

Nobel Prize in Literature 1973



Patrick White

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The Australian **Patrick White** has been awarded the 1973 Nobel Literature Prize "for an epic and psychological narrative art which has introduced a new continent into literature", as it says in the [Swedish Academy's](#) citation. White's growing fame is based chiefly on seven novels of which the earliest masterly work is *The Aunt's Story*, a portrayal imbued with remarkable feeling of a lonely, unmarried, Australian woman's life during experiences that extend also to Europe and America. The book with which White really made his name, however, was *The Tree of Man*, an epically broad and psychologically discerning account of a part of Australian social development in the form of two people's long life together, and struggle against outward and inward difficulties.

Another aspect of Australia is shown in *Voss*, in which a fanatical explorer in the country's interior meets his fate: an intensive character study against the background of the fascinating Australian wilds. The writer displays yet another kind of art in *Riders in the Chariot*, with special emphasis on his cystic and symbolic tendencies: a sacrificial drama,

tense, yet with an everyday setting, in the midst of current Australian reality. From contrasting viewpoints, *The Solid Mandala* gives a double portrait of two brothers, in which the sterilely rational brother is set against the fertilely intuitive one, who is almost a fool in the eyes of the world.

White's last two books are among his greatest feats, both as to size and to frenzied building up of tension. *The Vivisector* is the imaginary biography of an artist, in which a whole life is disclosed in a relentless scrutiny of motives and springs of action: an artist's untiring battle to express the utmost while sacrificing both himself and his fellow-beings in the attempt. *The Eye of the Storm* places an old, dying woman in the centre of a narrative which revolves round, and encloses, the whole of her environment, past and present, until we have come to share an entire life panorama, in which everyone is on a decisive dramatic footing with the old lady.

Particularly, these latest books show White's unbroken creative power, an ever deeper restlessness and seeking urge, an onslaught against vital problems that have never ceased to engage him, and a wrestling with the language in order to extract all its power and all its nuances, to the verge of the unattainable. White's literary production has failings that belong to great and bold writing, exceeding, as it does, different kinds of conventional limits. He is the one who, for the first time, has given the continent of Australia an authentic voice that carries across the world, at the same time as his achievement contributes to the development, both artistic and, as regards ideas, of contemporary literature.

For more details please visit:

http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1973/press.html