was raised for new computers.

Beverley and Shaun Matthews came to Barnard about five years ago after more than 10 years of providing world-class service for small high-end properties such as Twin Farms. After graduating college in England where they majored in hotel management, the Matthews went first to the Caribbean where they began to develop their unique management skills.

In 1992, they were invited to Barnard by the Twigg-Smith family. They joined Koke Twigg-Smith, who was engaged in developing the property at that time. The Twigg-Smiths originally purchased the property, once the home of Pulitzer Prize author Sinclair Lewis. Lewis gave the property as a wedding gift to his bride, journalist Dorothy Thompson, in 1928.

Twigg-Smith has spent about \$10 million developing the property. The makeover was directed by Johnson Wanzenberg Associates, a leading New York interior design company. The landscaping was done by Dan Kiley, who also did the Lincoln Center in New York.

Twin Farms began operations in 1993, offering guests four stylish rooms in the main house and 10 separate cottages. The rooms are currently priced at about \$800 to \$950 a night. The cottages go from \$950 a night to as much as \$1,500. The lodgings are all spacious. Each one has at least one fireplace and furnishings consist of exceptional antiques or custom-crafted pieces. The owners' collection of contemporary art adorn the quarters.

Meals are included in the price of accommodations and can be had at any time of day or night. "If a guest wants to dine alone, room service will accommodate. They can also join new friends in our dining room," says Matthews.

"We question our guests to find out their preferences in food, whether they have allergies, and more," says Matthews. "And we do our best to give them exactly what they want," she adds.

Guests have included corporate CEOs, heads of governments, royalty, and celebrities. They can avail themselves of a private ski slope—the former Sonnenberg Ski Area—many other recreational activities, and a Japanese Furo, or soaking tub.

The Zagat survey that resulted in the Twin Farms award is based on comments and ratings from 12,300 frequent travelers. Some of their selections include The Mansion in Dallas, Texas, as the best hotel in America. The Lodge at Koala Hawaii, was the best resort and The Golden Door in Escondido, California, was rated best spa. Midwest Express won best American airline and Singapore was chosen best international carrier.

Twin Farms is one of only two inns in all of New England with a five-star rating.

A BED AND BREAKFAST AT TWIN FARMS

By Michael Frank

from *Architectural Digest*, November 1996

Nowhere is Jed Johnson's range as an interior designer more thoroughly or exuberantly demonstrated than in his work on Twin Farms, an inn in Barnard, Vermont. The late designer and his partner, architect Alan Wanzenberg, oversaw the renovation of the hotel's main house and construction of three guest cottages in 1993; last year they completed five other distinctive cottages.

Inn, however, is too homespun a word for Twin Farms. Under the ownership of the Honolulu-based Twigg-Smith family and the management of Shaun and Beverley Matthews, Twin Farms has set out to become one of the most exclusive, if unassuming, hotels in America, and the architecture and design go a good way toward meeting that goal.

Twin Farms is a property with history. The original two farmhouses, one eighteenth century (which has since burned), one nineteenth—hence the "Twin"—were acquired in 1928, together with three hundred surrounding acres, by novelist Sinclair Lewis and his wife, journalist Dorothy Thompson. The Vermont retreat was the first and, it turned out, the only real house the Nobel laureate would ever own.

In times both rough and smooth, Lewis thought of the farm with longing and looked to it for solace, envisioning, as he wrote his wife, the "apple trees, and flaming lilies, and the moon over the low mountains and you and me...and lamplight and lots of books." For her part, Thompson confessed to Lewis that she felt that Twin Farms was "the best expression in life of both of us—beautiful, comfortable, hospitable and unpretentious."

In their expansion of Twin Farms, Johnson and Wanzenberg were clearly guided by Thompson's words and the precedent of the couple's tenure generally, although they infused the property with a subtle but unmistakably cosmopolitan flavor that is not in the least characteristic of rural Vermont. Here, too, the Lewises can be imagined to have made a contribution—their guests, after all, ranged from H. L. Mencken (who came only when he was assured he would not have to play tennis or go for walks) to Rebecca West to a young Henry Kissinger—and Dorothy Thompson was an adventurous traveler.

But on the whole the new cottages take Twin Farms in a fresh direction. In these meticulously realized buildings, hotel science has been expertly crossed with the artistry of architecture and interior design and topped with a dollop of fantasy. The goal, says Wanzenberg, was to create "a strong visual memory": hotel rooms, in other words, that guests would not soon forget.

First came the practical. Superb hotel rooms are a more comfortable and flawlessly functioning environment than can ordinarily be sustained in day-to-day life, and Wanzenberg and Johnson were presented with an array of requirements to help achieve that perfection.

In each cottage there had to be separate access and hidden closets for housekeeping; both the fireplace and the television

had to be visible from the bed; walls had to be painted rather than upholstered, lest the fabrics retain any traces of cigarette smoke; discretion and privacy were primary, which meant that doors had to close off various sections of the suite at any given time. The owners insisted on generous and varied closet space; sumptuous baths, where tubs had a view of the landscape; an area in which tea or coffee could be prepared; and, in order to take full advantage of the setting, a screen porch. For structures that basically consist of one room with a dressing area and a bath, the floor plans, Wanzenberg says, are "surprisingly complicated."

The cottages are complicated in another sense too: Wanzenberg and Johnson did not feel they should create a signature for the exterior architecture. They chose to subordinate the cottages to the main house, whose New England farmhouse vernacular set the style: wood siding relieved by touches of latticed wood; copper or metal roofs, which help make a heavy accumulation of snow manageable and a basic palette of soft grays and warm whites with trim occasionally heightened by the addition of such other classic New England colors as dirty blue, barn red and hunter green.

In times both rough and smooth, Lewis thought of the farm with longing and looked to it for solace, envisioning, as he wrote his wife, the "apple trees, and flaming lilies, and the moon over the low mountains and you and me...and lamplight and lots of books."

If the exteriors are sobriety and respectfulness distilled, the interiors erupt in pent-up energy and invention. "We wanted guests to enter into different stylistic worlds, fantastical worlds," Wanzenberg says. "We wanted it to seem as if someone had had an *idea* about a place or a period and then began imagining it. Jed never meant for the interiors to be authentic. They're utopian. The whole experience of Twin Farms is."

Consider the cottage that's known as Woods, the first of the new group to be completed. The gravel parking court, stonework, restrained siding and deliberately plain window shutters are no preparation for the elegant Tuscan-inflected interior that opens up beyond its unprepossessing front door. A narrow entrance hall leads to a substantial room with a barrel-vaulted ceiling, which sets the cottage's Italianate sensibility. This continues in Johnson's use of colored plaster walls, sandstone floors, an iron chandelier, tooled leather headboards and eighteenth-century Italian furniture.

In Log Cabin, the transition from exterior to interior is less dramatic, but what the cottage lacks in drama, it more than makes up in whimsy. Built of hundred-year-old salvaged lumber from North Carolina, Log Cabin allowed Wanzenberg and Johnson to create a floor plan they had long had in mind—

continued on page 12

Frank continued from page 11

a bipolar house consisting of two smaller buildings with a connecting porch and breezeway. Johnson, who was fond of dogs, decided to make liberal, and humorous, use of canine iconography: a paw-print rug, a chair with arms carved in the shape of dogs' heads, dog blankets, dog pillows, dog figures and dog biscuits next to the tea tray (all pure decoration, since Twin Farms does not allow animals or children). There are even dog-bone-shaped peepholes in the doors, and in the bookshelf, *Thurber's Dogs* stands next to *The Book of the Poodle*.

Meadow shifts mood, and geography, entirely. Once again, an unassuming, quintessentially New England exterior is unrelated to the Moroccan fantasy within. The interior was inspired, in part, by Johnson and Wanzenberg's longtime interest in tile. Wanzenberg says that Meadow is the one cottage he and Johnson specifically connected to Dorothy Thompson, on account of her travels, although, once again, they sought to exaggerate and embellish the Moroccan motifs. The tented ceiling, which is rendered in plaster and paint rather than cloth, was Johnson's concept and is repeated (in a reduced version) in the bath.

With Barn, the fourth cottage, Wanzenberg was able to build a gambrel roof, a favorite of his, while Johnson, whose family was Norwegian, got a chance to implement some of the decorative treatments he'd observed during his travels through Scandinavia. The double-height cottage contains a sleeping loft upstairs and a dramatic window that looks out onto a meadow and hill. Its whitewashed pine paneling has been embellished with trompe l'oeil twigs, which echo the staircase's real twig banister and split-log risers. The strictly blue-and-white palette covers a range of hues, from the pale Swedish furniture to the striped and checked textiles Johnson designed specifically for the interior. Yet, as in all the cottages, little of the designer's work is doctrinaire: In this Scandinavian family there are American cousins (an Adirondack-style grandfather clock, a weathervane, a blue-and-white graniteware tin cup) and some Polynesian touches that allude to the owners' Hawaiian connection.

Orchard takes its name from the surrounding apple orchard originally planted by Dorothy Thompson, who was an ambitious gardener—it was her hope, during the war, to make Twin Farms a viable working farm. The theme is Japanese, but Wanzenberg is careful to point out, "It's someone's personal vision of what Japan is about, not so much in the colors, which are probably richer, but in the screens, the seamless transition between the indoors and the outdoors, and the decorative objects." Wanzenberg and Johnson installed a woven-ash ceiling, embedded field grasses in the plaster walls and used hand-thrown pottery sinks in the bath. Guests sleep on a low bed and read by light filtered through translucent paper shades. The floor plan was a deliberate echo of one the partners had drawn up for themselves: a one-room cottage with a single roofline. "You live in one area and sleep in another," Wanzenberg says. "The simplicity is functional, but it's also meant to be idealized. This is not an environment for real life necessarily, but life perfected.

"Twin Farms taught us to be adaptable and quality-driven," Alan Wanzenberg concludes. "I'm especially committed to that now, since Jed's death. I'm focused on the longevity of our commissions. I want them to last."

DOROTHY THOMPSON NEWS

Dorothy Thompson was mentioned in a recent speech in San Antonio about Radio Germany's "Mr. O.K." Philip J. Harwood, of the Department of Communication at the University of Dayton, presented "Confidentially, Radio Germany's Mr. O.K.," at one of the World War II sections of the annual Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association Conference on March 27, 1997. "Mr. O.K." was an American citizen named Max Otto Koischwitz who broadcast for Nazi Germany during World War II. In his presentation, Harwood mentions that Koischwitz "reserved some of his most caustic comments" for newspaper correspondent and columnist Dorothy Thompson:

As head of *New York Evening Post's* Berlin Bureau, Thompson's reports about the Nazi movement eventually won her the distinction, in 1934, of becoming the first American correspondent to be expelled from Germany, by the personal order of Adolf Hitler. After her return to the U.S., she began an immensely popular column, "On the Record," that eventually was syndicated to 170 newspapers across the country. *Time* put her likeness on one of its covers in 1939, and in a poll conducted by the same magazine she finished second only to Eleanor Roosevelt as the most popular woman. Mr. O.K., in a broadcast of July 28, 1941, accused her of belonging "... to the most ardent war clique from the beginning. She got up in public and screamed that she's so happy to sacrifice a million American boys to destroy Hitler." He noted that "... a great many of our boys are over here [Europe] already, flying with the RAF.... Some boys have not returned on their flight to the continent. These boys who laid down their lives for Roosevelt's policy and Dorothy Thompson will not remain alone. Isolationism has been overthrown and nobody knows what the consequences will be" (C.B.S. July 28, 1941).

* * *

In a review of *Rage for Fame: The Ascent of Clare Booth Luce* by Sylvia Jukes Morris, critic Grace Lichtenstein in the *Washington Post's Book World* (June 8, 1997) notes some similarities between Luce and Dorothy Thompson. However Luce was often a "facile" journalist, who "engaged in a nasty war of words with the distinguished columnist Dorothy Thompson. They should have been pals, since they shared much: early work for the suffrage movement, marriage to alcoholics, 'prodigious physical and mental energy.' But though an early supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Luce gravitated toward Wendell Wilkie and thereupon decided that she, not Thompson, was to be the leading Republican female pundit" (1, 10).

REVIEW

LEWIS'S EARLY FICTION STILL RESONATES TODAY

*If I Were Boss:**The Early Business Stories of Sinclair Lewis*

Edited by Anthony Di Renzo

Southern Illinois University Press

363 pp., \$39.95, cloth; \$19.95, paper

By Linda Laird Giedl

from the *Christian Science Monitor*, October 30, 1997

It's Nobel laureate season again, and next week Southern Illinois University Press will release an anthology of short stories by America's first Nobel Prize-winner in Literature, Sinclair Lewis. In *If I Were Boss: The Early Business Stories of Sinclair Lewis*, editor Anthony Di Reno culled 15 stories of Lewis's more than 60 short stories not republished since their first appearance from 1915 to 1921 in magazines of the day—*The Saturday Evening Post*, *Metropolitan*, and *Harper's* among them.

Far from being quaint little relics of a bygone era, Lewis's early stories speak directly to today. They reflect a clever humor and a shrewd satiric style, and range from wistful and poignant in "Bronze Bars," to wickedly cutting in four Lancelot Todd stories. Secular parables, actually, these stories speak our language—they talk like us!

It's healthy, though, to look into this surprising mirror of the corporate workplace. Lewis's close-to-the-bone early satire "graphically depicts the seductive power of the American sales pitch, its poetry, pervasiveness, and perversity," writes Di Renzo in his introduction. He continues, "it traces the madness of the American workplace ... back to a regimen of perpetual, self-defeating salesmanship."

Men like Lancelot Todd are scoundrels. Lewis designs his

stories so that a moral Providence exposes Todd for what he is—a shameless huckster. He may be clever, work hard, have inspired notions about how to sway the public, but he is inevitably undone in the end. When the dishonest man gets his "come-uppence," readers cheer, although Lewis is skillful enough to make you wince at the same time. It is evident just how the anti-hero feels when the trap closes around him. Therein is the poignancy as well as the humor of these morality tales—especially the four that reveal the true nature of Todd, that genius of false advertising.

Readers, particularly women, must prepare themselves to forgive outmoded opinions and attitudes, expressed by Lewis's working folk, about the roles of men and women in the workplace.

Today's professional woman, however, will find her natural ancestor in Nancy Arroford, the unskilled but savvy young widow become top executive, whom Lewis depicts with uncanny insight and genuine empathy in "A Story with a Happy Ending."

With this piece, Lewis acknowledged the emerging aspirations of women. Other slurs and biases, "politically incorrect" today, turn up in these stories. Di Renzo, as editor, has obviously opted for fidelity to Lewis's original versions.

All the stories are easy to read, to the point, and quintessentially Midwestern. Their situations are eerily familiar. Examples of Lewis's mastery of the small-town dialects of his native Midwest, and of the techniques of promotional writing, abound....

