

The SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

VOLUME TWO, NUMBER TWO

SPRING 1994

SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY SPONSORS SESSION AT SYMPOSIUM ON AMERICAN REALISM AND NATURALISM

The Sinclair Lewis Society sponsored a session at the 1993 Cabo San Lucas Symposium sponsored by the American Literature Association. The 1993 Cabo Symposium focused on American realism and naturalism and was coordinated by the editors of *American Literary Realism*, Robert Fleming (member of the Board of Directors, Sinclair Lewis Society) and Gary Scharnhorst, both of the English Department, University of New Mexico. Held November 11-13 in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, the conference was a success despite the natural disaster that occurred just days before the conference began. Torrential rains caused several major bridges between the airport and the hotel to collapse, delaying the arrival of some participants. Despite this, a number of high quality sessions were presented on authors including Mark Twain, Henry James, Richard Wright, Edith Wharton, Frank Norris, Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, and Saul Bellow.

The newsletter is pleased to be able to publish abstracts of the papers of the Lewis Society panel called "Sinclair Lewis: Cultural Critic or Commentator" which took place on Saturday, November 13. They are representative of the high quality of current Lewis scholarship.

"A Scarlet Tanager on an Ice-Floe":

Women, Men, and History on *Main Street*

Caren J. Town, Georgia Southern University

When writing about Lewis, critics tend to speak in terms of his "thin but electric" style or of the "giddy capriciousness" of his satire. Others, acknowledging his larger thematic concerns, say that although a novel like *Main Street* is "haunted by the consciousness of the past and a confidence for the future," "one or two sharply defined images... can scarcely compensate for the basic failure of historical insight." It seems, however, that what many critics miss is the essentially historical quality of gender relations in this—and many other—Lewis novels. Not surprisingly, as Martin Light notes, when the novel is "seen as the story of a woman with a mind shaped by romantic notions, who challenges the community with her impractical idealism and suffers rebuffs and self-doubt, *Main Street* appears to have more purpose, unity, and psychological interest than many readers have been willing to concede to it."

One example of the variety—one might say the contradictions—of the characterization of Carol Kennicott is seen when the narrator describes her on a walk outside of town: "In her

loose nutria coat, seal toque, virginal cheeks unmarked by lines of village jealousies, she was as out of place on this dreary hillside as a scarlet tanager on an ice-floe." This clearly out of place creature feels the cold and emptiness of the prairie to which she has been exiled. Carol's role, it appears, is to stand out from the bleakness of Gopher Prairie, to bring to it life and color, but at her own peril. Yet she doesn't define *herself* as delicate, merely trapped. In her own eyes she is not a colorful, delicate tanager but an aggressive "tiny leashed hawk," in danger of being killed by degree in her small coop. This "tiny leashed hawk" is very different from the "rebellious girl" on the first page of the novel, the "spirit" of the American Midwest. Carol has by turns been an American eagle, a scarlet tanager, and finally a leashed hawk.

What does Carol's struggle with, and possible defeat by Main Street signify? Is her initial resistance to the town a sign of her difference from America or instead evidence of her very Americanness? Late in the novel, the narrator suggests that Carol's struggle is in fact normal, even familiar. If her rebellion is typical of a certain kind of American temperament, then what does her eventual integration into—and reluctant acceptance of—small town life mean? How does Carol become a part of this particular history and at what cost?

At the beginning of the novel, Carol's convergence with the American past is clear in the famous passage describing her on a hill by the Mississippi. She may not be thinking about the historical significance of where she is standing, but her observer is. In fact, "the heart of a chance watcher on the lower road tightened to wistfulness over her quality of suspended freedom." This "suspended freedom" is characteristic of Carol and perhaps of all American experience, a sense of unlimited possibility combined with a limited memory of the past. Carol's entire life has been filled with shadows from American history, what Lewis calls a "common American past." This "common American past" is nevertheless combined with the ahistoricism of the region, "the newest empire of the world; the Northern Middlewest." The "boundless" hope of this new land connects it to Carol, with her "suspended freedom." She may be its future and its hope, or the "scarlet tanager" may become "bloody feathers," a sacrifice to adorn the "creamy-skinned fat women" of her bridge club, the Jolly Seventeen.

The future, for the land and for Carol, may lie in work. In the farms surrounding Gopher Prairie, Carol finds "the dignity and

greatness which failed her in Main Street." Still, this dignity is not immediately accessible to her. She also begins to identify with the working poor, in particular her maid Bea. She recognizes that she will never be part of the Jolly Seventeen if she "must damn all the maids toiling in filthy kitchens, all the ragged hungry children." She is less comfortable, however, with Bea's husband, Miles Bjornstam, and his socialism: "The conception of millions of workmen like Miles taking control frightened her." Her love of the status quo may be in part due to a lack of nerve, which also keeps her in her role of doctor's wife in Gopher Prairie. This inertia may in turn be related to the role she is expected to play as wife and mother, and she feels its power even before she is married. Later, impending motherhood makes her feel "trapped" or "kidnapped by the town." There is also a suggestion, however, that her discontent may lie elsewhere, in something fundamental—in what she calls the "darkness of women": "We're all in it, ten million women, young married women with good prosperous husbands.... What is it we want—and need?... I think perhaps we want a more conscious life." This "more conscious life," unfortunately, is exactly what a place like Gopher Prairie denies.

Instead of becoming more conscious, Carol learns to cope by acting the part of a contented person, but her acting then becomes a kind of protection. This was not consolation, but necessary to prevent "being dragged naked down Main Street." But accommodation to the pleasures of small-town life is also accommodation to its oppression of thought and action. It appears that one must give up the golden dust and the "fragrance of burning leaves" to avoid "the contentment of the quiet dead," and Carol appears willing to sacrifice one to avoid the other. She has probably mistaken age, tradition, or history, for decay, and she goes to Washington to find the new again. Her past follows her there, however, in the person of her husband, and she eventually agrees to return, while nevertheless maintaining her faith in progress.

The Gopher Prairies of this world are founded on the rock of New England Puritanism, shot through with the history of this country, and yet filled with the same optimism that propelled those first settlers out of England. Carol, too, with her obstinate questionings, remains an American in the best tradition—one who wants to know why things are the way they are and why they can't be changed at once. Yet she bears on her shoulders an additional burden, the expectation that as a woman she won't ask questions, will just accept the inevitable—husband, housework, children. Carol has rejected the choices provided—scarlet tanager freezing on the ice floe or leashed hawk being pecked to death—and become part of the history of resistance: "She looked across the silent fields to the west. She was conscious of an unbroken sweep of land to the Rockies, to Alaska; a dominion which will rise to unexampled greatness when other empires have grown senile. Before that time she knew, a hundred generations of Carols will aspire and go down in tragedy devoid of palls and solemn chanting, the humdrum inevitable tragedy of struggle against inertia." In this moment, Carol has also become part of the history of America.

