

The SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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SPECIAL KEYNOTE SPEAKER

*Barnaby Conrad, Lewis's Secretary in 1947, to Speak at
Sinclair Lewis Conference 2000*

Barnaby Conrad, secretary to Sinclair Lewis in 1947, the year *Kingsblood Royal* was published, will be the keynote speaker at this year's Sinclair Lewis Conference. In the years after Conrad worked with Lewis he became a well-known novelist, travel writer, and feature writer. He has written on bullfighting, Hemingway's Spain, the martini, and writing fiction. He is also the author of the novel *Dangerfield*, which was inspired by his time with Lewis. Mr. Conrad will be speaking at 8 pm, Wednesday, July 12 at the Lutheran Church in Sauk Centre.

SINCLAIR LEWIS CONFERENCE 2000

The Sinclair Lewis Society and the Sinclair Lewis Foundation are planning a conference in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, Sinclair Lewis's hometown, July 12-14 to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the publication of *Arrowsmith* for which Lewis won the Pulitzer Prize. The conference will be held at the beginning of Sinclair Lewis Days, an annual event in Sauk Centre.

Among the scheduled events there will be a showing of the rarely seen 1931 film of *Arrowsmith* with Ronald Colman and Helen Hayes, and the 1947 film *Cass Timberlane* with Spencer Tracy and Lana Turner. There will be a tour of Sinclair Lewis's Boyhood Home, as well as a trip to St. Cloud to see the Lewis Family Papers and the home of Dr. Claude Lewis, Sinclair's brother. The year 2000 will also be the 80th anniversary of *Main Street*, the 65th anniversary of *It Can't Happen Here*, and the 55th anniversary of *Cass Timberlane*. There will be panels on *Arrowsmith*, *It Can't Happen Here*, and *Hike and the Aeroplane*, Lewis's only adolescent novel.

Prospective speakers include: Dylan Barth, Illinois State University; Frederick Betz, Southern Illinois University—Carbondale; Martin Bucco, Colorado State University; Rebecca Cooper, Northern Illinois University; Roger Forseth, University of Wisconsin—Superior; H. Brooke Hessler, Texas Christian University; George Killough, College of St. Scholastica; Robert L. McLaughlin, Illinois State University; Sally E. Parry, Illinois State University; Caren Town, Georgia Southern University; and Patricia E. Schenk, University Archivist, St. Cloud State University.

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MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE: LEWIS'S ADVICE TO A TEACHER

Sinclair Lewis was in correspondence with H. R. Brush, a professor at the University of California, in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Two letters from Lewis to Brush have recently been offered for sale by Toni A. Harter and are interesting for what Lewis has to say about the need to make the world a better place. Apparently Brush was complaining about teaching, and in a letter from London dated May 16, 1925, Lewis wrote, "I understand exactly what you mean by your problem in teaching. But I wonder if it is not *necessary* for you to do exactly what I am going to do—that is, to go on trying to be one of the pioneers in the creation of freedom and ease and beauty and conversation such as we have in Europe."

Lewis writes that he will be returning to America soon, "that country of great aspirations and damn little thought." He suggests that both writers and teachers must "make the conditions under which we can work." He also warns against taking too much advice from Upton Sinclair, who is not a practical man. Then in a postscript he asks that Brush not show the letter to Upton Sinclair because "he does not know that he is a great poet rather than a practical executive."

A second letter, dated August 6, 1931, is much shorter, notable mostly because he talks of Twin Farms, "deep among the Green Mountains with a fine solid comfortable old house, and a forty-mile view down the valley. This, with either New York or Europe in the winter, is about perfect."

CONTRIBUTORS

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

These people include: Frederick Betz, Martin Bucco, Dan Chabris, M. Ellen Dupree, Roger Forseth, Ralph Goldstein, Toni Harter, James Hutchisson, George Killough, Jacqueline Koenig, James Lorson, Joyce Lyng, Robert McLaughlin, Matthew Martin Sonnenberg, and Marilyn Tadros.

FASCISTS IN AMERICA: GENDER AND DYSTOPIA IN *IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE* AND *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*

By Sally E. Parry
Illinois State University

The president is assassinated. Most of the members of Congress are killed. Fascists take over the government. What's a person to do? The answer to this may depend on whether the person is male or female. Similar dystopian novels, *It Can't Happen Here* (1935) by Sinclair Lewis and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by Margaret Atwood, operate from the premise that a future United States has been terribly transformed by totalitarian forces. However, these novels are separated not only by 50 years but by the narrative strategies employed. By applying some of the tenets of feminist psychology to these two texts, we can see clearly that the narrative structure, the personal and political concerns of the main characters, and even the definition of heroism in the novels differ significantly because of the gender differences of the protagonists.

Both the novels focus on individuals who find their current society intolerable. They share similar concerns with protagonists in other classic dystopian works such as *Brave New World* and *1984*.¹ These characters tend to be ordinary people caught up in extraordinary times who decide that "[s]elf-realization is a possibility that exists only in breaking away from a corrupt and deforming social order" (Ruppert 101). The ways in which Lewis's Doremus Jessup and Atwood's Offred develop their individuality in times that call for a standardization of thought and action are determined to an extent by their sex. Carol Gilligan, in her study of how the psychological development of women varies from that of men, notes that women "define themselves in a context of human relationships" while men define

Parry's *Fascists in America* continued on page 4

LEWIS'S REPUTATION IN GERMANY

Sinclair Lewis Society member Fred Betz reports that *Dodsworth* (*Sam Dodsworth* in the German translation) has been selected as one of the 100 greatest works of world literature according to Walter Lempowski, a German author and journalist (born 1929). *Dodsworth* was the 87th selection and in the Berlin newspaper *Welt am Sonntag* (July 25, 1999) there was a feature article, "Eine Amerikanerin in Berlin und die deutschen Männer," on *Dodsworth* which included commentary on Lewis and the novel and an excerpt from chapter 22 where the Dodsworths visit Berlin and meet Count Kurt von Obersdorf.

The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter

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themselves in relationship to the world (17). For Doremus Jessup, the need to work for the ideals of democracy outweighs any obligation he owes his family. For Offred, human relationships, no matter how tenuous, are what must be cherished.

Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* begins in 1935, in the midst of the Depression. Although President Roosevelt was having some success with government programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Civil Works Administration, the country's economic problems had not lessened significantly. In addition, the Supreme Court was finding some New Deal programs, such as the National Recovery Administration and the Agricultural Adjustment Act, unconstitutional. Several third party movements were also gaining political support from Americans who did not see any improvement in their lives from the administration's policies. Senator Huey P. Long, former governor of Louisiana; Father Charles Coughlin, a Catholic priest from Detroit; and Dr. Francis Townsend, a retired California physician, were just three of the major voices asking for an overhaul of the economic system and a redistribution of wealth in such a way that social justice would be observed.² In Lewis's novel, Roosevelt loses the 1936 Democratic nomination to a Long-like populist politician, Senator Berzelius "Buzz" Windrip.³ Roosevelt forms a third party, not out of dislike for the Republican candidate, but to give the "True Democratic faction" (Lewis 102) someone to vote for.

Windrip, who has formed his own private army, the Minute Men,⁴ to help his election chances, capitalizes on racial and class divisions and economic desperation in the country and eventually is elected president. In a relatively short period of time, Windrip turns his election victory into a mandate for totalitarian government. He establishes martial law, assigns governing and judicial posts to his cronies, and redistricts the United States to facilitate control.

Lewis describes this change from democracy to a fascist state through the eyes of his protagonist, Doremus Jessup, the editor of a newspaper in a small Vermont town. Jessup reports primarily on local issues and how they are affected by the policies of the federal government. At times he writes on national issues as well, because he is concerned by the state of the economy and anxious about Windrip's election. The narrative is structured in such a way that the reader sees the fascists slowly and inexorably gaining power. As Mark Schorer notes, "Great areas of the novel are taken up with the details of reorganizing the political structure of the United States, with documenting the transformation of traditional and social customs into their opposites" (610). The structure is similar to the kaleidoscope method of John Dos Passos's *U.S.A.*, which moves from headlines to portraits of individual real people to narratives about fictional characters. In *It Can't Happen Here*, the machinations of Windrip and his followers, excerpts from Windrip's book *Zero Hour*, descriptions of political turmoil in the United States, and the problems of Fort Beulah, Vermont, are intermixed. The main focus is on Jessup and his Fort Beulah community, which represents an ordinary community affected by the growth of fascism. To emphasize Windrip's growing power over the country, some of the chapter epigraphs are from *Zero Hour* which is both campaign autobiography and a blueprint for social change.

If the structure of *It Can't Happen Here* is examined through the tenets of feminist psychology, it becomes evident that the narrative is told from a male perspective. As Carol Gilligan, Jean Baker Miller, and Carol McMillan have all shown, men are more likely to think in an abstract, rational/hierarchical manner. In other words, they tend to be more concerned with creating structures, such as moral codes or laws, to order their experiences of the world. McMillan notes that it is "the inveterate conviction of our culture that a man has not thought about an issue unless his thought has culminated

NEW MEMBERS

The Sinclair Lewis Society welcomes the following new members who have joined since the publication of the Fall 1999 Newsletter

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THE NATION REPRINTS LEWIS ESSAYS

The *Nation* recently brought back a terrific essay series by Lewis called "Be Brisk with Babbitt" that was originally written in 1924. The series appeared on *The Nation's* website (www.thenation.com/) for over three weeks. Sinclair Lewis became friendly with *Nation* editor Oswald Garrison Villard in the early 1920s. Villard admired Lewis's novels and Lewis found *The Nation's* political stances compatible with his own views—particularly in the 1924 campaign when the magazine supported Senator Robert La Follette, the only true progressive in the race. While in Europe, Lewis agreed to cover the Democratic and GOP conventions for Villard, who was ecstatic and advertised in the magazine that America's most famous novelist would be reporting on the election. The ad drew several hundred subscribers; unfortunately, Lewis changed his mind and said he wouldn't cover the conventions after all. Villard was a little miffed, but hid his feelings. The upshot was that Lewis agreed to discuss the election through the eyes of Dr. Will Kennicott and other Gopher Prairie characters from *Main Street*, as well as those of George F. Babbitt and his Zenith cronies. Lewis never gets back to Gopher Prairie in this particular trip, but spends all his time in Zenith, talking to everyone from George Babbitt to Virgil Gunch.

In the first essay, dated October 15, 1924, Lewis

returns to Zenith to talk politics with George F. Babbitt and to discuss the upcoming elections. Babbitt, probably not surprisingly, prefers Calvin Coolidge to the rest of the candidates (and since Babbitt has been to Europe he has a much more sophisticated sense of things than the average person). The URL for part 1 is: www.thenation.com/historic/19241015babbitt1.shtml.

In part 2, dated October 22, 1924, Lewis talks to Paul Riesling (who was not in jail at the time) and finds out that Riesling prefers Robert La Follette for president. Riesling had gone to Europe with Babbitt, but as usual, his political views were significantly different from those of his best friend. Lewis also speaks with Charlie McKelvey, president of the Dodsworth-McKelvey Construction Company, who surprises Lewis with his assertion that he also prefers La Follette. The URL of the second part is: www.thenation.com/historic/19241022babbitt.shtml.

