

people than the winners, written come from arguably reach more laureates are where they annually. Summaries of who the committee's choices abound tides—criticisms of the or too swayed by illusory cultural white, too male, too contrary to, excitation. Too European, too Prizes, with literature proving no inextricably linked to all Nobel international politics are Alfred Nobel chose the Swedish Prize that still inspires fierce arguments, intense celebration, and online gambling across the globe. Of course, geography and online gambling acrobatics the globe. Dot course, geographies the and international politics are international, nextiracably linked to all Nobel so, with minimal-yet-lofty guidance, a nineteenth-century armaments tycoon bequeathed a prize be awarded to the worthiest person, whether or not they are given to natiorally, but that the Scandinavian.

# Voices Around Me



## Nobel Prize Lectures

### Foreword

By Jessi Haley, Editorial Coordinator at Cita Press

In 2022, Annie Ernaux became the seventeenth woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. She is also the first French woman, the sixteenth French citizen, the ninety-sixth European, and the 119th person to win. In her acceptance letter, she stated “I do not regard as an individual victory the Nobel prize that has been awarded me. It is neither from pride nor modesty that I see it, in some sense, as a collective victory.”

Ernaux’s claim of a collective ownership for a highly

individualized award echoes ideas shared by many of the women laureates that came before her—as does her emphasis on the tension between the patriarchal system the Nobel stems from (and, to many, still represents) and the structural position of some winners, particularly women. When asked if she anticipated the prize, 2013 laureate Alice Munro replied: “Oh, no, no! I was a woman! . . . I just love the honor, I love it, but I just didn’t think that way.” Learning about her win from a group of reporters as she returned home from a hospital visit, eighty-seven-year-old Doris Lessing was flustered: “They told me a long time ago they didn’t like me and I would never get it. . . They sent a special official to tell me so.” Surrounded by

laureates, “no consideration by committees was that, in selecting only instruction for the peace, medicine, economics). His groups to select laureates from the other categories (chemistry, literature prize, just as he chose Academy as the arbiter of the Alfred Nobel chose the Swedish folkloric fiction).

borrowed from realism but returned to the romantic in her both cases: Selma Lagerlöf, who their ranks (the same woman in award. This was five years before they ever elected a woman to years into the existence of the woman Nobel laureate eight committtee selected the first Foundation by 115 years. The was installed by King Gustav III in 1786, so it predates the Nobel lifetime tenure. The academy “conferred the greatest benefit to

litterary professionals (DFAA) draws from The Swedish Academy, a group of eighteen members whose membership committee chosen by a laureates are chosen via the specific. must, with their words, illuminate (particularly all women); they they must represent all of us generations. At the same time, nations, ideologies, and understood to represent specific counter of apartheid.” They are female experience” or the “Geiger assigned roles like “the epitome of the literature prize have been laureates. Women who have won and hefty responsibilities to the this edit applies vague gravity and individualized award echoes ideas shared by many of the women laureates that came before her—as does her emphasis on the tension between the patriarchal system the Nobel stems from (and, to many, still represents) and the structural position of some winners, particularly women. When asked if she anticipated the prize, 2013 laureate Alice Munro replied: “Oh, no, no! I was a woman! . . . I just love the honor, I love it, but I just didn’t think that way.” Learning about her win from a group of reporters as she returned home from a hospital visit, eighty-seven-year-old Doris Lessing was flustered: “They told me a long time ago they didn’t like me and I would never get it. . . They sent a special official to tell me so.” Surrounded by

people whose work has namesake prize to recognize own professional domain was inventing dynamite. Though his changed the world most by Nobel, a Swede who perhaps critica set in the will of Alfred idealistic direction.” This is the field of literature, produced the most outstanding work in an writers. Writers who win the entry, there is little on the surface beyond a sense of breaking into a boy’s club and the communal will be using from now on.” “I swear I’m going upstairs to find some suitable sentences,” which I snapping cameras, she promised:

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toward the inefficiencies of politics, so often prickly (sometimes  
in her novels of colonialialism, imagined futures  
our stories that we are torn  
when we are destroyed. It is the  
the dream-makers  
myth-makers, that  
that represent us  
and at our most  
Mueller's work paid  
impressionsistic  
lives under Nicolae Ceausescu  
dictatorship in Romania.  
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withheld, she exclaims  
the more words you  
take, the freer

Through Lagerlof's works, making ideology a major award, nearly half of the women are concurred in the last eighteen years. The women in Laurea Europe, as are more laureates in genera Latin American and she remains that the American woman was a woman (Chile) Gabriela Mistral, a American woman American novelist who lived experience overwhelmedly won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1945. The only Black V of winners remained of the remaining 111 Nobel laureates in literature, 11 have faced famine displacement, 11 live in poverty.

force, its felicity is in its reach lessing, so often setting a pricky (sometimes cynical) ton in her novels of frustrated politics, colonialism, and imagined futures, is hopeful: "It our stories that will recreate us when we are torn, hurt, even destroyed. It is the storyteller, myth-maker, that is our phoenix that represents us at our best, and at our most creative."

Muller's work paints visceral, impulsive scenes of strife lives under Nicolae Ceausescu's dictatorship in Romania. No stranger to having words withheld, she explains: "After all the more words we are allowed to take, the freer we become."

"In the language of poetry, where every word is weighed, nothing is unusual or normal . . . not a single existence, not anyone's existence in this world." Only Szybomorska, who once wrote "After every war / someone has to clean up," can be so gentle and so firm at the same time.

Gordimer, whose novels dissect the human wreckage wrought by institutionalized racism and cycles of violence, confirms that "writing is always and at once an exploration of self and of the world, of individual and collective being".

Each writer's Nobel lecture includes something that could be applied across the work of the other women who have won,

Something that collects the

Morrison, whose novels explore many facets of Black American life with language that is as precise as it is poetic, argues that “language can never live up to life once and for all. Nor should it...it...be interesting,” any surroundings can be interesting;“

This essay is adapted from the foreword to the collection Voices Around Me: Nobel Lectures, which features the full lectures by Svetlana Alexievich Gordimer, Doris Lessing, Toni Morrison, Herta Müller, Alice Munro, and Wisława Szymborska. The pieces represent each writer’s unique style. We present this book—free, online first, and with an accordant new cover by Fiorella Feroni—with the open invitation to share in these women’s work and ideas.

Gordimer's concrete political lessons to Zygmunt Skarski's larger abstract musings to fables (Morrison)—each contains observations that are at once totally complex and recognizable truth.

"master of the contemporary," Munro asserts that she knew she could write about small-town Canadian life because "[t]hink any life can be interesting, any language that is as life with language that is as precise as it is poetic," argues that "language can never live up to life once and for all. Nor should it...its

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With characteristic directness, "master of the contemporary" Munro assesses that she knew she could write about small-town Canadian life because "I think any life can be interesting," any surroundings can life with language that is as precise as it is poetic, argues that "language can never live up to life once and for all. Nor should it...it