Boundary Ambiguity and Abortion: Women's Choices in Sinclair Lewis's *Ann Vickers* and *Kingsblood Royal*

Sally E. Parry, Illinois State University

In *Ann Vickers* (1933) and *Kingsblood Royal* (1947), Sinclair Lewis creates two women who share the dilemma of unexpected pregnancies. Their response is to create phantom children, babies who exist for them only emotionally, in order to try them out as members of a family. This reaction, which has since been identified by psychologists as boundary ambiguity, is a serious response to a stressful situation. Although *Ann Vickers* creates her child after she has had the abortion while Vestal *Kingsblood* decides that her phantom child should become a real one, both are responding to an anxiety caused by their concern that they are not part of well-defined families. These two women need to wrestle first with the problem of how to define a family before they can decide whether to bring children into them.

Ann Vickers, a single woman living in New York during World War I, and Vestal *Kingsblood*, a married woman in her twenties living in Minnesota at the end of World War II, are representative of two types of women who are faced with the prospect of unwanted children. *Ann* is an unmarried woman who does not have the money to raise a child alone, nor does she want to marry a man she does not love in order to create a family. Vestal, although married, has a deeply troubled relationship with her husband which she fears will be exacerbated by another child. Although these children are not wanted, abortions are illegal in their respective times and places and they fear that finding adequate medical care may be difficult. In addition, they both feel guilt over making this decision.

Boundary ambiguity is a term which describes the psychological turmoil that may result when a person is not sure what the boundaries of his or her family are. The term was first used by Pauline Boss in the 1970s in connection with the families of men missing in action from the Vietnam War. The father may be physically absent but psychologically present, causing an ambiguous and ultimately dysfunctional family system. In the mid-1980s, Ann Speckhard related this phenomenon to women who have had abortions. Since the perception of "humanness" of the

THE SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

The Sinclair Lewis Newsletter is published twice a year at the Publications Unit of the English Department, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois; Director, Jean C. Lee. Please address all correspondence to Sally Parry, Editor, English Department, Illinois State University, Campus Box 4240, Normal, IL 61790-4240.

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fetus is not necessarily contiguous with birth, there exists a sort of boundary ambiguity until the child is born because while it may exist psychologically as an individual, it does not exist physically apart from the mother. While many women mourn the aborted fetus which resolves the ambiguity caused by abortion, others do not grieve. This can lead to boundary ambiguity because the child has not been emotionally removed from the family.

At different times in their pregnancies both Ann Vickers and Vestal Kingsblood recognize the humanness of their unborn babies. In their desire to find out whether or not these children would fit into their lives, they create psychological identities for them. By doing so, they perhaps unconsciously acknowledge the boundary ambiguity of a possible additional person.

Ann Vickers' unexpected pregnancy is the result of a romantic affair with Lafe Resnick, a captain in the United States Army, who is awaiting orders to go overseas. Ann is a single woman whose parents are dead and therefore has to make her decision based on economic and situational reasons. It is not until after Ann has the abortion that the child acquires a psychological presence. Before the operation, the pregnancy had been a fact, but the baby was only an intellectual concept, not a personality. Ann solves her denial of starting a family by creating a psychological child, Pride. By the time Ann gives birth to a child several years later, she momentarily assumes that it is the girl Pride, but when told it is a boy, she lets go of the phantom child in order to embrace the real one.

Vestal Kingsblood in *Kingsblood Royal* would not become a single mother like Ann Vickers, but her circumstances change so radically that she, too, seriously considers abortion. Initially she seems to be a stereotypical middle-class wife and mother. Happily married to Neil Kingsblood, a World War II veteran, she has one daughter, Bidy, who is blond with very fair skin. However, while Neil is doing some research on his family tree, he discovers that his great-great-grandfather was a black man. According to the Minnesota historian he consults, this ancestry makes him black as well.

This revelation that Neil makes not only to Vestal but to their friends and family as well disturbs her cozy, white, middle-class assumptions about life. The boundaries of her family structure immediately become ambiguous, not because Neil is no longer physically present, but because she does not perceive him as the same man she married. One night, while admitting she is torn between love for him and anger at his newly announced heritage, she makes love to him.

The realization that a moment of confused passion has made her pregnant forces her to contemplate abortion. However, she eventually decides against it by resolving the ambiguities of her family structure. She admits that the man to whom she is married has black ancestry and that she must make this realization part of her redefined family. The unborn child takes on a psychological reality and a nickname, Booker T. Her final stance is to choose her redefined family over public opinion.

The choices that Ann and Vestal make in connection with their unplanned pregnancies illustrate two responses to the boundary ambiguity caused by their uncertain family structure. Ann's phantom child, Pride, is a psychological construct which

delays her grieving process but makes her feel less guilty. Vestal, despite great confusion over who the man she married actually is, opts to redefine what she considers her family so that Booker T. will be welcome when he is born. The need to be sure of what a family is and what its boundaries are affects the decision any woman makes about whether or not to bring a child into the world.

American Voices in Sinclair Lewis's

It Can't Happen Here

Robert L. McLaughlin, Illinois State University

In his massive biography of Sinclair Lewis, Mark Schorer takes a brief respite from his generally malevolent assessment of Lewis and his work when he comments on the 1929 publication of *Dodsworth*, "Between the end of the war and the beginning of the Depression, a revolution had overtaken American life in manners and morals and all intellectual assumptions, and *Main Street*, *Babbitt*, *Arrowsmith*, and *Elmer Gantry*, whatever their aesthetic limitations, had played a major part, probably the major literary part, in the transformation." But Schorer, as his analyses and evaluations of Lewis's novels show, is entirely unable to account for their impact, influence, or popularity. Indeed, Lewis's ability to capture so much of the American character and the spirit of his time in his writing is evidenced by the controversy that surrounded many of the novels, the lasting popularity of several of the novels, and, most significant, the absorption of many of his names and phrases into the American vocabulary. "Main Street," "Babbitt," "Elmer Gantry," and "It Can't Happen Here" are not just words, names, or titles: they are signifiers that manifest a whole range of ideas and beliefs that have come to define aspects of the American experience. But what in Lewis's technique accomplished this? Lewis's novels function as narratives because of his harnessing of various American voices, each representing its own belief systems, and the resulting merging, conflicting, and synthesizing of voices and their connected ideological positions.

