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| Literature\_1999- | |
| ID | 0926 |
| Biographical | Günter Grass was born in 1927 in Danzig-Langfuhr of Polish-German parents. After military service and captivity by American forces 1944-46, he worked as a farm labourer and miner and studied art in Düsseldorf and Berlin. 1956-59 he made his living as a sculptor, graphic artist and writer in Paris, and subsequently Berlin. In 1955 Grass became a member of the socially critical Gruppe 47 (later described with great warmth in *The Meeting at Telgte*), his first poetry was published in 1956 and his first play produced in 1957. His major international breakthrough came in 1959 with his allegorical and wide-ranging picaresque novel *The Tin Drum* (filmed by Schlöndorff), a satirical panorama of German reality during the first half of this century, which, with *Cat and Mouse* and *Dog Years*, was to form what is called the Danzig Trilogy.  In the 1960s Grass became active in politics, participating in election campaigns on behalf of the Social Democrat party and Willy Brandt. He dealt with the responsibility of intellectuals in *Local Anaesthetic*, *From the Diary of a Snail* and in his “German tragedy” *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*, and published political speeches and essays in which he advocated a Germany free from fanaticism and totalitarian ideologies. His childhood home, Danzig, and his broad and suggestive fabulations were to reappear in two successful novels criticising civilisation, *The Flounder* and *The Rat*, which reflect Grass’s commitment to the peace movement and the environmental movement. Vehement debate and criticism were aroused by his mammoth novel *Ein weites Feld* which is set in the DDR in the years of the collapse of communism and the fall of the Berlin wall. In *My Century* he presents the history of the past century from a personal point of view, year by year. As a graphic artist, Grass has often been responsible for the covers and illustrations for his own works.  Grass was President of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin 1983-86, active within the German Authors’ Publishing Company and PEN. He has been awarded a large number of prizes, among them Preis der Gruppe 47 1958, “Le meilleur livre étranger” 1962, the Büchner Prize 1965, the Fontane Prize 1968, Premio Internazionale Mondello 1977, the Alexander-Majakowski Medal, Gdansk 1979, the Antonio Feltrinelli Prize 1982, Großer Literaturpreis der Bayerischen Akademie 1994. He has honorary doctorates from Kenyon College and the Universities of Harvard, Poznan and Gdansk.   |  | | --- | | A selection of works by Günter Grass in English | | *The Tin Drum*. Transl. by Ralph Manheim. London: Secker & Warburg, 1962. | | *Cat and Mouse*. Transl. by Ralph Manheim. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1963. | | *Dog Years*. Transl. by Ralph Manheim. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965. | | *Four Plays*. Introd. by Martin Esslin. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967. | | *Speak out! Speeches, Open Letters, Commentaries*. Transl. by Ralph Manheim. London: Secker & Warburg, 1969. | | *Local Anaesthetic*. Transl. by Ralph Manheim. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970. | | *From the Diary of a Snail*. Transl. by Ralph Manheim. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973. | | *In the Egg and Other Poems*. Transl. by Michael Hamburger and Christopher Middleton. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977. | | *The Meeting at Telgte*. Transl. by Ralph Manheim. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981. | | *The Flounder.* Transl. by Ralph Manheim. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978. | | *Headbirths, or, the Germans are Dying Out*. Transl. by Ralph Manheim. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982. | | *The Rat*. Transl. by Ralph Manheim. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987. | | *Show Your Tongue*. Transl. by John E. Woods. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987. | | *Two States One Nation?* Transl. by Krishna Winston with A.S. Wensinger. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990; London: Secker & Warburg. | | *The Call of the Toad.* Transl. by Ralph Manheim. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992. | | *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising.* Transl. by Ralph Manheim. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1996. | | *My Century.* Transl. by Michael Henry Heim. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999. | | *Too far afield.* Transl. by Krishna Winston. London: Faber, 2000. |   *Günter Grass died on 13 April 2015.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0926 |
| Interview |  |
| Q5 | Mr Grass, German history is absolutely central to the creation of all literature and for me as a foreign reader and for future German readers your books offer a unique opportunity to experience history from an insider perspective. Would you agree that the task of literature is not just to make history readable but also to make it an experience? |
|  | Well, I would be cautious about giving a generalised definition of the purpose of literature. It is not part of the task and yet it is often unavoidable. I have not been able to choose the themes about which I’ve written – they were given to me. The war ended when I was 17. My gift, if I may define it as such, is of an aesthetic nature, a dramatic nature, and that was how I started.  Confronted by this mass of material I was overwhelmed and so it was inevitable. That was just the most recent German history, then post-war history. I have noticed over the years that I have also made an impression as a contemporary author and have done what many authors feel is too dangerous – written simultaneously with events.  Literature is always associated with the temporal distance intrinsic in the past tense of retrospective writing, that is one option. However, I know that, for instance in German literature Fontane wrote his last novel *Den Stechlin*, and also *Frau Jenny Treibel* in parallel with events, and experienced the corresponding wrath of the critics.  If a writer does this, writes in parallel with events, he is cruelly exposed to contemporary critics. However, that is the risk one has to take, and it is from this double impulse, by writing in the present as a contemporary yet at the same time also being confronted by the weight and burden of the past, that I have produced my work.  I am also – if I am to generalise and move on from literature – I believe it is impossible to master the future without taking the past into consideration, not purely to live in the present, which at the time is very strongly the case, this makes things one-dimensional, it blinds us and makes us incapable of handling the future. |
| Q30 | In your books history is presented in various ways, and from different perspectives. For example, you could say that sometimes history appears to be repeating itself. Whereas in other books we find the themes and motifs of slow progress and symbols such as snails, Sisyphus etc. How do these two ideas or ways of grasping history interact in the books? |
|  | Of course it is also a protest against the ideological fixations we have experienced this century. From the communist perspective, the fascist, the capitalist, it is always the same, like fixed truths, things preached, with a single aim, and I write against that. For me the route is more important than the destination.  This enduring labour of Sisyphus and [Camus](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1957/camus-facts.html) – modern formulation of it, Sisyphus as a happy man living with his stone and knowing for certain that the stone will never remain in its place up there. Or, however, in the turbulent revolutionary or pseudo-revolutionary times around 1968, when young people were very rightfully protesting, I came up with a hypothesis: careful – progress, I’m in favour of it, but it is a snail.  In truth you can achieve a great leap forward as in Maoist teaching, verbally or in another way, but the phase you’ve left out hurries on, it stands still and then it hits back. Those are the things I’ve gathered from my experience and converted into narrative.  However, just converted to narrative, through the change of perspective, through history seen from below, not from the people who made the history, but from the ordinary people that history brings up again and again, unavoidably, and they were turned into fellow travellers and victims and culprits and reacted correspondingly. These have always been my themes, from *The Tin Drum* to *My Century*. |
| Q39 | However, your last book, *My Century*, is exactly the opposite to a normal history book in that you focus on small, everyday details, such as buying ice-skates or the remains of a teddy bear or the significance of winter tyres. Why did you choose to account for your century in this way? |
|  | This is how life is constructed, out of these details, out of these everyday trivialities and superfluities and necessities. And as I’ve already said this is the perspective from which I write.  In a quite pronounced manner in my first novel – in Oskar, just turned three, who sees the adult world from the perspective of the table edge – and thus to this final book. It is a dreadful century, but it is not only the century of great warfare and murderous events but there is also, for example, the development of records, double-sided, the German gramophone society and its consequences.  Then there are always the media, not that I make a great play of this but rather of the people who have been involved in them, in the development of radio or the first German television programme, experienced the influence it has had from this petty bourgeois perspective. These are the things that make me write.  The other great stories have been documented by historians, sociologists etc., but literature can achieve something in a ‘narrative’ way that is closed to the other disciplines.  One thing that is very evident in *The Flounder*, for example, is the role in the narrative of food and the issue of nourishment.  Günter Grass: Yes, indeed, nourishment. |
| Q16 | And I’d like, it may seem a strange question, but there is in German romanticism a thinker who has also attempted to weave gastronomy into the conceptual sphere of the multigeneric romantic work of art, and that is Karl Friedrich von Romer. He published a splendid book in 1822, *Der Geist der Kochkunst*. Do you know this book? |
|  | Yes, it has slipped into obscurity again and again. The art of cookery is at the tip of a whole range of themes. What you said at first, and that relates to *The Flounder* too, the history of our nourishment.  Now we know everything, we communicate, as we call it, around the globe and are an over-informed society, but the chief problem of human existence, the issue of nourishment, has still not been solved.  On the contrary, hunger is increasing, isn’t it? Despite all our resources, we fail in the face of this mammoth task that grows with the increase in the world’s population, and I have noticed that as far as the historical record of this topic is concerned virtually nothing happens.  All we ever have is these great battles, dates, peace agreements, religious schisms, all these things, but what about for instance the significance of the addition of the potato, due to the discovery of the Americas for the masses, as a food resource alongside millet, the potato being a second staple food resource which has also contributed to population increase.  In the main this was not seen or was kept quiet or considered insignificant. Therefore, my very pointed assertion is that the introduction of the potato in Prussia had greater consequences than the outcome of the battles of the Seven Years War. And that is true too of Ireland and many parts of Europe.  Romer claimed after all that culturally all the European differences between Scandinavia, Central Europe, led by France, and Southern Europe can be explained as arising from the differences between butter, stock and olive oil. And that isn’t absurd!  Günter Grass: No, no! Right up to the nineteenth century, right into the prisons, there was the Rumford soup, the soup of the poor and the invention of economical cooking and everything associated with it, and the anticipation of great co-operative kitchens. It was indeed a great economiser, wasn’t it, in the most varied areas. An eccentric character, indeed. |
| Q41 | – Yes, I have a completely different question. You frequently emphasise the power of literature and of narrative, most recently in the Nobel lecture. Do you think that literature and the author have more power than is generally recognised? At least in Sweden – I don’t know if you are in agreement with me – is literature in the meantime regarded more as just a harmless hobby? |
|  | Yes, indeed according to the conventional concept of power we, as authors, are naturally placed at the bottom of the pile. Literature’s effect is delayed, often for centuries, and under the title “To be continued …” it’s not just the sequel but the development of censorship measures that run in parallel. The oppression of literature and the oppression of authors, even up to the present time.  These are all ongoing things, which, however, at the same time reveal over and over again, if censorship measures are taken against them and authors are persecuted, that there must indeed be a hidden power in literature. There is fear of literature. There is a fear of the penetrating effect of this persistence.  That it is not as history officially states, and that we write the history of the losers, whose voices are seldom heard. History is in the main written by the victors, and literature leaps into this gap and is thus uncomfortable.  Even where it really does not want to, or that it takes up themes, thus Ovid is not a result of the *Metamorphoses*, but when he described his love games, he roused the displeasure of the emperor and was sent into exile. Thus there is definitely no political theme.  A follow-up question: Could this power be misused? You do frequently raise the issue of the writer’s moral responsibility.  Günter Grass: Yes, indeed. I always get a bit annoyed about this, I contradict the tendency we have to look upon the concept of the “intellectual” as an indisputable sign of quality. There is the ghastly extreme right-wing intellectual, for example, Goebbels became an extreme right-wing intellectual. That is hardly a proof of quality.  There are also monstrous demagogues in the field of literature, and there are those failed leaders amongst splendid writers such as Ezra Pound or Gottfried Benn, who were wonderful writers but politically infantile, or influenced in this direction either by their vanity or through flattery, and as a result have caused something dreadful. This is still the case. |
| Q39 | I think that is very well said. That is why literature has been unpopular with the powerful, because it shows that there is more than one truth. And perhaps it is the case that if writers claim there is only one truth, as for example Pound did, then literature becomes a danger to itself. It damages itself. |
|  | Yes, the prevailing power, always claims that there is but one truth, no matter whether it be the Catholic church with its immaculate conception or just the party that is always right in communism or the master race of fascist ideology or capitalism, which now says: “In the view of the West there is only a free market society and nothing else.”  These are the terrible, single truths that appear as doctrines and finally collapse as we have experienced. Literature arises out of many realities, many truths.  Consider that fine Japanese film *Rashômo*n, in which a story is constructed from a variety of narrative perspectives, in which one says: “This is how it was”, but then another perspective produces another truth, another interpretation and all these different truths build into a reasonably logical picture, yet nonetheless there always remains a mystery. |
| Q39 | Yes, and that is indeed an issue of perspective and the question is: “What has happened?”. And that can be answered in a variety of ways. But it is also the case that if you’ve worked out what has happened, then you have to make a judgement. Again this can be done in a variety of ways.  There was indeed a concept in twentieth century literature, now virtually disappeared, the demonic, that is to say something that is neither good nor evil, that is unclassifiable, and yet remains a power. I am thinking, for instance in your books, of the character of the black cook in *The Tin Drum*. She is definitely demonic, isn’t she? |
|  | Yes, yes, certainly for the time, on the one hand almost a contradiction that I have used as one of the driving forces for the narration of *The Tin Drum*, *Dog Years* and *Cat and Mouse*. In the fifties there was a tendency in Germany to belatedly demonise the era of National Socialism, as if an earth spirit had risen from the ground and seduced the poor German people.  And that was not the case. It all happened in broad daylight. At the same time *The Tin Drum* is on the one hand an attempt at “de-demonisation”, I show how such an ideology with all its criminal objectives can build its foundations out of the petty bourgeoisie. And on the other hand this world is naturally riddled with demonic angst arousing forces, like the black cook.  Where did the black cook come from then?  Günter Grass: It’s a nursery song: “Is the black cook there? Yes, yes, yes.” And that is the manifesto. However, in my case, an important factor is that I am very strongly influenced by fairytales. Because I’ve discovered that fairytales contain the most amazing reality. Precisely because of these contradictions.  And through this we have … the romantics, they collected them, and I have chapter openings, once upon a time … and then a totally realistic contemporary story will be narrated. And in the novel *The Flounder* the Low German fairytale of the *Fischer un sine Fru* provided the title and determined the conflict throughout the whole book.  On the theme of fairytales may I pose a further question? I would say that on reading your books I sense an affinity with one of the German romantics, namely E T A Hoffmann. Is that really true?  Günter Grass: Yes, indeed. Except that E T A Hoffmann’s books exist purely in a bizarre, self-contained world, whilst for me the transition from bare realism, from which something almost foreseeable has flipped over into the unreal in the middle of a long sentence, and then, finally, reason takes control again, but now the consciousness produced has changed, that is a … I think, that the bizarre is far more dominant in E T A Hoffmann than in my own work.  Precisely this mixture of fantasy and realism is in part a feature of, for instance, *Too Far Afield*. Would you also agree that this is a result of German readers still being so strongly linked to this reality that they often have difficulty reading the book as literature?  Günter Grass: You could say that. Because here, on the one hand, I delve back into the past but at the same time write parallel with events. Many find that unusual, and on the other hand I have learnt directly from readers through their letters that, for them, through this book, which deals with the past, the first failed attempt to unite Germany under Bismarck through three wars, much has become clear about what is happening at present.  Those are the different timescales with which I work. However, at the same time it is once again about my undeniable origins in the picaresque novel, of course Fonti and his day and night shadows are a picaresque couple, just like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza or Bouvard and Pécuchet in the Flaubert’s French novels, from the fragment of a novel, and that of course leads to comedy and absurd situations.  If, for instance, those in Lusatia stand on the vast, brown coalmines, and I suddenly multiply these two characters, and then it becomes clear how during the communist regime this country was infiltrated by a network of informers, by a duplication, by object and subject, and it is with such images that I like to work.  You do indeed also on one occasion compare this relationship, precisely this relationship between the informer and the person informed upon with the relationship between a priest and his …  Günter Grass: Yes, yes, that, however, has been greatly misunderstood …  “We are spending our whole lives in the confessional,” Fonti says on one occasion.  Günter Grass: Yes, I’ve broken that habit. Always it was the image of the informers wearing their leather coats and looking sinister, that was certainly there too, yet of course the spies of the welfare state are far more dangerous. They say: “I am your friend. Therefore I’ll protect you so that you do (not) fall for the propaganda of class enemies.”  And just like Fonti experienced it in relation to the day and night shadows, where it is difficult to see through it. Where is the welfare, where is the spying, the boundaries have become fluid and that is what I’ve portrayed.  Yes, censorship has sometimes previously been in the form of artistic guidance to the writer.  Günter Grass: Yes, yes. But we are always forgetting the scope of literature, for example, I notice that you are an admirer of German romanticism, aren’t you? Friedrich Schlegel and Brentano, they did part of the Metterlich groundwork toward the end of their lives, and even converted to Catholicism and became terribly bigoted.  This was a hideous discovery for Goethe, as he suddenly noticed how these young people towards whom he had harboured a certain goodwill, became irrational in middle age and converted to Catholicism, of course fanatically as is the way of converts, and he found that very irritating.  Many of your literary characters are also Catholics. Could you say a few words in relation to them?  Günter Grass: Yes, yet also about these *Dog Years*, the on-going change in ideological dependency, this interplay also plays a part. Sure, I was brought up Catholic and know the stench of the Catholic Church. I moved away from religion early but the impression remains.  You have said that in some way you write aloud, you walk round the room and so on. Is it also the case that somehow you can hear the voices of the characters and you try to listen in?  Günter Grass: It is a wonderful thing in the process of writing when such paper characters are first sketched, and when one is doing good work, from a certain point in time they come alive and start contradicting the author as well. I find that the author is then no longer at liberty, once this is afoot, he may try to lead them on a long leash but they have a will of their own.  I remember when I was writing *The Tin Drum*, I had the totally misguided idea of giving Oskar Matzerath a sister, and he just wouldn’t have it. There was no space for a sister, yet I had the character of the sister in my head. In fact I used her in later novels, in *Cat and Mouse* and *Dog Years*, Tulla Pokriski. However, had Tulla Pokriski lived, and Oskar, it would have destroyed the novel. He protested and it went no further in the manuscript. I have to bow to the will of the fictitious characters and, I find, that this is wonderful for the writer and invigorates the writing experience. |
| ID | 0927 |
| Biographical | I was born in a family of landless peasants, in Azinhaga, a small village in the province of Ribatejo, on the right bank of the Almonda River, around a hundred kilometres north-east of Lisbon. My parents were José de Sousa and Maria da Piedade. José de Sousa would have been my own name had not the Registrar, on his own inititiave added the nickname by which my father’s family was known in the village: Saramago. I should add that *saramago* is a wild herbaceous plant, whose leaves in those times served at need as nourishment for the poor. Not until the age of seven, when I had to present an identification document at primary school, was it realised that my full name was José de Sousa Saramago…  This was not, however, the only identity problem to which I was fated at birth. Though I had come into the world on 16 November 1922, my official documents show that I was born two days later, on the 18th. It was thanks to this petty fraud that my family escaped from paying the fine for not having registered my birth at the proper legal time.  Maybe because he had served in World War I, in France as an artillery soldier, and had known other surroundings from those of the village, my father decided in 1924 to leave farm work and move with his family to Lisbon, where he started as a policeman, for which job were required no more “literary qualifications” (a common expression then…) than reading, writing and arithmetic.  A few months after settling in the capital my brother Francisco two years older, died. Though our living conditions had improved a little after moving, we were never going to be well off.  I was already 13 or 14 when we moved, at last, to our own – but very tiny – house: till then we had lived in parts of houses, with other families. During all this time, and until I came of age I spent many, and very often quite long, periods in the village with my mother’s parents Jerónimo Meirinho and Josefa Caixinha.  I was a good pupil at primary school: in the second class I was writing with no spelling mistakes and the third and fourth classes were done in a single year. Then I was moved up to the grammar school where I stayed two years, with excellent marks in the first year, not so good in the second, but was well liked by classmates and teachers, even being elected (I was then 12…) treasurer of the Students’ Union… Meanwhile my parents reached the conclusion that, in the absence of resources, they could not go on keeping me in the grammar school. The only alternative was to go to a technical school. And so it was: for five years I learned to be a mechanic. But surprisingly the syllabus at that time, though obviously technically oriented, included, besides French, a literature subject. As I had no books at home (my own books, bought by myself, however with money borrowed from a friend, I would only have when I was 19) the Portuguese language textbooks, with their “anthological” character, were what opened to me the doors of literary fruition: even today I can recite poetry learnt in that distant era. After finishing the course, I worked for two years as a mechanic at a car repair shop. By that time I had already started to frequent, in its evening opening hours, a public library in Lisbon. And it was there, with no help or guidance except curiosity and the will to learn, that my taste for reading developed and was refined.  When I got married in 1944, I had already changed jobs. I was now working in the Social Welfare Service as an administrative civil servant. My wife, Ilda Reis, then a typist with the Railway Company, was to become, many years later, one of the most important Portuguese engravers. She died in 1998. In 1947, the year of the birth of my only child, Violante, I published my first book, a novel I myself entitled *The Widow,* but which for editorial reasons appeared as *The Land of Sin.* I wrote another novel, *The Skylight,* still unpublished, and started another one, but did not get past the first few pages: its title was to be *Honey and Gall,* or maybe *Louis, son of Tadeus…* The matter was settled when I abandoned the project: it was becoming quite clear to me that I had nothing worthwhile to say. For 19 years, till 1966, when I got to publish *Possible Poems,* I was absent from the Portuguese literary scene, where few people can have noticed my absence.  For political reasons I became unemployed in 1949, but thanks to the goodwill of a former teacher at the technical school, I managed to find work at the metal company where he was a manager.  At the end of the 1950s I started working at a publishing company, Estúdios Cor, as production manager, so returning, but not as an author, to the world of letters I had left some years before. This new activity allowed me acquaintance and friendship with some of the most important Portuguese writers of the time. In 1955, to improve the family budget, but also because I enjoyed it, I started to spend part of my free time in translation, an activity that would continue till 1981: Colette, [Pär Lagerkvist](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1951/index.html), Jean Cassou, Maupassant, André Bonnard, Tolstoi, Baudelaire, Étienne Balibar, Nikos Poulantzas, Henri Focillon, Jacques Roumain, Hegel, Raymond Bayer were some of the authors I translated. Between May 1967 and November 1968, I had another parallel occupation as a literary critic. Meanwhile, in 1966, I had published *Possible Poems,* a poetry book that marked my return to literature. After that, in 1970, another book of poems, *Probably Joy* and shortly after, in 1971 and 1973 respectively, under the titles *From this World and the Other* and *The Traveller’s Baggage,* two collections of newspaper articles which the critics consider essential to the full understanding of my later work. After my divorce in 1970, I initiated a relationship, which would last till 1986, with the Portuguese writer Isabel da Nóbrega.  After leaving the publisher at the end of 1971, I worked for the following two years at the evening newspaper Diário de Lisboa, as manager of a cultural supplement and as an editor.  Published in 1974 with the title *The Opinions the DL Had,* those texts represent a very precise “reading” of the last time of the dictatorship, which was to be toppled that April. In April 1975, I became deputy director of the morning paper Diário de Nóticias, a post I filled till that November and from which I was sacked in the aftermath of the changes provoked by the politico-military coup of the 25th November which blocked the revolutionary process. Two books mark this era: *The Year of 1993,* a long poem published in 1975, which some critics consider a herald of the works that two years later would start to appear with *Manual of Painting and Calligraphy,* a novel, and, under the title of *Notes,* the political articles I had published in the newspaper of which I had been a director.  Unemployed again and bearing in mind the political situation we were undergoing, without the faintest possibility of finding a job, I decided to devote myself to literature: it was about time to find out what I was worth as a writer. At the beginning of 1976, I settled for some weeks in Lavre, a country village in Alentejo Province. It was that period of study, observation and note-taking that led, in 1980, to the novel *Risen from the Ground,* where the way of narrating which characterises my novels was born. Meanwhile, in 1978 I had published a collection of short stories, *Quasi Object;* in 1979 the play *The Night,* and after that, a few months before *Risen from the Ground,* a new play, *What shall I do with this Book?* With the exception of another play, entitled *The Second Life of Francis of Assisi,* published in 1987, the 1980s were entirely dedicated to the Novel: *Baltazar and Blimunda,* 1982, *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis,* 1984, *The Stone Raft,* 1986, *The History of the Siege of Lisbon,* 1989. In 1986, I met the Spanish journalist Pilar del Río. We got married in 1988.  In consequence of the Portuguese government censorship of *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ* (1991), vetoing its presentation for the European Literary Prize under the pretext that the book was offensive to Catholics, my wife and I transferred our residence to the island of Lanzarote in the Canaries. At the beginning of that year I published the play *In Nomine Dei,* which had been written in Lisbon, from which the libretto for the opera *Divara* would be taken, with music by the Italian composer Azio Corghi and staged for the first time in Münster, Germany in 1993. This was not the first cooperation with Corghi: his also is the music to the opera *Blimunda,* from my novel *Baltazar and Blimunda,* staged in Milan, Italy in 1990. In 1993, I started writing a diary, *Cadernos de Lanzarote* (Lanzarote Diaries), with five volumes so far. In 1995, I published the novel *Blindness* and in 1997 *All the Names.* In 1995, I was awarded the Camões Prize and in 1998 the Nobel Prize for Literature.  From [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)*. The Nobel Prizes 1998*, Editor Tore Frängsmyr, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1999  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and later published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel/*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)[*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*/*[*The Nobel Prizes*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/nobel-prizes.html). The information is sometimes updated with an addendum submitted by the Laureate.  *José Saramago died on 18 June 2010.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0927 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0928 |
| Biographical | In addition to playwright, Dario Fo is also director, stage and costume designer, and on occasion he even composes the music for his plays.  France Rame, his leading actress, has assisted in and contributed to the writing of many of the plays they have produced in their 45 years of theatre together. She has also assumed the administrative and organizational responsibility for the Fo-Rame Company.  Franca Rame Franca Rame was born in Parabiago, a small town in the Province of Milan. That she happened to be born there was pure chance: her family was performing in the town at the time. Her father Domenico, her mother Emilia and her brother, along with aunts, uncles, cousins and other actors and actresses hired on contract, were all part of a travelling theatre troupe touring the towns and villages of Lombardy and Piedmont.  The Rame family’s ties to the theatre are very old. Since the late 17th century, they have been actors, and puppet masters, as the occasion required.  With the arrival of the cinema they shifted from puppet theatre to real theatre, enriched with all the “special effects” of the puppet theatre. They travelled from town to town, and were well received wherever they went.  Even today, her personal success in theatre and television notwithstanding, people in these towns still often refer to Franca as “the daughter of Domenico Rame”. In the best tradition of the Commedia dell’Arte, the family improvised its performances, drawing on a rich repertoire of tragic and comical situations and dialogues.  They often opened in a new town – following a poll among the townspeople – with an enactment of the life of the local patron saint.  The family’s repertoire ranged from the biblical texts over Shakespeare to Chekhov and Pirandello; from Niccodemi to the great l9th century historical novels – especially those with a socialist or anticlerical bent. Often their performances included enactments of the lives of men such as Giordano Bruno, Arnaldo da Brescia and Galileo Galilei.  Domenico Rame was the troupe’s poet; a devout socialist, he often saw to it that the revenue from a performance was given in support of striking workers or used to build child-care facilities, or in other ways spent to improve the lives of the common people. The minutely documented records of this activity, which remains in the Rame-Fo archives, was probably maintained by Franca’s mother Emilia Baldini, a school teacher and daughter of a municipal engineer in Bobbio.  As a young school teacher, Emilia fell in love with Domenico – twenty years her senior – who was passing through Bobbio with his marionettes and puppets. She married him, against the strong wishes of her family, and together they continued to tour all of Lombardy. Emilia soon learned the trades of acting and costume designer. It was she who taught their four children to act and to move on the stage. She was an outstanding woman, meticulous in all her work and an excellent organizer. In the end it was she who carried the troupe on her shoulders.  It was in this environment that Franca earned her apprenticeship. She has always felt at home on the stage because – as she says – “I was born there: I was only eight days old when I made my debut in my mother’s arms [she played the new-born son of Geneviève of Brabant] … I didn’t say much that evening! “  Some years later, in the 1950-51 theatre season, Franca – following the lead of her sister Pia – left the family and joined the company of Tino Scotti for a part in Marcello Marchesi’s “Ghe pensi mi” at the Teatro Olimpia in Milan.  Dario Fo Dario Fo was born on 24 March 1926 in San Giano, a small town on Lago Maggiore in the province of Varese. His family consisted of: his father Felice, socialist, station master and actor in an amateur theatre company; his mother Pina Rota, a woman of great imagination and talent (in the 1970s her autobiographical account “Il paese delle rane”, telling the history of her home town, was published by Einaudi); his brother Fulvio and his sister Bianca; and his maternal grandfather, who had a farm in Lomellina, where young Dario spent his childhood vacations.  During Dario’s visits, his grandfather would travel around the countryside selling his produce from a big, horse-drawn wagon. To attract customers he would tell the most amazing stories, and in these stories he would insert news and anecdotes about local events. His satirical and timely chronicles earned him the nickname *Bristìn* (pepper seed). It was from his grandfather, sitting beside him on the big wagon, that Dario began to learn the rudiments of narrative rhythm.  Dario spent his childhood moving from one town to another, as his father’s postings were changed at the whim of the railway authorities. But even though the geography remained in a flux, the cultural setting was always the same. As the boy grew, he became schooled in the local narrative tradition. With growing passion, he would sit in the taverns or the *piazze* and listen tirelessly to the master glass-blowers and fishermen, who – in the oral tradition of the *fabulatore* – would swap tall tales, steeped in pungent political satire.  In 1940 he moved to Milan (commuting from Luino) to study at the Brera Art Academy. After the war, he begins to study architecture at the Polytechnic, but interrupts his studies with only a few exams left to complete his degree.  Towards the end of the war, Dario is conscripted into the army of the Salo republic. He manages to escape, and spends the last months of the war hidden in an attic store room. His parents are active in the resistance, his father organizing the smuggling of Jewish scientists and escaped British prisoners of war into Switzerland by train; his mother caring for wounded partisans.  At the end of the war, Dario returns to his studies at the Academy of Brera in Milan while attending courses in architecture at the Polytechnic, commuting each day from his home on Lago Maggiore.  1945-41 he turns his attention to stage design and theatre décor. He begins to improvise monologues.  He moves with his family to Milan. Mamma Fo, in order to help her husband put the three children through college, does her best as a shirt-maker.  For the younger Fos, this is a period of ravenous reading. Gramsci and Marx are devoured along with American novelists and the first translations of Brecht, Mayakovsky and Lorca.  In the immediate postwar years, Italian theatre undergoes a veritable revolution, pushed along mainly by the new phenomenon of *piccoli teatri* [“small theatres”] that play a key role in developing the idea of a “popular stage”.  Fo is captured by this effervescent movement and proves to be an insatiable theatregoer – even though he usually can’t afford to buy a seat and has to stand through the performances. Mamma Fo keeps an open mind and an open house for her children’s new acquaintances, among them Emilio Tadini, Alik Cavalieri, Piccoli, Vittorini, Morlotti, Treccani, Crepax, some of them already famous.  During his architecture studies, while working as decorator and assistant architect, Dario begins to entertain his friends with tales as tall as those he heard in the lakeside taverns of his childhood.  In the summer of 1950, Dario seeks out Franco Parenti who is enthralled by the young man’s comical rendering of the parable of Cain and Abel, a satire in which Cain, *poer nano* [“poor little thing”], a miserable fool, is anything but evil. It’s just that every time he tries, *poer nano,*to mimic the splendid, blond and blue-eyed Abel, he gets into trouble. After suffering one disaster after another, he finally goes crazy and kills the splendid Abel. Franco Parenti enthusiastically invites Fo to join his theatre company.  Dario starts performing in Parenti’s summer variety show. This is when he has his first “encounter” with Franca Rame – not in person, mind, but in the form of a photograph he sees at the home of some friends. He is thunderstruck!  For a while he continues to work as assistant architect. But he soon decides to abandon his work and studies, disgusted by the corruption already rampant in the building sector.  CHRONOLOGY   |  |  | | --- | --- | | The 1951-52  theatre season | Franca Rame and Dario Fo meet by chance: they are both engaged in a production of “Sette giorni a Milano” by Spiller and Carosso, staged by the Nava-Parenti company at the Odeon Theatre in Milan.  Dario’s courting technique is drastic: he pretends not to see Franca. After a couple of weeks of this, she grabs him backstage, pushes him up against a wall and gives him a passionate kiss. They are engaged. | | 1951 | Fo’s performance is a minor success, and he is invited to participate in RAI’s (the Italian national radio’s) show “Cocoricò”, where he earns a certain notoriety with his “poer nano” monologues, transmitted in 18 episodes. His innovative use of language subverts the rhetoric of “official” narrative. It is the first experiment with a narrative technique that combines re-examination of history with excursions into popular lore, a technique he is later to develop further with “Mistero buffo”. Created in this period are his grotesque renditions of the stories of Cain and Abel, Samson and Delilah, Abraham and Isaac, Romeo and Juliet, Moses, Othello, Rigoletto, Hamlet, Julius Caesar, King David, Nero and others.  The series is interrupted after the eighteenth show, as the producers – who are slow to catch on to the social and political satire that permeates the monologues – at last see fit to censure them. | | 1951-52 | Dario makes his debut with a series of monologues entitled “Poer Nano” (“poor little thing”, an affectionate expression in the Lombard dialect) in the revue “Sette giorni a Milano”, where he meets Franca Rame. Fo’s monologues are a success, leading to an own show on Italian national radio. He becomes a celebrity. | | 1952 | “Papaveri e papere”, a film by Marcello Marchesi, with Franca Rame and Walter Chiari. Franca has roles in some ten-odd other commercial films. | | 1952-53 | Dario Fo is on stage with the satirical performance “Cocoricò”, with Giustino Durano, Viky Enderson and others. Franca Rame is engaged by Remigio Paone to play in a big revue company, Billi and Riva in “I fanatici” by Marchesi and Mertz, music by Kramer. Teatro Nuovo, Milan. | | 1953-54 | For a performance at the Piccolo Teatro in Milan, Fo writes, together with Franco Parenti and Giustino Durano, directs (in collaboration with Lecoq) and plays “Il dito nell’occhio”. (He is also responsible for stage design and costumes.) Franca Rame also participates in the production, which is the first really satirical post-war revue. The show sparks both approval and controversy.  The company has difficulty in finding theatres to stage the play. Drastic efforts of censorship by the government as well as the Church: signs on church doors exhort parishioners not to see the play. This becomes a praxis that will hound the Fo-Rame theatre company for many years. | | 24 June | Franca and Dario are married in Milan’s Saint Ambrose Basilica. From this moment on, Franca is Fo’s main collaborator behind the desk as well as on the stage. | | 1954-55 | Together with Parenti and Durano, Fo writes and at the Piccolo Teatro in Milan, directs and plays “I sani da legare”. Also this play is subject to the same type of censorship as is described above. These two plays are the first real satirical postwar revues, and both enjoy great success with the public. | | 1955 | Attracted by the possibility to work in the cinema, the couple moves to Rome. Dario works as screen-writer (gag-man) with Age, Scarpelli, Scola and Pinelli, and for Ponti and De Laurentis as well as for other productions. | | 31 March | Their son Jacopo is born.  Franca with Memo Benassi in “King Lear” at the Teatro Stabile of Bolzano. | | 1956 | Fo writes the script for and plays against Franca Rame in the film “Lo svitato”, directed by Carlo Lizzani. | | 1956-57 | Fo collaborates in various film script projects and plays against Franca in several films. | | 1957 | Franca Rame in “Non andartene in giro tutta nuda” [“Mais n’te promène donc pas tout nue!”] by G. Feydeau at the Arlecchino Theatre in Rome. | | 1957-58 | The “Fo-Rame Company” is established. Franca and Dario return to Milan to establish their own theatre company, with Dario as playwright, actor, director, stage- and costume designer. Franca is Dario’s main text collaborator and leading actress. She also assumes responsibility for the company’s administration.  The Fo-Rame company makes its debut at Milan’s Piccolo Teatro. The company then leaves for a first long, annual tour (there were to be many, lasting up to 10 months and bringing the company to every part of Italy) with a performance entitled “Ladri, manichini e donne nude” and comprising four one-act farces: “l’uomo nudo, l’uomo in frack” [“One Was Nude and One Wore Tails”], “Non tutti i ladri vengono per nuocere” [“The Virtuous Burglar”], “Gli imbianchini non hanno ricordi” and “I cadaveri si spediscono e le donne si spogliano”. The four farces make the most of an endless series of misunderstandings, mistaken identities, people running up and down stairs, gags and slapstick. | | 1958-59 | “Comica finale” is another collection of four one-act plays: “Quando sarai povero sarai re”, “La Marcolfa”, “Un morto da vendere” and “I tre bravi”. These are short, comical stories structured much like the ones Franca’s family played at the end of their performances (“comic closures”). From the Teatro Stabile, Dario Fo and Franca Rame buy scenery, props and costumes, and set out on tour with their company. They also revive “Ladri, manichini e donne nude”. |   THE FO-RAME COMPANY HAS ITS FIRST OPENING AT A MAJOR, DOWNTOWN THEATRE IN MILAN   |  |  | | --- | --- | | 1959-60 | With “Gli arcangeli non giocano a flipper” [“Archangels Don’t Play Pinball”], at Milan’s Odeon Theatre, The Fo-Rame Company finally earns national recognition. The play becomes the greatest box-office hit in Italian theatre. | | 1960 | Fo writes “La storia vera di Piero d’Angera, che alla crociata non c’era”, produced by other companies with great success. | | 1960-61 | Teatro Odeon, Milan: “Aveva due pistole con gli occhi bianchi e neri”. | | 1961 | First performance abroad with his play: “Ladri, manichini e donne nude”, first at Stockholm’s Arena Theatre, then with a production in Poland. | | 1961-62 | Teatro Odeon, Milan: “Chi ruba un piede è fortunato in amore”. | | 1962 | In the spring, RAI (Italian national television) broadcasts on its second channel the televised variety show “Chi l’ha visto?” with Fo-Rame and others.  Together with Franca Rame, Dario Fo is invited to write, direct and present “Canzonissima”, a highly popular TV show built around the national lottery, with a different host each year. Fo’s and Rame’s sketches become an issue for the entire nation, provoking wild controversy. For the first time, television is used to portray the lives and difficulties of common people: the work-related illness of a signal woman, bricklayers that fall to their death from the scaffolding, etc.  The show is very successful; during broadcasts even taxi drivers stop working, and bars with televisions are smack full of people. RAI’s management starts to get nervous. Cuts are demanded in texts that have already been approved. All hell breaks loose over a sketch with a Mafia theme that tells the story of a murdered journalist. Malagodi, a senator from Italy’s Liberal Party, reports the sketch to the Italian Parliament’s oversight committee for television, on the grounds that “the honour of the Sicilian people is insulted by the claim that there exists a criminal organization called the Mafia”. (In 1985, Prime Minister Andreotti appoints Malagodi senator-for-life for his political services.) Fo and Rame also receive death threats, written with blood and delivered with the typical miniature, wooden coffin. The Fo family (including Franca’s and Dario’s seven-year old son) is placed under police protection.  A fight begins with RAI about censorship. Just a few hours before the scheduled broadcast of the eighth programme in the series, RAI’s management declares that further cuts must be made. Dario and Franca refuse and threaten to leave the programme. As “Canzonissima” is about to be aired it is still unclear what is going to happen. At the last minute RAI confirms the cuts. Dario and Franca walk off the show as a sign of protest.  The support they receive for their act is overwhelming, including thousands of letters and telegrams. RAI is unable to find substitutes for Fo and Rame, as all who are asked to replace them follow the instructions of SAI (the Italian actors union) to turn down the offer.  Fo and Rame face five law suits as a consequence and are ordered to pay several billion lire in damages. For 15 years they are banned by RAI from participating in either programmes or commercials on national radio or television (at that time, both radio and television were state monopolies). | | 1963-64 | Opening at Milan’s Odeon Theatre of “Isabella, tre caravelle e un cacciaballe”, which tells the story of the “discovery” of America on the basis of a thorough historical investigation of the life of Christopher Columbus, the court of Isabella of Castille and the “ethnic cleansing” of Spain’s Arabs and Jews. The play marks the beginning of a major effort to trace the history and “dogmas” of the dominant culture. The play, blatantly exposing the mystifications of “school-book” history and of militarist and patriotic rhetoric, comes under violent attack by right-wing groups. On one occasion, Fo and Rame are assaulted as they leave the Valle Theatre in Rome. Only through the presence of groups of militant workers from the Italian Communist Party (PCI) can the performances continue. | | 1964-65 | “Settimo: ruba un po’ meno” opens at the Odeon in Milan. The play is dedicated to Franca Rame, who in the leading comic role portrays a rather odd grave digger whose highest ambition is to become a prostitute. With its minutely detailed description of the corruption rampant in Italy, it anticipates by some thirty years the revolution brought about by the “Mani Pulite” (“Clean hands”) movement. | | 1965-66 | Milan’s Odeon Theatre: “La colpa è sempre del diavolo”. | | 1966-67 | Two productions: “Gli amici della battoniera”, translated from French and adapted by Fo; and “Ci ragiono e canto”, in collaboration with Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano, a performance built on traditional folk songs, compiled by Gianni Bosio and elaborated by Fo. | | 1967 | Following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Dario Fo withdraws his permission for his plays to be staged in Czech theatres. He later refuses to authorize cuts, proposed by Soviet censors, in a play scheduled to open at a Soviet theatre. After these incidents, production of his work all but ceases throughout the Soviet block. | | 1967-68 | Teatro Manzoni in Milan: “La signora è da buttare”. | | 1968-69 | Stimulated by the political events of those years, Dario and Franca disband their company and establish the Associazione Nuova Scena, composed of more than thirty young technicians, actors and actresses. It is an independent theatre collective, organized in three groups that tour Italy with productions staged mainly before working class audiences and at venues other than those offered by the official theatre circuit, such as *case del popolo* (workers’ community halls), sport arenas, cinemas, boccia courts, town squares, etc. To allow mobility and use of available space, foldable stages are built on Dario’s design. Nuova Scena’s first production opens at the *Casa del popolo* in Cesena (Romagna) with a performance of “Grande pantomima per pupazzi piccoli, grandi e medi”. The production is also staged at Milan’s Union Hall and is played on tour. Back in Milan, Nuova Scena – encountering difficulties in finding a fixed venue – rents an old, abandoned factory which it transforms into a theatrical centre. The centre becomes the home stage of a new company, *Il Capannone di Via Colletta*, supported by the theatre collective and by a large group of members: workers and students who contribute with their creativity and practical skills. | | 1969-70 | At Genua’s Union Hall and in various localities, Franca Rame is on stage with two new comic productions by Fo: “L’operaio conosce 300 parole, il padrone 1000, per questo lui è il padrone” and a double feature consisting of two one-act farces: “Legami pure, tanto spacco tutto lo stesso” and “Il funeral e del padrone”. Because of the plays’ expressed critique of Stalinism and of the social-democratic position of the Italian Communist Party, the tour is heavily sabotaged by the Party leadership. Some ten-odd performances are cancelled. The situation is very tense, Franca’s planned opening at Milan’s Union Hall is cancelled. Instead she is invited to play at the “Circus Medini”, a real circus with horses, tigers, lions and elephants, luckily all kept in cages around the tent. After some initial difficulties, the production can continue – thanks to support organized among the Party rank and file and among the extraparliamentary left – to enjoy great public success. Franca sends her Party card back to PCI Secretary Enrico Berlinguer (Dario has never been a member).  Dario stages “Mistero buffo” [“Mistero Buffo”]. The performance takes the form of a lesson in the history of literature that departs from a questioning of school dogma, in particular the text-book interpretation of the earliest known text in Italian (“Rosa fresca e aulentissima”), in which the text’s blatant – and scurrilous – allusion to the feminine genitalia is altogether censored. The actor reconstructs the language of the medieval jesters, reciting their monologues in such a way as to make them accessible to a wide audience today. The play is a terrific success; it even becomes necessary to stage it at sport arenas that can hold thousands. It is the play that more than any other establishes Fo’s fame worldwide. More than 5000 performances.  Due to political differences, Dario Fo and Franca Rame leave “Nuova Scena”. The “Collettivo Teatrale La Comune” sees the light of day, directed by Dario Fo and Franca Rame. | | 1970-71 | 1970 Arturo Corso begins as assistant director to Fo. La Comune produces (at the *Capannone di via Colletta*): “Vorrei morire anche stasera se dovessi sapere che non è servito niente”, a play about the Italian and Palestinian resistance.  