Sinclair Lewis: Social Satirist

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SINCLAIR LEWIS: SOCIAL SATIRIST

being

A thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

by

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Approved

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SINCLAIR LEWIS: SOCIAL SATIRIST

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the novels written by Sinclair Lewis, in an effort to determine whether the facts in them presented are accurate or not and if his satire is justified by existing conditions. Some critics have bitterly attacked Lewis because he satirized society. Since Lewis, who wrote concerning many social problems in the period between 1910-1950, was a popular writer, a study of his novels is pertinent. Surely, no one else serves so well as he to illustrate the relationship between literature and a practical world which he portrays and holds up to judgment.

Born in Sauk Center, Minnesota, in 1885, son of a doctor, Lewis was representative of the first half of the twentieth century. After graduation from Sauk Center High School, he attended Yale University where he was awarded a degree in 1907. In recognition of his ability as a writer, Yale conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature in 1936.

Lewis' career began as editor of The Volta Review, a magazine for the deaf; later the Stokes Publishing Company employed him as assistant editor of Adventure.
At one time, he was editor and advertising manager of the George H. Doran Company, publishers.

The Saturday Evening Post published many of his short stories between the years 1914-1919.

"Our Mr. Wren," a tale of his trip to Europe on a cattleboat, was published in 1914. "The Trail of the Hawk," "The Job," "The Innocents," and "Free Air" were some of his first novels. Altogether, he wrote twenty-six novels.

The writer's purpose in a book aids the reader to understand his novels. Lewis said that he had only one illusion: "that he was not a journalist and photographic realist, but a stylist whose chief concern in writing was warmth and lucidity. ¹

T. W. Whipple, associate professor of English in the University of California, in his remarks on this statement, declared that this was an illusion.

Such illusions are not uncommon...Lewis' wish need not prevent us from adopting the general view that he is a photographic realist and also, at times, something of a novelist or creative artist, yet after all, he is primarily a satirist—unless indeed he is more interesting as a product than as a critic of American society....His knack for mimicry is unsurpassed, yet charged with hostile criticism and all edged with satirical intent which little or nothing escapes. His is the world ruled by the desire of each individual for his own aggrandizement

¹ T. K. Whipple, Spokesman p. 208. (277 pages)
and it shows the effects of such a rule plainly in its appearance.\(^2\)

In the *Spokesman* T. W. Whipple explained Lewis' attitude toward society in these words:

> The world would have none of him; so he will have none of the world. His world was a poor one at best, but he denied himself even what little it might have offered. That is why he is still a boy, with a boy's insecurity and self-doubt hidden behind a forced rudeness and boldness....he has made Americans more hostile critics of one another.\(^3\)

Lewis' satire of religion inspired opposition both from the average man and the critics. The *Commonweal* opposed his books with great bitterness in an article entitled "God and Sinclair Lewis."

> I, the great Sinclair Lewis, author of books, which have put all the rooks in their places, can go up on a mountain and give a word of advice to the stars . . . We must believe that were there to enter the heart of Mr. Lewis, a momentary understanding that God is the Divine Lover, the awfulness of his ghastly renouncement would drive him crushed and repentant into the solitude of silence.

This indictment ignored the fact that Lewis hated hypocrisy in every vocation and did not condone it in any book. His satire showed his disapproval. The sale of the novels was a tribute to Lewis, the author. Although he satirized the average man for his false ideas of culture and education, and almost every phase of American life,

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 228.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 228.
his books are very entertaining and contain an element of truth in them.

Lewis died January 10, 1951 in Rome. Time alone will tell his place in literary circles. Regardless of his faults, there is an essence of truth in his novels. Like all satirists, he stirred up opposition of the reading public, which may lead to future social reforms.
CHAPTER I

PSEUDO CULTURE

The literature of a country reflects the standards which govern the country that the author represents. Culture implies refinement and a sense of propriety with an emphasis on true values.

Lewis very definitely has attacked pseudo-culture in Mainstreet, Dodsworth and the Prodigal Parents, with unrelentless satire. Traces of this attack on pseudo-culture can be seen in the other novels, but the theme of the three novels mentioned is pseudo-culture.

T. W. Whipple, professor of English in the University of California, has confirmed our opinion of Lewis' attack on pseudo-culture.

Lewis presents life dehumanized by indifference or enmity to all human values. The characters in his novels make a conventional gesture at the pursuit of culture but they lack the intellectual qualities which lead to appreciation of true values. In Gopher Prairie, the Thanatopsis Club listens to papers on the English poets; in Zenith a symphony orchestra is advocated for civic advertisement; but real appreciation of the fine arts is entirely lacking.¹

In Mainstreet, Lewis declared that the average American had not advanced beyond the pioneer stage in

¹. Ibid., p. 228.
culture. He declared:

Here is the newest empire of the world, the Northern Middlewest, a land of dairy herds and exquisite lakes of new automobiles and tar-paper shanties also silos like red towers, of clumsy speech and a hope that is boundless . . . They are pioneers, these sweaty wayfarers, for all their telephones, bank accounts, automatic pianos and co-operative leagues. 2

Mainstreet shows Gopher Prairie, a small town in the midwest, with stark realism. Minute details are given to emphasize its hit or miss ugliness. This setting emphasizes materialism. The town offers no chance for cultural advancement. The library contains no books by noted authors. The citizens cannot view the great works of art or hear concerts given by noted musicians. They have no theater where the masterpieces of drama can be presented for their enlightenment.

Carol Kennicott, a judge's daughter, had had every advantage in Minneapolis. The family library contained many classics for her perusal. Educated in a select girls' school, she was taught refinement and taste.

Carol's exclusiveness is clearly expressed by her comment to Dr. Kennicott at a reception given in their honor when she first arrived in Gopher Prairie.

"I've never met a tailor socially. It must be charming to meet one and not have to think about what you

owe him. Would you go hunting with your barber too."3

A truly cultured lady observes the rules of propriety and never once attracts unfavorable attention. At the welcoming party given in her honor, Carol defied the rules of society in Gopher Prairie by sitting with the men and discussing union labor. In an attempt to enliven the party, she shocked the crowd by her fickle remarks which attracted unfavorable attention.

Again, at her house warming, oblivious to the fact that her guests might think her noisy and improper, she amused them with a game of sheep and wolves which she had learned in Chicago. A hostess' first duty to her guests demands that she make them feel at ease. This game was entirely unsuited to the occasion.

The plan to rebuild the entire town showed Carol's emphasis on the material things of life and her false sense of real values. Even a person experienced in city planning would not suggest the destruction of all buildings to make room for modern structures. A new school building would be a big undertaking in itself. Totally unconscious of the absurdity of her plan, Carol even suggested to the town millionaire that he should donate funds for this purpose.

A new member of a club should always let the old

3. Ibid., p. 30.
members decide on the programs presented. When Carol joined the "Jolly Seventeen" and the Thanatopsis Club, she tried to change their programs completely. The members resented her interference.