In part 3, Lewis talks to a number of ordinary people in town and on the train about their political preferences. As expected, Virgil Gunch is for Coolidge and Seneca Doane is for La Follette. And the wonderful Lewis language is always a pleasure to read. The URL for part three is: www.thenation.com/historic/19241029babbitt.shtml.

LEWIS BIOGRAPHER BECOMES PLAYWRIGHT

Richard Lingeman, senior editor of *The Nation*, who is currently working on a new biography of Sinclair Lewis, is also a playwright. Together with Victor Navasky, publisher and editorial director of *The Nation*, he has written *Starr's Last Tape*, a one-man play about a character named Starr who dresses in a prison jumpsuit and dictates his memoirs. Chapter 1 of the memoirs is entitled: "Mission: To Trap a President." Sam Cohn, the agent, called the play "politically and historically important."

The New York Times Arts and Leisure section sent journalist Sylviane Gold to interview Lingeman and Navasky this past summer. In a feature entitled "Splashing Around in the Shallows of Whitewater" (August 1,

1999), she created several narratives which show the playfulness, politics, and permutations of the creative process. Navasky notes that a "great caricaturist can get at certain truths by not presenting a balanced picture.... You go right for it, you present your view of what's at the center of what you're writing about."

Both Navasky and Lingeman had written plays in college and met at Yale Law School in 1956. In 1959 they wrote a musical that was never produced about the communist paranoia of the 1950s, but haven't written much theatrically since then. The world premiere of *Starr's Last Tape* took place in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, at the Berkshire Theater Festival in late August.

Parry's Fascists in America continued from page 4

in a sophisticated system of laws and theories" (45). In *It Can't Happen Here* the economic and political conditions are carefully established. The reader is made aware of the causes of discontent: millions thrown out of work by the Depression, fear of communism, the closing of banks, and no clear solutions for worldwide economic problems in sight. Windrip's followers carefully cultivate the angry and powerless lower classes by appealing to greed and xenophobia as well as race hatred. The effects of this pandering to the threatened masses ensure Windrip's election to the presidency because he has promised solutions. As one character notes, "I'm going to vote for Buzz Windrip. He's going to fix it so everybody will get four thousand bucks, immediate" (Lewis 73). Windrip provides a purpose for many of the unemployed by organizing them into paramilitary organizations and encouraging their support for the Minute Men. These "shock troops of freedom" (Lewis

112) are Windrip's weapons for forcing Congress to vote him full control of legislation. Those who refuse or are uncooperative meet with exile, jail, or violence, often resulting in death. Lewis describes precisely how Windrip's declaration of martial law causes censorship, the end of many civil rights, and the establishment of military courts and concentration camps. A country based on democratic principles quickly becomes one controlled by fascist rulers. Jessup attempts to bring some of the most egregious abuses of power to public attention through his newspaper, but he is eventually silenced by the censors. The descriptions of the changing structure of the government, the way the new laws affect the masses, and the concern with the cause and effect of various political actions mark Doremus's narrative as a traditionally male one.

Atwood describes a similar disruption of the United States government for ideological reasons in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Her novel is not based in any specific historical time period, but rather in the near future as certain elements in society react to various trends including the lessening momentum in the women's movement, the growing power of the religious right, and increasing environmental problems, especially those associated with nuclear power. American society has suffered from a number of unspecified environmental tragedies, and the president and most of Congress have been assassinated, but by whom, or for what reason, is not made immediately clear. Civil rights, especially for women, have been revoked as well. The most complete description of what happened does not come until over halfway through the tale, and then only in the middle of some musings by the protagonist. She thinks about when women started losing privileges: "It was after the catastrophe, when they shot the president and machine-gunned the Congress and the army declared a state of emergency. They blamed it on the Islamic fanatics, at the time" (Atwood 225). Apparently a nuclear meltdown has occurred in the western part of the United States and the reproductive capacities of millions of men and women have been affected by radiation. The totalitarian government that arises to deal with this crisis calls itself Gilead since it locates its moral authority in the Old Testament.⁵ The government divides men and women into classes: men are expected to guard the purity and safety of the new republic; women are expected to bear children or help those who do. Anyone who will not or cannot fit

SCHORER ON LEWIS

Sinclair Lewis Society member Dan Chabris has come upon evidence that Mark Schorer felt antagonistic toward Lewis very early on in his research for the biography. Schorer and his wife Ruth visited Florence in January 1952 to see where Lewis had lived and seemed unimpressed by it, because it confirmed for him all the worst things that he thought about Lewis.

In a letter to Arthur Mizener dated January 13, 1952, Schorer wrote, "But we had a good time. Next day, somewhat shakily, we went to lunch at the Villa La Costa, which was Sinclair Lewis's last residence and now houses General Schlatter and family, the commanding officer of the Southern European arm of the Am. Air Force. It only confirmed what Lewis's Williamstown hotel had made me feel about him—a miserable, lonely man who had no capacity for humanizing a place. Acres of marble, gilt to blind you, miles of banister posts of Venetian glass, and enormous stuffy portraits in ballroom gowns of the ladies belonging to the owner's family, the owner being the present Italian ambassador to Yugoslavia."

Given that Lewis was only renting the house before he died, it seems obnoxious of Schorer to blame Lewis for the decor created by an Italian family.

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DULUTH RECOGNIZES LEWIS RENAISSANCE

The *Duluth Budgeteer News*, in its January 2, 2000 issue, ran a very nice two-page feature story on Sinclair Lewis Society President George Killough and the work he is doing to help rebuild Lewis's reputation (B1, B7). The article, "Literary Renaissance," by Kyle Eller, interviewed Killough to find out why he is doing so much work on Lewis since his training is in Chaucer and linguistics. He says, "Because I had grown up in small towns in the Midwest and had liked Sinclair Lewis when I was a teenager, I was delighted to discover that Lewis had lived in Duluth in the 1940s. People pointed his house out to me, and I put his house on my running route... and I was kind of excited about going by his house and thinking about him in there, and then I started looking into the kind of scholarship that was being done on Lewis. There wasn't too much being done."

Like many Lewis scholars, Killough visited Yale, where the major collection of his papers is held, and discovered a diary that Lewis had kept off and on in Duluth from 1944 to 1946, during the time he was working on *Cass Timberlane* and *Kingsblood Royal*. Killough thought that the diary gave "kind of a new view of Lewis" and felt that editing it would be a nice two-year project for him. Spurred by the chance to work with "living record," (the memories of people who met Lewis)—a rare opportunity indeed for a medievalist—and feeling a connection with Lewis's life, Killough started tracking down people mentioned in the interviews. Now, a decade later, the diary will be published in October by the University of Idaho Press.

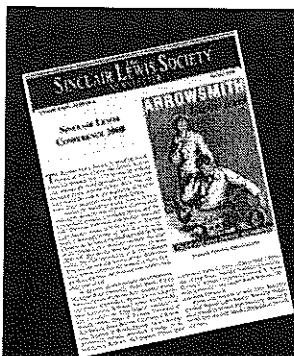
The decline in Lewis's reputation is traced to Mark Schorer's massive 1961 biography of Lewis, a "thinly

veiled cheap shot from Ernest Hemingway, a literary trend away from Lewis's social realism, and a reputation for obnoxious alcoholic behavior." "[There] you have the makings of a declining literary reputation," Killough said. Interest in Lewis started increasing again with the creation of the Sinclair Lewis Society and its Newsletter in the early 1990s.

Killough feels that an upcoming biography of Lewis, as well as the publication of Lewis's *A Minnesota Diary*, will add to the renewed interest in Lewis's writing. "It's a different kind of writing than you see in the novels... And I found that refreshing and also illuminating about the sensibility of Lewis. This is something about Lewis that you just don't expect, given all the things that you read about in the biographical material." For example, Lewis admired Henry David Thoreau and hoped that his visit to Minnesota would include "his own sort of Thoreauvian experience. Now, living in 2601 East Second Street with servants, and his starlet girlfriend from New York visiting maybe once or twice a year, and hobnobbing with all the Duluth blue-bloods at parties—maybe that's not the Thoreauvian life, but his goals kind of conflicted here."

"He wanted to re-establish his Minnesota roots, he wanted to have a kind of a Thoreauvian experience, I think, but he also wanted to work on a book. He was always working on books, he couldn't stop...."

In conclusion, Killough says that although the diary has few dramatic revelations about Lewis, he hopes that it will help create a more balanced and positive view of him. "I think Lewis had a lot to do with the way America sees itself, and some more attention will be paid, I think, as time goes on."



Sinclair Lewis on the Web

Contact *The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter*
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<http://lilt.ilstu.edu//separry/newsletter.htm>
(Please Note New Address)



into these created structures is deported, hanged, or set to work in the nuclear wasteland.

According to Carol Gilligan, women tend to have "different notions of what is of value in life" (5). Consequently, it is not surprising that Offred would not describe the new society of Gilead in the same methodical way that the narrator describes Windrip's fascist government. As Carol Farley Kessler notes, in utopian writing and in general, "women make issues of family, sexuality, and marriage more central than do men" (7). Atwood's protagonist, Offred, is a woman who tells her story strictly in first person narrative.⁶ What the reader learns of the structure of the government is revealed through conversations Offred has with her Commander, a high official in the new government, and through the rules she is forced to obey and rituals in which she must participate. In *It Can't Happen Here*, the narrative reports on the terrors imposed by the new government; in *The Handmaid's Tale*, the reader becomes intimately involved with how the restrictive regulations affect one person. Offred must always travel in the company of other women, she is told what to wear and where she can go, and most frighteningly of all, she has been taken from her husband and assigned to another man and his

wife so that she can bear them a child. At first, readers may assume that Offred is a resident of a madhouse or a prison since she describes bars over the windows and an absence of sharp objects. However, these precautions prevent her escape from her major purpose in this new society, to prove her fertility. She thinks longingly of her daughter, who has disappeared and apparently been placed with a politically powerful family. Her husband, too, is missing, and she spends a good deal of time trying to picture what has happened to him: exile, prison, or death. Offred thinks about the government and political changes primarily in terms of how she and those she loves are affected.

Readers of Atwood's novel are in a sense made to feel like women in present day society, piecing together clues in order to find acceptable means of behavior. Men have been responsible for creating most laws and by extension the ways in which we, as human beings, comport ourselves. Although laws ostensibly are gender neutral, they seem to presume a male code of behavior in which all human beings have to fit. Women need to figure out this "male code" since it is not laid out in the laws yet governs what everyone ought to do. Freud even complained that women do not react to laws in the same way as men. He said they "show less sense of justice than men...they are more often influenced in their judgments by feelings of affection or hostility" (qtd. Gilligan 7). In the Gileadean society, women's confusion over proper behavior is compounded. Although it is obvious that there are many laws and requirements in this new society, women are told only what to do and what not to do, while the reasons are only gradually made clear to the reader. As Gayle Greene notes, "Because Offred's lowly position in her society's hierarchy, she does not see the total picture, and we share her bewilderment and disorientation" (14). The government has even made reading and writing by women a serious crime. The very means by which women might be able to find out about the government has been taken away.