Following the terrorist attack on the Banca Nazionale dell’Agricoltura in Milan, Dario writes and produces one of his most famous pieces: “Morte accidentale di un anarchico” [“Accidental Death of an Anarchist”], about the *strage di Stato* [a massacre thought to be organized by organs of the state].  Franca Rame on stage in “Tutti uniti, tutti inseme! Ma, scusa, quello non è il padrone?!”, a play about the birth of the Italian Communist Party in 1921. | | 1971 | “Fedayin”, a piece by Fo, with Franca on stage with 10 authentic Palestinian freedom fighters to gather funds and medicine for the Palestinian resistance. Franca went to fetch the fedayeen herself in the training camps in Lebanon, with the help of the Popular Democratic Front. | | 1971-72 | “Ordine per Dio.ooo.ooo.ooo” with Franca Rame and other actors, while Dario tours Italy with “Mistero buffo numero 2”.  Due to the economic crisis, many factories are closed. To defend their jobs, workers go on strike and occupy the factories. In support of this struggle, from 1971 to 1985 the La Comune collective stages hundreds of performances, donating the revenues to the workers.  La Comune is forced to leave the *Capannone di via Colletta*. The contract has expired and the owner refuses to renew it. | | 1973-74 | Dario, Franca and their colleagues are not deterred. They rent the Rossini Cinema on the outskirts of Milan, where they stage “Pum pum, chi è? La Polizia!” [“Bang bang, who’s there? Police!”] (still addressing the *strage di Stato*) with Dario Fo and other actors.  The theatre collective is subjected to various acts of repression by the police as well as to efforts at censorship. | | 8 March | A group of fascists kidnaps, tortures and rapes Franca Rame. Through this beastly act, they seek to punish Franca and Dario for their political activism, in particular Franca’s work in the prisons since 1970. Outcries of indignation and support throughout Italy. | | May | Following a two-month break, Franca returns to the stage with a performance entitled “Basta con i fascisti”, a slide presentation with monologues by Fo-Rame and Lanfranco Binni. The performance is dedicated to young people and addresses the cultural and political presence of fascism within the Italian state, retelling the birth, history and violence of fascism (opening: Milan’s *Casa del popolo* and tour).  Paris: “Mistero buffo” with Théâtre National Populaire at Salle Gemier-Trocadero.  “Ci ragiono e canto N.3” written by Fo for the Sicilian street singer Ciccio Busacca.  Having searched in vain for a permanent stage, La Comune occupies an abandoned, dilapidated building in central Milan, the *Palazzina Liberty,* formerly an indoor vegetable market. Within a year they have 80 000 season-ticket holders in Milan alone. | | September | A few days after the death of Allende, La Comune opens its new home stage – repaired and put in order with the help of neighbours and workers from various Milan factories – with “Guerra di popolo in Cile”. The revenues go to the Chilean resistance. During a guest performance in Sassari, Fo is arrested for having blocked access to the theatre for policemen seeking to stop the performance. | | 1974-75 | *Palazzina Liberty:* “Non si paga, non si paga!” [“Can’t pay? Won’t pay!”]. In the course of the season, Fo and Rame organize performances, demonstrations and concerts in support of the campaign for a referendum on divorce and as manifestations of solidarity with workers occupying factories and in other ways taking part in the political struggle. Many immigrants have in the *Palazzina Liberty* found a place to meet to discuss their common concerns and to celebrate their faiths. | | June 1975 | “Fanfani rapito”: Fo writes this piece in four days in support of the campaign for a referendum for the legalization of abortion. The performances of “Non si paga, non si paga!” are interrupted and the new play is staged within eight days! | | 1975 | The La Comune collective visits the People’s Republic of China for one month.  A group of Swedish intellectuals nominate Fo as candidate for the Nobel Prize in literature. | | 1975-76 | “La marijuana della mamma è la più bella”, a play about the drug fad making headway also in Italy. | | 1976-77 | On the invitation of Massimo Fichera, Director of RAI 2, Dario and Franca return to television after 15 years. The series “Il teatro di Dario Fo” includes “Mistero buffo”, “Settimo: ruba un po’meno!”, “Ci ragiono e canto”, “Isabella, tre caravelle e un cacciaballe”, “La signora è da buttare” and “Parliamo di donne”, for a total television time of 21 hours. The political right and the Church complain … and attack the programme at every opportunity! Franca Rame receives the IDI Prize as best television actress for her performance in “Parliamo di donne”. | | 1977-78 | During this theatre season, the third edition of “Mistero buffo” is born (*Palazzina Liberty,* followed by tour.)  In November opens at *Palazzina Liberty* a production of “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa” [“Female parts”], a piece mixing the grotesque, comic and dramatic to illustrate the situation of women today. Alone on the stage is Franca Rame, who for the first time puts her name besides Fo’s on the author by-line. The performance is staged more than 3000 times.  It is in these years that Fo becomes Italy’s most translated author. He is published in more than 50 countries and in more than 30 languages. | | 1979 | Dario and Franca participate in the International Theatre Festival in Berlin with “Mistero buffo” and “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa”.  Fo writes “La tragedia di Aldo Moro”, on the kidnapping and assassination of the Italian Christian Democratic Party leader at the hands of the Red Brigades. The play, which has never been performed, is built on Sophocles’ *Philoctetes*.  Re-elaborates and directs for Milan’s La Scala Theatre “L’Histoire du Soldat” by Igor Stravinsky. Writes and directs “Storia della tigre [‘The Tale of the Tiger’] e altre storie”. | | l980 | Franca, Dario and their son Jacopo found the *Libera Università di Alcatraz*, a cultural and agricultural retreat and study centre located in the hills between Gubbio and Perugia. By buying up, little by little, 3 700 000 square metres of forest (that otherwise would have been felled) and olive groves, the Fos prevent the destruction of a beautiful valley. They also restore eleven ancient and abandoned farm houses and medieval towers. Alcatraz becomes a gathering place for various artists and cultural groups – including Sergio Angese, Stefano Benni, Dacia Maraini, Milo Manara, Andrea Pazienza, Elena Cranco – who hold workshops in theatre, cartoon drawing, dance, writing, psychophysical techniques, psychology and craftsmanship. Alcatraz also arranges educational programmes and summer camps for young people, social outcasts and persons with handicap. The activities at the centre include equine therapy, comic therapy, nature walks and pool swimming including a swimming school. In addition, the centre offers natural gardening, an ecological restaurant and a facility to preserve organically grown fruit and produce. To date, the centre has had more than 3000 guests. It is directed by Jacopo Fo.  “Buona sera con Franca Rame” – by and with Fo – RAI 2 (20 shows). | | March | Sweden: Stockholms Stadsteater (The City Theatre of Stockholm) stages “Mistero buffo” and “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa”. | | May | Fo is invited by East Berlin’s Berliner Ensemble to stage a production at Bertolt Brecht’s prestigious theatre in the spring of 1981. Dario Fo prepares an adaptation of Brecht’s “Three-penny Opera” that is rejected for its political content. The main resistance comes from Brecht’s daughter (the Berlin Wall has not yet fallen). The same adaptation is used when the play is staged a year later at Turin’s Teatro Stabile.  Dario and Franca are invited to participate at the Italian Theatre Festival in New York. However, the US Department of State denies them entry visas to the United States. On 29 May, a large group of US artists and intellectuals organize a protest against the ruling. Among the protesters are Arthur Miller, Norman Mailer, Martin Scorsese, Ellen Stewart, Sol Yurrick, Eve Merriam and others. | | December | France: Théâtre de L’Est Parisien stages “Mistero buffo” and “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa”.  Germany: Franca on stage with “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa” at the Volkshochschule in Frankfurt and the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Bochum and in Hamburg. | | 1981- | The University of Copenhagen awards Fo with the prestigious Sonning Prize, which he dedicates to Franca. | | 1981 | Franca in a production by RAI: “Mrs Warren’s Profession” by [G. B. Shaw](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1925/index.html), directed by Giorgio Albertazzi. | | 1981-82 | “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa” in a new version, Milan’s Odeon Theatre followed by tour. Franca writes “Lo stupro” and, with Dario, “Una madre” (about political prisoners), two monologues that are inserted in various performances.  Fo writes “Clacson, trombette e pernacchi” [“Trumpets and raspberries”], a comedy about terrorism. | | 1982 | Turin’s Teatro Stabile produces and Fo directs his new play “L’Opera dello sghignazzo”, a free adaptation of John Gay’s “The Beggar’s Opera”, which also served as point of departure for Brecht’s “Three-penny Opera”. Dario Fo writes and produces “Il fabulazzo osceno”, based on “Mistero buffo” and “Storia della tigre”. With him on stage is Franca Rame who recites the two monologues “Lo stupro” and “La madre”.  London: Franca’s performance of “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa” at the Riverside Studios is received with loud acclaim by critics and public alike. The same piece, in English translation [“Female Parts”], is performed by Yvonne Bryceland at the National Theatre.  Dario and Franca together write “Coppia aperta” [“The Open Couple”], which is immediately staged at Stockholm’s famous Pistol Theatre, translated and directed by Anna and Carlo Barsotti. The play enjoys great success with critics and public. | | 1983 May | London: Fo at the Riverside Studios with “Mistero buffo”.  Canada: Franca is invited to participate in the Festival Québéçois du Jeune Théâtre with “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa”. | | 1983-84 | Following the play’s clamorous success in Sweden, Dario and Franca stage “Coppia aperta” with Nicola de Buono in the role of the husband (Teatro Ciak in Milan). The Ministerial Commission for Censorship bans the play to minors under 18 (!). The ruling is later recalled after protests from the press and the public. | | January | Cuba: Festival de teatro de la Habana with “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa”. | | May | Argentina: Teatro Municipal General San Martin with “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa” and “Mistero buffo”. During a performance, a youth throws a military tear-gas grenade into the theatre. It explodes, creating panic among the audience of well over 1000 persons. Every evening throughout the stay in Argentina, young and not so young – fascists in black leather jackets throw stones at the windows of the theatre – while tens of policemen stand by, watching complacently. Windows up to the third floor are broken. Meanwhile, groups of Catholics (instigated by fiery press articles by the Bishop of Buenos Aires, written before the arrival of the company), carrying oversized images of Jesus on their chests, pray in the lobby of the theatre. Others interrupt the performances with shouts every time the word “pope” was mentioned. These people are carried out of the theatre by the police. Reactions of support from authorities and the public, including the mothers of Plaza de Mayo.  Colombia: Teatro Colon with “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa” and “Mistero buffo”. | | August | Franca and Dario at Edinburgh’s Fringe Theatre Festival with “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa” and “Mistero buffo”.  Tour in Finland, Tampere: Festival of the Theatre of Dario Fo. Plays and performances by Fo-Rame are staged all over the city. Dario presents “Mistero buffo” and Franca “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa”.  They are invited by Joseph Papp to stage a production at New York’s Public Theatre, but are denied entry into the USA for a second time.  Fo writes “Patapunfete”, a text for clowns, performed and directed by Ronald and Alfred Colombaioni.  During the summer, Fo writes “Quasi per caso una donna: Elisabetta” [“Elizabeth: Almost by Chance a Woman”], “Dio li fa poi li accoppa” and “Lisistrata romana”, the latter a monologue that has never been staged.  London: Riverside Studios with “La storia della maschera“.  Fo-Rame at Edinburgh’s Fringe Theatre Festival. | | 1984-85 | The first production of “Quasi per caso una donna: Elisabetta” opens in the autumn. The large number of people who come to see the play during the season earn Dario and Franca AGIS’s “Golden Ticket” award. | | May-June | Germany: The International Theatre Festival in Munich with “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa” and “Mistero buffo”. | | May | Genua’s Teatro della Tosse stages “La vera storia di Piero d’Angera che alla crociata non c’era”, directed by Tonino Conte, stage design and costumes by Lele Luzzati. | | November | American producer Alexander Cohen stages a Broadway production of “Accidental Death of an Anarchist”, with adaptations by Richard Nelsan, at New York’s Belasco Theatre. The US Department of State finally – after personal intervention by President Reagan! – grants Fo and Rame a limited, six-day entry visa. | | 1985-86 | For the Biennial exhibition in Venice, Fo writes and stages (with Rome University’s Teatro Ateneo) “Hellequin, Harlekin, Arlecchino” at Venice’s Palazzo del Cinema. He also writes “Diario di Eva” for Franca; but has yet to stage it. | | September | Franca is invited to Copenhagen by the Danish actors’ union to present a few of her monologues at a benefit performance. Franca visits Tübingen, Heidelberg, Stuttgart and Frankfurt with the Theater Am Turm to perform “Coppia aperta” with Giorgio Biavati. | | May-June | USA: Dario and Franca are finally granted a normal entry visa for the United States. On the invitation of Harvard University, they perform “Mistero buffo” and “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa” at Cambridge’s American Repertory Theater, the New Haven University Repertory Theatre, Washington’s Kennedy Center, Baltimore’s Theater of Nations and New York’s Joyce Theater. They hold a five-day theatre seminar at New York University as well as various workshops. Franca gives a lesson/performance at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts. | | August | Fo receives the Premio Eduardo from Taormina Arte.  Franca at the Free Festival in Edinburgh with “Coppia aperta”. Participating in the festival are various companies presenting Fo-Rame texts in English translation: Yorick Theatre Co., Catwalk Theatre Productions, Fo-Rame Theatre Project, Warehouse Theatre, The Drama Department and Borderline Theatre. | | 1986-87 | Franca opens at Milan’s Teatro Nuovo with “Parti femminili”, two one-act plays by Dario Fo and Franca Rame: “Una giornata qualunque” [“An Ordinary Day”] and an updated version of “Coppia aperta”. The same season sees the opening of “Il ratto della Francesca” with Franca Rame and others. | | December | Pagani (Naples): Dario Fo receives the “Fifth national award against violence and the Camorra” from the Associazione Torre. | | February | Dario Fo directs Rossini’s “The Barber of Seville” at *De Nederlandse Opera* in Amsterdam. The same production – with another cast is later staged at the Teatro Petruzzelli in Bari. | | April | Dario and Franca are in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to direct Archangels Don’t Play Flipper” at the American Repertory Theatre. | | June | In New York to receive the Obie Prize. | | July | Franca Rame at the San Francisco Theater Festival with “Coppia aperta”. She holds a theatre workshop with well over a hundred participants, numbering actors, mimes, acrobats and magicians who have come from all parts of the United States to share experiences. | | 1987-88 | At the Festival dell’Unità, before an audience of over 10 000, Dario Fo presents his piece “La rava e la fava” (title later changed to “La parte del leone”), a tragicomic monologue on the political situation in Italy.  Franca Rame continues with “Parti femminili” and participates in a production for RAI 2, “Una lepre con la faccia da bambina”, a film by Gianni Sera on the ecological disaster in Seveso. In the meantime, Fo writes scripts for the eight episodes of “Trasmissione forzata” planned for RAI 3, where he also assumes the roles of director, costume designer, stage designer and actor (with Franca and others). Eleven more years have again passed since their last collaboration with RAI television.  They are awarded the Agro Dolce Prize in Campione d’Italia. | | June | Franca tours Turin for RAI 2’s production of “Parti femminili”. | | 1988-89 | Franca Rame continues her Italian tour of “Parti femminili”. Fo has a film role in “Musica per vecchi animali”, directed by Stefano Benni. | | March | *De Nederlandse Opera* reopens with “The Barber of Seville”, again directed by Fo. | | l989 | “Lettera dalla Cina” by Dario Fo staged at Milan’s *Arco della Pace* and in other Italian cities as part of demonstrations against the events at Tienanmen Square. | | May | Brazil: As part of the exhibition “Italia Viva”, the Teatro Petruzzelli stages Fo’s production of “The Barber of Seville” in Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro. In the same cities, Dario and Franca perform “Mistero buffo” and “Parti femminili” to a public already acquainted with their theatre through several productions by various Brazilian theatre companies. | | 1989-90 | Fo writes two plays: “Il braccato”, a never-played piece with a Mafia theme, and “Il papa e la strega” [“The Pope and the Witch”], on the legalization of drugs. The latter is staged with Franca Rame, who thanks to the large audience she reaches during the season again receives the “Golden ticket” award from AGIS. | | April-June | Paris: on the invitation of Antoine Vitez, Artistic Director of the *Comédie Française*, Fo stages Molière’s “Le médecin malgré lui” and “Le médecin volant”. Sadly, Vitez – who had fought to have Fo inaugurate his planned Molière cycle – is unable to witness the triumphs that the productions reap with critics and public alike. He passes away towards the end of April. Fo is the first Italian director to stage a production at the *Comédie Française*. Among the spectators is President Mitterrand, who praises the productions in a personal letter to Dario Fo. | | May | Fo is invited by the Berliner Ensemble to stage a production in Bertolt Brecht’s old theatre in the spring of 1991. The project is never finalized. | | July | Franca Rame films “Coppia aperta” for Swiss national television. | | 1990-91 | Fo writes and produces at Milan’s Teatro Nuovo “Zitti! Stiamo precipitando!”, a comic-grotesque farce about AIDS. The piece with Dario Fo, Franca Rame and others on stage – is played at many of the country’s major theatres. In several cities, it is alternated with “Mistero buffo”, always in high demand.  The open-ended structure of “Mistero buffo” allows it to evolve over the years, permitting Fo to address the various issues which over time attracts his interest and that of the public. | | April | As part of the Eleventh International Theatre Festival, Dario and Franca stage “Mistero buffo” in Palma and Seville. | | May | Fo is invited to participate with a new production at Seville’s 1992 World Exhibition on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the discovery of America. | | May | Fo’s production of “The Barber of Seville” at *De Nederlandse Opera* is filmed by Dutch national television. | | 1991-92 | Dario Fo on stage with his new monologue “Johan Padan a la descoverta de le Americhe”. The text is the fruit of his research on the lives of a group of Europeans shipwrecked in the early 16th Century. Using testimonials recovered from that time, Fo tells the story – in a reinvented, antique language – of a group of Mississippi Indians resisting the European incursion. This five centuries old struggle marks the beginning of the undefeated Seminole nation’s fight for its survival, an epic story that from the beginning has been censored from the pages of history. | | October | Dario and Franca at the Italian Theatre festival in Moscow, organized by the Russian Writers Association and ETI. They stage “Mistero buffo” at the Taganka Theatre. | | April | Spain: the Centro Dramatico in Valencia puts on a production of Fo’s 1962 play “Isabella, tre caravelle e un cacciaballe”, slightly revised on occasion of the “celebration” of the quincentenial anniversary of the “discovery” of America.  Fo participates with “Johan Padan” in the World Exhibition in Seville in 1992.  “Parliamo di donne”, consisting of two one-act pieces (“L’Eroina” and “Grassa è bello”), is staged in September at Milan’s Teatro Nuovo. The pieces are written with Franca Rame who also plays the leading roles. “L’Eroina” tells the tragic story of a mother of three drug-addicted children, of which one dies of an overdose and another of AIDS. To save the life of the third child, the mother prostitutes herself to afford to keep him with drugs: “A drug addiction can be cured but AIDS can only kill”. In “Grassa è bello”, Franca – in a foam rubber body suit to make her look grossly overweight – airs thoughts on femininity, what it means to be sexy, slimming, dieting, love and life in general. As often happens when Franca is on stage, several performances are cancelled because the theatre owners get cold feet following a bigoted press campaign. | | June | Fo directs a new production of “The Barber of Seville”, this time for the Paris Opera playing at the Opera Garnier. | | October | *De Nederlandse Opera* opens with “The Barber of Seville” for yet another season.  Also continuing for another season are Fo’s productions of Molière’s “Le médecin malgré lui” and “Le médecin volant” at the *Comédie Française.* | | 1992-93 | “Settimo: ruba un po’ meno! n. 2” by Dario Fo and Franca Rame. In this one-act play, staged as the flood-gates of the wide-reaching graft scandal known in Italy as *“tangentopoli”* [“bribe city”] opened, Franca Rame talks in simple terms about the thievery that has become custom in Italy’s political establishment. No embellishments are necessary for dramatic effects. | | July 1993 | At the Festival dei Due Mondi in Spoleto, Franca Rame and others read “Dario Fo incontra Ruzzante”. | | 1993-94 | Dario Fo writes and plays in “Mamma! I sanculotti!”, a piece that, in the tradition of comic theatre, through dance, mime and song, tells the story of a public prosecutor who investigates graft and corruption in and out of Parliament. | | 1994 | “Un palcoscenico per le donne”: At Milan’s Porta Romana Theatre, Franca Rame organizes a theatrical review, by and for women, with young playwright/actresses. In August, the review is played in Cesenatico with great success. | | April | Franca: a new season with “Settimo: ruba un po’ meno n. 2”. | | May | In cooperation with the Municipality of Cervia, Franca organizes a performance for a group of Italian and foreign actors and actresses. Participants come from Denmark, the United Kingdom, the United States and Turkey. | | August | At the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro, Fo directs Rossini’s “L’Italiana in Algeri”. | | 1994-95 | In October, Franca opens in Milan with “Sesso? Grazie, tanto per gradire!”, by Franca Rame and Jacopo and Dario Fo, based on Jacopo Fo’s book *Lo zen e l’arte di scopare* (more than 300 000 copies sold). In the grotesque and ironic text, Franca Rame – departing from her own first sexual experiences – illustrates how we are kept in the dark as we grow up, with the idea that sexuality – above all women’s sexuality – is something indecent. At first, the Ministerial Commission for Censorship bans the performance for minors under 18 years. After two months of press campaigns and litigation, the ban is dropped, and the performance is described as “brimming with profound maternal love and therefore recommended to minors”. | | December | Fo’s production of Rossini’s “L’Italiana in Algeri” is staged at *De Nederlandse Opera* to resounding international acclaim. The production is filmed by Dutch national television.  Franca visits Toronto with an enthusiastically received performance of “Sesso? Grazie, tanto per gradire!”. | | January | Dario Fo opens in Florence with “Dario Fo recita Ruzzante”, a satirical monologue and an homage to Angelo Beolco. The text is an elaboration of the one already read at the Festival in Spoleto, enriched with new material. The performance meets with unanimous praise from Italy’s theatre critics and draws a large audience.  Walter Valeri, who manages the Fo-Rame company’s foreign bookings, prepares an international tour in France, the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States. Scheduled for the tour are performances of “Johan Padan a la scoperta de le Americhe” and “Sesso? Grazie, tanto per gradire!”, as well as seminars at leading universities with central figures in American theatre.  On 17 July, Dario is struck by cerebral ischaemia and loses 80 per cent of his sight. All plans are put on hold. In order to honour commitments to technical and administrative personnel, Franca Rame continues in the autumn with her Italian tour of “Sesso? Grazie, tanto per gradire!”, while Dario rests and recuperates. His condition is good and improves day by day. | | 1996-97 | Dario begins to reassume his tasks: he holds classes in theatre schools and at universities, and gives a special performance of “Arlecchino” at Venice’s Teatro Goldoni. | | July | He writes “Bibbia dei villani” for the festival of Benevento. The performance is staged in September. | | May | Dario and Franca visit Copenhagen, where they hold an open seminar at Folkteatret. Franca arranges a theatre evening with Danish actresses and gives performances of “Sesso? Grazie, tanto per gradire!”. The couple also inaugurates an exhibition of their drawings, costumes and puppets at the National Museum.  In the autumn, Dario and Franca continue with their Italian tour of “Mistero buffo” and “Sesso? Grazie, tanto per gradire!”, merging the two pieces into a single performance played at major theatres as well at sports arenas before large audiences (up to 5000 people). In order not to tire Dario too much, the activities of the company are otherwise reduced.  During this tour, Dario and Franca write “Il diavolo con le zinne”, a comic-grotesque spectacle that for its richness and variety in language, its theatrical invention and its elements of song and dance, is best described as an opera. It is a great success.  Dario is now cured of his illness, and his eyesight has improved so much that Franca gives him a computerized typewriter (he refuses to use a computer), They are very happy! | | 1997-98 | For the Festival of Taormina, CTFR, GIGA and Taormina Arte produce “Il diavolo con le zinne”, directed by Dario Fo, who also designs costumes and décor. On stage are Franca Rame and Giorgio Albertazzi. The play opens on 7 August 1997 at the Teatro Vittorio Emanuele in Messina.  The production continues the following season and is taken on tour throughout Italy, where it meets with great success. |   9 October 1997 Dario Fo receives the Nobel Prize in literature.  PLAYS DIRECTED BY DARIO FO AND FRANCA RAME   |  |  | | --- | --- | | 1962 | GLI AMICI DELLA BATTONIERA – Teatro Ridotto, Venice. | | 1963 | CHI RUBA UN PIEDE È FORTUNATO IN AMORE – Lilla Teatern, Helsinki. | | 1967 | LA PASSEGGIATA DELLA DOMENICA – by M. Archard, translation and arrangement by Dario Fo; Teatro Durini, Milan. | | 1968 | ENZO JANNACCI: 22 CANZONI – Teatro Odeon, Milan. | | 1978 | LA STORIA DI UN SOLDATO (L’HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT) – by I. Stravinsky; Teatro alla Scala, Milan. | | 1981 | L’OPERA DELLO SGHIGNAZZO – elaboration of “The Beggars Opera” by J. Gay; Teatro Stabile, Turin. | | 1986 | TUTTA CASA, LETTO E CHIESA- Belgium and France. | | 1987 | THE BARBER OF SEVILLE – by G. Rossini; De Nederlandse Opera, Amsterdam. | | 1987 | ARCHANGELS DON’T PLAY FLIPPER – American Repertory Theater, Cambridge (Mass.). | | 1988 | THE BARBER OF SEVILLE – by G. Rossini; Teatro Petruzzelli, Bari. | | 1989 | THE BARBER OF SEVILLE – by G. Rossini; tour with Teatro Petruzzelli in Brazil (Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro). | | 1990 | LE MÉDECIN MALGRÉ LUI/LE MÉDECIN VOLANT – by Molière; Comédie Française, Paris. | | 1990 | THE BARBER OF SEVILLE – by G. Rossini; De Nederlandse Opera, Amsterdam. | | 1991 | IL MEDICO PER FORZA/IL MEDICO VOLANTE – by Molière; Comédie Française, Paris. | | 1992 | ISABELLA, TRE CARAVELLE E UN CACCIABALLE – Centro Dramatico Nacional, Valencia. | | 1992 | THE BARBER OF SEVILLE – by G. Rossini; De Nederlandse Opera, Amsterdam (filmed for Dutch TV). | | 1992 | THE BARBER OF SEVILLE – by G. Rossini; Opera Garnier, Paris. | | 1994 | L’ITALIANA IN ALGERI – by G. Rossini; Pesaro Opera Festival, Pesaro. | | 1994 | THE BARBER OF SEVILLE – by G. Rossini; De Nederlandse Opera, Amsterdam. | | 1996 | THE BARBER OF SEVILLE – by G. Rossini; Israel (produced by Arturo Corso). | | 1997 | THE BARBER OF SEVILLE – by G. Rossini; Sweden (staged by Carlo Barsotti). |   WORK IN FILM AND TELEVISION   |  |  | | --- | --- | | 1952 | PAPAVERI E PAPERE, a film by Marcello Marchesi with Franca Rame and Walter Chiari. | | 1956 | MONETINE DA 5 LIRE, a television comedy by Dario Fo for RAI. | | 1956 | LO SVITATO, a film by Carlo Lizzani with Franca Rame, script by Dario Fo. | | 1961 | CHI L’HA VISTO?, a television series for RAI 2 (6 episodes). | | 1962 | CANZONISSIMA, a television series for RAI 1 (13 episodes). Fo writes the texts, directs and – with Franca Rame – hosts the show, which is one of the most popular on Italian television. Due to the political content of some of the sketches, the show is censured. Dario Fo and Franca Rame leave the show in protest. As a consequence, they are sued by RAI’s management which bans them from television for 15 years. | | 1976 | FANFANI RAPITO, film. | | 1977 | IL TEATRO DI DARIO FO, seven televised comedies by and with Dario Fo and Franca Rame, for RAI 2. | | 1978 | BUONASERA CON FRANCA RAME, a television series for RAI 2 (20 episodes). | | 1978 | PARLIAMO DI DONNE, 2 episodes with Franca Rame. | | 1981 | MRS WARREN’S PROFESSION by G. B. Shaw, directed for television by G. Albertazzi, with Franca Rame. | | 1988 | TRASMISSIONE FORZATA with Dario Fo and Franca Rame, for RAI 3. | | 1989 | UNA LEPRE CON LA FACCIA DA BAMBINA, film for television by G. Serra, with Franca Rame. | | 1989 | UNA GIORNATA QUALUNQUE and COPPIA APERTA for RAI 2, with Franca Rame. | | 1989 | PROMESSI SPOSI, Dario Fo. | | 1989 | MUSICA PER VECCHI ANIMALI, film for television by S. Benni, with Dario Fo. | | 1990 | COPPIA APERTA, Swiss national television, with Franca Rame. | | 1991 | SETTIMO: RUBA UN PO’ MENO, for RAI 2. | | 1991 | MISTERO BUFFO, for RAI 2, with Dario Fo and Franca Rame. | | 1993 | RUZZANTE, for RAI 2. |   COUNTRIES IN WHICH THE THEATRE OF DARIO FO AND FRANCA RAME HAS BEEN PLAYED  Argentina Australia Austria Belgium Brazil Bulgaria Canada Chile China Colombia Czechoslovakia Denmark England Estonia Finland France Germany Greece  Greenland Hungary Iceland India Ireland Israel Japan Kenya Luxembourg Malta Mexico Monaco The Netherlands New Guinea New Zealand Norway Paraguay PeruPoland Portugal Puerto Rico Romania Scotland Singapore South Africa Spain Sweden Switzerland Turkey South Korea Soviet Union United States Uruguay Venezuela Yugoslavia Zimbabwe  CITIES HOSTING EXHIBITS OF THE THEATRE OF DARIO FO AND FRANCA RAME ITALY: Bergamo, Cesena, Forli, Milan, Palermo, Pesaro, Riccione, Venice  SPAIN: Barcelona, Madrid  DENMARK: Copenhagen  FINLAND: Helsinki  The NETHERLANDS: Amsterdam  The exhibits contain paintings, masks, hand- and string puppets, tapestries, sketches for stage design, stage machinery, direction notes and costumes.  *Translated by Paul Claesson*  From [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)*. The Nobel Prizes 1997*, Editor Tore Frängsmyr, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1998  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and later published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel/*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)[*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*/*[*The Nobel Prizes*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/nobel-prizes.html). The information is sometimes updated with an addendum submitted by the Laureate.  *Dario Fo died on 13 October 2016.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0928 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0929 |
| Biographical | Wisława Szymborska was born in Kórnik[\*](https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1996/szymborska/biographical/#not) in Western Poland on 2 July 1923. Since 1931 she has been living in Krakow, where during 1945-1948 she studied Polish Literature and Sociology at the Jagiellonian University. Szymborska made her début in March 1945 with a poem “Szukam slowa” (*I am Looking for a Word*) in the daily “Dziennik Polski”.  During 1953-1981 she worked as poetry editor and columnist in the Kraków literary weekly “Zycie Literackie” where the series of her essays “Lektury nadobowiazkowe” appeared (the series has been renewed lately in the addition to “Gazeta Wyborcza”-“Gazeta o Ksiazkach”). The collection “Lektury nadobowiazkowe” was published in the form of a book four times.  Szymborska has published 16 collections of poetry: *Dlatego zyjemy* (1952), *Pytania zadawane sobie* (1954), *Wolanie do Yeti* (1957), *Sól* (1962), *Wiersze wybrane* (1964), *Poezje wybrane* (1967), *Sto pociech* (1967), *Poezje* (1970), *Wszelki wypadek* (1972), *Wybór wierszy* (1973), *Tarsjusz i inne wiersze* (1976), *Wielka liczba* (1976), *Poezje wybrane II* (1983), *Ludzie na moscie* (1986). *Koniec i poczatek* (1993, 1996), *Widok z ziarnkiem piasku. 102 wiersze* (1996). Wisława Szymborska has also translated French poetry.  Her poems have been translated (and published in book form) in English, German, Swedish, Italian, Danish, Hebrew, Hungarian, Czech, Slovakian, Serbo-Croatian, Romanian, Bulgarian and other languages. They have also been published in many foreign anthologies of Polish poetry.  Wisława Szymborska is the Goethe Prize winner (1991) and Herder Prize winner (1995). She has a degree of Honorary Doctor of Letters of Poznan University (1995). In 1996 she received the Polish PEN Club prize.  \* In Bnin, now a part of Kórnik.  From [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)*. The Nobel Prizes 1996*, Editor Tore Frängsmyr, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1997  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and later published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel/*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)[*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*/*[*The Nobel Prizes*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/nobel-prizes.html). The information is sometimes updated with an addendum submitted by the Laureate.   |  | | --- | | A selection of works by Wisława Szymborska in English | | *People on a bridge. Poems.* Introd. and transl. by Adam Czerniawski. London, Boston: Forest Books, 1990. | | *View with a grain of sand. Selected poems.* Transl. by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh. New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1995. | | *Nothing twice. Selected poems.* Selected and transl. by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh. Kraków: Wydawn. Literackie, 1997. | | *Poems, new and collected, 1957-1997.* Transl. by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998. | | *Miracle fair. Selected poems.* Transl. by Joanna Trzeciak. New York: Norton, 2001. | | *Nonrequired reading. Prose pieces.* Transl. by Clare Cavanagh. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2002. |   From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1995-2000*, Editor Horace Engdahl, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 2002  *Wisława Szymborska died on 1 February 2012.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0929 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0930 |
| Biographical | Seamus Heaney was born in April 1939, the eldest member of a family which would eventually contain nine children. His father owned and worked a small farm of some fifty acres in County Derry in Northern Ireland, but the father’s real commitment was to cattle-dealing. There was something very congenial to Patrick Heaney about the cattle-dealer’s way of life to which he was introduced by the uncles who had cared for him after the early death of his own parents. The poet’s mother came from a family called McCann whose connections were more with the modern world than with the traditional rural economy; her uncles and relations were employed in the local linen mill and an aunt had worked “in service” to the mill owners’ family. The poet has commented on the fact that his parentage thus contains both the Ireland of the cattle-herding Gaelic past and the Ulster of the Industrial Revolution; indeed, he considers this to have been a significant tension in his background, something which corresponds to another inner tension also inherited from his parents, namely that between speech and silence. His father was notably sparing of talk and his mother notably ready to speak out, a circumstance which Seamus Heaney believes to have been fundamental to the “quarrel with himself” out of which his poetry arises.  Heaney grew up as a country boy and attended the local primary school. As a very young child, he watched American soldiers on manoeuvres in the local fields, in preparation for the Normandy invasion of 1944. They were stationed at an aerodrome which had been built a mile or so from his home and once again Heaney has taken this image of himself as a consciousness poised between “history and ignorance” as representative of the nature of his poetic life and development. Even though his family left the farm where he was reared (it was called Mossbawn) in 1953, and even though his life since then has been a series of moves farther and farther away from his birthplace, the departures have been more geographical than psychological: rural County Derry is the “country of the mind” where much of Heaney’s poetry is still grounded.  When he was twelve years of age, Seamus Heaney won a scholarship to St. Columb’s College, a Catholic boarding school situated in the city of Derry, forty miles away from the home farm, and this first departure from Mossbawn was the decisive one. It would be followed in years to come by a transfer to Belfast where he lived between 1957 and 1972, and by another move from Belfast to the Irish Republic where Heaney has made his home, and then, since 1982, by regular, annual periods of teaching in America. All of these subsequent shifts and developments were dependent, however, upon that original journey from Mossbawn which the poet has described as a removal from “the earth of farm labour to the heaven of education.” It is not surprising, then, that this move has turned out to be a recurrent theme in his work, from “Digging”, the first poem in his first book, through the much more orchestrated treatment of it in “Alphabets”(*The Haw Lantern,* 1987), to its most recent appearance in “A Sofa in the Forties” which was published this year in *The Spirit Level*.  At St. Columb’s College, Heaney was taught Latin and Irish, and these languages, together with the Anglo-Saxon which he would study while a student of Queen’s University, Belfast, were determining factors in many of the developments and retrenchments which have marked his progress as a poet. The first verses he wrote when he was a young teacher in Belfast in the early 1960s and many of the best known poems in *North*, his important volume published in 1975, are linguistically tuned to the Anglo-Saxon note in English. His poetic line was much more resolutely stressed and packed during this period than it would be in the eighties and nineties when the “Mediterranean” elements in the literary and linguistic heritage of English became more pronounced. *Station Island* (1984) reveals Dante, for example, as a crucial influence, and echoes of Virgil – as well as a translation from Book VI of *The Aeneid* – are to be found in *Seeing Things* (1991). Heaney’s early study of Irish bore fruit in the translation of the Middle Irish story of Suibhne Gealt in *Sweeney Astray* (1982) and in several other translations and echoes and allusions: the Gaelic heritage has always has been part of his larger keyboard of reference and remains culturally and politically central to the poet and his work.  Heaney’s poems first came to public attention in the mid-1960s when he was active as one of a group of poets who were subsequently recognized as constituting something of a “Northern School” within Irish writing. Although Heaney is stylistically and temperamentally different from such writers as Michael Longley and Derek Mahon (his contemporaries), and Paul Muldoon, Medbh McGuckian and Ciaran Carson (members of a younger Northern Irish generation), he does share with all of them the fate of having be en born into a society deeply divided along religious and political lines, one which was doomed moreover to suffer a quarter-century of violence, polarization and inner distrust. This had the effect not only of darkening the mood of Heaney’s work in the 1970s, but also of giving him a deep preoccupation with the question of poetry’s responsibilities and prerogatives in the world, since poetry is poised between a need for creative freedom within itself and a pressure to express the sense of social obligation felt by the poet as citizen. The essays in Heaney’s three main prose collections, but especially those in *The Government of the Tongue* (1988) and *The Redress of Poetry* (1995), bear witness to the seriousness which this question assumed for him as he was coming into his own as a writer.  These concerns also lie behind Heaney’s involvement for a decade and a half with Field Day, a theatre company founded in 1980 by the playwright Brian Friel and the actor Stephen Real. Here, he was also associated with the poets Seamus Deane and Tom Paulin, and the singer David Hammond in a project which sought to bring the artistic and intellectual focus of its members into productive relation with the crisis that was ongoing in Irish political life. Through a series of plays and pamphlets (culminating in Heaney’s case in his version of Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* which the company produced and toured in 1990 under the title, *The Cure at Troy*), Field Day contributed greatly to the vigour of the cultural debate which flourished throughout the 1980s and 1990s in Ireland.  Heaney’s beginnings as a poet coincided with his meeting the woman whom he was to marry and who was to be the mother of his three children. Marie Devlin, like her husband, came from a large family, several of whom are themselves writers and artists, including the poet’s wife who has recently published an important collection of retellings of the classic Irish myths and legends (*Over Nine Waves,* 1994). Marie Heaney has been central to the poet’s life, both professionally and imaginatively, appearing directly and indirectly in individual poems from all periods of his oeuvre right down to the most recent, and making it possible for him to travel annually to Harvard by staying on in Dublin as custodian of the growing family and the family home.  The Heaneys had spent a very liberating year abroad in 1970/71 when Seamus was a visiting lecturer at the Berkeley campus of the University of California. It was the sense of self-challenge and new scope which he experienced in the American context that encouraged him to resign his lectureship at Queen’s University (1966-72) not long after he returned to Ireland, and to move to a cottage in County Wicklow in order to work full time as a poet and free-lance writer. A few years later, the family moved to Dublin and Seamus worked as a lecturer in Carysfort College, a teacher training college, where he functioned as Head of the English Department until 1982, when his present arrangement with Harvard University came into existence. This allows the poet to spend eight months at home without teaching in exchange for one semester’s work at Harvard. In 1984, Heaney was named Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, one of the university’s most prestigious offices. In 1989, he was elected for a five-year period to be Professor of Poetry at Oxford University, a post which requires the incumbent to deliver three public lectures every year but which does not require him to reside in Oxford.  In the course of his career, Seamus Heaney has always contributed to the promotion of artistic and educational causes, both in Ireland and abroad. While a young lecturer at Queen’s University, he was active in the publication of pamphlets of poetry by the rising generation and took over the running of an influential poetry workshop which had been established there by the English poet, Philip Hobsbaum, when Hobsbaum left Belfast in 1966. He also served for five years on The Arts Council in the Republic of Ireland (1973-1978) and over the years has acted as judge and lecturer for countless poetry competitions and literary conferences, establishing a special relationship with the annual [W.B. Yeats](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1923/index.html) International Summer School in Sligo. In recent years, he has been the recipient of several honorary degrees; he is a member of Aosdana, the Irish academy of artists and writers, and a Foreign Member of The American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1996, subsequent to his winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995, he was made a Commandeur de L’Ordre des Arts et Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture.  From [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)*. The Nobel Prizes 1995*, Editor Tore Frängsmyr, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1996  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and later published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel/*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)[*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*/*[*The Nobel Prizes*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/nobel-prizes.html). The information is sometimes updated with an addendum submitted by the Laureate.  *Seamus Heaney died on 30 August 2013.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0930 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0931 |
| Biographical | Kenzaburo Oe was born in 1935, in a village hemmed in by the forests of Shikoku, one of the four main islands of Japan. His family had lived in the village tradition for several hundred years, and no one in the Oe clan had ever left the village in the valley. Even after Japan embarked on modernization soon after the Meiji Restoration, and it became customary for young people in the provinces to leave their native place for Tokyo or the other large cities, the Oes remained in Ose-mura. Maps no longer show the small hamlet by name because it was annexed by a neighbouring town. The women of the Oe clan had long assumed the role of storytellers and had related the historical events of the region, including the two uprisings that occurred there before and after the Meiji Restoration. They also told of events closer in nature to legend than to history. These stories, of a unique cosmology and of the human condition therein, which Oe heard told since his infancy, left him with an indelible mark.  The Second World War broke out when Oe was six. Militaristic education extended to every nook and cranny of the country, the Emperor as both monarch and deity reigning over its politics and its culture. Young Oe, therefore, experienced the nation’s myth and history as well as those of the village tradition, and these dual experiences were often in conflict. Oe’s grandmother was a critical storyteller who defended the culture of the village, narrating to him humourously, but ever defiantly, anti-national stories. After his father’s death during the war, his mother took over his father’s role as educator. The books she bought him – *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Strange Adventures of Nils Holgersson* – have left him with an impression he says ‘he will carry to the grave’.  Japan’s defeat in the war in 1945 brought enormous change, even to the remote forest village. In schools, children were taught democratic principles, replacing those of the absolutist Emperor system, and this education was all the more thorough, for the nation was then under the administration of American and other forces. Young Oe took democracy straight to his heart. So strong was his desire for democracy that he decided to leave for Tokyo; leave the village of his forefathers, the life they had lived and preserved, out of sheer belief that the city offered him an opportunity to knock on the door of democracy, the door that would lead him to a future of freedom on paths that stretched out to the world. Had it not been for the drastic change the nation underwent at this time, Oe, whose love of trees is one of his innate qualities, would have remained in his village as his forefathers had done, and tended to the forest as one of its guardians.  At the age of eighteen, Oe made his first long train trip to Tokyo, and in the following year enrolled in the Department of French Literature at Tokyo University where he received instruction under the tutelage of Professor Kazuo Watanabe, a specialist on Francois Rabelais. Rabelais’ image system of grotesque realism, to use Mikhail Bakhtin’s terminology, provided him with a methodology to positively and thoroughly reassess the myths and history of his native village in the valley.  Watanabe’s thoughts on humanism, which he arrived at from his study of the French Renaissance, helped shape Oe’s fundamental view of society and the human condition. An avid reader of contemporary French and American literature, Oe viewed the social condition of the metropolis in light of the works he read. Yet, he also endeavored to reorganize, under the light of Rabelais and humanism, his thoughts on what the women of the village had handed down to him, those stories that constituted his background. In this sense, he was again living another duality.  Oe started writing in 1957, while still a French literature student at the university. His works from 1957 through 1958 – from the short story, *The Catch*, which won him the Akutagawa Award, to his first novel, *Bud-Nipping*, *Lamb Shooting\** (1958) – depict the tragedy of war tearing asunder the idyllic life of a rural youth. In *Lavish are the Dead* (1957), a short story, and in *The Youth Who Came Late\** (1961), a novel, Oe portrayed student life in Tokyo, a city where the dark shadows of the U.S. occupation still remained. Apparent in these works are strong influences of Jean-Paul Sartre and other modern French writers.  Crisis struck Oe’s life and literature with the birth of his first son, Hikari. Hikari was born with a cranial deformity resulting in his becoming a mentally- handicapped person. Traumatic as the experience was for Oe, the crisis granted him a new lease on both his life and his literature. Overcoming the agony and determined to coexist with the child, Oe wrote *A Personal Matter* (1964), his penning of his pain in accepting the brain-damaged child into his life, and of how he arrived at his resolve to live with him. Through the catalytic medium of humanism, he conjoined his own fate of having to accept a handicapped child into the family with that of the stance one ought to take in contemporary society, and wrote *Hiroshima Notes* (1965), a long essay which describes the realities and thoughts of the A-bomb victims.  Following this, Oe deepened his interest in Okinawa, the southernmost group of islands in Japan. Before the Meiji Restoration, Okinawa was an independent country with its own culture. During World War II, the islands became the site of the only battle Japan fought on its own soil. After the war, the people of Okinawa were left to suffer a long U.S. military occupation. Oe’s interest in Okinawa was oriented, politically, toward the lives of the Okinawans living on what became a U.S. military base, and, culturally, to what Okinawa meant to him in terms of its traditions. The latter opened out to a broadened interest in the culture of South Koreans, enabling him to further appreciate the importance of Japan’s peripheral cultures, which differed from Tokyo-centered culture. This pursuit provided realistic substance to his study of Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory regarding a people’s culture which led him to write *The Silent Cry* (1967), a work that ties in the myths and history of the forest village with the contemporary age.  After *The Silent Cry*, two streams of thought, which at times flow as one, are apparent and consistent in Oe’s literary world. Starting with *A Personal Matter* is one group of works that depicts his life of coexistence with his mentally-handicapped son, Hikari. *Teach Us to Outgrow our Madness* (1969), a two-volume work, painfully portrays both the agony-laden trials and errors he experiences in his life with his yet unspeaking infant child, and his pursuit of his father he lost during the war. *My Deluged Soul\** (1973) depicts a father who relates to his infant child who, through the medium of the songs of the wild birds, has started to communicate with the family, and who empathizes with youths that belong to a belligerent and radical political party. *Rouse Up, O, Young Men of the New Age!\** (1983), a work in which Oe draws upon images from William Blake’s Prophecies, depicts his son Hikari’s development from a child to a young man, and thus crowns the works he wrote about his handicapped child.  The second group are stories in which Oe relates characters who he establishes in the theater of the myths and history of his native forest village, but who interact closely with life in today’s cities. This world of Oe’s fiction, starting with *Bud- Nipping, Lamb-Shooting* and followed by *The Silent Cry*, came to shape the core of his entire literature. Making full use of new ideas of cultural anthropology, these works represent the totality of Oe’s world of fiction, as evidenced in *Letters to My Sweet Bygone Years* (1987), a work about a young man who, banking on his cosmology and world-view of Dante, strives but fails to establish a politico- cultural base in the forest. *Contemporary Games* is a story that alternates between myth and history, which Oe supports with the matriarch and trickster principles he draws from cultural anthropology. He rewrote this work in narrative form as *M/T and the Wonders of the Forest\** (1986). With the aid of [W.B. Yeat’s](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1923/index.html) poetic metaphors, Oe embarked on writing *The Flaming Green Tree\**, a trilogy comprised of *Until the ‘Savior’ Gets Socked\** (1993), *Vacillating\** (1994), and *On The Great Day\** (1995). Oe has announced that with the completion of this trilogy, he will enter into his life’s final stage of study, in which he will attempt a new form of literature. The implication of this project is that Oe deems his effort at presenting his cosmology, history and folk legend as having been brought to full circle, and that he has succeeded in creating, through his portrayal of that place in the valley and its people, a model for this contemporary age. It also implies that he considers Hikari’s becoming a composer, in actuality, surpasses the importance of his own literature about him.  Oe’s winning the Nobel Prize for 1994 has thus encouraged him to embark on his pursuit of a new form of literature and a new life for himself.  \*Tentative English titles.  From [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)*. The Nobel Prizes 1994*, Editor Tore Frängsmyr, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1995  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and later published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel/*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)[*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*/*[*The Nobel Prizes*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/nobel-prizes.html). The information is sometimes updated with an addendum submitted by the Laureate.  *Kenzaburo Oe died on 3 March 2023.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0931 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0932 |