Although the Thanatopsis Club used the magazine *Culture Hints* in planning their programs on English Poets, Drama and Art, their coverage of these subjects was very superficial and true appreciation of these fields was entirely lacking. The members of these clubs, thoroughly imbued with the idea of their importance, were entirely unconscious of their lack of social graces.

Lewis expressed his opinion of women's clubs in these words: "The Jolly Seventeen were the Country Club, the diplomatic set, the St. Cecilia, the Ritz oval room, and the Club de Vingt."\(^4\)

A cultured lady generally should observe the rules of propriety. Carol violated the rules when she entered the office of Guy Pollock, the lawyer, in the evening and remained there. Guy Pollock realized the impropriety of her actions and to prevent scandal asked in the dentist and his wife, who had an apartment in the same building, to drink coffee.

"Little Theatre" groups, in the large cities, presented some of the best plays at this time. Carol had

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attended some of their plays in Minneapolis. To teach the people of Gopher Prairie an appreciation of good drama, she decided to organize a dramatic club. Although Carol had not directed a play before, she posed as an experienced director. The cast had had no experience in dramatics, yet they had the utmost confidence in their ability to select and present a play. They did not put forth the effort necessary for good production and did not consider the audience before which the play was presented. Their background was an insurmountable obstacle to them.

It is an unimaginative standardized background, a sluggishness of speech and manners a rigid ruling of the spirit by a desire to be respectable. It is . . . the contentment of the quiet dead, who are scornful of the living for their restless walking. It is negation canonized by the one positive virtue. It is the prohibition of happiness. It is slavery self-sought and self-defended. It is dullness made God.\(^5\)

Not only did Lewis satirize the small town in Mainstreet, but he also satirized the city. When Carol went to Washington Square to escape the censure of her husband and friends, she found the same conditions which prevailed in Gopher Prairie. The average person whom Carol contacted did not appreciate the opportunities for cultural advancement. Carol, herself, did not have time or opportunity to enjoy the many advantages of a large city which had gone money-mad.

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 265.
The other characters faded into insignificance through the entire book. Dr. Kennicott seemed important only as the husband of Carol. He lacked a sympathetic understanding of his wife through the difficulties encountered in her adjustment to circumstances. A close study of his character revealed him to be the strong silent type in perfect control of his emotions. Although he realized the handicaps under which he pursued his profession in the community, he was determined to overcome all obstacles. Intent on his practice, he neglected his wife and only awakened when he had almost lost her. He did not lose his temper until circumstances became almost unbearable; then he showed judgment characteristic of maturity. His remark near the end of the story showed an attitude of futility.

"By jolly, I've done all I could and now I expect you to play the game." 6

Although Carol's emphasis on unimportant values was very trying to his patience, yet real love does not find its fulfillment in reason and the situation appeared unnatural. However, it gave the key to the many incidents related in the book.

At the end of the novel, the situation was almost identical with the situation at the beginning. 

6. Ibid., p. 300.
was the story of Carol Kennicott whose actions dominated the entire book.

Mainstreet was effective because of the amazing skill with which Lewis produced his own world. His mimicry was unsurpassed but charged with satire toward the characters and the town. Lewis showed himself, a product of the same environment which he portrayed so realistically. How else could he have conceived the idea of writing a novel which satirized American institutions and people?

The people of Sauk Center showed the realism of Mainstreet in their comments on the book, expressed to a reporter for the Kansas City Star.

We are very proud of Sinclair Lewis. Possibly he laid it on pretty thick. We, in the small town, don't think we are any worse than people in the cities in our lack of appreciation of the finer things. But Lewis is a wonderful writer.

In this same article, J. P. Hansen, a groceryman in Sauk Center, mourned the absence of "characters" today.

"The town used to be full of them," he said. 7

In *Dodsworth*, an European trip brought unhappiness to a retired automobile manufacturer and his excessively irritating but human wife. They expected to be admitted to European society because of their money but European social standards were based on background not on materialistic values. The characters portrayed showed the author's tendency to belittle the American people.

Although Fran, the chief character, had been educated in England, she was the daughter of a Zenith brewer. In spite of money, she could not be recognized in European society which was characterized by snobishness toward persons without a good background.

While Fran shopped for expensive clothes and went to the theater with a major, Dodsworth spent his time drinking with a fellow American and regretting the European trip. At no time did he avail himself of the opportunity for cultural advancement. His interest had been centered on the acquisition of worldly goods for so long that he did not know how to enjoy himself.

The scene shifted from England to Paris in a salon at the Ritz Hotel, then to a villa owned by the Duchess de Quatrefleurs, which had been leased by the Dodsworths. In this setting, Fran made every effort to impress society, but only succeeded in attracting some bankrupt noblemen who were seeking to recuperate their fortunes.
Arnold Israel, the perfect international Jew, and Kurt Von Obersdorf, an Austrian who spoke English with a Viennese accent, were Fran's constant companions. Renee de Penable, a designing woman, encouraged her to spend her money and to criticize Dodsworth's manners.

Only the fact that Kurt Von Obersdorf was a Catholic and Fran a Protestant prevented a divorce and remarriage. When Dodsworth asserted his authority, his wife accused him of romantic inclinations toward Mrs. Courtwright, a widow who jumped at the chance to recuperate her finances.

Throughout the book, the characters laid a stress on unimportant details. They judged a person by social position and not by character or intellectual qualities and manners.

Although they had gone to Europe with the expectation of being accepted by society, they were disappointed. Their sense of real values was lost in their desire to be accepted by European society.

Cultured people recognize their responsibility for the welfare of their children. Mr. and Mrs. William Cornplow neglected their children when they went to Europe, leaving their two children without parental advice. While they tried to appear sophisticated, their efforts showed that they were not seasoned travelers. They stayed at second-rate hotels and did not enjoy any of the
chances for cultural advancement.

Since their children had not been trained to be independent, they could not manage without their parents. Their daughter left her husband to join her parents in Europe. The father worried over his son so much that he returned home without his wife and daughter.

Howard Cornplow, the son, lacked strength of character which could be blamed on wrong rearing. The parents granted his every wish and upheld him when he was involved in an auto accident in college. In their absence, he made the home a gathering place for a communist organization whose members encouraged him to become intoxicated and to distribute pamphlets advocating communism among his college companions.

The parents thought they had done their duty when they provided the children with the material things of life. They did not train their children to appreciate the qualities that make strong character and assure respect of the community in which they lived.

Throughout the novel the satire was bitter and relentless toward parents who taught their children to be dependent and then left them to manage without parental advice. All the advantages which money offered could not compensate for lack of training and guidance.
Race prejudice is an important issue today when the world is torn by war. The armed forces of the United States are fighting on foreign soil to insure justice to all people regardless of race, creed or color. Forseeing that domestic tranquility depended on justice to all Americans, the American forefathers guaranteed the right of liberty and the pursuit of happiness to all citizens. Yet many Americans have not enjoyed these rights because of race prejudice. That the white race endangered their very existence in pioneer times by their unfair treatment of the Indians is revealed in Mantrap, written by Lewis in 1926. The Negro, through no fault of his own, suffered from race discrimination in Kingsblood Royal, Lewis' novel dealing with race prejudice and its dire results. The Jew, also in several novels, was not permitted to enjoy the rights of other Americans. Even within the white race, the characters showed resentment toward immigrants who had different standards of living from that of the average American.

