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Designed and produced by the Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, New York 13210*

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THE COURIER



VOLUME III, NUMBER 4, WHOLE NUMBER 20, December 1963

Michel Licht

Mrs. Evelyn Markun Licht, relict of the eminent Yiddish poet, Michel Licht, recently donated to Syracuse University Library a rich portion of her late husband's extensive library of books, music, original letters and manuscripts, and files of avant-garde periodicals and publications. Among the magazines were files of *Hound and Horn*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, *Criterion*, *The Dial*, *Pagan*, *Accent*, and *Partisan Review*.

In the collection are letters to Licht by James Branch Cabell (Licht was the translator of the Yiddish edition of the Virginian's *Jurgen*), Ezra Loomis Pound of Hailey, Idaho, Thomas Stearns Eliot and Marianne Craig Moore, both of Saint Louis, Missouri, Gertrude Stein of Allegheny, Pennsylvania, Hart Crane of Garrettsville, Ohio, and other literary luminaries with whom the poet maintained an extensive correspondence.

The gift contains copies of Licht's published work as well as a varied group of numerous notebooks, diaries, and other holograph materials in English, Russian, and Yiddish. There is also an original poem by the distinguished Russian poet, Sergei Yessenin, husband of the tragic Isadora Duncan, accompanied by a translation into English.

In addition, Mrs. Licht presented Syracuse University Library with about a thousand recordings of classical music, most of which are now rare and sought after as collectors' items; also numerous pamphlets by Randolph Silliman Bourne, Christopher Darlington Morley, William Morley Punshon McFee, and a collection of play-bills and programs of the Provincetown Players and the Federal Theatre, the latter established as a project of the Works Progress Administration back in 1935.



From Drawing by Evelyn Markun Licht

Michel Licht
(1893-1953)

Michel (or Michael or Michi) Licht was born in Plisk, Volhynia, Russia on 30 June 1893, and until the age of twenty he lived in Bielozorka, at the home of his aunt and uncle who guided his early education in traditional Jewish learning as well as in secular studies. His poem "Dem Feter Shaye un der Mume Pesye" ("For My Uncle Shaye and My Aunt Pesye"), dedicated to these fine and simple people, is among the best of the modern Yiddish sentimental lyrics written in the folk manner. He learned to write in Russian when he was only eight years of age.

In 1913 Licht emigrated to this country, and at the College of the City of New York and the New York School for Social Studies, he took courses in Literature, History, Sociology, Applied Art, and Philosophy. His poems and translations in English—signed *Sonin* or *M. Licht Sonin*—began to be published in various American periodicals in 1915, and a selection of his verse appeared in the *Second Pagan Anthology*, 1919.

Licht's first publication in Yiddish was a short story published in *Tog* in New York, 1916, and his poems appeared in such periodicals as *Onheib*, *Feder*, *In Sich*, *Shriftn*, *Loglen* (edited by Licht and Jacob Glatstein), *Kultur* of Chicago, *Undzer Buch*, *Unzug* of Toronto, *Neie Zeit*, *New Yorker Vochnblatt*, *Kern* (edited by Licht with N. B. Minkoff), and *Bodn*.

Of Licht's first book of verse, *Egoemen* (1922), it has been said that it was "distinguished by sensitivity, lucidity, and purity of expressions." His second book *Vazon* (*Flower-pot*, 1928) was considered "more lyrical, although herein personal, intimate motives are more abstruse, sublimated by a classical mastery of form." In 1932 came *Protzesies un Andere Lieder* (*Processions and Other Poems*) which depicted "the recondite adventures of modern man's spiritual self, his concepts and his aspirations, influenced by his twentieth century environment." Licht's poem "Der Vint" ("The Wind"), included in this book, apotheosizes the modern soul.

Licht's *Fragmentn*, published in *Bodn* during 1934-7, was planned as a larger work in poetry and prose designed to describe "the particular biography of a certain attitude of our (Jewish) present times." Unfortunately, Licht never had the opportunity to complete this work. His sudden and unexpected death occurred in New York City on 10 June 1953.

In addition to writing critical essays and experimental short stories, Licht translated into Yiddish the verses of various American poets, some of whom were Emily Dickinson, Edward Estlin Cummings, Eliot, and M. C. Moore. His contribution to American and Yiddish