| Biographical | Born Chloe Anthony Wofford, in 1931 in Lorain (Ohio), the second of four children in a black working-class family. Displayed an early interest in literature. Studied humanities at Howard and Cornell Universities, followed by an academic career at Texas Southern University, Howard University, Yale, and since 1989, a chair at Princeton University. She has also worked as an editor for Random House, a critic, and given numerous public lectures, specializing in African-American literature. She made her debut as a novelist in 1970, soon gaining the attention of both critics and a wider audience for her epic power, unerring ear for dialogue, and her poetically-charged and richly-expressive depictions of Black America. A member since 1981 of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, she has been awarded a number of literary distinctions, among them the Pulitzer Prize in 1988.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1991-1995*, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1997  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Toni Morrison died on 5 August 2019.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0932 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0933 |
| Biographical | Derek Walcott was born in 1930 in the town of Castries in Saint Lucia, one of the Windward Islands in the Lesser Antilles. The experience of growing up on the isolated volcanic island, an ex-British colony, has had a strong influence on Walcott’s life and work. Both his grandmothers were said to have been the descendants of slaves. His father, a Bohemian watercolourist, died when Derek and his twin brother, Roderick, were only a few years old. His mother ran the town’s Methodist school. After studying at St. Mary’s College in his native island and at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, Walcott moved in 1953 to Trinidad, where he has worked as theatre and art critic. At the age of 18, he made his debut with *25 Poems*, but his breakthrough came with the collection of poems, *In a Green Night* (1962). In 1959, he founded the Trinidad Theatre Workshop which produced many of his early plays.  Walcott has been an assiduous traveller to other countries but has always, not least in his efforts to create an indigenous drama, felt himself deeply-rooted in Caribbean society with its cultural fusion of African, Asiatic and European elements. For many years, he has divided his time between Trinidad, where he has his home as a writer, and Boston University, where he teaches literature and creative writing.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1991-1995*, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1997  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Derek Walcott died on 17 March 2017.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0933 |
| Interview |  |
| Q1 | Derek Walcott, welcome to the interview. You were the Nobel Literature Laureate in 1992. Tell us where did it all start? What unique combination of circumstances gave Derek Walcott to the world? |
|  | I’m from the island of St Lucia in the Caribbean in the Lesser Antilles, the lower part of the archipelago which is a bilingual island – French, Creole and English – but my education is in English. I went to St Mary’s College. I was writing from a very, very early age. My father used to write. He died early and my mother was a schoolteacher so my academic background from childhood is a strong one, a good one.  And your ancestry, is it typical of the Caribbean?  Derek Walcott: Yes, a mixed African and Dutch and English, which is probably typical of Caribbean, everybody’s got some mixture of something. |
| Q2 | And what does that bring to the culture? What does that bring to you as a writer? |
|  | St Lucia, which is where I’m from, changed hands from treaties about 13 times, so it might have finished off as a French as opposed to an English island. It’s just the last treaty that made it English, like Martinique, which is its neighbour, or Guadeloupe. What that does is it gives you a bilingual situation, a bicultural situation, very strong African presences there in terms of the rituals, Catholic religion, African rituals and the music is very strongly influenced by African rhythms but of course one studied English literature so all that melange was very fertile for me.  There is a contradiction in the perception of your culture.  Derek Walcott: The usual thing is to see the Caribbean mainly as a tourist place with hotels and waiters and stuff like that and it is, that’s its economic direction, unfortunately, that it has to develop tourism as an industry, so there’s a clichéd perception of the Caribbean as a place of, you know, usual thing, Calypso and steel band and beaches and so on. All of that’s there and it’s true, there isn’t much interest, though, I think in the real Caribbean which is small and negligible in a way, so it’s the Caribbean writers and artists who have made attention happen to the Caribbean, that aspect of the Caribbean, not just the tourist aspect of it.  There’s a recurring theme in your writing.  Derek Walcott: No, the risk that it takes is that it takes a risk of humiliation and embarrassment, in other words if you’re insisted on as someone who should always be hospitable, always smiling for tourists and so on, that’s like a given rule, you know, that is a kind of more benign slavery in a sense, you know? So there’s a big risk of thinking of the Caribbean as a tourist resort, encouraged in a way by government policy of hospitality, but hospitality can be almost taken too far sometimes so I still look out that there isn’t the kind of degradation in that kind of service. I don’t think it’s that bad, but I think it’s risky and of course a lot of the real estate that happens in terms of hotels is often encouraged by the government at the risk of, say, neglecting the needs of the Caribbean people in terms of the villages that are near to beaches, big hotels that are near to poverty. It takes a very delicate balance for it to work. |
| Q25 | You write very lyrically, very beautifully, the landscape of the Caribbean, you describe it very, very well but there’s always this tension, so does that give you fertile ground for your writing? This dichotomy, this tension? |
|  | Yes, because again the smallness of the place as that you write, especially in my island, can lead to a very isolated view of oneself. In other words a fisherman, say, working on a beach doing his job, may be photographed by a tourist because it’s photogenic to see him working and the Caribbean is extremely photogenic so poverty is photogenic and a lot of people are photographed in their poverty and sometimes it’s kind of exploited. The poverty can be exploited sentimentally in terms of presenting certain images that are good for tourism, you know, a happy native woman holding up something, a smiling waiter, all of those sort of clichés that one has to avoid, I think it’s almost a duty of the writer to protect the people from that kind of cliché exploitation of them.  In the Caribbean, do you have a readership?  Derek Walcott: I don’t think poetry has a readership anywhere, really, that’s that big. If you go to, say, a poetry reading at the Guggenheim Museum or the YMHA, the full audience might be something like 400, 500. Well, you take a place like New York, with so many million, that percentage of people attending a poetry reading is very, very small and proportionally talking in terms of having a poetry reading in the Caribbean in which you may have 100 people, percentage wise there are more people at that poetry reading in the Caribbean than there at the Guggenheim. |
| Q6 | You started, you published very early, you wrote very early. Do you consider yourself a natural writer? |
|  | I always knew what I wanted to do, which was to write poetry from young, very young, and then later plays, so I knew my vocation extremely early mainly because, I think because of my father’s death, early death, and my mother’s encouragement. My dedication to trying to be a poet started very, very young and I was very well encouraged by good teachers and by older friends and so on, so I think it is a benediction and I also think it is a calling, a duty. For me it was, definitely, and that’s the only thing I knew I wanted absolutely to do from extremely early so that I thought I was blessed as well, too, in fact that I was learning in a society that hadn’t had much expression particularly in terms of English verse, so it was tremendous excitement to paint and to write that early and trying to find out, you know, who you were, what you were trying to write about or who your, people that you are living among are. |
| Q8 | And what developed and nurtured your literary voice? |
|  | My mother was extremely encouraging because she knew my father wrote. My father used to have amateur theatricals done in which my mother was an actress, evidently and his friends and so on, so he had a very small courtier of people devoted to poetry and theatre and stuff like that. So she knew, it wasn’t a surprise to her that I would want to, or my brother, to pursue that calling and to try to be a writer in the Caribbean at that age and, you know, at that time was extremely, well not courageous but a little odd to say, you know, in St Lucia, that you wanted to be a writer when there are no publishing houses and no museums or galleries and so on, but it was good to do it because you were beginning something, you were at the start of something, I thought. |
| Q30 | And further to that stimulus, to the stimulus at home and from within your community, a lot of your writing has very sort of deep classical allusions. You’ve written ‘The Odyssey’, you know, you’ve reinterpreted it in your writing so what academic career did you pursue? |
|  | I have to always defend this idea that I re-wrote ‘The Odyssey’. I think it would be a stupid endeavour to try to do that, so that’s not what it is. It’s a book that has to do with the references, in other words, our references to the classics or to religion or to anything is referential. It is not the direct thing. I mean, our names, our customs and so on, came over the Atlantic and the fact that the Atlantic has an archipelago called the Caribbean and that the Aegean has an archipelago called the Aegean, both are geographical parallels. They’re not cultural parallels, but any fisherman out at sea is an Odysseus and any sort of heroic figure on a beach is a Hector or an Achilles so that these are references. There’s no point trying to do a template of ‘The Odyssey’, that would be a futile exercise. I mean, Joyce did it but he did it with a complete plan of, you know, moment by moment copying of ‘The Odyssey’.  My point of the whole play, of the book, is not to do it in black or to do it in Caribbean, in another language and to use the figures because none of the references are accurate really. They’re all referential, they’re all accidental and therefore they are what we have in the New World which is a sort of half referential, half real reality that someone, an Indian who has lost, you know, India by travelling across, you know, the Indian dispensation of arriving in the Caribbean loses that ancestry too and what remains is a fragmentary memory of accidents and associations and I think that that’s the description of the, not philosophy of the cultural experience that I’m trying to describe. So that it’s not a copy of, it’s in no way a copy of ‘The Odyssey’ to do that because the references are not exact. They are, as I said, referential, they are associative rather than direct. |
| Q28 | Is that a privilege that you have, coming from a culture with such diverse origins that you can draw on the association of so many different sources and so many different traditions of …? |
|  | In a way it’s a misnaming of things rather than a naming so that if somebody sees a black fisherman, you know, striding across on the sand and says: That looks like Achilles, right? He’s obviously not Achilles. The fisherman doesn’t know that he is supposed to be Achilles or anything like that, but the reference that one has made is a carryover from a previous culture whose echoes are carried over into the Caribbean and I think that’s true of Caribbean literature as it is or Spanish-American literature, that these references, these back of the head echoes, are what we try to describe in the New World, not as it was in the Old World, but something associative of the Old World that is there in the New. |
| Q28 | What is the African influence in your writing? |
|  | I think the African influence is in the melody of my voice, I think it’s there in the music that I like, certainly in the plays it’s very strong because it’s a society of percussion, it’s rhythmic in its essence and in the theatre particularly I try to capture that kind of quality that is there in the pulse of the country. |
| Q8 | When you write plays, what audiences do you have in mind? You have the audiences that is going to read your dramas but performance must be a very important part of that? |
|  | Yes. Obviously, I’m very well educated, I read, I write. Consequently, I’m a big difference from someone who is maybe illiterate coming into the theatre, if one can get them in, so that the audience that exists in these islands is not a brilliant sophisticated audience but it’s the best kind of audience because you have to go after it emotionally. You have to move them in the same way that an opera, which we don’t understand, moves us, but they may not understand even the metaphors that are there. Not the metaphors but certainly the language that may be there, but they can be moved by the beat and sway and power of what you’re hoping to write, even more than, say, a naturalistic, you know, three act play in which there’s a linear kind of exposition of something which is rational.  And I prefer to go after something that has more vehemence and more vitality and even if it is not understood but has, in the way that an opera has a visible narrative line, that you can be moved by speeches. I never wrote, I’ve never written down to my allegedly illiterate audience and the fact, the duty to move them is stronger than if I had to do, you know, a play in Stockholm, which has happened, or a play in London or New York. I feel more responsibility to move these people than I feel to try to move an audience in a box like set, you know, in any one of these cities in which you are, you’re going to the theatre and you’re really in a shut box and there’s no sense of light and exhilaration and so on that I like to try to bring to my plays. |
| Q39 | In the prelude to your collected poems, there’s a passage: “Until I’ve learned to suffer in accurate iambics”. What does that refer to? |
|  | Well, that’s a very early poem and I guess what I’m saying is I’m beginning to write and I shouldn’t say anything until I’ve learned how to scan what I’m writing, the technique of writing. The craft, really, is, master the craft and then you can say something and that’s what I’m saying to myself as early as I can.  And where did you go to master this craft?  Derek Walcott: How does a poet teach himself or herself? I think chiefly by imitation, chiefly by practising it as a deliberate technical exercise often. Translation, imitation, those were my methods anyway.  And when do you break away from the roots? Break away from that tree and become truly creative and original?  Derek Walcott: I don’t think I’ve ever tried to be, you know, deliberately original. I mean, there’s a great thing that Pasternak said which is something that I quote often, that I’m not calling myself great, he just says that great poets don’t have time to be original. It’s a great remark. But what one feels, one is part of a huge body of work that you’re trying to contribute to which is on unanimous experience called poetry, even globally and even historically, that there is a thing called poetry which is fed by different languages and your language feeds into that and whatever the language is, there is a limited number of good poems always. There’s always one small anthology of the best poetry that stays the same size for centuries, I think. |
| Q28 | Your fellow Laureates on the podium last night have a passion that, to some extent, has been forged and fed by struggle against injustice, by personal suffering. Is there an element of that in your writing? Do you feel a passion that is fed by your awareness of the injustices in your world and in the black world, in the African world? |
|  | Well, see, to say ‘the African world’ is to confine the experience of the Caribbean strictly to Africa. I don’t like that because I think you have to include the Lebanese, the Syrian, the Chinese, all those people who, from the Mediterranean for instance, have come to the Caribbean, or the Barbadian convict, it is all part of the totality of the Caribbean experience. The emphatic experience probably has been Africa but there’s an equal balance in Trinidad, of say the Indian experience, and I think it’s a duty of the West Indian writers to take in all those different cultures and manifest their experience, even if it may be African or Indian.  I think there’s too much of a separation that goes on now, even, in Caribbean literature of Indian, Chinese and so on and that really the amalgam of everything is a complete experience of everybody being exiled and arriving here and trying to do nicely here, I mean in the Caribbean, and trying to forge something out of it. So that the emphasis, I think, has been very African in the Caribbean, but I’d like to see more presence in Caribbean literature of, say, you know, our writers vary in colour, we have some very good young white West Indian writers, all right? Who shouldn’t be excluded from the idea of the African so called Diaspora because they’re white. |
| Q26 | You talk about the rhythm, the percussion of Africa, of the Caribbean; you talk about that sort of cadence that comes into your writing. Is there a continuity into the present that you pick up through reggae, through hip hop, through a constant evolution of poetry? |
|  | Not so much poetry, I don’t think. I think more music, I think, you know, there’s a lot of poetry coming out of Jamaica, that kind of sort of public poetry. That goes on, like rap and stuff like that, you know, but I think you have to kind of make a distinction between poetry and that kind of performance because very often it is too monotic, too boring, you know, too repetitive to the industry, I think. But I think in the theatre that the young actors, for instance, we have a group of actors coming out of that background who can take in the idea of playing Shakespeare as easily as if they can do a rap number, so that mix is great. |
| Q26 | Is there a valuable contribution that is evolving all of the time? That adds to the body of influence, though? |
|  | I think the manifestation, as always in literature or culture, is music, what’s happening to the music? And what’s going on in Caribbean music is, I think, pretty phenomenal because it takes in all these different strains and makes it one thing. I think I like Zouk a great deal because it has polka in it and it has reggae. It’s sort of a amalgam, which is what the Caribbean culture is and that’s manifested in the music, so in that sense it can be made theatrical by manifesting it physically. To have that … I think what’s happening, I think that presence, that combination of different sources and different elements mixed together which some people might think as degenerate and corrupt because it’s not authentic and steady, but that’s the manifestation of Caribbean experience and it is that multi cultural and multi faceted and great for a writer, experience a playwright. |
| Q6 | Are you a very sensitive observer? How do you as a writer get into the human experience and express it through different viewpoints and different characters? |
|  | The novel tends to do that more than, say, theoretically the poem, although you can do it in long poems, so I’m talking about the technique of whatever you’re doing and what you’re using to justify, you know, your existence as a writer. And the theatre, I think, does that because the joy of the theatre, of course, is to have a new people to write about, the Caribbean people, and to write about them not only on one level of, say, the tourist level of the level of the forest or beach or whatever but also to examine a little more carefully what the Caribbean middle class is about. We need more plays of that kind, that examination of what is the structural conflict that, not structural conflict but the cultural things that can go on in the class war that happens which is more real than, say, a racial context. A class examination of what is happening in the Caribbean now, I think, is an exciting subject.  Have you written about this? What of your writings explores this particular theme of class?  … what I try to maintain is the melody that’s my own melody …  Derek Walcott: I write in verse, so I don’t think I’m moving from poetry when I enter theatre so that I try to have the same complexity that you might get in a poem as you might get in, say, the equivalent of a dramatic aria of someone talking, so it is for me a matter of meter as much as it is a matter of structure so even if it’s middle class language, what I try to maintain is the melody that’s my own melody, the way I’m talking now, and how far it can carry itself into something that may be metaphoric or, you know, discursive and its manifestation in terms of dialogue and that’s there, I think it’s an extremely enriching place to be for a writer now. |
| Q3 | Is it accessible? Do you feel that your writing is accessible to a broad audience or, as you say, is it, you know, poetry readings don’t attract huge … |
|  | No, it’s not accessible at all, in fact it’s far from accessible because first of all the subjects that I’m writing about are not of interest to anybody on Broadway. They don’t care about the life of a black fisherman, you know, if that’s what I’m writing about, or the life of an Indian woman living in the country or something, because those are not box office subjects. So we have to be, we have to move away from the possibility of hoping that, you know, you’re going to have a hit on Broadway in which you’re dealing with peasants or backward people or under developed people so that’s that theme, that possibility just has to be erased and fact is good because then you don’t take your theatre in that particular direction.  You take it in the direction it should go in the reality of what you’re writing about, but the temptations are there and the temptations remain, the Hollywood temptation and the Broadway temptation and the commercial temptation. It’s there for the novelist as much as it is for the playwright. You know, you don’t sell sonnets to Warner Brothers for production but it’s also, in a way, it’s there for the poet as well. The great threat is that whole commercialisation of art that has happened in the 20th century because people can make tremendous fortunes from writing, with luck. They can, you know, and sometimes I think that particularly in America, that’s very present in terms of a young writer who can make a tremendous fortune if they have a hit book, a hit you know, anything, so that’s a dominating fare that’s there.  Since that’s not present in the Caribbean, then you feel freer to do what you want without always being haunted by the idea. You know it’s not going to be a hot, there’s no chance of it being a hit, so there’s a little more likelihood of one being a little more truthful to the experience than glamorising it into something that might make a lot of money. |
| Q45 | So you consider that sort of predominant commercialisation is a threat to integrity? |
|  | More and more, yes. I can only say the obvious in terms of television or what television does, not to the audience, but to the writer. I don’t think there’s a writer in the 20th century who can escape the idea of a hit, of making a million dollars not deliberately but by accident, even, you know, that that possibility remains there and it grows more and more corruptible in the sense that the, you know, we now pay actors $20 million to make a movie. That’s a budget of a small island, you know? So the sense of proportion is very threatened everywhere.  You write epic poetry. You wrote ‘Omeros’. I mean, that is not a popular current form at all.  Derek Walcott: Yes, I wish they’d make a movie and pay me 20 million though. Despite what I’m saying.  What lies behind that? What stimulates you to sit down and write epic poems?  Derek Walcott: I don’t like, I’ve said it before, I’m not crazy about the word epic because it has such a pompous echo to it. It’s a long book and I guess it’s epical in the sense that the Caribbean experience has been epical, the middle passage is epical the, you know, Indian journey across from India to here, the piracy, the different things that have happened in the Caribbean, but what that particular book, what made me want to continue daily and enjoy working on it every day was, the propelling thing was celebration.  I wanted to celebrate the island and the people that I knew so at the back of it there was a joy of responsibility in doing it that, you know, made me want to get up in the morning to work on it. Plus, of course, the form. The form was exciting because I had to write rhyming hexameters alternating with whatever, you know, in a terza rima design, you know, it was a challenging thing to do and it was, because it was formal in that respect, then it was exciting to get up to do it. I guess like going to play golf. I don’t play golf, but it must have been the same thing every day. |
| Q29 | What do you say to a potential reader? |
|  | Well you hope, in a work like that, you hope that you’re engaging the reader and this is very pompous but I mean in terms of delight, in terms of giving delight to the reader. I don’t think that’s something that’s around now. I mean, I think poets now don’t give delight to readers, they give responsibility. They make things very hard for the reader and it’s like a test, it’s an examination. Nearly every poem you read now is like an exam, you know, try to work out what it’s saying. |
| Q34 | A few more things, the Nobel Prize, of course, I mean, you talk about having a hit. How did you get to find out that you were a Nobel Prize Laureate and what was your reaction? |
|  | I had heard rumours about it the year before I got it and that tends to happen, I think, to candidates. You know, their names keep coming up. I forgot exactly now, but somebody called me, obviously, and they called me early in the morning and I was at home alone and it was a shock, a very pleasant shock. Sort of a shock. I kind of thought well maybe, yes, it could happen, you know, and when it did it was from that day on the pace of being a Nobel Prize winner increased tremendously. I mean, as [Czeslaw Milosz](https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1980/milosz/facts/) once said to somebody who had won the Prize, I’m sorry for them, in the sense that the harassment is not a good word but the press, who dutifully have to do what they do, like call you up and find out and all of that, so, I mean, the phone was interminable, it just kept going and so on.  On the other hand, though, you recognise what a tremendous honour it is and what good it can do or has done or could do for Caribbean literature, you know. It was not for me only but it felt like it was doing something for what has been happening in Caribbean writing and Naipaul is a candidate, an obvious candidate that I have nominated anyway. As much as I don’t like a lot of the stuff that he writes, but I have great respect for him as a writer, so I would nominate him every time it came up that he would be nominated and I’m glad he finally got it, even if he behaved a little stupidly once he did get it.  So did you see yourself at that point as a standard bearer for Caribbean literature?  Derek Walcott: No. What did happen, though, was extremely moving. There was great celebration and what one had to do was to separate yourself from the celebration in a way, that you had to make yourself, translate yourself into the third person, right, like, oh they’re applauding him as opposed to, you know, oh they’re applauding me or they’re creating something around me. You’ve got to eradicate the me and make it a third person thing for the sake of, I think, the Prize is given to the idea of poetry as much as it is to the poet himself, to the perpetuation of poetry is what I think the prize means. |
| Q17 | Finally, young writers, do you have something special that you can say to aspirant young writers? |
|  | I teach at Boston University and I have young poets that I am supposed to be guiding in certain directions and I’ve always have a lot of pleasure and pain too in trying to direct them in certain ways because it’s very painful sometimes to see a young artist trying to shape his or her life and to wonder what to tell them, which is in a way what, you know, you try to do in the sense of saying you better make very sure that this is what you want to do because it’s going to be extremely demanding and you probably will give up and that’s sad because eventually they do give up, some of them, because different things come into their lives.  Often for young women it’s marriage and sometimes I would say, you know, get a boyfriend who understands what you want to do but don’t give up what you’re doing for the boyfriend or for the husband because this is a calling and that’s the, not penalty, but that’s the thing that comes with the calling and the same thing might be true of a young man, saying that, you know, especially if you want to do poetry all your life and that you think this is what your life should be, it’s very painful sometimes to look at that happening under your tutorship.  So it is a calling? You need to be prepared to sacrifice?  Derek Walcott: In a way, the ones who aren’t called or driven, when they give up, it may be best that they did give up but sometimes I have seen those who should not give up surrender from time, from other things that come in their way, you know, the concept of, say, being a writer and making a living off a writer, especially a young playwright, it’s very, very hard for young American playwrights, extremely hard. There’s no body of production to support them. There’s not a state theatre, there’s no provision for, well there’s social security, I guess, but I mean it’s not like Europe where you can have an idea of a candidacy of being a playwright in a state theatre and so it’s abysmally lacking here. Very frightening. |
| ID | 0934 |
| Biographical | Born in Springs, South Africa, 20/11/1923. Daughter of Isidore and Nan Gordimer. Has lived all her life, and continues to live, in South Africa.  Principal works: 10 novels, including *A Guest of Honour*, *The Conservationist*, *Burger’s Daughter*, *July’s People*, *A Sport of Nature*, *My Son’s Story* and her most recent, *None to Accompany Me*.  10 short story collections, the most recent *Jump*, published 1991, and *Why Haven’t You Written: Selected Stories 1950-1972*, published 1992.  Non-fiction: *The Essential Gesture*; *On the Mines*; *The Black Interpreters*.  Among honorary degrees: from Yale, Harvard, Columbia, New School for Social Research, USA; University of Leuven, Belgium, University of York (England), Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand (South Africa), Cambridge University (England).  *Commandeur de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* (France).  Vice-President of International PEN.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1991-1995*, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1997  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  Copyright © The Nobel Foundation 1991 **Addendum, May 2005** Married to Reinhold Cassirer.  14 novels, including *A Guest of Honour, The Conservationist, Burger’s Daughter, July’s People, The Pickup*, and her most recent *Get A Life*, published 2005.  11 short story collections, the most recent *Loot*, published 2003, and *Jump* 1992.  Honorary Member American Academy of Arts & Sciences, Honorary Member American Academy & Institute of Arts & Letters, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, Goodwill Ambassador UNDP.  Order of The Southers Cross, South Africa, Order of Friendship, Republic of Cuba, Presidential Medal of Honour of the Republic of Chile.  *Nadine Gordimer died on 13 July 2014.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0934 |
| Interview |  |
| Q6 | From what origins did Nadine Gordimer come to be born in a gold mining town in South Africa? |
|  | The usual sort of background for whites in South Africa. My mother came from England and my father came from Latvia.  Is that typical white middle class type of background?  Nadine Gordimer: No, what I meant was that almost every white person, for perhaps a generation, two generations, even three generations before, they come from various parts of Europe. So mine is not *the* background, it is just one of a number.  And what was the sense during your youth, during your childhood; did you get a sense that you were part of an elite that owned South Africa?  Nadine Gordimer: It went without saying, if you could call what my background was an elite. It was a small gold mining town, but of course, being white in South Africa, up until the change came and till we got our freedom, to be white was to be automatically belonging to the ruling caste, no matter how humble you were as a white.  And did you feel that humility at the beginning?  Nadine Gordimer: No, I didn’t feel it at all, because it’s natural for a child to accept the milieu in which he or she lives. I went to a convent school. Of course it was also gender restricted as well. So I went to this convent school. Everybody was white; the other girls were white. On Saturdays when you got your pocket money and could go to the movies it never occurred to me, as a child, I think, or to any of the others as a small child, that there were no black children there; black children didn’t go.  Q… without that library I don’t think I would ever have been a writer …  The most important thing was that the local municipal library … My mother read a lot and she, having read to us, my sister and me when we were little, by the time I was six years old I was inscribed in the children’s library and that library indeed I still regard as my principle source of education, because without that library I don’t think I would ever have been a writer, because the only way you can become a writer, the only training is to read and if I’d been a black kid I couldn’t have used that library. |
| Q6 | At what point in your childhood did that realisation come, that you were part of a privileged elite and that there was an enormous imbalance? |
|  | I think it came in, you know, in less formal terms, it came from experience. When I walked to my convent school across the veldt, on the left was one of the big mines, the Springs mine, and there was the compound where the black mineworkers lived and they came from all over Africa and I was always warned, now you know don’t go anywhere near the mine boys. So you were instilled with the fear of blackness even though there was the black maid of all work, nanny, whatever in the house, but of course she was a woman. She was black, but at least she didn’t seem to represent the sexual threat that has always existed about white attitudes towards black, what they regarded as a threat, as if every black mineworker was waiting to jump on some ugly little 10 year old schoolgirl. But to be serious about it, there were the mine concession stores.  The mines would build a row of little stores and they would rent them out as a concession to local people who wanted to run them and the idea was to keep the miners from going into the town. So that I would pass these stores and then I would see how the mineworkers, many of them still in their semi travel dress, blankets and so on, and what have now become dreadlocks but were just the way they wore their hair, coming along and they would want to buy something. Now the counter, there’d be a counter and there would be a wire across it; strong wire, kind of fence between the shopkeeper and the customer and the customer would point at this or that and the owner of the shop would take it down and then the black man, he couldn’t try anything on, he couldn’t touch anything to see whether it was what he wanted. He would have to push his money through and then he would get the goods. And child as I was, I suppose 11, 12, I couldn’t help thinking this is strange, because when I go with my mother into town and I’m buying a pair of shoes or a dress or something, we go into a little booth and we try it on. Why do these black people just have to point something, they can’t even look at it and see what it really, what quality it really has. So it was incidents like this that made me think about the difference.  Also the question of liquor raids. It was of course at that time, I’m talking about the ‘30s now, late ‘30s. It was forbidden for blacks to buy liquor and so people made their own beer everywhere, all over the place, in the backyards of white houses and when I was a little older, I think about 11, then there was a raid one day. I woke up, my parents woke up. We went out into the yard and there were the policemen, white and black, turning out everything in the servant’s room, in this old retainer of ours we’d had since I was two years old, turning her mattress over, pulling her clothes out, looking for beer and my parents stood by, didn’t say “Where’s your warrant to search? You walk into my property.” It was simply accepted and so was a humiliation of the woman and indeed, one of the first adult stories I ever wrote came out of that.  Only two to three years later when, at the age of 15, I wrote a story which indeed appeared in 1939, the year the war broke out, in a journal, a literary journal in South Africa. Nobody knew that I was a child, but the fact that I’m wanting to point out is that this was such a traumatic thing that I saw, with this woman, that these two things together that I described to you, began to make me think about the way we lived and why we lived like that and who were we to have the privileges that nobody else had if they were the wrong colour? |
| Q30 | Do you think that once you began to recognise that injustice, that humiliation, you began to sort of piece together a more three-dimensional picture of black South Africans as opposed to the many South Africans who either supported or ignored apartheid, who never really let black people come into focus as real people to them? |
|  | Yes, but I think you have to look at the circumstances. It was unthinkable for me to meet or know black people who would share my interests, with whom, in other words, there could be some sort of natural rapport and meeting. It was always on the servant/master basis and even if you were the child of the master or the mistress, you still had this particular position, but being troubled about it and, great reader as I always was, beginning to find out that there was something called racism that existed in the world and I was living in it, I was part of it.  … so I met one or two black people, with whom I had far more in common …  And then when I was older and went very briefly to, took the train every day and went to the university, and there for the first time I met, even then there were one or two, there were a few young blacks. Remember the university of course was whites only, but there were certain courses that were not available in the black universities and then, as a concession, at graduate level, post graduate level, a few blacks would come in and so I met one or two black people, with whom I had far more in common than I had with the young whites that I knew in the town.  I wasn’t sporty. Many of the things that they did were of no particular interest to me and here were young people, black, who were trying to write, who were beginning to write. So we had this enormous, not just ambition, we had this enormous way of approach to life and the mystery of life and social questions in our own lives and then I began, at that age, to make black friends. And then as I, myself, became a young published writer, then I moved into a different circle, which was, again, journalists, actors, people in the arts who normally indeed don’t follow the rules, the conservative rules, and where the feeling about the incredible distortions of racism, not only the oppression of blacks, but the distortions in your personality, in your mind as a white, these became very much part of my life and indeed started my way to freedom from racism, from racist ideas that I’d been inculcated at school, at home, everywhere since childhood. |
| Q2 | You know, there was the recognition of the injustice. There must have been the anger that you felt. What nurtured and fed your voice? |
|  | Well, I suppose that did, and then, of course, it meant that this extended to the times when people who said what they thought got into trouble and if you were black the consequences were dire. So that your connections, which had been personal and through the arts, became political and your friends got into trouble and you found yourself having to, indeed, when questioned by the police to tell lies, to say that you hadn’t seen them or you didn’t know them. Apartheid made fantastic liar out of everybody who was against it. You had to in order to your friends and others to survive, never mind yourself. So that the two really then developed together. |
| Q8 | You have a whole generation who grew up under apartheid whose children are now getting a different kind of education. Is there a sort of a generation gap which doesn’t offer the type of support that is necessary to nurture young writers? |
|  | Yes, but this is nothing to be distinguished by colour. Black children and white children, they come home from school and they turn on television and the bedtime story doesn’t exist. You put the kid in front of the television and turn on the kiddies programme and that’s that. You don’t read to them anymore. And when you’re being read to, probably you are, you’re young but you’re of a generation where you read to probably, and then you begin to look at the words and want to recognise them for yourself and you become literate. We have an enormous problem of illiteracy. We have very high illiteracy and I put it down to the fact that people have got no access to the joy and the pleasure of books. Having to read a particular book in school is one thing, it’s a task, but to amuse yourself and to let you enter into another world, that’s really something different, but of course that is becoming almost universal. I was reading the other day how in England and in America the functioning literacy, the standard has dropped.  So you moved beyond the sort of particularities of apartheid. You see that as a universal problem?  Nadine Gordimer: Oh yes, this has got nothing to do with apartheid. This is the threat of the image against the word, the written word, the published word in a book. |
| Q6 | Your early writing, *The Lying Days*, was that a sort of coming of age, a realisation of … the first articulation of your understanding of the society around you? |
|  | I had been writing stories, which indeed were looking at questioning how we lived and then that first novel, it’s the only thing I’ve ever written in my 14 novels, in my nine or ten books of stories; it’s the only autobiographical thing. I’m not a writer who uses her own life. My writing is widely ranged in terms of who is the central character, whether it’s in the first person, whether it’s in the third person, whether it’s a mixture of the two, but I’m not an autobiographical writer. But the first novel, like everybody’s first novel really, had lots of autobiographical elements in it and I think the first novel is usually some kind of revenge against your background and, you know, you’ve got to get it off your chest. |
| Q30 | You write from very, very diverse points of view, very diverse characters, diverse situations. You write about gender, you write about sex, you write about injustice, you write about race. |
|  | But I write about it from within. I don’t write about it. I write about how it shapes the people who are shaped by it. To write about it is to write nonfiction, to write essays, which I have done of course, but in my novels and stories they’re not about …  You write very much as an insider, from very diverse positions. I’ve just been reading some of your short stories in *Loot*. For instance “Mission Statement”, you know, it’s a very, very intimate portrait from within a particular situation, from within somebody’s life. How do you manage to get under the skin of such very, very diverse characters in diverse situations?  Nadine Gordimer: I can only say I don’t know. I really don’t know.  But is there a process, because obviously you display an intimate knowledge in that case of the world of an aid worker. Do you actively set out to experience and get into these situations, get to know these kind of people?  Nadine Gordimer: No, I’m not a journalist, I don’t do this, but of course I have known, in my long life, a variety of people and, as I’ve said, there is this curiosity about other people and also the alertness to what they are thinking or doing and the way that they give away their real feelings. But I can’t explain it, and I don’t think any writer can explain it. It happens and of course there are some people who, and there are some occasions in your life when there is one of your characters is going to be engaged in some particular aspect of life, about which you don’t know very much, so then I, others may enjoy this, but I have to force myself, very reluctantly, to go into what is called research to make sure that I haven’t used the wrong term or whatever, but that’s pretty unlikely. For instance I could never write an historical novel because I haven’t the capacity, the ability to do the research that is necessary.  Education. You attended Wits University. You didn’t graduate.  Nadine Gordimer: No, I was only there for a year doing occasional courses. |
| Q1 | Isn’t that rather unusual for an author of your stature that you have, you know, the process has come from within? How have you developed yourself as a writer? How have you developed the powers of language, the descriptive powers, the idiom that you have created? Where does that all come from? Is that just hard work? |
|  | Books, no from reading. From reading since I was six years old, truly.  Is that a real discipline?  No, the reading was never a discipline, you know, an enormous pleasure …  Nadine Gordimer: And living of course. No, the reading was never a discipline, you know, an enormous pleasure, an unending pleasure in my life but one can’t explain it. I suppose the love of words comes into it but then where do the words come from if you haven’t had a long academic education, which I certainly didn’t have. I don’t know. Would I have been a different kind of writer, I sometimes ask myself, and, on the other hand, I often see in academics’ fiction the stiffness and the set of academic language coming in. So maybe I was lucky. The only thing I really regret is that I would like to have studied languages, more languages.  Other languages?  Nadine Gordimer: Oh yes, I mean obviously English is my own but just to have studied foreign languages and not to have learnt an African language. So like most other South Africans, there I am sitting with my black friends and we’re all talking in English and then I may go out of the room perhaps to get a bucket of ice or something and come back, we’re having drinks together, and they have broken into their own language. They’re talking Setswana, they’re talking Zulu, whatever, and I am then a stranger in my own country and among my own people. So that’s a great regret in my life. |
| Q46 | For many years a lot of South African culture, art, performance, writing has been informed very much by the struggle against apartheid. Is there going to be a kind of liberation in the arts where people are able to confront and express more personal, more intimate, more self discovery now? |
|  | I wouldn’t like to see literature turn inward. I wouldn’t like to see it contemplating its own literary navel. The change is so extraordinary and as a new generation grows up in totally different circumstances from those that I, my children or my children’s children would really know, there is so much unexplored, there’s so much of the mystery of the way we love to be explored now and I am waiting now, not quite so patiently anymore, to see some of this expressed in young writers at present.  I wouldn’t like to see literature turn inward.  There’s some people who are writing very well but they’re obsessed by the past. It’s particularly black writers and it’s more understandable then because the weight of all that was on their backs, holding them down, changing the lives of their parents and grandparents and so on.  Changing, what am I saying, they were not changed, each one was exactly like the one before. Then this seems to be something they want to express all this. It’s the return of the repressed in Freudian terms, but it seems to be happening with whites as well and there’s been quite a rush of books, it’s the breast beating book. Oh, I couldn’t help it, my parents were racists and so, you know, and I was always uncomfortable about it. This is something that you should go to your psychotherapist for, not bore everybody else with it. This is not to say that white experience is irrelevant, of course it wasn’t, but I’d love to see much more of what is happening now, because to me little things are they’re not so little. They’re little incidents but they have huge social implications.  Near where I live there’s a primary school, which of course was always white. Very nice school, not too big. Now, if I walk past there and it’s break, lunch break time, the kids are coming out, they’re smallish because it’s a primary school and it still gives me a sort of start when I see two boys, a black boy and a white boy. You know how you’ve all wrestled, you were a boy and it’s natural for little boys to kind of play battles, wrestling with one another, but this is a white and a black. This was unthinkable even in my children’s time and then go to a play or to a movie and there you have a mixed couple; a black/white couple on this side, you have two blacks there. This gives me a shock of pleasure. |
| Q28 | You compiled this extraordinary collection of stories from very distinguished writers and this is a global statement. Can you tell us a little bit about *Telling Tales*? |
|  | Well, now it’s I suppose 15 months ago, there were, and it continues of course, these wonderful big musical events, mainly pop stars, musicians and singers but also some of the classical musicians as well, but mainly the pop stars, holding these enormous gigs where they have enormous performances, where indeed they raise money for the cause of HIV/AIDS sufferers and, at the same time, made people aware, roused people’s awareness of this pandemic disease and did a lot, I think, to give a shove to the whole problem of denial and the shame that people feel is attached to having contracted the disease. And I thought, well fine, there’s Bono, there’s Geldof, there’s everybody else doing these things, what are the writers doing?  PEN, the international organisation of writers, which has been wonderful over 30 years and continues for writers who become politically oppressed and indeed hunted down by various regimes, it’s still going on in some places. They have done wonderful work there but there hasn’t been a peep out of PEN about HIV/AIDS, and you would think that they would know writers who had succumbed to this. So I thought, well it’s no good going on grumbling about it and saying why doesn’t this one do something, why doesn’t that do something? Well, what can you do as an individual?  So out of the blue I wrote off to 20 writers and said: Look, I have this idea, would you let me have a story?  So then I thought, what about a book of really lovely stories, wonderful stories. There are plenty of books about HIV/AIDS, textbooks and manuals to help you if you do contract the disease and so on. But these should be stories that are not on that subject at all and, quite commercially, go for big names, wonderful stories and try and get them published at a time, especially near Christmas when people are looking for gifts, but in other words to have a book that people will want to buy for themselves and give as a present. So out of the blue I wrote off to 20 writers and said: Look, I have this idea, would you let me have a story? I didn’t write to people who were mainly novelists because I don’t think that bits out of novels work very well. So I wrote to them all, from the five Nobel Prize winners and a lot of others, and from Woody Allen to [Günter Grass](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1999/) and John Updike and, you know, everybody whose stories I think are really wonderful and I admire.  The response was marvellous. I didn’t get one refusal and they all sent me these wonderful stories and then of course publisher. I went first to my own publisher in America and said, look, I don’t know how you’ll feel about this but will you publish this book and will you take only production costs? You will not get a penny of royalties, the writers are not going to be paid and all the money will go indeed to the Treatment Action Campaign since we are such a heavily infected area and Treatment Action Campaign of course now, as you know, works quite a bit in the surrounding territories as well, and to my astonishment they were very pleased, said we’ll do it. My English publisher the same and now I have 14 publishers worldwide. It’s just come out in Greek; I got it the other day, a copy of it. It’s come out in German and indeed it’s on the way in France, in Italy, China. You name it, it’s all over the place. Russia.  It’s a fantastic effort. I haven’t read all of them but I’ve loved what I’ve read so far.  Nadine Gordimer: The stories are really lovely, so the people they buy it and, at the same time, they have the great pleasure of knowing that what they’re enjoying is also helping other people, but I don’t know how to thank enough the writers who generously gave what we have, you know, our talent and the publishers, after all they’re business people, and 14 publishers agreed to this. |