A theoretical context defined by the dialogics of Mikhail Bakhtin and the symbolic convergence theory of Ernest Bormann helps to explain the immediate and long-lasting impact of Lewis's novels. These books, most obviously *Main Street*, *Babbitt*, *Elmer Gantry*, and *It Can't Happen Here*, created controversy not simply because they satirized American life but because they self-consciously call into question some of the fundamental narratives about the American experience that have served as the cognitive structures for a whole set of ideological belief systems. Thus they did not just make fun of things some people take seriously; they subverted the intellectual foundations that allow people to make sense of their world, their country, their religion, and themselves. For example, Lewis so successfully subverts the various narratives associated with the ideological belief systems of small-town America, that "Main Street" has become a part of the American discourse, a symbolic cue recalling both the traditional narratives and belief systems about small towns and then Lewis's overturning of those narratives and belief systems. Thus "Main Street" (and similarly "Babbitt," "Elmer Gantry," and "It Can't Happen Here") have become terms imbued with a double conscious-

ness: they imply both an assertion about America and its contradiction.

The complexity of Lewis's narrative style can be studied closely in the opening chapter of *It Can't Happen Here* in which Lewis's narrator describes the Fort Beulah, Vermont, Rotary Club's annual Ladies' Night Dinner. Here Lewis employs a number of narrational styles that work together or conflict to establish the atmosphere in which American fascism could come to be. The first is direct narration in which the narrator describes events apparently autonomously, that is, without comingling his voice with other voices. These passages are important for establishing not only the narrator's point of view but also his ideological stance: a criticism of the hollowness and corruption of American ideals. The second narrational style is the individual speech of the characters. By presenting this speech in a stylized manner, the narrator is able to let the characters themselves reveal their ideological worldviews. General Edgeways, Mrs. Adelaide Tarr Gimmitch, Francis Tasbrough, and Louis Rotenstern combine to define an ideology of militarism, sexism, industrialism, exclusionism, and totalitarianism. A third narrational style, connected to this last, occurs when the narrator, instead of presenting his characters' speech directly, takes on their discourse style himself. In a protean manner the narrator constantly increases and decreases the distance between himself and his characters. He does this with two results. First, he can merge his voice completely with a specific character's, then create a sudden disjunction between his voice and the character's so as to unmask and criticize their discourse and its associated worldview. Second, he can reemphasize his own ideological position, usually by means of the voice of Doremus Jessup. This kind of reemphasis becomes especially important in the context of a fourth narrational style, probably the predominate style in this chapter. For much of the chapter the narrator adopts the voice not of any specific character but of the community of Fort Beulah. That is, much of his description and reporting is made with the discourse style and from the ideological point of view of the community as a whole.

Lewis has used these narrational styles to create a complex presentation of ideas. He has set up a conflict between characters like General Edgeways, Mrs. Gimmitch, Tasbrough, and Rotenstern and their ideas of militarism, nationalism, capitalism, gender, their associated definitions of patriotism, strength, and manliness, in short, how power is to be distributed and used in American society and the narrator and his critique of these positions and his claim that American ideals have been corrupted and lost. Furthermore, the narrator has associated the positions he disagrees with, those of Edgeways, Gimmitch, etc., with the community at large and his own positions with the "cranks" and "cynics" Lorinda Pike and Doremus Jessup. Two results of this use of discourse are, first, that the reader is encouraged to sympathize with the positions of the narrator, Lorinda, and Doremus while understanding that these are the minority positions, and, second, the narrator has defined and associated with the community at large the ideological positions that will allow fascism in America to emerge. In fact, it becomes clear that the installation of a fascist government will not be a revolution or coup d'état; rather, the groundwork for fascism has

already been constructed in the ideological worldviews of the majority of Americans. The riposte to the claim that "It can't happen here" is "It already has." ♦

DISCOUNT ON LIBRARY OF AMERICA LEWIS VOLUME FOR MEMBERS

Members of The Sinclair Lewis Society are able to receive a 20% discount when purchasing the Library of America volume of the works of Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street and Babbitt*. Members should write to The Library of America, 14 East 60th Street, New York, NY 10022 and enclose a check for \$28.00 for each copy plus \$3.50 postage for one copy and \$.50 for each additional copy.

CONTRIBUTORS

The editor of *The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter* would like to thank everyone who contributed to this issue by writing articles or sending notes. These people include Clare Eby, Robert Fleming, Roger Forseth, Sally Hoople, James Hutchisson, George Killough, Jacqueline Koenig, Robert L. McLaughlin, Caren J. Town.

SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY PANEL AT ALA CONFERENCE IN SAN DIEGO

The Sinclair Lewis Society will be holding a session at the 1994 American Literature Association Conference which is scheduled for June 2-5, 1994 (the Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday after Memorial Day weekend). The conference will again be held at the Bahia Hotel in San Diego.

The panel will be called "Sinclair Lewis: Culture and History" and will be chaired by Sally E. Parry, Illinois State University. The following papers will be presented at the Lewis session which will run from 10:30 to 11:50 on Thursday, June 2:

"Paul De Kruif and the Composition of *Arrowsmith*," James M. Hutchisson, The Citadel

"The Mine of Lost Souls: Generational History in Sinclair Lewis's *Free Air* and Douglas Coupland's *Shampoo Planet*," Edward Watts, Michigan State University

"Sinclair Lewis and William Faulkner: The Quest for Integrity," Dmitry Urnov, Adelphi University, and Julie Palievsky, Nassau Community College, SUNY

TEACHING SINCLAIR LEWIS

FROM RESENTMENT TO RECOGNITION: *BABBITT* IN THE CLASSROOM

by Clare Virginia Eby
University of Connecticut*

Babbitt still speaks to me, and to my students, because of Lewis's treatment of one of the most important conflicts depicted in American literature: independence versus conformity. While Lewis's treatment is bleaker than that of some canonical texts such as *Huck Finn*, his message is not too far removed from that of *The Age of Innocence* or *The Scarlet Letter*. The problem with teaching *Babbitt* is that many students initially find themselves distanced from the novel either emotionally or aesthetically: some of them find it too "depressing" to risk connecting with it, while others resent what they feel is its lack of artistry. My goal is to move students from the resentment they feel toward Lewis, his characters, and his novel to a recognition of how *Babbitt* continues to speak to us.