The closest Atwood comes to incorporating a male voice in her novel is in the "Historical Notes" following Offred's narrative. Atwood creates a 22nd-century academic conference during which *The Handmaid's Tale* is discussed as a set of cassette tapes, discovered and transcribed by male scholars. One of the scholars, Professor James Pieixoto, casts some doubt on the authenticity of the tapes since the identity of the narrator is not known.

**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 on presentations and publications relating to Lewis, discoveries of materials (correspondence, manuscripts, etc.), descriptions of collections in libraries, and all other items to:

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MARTIN ARROWSMITH AND MODERN MEDICINE

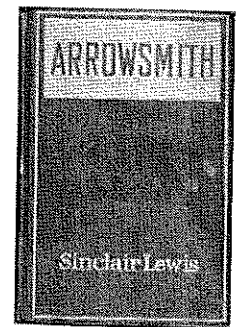
Martin Arrowsmith may not be too far out of the loop in terms of modern scientific discoveries. In a *New York Times Magazine* article on February 6, 2000, Lawrence Osborne notes that bacteriophage is now used in Soviet hospitals as a way to fight infection. The article, "A Stalinist Antibiotic Alternative," calls bacteriophage "a hoary Soviet method for fighting infections [that] may prove invaluable in an age of antibiotic resistance" (50).

Phages were popularized by Sinclair Lewis in his 1925 novel *Arrowsmith*, about a young doctor who goes to the West Indies to use them against an epidemic of bubonic plague. "You may," says one of the novel's main characters to Martin Arrowsmith (who was inspired by the real-life d'Herelle), "have hit on the supreme way to kill pathogenic bacteria!" (52).

Bacteriophages were first discovered independently by English microbiologist Frederick Twort and Canadian biologist Felix d'Herelle prior to World War I. Although phages can be effective, there are hundreds of types of them and each kills only one variety of bacteria. Because of the problems of matching phage and bacteria in the 1920s, and related difficulties with purification, this approach to infection was bypassed by the development of

penicillin which could treat a wide variety of infections. Phage research continued in the West, primarily with DNA work. Phages were used by Sir Francis Crick and Max Delbruck to unlock some of the secrets of molecular biology.

However, the use of phages to fight infection may be returning to Western medicine. With the rise of bacteria resistant to antibiotics, bacteriophage therapy, which uses naturally occurring organisms, is being reconsidered. D'Herelle, who was a passionate communist and admirer of Stalin, brought his research to the Soviet Union in 1934 where work has been going on for the last 70 years on phages, even while most of the Western medical establishment has been exploring other options. Alexander Tomasz, a leading microbiologist at Rockefeller University, thinks that in the age of "superbugs" which are resistant to even the most potent antibiotics, bacteriophage therapy is looking "very promising" (51). Martin Arrowsmith would be pleased.



Parry's Fascists in America continued from page 8

During his presentation he notes that the tapes were not arranged in any particular order and that he and another male scholar created an order for them. At first, it seems Atwood created this conference on Gilead to give the reader more specifics about her futuristic society. However, this dry recitation of facts and academic guesses about the historical identity of Offred and the people with whom she comes in contact seems divorced from the emotional drama of a woman trying to survive in a nightmare world she does not understand. The use of this male form of discourse provides an ironic commentary. Although the scholars are living in a time when discrimination against women seems to have been eliminated, they are still operating from a patriarchal viewpoint. They are working with a text written by a woman about her problems, but they are using it as a tool to discover who her Commander was and what sort of position he held in Gilead.

Within the narratives of *The Handmaid's Tale* and *It Can't Happen Here* the actions of the protagonists are determined to some extent by their sex. Both Offred and

Doremus Jessup seem to have been socialized in relatively traditional ways. Men are expected to define themselves through the public domain. In other words they are supposed to seek "public recognition of their achievements" through such fields as politics, business, medicine, or the law (Evans 2). They are also taught from an early age to be aggressive and dominant. Although Doremus is not physically aggressive, he tends to think of himself in terms of work and ideas rather than through family relationships. He spends more time at the newspaper office than at home, and his concern for democracy is greater than his concern for his family. For example, when he begins to travel as part of his work against the fascist state, he realizes that "no one who loved him would have any stable address for him now any more" (Lewis 453). But this sacrifice is one he feels he must make. Nancy Chodorow notes that men see themselves as individuals rather than as part of a family unit (178-79). For them, action of any sort becomes an expected way to respond to whatever problems they are faced with.

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Women, by comparison, are culturally conditioned to be passive, to be "supported" by men both physically and monetarily, and to cherish the roles of homemaker and mother (Gough 761-62). As the political philosopher Jean Bethke Elstain notes, "The flip side of a coin that features the public-spirited visage of the male citizen and dutiful father is the profile of the loving, virtuous, chaste, selfless wife" (qtd. in Evans 2-3). In a sense women are expected to react to what men do rather than initiate action on their own. Although she is not supportive of the new government, Offred obeys the dictates of the paternalistic society, confining her major actions to these expectations. She wears the red costume which is symbolic of her status as a Handmaid, she attends functions such as Births and Particutions with little complaint, and she endures the infamous Ceremony during which the Commander tries to impregnate her.⁷ Frank Davey observes that for Atwood, the female approach to experience is "inclusive, requires total 'involvement,' immersion, risk-taking, depth" (72). This awareness of how women are socialized to cooperate may explain why Doremus finds it easier to operate outside the system than Offred does.

In *It Can't Happen Here*, Doremus Jessup is a man of intellect who feels forced into the role of a man of action. He sees himself primarily as a writer with no strong political bias. "[F]ar from being a left-wing radical, he was at most a mild, rather indolent and somewhat sentimental Liberal" who hated "cruelty and intolerance" (Lewis 57-58). Jessup supports Roosevelt and his policies for ending the Depression, but he is not a political activist, at least not until the fascists become powerful.⁸ At first he naively assumes that the country will soon improve, both economically and politically. He even has somewhat mixed feelings about Windrip, exclaiming after hearing one of the candidate's speeches, "he's a darn good sort when you come to meet him!" (Lewis 120). However, when his worst fears about Windrip and his government come true, he feels compelled to do something. He had been a man of words and had written against Windrip's government. But after his son-in-law is shot and he is arrested and tortured for his political beliefs, he realizes that to "write another editorial viewing-with-alarm" is not enough (Lewis 31). He starts an underground newspaper and later becomes a political spy and provocateur for the newly established government-in-exile which has been set up in Canada by the former Republican candidate for president, Walt Trowbridge. Benjamin Stolberg notes that Jessup embodies "the dilemma of the

average American—decent, democratic, well-meaning—when confronted by the nightmare of fascist and Communist mentality" (459).

Interestingly, Lewis portrays both men and women in active roles.⁹ Many of the members of Jessup's underground group are small businessmen like himself, but three of its most important members are women. Lewis avoids sexual stereotyping, describing these women as taking on a variety of tasks in order to overthrow the government. Sissy, Jessup's younger daughter, comes closest to the traditional Mata Hari-type role of offering sex for information. She pretends to have sexual interest in Shad Ledue, a former handyman for the Jessups, who has grown to prominence in the new government. Lorinda Pike, Jessup's mistress and the owner of a hotel outside of town, acts as a spy and also uses her inn to harbor those fighting against the fascists. Mary, Jessup's older daughter, is perhaps the most heroic of all (in the traditionally male sense). Deeply depressed by the death of her husband at the hands of the government, Mary becomes a military pilot and in kamikaze fashion, purposely crashes a plane she is flying in order to kill several important government officials. In Lewis's dystopia, both men and women can take action in defense of their beliefs.

Atwood does not give her protagonist the opportunity for such heroics. Most of the women in her novel are victims of a society in which they have few choices. Traditionally women have been expected to act primarily in the private domain, in connection with activities relating to home and child care. The government of Gilead forces women into these traditional roles of mother, wife, prostitute, and domestic servant. Women have little control here, even in this limited sphere. Unless a woman is willing to cooperate, she is of little use in this society. Offred is one of the compliant women whom Gayle Greene compares to a "good German" for participating in the tyranny (14). Although she is tremendously unhappy, she allows herself to accept reeducation as a Handmaid, to consent to bear a child, and to refer to herself by her government name, Offred. The name itself implies a temporary ownership of her by Fred, her Commander. She considers suicide, like the Commander's last Handmaid, but keeps hoping she will escape. However she has only three years of life as a Handmaid. If at the end of that time she has not given birth, she will be sent away to the nuclear wasteland, which is a death sentence.

There are several defiant women portrayed in *The*

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Handmaid's Tale, but all are defeated. Some men and women belong to the anti-government underground organization May Day. This is a risk because people suspected of any sort of impermissible behavior are usually executed. Offred's shopping partner, Ofglen, is a member of May Day and helps pass information among the Handmaids. When Ofglen finds herself suspected by government spies, she kills herself to avoid capture. Offred's mother was a radical feminist whose activities apparently came to the attention of the Gileadean government. She is last seen in an old videotape of nuclear wasteland workers. The most radical woman in the novel is Moira, Offred's best friend from the time before. She initiates both disruptive activities and seditious thinking. The women in the Handmaids' reeducation center consider her "our fantasy" (Atwood 172) because of the power she seems to have. Her most daring action is tying up one of the teachers of the Handmaids, stealing her clothes, and impersonating her in order to make an escape. However, on her way out of the United States on the Underground Femaleroad, she is captured and turned into a Jezebel, one of the state prostitutes. In effect she is co-opted by male society. There is little in the way of successful resistance here.

The concept of the heroic protagonist differs greatly in these two narratives. For men, heroism is taking action so that order can be restored in the world. Doremus Jessup becomes heroic by recognizing that "everything that is worth while in the world has been accomplished by the free, inquiring, critical spirit, and that the preservation of this spirit is more important than any social system whatsoever" (Lewis 433). He realizes that "passive liberalism does not work against a dictatorship; that one must become militant in order to defend one's beliefs" (Heiney 121). However, in order to do this he must abandon his wife, children, and grandchild. Valuing qualities that Gilligan says are associated in this society with masculinity, "capacity for autonomous thinking, clear decisionmaking, and responsible action" (17), he feels his duty is to work to restore democracy rather than care for his family and friends: "Dreadful, incredible information came to Doremus, until he saw that his own life, and Sissy's and Lorinda's and Buck's, were unimportant accidents" (Lewis 314). Jessup's final thoughts are of the future where prisoners are freed from concentration camps and his family is reunited. But in order to make this dream a reality, he must contribute by passing messages from the government-in-exile, taking an

active part toward reclaiming a democratic future.

The actions of Offred are not traditionally heroic like Mary's crashing a plane to kill government leaders. Offred wants to think that Moira could have been like that. "I'd like to say she blew up Jezebel's, with fifty commanders inside it. I'd like her to end with something daring and spectacular... [b]ut... I don't know how she ended..." (Atwood 325). Some critics complained about Offred's lack of conventional heroism when the novel was first published. Robert Linkous notes "Her will to revolt is mainly puerile.... Occasionally, she experiences flashes of hot lust for violence, but her resentment never accumulates into obsession or rage, or motivates her to formulate a daring plan and act on it" (6).