Race prejudice caused an Indian uprising in Mantrap. The Indians, who outnumbered the white settlers, permitted these settlers to build homes and put in crops
without molesting them. The white settlers destroyed the Indian hunting grounds upon which they depended for existence. They set aside no land on which the Indians could raise corn. When people are hungry, they often commit acts of violence to secure the necessities of life.

The traders gave useless trinkets for valuable furs instead of food which the Indians lacked. They also gave whiskey to the Indians with the intention of robbing them. When the Indians, under the influence of liquor, became troublesome, they drove them from the settlement.

Although they showed no respect for Indian women, some of the white men married them and mistreated them, thus demonstrating their inconsistency. Selene, a half breed, the wife of Joe Easter, a trader, was one of the chief characters in the story.

A young missionary, another character, was always just in his dealings with the Indians. Sensing an uprising of the Indians, he fled to the wilderness. Now, the Indians had every opportunity to massacre this missionary and Selene who joined him. Instead, they left game by the campfire, when the food supply had dwindled. They also supplied a canoe for these weary travelers.

A careful study of Mantrap revealed Lewis' purpose in writing it. Certainly, he did not intend to inform the public about historical data; for he has not emphasized historical facts. Besides, these facts could be
obtained from our histories. Without doubt, he intended to show that the people of the United States falsely boasted of justice to all since from pioneer days to the present time, the white race had considered their own welfare more important than the welfare of other races. He showed that citizens today could not prove that they were white since the white men in pioneer times married Indian girls. He also implied that Americans could not justly blame other countries for their conquests of uncivilized people. Perhaps he implied that our government owed help to the Indians who barely eke out their existence in the middle west.

He showed only one part of the picture. The Indians are still wards of our government which allotted certain land to them. Government schools have been established. Some of the Indians have grown rich from oil found on their land. Many Indians are good citizens. Since harmony among races is imperative for survival, this satire seems untimely.

Race prejudice is the theme of *Kingsblood Royal*. In this novel, Lewis quoted verbatim a statement made by David L. Cohn, in the *Atlantic Monthly*:

There are whites and Negroes who would attempt to break down segregation in the South by Federal fiat. Let them beware. I have no doubt that in such an event every white man would spring
to arms and the country would be swept by civil war.¹

Lewis, however, did not condone the race prejudice expressed in the quotation just given. His statement follows:

There was no Lincoln now to call for troops and eighty five years after it had started, the war Between the States was won by the South. And in a small frozen city in the North Central States, a negro, Neil Kingsblood, was having trouble in keeping his job, not because of any incompetence or incivility but because of his color—even though he did not have that color, and God still reigned and everything was mysterious in its lack of any sense whatever.²

Neil Kingsblood, a banker and injured veteran of World War II, who believed that his name signified royal ancestry, traced his descent and discovered that he had negro blood. Before this discovery Neil and Vesta, his wife, were prejudiced against all races except the Caucasian race.

"Neil and Vesta had a distinct anti-Ethiopian bias in the matter of Belfreda, their maid, along with no very remarkable pro-Semitism or love for the Hindus, the Japanese, or the Finns."³

"One thing is obvious: the whole biological and psychological make-up of the Negro is different from that

¹. Kingsblood Royal p. 258.
2. Loc. cit.
3. Ibid., p. 12.
of white people, especially from us Anglo-Saxons (course I have some French blood too)," said Neil. 4

Neil's prejudice had developed while he was in the army. A doctor and a scientist told him that it had been proven that all Negroes have smaller brain capacity than white people and the sutures in their skulls close up earlier.

Neil expressed his prejudice again in these words. "Wouldn't I like to see one of these nigger college professors sent back to making cotton and laid over a barrel and getting fifty lashes if he bellyached."

Vesta felt insulted when her maid, Pelfreda, introduced her to Bums Burgdoll who remarked, "I have heard of Mrs. Kingsblood often. This is an honor. May I hope it will be repeated?"

To Neil's credit, he was irritated by the frequent sneers at "kikes." He meditated, "I don't suppose the Jews like being called 'kikes' any more than my French-Canadian ancestors like being called 'frog-eaters.'"

Thus Neil's intolerance of other races was shown before his father revealed that the Kingsbloods could rightfully lay claim to the English throne and asked Neil to trace their descent from Henry the Eighth and Catherine of Aragon.

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When he traced his ancestry in the records of the Minnesota Historical Society, he found that Xavier Pic, his ancestor, was a full-blooded Negro. The struggle he fought with himself is revealed in his words:

Why should I be so conceited as to imagine God has specially called me to be a martyr? And pretty vicious kind of a martyr that would sacrifice his mother and his daughter to his holy vanity! Everything can be just as it was. You wouldn't deliberately turn your own mother into an outcast, would you?5

Neil condemned his prejudice in these words:

I think God turned me black to save my soul. I've got to say, 'You're as blind and mean and ignorant as a white man, and that's a tough thing to take, even from myself.'6

Major Rod Aldrich, Neil's superior officer and friend, indicated that liberty for which our armed forces fought did not exist for the colored race. Calling a colored sergeant a Bolshevik because he objected to Negroes being segregated in transportation and Red Cross supplies, he remarked, "If our staff could have managed it, there was one dusky gentleman that would never have come home to his hot mama in this sweet land of liberty."7

The inconsistency of race prejudice annoyed Ash Davis, a Negro. He remarked:

5. Ibid., p. 69.
6. Ibid., p. 74.
7. Ibid., p. 89.
In one town in the South he can shop in any department store and ride on the front elevators and his wife can try on the clothes; and in the next one, forty miles away, he isn't allowed to enter any decent white store at all, and gets pinched if he tries it, and the elevators are jimcrowed even in twenty story office buildings. There's a controversy now in colored press about whether to go North and get frozen out or stay South and get burned out.  

Association with Negroes overcame his prejudice but made him realize that humiliation would result from a public confession of negro blood. When he confessed his negro blood, the president of the bank asked his resignation. He remarked, "The other evening you went to the house of a colored man named Woolcape and met a group of Negro trouble-makers who are plotting to destroy our entire business system."  

The banker accused him of taking advantage of his tolerance and Neil refused to shake hands at parting with this remark: "That's quite all right, sir, but I don't like to shake hands with white men."  