I have successfully taught *Babbitt* three times at the University of Connecticut, Greater Hartford Campus. *Babbitt* appears in a course I've designed called "American Attitudes Toward Business," which meets once a week in the evening. Consequently, the course draws many "nontraditional" (i. e., adult) students. The growth of the adult student population (many of whom have exposure to the business world) in universities across the country is an important resource to draw upon in the pedagogical selling of *Babbitt*. The business literature framework is also very helpful, but while I have the liberty to use *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, *The Financier*, *The Rise of David Levinsky*, *The Octopus*, *The Custom of the Country*, *The Big Money*, and *The Bonfire of the Vanities* to provide a context for Lewis's novel, I believe it would also work in a more mainstream American lit survey, clustered with thematically related works such as *The Great Gatsby*, *Sister Carrie*, or *Death of a Salesman*. The syllabus, then, can establish an important context for reading *Babbitt* as commenting on American preoccupations with money, status, and success.

I begin class by introducing two seemingly contradictory lines of thought: the importance of Lewis as cultural spokesman, and the resentment many readers feel about considering *Babbitt* as a work of art. Students are intrigued to hear details about Lewis's refusal of a Pulitzer, and his receipt of the Nobel (particularly when I tell them how few Americans have been laureates). By quoting some of Lewis's comments about the literary climate and the "American Fear of Literature," I get students on his side.¹ The rebel in Lewis appeals to them, makes them consider some political and social dimensions of literature—and provides a useful framework for our later discussion of *Babbitt*'s own attempted rebellion. A particularly effective way to bring home *Babbitt*'s cultural importance is by passing around E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy*, which includes "Babbitt" as an entry in the pompous list of "what every American needs to know." Students are fascinated by this list and, I suspect, pleased with themselves for recognizing *Babbitt* on it.

I segue, then, to *Babbitt*'s historical status as the "classic American business novel" (or, one could say, a "classic American novel"), reading them excerpts of contemporary reviews, and ask students what they think of that estimation. As long as they have read related texts, students have ready responses—many of them negative. Provided that students are allowed to voice their criticisms without fearing retribution from me, the discussion productively engages them with the novel—even if this engagement is initially negative. It is helpful to affirm that their negative emotional reactions, such as depression, revulsion, and frustration, are entirely appropriate. I admit (and exaggerate) my own reservations: that Lewis is taking a lot of cheap shots, that the novel seems hollow, that the characters are flat, that it seems more a series of sociological abstracts than a novel.

I exploit the tension between *Babbitt*'s historical importance and our complaints about it. Students enjoy being allowed to criticize a book on Hirsch's list; in current parlance, they are "empowered" by doing so. Furthermore, when students enter into a process of intelligent criticism, they are placing themselves in a position to appreciate Lewis's own highly critical novel.

After students have voiced what they dislike about *Babbitt*, I move them from resistance to recognition by focusing the discussion on satire. A brief definition of satire may be in order, but what is more interesting is to ask students to pin down exactly *what* Lewis is satirizing, and *why*. This question can be answered in so many ways—including materialism, advertising, standardization, the commercialization of religion, the rigidity of gender roles, peer pressure, hypocrisy, anti-intellectualism, conformity, cowardice—that discussion can continue for some time. As students begin to articulate what Lewis is satirizing, pointing out their favorite quotations, the giggling begins. This amusement is a sign of further engagement with the novel, and I second it by quoting my own favorite passages. Often students acknowledge without any prodding from me that these problems persist in their own world but, if not, all I need to do is ask, "Do you know anyone like Babbitt?," or "Have you ever felt this sort of pressure?" The shock of recognition, combined with amusement, gets many students to connect with the novel.

Another useful approach, particularly for the adult students, is to set up *Babbitt* as a novel of midlife crisis. As with the question of satire, asking students exactly what *Babbitt* is rebelling against and whether or not he accomplishes anything in his rebellion provokes many responses. Asking students how they feel, for instance, when *Babbitt* tells Myra "I'm back," can provoke a heated argument about issues crucial to the novel such as family values, autonomy, conformity, and indepen-

dence. Asking about the role of Paul Riesling is another way to engage students with these issues.

Discussion of Babbitt's aborted rebellion helps students to see the tension in Lewis's characterization: George F. is largely a type figure but tries to become individualized. An effective closing question is to ask students how they evaluate the fact that Lewis plots the novel around Babbitt's conformity, rebellion, and reclamation by the tribe. Many students are depressed, but by now able to empathize with Babbitt and to respect Lewis's social commentary. Most importantly, they recognize that the tension between independence and conformity persists in their own lives.

*I would like to thank my students in English 217, Spring 1989, Fall 1991, and Fall 1993.

¹"The American Fear of Literature," Lewis's Nobel Prize address, is reprinted, along with other useful documents, in *The Man from Main Street*, ed. Harry E. Maule and Melville H. Cane (New York: Random House, 1953).

THE LIFE OF BABBITT

by James M. Hutchisson
The Citadel

Glen A. Love. *Babbitt: An American Life*. New York: Twayne, 1993. 105pp.

Babbitt: An American Life is a volume in Twayne's "Masterwork Studies," a series that provides critical readings of classic literary texts. This study of *Babbitt*, like its companion volumes, also contains a detailed chronology of the life of the author, places the novel in its historical context, describes the importance of the work and the rationale for studying it, and gives an overview of its critical reception and the subsequent scholarly reputation of its author. There is also a selective bibliography at the rear of the volume. The intended audience of the series seems to be both students and teachers: the focused readings of the texts could be used both by instructors as lesson plans and by students as study guides.

Glen A. Love's study of *Babbitt* succeeds on all of these levels. In addition, it is a first-rate contribution to the ongoing revival of interest in Lewis, because it synthesizes the various critical approaches to the novel that have become standard and introduces new ways of analyzing and appreciating Lewis's achievement. Love discusses the novel as a work of realism, as a satire, as an idealistic romance, and as a work of cultural symbolism—in particular, that of man living in a machine civilization. Love's thesis is that these various aesthetic strands in *Babbitt* may make the novel difficult to classify according to genre, but that its very contrarities reflect the paradoxes and contradictions of modern American life. Ultimately, Love reads the novel not as an attack on the America of Lewis's time, but as an optimistic, idealistic, and sincere affirmation of its potentiality. Babbitt himself is a tragicomic middleman, muddling through his banal existence, but all the time questing after a way

to make a more meaningful and lasting contribution to the development of his beloved Zenith. In that sense, the novel chronicles an archetypal "American life."

The preliminary chapters of the study are useful introductions for the non-specialist or first-time reader of Lewis. Love describes how in *Babbitt* and the other novels that Lewis published during the 1920s, Lewis presented average, middle-class Americans reacting against the new moralities of the postwar age. He places *Babbitt* in the context of Lewis's other examinations of American life—the frustration of the questing woman in *Main Street*; the deification of science in *Arrowsmith*; and the orgiastic temper of evangelism in *Elmer Gantry*. Love follows this section with a chapter entitled "Capturing the Archetype," in which he argues eloquently for the importance and continuing relevance of *Babbitt* by discussing what it means for a writer such as Lewis to have "lodged a new noun in our common vocabulary" (13).