As the first major satirist and social critic of the effects on ordinary middle-class men and women of the modern corporation, however, Lewis's place is surely secure. The stories in *If I Were Boss* deserve their contemporary revival.

Clare Eby, a member of the Sinclair Lewis Society Board of Directors, will be reviewing this book in an upcoming issue.

Announcement...

THE PUBLICATION OF THE FIRST DEFINITIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SINCLAIR LEWIS

Sinclair Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography
A Collector's and Scholar's Guide to Identification
 By Stephen R. Pastore

With:

James Hutchisson, Assoc. Prof., The Citadel; Author, *The Rise of Sinclair Lewis: 1920-1930*. Penn State Press, 1996.
 Sally Parry Dept. of English, Illinois State University; Executive Director, The Sinclair Lewis Society.

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REVIEW

AT LAST

*Sinclair Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography,
A Collector's and Scholar's Guide to Identification*

Stephen R. Pastore

Yale Books

340 pages, \$59.95, cloth, dust wrapper.

By Daniel Chabris

Rejoice—here we have the first Sinclair Lewis bibliography worthy of the name. Anyone with even a modest interest in collecting Lewis should own this volume. It is not perfect, by any means, but it is far and away the most complete to date and reflects a major effort by a dealer/collector with a long-standing interest in the first American Nobel Prize winner in literature.

The volume includes much more than the mere physical description of Lewis's works. Sally Parry, one of the founders of the Sinclair Lewis Society, has provided a fascinating autobiographical preface. Lee Biondi, a distinguished California dealer, has contributed a second preface coming at Lewis from the dealers' point of view. An introduction by Pastore gives the reader, whether new collector or experienced gray beard, much good collecting advice. James M. Hutchisson, the author of the most recent, and first-rate work on Lewis, gives a splendid summary of Lewis's life and work. But the extras go on.

In what at first blush appears to be the final section of the books labeled "Ephemera," we find a short and fact-filled essay on Dust wrappers, another short comment on Lewis Reprints, and a longer, heavily illustrated section labeled "Signatures, Inscriptions and Association Copies." This last piece even includes a page on *Ptomaine Street*, a parody published in 1921. But there is still more to come.

An appendix provides a comment on first appearances of Lewis writings, a list of dates and publications where the seven serialized novels first appeared, and finally a listing of all first appearances of any kind presented both chronologically and alphabetically by title. Steve Pastore has done us all a great service.

The main section of the work gives a full treatment to each of 36 titles. It would probably be more precise to refer to 24 titles with the other 12 being included as ephemera, subsequent editions, etc. The section is called "The Books," though several of them would be classified otherwise by a different author. For example—a pamphlet review of the John Dos Passos *Manhattan Transfer* is surely not a book. The same might be said of "Keep out of the Kitchen," "Cheap and Contented Labor," "Sinclair Lewis on the Valley of the Moon," "Launcelot," and the second version of "Cheap and Contented Labor." Nevertheless, the material provided on each title is valuable and extensive. Considering the author's views on Harvey Taylor, calling some of his creations "Books" is surprising.

For every one of the 36 titles the author has provided photographs of the front cover as well as the dust wrapper (when present). Also, "points" of bibliographic interest are reproduced whenever they are of some significance. Each title description begins with a short essay on the inception of the work, publishing anecdotes, comments, where necessary, on the dust wrappers, and frequently explications of some anomalies in various bindings. This is all followed by the images mentioned alone. These include, in the case of *Elmer Gantry*, reviews of the spine in both first and subsequent printings. In the earliest versions of the binding the "G" in *Gantry* appears to be a "C." This is the point that separates the first from subsequent printings. Lastly comes a page giving the descriptive facts—publisher, date of publication, price, dimension, binding material, lettering, decoration, pagination, number of copies printed and "points." (Some of the dust wrappers used for the illustrations are of rather poor quality. *The Job*, *The Innocents*, and *Dodsworth* are particularly so. It should have been possible to borrow better copies for so worthy a project.)

It is unfortunate that the author has given us almost no listing or, better still, description of subsequent printings and/or editions. He does provide a few comments on reprints, principally those by Grossett & Dunlap, but writes almost nothing of the dozens of reprints in both hardbound and paperback editions. Further, there are no entries on foreign editions where Lewis's works enjoyed immense popularity.

The paperback editions, several still in print, can use a major section of this, or some subsequent volume of their own. Many of them enjoyed the attention, in introductions or afternotes, of perceptive contemporary critics. These additions to some of the paperbacks changed over the decades since their first appearance and may give clues to the changing views on Lewis.

The Armed Forces Editions (I believe there are but three) should at least be listed in some works like this one. The same is true for the several Modern Library editions, the Limited Editions and Heritage Press versions of *Main Street* and the recent Library of America volume containing *Main Street* and *Babbitt*. This last volume contains a handy chronology of Lewis's life and writings that any collector should be aware of. It was written by John Hersey, one-time secretary to Lewis, and contains some facts not elsewhere recorded.

The author has admitted that he is in the process of finalizing a second volume of Lewis's bibliography listing all of those later editions/printings plus new volumes about Lewis or that contain any mention of Lewis or his works in any fashion! All this from Pastore's personal collection. We'll all be waiting for that one.

On the authorship of "Tennis as I Play It" I find myself unconvinced by Pastore's arguments. I have read the same collected material he has, spoken to some of the California dealers involved, pursued (fruitlessly) descendants of the deceased principals and spoken to the archivist of the USLTA.

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Chabris continued from page 14

The evidence strikes me as shabby. The author makes the further argument that as a "tennis" book the volume would have same value as a Lewis creation. This is not likely. The volume appears in the sporting books section of a recent dealer catalog at \$100. There are as yet (3 weeks later) no takers. The book, as a Lewis artifact (with the attendant material Pastore mentions), has been offered, and sold, at prices from \$250 to \$300.

On the other hand, it is my personal view that the bibliography should have contained *Storm in the West* written by Sinclair Lewis and Dore Schary in 1943. It was to be a motion picture in the form of a Western allegory of the war in Europe for production by MGM (Dore Schary was at that time a producer at MGM) The book was published in a hardback version by Stein & Day, New York, in 1963. It was followed by a paperback version from the same publisher. I have discussed this item with Mr. Stein who knew Schary and was his editor on the published short novel. He confirms that Sinclair Lewis did most of the creative writing on the work and Schary collaborated and printed the necessary screenplay expertise.

It is sad to report that the book's author was ill-served by his publisher and copyeditor. The evidence of the final book suggests that everyone involved in producing the volume had something better to do at the time. Typographical errors of every variety are numerous. Words are misspelled, dropped, or misplaced. Lines are repeated and consistency of presentation is periodically misplaced as well.

Factual material, however, is not compromised and all of the above are no more than distractions to a Lewis aficionado. There may soon be a second edition correcting all of those errors. That volume also will be a necessary buy.

The final word from this review is that despite its faults this book is essential for all Sinclair Lewis enthusiasts whether collectors or not.



CONTACT THE SINCLAIR LEWIS
SOCIETY NEWSLETTER ON THE
WORLD WIDE WEB AT:
<http://www.ilstu.edu/~separry/lewis.html>

Koenig continued from page 9

A little girl bear comes by. It's love at first sight. One of the "sister" vocal groups of this era sings, "This is too good to be true."

Big Bear comes to take Lulu Belle for himself, but in the end, Bongo becomes the hero of the forest and wins back his love. She goes up a tree, and he still can't climb. Other animals show him, and they end up two love bears in a tree.

* * *

Nothing could be more pleasant than staying at the Palmer House, where Sinclair Lewis once worked. The rooms are pleasant, as well as comfortable. Various antique desks and headboards, wing chairs, afghans, crocheted cloths add just the right touch. And they fed us very well.

There is something new at the front desk. "Palmer," the cockatiel. Palmer was born April 8, 1997, so he's not talking yet, but he does tricks. If you talk to him, he'll show you his swings and race up and down the cage and swing upside-down for you.

I remained at the Palmer House until Sunday for Sinclair Lewis Days weekend. We awoke to rain each morning, but the events weren't too dampened. Lesley Lewis led the parade as grand marshal.

Lesley promises to bring her two brothers to our next conference. It will no doubt be in the year 2000 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of *Arrowsmith*, but Sally predicts we may get together even before that.

BABBITT AND BOOKS

Janice Radway's new book, *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire*, (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1997) discusses the rise of "book club culture" and uses George Babbitt as a symbol of the sort of person at whom books clubs were aimed. In laying out the debate among intellectuals about the standardization of literary merit, she writes "With respect to the impact of this process on the literary realm, it seems clear that the debate was intensified by the 1922 publication of Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*" (204). "'Babbitt' and 'Main Street' were familiar rhetorical figures in these debates. In the August 1929 issue of *The Bookman*, for instance, Douglas Bush noted that 'then came Mr. Lewis, and the revolt against parochialism and standardization was in full swing'" (383). Stuart Chase in the *New Republic* in 1926 bemoaned the specter of "one hundred million Babbitts" (207), and Radway notes other examples of critics who were "appalled at the sight of millions of Ford-driving, silk shirted Babbitts" (242).

Harry Scherman, a founder of the Book-of-the-Month Club, was vilified by many who thought he was destroying essential distinctions between literature and trade books like cookbooks and mysteries, offering culture to "the lazy, the profligate, and the obtuse. . .to every Babbitt who could afford the price of subscription" (249). The editors of the *Nation* applauded Lewis in 1926 when he refused the Pulitzer Prize because it seemed as though he were standing against "the new fad of identifying 'the best'" (223).

REVIEW

EVEN AT 70, *ELMER GANTRY* IS WICKEDLY FUNNY A SATIRICAL LOOK AT EVANGELISM LEWIS-STYLE

By Roger K. Miller

from *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, July, 13, 1997

Elmer Gantry
Sinclair Lewis
Signet Classics
\$5.95, paper

The preachers, televangelists and assorted other divines have been disappointingly quiet of late. No revelations of hideaway love nests, no money scandals or political-biblical humbuggery to titillate a jaded public yawning over accounts of which rock star or Hollywood demigod is doing what to whom.

It was different only a few years back. Every week or so a Bakker or a Swaggart or a Robertson or a Falwell could be counted on to trip over his own morality and entertain us with a bathetic scene of righteousness curdled.

Then again, maybe it's not them, but us—us and the weakening grip that mainstream religious strictures have on our national life. The holy doctors are doubtless deflowering and defrauding the diminishing numbers of the faithful at a rate just as rabid as ever, but what we as a society don't value we don't raise high, and what we don't raise high can't fall very far. Ergo: No fall for them, no shock—or, alas, amusement—for us.

And, oh, how different it was a few decades back, when Sinclair Lewis published his *Elmer Gantry*, which has its 70th anniversary this year. In those days, when Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple McPherson and other sanctified quacks had a death grip on our conscience, the fall from grace of one of their number would cause a public swoon that rocked from shore to shore.

Which is precisely the sort of thing chronicled by *Elmer Gantry*—still in print and still holding up as a remarkably entertaining novel—though it is not the only, nor even the main, thing. Elmer is not an evangelist and the book is not an exposé of evangelism or revivalism—at least, not primarily.

Elmer is a church pastor—originally a Baptist, later a Methodist—and the book is a biting attack on how he and others had abused that calling. The association of “Elmer Gantry” with revivalism probably stems from the 1960 movie, which was based only on the section of the book dealing with Elmer's joining the tent revivalism of Sister Sharon Falconer.

Seven decades ago jealousy, greed, lust, and other sins among the clergy scandalized the devout. Wherever pos-

sible it was kept hidden, and the shock of *Elmer Gantry* at the time was that it not only brought it into the open, but mocked it.

There is vicious backbiting and name-calling. From his pulpit, Elmer disparages a brother minister (and former fellow seminarian) to lure away a rich parishioner. A cynical musician in Sister Sharon's three-piece “orchestra” says, “These religious folks do seem to scrap amongst themselves.”

There is sex. Elmer tends a whole garden of fleshly delights, a garden that some of his fellow preachers also cultivate. At the end, Elmer almost comes a cropper with a church secretary, but manages to emerge largely unscathed.

There is money. Here is one philosophical area in which seven decades have brought scarcely a ripple of change: the idea that what God really wants is for you to prosper. Elmer insists on the “good, hard, practical, dollars-and-cents value of Christ in Commerce.” When temporarily out of the church, Elmer peddles New Thought or Prosperity Thinking, a secular version of this same line of goods.

And still further: the self-righteous desire to set the moral tone of the nation, which has flared brightly again in our day. For himself, Elmer has the farcical ambition of becoming the chief moral director of America.

Fretful flocks, eager to explain away the straying of their shepherds, blame it all on outsiders, especially the press, a form of scapegoating not unheard of even now. “The rumors,” Lewis writes, “were inspired by the devil and spread by saloon-keepers and infidels.”

All of this Lewis satirizes in this wickedly funny novel. And more: the religionists' anti-intellectualism—Elmer's church-affiliated college had a “standard of scholarship equal to the best high schools.” And hypocrisy and double standards—Sharon condemns dancing, but loves to dance.

And poor old Elmer himself, a chief yahoo in Mencken's tribe of boobus Americanus, with calluses on their knuckles and hair upon their brows. He cannot let religion alone. In the seminary, though he is repelled by what he sees as the boredom of the church, still he wants to be a part of it. After he is thrown out of the seminary, he becomes a salesman, but he yearns to get back into preaching.

Blame it on Lewis. The objects of his attacks were also objects of his desire. As a grown man, during drunken revels with friends he could reel off verse after verse of hymns remembered from his youth.

Today we might say he was conflicted. And if we did, and he were alive, he'd mock us for our pretentiousness.

Lingeman's conference keynote address continued from page 1

Schorer had done a massive job of documenting Lewis's life; his book was an informative, exhaustively researched, at times illuminating work of scholarship with the word "definitive" stamped all over it. But Lewis had been a hero to me, and here was an 800-page obituary that left me glad that the subject was dead.

Not only did Schorer portray Lewis's life as a disaster, he didn't think much of his novels either. And he seemed to be saying that the best evidence of their worthlessness was the disastrous life of their author. Recently, I came across a foreword Schorer wrote to a collection of essays by T.K. Whipple, a well-known literary critic of the 1920s. Schorer quotes Whipple as follows: "[Lewis's] world was a poor one at best, but he has denied himself even what little it might have offered. That is why he is still a boy, with a boy's insecurity and self-doubt hidden behind a forced rudeness and boldness."

Schorer comments: "This judgment proves, on biographical evidence, to be so unarguable that, thirty-one years later, in a biography, I could do little more than document it...." Here is a biographer proclaiming that he spent 800 pages documenting the proposition that Sinclair Lewis never grew up. What's more, when he writes about Lewis's early years, he is not content just to say he had a miserable childhood. It was HIS OWN FAULT!