The result of his confession is shown in this statement:  

When he had warned himself, a month ago, that to be a penniless Negro in this Christian land would be difficult, that just to get through one day of the threat and actuality of snubs would be hard, he had not quite known that it would be hell in the

8. Ibid., p. 138.
9. Ibid., p. 262.
10. Loc. cit.
cold, hell in the employers' insults, hell in the pocketbook so flat that you took coffee or soup at a grubby lunch, hell in the screaming tendons of the lame, jarring leg he had almost lost in defending the freedom of white Americans to refuse jobs to black Americans.11

When Neil finally secured a job in a sporting goods store, the customers, seeking a sensation, insulted him, calling him a "nigger" and making remarks which he heard. Then, race prejudice caused the residents of Sylvan Park to blame Neil for his father's death. Mr. Staubmeyer gave forth, "You know he not only got fired from the bank for embezzlement but had a fight with his own father and yelled at him so outrageously that the poor old fellow dropped dead from a heart attack."12

This same Staubermeyer upheld his son who stripped Biddy Kingsblood and when Kingsblood, infuriated, threatened trouble, he yelled at him, "Got any idea how glad this neighborhood would be to get rid of all you coons? I always had an idea you were a nigger or something, Kingsblood, because you got along so well with the kikes and wops."13

When the Kingsbloods defended their home against a mob who sought to force them to move to the negro section of town, the police arrested them.

11. Ibid., p. 275.
12. Ibid., p. 332.
The last words of Vesta Kingsblood as she entered the patrol wagon were very significant. "Listen to Josephus Smith bawling out the policeman. There must be lots of good white men, aren't there?"

The critics have been strangely quiet about this indictment of race prejudice. The race problem is a live issue today. T. W. Whipple's review said that Lewis' novels had made Americans more critical of each other. This could well apply to Kingsblood Royal. When Sinclair Lewis' merits as a novelist were reviewed, this novel was not mentioned. Stress was put on Mainstreet, Arrowsmith and Babbitt. If this novel had been considered important, it would have inspired criticism either favorable or hostile.

Race prejudice can be traced in other novels whose general theme puts them in a different classification. Mainstreet told of the persecution of Eric Valberg, a Jewish tailor, who was compelled to seek a living elsewhere by prejudice. He had an appreciation of good literature and art. Carol Kennicott considered him a congenial companion; however the people of Gopher Prairie ignored him because he was a Jew. Finally, they left notes warning him to get out of town. Since he had harmed no one and had merely pursued his occupation, he was entitled to decent treatment accorded to the other residents. This treatment of Jews was not general as
Lewis would have us believe. In our experience, the Jews have been accepted into society and accorded every right enjoyed by other citizens.

Gideon Planish, in his lectures on crises in the Commonwealth, made his audience tremble with his inside news of Jewish Communist and Scandinavian Irish conspiracies against the common man. His lectures were written to attract the crowd so that he could make money. The response showed that the American people were only too eager to believe these accusations without investigation to see if facts justified them.

Bethel Merridy liked to tell of her father's escape from a burning Jewish village in Russia after seeing his father disembowled and then to declare that no immigrant to America had a chance in this wickedness of all capitalisms where seventy percent of the immigrants lay under Brooklyn Bridge, starving to death. Now, anyone with average intelligence would seek work to secure the necessities of life. Even if all the wealth were equally divided, some people would soon be poor because of mismanagement. In ordinary times work could be found by any person in America. Bethel Merridy's remark was not founded on actual facts. She was discouraged by her unemployment and blamed it on race prejudice.

The builders' organization in the Godseeker voted to strike if their employers hired Negro labor. Fearing
violence some of the more broad-mined members spirited Harry Oldham, the negro, out of town. When he was gone and the furor died down, a Swede made a motion to admit him to all rights and privileges as a member of the "Builder Workers Fraternity and Union." This action clearly proved that the members of the union did not want to antagonize the Negro race.

Cass Timberlane said that in the friendly city they did not shoot Jews but just did not call on them. He detested Sweeney Fishberg, a lawyer, because he was a Jew. A judge could not administer justice to all who came before his court when he let his prejudice against the Jewish race become known to his fellow lawyers. He could not make just decisions for the clients of this Jewish lawyer. This account seemed entirely improbable.

The Jew financeers plotted to control all business in America in It Can't Happen Here. They also supported communism. Now our laws prevented monopolies in the past and thus guaranteed to any man the right of free competition. The American people made these laws and government officials enforced them.

One of the most noticeable cases appeared in Arrowsmith. Dr. Gottlieb, a noted German Jew scientist, lost his job in the Rouncefield Clinic and could not get another job because of race prejudice.

Scientists have always dedicated themselves to
humanity and shared their discoveries regardless of race. Einstein was welcomed and honored in America. George Washington Carver, a Negro, has been highly honored for his experiments. This account of Dr. Gottlieb appeared improbable.
CHAPTER III

LABOR

Labor problems have threatened our economy in this generation. The strikes called by labor organizations have tied up transportation, have caused our citizens to be deprived of fuel and many necessities. When wage scales are high the price of commodities soars so that the buying public cannot obtain the necessities. When wage scales are low the standard of living of the average American is lowered. Labor agitators have caused dissatisfaction among the workers and aroused them until they destroyed property.

Lewis recognized the importance of labor problems. His novels indicated his belief in free competition, unhampered by labor organizations and government regulations.

Babbitt, the average man in the novel by the same name, argued in circles, showing that he did not understand the labor problem. He said, "A good labor union is of value because it keeps out radical unions which might destroy property."1

Then with characteristic inconsistency, he said, "In fact, just between ourselves, there ought not to be

any labor unions allowed at all."

Lewis said that the citizens of Zenith opposed a strike of telephone operators and linemen, since they feared violence which might destroy property and condemned "cooked-up" wage scales, government commissions which interfered with labor, labor federations, which he called "poppycock."

To show that free competition could not prevail when business men were antagonistic to their competitors, a character in *Babbitt*, Paul a lumberman, said that his firm not only distributed roofing but prevented competitors from distributing roofing.

Labor agitators caused strikes, said Lewis in *It Can't Happen Here*. He declared, "I do abhor war, yet there are worse things. Oh my friends far worse! A state of so-called peace in which labor organizations are riddled as by plague germs, with insane notions from anarchistic Russia."2 "Maybe when a country has gone mad like all our labor unions and workmen with their propaganda to hoist income taxes so that the thrifty and industrious have to pay for the shiftless and ne'er-do-wells, then maybe to save their lazy souls and get some iron into them, then maybe a war might be a good thing."3

2. *It Can't Happen Here* p. 9.

Now, our government carefully investigated to find the cause of strikes and deported aliens fomenting strikes. Lewis gave no proof supporting his statement and without proof such a statement was not justified. The last statement quoted was aimed at the unemployed laborers. In every age there are shiftless people but many workers could not find employment at this time when machines took the place of manpower.

Our government recognized the importance of this unemployment problem and granted temporary relief to the unemployed. Unemployment, for the most part, resulted from conditions for which the average man was not responsible.

Lewis asserted that twenty-eight million people were on relief and were beginning to get ugly, thinking that the government owed them support. Undoubtedly, some did take this view but personal experience with people on relief proved that the majority of these unfortunate people sought work in vain and only as a last resort sought relief. The commodities furnished were so meagre that they did not encourage idleness, yet the recipients were grateful for this assistance.

Lewis called the workers the forgotten men. In this book, the league of forgotten men petitioned the government to recognize them as instruments of joint bargaining and to make them a government bureau like the
syndicates in Italy.