Following that, Love has a chapter that surveys the mostly favorable judgments of the contemporary reviewers of *Babbitt*, with an emphasis on the opinion of the influential H. L. Mencken and his importance to Lewis's career. Love then describes the enthusiasm with which Lewis's other novels of the 1920s were greeted and offers some reasons for why Lewis's critical reputation underwent such a precipitate decline in the 1930s and 1940s. Finally, he shows how Mark Schorer's biography contributed to the decline in academic interest in Lewis, but Love wisely does not adopt a polemical stance or an injured tone here. Throughout the book, in fact, he seeks to attract readers to Lewis, and he avoids getting mired down in constructing an apologia for Lewis and in attacking his detractors.

The bulk of the study is devoted to a close critical reading of the novel. Love begins his analysis of the realistic elements in the novel with a highly useful, sensible discussion of why Lewis's reportage and his concern with detail may seem unusual to college students today—surrounded as they are by the social and theoretical attractions of non-mimetic literature. He then shows how Lewis's skills at rendering description and everyday conversation make him "a kind of literary sociologist of American life" (32). Next comes a longish chapter analyzing Lewis's satiric style. This is by far the best and most detailed study of Lewis's sentence style and rhetoric that we have. Love demonstrates, for example, how Lewis juxtaposes the sublime and the mundane, or how he closes passages with a "short but devastating final phrase" which deftly undercuts "the credibility of all of the considerable and apparently reasonable and sensible prose that has led up to it" (46). The analysis of these structural devices is particularly rewarding and funny to look at in some of the passages where Babbitt gets entangled in his own self-defeating, entropic language. Love also examines the cinematic techniques in the novel and the parodies of such mass media as public speaking, advertising, and pulpit oratory.

Another chapter shows how the individualities of Babbitt lurk beneath the surface of Lewis's presentation of him as a satiric type. Love draws out the idealistic themes of the novel by discussing three recurring issues: the celebration of nature, the visionary western future, and the questing individual. Love

follows this discussion of romantic idealism with a chapter on the patterns of cultural symbolism in the novel. He sees the related images of power, technology, and control as contributing toward one of Lewis's constant themes: how the artist-figure in the modern world can appreciate and understand the humane values of art as well as do meaningful, fulfilling work:

Babbitt dramatizes remarkably...an ascendant technology within which the individual, deprived of the traditional function of a genuine art or mythology...is left to feed on straw and chaff, and wonder why he is starving to death. If Babbitt's automobile is, as Lewis claims and demonstrates, his "poetry and tragedy," what profundities can he expect from it? Without any genuine artists, must Chum Frink, the doggerel poet of the newspapers, be left to serve as Zenith's only interpreter? In a city, Lewis tells us, built for giants, what creative void has left us with only a race of midgets? In the vast gulf in the America of 1922 between Zane Grey, on the one hand, and the obscure footnotes to "The Waste Land," on the other, where is the compelling communal artist who will shape the boundless energy of the new urban-industrial metropolis into a meaningful art for its inhabitants? (77)

Here, as in the other chapters, Love's critical judgments are sharp and incisive. His discussions of the controlled and elaborate complex of artistic impulses in the novel should help redirect thinking about Lewis. This book should do much to correct the inaccurate, clichéd view of Lewis as a kind of literary loose cannon—someone who did not know whether he wanted to be a realist or a romantic, an exuberant national booster or an ill-tempered satirist. Perhaps most important of all, Love's reading of the novel brings out the excellences of *Babbitt*; his study should attract new readers to the novel.

SINCLAIR LEWIS NOTES

Sinclair Lewis was mentioned in his role as an editor in Richard Lingeman's review of the new edition of Theodore Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* in the *New York Times* on November 7, 1993 (33-34). In "A Few Changes, Mr. Dreiser," Lingeman notes the concerns Dreiser had that *Jennie Gerhardt* would be thought by publishers and the public to be as "immoral" as *Sister Carrie*. Although Harper & Brothers did publish the novel, the next publisher on Dreiser's agent's list might have refused it. William Morrow told Lewis, then an editor at his firm, that he regarded Dreiser as a "salacious writer."

The Hudsucker Proxy, a new movie written by Joel and Ethan Coen and starring Tim Robbins, Jennifer Jason Leigh, and Paul Newman, was influenced by Sinclair Lewis. In a feature story in the *New York Times* on March 6, 1994, Joel Engel discusses this satire on big business and notes that there are echoes of "such disparate influences as Horatio Alger, Sinclair Lewis, Lewis Carroll, and Frank Capra."

Paul Theroux's new novel, *Millroy the Magician*, has many echoes of *Elmer Gantry*. This satire of evangelism and weight control focuses on a prestidigitator who preaches that the way to salvation is through eating foods mentioned in the Bible such as "Jacob pottage, Ezekiel bread, Daniel lentils, Nahum's fig bars, Bethel barley cakes." As one admirer of Millroy tells him, "You're selling one big package that includes God, food, weight control and regularity. I mean, who else has wrapped up Christianity and slimming? This is a dynamite product—laxatives, Scriptures and weight control. We're talking salvation in all senses." Critics of Millroy call him "Gantry with granola," but Millroy may be the Elmer Gantry of the 1990s.

In the Winter 1994 issue of *At Random: Books and Bookpeople from Random House* there is an interview with Paul Theroux (28-33) in connection with his new novel. He says, "it's also about all the American novels that I've read where there's a preacher, novels by Flannery O'Connor or Carson McCullers or William Faulkner or *Elmer Gantry*. In every case, without an exception, every novel written in America about a preacher or this kind of self-appointed prophet is about the prophet being a charlatan...But I wanted to write a book where the prophet isn't a phony, where he believes what he believes and he isn't doing harm" (31-32).

Another reference to *Elmer Gantry* was made in the article "What the Infomercials Don't Always Tell You" in the November 27, 1993 *TV Guide*. The article discussed the increasing prevalence of infomercials on late-night television and said that some of the people in this business casually call each other "snake-oil salesmen" and "sell-evangelists," "modern-day Elmer Gantrys who peddle potions and notions through the TV set" (26).

President Clinton was compared to Elmer Gantry on the opinion page of the *Arizona Republic* on January 27, 1994. In an editorial by E. J. Dionne, a member of the *Washington Post* editorial page staff, Haley Barbour, the Republican national chairman, is quoted as describing Clinton as an "Elmer Gantry president" who will "mount the bully pulpit and say anything he thinks you want to hear" (B5).