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COURSE ON LEWIS'S BUSINESS WRITING PROPOSED

Sinclair Lewis Society member Matthew Martin Sonnenberg, who teaches at Trinity Christian College, has devised a syllabus for a proposed Literature/Independent Study course concerning Lewis's business writing. Entitled "The Business of Literature," the course aims to "...study the most familiar Lewis novels alongside his best business tales as a means to learn about ourselves by examining the struggles and setbacks of characters with some far too familiar approaches to life—namely the ceaseless pursuit of monetary success, status-development, and self-improvement." Sonnenberg goes on to say that, "Through Lewis's adept portrayals and satiric prose, his characters are as real and diverse as those who parade any Main Street, thus they can acquaint us with still-important social issues and universal truths that will help us understand—and hopefully not repeat—past history." Texts to be included in the course are: *Babbitt*, *If I Were Boss*: *The Early Business Writing of Sinclair Lewis*, and *Main Street*.

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Mary McCarthy feels Offred has "an unwillingness to stick her neck out" (35), while Barbara Ehrenreich considers her "sunk too far into the incestuous little household she serves" and calls her a "sappy stand-in for Winston Smith" (34, 35). Ehrenreich believes Offred is like many women who "have been complicit in their own undoing" (35).¹⁰

The heroism for women in *The Handmaid's Tale* is unconventional and often takes the form of small, secret acts or passive resistance.¹¹ There are signs that women have not abandoned all hope. Since the Gileadean society values fertile women above all else, some Handmaids purposely abort their fetuses or kill themselves in order to thwart the creation of new leaders for the government. Moira, before becoming a Jezebel, does what she can to keep up the spirit of rebellion among the Handmaids. And some women are apparently able to help on the Underground Femaleroad. Offred's actions are limited but also invidious. Unlike Doremus Jessup, Offred does not intend to bring down the system, but to make her present life and relationships more tolerable. As Amin Malak notes, she eventually initiates "risky but assertive schemes that break the slavery syndrome. Her double-crossing the Commander and his Wife, her choice to hazard a sexual affair with Nick and her association with the underground network, all point to the shift from being a helpless victim to being a sly, subversive survivor" (Malak 13). She rebelliously maintains an interest in her body, stealing a pat of butter to use as hand lotion. She becomes friendly with her Commander outside of the Ceremony ritual and even plays Scrabble with him at night. Offred becomes a person to him rather than just a vessel to be filled with his seed. Because the Commander values her friendship, he lets her look at old issues of *Cosmopolitan* and even takes her outside at night on a "date." Offred's desire for a human relationship leads to her affair with the Commander's chauffeur Nick. Although she is haunted by memories of her husband and child, she rationalizes her dangerous relationship as the one meager chance she has at any sort of love in a loveless society. At the end of the novel Offred is taken away by a black van, but it is not clear whether she is being rescued by the underground or about to be punished by the military. It is a passive acquiescence. She says, "And so I step up, into the darkness within; or else the light" (Atwood 378). The "Historical Notes" indicate that Offred was free long enough to tape reminiscences of her time as a Handmaid, but whether she survives beyond that or contributes to the decline of the Gileadean

Republic is not known.

In a final consideration of these two dystopian novels, it seems clear that feminist psychology can help us reassess our concepts of what it means to function and be heroic in a world of forces beyond our control. Operating outside of the system and acting as an individual agent like Doremus Jessup, is perceived by many as being traditionally brave because the reliance is only on the self. However, to develop trust and relationships in a society where they are devalued can be heroic as well. Offred's efforts to connect with others in order to build a more tolerable life in intolerable circumstances may ultimately contribute to the defeat of a totalitarian government, but not in so dramatic a fashion. There is no one right way to fight for freedom of thought and action. Regardless of whose actions we think are more effective, we certainly hope that neither of these dystopias will come to pass and that it truly can't happen here. ✍

Notes

1. For an examination of the British tradition of utopian and dystopian literature, especially prior to the 1960s, see Gerber and Garrett. See the essay collections by Rabkin and Barr for discussions of dystopias with a focus on issues of gender and class.
2. Long's vehicle for change was the Share Our Wealth Society which wanted to guarantee every American family certain "necessities," enough for a "home, an automobile, a radio, and the ordinary conveniences" (Brinkley 72). See Williams 692-98 and Brinkley 71-74 for a fuller discussion of Long's plan. Coughlin's National Union for Social Justice, which actually fielded a presidential candidate in 1936, wanted a guaranteed "living wage" for every citizen willing to work, and nationalization of major industries including power, light, and oil. This is detailed in Coughlin's "Sixteen Principles of Social Justice" (rpt. in Brinkley 287-88). Townsend allied himself with Coughlin at times but his main concern was the Townsend Old Age Revolving Pension Plan which proposed that the federal government give everyone over 60 at least \$150 a month. This national movement was greatly weakened after the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935 (Brinkley 222-26).
3. Long was assassinated after Lewis's first draft was completed but before the novel was published in 1935. There are several references to Long in the text, some which were altered before publication. Another politician with similar appeal was Governor Eugene Talmadge of Georgia, who was compared to Buzz Windrip by *The Nation* in 1936 (Schlesinger 520-21).
4. There is an additional paramilitary organization in the novel called the League of Forgotten Men, founded by Bishop Peter Paul Prang, who is modeled on Father Coughlin.

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5. For a modern-day parallel to this situation, see Boston who describes the goals of Christian Reconstructionists who want to remake the United States government into a country based on the Law of Moses.
6. *The Handmaid's Tale* has two distinct parts: the narrative of the Handmaid, and the "Historical Notes," which follow the Handmaid's story and provide an ironic commentary on current society.
7. The Gileadean government found various ways to keep women involved in this repressive regime. Women were expected to view the birth of children, partially in order to be inspired to become pregnant themselves, and partially to give support to the other Handmaids. Particution was a ceremony in which women literally tore men apart for crimes against women, such as rape. By participating in such violence, women became complicit in state-sponsored terrorism.
8. Lewis felt a degree of identification with Doremus Jessup, not only in his political thinking but with the character itself. In 1938 he played Jessup in a dramatization of *It Can't Happen Here* in summer stock theaters in the Northeast.
9. See Maglin for a discussion of strong women in other Sinclair Lewis novels.
10. The film version of *The Handmaid's Tale*, written by Harold Pinter and directed by Volker Schlöndorff, almost seems a response to these complaints. In the movie, Offred is much more assertive and actually kills the Commander in order to escape.
11. See Elgin, *Native Tongue* and *The Judas Rose: Native Tongue II*, for other examples of dystopias where women must secretly plot against a powerful male society. Unlike the women in *The Handmaid's Tale*, whose major weapon is their own fertility, these women are linguists who create a new women's language in order to develop a sense of control over men and a separateness from them. They assume that by starting "a language that expresses the perceptions of women rather than those of men, reality will begin to change" (*Native Tongue* 250). This form of rebellion shows women reacting to their suppression with such patience that their solution takes generations to implement.

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LEWIS SESSION AT ALA FOCUSES ON MIDDLE-CLASS LIFE, AWARDS, AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

The American Literature Association Annual Conference was held May 25-28, 2000 at the Hyatt Regency in Long Beach, California. The session on Sinclair Lewis was chaired by long-time Lewis scholar M. Ellen Dupree of the University of Nevada and featured presentations on *Babbitt*, Lewis as Nobel Laureate, and the need for a new bibliography of Lewis's writings. Abstracts supplied by the participants follow below.

"'Snowy Talker Father': The Construction of the Suburban Family in *Babbitt*"

M. Ellen Dupree
University of Nevada—Reno

The construction of the middle-class family is critiqued in *Babbitt* and linked to Progressive-Era ideas about child-rearing and family organization. The paper focuses on what happens when these liberal ideas hit the commercial values of the 1920s.

"A Plea for a Bibliography of Sinclair Lewis"

James Lorson
Lorson's Books and Prints

The paper will examine available material: the Harvey Taylor Bibliography of 1933; Merle Johnson's *American First Printing*, 4th edition, 1949; Mark Schorer's *Sinclair Lewis: First Printings of American Authors*; and Stephen Pastore's *Sinclair Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography*. It will propose that a bibliography in the style of the University of Pittsburgh Series in Bibliography is much needed and overdue.

[James Lorson is an antiquarian dealer and long-time collector of Lewis.]

"Delicate Fellows and Fugitives from Rage: The American Nobel Laureates"

Ralph Goldstein

The Swedish Academy has awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature to twelve writers who were either born or sought refuge in the United States. To varying extents, their work and life experiences lend validity to the fol-

lowing statement made by H.L. Mencken in 1924.

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

So much for the theory of it. The more the facts are studied, the more they bear it out. In those fields of art, at all events, which concern themselves with ideas as well as with sensations, it is almost impossible to find any trace of an artist who was not actively hostile to his environment, and thus an indifferent patriot. From Dante to Tolstoy and from Shakespeare to Mark Twain the story is ever the same. Names suggest themselves instantly: Goethe, Swift, Dostoyevsky, Carlyle, Molière, Pope—all bitter critics of their time and nation, most of them piously hated by the contemporary 100 percenters, some of them actually fugitives from rage and reprisal.

Six years later, the first writer from the United States to receive the Nobel Prize, Sinclair Lewis, titled his acceptance speech "The American Fear of Literature." Warning his audience at the outset that he would be a little impolite regarding certain institutions and persons of his native land, Lewis went on to describe the denunciations heaped upon him by some members of academia and the clergy. His angriest complaint, however, was directed at colleagues engaged primarily in glorifying the nation, writers afraid to expose faults or express life and beauty and terror. Lewis openly acknowledged his ambivalence toward his homeland, calling it the most contradictory, the most depressing, the most stirring, of any land in the world.

Before concluding his speech, Lewis saluted three writers from the United States: Eugene O'Neill, William Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway, all of whom he praised for their vigorous abandonment of tradition.

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These writers ultimately followed Lewis to Stockholm to receive their own Nobel Prize, and, like him, suffered from alcoholism, extreme bouts of depression, and marital dysfunction. John Steinbeck, a native-born laureate not mentioned by Lewis in 1930, shared with the earlier American winners a penchant for alcohol and history of marriage difficulties. Toward the end of his life, Steinbeck distinguished himself from the earlier laureates, all of whom were skeptical about U.S. military adventures, when he intensified his friendship with Lyndon Johnson and supported the Vietnam War. Living much of their lives away from the United States, Pearl Buck and T.S. Eliot did not experience the degree of personal hardship apparent in the other native-born laureates. The paper will examine the causes of this difference, attributable in part to separation from homeland and in part to religious commitment.