Again, Lewis satirized newspapers which supported Norman Thomas, the Socialist candidate and defended the Five-year Plan. When one editor suggested that Russia might be the most pleasant country in the world for the mythical average man when her factories and giant farms really operated in nineteen forty five, he was called Bolshevik and his paper circulation dropped from five thousand to seven hundred fifty.

Lewis said he was a little of a Bolshevik as Herbert Hoover in these words: "Russia forbade everything that made his life endurable: privacy, the right to think and to criticize freakishly. To have his mind policed by peasants in uniform--rather than that, he would live in Alaska in a cabin with beans and a hundred books and a new pair of pants every three years."

The labor camps were opened with band music, paper flowers and speeches by the district commissioners. Sharecroppers, who had always complained of their misfortunes, did not seem one bit more contented in well-run hygienic labor camps.

Thus, Lewis satirized the discontent among labor when they were forced to depend on government aid and were deprived of the right to earn their living by free

4. Ibid., p. 57.
competition with other workers. Labor camps like the ones common in Europe under Hitler were opened. The W. P. A. here in America had temporary camps for those workers who labored away from home but no force was used. Since this was only a temporary arrangement to help the unemployed, we fail to get the parallel.

The strikers who opposed the Minute Men were treated with violence. Three communists who fomented an illegal strike of dockworkers were brutally treated by the Minute Men who tied them to a bale of rattan, soaked in oil and then set this bale on fire. Then, they shot off the criminals' ears and fingers but did not kill them "while trimming them up." Thus, Lewis showed what could happen here in America to communists if the people became aroused.

A review of the events in this book showed that the title itself could not be interpreted literally. This was Lewis' way of warning labor of the consequences of listening to agitators who were intent on fomenting trouble. Viewed in the light of events depicted, the title must be interpreted as satire. Without doubt, Lewis meant that it can happen here.

In *Elmer Gantry* Lewis portrayed a minister who declared that he was in sympathy with the American Federation of Labor, the Independent Workers of the World, the Communists and the Nonpartisan League although they
did not sympathize with one another. 5

Another statement which followed was very enlightening: "Frank Shallard found that the worthy butchers and haberdashers of his congregation did not radiate joy at a defense of Bolshevik Russia." 6

Lewis defended free competition in *Gideon Planish*. In this book, the citizens called a conference to discuss crises in the commonwealth. This conference opposed labor racketeers who interfered with free enterprise. The members opposed laws which favored corporations and discriminated against individuals. Agitated by Gideon Planish who told that Irish and Scandinavian labor agitators were manufacturing machine guns in a cellar near Sebastian, North Dakota, the conference gave him funds to buy bibles to trade for the tommy guns which he proposed to destroy.

The Cizkon speakers represented banks, insurance companies, utility companies, and corporations who tried to convince the workers that their organizations were working for the welfare of the common man.

Lewis said, "The Cizkon was so idealistic that it dripped."

The Cizkon magazine showed the picture of George

Washington crossing the Delaware. Underneath the picture was a caption which asserted, "If George Washington crossed the Delaware today, it would be to spend a weekend with the Du Ponts." 7

Sanderson Smith, the head of the Cizons, was a communist. When Mrs. Roosevelt appeared friendly to coal miners, he explained that this had been accomplished by collusion with Moscow. He also circulated the rumor that Miss Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, was really Rebecca Paryzsta of Czakov and originated the joke, attributed to several popular columnists, that the New Dealers were all small town boys named Ray - Ray Frankfurter, Ray Tugwell, Ray Moley, Ray Roosevelt.

To arouse dissatisfaction, Sanderson Smith, paid speakers who advocated small company unions, since he believed that the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O. would not serve his purpose. The regulations in these large organizations hampered him. The workers, believing that he was concerned for their welfare, listened to him.

To arouse the white people in the South, he persuaded one employer in a Southern state to hire one per cent Negro labor. This action caused trouble and gave the communists a chance to influence the workers against the New Deal. In nineteen forty, he was put in prison.

7. Gideon Planish p. 272
for his subversive activities which threatened the effectiveness of the New Deal.

Thus, Lewis satirized both Labor and Capital who were victims of subversive agitators. Lewis showed labor swayed by agitators until they were not sure of their views and often acted hastily without regard for consequences. A character defended labor unions for several pages then made a statement which repudiated everything said. To the thoughtful reader, his satire appeared a warning to the average man, not to listen to agitators and not to act hastily without investigation since hasty action might force our government to interfere to prevent violence.

Our government has deported foreign agitators and has used troops to prevent violence and has tried to settle strikes and even to avoid strikes by setting up wage scales and limiting hours, by making laws which do not permit excessive profit for capital at the expense of the worker.
Education is of vital importance to every American citizen. The continuance of democracy depends on the enlightenment of our youth. To insure proper training of the youth of America, the teachers in our schools are required to meet high standards of education and character; but the American people must be on guard to prevent foreign idealology from infiltrating into our schools, and to insure instruction which will prepare students for a career. A loyalty oath is required of all teachers.

Lewis recognized the importance of education. He wrote with authority since he was a graduate of Yale University. Personal prejudice or some unfortunate incident may have occurred to inspire his satire on education directed toward both teachers and students. Be that as it may, Lewis emphasized the bad features of education to the neglect of the good features. He satirized both instruction and career.

Gideon Planish portrayed a university professor whose name was listed as a national director on the stationery of a propaganda organization. This fact was a serious indictment of universities which allowed professors to belong to subversive organizations and yet to retain their prestige.
Lewis described Gideon Planish as a man who early in life became addicted to the narcotic effect of his own voice. Not only a professor but a lecturer, he was a philanthropist, a professional money raiser, a man of "superior" education who was often toastmaster at public dinners.

This statement emphasized the egotism of Gideon Planish and his greed for money - two very undesirable qualities. Gideon Planish made no attempt to raise our standards of education or even to uphold the existing standards. Money was more important to him than the welfare of the school which should have been his first consideration.

A good teacher knows the subject matter in the courses which he teaches and makes careful preparation to insure proper presentation of the subject so that the students can understand every detail and also arouses the interest of the class by a variety of methods.

Since Techla Pridmore Schaum, daughter of the president of the college trustees, prepared Gideon Planish's lectures which he read for the first time, in class the students asked many questions which he could not answer; thus, he lost the confidence of his students. To hide his confusion, caused by lack of preparation, in the time which invariably remained, he resorted to questions which had little connection with his subject.
For example, he asked a rhetoric class who would sell a vacuum cleaner, one who used rich mellifluous language or one who used crude language? Then, he declared that all persons who did not attend Kinniknick College and even those who did attend but did not love the rhetoric class used crude language.

His choice of companions showed his weakness for publicity. He was not careful in his choice of companions. One of these, Winifred Homeward "the talking woman," was on the boards of twenty-seven welfare organizations and gave lectures three times a week. Senator Tom Blizzard and the fabulous Charles B. Marduc, magazine publisher and communist, were his boon companions. Notice the satire in these names: Homeward - Blizzard - Marduc.