What also struck me back in 1961, when I read *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life*, was the author's condescending tone. Here is one example: On the last page Schorer describes Lewis's death and ends by quoting the Italian words on the death certificate: "'Paralisi cardiaca.' Paralysis of the heart." There the book ends, but as Schorer later explained, to him those words represented more than a medical judgment; they were an example of the "poetry of fact." As he wrote: "Paralysis of the heart. This...I had long before discovered was the very theme of Lewis's life and a major theme of the whole [biography]: his incapacity for love. Is this not poetry? and more than that, magnificently, poetic justice?" Does he mean it was poetic justice that Lewis died of cardiac arrest? It strikes me that Schorer's own heart was a bit paralyzed when he wrote that. Perhaps Lewis's heavy smoking and drinking were the mundane cause of his troubled heart. Roger Forseth has chided Schorer for his treatment of Lewis's alcoholism, saying it showed a lack of knowledge of that terrible addiction, which scarred Lewis's life.

What was most dismaying to me when I read Schorer's biography was that it seemed to leave Lewis's entire career in ruins. Many critics agreed at the time that it decisively punctured Lewis's over-inflated literary reputation. Here is a typical statement: "most readers who struggled through [Schorer's] bulky tome must have felt as though they were watching a once-brilliant rocket tumble awkwardly and irrevocably to earth. Both Schorer and his audience had learned too much. Why bother oneself further with a man who was so contemptibly understandable as a product of his callow and bumptious age?"

And so, like a lot of people, I lost my innocence reading *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life*. But who was I to question such a massively documented, critically acclaimed biography? There seemed nothing more to be said. Case closed.

Now, flash forward 32 years. In 1993 I had finished a biography of Theodore Dreiser and was casting about for the subject of my next book—floundering is a better word. I confessed my quandary to James West, professor of English at Penn State, a Dreiser authority, and a biographer in his own right of William Styron. Jim suggested I write a biography of Lewis. He confirmed that the general view among academic authorities was that Schorer's biography was marred by his personal dislike of Sinclair Lewis and that it was time for another one.

And so, like a lot of people,
I lost my innocence reading
Sinclair Lewis: An American Life.

And that was when I began to see that Schorer's book was not the Rock of Gibraltar, after all; it was only made of clay, as the song goes. When I began looking into the more recent commentary on Lewis, I inevitably encountered Sally Parry, to whom all Lewis roads lead and who confirmed what Jim West had told me and sent me other articles, one of her own and others published in *The Sinclair Lewis Newsletter*, including a pretty definitive critique by Jack Davis. I discovered that she edited the *Newsletter*. What is more she sent me a piece on Schorer and Lewis by her husband, Robert McLaughlin. Well, there may not be a Sinclair Lewis industry in academia, but there is a Mom and Pop store. Jim Hutchisson sent me the still-smoking typescript of his just-completed book, *The Rise of Sinclair Lewis*. It turned out that Jim had been a student of Jim West.

With all this good help I was able to draw up a solid proposal and persuade Random House that a new biography of Lewis was overdue. Oh yes, my editor at Random House for this book, Bob Loomis, is also Jim West's editor. And so you have the naked truth about the incestuous world of New York publishing.

Now my book is well underway, but it's still a work in progress, so anything I say tonight should not be taken as my final thinking. Indeed, I welcome suggestions, not to mention new information.

At any rate I eagerly plunged into the research and writing of the book, fancying myself the exorcist who would lift the Schorer Curse. But his biography continued to loom in my path like a great boulder. On the one hand, I couldn't ignore it, because it is an indispensable source, full of interviews with people long dead. Still, I somehow had to get beyond it, not least because otherwise what was the point of writing a new biography? But as I brooded I realized that I was letting the Schorer Curse affect me too. I saw I had become so obsessed with it that it was warping my writing. I found myself

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constantly arguing with Schorer or trying to refute him, rather than advancing my own interpretations.

Well, the fact that I began to see that there were other interpretations was actually a hopeful sign. What I was doing was getting away from constantly reacting against my predecessor and instead finding my own way, drawing on the new information and new critical thinking that has become available and starting to construct a portrait of Sinclair Lewis from the bottom up, as it were, without being defensive or over-protective of him. Sinclair Lewis doesn't really need a defense lawyer; his achievements stand. The real job is to redefine them for our own times, to see him as he was, to place his literary achievements in their proper historical perspective.

Now let me talk about some of this new information and thinking that freed me from my personal Schorer Curse. As I've already suggested, Lewis is being read and discussed by a whole new generation of critics and readers. This has inspired a raft of new scholarship and criticism in academia. And though I don't have any hard data to support this, he is also being discovered by younger readers, or rediscovered by older readers, who had forgotten him.

A certain attitude towards Lewis has prevailed for many years, namely that he is old hat, that we already know what he says in his novels. That cultural *déjà vu* is, paradoxically, partly the result of Lewis's brilliant success in discovering and naming American types and institutions and pinning them to his novelistic specimen board. As we all know, some of the names he gave the species he discovered became a part of the language, but there was the rub. *Main Street* and *Babbitt* are terms so firmly embedded in the American mind that they have become clichés: their origins have been forgotten and their once pertinent meanings have been worn smooth by overuse. But now a counterreaction is leading us back to the source of those words—leading us to rediscover the novels that named the phenomena and experience the same thrill of discovery that Lewis's first readers had. In a letter to Schorer John O'Hara said that a lot of novelists in the 1920s were equipped to write *Babbitt* but "Lewis, and only Lewis, saw *Babbitt*. All the other novelists and journalists and *Babbitt* himself were equally blind to *Babbitt* and *Zenith* and the United States of America until 1922. Do you know of anyone since Fielding who made such an important discovery-creation....?"

Another reason Lewis's reputation is on the upswing is that the biographers and critics who play a key role in determining whether a writer's reputation rises or falls on the literary stock market often reflect their times. Schorer himself is a prime example. As several critics of him have pointed out, his judgments on Lewis reflected not only personal distaste but also his critical taste. He was a leading exponent of the New Critics, who dominated academia in the 1950s when I was in college. As McLaughlin writes in his essay, "the premises behind Schorer's New Critical approach seem inimical to Lewis's novels." In other words, Schorer had a tin ear for Lewis's writing and thus was unable to explain—again to

quote McLaughlin, "why Lewis's novels were so popular, influential, and important and why they are still valuable to us."

McLaughlin predicted that other critical perspectives could give Lewis a fairer hearing and recover what was good and valuable in his novels. And this is what has happened. New cohorts of teachers and critics are taking a fresh look. What happens in academia may seem remote to the rest of us, but how novelists are being taught in high schools and colleges—indeed if they are being taught at all—is part of the process by which American literature is passed down the generations. I note that *The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter* has a sort of standing invitation for articles suggesting new ways of teaching Sinclair Lewis. Good teachers respond to their times, to changing values in society.

The real job is to redefine [Lewis's] achievements for our own times, to see him as he was, to place his literary achievements in their proper historical perspective.

The rise of feminism, for example, has brought a new generation of women to Lewis's novels, particularly *The Job*, *Main Street*, and *Ann Vickers*. They discover he was raising some of the same issues that Betty Friedan and her sisters did. Whatever the difficulties Lewis had in his own life relating to women, he harbored a strong, sincere interest in feminism which he regarded as a part of an eternal global struggle for greater freedom and social justice by those who are held down by obsolete institutions. And those women who want to read the novels by Lewis I just named will find that they have been reissued in paperback—some of them had been out of print—with new appraisals of Lewis's handling of feminist issues.

Schorer touched only glancingly on the feminist themes in Lewis's novels. He also scanted Lewis's other political and social ideas. He dismisses Lewis's youthful political radicalism, for example, as a boyish escapade, part of the intellectual high-jinks of his Bohemian days in Greenwich Village, when he joined the Socialist Party. It's true that Lewis wasn't a politically active party member; in later years he called himself a parlor socialist. Nevertheless, years later he told Marcella Powers that he had been a fervent member of Branch One of the New York Socialist Party—the famous branch that all the intellectuals, writers, and artists joined in the pre-World War I era. It's also true that after he married Grace Hegger and was supporting her and their son, Wells, by writing for the *Saturday Evening Post*, he kept his radical views under wraps, particularly during the First World War when such ideas could get you thrown into prison. But by that time he had worked out his own social philosophy, which was an eccentric home brew of Fabian socialism and H.G. Wells' utopianism. This philosophy formed a continuing thread—the Red Thread you might say—through his writings.

Christopher Wilson's excellent essay "Sinclair Lewis and the Passing of Capitalism" and his book *White Collar Fictions* explains how Lewis's social and political vision shaped his short stories and novels of the teens and, later, two of his most important novels, *Main Street* and *Babbitt*.

Recognition of the influence of Lewis's political views on his stories and novels leads to a related consideration—the social and historical context in which he wrote them. While writing about *Main Street*, I was somewhat surprised to discover how important the historical context is. For example, Carol Kennicott is sometimes a spokesperson for Lewis's ideas; she expresses his idealism, his belief in democracy and freedom of speech, his sense of social justice, his sympathy with the poor—in this case, the Swedish, German, and Norwegian farmers around Gopher Prairie. In World War I suppression of free speech was common and was particularly virulent here in Minnesota, where radicals were jailed or ridden out of town on a rail. During the war years Lewis lived in the Twin Cities and Mankato and he was critical of what was going on, because it forms the backdrop to events in the last section of *Main Street*, during and immediately after World War I, when Carol decides to leave her husband and take a job in Washington.

Carol also complains about the town businessmen exploiting the farmers. Her criticisms sound much like those made by Thorstein Veblen, the Minnesota-born radical economist, in an essay called "The Country Town." Veblen actually published the essay after *Main Street* came out but some of the basic ideas in it can be found in a 1915 book that Lewis—who was a Veblen enthusiast—may have read (I'm still checking). But even if he didn't read it, the same ideas were in the air. They were being voiced by the National Nonpartisan League, which was active in Minnesota and South Dakota from 1915 into the 1920s. In John Koblas's book *Sinclair Lewis—Home at Last*, which provides much new material on his activities at this time, we learn he attended Nonpartisan League meetings while spending the summer of 1919 in Mankato and planning *Main Street*. And the Good Citizens League in *Babbitt* has its real-life counterpart in businessmen's groups like the Minneapolis Citizens Alliance, which for years fought labor unions in the Twin Cities. Knowing Lewis was criticizing those groups for trampling on free speech helps us appreciate that he wasn't just crying in the wind, and he came back to the issue in the 1930s, in his novel about a fascist takeover in the United States, *It Can't Happen Here*, and in the 1940s, in *Kingsblood Royal*.

But first of all he was a novelist, and in understanding how and why he wrote what he did and the way he did, it is also important to study his development as a writer, his working methods, the play of his imagination on materials drawn from real life.

Lewis served his apprenticeship writing stories for the *Saturday Evening Post* from 1915 until the time he completed *Main Street*. To a biographer these efforts are interesting because (1) they show how Lewis experimented with

various styles, characters and settings; (2) because they anticipate the themes and subjects he later dealt with more fully in his novels of the 1920s; and (3) because, despite the pressures under which they were written, they display Lewis's growing technical skill.

But Lewis became increasingly frustrated with *Saturday Evening Post* taboos and conventions, such as always having a happy ending. The *Post* stood for the old-time conservative, pro-business values of its editor, George Horace Lorimer, values that Lewis, the parlor socialist, questioned. Lewis was tied to the *Post* because of the high prices it paid him, as well as because of his respect for Lorimer, to whom he felt a deep gratitude for launching his writing career and enabling him to quit his job in book publishing. But now he was dreaming of writing what he thought would be a real and true novel, *Main Street*.

During his stint of gold-plated servitude to the *Post*, whenever he had a strong urge to say something he knew Lorimer couldn't stomach, he turned to other outlets. For example, he wrote a series of satirical stories about an advertising man and promoter named Lancelot Todd, who is a complete fraud, always coming up with new schemes to bilk the public. The irritant that generated those stories was, I think, his disgust with the advertising blurbs and puff pieces he wrote while working for various publishing houses. Anyhow, he sent these stories to *Metropolitan* magazine which was more liberal than the *Post*.

In the Lancelot Todd stories we see Lewis's satirical style beginning to bloom, his ear for American speech and the gassy double-talk of advertisements, which he later deployed to high comic effect in *Babbitt*. In short, we see a writer struggling to find his own voice, something he was blocked from doing in the *Post*. This struggle also emerges in letters he wrote to the novelist Joseph Hergesheimer. In one of these letters, Lewis insists on his right to use slangy Americanese like Ring Lardner and a few other contemporary writers were doing. He was consciously attempting to find a realistic, yet satirical way to render the American experience.

The rise of feminism, for example, has brought
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Lewis's struggle to break away from the *Saturday Evening Post* is chronicled in the letters between him and Lorimer that were acquired last year by the Minnesota Historical Society. Reading between the lines you sense the conflict in Lewis's mind between his need for financial security and his desire to express the ideas he believed in that were seething in his brain. In the letters you see him temporizing; he is afraid of losing his lucrative outlet in the *Post* and he is trying to stay in Lorimer's good graces. And you sense Lorimer's growing suspicion. Lorimer was a powerful editor, who treated his

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Lingeman continued from page 19

writers like vassals, and demanded loyalty. When Lewis tells him about *Main Street* and insinuates that it is not suitable for the *Post*, he becomes even more suspicious. But Lewis can never quite tell Lorimer the truth—that he feared if he wrote *Main Street* with serialization in the *Post* in mind he would pull his punches, that the novel contains ideas Lorimer would not approve of, and that he had promised his publisher, Alfred Harcourt, he would not serialize it in the *Post* because that would cut into the sales of the book.

The Lewis-Lorimer letters are one example of the new material that has emerged since Schorer wrote his biography. Another fresh source, as Jim Hutchisson shows in his book, is the manuscripts of Lewis's novels, showing his changes and cuts; and also the extensive notes, plans and maps that he drew up before starting his books. Some of these materials were available to Schorer but he dismissed them as of little importance. A biographer does not have the space to discuss fascinating issues such as why Lewis cut a chapter in *Main Street* in which he has Guy Pollock marrying a small-town floozy, and Lewis never said why he did it. But such decisions by an author offer valuable clues about his intentions.

Although I vowed to stop being defensive, let me deal with one criticism frequently made of Lewis—that he was primarily a reporter who selected a topic, researched it down to the nub, and then regurgitated his data in a novel. If you look at the detailed maps he made of Babbitt's city, his neighborhood, his offices and so on, and read the lengthy history of the city of Zenith that he wrote and the sketches of the dozens of characters in the novel, you apprehend the powerful searchlight of a novelist's imagination illuminating the terrain of ordinary American life. Lewis drew on his considerable knowledge of society, but he transmuted it into fictional images to reveal truths that go deeper than sociological facts. Also he can be a lot funnier than many sociologists I know. The creator of Elmer Gantry and Will Kennicott and Lowell

Schmaltz and Vergil Gunch and Chum Frink was more than a reporter.