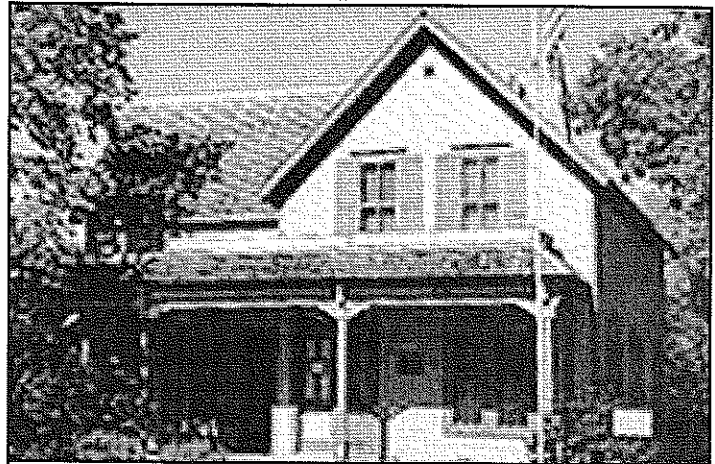
In sharp contrast to most of the native-born laureates, there is an absence of self-destructive behavior in the Nobel Prize winners who immigrated to the United States. Fugitives from Nazi or communist tyranny, their very existence threatened by external forces, Isaac Singer, Czeslaw Milosz, and Joseph Brodsky were toughened by their struggle to leave their respective homelands and establish themselves here. Although Canadian-born Saul Bellow was not exposed to the same

level of persecution, he shares with the other émigrés an obligation and will to survive in a post-Holocaust world. Drawing upon their essays, interviews, and selections from their work, the paper will comment on how these exiled writers have been able to escape the personal despair that afflicted our earlier laureates. As is the case with the immigrant American laureates and in contrast to most of the native-born laureates, Toni Morrison has similarly not only evaded self-destruction but has been generously welcomed by the American academic community. Regarded by some as an outsider in the land of her birth, Morrison insists upon placing African-Americans in the foreground of her work. She is energized by her transgression of previously drawn lines, repudiating dominance in many forms. Nevertheless, the antagonism experienced in varying degrees by Lewis and the other earlier laureates, which Mencken suggested made writers less fitted to prosper and enjoy life, seems much reduced for Toni Morrison. Referring to the reception of her work in the United States, her Nobel Lecture, essays and other writing, the paper will explore this contrast. *es*

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR *MIDWESTERN MISCELLANY*

Midwestern Miscellany will be devoting an issue to Sinclair Lewis, guest edited by Sally Parry. She welcomes essays on any aspect of Lewis's life and work. Essays should be no more than 25 double-spaced pages. Documentation should be MLA style. Deadline for completed essays is September 1, 2000. Authors published in *Midwestern Miscellany* must be members of the Society for Midwestern Literature or must become members prior to publication of their essays. Send e-mail to separry@ilstu.edu or fax (309) 438-5414.

For information on the Society for Midwestern Literature, please write David Anderson, Bessey Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1033.



THE SINCLAIR LEWIS HOMEPAGE

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SAUK CENTRE NEWS



SL Days Coming Soon

Sinclair Lewis Days are once again set for the third weekend in July. The conference on Sinclair Lewis (July 12-14), sponsored by the Sinclair Lewis Society and the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, will be a highlight of this event (see story on the front page of the newsletter for more details). The 2000 Sinclair Lewis Days are set for July 12th through the 16th. This will be the 30th year of the celebration. Some of the other events planned by the Chamber of Commerce include the Miss Sauk Centre Pageant (July 13), the Street Dance (July 14), the Heart of the Lakes bike tour, the Flea Market/Craft Show, the parade at 7:30, followed by a fireworks display (all July 15).

St. Cloud Times Article on Lewis

The *St. Cloud Times* ran an article on visiting Sauk Centre, "Visit Lewis's Home in Sauk Centre" on January 20, 2000. Reporter Molly Miron wrote, "The folks of Sauk Centre were not pleased in 1920 when Sinclair Lewis wrote *Main Street*, depicting their community as Gopher Prairie, a narrow and sometimes nasty small town."

"But after the author won the Nobel Prize for literature, Sauk Centre residents were glad to claim the title, 'Original Main Street,' that inspired the novel. And, although he had an unhappy childhood there, Lewis himself chose Sauk Centre as his final resting place."

"'He said there would never be smoky skies, meaning that industry would never come here,' said Barb Borgerding, the Sauk Centre Chamber of Commerce manager. Although there is no industrial pollution to speak of in Sauk Centre, the town is growing and now has 3,700 inhabitants."

The article showed several pictures of Lesley Lewis, Sinclair Lewis's granddaughter, who visited the town for the 1997 Sinclair Lewis Conference. Miron mentions places to see connected with Lewis, including the Boyhood Home, the Palmer House where Lewis worked as a night clerk, the Greenwood Cemetery where Lewis is buried, and the Interpretive Center. Other places of interest include the 28 mile Lake Wobegon Trail and the Viking Altar Rock which seems to provide proof that Scandinavians visited the area in the 14th century.



Lewis Turns 115!

The Sinclair Lewis Foundation held its annual meeting and celebration honoring Sinclair Lewis's 115th birthday on February 7. The program included a book discussion on *Arrowsmith* to celebrate the 75th anniversary of its publication. After a brief business meeting, there was birthday cake, refreshments and a drawing for door prizes. The Foundation operates and maintains the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home and Museum as well as sponsors other activities. For more information write the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, Highway I94 and Highway 71, Sauk Centre, MN 56378 or call (612) 352-5201.

LEWIS AND THE WEB: INFORMATION AND REQUESTS

Since the Fall 1999 newsletter, the Sinclair Lewis website has received another 5,000 visits. It's good to see that there is so much interest in Lewis. Here is a selection of recent e-mails received from people who contacted the website. Material in brackets are either answers that were sent or comments by the editor. Hope you enjoy reading them as much as I enjoy receiving them.

* * *

I am a researcher for Trivial Pursuit Online at Sony Online Entertainment and am attempting to locate information regarding the writings of Sinclair Lewis. Specifically, I need to verify that Lewis classified the act of kissing with terms such as "the short interrogative," "the long interrogative," and "the vampire-minatory." Any information you can give would be greatly appreciated. [Your question wasn't one that I've dealt with before, but the quotation is indeed from one of Sinclair Lewis's novels. In the novel *Cass Timberlane* (1945) one of the characters, Juliet Zago, tells her husband about different kinds of kisses such as the ones you listed as well as the "allergic-to-lipstick" kiss. The information is on the last page of chapter 27, page 189 in the original edition.]

* * *

A member of my family has found a 1925 copy of *Arrowsmith*, and wonders if it is of great monetary value?

* * *

It is good to see Lewis treated with the respect he deserves. I read as much of his work as I could find in the libraries of the Air Force bases I was assigned to in the late fifties and early sixties, and I thought then that *It Can't Happen Here* was a much more powerful polemic against fascism than *Brave New World*. And I enjoyed Schorer's biography. It's a shame I didn't return to Lewis in the seventies: I think I would have recognized a lot of sources of my political attitudes, formed and fueled by his great writing.

* * *

Lewis was reputed to hang out at the Argus Bookstore in Chicago in the twenties. My father was a good friend of the proprietor, Ben Abrahamson, and was strongly influenced by Lewis's work. He too would have appreciated your web page. Besides Schorer, does any of the commentary on Lewis mention Ben Abrahamson or the Argus Bookstore?

* * *

I am really curious to know if Lewis' life had to do with or influenced his work.

* * *

Last week, while cleaning out a room in my father's house, I came across an old copy of *Arrowsmith*. My father was sitting there with me and I told him I might just read it again, as I hadn't read it in 30 years. He said it was probably a copy purchased by his mother when it was first published & that she usually wrote her name in it. He said she would often review new fiction for her club or the local newspaper. I only opened it to see if she had indeed signed it and found glued to the back cover an envelope containing a letter from Mr. Lewis, reading as follows: "Dear Mrs. Carvey: I am asking Mr. Harrison Smith, of Harcourt, Brace & Co., 383 Madison Ave., New York, my publishers, to send you a biography of myself published by that firm, which will, I hope give you the data necessary for your paper. If you fail to receive it in the next two weeks, please write to Mr. Smith. To answer your questions: Yes I do admire Arrowsmith, and I think that in the case of his son already having a mother who was thoroughly competent to take care of him, he was justified in giving his whole self to his scientific research. Yours sincerely...". The letter is typewritten, but his signature is in ink. We, my father and I, were quite amazed. My 82-year-old father chuckled and said it would have ended up in the Goodwill had I not had the urge to read it again. I was amazed and pleased that Mr. Lewis took the time to answer the letter of an unknown woman from a tiny Midwestern town.

My father lives in Indiana and I am home again in North Carolina, but only for another week. I was in Indiana delivering our two beloved cats into my father's

care before my husband and I leave in one week for New Zealand & subsequently Antarctica where we will be doing research until early April. I know this is terribly short notice, but wanted to do a little investigation before leaving as to any possible value of this letter. I have left it attached to the book, a 6th printing of the first trade publication, 1925. I thought perhaps you might give me some advice as to how to continue. My husband suggests a fax to Christie's in New York, but I thought perhaps notifying someone more interested in the man himself. Any information you might give me would be greatly appreciated.

* * *

I have had a computer for 6 months & have had very little use for it. Finally something on the Internet worthy of my attention! I fell for Lewis when I read *Babbitt* shortly after college. I was assigned to read it for a class & skimmed thru it just enough to get by. As I read the complete text with my full attention, I rapidly realized how special his writing is. *Arrowsmith* was next & I completely planned my trip to the bookstore to buy all available. I have read all his books several times.

* * *

Recently I read Blaise Cendrars's account of the eve of Lewis's journey to Stockholm to pick up the Nobel Prize in 1930. According to the Swiss writer he found Sinclair Lewis in the bathtub of a Roman hotel (fully dressed and half submerged) in a serious state of intoxication, while a big party was going on in the rest of the suite. Cendrars claimed to have saved the man's life and describes the American writer as a very sour fellow who looked like the devil himself. I don't know whether this anecdote may be of any relevance to Mr. Lingeman, but since I read in his interview on your home page that he is interested in all sorts of information I decided to supply it. Cendrars's account has been published in the book *Blaise Cendrars—Am Mikrofon* (Lenos Verlag, 1999) which gives the transcriptions of 10 interviews the author gave to French radio journalist Michel Manoll in 1950. There is a French version that dates from the fifties. I don't know if there's an English translation.

* * *

I am doing a video on Sinclair Lewis and his works, and have been having a hard time finding critical reviews on him. If anyone knows of a site where I could find some critical reviews, could you please send them to: myshelle_1@yahoo.com. Thanks!!!

* * *

I am seeking the opinions of Lewis's contemporaries about *Main Street*. Can you offer me e-mail addresses or bibliographies that contain this information?

* * *

Years ago I came upon an essay by Sinclair Lewis, about the decay of the English language and society. I cannot remember the name of the essay or in what collection I found it.

* * *

I possess a water color of "Cave Rock at Tahoe," painted in 1936, by Elmer Gandy, the evangelist that Elmer Gantry was purportedly patterned after. I acquired it from a doctor in Seattle in 1962. The story, as told to me, was that Gandy and some women in the Temperance Union tore up a speakeasy that Mr. Lewis had an interest in. Would like to hear more, if anyone knows.

* * *

I am looking for information concerning Lewis's book *Babbitt*, and more particularly, about the theme of freedom in *Babbitt*. It is very urgent.

* * *

I was just at your website and I have a seemingly obscure Sinclair Lewis question that I can't seem to find the answer to. Apparently the Disney movie *Bongo* was based on a story written by Lewis. Is it possible to find that story or did he write it specifically for the movie? If the movie is a retelling/adaptation, is it possible to track down the original? Is it in a volume of collected works? I am very curious to read the original story (if there is one) and I would appreciate any assistance that you might be able to give in this arena. [*Bongo* is a Disney picture book much prized by Disney collectors because of its scarcity.]