Disney's America, the theme park scheduled to open outside Washington, D.C. in 1998, will feature an attraction called Main Street. According to the *Nation*, Disney wants it to represent "the small town pleasures in those carefree days at the turn of the century." Jon Wiener, in the article "Tall Tales and True" (January 31, 1994), notes that "the real Main Streets of real small towns at the turn of the century were not so nice... Indeed, in the 1920 Sinclair Lewis novel of that name, Main Street was populated by people who were 'dull but mean, bitter,' complacent, bigoted and Republican" (133).

The short review of *Theirs Was the Kingdom: Lila Wallace and DeWitt Wallace and the Story of the Reader's Digest* also mentions Lewis as one of the perhaps unintentional instigators of *Reader's Digest*. In 1922, only "two years after Sinclair Lewis's 'Main Street' skewered small-town America's medi-

ocricity, DeWitt Wallace, a minister's son from the Middle West, and his wife, Lila, a minister's daughter, began publishing a magazine for the inhabitants of Main Street and their country cousins" (127).

Taking issue with a *New York Times Magazine* article on Long Island as the prototypical dysfunctional community, reader Robert Wanerman writes in the September 19, 1993 *NYT Magazine*, "If anything, it is a condition that is woven into the fabric of American life. In the early part of this century, authors like Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Lewis created entire communities of dysfunctional Midwesterners; lesser writers have propagated dysfunctional communities for consumption in popular fiction and on soap operas. Surely, some must have drawn on conditions they observed where they lived. Could it be that Long Island is only experiencing a generous allotment of the sort of fame that Andy Warhol talked about?" (18).

Alan Brinkley's article on David Duke, "Why Duke Isn't a Populist: He's heir to a more perverse political tradition," in the November 18, 1991 issue of *Newsweek*, pictures Duke as for the most part an ordinary man. "In the 1930s, those who feared for the future of democracy assumed the threat would come from someone extraordinary—a powerful figure like Huey Long or Buzz Windrip, the fascist demagogue elected president in Sinclair Lewis's 1935 novel, 'It Can't Happen Here'—as if bigotry and extremism required a vehicle larger than life" (31). Although Duke is no Long or Windrip, he and his followers represent something that Lewis was aware of nearly sixty years ago, that in "an increasingly fragmented and contentious nation... may lie something dark and ominous within the American psyche."

The New York Public Library's recent exhibit "Assault on the Arts—Culture and Politics in Nazi Germany," brought to mind memories of Dorothy Thompson, Sinclair Lewis's second wife, for the reporter Philip Hamburger. In "Into the Flames" (*New Yorker*, March 22, 1993), Hamburger remembers the "remarkable courage" of Thompson, one of the first American reporters to take the threat of the Nazi regime seriously. In May 1945, shortly after the war in Europe ended, Thompson drove to Berchtesgaden to view the bombed out Berghof (Hitler's house) and barracks. Despite an accident in which the car she was traveling in overturned, Thompson and Hamburger proceeded up to the Führer's Adlerhorst or Eagle's Nest on the Kehlstein to view its ruins. (Note: This building, now known as Kehlsteinhaus, has been remade into a restaurant. With the exception of a fireplace, none of the furnishings in the building are original.)

Sinclair Lewis is among the writers mentioned in *Whose Woods These Are: A History of the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, 1926-1992*, published by Ecco and edited by David Howard Bain and Mary Smyth Duffy. Although Lewis is in the esteemed company of Katherine Anne Porter, Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, John Gardner, and Toni Morrison among others who have spoken at Bread Loaf over the years, it is Robert Frost and

his "monstrous ego" who has center stage. At one reading by Archibald MacLeish, Frost set a fire in the back of the room to deflect attention from MacLeish and onto himself.

A biography of flamboyant reporter Richard Harding Davis has recently been written by Arthur Lubow and published by Scribner's. Davis, who covered every big story around the turn of the twentieth century from the Johnstown Flood to the Russo-Japanese War to World War I, was a star journalist who also wrote best-selling novels and hit plays. As Naomi Bliven remarks in "A Mild-Mannered Reporter," her review of the biography in the September 14, 1992 *New Yorker*, "Davis was a role model. The personality he projected shaped the day-dreams and careers of several generations of American writers, from his friend and colleague Stephen Crane on to Frank Norris, John Reed, Theodore Dreiser, H. L. Mencken, Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, and Vincent Sheean" (104). Lewis heroes like our Mr. Wrenn and Carl Erikson in *The Trail of the Hawk* were certainly influenced by the romance of travel and adventure which Davis represented.

Another romantic writer who is featured in a new biography is Robert Louis Stevenson. In an October 3, 1993 *Chicago Tribune* review of *Dreams of Exile: A Biography of Robert Louis Stevenson* by Ian Bell, reviewer Jon Manchip White contrasts Stevenson's peripatetic life with the lives of most writers. "By the nature of their trade, the majority of authors tend to be dull and sober folk, desk potatoes and stay-at-homes. As Sinclair Lewis remarked, the business of writing consists principally of 'the application of the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair.'"

Book of the Month Club selected the *Main Street and Babbitt* Library of America volume as one of their "favorites" for December 1993. The caption reads, "Revealing the compla-

SINCLAIR LEWIS BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Sinclair Lewis Society is planning to update Robert Fleming's annotated bibliography of Lewis. We would appreciate receiving isolated annotated entries from 1977 on. If anyone would like to volunteer to survey a full year, please write and let us know. Depending on the number of volunteers, we would like to have it ready by next summer. Joan Bennington, an undergraduate at Illinois State University, is presently working on an honors independent study collecting material for the bibliography.

TEACHING SINCLAIR LEWIS

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, Campus Box 4240, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4240.

gency and conformity of middle-class life in America, here are the famous satirical novels of America's first Nobel Prize winner for literature."

Sinclair Lewis was apparently an inspiration to the psychologist B. F. Skinner. In a review of the new biography, *B.F. Skinner: A Life* by Daniel W. Bjork, in the October 3, 1993 *New York Times Book Review*, reviewer Robert Kanigel notes that Skinner took off a year after attending Hamilton College to try and write fiction. Apparently he was more successful mowing lawns than composing, but he read heavily including *Ulysses*, *Arrowsmith*, and *Erewhon*.

Lewis is also mentioned in connection with the again popular Edith Wharton. Francine Prose includes Lewis with Henry James, Bernard Berenson and André Gide as having provided her with "sustaining friendships" in the article "In 'Age of Innocence,' Eternal Questions" in the September 12, 1993 *New York Times Arts and Leisure* section. It is well-known that Lewis admired Wharton so much that he dedicated *Babbitt* to her in 1922.