| Q20 | To get back to the Nobel Prize. Tell us about it? I mean 1991. Did you get a phone call, you knew that you were on the shortlist? What was the procedure? |
|  | Well, I’d been on the shortlist for a few years, as you usually are I think, and journalists would phone me and say, you’re on the shortlist, you’re probably going to get the Nobel Prize, what do you think about it? And I would say, if I ever get it I’ll tell you, goodbye, and put down the phone. Finished. And on this occasion I happened to be in New York for another reason and staying with my son. I got up before anybody else did in the apartment because I wanted to call somebody in London and when the time difference, you know, was convenient, but as I went into the kitchen where the phone was the phone rang and indeed it was a Swedish journalist who had found out, through a friend in Sweden, where I was and phoned to tell me that I’d got the Prize. So that was really out of the blue because I think that year, probably because I was away, no-one had phoned and said you’re on the shortlist again.  How did that feel? How has that affected your life?  Nadine Gordimer: Of course it’s a wonderful thing to get because it is the premier prize in the world since it’s not just one country. I’ve also had the Booker but was for Commonwealth and people who get the Pulitzer here and so on or the National Book Award, you’ve got to be an American to get it and that’s ok, these are national prizes, but the Nobel, that is both, its strength and some people would say its weakness is that it looks at books from all over the world in all languages.  I’ve come to the conclusion this is a very, very good thing. For instance someone whom I now consider, and I should have long before but he didn’t exist in translation sufficiently for me to have noticed his work, that’s the Portuguese writer, [José Saramago](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1998/), who is a very great writer and suddenly it’s announced he’s got the Nobel Prize and I’m saying, who, you know, never heard of him. Then of course the translations came out and I realised what a wonderful thing that someone who was not widely known now is recognised worldwide in so very many languages.  Does that give extra force to your voice? You get a bigger readership, you get the recognition?  Nadine Gordimer: You know it’s a very moot point about readership. Probably the readership thing is for the year when you get it, for the most recent book, but then after that, you know, it’s a line on a cover. I don’t think it makes all that much difference. More and more writers are expected to be performers so that if you have a new book out, if it’s a good book of course, if it gets well reviewed, then you must be going round talking about it and being on talk shows and things. So that side of it comes into the sales.  More and more writers are expected to be performers …  But changing your life. You mentioned it gets you … Of course it gives you a voice, shall we sa,y that is likely to be listened to a bit more. So for instance, in the case of *Telling Tales*, it probably helped me when I wrote to the writers and it helped me with the publishers to get this off the ground and then of course you get invited, my god, I think they don’t even know what kind of Nobel Prize you’ve got. So you suddenly get invited to open some conference on saving the whales or whatever, you know, in various parts of the world. But, on the other hand, it does give you a voice when there’s something that you care about, that you want to give some push to.  And of course every year, once you’ve got it, you have the privilege of absolutely confidentially, only to the Foundation, of putting up, nominating someone for the current year. So since ’91 … it’s absolutely confidential. People send you their books and say, could you please put me forward and so on, just ignore it. Since ’91, and I’ve made use of this privilege each year, I’ve had only two successes and that I can tell you because they got the Prize. The first one was the great German writer, Günter Grass, and the other was [Kenzaburo Oe](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1994/), the Japanese. So I don’t know, it’s a very low average. |
| Q17 | To conclude, I’m looking at the Nobel website and I’m looking at this interview and I’m a young aspiring writer, what would be your most valuable words of advice? |
|  | Boringly, I always repeat; read, read, read and don’t read the book coming in a stream of words on a screen, don’t depend on that, which you now have in your car and on your, god knows, your cell phone and everything. Please, just go to the library and read.  Then you go through the stage, when you’re very young, that you begin to imitate the writers that you admire but that will pass. If you’ve got your own voice you will hear it. So there we are. |
| ID | 0935 |
| Biographical | Octavio Paz was born in 1914 in Mexico City. On his father’s side, his grandfather was a prominent liberal intellectual and one of the first authors to write a novel with an expressly Indian theme. Thanks to his grandfather’s extensive library, Paz came into early contact with literature. Like his grandfather, his father was also an active political journalist who, together with other progressive intellectuals, joined the agrarian uprisings led by Emiliano Zapata.  Paz began to write at an early age, and in 1937, he travelled to Valencia, Spain, to participate in the Second International Congress of Anti-Fascist Writers. Upon his return to Mexico in 1938, he became one of the founders of the journal, *Taller* (Workshop), a magazine which signaled the emergence of a new generation of writers in Mexico as well as a new literary sensibility. In 1943, he travelled to the USA on a Guggenheim Fellowship where he became immersed in Anglo-American Modernist poetry; two years later, he entered the Mexican diplomatic service and was sent to France, where he wrote his fundamental study of Mexican identity, *The Labyrinth of Solitude,* and actively participated (together with Andre Breton and Benjamin Peret) in various activities and publications organized by the surrealists. In 1962, Paz was appointed Mexican ambassador to India: an important moment in both the poet’s life and work, as witnessed in various books written during his stay there, especially, *The Grammarian Monkey* and *East Slope*. In 1968, however, he resigned from the diplomatic service in protest against the government’s bloodstained supression of the student demonstrations in Tlatelolco during the Olympic Games in Mexico. Since then, Paz has continued his work as an editor and publisher, having founded two important magazines dedicated to the arts and politics: *Plural* (1971-1976) and *Vuelta,* which he has been publishing since 1976. In 1980, he was named honorary doctor at Harvard. Recent prizes include the Cervantes award in 1981 – the most important award in the Spanish-speaking world – and the prestigious American Neustadt Prize in 1982.  Paz is a poet and an essayist. His poetic corpus is nourished by the belief that poetry constitutes “the secret religion of the modern age.” Eliot Weinberger has written that, for Paz, “the revolution of the word is the revolution of the world, and that both cannot exist without the revolution of the body: life as art, a return to the mythic lost unity of thought and body, man and nature, I and the other.” His is a poetry written within the perpetual motion and transparencies of the eternal present tense. Paz’s poetry has been collected in *Poemas 1935-1975* (1981) and *Collected Poems, 1957-1987* (1987). A remarkable prose stylist, Paz has written a prolific body of essays, including several book-length studies, in poetics, literary and art criticism, as well as on Mexican history, politics and culture.   |  | | --- | | Poesía | | *Luna silvestre*. México, Fabula, 1933. | | *No pasarán!* México, Simbad, 1936 | | *Raíz del hombre*. México, Simbad, 1937. | | *Bajo tu clara sombra y otros poemas sobre España*. Valencia, Ediciones Españolas, 1937. | | *Entre la piedra y la flor*. México, Nueva Voz, 1941. | | *A la orilla del mundo*. México, ARS, 1942. | | *Libertad bajo palabra*. México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1949. | | *Semillas para un himno*. México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1954. | | *Piedra de sol*. México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1957. | | *La estación violenta*. México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1958. | | *Salamandra (1958-1961)*. 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Charles Tomlinson, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1979 (various translators). | | *Airborn/Hijos del Aire*, trans. Charles Tomlinson. London: Anvil Press, 1981 (collaborative poem written with Tomlinson). | | *The Monkey Crammarian*, trans. Helen Lane. N.Y.: Seaver Books, 1981. | | *Obsidian Butterfly*, trans. Eliot Weinberger. Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, 1983 (limited edition, with artwork by Brian Nissen). | | *Selected Poems*, ed. Eliot Weinberger. N.Y.: New Directions, 1984 (various translators). | | *The Four Poplars*, trans. Eliot Weinberger. N.Y.: The Red Ozier Press, 1985 (limited edition with woodblock by Antonio Frasconi). | | *Homage and Desecrations*, trans. Eliot Weinberger. N.Y.: The Red Ozier Press, 1987 (limited edition with artwork by Richard Mock). | |  | | Prose | | *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, trans. Lysander Kemp. N.Y.: Grove Press, 1961. | | *Marcel Duchamp, or the Castle of Purity*, trans. Donald Gardner. London: Cape Goliard, and N.Y.: Grossman, 1970. | | *Claude Lévi-Strauss: An Introduction*, trans. J.S. Bernstein & Maxine Bernstein. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970. | | *The Other Mexico: Critique of the Pyramid*, trans. Lysander Kemp. N.Y.: Grove Press, 1972. | | *Alternating Current*, trans. Helen Lane. N.Y.: Viking Press, 1973. | | *The Bow and the Lyre*, trans. Ruth L.C. Simms. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973. | | *Children of the Mire: Poetry from Romanticism to the Avant-Garde*, trans. Rachel Phillips. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974. | | *Conjunctions and Disjunctions*, trans. Helen Lane. N.Y.: Viking Press, 1974. | | *The Siren and the Seashell, and Other Essays on Poets and Poetry*, trans. Lysander Kemp & Margaret Seyers Peden. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976. | | *Marcel Duchamp: Appearance Stripped Bare*, trans. Rachel Phillips & Donald Gardner. N.Y.: Viking Press. 1978. | | *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, trans. Lysander Kemp, Yara Milos, & Rachel Phillips Belash. N.Y.: Grove Press, 1985 (expanded edition containing other works). | | *One Earth, Four or Five Worlds: Reflections on Contemporary History*, trans. Helen Lane. N.Y.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985. | | *On Poets and Others*, trans. Michael Schmidt. N.Y.: Seaver Books, 1986. | | *Convergences: Selected Essays on Art and Literature*, trans. Helen Lane. N.Y.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987. | |  | | Anthologies, critical studies, interviews | | *An Anthology of Mexican Poetry*, ed. Octavio Paz, trans. Samuel Beckett. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958. | | *New Poetry of Mexico*, selected by Paz, Ali Chumacero, José Emilio Pacheco & Hormero Aridjis, bilingual edition edited by Mark Strand. N.Y.: E.P. Dutton, 1970 (various translators). | | Rachel Phillips, *The Poetic Modes of Octavio Paz*. London: Oxford University Press, 1972. | | Rita Guibert, *Seven Voices*, trans. Frances Partridge. N.Y.: Alfred Knopf, 1973 (contains most extensive interview with Paz available in English). | | *The Perpetual Present: The Poetry and Prose of Octavio Paz*, ed. Ivar Ivask, Norman. University of Oklahoma Press, 1973. | | Jason Wilson, *Octavio Paz: A Study of His Poetics*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1979. | | *Octavio Paz: Homage to the Poet*, ed. Kosrof Chantikian. San Francisco: Kosmos Editions, 1980 (contains a complete translation by Harry Haskell of the Play, *Rappaccini’s Daughter*). | | John M. Fein, *Torward Octavio Paz: A Reading of His Major Poems, 1957-1976*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986. |   From [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)*. The Nobel Prizes 1990*, Editor Tore Frängsmyr, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1991  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and later published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel/*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)[*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*/*[*The Nobel Prizes*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/nobel-prizes.html). The information is sometimes updated with an addendum submitted by the Laureate.  *Octavio Paz died on April 19, 1998.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0935 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0936 |
| Biographical | Camilo José Cela Trulock was born on 11 May, 1916, in Iria Flavia, district of Padron, province of la Coruña.  Principal works:  Poetry: *Pisando la dudosa luz del dia* (1956; 1st ed. 1945).  Novels: *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (1942), *Pabellón de reposo* (1943), *Nuevas andanzas y desventuras de Lazarillo de Tormes* (1944), *La colmena* (1951), *Mrs. Caldwell habla con su hijo* (1952), *La catira* (1955), *Tobogán de hambrientos* (1962), *San Camilo* I936 (1969), *Oficio de tinieblas 5* (1973), *Mazurca para dos muertos* (1983), *Cristo versus Arizona* (1988).  Novelettes: *Timoteo, el incomprendido* (1952), *Santa Balbina*, *37, gas en cada piso* (1952), *Café de artistas* (1953), *El molino de viento* (1956), *La familia del héroe* (1965), *El ciudadano Iscariote Reclús* (1965).  Collections of short stories, fables, sketches, and miscellaneous writings: *El gallego y su cuadrilla* (1949), *Nuevo retablo de Don Cristobita* (1957). *Los viejos amigos* (1960), *Gavilla de fabulas sin amor* (1962), *El solitario y los suerios de Quesada* (1963), *Toreo de salon* (1963), *Once cuentos de futbol* (1963), *Izas, rabizas y colipoterrus* (1964), *Nuevas escenas matritenses* (seven series, 1965 and 1966), *Rol de cornudos* (1976).  Travel books: *Viaje a la Alcarria* (1948), *Del Mino al Bidasoa* (1952), *Judios, moros y cristianos* (1956), *Primer viaje andaluz* (1959), *Viaje al Pirineo de Lérida* (1965), *Nuevo viaje a la Alcarria* (1986).  Collections of articles: *Mesa revuelta* (1945),*Cajón de sastre* (1957), *Cuatro figuras del 98* (1959), *Garito de hospicianos* (1963), *Las companies convenientes* (1963), *Al servicio de algo* (1969), *Los sueños vanos, los ángeles curiosos* (1979), *Los vasos comunicantes* (1981), *Vuelta de hoja* (1981), *El juego de los tres madroños* (1983), *El asno de Buridán* (1986).  Plays: *María Sabina* (1967), *El carro de heno o el inventor de la guillotina* (1969).  Lexicographic works: *Diccionario secreto* (I, 1968; II, 1971).  Collected works: *Obras completas*. 25 vols. (1989-1990).  Founder and director of the journal *Papeles de Son Armadans* (1956-1979).  *Doctor honoris causa* at the universities of Syracuse (New York, USA), Birmingham (Great Britain), John F. Kennedy (BuenosAires,Argentina), Palma de Mallorca, Santiago de Compostela, the Interamericana University (San Juan, Puerto Rico), and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Former professor at the University of Palma de Mallorca.  Member of the *Real Academia Española*.  Member of the Hispanic Society of America, the Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies and the *Académie du Monde Latin*. Honorary member of the *Real Academia Gallega*, the *Real Academia de Buenas Letras* (Barcelona), the *Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Sebastián* (Palma de Mallorca), the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, the Cultural Institute Israel – Ibero-America, Spain and Portugal (Jerusalem), the *Asociación National de Profesores y Entrenadores de Judo* (Madrid), and the *Asociación de la Prensa de Madrid* (1979; after being expelled in 1952). Corresponding member of the Academia Porteea del lunfardo (Buenos Aires), president of the A*mistad España* – *Israel* association (Madrid), honorary president of the *Cultura Latina*association (Paris).  Honorary postman. Honorary doctor of forensic medicine. Senator by royal appointment in the constituent assembly (1977-1978).  Favourite son of Padron. Adopted son of Palma de Mallorca, of Madrid and of Torremejia (Badajoz). Honorary citizen of the State of Texas.  Awards and honours: *Premio de la Crítica, Premio National de Literatura, Gran Cruz de la Orden de Isabel la Caólica, Premio Principe de Asturias*.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1981-1990*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Camilo José Cela died on January 17, 2002.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0936 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0937 |
| Biographical | Born in Cairo in 1911, Naguib Mahfouz began writing when he was seventeen. His first novel was published in 1939 and ten more were written before the Egyptian Revolution of July 1952, when he stopped writing for several years. One novel was republished in 1953, however, and the appearance of the Cairo Triology, *Bayn al Qasrayn, Qasr al Shawq, Sukkariya (Between-the-Palaces, Palace of Longing, Sugarhouse)* in 1957 made him famous throughout the Arab world as a depictor of traditional urban life. With *The Children of Gebelawi* (1959), he began writing again, in a new vein that frequently concealed political judgements under allegory and symbolism. Works of this second period include the novels, *The Thief and the Dogs* (1961), *Autumn Quail* (1962), *Small Talk on the Nile* (1966), and *Miramar* (1967), as well as several collections of short stories.  Until 1972, Mahfouz was employed as a civil servant, first in the Ministry of Mortmain Endowments, then as Director of Censorship in the Bureau of Art, as Director of the Foundation for the Support of the Cinema, and, finally, as consultant on Cultural Affairs to the Ministry of Culture. The years since his retirement from the Egyptian bureaucracy have seen an outburst of further creativity, much of it experimental. He is now the author of no fewer than thirty novels, more than a hundred short stories, and more than two hundred articles. Half of his novels have been made into films which have circulated throughout the Arabic-speaking world. In Egypt, each new publication is regarded as a major cultural event and his name is inevitably among the first mentioned in any literary discussion from Gibraltar to the Gulf.  From [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)*. The Nobel Prizes 1988*, Editor Tore Frängsmyr, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1989  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and later published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel/*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)[*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*/*[*The Nobel Prizes*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/nobel-prizes.html). The information is sometimes updated with an addendum submitted by the Laureate.  *Naguib Mahfouz died on August 30, 2006.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0937 |
| Interview |  |
| Q20 | What did you feel when you knew you had won the Nobel Prize for Literature? |
|  | I felt extreme happiness as well as great astonishment. I never expected to win the prize. During my time Nobel was awarded to writers of the highest calibre like [Anatole France](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1921/index.html), [Bernard Shaw](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1925/index.html), [Ernest Hemingway](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1954/index.html), and [William Faulkner](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1949/index.html). There were also [Jean-Paul Sartre](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1964/index.html) and [Albert Camus](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1957/index.html). I had heard that an Arab writer might some day win the Nobel Prize, but I greatly doubted it would happen.  *Mohamed Salmawy*: But did not writer Abbas Mahmoud El-Aqqad nominate you to the prize 20 years before you won it? This was during a television interview in which he said he believed you deserve the Nobel Prize.  *Naguib Mahfouz*: El-Aqqad was always courageous in his thinking. |
| Q20 | Did winning the Nobel Prize in any way influence your life and subsequent work? |
|  | Yes, it encouraged me to continue writing. But I received it at a later stage of my writing career, unfortunately. The only thing I wrote afterwards was *Echoes of an Autobiography*. I am now writing *Dreams of Recuperation*. Even the novel *Qushtumur*, which was published in serialised form in *Al-Ahram* was written before the prize. It appeared in book form afterwards.  On the personal level winning Nobel imposed on me a life-style to which I am not used and which I would not have preferred. I accepted the interviews and encounters that had to be held with the media, but I would have preferred to work in peace. |
| Q1 | What made you become a writer and who inspired your career? |
|  | I started writing while I was in school on copy-books. I was inspired by contemporary Arab writers like El-Manfalouti, Taha Hussein, and El-Aqqad. They moved in me the passion to write, with the result that I moved from the science section to the literature section when I was in secondary school. |
| Q20 | What have been the most important events in your life since Nobel? |
|  | This, the beating I received in 1994 (referring to the assassination attempt on his life when a youth tried to plunge a dagger in his neck. Mahfouz’s right hand was paralyzed for a long time afterwards). But I was also greatly honoured by the state and people in a way that deeply moved me. |
| Q20 | What has been the impact of your works on Egyptian literature since you won the Nobel Prize? |
|  | The answer to this must be left to the critics. Only they can say whether my writings influenced Arabic literature or not. One effect that the Nobel Prize seems to have had is that more Arabic literary works have been translated into other languages. I heard this from Russian visitors, as well as from Germans who came to Egypt to invite us to the Frankfurt International Book Fair for which they were preparing at the time. |
| ID | 0938 |
| Biographical | Joseph Brodsky was born in 1940, in Leningrad, and began writing poetry when he was eighteen. Anna Akhmatova soon recognized in the young poet the most gifted lyric voice of his generation. From March 1964 until November 1965, Brodsky lived in exile in the Arkhangelsk region of northern Russia; he had been sentenced to five years in exile at hard labor for “social parasitism,” but did not serve out his term.  Four of Brodsky’s poems were published in Leningrad anthologies in 1966 and 1967, but most of his work has appeared only in the West. He is a splendid poetic translator and has translated into Russian, among others, the English metaphysical poets, and the Polish emigre poet, [Czeslaw Milosz](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1980/index.html). His own poetry has been translated into at least ten languages. *Joseph Brodsky: Selected Poems* was published by Penguin Books in London (1973), and by Harper & Row in New York (1974), translated by George L. Kline and with a foreword by W.H. Auden. A volume of Brodsky’s selected poems translated in French has been published by Gallimard; a German translation, by Piper Verlag; and an Italian translation, by Mondadori and Adelphi. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux published Brodsky’s acclaimed collection, *A Part of Speech*, in 1980.  On June 4, 1972, Joseph Brodsky became an involuntary exile from his native country. After brief stays in Vienna and London, he came to the United States. He has been Poet-in-Residence and Visiting Professor at the University of Michigan, Queens College, Smith College, Columbia University, and Cambridge University in England. He currently is Five College Professor of Literature at Mount Holyoke College. In 1978, Brodsky was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters at Yale University, and on May 23, 1979, he was inducted as a member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1981, Brodsky was a recipient of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation’s award for his works of “genius”.  In 1986, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux published *Less Than One*, a collection of Mr. Brodsky’s essays on the arts and politics, which won the National Book Critic’s Award for Criticism.  In 1988 Farrar, Straus, and Giroux published a collection of his poetry, *To Urania*, and in 1992 a collection of essays about Venice, *Watermark*.  From [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)*. The Nobel Prizes 1987*, Editor Wilhelm Odelberg, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1988  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and later published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel/*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)[*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*/*[*The Nobel Prizes*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/nobel-prizes.html). The information is sometimes updated with an addendum submitted by the Laureate.  *Joseph Brodsky died on January 28, 1996.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0938 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0939 |
| Biographical | Wole Soyinka was born on 13 July 1934 at Abeokuta, near Ibadan in western Nigeria. After preparatory university studies in 1954 at Government College in Ibadan, he continued at the University of Leeds, where, later, in 1973, he took his doctorate. During the six years spent in England, he was a dramaturgist at the Royal Court Theatre in London 1958-1959. In 1960, he was awarded a Rockefeller bursary and returned to Nigeria to study African drama. At the same time, he taught drama and literature at various universities in Ibadan, Lagos, and Ife, where, since 1975, he has been professor of comparative literature. In 1960, he founded the theatre group, “The 1960 Masks” and in 1964, the “Orisun Theatre Company”, in which he has produced his own plays and taken part as actor. He has periodically been visiting professor at the universities of Cambridge, Sheffield, and Yale.  During the civil war in Nigeria, Soyinka appealed in an article for cease-fire. For this he was arrested in 1967, accused of conspiring with the Biafra rebels, and was held as a political prisoner for 22 months until 1969. Soyinka has published about 20 works: drama, novels and poetry. He writes in English and his literary language is marked by great scope and richness of words.  As dramatist, Soyinka has been influenced by, among others, the Irish writer, J.M. Synge, but links up with the traditional popular African theatre with its combination of dance, music, and action. He bases his writing on the mythology of his own tribe-the Yoruba-with Ogun, the god of iron and war, at the centre. He wrote his first plays during his time in London, *The Swamp Dwellers* and *The Lion and the Jewel* (a light comedy), which were performed at Ibadan in 1958 and 1959 and were published in 1963. Later, satirical comedies are *The Trial of Brother Jero* (performed in 1960, publ. 1963) with its sequel, *Jero’s Metamorphosis* (performed 1974, publ. 1973), *A Dance of the Forests* (performed 1960, publ.1963), *Kongi’s Harvest* (performed 1965, publ. 1967) and *Madmen and Specialists* (performed 1970, publ. 1971). Among Soyinka’s serious philosophic plays are (apart from “*The Swamp Dwellers*“) *The Strong Breed* (performed 1966, publ. 1963), *The Road* ( 1965) and *Death and the King’s Horseman* (performed 1976, publ. 1975). In *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973), he has rewritten the Bacchae for the African stage and in *Opera Wonyosi* (performed 1977, publ. 1981), bases himself on John Gay’s *Beggar’s Opera* and Brecht’s *The Threepenny Opera*. Soyinka’s latest dramatic works are *A Play of Giants* (1984) and *Requiem for a Futurologist* (1985).  Soyinka has written two novels, *The Interpreters* (1965), narratively, a complicated work which has been compared to Joyce’s and [Faulkner’s](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1949/index.html), in which six Nigerian intellectuals discuss and interpret their African experiences, and *Season of Anomy* (1973) which is based on the writer’s thoughts during his imprisonment and confronts the Orpheus and Euridice myth with the mythology of the Yoruba. Purely autobiographical are *The Man Died: Prison Notes* (1972) and the account of his childhood, *Aké* ( 1981), in which the parents’ warmth and interest in their son are prominent. Literary essays are collected in, among others, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1975).  Soyinka’s poems, which show a close connection to his plays, are collected in *Idanre, and Other Poems* (1967), *Poems from Prison* (1969), *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1972) the long poem *Ogun Abibiman* (1976) and *Mandela’s Earth and Other Poems* (1988).  From [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)*. The Nobel Prizes 1986*, Editor Wilhelm Odelberg, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1987  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and later published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel/*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)[*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*/*[*The Nobel Prizes*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/nobel-prizes.html). The information is sometimes updated with an addendum submitted by the Laureate. |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast | **”In a number of my works, I am just narrating a tale for whoever is interested”** In this podcast episode with literature laureate Wole Soyinka, conducted in November 2021, he talks about his photographic memory, his creative process and the question of who he writes literature for. His home of Nigeria figures prominently in his writing, and he looks ahead to the future of his country. Wole Soyinka also tells us about his passion for space and space travel, or as he puts it, ”I am a space nut!”  The host of this podcast is nobelprize.org’s Adam Smith. |
| Telephone  interview | 0939 |
| Interview |  |
| Q6 | Let’s start right at the very beginning. What were the circumstances of your birth, your early upbringing? |
|  | I was born into a Christian household, in a parsonage in fact, so I grew up in sort of a missionary atmosphere but it was an environment which involved both the traditional religions as well as the Muslim religion, so we were exposed to all the various facets of faith, micro cultures which existed within those beliefs, and even though I’ve lost whatever Christian faith was drummed into me as a child, I still maintain very good relationship with all the various religions.  And you were born in a Nigerian town called, how do you pronounce it, Ake?  Wole Soyinka: Ake, Ake Abeokuta, I was born in the Ake sector of Abeokuta. Abeokuta is a nation city, it means literally “under the rocks” and it’s a very rocky kind of environment and very lush, lots of greenery, of course, because it’s a very tropical belt. It is a small town with the monarch, the Alake of Abeokuta, a mixture of traditional and western kind of cultures. My father was a schoolteacher and so I had the advantage of both western educational instruction in the school, as well as what you might call the process of imbibing the traditional processes of education instruction around me.  And this was colonial Nigeria. What were the forces that shaped the society?  Wole Soyinka: First of all it was a society which was very deeply steeped in its own cultures. Those cultures were never eradicated by contact with the missionary society. It was also a birth place of a lot of political agitation. While there was a pretty reasonable harmonious co-habitation with the European, the British specifically, British colonial forces, there was also a very keen sense of nationalism. In fact, the Egba kingdom, which Abeokuta is more or less the capital city, the Egba kingdom was one of the very last to be ceded to the British protectorate. It remained almost an independent entity within what is now known as Nigeria, simply because of its own traditional structure of governance. |
| Q6 | You talk about political agitation … You talk in some of your writings and in your Nobel Lecture about the very, very young experience of your mother participating in a tax agitation against what was perceived as a very unfair tax. Did this political agitation, this very overtly political life, influence you from a very early age? |
|  | There’s no question at all, I grew up with a very strong sense of what is just and what is not or, to put it this way, I grew up with a keen sense of a division, the reality of a division of perception in people’s lives between those who govern and those who govern. The Alake of Abeokuta, for instance, was a revered individual, traditionally, was a powerful monarch and the institution of Obaship. Many people don’t understand this outside, but actually the Yoruba system of Obaship, that’s kingship, is really a pretty democratic one. There are severe limitations to what a king can do and not do. There is a council of chiefs who wield a lot of power, they’re like a cabinet and if the king misbehaves or uses excessive power, this Ogboni council can actually meet, the enclave can meet and dethrone him. So the kind of autocratic notion which people have about Obaship, your system of kingship or that applies in other parts of Africa, of course, but this Yoruba is the example we’re dealing with, it’s not quite as rigid as they imagine.  When the Oba became somewhat high handed, autocratic, imposed what the women considered an unfair taxation on them, they rebelled and their protest was organised principally by my aunt, Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, and one of her lieutenants was my mother and I was fascinated by the conflict. I was interested in the causes, and I found myself on the side of the women, maybe I got moved into it because my mother was involved, but I think I understood sufficient about what was happening and I became the courier between various groups, demonstrating groups, and I got really caught up, physically and mentally, in the entire conflict and I’ve no doubt at all that early lesson left its mark on my political awareness. |
| Q6 | Your life has been defined, punctuated by political incidents, some more benign and some very cruel and threatening, even to you personally. Can you describe some of that process? |
|  | The process of decolonisation was a very untidy one. The British, when they were leaving finally and knew exactly who they wanted to take over, they wanted pliant government, figures, structures, they wanted to continue indirectly in effect their control over much of their colonial possessions and this was one of the very early causes of conflict. The British inclined more towards the feudal mentality, the feudal structures rather than the more radical progressive elements who would re-shape society and institute pretty egalitarian systems of governance with opportunity for even disadvantaged people and so I found that decolonisation was not just the end of political struggle.  There always are internal divisions which impose choice on citizens and those who were politically aware and so I found myself thrown into that division within bound society in the west of Nigeria especially and I wrote, used street theatre, we call it guerrilla theatre, wrote political sketches, performed them in open spaces and halls in which corrupt authority was attacked and this led eventually to even more activist action.  There was the incident where a radio station which was the result of my intervention in the attempt of the government to rig the elections and pronounce, you know, broadcast totally false results after inflicting violence on the voters, after intimidation failed completely and so I intervened in that. This ended me my first spell, you know, of conflict with the law because I was tried for allegedly holding up a radio station and substituting the Premier’s state with mine, which more or less invited the Premier to get out of town sort of thing, but I was acquitted and then later things got even more serious. We had our first experience of a military coup which was very bloody. There were reprisals, there was a counter coup and all this led to a civil war.  I consider the civil war very unjust because the breakaway state of Biafra, I mean the conflict led to Biafrans, the Igbo people breaking away from Nigeria and while I thought that this was politically unwise, I found that it was not morally wrong because they had been decimated. There’s no other word for it. It was an act of genocide which was perpetrated against the Igbo people. The causes, of course, are more complex than straightforward right and wrong but you could not escape the fact that there was an act of genocide and so I took position against the war, I allied with others who were like minded and we tried to intervene.  This led to my imprisonment for two years and four months, nearly two years of which was in solitary confinement, so that was like an escalation of risks, escalation of intensities of the cause of conflict. Then, after that, when I thought it was more or less all over, everything was stabilised, we were moving up to serious military dictatorships which were not acceptable but with which you had to live and even trying to obtain, keep something useful for the nation, for the people, with the more amenable of these, the less obnoxious of some of them. Then the move towards democracy began all over again and suddenly it was aborted and aborted by a very singularly repellent kind of military individual and so I had to take action against him also which led eventually to my exile, my being placed on trial for treason, a price being placed on my head and so on and so forth. Part of occupational risk of one’s endeavours. |
| Q47 | Has this process been part of your perceived duty as a writer or as a citizen? |
|  | The problem with literature, with writing, is that it works sometimes in terms of correction of social ills. Other times, it just does not suffice. The proof of that is the ability of a dictator to snuff out the life of a writer as happened to my colleague, Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Ogoni environmental activist who was hanged after a kangaroo trial by this brutal dictator, Sani Abacha, he and eight of his companions. When an event like that happens, and even lesser events of lesser gravity, the citizen comes to the fore, the citizen overtakes the writer because literature has proved or is proving inadequate and then forms of citizen action, whether it’s demonstrations or sometimes, in the case of Christopher Okebo, another colleague of mine who lost his life, that’s, you know, he went to war, he went on the Biafran side because he found that his poetry could not answer his sense of intense wrong and he perished on the front.  So writers throughout the ages have one weapon, which is literature, but they also have their responsibilities …  So writers throughout the ages have one weapon, which is literature, but they also have their responsibilities as a citizen when literature does not seem to suffice. I mean, they are not mutually exclusive. One continues to write anyway but if you are called out to demonstrate, if people are being killed in the streets, it’s hardly the moment to go for your pen and paper, you know, help in one way or the other. |
| Q25 | It’s a very intense fire in which your craft, your art has been forged. Has it had a very powerful affect on your writing? Has it made your writing more intense? |
|  | Could be. One thing I am certain of is that it has made me create and recreate different tempo or different tempi of writing. I’ve had to adjust to … I mean, ideally, for instance, I think most writers would like a quiet space, complete isolation, in which they control their own time. Spaces of creativity in which there’s very little interruption. I think that’s the idea and this perhaps is how I began as a writer, finding that space, that intense period in which I’m completely alone, completely alone.  But as you get drawn more and more into other activities, like political activities, very demanding, you have to find different rhythms of writing; I think that’s the word I’m looking for, rhythms of creativity which then, of course, become very intense. I think your writing then tends to be very intensified simply because there are other demands which seem equally important. You know, if they were just trivial demands and so on then it wouldn’t matter at all, you can hive off a certain section of the mind and deal with that, but if it’s something which consumes you, then there’s a competition which concentrates your writing. |
| Q8 | Did you find it easy to start writing or was it a struggle? Are you a natural writer? |
|  | That’s a very good question. I think I’m a very lazy writer and by that I mean that I do not battle, I don’t struggle too hard against it. If I have difficulties in the writing, I just go and do other things. I don’t feel a compulsion to write. Of course, when I start writing then it becomes a compulsive activity, because I’ve begun something and I want to continue, want to finish it. The characters in my play are crowding my head, demanding to be let out or demanding to be allowed to complete what they’ve set out to do, so there is compulsion there and of course I can carry an idea with me in my head, it just is there for months, years.  I remember doing ‘The King’s Horseman’, when I first heard of that story, I wanted, I was so fascinated by it, I wanted to write it immediately but I didn’t have time for it and other things came in between. Then one day I was teaching in Cambridge, and this is a play which is set in a colonial period, and my college was Churchill College and I used to come down the stairs, you know, towards the dining hall or going outside and there was this bust of this great genius of a colonialist and all the more hated for being such a genius at his work, at that kind of work, Winston Churchill.  I used to look at him and I felt each time like pushing the bust over the edge of the stairs and it was during that period that one day I recalled this story which had been in my head for – how many years? Maybe five, ten years, yes, about ten years and I sat and after that I just couldn’t rest until I could sit at my typewriter then and start work on it and that’s where I wrote it and wrote it, for a play of that complexity, virtually record time. Within the week I’d completed it and I brought people in to read it, so writing comes like in … it has its own creative rhythm, you know, you can’t force it. At least I don’t. I know there are other writers who sit down religiously every morning, they take their espresso, they put a clean sheet of paper there and they sit looking at that paper until they’ve finished or covered at least a number of those pages. No, I’m not like that. I have to be ready. It has to gestate it for quite a while and then it’s ready to burst forth. |
| Q30 | Is that part of your African tradition? Because obviously you’re writing for very diverse audiences and audiences with diverse literary capacities. Some of your audiences may be completely illiterate. Is it important to you that you reach all of those audiences and is theatre a strong vehicle for that? |
|  | That’s where I think those of us who work in the theatre have an advantage over the novelists and the prose writers and, to some extent, those who write only poetry. With theatre, you can interpret the most complex play on stage for it have meaning to an audience because you’re dealing in images, you’re dealing in action, you can use different idioms to interpret and clarify something which is obscured in the reading and of course there are different kinds of play, there are mythological plays, there are what I call the dramatic sketches, direct political theatre which is virtually everybody, but I find that you can use the stage as a social vehicle, you know, which any kind of audience.  And when you have already the tradition of theatre in your society and we have these travelling companies, we call them folk opera companies, they travel all over the place in a lorry; they arrive there in the morning, they drum, dance around the town to announce their presence. In the evening, to say where the venue will be, it can be just an improvised hall. By evening everybody’s already, you know, swarming in that direction so the tradition of theatre already exists in my society and that is an advantage. |
| Q48 | Does it give you a special joy to have your work performed in front of a Nigerian audience, say the Orubo audience? |
|  | Joy is not the word, I don’t think, it’s just that’s my occupation, you know, I come alive, let’s put it that way, I come alive when I have assisted in bringing out the printed word on the stage, you know, and I enjoy directing plays. It’s a tactile process, theatre, unlike a number of other forms of the creative work.  You talk about diverse audiences, diverse influences?  Wole Soyinka: My understanding of the creative process is simply that all cultures and all concerns meet at a certain point, the human point in which everything is related to one another. That has been my creative experience. I never know who’s influencing me at any time. I mean, I can take a play by Brecht and adapt it, I’m consciously adapting that play, or, as I’ve done with the Greek classics, Euripides and Oedipus, and I’m consciously adapting that play. Whether it influences me or not, I think it’s the critics, the analysts who have to decide that. Me, I don’t feel that I’m under the influence of any such sources. |
| Q39 | You draw lots on your Yoruba culture, you draw a lot on Ogun, you draw a lot on the cosmology of your people. How does that distinguish your work from other writers? |
|  | Mythology can be used, and has been used, even to re-state, you know, the very urgent problems of the world. At a reading which we had, [Derek Walcott](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1992/walcott-facts.html), [Nadine Gordimer](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1991/gordimer-facts.html), [Toni Morrison](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1993/morrison-facts.html) … Once Derek Walcott read a play of his which is based on the Cyclops myth. Intensely political play with direct correlation and purpose to the Greek tyranny in the episode of the Greek General, but I also rarely use mythology for its own sake because, as a theatre person, the mythological figures are in fact humanity to the ninth degree and Yoruba mythology in particular has fascination of being one of the most humanised mythologies in the world.  The gods in Yoruba mythology are not remote at all. They’re benign, they’re malign, they are mischievous, like Eshu for instance, tricksters, rascally, fornicators, that’s a similarity to Greek mythology, for instance, you know. They’re not saints, they’re not saints. They’re powerful. It’s why they’re not tyrannical. Of course, a number of them are also very, you know, benevolent, you know, there are saintly virtues to be found in them. In other words, you have the entire gamut of human experience captured in the mythology of the Yoruba. This is what makes the Yoruba mythology a natural source material for me in my creative endeavours. |
| Q30 | Do you feel a duty, do you feel bound to give a voice to your community? Yesterday at the reading you talked about reinforcing the civic voice. |
|  | Yes, I do. I do, but I were part company with certain schools of writers that I do not believe that it is necessarily the duty of the writer. I don’t believe that. If a writer is true to his vocation, to his or her vocation, the very process of creativity enlarges these human horizons. It provides insights, even when you’re not writing, when your writing’s not dealing with a concrete political situation.  The very function of creativity, of the elaboration of the human condition only enlarges the human spirit and, I mean, as a writer I don’t want to read political literature all the time. It would be terribly boring and, you know, abrasive, but just reading the insights, you know, partaking of the insights of a writer into phenomena, into society, into human relationships, both on a micro level and on a macro level, is already a function. For me, a writer is already being the deuce of his mission, his occupation to society. But I happen to be unfortunately temperamental. No, my temperament is also, what you describe to rainfalls, the will of society, to combat a number of contradictions. That happens to be my creative temperament.  When did these issues move away from specific to universal?  Wole Soyinka: I think all, well … no, let me correct what I was about to say. I’m very conscious when I’m being specific, like my street theatre, my guerrilla theatre for instance. It’s created and the themes and the methodology of the delivery of the content is specific. It’s to an immediate issue. But when I sit down to craft a play or a novel or a poem, I’m now dealing more consciously, perhaps, perhaps, on more universal issues. But even those specific issues contain sometimes universal applications, so I don’t say I’m only going to be specific but what motivates that particular work at that moment is a specific issue and I try to address it as much as possible. |
| Q20 | In literature. Tell us about the event. Did you have intimations beforehand? How did it all come about? |
|  | No. Not only didn’t I have any intimations, I was extremely irritated the year before by speculations in the Nigerian media. I mean, it really boiled up to a hysterical pitch. I believe that prizes are useful, you know, are useful things for the disciplines, whether we are talking about chemistry or we’re talking … It motivates, it, you know, inspires, it encourages and it brings, in the case of literature, it brings literature, the arts, it brings the arts out of the ghetto, out of the ghetto. People respond … “Oh there’s a prize for this? Oh yes. Oh, I must take a look into that.”  But as a matter of fact, I was nominating other writers. During that period where, in my group, the institution to which I belonged, we moved between … and Senghor, Léopold Senghor, and I frankly thought that one or the other was going to get it and we were going to celebrate with them. So my mind was never at any time, at any time, you know, on the notion of considering myself as a candidate just, you know, because I had other writers I loved, and not just African writers. I mean, like, I’m a consumer of literature and so I had candidates quite apart from even the African candidates whom I thought, you know, who are going to get it before they got to me at all. So it was quite a shock and a surprise. Pleasant one, but the shock was the same. |
| Q20 | The event itself, your Nobel Lecture, you used the platform, it was a very overtly political speech. It was a very powerful lecture and there was, among the more conservative elements in society, there was some grumbling about using that platform for such an overtly, and I come from South Africa and of course at that time the reaction was fantastic because it really put the apartheid government into a flap, you know, it disturbed them. |
|  | I have been obsessed by South Africa since, oh, way back. My very first play which was put on at the Royal Court Theatre in London as a student, I wrote it as a student, was called ‘The Invention’ and it was a racial thing but I felt my racial fount was being sullied and insulted as long as, you know, the apartheid situation existed. It just didn’t make sense to me. There was no way I would not have used that platform, you know, I couldn’t conceive. My mind immediately shot to South Africa the moment I sat down to think what I was going to write, what I was going to say. There was no other choice.  I wasn’t interested in discussing my craft. I mean, South Africa had always been mixed up with my work, with my literature, so you can talk about South Africa, I am talking about my work, my play ‘The Invention’, other poems I had written, the very issue of creativity. I was speaking about the whole fate of literature, the exiled South African writers with whom I used to mix in London and other places. /—/, Lewis Nkosi, /—/ etcetera. I mean, for me this was literature. I had no ambiguity at all about what I was going to say. I wasn’t that I felt it was my duty. No, it was just my literature. |
| Q47 | Do you think that that lecture had a powerful influence? Do you think that it has contributed towards changing things? |
|  | You know, I was so impressed when you said just now that it really had the South African government in a flap. I didn’t follow, you know, up the consequences or whatever, I was always more interested in looking forward to the day when, as I wrote in another article, I would present a copy of Mandela’s poems, ‘Mandela’s World and other poems’, and I swore that one day I was going to present it to him in his living room and read him one or two poems.  So once I’d given that speech, well for me, I was more interested in doing other things in the same connection and maybe that and the work of others, cumulative effect, political bargaining. I wrote, if you remember Ogun Abibima which was a construction of Ogun, moving down to the south to join hands with Shaka, both mythological figures, one is real of course but in a sense, two ancestral figures, you know, joining hands to go down and smash apartheid and I wrote this epic of projection … so I just went back to my work, I continued my work. |
| Q20 | How has being a Nobel Prize Laureate affected your work, your writing, your creative space? |