Another valuable source on how he went about writing his novels is the letters he wrote to Marcella Powers now at St. Cloud State University. Pat Schenk has discussed them, so I will just say that I regard them as invaluable in revealing his state of mind when he wrote his best books of his later years, *Cass Timberlane* and *Kingsblood Royal*. And at Yale, where the main body of Lewis's papers are kept, the detailed plans and maps for these two novels can be found as well. Taken together, this is a rich trove of information that could reshape our understanding of Lewis's writings in his last years.

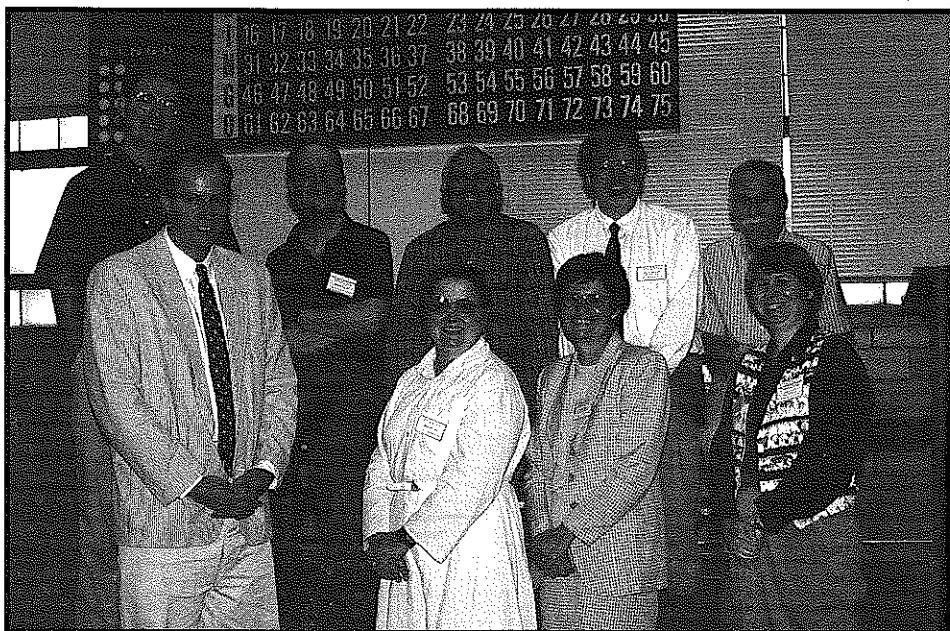
I will briefly mention other new material, from the letters to Doubleday, his publisher in the 1930s, at the Library of Congress, to the book of reminiscences Lewis's niece Isabel Agrell compiled. The latter is full of family photographs and odd facts relating to Lewis's father and mother and step-mother, and their forebears, as well as to his early years in Sauk Centre. And finally, there are revealing biographies of Dorothy Thompson, Lewis's second wife, along with a large collection of her letters and diaries at Syracuse University. This material is important not least because she played such a crucial role in shaping Schorer's portrait of Lewis and because of the revelations of her bisexuality, which surely had some effect on their marital relations.

Well, here I am, coming back to Mark Schorer. If I have harped too much on his failings tonight, I apologize. I was just trying to exorcise my personal Schorer curse. Rest in peace Mark.

Richard Lingeman is a senior editor of the Nation and the author of Small Town America, Don't You Know There's A War On? The American Home Front 1941-1945, Theodore Dreiser: At the Gates of the City 1871-1907, and Theodore Dreiser: An American Journey 1908-1945.

Keynote speaker Richard Lingeman, and other conference attendees, take a break at The Sinclair Lewis Conference in Sauk Centre, Minnesota.

(Back row, from left to right) James Hutchisson, Lingeman, Martin Bucco, Robert McLaughlin, Frederick Betz; (front row) Jonathan Veitch, Jean Mullin Yonke, M. Ellen Dupree, Sally Parry.



SAUK CENTRE WELCOMES LEWIS'S GRANDDAUGHTER

By Roberta Olson

from *Osakis Review*, July 29, 1997

Lesley Lewis never met her grandfather, but she could feel his presence when she paid her first visit to Sauk Centre July 16-20 for a conference and a festival in his honor.

"I really felt an enormous presence," Lesley said of her first visit to the National and Minnesota Historic Monument in which her grandfather, America's first Nobel Prize for Literature winner Sinclair Lewis, grew up.

"Even if I had not been a granddaughter, I would have felt the power," she said.

Touring the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home, which was the home of her great-grandfather, Dr. E. J. Lewis, his second wife, Isabel, and the three Lewis sons, was "like a dream sequence," Lesley commented her first afternoon in Sauk Centre.

The Sinclair Lewis Foundation Board gathered to greet her and present her with a plaque of a life-time membership in the Foundation. Foundation President Roberta Olson made the presentation. She spent an hour and a half that first afternoon inspecting in detail every nook and cranny of the famous home. In turn, she related memories and information she had about the Lewis family.

**"Even if I had not been a granddaughter,
I would have felt the power."**

—Lesley Lewis describing her first visit to
Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home.

Lesley never met her famous—some would say infamous—grandfather. Sinclair died Jan. 10, 1951 in Rome. She was born March 20, 1961 in Manhattan, daughter of Sinclair's youngest son, Michael, and his second wife, Valerie Cardew Lewis.

Both her parents were actors, Lesley relates. And they moved around. At one point she spent several years living in England.

Lesley had a five-day whirlwind visit to Sauk Centre, which was hosted by Patricia and Dick Lewis of St. Cloud and the Sinclair Lewis Foundation. Lesley and Patricia together visited the Lewis Family Archives at St. Cloud State University, then went on to Duluth where they toured one of the homes Sinclair Lewis lived in. It was the one in which he did the research for *Kingsblood Royal*.

That book was one of two featured at the Sinclair Lewis Conference held July 17 and 18 in Sauk Centre. The other was *Babbitt*. This is the anniversary for the two novels, *Kingsblood Royal's* 50th, and *Babbitt's* 75th.



Lesley Lewis, as Grand Marshall of Sinclair Lewis Days Parade. In the background is the Lewis Boyhood Home.

The conference featured college professors from Illinois, where the Sinclair Lewis Society is headquartered; Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Texas, New York, California, Ohio, and Kansas, reading their scholarly papers on their studies of one or both of the novels.

"I was surprised at the wealth of perspectives presented on Lewis," Lesley commented after the conference. "It made me feel even more I wish I had met Sinclair Lewis."

On her famous grandfather, Lesley commented, "Sinclair Lewis is a part of our culture, one of the embodiments of Americana. He would have wanted the common man and the more wealthy person to be aware of his ideals. He never sought personal glory. He was a mimic. He liked to impersonate people. He felt they would be open-minded."

Lesley always knew about her connection to Sinclair Lewis, but it was not a big thing in her life, she said. Her mother did encourage her to read the Lewis novels, and while she has not read all of them, she had read *Prodigal Parents*, *Arrowsmith*, *Elmer Gantry*, and part of *Babbitt*. Her favorite is *Kingsblood Royal*.

Lesley's visit, which has been in the making for two years, was arranged by Pat Lewis of St. Cloud, whose husband, Richard, is the grandson of Fred Lewis, one of Sinclair's brothers. Pat is a member of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation Board and enjoys keeping track of family history.

Lesley enjoyed and was a little surprised that she was treated like a celebrity in Sauk Centre. She served as Grand Marshal of the Sinclair Lewis Days parade Sunday afternoon.

She expressed an interest in having her stepbrothers, Gregory and John-Paul Sinclair, make a similar trip to Sauk Centre to get the feeling of their mutual roots. The three are the only descendants of Sinclair Lewis.

The Sinclair Lewis Conference was coordinated by Sally
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Parry and Robert McLaughlin, husband and wife, who are professors of English at Illinois State University. Sally is the Society's executive director, and Robert is the Society's secretary-treasurer.

Sessions were titled Sinclair Lewis as Man of Letters; New Approaches to *Babbitt*; *Kingsblood Royal* as Cultural Document; George Babbitt and Other Guys; Sinclair Lewis and His Impact on Society.

The keynote speaker was Richard Lingeman of New York,

who is about midway through the research and writing of a new biography on Lewis to be published by Random House. Lingeman's work, Lewis scholars expect, will be the new authority on him with the new materials being used.

The Conference schedule included tours of the Boyhood Home, the Interpretive Center, the gravesite, and the stone arch. It ended with a showing of two movies, *Babbitt* from 1934, and *Bongo*, a children's story written by Lewis and made into a feature-length cartoon by Walt Disney.

WRITER'S HOMETOWN SHOWERS GRANDDAUGHTER LESLEY LEWIS WITH CELEBRITY STATUS

By Kris Bergquist

from *St. Cloud Times*, July 18, 1997

With an unusual accent that combines her English and New York City heritage, Lesley Lewis speaks as if she's in a race.

Part of that could be attributed to the fact that since she arrived July 16 in Minnesota she's been on a whirlwind of receptions, lectures, tours and picture posing.

Lewis is visiting Sauk Centre, the home of her grandfather, Sinclair Lewis, for the first time. She will be part of this weekend's Sinclair Lewis Days and returns to her New York home July 24.

"(The foundation sees it as) a granddaughter coming back to see what we've preserved for her," said Pat Lewis, a member of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation. "To us, she's a celebrity."

Lewis, the daughter of Michael Lewis and Valerie Cardew, was born March 20, 1961 in Manhattan. Michael was Sinclair Lewis's son from his second marriage to Dorothy Thompson, 1928-1942. Both her parents were actors and have died, her father in 1975 at the age of 44 and her mother in 1986 at age 55.

Lesley works in the classified advertising department at Yellow Book Company in Rockville Centre, NY. Her home is Long Beach, NY, and she helps take care of her 96-year-old maternal grandmother, Kay Cardew, who lives in a nearby apartment. Although she's always known about her connection to Nobel Prize-winning author Sinclair Lewis, it hasn't been a big deal in her life.

"My mother encouraged me to read Lewis's work.... I read *The Prodigal Parents*. I wanted to read something more obscure," she said.

Although she doesn't know much about her grandfather's youth in Sauk Centre, she said she did feel a connection with the boyhood home when visiting it for the first time Wednesday.

"I felt an enormous feeling of power and peacefulness

together. I can't really explain it. It was like an electricity in the air," she said.

She was contacted two years ago by Pat Lewis, St. Cloud, to be part of Sinclair Lewis Days. Pat is married to Richard Lewis, whose grandfather was Fred Lewis, one of Sinclair's two brothers. Besides keeping track of the family history, she's a Sinclair Lewis Foundation board member. At the time of the first invitation, there were some emergencies at work, and Lesley Lewis couldn't get away. But it's been on both of their minds ever since.

Lewis said she has been treated like a celebrity since she arrived. "I wouldn't say adoration, but it's been adulation. The level of adulation has been a little overwhelming," she said. "There are 3,500 people in Sauk Centre, and about one-third are all so devoted to Lewis. That's kind of nice."

The foundation members have been just as complimentary. "I don't know why I was so nervous yesterday. I gave her an hour and a half tour, I told her things and she told me things," said Joyce Lyng, a tour guide at Sinclair Lewis's boyhood home. Pat Lewis added, "She's been a delight."

Lesley Lewis was given a lifetime membership to the Sinclair Lewis Foundation. She said she got a bit emotional at the honor. Besides touring Sauk Centre and serving as the parade's grand marshal, she's visiting her grandfather's former Duluth estate, Claude Lewis's (Sinclair's brother) former St. Cloud home, and St. Cloud State University's Learning Resources Services to view its collection of love letters between Sinclair Lewis and girlfriend Marcella Powers.

Lewis is not Sinclair Lewis's only grandchild. She has two half-brothers, John-Paul and Gregory Lewis, who are children from Michael Lewis's first marriage to Bernadette Lewis. Pat Lewis and Lesley said they had both planned to invite the two to this year's Sinclair Lewis Days, but they miscommunicated and each thought the other had extended the invitation.

"There will be other years. But, it's too bad. I'd really like them to share in this," Lesley Lewis said. "I've heard another lifetime of information this weekend."

Nobel Love Letters

By Kevin Duchscherer

from *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, July 16, 1997

It was the summer of 1942, a grim time for civilization. But World War II was a world away for the would-be suitor typing a gushy note to his beloved from his rented house on Lake Minnetonka. "I think of you," he wrote, "every time I finish a good chapter, or see a sunset or a moonrise, or start a Beethoven [sic] symphony, or meet a charming person, and want to share the treasure with you...a thousand suggestions every day, and you in all of them."

Courtship puffery, perhaps, but this swain was no ordinary correspondent. He was Nobel Prize-winning author and Minnesota native Sinclair Lewis, at 57, writing to an actress 36 years his junior named Marcella Powers—the last great love of his love-starved life.

Last year, St. Cloud State University purchased that letter and 260 others that Lewis wrote Powers from 1939-1947, years that coincide with his last productive period. Many, including Lewis's latest biographer, believe that his infatuation with Powers kept him off the bottle and refueled his creative genius.

The acquisition has made St. Cloud State's Lewis Family Papers a formidable resource on the author of *Main Street*. Some scholars rank the collection behind only that of Yale, where Lewis willed his manuscripts.

"There are other important collections, at Syracuse and Austin and the Bancroft Library at Berkeley, but it seems that people who still have Lewis materials are inclined to see that they get to St. Cloud State," said Roger Forseth, English professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. "The Marcella Powers papers are very important and fascinating."

Powers's letters will be among topics discussed by scholars Thursday and Friday at the Sinclair Lewis Conference in Sauk Centre, the prairie town where Lewis was born and raised, and which he found at once exasperating and delightful.

The conference comes at a time when Forseth and others see a revival of interest in Lewis among young scholars, who are combing some of Lewis's lesser-known works for his advanced views on feminism and race.

Thursday's keynote speaker will be Richard Lingeman, senior editor of the *Nation*, whose biography of Lewis is expected out next year. He said that the Powers letters reveal a wittier and more human Lewis than the tormented man portrayed by his last major biographer, Mark Schorer, in 1961.

Schorer, who concluded that Lewis was overrated as a writer, emphasized his explosive temper and compulsive drinking. The long but unflattering book leaves an abiding impression of an unpleasant man who alienated even his friends.

Schorer had access to the Powers papers, but used them

sparingly, Lingeman said.

"They show the full range of his mind," he said. "To me, it's important to have these examples of a writer talking in his own voice.... It reveals the person. These are some really dazzling letters."