A university professor should be careful not to affiliate with communist organizations. Planish got lecture engagements through the Cizkon, a communist organization which warned editors by letters, ostensibly from indignant subscribers, that liberals were essentially more dangerous than communists. The Cizkon even tried to influence school boards in their choice of textbooks. Thus Lewis warned educators to be careful when choosing textbooks.

This account can be substantiated by facts. "The American Way of Life," a history textbook, has been banned from our high schools recently because it fostered ideas
against our government. Even the pictures cast a noticeable reflection on our way of life. Many teachers protested the use of this book.

Although he was not qualified to be an administrator, the board of regents offered him the presidency which he considered until his coed wife opposed it. That he was not innately bad but a victim of circumstances is shown by his realization of his faults. At last, he was certain that he would take a train some day and in some still small valley, find honor and dignity.

When the students advocated every foreign idealology, communism, socialism, atheism, and agnosticism, just to be different and to start an argument which would conceal their lack of preparation, Gideon Planish took these arguments seriously and became impatient with the students since they asked questions which he could not answer with authority.

From our own experience, a good professor keeps the pupils' minds on the subject by giving them work to occupy every moment. Practical application of the principles set forth in the lectures must follow the lectures if instruction is effective.

In spite of his deficiency, Professor Planish became Dean Planish when the old dean died "in the harness" also "in the liquor." Then President Bull (a significant name) asked him to be president when he retired. Thus, Lewis satirized instruction in our universities. This
satire was consistent with the characters which he portrayed. Since a professor is a public servant, every activity and interest of a professor is scrutinized by the public. Gideon Planish belonged to several organizations which he exploited to secure money. "The Blessed to Give Brotherhood"—make them pay while they pray—was one; "The Heskett Rural School Foundation" was another. Christian Stern, New York communist, a slick politician, was chairman of the board. "The Citizens Conference on Constitutional Crises in the Commonwealth," mentioned in the chapter on labor, also "The Every Man a Priest Fraternity" were organizations to which Gideon Planish belonged.

This account would not be complete without consideration of the students who were bewildered by the problems facing this generation. In their attempt to appear sophisticated, perhaps just to be different, they advocated communism and atheism; some of them opposed Jews. Certainly, Gideon Planish did not help them by precept or example.

Lewis showed the traits ascribed to him by Carl Van Doren. A pursuit of the tedious commonplace, photographic gifts of accuracy and exactness of detail. While he satirized only one professor, he made him a representative of all professors. His evidence was so convincing that any person who had not attended colleges where the professors were conscientious upright men, might believe
him. This showed the personal bias and prejudice of the author who satirized the system which permitted the abuses found in his account and also the instructors both in the classroom and in their outside activities. This satire was destructive not constructive for it suggested no solution for the problem.

That education did not assure success in a career was the theme of Bethel Merriday. In this novel, Lewis showed the difficulties encountered by actors in their chosen profession. He emphasized that success depended upon hard work and the intelligence of the audience. Lewis wrote from experience since he chose acting for his career in his youth. He even played some minor parts in the theater. Unable to make expenses, he gave up his chosen profession with regret. His sympathy for actors made Bethel Merriday his gentlest novel.

Bethel Merriday, the heroine in this novel, was trained in dramatics at an exclusive girls' school. A star in a play given by the dramatics department, she became interested in the theater and chose a career as an actress. During the summer, with unbounded enthusiasm, she joined a stock company at Point Grampton, New York, on the Sound. Roscoe Valentine, the manager, was composed entirely of powderpuffs except for his brains and indignant red eyes, and Andy Deacon, a Yale man, was a very rich but undistinguished actor.
The apprentices were permitted to appear in three plays during the season. Not until the fourth play, *Stage Door*, by Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufman did Bethel have her chance. Then she played a minor part. Fletcher Hewitt, a good actor, declared that she was magnificent and Andy Deacon, another distinguished actor, beamed, "Nice work, Miss Merriday."

These actors admired her, not her performance, but Bethel did not realize the significance of their remarks until she read a critical report by Mr. Black Bart in the *New London Era*. "Miss Merriday made Bernice so objectionable and flashy that she made one itch, and yet so pathetic when she 'busted down' that one changed his mind and decided to shoot her instead of boiling her in hair oil."

When the cast disbanded, Bethel went to New York seeking employment. Her education, particularly the course in dramatics, did not impress the theater managers. When she had almost given up her career, Andy Deacon, whom she had met at the summer camp gave her a part in Romeo and Juliet played in modern dress. She was chosen to understudy Mahala Vale, another actress, who played the part of Juliet and to say the prologue as well as to play the part of a page to Mercutio.

Since the audiences in the small towns did not appreciate Shakespeare's play, the venture was a failure.
The uneducated people thought the performance uninteresting; the educated people criticized the modern dress of the actors. While Shakespeare's plays are universal in their application, we feel the modern dress was inappropriate.

Bethel Merriday's career ended when she married one of the actors. At last, she was convinced that she had no talent and that her efforts would end in failure.

Education should aid a person in choosing a career suited to talent and ability. The dramatics teacher mislead Bethel when he failed to explain the difficulties of the stage and that only a person of unusual talent could succeed in the actor's profession. However, experience has shown us that a young person is not easily convinced when her heart is set on a certain occupation. A teacher dislikes to discourage his students; nevertheless we feel that duty requires him to guide the student so that he may judge his own ability and thus be able to pick a suitable career.

Guidance courses play an important part in the curriculum. The influence of the teachers plays a major part in the guidance of our young people. To inspire lasting respect, we feel that a teacher must often explain the deficiency of the pupil but he should ever be able to give constructive criticism with that helpful attitude which inspires confidence. Education has failed when a student picks the wrong career. Bethel Merriday found out her deficiency the hard way. Her determination to succeed
against all odds, was a very admirable trait.

Only a person familiar with the stage could have written this novel.
he debated with himself whether to send her back alone or to escort her back. His conscience told him to get her back to town at once but the path to the cottage was narrow and dangerous so they waited until daylight. As a result, they were married and Gideon Planish was constantly in love and in debt. This account did not take into consideration the Dean of Women who supervised the girls and set hours and disciplined students who disregarded these hours.

The other professors were far from ideal since they had private bars, although President Bull was a teetoler. The general public expects the highest type of manhood in the teaching profession since young people are easily influenced.

A close examination of this book revealed Lewis’ purpose when he wrote this novel. Lewis intended to show the infiltration of communism in our colleges. He allied Gideon Planish with a communist organization (the Cizkon mentioned in Chapter IV). Then, he made his morals questionable. Thus by clever satire he indited communism.

*Elmer Gantry* portrayed a religious hypocrite who exploited religion to cover his vices and to make money to gain power. Meekness and humility were entirely lacking in his character.

In college, he sought the companionship of the most worldly students who drank heavily, gambled, and caroused.
He was never truly converted; yet he entered the ministry. His first charge was a small church at Paris, Kansas, a puritanical rural community. There, he soon discovered that he could work on the emotions of his congregation and influence them to contribute large sums to his support.