|  | Let me again cite [Bernard Shaw](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1925/shaw-facts.html), who is reputed to have said that, when he was given the Nobel Prize, that he could forgive the man who invented dynamite but it took the most diabolical mind in the world to invent the Nobel Prize for Literature. I agree with that to a certain extent because it swelled my constituency. It was already sufficiently, you know, swollen because I’ve always, you know, agitated on the world stage one way or the other but it really made life virtually impossible. It’s with astonishment that I discover that I’ve actually completed a new work, you know, ever since the Nobel I would sit down and look at it like some strange object … Oh, did I really manage to finish this?  So it’s mixed with … Of course I’ve enjoyed having the Nobel Prize, the prestige that goes along with it, the money that came with it in particular. I was the typical, still am to some extent, impecunious writer, you know, just struggling to make ends meet, so that, you know, nobody’s going to deny that at all. In fact, if they want to give it to me a second time, I’m standing by, ready to receive it, but as I said now, it’s a problem, it’s a real problem and then expectations and then you have monsters like Sani Abacha who come up from time to time and who would have died a happy man if he’d succeeded in hanging a Nobel Laureate for literature. I mean, that’s a fact and it can be attested by some of his close associates so it brings, in this particular case it brought certain additional risks when it should have been what most people correctly think, a kind of protection. |
| Q49 | It’s a new century. You’re writing ‘Climate of Fear’, you’re addressing very current issues. You’re addressing a new threat. Can you tell us a little bit about the last lecture in here ‘I am right, you are dead’, it talks about intolerance. |
|  | Yes, intolerance has become, I think, the reigning ideology of the world today, the intolerance versus intolerance and it’s taken on lethal proportions. I mean, intolerance has always been with us, you know. The moment you have ideology, we have intolerance, whether it’s the secular ideology or, you know ideocratic ideology, which always brings with it some kind of intolerance. But the sense of self assuredness that, you know, ideologists, you have all the structure of the world in your hand, whether you’re viewing it from material world or from the extra terrestrial lofty position and it’s become accentuated because of genuine as well as perceived injustices.  Religion has really spawned some monsters. It always has, historically. Go all the way back to the Inquisition, you know, the Crusades, the Jehad and so on. It’s all based on the mentality of “I’m right”, but now today it’s moved from even the question of “I’m right and I’m willing to tolerate those who agree that I am right or those who don’t disturb me anyway”. Now, it’s a question of “If you do not accept that I’m right, I have a right to kill you”. That is the mentality of religious fundamentalism today. That is the meaning of the kind of terror which we are witnessing today, that everybody is expendable who do not actually physically line up behind me.  And one of the most distressing aspects of this is to see that kind of mentality also manifested by the leadership of so called democratic countries, and I refer specifically to the United States of America, where the President uses a kind of language which becomes indistinguishable from that of Osama Bin Laden. “I’m right, it doesn’t matter whether the world thinks I am wrong, I know that I am divinely ordered to do this”. It’s that kind of language, that’s the language of intolerance, intolerance of opinion – those who are not with us are against us, you know. And this is, of course, we’ve got to be honest, that the more dangerous is that of religious fundamentalism, those who feel that, you know, the kind which led to Beslan, one of the most horrendous chapters of Iraq’s contemporary experience. That really, I think, has reached, has breached the very barriers of the unimaginable. |
| Q49 | People seem to have a very short memory for history, that things recur over and over again in an endless cycle. Do you think that your role as a writer is to try and help people to understand, to deconstruct history? |
|  | Whenever that is possible, I consider it my duty to do. Whenever circumstances point, reactions, events point to this short changing of memory, then I think it is the duty of the writer to say: Look, the material we’re working on, whether citizens or writers, is not new, you know, and to bring the mind back and see that there’s a repetition of this cycle of stupidity. I think I’ve used that expression somewhere else before and to think now why do we have to tread the same spores over and over again? It’s almost a kind of self defense. You’re saying you’re making my work as a writer difficult for me because you’re not paying attention, you’re not recollecting and I have to keep reminding you, so yes, I think even from the point of view of self defense, one must bring up, you know, pull up memories from where it’s short changed. |
| Q17 | Finally, you teach as well, you have young aspiring writers. In short, what do they have to do? |
|  | I always tell them get ready a basket first of all, in which to collect all your rejection slips and you must continue until that basket is full or your work is accepted. In other words, you just must continue writing; and once you accept that, then we can talk about what you want to write insofar as I can assist. I’m not a very good teacher of creative writing and I always warn them about that. What I teach is literary criticism and comparative literature and so on and that’s my function, but from time to time it’s possible for me actually to help a writer. I read something and something strikes me then, I feel I can talk to that writer about it.  But over and above all, I also tell them don’t get carried away by the ideologs. Don’t feel that you have to tailor your literature a particular way to please any school of ideology. There will emerge in its own right, effortlessly, some kind of ideological direction which is a reflection of your thinking and you want your thinking, above all. We wasted a lot of creative energy in that immediate post colonial era, when there was a struggle between, you know, the Cold War between the capitalism and communism. Many writers just wasted their energy and their talent because they want to be ideologically correct and of course all they produced was propaganda. Absolute tawdry uninteresting, oh, full of excitation, yes, you know, full of ra-ra-ra but they were short changing their own talent and I used to tell them and now that they’ve become ideological orphans, they’re now trying to recover their own true voice and have produced some very good work but they could have produced excellent work and at the same time, you know, be truthful to their ideological convictions if they hadn’t allowed that ideology to take primary place and that’s what I tell all writers. |
| ID | 0940 |
| Biographical | Claude Simon was born in 1913 at Tananarive (Madagascar). His parents were French, his father being a career officer who was killed in the first World War. He grew up with his mother and her family in Perpignan in the middle of the wine district of Roussillon. Among his ancestors was a general from the time of the French Revolution.  After secondary school at Collège Stanislas in Paris and brief sojourns at Oxford and Cambridge he took courses in painting at the André Lhote Academy. He then travelled extensively through Spain, Germany, the Soviet Union, Italy and Greece. This experience as well as those from the Second World War show up in his literary work. At the beginning of the war Claude Simon took part in the battle of the Meuse (1940) and was taken prisoner. He managed to escape and joined the resistance movement. At the same time he completed his first novel, Le Tricheur (“The Cheat”, published in 1946), which he had started to write before the war.  He lives in Paris and spends part of the year at Salses in the Pyrenees.  In 1961 Claude Simon received the prize of l’Express for “La Route des Flandres” and in 1967 the Médicis prize for “Histoire”. The University of East Anglia made him honorary doctor in 1973.   |  | | --- | | Works | | *Le Tricheur/The Cheat* 1945 | | *La Corde Raide/The Tightrope* 1947 | | *Gulliver* 1952 | | *Le Sacre du printemps/The Anointment of Spring* 1954 | | *Le vent. Tentative de restitution d ‘un rétable baroque/The Wind. Attempted Restoration of a Baroque Altarpiece* 1957 | | *L’Herbe/The Grass* 1958 | | *La Route des Flandres/The Flanders Road* 1960 | | *Le Palace/The Palace* 1962 | | *La Separation/The Separation 1963* (Play adapted from the novel *L’Herbe*) | | *Femmes/Women*. Ill by Joan Miró. – New edition entitled *La Chevelure de Bérénice/Berenice’s Hair* 1984 | | *Histoire/Story* 1967 | | *La Bataille de Pharsale/The Battle of Pharsalus* 1969 | | *Orion aveugle. Essai/Blind Orion. Essay* 1970 | | *Les Corps conducteurs/Conducting Bodies* 1971 | | *Triptyque/Triptych* 1973 | | *Leçon de choses/Lesson in Things* 1975 | | *Les Géorgiques/The Georgics* 1981 | | *L’Invitation/The Invitation* 1987 | | *L’Acacia/The Acacia* 1989 | | *Le jardin des plantes/The Jardin des Plantes*, 1997[\*](https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1985/simon/biographical/#not) | | *Le tramway/The Trolley*, 2001[\*](https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1985/simon/biographical/#not) |   From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1981-1990*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  \* Updated by the Laureate, May 2005.  *Claude Simon died on July 6, 2005.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0940 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0941 |
| Biographical | Jaroslav Seifert was born on 23 September 1901 into a working-class family living in Zizkov, a suburb of Prague. He attended secondary school and soon began devoting himself to writing poetry and to journalism. He made his debut in 1918; he published his first collection of poems in 192 1. He belonged to the extreme left wing of the Social Democratic Party, which, in 1921, was to form the core of the Communist Party in newly formed Czechoslovakia. He became an editor of communist newspapers and magazines (*Rovnost, Srsatec, Reflektor*) while, at the same time, working at the communist publishing house and bookstore. In the 1920s he was a leading representative of the Czechoslovakian artistic avant-garde; he served on the editorial staffs of several of its publications. He translated from the French (Apollinaire, Verlaine, and others). In March 1929, together with six other important communist writers, he signed a manifesto protesting against Bolshevik tendencies in the new leadership of Czechoslovakia’s Communist Party, and together with his fellow signers, he was expelled from the party. From 1930, he served in various editorial posts within the social democratic press (*Pestré kvety, Ranní noviny*). During the German occupation, he was editor of the daily *Národní práce* and after 1945, of the trade-union daily *Práce*. During the years 1945-1948, he edited the literary monthly *Kytice*. Since 1949, when he was forced to leave journalism, he has devoted himself exclusively to literature. In 1936, 1955, and 1968, his poetry was awarded state prizes. In 1967, he was designated National Artist. In 1968, he was elected to the post of Chairman of the Czechoslovakian Writers’ Union. During the years 1969-1970, he was Chairman of the Czech Writers’ Union.  Jaroslav Seifert died in 1986.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1981-1990*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Jaroslav Seifert died on January 10, 1986.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0941 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0942 |
| Biographical | William Golding was born in Cornwall in 1911 and was educated at Marlborough Grammar School and at Brasenose College, Oxford. Apart from writing, his past and present occupations include being a schoolmaster, a lecturer, an actor, a sailor, and a musician. His father was a schoolmaster and his mother was a suffragette. He was brought up to be a scientist, but revolted. After two years at Oxford he read English literature instead, and became devoted to Anglo-Saxon. He spent five years at Oxford. Published a volume of poems in 1935. Taught at Bishop Wordsworth’s School, Salisbury. Joined the Royal Navy in 1940 and spent six years afloat, except for seven months in New York and six months helping Lord Cherwell at the Naval Research Establishment. He saw action against battleships (at the sinking of the Bismarck), submarines and aircraft. Finished as Lieutenant in command of a rocket ship. He was present off the French coast for the D-Day invasion, and later at the island of Walcheren. After the war he returned to teaching, and began to write again. *Lord of the Flies*, his first novel, was published in 1954. It was filmed by Peter Brook in 1963. His other books are:   |  | | --- | | *The Inheritors* (novel) 1955 | | *Pincher Martin* (novel) 1956 | | *The Brass Butterfly* (play) 1958 | | *Free Fall* (novel) 1959 | | *The Spire* (novel) 1964 | | *The Hot Gates* (essays) 1965 | | *The Pyramid* (novel) 1967 | | *The Scorpion God* (three short novels) 1971 | | *Darkness Visible* (novel) 1979 | | *Rites of Passage* (novel) 1980 | | *A Moving Target* (essays and autobiographical pieces) 1982 | | *The Paper Men* (novel) 1984 | | *An Egyptian Journal* 1985 | | *Close Quarters* (novel) 1987 | | *Fire Down Below* (novel) 1989 |   In 1980 he won the ‘Booker Prize’ for his novel *Rites of Passage*. He retired from teaching in 1962. After that, he lived in Wiltshire, listing his recreations as music, sailing, archaeology and classical Greek.  William Golding died in 1993.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1981-1990*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *William Golding died on June 19, 1993.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0942 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0943 |
| Biographical | Gabriel García Márquez was born in 1927 in the small town of Aracataca, situated in a tropical region of northern Colombia, between the mountains and the Caribbean Sea. He grew up with his maternal grandparent – his grandfather was a pensioned colonel from the civil war at the beginning of the century. He went to a Jesuit college and began to read law, but his studies were soon broken off for his work as a journalist. In 1954 he was sent to Rome[\*](https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1982/marquez/biographical/#not) on an assignment for his newspaper, and since then he has mostly lived abroad – in Paris, New York, Barcelona and Mexico – in a more or less compulsory exile. Besides his large output of fiction he has written screenplays and has continued to work as a journalist.   |  | | --- | | Bibliography | | La hojarasca. Bogotá: Ed. S. L. B., 1955. | | El coronel no tiene quien le escriba. Medellín: Aguirre Ed., 1961. | | La mala hora. Madrid: Talleres de Gráficas “Luis Pérez”, 1962 (ed. desautorizada por el autor); 2. ed.: Mexico: Ed. Era, 1966. | | Los funerales de la Mamá Grande. Xalapa, 1962. | | Cien años de soledad. Buenos Aires: Ed. Sudamericana, 1967. | | Monólogo de Isabel viendo llover en Macondo. 1969. | | Relato de un náufrago. Barcelona: Tusquets Ed., 1970. | | La increíble y triste historia de la cándida Eréndira y de su abuela desalmada. Barcelona: Barral Ed., 1972. | | Chile, el golpe y los gringos. 1974. | | Ojos de perro azul. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1974. | | Cuando era feliz e indocumentado. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1975. | | El otoño del patriarca. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1975. | | Todos los cuentos. Barcelona: Ed. Bruguera, 1975. | | Obra periodística. Vol. 1: Textos costeños. Barcelona: Ed. Bruguera, 1981. | | Crónica de una muerte anunciada. Barcelona: Ed. Bruguera, 1981. | | El rastro de tu sangre en la nieve: el verano feliz de la señora Forbes. Bogotá: W. Dampier Editores, 1982. | | Viva Sandino. Managua: Nueva Nicaragua, 1982. | | El secuestro (screenplay). Salamanca: Lóquez, 1982. | | El asalto: el operativo con el FSLN se lanzó al mundo, Nueva Nicaragua, 1983. | | Eréndira (screenplay from his own novella), N.P., Les Films du Triangle, 1983. | | El amor en los tiempos del cólera. Bogotá: Oveja Negra, 1985. | | El general en su laberinto. Bogotá: Oveja Negra, 1989. | | Doce cuentos peregrinos. Bogotá: Oveja Negra, 1992. | |  | | In English | | Leaf Storm, and Other Stories. (La hojarasca. 1955) Transl. by G. Rabassa. London: Cape, 1972; New York: Harper & Row, 1972, 1979; Pan Books, 1979. | | No One Writes to the Colonel. (El coronel no tiene quien le escriba. 1961.) Transl. by. S. Bernstein. London: Cape, 1971; New York: Harper & Row, 1979. | | An Evil Hour. (La mala hora. 1962.) Transl. by G. Rabassa. New York: Harper & Row, 1979. | | Big Mama’s Funeral. (Los funerales de la Mamá Grande.1962.) (Published with: No One Writes to the Colonel. See above.) | | One Hundred Years of Solitude. (Cien años de soledad. 1967.) Transl. by G. Rabassa. New York: Harper & Row, 1970; Pan Books, 1980. | | Innocent Eréndira, and Other Stories. (La increible y triste historia de la cándida Eréndira… 1972). Transl. by G. Rabassa. New York: Harper & Row, 1978, 1979; Pan Books, 1981. | | The Autumn of the Patriarch. (El otoño del patriarca, 1975.) Transl. by G. Rabassa. New York: Harper & Row, 1976; Pan Books, 1978. | | Chronicle of a Death Foretold. (Crónica de una muerte anunciada, 1981.) Transl. by G. Rabassa. London: Cape, 1982. | | Collected Stories. New York: Harper, 1984; revised edition, London: Cape, 1991. | | Love in the Time of Cholera (El amor en los tiempos del cólera). Transl. by E. Grossman. New York: Knopf and London: Cape, 1988. | | Diatribe of Love Against a Seated Man (play produced in Buenos Aires, 1988). | | Collected Novellas. New York: Harper Collins, 1990. | | The General in his Labyrinth (El general en su laberinto). Transl. by E. Grossman. New York: Knopf, 1990 and London: Cape, 1991. |   From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1981-1990*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  \* In his autobiographical book *Vivir para contarla* (2002) Gabriel García Márquez mentions Genève as the first town he was sent to.  *Gabriel García Márquez died on 17 April 2014.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0943 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0944 |
| Biographical | |  |  | | --- | --- | | 1905 | Born on 25 July in Ruse, Bulgaria. Mother tongue Ladino  (archaic dialect of Spanish). | | 1911 | Moved to Manchester, England. First school. Earliest lessons  in English. | | 1912 | Sudden death of his father. War breaks out in the Balkans. | | 1913 | His mother moves to Vienna with her three small sons. German lessons from his mother. Elementary school in Vienna. | | 1914 | First World War begins. Enthusiastic crowds take to the streets of Vienna. | | 1916 | Zurich. Canton school until 1921. Excellent teachers. | | 1921-22 | Frankfurt. Upper secondary school. Demonstrations after the death of German industrialist and politician Walter Rathenau. Inflation. | | 1924 | Graduated (“Abitur”) in Frankfurt. Return to Vienna. Study of chemistry. Lectures by the Austrian writer-critic Karl Kraus a decisive influence. | | 1925 | First outline for a book about crowd psychology. | | 1927 | 15 July: the Viennese Law, Court burns. | | 1928 | Visit to Berlin. Meets George Grosz, Brecht and Isaak Babel. | | 1929 | Receives his doctorate in Vienna. | | 1930-31 | Works on his novel *Die Blendung*. | | 1932 | *Hochzeit* [“The Marriage”] – a play. | | 1934 | *Komodie der Eitelkeit* [“The Comedy of Vanity”] – marries Veza Taubner-Calderon. | | 1935 | Publishes *Die Blendung* | | 1938 | Hitler occupies Austria. November: emigration via Paris to London. | | 1939 | During the following two decades concentration on his forthcoming work, *Masse und Macht*. | | 1946 | Publication of *Auto-da-Fé*, the English version of *Die Blendung* in a translation by C. V. Wedgwood. [Appeared in the US in 1947 as *The Tower of Babel*.] | | 1952 | Receives British citizenship. | | 1956 | Premiere of his play *Die Befristeten* [“Their Days are Numbered”] in Oxford. | | 1960 | *Masse und Macht* [Crowds and Power, tr. 1962] published in Hamburg. | | 1963 | Death of Veza Canetti. | | 1964 | The three plays Hochzeit, *Komodie der Eitelkeit and Die Befristeten* appear. | | 1965 | *Aufzeichnungen* 1942-48 [“Sketches”]. | | 1968 | *Die Stimmen von Marrakesch [The Voices of Marrakesh* tr. 1978] published by Hanser in Munich. | | 1969 | *Der andere Prozess. Kafkas Briefe an Felice [Kafka’s Other Trial,* tr. 1974]. | | 1971 | Marries Hera Buschor. | | 1972 | Receives the Buchner Prize in Darmstadt. | | 1973 | *Die Provinz des Menschen. Aufzeichnungen 1942-1972* [*The Human Province,* tr. 1978]. | | 1974 | *Der Ohrenzeuge. Funfzig Charaktere [Ear Witness: Fifty Characters,* tr. 1979]. | | 1975 | *Das Gewissen der Wort.* Essays [“The Conscience of Words”].  Receives honorary doctorates from Manchester and Munich. | | 1977 | *Die gerettete Zunge. Geschichte einer Jugend. [The Tongue Set Free,* tr. 1979]. | | 1980 | *Die Fackel im Ohr. Lebensgeschichte 1921-1931 [The Torch in My Ear,* tr. 1982].  Receives the order Pour le mérite in Bonn. | | 1981 | Receives the 1981 Nobel Prize in Literature. | | 1985 | *Das Augenspiel. Lebensgeschichte 1931-1937 [The Play of the Eyes* tr. 1990]. | | 1987 | *Das Geheimhen der Uhr. Aufzeichnungen 1973-1985 [The Secret Heart of the Clock,* tr 1989]. | | 1992 | *Die Fliegenpein, Aufzeichnungen/Pain of Flies: Notes.* |   Elias Canetti  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1981-1990*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Elias Canetti died on 14 August 1994.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0944 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0945 |
| Biographical | Czesław Miłosz was born June 30, 1911 in Seteiniai, Lithuania, as a son of Aleksander Miłosz, a civil engineer, and Weronika, née Kunat. He made his high-school and university studies in Wilno, then belonging to Poland. A co-founder of a literary group “Zagary”, he made his literary début in 1930, published in the 1930s two volumes of poetry and worked for the Polish Radio. Most of the war time he spent in Warsaw working there for the underground presses.  In the diplomatic service of the People’s Poland since 1945, he broke with the government in 1951 and settled in France where he wrote several books in prose. In 1953 he received Prix Littéraire Européen.  In 1960, invited by the University of California, he moved to Berkeley where he has been, since 1961, Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures.  Presented with an award for poetry translations from the Polish P.E.N. Club in Warsaw in 1974; a Guggenheim Fellow for poetry 1976; received a honorary degree Doctor of Letters from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 1977; won the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 1978; received the “Berkeley Citation” (an equivalent of a honorary Ph.D.) in 1978; nominated by the Academic Senate a “Research Lecturer” of 1979/1980.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Czesław Miłosz died on August 14, 2004.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0945=CM  I came to Cracow on a foggy day just before Christmas 2003 to interview Czesław Miłosz, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, for the Swedish newspaper *Göteborgs-Posten*. After having lived most of his life in exile, it is no surprise that Miłosz chose to spend his final years in Cracow – no other Polish city offers such a fascinating fusion of culture, tradition and modernity.  Miłosz was born in 1911 in Lithuania, at that time a part of Russia. He studied in Vilnius and made his debut as a poet in 1933. He was considered to be one of the most promising young Polish poets in the years between the First and Second World Wars. After the Second World War Czeslaw Miłosz served as diplomat for the People’s Poland. In 1951 he left the post and sought political asylum in France. In 1961 he accepted an offer of a professorship at the University of California in Berkeley, where he lectured for over 20 years, devoting his time simultaneously to academic duties, writing and translating.  Although his works were banned in Poland during his exile in Europe and the US, they reached Polish readers by different clandestine routes, even long before he won the Nobel Prize. Winning the prize in 1980 however, made it possible for him to return to Poland after 30 years’ absence and it also made it possible for his works to be officially published in his home country again. In a formal ceremony in the middle of the 1990s Miłosz was given a symbolic key to the city of Cracow and a newly renovated flat, which he accepted with gratitude. Having settled down in Poland, he spent his time between Cracow and Berkeley, two cities with great significance for his life and career.  Czesław Miłosz received me with a somewhat old-fashioned yet graceful Polish chivalry. Warmed up by coffee and his charm, I began asking questions and very soon our conversation turned to Sweden, a country with a special relation to Miłosz not only because of the Nobel Prize. This became apparent when I asked what books had influenced him most as a child. He gave me a broad smile and explained:  CM: One was actually [Selma Lagerlöf](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1909/index.html)‘s *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*. I’m still convinced that it formed my feeling for literature and taught me the double perspective, of being able to see things both from above and on a more earthly plane.  MAP: I suspect you must also have applied the double perspective when you taught the history of Polish literature at the University of California. My experience has taught me that you never see your own culture so clearly as when it’s reflected in another culture. How, in your opinion, does Polish literature differ from the literature of other cultures? What is its most distinctive feature?  CM: Without doubt Polish literature’s constant struggle with history. There is simply no other country in Europe that suddenly disappeared from the map for over 100 years as Poland did in 1795, when it was partitioned between Russia, Prussia and Austria. After a brief respite between the First and Second World Wars, Poland lost its statehood again in 1939 when it was divided in an agreement between Hitler and Stalin. All of this is complicated, of course, and it isn’t easy to explain to foreigners the martyrdom of Polish literature and its struggle for liberation, especially if you want to avoid unnecessary pathos. But we Poles are all too aware of the heavy burden that history has forced upon us. Polish writers were thrown into all this against their will, and these historically difficult situations also meant that they were forced to take a political stand.  MAP: I can’t help thinking of one of your poems that became very well known due to its controversial Polish-Jewish theme. I mean “Campo dei Fiori”, which you wrote in Warsaw in 1943. You compare Giordano Bruno’s death on a pyre and the people’s indifference to it with the doomed Jews’ struggle in the Warsaw ghetto. Poles would like to think that this poem rescued the conscience of Polish war literature. What is your feeling about that?  CM: There are people who say that what I described was just a literary metaphor. But in fact, I passed the ghetto as I was riding the tram and saw all that horror with my own eyes… The main theme of the poem is the vulnerability and aloneness of the dying person, and for that reason the comparison with Giordano Bruno was appropriate; the death of each and every individual can be compared with this. The poem was born out of a sort of moral obligation, when you feel that you must react.  MAP: You said that Polish writers were often forced to take a political stand. You were also repeatedly forced to take such a stand, for instance in 1980 when you gave your undivided support to the Solidarity Movement. Even much earlier, in the 1950s, you described the spiritual oppression behind the Iron Curtain in your book *The Captive Mind*. People reacted very strongly to that book and it helped many readers in the Western world to understand the mechanisms of the totalitarian state. But isn’t it so that your having been on the safe side of the Iron Curtain was turned against you? …  CM: I wrote that book under great inner conflict, it was meant primarily for readers in the West. Today we face an entirely different problem: that the book – which deals with the dark sides of the communistic system, with propaganda, interrogations, censorship etc., is completely incomprehensible to the young generation in Poland. Probably because Marxism and the communistic ideology in Poland were forced upon the people from above. Their roots quite simply don’t go very deep. It was never taken very seriously in Polish intellectual circles. And, because of censorship, it was hardly widespread in the country. What’s interesting now about *The Captive Mind* is that it recently came out for the first time in Russia. Why, we can ask. Perhaps because it’s become topical again now, as we start again to see certain totalitarian tendencies in Russian society. The book is still also very widely read and discussed in American universities and colleges since it’s considered to portray an important part of the history of the 1900s. But that isn’t the case in Poland …  MAP: In other words, one of the Polish paradoxes… But let’s return to your writing: you often bring up the theme of living in exile and of not being able to step into the same river twice, and yet you returned to your native Lithuania after 52 years and described the experience in your autobiographical novel *The Issa Valley*. What were your feelings about that return?  CM: Writing about exile was a way for me to seek distance just exactly by that distance in time and space. My return to Lithuania was primarily a return to my maternal grandparents’ home in Szetejnie. I have to confess that it was a completely unexpected experience, the meeting with all that lush greenery, exactly as I remembered it from my childhood! Everything else was changed, though, of course, because I saw it then through the eyes of a small child, so that everything that surrounded me had completely different proportions. My return to my childhood home, or more accurately my non-home, because nothing of it remained, was in fact a kind of shock. But in Vilnius, where I spent my school and university years, I had a strange, almost physical, feeling of being surrounded by ghosts, naturally because none of the people I knew before were there any longer, not even their children or their grandchildren. The Jewish population had been murdered during the war and the Poles had largely been deported or had emigrated.  MAP: You once said that Lithuania’s spirit had never left you completely and – what at first surprised me – you compared the Poles in Lithuania with Finno-Swedes in Finland.  CM: Yes, with the difference that the concept “Lithuanian Pole” doesn’t exist in the general Polish consciousness. But if history had developed in another way we would surely have been able to create that label.  MAP: As it is now, there is hardly any environment or national and cultural kinship for people with a background like yours.  CM: That’s true. I feel that very strongly and look for soul mates, but it’s too late. I see myself as one of the last Lithuanian Poles, the “last Mohican”… [laughing]  MAP: How did it feel to come back to Poland after having being considered for so many years an exile writer? Did you identify yourself with that term?  CM: No, in fact I didn’t. Especially considering that I was not in any of the Polish emigrant environments, with the exception of those around the editor Jerzy Giedroyc and his journal/publishing company “Kultura” in Paris. My work was banned in Poland, and Giedroyc published many of my books, so it was in that sense that I was a writer in exile. However, I always felt a great affinity with the intellectual and literary group in Poland and saw myself as one of them, but one who paradoxically enough had wound up in the West.  MAP: What do you think will happen now to the Polish “free” culture? Will it be able to claim a place in the new Europe?  CM: In my youth I was thrown between two totalitarian ideologies: communism on the one hand and nationalism on the other. And I struggled desperately to be able to find a way to approach these two strong currents. Today Polish writers have no points of reference at all, that’s the great difference. It was without a doubt the political factor that characterised Polish literature, both in Poland and abroad. Replacing the old “Polish code” with the “European” is obviously not easy, especially since – which my Irish friend [Seamus Heaney](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1995/index.html) pointed out – what gave Polish poetry its special distinction was this unique connection between the political and the personal situation. It’s my opinion however that the most specific Polish factor is probably the Catholic religion. At the same time, Poland is an incomprehensible country to me: Poles worship the Pope but many also act as though the Catholic religion never existed. I believe nevertheless that it is exactly its religious thinking that is one of the most valuable Polish dimensions.  MAP: The “eternal values” that survive all other political events, in other words …?  CM: Absolutely!  MAP: You discussed the concept of “two Europes” – that is, Western and Eastern Europe – early on, in your autobiographical book *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition* that was published in Paris in 1958. What are your thoughts on that now? Is Poland still a part of the second Europe or is it finally beginning to come closer to the first?  CM: That division probably still holds. I mean, that for many years in the general French, German or English consciousness there was a line on the map of Europe behind which no one expected to see anything other than white bears! [laughing] For that reason we have to let time go by, it’s still too early to be able to erase that line completely. I understand that writers today probably have a difficult time finding their way in the new “McDonaldised” reality. But they’re perhaps not aware of one important thing – that Poland is not a “normal” European state, not yet and not with so many historical knots. There are still altogether too many historical complications to take a stand on. That means that writers who now completely ignore political reality are perhaps making a false conclusion.  MAP: You said in your [Nobel Lecture](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1980/milosz-lecture.html) that we all, both those who speak and those who listen, are no more than links between the past and the future …  CM: Yes, and I can only add here something that my good friend [Joseph Brodsky](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1987/index.html) said – that it isn’t at all that we write for those who come after us. We write to gain the sanction of our forefathers!  MAP: Is there anything that you still carry inside you that for some reason you haven’t yet been able to write about?  CM: My poor vision unfortunately stops me from writing. I was forced to dictate my last books. It’s a burden that also makes certain literary projects impossible. So even if I do probably have a few thoughts it’s getting more and more difficult to accomplish anything …  He gave a melancholy laugh and I joined in. It was easy to do that in his company. Just then his housekeeper walked past the room with a scowl. “Yes, indeed, here you sit and talk and talk while your food gets cold,” she muttered with a displeased look in my direction. Miłosz smiled, obviously amused at her words, but he looked tired and I began to pick up my things. I thought of what the Swedish poet Artur Lundkvist wrote about him in 1979: “His life holds many moments, /…/ they belong to very different times, to very different places. And his words look for and find them from the most different directions.”  Czesław Miłosz passed away on August 14, 2004, at the age of 93. He was buried in Cracow, in the crypt of the Pauline Church, a place of high honour where some of the greatest Polish names rest. With his death Polish literature lost one of its most accomplished writers and most unique twentieth-century literary personalities. |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0946 |
| Biographical | Descendant of an old family of Lesbos, he was born in Heraclion (Candia) on the island of Crete, November 2, 1911. Some time later his family settled permanently in Athens where the poet finished his secondary school studies and later visited the Law School of the Athens University. His first appearance as a poet in 1935 through the magazine “Nea Grammata” (“New Culture”) was saluted as an important event and the new style he introduced – though giving rise to a great many reactions – succeeded in prevailing and effectively contributing to the poetical reform commencing in the Second World War’s eve and going on up to our days.  In 1937 he visited the Reserve Officer’s Cadet School in Corfu. Upon the outbreak of the war he served in the rank of Second Lieutenant, first at the Headquarters of the 1st Army Corps and then at the 24th Regiment, on the advanced fire line. During the German occupation and later, after Greece was liberated, he has been unabatedly active, publishing successive collections of poetry and writing essays concerning contemporary poetry and art problems.§  He has twice been Programme Director of the Greek National Radio Foundation (1945-46 and 1953-54), Member of the National Theatre’s Administrative Council, President of the Administrative Council of the Greek Radio and Television Service as well as Member of the Consultative Committee of the Greek National Tourist’s Organisation on the Athens Festival. In 1960 he was awarded the First State Poetry Prize, in 1965 the Order of the Phoenix Brigade and in 1975 he was proclaimed Doctor Honoris Causa of the Philosophical School of the Thessaloniki University and Honorary Citizen of the Town of Mytilene.  During the years 1948-1952 and 1969-1972 he settled in Paris. There, he listened to philology and literature lessons in the Sorbonne and got acquainted with the pioneers of the world’s avant-garde (Reverdy, Breton, Tzara, Ungaretti, Matisse, Picasso, Chagall, Giacometti). Starting from Paris he travelled and visited subsequently Switzerland, England, Italy and Spain. In 1948 he was the representative of Greece at the “International Meetings of Geneva”, in 1949 at the Founding Congress of the “International Art Critics Union” in Paris and in 1962 at the “Incontro Romano della Cultura” in Rome.  In 1961, upon an invitation of the State Department, he traveled through the U.S.A.; and – upon similar invitations – through the Soviet Union in 1963 and Bulgaria in 1965.  Elytis’ poetry has marked, through an active presence of over forty years, a broad spectrum. Unlike others, he did not turn back to Ancient Greece or Byzantium but devoted himself exclusively to today’s Hellenism, of which he attempted – in a certain way based on psychical and sentimental aspects – to build up the mythology and the institutions. His main endeavour has been to rid his people’s conscience from remorses unjustifiable, to complement natural elements through ethical powers, to achieve the highest possible transparency in expression and to finally succeed in approaching the mystery of light, “the metaphysic of the sun” – according to his own definition. A parallel way concerning technique resulted in introducing the “inner architecture”, which is clearly perceptible in a great many works of his; mainly in the *Axion Esti* – *It Is Worthy*. This work – thanks to its setting to music by Mikis Theodorakis – was to be widely spread among all Greeks and grew to be a kind of the people’s new gospel. Elytis’ theoretical ideas have been expressed in a series of essays under the title *(Offering) My Cards To Sight*. Besides he applied himself to translating poetry and theatre as well as creating a series of *collage* pictures. Translations of his poetry have been published as autonomous books, in anthologies or in periodicals in eleven languages.   |  | | --- | | Literature | | “Orientations” (1940) | | “Sun – The First” (1943) | | “An Heroic And Funeral Chant For The Lieutenant Lost In Albania” (1946) | | “To Axion Esti” – “It Is Worthy” (1959) | | “Six Plus One Remorses For The Sky” (1960) | | “The Light Tree And The Fourteenth Beauty” (1972) | | “The Sovereign Sun” (1972) | | “The Trills Of Love” (1973) | | “The Monogram” (1973) | | “Step-Poems” (1974) | | “(Offering) My Cards To Sight” (1974) | | “The Painter Theophilos” (1973) | | “Second Writing” (1976) | | “The Magic Of Papadiamantis” (1976) | | “Signalbook” (1977) | | “Maria Nefeli” (1978) | | “Selected poems” Ed. E. Keeley and Ph. Sherrard (1981) | | “Three Poems under a Flag of Convenience” (1982) | | “Diary of an Invisible April” (1984) | | “The Little Mariner” (1988) | | “What I Love. Selected Poems” (1986) | | “Krinagoras” (1987) | | “The Elegies of Oxopetras” (1991) | |  | | Reference Works | | Mario Vitti: Odysseus Elytis. Literature 1935-1971 (Icaros 1977) | | Tasos Lignadis: Elytis’ Axion Esti (1972) | | Lili Zografos: Elytis – The Sun Drinker (1972); as well as the special issue of the American magazine Books Abroad dedicated to the work of Elytis (Autumn 1975. Norman, Oklahoma, U.S.A.) | | Odysseus Elytis: Anthologies of Light. Ed. I. Ivask (1981) | | A. Decavalles: Maria Nefeli and the Changeful Sameness of Elytis’ Variations on a theme (1982) | | E. Keeley: Elytis and the Greek Tradition (1983) | | Ph. Sherrard: Odysseus Elytis and the Discovery of Greece, in Journal of Modern Greek Studies, 1(2), 1983 | | K. Malkoff: Eliot and Elytis: Poet of Time, Poet of Space, in Comparative Literature, 36(3), 1984 | | A. Decavalles: Odysseus Elytis in the 1980s, in World Literature Today, 62(l), 1988 | |  | | Translations | | Poesie. Procedute dal Canto eroico e funebre per il sottotenente caduto in Albania. Trad. Mario Vitti (Roma. Il Presente. 1952) | | 21 Poesie. Trad. Vicenzo Rotolo (Palermo. Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici. 1968) | | Poèmes. Trad. Robert Levesque (1945) | | Six plus un remords pourle ciel. Trad. F. B. Mache (Fata Morgana. Montpellier 1977) | | Korper des Sommers. Übers. Barbara Schlörb (St. Gallen 1960) | | Sieben nächtliche Siebenzeiler. Übers. Günter Dietz (Darmstadt 1966) | | To Axion Esti – Gepriesen sei. Übers. Güinter Dietz (Hamburg 1969) | | The Axion Esti. Trans. Edmund Keeley and G. Savidis (Pittsburgh, U.S.A. 1974) | | The Sovereign Sun. Trans. Kinom Friar (Philadelphia, U.S.A. 1974) |   From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Odysseus Elytis died on March 18, 1996.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0946 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0947 |
| Biographical | In one of his more light-hearted books, Isaac Bashevis Singer depicts his childhood in one of the over-populated poor quarters of Warsaw, a Jewish quarter, just before and during the First World War. The book, called *In My Father’s Court* (1966), is sustained by a redeeming, melancholy sense of humour and a clear-sightedness free of illusion. This world has gone forever, destroyed by the most terrible of all scourges that have afflicted the Jews and other people in Poland. But it comes to life in Singer’s memories and writing in general. Its mental and physical environment and its centuries-old traditions have set their stamp on Singer as a man and a writer, and provide the ever-vivid subject matter for his inspiration and imagination. It is the world and life of East European Jewry, such as it was lived in cities and villages, in poverty and persecution, and imbued with sincere piety and rites combined with blind faith and superstition. Its language was Yiddish – the language of the simple people and of the women, the language of the mothers which preserved fairytales and anecdotes, legends and memories for hundreds of years past, through a history which seems to have left nothing untried in the way of agony, passions, aberrations, cruelty and bestiality, but also of heroism, love and self-sacrifice.  Singer’s father was a rabbi, a spiritual mentor and confessor, of the Hasid school of piety. His mother also came from a family of rabbis. The East European Jewish-mystical Hasidism combined Talmud doctrine and a fidelity to scripture and rites – which often merged into prudery and strict adherence to the law – with a lively and sensually candid earthiness that seemed familiar with all human experience. Its world, which the reader encounters in Singer’s stories, is a very Jewish but also a very human world. It appears to include everything – pleasure and suffering, coarseness and subtlety. We find obstrusive carnality, spicy, colourful, fragrant or smelly, lewd or violent. But there is also room for sagacity, worldly wisdom and shrewd speculation. The range extends from the saintly to the demoniacal, from quiet contemplation and sublimity, to ruthless obsession and infernal confusion or destruction. It is typical that among the authors Singer read at an early age who have influenced him and accompanied him through life were Spinoza, Gogol and Dostoievsky, in addition to Talmud, Kabbala and kindred writings.  Singer began his writing career as a journalist in Warsaw in the years between the wars. He was influenced by his elder brother, now dead, who was already an author and who contributed to the younger brother’s spiritual liberation and contact with the new currents of seething political, social and cultural upheaval. The clash between tradition and renewal, between other-worldliness and faith and mysticism on the one hand, and free thought, secularization, doubt and nihilism on the other, is an essential theme in Singer’s short stories and novels. The theme is Jewish, made topical by the barbarous conflicts of our age, a painful drama between contentious loyalties. But it is also of concern to mankind, to us all, Jew or non-Jew, actualized by modern western culture’s struggles between preservation and renewal. Among many other themes, it is dealt with in Singer’s big family chronicles – the novels, *The Family Moskat* (1950), *The Manor* (1967), and *The Estate* (1969). These extensive epic works have been compared with [Thomas Mann](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1929/index.html)‘s novel, *Buddenbrooks.* Like Mann, Singer describes how old families are broken up by the new age and its demands, from the middle of the 19th century up to the Second World War, and how they are split, financially, socially and humanly. But Singer’s chronicles are greater in scope than Mann’s novel and more richly orchestrated in their characterization. The author’s apparently inexhaustible psychological fantasy has created a microcosm, or rather, a well-populated microchaos, out of independent and graphically convincing figures. They bring to mind another writer whom Singer read when young – Leo Tolstoy.  Singer’s earliest fictional works, however, were not big novels but short stories and novellas, a genre in which he has perhaps given his very best as a consummate storyteller and stylist. The novel, *Satan in Goray*, written originally in Yiddish, like practically all Singer books, appeared in 1935 when the Nazi catastrophe was threatening and just before the author emigrated to the USA, where he has lived and worked ever since. It treats of a theme to which Singer has often returned in different ways and with variations in time, place and personages – the false Messiah, his seductive arts and successes, the mass hysteria around him, his fall and the breaking up of illusions in destitution and new illusion, or in penance and purity. *Satan in Goray* takes place in the 17th century, in the confusion and the sufferings after the cruel ravages of the Cossacks, with outrages and mass murder of Jews and other wretched peasants and artisans. The people in this novel, as elsewhere with Singer, are often at the mercy of the capricious infliction of circumstance, but even more so, their own passions. The passions are frequently of a sexual nature but also of another kind – manias and superstitions, fanatical hopes and dreams, the figments of terror, the lure of lust or power, the nightmares of anguish, and so on. Even boredom can become a restless passion, as with the main character in the tragi-comic picaresque novel, *The Magician of Lublin* (1961), a most eccentric anti-hero, a kind of Jewish Don Juan and rogue, who ends up as an ascetic or saint.  This is one of the most characteristic themes with Singer – the tyranny of the passions, the power and fickle inventiveness of obsession, the grotesque wealth of variation, and the destructive, but also inflaming and paradoxically creative potential of the emotions. We encounter this tumultuous and colourful world particularly in Singer’s numerous and fantastic short stories, available in English translation in about a dozen collections, from the early *Gimpel The Fool* (translated 1953), to the later work, *A Crown of Feathers* (1973), with notable masterpieces in between, such as, *The Spinoza of Market Street* (1961), or, *A Friend of Kafka* (1970). The passions and crazes are personified in Singer as demons, spectres, ghosts and all kinds of infernal or supernatural powers from the rich storehouse of Jewish popular imagination. These demons are not only graphic literary symbols, but also real, tangible beings – Singer, in fact, says he believes in their physical presence. The middle ages rise up in his work and permeate the present. Everyday life is interwoven with wonders, reality spun from dreams, the blood of the past with the moment in which we are living. This is where Singer’s narrative art celebrates its greatest triumphs and bestows a reading experience of a deeply original kind, harrowing, but also stimulating and edifying. Many of his characters step with unquestioned authority into the Pantheon of literature, where the eternal companions and mythical figures live, tragic and grotesque, comic and touching, weird and wonderful people of dream and torment, baseness and grandeur.   |  | | --- | | Books | | Issac Bashevis Singer, born in Leoncin near Warsaw, emigrated 1935 to USA. He died in 1991.  In addition to the works mentioned above Singer’s writings include – in English: | | *the novels* | | The Slave, transl. by the author and Cecil Hemley. New York: Farrar Straus, 1962; London: Secker and Warburg, 1963. | | Enemies: A Love Story, transl. by Alizah Shevrin and Elizabeth Shub. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1972. | | Shosha. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1978. | | Reaches of Heaven. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1980. | | The Golem. London: Deutsch, 1983. | | The Penitent. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1983. | | Yentl the Yeshiva Boy, transl. from the Yiddish by Marion Magid and Elisabeth Pallet. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1983. | | The Ring of the Fields. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1988. | | Scum, transl. by Rosaline Dukalsky Schwartz. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1991. | | *the collections of short stories* | | Short Friday, transl. by Ruth Whitman and others. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1964; London: Seeker and Warburg, 1967. | | The Seance, transl. by Ruth Whitman and others. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1968; London: Cape, 1970. | | Passions, transl. by the author in collab. with others. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1975; London: Cape, 1976. | | Old Love. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1979. | | The Power of Light. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1980. | | The Image and Other Stories. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1985. | | The Death of Metuselah and Other Stories. London: Cape, 1988. | | *the memoirs* | | A Little Boy in Search of God: Mysticism in a Personal Light. N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976. | | A Young Man in Search of Love, transl. by Joseph Singer. N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978. | | Lost in America. N.Y.: Doubleday, 1981. | | *for children* | | Zlateh the Goat and Other Stories, transl. by the author and Elizabeth Shub. N.Y.: Harper, 1966; London: Secker and Warburg, 1967. | | When Schlemiel Went to Warsaw and Other Stories, transl. by the author and Elizabeth Shub. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1968. | | A Day of Pleasure: Stories of a Boy Growing up in Warsaw, transl. by the author and Elizabeth Shub. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1969. | | The Fools of Chelm and Their History, transl. by the author and Elizabeth Shub. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1973. | | Why Noah Chose the Dove, transl. by Elizabeth Shub. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1974. | | Stories for Children. N.Y.: Farrar Straus, 1986. |   From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Isaac Bashevir Singer died on July 24, 1991.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0947 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0948 |
| Biographical | Vicente Aleixandre was born in Sevilla (Spain) on April 26, 1898. He spent his childhood in Malaga and he has lived in Madrid since 1909. Studied law at the University of Madrid and at the Madrid School of Economics. Beginning in 1925 he has completely devoted himself to literature. His first book of poems, *Ambit*, appeared in 1928. Since that date he has written and published a score of books. In 1933, he received the National Literary Prize for his work *Destruction or Love*. He spent the Civil War in the Republican zone. He fell ill and remained in Madrid at the end of the conflict, silenced by the new authorities for four years. In 1944, he published *The Shadow of Paradise*, still maintaining his independence of the established political situation. In 1950, he became a member of the Spanish Academy. His books and anthologies have been published up to the present day. The Swedish Academy awarded him the Nobel Prize for Literature for the totality of his work in 1977.  Further works  *Sonido de la guerra/Sound of War* (poetry), 1978  *Epistolario/Letters*, 1986  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Vicente Aleixandre died on December 14, 1984.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0948 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0949 |