St. Cloud State archivist Patricia Schenk, who oversees the collection, said that Lewis emerges in the letters as lover, teacher and mentor.

"It shows such a different side of him than you read about—more tender, more human, more humorous—and in some ways these letters make him seem a lot more stable," she said.

After Lewis died of heart failure in 1951 in Rome, Powers moved to Santa Fe, NM, where she died in 1985 at age 64. What happened to her letters to Lewis is unknown, but she bequeathed his letters to her friend Mary Branham.

In 1987, Branham offered to sell the letters to St. Cloud State. University president Brendan McDonald agreed to pay \$6,000 for the letters, which were placed in a university vault until the transaction was finally made last year.

It was a bargain for St. Cloud State. The Minnesota Historical Society had paid \$24,000 in 1995 for 200 letters between Lewis and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Branham knew that she could probably get more money elsewhere for the letters, but she said that she preferred they stay with the family papers, Schenk said.

AN UNLIKELY PAIR

Lewis dominated American literature in the 1920s with *Babbitt* and *Arrowsmith*, but by the 1930s many considered his best days behind him. His second marriage fell apart, he drank too much and his books failed to win critical acclaim.

He was 54 and separated from his second wife, journalist Dorothy Thompson, when he met Powers in August 1939 while he was performing in a play in Provincetown, Massachusetts. Powers, an 18-year-old from New Jersey, was assigned to cue him. By the end of the month, he had invited her to dinner in Boston.

Even setting aside the age difference, they were an unlikely pair. His puckered face and wispy hair made him seem older than his years, while her petite frame and delicate features accentuated her girlishness. He was a world-class author and social critic; she was an aspiring actress who, failing that, was hard-pressed to choose between college and a shorthand course.

But he was enchanted with her from the start. His first letter to her begins "Hail!—and I miss you very much." Before long, he was calling her "Darling."

Lewis, whose books had made him a wealthy man, began sending her money—"Your regular check will come in 10 days"—and lining up acting jobs for her. "She is an unusually excellent and experienced young actress," he wrote a New York City producer.

Soon they were traveling together, vacationing and performing in a host of theater companies. When they were separated, he wrote her constantly to let her know how much he missed her.

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"My darling, my small monkey, this is such a beautiful place, even more beautiful than I had remembered, but what's the use of it without you here," he wrote from Beverly Hills, California.

Most of the letters are typed on Lewis's letterhead; it seems that he wrote in longhand mainly when he was lecturing across the country. In some letters he drew humorous, Thurberesque sketches of himself. Often he typed "love" in diagonal rows or helter-skelter across the page.

He sometimes signed the letters "Red," his nickname, but more often he used monikers that smack of inside jokes, such as "the zebra," "Patty Wawa," "Pedro the Grik" and "Sven Svenson." The code "S.S.S.," apparently referring to the "small size spies" watching them, became one of the nicknames.

"I REALLY LOVE THIS STATE"

Lewis sent many of the letters from Hollywood and Beverly Hills, where he worked on screenplays. A good share also were written in Minneapolis, Duluth, and Excelsior, where he did research for his novels.

But Lewis had another reason for spending so much time in Minnesota in the 1940s, Lingeman said. Quite simply, the man who had skewered the provincial folks of his home state in *Main Street* never lost his deep affection for either.

"The beauty of Minnesota appealed to him.... He was always optimistic about it, that it had great promise," Lingeman said. "This was his America in a way, his idea of America, and he kept coming back to it."

Several letters are filled with rich descriptions of the Upper Midwest from car trips Lewis took with his valet. "I really love this state, and I've found that there's big sections of it that aren't at all flat prairies, but really beautifully hilly," he wrote from the Nicollet Hotel in Minneapolis in March 1942. "Yesterday, with Joseph, I motored 317 miles through the southeastern part of the state, almost all of it new to me, and found not only glorious bluffs along the Mississippi but the most charming little interior valleys, as peaceful and demure as New England."

Two years later, he described a 1,300-mile trip he had made through Minnesota and the Dakotas, "where men are men and women are not broads but just broad."

No doubt seeking to impress Powers, his letters from California were studded with the names of movie stars he had met. One night he spied Gary Cooper, Barbara Stanwyck and Judy Garland at a Hollywood restaurant. He was an old friend of Katharine Hepburn's parents, and often dined at her Santa Monica, California, home with her and Spencer Tracy. They "seem to be very much in love with each other," he wrote.

A PYGMALION QUALITY

In early 1942, Lewis wrote Powers that he was now divorced: "But what would that mean to you and me? We don't know anybody, do we, that would marry a man who

collects pennies and can't act? I'm always thinking of you, dammit. (Not *really* dammit, you know; I love doing it.)"

Most scholars agree that Lewis toyed with the idea of marrying Powers. He occasionally called her "my dear wife" and encouraged friends to treat her as such. She, in turn, tormented him with the names of various boyfriends.

"She thought that her future did not lie with him. She wanted somebody younger," Lingeman said.

Some have since charged that Powers exploited Lewis's loneliness in order to travel and gain entrée into the world of art and letters. He helped her get an editorial job with *Good Housekeeping* magazine, and later set her up as a literary agent.

Others have suggested that Lewis took advantage of a girl awestruck by his fame and charm. Certainly he used her as a model for his main character in *Bethel Merriday* and a young woman who falls for an older man in *Cass Timberlane*.

But the relationship ultimately assumed a Pygmalion quality that each found comfortable and satisfying. After living with the strong, self-reliant Thompson, Lewis sought a simpler woman who appreciated his stature, Lingeman said.

After Lewis learned in early 1947 that Powers was to marry a young writer, his letters were gracious but markedly formal. "I send you every affectionate, admiring and earnest hope for your great happiness, and my strong feeling that Mike and you will find it," he wrote.

Even though Lewis stopped writing Powers, Lingeman said, he never stopped hoping that she would return to him.

His last gift to her survives in the opening pages of his 1944 novel, *Kingsblood Royal*, a book about racial prejudice that he researched in the Twin Cities and Duluth. "The only suitable wedding present from me is the dedication of *Kingsblood*," he wrote her shortly before she got married.

And there it is still, echoing the familiar intimacy of those letters long before: "To S.S.S., who first heard this story."

FROM SINCLAIR, WITH LOVE

EXCERPTS FROM THE LEWIS'S LETTERS TO POWERS

1940, describing the University of Minnesota and how he had turned down an invitation to teach there: "But it's such a factory, jammed right in the middle of two cities that, together, have 800,000 people & a whelping of factories. I've accepted [the University of] Wis, & tomorrow I'll be there."

1940, on a visit to Sauk Centre: "Very kind & affectionate but I couldn't remember more than 1 out of 3 of the now-wrinkled people who came up to me on Main St. & said, bet you don't remember me, Harry!"

1941, on his craft: "But if you're going to write, you must start right in and WRITE. If you'd begin by doing letters as long and detailed as this one of mine is, the practice [sic] would be excellent.... Describe—chronicle—comment. Only begin and do it—"

1942, after a car trip across Minnesota and the Dakotas: "The plains can be pretty intimidating in gray rain dashed by a northwest wind, but in the sun, with piles of cumulus clouds rolling through unstained blue, with the light tender on young wheat, with the meadow lark piping and proud crested cock pheasants parading by the road, and tiny slews bright at the edge of pastures nibbled by the sheep till they're like natural lawns, then, darling,—why then I wished you were there!"

1942, Minneapolis: "A bachelor party last evening—steak, beer, and Solid Talk. You, I think, would have screamed and lep [sic] right through the window. Me. I liked it."

1942, on seeing Rachmaninoff play his Second Concerto with the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra: "When he tottered out to the piano, he seemed 15 years older than his actual 69, but he played with all the fire in the world. Curious: Minneapolis, which has no little theater at all,

Simpkins continued from page 1

I use the books *Babbitt* and *Elmer Gantry* to jazz up my history classes," said Dr. Jane Lamm Carroll, a history professor from the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul. "Students will remember George Babbitt and Elmer Gantry long after they put the textbooks away," said Carroll. "Fiction connects students emotionally to another time."

"Lewis gave us a compelling window on his time. These two books tell the story of social change in America when business became a religion and religion became a business," said Carroll. "There are also many other important themes, such as consumerism, feminism, race, advertising, the automobile, credit and mass merchandising.... Lewis's use of the language of the time is also rich and informative for modern readers."

The conference was attended by several Lewis authors, including James Hutchisson, an English professor at the Citadel, and biographer Richard Lingeman, a senior editor of the *Nation*.

"The popularity of this conference is a testimony to the renewed interest in Lewis," said Hutchisson. "We are moving away from the greedy days of Reagan-Bush years into a more reflective age where social critics like Lewis are regaining popularity.... I'm sure this conference will stimulate a new batch of good, solid, critical work on Lewis, the themes he talked about and how relevant they still are."

Hutchisson is the president of the Sinclair Lewis Society and has edited a collection of essays on Lewis and written a book entitled *The Rise of Sinclair Lewis*, which outlines the craftsmanship of the Lewis books written in the 1920s.

Lingeman is currently working on a new biography of Lewis which scholars are hoping will replace the Mark Schorer book. While Schorer's book was very detailed, it was also very critical of Lewis.

"It is time for a new perspective on Lewis," said Lingeman at his Thursday night keynote address. "I don't believe I need

which sees few even of 2nd rate touring shows, is music-mad and music-wise."

1943, a handwritten postscript from Hollywood: "I'd rather stay home with you,/my steady,/Than go out at night with /Kate & Heddy./But alas it is you who hate/to tarry./You'd rather go out with/Humph & Gary."

1943, on an obscure singer: "Had you heard about the Sinatra craze in New York? I'd never heard his name. Acc to his pictures, he looks like a soda-clerk who is a great friend of Mortimer Snerd."

1943, after a lecture in Dallas: "My 3-day stay in Dallas was interesting—like Seattle, it is a Minneapolis with a lively future."

1945, after hearing of the end of the war: "This news is immeasurably great, yet not too great for me to think of you, first of all and immediately, when I heard it."

to defend Lewis against the attacks of the Schorer book. I'd rather document the growing new attitude and information that points to the fine quality of his work," he added.

Lingeman pointed out Lewis's Italian death certificate noted he died of a "paralysis of the heart." "Here we have a man with wonderful career who lost much of what was important to him to alcohol. He was a social prophet and an astute commentator on the American way of life, yet he had such sadness," said Lingeman.

"The popularity of this conference is a testimony to the renewed interest in Lewis."

—James Hutchisson

While Lewis is often presented as a sad and lonely figure, several of the presenters told many stories of Lewis humor and satire. Roger Forseth, of the University of Wisconsin-Superior, revealed the contents of a Lewis FBI file. Apparently, Lewis and Marcella Powers received a grand tour of the FBI offices in 1939 shortly before his divorce to Dorothy Thompson was final. He was doing research for a possible crime fighting novel. When the day was ending, he suggested to the assistant director that his wife, Dorothy, might be interested in a tour and they should give her a call.

Parry and Hutchisson agreed having the conference in Sauk Centre gave them a greater appreciation for Lewis and how Sauk Centre impacted his writing style.

"Coming to Sauk Centre makes the stories, people and places in Lewis's books jump out of the page. This is truly small town America," said Jim Hutchisson.

The Sinclair Lewis Foundation cooperated in the event. President Roberta Olson agreed it was beneficial to local Lewis enthusiasts to hear informative lecturers. "This was great to meet so many people so knowledgeable about Lewis and his writing," said Olson.

SINCLAIR LEWIS ESSAY WINNERS AWARDED SCHOLARSHIPS

REBECCA STEPAN TAKES FIRST; SABRINA MARTHALER SECOND

To help celebrate the 75th anniversary of the publication of *Babbitt* and the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Kingsblood Royal*, the Sauk Centre Chamber of Commerce held an essay contest.

The winner of the contest was Rebecca Ann Stepan, daughter of Maurice and Cindy Stepan of Sauk Centre. She will receive a \$600 scholarship which she will use to attend the University of St. Thomas majoring in biology. Runner-up honors went to Sabrina Marthaler, daughter of Peter and Laurie Marthaler of Sauk Centre. She will receive a \$300 scholarship which she will use to attend the College of St. Benedict majoring in the Business accounting area.

Participants answered the question, "Why does Sinclair Lewis continue to be a writer whom people are still interested in?" The first place and runner-up essays can be found below.

Reprinted from the *Sauk Centre Herald*, Tuesday, July 15, 1997

LEWIS CONTINUES TO BE REMEMBERED

By Rebecca Ann Stepan

Grand Prize

Three fellow students and I recently attended a banquet in St. Cloud where we had the pleasure of listening to Garrison Keillor, the guest speaker for the evening. Keillor is most well-known for his storytelling in books and on radio shows. He wrote a book similar to Lewis's *Main Street*, which is entitled *Lake Wobegon Days*, about a fictional small town in Minnesota.

After Keillor spoke he stayed after to sign autographs on our complementary *Lake Wobegon Days* books we had received. While signing the book, Keillor asked where I was from. I said I lived about an hour west in a little town called Sauk Centre, thinking that maybe since I told him the direction he would somewhat recognize the town name.

Without a doubt Keillor said that he recognized the town because it was where Sinclair Lewis, "an excellent and talented storyteller" was from.

Even today, 46 years after Lewis's death, Lewis is recognized by the great writers of our times.

As well as writers of the times, many other people still recognize and have an interest in Lewis. People come to Sauk Centre from all over the world to visit the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home and the Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center Museum. Just last year 10,185 people visited the Interpretive Center and approximately 1,400 people visited the Boyhood Home. Personal experiences at my waitress job at the historical Palmer House Restaurant and Hotel have also made me aware of the interest so many people have in Lewis. Questions commonly asked are where is Lewis's home, where is more information about Lewis available or are any relatives of Lewis still living in Sauk Centre?

With the knowledge that Lewis is so well-known and of interest to so many, questions arise that ask why. Why do people still have an interest in Lewis today?

Some who knew Lewis remembered him to be un-

friendly and unhappy; a man who spent a lot of time at home. However, Lewis is most widely remembered as a very intelligent writer whose outstanding accomplishments made him, as well as Sauk Centre, well-known.

One of the most superior accomplishments of Lewis was that he was the first American to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. This event made Lewis well-known nationally. Lewis's most successful books include *Babbitt*, *Arrowsmith*, *Kingsblood Royal*, and *Main Street*. Before the time Lewis died, he sold over 2 million copies of *Main Street* alone.

Lewis lived and wrote during the time of Prohibition, the women's rights movement and the end of World War I. The United States was in a time sometimes referred to as the Roaring 20s when everything was changing including the culture of the people. Lewis commonly wrote about the issues of these times when the morality and actions of people were being questioned. Lewis was bold; he wrote about the positives and the negatives of the times. There was much controversy about some of Lewis's writings. However, Lewis had such a unique way of storytelling that his books were successfully sold and read then and continue to still sell and be read today.