Guy Kibbee played George Follansbee Babbitt in a movie in the early 1930s and Edward Andrews portrayed him in the 1960 film *Elmer Gantry*. Clifford Terry, in "Hollywood High: From Andy Hardy to the 'Hood, How the Movies Have Sent Teenagers Off to School," in the September 19, 1993 issue of the *Chicago Tribune*, notes that Jim Backus, in his role as the father of James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*, could also be seen as quite "Babbitt-y." He has "no clue what to do" with his constantly angry son and is by turns insensitive and spineless. The novel, however, ends with a rapprochement between Babbitt and his son, George seeing in him the opportunities he never had to do what he wanted, much as Carol Kennicott does for her daughter in *Main Street*.

The late William Shirer, who died at the end of 1993 and is best known for *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, started his journalistic career in much the same way that Lewis did, working his way to Europe on a cattle boat in 1925. Traveling to Paris nearly 20 years after Lewis first did so, Shirer wrote that he wanted to get away from "Prohibition, fundamentalism, puritanism, Coolidgeism, Babbitry, ballyhoo..." (from *Newsweek* obituary, January 10, 1994, 66).

Films for the Humanities and Sciences lists a number of videos and filmstrips on American literature and drama. A segment of the 15-part American Literature on Filmstrip series is on "The Great American Novel," tracing "the development of American fiction, from Henry James and Edith Wharton to Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis." Works covered include *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Ethan Frome*, *Death Comes to the Archbishop*, *O Pioneers!*, *The Sea Wolf*, *The Call of the Wild*, *Sister Carrie*, *An American Tragedy*, *Babbitt*, and *Main Street*. The two 15-minute sound filmstrips are \$49.95. For more information write them at P.O. Box 2053, Princeton, NJ 08543-2053 or call 1-800-257-5126 or 609-275-1400. ♦

PALMER HOUSE RESTORED

Sauk Centre's historic Palmer House Hotel, where Sinclair Lewis worked as a bellhop and night clerk, has been sold to Linda Frumkin, a Sauk Centre native and local businesswoman, and Peter Jensen, a St. Cloud resident who once performed in a play at the hotel's dinner theater. "I'm as excited today as I was when I came in the hotel in 1974 because I know the tradition is going to be carried on," said Al Tingley, who has owned the property with business partner Dick Schwartz for the past 19 years.

In the article "New Owners Vow to Preserve Hotel on Lewis's 'Main Street': Sauk Centre's Palmer House to get \$261,000 Facelift" in the March 24, 1993 issue of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Richard Meryhew writes, "The hotel, which opened in 1901, is a frequent stopping spot for tourists and literature buffs fascinated by the legacy of Lewis and his 1920 novel, 'Main Street,' which depicted life in small-town Minnesota. Lewis, who grew up in Sauk Centre, worked at the hotel while in high school and during his first summer in college.

"During their stint running the place, Schwartz and Tingley have worked to preserve the hotel's original look and feel and to promote the Lewis theme. In recent years, however, the hotel has sapped them of energy and savings. They have tried to sell for several years and had been close with several prospective buyers only to see those deals collapse...

"It's rundown," Frumkin said. "But it's the cornerstone of Sauk Centre. And so many people just love that comfortable feeling when they walk in there."

George Killough, a member of the Sinclair Lewis Society, visited the Palmer House in Sauk Centre this past summer and says that it looks great. He spoke to Linda Frumkin, one of the new owners, who grew up in Sauk Centre but has been living in southern California. She is now the president of the local Sinclair Lewis Foundation. She showed him around and he reports, "Old details are appropriately preserved, and the atmosphere is inviting, rather like many national park historic site renovations." He also recommends highly the pecan pie. He writes, "All I know is that the Palmer House looks prosperous and pleasant now, though not particularly crowded with patrons, and I had a fine visit. I recommend the place to all Lewis fans."

BOOK NOTES

Bison Books to Publish New Lewis Editions

Bison Books, a division of the University of Nebraska Press, has scheduled *The Job* (1917) and *Ann Vickers* (1933) for publication in May 1994. With *Free Air*, republished by Bison in 1993, these latest offerings will mean that Nebraska has three Lewis titles in print.

The Job, which has been out of print for many years and has been available to most scholars only through inter-library loan, will be introduced by Maureen Honey, Associate Professor of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Ann Vickers, also long out of print, has been more available in libraries, since its publication immediately followed Lewis's Nobel Prize and Doubleday, Doran, his new publisher, brought out a large edition. However, the Bison paperback edition will make the novel available for classroom use. *Ann Vickers* will be introduced by Nan Bauer Maglin, Professor of English at Manhattan Community College, CUNY.

—Robert E. Fleming
University of New Mexico

The Ivan R. Dee College Catalog for Fall and Winter 1993-1994 includes *The Selected Short Stories of Sinclair Lewis* with an introduction by James W. Tuttleton. The caption reads, "Thirteen stories illustrating the wide range of Lewis's art and interests: tales of romantic fantasy or escape, melodramas of heroic or mock-heroic adventure, boy-meets-girl stories, satires of pretension and folly, and tales of isolation and loneliness. All demonstrate Lewis's enviable command of narrative. 'What Mr. Lewis has done for myself and thousands of others is to lodge a piece of a continent in our imagination.'—E. M. Forster."

The book is 449 pages and lists for \$12.95 in paperback. To order or to receive a catalog, write Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1332 N. Halsted St., Chicago, IL 60622. Toll-free orders 1-800-634-0226. ♦

BIBLIOGRAPHY NOTES

"The Minister and the Seductress in American Fiction"

The Winter 1993 issue of *The Journal of American Culture* features the article "The Minister and the Seductress in American Fiction: The Adamic Myth Redux" by Elizabeth S. Prioleau. In it, Prioleau discusses several novels featuring the temptation of ministers by seductresses including *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, *The Inside of the Cup*, and *Elmer Gantry*. This theme, she says, fades by the mid-twentieth century. Of *Elmer Gantry*, she says, "Elmer Gantry, in Sinclair Lewis's bitter novel, is ruined by a temptress, but the siren in this case has a screw loose, and Elmer merely falls from unconscious hypocrisy to conscious fraudulence" (1). "Elmer may be naive before he meets the vamp-evangelist, Sharon Faulkner [(sic) her last name is actually Falconer], but he is already corrupt... He philanders, preens, lies, cheats, blasphemes, cons and ruins others with impunity, until, amidst his fraudulent peregrinations, he wanders into [her] tent revival" (3).

