
The Nobel Prize and Dreiser

To the Editor:

Year after year in the decade in which we were neighbors in Vermont, Sinclair Lewis, the first American to get the Nobel Prize for Literature, spoke about the wrongs committed by the donors. It may be remembered that in his acceptance speech he said the first American who should have been honored was Theodore Dreiser.

When, later, several critics suggested that Lewis was merely playing the gentleman, I asked him about this, and to prove his sincerity he told me that in his letters of recommendation for the Nobel Prize, year after year, his nomination was Dreiser. Lewis actually showed me the carbon copies of his annual letters.

Lewis also spoke frequently of the need of an article or even a book giving the history of the awards in literature, and the failure of the donors to honor the greatest writers of the year. The New York Times Book Review deserves some sort of a prize for George Steiner's essay "The Scandal of the Nobel Prize" (Sept. 30). I am sure Lewis would have joined me in sending you a thank-you letter.

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