Lewis's background, including living in a common American small town, also contributed to the level of interest people have in him. Small town life is becoming more scarce, and Lewis's town and home provide people with an idea of how small towns were and how they have changed up until now. People are interested in the lifestyle and environment Lewis lived in as well as the times he wrote in.

Lewis is remembered today and will be in the future for his controversial, yet entertaining writings in addition to his national accomplishments and his small town background.

MAIN STREET HAS NOT CHANGED IN 80 YEARS

By Sabrina Marthaler

1st Runner Up

Growing up in the town of Sauk Centre, I saw references to Sinclair Lewis everywhere I looked.

From Sinclair Lewis Park, Sinclair Lewis Avenue and Sinclair Lewis Days, to the Gopher Prairie Motel and the Sauk Centre Mainstreeters, the town's pride was displayed for all to see.

I was told by others that Lewis had, in fact, hated Sauk Centre and had made fun of it in his book *Main Street*. I wondered, then, why Sauk Centre should advertise a man who hated it. I was told it was merely for tourism.

Much later, in my senior year, I read *Main Street* for myself. No one told me to read it, no one interpreted it for me and no one imposed their opinion of the book upon me. By doing this on my own, I was able to draw my own conclusions and ideas. And the conclusions I drew were quite different from what I had always been told.

I believe that Lewis is a writer who had the talent to see into human nature and realize that it remains virtually the same over time. Take, as an example, the conservative nature of the small town. The people of Gopher Prairie are quite set in their ways and beliefs and are often rather stubborn. Take a look in any small town today and you will see that the values of the younger generation are still influenced by the older, conservative generation. The faces of the town will change but the values, passed down through consecutive generations, remain unchanged. For another example, look at the deep prejudices the people of Gopher Prairie hold. They believe that there is a certain way people should act, look and think, and if anyone deviates from that certain way, then something is wrong with them.

Now look around at almost any of today's small towns. Political correctness, women's and civil rights and equality are ideals that everyone is "supposed" to have picked up on. However, although most small towns claim to have internalized these ideals, many small town citizens still hold deep-seated prejudices against violators of the norms.

Similarly, Lewis's writing shows that small towns also remain essentially the same over time. For example, look at his portrayal of the small town's upper class. In Gopher Prairie, it consisted of a small group of business owners. In most small towns today, it remains the same class of people. They do not have to be cultured or highbrow or fancy in any certain way. The characters in *Main Street* were very simple in nature and only had more wealth than others. In a large city, money means nothing without huge, sometimes gaudy, displays of that wealth, like parties and large celebrations and great dinners and huge mansions and media attention.

Contrastingly, the small town consistently prefers simplicity to extravagance. As another example, look at Gopher Prairie's pride in Percy Bresnahan. They were not looking for tourism and publicity, but simply a little acknowledgment that small towns can produce big shots, too, not just the larger cities. I believe this is the true reason Sauk Centre displays its famous former citizen. Although it has created a larger tourism industry in town, I believe the city is simply showing its pride and that it, too, can produce a famous writer. People in the big cities who believe the small towns to be backward and full of hicks must stop and reconsider that, perhaps, small towns are just as good as the large cities after all.

Lewis's portrayal of the small town of Gopher Prairie could have been said of any small town back around 1920; however, it could still be written today about nearly any small town. The simplicity remains, the values remain fundamentally the same. In other words, *Main Street* looks the same.

I believe that Lewis will continue to be a writer people find interesting, so long as there are small towns. Through Lewis's writings, citizens can see their town in a different, more objective light. Still, they will come back to the same old conclusion: a small town is a fine place to call home.

ROBERT BLY SPEAKS AT FOUNDATION-SPONSORED WRITERS CONFERENCE

The Sinclair Lewis Foundation sponsored the 1997 Sinclair Lewis Writers Conference on Saturday, October 11 at the Sauk Centre Junior High School. The keynote speaker was poet Robert Bly, whose recent books include *Iron John: A Book about Men*, *Collected Prose Poems*, and *The Sibling Society*. About his keynote talk, Bly said, "We'll discuss the importance of the literature of the past as we try to claim this moment in history, this moment in American life, and this moment in our personal life. We can't let go of our culture or the place where we were born or what is actually happening at this moment."

Other speakers included Alexs Pate, a novelist and author of *Finding Makeba* and *Losing Absalom*, on "The Stories of Families and Their Struggles"; Edith Rylander, a poet and essayist, and author of *Dancing Back the Cranes* and *Rural Routes: Essays on Living in Rural Minnesota*, on "Writing Without Winning the Nobel Prize"; and John J. Koblas, author of six books on the lives of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Sinclair Lewis, on "Writing History and Biography." We hope to have more information on the conference in the next newsletter.

SINCLAIR LEWIS NOTES

Pat Hingle, the stage and screen actor, was interviewed over the summer by Alex Witchel, a reporter for the *New York Times Arts and Leisure* section, about his new role as Benjamin Franklin in the Roundabout Theater's revival of *1776*. In the interview, "A Broadway Elder with the Spirit of '76," Hingle revealed that in 1959 he had been offered the title role in the film of *Elmer Gantry*, a role that Burt Lancaster eventually played and for which he received an Academy Award for Best Actor. However, Hingle, who at that time had just received rave reviews for playing the title role in Archibald MacLeish's play *J.B.*, suffered a serious injury after an elevator he was on malfunctioned and he fell 54 feet down an elevator shaft. He said, "I know that if I had played *Elmer Gantry*, I would have been more of a movie name. But I'm sure I would not have done as many plays as I've done. I've had exactly the kind of career I had hoped for."

The *Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society Newsletter* reports that the 1941 University of Wisconsin yearbook, *The Badger*, included a page describing a fall 1940 visit of Sinclair Lewis and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. It was sent to the *Rawlings Newsletter* by A. C. Nielsen, Jr., whose father was a student with Rawlings at the University of Wisconsin.

Lisa Wren, in a travel feature for the *Knight-Ridder Newspapers*, writes about the various authors who were drawn to Carmel Bay, California, including Robert Louis Stevenson, George Sterling, Jack London, Mary Austin, Nora Mae French, Upton Sinclair, Grace MacGowan Cooke, Alice MacGowan, Harry Leon Wilson, Robinson Jeffers, and John Steinbeck. Of Sinclair Lewis, who first visited early in his career, in 1908, she says, "When Lewis arrived in 1908, he was, as Carrie Sterling describes him, a gangly, pimply redhead 'as homely as Broadway in Oakland but lovely company and bright.' Lewis was just learning to write while in Carmel, and maintained his only actual published work there was a joke to a national humor magazine. There is evidence otherwise, however. An interesting footnote is that Lewis (whose talent was an inventive imagination) sold Jack London (then stumped for story lines) 14 plots for \$5 each. Only three were ever written, and they didn't amount to much."

In Thomas Mallon's novel *Dewey Defeats Truman* (Pantheon, 1997), a bookstore clerk is shown "wrapping up a copy of *Kingsblood Royal*, the most recent Sinclair Lewis" (159). The novel is set in Owosso, Michigan, Thomas Dewey's real home town, during the 1948 presidential campaign.

In the June 2, 1997 *New Yorker*, Diana Trilling writes about a dinner she and her husband Lionel Trilling attended in April 1962 at the White House. In "Washington Memoir: A Visit to Camelot," she describes the after-dinner entertainment. "Fredric March read from three dead Nobel Prize winners, beginning with the introduction to Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. Next came some excerpts from Marshall's outline for what was to become his famous plan. . . . The final reading was from Hemingway. March said, 'I was going to read Ernest Hemingway's "The Killers," but Mrs. Hemingway felt that we were all of us too familiar with that, and that perhaps you would like to hear something that had been unpublished, so she went through her husband's unpublished works and selected a chapter from an unpublished novel' (62).

Benét's Reader's Encyclopedia, 4th edition, was a featured book in the summer 1997 Quality Paperback Book Club offerings. This reference text, edited by Bruce Murphy, is touted as being "the definitive guide to world literature in one volume." It includes "plot summaries of seminal works, from *The Circle of Chalk*, a Chinese play of the Yuan dynasty, to Frazer's *The Golden Bough*; profiles of memorable characters, from Babar to Babbitt to Shylock"; and biographies of poets, playwrights, novelists, and essayists.

The 1997-98 Carroll & Graf Catalog lists their new edition of *Main Street*, with an introduction by Matthew J. Bruccoli, for \$10.95 (ISBN 0-7867-0325-3). The catalog copy reads as follows: "E.M. Forster wrote of Nobel Prize winner Sinclair Lewis, 'He has lodged a piece of a Continent in the world's imagination,' and Lewis' literary geography of the United States began with *Main Street*, which launched his career amid controversy over its depiction of the American heartland. Moving with her new husband to Gopher Prairie, Minnesota, Lewis's heroine rebelliously challenges the town's respectable facade. Vivid and captivating, *Main Street* remains the definitive portrait of the American small town. 'A remarkable book.... Absorbing... It is so much like life itself, so extraordinarily real. These people are actual folk...'—*New York Times*. 'Pioneer work.... Natural, honest... amazingly illuminating.'—*New Republic*."

Harper's Magazine is still using the name of Sinclair Lewis to encourage new subscribers. In a recent letter, the editor mentions William Gass, David Foster Wallace, and Cornel West as a few of the current writers for *Harper's* and says, "These are just a few of the names that join the distinguished *Harper's* tradition of Charles Dickens, Stephen Crane, Sinclair Lewis, Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, Edith Wharton, William Faulkner, and many others."

MORE NOTES

The Steinbeck Newsletter [10.1 (1997)] mentions a course taught by the late Robert Bain that focused on "The Regions of the United States." This interdisciplinary course in history, geography, and literature used such novels as John Cheever's *The Wapshot Chronicle* for New England, *Absalom, Absalom!* by William Faulkner for the South, Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* and Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* for the Midwest, and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and Wallace Stegner's *The Big Rock Candy Mountain* for the West.

Also from the same *Steinbeck Newsletter* is a comment from Paul Boyer of the Department of History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison discussing the change in Arnold Schoenberg's reputation. Apropos of this he notes, "The once-commanding reputations of artists, composers and writers similarly erode. The novelists Sinclair Lewis and John Steinbeck, Nobel Prize-winners who dominated the literary firmament in their heyday, languish largely unread today, except by students in literature courses."

Lionel Rolfe, in an editorial from the *San Francisco Chronicle* (Dec. 7, 1995: A23) called "I'm the Fat Man on the Left," writes "I think of what were once the big influences on our culture and politics: Mark Twain, Jack London, Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, even H.L. Mencken for God's sakes. In their place we now have Rush Limbaugh. You tell me something hasn't gone very wrong?... And in the '30s and '40s and even '50s this country produced the likes of John Steinbeck, Sinclair Lewis, Woody Guthrie, Paul Robeson, Paul Ochs and others who captured the state of our soul" [rpt. in *Steinbeck Newsletter* 10.1 (1997): 24].

In a review of *The Cost of Living* by David Dorsey (Viking, 1997), critic Suzanne Berne in the *New York Times Book Review* notes that the protagonist is a modern day Babbitt. "Overworked, understimulated and prey to self pity, Cahill, like Babbitt, has not accomplished much of anything besides just getting along."

Donald E. Westlake's new murder mystery, *The Ax*, features a murderer who is after the people that he thinks downsized from his job in the processed paper industry. D. Keith Mano, in a review called "Thy Neighbor's Job," in the *New York Times Book Review*, calls the protagonist/murderer "American Man at the millennium—as emblematic of his time as George F. Babbitt and Holden Caulfield and Capt. John Yossarian were of theirs."

In a review of *Raymond Chandler: A Biography* by Tom Hiney (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997), R.W.B. Lewis writes that when Evelyn Waugh praised Chandler as "the greatest living American novelist," he was actually critiquing the rest of American literature, "at one stroke sweeping away Faulkner, Hemingway, Steinbeck, Lewis and all the other American fiction writers then living" (*New York Times Book Review* June 22, 1997: 13).

Nicholas Fox Weber reviewed *Virgil Thomson: Composer on the Aisle* by Anthony Tommasini (Norton, 1997) for the *New York Times Book Review*. In discussing the description of Thomson's adolescence that included singing at recitals and playing the piano at a neighborhood silent movie house, he writes, "Tommasini's straightforward rendition of these events is pure Sinclair Lewis—until the tenor [Robert Leigh Murray] makes homosexual overtures to Thomson."

Dinitia Smith's, "Mansion Full of Honors in the Arts," (the *New York Times*, May 22, 1997: B1, B8) reports about the American Academy of Arts and Letters, 155 West Street, New York City, gathering to induct new members. On page 8:

Throughout the years, the academy has been a scorned and envied place. . . . Sinclair Lewis refused election, saying it made writers "safe, polite, obedient and sterile," and attacked it when he received the Nobel Prize in 1930 in Stockholm. He eventually caved in and became a member."

The academy will be 100 years old next year, and a book, "A Century of Arts and Letters," edited by John Updike, is scheduled for publication by Columbia University Press.

Featured in the May 18, 1997 issue of the *Chicago Tribune* was a section on 150 years of the arts in Chicago. The article, "Entertainment Center: How Chicagoans Have Been Amused Since 1847," states, "In Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, Chicago looms as a renaissance citadel to which the lonely heroine returns for nourishment after failing to bring culture to the small Minnesota town of the novel's primary setting" (7).

If you have items of interest for
Sinclair Lewis Notes,
please send the information to:
Sally Parry, Editor, The Sinclair Lewis Society
Newsletter, 4240 English Dept., Illinois State
University, Normal, IL 61790-4240.

CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

A Manless Novel in a Manly Time

Presented by Todd Michael Stanley

The decade of the 1920s was a good time for both America and Sinclair Lewis. America was basking in the Jazz Age, where images of flappers, drinking, and carefree lifestyles were expressed in books such as Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Lewis on the other hand had a number of best-sellers, *Main Street*, *Arrowsmith*, *Babbitt*, *Elmer Gantry*, and *Dodsworth*, and won both the Pulitzer and Nobel Prize for Literature. Sandwiched between all of his famous novels of the 1920s was an obscure book that was published in 1926 titled *Mantrap*.

While it contained the usual wit, sarcasm, and satire of the other Lewis novels, it seemed to be poking fun at what the 1920s were celebrating, manhood.

The main character, a New York lawyer named Ralph, gets caught up in the swoon of the twenties and goes out to prove he is a real man. He goes on a hunting trip with a business associate to conquer the one thing man has always challenged to prove manhood: the wilderness. While out camping along the Mantrap River, Ralph grows tired of his companion's false masculinity and finds friendship in a real

frontiersman named Joe.