"This magnetic seductress catalyzes his unconscious evildoing into conscious, calculated outlawry. Sharon is the ultimate scam artist who represents the negative potentiality of the American dream. Her autonomy and individualism have resulted in megalomania (she believes she's the new messiah and cannot sin); her free-thinking, in a whack-brained fertility cult; her materialism, in a wholesale embezzlement; and her sensuality, in idle promiscuity... Elmer's career after Sharon's death illustrates further the low ebb of the clergyman's reputation and anticipates the abuses of tele-evangelism. Fulfilling predictions

of the minister's subservience in America, Elmer has so far become a lackey of the people that he succeeds by pandering to their lowest impulses... By the end he has traded places with Sharon: he becomes the seducer, exploiter, megalomaniac, and muddled nonbeliever" (3-4).

"Dorothy Thompson: Withstanding the Storm"

Published in the *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier*, 23.2 (Fall 1988): 3-21, Michael J. Kirkhorn's article looks at Thompson's conflicts as a journalist with passionate convictions. Although most of the article deals with her work in newspaper and radio on reporting world conditions, there are a few references specifically to her relationship with Lewis. Kirkhorn sees her as a strong woman although disappointed with the failure of her marriage to Lewis. He calls Lewis her "beloved adversary" with whom she often disagreed. In a column of hers reprinted in the collection *The Courage to be Happy* (1957) Thompson wrote about how small towns differ from when Lewis wrote *Main Street*. "And if there are any small towns without *proportionately* as many civilized, informed, public-spirited and wide-awake people as there are in the great cities, I haven't been in them. Their local civic consciousness, I think, is higher than that of the Big City populations. In the great cities people vote for reforms. In the little towns they *undertake* the reforms. And the old provincial tightness is disappearing" (8).

DESCRIPTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY QUERY

Daniel Chabris, one of our founding members, has written to ask about the possibility of a complete descriptive bibliography of Sinclair Lewis texts, including all possible editions and printings, both domestic and foreign. This bibliography would ideally include introductions, prefaces, magazine articles, and other occasional writings. If anyone is interested in this project or knows if someone is preparing one, please write and let us know.

JEOPARDY TIME

Here are more Sinclair Lewis answers and questions from the syndicated game show *Jeopardy*.

From October 25, 1993: The movie *The Gnome Mobile* was based on a novel by this author of *The Jungle*. This proved to be a tough one. Someone guessed Sinclair Lewis, but no one came up with the right answer, Upton Sinclair.

From December 9, 1993: This Sinclair Lewis title character studied medicine at the University of Winnemac. This \$800 question was answered correctly as *Arrowsmith*.

From March 8, 1994: This novelist refused the Pulitzer Prize for *Arrowsmith* but accepted the Nobel Prize four years later. This \$600 question in 20th-Century Americans was also answered correctly. ♦

NEW MEMBERS

The Sinclair Lewis Society has added several new members since the last newsletter. They include:

Clare Eby
9 Schoolhouse Crossing
Wethersfield, CT 06109

Lawrence Ianni
1025 E. Skyline Pkwy
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1160 SW Warren
Topeka, KS 66604

Caren J. Town
Dept. of English
Georgia Southern University
Statesboro, GA 30460

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Jacqueline Koenig, a Sinclair Lewis Society founding member, has sent in several listings of unusual Lewis material including descriptions and going prices. If you spot any interesting Lewis for sale, please write and let us know.

From Pepper & Stern-Rare Books, 1980 Cliff Dr., Ste. 224, Santa Barbara, CA 93109, (805) 963-1025
Sinclair Lewis. *Kingsblood Royal*. New York: Random House, 1947. First Edition. One of 1,050 numbered copies signed by Lewis. Near fine in a rubbed original publisher's slipcase. \$250.

Disney Studios (Sinclair Lewis). *Walt Disney's Bongo*: Adapted from the Characters and Backgrounds Created for the Walt Disney Motion Picture *Fun and Fancy Free*. Based on an Adaptation of the Original Story "Bongo" by Sinclair Lewis. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1947. First Edition. Nearly fine. Scarce. \$375.

From Thomas A. Goldwasser Rare Books, 126 Post St., Ste. 407, San Francisco, CA 94108-4704, (415) 981-4100
Sinclair Lewis. *Irwin Cobb. His Book*. Friendly tributes upon the occasion of a dinner tendered to Irwin Shrewsbury Cobb at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. New York, 1915. Original boards, paper label, spine and corners worn. First edition contains Lewis's tribute "C-O-B-B," among works of many other writers and artists. This copy is inscribed by Cobb to Howard Chandler Christy, who contributed a drawing. Accompanied by the elaborate menu for the night, listing the program and the members of the committee. \$250.

From Tollett and Harman, 175 West 76th St., New York, NY 10023, (212) 877-1566
Sinclair Lewis. American author of *Arrowsmith, Main Street*. First American Nobel laureate in literature. ALS, 1 page, 4to, Chateau Marmont, Hollywood, July 11, 1943, to poet Joseph Auslander, "Gift Officer, Library of Congress." Will miss him in New York as Lewis will be in Hollywood til mid September, then goes on a lecture tour. "What an idea of vacation!" Signed twice by Lewis. \$300.

From Waiting for Godot Books, P.O. Box 331, Hadley, MA 01035, (413) 585-5126
Sinclair Lewis. *Elmer Gantry*. Roman. Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, 1928. First German edition. Red cloth stamped in gold, 687 pages. Owner's bookplate on front pastedown, spine slightly darkened, else a fine copy. \$50.

From Between the Covers, 132 Kings Highway East, Haddonfield, NJ 08033, (609) 354-7695
Sinclair Lewis. *The Trail of the Hawk*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co. (1915-really c. 1930). *Later printing*, "Nobel Prize Edition." Spine lettering quite rubbed else very good or better in very good dustwrapper a bit darkened on the spine and with a little loss to the crown. *Signed* by the author. \$150.

Sinclair Lewis. *Ann Vickers*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1933. *Early later printing*. A not quite very good copy with the spine quite sunned and spine lettering worn, lacking the dustwrapper. Briefly *Inscribed* by the author. \$125.

Sinclair Lewis. *Work of Art*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1934. *Early later printing*. A not quite very good copy with spine sunned and spine lettering worn. *Inscribed* by the author: "To Tom Stix/and Dr. Stix/with gratitude/from their patient/-I mean guest/Sinclair Lewis/N.Y./Feb. 14, 1934." Stix reportedly was a New York radio personality. A nice inscription. \$200. ♦

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter welcomes short contributions about 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 on 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 Parry, Editor, *The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter*, Department of English, Campus Box 4240, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4240.

JOIN TODAY

We invite you to become a member of the Sinclair Lewis Society in one of the following categories:

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