| Biographical | Saul Bellow was born in Lachine, Quebec, a suburb of Montreal, in 1915, and was raised in Chicago. He attended the University of Chicago, received his Bachelor’s degree from Northwestern University in 1937, with honors in sociology and anthropology, did graduate work at the University of Wisconsin, and served in the Merchant Marine during World War II.  Mr. Bellow’s first novel, *Dangling Man*, was published in 1944, and his second, *The Victim*, in 1947. In 1948 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and spent two years in Paris and traveling in Europe, where he began *The Adventures of Augie March*, which won the National Book Award for fiction in 1954. Later books include *Seize The Day* (1956), *Henderson The Rain King* (1959), *Herzog* (1964), *Mosby’s Memoirs and Other Stories* (1968), and *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* (1970). His most recent work of fiction, *Humboldt’s Gift* (1975), was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. Both *Herzog* and *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* were awarded the National Book Award for fiction. Mr. Bellow’s first non-fiction work, *To Jerusalem and Back: A Personal Account*, published on October 25,1976, is his personal and literary record of his sojourn in Israel during several months in 1975.  In 1965 Mr. Bellow was awarded the International Literary Prize for *Herzog*, becoming the first American to receive the prize. In January 1968 the Republic of France awarded him the Croix de Chevalier des Arts et Lettres, the highest literary distinction awarded by that nation to non-citizens, and in March 1968 he received the B’nai B’rith Jewish Heritage Award for “excellence in Jewish literature”, and in November 1976 he was awarded the America’s Democratic Legacy Award of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, the first time this award has been made to a literary personage.  A playwright as well as a novelist, Saul Bellow is the author of *The Last Analysis* and of three short plays, collectively entitled *Under the Weather*, which were produced on Broadway in 1966. He has contributed fiction to *Partisan Review, Playboy, Harper’s Bazaar, The New Yorker, Esquire*, and to literary quarterlies. His criticism has appeared in *The New York Times Book Review, Horizon, Encounter, The New Republic, The New Leader*, and elsewhere. During the 1967 Arab-lsraeli conflict, he served as a war correspondent for *Newsday*. He has taught at Bard College, Princeton University, and the University of Minnesota, and is a member of the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago.   |  | | --- | | Further works | | *To Jerusalem and Back. A Personal Account*, 1976 | | *Him with His Foot in his Mouth and Other Stories*, 1984 | | *More Die of Heartbreak. A Novel*, 1987 | | *The Bellarosa Connection. A Novella*, 1989 | | *A Theft (novella)*, 1989 | | *Something to Remember Me By. Three Tales*, 1992 |   From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  For more updated biographical information, see: Bellow, Saul, “Memoirs of a Bootlegger’s Son”. In *Granta*, 41, pp. 9-36, 1992.  *Saul Bellow died on April 5, 2005.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0949 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0950 |
| Biographical | Eugenio Montale, born in 1896, is one of the few obvious “true masters” of the last fifty years of Italian literature. Born in Genoa into a family of businessmen, he discontinued his secondary studies and started, on a private basis, to study singing with the baritone Ernesto Sivori. But the 1915-18 war (in which he served as an infantry officer), the death of Sivori and his decision to go in for a literary career, turned Montale away from that course, in which he had shown an extraordinary interest in melodrama, even its technical aspects. When he started to devote himself to poetry, he was already in possession of a rich and versatile culture and a taste for Bellini’s and Debussy’s music, impressionist painting and the art of the great novelists of nineteenth-century Europe, at the same time sharing the interests of the Ligurian poets Roccatagliata-Cecardi, Boine and Sbarbaro. However, the “regional” outlook of the poetry of his time was not allowed to limit the critical attention that he paid to Leopardi and Foscolo. It was not until after the war that the poet dedicated himself fully to creative activities and literature. In 1921, he contributed to “Primo Tempo”, with Solmi and Debenedetti, revealing, besides his poetic gifts, a rare critical talent through his acuteness and independence of conventional patterns. His *Omaggio a Svevo*, published in 1925 in the Milanese paper “L’Esame”, aroused much attention, determining, among other things, the fortune of the works of the Triestine writer.  Montale settled down in Florence in 1928, where he became director of the Gabinetto Vieusseux library. He was one of the first inspirers of “Solaria”, always being one of the most active and politically non-conformist Florentine intellectuals until, in 1938, refusing to join the party then in power, he was dismissed from his directorship at the Gabinetto Vieusseux.  In 1925, he published his first collection of poems, *Ossi di seppia*, which quickly became one of the “classics” of contemporary Italian poetry; in his verses, sentiment appears desiccated by a severe intellectual rigour, evoked with intimate fullness in the fervid and striking sights of the Mediterranean landscape. Some critics aptly saw in *Ossi di seppia* a singular introspective continuity, as in a great modern novel, linked to the story of the protagonist, finding its most developed form in the poem “Arsenio”.  When *Le occasioni* (1939) was published, it brought consistent confirmation of this inner line of development which, bearing a new classical-modern imprint, identified itself with the great contemporary metaphysical poetry. In *Le occasioni*, Italian poetry and culture as a whole were, from then on, to recognise a book that reflected the solitude and the agony over the human condition of one who lucidly opposed Fascist oppression, creating a song of noble stoicism.  Montale’s biography is a chronicle of poetry. The Second World War saw the publication, in 1943, of *Finisterre*, a collection which, published in Lugano in two successive editions of modest print runs, constituted one of the cornerstones of the volume *La bufera e altro*, a consistent continuation of his whole work, printed in 1956. *La farfalla di Dinard* – which from the ninety-six pages of the 1956 edition was expanded, from one edition to another, into the 273 pages of the 1960 edition – showed Montale to be an original writer of autobiography and imaginative prose, almost a narrator, with malicious flashes of wit but with an elegiac spirit.  In 1961, Montale was awarded an honorary degree at the University of Rome and shortly afterwards, at the universities of Milan, Cambridge, and Basel. In 1967, President Saragat appointed him senator for life “in recognition of his distinguished achievements in the literary and artistic fields”. This event relieved him, in a sense, of the obligation to go every day to the editorial office of the “Corriere della Sera”, where he had been working as a music critic, editor and special correspondent since 1948. The following works, prose as well as poetry, confirmed the vitality of a writer who, true to the fundamental themes of his early career (the Universe marked by inevitable failure and pain as an existential stigma), managed to collect experiences and important moments from the spiritual transformations of our times. *Auto da fé* (1966 and 1972), *Fuori di casa* (1969 and 1975) and *Quaderno di tradazioni* (1948 and 1975) are books that give an idea of the vastness of his interests and of the versatility of his talent, later confirmed by *La bufera e altro* (1970).  In 1971, Mondadori published his fourth collection of poetry, *Satura*, which soon became a bestseller. The book, exhibiting the usual linguistic ambiguity typical of Montale, alludes to a poetry that disrupts its own and others’ patterns, including, in a paradoxical manner, much more than is usual (even for Montale) to include in the stylistic and linguistic models of poetry: meditative solicitations, existential themes about man still in some way Christian and Western, a wisdom anything but senile, subtle and provocative humor in the face of a world that changes and proceeds along its tragic and mysterious route.  Montale’s great poetry, in actual fact, is born out of the search for those presences that reveal and liberate the hidden world, such as spectres and amulets. Not insusceptible to the stylistic lessons of Pascoli and Gozzano, nor to contemporaries writing in English, Montale has in his turn influenced younger Italian poets, even post-*Ermetismo* poets and experimentators.  After a volume of cultural articles, *La farfalla di Dinard*, he published in 1973, still with Mondadori, *Diario* 1971-72, which contains more recent lyric poems, born of a moral meditation not very different from that which brought forth the poems of Satura.  Attentive to the effects of history, Montale’s poetry stands out as congenial to spirits that are aware of the consequences (of which, from many aspects, we have not yet seen the end) of the second world tragedy, which the writer saw as temporary reflections of an evil without origin and without end, according to a parable which makes him belong to the more conscious part of the European intellect.  Further works  *Quaderno di quattro anni/It Depends. A Poet’s Notebook*, tr. (poetry), 1977  *L’opera in versi/Collected Poems* (poetry), 1980  Eugenio Montale died in 1981.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Eugenio Montale died on September 12, 1981.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0950 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0951 |
| Biographical | Born in 1900 at Svartbjörnsbyn near Boden in the north of Sweden.  Parents, Olof Petter J., stonecutter from Värmland, and Cevia Gustafsdotter from Blekinge. There were six children in the family, of whom E.J. was the next youngest. His father fell ill with silicosis about 1904, and E.J. was taken care of by his childless aunt and her husband, stonecutter Anders Johan Rost. At the age of fourteen he left his foster-parents, of whom he was very fond, to look for work near the home where he was born.  He did many different kinds of work, first at the timber sorting town near Sävast on the Lule River, then at the Björn brickworks. Between 1915 and 1919 he was a sawmill worker, a ticket seller and usher at a cinema, and a projectionist; then assistant to plumbers and electricians. In 1918 he was a locomotive cleaner at the engine sheds in Boden, and for a time during the winter, a stoker on cargo trains between Boden and Haparanda. Again, sawmill worker for a while, then hay-presser, then out of work. Borrowing money, he travelled down to Stockholm, where he got work at LM Ericsson’s big workshop in Tulegatan. The metalworkers’ strike broke out in 1920 and he tried to live on what he wrote, with very meagre results. At the same time, together with some other young budding writers, he founded the literary magazine *Vår Nutid* (Our Present Day), which appeared in six issues. He then became a member the society of future writers which called itself *De gröna* (The Green Ones).  From the autumn of 1920 to the autumn of 1921, together with two or three friends, he worked at haymaking and timber-felling on a small farm in Uppland, where he had spare time and peace in which to read and write.  In the autumn of 1921 he went to Germany – by cargo boat to Kiel, by train to Berlin, and a few months later he continued via the Rhineland to Paris, where he earned his living writing for Swedish papers, as a cement worker, and then as a dishwasher at a big hotel near the Gare du Nord. Then back to Berlin, where he remained until the autumn of 1923, when he returned home to Sweden.  His first book, *De fyra främlingarna* (The Four Strangers), a collection of short stories, was finished in the spring of 1924 and published during the autumn. During a winter visit to the North, he finished his second book, which was published in the autumn of 1925. By then E.J. was back in France, where he was to live for over five years.  In 1927 he was married at Saint-Leu-La Fôret to Aase Christofersen. Their son Tore was born there in 1928. In 1930 the family moved home to Sweden.  After Aase Johnson’s death, E.J. married Cilla Frankenhaeuser. They have two children, Maria, born 1944, and Anders, born 1946. From 1947 to 1950, E.J. and his family lived in Switzerland and England, and after that at Saltsjöbaden.   |  | | --- | | Bibliography | | *De fyra främlingarna* (The Four Strangers), 1924 | | *Timans och rättfärdigheten* (Timans and Righteousness), 1925 | | *Stad i mörker* (Town in Darkness), 1927 | | *Stad i Ljus* (Town in Light), 1928; French translation: *Lettre recommandée*, 1927 | | *Minnas* (Remembering), 1928 | | *Kommentar till ett stjärnfall* (Commentary on a Falling Star), 1929 | | *Avsked till Hamlet* (Farewell to Hamlet), 1930 | | *Natten är här* (Night is here), 1932 | | *Bobinack*, 1932 | | *Regn i gryningen* (Rain at Dawn), 1933 | | *Romanen om Olof* (The Novel of Olof): 1. *Nu var det 1914* (The Year was 1914), 1934; 2. *Här har du ditt liv!* (Here is Your Life! ),1935; 3. *Se dig inte om!* (Don’t Look Back!), 1936; 4. *Slutspel i ungdomen* (Postlude to Youth), 1937 | | *Nattövning* (Night Manoeuvre), 1938 | | *Den trygga världen* (The Safe World), 1940 | | *Soldatens återkomst* (The Return of the Soldier), 1940 | | *Krilonromanen* (The Novel of Krilon): 1. *Grupp Krilon* (Group Krilon), 1941; 2. *Krilons resa* (Krilon’s Journey), 1942; 3. *Krilon själv* (Krilon Himself), 1943 | | *Strändernas svall* (English translation: *Return to Ithaca* ): novel, 1946; stage version, 1948 | | *Dagbok från Schweiz* (Swiss Diary), 1949 | | *Drömmar om rosor och eld* (Dreams of Roses and Fire), 1949 | | *Lägg undan solen* (Put Away the Sun), 1951 | | *Romantisk berättelse* (A Romantic Story), 1953 | | *Tidens gång* (The Course of Time), 1955 | | *Vinterresa i Norrbotten* (A Winter Journey in Norrbotten), 1955 | | *Molnen över Metapontion* (The Clouds Over Metapontion), 1957 | | *Vägar över Metaponto – en resedagbok* (Roads by Metaponto – A Travel Diary), 1959 | | *Hans Nådes tid* (English translation: *The Days of His Grace*), 1960 | | *Spår förbi Kolonos – en berättelse* (Traces Past Colonus – A Story), 1961 | | *Livsdagen lång* (Life’s Long Day), 1964 | | *Stunder, vågor – anteckningar, berättelser* (Moments, Waves – Notes, Stories), 1965 | | *Favel ensam* (Favel Alone), 1968 | | *Resa i hösten 1921* (Journey in the Autumn of 1921), 1973 | | *Några steg mot tystnaden* (Some Steps Towards Silence), 1973 |   Eyvind Johnson died in 1976.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Eyvind Johnson died on August 25, 1976.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0951 |
| Interview |  |
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| ID | 0952 |
| Biographical | Harry Martinson was born at Jämshög in 1904. He was left an orphan at an early age, and after a chequered childhood, in which the children’s homes and institutions were as numerous as the escapes, he went to sea at the age of sixteen, spending six years of his life on board various ships and as a workman in foreign countries.  It was from these travels and years of work in environments of all kinds that he later drew material and inspiration for his literary efforts – a couple of books of prose with glimpses, views and memories of the world of coal-heated ships during the 1920s.  These accounts were followed a few years later by one or two books with an autobiographical strain and fictional recollections of a boarded-out child’s existence, especially the child’s own way of perceiving and trying to understand life and the people in it.  Side by side with this psychological cognition of the childhood land of memory, there appeared some collections of poetry which were continued by degrees in a series of nature studies in prose, in which words and observation are combined in what the author has called “thinking out in the meadow”.  In a later work, the novel *Vägen till Klockrike*, the description of the human side is devoted entirely to the relationship between the settled and the itinerant man within ourselves. A world of journeying in a still wider sense emerges in *Aniara*, an epic work about an imagined space flight with a perspective in depth towards our own time. In it, jostling for room in our consciousness, are our fears and our questions as to where we are heading, together with the planet that our generation is treating as it does.  Harry Martinson died in 1978.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Harry Martinson died on February 11, 1978.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0952 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0953 |
| Biographical | I was born on May 28th 1912 in Knightsbridge, London, to Australian parents. Victor White was then forty-two, his wife, Ruth Withycombe, ten years younger. When I was six months old my parents returned to Australia and settled in Sydney, principally because my mother could not face the prospect of too many sisters-in-law on the property, in which my father had an interest, with three older brothers. Both my father’s and my mother’s families were yeoman-farmer stock from Somerset, England. My great-grandfather White had emigrated to New South Wales in 1826, as a flockmaster, and received a grant of crown land in the Upper Hunter Valley. None of my ancestors was distinguished enough to be remembered, though there is a pleasing legend that a Withycombe was fool to Edward II. My Withycombe grandfather emigated later in the nineteenth century. After his marriage with an Australian, he and my grandmother sailed for England, but returned when my mother was a year old. Grandfather Withycombe seems to have found difficulty in settling; he drifted from one property to another, finally dying near Muswellbrook on the Upper Hunter. My father and mother were second cousins, though they did not meet till shortly before their marriage. The Withycombes enjoyed less material success than the Whites, which perhaps accounted for my mother’s sense of her own superiority in White circles. Almost all the Whites remained wedded to the land, and there was something peculiar, even shocking, about any member of the family who left it. To become any kind of artist would have been unthinkable. Like everybody else I was intended for the land, though, vaguely, I knew this was not to be.  My childhood was a sickly one. It was found that I was suffering from nothing worse than asthma, but even so, nobody would insure my life. As a result of the asthma I was sent to school in the country, and only visited Sydney for brief, violently asthmatic sojourns on my way to a house we owned in the Blue Mountains. Probably induced by the asthma, I started reading and writing early on, my literary efforts from the age of about nine running chiefly to poetry and plays. When thirteen I was uprooted from Australia and put at school at Cheltenham, England, as my mother was of the opinion that what is English is best, and my father, though a chauvinistic Australian, respected most of her caprices. After seeing me ‘settled’ in my English prison, my parents and sister left for Australia. In spite of holidays when I was free to visit London theatres and explore the countryside, I spent four very miserable years as a colonial at an English school. My parents returned for the long holiday when I was sixteen, and there were travels in Europe, including Scandinavia. Norway and Sweden made a particular impression on me as I had discovered Ibsen and Strindberg in my early teens – a taste my English housemaster deplored: ‘You have a morbid kink I mean to stamp out’; and he then proceeded to stamp it deeper in.  When I was rising eighteen I persuaded my parents to let me return to Australia and at least see whether I could adapt myself to life on the land before going up to Cambridge. For two years I worked as jackeroo, first in the mountainous southern New South Wales, which became for me the bleakest place on earth, then on the property of a Withycombe uncle in the flat, blistering north, plagued alternately by drought and flood. I can remember swimming my horse through floodwaters to fetch the mail, and enjoying a dish of stewed nettles during a dearth of vegetables. The life in itself was not uncongenial, but the talk was endlessly of wool and weather. I developed the habit of writing novels behind a closed door, or at my uncle’s, on the dining table. More reprehensible still, after being a colonial at my English school, I was now a ‘Pom’ in the ears of my fellow countrymen. I hardly dared open my mouth, and welcomed the opportunity of escaping to King’s College, Cambridge. Even if a university should turn out to be another version of a school, I had decided I could lose myself afterwards as an anonymous particle of the London I already loved.  In fact I enjoyed every minute of my life at King’s, especially the discovery of French and German literature. Each vacation I visited either France or Germany to improve my languages. I wrote fitfully, bad plays, worse poetry. Then, after taking my degree, the decision had to be made: what to do? It was embarrassing to announce that I meant to stay in London and become a writer when I had next to nothing to show. To my surprise, my bewildered father, who read little beyond newspapers and stud-books, and to whom I could never say a word if we found ourselves stranded alone in a room, agreed to let me have a small allowance on which to live while trying to write.  At this period of my life I was in love with the theatre and was in and out of it three or four nights of the week. I tried unsuccessfully to get work behind the scenes. I continued writing the bad plays which fortunately nobody would produce, just as no one did me the unkindness of publishing my early novels. A few sketches and lyrics appeared in topical revues, a few poems were printed in literary magazines. Then, early in 1939, a novel I had managed to finish, called *Happy Valley*, was published in London, due to the fact that Geoffrey Grigson, the poet, then editor of the magazine *New Verse* which had accepted one of my poems, was also reader for a publishing firm. This novel, although derivative and in many ways inconsiderably, was received well enough by the critics to make me feel I had become a writer. I left for New York expecting to repeat my success, only to be turned down by almost every publisher in that city, till the Viking Press, my American publishers of a lifetime, thought of taking me on.  This exhilarating personal situation was somewhat spoilt by the outbreak of war. During the early, comparatively uneventful months I hovered between London and New York writing too hurriedly a second novel, *The Living and the Dead*. In 1940 I was commissioned as an air force intelligence officer in spite of complete ignorance of what I was supposed to do. After a few hair-raising weeks amongst the RAF greats at Fighter Command I was sent zigzagging from Greenland to the Azores in a Liverpool cargo boat with a gaggle of equally raw intelligence officers, till finally we landed on the Gold Coast, to be flown by exotic stages to Cairo, in an aeroplane out of Jules Verne.  The part I played in the war was a pretty insignificant one. My work as an operational intelligence officer was at most useful. Much of the time was spent advancing or retreating across deserts, sitting waiting in dust-ridden tents, or again in that other desert, a headquarters. At least I saw something of almost every country in the Middle East. Occasionally, during those years bombs or gunfire created what should have been a reality, but which in fact made reality seem more remote. I was unable to write, and this finally became the explanation of my state of mind: my flawed self has only ever felt intensely alive in the fictions I create.  Perhaps the most important moments of my war were when, in the western desert of Egypt, I conceived the idea of one day writing a novel about a megalomaniac German, probably an explorer in nineteenth century Australia, and when I met my Greek friend, Manoly Lascaris, who has remained the mainstay of my life and work.  After demobilisation we decided to come to Australia where we bought a farm at Castle Hill outside Sydney. During the war I had thought with longing of the Australian landscape. This, and the graveyard of postwar London, and the ignoble desire to fill my belly, drove me to burn my European bridges. In the meantime, in London, in Alexandria on the way out, and on the decks of liners, I was writing *The Aunt’s Story*. It was exhilarating to be free to express myself again, but nobody engaged in sorting themselves out of the rubble left by a world war could take much interest in novels. Australians, who were less involved, were also less concerned. Most of them found the book unreadable, just as our speech was unintelligible during those first years at Castle Hill. I had never felt such a foreigner. The failure of *The Aunt’s Story* and the need to learn a language afresh made me wonder whether I should ever write another word. Our efforts at farming – growing fruit, vegetables, flowers, breeding dogs and goats, were amateurish, but consuming. The hollow in which we lived, or perhaps the pollen from the paspalum which was always threatening to engulf us, or the suspicion that my life had taken a wrong turning, encouraged the worst attacks of asthma I had so far experienced. In the eighteen years we spent at Castle Hill, enslaved more than anything by the trees we had planted, I was in and out of hospitals. Then about 1951 I began writing again, painfully, a novel I called in the beginning *A Life Sentence on Earth*, but which developed into *The Tree of Man*. Well received in England and the United States, it was greeted with cries of scorn and incredulity in Australia that somebody, at best, a dubious Australian, should flout the naturalistic tradition, or worse, that a member of the grazier class should aspire to a calling which was the prerogative of schoolteachers! *Voss*, which followed, fared no better: it was ‘mystical, ambiguous, obscure’; a newspaper printed its review under the headline ‘Australia’s most Unreadable Novelist’. *In Riders in the Chariot* it was the scene in which Himmelfarb, the Jewish refugee, is subjected to a mock crucifixion by drunken workmates which outraged the blokes and the bluestockings alike. Naturally, ‘it couldn’t happen here’- except that it does, in all quarters, in many infinitely humiliating ways, as I, a foreigner in my own country, learned from personal experience.  A number of Australians, however, discovered they were able to read a reprint of *The Aunt’s Story*, a book which had baffled them when first published after the war, and by the time *The Solid Mandala* appeared, it was realised I might be something they had to put up with.  In 1964, submerged by the suburbs reaching farther into the country, we left Castle Hill, and moved into the centre of the city. Looking back, I must also have had an unconscious desire to bring my life full circle by returning to the scenes of my childhood, as well as the conscious wish to extend my range by writing about more sophisticated Australians, as I have done in *The Vivisector* and *The Eye of the Storm*. On the edge of Centennial Park, an idyllic landscape surrounded by a metropolis, I have had the best of both worlds. I have tried to celebrate the park, which means so much to so many of us, in *The Eye of the Storm* and in some of the shorter novels of *The Cockatoos*. Here I hope to continue living, and while I still have the strength, to people the Australian emptiness in the only way I am able.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.   |  | | --- | | A Selected Bibliography | | Poetry | | *Thirteen Poems* (ca. 1930 – under the pseudonym Patrick Victor Martindale) | | *The Ploughman and Other Poems* (1935) | |  | | Novels | | *Happy Valley*, 1939 | | *The Living and the Dead*, 1941 | | *The Aunt’s Story*, 1948 | | *The Tree of Man*, 1955 | | *Voss*, 1957 | | *Riders in the Chariot*, 1961 | | *The Solid Mandala*, 1966 | | *The Vivisector*, 1970 | | *The Eye of the Storm*, 1973 | | *A Fringe of Leaves*, 1976 | | *The Twyborn Affair*, 1980 | | *Memoirs of Many in One* (1986) | |  | | Short Stories | | *The Burnt Ones*, 1964 | | *The Cockatoos*, 1974 | | *Three Uneasy Pieces*, 1988 | |  | | Plays | | *Return to Abyssinia (1947)* | | *Four Plays*, 1965 | | *Big Toys*, 1978 | | *Signal Driver*, 1983 | |  | | Nonfiction | | *Flaws in the Glass: A Self-Portrait*, 1981 | | *Patrick White Speaks* (1990) | | *Letters* (ed. David Marr, 1994) | |  | | Secondary Literature – A Selected Bibliography | | Colmer, John. *Patrick White*. London: Methuen, 1984. | | Colmer, John. *Patrick White’s Riders in the Chariot*. Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1978. | | During, Simon. *Patrick White*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996. | | Hansson, Karin. *The Warped Universe: A Study of Imagery and Structure in Seven Novels by Patrick White*. Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1984. | | Kiernan, Brian. *Patrick White*. London: Macmillan 1980. | | Marr, David. *Patrick White: A Life*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1991. | | Morley, Patricia A. *The Mystery of Unity: Theme and technique in the novels of Patrick White*. Montreal and London: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1972. | | Patrick White: *A Tribute*. Ed. Clayton Joyce. North Ryde: Angus and Robertson, 1991. | | Tacey, David J. *Patrick White: Fiction and the Unconscious*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988. |   *Patrick White died on September 30, 1990*. |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0953 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0954 |
| Biographical | I was born December 21, 1917 in Cologne, on the Rhine, the son of the sculptor and cabinet-maker, Viktor Böll, and his wife, Maria, née Hermanns. Between 1924 and 1928 I attended elementary school in Köln Raderthal, and from 1928 to 1937, the state-run Kaiser-Wilhelm classical secondary school in Cologne. In spring 1937 I began as an apprentice bookseller (publishers, retail trade, antiquarian) for the Matth. Lempertz company in Bonn. I left this apprenticeship in spring 1938, started my first attempts to write, gave private lessons, read a great deal. During autumn 1938 I was conscripted into the national labour service, and released in spring 1939 after completing a six-month term of compulsory service. Because the completion of labour service was a precondition for permission to study at the university, I was able to begin my studies of Germanistics and Classical Philology during the summer term of 1939. Late in the summer of 1939 I was conscripted into the German Army shortly before the outbreak of the war. I took part in the Second World War; in autumn 1940, briefly in France, from 1941 to 1942 (after a severe case of typhus), in the replacement units in Germany, from early 1942 until summer 1943, along the English Channel coast in France, between summer 1943 and autumn 1944, in the Soviet Union, Romania and Hungary, from spring 1945 on, for a few weeks in western Germany, where I was taken prisoner by the Americans, and interned until October 1945 in a camp in France, and then for a few weeks in October/November 1945, in an English camp in Belgium.  As early as December 1945, I accompanied my wife and a few relatives in their return from evacuation in the countryside to Cologne, where over the years we settled down in a destroyed house. I started to write again, while simultaneously working on repairing the destroyed house, I started my studies again – merely formally, because proof of occupation was necessary to obtain a food rationing card. From 1946 to 1949 I published short stories, and in 1949 my first book, a novella, called *Der Zug war pünktlich*, was published. After a first invitation to a meeting of the “Gruppe 47” in 1951, I met many German postwar writers with whom I afterwards became friends. I owe particular thanks, and hereby give them, to Hans Werner Richter, Alfred Andersch and many others that I cannot name in detail. Even if there occurred brief or permanent controversies during, or after, these meetings, the Gruppe 47 liberated many German authoresses and authors out of their isolation in a destroyed and fragmented postwar Germany. In 1942 I married Annemarie Cech, who has been irreplaceable, not only as my wife and companion, and not only as fellow experiencer and fellow sufferer in the fascist drama during the Nazi reign in Germany, but also for her critical awareness for language.  Our first child, Christoph, died in October 1945. Our sons Raimund, René and Vincent were born in 1947, 1948 and 1950 in the rubble of Cologne and grew up there.  Between 1950 and 1951 I worked as a temporary employee in the Cologne Bureau of Statistics. From summer 1951 on I have lived as a freelance writer with a fixed postal address in Cologne, but with a continually shifting place of work.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Heinrich Böll died on July 16, 1985.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0954 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0955 |
| Biographical | Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), whose real name is Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto, was born on 12 July, 1904, in the town of Parral in Chile. His father was a railway employee and his mother, who died shortly after his birth, a teacher. Some years later his father, who had then moved to the town of Temuco, remarried doña Trinidad Candia Malverde. The poet spent his childhood and youth in Temuco, where he also got to know [Gabriela Mistral](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1945/index.html), head of the girls’ secondary school, who took a liking to him. At the early age of thirteen he began to contribute some articles to the daily “La Mañana”, among them, *Entusiasmo y Perseverancia* – his first publication – and his first poem. In 1920, he became a contributor to the literary journal “Selva Austral” under the pen name of Pablo Neruda, which he adopted in memory of the Czechoslovak poet Jan Neruda (1834-1891). Some of the poems Neruda wrote at that time are to be found in his first published book: *Crepusculario* (1923). The following year saw the publication of *Veinte poemas de amor y una cancion desesperada*, one of his best-known and most translated works. Alongside his literary activities, Neruda studied French and pedagogy at the University of Chile in Santiago.  Between 1927 and 1935, the government put him in charge of a number of honorary consulships, which took him to Burma, Ceylon, Java, Singapore, Buenos Aires, Barcelona, and Madrid. His poetic production during that difficult period included, among other works, the collection of esoteric surrealistic poems, *Residencia en la tierra* (1933), which marked his literary breakthrough.  The Spanish Civil War and the murder of García Lorca, whom Neruda knew, affected him strongly and made him join the Republican movement, first in Spain, and later in France, where he started working on his collection of poems *España en el Corazón* (1937). The same year he returned to his native country, to which he had been recalled, and his poetry during the following period was characterised by an orientation towards political and social matters. *España en el Corazón* had a great impact by virtue of its being printed in the middle of the front during the civil war.  In 1939, Neruda was appointed consul for the Spanish emigration, residing in Paris, and, shortly afterwards, Consul General in Mexico, where he rewrote his *Canto General de Chile*, transforming it into an epic poem about the whole South American continent, its nature, its people and its historical destiny. This work, entitled *Canto General*, was published in Mexico 1950, and also underground in Chile. It consists of approximately 250 poems brought together into fifteen literary cycles and constitutes the central part of Neruda’s production. Shortly after its publication, *Canto General* was translated into some ten languages. Nearly all these poems were created in a difficult situation, when Neruda was living abroad.  In 1943, Neruda returned to Chile, and in 1945 he was elected senator of the Republic, also joining the Communist Party of Chile. Due to his protests against President González Videla’s repressive policy against striking miners in 1947, he had to live underground in his own country for two years until he managed to leave in 1949. After living in different European countries he returned home in 1952. A great deal of what he published during that period bears the stamp of his political activities; one example is *Las Uvas y el Viento* (1954), which can be regarded as the diary of Neruda’s exile. In *Odas elementales* (1954- 1959) his message is expanded into a more extensive description of the world, where the objects of the hymns – things, events and relations – are duly presented in alphabetic form.  Neruda’s production is exceptionally extensive. For example, his *Obras Completas*, constantly republished, comprised 459 pages in 1951; in 1962 the number of pages was 1,925, and in 1968 it amounted to 3,237, in two volumes. Among his works of the last few years can be mentioned *Cien sonetos de amor* (1959), which includes poems dedicated to his wife Matilde Urrutia, *Memorial de Isla Negra*, a poetic work of an autobiographic character in five volumes, published on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, *Arte de pajáros* (1966), *La Barcarola* (1967), the play *Fulgor y muerte de Joaquín Murieta* (1967), *Las manos del día* (1968), *Fin del mundo* (1969), *Las piedras del cielo* (1970), and *La espada encendida*.   |  | | --- | | Further works | | *Geografía infructuosa/Barren Geography* (poetry), 1972 | | *El mar y las campanas/The Sea and the Bells*, tr. (poetry), 1973 | | *Incitación al nixonicidio y alabanza de la revolución chilena/A Call for the Destruction of Nixon and Praise for the Chilean Revolution*, tr. (poetry), 1974 | | *El corazón amarillo/The Yellow Heart* (poetry), 1974 | | *Defectos escogidos/Selected Waste Paper* (poetry), 1974 | | *Elegía/Elegy* (poetry), 1974 | | *Confieso que he vivido. Memorias/Memoirs*, tr. (prose), 1974 | | *Para nacer he nacido/Passions and Impressions*, tr. (prose), 1978 |   From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Pablo Neruda died on September 23, 1973.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0955 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0956 |
| Biographical | I was born at Kislovodsk on 11th December, 1918. My father had studied philological subjects at Moscow University, but did not complete his studies, as he enlisted as a volunteer when war broke out in 1914. He became an artillery officer on the German front, fought throughout the war and died in the summer of 1918, six months before I was born. I was brought up by my mother, who worked as a shorthand-typist, in the town of Rostov on the Don, where I spent the whole of my childhood and youth, leaving the grammar school there in 1936. Even as a child, without any prompting from others, I wanted to be a writer and, indeed, I turned out a good deal of the usual juvenilia. In the 1930s, I tried to get my writings published but I could not find anyone willing to accept my manuscripts. I wanted to acquire a literary education, but in Rostov such an education that would suit my wishes was not to be obtained. To move to Moscow was not possible, partly because my mother was alone and in poor health, and partly because of our modest circumstances. I therefore began to study at the Department of Mathematics at Rostov University, where it proved that I had considerable aptitude for mathematics. But although I found it easy to learn this subject, I did not feel that I wished to devote my whole life to it. Nevertheless, it was to play a beneficial role in my destiny later on, and on at least two occasions, it rescued me from death. For I would probably not have survived the eight years in camps if I had not, as a mathematician, been transferred to a so-called *sharashia*, where I spent four years; and later, during my exile, I was allowed to teach mathematics and physics, which helped to ease my existence and made it possible for me to write. If I had had a literary education it is quite likely that I should not have survived these ordeals but would instead have been subjected to even greater pressures. Later on, it is true, I began to get some literary education as well; this was from 1939 to 1941, during which time, along with university studies in physics and mathematics, I also studied by correspondence at the Institute of History, Philosophy and Literature in Moscow.  In 1941, a few days before the outbreak of the war, I graduated from the Department of Physics and Mathematics at Rostov University. At the beginning of the war, owing to weak health, I was detailed to serve as a driver of horsedrawn vehicles during the winter of 1941-1942. Later, because of my mathematical knowledge, I was transferred to an artillery school, from which, after a crash course, I passed out in November 1942. Immediately after this I was put in command of an artillery-position-finding company, and in this capacity, served, without a break, right in the front line until I was arrested in February 1945. This happened in East Prussia, a region which is linked with my destiny in a remarkable way. As early as 1937, as a first-year student, I chose to write a descriptive essay on “The Samsonov Disaster” of 1914 in East Prussia and studied material on this; and in 1945 I myself went to this area (at the time of writing, autumn 1970, the book *August 1914* has just been completed).  I was arrested on the grounds of what the censorship had found during the years 1944-45 in my correspondence with a school friend, mainly because of certain disrespectful remarks about Stalin, although we referred to him in disguised terms. As a further basis for the “charge”, there were used the drafts of stories and reflections which had been found in my map case. These, however, were not sufficient for a “prosecution”, and in July 1945 I was “sentenced” in my absence, in accordance with a procedure then frequently applied, after a resolution by the OSO (the Special Committee of the NKVD), to eight years in a detention camp (at that time this was considered a mild sentence).  I served the first part of my sentence in several correctional work camps of mixed types (this kind of camp is described in the play, *The Tenderfoot and the Tramp*). In 1946, as a mathematician, I was transferred to the group of scientific research institutes of the MVD-MOB (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of State Security). I spent the middle period of my sentence in such “SPECIAL PRISONS” (*The First Circle*). In 1950 I was sent to the newly established “Special Camps” which were intended only for political prisoners. In such a camp in the town of Ekibastuz in Kazakhstan (*One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*), I worked as a miner, a bricklayer, and a foundryman. There I contracted a tumour which was operated on, but the condition was not cured (its character was not established until later on).  One month after I had served the full term of my eight-year sentence, there came, without any new judgement and even without a “resolution from the OSO”, an administrative decision to the effect that I was not to be released but EXILED FOR LIFE to Kok-Terek (southern Kazakhstan). This measure was not directed specially against me, but was a very usual procedure at that time. I served this exile from March 1953 (on March 5th, when Stalin’s death was made public, I was allowed for the first time to go out without an escort) until June 1956. Here my cancer had developed rapidly, and at the end of 1953, I was very near death. I was unable to eat, I could not sleep and was severely affected by the poisons from the tumour. However, I was able to go to a cancer clinic at Tashkent, where, during 1954, I was cured (*The Cancer Ward, Right Hand*). During all the years of exile, I taught mathematics and physics in a primary school and during my hard and lonely existence I wrote prose in secret (in the camp I could only write down poetry from memory). I managed, however, to keep what I had written, and to take it with me to the European part of the country, where, in the same way, I continued, as far as the outer world was concerned, to occupy myself with teaching and, in secret, to devote myself to writing, at first in the Vladimir district (*Matryona’s Farm*) and afterwards in Ryazan.  During all the years until 1961, not only was I convinced that I should never see a single line of mine in print in my lifetime, but, also, I scarcely dared allow any of my close acquaintances to read anything I had written because I feared that this would become known. Finally, at the age of 42, this secret authorship began to wear me down. The most difficult thing of all to bear was that I could not get my works judged by people with literary training. In 1961, after the 22nd Congress of the U.S.S.R. Communist Party and Tvardovsky’s speech at this, I decided to emerge and to offer *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.  Such an emergence seemed, then, to me, and not without reason, to be very risky because it might lead to the loss of my manuscripts, and to my own destruction. But, on that occasion, things turned out successfully, and after protracted efforts, A.T. Tvardovsky was able to print my novel one year later. The printing of my work was, however, stopped almost immediately and the authorities stopped both my plays and (in 1964) the novel, *The First Circle*, which, in 1965, was seized together with my papers from the past years. During these months it seemed to me that I had committed an unpardonable mistake by revealing my work prematurely and that because of this I should not be able to carry it to a conclusion.  It is almost always impossible to evaluate at the time events which you have already experienced, and to understand their meaning with the guidance of their effects. All the more unpredictable and surprising to us will be the course of future events.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Alexandr Solzhenitsyn died on 3 August, 2008.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0956 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0957 |
| Biographical | 1906 – Born in Dublin of Irish parents  1927 – B.A. Trinity College, Dublin  1928-29 – English reader at École Normale Supérieure, Paris  1930 – French reader at Trinity College, Dublin  1938 – Moved to France  1945 – Began writing in French  1989 – Died in Paris |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0957 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0958 |
| Biographical | Yasunari Kawabata, son of a highly-cultivated physician, was born in 1899 in Osaka. After the early death of his parents he was raised in the country by his maternal grandfather and attended the Japanese public school. From 1920 to 1924, Kawabata studied at the Tokyo Imperial University, where he received his degree. He was one of the founders of the publication *Bungei Jidai*, the medium of a new movement in modern Japanese literature. Kawabata made his debut as a writer with the short story, *Izu dancer*, published in 1927. After several distinguished works, the novel *Snow Country* in 1937 secured Kawabata’s position as one of the leading authors in Japan. In 1949, the publication of the serials *Thousand Cranes* and *The Sound of the Mountain* was commenced. He became a member of the Art Academy of Japan in 1953 and four years later he was appointed chairman of the P.E.N. Club of Japan. At several international congresses Kawabata was the Japanese delegate for this club. *The Lake* (1955), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1960) and *The Old Capital* (1962) belong to his later works, and of these novels, *The Old Capital* is the one that made the deepest impression in the author’s native country and abroad. In 1959, Kawabata received the Goethe-medal in Frankfurt.  Yasunari Kawabata died in 1972 (suicide).  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1968-1980*, Editor-in-Charge Tore Frängsmyr, Editor Sture Allén, World Scientific Publishing Co., Singapore, 1993  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Yasunari Kawabata died on April 16, 1972.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0958 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0959 |
| Biographical | M iguel Angel Asturias (1899-1974) was born in Guatemala and spent his childhood and adolescence in his native country. He studied for his baccalaureate at the state high school and later took a law degree at the University of San Carlos. His thesis on “The Social Problem of the Indian” was published in 1923.  After he finished his law studies, he founded with fellow students the Popular University of Guatemala, whose aim was to offer courses to those who could not afford to attend the national university. In 1923 he left for Europe, intending to study political economy in England. He spent a few months in London and then went to Paris, where he was to stay for ten years. At the Sorbonne he attended the lectures on the religions of the Mayas by Professor Georges Raynaud, whose disciple he became. Also, as correspondent for several important Latin American newspapers, he travelled in all the Western European countries, in the Middle East, in Greece, and in Egypt.  In 1928 Asturias returned for a short time to Guatemala, where he lectured at the Popular University. These lecture were collected in a volume entitled *La arquitectura de la vida nueva* (Architecture of the New Life), 1928. He then went back to Paris, where he finished his *Leyendas de Guatemala* (Legends of Guatemala), 1930. Published in Madrid, the book was translated into French by Francis de Miomandre, who sent his translation to Paul Valéry. The French poet was greatly impressed, and his letter to Miomandre was used as the preface to the 1931 edition published in the *Cahiers du Sud* series. The same year, *Leyendas de Guatemala* received the Silla Monsegur Prize, a reward for the best Spanish-American book published in France.  During his stay in Paris from 1923 to 1933, Asturias wrote his novel *El Señor Presidente* (The President), which slashed at the social evil and malignant corruption to which an insensitive dictator dooms his people. Because of its political implications Asturias was unable to bring the book with him when, in 1933, he returned to Guatemala, which at the time was ruled by the dictator Jorge Ubico. The original version was to remain unpublished for thirteen years. The fall of Ubico’s regime in 1944 brought to the presidency Professor Juan José Arévalo, who immediately appointed Asturias cultural attaché to the Guatemalan Embassy in Mexico, where the first edition of *El Señor Presidente* appeared in 1946.  In late 1947, Asturias went to Argentina as cultural attaché to the Guatemalan Embassy and, two years later, obtained a ministerial post. While in Buenos Aires, he published *Sien de alondra* (Temple of the Lark), 1949, an anthology of his poems written between 1918 and 1948. In 1948 he returned to Guatemala for a few months, during which time he wrote his novel *Viento fuerte* (Strong Wind), 1950, an indictment of the effect of North American imperialism on the economic realities of his country. That same year, the second edition of *El Señor Presidente* was published in Buenos Aires.  When the government of President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman fell in 1954, Asturias went into exile in Argentina, his wife’s native country, where he remained until 1962. A year later, the Argentine publisher Losada brought out his novel *Mulata de tal* (Mulata). This story, a surrealistic blend of Indian legends, tells of a peasant whose greed and lust consign him to a dark belief in material power from which, Asturias warns us, there is only one hope for salvation: universal love.  In 1966 Asturias was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize. In the same year, he was appointed the Guatemalan ambassador to France by President Julio Mendez Montenegro.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Miguel Asturias died on June 9, 1974.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0959 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0960 |
| Biographical | Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888-1970) was born in Buczacz, Eastern Galicia. Raised in a mixed cultural atmosphere, in which Yiddish was the language of the home, and Hebrew the language of the Bible and the Talmud which he studied formally until the age of nine, Agnon also acquired a knowledge of German literature from his mother, and of the teachings of Maimonides and of the Hassidim from his father. In 1907 he left home and made his way to Palestine, where, except for an extended stay in Germany from 1913 to 1924, he has remained to this day.  At an early age, Agnon began writing the stories which form a chronicle of the decline of Jewry in Galicia. Included among these is his first major publication, *Hakhnasat Kalah* (The Bridal Canopy), 1922, which re-creates the golden age of Hassidism, and his apocalyptic novel, *Oreach Nata Lalun* (A Guest for the Night), 1939, which vividly depicts the ruin of Galicia after the First World War. Nearly all of his other writings are set in his adopted Palestine and deal with the replacement of the early Jewish settlement of that country by the more organized Zionist movement after the Second World War. The early pioneer immigrants are portrayed in his epic *Temol Shilshom* (Only Yesterday), 1945, considered his greatest work, and also in the nightmarish stories of *Sefer Hamaasim* (The Book of Deeds), 1932.  While these and other works such as *Pat Shlema* (A Whole Loaf), 1933, and *Shevuat Emunim* (Two Tales), 1943, are enough to assure his stature as the greatest living Hebrew writer, Agnon has also occupied himself with commentaries on the Jewish High Festival, *Yamin Noraim* (Days of Awe), 1938, on the giving of the Torah, *Atem Reitem* (Ye Have Seen), 1959, and on the gathering of Hassidic lore, *Sifreihem Shel Tzadikim* (Books of the Tzadikim), 1960-1961.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Shmuel Yosef Agnon died on February 17, 1970.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0960 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0961 |