Joe takes Ralph back to his home in the wilderness where he is introduced to Joe's wife. When Ralph ends up falling for Joe's wife, they try and run from Joe, and it seems as though the conflict will be resolved with a typical male struggle over a girl. Instead it only makes the friendship between Ralph and Joe stronger.

By the end of the book there is a bond between the two men that is unspoken and unheard of at the time. Men back then were only to be drinking buddies or to conduct business with. There is something much deeper between Ralph and Joe, and while not homosexual in nature, it is a touchy issue. In "A Manless Novel in a Manly Time," I explore Lewis's depiction of Joe and Ralph's relationship and how it was an inaccessible novel for many in the 1920s.

Todd Stanley is a graduate of Bowling Green State University with degrees in Creative Writing and History. He had some short stories published in Seattle and Denver and recently received a Master's degree in Secondary Social Studies Education at Ohio State University.

Sinclair Lewis on the Nineties

Presented by Nancy Bunge

Sinclair Lewis's critiques of the society of his time are just as applicable and pertinent to today's society. He points out communal breakdowns in integrity while anticipating and undermining the attempt to accept judgments but pass the guilt to someone else. He identifies Americans' refusal to develop the individuality that grows naturally from making principled choices. They confuse their own significance with the size of their possessions, as George Babbitt did. Other themes that are still pertinent included

the hollow conformity that is rampant in communities, the deterioration of marriages, and the tendency to compartmentalize problems rather than developing solutions. Lewis's novels may make us wince, but by implicating us, they give us power.

Nancy Bunge teaches in the Department of Thought and Language at Michigan State University. She is the interviewer and editor of Finding the Words: Conversations with Writers Who Teach and the author of Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Study of the Short Fiction.

Neil Kingsblood: The Not So Tragic Mulatto

Presented By Jean Mullin Yonke

Sinclair Lewis takes the figure of the tragic mulatto—the perceptibly white character doomed by his/her fractional Negro blood—and transforms this character into a more complex and less lamentable person. Like many mulatto figures, Neil Kingsblood experiences the crisis of discovering his Negro heritage and subsequent ambivalent feelings toward both the black and white communities. More importantly, Lewis uses Kingsblood's situation to explore the racism and hypocrisy of the white community, the hero's and his wife's gradual rejection of their own racism and their acceptance within the inclusive Negro community. Although *Kingsblood Royal* (1947) ends with Neil and his wife, and their Negro friends physically defending his right to live in his white neighborhood, Kingsblood's ability to withstand future attacks from the townsmen is problematic. Nevertheless, Neil Kingsblood remains proud, strong, and defiant, and quite unlike early tragic mulattos in American fiction who suffer rejection and death.

Jean Mullin Yonke completed her Ph.D. in American Studies at the University of Kansas. Her dissertation was on William Faulkner as a moralist and cultural critic. She has taught in a number of temporary positions at Albright College, Penn State University-Berks Campus, University of Kansas, Kansas City Community College, and Michigan State University.

Currently, she is an independent scholar and teaches as a substitute in four school districts. Her research interests include: William Faulkner, Sinclair Lewis, Twentieth-Century Authors, Ethnic Literature, Women's Literature, and Southern Literature.

Literary and Racial Tensions in *Kingsblood Royal*

Presented By M. Ellen DuPree

In my paper, I examine Sinclair Lewis's use in *Kingsblood Royal* of two novels of social criticism: his distinctive "Babbitt-style" comedy of manners and a form of the mulatto novel, written largely by blacks, that first appeared in the 1890s. Lewis takes his novel's structure from this mulatto novel, in which the biracial protagonist rejects a white identity for a black one, while his heavily satiric treatment of American middle-class society comes from the comedy of manners.

As Lewis was undoubtedly aware, combining these very different novels presents a number of difficulties. The main one is that the ruthless exposure of the community of Grand Republic constantly threatens to undermine *Kingsblood* as the mulatto hero: as a product of a Babbittish society, he is hard to take seriously as one who undergoes a moral transformation and radical change of identity. Grand Republic's strong similarity to *Babbitt's* Zenith, in fact, encourages the reader to connect *Kingsblood's* embracing of his black heritage with *Babbitt's* brief flirting with liberal politics as a member of the "the Bunch." For example, when *Kingsblood* surreptitiously visits the African-American church and then forces himself on the Woolcapes in an attempt to establish contact with "his people," he appears ridiculous.

Even near the end of the novel, his acceptance of Vestal's nickname, "Booker T.," for their unborn child creates doubt about his sincerity. Also, combining the dominant cynical tone of Lewis's comedy of manners with the intensely idealistic mulatto novel produces a jarring effect. And the comedy of manners' sophisticated social commentary conflicts with the mulatto novel's straightforward propagandistic purpose.

Lewis appears to have been very much aware of the tension that his combining of the two novels produced. I argue that in *Kingsblood Royal* this tension represents racial barriers; the seeming impossibility of merging his white satiric novel with a black political one stands for the

tremendous difficulties he saw in the 1940s of achieving racial equality in the "Grand Republic" of America. Yet, against all odds, his novel does succeed. A significant difference between *Babbitt* and *Kingsblood* is that *Kingsblood's* traumatic experiences as an officer in World War II have prepared him for a moral transformation. In the end, despite the absurdities of his situation, his desire to understand African-Americans and to defend them and his own family against racism is convincing. When his own neighbors return him to the violence of the war during the race riot, we can accept that he, like the protagonist of the mulatto novel *Iola Leroy* (1892), has discovered that to identify oneself as black is not to possess particular physical characteristics, but to take a particular moral position. Although the novel ends in violence and disorder, with *Kingsblood's* arrest and Vestal's

attack on a policeman, I feel it is essentially optimistic. In bringing together the two streams of social criticism, Lewis suggests that America is, after all, capable of moving toward racial harmony—that at least some members of the younger generation will understand the lessons of World War II and begin the work of rejecting America's racist traditions.

M. Ellen DuPree, who teaches literary theory and American Literature at the University of Nevada, Reno, has published articles on American women writers, including "Wharton, Lewis, and the Nobel Prize Address," which appeared in American Literature. Her most recent article, "The New Woman, Progressivism, and the Woman Writer in Edith Wharton's The Fruit of the Tree," is forthcoming in American Literary Realism.

Vision, Progress, and Regular Guys: George F. Babbitt's Rhetorical Ideals

Presented by Brooke Hessler

The reader of *Babbitt* is immediately struck by the author's unusual use of language. In addition to Lewis's masterful reproduction of Booster-ese, one encounters rampant capitalization of such expressions as Salesmanship, Good Fellows, and Modern Appliances. The latter appears to be an attempt to demonstrate the protagonist's peculiar reverence for these terms and the ideals they represent. In rhetorical analysis, such expressions are called "ultimate terms"—words endowed with unusual authority that serve as linguistic clues into the speaker's hierarchy of values. My paper considers the extent to which Lewis's use of these words is a rhetorical strategy intended to establish, reinforce, and satirize the values of George F. Babbitt (and those he represents). This paper draws upon a larger research project conducted one year ago, in which I catalogued all the potential ultimate terms present within the text (approximately 200 occurrences), and studied Lewis's research notes at the Beinecke Rare Books and Manuscripts Library to ex-

amine his authorial intentions. An early entry in Sinclair Lewis's "Babbitt Notebook" reads "What was [Babbitt's] conscious ideal in business, in life?" I believe Lewis's use of ironical ultimate terms was one way he endeavored to manifest his protagonist's ideals within the novel—and to confront the reader with those ideals and their implications for American society.

Brooke Hessler is a Ph.D. student in Rhetoric and Composition at Texas Christian University, where she has recently been appointed Associate Director of Composition. Her dissertation-in-progress is a rhetorical analysis of Twentieth-Century American Business Culture. Her article "[Not] Making and Knowing: Creativity and Self-Knowledge in Sinclair Lewis's Babbitt" is forthcoming in the 1997 volume of CTE Studies. Brooke's romance with George F. Babbitt began in the early 1990s when, as an executive speechwriter, she realized a disturbing kinship with Zenith's famous orator.

MORE ABSTRACTS ON PAGE 32

Jazzing Up American History:

Using *Babbitt* and *Elmer Gantry* to Teach the History of the 1920s

Presented by Jane Lamm Carroll

Most undergraduate students find history more interesting and engaging when they read novels as sources. Historical fiction or the contemporary fiction of a particular era pulls students into the past in a way that textbooks cannot; novels connect students emotionally and psychologically with previous eras. Using novels as sources is very effective in teaching history, not only because students obtain a more complete understanding of the past, but because they are more likely to retain what they learn.

I have used both *Babbitt* and *Elmer Gantry* to teach undergraduates in my American history courses. Students are required to use the novels as historical sources that provide windows into the social, cultural, economic and political patterns of the 1920s. These patterns include nativism, the resurgence of Protestant fundamentalism, anti-intellectualism, Red-baiting, racism, consumerism, materialism, business and technology as religions, the advent of automobile culture, class conflict, the expansion

of the middle class and suburbia, the return to laissez-faire politics and isolationism.

The paper discusses the ways in which the novels illustrate these historical patterns, as well as describing the risks inherent in using them as historical sources. It also explains how a historian's interest in the Lewis novels differs from other scholarly perspectives.

Jane Lamm Carroll received her B.A. from the College of St. Catherine and her Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in 1991. Her dissertation was "Criminal Justice on the Minnesota Frontier, 1820-1857." From 1989-1996, she was a Historian and Culture Resources Specialist for the United States Army Corps of Engineers in St. Paul. She is currently Assistant Professor of History at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul.

She has published several articles on Nineteenth-Century History in Minnesota History, the quarterly publication of the Minnesota Historical Society.

It Can't Happen Here:

The Liberal Imagination in an "Age of Ideology"

Presented by Jonathan Veitch

In the minds of many Americans, there was probably no book published during the thirties that offered a more likely scenario for the emergence of fascism than Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here*. The novel was an instant success and something of a *cause célèbre* when it was published in 1935. Its appeal lay in Lewis's capacity to imagine even the most prosaic details of home-grown fascism: i.e. What would the storm troopers be called?; Who would be their leaders?; and How would an American dictator fashion himself? This *roman à thèse* offers a very powerful and widely accepted thesis grounded in

liberal tradition and reveals likely sources for the emergence of fascism in America as well as the confusions and blindnesses associated with that tradition—blindnesses which in some sense are responsible for the very excesses it deplors. This is best seen in the sentimental liberalism that Doremus Jessup holds out as the repository of truth against the monstrous abstractions of both the right and the left. It seems finally that Lewis may have nothing to substitute for Main Street but Main Street itself.

Jonathan Veitch is the Chairman of Humanities at The New School for Social Research. He is the author of American Superrealism: Nathanael West and the Politics of Representation in the 1930s and a forthcoming study entitled Mediating Modernity: The Construction of Hollywood in the American Imagination.

Iron George: Myths of Masculinity in Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* and *Mantrap*

Presented by Sally E. Parry

Sinclair Lewis was aware in his own time of middle-class, male insecurity, especially among office workers, about whether they fit into the world of "real" men. In a number of his novels Lewis portrayed the somewhat pathetic urges of his male characters to be considered he-men and good fellows despite their sedentary occupations.

In particular George Babbitt and Ralph Prescott Mantrap seem to feel this need to connect with manliness or at least a sense of masculine identity that they believed to be lacking in their urban, business-driven lives. Their sea in both cases leads them to view wilderness as a place where they can get down to being real men, in harmony with nature and other men. However, although Lewis feels sympathy for the sterility of their lives, he deconstructs the romantic fantasies these men participate in and sees as a substitute for thinking seriously about their place as men in modern society. By the end of their respective novels, George and Ralph failed to become stereotypical men, but they have succeeded in becoming finer human beings.

Sally E. Parry teaches at Iowa State University. Her publications include articles on adolescence, Sinclair Lewis, Margaret Rawlings, Margaret Atwood, Upton Sinclair and chapters in books, including Sinclair Lewis: Essays in Criticism and Lewis at 100. She is currently the executive director of the Sinclair Society and editor of its newsletter. She received her Ph.D. from Iowa State University in 1986 with a dissertation entitled "Sinclair Lewis: Darkening Vision of His Late

From Stereotyping to Social Critique:

Babbitt's Italian Fortune During the Fascist Years

Presented by Valerio C. Ferme

This paper examines how Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* was read and interpreted by Italian critics and scholars during the Fascist years. In doing so, it suggests ways in which *Babbitt* became a symbolic token by which different critics either affirmed their acceptance of the Fascist regime or used Lewis's text to provide an aesthetic and social critique of Mussolini and his policies. The analysis suggests ways in which readings and misreadings of the novel worked to support or undermine the dominant ideology of Fascism. It also underscores the importance of Sinclair Lewis's work as a model for linguistic and aesthetic innovation as it transpires from his influence on the literary development of Cesare Pavese, one of the most innovative Italian writers of the time.

My discussion first focuses on the articles written about *Babbitt* by Carlo Linati and Emilio Cecchi between 1928 and 1929. These two critics, who were

members of the mainstream intelligentsia, discussed the book and its main character as embodying the worst aspects of American society and its capitalistic urges. As such, *Babbitt* represented symbolically the stereotype of the uncultured and money-hungry American and was implicitly contrasted with the new Italian flourishing in a culturally benign Fascist society. Thus, the term *babbittismo* was coined to label negatively American culture and its presence in Italian society, while reaffirming the autarchic policies of the regime.

In the second part of the paper, I examine instead how *Babbitt* (and Sinclair Lewis's work in general) was reevaluated following his Nobel Prize award and Cesare Pavese's article in *La Cultura* in 1930. Especially in Pavese's comments on Lewis's slang and on his sympathetic portrayal of *Babbitt*, and in Antonio Gramsci's 1933 analysis of *Babbitt*, the book is no longer understood solely as providing a caricature of the typical American businessman and

contrasted with a more civilized Fascist society. Instead, *Babbitt* becomes the means through which these fringe intellectuals on the one hand criticize and attack the stale aesthetics of Fascist mainstream intellectuals (Pavese), and on the other hand provide a social critique of the Italian bourgeoisie under Fascism (Gramsci).

Valerio C. Ferme is a dual citizen of the United States and Italy who has just completed his dissertation in Comparative Literature at the University of California at Berkeley on the subversive nature of translations from American literature under the Fascist regime. He has published articles on Boccaccio's Decameron and Italo Calvino, has articles accepted on Fascist aesthetics and translation theory, and has recently completed a paper on Cesare Pavese's translation of Our Mr. Wrenn. His first volume of poetry will be published in Italy this fall.

Deconstructing Culture in *Kingsblood Royal*

Presented by Robert L. McLaughlin

Kingsblood Royal, Sinclair Lewis's 1947 novel about race relations in America, often leaves its readers confused about two key questions: Why does comfortably middle-class, white banker Neil Kingsblood, when he discovers he has a black great-great grandfather, decide that he too is black? And why do his white family, friends, and neighbors, when he announces that he is black, suddenly treat Neil as a stranger?