* * *

Congratulations! Your Web site has received the Web Feet Seal of Approval and will appear in *Web Feet: The Internet Traveler's Desk Reference*. Web Feet is the premier subject guide to the best Web sites for students, researchers, and the general public and is the first comprehensive Web guide that is interactive and updated monthly. Web Feet is expanding at a rate of 100 sites a month and is revised and updated on an ongoing basis. A site is included in Web Feet only if our researchers think it is an outstanding site in its subject area. The Web Feet Seal of Approval tells teachers, librarians, parents, and students that your site is especially valuable for research, teaching, or general interest. Please download this seal and display it on your site. Versions in html and gif format are attached.



* * *

"Red" has always been most revered to me, the epitome of the satirical writer. I have several of his first editions, including this autograph in a grayed first edition of *Main Street*. I remember DeKruif (who provided the research on *Arrowsmith*) wrote a book in which he said Sinclair Lewis was hitting on DeKruif's wife. I would have been disappointed in him if he hadn't. I have his first editions of *It Can't Happen Here* and *Work of Art* among others. But I watched *Cass Timberlane* on TV tonight and remembered how much he gave to the world. To me Sinclair Lewis stands taller than Hemingway and others.

* * *

I am a big fan of Sinclair Lewis's work. Any idea how I can get a picture of him for my office?

* * *

Would like to know if anyone can lend information on a text I located at a swap meet this weekend. It is a first copy run of Lewis's *Dodsworth* (1929 edition). On the cover page is the following: "S. (Can't make out the rest of the line)." Then, "My dear commissioner: I do hope that you will make a reasonable America." "Sam Dodsworth, per secy." Then it is signed by Sinclair Lewis. There is no doubt that Lewis signed this copy but I am wondering if you could shed light on who he may have written the personalized message to? I feel it had to be someone in the federal gov't., since he's asking the person to "make a reasonable America," not something that would be said to an ordinary citizen.

* * *

I was thinking today how unpopular Sinclair Lewis must have been with the people and groups he satirized: American Legion, Rotary Club, religion. I recall a book I bought and read years ago about the man who thought he would be co-author of *Arrowsmith*, and Sinclair gave him profit and dedication instead. Dr. Paul DeKruif wrote how Red came to visit them and tried to make time with his wife. Enlighten me, from your studies. Lewis must have been a lonely man, as most writers are if they have the courage to take up the challenge as Gauguin did.

* * *

Please send name of Sinclair Lewis's New York town residence just before he wrote *Travels with Charley*. (This is WAY upstate near the Hamptons.) [A later message from this person admitted that she had meant John Steinbeck.]

* * *

I am a webmaster at St. Ambrose University and maintain our reference homepage and pages of indexes to major fields of study. I was reviewing the Sinclair Lewis page and really like it, but I wanted to ask whether someday you hope to put on-line some full-text of his work? Thanks for your good work.

* * *

I was stunned to find there is so much interest in Lewis—is he required reading? I used to sneak in copies of Lewis's works to a particularly boring history class back in 1964. I read *Dodsworth* and *Arrowsmith* there. I think *Dodsworth* is Lewis's most mature work by a considerable margin. Is the Society aware of the Grace Hegger Lewis-Sinclair Lewis Collection at the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas? I have an Exhibition Catalog signed by Grace Hegger Lewis—#66 of 100. I wonder if it has any value? I purchased it for one dollar. Am thinking about joining your Society. I've been a member of the Mencken Society for over 20 years and have a copy of every *Menckenianna*. They don't make 'em like Lewis and Mencken anymore! God, I miss their satire—the way they lambasted the general populace as a bunch of inflammatory dolts. What courage!

* * *

You may be interested to know that I have posted a letter, with envelope and signature from Sinclair Lewis on eBay. My Dad has had this letter since 1947 and has decided to auction it. Your site has been a lot of help and is wonderfully organized and presented! I've provided a link below that will direct you to a picture of the letter if you're interested in viewing it.

* * *

Hi! Julie (my wife) and I played the *Gantry* tape last night on our TV. It was a great movie with great lines. Mr. Sinclair Lewis has now become one of my favorite authors. Question: In the conclusion of the movie, it is unsure if Sister Sharon perished in the fire. Did she secretly meet with Gantry, as he had often begged her to do, after the fire? Did Mr. Lewis end his novel with the same uncertainty?

* * *

I am interested in the new biography by Richard Lingeman on Sinclair Lewis. I have checked with Barnes and Noble and did not find it. Has this book been published, and if not is there an expected publication date? [The last we heard, the biography is at the publishers.]

* * *

My name is Izi Mann and I am the presenter and producer of the daily 20th century show in Voice of Israel (Israeli Radio). In this show I present the people and the events that shaped the century, and would like to present Mr. Sinclair Lewis. Since it is radio work that I do, I need any short audio clips of his voice and his brother's voice as well. Do you have any idea where any recordings of him speaking can be found?

* * *

The book group I'm in is reading *It Can't Happen Here*, which is a book that has fascinated me for years. On this re-reading, I've discovered the connection between Lewis's character/caricatures and the likes of Pelley and Winrod. I'm wondering if you can recommend any online resources that might be of interest in that regard, and I'm also curious about your paper on Sinclair Lewis and Upton Sinclair, since at least two of us over here would like to know more about why Lewis seems to be taking shots at Sinclair.

* * *

I would be very grateful if you could inform me what is the name of the city described in *Main Street*.

* * *

Hello, I am just curious about this. Does Sinclair Lewis have any history of doing any oil paintings as a young man? Your site is very well organized. I enjoy it.

* * *

I'm inquiring to the significance of a first edition book by Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt*, could you please forward myself information on its value today.

* * *

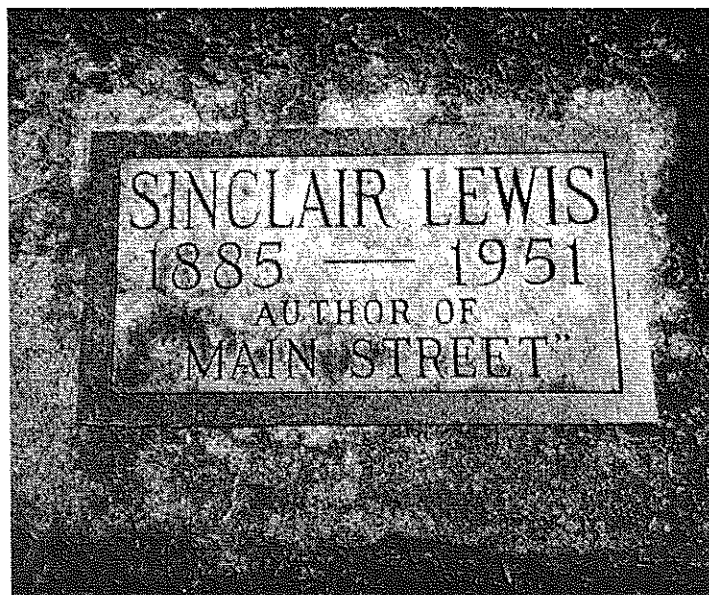
I live on 365 East Shore Road in Great Neck, NY. I was told that this was once the home of Sinclair Lewis. I have found some old drafts of his. How long did he stay here? [Lewis never lived anywhere very long. During his adult life, his stay at Twin Farms may have lasted the longest.]

* * *

Thanks for the great article and the newsletter. I had, incidentally, never before heard of Robert Ingersoll until 1992 when a friend and I began to attempt to organize and conserve letters, diaries, and documents which had been very poorly conserved in a cottage in our community, The Free Acres Association, in Berkeley Heights. The cottage belonged to the last living member of a family of artists whose members had lived in Free Acres in two "holdings." She had to sell the cottage and was distraught at the loss of the family history and all the documents and letters it contained. Loath at first to get involved, I was persuaded by my friend, Dr. Sylvia Heerens, to try to find a home for these documents. The Alexander Library at Rutgers at last agreed to take just about everything in what they deemed "a rich collection." We did not transfer the material until we had woven selected letters and documents into a story which we called "Treasures of the Little Cabin."

An early patriarch of the family from the Midwest had been a follower of Robert Ingersoll. We had to find out who Ingersoll was and did some research. We found out and were amazed that before the turn of the century, from Peoria, Illinois of all places, such a fervent agnostic could have such a following. Two of our letter writers, Mary Ingalls and Louis Charles DeGuibert, met at Eureka college in Eureka, Illinois; she the daughter of devout Protestants; he the child of the Ingersoll devotee. The two married. Louis Charles DeGuibert "went along" with his wife Mary's religious beliefs but never attended church as she did. This was a similar setup to that in which he had been raised where his own mother and father agreed to disagree about church versus Robert Ingersoll. Subsequently in the early 1900s Mary and Louis Charles, the child of the Robert Ingersoll follower, Louis Alexander DeGuibert, never would "come forward" or ultimately attend, nor would her siblings.

I was amazed, floored is a better word by all of this. Our book, of which we printed 20 copies, was bought out at \$35.00 a copy but others were not as fascinated as we by the stories it contained. Among other things I had found out that the imprint of Robert Ingersoll was strong enough to greatly influence the direction family members took leading the granddaughter of the Ingersoll follower to Helicon Hall and then to Free Acres, which in 1919, when she joined, was a much more idealistic community. She had also tried to be a member of "The Straight Edge" in New York City. I saw her interest and participation in The Straight Edge as an attempt



to reconcile the philosophies of both sides of her family. She met her husband there and they joined the Helicon Hall community together. Their names were Undena DeGuibert Eberlein and Ernest Eberlein. My play was inspired by them and by the letters and documents we found, although I changed their story. The director who was interested in the play has given me some hope of its actually being put on.

One more question to bother you with. At Helicon Hall, in order to avoid confusion in my play among the characters in dialogue, I have people addressing Upton Sinclair as "Upton" and Sinclair Lewis as "Hal." Would that be correct or would people have addressed Upton Sinclair as "Sinclair" rather than "Upton"? If you can let me have your opinion on that, I would appreciate it.

Student Queries

Dear Mr. Lewis,

I am a student at a high school in Ohio. My school is R.B. Hayes High School. I am a freshman. In my English class my teacher told us we had to pick an author and pick 2 books by that author. I was looking around and I saw a book called *Main Street*. So I opened it up and read a little bit and it caught my attention so I checked it and another book by you called *Arrowsmith*. She said we had to read both of the books and write a report on the books. We also have to find out a little about the author and write a report about them. Well I got some information off of your web site but not enough. I was

wondering if you could e-mail me back telling me a little about yourself. I would really appreciate it if you could do that. Just to let ya know I love the book. I am at the part now where Carol married Mr. Kennicott and moved to Prairie Grove. Now she is trying to get used to the town. This book is very interesting and I would recommend it to people in high school. [The student obviously didn't look at the website very carefully.]

* * *

I am doing a report on Sinclair and would like to know if you could send me some information. I am not yet very adept at searching the web. I am most interested in the friendship between Upton Sinclair and Sinclair Lewis. Would you possibly have any information on the subject? I know that they were both interested in a utopian experiment in living at one time around 1907. How can I learn more? Is there a book which might have some information touching on this part of Sinclair Lewis's life?