| Biographical | Leonie Nelly Sachs, born in Berlin on December 10, 1891. As refugee, arrived in Sweden with my mother on May 16, 1940. Since then living in Stockholm and active as writer and translator.  Biographical Note Nelly Sachs (1891-1970), daughter of a wealthy manufacturer, grew up in a fashionable area of Berlin. She studied music and dancing and at an early age began writing poetry. After her escape to Sweden in 1940, Miss Sachs took up the study of Swedish and devoted much of her time to the translation of such Swedish poets as Gunnar Ekelöf, Johannes Edfelt, and Karl Vennberg.  Nelly Sachs’s career as a poet of note started only after her emigration, when she was nearly fifty years old. Her first volume of poetry, *In den Wohnungen des Todes* (In the Houses of Death), 1947, creates a cosmic frame for the suffering of her time, particularly that of the Jews. Although her poems are written in a keenly modern style, with an abundance of lucid metaphors, they also intone the prophetic language of the Old Testament. The collections *Sternverdunkelung* (Eclipse of Stars), 1949, *Und niemand weiss weiter* (And No One Knows Where to Go), 1957, and *Flucht und Verwandlung* (Flight and Metamorphosis), 1959, repeat, develop, and reinforce the cycle of suffering, persecution, exile, and death which characterizes the life of the Jewish people, and becomes transformed, in Nelly Sachs’s powerful metaphorical language, into the terms of man’s bitter, but not hopeless, destiny. Of her poetic dramas, the miracle play *Eli* (1950), broadcast in West Germany as a radio play, has been widely acclaimed. Nelly Sachs has received awards in Sweden and Germany, among them the Prize of the Swedish Poets Association (1958) and the “Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels” (1965). In 1961 her collected poems were published under the title of *Fahrt ins Staublose* (Journey to the Beyond); her verse dramas in *Zeichen im Sand* (Signs in the Sand). *O the Chimneys*, English translations of some of her poetry and of her play *Eli*, appeared in 1967.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Nelly Sachs died on May 12, 1970.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0961 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0962 |
| Biographical | Mikhail Aleksandrovich Sholokhov (1905-1984) was born in the land of the Cossacks, now known as the Kamenskaya region of the R.S.F.S.R. He attended several high schools until 1918. During the civil war he fought on the side of the revolutionaries, and in 1922 he moved to Moscow to become a journalist. There he published a number of short stories in newspapers. He made his literary debut in 1926 with a volume of stories, *Donskie rasskazy* (Tales from the Don), 1926, about the Cossacks of his native region, to which he had returned two years earlier.  In the same year, 1926, Sholokhov began writing *Tikhi Don* (And Quiet Flows the Don), 1928-1940, which matured slowly and took him fourteen years to complete. Reminiscent of Tolstoy in its vividly realistic scenes, its stark character descriptions and, above all, its vast panorama of the revolutionary period, Sholokhov’s epic became the most read work of Soviet fiction. Deeply interested in human destinies which are played against the background of the transformations and troubles in Russia, he unites in his work the artistic heritage of Tolstoy and Gogol with a new vision introduced into Russian literature by Maxim Gorky.  His other major work in the Don cycle, *Podnyataya tselina* (Virgin Soil Upturned), 1932 and 1959, deals in part with the collectivization of the Don area. There are a number of works such as the short story *Sudba cheloveka* (The Fate of a Man), 1957 – made into a popular Russian film – which treat the power and the resilience of human love under adversity. His collected works, *Sobranie sochineny*, were published in eight volumes between 1956 and 1960. In 1932 Sholokhov joined the Communist Party and, on several occasions, has been a delegate to the Supreme Soviets. In 1939 he became a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and later vice president of the Association of Soviet Writers.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Mikhail Sholokov died on February 21, 1984.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0962 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0963 |
| Biographical | Jean-Paul Sartre, (1905-1980) born in Paris in 1905, studied at the École Normale Supérieure from 1924 to 1929 and became Professor of Philosophy at Le Havre in 1931. With the help of a stipend from the Institut Français he studied in Berlin (1932) the philosophies of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. After further teaching at Le Havre, and then in Laon, he taught at the Lycée Pasteur in Paris from 1937 to 1939. Since the end of the Second World War, Sartre has been living as an independent writer.  Sartre is one of those writers for whom a determined philosophical position is the centre of their artistic being. Although drawn from many sources, for example, Husserl’s idea of a free, fully intentional consciousness and Heidegger’s existentialism, the existentialism Sartre formulated and popularized is profoundly original. Its popularity and that of its author reached a climax in the forties, and Sartre’s theoretical writings as well as his novels and plays constitute one of the main inspirational sources of modern literature. In his philosophical view atheism is taken for granted; the “loss of God” is not mourned. Man is condemned to freedom, a freedom from all authority, which he may seek to evade, distort, and deny but which he will have to face if he is to become a moral being. The meaning of man’s life is not established before his existence. Once the terrible freedom is acknowledged, man has to make this meaning himself, has to commit himself to a role in this world, has to commit his freedom. And this attempt to make oneself is futile without the “solidarity” of others.  The conclusions a writer must draw from this position were set forth in “Qu’est-ce que la littérature?” (What Is Literature?), 1948: literature is no longer an activity for itself, nor primarily descriptive of characters and situations, but is concerned with human freedom and its (and the author’s) commitment. Literature is committed; artistic creation is a moral activity.  While the publication of his early, largely psychological studies, *L’Imagination* (1936), *Esquisse d’une théorie des émotions* (Outline of a Theory of the Emotions), 1939, and *L’Imaginaire: psychologie phénoménologique de l’imagination* (The Psychology of Imagination), 1940, remained relatively unnoticed, Sartre’s first novel, *La Nausée* (Nausea), 1938, and the collection of stories *Le Mur* (The Wall and other Stories), 1938, brought him immediate recognition and success. They dramatically express Sartre’s early existentialist themes of alienation and commitment, and of salvation through art.  His central philosophical work, *L’Etre et le néant* (Being and Nothingness), 1943, is a massive structuralization of his concept of being, from which much of modern existentialism derives. The existentialist humanism which Sartre propagates in his popular essay *L’Existentialisme est un humanisme* (Existentialism is a Humanism), 1946, can be glimpsed in the series of novels, *Les Chemins de la Liberté* (The Roads to Freedom), 1945-49.  Sartre is perhaps best known as a playwright. In *Les Mouches* (The Flies), 1943, the young killer’s committed freedom is pitted against the powerless Jupiter, while in *Huis Clos* (No Exit), 1947, hell emerges as the togetherness of people.  Sartre has engaged extensively in literary critisicm and has written studies on Baudelaire (1947) and Jean Genet (1952). A biography of his childhood, *Les Mots* (The Words), appeared in 1964.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Jean-Paul Sartre died on April 15, 1980.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0963 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0964 |
| Biographical | Giorgos Seferis was born in Smyrna, Asia Minor, in 1900. He attended school in Smyrna and finished his studies at the Gymnasium in Athens. When his family moved to Paris in 1918, Seferis studied law at the University of Paris and became interested in literature. He returned to Athens in 1925 and was admitted to the Royal Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the following year. This was the beginning of a long and successful diplomatic career, during which he held posts in England (1931-1934) and Albania (1936-1938 ). During the Second World War, Seferis accompanied the Free Greek Government in exile to Crete, Egypt, South Africa, and Italy, and returned to liberated Athens in 1944. He continued to serve in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and held diplomatic posts in Ankara (1948-1950) and London (1951-1953). He was appointed minister to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq (1953-1956), and was Royal Greek Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1957 to 1961, the last post before his retirement in Athens. Seferis received many honours and prizes, among them honorary doctoral degrees from the universities of Cambridge (1960), Oxford (1964), Salonika (1964), and Princeton (1965).  His wide travels provide the backdrop and colour for much of Seferis’s writing, which is filled with the themes of alienation, wandering, and death. Seferis’s early poetry consists of *Strophe* (Turning Point), 1931, a group of rhymed Lyrics strongly influenced by the Symbolists, and *E Sterna* (The Cistern), 1932, conveying an image of man’s most deeply felt being which lies hidden from, and ignored by, the everyday world. His mature poetry, in which one senses an awareness of the presence of the past and particularly of Greece’s great past as related to her present, begins with *Mythistorema* (Mythistorema), 1935, a series of twenty-four short poems which translate the Odyssean myths into modern idiom. In *Tetradio Gymnasmaton* (Book of Exercises), 1940, *Emerologio Katastromatos* (Logbook I), 1940, *Emerologio Katastromatos B* (Logbook II), 1944, *Kihle* (Thrush), 1947, and *Emerologio Katastromatos C* (Logbook III), 1955, Seferis is preoccupied with the themes he developed in *Mythistorema*, using Homer’s Odyssey as his symbolic source; however, in “The King of Asine” (in Logbook I), considered by many critics his finest poem, the source is a single reference in the *Iliad* to this all-but-forgotten king. The recent book of poetry, *Tria Krypha Poiemata* (Three Secret Poems), 1966, consists of twenty-eight short lyric pieces verging on the surrealistic.  In addition to poetry, Seferis has published a book of essays, *Dokimes* (Essays), 1962, translations of works by [T.S. Eliot](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1948/index.html), and a collection of translations from American, English, and French poets entitled *Antigrafes* (Copies), 1965. Seferis’s collected poems (1924-1955) have appeared both in a Greek edition (Athens, 1965) and in an American one with translations *en face* (Princeton, 1967).  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Giorgos Seferis died on September 20, 1971.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0964 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0965 |
| Biographical | John Steinbeck (1902-1968), born in Salinas, California, came from a family of moderate means. He worked his way through college at Stanford University but never graduated. In 1925 he went to New York, where he tried for a few years to establish himself as a free-lance writer, but he failed and returned to California. After publishing some novels and short stories, Steinbeck first became widely known with *Tortilla Flat* (1935), a series of humorous stories about Monterey *paisanos.*  Steinbeck’s novels can all be classified as social novels dealing with the economic problems of rural labour, but there is also a streak of worship of the soil in his books, which does not always agree with his matter-of-fact sociological approach. After the rough and earthy humour of *Tortilla Flat,* he moved on to more serious fiction, often aggressive in its social criticism, to *In Dubious Battle* (1936), which deals with the strikes of the migratory fruit pickers on California plantations. This was followed by *Of Mice and Men* (1937), the story of the imbecile giant Lennie, and a series of admirable short stories collected in the volume *The Long Valley* (1938). In 1939 he published what is considered his best work, *The Grapes of Wrath,* the story of Oklahoma tenant farmers who, unable to earn a living from the land, moved to California where they became migratory workers.  Among his later works should be mentioned *East of Eden* (1952), *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961), and *Travels with Charley* (1962), a travelogue in which Steinbeck wrote about his impressions during a three-month tour in a truck that led him through forty American states. He died in New York City in 1968.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *John Steinbeck died on December 20, 1968.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0965 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0966 |
| Biographical | Ivo Andrić was born in the village of Dolac, near Travnik, in 1892. After spending his youth in his native Bosnia, which was at the time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he studied philosophy at the Universities of Zagreb, Vienna, and Cracow. His studies were interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War, at the beginning of which he was jailed for his anti-Austrian activities. After receiving a doctorate in letters from the University of Graz in 1923, he entered the Yugoslav diplomatic service. The last diplomatic post he held was that of Yugoslav minister in Berlin. When Germany invaded Yugoslavia in 1941, Andrić returned to Belgrade and lived there in seclusion throughout the Second World War. He has continued to reside in the Yugoslav capital.  Andrić started his literary career as a poet. In 1914 he was one of the contributors to *Hrvatska mlada lirika* (Young Croatian Lyrics). At the end of the war he published two books of lyrical prose – one of them entitled *Nemiri* (Anxieties), 1919 – which, written in the form of a diary, reflect Andrić’s experiences of the war and his imprisonment. There followed a long period in which Andrić concentrated on the writing of short stories. His first novella, *Put Alije Djerzeleza* (The Trip of Alija Djerzelez), published in 1920, early manifests a dominant trait of his creative process. Andrić takes his material from the life of Bosnia, but through this local material he presents universal human problems. In the period between the two world wars Andrić published three books of short stories under the same title, *Pripovetke* (Stories), 1924, 1931, 1936.  During the Second World War, in the leisure imposed on him by the circumstances, Andrić wrote his three large works, all of which were published in 1945: *Na Drini cuprija* (The Bridge on the Drina), *Travnicka hronika* (Bosnian Story), and *Gospodjica* (The Woman from Sarajevo).  The first two of these works – both of them chronicles rather than novels in the strict sense – deal, like most of Andrić’s work, with Bosnia and her history. The author describes the life of this region in which East and West have for centuries clashed with their interests and influences, a region whose population is composed of different nationalities and religions. Andrić is at his best when he limits himself to his native Bosnia and her people.  In *Gospodjica* and *Nove pripovetke* (New Stories), 1948, Andrić presented present-day people and problems. He dealt with the psychology of the wealthy, with the war and postwar periods, and with the formation of a new society. But in Prokleta avilija (Devil’s Yard), 1954, Andrić returned to his favorite milieu and described the experiences of a Bosnian Franciscan, Fra Peter, who is put in an Istanbul jail, being wrongly accused of plotting against Ottoman rule. In 1960 Andrić published another collection of stories, *Lica* (Faces). He has also written several essays, prominent among which is *Zapisi o Goji,* (Notes on Goya), 1961.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Ivo Andrić died on 13 March 1975.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0966 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0967 |
| Biographical | Saint-John Perse, born in 1887, pseudonym for Alexis Saint-Léger Léger, came from an old Bourguignon family which settled in the French Antilles in the seventeenth century and returned to France at the end of the nineteenth century. Perse studied law at Bordeaux and, after private studies in political science, went into the diplomatic service in 1914. There he had a brilliant career. He served first in the Peking embassy, and later in the Foreign Office where he held top positions under Aristide Briand and became its administrative head.  He left France for the United States in 1940 and was deprived of his citizenship and possessions by the Vichy regime. From 1941 to 1945, he was literary adviser to the Library of Congress. After the war he did not resume his diplomatic career and, in 1950, retired officially with the title of *Ambassadeur de France.* He has made the United States his permanent residence.  His literary work was published partly under his own name, but chiefly under the pseudonyms St. J. Perse and Saint-John Perse. After various poems that reflect the impressions of his childhood, he wrote *Anabase* (Anabasis), 1924, while in China. It is an epic poem which puzzled many critics and gave rise to the suggestion that it could be understood better by an Asian than by a Westerner. Much of his work was written after he settled in the United States: *Exil* (Exile), 1942, in which man and poet merge and imagery and diction are fully mastered; *Poème l’Etrangère* (Poem to a Foreign Lady), 1943; *Pluies* (Rains), 1943; *Neiges* (Snows), 1944; *Vents* (Winds), 1946, which are the winds of war and peace that blow within as well as outside of man; *Amers* (Seamarks), 1957, wherein the sea redounds as an image of the timelessness of man; and his abstract epic, *Chronique* (Chronicle), 1960.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Saint-John Perse died on September 20, 1975.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0967 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0968 |
| Biographical | Salvatore Quasimodo (1901-1968) was born of Sicilian parents in Modica, near Syracuse. Desiring to become an engineer, he attended technical schools in Palermo and later enrolled at the Politecnico in Rome. In addition, he studied Latin and Greek at the University there. However, for economic reasons he was unable to complete his studies. He obtained a position with the Italian government’s civil engineering corps and was sent to various parts of Italy. In 1930 he had three poems published in the avant-garde review, Solaria, and later that same year appeared his first book of verse, *Acque e terre* (Waters and Lands). Two years later he published *Òboe sommerso* (Sunken Oboe), in which he proves a more mature poet. The “poetica della parole”, the poetics of the word, which is, for Quasimodo, the fundamental and virtually limitless connotative unit, pervades his first book. While this concept still serves as the basis for *Òboe sommerso,* the main interest of this collection lies in the rhythmical arrangement of words around a lyrical nucleus. In both these and his later works Sicily is the constant, ever-present factor.  Between 1930 and 1938, the year he left his government position, he made the acquaintance of many prominent Italian authors and painters. In 1938 he became editor of the weekly magazine, *Tempo*, and three years later was appointed to the chair of Italian Literature at the Giuseppe Verdi Conservatory in Milan.  During the 1930’s Quasimodo was a leader of the “Hermetic” school of poetry; however, with the appearance of his translations *Lirici Greci* (Greek Lyrics), 1940, it was obvious that his direction was no longer entirely along the lines of that group. In *Nuove Poesie* (New Poems), 1942, Quasimodo reveals both the influence of classical stylistics and a greater understanding of life in general. His subsequent translations, which range from the Greek and Latin poets (Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, Ovid, Vergil, etc.) to Shakespeare and Molière and twentieth-century writers ([Neruda](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1971/index.html), e.e. cummings, Aiken, etc.), reflect his full appreciation of the original works as well as his modern taste and sensibility.  During the Second World War Quasimodo experienced the need of the poet to feel one with the people and to declare himself as such in his poems. To him the role of the poet in society is a neccessarily active one; he should commit himself and his talents to contemporary struggles. Such views were first expressed in *Giorno dopogiorno* (Day after Day), 1946, and *La vita non è sogno* (Life Is Not a Dream), 1949.  Quasimodo’s later works show this change from individualism toward sociality, and moreover affirm the positive characteristics of life even in a world where death is an omnipresent fear. In *La terra impareggiabile* (The Incomparable Earth), 1958, Quasimodo has eloquently attempted to fuse life andliterature; he has developed a new language which coincides with man’s new activities and ever-expanding investigations. Some of his poetry and two of his critical essays have appeared in English translation in *The SelectedWritings of Salvatore Quasimodo* (1960); his *Selected Poems* were published in 1965.  The recipient of many literary prizes – in 1953, for instance, together with Dylan Thomas, he was awarded the Etna-Taormina International Prize in Poetry -, Quasimodo died in Naples on June I4, 1968.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above. |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0968 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0969 |
| Biographical | Boris Leonidovich Pasternak (1890-1960), born in Moscow, was the son of talented artists: his father a painter and illustrator of Tolstoy’s works, his mother a well-known concert pianist. Pasternak’s education began in a German Gymnasium in Moscow and was continued at the University of Moscow. Under the influence of the composer Scriabin, Pasternak took up the study of musical composition for six years from 1904 to 1910. By 1912 he had renounced music as his calling in life and went to the University of Marburg, Germany, to study philosophy. After four months there and a trip to Italy, he returned to Russia and decided to dedicate himself to literature.  Pasternak’s first books of verse went unnoticed. With *Sestra moya zhizn* (My Sister Life), 1922, and *Temy i variatsii* (Themes and Variations), 1923, the latter marked by an extreme, though sober style, Pasternak first gained a place as a leading poet among his Russian contemporaries. In 1924 he published *Vysokaya bolezn* (Sublime Malady), which portrayed the 1905 revolt as he saw it, and *Detstvo Lyuvers* (The Childhood of Luvers), a lyrical and psychological depiction of a young girl on the threshold of womanhood. A collection of four short stories was published the following year under the title *Vozdushnye puti* (Aerial Ways). In 1927 Pasternak again returned to the revolution of 1905 as a subject for two long works: *Leytenant Shmidt*, a poem expressing threnodic sorrow for the fate of Lieutenant Schmidt, the leader of the mutiny at Sevastopol, and *Devyatsot pyaty god* (The Year 1905), a powerful but diffuse poem which concentrates on the events related to the revolution of 1905. Pasternak’s reticent autobiography, *Okhrannaya gramota* (Safe Conduct), appeared in 1931, and was followed the next year by a collection of lyrics, *Vtoroye rozhdenie* (Second Birth), 1932. In 1935 he published translations of some Georgian poets and subsequently translated the major dramas of Shakespeare, several of the works of Goethe, Schiller, Kleist, and Ben Jonson, and poems by Petöfi, Verlaine, Swinburne, Shelley, and others. *Na rannikh poyezdakh* (In Early Trains), a collection of poems written since 1936, was published in 1943 and enlarged and reissued in 1945 as *Zemnye prostory* (Wide Spaces of the Earth). In 1957 *Doktor Zhivago*, Pasternak’s only novel – except for the earlier “novel in verse”, *Spektorsky* (1926) – first appeared in an Italian translation and has been acclaimed by some critics as a successful attempt at combining lyrical-descriptive and epic-dramatic styles. An autobiographical sketch, *Biografichesky ocherk* (An Essay in Autobiography), was published in 1959, first in Italian, and subsequently in English. Pasternak lived in Peredelkino, near Moscow, until his death in 1960.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Boris Pasternak died on May 30, 1960.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0969 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0970 |
| Biographical | Albert Camus (1913-1960) was a representative of non-metropolitan French literature. His origin in Algeria and his experiences there in the thirties were dominating influences in his thought and work. Of semi-proletarian parents, early attached to intellectual circles of strongly revolutionary tendencies, with a deep interest in philosophy (only chance prevented him from pursuing a university career in that field), he came to France at the age of twenty-five. The man and the times met: Camus joined the resistance movement during the occupation and after the liberation was a columnist for the newspaper *Combat.* But his journalistic activities had been chiefly a response to the demands of the time; in 1947 Camus retired from political journalism and, besides writing his fiction and essays, was very active in the theatre as producer and playwright (*e.g., Caligula*, 1944). He also adapted plays by Calderon, Lope de Vega, Dino Buzzati, and [Faulkner’s](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1949/index.html) *Requiem for a Nun.* His love for the theatre may be traced back to his membership in L’Equipe, an Algerian theatre group, whose “collective creation” *Révolte dans les Asturies* (1934) was banned for political reasons.  The essay *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (The Myth of Sisyphus), 1942, expounds Camus’s notion of the absurd and of its acceptance with “the total absence of hope, which has nothing to do with despair, a continual refusal, which must not be confused with renouncement – and a conscious dissatisfaction”. Meursault, central character of *L’Étranger* (The Stranger), 1942, illustrates much of this essay: man as the nauseated victim of the absurd orthodoxy of habit, later – when the young killer faces execution – tempted by despair, hope, and salvation. Dr. Rieux of *La Peste* (The Plague), 1947, who tirelessly attends the plague-stricken citizens of Oran, enacts the revolt against a world of the absurd and of injustice, and confirms Camus’s words: “We refuse to despair of mankind. Without having the unreasonable ambition to save men, we still want to serve them”. Other well-known works of Camus are *La Chute* (The Fall), 1956, and *L’Exil et le royaume* (Exile and the Kingdom), 1957. His austere search for moral order found its aesthetic correlative in the classicism of his art. He was a stylist of great purity and intense concentration and rationality.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Albert Camus died on January 4, 1960.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0970 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0971 |
| Biographical | Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881-1958) belonged to the group of writers who, in the wake of Spain’s loss of her colonies to the United States (1898), staged a literary revival. The leader of this group of *modernistas*, as they called themselves, Rubén Darío, helped Juan Ramón to publish *Almas de violeta* (Souls of Violet), 1900, his first volume of poetry. The years between 1905 to 1912 Ramón Jiménez spent at his birthplace, Moguer, where he wrote *Elejías puras* (Pure Elegies), 1908, *La soledad sonora* (Sonorous Solitude), 1911, and *Poemas mágicos y dolientes* (Magic Poems of Sorrow), 1911. His early poetry was influenced by German Romanticism and French Symbolism. It is strongly visual and dominated by the colours yellow and green. His later style, decisive, formally ascetic, and dominated by white, emerges in the poetic prose of his delicate *Platero y yo* (Platero and I), 1914, and is fully developed in *Diario de un poeta recién casado* (Diary of a Newly-Wed Poet), 1917, written during a trip to the United States, as well as in *Eternidades* (Eternities), 1918, *Piedra y cielo* (Stone and Sky), 1919, *Poesía* (Poetry), 1923, and *Belleza* (Beauty), 1923. In the twenties, Ramón Jiménez became the acknowledged master of the new generation of poets. He was active as a critic as well as an editor of literary journals. In 1930 he retired to Seville to devote himself to the revision of his earlier work. Six years later, as the result of the Spanish Civil War, he left Spain for Puerto Rico and Cuba. He remained in Cuba for three years and, in 1939, went to the United States, which became his residence until 1951, when he moved definitely to Puerto Rico. During these years Juan Ramón taught at various universities and published *Españoles de tres mundos* (Spaniards of Three Worlds), 1942, a book of prose portraits, and several collections of poems, among them *Voces de mi copla* (Voices of My Song), 1945, and *Animal de fondo* (Animal of Depth). The latter book, perhaps his best, clearly reveals the religious preoccupations that filled the last years of the poet’s life. Selections from most of his works were published in English translation in *Selected Writings of Juan Ramón Jiménez* and *Three Hundred Poems,* 1903-1953. Ramón Jiménez died in Puerto Rico in 1958.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Juan Ramón Jiménez died on May 29, 1958.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0971 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0972 |
| Biographical | Halldór Kiljan Laxness was born in 1902 in Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, but spent his youth in the country. From the age of seventeen on, he travelled and lived abroad, chiefly on the European continent. He was influenced by expressionism and other modern currents in Germany and France. In the mid-twenties he was converted to Catholicism; his spiritual experiences are reflected in several books of an autobiographical nature, chiefly *Undir Helgahnúk* (Under the Holy Mountain), 1924. In 1927, he published his first important novel, *Vefarinn mikli frá Kasmír* (The Great Weaver from Kashmir). Laxness’s religious period did not last long; during a visit to America he became attracted to socialism. *Alþydubókin* (The Book of the People), 1929, is evidence of a change toward a socialist outlook. In 1930, Laxness settled in Iceland.  Laxness’s main achievement consists of three novel cycles written during the thirties, dealing with the people of Iceland. *Þú vínviður hreini,* 1931, and *Fuglinn í fjörunni,* 1932, (both translated as Salka Valka), tell the story of a poor fisher girl; *Sjálfstætt fólk* (Independent People), 1934-35, treats the fortunes of small farmers, whereas the tetralogy *Ljós heimsins* (The Light of the World), 1937-40, has as its hero an Icelandic folk poet. Laxness’s later works are frequently historical and influenced by the saga tradition: *Íslandsklukkan* (The Bell of Iceland), 1943-46, *Gerpla* (The Happy Warriors), 1952, and *Paradísarheimt* (Paradise Reclaimed), 1960. Laxness is also the author of the topical and sharply polemical *Atómstöðin* (The Atom Station), 1948.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Halldór Kiljan Laxness died on February 8, 1998.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0972 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0973 |
| Biographical | Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), born in Oak Park, Illinois, started his career as a writer in a newspaper office in Kansas City at the age of seventeen. After the United States entered the First World War, he joined a volunteer ambulance unit in the Italian army. Serving at the front, he was wounded, was decorated by the Italian Government, and spent considerable time in hospitals. After his return to the United States, he became a reporter for Canadian and American newspapers and was soon sent back to Europe to cover such events as the Greek Revolution.  During the twenties, Hemingway became a member of the group of expatriate Americans in Paris, which he described in his first important work, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). Equally successful was *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), the study of an American ambulance officer’s disillusionment in the war and his role as a deserter. Hemingway used his experiences as a reporter during the civil war in Spain as the background for his most ambitious novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). Among his later works, the most outstanding is the short novel, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), the story of an old fisherman’s journey, his long and lonely struggle with a fish and the sea, and his victory in defeat.  Hemingway – himself a great sportsman – liked to portray soldiers, hunters, bullfighters – tough, at times primitive people whose courage and honesty are set against the brutal ways of modern society, and who in this confrontation lose hope and faith. His straightforward prose, his spare dialogue, and his predilection for understatement are particularly effective in his short stories, some of which are collected in *Men Without Women* (1927) and *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* (1938). Hemingway died in Idaho in 1961.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.   |  | | --- | | Selected Bibliography | | Baker, Carlos. *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*. Fourth edition, Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 1972. | | Bruccoli, Matthew J. (Ed.). *Ernest Hemingway’s apprenticeship: Oak Park, 1916-1917*. NCR Microcard Editions: Washington, D.C., 1971. | | Bruccoli, Matthew J., and Robert W. Trogdon (Eds.). 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Jonathan Cape: London, 1927. | | – *For Whom the Bell Tolls.* Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York 1940. | | – *The Garden of Eden*. Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York, 1986. | | – *Green Hills of Africa*. Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York 1935. | | – *In Our Time*. Boni and Liveright: New York, 1925. | | – *Islands in the Stream*. Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York, 1970. | | – *A Moveable Feast*. Jonathan Cape: London, 1964. | | – *The Nick Adams Stories*. Preface by Philip Young. Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York, 1972. | | – *The Old Man and the Sea*. Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York, 1952. | | – *Selected Letters 1917-1961*. Ed. Carlos Baker. Panther Books/Granada Publishing: London 1985(1981). | | – *The Snows of Kilimanjaro and other stories*, Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York, 1961. | | – *The Sun also rises*. Charles Scribner’s Sons: New York, 1928(1926). | | – *The Torrents of Spring: A Romantic Novel in Honor of the Passing of a Great Race*. 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(Ed.). *Ernest Hemingway: A Documentary Volume. In: Dictionary of Literary Biography* (series) Vol. 210. Gale Research Inc.: Detroit, Michigan, 1999. | | Wagner-Martin, Linda (Ed.). *A Historical Guide to Ernest Hemingway*. Oxford University Press: New York and Oxford, 2000 | | The John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, Massachusetts, has an extensive collection of books and manuscripts, and holds more than 10,000 photos of Ernest Hemingway. |   *Ernest Hemingway died on July 2, 1961.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0973 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0974 |
| Biographical | The Right Honourable Sir Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill (1874-1965), the son of Lord Randolph Churchill and his American wife Jennie Jerome, was educated at Harrow and Sandhurst. After a brief but eventful career in the army, he became a Conservative Member of Parliament in 1900. He held many high posts in Liberal and Conservative governments during the first three decades of the century. At the outbreak of the Second World War, he was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty – a post which he had earlier held from 1911 to 1915. In May, 1940, he became Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and remained in office until 1945. He took over the premiership again in the Conservative victory of 1951 and resigned in 1955. However, he remained a Member of Parliament until the general election of 1964, when he did not seek re-election. Queen Elizabeth II conferred on Churchill the dignity of Knighthood and invested him with the insignia of the Order of the Garter in 1953. Among the other countless honours and decorations he received, special mention should be made of the honorary citizenship of the United States which President Kennedy conferred on him in 1963.  Churchill’s literary career began with campaign reports: *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (1898) and *The River War* (1899), an account of the campaign in the Sudan and the Battle of Omdurman. In 1900, he published his only novel, *Savrola*, and, six years later, his first major work, the biography of his father, *Lord Randolph Churchill*. His other famous biography, the life of his great ancestor, the Duke of Marlborough, was published in four volumes between 1933 and 1938. Churchill’s history of the First World War appeared in four volumes under the title of *The World Crisis* (1923-29); his memoirs of the Second World War ran to six volumes (1948-1953/54). After his retirement from office, Churchill wrote a *History of the English-speaking Peoples* (4 vols., 1956-58). His magnificent oratory survives in a dozen volumes of speeches, among them *The Unrelenting Struggle* (1942), *The Dawn of Liberation* (1945), and Victory (1946).  Churchill, a gifted amateur painter, wrote *Painting as a Pastime* (1948). An autobiographical account of his youth, *My Early Life*, appeared in 1930.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Winston Churchill died on January 24, 1965.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0974 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0975 |
| Biographical | François Mauriac (1885-1970) was born in Bordeaux. His father, a banker, died when he was eighteen months old, leaving his mother with five children, of which he was the youngest. François grew up in a closely sheltered world, first under the protection of his mother, later in a school run by the Marianites. He studied literature at Bordeaux and Paris but soon became an independent writer. *Les Mainsjointes* [Clasped Hands], a collection of poems that appeared in 1909, aroused some interest, but it was not until the publication of *Le Baiser aux lepreux* (1922) [*A Kiss for the Leper*] that Mauriac became famous. In 1933, he was elected to the Académie Française. During the Second World War he lived in occupied territory, at his estate in Malagar and in Paris, and published *Le Cahier noir* [The Black Notebook] under the pseudonym Forez. After the war de Gaulle made Mauriac a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour. Apart from his many novels, Mauriac has published several plays which have been produced by the Comédie Française. He is also a distinguished journalist and has been an editorial writer for *Figaro*.  The «religious» novels of Mauriac have been a puzzle to many critics, for they abound in evidences of the «dark side of life», and their religious content is not directly apparent. For instance, *Le Desert de l’amour* (1925) [*The Desert of Love*] portrays the triangle of a woman and her would-be lovers, father and son, whose «unused» passion, an illusion of escape, turns into the desert in whose isolation the characters live their frustrated lives. Other outstanding novels are *Thérèse Desqueyroux* (1927) [*Thérèse*], *Le Noeud de vipères* (1932) [*The Knot of Vipers*], *La Fin de la nuit* (1935) [The End of the Night], and *La Pharisienne* (1941) [*A Woman of the Pharisees*]. His most recent work has been a study of Charles de Gaulle (1964). Mauriac’s complete works were published in twelve volumes between 1950 and 1956.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *François Mauriac died on September 1, 1970.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0975 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0976 |
| Biographical | Pär Lagerkvist (1891-1974), son of station master Anders Johan Lagerkvist and Johanna Blad, was born in the south of Sweden. He decided early that he was going to be a writer and, after a year at the University of Uppsala, he left for Paris (1913), where he came under the influence of expressionism, especially in painting. His impressions resulted in the programmatic *Ordkonst och bildkonst* (1913) [Verbal Art and Pictorial Art]. Until 1930 Lagerkvist lived chiefly in France and Italy, and even after his permanent return to Sweden he frequently travelled on the Continent and in the Mediterranean.  Lagerkvist has given an account of his early years in the autobiographical volumes *Gäst hos verkligheten* (1925) [*Guest of Reality*] and *Det besegrade livet* (1927) [The Conquered Life]. His poetry moves from the anxiety and despair of the war years, as in *Ångest* (1916) [*Anguish*], to the celebration of love as a «universal conciliatory power», as in *Hjärtats sånger* (1926) [Songs from the Heart].  As a playwright, Lagerkvist has been extremely versatile. While *Den svåra stunden* (1918) [*The Difficult Hour I, II, III*] shows the influence of the later Strindberg, plays like *Himlens Hemlighet* (1919) [*The Secret of Heaven*] echo Tagore and the mystery play; *Han som fick leva om sitt liv* (1928) [He Who Lived His Life Over Again], on the other hand, is realistic. His work during the thirties was determined by his violent opposition to totalitarianism: *Bödeln* (1933) [*The Hangman*], *Mannen utan själ* (1936) [The Man without a Soul], and *Seger i mörker* (1939) [Victory in the Darkness].  Lagerkvist increasingly has dealt with the problem of man’s relation to God, particularly in his three important novels, Dvärgen (1944) [*The Dwarf*], *Barabbas* (1950), and *Sibyllan* (1956) [*The Sibyl*]. Barabbas, the story of a «believer without faith», was his first truly international success.  In 1940, Lagerkvist was elected to the [Swedish Academy](https://www.svenskaakademien.se/en).  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Pär Lagerkvist died on July 11, 1974.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0976 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0977 |
| Biographical | Bertrand Arthur William Russell was born at Trelleck on 18th May, 1872. His parents were Viscount Amberley and Katherine, daughter of 2nd Baron Stanley of Alderley. At the age of three he was left an orphan. His father had wished him to be brought up as an agnostic; to avoid this he was made a ward of Court, and brought up by his grandmother. Instead of being sent to school he was taught by governesses and tutors, and thus acquired a perfect knowledge of French and German. In 1890 he went into residence at Trinity College, Cambridge, and after being a very high Wrangler and obtaining a First Class with distinction in philosophy he was elected a fellow of his college in 1895. But he had already left Cambridge in the summer of 1894 and for some months was attaché at the British embassy at Paris.  In December 1894 he married Miss Alys Pearsall Smith. After spending some months in Berlin studying social democracy, they went to live near Haslemere, where he devoted his time to the study of philosophy. In 1900 he visited the Mathematical Congress at Paris. He was impressed with the ability of the Italian mathematician Peano and his pupils, and immediately studied Peano’s works. In 1903 he wrote his first important book, *The Principles of Mathematics*, and with his friend Dr. Alfred Whitehead proceeded to develop and extend the mathematical logic of Peano and Frege. From time to time he abandoned philosophy for politics. In 1910 he was appointed lecturer at Trinity College. After the first World War broke out, he took an active part in the No Conscription fellowship and was fined £ 100 as the author of a leaflet criticizing a sentence of two years on a conscientious objector. His college deprived him of his lectureship in 1916. He was offered a post at Harvard university, but was refused a passport. He intended to give a course of lectures (afterwards published in America as *Political Ideals*, 1918) but was prevented by the military authorities. In 1918 he was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment for a pacifistic article he had written in the *Tribunal*. His *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (1919) was written in prison. His *Analysis of Mind* (1921) was the outcome of some lectures he gave in London, which were organized by a few friends who got up a subscription for the purpose.  In 1920 Russell had paid a short visit to Russia to study the conditions of Bolshevism on the spot. In the autumn of the same year he went to China to lecture on philosophy at the Peking university. On his return in Sept. 1921, having been divorced by his first wife, he married Miss Dora Black. They lived for six years in Chelsea during the winter months and spent the summers near Lands End. In 1927 he and his wife started a school for young children, which they carried on until 1932. He succeeded to the earldom in 1931. He was divorced by his second wife in 1935 and the following year married Patricia Helen Spence. In 1938 he went to the United States and during the next years taught at many of the country’s leading universities. In 1940 he was involved in legal proceedings when his right to teach philosophy at the College of the City of New York was questioned because of his views on morality. When his appointment to the college faculty was cancelled, he accepted a five-year contract as a lecturer for the Barnes foundation, Merion, Pa., but the cancellation of this contract was announced in Jan. 1943 by Albert C. Barnes, director of the foundation.  Russell was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1908, and re-elected a fellow of Trinity College in 1944. He was awarded the Sylvester medal of the Royal Society, 1934, the de Morgan medal of the London Mathematical Society in the same year, the Nobel Prize for Literature, 1950.  In a paper “Logical Atomism” (*Contemporary British Philosophy. Personal Statements*, First series. Lond. 1924) Russell exposed his views on his philosophy, preceded by a few words on historical development.[1](https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1950/russell/biographical/#not1)   |  | | --- | | Principal publications | | *German Social Democracy*, 1896 | | *Foundations of Geometry*, 1897 | | *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, 1900 | | *Principles of Mathematics*, vol. 1, 1903 | | *Philosophical Essays*, 1910 | | *(with Dr. A. N. Whitehead)* Principia mathematica, 3 vols, 1910-13 | | *The Problems of Philosophy*, 1912 | | *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy*, 1944 | | *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, 1916 | | *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays*, 1918 | | *Roads to Freedom: Socialism, Anarchism and Syndicalism*, 1918 | | *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, 1919 | | *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, 1920 | | *The Analysis of Mind*, 1921 | | *The Problem of China*, 1922 | | *The ABC of Atoms*, 1923 | | (with Dora Russell) *The Prospects of Industrial Civilisation*, 1923 | | *Logical Atomism*, 1924 | | *The ABC of Relativity*, 1925 | | *On Education*, 1926 | | *The Analysis of Matter*, 1927 | | *An Outline of Philosophy*, 1927 | | *Sceptical Essays*, 1928 | | *Marriage and Morals*, 1929 | | *The Conquest of Happiness*, 1930 | | *The Freedom and Organisation* 1814-1914, 1934 | | *In Praise of Idleness*, 1935 | | *Which Way to Peace?*, 1936 | | (with Patricia Russell editor of) *The Amberley Papers*, 2 vols, 1937 | | *Power: a new Social Introduction to its Study*, 1938 | | *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*, 1941 | | *History of Western Philosophy*, 1946 | | *Human Knowledge, its Scope and Limits*, 1948 | | *Authority and the Individual*, 1949 | | *Unpopular Essays*, 1950 | |  |   1) The matter for this sketch is taken from general English reference books.  From [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html) *en 1950*, Editor Arne Holmberg, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1951  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and later published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel/*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html)[*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*/*[*The Nobel Prizes*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/nobel-prizes.html). The information is sometimes updated with an addendum submitted by the Laureate.  For more updated biographical information, see: Russell, Bertrand, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*. (3 vols.) Allen & Unwin: London, 1967-1969.  *Bertrand Russell died on February 2, 1970.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0977 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0978 |
| Biographical | William Faulkner (1897-1962), who came from an old southern family, grew up in Oxford, Mississippi. He joined the Canadian, and later the British, Royal Air Force during the First World War, studied for a while at the University of Mississippi, and temporarily worked for a New York bookstore and a New Orleans newspaper. Except for some trips to Europe and Asia, and a few brief stays in Hollywood as a scriptwriter, he worked on his novels and short stories on a farm in Oxford.  In an attempt to create a saga of his own, Faulkner has invented a host of characters typical of the historical growth and subsequent decadence of the South. The human drama in Faulkner’s novels is then built on the model of the actual, historical drama extending over almost a century and a half Each story and each novel contributes to the construction of a whole, which is the imaginary Yoknapatawpha County and its inhabitants. Their theme is the decay of the old South, as represented by the Sartoris and Compson families, and the emergence of ruthless and brash newcomers, the Snopeses. Theme and technique – the distortion of time through the use of the inner monologue are fused particularly successfully in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), the downfall of the Compson family seen through the minds of several characters. The novel *Sanctuary* (1931) is about the degeneration of Temple Drake, a young girl from a distinguished southern family. Its sequel, *Requiem For A Nun* (1951), written partly as a drama, centered on the courtroom trial of a Negro woman who had once been a party to Temple Drake’s debauchery. In *Light in August* (1932), prejudice is shown to be most destructive when it is internalized, as in Joe Christmas, who believes, though there is no proof of it, that one of his parents was a Negro. The theme of racial prejudice is brought up again in *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), in which a young man is rejected by his father and brother because of his mixed blood. Faulkner’s most outspoken moral evaluation of the relationship and the problems between Negroes and whites is to be found in *Intruder In the Dust* (1948).  In 1940, Faulkner published the first volume of the Snopes trilogy, *The Hamlet*, to be followed by two volumes, *The Town* (1957) and *The Mansion* (1959), all of them tracing the rise of the insidious Snopes family to positions of power and wealth in the community. *The reivers*, his last – and most humorous – work, with great many similarities to Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*, appeared in 1962, the year of Faulkner’s death.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *William Faulkner died on July 6, 1962.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0978 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0979 |
| Biographical | Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965) was born in St. Louis, Missouri, of an old New England family. He was educated at Harvard and did graduate work in philosophy at the Sorbonne, Harvard, and Merton College, Oxford. He settled in England, where he was for a time a schoolmaster and a bank clerk, and eventually literary editor for the publishing house Faber & Faber, of which he later became a director. He founded and, during the seventeen years of its publication (1922-1939), edited the exclusive and influential literary journal Criterion. In 1927, Eliot became a British citizen and about the same time entered the Anglican Church.  Eliot has been one of the most daring innovators of twentieth-century poetry. Never compromising either with the public or indeed with language itself, he has followed his belief that poetry should aim at a representation of the complexities of modern civilization in language and that such representation necessarily leads to difficult poetry. Despite this difficulty his influence on modern poetic diction has been immense. Eliot’s poetry from *Prufrock* (1917) to the *Four Quartets* (1943) reflects the development of a Christian writer: the early work, especially *The Waste Land* (1922), is essentially negative, the expression of that horror from which the search for a higher world arises. In *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and the *Four Quartets* this higher world becomes more visible; nonetheless Eliot has always taken care not to become a «religious poet». and often belittled the power of poetry as a religious force. However, his dramas *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) and *The Family Reunion* (1939) are more openly Christian apologies. In his essays, especially the later ones, Eliot advocates a traditionalism in religion, society, and literature that seems at odds with his pioneer activity as a poet. But although the Eliot of *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948) is an older man than the poet of *The Waste Land*, it should not be forgotten that for Eliot tradition is a living organism comprising past and present in constant mutual interaction. Eliot’s plays *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1954), and *TheElderStatesman*(1959) were published in one volume in 1962; *Collected Poems 1909-62* appeared in 1963.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *T.S. Eliot died on January 4, 1965.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0979 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0980 |