Among other faults, he was entirely too interested in the girls in his parish but too clever to betray his feelings. A young girl came to him in the church and with tears in her eyes told her sinful nature. Forgetting his dignity, he embraced her just at the moment when a parishioner entered the door. Her father insisted that Elmer marry her but he arose to the occasion. He induced a young man who admired her to court her and wriggled out of his predicament, but he lost prestige in this narrow-minded community.

Unable to face the gossip caused by this incident, Elmer left Paris to join a young girl revivalist who was conducting meetings in a tent. She went into trances like a fortune teller while Elmer harvested the savings of the audience. When Elmer haunted her apartment after hours, dressed in flowing robes, she served cocktails. Elmer felt constricted under her influence until she burned to death in a tabernacle fire leaving Elmer free again.

Then, bent on fame and fortune, he decided to combine into one association all the moral organizations of
America, perhaps of the entire world: The anti-saloon league; the W. C. T. U.; the vice societies which censored immoral novels, paintings, plays and motion pictures; the associations fighting Sunday baseball and golfing.  

Elmer Gantry revealed the puritanical idea of God continuously challenging, denying—the Being summoned up in a kind of retroactive barbaric mood at revival camp-fires.

Elmer Gantry, the minister, lacked the moral qualities which ministers possess. He not only exploited religion for financial gain but his private life would not bear investigation.

Prisons were breeding places for crime, said Lewis in his novel, Ann Vickers. He saw the need for mental therapy if the prisoner were ever to become a useful citizen.

Ann Vickers was a social worker who worked in a prison for women. Since no distinction among criminals was recognized, hardened criminals, even murderesses, associated with young girls who had committed some minor offense and were serving a short term. The executions occurred close to the cell block where the prisoners could hear everything.

Since the prisoners lacked medical care, social...

1. Elmer Gantry p. 409.
diseases spread unchecked.

Realizing that idleness could never heal the broken minds of these unfortunate women, Ann went to the prison board to suggest work for the prisoners; but the board thought her sentimental and refused to cooperate until a disastrous prison riot occurred.

Lewis blamed a society which permitted slums in our large cities along with places of vice which made criminals, and emphasized the need of preventive measures which would change people into desirable citizens before they were imprisoned.
CHAPTER VI

MARRIAGE

Lewis viewed marriage with cynicisms; yet he realized the importance of successful marriage. The characters in his novels were often mismated and their careers suffered. In Case Timberlane Lewis made this statement:

If the world of the twentieth century cannot succeed in this one thing, married love, then it has committed suicide, all but the last moan, and whether Germany and France can live as neighbors is insignificant compared with whether Johann and Maria or Jean and Marie can live as lovers. With each decade such serenity was more difficult with careers for women opening equally on freedom and on a complex weariness. But whether women worked in the kitchen or in the machine shop, married love must be a shelter, or the world would freeze, out in the bleak prairies of irresponsible love-making.¹

Gideon Planish, in the novel of the same name, married a young girl student and was constantly in love and in debt. Peony lacked intellectual qualities so necessary for a professor's wife.

Dr. Kennicott, in Mainstreet, loved his wife deeply but he was always master of his emotions. His profession demanded coolness in every emergency. Carol was impetuous and romantic and liked society and missed the advantages

of the big city. In contrast, Dr. Kennicott liked a small town and was too busy to court his wife.

They separated and Carol went to Washington for two years with her son. Dr. Kennicott, true to his character, did not urge her to return. She made the decision herself. She returned because her perspective had changed. Washington Square did not give her the companionship for which she longed, since she held a job to support her son. Finally, she realized that her rebellion was caused by immaterial things which really did not matter.

Lewis used a unique method in Cass Timberlane, a novel of husbands and wives. He interrupted the story of Cass Timberland and his young bride to relate marital difficulties under the heading: "An Assemblage of Husbands and Wives."

In this novel, Doctor Roy Drover whose marriage was considered successful, although his wife often contemplated suicide, expressed his opinion of marriage in these words:

My experience is that it's all nonsense to say that marriage is difficult just because of complicated modern life on top of the fundamental clashes between the sexes. Yessir! It's all perfectly easy, if the husband just understands women and knows how to be patient with their crazy foibles. You bet!2

Again, children upset the schedule of some homes and

2. Ibid., p. 79.
made the father feel neglected. Some couples were just naturally bored with each other and flirtations with the opposite sex resulted. Juliet was the flirtatous type. Most men knew that the way to shut up Juliet was to kiss her.

Drinking was a major difficulty which caused quarrels and separations. Sometimes violence occurred; for example, debts incurred by his wife caused one man to jump from a twelve story building.

In one case, the wife was so particular that her husband never felt at ease after a trying day at the office, so he went up town to seek cheerful companions.

One man loved porridge for breakfast and every morning, three hundred and sixty-five mornings a year, they had porridge. After thirty-two years his wife reported, a bit reluctantly, "I think I'm beginning to like the nasty stuff."3

Another man was sick of his wife's mildly chattering tongue and her extravagance and her astonishing tendency to get accidentally kissed at country club dances. He invited a gay young fellow to their home to play three handed rummy; then he was called out to the cement works at ten p.m. and telephoned that he could not return until two. His scheme worked and she divorced him.

3. Ibid., p. 188.
One married man made a death pact with his illicit sweetheart, and they almost died of carbon monoxide in an enclosed car. A detective broke the Casanova's jaw.

Many other cases of marital trouble brought the persons concerned before Judge Timberland but he did not heed the warning but married a giddy young girl who carried on flirtations right under his nose, then finally ran away with a notorious young man who never intended to marry her.

Judge Timberland's own marriage ruined his career, since his fellow lawyers looked upon him with contempt and questioned his judgment in court. His friends blamed him for being too severe on his young bride but an unsatisfactory first marriage had embittered him. The entire situation was utterly absurd since difference in education, age, and taste could only mean trouble.

The frankness with which Lewis portrayed the characters exceeded propriety yet many characters represented the lower strata of American society which aired their difficulties in court. Cass Timberland did not have the background of a representative judge.

This novel could not compare with the better novels written by Lewis. The plot was disconnected and the characterization was poor.

The Prodigal Parents was one of the minor novels written to show parents their duty to their children. It
emphasized the disastrous results of wrong bringing up and children's need of parental advice.

William Cornplow, a successful automobile manufacturer, suddenly realized that his children considered him a walking bank account to whom they owed neither affection nor respect.

The children had not been taught to be independent in their youth. When they got into scrapes, their parents upheld them instead of correcting them. Howard, the son, who attended college had a car and an unlimited checking account. When the Dean of the college called Mr. Cornplow for a conference after a bad accident which put several boys in the hospital occurred, he would not listen to reason but upheld his son.

Emily, the married daughter, was so spoiled that she would not accept her responsibility as a wife and mother.

Shifting their responsibility, the parents went to Europe. Their conscience troubled them so that they did not enjoy the trip. Emily joined her parents in Paris. When her account of Howard's actions made the father so uneasy that he returned home, he found the home a gathering place for a communist organization. The house was a shambles with dirty dishes and whiskey bottles. For the first time, he realized his duty as a father, almost too late to help his wayward son.
The theme was excellent but the novel read like a collection of unpolished notes. The plot was hard to follow.

