

Nobel Prize in Literature 1971



Pablo Neruda

The Nobel Prize in Literature 1971 was awarded to Pablo Neruda *"for a poetry that with the action of an elemental force brings alive a continent's destiny and dreams"*.

No great writer gains lustre from a Nobel Prize. It is the Nobel Prize that gains lustre from the recipient - provided the right one has been chosen. But who is the right one? According to Nobel's will, as we have just heard, the prize is to reward work in "an ideal direction". This is not pure Swedish. One may work under conditions that are not ideal. One can, according to the presumption made by Oscar Wilde, be an ideal husband. The word ideal simply indicates something that corresponds to reasonable expectations. But that is not enough for a Nobel prize. In Nobel's time the word still had philosophical connotations as well. By ideal was meant something which only exists in one's imagination, never in the world of the senses. This is perhaps true of the ideal husband, but not of the ideal Nobel prize winner.

The spirit of Nobel's will tells us what he had in mind. The contribution must be one which will benefit mankind. But any work of art worthy of the name does this, so does any literary work with a serious purpose, and so far that matter does that which aims at

nothing more serious than raising a healthy laugh. The clause in the will has so much to say that it leaves us without a clear message. One of the few cases, however, where it does take on a definite meaning is this year's winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature: Pablo Neruda. His work benefits mankind precisely because of its direction. It is my impossible task here to indicate this in a few words. To sum up, Neruda is like catching a condor with a butterfly net. Neruda, in a nutshell, is an unreasonable proposition: the kernel bursts the shell.

Nevertheless, one can do something to describe this kernel. What Neruda has achieved in his writing is community with existence. This sounds simple, and is perhaps our most difficult problem. He himself, in one of his *New Elemental Odes*, has defined it in the formula: harmony with Man and the Earth. The direction in his work, the direction which can so justly be called ideal, is indicated by the path which has brought him to this harmony. His starting point was isolation and dissonance.

So it was in the love poems of his youth. What these *Twenty Poems of Love and One Ode of Desperation* depict is the meeting between two people's desolation in the shadow of destruction, and in the next major work, *Residence on Earth*, he is still "alone among shifting matter".

The turning point was reached in Spain. It was as if a release from the shadow of death and a way towards fellowship were opened when he saw friends and fellow writers taken away in fetters and executed. He found the fellowship of the oppressed and persecuted. He found it when he returned from the Spain of the Civil War to his own country, the battleground for conquistadors over the centuries. But out of the fellowship with this territory of terror there grew, too, awareness of its riches, pride over its past, and hope for its future, for that which he saw shimmering like a mirage far to the East. With this, Neruda's work was transformed into the poetry of political and social preparedness under the banner of redress and visions of the future - not least so in *Canto general*, partly written while in exile in his own country for no other offence than an opinion. The opinion was that his country belonged to him and his compatriots and that no man's dignity should be insulted.

This huge collection is no more than a drop in Neruda's brimming output. In his work a continent awakens to consciousness. To require moderation in such an inspiration is as if to demand system and order from a jungle and restraint from a volcano.

The fact that Neruda's *œuvre* is so difficult to view as a whole may also make it difficult to recognize what distances he has put behind him. One of his later collections of poems is called *Estravagario*. The word seems to be a new one and comprises both extravagance and vagabondage, whim and errantry. For the way from *Canto general* was still long and full of experiences, enriching or bitter. The territory of terror was found to lie in more than one part of the globe and Neruda saw this with the indignation of one who feels himself duped. The erstwhile idol who was set up everywhere in "the stucco statutes of a moustachioed god in boots" now appeared in an ever more merciless light, as did the similarity in methods and trappings between the two leader figures whom he called just Moustache and Little Moustache. But at the same time Neruda was also led to a new relationship to Love and to Woman, to the origin and continuance of life, perhaps most beautifully expressed in yet another masterpiece from recent years, *La Barcarola*. Whither Neruda's path will take him now, it is not for anyone to say. But the direction is the one already set, harmony with Man and the Earth, and we shall follow with high expectations this remarkable poetry, which with the overflowing vitality of an awakening continent resembles one of its rivers, growing all the mightier and more majestic the closer it approaches the estuary and the sea.

Cher Maître, Votre *Estravagario* vous a mené loin à travers des pays et des époques. Une fois il vous a mené vers une cité minière où les mineurs avaient peint un hommage sur cette terre qui est vraiment la vôtre. Il disait: Bienvenue à Neruda. C'étaient les mots de la dignité humaine opprimée à celui qui était son porte-parole. Votre tour du monde vous a aujourd'hui mené ici: dans la ville aux clochers vert-de-grisés que vous chantâtes une fois. Et je répète le même hommage: Bienvenido Neruda. Avec lui je transmets aussi les félicitations de l'Académie suédoise et vous prie maintenant de recevoir des mains de Sa Majesté le Roi le Prix Nobel de littérature de cette année.



International Journal of Science Innovations and Discoveries

ISSN:2249-5347

IJSID

*An International peer
Review Journal for Science*

For more details please visit:

http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1971/press.html

Call for research and Review articles publication: ijsidonlineinfo@gmail.com