* * *

I am a Junior in high school in Tucson, Arizona. The major project in English of the Junior year is to write an analytical paper on a great American Author. I was assigned Sinclair Lewis, however being quite sheltered, I am sorry to say that I have not read any of Mr. Lewis's works. I must read two of his works and I was hoping that someone could recommend two of his books. I would greatly appreciate any help you may be able to offer.

* * *

Can you help me by pointing me in the right direction for some statistics? I am trying to find the number of books written by Sinclair Lewis that were sold and to compare that sales volume with the sales of some of the other revered authors of the era: Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck. I am trying to write a paper addressing the fact that those other authors are better remembered in lists of best sellers of the century than is Lewis, the first Nobelist, who was not only very popular in his time but who also provided us with more lasting contributions to literature.

* * *

I am in the 11th grade in Phoenix City, Alabama. I have been assigned a research paper topic of "Sinclair Lewis." I am wondering why anyone would want to have a newsletter for this man. Can you tell me something about him that will get me interested in my research? Do you know of good sources of information for me to use?

* * *

Sinclair Lewis is one of my favorite authors, if not the favorite. I'm applying to NYU's MA program in English, and wanted to write a paper on *Main Street* to accompany my application. I was hoping to compare Lewis to a contemporary author who cites him as an influence, but I haven't found one. I realize this is a bit of a cheat to ask you and wouldn't be surprised if you refuse to help me, but I've looked over the Sinclair Lewis Society site (which I like very much) and the site for the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature but found no references to contemporary fiction. Kurt Haruf's *Plainsong* does not really fit the bill, and frankly I didn't really like his book. How can I find contemporary fiction that is set in the Midwest? [I suggested John Updike's *Rabbit* books since there is a lot of connections with *Babbitt*, although not a Midwest location.]

* * *

I'm doing some extra credit for my history class during this vacation and there is one question which I can't seem to answer. I was wondering if you could help me? "Which Sinclair Lewis character would fit in well with Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker, and other evangelistic 'sinners'?"

* * *

Hi. I'm a French student. I study Lewis's *Babbitt* and our teacher asked us to write an essay whose subject is town and country. Please could you help to understand what he meant by this?

* * *

I attend John Burroughs High School, and I am currently in 11th grade. I am enrolled in an Honors English class, and I am doing a paper on Sinclair Lewis. I found a massive amount of information on your web site, but I wished

to find even more. I want to really find out everything there is to know about Mr. Lewis. I was hoping that you or the Society would be able to tell me of any way I could contact either of his ex-wives, Grace Hegger, or Dorothy Thompson, if they are still alive. I would also like to contact his son, Michael Lewis, if at all possible. I know that is a lot to ask, but I knew that if anyone could get me that information, it would be his website. Thank you very much.

* * *

I am disappointed that there is no one in his family that I can contact, but I was wondering if you had the web address of the *Sauk Centre Herald* website. I was also wondering if you knew of any way that I could get in contact with any of the publishers of his books, preferably Harcourt, Brace and Company who published *Main Street* because that is the book that I am currently reading.

* * *

My name is Laura, I'm a 10th grader, I'm doing a 10 page report on Sinclair Lewis for my sophomore English class. I looked on several web-pages on Sinclair Lewis, and I found your name and e-mail address. I was wondering if you could give me some ideas to look up to find more on Sinclair Lewis.

* * *

I am a Chinese graduate student studying American Literature. I want to write thesis paper about Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*. But I find that in China there are few articles about Sinclair Lewis. People in China know much about Mark Twain, Crane, Anderson, Fitzgerald. I want to know much about Sinclair. And I want to introduce Sinclair to Chinese people. How can I do that? I need your help very much.

* * *

Hi, I'm a student (junior in high school) and for my English term paper, I'm writing about *Babbitt*—I haven't picked a thesis yet, please don't ask—I also just finished a critique on it for AP American History class—anyway, I wanted to know if it costs money to order issues, because your newsletter is a very good source—so please get back to me and let me know (I don't have much money which is why I ask).

* * *

Hi. I'm doing research on Sinclair Lewis and I'm a little confused. Apart from the Pulitzer—wasn't he known for his book of love letters that he wrote to his wife who died young? You have no mention of this on the site. Please help! I need information on this urgently!!

* * *

I really enjoyed the layout of your site. I am trying to do a report about Sinclair Lewis, and your site doesn't have any information about why Sinclair was important, and what he was responsible for during the 1920s and 1930s. You might want to consider adding that.

WEBSITE ON LEWIS AND HUXLEY

Marlyn Tadros, a scholar in Cairo, completed a Ph.D. in 1996 at Cairo University and has set up a website which includes excerpts from it. The website, located at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Agora/6554> includes parts of the dissertation, "Satire in Some of the Novels of Aldous Huxley and Sinclair Lewis." The contents page is as follows:

Introduction : The Tradition of Satire

- 1) Satire: an Introduction
- 2) The Satire of Sinclair Lewis and Aldous Huxley
- 3) Conclusion

Chapter 1 : The Indignant Reformer and the Amused Spectator: Satirising their Own Societies—Lewis's *Babbitt* and Huxley's *Antic Hay*

Chapter 2 : The Acquiescent Satirist and The Analytic Saviour: Satirising Each Other's Societies—Lewis's *Dodsworth* and Huxley's *After Many a Summer*

Chapter 3 : Vision of the Future: Dystopias—Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* and Huxley's *Brave New World*

SINCLAIR LEWIS NOTES

Joyce Carol Oates, one of America's most well published authors, has recently called *Main Street* "one of our underrated classics, a dissection of small-town American life that seems even today uncomfortably contemporary" (32). This observation appears in the *New York Review of Books* (October 21, 1999) as part of a review of *Plain-song* by Kent Haruf (Knopf, 1999). In the essay, "Wearing Out the West," Oates talks about the connection this book has with other tales of the Midwest and West, including Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark* and Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses*. The town Haruf writes about, Holt, Colorado, Oates says "makes Sinclair Lewis's Gopher Prairie seem a cultural mecca by contrast" (31).

SL

Kurt Vonnegut also praises Lewis in *For the Love of Books* by Ronald B. Shwartz (Putnam, 1999). Vonnegut says, "Then there's *Babbitt* by Sinclair Lewis. It showed Americans for the first time what they really sounded like. Having grown up in Indianapolis, I can say, Yes, that is what they sounded like. I had never seen them put into books before" (266).

SL

Frederick Manfred, the Minnesota writer who read a long eulogy at Lewis's funeral, has been written about by his daughter, Freya, in *Frederick Manfred: A Daughter Remembers* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 197 pages, \$24.95 cloth, \$15.95 paper). She first interviewed him for public television in 1991. During the program she asked him, "So if you had a picture of yourself as you move into death, what would you be doing?" Manfred replied, "I hope with my eyes wide open to have a good look!" The book is a literary memoir that provides a good introduction to the elder Manfred's life and works. By the time of his death in 1994, he had become one of Minnesota's most prolific authors with more than 30 books of fiction, essays, and poetry.

SL

Clifton Fadiman, the popular editor and critic who died last year at the age of 95, wrote that he favored "clarity above all" and preferred the writings of Sinclair Lewis over William Faulkner and Gertrude Stein, of whom he wrote, she was a "past master in making nothing happen very slowly." An article on Fadiman by Bob Minzesheimer in *USA Today* (June 22, 1999, 9D), notes that Fadiman estimated he'd read over 25,000 books in his lifetime and out of that experience wrote *The New Lifetime Reading Plan*, an introduction to writers from Homer to Chinua Achebe. Fadiman was also witty and erudite in person, moderating *Information Please* from 1938 to 1948 on NBC Radio. Dorothy Thompson, in the mid 1940s, ranked Fadiman as one of the world's three most entertaining guests, along with Noel Coward and Clare Boothe Luce.

SL

In a charming feature for Valentine's Day, the Sunday *New York Times* for February 13, 2000 (Week in Review, 7), included vituperative expressions of romance turned sour, as written by prominent authors including George Bernard Shaw, Dorothy L. Sayers, James Thurber, and Ernest Hemingway. The romance of Lewis and Dorothy Thompson made it as well. The *Times* article, "Happy Valentine's Day, You Fathouse Pig," quotes from a letter Thompson wrote to Lewis after he sailed to Bermuda in 1936 and neglected to tell her. She wrote, "[I]f I ever pulled anything on you like that I would never hear the last of it... You are so terrible, so terrifying when you are angry... When you are like that you freeze something in me."

SL

The New Yorker, in its The Mail section (September 20, 1999, 13), headlined a letter to the editor decrying the mediocrity of network television as "Network Babbitry." The letter writer, Doug Yeager of Wisconsin, complains that "unimaginative people reside throughout the country. It is thanks to the cowardly choices made by network executives like those at ABC that what could be an interesting medium is nothing more than visual opium." It sounds like Babbitts still exist in television management.

(SL)

Babbitt also appears as a metaphor for conformity in a review of *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* by Susan Faludi (Morrow, 1999). Reviewer Judith Shulevitz, in the *New York Times Book Review* (October 3, 1999), writes that "This was the first of the betrayals alluded to in her subtitle: what looked like a New Deal for veterans—jobs for everyone!—turned out to be mass Babbitry" (8).

(SL)

In *The Real American Dream: A Meditation on Hope* (Harvard UP, 1999), author Andrew Delbanco, a professor of humanities at Columbia University, interrogates what he considers this country's "postmodern melancholy." Richard Rorty, in a review in the *New York Times Book Review* (November 7, 1999, 16), discusses this "beautifully written book" which critiques the current culture of instant gratification and looks to various ways in which an ideally just America can be realized. Rorty notes that "this is not the first time that our country has indulged in an orgy of selfishness, or that it has, self-defeatingly, pinned all its hopes on Self. Back in 1929 [sic], George Babbitt's mindless bounciness was making [Jonathan] Edwards's asceticism look good. But a few years later, Tom Joad and F.D.R. were making Whitman and Lincoln look much better.

"Disgusted as we may now be by Babbitt's spoiled great-grandchildren, we have every reason to hope that once today's economic bubble bursts, once we start re-inventing the interventionist state, Americans will re-learn what Delbanco calls 'the lesson of Lincoln's life...That the quest for prosperity is no remedy for melancholy, but that a passion to secure justice by erasing the line that divides those with hope from those without hope can be.'" Fred Cornplow of *The Prodigal Parents* would have agreed.

(SL)

"Whenever some shocking incident occurs in our country, the ironic title of Sinclair Lewis's prophetic book, *It Can't Happen Here*, comes to mind. In his 1935 novel, Lewis was not comparing the U.S. to the deadly European dictatorships on the eve of World War II. Rather, he used fiction (shades of Edmund Morris's *Dutch*) to warn his fellow Americans about the possibility of totalitarianism. His

still-controversial novel delivered an unsubtle message: 'Don't let it happen here.'" This striking quote opens Herbert Mitgang's review of *The Plutonium Files: America's Secret Medical Experiments in the Cold War* by Eileen Welsome (Dial, 2000). The review (*Chicago Tribune* January 9, 2000, sec. 14, 9), entitled "Nuclear Guinea Pigs," discusses how the American government wanted to find out more about the effects of radiation on human beings and therefore sanctioned a number of experiments which included injecting unwitting patients with plutonium during the Cold War. Mitgang notes that this book "reminded me of Lewis's story because something unbelievable did happen here." He praises *The Plutonium Files* as "a memorable work of reporting that's full of passion."