Arrowsmith won the Pulitzer Prize on its merits as a work of science. It raises the question: Can a man devoted to science make a good husband?

When Martin Arrowsmith married Leora Tozier, a student nurse, he took a practice in a small community to support his wife. Financial difficulties temporarily kept him from research work but the desire to contribute something worthwhile still ruled him.

When Dr. Gottlieb, his former professor, a man devoted to science wrote to him he could no longer resist the desire to continue his research. He then took a job with the Rouncefield Clinic in Chicago. While he pursued his research in a laboratory, Leora watched over him, administering to his every need but never interfering with his work. Absorbed in his experiments, for many days, he neglected her but she remained firm and steadfast at his side while he experimented with potential death in test tubes.

Although they had no home life because of the pressure of his work, Leora bore it all without complaint, contented to be near him. When his employers, becoming impatient at his failure to find a serum which would advertise the clinic and bring financial gain, criticized
him, Leora cheered him with her sympathetic understanding even though he criticized her unmercifully.

The same conditions prevailed at the McGurk Institute in New York with the exception that Leora was not permitted to enter the laboratory where Arrowsmith handled deadly plague germs. Discovering a serum to control the plague, Arrowsmith decided to go alone to the West Indies where the plague was raging. Leora insisted on accompanying him. There, she died of the plague, although Arrowsmith took every precaution to protect her. His unfailing devotion to science sacrificed his wife.

True to life, Arrowsmith married a wealth girl, who equipped a large laboratory for him. Selfish and demanding, unlike Leora, she called him a microbe grubbing smart aleck. His work suffered before he rebelled and left with a doctor friend to pursue his research and experiments.

For the first time, he knew all that Leora had meant to him. At last he appreciated her untiring devotion and her self-effacement when he was occupied for long hours in the laboratory.

Thus the quotation from Cass Timberlane emphasizing the importance of true love and showing the interference with marriage of a career applied to Arrowsmith whose career, sacrificing his wife, brought only a feeling of frustration and endless misery, which a second marriage
could not alleviate.

If marriage succeeds, husband and wife must work together, bound by inseparable ties of loyalty and consideration unhampered by selfishness and outside interests. Leora's training as a nurse gave her understanding of the difficulties of the medical profession and unlike the second wife she aided her husband in his career. His second wife wanted Arrowsmith to be successful to make a favorable impression on his friends; yet she expected him to be her constant companion in society.

Arrowsmith, by rights, should have stayed single and devoted his time to his career which meant so much to him.

The real test of marriage came to George T. Babbitt and his wife at middle age when their two children were almost grown and romance had settled into reality. Babbitt expected his wife to run the house with the same efficiency with which he ran his business. His stenographer catered to his every wish with the efficiency of an experienced business woman. Children completely upset the schedule in the home. Ted and Verona came in at all hours and left disorder in their wake.

A gay young widow, who rented a flat owned by the Babbitt Real Estate Company, induced Babbitt to join a reckless younger set in their merrymaking, but they soon tired of him when he could not keep up the pace of the
crowd. Babbitt's actions were unbecoming to a mature married man.

Babbitt had a conceited idea of his importance. Asked to make a five minute speech at a Rotary Club dinner, he paced the floor at home rehearsing his speech a hundred times, driving his family to distraction. When Ted and Verona skipped out with their friends, Babbitt was offended by their lack of appreciation of their father's importance.

Mrs. Babbitt could not depend on her irresponsible husband when she sent him on errands. Before an important dinner party at their home, she instructed him to get some ice cream. He completely forgot until the stores closed; then chased around all over town until he found a merchant who would open his store for him.

When Paul Riesling, a friend, shot his nagging wife Babbitt sympathized with him; however, he urged a reconciliation when Mrs. Riesling forgave her husband, although one arm was useless. Babbitt himself was not strong willed enough to commit such an act.

When Mrs. Babbitt had an appendicitis operation, Babbitt paced the hospital corridor until she was out of danger. He found that he still loved her, and that his duty to his wife came first with him.

The double standard which permitted a married man to wander from his responsibility and yet to retain his prestige in the community bore the blunt of Lewis' satire.
A successful marriage never results when a woman spends all her time on household duties, which make endless demands on her time, to the neglect of her husband. Mutual respect and understanding with common interests might have saved them from a misunderstanding.

In conclusion, marriage was fraught with difficulties in Lewis' novels.
CONCLUSION

Lewis took one side of the issue and made it appear the entire issue.

*Mainstreet* laid an emphasis upon knowledge and education. These will not give culture, alone. Culture is more or less innate and depends upon refinement, consideration for others, a sense of propriety, good manners and taste, not upon material things. Lewis emphasized the disadvantages of a small community and overlooked the advantages. He had acquired a prejudice against a small town and could not see the wholesome influences which made life in a small town worthwhile. The characters represented were not representative citizens but people who had not the desire to understand the needs of a small community. They were critical and overbearing, entirely lacking in sympathy and understanding. Personal aggrandizement was their sole aim. They made a conventional gesture at the pursuit of culture, but real appreciation of the finer things was lacking.

In *Dodsworth*, the characters thought money the basis of society. They never sought the company of people of real worth and were utterly miserable since they tried to ape the people who had good background. They had struggled so long for wealth that they had neglected the real values.

The *Prodigal Parents* were not typical American
parents but were selfish in considering their own interests and forgetting their duty to their children, a duty which comes first with most American parents, who try to rear their children to be independent useful citizens. This responsibility faces all parents and the strength of America lies in its homes and public opinion frowns on parents who neglect their children.

Race prejudice is not so widespread in America as Lewis would have us believe. Only narrow-minded people discriminate against people of other races. The average American believes in race integrity but strives to raise the standards of living of all races. America has made rapid strides to assure opportunities of education and occupation to all citizens regardless of race, creed, or color. True worth is recognized by all and all races enjoy the privileges of American citizens until they abuse their rights.

The moral standard is high in America. Public opinion, as well as our laws, upholds this standard. Many organizations make campaigns against vice and our government prosecutes violators. The average American has high ideals.

Our university professors are fine outstanding men and the students are earnest in their desire for an education. A man of Gideon Planish's calibre could not even get a job. Lewis' personal prejudice caused him to give
an inaccurate view of education. He decidedly misrepresented facts.

Labor unions were organized to protect the rights of the laboring man and to prevent exploitation of labor by capital. Shorter hours and better pay has enabled the worker to have a higher standard of living. Conditions in our factories have been improved to meet the demands of organized labor and to check abuses.

Lewis treated the sensational for effect. This is especially true of *Kingsblood Royal*. Most authors would hesitate to take the subject of a white man who found he had Negro blood for fear of criticism.

Lewis failed to show the fine qualities, the high moral and educational standards of representative Americans in his books. While his books are very entertaining, they do not inspire us to higher ideals.
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