In answering these questions, we discover the novel's exploration of the language of race, especially the white/black binary opposition and the societal power it supports, revealing in the process the factitious and absurd nature of the opposition. Neil

goes through a learning process in which he at first accepts the white/black opposition, thinking he must be one or the other, not both or a mixture; he chooses to be black because blacks as Other seem completely different—dangerous, exotic, erotic, and exciting—an escape from the dull life his family has planned for him.

He goes on to learn, however, that blacks are not Other at all but very like him and the whites he knows: the black/white opposition is based on artificial social constructions. He also learns that these constructions, though artificial, have power. His white friends and neighbors see him as a new person once he announces himself as black because they are not willing to see past the black/white opposition. They are supported in this

by the economic and political elite who need to define blacks as Other in order to maintain their own power. This elite must bring Neil down because, by his very public stance, Neil becomes a deconstructive principle, threatening to teach all of Grand Republic the lessons he's learned about the artificial construction of their ideas of race, threatening the logic of the black/white dichotomy and with it, the economic and political power structures it supports.

Robert L. McLaughlin, an Assistant Professor of English at Illinois State University, received his Ph.D. from Fordham University in 1987. He is Senior Editor of the Review of Contemporary Fiction and Secretary-Treasurer of the Sinclair Lewis Society.

Babbitt:

The Middle-Class Malcontent

By Catherine Jurca

The publication and enthusiastic reception of *Babbitt* in 1922 was widely interpreted as a sign that "as a nation," America was at last "beginning to become self conscious." Although virtually all critics of Lewis since then have addressed the omnipresent problems of conformity and disaffection among his middle-class characters, the real brilliance of Lewis's analysis of this population has yet to be articulated: it is their spiritual alienation and profound awareness of it that Lewis identifies as the essence of their identity as middle-class Americans. This essay argues that in *Babbitt*, Lewis is committed in particular to describing a middle-class identity based on its alienation from the very

institution—the home—that was held to be central to its identity. Thus the most significant manifestation of Babbitt's discontent is his recognition of his own homelessness, that is, his awakening to the discrepancy between material and spiritual shelter evident in Lewis's earliest diagnosis of his protagonist's crisis: "the Babbitt house...was not a home." The problem with the standardized house is not that it threatens Babbitt's individuality, but rather that it assaults his privacy; because his house is just like any other it is as though he shares it with anonymous strangers. But the sense of comfortable familiarity produced by standardization simultaneously enables Babbitt to feel at home anywhere. Babbitt's futile rebellion against Zenith society is an at-

tempt to "come home," but the lesson he learns is that while there is no running away from homelessness, he can find compensation for this feeling through the middle-class community of the novel that standardization makes so readily available to him. This community is coercive, but Lewis ultimately reveals himself to be less interested in its coercive force than in the forcefulness of its psychological appeal to the members who define themselves by both resisting and embracing it.

Catherine Jurca is Assistant Professor of English at the California Institute of Technology. She is at work on a book manuscript on the construction of the suburb in the American novel, 1890-1960.

Heinrich Mann's *Der Untertan*: "A German Main Street" and More

By Frederick Betz

Among the great satirical novelists represented in Penguin's Twentieth Century Classics are Sinclair Lewis and Heinrich Mann, the older and less known brother of Thomas Mann. But while the Penguin Lewis editions are expertly introduced and annotated by Martin Bucco and James Hutchisson, the reader is unfortunately provided with no such orientation for the English translation (1984, 1992) of *Der Untertan* (1918), Mann's devastating satire of the German bourgeoisie as the obsequious but opportunistic loyal subject of Kaiser Wilhelm II in the 1890s. The English title, *Man of Straw*, which satirically identifies the representative main character as a straw image of the Kaiser, actually first appeared in 1947, although its original publication in translation was in late 1921 under the title *The Patrioteer*. Both

Mann and Lewis display similar techniques of satiric portrayal and ironic polarity between Americans or Germans and foreigners or immigrants, business and labor, capitalists and socialists, conservatives and liberals, practical doers and intellectual loafers or cranks. *Der Untertan*, with scrutiny of established power and political systems, deserves a new translation and publication, following the example of Penguin's fine editions of *Main Street* and *Babbitt*.

Frederick Betz (Ph.D., Indiana University, 1973), Professor of German at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, has published books and articles on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century German and American Literature and Journalism, with particular focus on Theodor Fontane, Heinrich Mann, H.L. Mencken, Sinclair Lewis, and Dorothy Thompson.

THE SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER WELCOMES CONTRIBUTIONS

The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter welcomes short contributions about Sinclair Lewis's work, life, and times. We also welcome essays about teaching Lewis's novels and short stories. Send books for review, notices of upcoming conferences, reports of presentations and publications relating to Lewis, discoveries of materials (correspondence, manuscripts, etc.) in and descriptions of collections in libraries and all other items to: Sally Parr, Editor, The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter, Dept. of English, Box 4240, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4240.

—Collector's Corner features catalog listings from book dealers as a sampling of what publications by Lewis are selling for currently.

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185. Lewis, Sinclair. *Our Mr. Wrenn*. NY: Harpers, (1914). \$600

Contemporary stamp of a noted bookseller and publisher, very light rubbing at the extremities and some slight wear to the spine lettering still a fine copy without dust wrapper. Stamped on the title page "Advance Copy—Not Published," this issue has a different binding than the published book. The advance issue was released without jacket. A nice copy of the author's first book published under his own name.



Babbitt, Inscribed to H.L. Mencken

186. Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. NY: Harcourt, Brace (1922). \$15,000

Top edge slightly soiled, a fine copy in attractive, very good plus, price-clipped dustwrapper with some light chipping and slight loss at the spinal extremities. Housed in a custom quarter morocco clamshell box. This copy Inscribed by the author: "To H.L. Mencken, One for the money, Two for the Show-Cheers! Sinclair Lewis." Laid in is a brief typed note from Mencken Initialed and dated in 1938 that reads: "Bee- I've had this long enough-maybe it will be of use to you. Besides, I need the room on my shelves for more bottles. Yours, M."

A major association between American authors, indeed in Mark Schorer's monumental biography *Sinclair Lewis: An American Life*, Schorer states that Mencken's was "the most influential literary relationship that Lewis was to experience." In a contemporary letter from Lewis to Mencken he noted that Mencken's review of his previous novel, *Main Street*, was one of the major inspirations for his conception and writing of *Babbitt*. Lewis's writing was influenced by

**Collector's
Corner**

Mencken's anti-bourgeois feelings and his distrust of placing European language and literature over those of American. Mencken wrote the first review of *Babbitt* for the *Smart Set*, where he said of the novel: "I know of no other American novel that more accurately presents the real America." Mencken's relentless championing of Lewis had a major influence on public opinion, and he perhaps more than any other was responsible for Lewis becoming the first American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. A Johnson *Highspot of American Literature*.



234. (Photoplay). Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. NY: Grosset & Dunlap (nd-1931). \$300

Photoplay edition. Fine in fine dust wrapper with some nominal wear. Very attractive copy of this Pulitzer Prize winner illustrated with photos and jacket art from the 1931 John Ford film featuring Ronald Colman and Helen Hayes. A superlative copy.

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4. *Art and Craftsman: The Best of the Yale Literary Magazine 1836-1961*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. (1961). \$45

The oldest monthly magazine commemorates 125 years. Three winners of Nobel Prizes, several Pulitzer winners. Among the contributors: Kipling, Sinclair Lewis, Thornton Wilder, Paul Tillich, John Dos Passos, Robert Penn Warren, Louis Auchincloss. Fine in bright, price-clipped dj.

(Collector's Corner continues on page 36)

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Catalogue No. 33

Literary First Editions

184. Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. NY: Harcourt, Brace (1922). \$15,000

A marvelous association copy of one of Sinclair Lewis's two great works, a satirical novel of commercialism and shallowness whose protagonist has become an American type, "babbitry" adjectival shorthand for conformity and boosterism among the American middle class, inscribed by Lewis to the great scourge of the booboisie. "To H.L. Mencken/One for the money/Two for the show—/Cheers!/Sinclair— words mockingly, perhaps self-mockingly evoking the pursuit of success and spectacle that defines babbitry. Following upon the success of *Main Street*, *Babbitt* was one of the most anticipated and hyped works of American literature to that time, with a record 85,000 copies printed prior to publication. One month before the book appeared, Harcourt, Brace sent out a letter Mencken had written to Lewis, along with Mencken's enthusiastic review of the book for *Smart Set*, in which he claimed to "know of no American novel that more accurately presents the real America." *Babbitt* was an immediate *succès de scandale*, creating a nationwide controversy and sparking numerous newspaper editorials and literary debates.

But Mencken's involvement reaches beyond prepublication praise into the very conception of Lewis's satire: according to Lewis's biographer Mark Schorer, "the most influential literary relationship Lewis was to experience" was with Mencken, who served as the primary intellectual impetus for the marked tempering of Lewis's optimism about the vitality and promise of American life evident in both *Main Street* and *Babbitt*. Indeed, in a letter to Mencken which Schorer quotes at length, Lewis credits Mencken with the inspiration for *Babbitt*:

"You ask about the new novel—which won't be out till next September. It's curiously associated with yourself. A year ago in a criticism of *Main Street* you said that what ought to be taken up now is the American city—not NY or Chi but the cities of 200,000 to 500,000—the Baltimores and Omahas and Buffaloes and Birminghams, etc. I was startled to read it, because that was precisely what I WAS then planning, and am now doing. But your piece helped me to decide on this particular one as against one or two others which, at the time, I also wanted to do. I think you'll

like it—I hope the Christ you do. All our friends are in it—the Rotary Club, the popular preacher, the Chamber of Commerce, the new bungalows, the bunch of business men jolliers lunching at the Athletic Club. It ought to be at least 2000% American, as well as forward-looking, right-thinking, optimistic, selling the idea of success, and go-getterish. The central character is a Solid Citizen, one George F. Babbitt, real estate man, who has a Dutch Colonial House on Floral Heights....The book is not altogether satire. I've tried like hell to keep the boob Babbitt from being merely burlesque—hard though that is at times, when he gets to orating before the Boosters' Club lunches. I've tried to make him human and individual, not a type. Of this I'm sure—if you don't like the book, nobody in the entire Vereinigten will."

Schorer notes the fit between Mencken's criticism and Lewis's satire, both aimed at "the standardization of manners in a business culture and the stultification of morals in middle class convention," and Edmund Wilson was one of many to make the connection, proclaiming that "Babbitt and the inhabitants of...Main Street are merely particular incarnations of the great American boob, evidently inspired by Mencken." At a press conference, Lewis announced, "If I had the power, I'd make Henry Mencken the Pope of America."

First edition, second issue, with "Supposing Lyte and I" at p. 49, line 4. A very good+ copy in a generally appealing very good example of what bibliographer Stephen Pastore describes as the "absurdly fragile" dust jacket with shattering to extremities, in appealing custom-made quarter blue leather and marbled paper-covered clamshell box. It is a brief typed note, initialed by Mencken, dated December 29, 1938, passing the book on: "Dear Bee:—I've had this long enough—maybe/it will be of use to you. Besides, I need room on my shelves for more bottles./Yours, M."

To quote bookseller Lee Biondi in his preface to Pastore's *Sinclair Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography*, "no serious collection of twentieth century American literature can afford to ignore the Sinclair Lewis novels of the twenties" (14). *Main Street*, *Babbitt* is assuredly the most desirable of the novels, and it would be difficult to imagine a more significant association copy of this high spot of American literature than the first American to win a Nobel Prize for Literature.

Quill & Brush

Quill & Brush, the large Rockville, MD, antiquarian bookseller that publishes *Collected Books: The Guide to the Author Price Guides* is about to publish the *Author Price Guide: Sinclair Lewis*. There are more than 160 *Author Price Guides* and SL has finally made the rank. Stephen R. Pastore (*Sinclair Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography*) compiled the material for this newest addition to the growing lexicon of Lewis material. It should be on hand in January 1998.

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May 1997

146. Lewis, Sinclair. *Bethel Merriday*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran (1940). \$100

First Edition. A near fine copy in a dust jacket with marginal wear and tear.



234. [Lewis, Sinclair]. Pastore, Stephen R. *Sinclair Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography*. New Haven: Yale Books, 1997. \$60.00

First Edition. Well-illustrated with photographs of bindings and dust jackets, a useful appendix of first appearances and a biographical sketch. New.

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Summer 1997

334. Lewis, Sinclair. *Ann Vickers*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran (1933). \$125.00

First Edition. Near fine in lightly soiled dust jacket with several closed edge tears.



335. Lewis, Sinclair. *Work of Art*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran (1934). \$100

First Edition. Near fine in dust jacket (minor wear).



336. Lewis, Sinclair. *Gideon Planish*. New York: Random House (1938). \$100

First Edition. Some dustiness to fore edges otherwise a fine copy in a particularly bright fresh dust jacket (slightly creased, a couple closed tears).



337. Lewis, Sinclair. *The God-Seeker*. New York: Random House (1949). \$75

First Edition. Fine in dust jacket slightly rubbed at spine ends.

FALL 1997 MISCELLANY LIST

114. [Lewis, Sinclair]. John Dos Passos *Manhattan Transfer*. New York: Harper & Brothers (1926). \$75.00

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



115. Lewis, Sinclair. *Work of Art*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran (1934). \$150

First Edition. Fine in dust jacket just a little faded at spine.



116. Lewis, Sinclair. *It Can't Happen Here*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran (1935). \$125.00

First Edition. Contemporary owner signature on endpaper. Near fine in dust jacket with some very shallow chipping at spine ends.



117. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace (1927). \$475

First Edition. First issue binding with G resembling a C on spine. Fine bright copy in a very good dust jacket which has had some professional restoration, including cleaning, tape removal and infilling of several small chips with Japanese paper. Not a bad looking copy, but probably not for the purist.

Of note...

Jacqueline Koenig reports that the Sinclair Lewis letter at the Pacific Book Auction sale 132 on April 25 sold for \$374 including the 15% buyer's premium. (This item was described on page 15 of the spring newsletter.)

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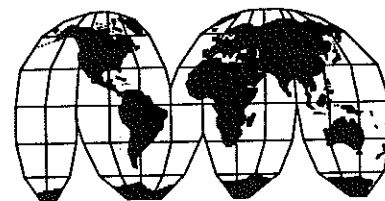
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Anyone who has successfully taught a Sinclair Lewis novel or short story is invited to submit a short essay for consideration for publication. Please use MLA style. Send to the Sinclair Lewis Society, Dept. Of English, 4240 Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4240 or e-mail separry@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu

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