(SL)

In a review of two recent biographies of the celebrity scientist Carl Sagan, David Hollinger notes in "Star Power" in the *New York Times Book Review* (November 28, 1999) that when Keay Davidson in *Carl Sagan: A Life* (Wiley, 1999) discusses *Contact*, Sagan's 1985 novel, Davidson compares Sagan's portrayal of scientists to other fictional portrayals, "especially Sinclair Lewis's classic *Arrowsmith*" (15).

(SL)

Benjamin Schwarz, in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times Book Review* (October 24, 1999, 7), responds to a review that John B. Judis wrote about Patrick Buchanan's book, *A Republic, Not an Empire*, in connection with the America First movement before World War II. Schwarz notes that although Charles Lindbergh, one of the most prominent members of America First made anti-Semitic statements, there were other well-known members including "liberals Robert La Follette, Jr., Robert Hutchins, Chester Bowles, Sinclair Lewis, e. e. cummings, John T. Flynn, and Sidney Herzberg" who were not anti-Semites and that Judis shouldn't try to conflate anti-Semitism and isolationism.

(SL)

The First Vintage Crime/Black Lizard edition of Dashiell Hammett's *The Thin Man* (1933), published in 1992, features a quote from Lewis. It is only one of two quotes on the back cover (the other is from the *New York Times*) and notes that Lewis calls this novel "the most breathless of Hammett's stories."

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

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Catalogue 72: Holiday 1999
Modern Firsts & New Arrivals

201. Lewis, Sinclair. *Our Mr. Wrenn*. New York: Harpers, 1914. \$600

First edition. 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 dustwrapper. 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.

202. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Trail of the Hawk*. New York: Harper, 1915. \$2500

First edition. Spine lettering worn, else a very good copy lacking the dustwrapper. Inscribed by the author in the year of publication: "To Joseph Margulies with the regards of his friend Sinclair Lewis. Aug. 31, 1915." The author's second book under his own name. Scarce signed.

203. Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1925. \$125

First trade edition, after a limited signed edition. Two owner names, and a small stain on the spine, a very good plus copy lacking the rare dustwrapper. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize (which Lewis refused) and probably the book most influential in his winning the Nobel Prize.

Collector's Corner

204. Lewis, Sinclair. *Cass Timberlane*. New York: Random House, 1945. \$275

First edition. Offsetting to the front flap else fine in fine and bright dustwrapper with one tiny nick at the foot of the spine. A bright copy of this cheaply produced book employing inferior wartime materials.

205. Lewis, Sinclair. *The God-Seeker*. New York: Random House, 1949. \$350

First edition. Very fine in very fine dustwrapper. A just about as new copy of this novel about the Minnesota frontier, and rarely found thus.

206. Lewis, Sinclair. *World So Wide*. New York: Random House, 1951. \$300

First edition. Very slight offsetting to the front fly else as new in brilliant, very fine dustwrapper. A splendid copy of one of the author's later novels.

300. Lewis, Sinclair. (Photoplay edition.) *Mantrap: A Story of the Northern Wilds*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1926. \$300

Photoplay edition. As new in dustwrapper with a faint publisher's remainder stamp on the front panel and a tiny rubbed spot, but which is otherwise nearly as new. Front panel features a painting of Clara Bow and Percy Marmont in the Paramount Production.

Holiday Supplement

- Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922. \$12,500

First edition. Fine in very good dustwrapper with a few chips at the extremities. This copy nicely INSCRIBED by the author to his mother-in-law: "To Mrs. Hegger with the affection of one of her 672 beautiful sons-in-law Sinclair Lewis." Lewis wed Grace Hegger in 1914 and her mother, known to them both as "Mama," lived and traveled with the couple for long periods of time until their divorce in 1927. Though this copy is undated it is likely she received one of the earliest presentation copies. A splendid copy of a major highspot, a book that defined and held up to national and international scrutiny a uniquely American personality type, and one of the key reasons Lewis became the first American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Books du Jour

Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1926. \$2,850.

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

Bibliotopus

Catalog 18

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2131 Century Park Lane
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1917. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Innocents*. New York, 1917. \$15,000

First edition, first printing with "Published October, 1917" and the code "F-R" on the copyright page. First issue dust jacket with ads for "Important Fiction" on the back, *Harper's Magazine* on the front flap and

"The Reader's Duty" on the rear flap. An incisive, signed presentation copy to Harry Korner, the inscription noting that the book was presented in person, mentioning the flu epidemic that killed 50,000 Americans (40 million world wide) and specifying that reading this novel is a sure cure. Fine in a superb dust jacket with 2 minuscule nicks and a single small edge-tear, a once in a lifetime copy. The little lamp on the jacket's spine is clearly visible, a feature seldom seen on the few examples recorded. NO FIRST EDITION IN DUST JACKET (IN ANY CONDITION) AT AUCTION IN 20 YEARS. Fine full morocco case. Rare in dust jacket, beyond hope and reason in this condition, but my great vanity has always been the delusion that somebody is paying attention.

Korner was a close friend of Lewis's, the recipient of presentation copies of Lewis's first editions from 1914 to 1929, an early champion of *Our Mr. Wrenn*, and Lewis's companion for a portion of the *Free Air* motor car trip. Lewis was America's breakthrough modern author. In 1926 he declined the Pulitzer Prize because it was not awarded for literary merit, but for "the best presentation of the wholesome atmosphere of American Life," a major target of Lewis's satire and the reason why so many sleepy books have won it. In 1930 he became the first American to win The Nobel Prize for Literature. He accepted it and the big bucks that came with it, breaching the Swedish citadel for the likes of Pearl Buck, Eugene O'Neill, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Saul Bellow, an American though born in Canada, and Toni Morrison. *The Innocents* is among a handful of Lewis's novels from the teens (all rare in dust jacket) published before he climbed up the best seller list in the 1920's with *Main Street*, *Babbitt*, *Arrowsmith*, *Elmer Gantry* and *Dodsworth*.

Loblolly Books

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Fax: (415) 389-0616

Catalog 10

336. Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe, 1920. \$2,500

First edition, second state. 12 mo. Inscribed by Lewis to "Alma Glück, with the love of Sinclair Lewis." Glück was a noted opera diva and mother of the writer Marcia Davenport. She also had a long and close relationship with the ill-fated Czech nationalist Jan Masaryk. With the armorial bookplate of Efrem Zimbalist, Glück's husband, on the front pastedown. A fine copy without the scarce dust jacket.

Pacific Book Auction Galleries

Sale 195

October 7, 1999

The Collection of Leonard Bornstein

London, Jack. *The Abysmal Brute*. New York: Century, 1913. \$400-600.

First edition. Illus. with a frontis. by Gordon Grant. Olive green cloth stamped in black & dark green. Inscribed by Sinclair Lewis, "*Yours for the revolution! Jack London by Sinclair Lewis*" on front free endpaper. Accompanied by a signed typed note from Lewis on the lower half of a letter addressed to him, responding to the writer's query about whether Lewis helped write *The Abysmal Brute*, and to a request that Lewis inscribe accompanying book. The letter was written on June 16, 1948, and Lewis responds, "*It is true that I sold the plot of this story to Jack London, but I did not help him write it. He needed no help from me. Jack was one of the great story tellers of all time. No one understood the place of the common man in the Universe better than Jack London. He was a true revolutionary and a writer of great vision. I am proud to inscribe the book in his name, as he would have done.*"

Added to the lot is a small pamphlet (2 pp. of a folded, stapled signature), *Sinclair Lewis on the Valley of the Moon*, No. 91 of 100 copies issued by the Harvard Press for private distribution by Harvey Taylor, signed by Taylor. *The Abysmal Brute* with London's wolf's head bookplate on front pastedown.

This is a variant, probably later binding. Sine ends crimped; near fine.

James Pepper Rare Books, Inc.

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Santa Barbara, California 93109
Phone: (805) 963-1025
Fax: (805) 966-9737
E-mail: pepbooks@aol.com

Catalogue 88

176. Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922. \$300

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

177. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927. \$300

First edition, First issue. From the library of Harpo and Susan Marx, with their bookplate illustrated by Susan Marx. Very good clean copy without dust jacket.

Catalogue 89

186. Lewis, Sinclair. *Ann Vickers*. Garden City: Doubleday Doran, 1933. \$175

First edition. From the library of Harpo Marx, and his wife actress Susan Fleming Marx. Very good in a very good dust jacket with some darkening, chipping, and tears.

187. Lewis, Sinclair. *Work of Art*. Garden City: Doubleday Doran, 1934. \$95

First edition. From the library of Harpo and Susan Marx, with their bookplate illustrated by Susan Marx. Spine faded and cloth lightly used without dust jacket.

188. [Lewis, Sinclair.] Sherman, Stuart P. *The Significance of Sinclair Lewis*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922. \$35

First edition. Paperbound booklet, WITH BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE AND PORTRAIT. Light rubbing and dust soiling, with a 1" exterior tape repair at bottom of spine.

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November and December 1999

149. Lewis, Sinclair. *Our Mr. Wrenn*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1914. \$1,000

First edition of Lewis's first book written for adults. Small stain on front cover; photo of Lewis and Dorothy Thompson on copyright page, else a very good copy. Inscribed by the author, "Dear Dr. Lang: I think this is a first edition—but if Ruth hasn't read it, it isn't any edition. Sinclair Lewis."

150. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Job*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1917. \$650

First edition. Minor spots and rubbing; photo of Lewis tipped onto copyright page: very good overall. Inscribed by the author.

151. Lewis, Sinclair. *Free Air*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe, 1919. \$650

First edition. Minor spots and rubbing; very good overall. Inscribed by the author.

152. Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925. \$2,250

First edition. One of 500 numbered and signed copies; this copy has been additionally inscribed by Lewis. Spine very slightly soiled, else a fine copy in the seldom-present publisher's slipcase (some cracking and wear), and in the remnants of the original cellophane wrapper.

153. Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925. \$950

First edition. One of 500 numbered and signed copies. Ownership signature; a very good copy.

154. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928. \$1,350

First edition. Caricature of Lewis tipped inside front cover, very good in a dust jacket with some small chips. Inscribed by Lewis.

155. [Lewis, Sinclair.] Sherman, Stuart P. *The Significance of Sinclair Lewis*. New York: Harcourt, Brace 1922. \$300

First edition; original wrappers; very good. Lewis has written underneath the title, "Yeah?" and signed his name.

R & R Enterprises
Bedford, NH

Catalogue auction that ended at Midnight (EST)
Wednesday, February 16, 2000.

413. Lewis, Sinclair. TLS one page, 6.5 x 10, personal letterhead, March 31, 1941. MB \$100.

Author of *Babbitt*, *Main Street*, and *Elmer Gantry*, known for his realistic characterization and keen insight into contemporary social mores. In full he writes: "It was extremely kind of you to write to me about the broadcast—it's so long since I've seen you that it was very pleasant to hear from you again. I hope that the new book, of which you speak, will be coming along in another year now." Fine.

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