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The Editor's Corner

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THE
EDITOR'S CORNER



NOT BOOKS but Death (including the escape from it) furnished the big literary news recently. The one who escaped lived to face the inescapable situation, and armed all too symbolically with bananas and gin had to make his apologies for not dying. Others did not deny a public feast, and from the Tabloids to the White Horse Tavern a great Dionysiac chewing goes on.

At the tables the guests, mostly crashers, busy themselves in killing what is still alive—the personality of the dead writer. Death and gossip are cousins. Perhaps, like the fallen Bodenheim, the man is stigmatized and the acquaintances who “tried to help” are praised; or like the risen Thomas, the man is angelicized and the friends and acquaintances who “betrayed” him blamed. Either way it is the same process at work: the destruction of fact and the beginning of legend. Like most of the workings of death, it is not a pretty process but it has its necessity.

The facts which the droners are carrying off are either extraneous or else have a significance almost impossible to verify. But the legend they begin can be verified, and will be. In its essentials it must square with the dead writer's books. These are now the major fact of his life. In his death begins their Authority.

Alive, a man is a writer in the

same sense that a man is a carpenter. Dead, he becomes a Writer. Which is to say a name attached to books. Maybe history will provide him the blurb of legend. If he is lucky it won't, and if he is luckier still not too much assorted fact will be left to go with the name. Death ought to earn the man freedom from being used as a looking-glass through which to view his work; just as it ought to earn the work freedom from his possession.

So there is a special excitement and hullabaloo when a good writer dies. There is a sweet shiver of public domain. The satisfying click of a *Works*, fastening into place. It is more than the sense of a paid debt. Rather a symbol of the truth that for a writer, his death is a major premise of his art.

CONTRIBUTORS

DOROTHY BROWN ASPINWALL, who translated Astorg's chapter on Gide, is Canadian by birth, by profession Associate Professor of European Languages at the University of Hawaii.

MALCOLM BROWN, Albuquerque artist, did the cover symbol.

IRVING FELDMAN lives in New York City, has published poems in *Poetry* and *Western Review*.

MARY FREEMAN'S "D. H. Lawrence: Preview of a Basic Study" appeared in Spring 1950 *NMQ*. She lives in Florida.

EDWIN HONIG, author of *Garcia Lorca*, has published poetry, prose, and criticism in a good number of maga-

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LYSANDER KEMP now lives in Mexico, has published poetry widely (see *NMQ's* Poet Signature XVII, Winter 1953).

GILBERT NEIMAN's "Death in the South" is an excerpt from his recently completed novel *Art's the Thing!*, a comedy. Mr. Neiman, who lives in Albuquerque, is now working on a new novel.

MYRON OCHSHORN, who teaches at the University of New Mexico, has been working for the past several years on a book on Dylan Thomas, which is now nearing completion.

CHARLES OLSON is the author of *Call Me Ishmael* (Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947); *Y & X* (Black Sun Press, 1948); *In Cold Hell, In Thicket* (Origin Press, 1953); *Maximus Poems/1-10* (Jonathan Williams, 1953); *Mayan Letters* (Divers Press, 1954). He teaches at Black Mountain College.

JERRY RICHARD lives in New York City. "Drowning" is his first published story.

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VAL TELBERG was "born 1910 in Moscow of Swedish parentage. Lived mostly in North China until 1928. Then went to college [Wittenberg] in Springfield, Ohio, and returned to China after graduation in 1932. Entered publishing and export business until 1939. Then came to New York, worked as an advertising executive until 1941. Then went into painting and gradually entered abstract photography." Mr. Telberg's work has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art (N. Y.), Brooklyn Museum, Smithsonian Institute, Galerie Huit (Paris), Amerikahaus (Munich), Slade School of Fine Art (London), et al. He is represented in a number of public and private collections.

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