| Biographical | André Gide (1869-1951) came from a family of Huguenots and recent converts to Catholicism. As a child he was often ill and his education at the École Alsacienne was interrupted by long stays in the South, where he was instructed by private tutors. His *Les Cahiers d’André Walter* (1891) [*The Notebooks of André Walter*] opened the door to the symbolist literary circles of the day, but the decisive event of these years was a journey to Algeria, where a severe illness brought him to the verge of death and precipitated his revolt against his puritanical background. Henceforth his work lived on the never resolved tensions between a strict artistic discipline, a puritanical moralism, and the desire for unlimited sensual indulgence and abandonment to life. *Les Nourritures terrestres* (1897) [*Fruits of the Earth*], the drama *Saul* (1903), and later *Le Retour de l’enfant prodigue* (1907) *[The Return of the Prodigal*], are the chief documents of his revolt.  A result of Gide’s revolt was the unprecedented freedom with which he wrote about sexual matters in *Corydon* (privately published 1911, public version 1924), his autobiography *Si le grain ne meurt* (1924) [*If It Die …*], and Gide’s lifelong diary *Journal 1889 à 1939* (1939), *Journal 1939 à 1942* (1948), and *Journal 1942 à 1949* (1950).  Gide divided his narrative works into *soties* such as *Les Caves du Vatican* (1914) [*Lafcadio’s Adventures*] and classically restrained récits, for example, *La Porte étroite* (1909) [*Strait is the Gate*] and *La Symphonie pastorale* (1919). The only work which he considered a novel was the structurally complex and experimental *Les Faux Monnayeurs* (1926) [*The Counterfeiters*].  Until the twenties Gide was known chiefly in avant-garde and esoteric literary circles (he was one of the founders of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*), but in his later years he became a highly influential, although always controversial figure. He travelled widely. His trip to the Congo led to a scathing report on economic abuses by French firms and resulted in reforms. If in the thirties Gide put off one part of the public by his sympathies with communism, his disillusioned report of his journey to Russia, *Le Retour de L’U.R.S.S* (1936), scandalized another. Gide’s interests went far beyond the confines of French literature. He translated Shakespeare, Whitman, Conrad, and Rilke. He was an influential literary critic (*Prétextes*, 1903; *Nouveaux Prétextes*, 1911) and was especially attracted to problematic writers like Dostoevsky, about whom he wrote a book (1923).  Among Gide’s last work was Thésée (1946), like the earlier Oedipe (1931) the reworking of an old myth. Gide’s collected works have been published in fifteen volumes (1933-39).  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *André Gide died on February 19, 1951.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0980 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0981 |
| Biographical | I was born in Calw in the Black Forest on July 2, 1877. My father, a Baltic German, came from Estonia; my mother was the daughter of a Swabian and a French Swiss. My father’s father was a doctor, my mother’s father a missionary and Indologist. My father, too, had been a missionary in India for a short while, and my mother had spent several years of her youth in India and had done missionary work there.  My childhood in Calw was interrupted by several years of living in Basle (1880-86). My family had been composed of different nationalities; to this was now added the experience of growing up among two different peoples, in two countries with their different dialects.  I spent most of my school years in boarding schools in Wuerttemberg and some time in the theological seminary of the monastery at Maulbronn. I was a good learner, good at Latin though only fair at Greek, but I was not a very manageable boy, and it was only with difficulty that I fitted into the framework of a pietist education that aimed at subduing and breaking the individual personality. From the age of twelve I wanted to be a poet, and since there was no normal or official road, I had a hard time deciding what to do after leaving school. I left the seminary and grammar school, became an apprentice to a mechanic, and at the age of nineteen I worked in book and antique shops in Tübingen and Basle. Late in 1899 a tiny volume of my poems appeared in print, followed by other small publications that remained equally unnoticed, until in 1904 the novel *Peter Camenzind*, written in Basle and set in Switzerland, had a quick success. I gave up selling books, married a woman from Basle, the mother of my sons, and moved to the country. At that time a rural life, far from the cities and civilization, was my aim. Since then I have always lived in the country, first, until 1912, in Gaienhofen on Lake Constance, later near Bern, and finally in Montagnola near Lugano, where I am still living.  Soon after I settled in Switzerland in 1912, the First World War broke out, and each year brought me more and more into conflict with German nationalism; ever since my first shy protests against mass suggestion and violence I have been exposed to continuous attacks and floods of abusive letters from Germany. The hatred of the official Germany, culminating under Hitler, was compensated for by the following I won among the young generation that thought in international and pacifist terms, by the friendship of [Romain Rolland](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1915/index.html), which lasted until his death, as well as by the sympathy of men who thought like me even in countries as remote as India and Japan. In Germany I have been acknowledged again since the fall of Hitler, but my works, partly suppressed by the Nazis and partly destroyed by the war; have not yet been republished there.  In 1923, I resigned German and acquired Swiss citizenship. After the dissolution of my first marriage I lived alone for many years, then I married again. Faithful friends have put a house in Montagnola at my disposal.  Until 1914 I loved to travel; I often went to Italy and once spent a few months in India. Since then I have almost entirely abandoned travelling, and I have not been outside of Switzerland for over ten years.  I survived the years of the Hitler regime and the Second World War through the eleven years of work that I spent on the *Glasperlenspie*l (1943) [*Magister Ludi*], a novel in two volumes. Since the completion of that long book, an eye disease and increasing sicknesses of old age have prevented me from engaging in larger projects.  Of the Western philosophers, I have been influenced most by Plato, Spinoza, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche as well as the historian Jacob Burckhardt. But they did not influence me as much as Indian and, later, Chinese philosophy. I have always been on familiar and friendly terms with the fine arts, but my relationship to music has been more intimate and fruitful. It is found in most of my writings. My most characteristic books in my view are the poems (collected edition, Zürich, 1942), the stories *Knulp* (1915), *Demian* (1919), *Siddhartha* (1922), *Der Steppenwolf* (1927) [*Steppenwolf*], *Narziss und Goldmund*. (1930), *Die Morgenlandfahrt* (1932) [*The Journey to the East*], and *Das Glasperlenspiel* (1943) [*Magister Ludi*]. The volume *Gedenkblätter* (1937, enlarged ed. 1962) [Reminiscences] contains a good many autobiographical things. My essays on political topics have recently been published in Zürich under the title *Krieg und Frieden* (1946) [*War and Peace*].  I ask you, gentlemen, to be contented with this very sketchy outline; the state of my health does not permit me to be more comprehensive.  Biographical note on Hermann Hesse  Hermann Hesse (1877-1962) received the Goethe Prize of Frankfurt in 1946 and the Peace Prize of the German Booksellers in 1955. A complete edition of his works in six volumes appeared in 1952; a seventh volume (1957) contains essays and miscellaneous writings. *Beschwörungen* (1955) [Evocations], a volume of late prose, and his correspondence with Romain Rolland (1954) were published separately.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Hermann Hesse died on August 9, 1962.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0981 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0982 |
| Biographical | Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957), pseudonym for Lucila Godoy Alcayaga, was born in Vicuña, Chile. The daughter of a dilettante poet, she began to write poetry as a village schoolteacher after a passionate romance with a railway employee who committed suicide. She taught elementary and secondary school for many years until her poetry made her famous. She played an important role in the educational systems of Mexico and Chile, was active in cultural committees of the League of Nations, and was Chilean consul in Naples, Madrid, and Lisbon. She held honorary degrees from the Universities of Florence and Guatemala and was an honorary member of various cultural societies in Chile as well as in the United States, Spain, and Cuba. She taught Spanish literature in the United States at Columbia University, Middlebury College, Vassar College, and at the University of Puerto Rico.  The love poems in memory of the dead, *Sonetos de la muerte* (1914), made her known throughout Latin America, but her first great collection of poems, *Desolación* [Despair], was not published until 1922. In 1924 appeared *Ternura* [Tenderness], a volume of poetry dominated by the theme of childhood; the same theme, linked with that of maternity, plays a significant role in *Tala*, poems published in 1938. Her complete poetry was published in 1958.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Gabriela Mistral died on January 10, 1957.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0982 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0983 |
| Biographical | I was born on the 20th of January, 1873, in a village in North Jutland, the second son of the district veterinary surgeon, H. Jensen, a descendant on both sides of farmers and craftsmen. In 1893, at the age of twenty, I graduated from the Cathedral School of Viborg, and subsequently studied medicine for three years at the University of Copenhagen. I earned my living by my pen until it became necessary for me to choose between further studies and literature. The grounding in natural sciences which I obtained in the course of my medical studies, including preliminary examinations in botany, zoology, physics, and chemistry, was to become decisive in determining the trend of my literary work.  My literary career began near the turn of the century with the publication of *Himmerlandshistorier* (1898-1910) [Himmerland Stories], comprising a series of tales set in that part of Denmark where I was born. This was followed in the years up to 1944 by «legends» and«myths» representing literary forms I have particularly liked, and of which nine volumes have appeared (*Myter*, 1907-45 [Myths]). I have also written poetry, a few plays, and many essays, chiefly on anthropology and the philosophy of evolution.  For many years I was engaged in journalism, writing articles and chronicles for the daily press without ever joining the staff of any newspaper. Nor have I ever belonged to any political party. After extensive journeys to the East, to Malaya and China, and several visits to the United States, I inspired a change in the Danish literature and press by introducing English and American vigour, which was to replace the then dominant trend of decadent Gallicism. The essence of my literary work is to be found in my collection of poems, which may be regarded as a reaction against the fastidious style of the day bearing Baudelaire’s poisonous hall-mark. My poems represented a turn to simple style and sound subject matter (*Digte, 1904-41*, 1943 [Poems]).  A probing analysis of the problems of evolution forms the basis of my prose. During half a century of literary work, I have endeavoured to introduce the philosophy of evolution into the sphere of literature, and to inspire my readers to think in evolutionary terms. I was prompted to do this because of the misinterpretation and distortion of Darwinism at the end of the 19th century. The concept of the *Übermensch* had disastrous consequences in that it led to two world wars, and was destroyed only with the collapse of Germany in 1945. In the course of opposing this fallacious doctrine, I have arrived at a new interpretation of the theory of evolution and its moral implications.  Biographical note on Johannes V. Jensen  Johannes V. Jensen (1873-1950) developed his theories of evolution in a cycle of six novels, *Den lange rejse* (1908-22) [*The Long Journey*], which was published in a two-volume edition in 1938.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Johannes V. Jensen died on 25 November 1950.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0983 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0984 |
| Biographical | Frans Eemil Sillanpää was born on the 16th of September, 1888, at Ylä-Satakunta in the Hämeenkyrö Parish of Finland on a desolate croft of the same name. The cottage had been built by his parents, his father Frans Henrik Henriksson, who had moved there some ten years before from Kauvatsa in the Kumo Valley, and his mother, Loviisa Vilhelmiina Iisaksdotter, whose family had lived in the Hämeenkyrö Parish from times immemorial.  Sillanpää’s parents had experienced all the trials and tribulations common to generations of settlers in those parts of Finland. Frosts had killed their seeds, farm animals had perished, and the farmer’s children, too, had died, until only Frans Eemil, the youngest of the offspring, was left.  There was only a mobile school for the farm children, and it was purely by accident – young Sillanpää’s life was to abound in accidents – that the crofter’s son, who was regarded as a bright lad, came to attend a regular school where he displayed a real aptitude for learning. Some idealists decided that nothing less than a secondary school at Tampere would do and, after giving the matter some thought, old Sillanpää consented to send his son away. For five years, Sillanpää’s parents pinched and scraped to keep their son in school, after which he supported himself for another three years and, in 1908, matriculated with good marks. This was a time in Finland when a promising young man could study almost indefinitely on borrowed money, and young Sillanpää was not slow to avail himself of this miscarriage of educational zeal. He plunged into learning and his studies were as chaotic as they were long drawn-out. He did, however, choose biology as his basic subject and worked hard in the laboratory, cutting up things, studying them under the microscope, and drawing what he saw until, one fine day, he woke up to find that five years had gone by; his examination day was still far off and the kind old gentlemen who had been lending him money were not prepared to do so any longer. He scraped together enough cash to return to his home, where he found his father and mother poorer than ever. He lived in their hut and shared their meals, which could hardly excite a gourmet’s palate.  His student days were over, his amorous escapades a thing of the past, but at least it was easy enough for him to start from nothing. Sillanpää acquired at a nearby village shop some stationary of the type favoured by village lads for private correspondence and wrote a short story, which he sent to the editor of a large city paper without much hope of seeing it published. To use an expression popular in those days, the story must have been written with his heart’s blood because, after a very short time, it appeared on the front page of the aforesaid paper and its author received a very handsome letter from the editor’s secretary, as well as his fee, which was more than welcome. The story had been published under a pen name but the literary world of Helsinki soon discovered the identity of the author and the erstwhile eternal scholar found himself, to his amazement, receiving letters of extravagant praise. After several more of his stories had been published in the same paper, something very unusual happened. He was approached by a wellknown publisher who asked to be borne in mind should Sillanpää’s literary output stretch to a whole book. The publisher went so far as to offer him a reasonable advance to enable him to work in peace.  Yet another wonder – one of a series – occurred at that time. At an unimportant village dance, Sillanpää met a shy seventeen-year-old girl who, insisting that she could not dance, sat far at the back of the dance hall. In spite of her resistance, Sillanpää dragged her out onto the dance floor to discover that she could dance after all, which she proceeded to do with the utmost seriousness and concentration. This was the beginning of a twenty-five-year saga, during which Sigrid Maria (for such was the name of the seventeen-year-old girl) bore Sillanpää eight children, one of whom died. Mrs. Sillanpää died on an April morning in 1939. In early November, the widower who, six months earlier, had been in deep mourning, was standing before the mayor of Helsinki being asked if he would take Anna Armia von Hertzen to be his wedded wife, to love her, and so on. To this, Sillanpää replied with obvious eagerness, nor was Anna Armia’s «yes» a timid whisper. Some days before a telegram had come from the Secretary of the [Swedish Academy](https://www.svenskaakademien.se/en) telling Sillanpää that he had been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. A new point had been reached in the long series of wonderful events with which Sillanpää’s life has been punctuated. As for the changes which may have occurred in it since that memorable event, they are, historically speaking, too recent to be worth recording. May his autobiography, therefore, end with this red-letter day.  It should perhaps be added that, in 1936, the University of Helsinki conferred on Sillanpää an honorary doctorate.  Books published by Sillanpää, of which *The Maid Silja* in particular has been translated into nearly every civilized language from Icelandic to Hebrew, are:   |  | | --- | | *Elämä ja aurinko* (1916) [Life and Sun] | | *Ihmislapsia elämän saatossa* (1917) [Children of Man in Life’s Procession] | | *Hurskas kurjuus* (1919) *[Meek Heritage*] | | *Rakas isänmaani* (1919) [Beloved Fatherland] | | *Hiltu ja Ragnar* (1923) [Hiltu and Ragnar] | | *Enkelten suojatit* (1923) [Wards of the Angels] | | *Omistani ja omilleni* (1924) [About my Own and to my Own] | | *Maan tasalta* (1924) [From the Earth’s Level] | | *Töllinmäki* (1925) [Shanty Hill] | | *Rippi* (1928) [Confession] | | *Kiitos hetkistä, Herra…* (1930) [Thanks for the Moments, Lord …] | | *Nuorena nukkunut* (1931) [*The Maid Silja*] | | *Miehen tie* (1932) [A Man’s Way] | | *Virranpohjalta* (1933) [From the Bottom of the Stream] | | *Ihmiset suviyössä* (1934) [*People in the Summer Night*] | | *Viidestoista* (1936) [The Fifteenth] |   Biographical note on Frans Eemil Sillanpää  After 1939, Sillanpää (1880-1964) wrote the novels *Elokuu* (1944) [August] and *Ihmiselon ihanuus ja kurjuus* (1945) [The Loveliness and Wretchedness of Human Life]. An account of his life, *Poika eli elämäänsä* [The Boy Lived His Life], based mainly on the Finnish radio broadcasts of his memoirs, was published in 1953. A collection of his political and social essays and his travel accounts came out in 1956 under the title *Päivä korkeimmillaan* [Day at its Highest].  Sillanpää’s family name was Koskinen and was later changed to Sillanpää. His collected works were published in twelve volumes between 1932 and 1948.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Frans Eemil Sillanpää died on June 3, 1964*. |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0984 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0985 |
| Biographical | Pearl Buck (1892-1973) was born in Hillsboro, West Virginia. She grew up in China, where her parents were missionaries, but was educated at Randolph-Macon Woman’s College. After her graduation she returned to China and lived there until 1934 with the exception of a year spent at Cornell University, where she took an M.A. in 1926. Pearl Buck began to write in the twenties; her first novel, *East Wind, West Wind*, appeared in 1930. It was followed by *The Good Earth* (1931), *Sons* (1932), and *A House Divided* (1935), together forming a trilogy on the saga of the family of Wang. *The Good Earth* stood on the American list of «best sellers» for a long time and earned her several awards, among them the Pulitzer Prize and the William Dean Howells Medal. She also published *The First Wife and Other Stories* (1933), *All Men are Brothers* (a translation of the Chinese novel *Shui Hu Chuan*) (1933), *The Mother* (1934), and *This Proud Heart* (1938). The biographies of her mother and father, *The Exile* and *Fighting Angel*, were published in 1936 and later brought out together under the title of *The Spirit and the Flesh* (1944). *The Time Is Now*, a fictionalized account of the author’s emotional experiences, although written much earlier, did not appear in print until 1967.  Pearl Buck’s works after 1938 are too many to mention. Her novels have continued to deal with the confrontation of East and West, her interest spreading to such countries as India and Korea. Her novelist’s interest in the interplay of East and West has also led to some activity in political journalism.  Pearl Buck has been active in many welfare organizations; in particular she set up an agency for the adoption of Asian-American children (Welcome House, Inc.) and has taken an active interest in retarded children *(The Child Who Never Grew, 1950)*.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Pearl Buck died on March 6, 1973.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0985 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0986 |
| Biographical | Roger Martin du Gard (1881-1958) was born in Neuilly-sur-Seine, attended two of the finest Paris lycees and, in 1906, was graduated from the École des Chartes with a thesis on an archaeological subject and with the degree of archivist-paleographer. To this training in history and scholarship he attributes his scrupulous realism and attention to minute detail.  Martin du Gard’s first success was the novel *Jean Barois*, published by his former school friend Gaston Gallimard in 1913. It anticipates some of the thematic material of *Les Thibault*. Largely in dialogue form, *Jean Barois* is the story of a life deeply divided by two world views, that of the Catholic Church and that of a freethinking, unflinching, humanistic philosophy of facing and mastering reality. In 1920 he published the peasant farce *Le Testament du Père Leleu*. He became attached to the circle of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* and was close to [Gide](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1947/index.html), Copeau, and J. Schlumberger.  After the years of the First World War, which Martin du Gard spent almost entirely in the front lines, he devoted most of his time to the writing of the «roman-fleuve», *Les Thibault*, which culminates in the three volumes of *L’Été 1914* [*Summer 1914*]. The twelve individual volumes of the series of novels appeared between 1922 and 1940.  *Les Thibault* is a monumental picture of the world before the outbreak of the First World War. Its rambling plot traces the history of Jacques Thibault, the rebel son of an upper middle-class family, against the background of the more staid destinies of his relatives. The work gives a detailed account of the hero’s despair at the outbreak of fighting and the failure of his insane attempt to stop it. Various minor works, written for distraction or relaxation, include the drama *Un Taciturne* (1932) [The Silent One], the short novel *confdence africaine* (1931) [African Secret], and a collection of village sketches, *Vieille France* (1933) [The Postman]. His *Notes sur André Gide 1913-1951* [*Recollections of André Gide*] appeared in 1951. The complete works of Martin du Gard were published in two volumes in 1955.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Roger Martin du Gard died on August 22, 1958.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0986 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0987 |
| Biographical | Born October 16th, 1888, in New York City. Son of James O’Neill, the popular romantic actor. First seven years of my life spent mostly in hotels and railroad trains, my mother accompanying my father on his tours of the United States, although she never was an actress, disliked the theatre, and held aloof from its people.  From the age of seven to thirteen attended Catholic schools. Then four years at a non-sectarian preparatory school, followed by one year (1906-1907) at Princeton University.  After expulsion from Princeton I led a restless, wandering life for several years, working at various occupations. Was secretary of a small mail order house in New York for a while, then went on a gold prospecting expedition in the wilds of Spanish Honduras. Found no gold but contracted malarial fever. Returned to the United States and worked for a time as assistant manager of a theatrical company on tour. After this, a period in which I went to sea, and also worked in Buenos Aires for the Westinghouse Electrical Co., Swift Packing Co., and Singer Sewing Machine Co. Never held a job long. Was either fired quickly or left quickly. Finished my experience as a sailor as able-bodied seaman on the American Line of transatlantic liners. After this, was an actor in vaudeville for a short time, and reporter on a small town newspaper. At the end of 1912 my health broke down and I spent six months in a tuberculosis sanatorium.  Began to write plays in the Fall of 1913. Wrote the one-act *Bound East for Cardiff* in the Spring of 1914. This is the only one of the plays written in this period which has any merit.  In the Fall of 1914, I entered Harvard University to attend the course in dramatic technique given by Professor George Baker. I left after one year and did not complete the course.  The Fall of 1916 marked the first production of a play of mine in New York – *Bound East for Cardiff* – which was on the opening bill of the Provincetown Players. In the next few years this theatre put on nearly all of my short plays, but it was not until 1920 that a long play *Beyond the Horizon* was produced in New York. It was given on Broadway by a commercial management – but, at first, only as a special matinee attraction with four afternoon performances a week. However, some of the critics praised the play and it was soon given a theatre for a regular run, and later on in the year was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. I received this prize again in 1922 for *Anna Christie* and for the third time in 1928 for *Strange Interlude*.  The following is a list of all my published and produced plays which are worth mentioning, with the year in which they were written:  *Bound East for Cardiff* (1914), *Before Breakfast* (1916), *The Long Voyage Home* (1917), *In the Zone* (1917), *The Moon of the Carabbees* (1917), *Ile* (1917), *The Rope* (1918), *Beyond the Horizon* (1918), *The Dreamy Kid* (1918), *Where the Cross is Made* (1918), *The Straw* (1919), *Gold* (1920), *Anna Christie* (1920), *The Emperor Jones* (1920), *Different* (1920), *The First Man* (1921), *The Fountain* (1921-22), *The Hairy Ape* (1921), *Welded* (1922), *All God’s Chillun Got Wings* (1923), *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), *Marco Millions* (1923-25), *The Great God Brown* (1925), *Lazarus Laughed* (1926), *Strange Interlude* (1926-27), *Dynamo* (1928), *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1929-31) , *Ah, Wilderness* (1932), *Days Without End* (1932-33).  Biographical note on Eugene O’Neill  After an active career of writing and supervising the New York productions of his own works, O’Neill (1888-1953) published only two new plays between 1934 and the time of his death. In *The Iceman Cometh* (1946), he exposed a «prophet’s» battle against the last pipedreams of a group of derelicts as another pipedream and managed to infuse into the «Lower Depths» atmosphere a sense of the tragic. *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1952) contains a strong autobiographical content, which it shares with *Long Day’s Journey into Night* (posth. 1956), one of O’Neill’s most important works. The latter play, written, according to O’Neill, «in tears and blood… with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness for *all* the four haunted Tyrones», had its premiere at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm. Sweden grew into an O’Neill centre with the first productions of the one-act play *Hughie* (posth. 1959) as well as *A Touch of the Poet* (posth. 1958) and an adapted version of *More Stately Mansions* (posth. 1962 ) – both plays being parts of an unfinished cycle in which O’Neill returned to his earlier attempts at making psychological analysis dramatically effective.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Eugene O’Neill died on 27 November 1953*. |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0987 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0988 |
| Biographical | Luigi Pirandello(1867-1936) was born in Girgenti, Sicily. He studied philology at Rome and at Bonn and wrote a dissertation on the dialect of his native town (1891). From 1897 to 1922 he was professor of aesthetics and stylistics at the *Real Istituto di Magistere Femminile* at Rome. Pirandello’s work is impressive by its sheer volume. He wrote a great number of novellas which were collected under the title *Novelle per un anno* (15 vols., 1922-37). Of his six novels the best known are *Il fu Mattia Pascal* (1904) [*The Late Mattia Pascal*], *I vecchi e i giovani* (1913) [*The Old and the Young*], *Si gira* (1916) | [*Shoot!*], and *Uno, nessuno e centomila* (1926) [*One, None, and a Hundred thousand*].  But Pirandello’s greatest achievement is in his plays. He wrote a large number of dramas which were published, between 1918 and 1935, under the collective title of *Maschere nude* [*Naked Masks*]. The title is programmatic. Pirandello is always preoccupied with the problem of identity. The self exists to him only in relation to others; it consists of changing facets that hide an inscrutable abyss. In a play like *Cosí é (se vi pare)* (1918) [*Right You Are (If You Think You Are)*], two people hold contradictory notions about the identity of a third person. The protagonist in *Vestire gli ignudi* (1923) [*To Clothe the Naked*] tries to establish her individuality by assuming various identities, which are successively stripped from her; she gradually realizes her true position in the social order and in the end dies «naked», without a social mask, in both her own and her friends’ eyes. Similarly in *Enrico IV* (1922) [*Henry IV*] a man supposedly mad imagines that he is a medieval emperor, and his imagination and reality are strangely confused. The conflict between illusion and reality is central in *La vita che ti diedi* (1924) [*The Life I Gave You*] in which Anna’s long-lost son returns home and contradicts her mental conception of him. However, his death resolves Anna’s conflict; she clings to illusion rather than to reality. The analysis and dissolution of a unified self are carried to an extreme in *Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore* (1921) [*Six Characters in Search of An Author*] where the stage itself, the symbol of appearance versus reality, becomes the setting of the play.  The attitudes expressed in *L’Umorismo* [*Humour*], an early essay (1908), are fundamental to all of Pirandello’s plays. His characters attempt to fulfil their self-seeking roles and are defeated by life itself which, always changing, enables them to see their perversity. This is Pirandello’s humour, an irony which arises from the contradictions inherent in life.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Luigi Pirandello died on December 10, 1936.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0988 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0989 |
| Biographical | I come from an old and noble house that has given to Russia a good many illustrious persons in politics as well as in the arts, among whom two poets of the early nineteenth century stand out in particular: Anna Búnina and Vasíly Zhukóvsky, one of the great names in Russian literature, the son of Athanase Bunin and the Turk Salma.  All my ancestors had close ties with the soil and the people: they were country gentlemen. My parents were no exception. They owned estates in Central Russia, in those fertile steppes in which the ancient Muscovite czars had settled colonists from all over the country for their protection against Tartar invasions from the South. That is why in that region there developed the richest of all Russian dialects, and almost all of our great writers from Turgenev to Leo Tolstoy have come from there.  I was born in Vorónezh in 1870; my childhood and youth were spent almost entirely in the country on my father’s estates. During my adolescence the death of my little sister caused a violent religious crisis, but it left no permanent scars on my soul. I had a passion for painting, which, I think, shows in my writings. I wrote both poetry and prose fairly early and my works were also published from an early date.  Ever since I began to publish, my books have been both in prose and poetry, original writings as well as translations (from the English). If one divides my work by genre, one would find volumes of original poetry, two volumes of translations, and ten volumes of prose.  My works were soon recognized by the critics. They were subsequently honoured on several occasions, receiving in particular the Pushkin Prize, the highest prize awarded by the Russian Academy of Sciences. In 1909 that Academy elected me one of its twelve honorary members, a position that corresponds to the immortals of the French Academy. Among their number was Leo Tolstoy.  Nonetheless, there were several reasons why I was not widely known for a considerable time. I kept aloof from politics and in my writings did not touch upon questions concerning it. I did not belong to any literary school; I was neither decadent, nor symbolist, romantic, or naturalist. Moreover, I frequented few literary circles. I lived chiefly in the country; I travelled much in Russia as well as abroad; I visited Italy, Sicily, Turkey, the Balkans, Greece, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and the tropics. According o the words of Saadi I tried to «look at the world and leave upon it the imprint of my soul». I was interested in problems of philosophy, religion, morals, and history.  In 1910 I published my novel *Derévnya* [*The Village*]. It was the first of a series of works to give picture of the Russian without make-up: his character and his soul, his original complexity, his foundations at once luminous and obscure, but almost always essentially tragic. These «ruthless» works caused passionate discussions among our Russian critics and intellectuals who, owing to numerous circumstances peculiar to Russian society and – in these latter days – to sheer ignorance or political advantage, have constantly idealized the people. In short, these works made me notorious; this success has been confirmed by more recent works.  I left Moscow because of the Bolshevik regime in May, 1918; until February, 1920, when I finally emigrated abroad, I lived in the south of Russia. Since then I have lived in France, dividing my time between Paris and the maritime Alps.  Biographical note on Ivan Alekseyevich Bunin  In addition to *Derévnya*, Bunin (1870-1953) wrote such novels as *Sukhodól* (1911-12) and *Mítina lyubóv* (1924-25) [*Mitya’s Love*], the short story *Gospodín iz San Francisco* (19I6) [*The Gentleman from San Francisco*], end the autobiographical novel in two volumes, *Zhizn Arsénieva* (Part I, *Istóki dnéy* [1930], translated as *The Well of Days*; Part II, *Lika* [1939]). He is the author of several volumes of short stories mixed with poetry, and, in 1950, he published the autobiography *Vospominániya* [*Memories and Portraits*]. Bunin died in France in 1953. There are two editions of his collected works – one in twelve volumes (Berlin,1934-36) and the other in six volumes (Moscow, 1956) – as well as collections of his stories (Moscow, 1961) end of his poetry (Leningrad, 1961).  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Ivan Bunin died on 8 November 1953.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0989 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0990 |
| Biographical | John Galsworthy (1867-1933) was educated at Harrow and studied law at New College, Oxford. He travelled widely and at the age of twenty-eight began to write, at first for his own amusement. His first stories were published under the pseudonym John Sinjohn and later were withdrawn. He considered *The Island Pharisees* (1904) his first important work. As a novelist Galsworthy is chiefly known for his *roman fleuve, The Forsyte Saga*. The first novel of this vast work appeared in 1906. *The Man of Property* was a harsh criticism of the upper middle classes, Galsworthy’s own background. Galsworthy did not immediately continue it; fifteen years and with them the First World War intervened until he resumed work on the history of the Forsytes with *In Chancery* (1920) and *To Let* (1921). Meanwhile he had written a considerable number of novels, short stories, and plays. *The Forsyte Saga* was continued y the three volumes of *A Modern Comedy*, *The White Monkey* (1924), *The Silver Spoon* (1926), *Swan Song* (1928), and its two interludes *A Silent Wooing* and *Passersby* (1927). To these should be added *On Forsyte Change* (1930), a collection of short stories. With growing age Galsworthy came more and more to identify himself with the world of his novels, which at first he had judged very harshly. This development is nowhere more evident than in the author’s changing attitude toward Soames Forsyte, the «man of property», who dominates the first part of the work.  Galsworthy was a dramatist of considerable technical skill. His plays often took up specific social grievances such as the double standard of justice as applied to the upper and lower classes in *The Silver Box* (1906) and the confrontation of capital and labour in *Strife* (1909). *Justice* (1910), his most famous play, led to a prison reform in England. Galsworthy’s reaction o the First World War found its expression in *The Mob* (1914), in which the voice of a statesman is drowned in the madness of the war-hungry masses; and in enmity of the two families of *The Skin Game* (1920).  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *John Galsworthy died on January 31, 1933.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0990 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0991 |
| Biographical | Erik Axel Karlfeldt (1864-1931) was born in Karlbo in the province of Dalekarlia. The name Karlfeldt, which he assumed in 1889, was derived from the name of his father’s farm; his parents were Erik Janson and Anna Stina Jansdotter, both of whom came from old mining families. Karlfeldt attended schools at his birthplace and at Västerås, where he graduated in 1885. He studied at the University of Uppsala and received his degree in 1898. Between 1893 and 1896, he taught at the private grammar school at Djursholm and at the school for adult education at Molkom. For a short time he worked for a Stockholm paper.  After completing his studies, he held a position at the Royal Library in Stockholm for five years. In 1903 he was appointed librarian of the Agricultural Academy. Meanwhile he had found recognition as a poet, and in 1904 was elected to the [Swedish Academy](https://www.svenskaakademien.se/en). In 1905 he became a member of the Nobel Institute of the Academy and in 1907 of the Nobel Committee. In 1912 he was appointed permanent secretary of the Academy and henceforth devoted all his time to this position (although he did remain a member of the Nobel Committee) and to his poetry. In 1917 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Uppsala  Individual poems of his had appeared even during his school days; his first collection *Vildmarks-och kärleksvisor* [Songs of the Wilderness and of Love] was printed in the autumn of 1895. It was followed by *Fridolins visor* (1898) [Fridolin’s Song], *Fridolins lustgård* (1901)[Fridolin’s Pleasure Garden], Flora och Pomona (1906) [Flora and Pomona], *Flora och Bellona* (1918) [Flora and Bellona], and *Hösthorn* (1927) [The Horn of Autumn]. Selections of his poetry, translated into English by Charles Wharton Stork under the title *Arcadia Borealis*, were published in 1938.  Karlfeldt wrote a short life of the Swedish poet Lucidor (1909) and a necrologue for Carl Fredrik Dahlgren in the proceedings of the Swedish Academy. A collection of his speeches appeared in print shortly after his death in 1931.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Erik Axel Karlfeldt died on April 8, 1931.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0991 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0992 |
| Biographical | To recount my life for the Nobel Foundation, I would like to present it as possessing some romantic quality, some unique character, like [Kipling](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1907/index.html)‘s early adventures in India, or [Bernard Shaw](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1925/index.html)‘s leadership in the criticism of British arts and economics. But my life, aside from such youthful pranks as sailing on cattleships from America to England during university vacations, trying to find work in Panama during the building of the Canal, and serving for two months as janitor of Upton Sinclair’s abortive co-operative colony, Helicon Hall, has been a rather humdrum chronicle of much reading, constant writing, undistinguished travel à la tripper, and several years of comfortable servitude as an editor.  I was born in a prairie village in that most Scandinavian part of America, Minnesota, the son of a country doctor, in 1885. Until I went East to Yale University I attended the ordinary public school, along with many Madsens, Olesons, Nelsons, Hedins, Larsons. Doubtless it was because of this that I made the hero of my second book, *The Trail of the Hawk*, a Norwegian, and Gustaf Sondelius, of *Arrowsmith*, a Swede – and to me, Dr. Sondelius is the favorite among all my characters.  Of Carl Ericson of *The Trail of the Hawk*, I wrote -back in 1914, when I was working all day as editor for the George H. Doran Publishing Company, and all evening trying to write novels – as follows:  «His carpenter father had come from Norway, by way of steerage and a farm in Wisconsin, changing his name (to Americanize it) from Ericsen… Carl was second-generation Norwegian; American-born, American in speech, American in appearance, save for his flaxen hair and china-blue eyes… When he was born the ‹typical Americans› of earlier stocks had moved to city palaces or were marooned on run-down farms. It was Carl Ericson, not a Trowbridge or a Stuyvesant or a Lee or a Grant, who was the ‹typical American› of his period. It was for him to carry on the American destiny of extending the Western horizon; his to restore the wintry Pilgrim virtues and the exuberant October, partridge-drumming days of Daniel Boone; then to add, in his own or another generation, new American aspirations for beauty.»  My university days at Yale were undistinguished save for contributions to the Yale Literary Magazine. It may be interesting to say that these contributions were most of them reeking with a banal romanticism; that an author who was later to try to present ordinary pavements trod by real boots should through university days have written nearly always of Guinevere and Lancelot – of weary bitterns among sad Irish reeds – of story-book castles with troubadours vastly indulging in wine, a commodity of which the author was singularly ignorant. What the moral is, I do not know. Whether imaginary castles at nineteen lead always to the sidewalks of Main Street at thirty-five, and whether the process might be reversed, and whether either of them is desirable, I leave to psychologists.  I drifted for two years after college as a journalist, as a newspaper reporter in Iowa and in San Francisco, as – incredibly – a junior editor on a magazine for teachers of the deaf, in Washington, D.C. The magazine was supported by Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone. What I did not know about teaching the deaf would have included the entire subject, but that did not vastly matter, as my position was so insignificant that it included typing hundreds of letters every week begging for funds for the magazine and, on days when the Negro janitress did not appear, sweeping out the office.  Doubtless this shows the advantages of a university education, and it was further shown when at the age of twenty-five I managed to get a position in a New York publishing house at all of fifteen dollars a week. This was my authentic value on the labor market, and I have always uncomfortably suspected that it would never have been much higher had I not, accidentally, possessed the gift of writing books which so acutely annoyed American smugness that some thousands of my fellow citizens felt they must read these scandalous documents, whether they liked them or not.  From that New York position till the time five years later when I was selling enough short stories to the magazines to be able to live by free-lancing, I had a series of typical white-collar, unromantic, office literary jobs with two publishing houses, a magazine (*Adventure*), and a newspaper syndicate, reading manuscripts, writing book advertising, writing catalogues, writing uninspired book reviews – all the carpentry and plumbing of the city of letters. Nor did my first five novels rouse the slightest whispers: *Our Mr. Wrenn*, *The Trail of the Hawk*, *The Job*, *The Innocents*, and *Free Air* they were called, published between 1914 and 1919, and all of them dead before the ink was dry. I lacked sense enough to see that, after five failures, I was foolish to continue writing.  *Main Street*, published late in 1920, was my first novel to rouse the embattled peasantry and, as I have already hinted, it had really a success of scandal. One of the most treasured American myths had been that all American villages were peculiarly noble and happy, and here an American attacked that myth. Scandalous. Some hundreds of thousands read the book with the same masochistic pleasure that one has in sucking an aching tooth.  Since *Main Street*, the novels have been *Babbitt* (1922); *Arrowsmith* (1925); *Mantrap* (1926); *Elmer Gantry* (1927); *The Man Who Knew Coolidge* (1928); and *Dodsworth* (1929). The next novel, yet unnamed, will concern idealism in America through three generations, from 1818 till 1930-an idealism which the outlanders who call Americans «dollar-chasers» do not understand. It will presumably be published in the autumn of 1932, and the author’s chief difficulty in composing it is that, after having received the Nobel Prize, he longs to write better than he can.  I was married, in England, in 1928, to Dorothy Thompson, an American who had been the Central European correspondent and *chef de bureau* of the New York Evening Post. My first marriage, to Grace Hegger, in New York, in 1914, had been dissolved.  During these years of novelwriting since 1915, I have lived a quite unromantic and unstirring life. I have travelled much; on the surface it would seem that one who during these fifteen years had been in forty states of the United States, in Canada, Mexico, England, Scotland, France, Italy, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia, Greece, Switzerland, Spain, the West Indies, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Poland, and Russia must have been adventurous. That, however, would be a typical error of biography. The fact is that my foreign travelling has been a quite uninspired recreation, a flight from reality. My real travelling has been sitting in Pullman smoking cars, in a Minnesota village, on a Vermont farm, in a hotel in Kansas City or Savannah, listening to the normal daily drone of what are to me the most fascinating and exotic people in the world – the Average Citizens of the United States, with their friendliness to strangers and their rough teasing, their passion for material advancement and their shy idealism, their interest in all the world and their boastful provincialism – the intricate complexities which an American novelist is privileged to portray.  And nowadays, at forty-six, with my first authentic home – a farm in the pastoral state of Vermont – and a baby born in June 1930, I am settled down to what I hope to be the beginning of a novelist’s career. I hope the awkward apprenticeship with all its errors is nearly done.  Biographical note on Sinclair Lewis  Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951) continued to be a prolific writer, but none of his later writings equalled the success or stature of his chiefworks of the twenties. After his divorce from his second wife in 1942, Sinclair Lewis lived chiefly in Europe. His later novels include *Ann Vickers* (I933), *It Can’t Happen Here* (1935), *The Prodigal Parents* (1938), *Gideon Planish* (1943), *Cass Timberlane* (1945), *Kingsblood Royal* ( 1947), *The God-Seeker* (1949), and *World So Wide* (1951). *From Main Street to Stockholm: Letters of Sinclair Lewis 1919-1930* was published in 1952, one year after his death in Rome.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Sinclair Lewis died on January 10, 1951.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0992 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0993 |
| Biographical | I was born in Lübeck on June 6, 1875, the second son of a merchant and senator of the Free City, Johann Heinrich Mann, and his wife Julia da Silva Bruhns. My father was the grandson and great-grandson of Lübeck citizens, but my mother first saw the light of day in Rio de Janeiro as the daughter of a German plantation owner and a Portuguese-Creole Brazilian. She was taken to Germany at the age of seven.  I was designated to take over my father’s grain firm, which commemorated its centenary during my boyhood, and I attended the science division of the «Katharineum» at Lübeck. I loathed school and up to the very end failed to meet its requirements, owing to an innate and paralyzing resistance to any external demands, which I later learned to correct only with great difficulty. Whatever education I possess I acquired in a free and autodidactic manner. Official instruction failed to instill in me any but the most rudimentary knowledge.  When I was fifteen, my father died, a comparatively young man. The firm was liquidated. A little later my mother left the town with the younger children in order to settle in the south of Germany, in Munich.  After finishing school rather ingloriously, I followed her and for the time being became a clerk in the office of a Munich insurance company whose director had been a friend of my father’s. Later, by way of preparing for a career in journalism, I attended lectures in history, economics, art history, and literature at the university and the polytechnic. In between I spent a year in Italy with my brother Heinrich, my elder by four years. During this time my first collection of short stories, *Der kleine Herr Friedemann* (1898) [*Little Herr Friedemann*], was published. In Rome, I also began to write the novel *Buddenbrooks*, which appeared in 1901 and which since then has been such a favourite with the German public that today over a million copies of it are in circulation.  There followed shorter stories, collected in the volume *Tristan* (1903), of which the North-South artist’s novella *Tonio Kroger* is usually considered the most characteristic, and also the Renaissance dialogues *Fiorenza* (1906), a closet drama which, however, has occasionally been staged.  In 1905 I married the daughter of Alfred Pringsheim, who had the chair of mathematics at the University of Munich. On her mother’s side my wife is the granddaughter of Ernst and Hedwig Dohm, the well-known Berlin journalist and his wife, who played a leading role in the German movement for women’s emancipation. From our marriage have come six children: three girls, of whom the eldest has gone into the theatre, and three boys, of whom the eldest has also devoted himself to literature.  The first literary fruit of my new status was the novel *Königliche Hoheit* (1909) [*Royal Highness*], a court story that provides the frame for a psychology of the formal-representative life and for moral questions such as the reconciliation of an aristocratic, melancholic consciousness with the demands of the community. Another novelistic project followed, the *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull* (1922) [*Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man*]. It is based on an idea of parody, that of taking an element of venerable tradition, of the Goethean, self-stylizing, autobiographic, and aristocratic confession, and translating it into the sphere of the humorous and the criminal. The novel has remained a fragment, but there are connoisseurs who consider its published sections my best and most felicitous achievement. Perhaps it is the most personal thing I have written, for it represents my attitude toward tradition, which is simultaneously loving and destructive and has dominated me as a writer.  In 1913 the novella *Tod in Venedig* [*Death in Venice*] was published, which beside *Tonio Kroger* is considered my most valid achievement in that genre. While I was writing its final sections I conceived the idea of the «Bildungsroman» *Der Zauberberg* (1924) [*The Magic Mountain*], but work on it was interrupted in the very beginning by the war.  Although the war did not make any immediate demands on me physically, while it lasted it put a complete stop to my artistic activity because it forced me into an agonizing reappraisal of my fundamental assumptions, a human and intellectual self-inquiry that found its condensation in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* [*Reflections of an Unpolitical Man*], published in 1918. Its subject is the personally accented problem of being German, *the* political problem, treated in the spirit of a polemical conservatism that underwent many revisions as life went on. An account of the development of my socio-moral ideas is found in the volumes of essays *Rede und Antwort* (1922) [Question and Answer], Bemühungen (1925) [Efforts], and *Die Forderung des Tages* (1930) [*Order of fhe Day*].  Lecture tours abroad began immediately after the borders of countries neutral or hostile during the war had been re-opened. They led me first to Holland, Switzerland, and Denmark. The spring of 1923 saw a journey to Spain. In the following year I was guest of honour of the newly established PEN Club in London; two years later I accepted an invitation of the French branch of the Carnegie Foundation, and I visited Warsaw in 1927.  Meanwhile, in the autumn of 1924, after many prolonged delays the two volumes of *Der Zauberberg* were published. The interest of the public, as revealed by the hundred printings the book ran into within a few years, proved that I had chosen the most favourable moment to come to the fore with this composition of ideas epically conceived. The problems of the novel did not essentially appeal to the masses, but they were of consuming interest to the educated, and the distress of the times had increased the receptivity of the public to a degree that favoured my product, which so wilfully played fast and loose with the form of the novel.  Soon after the completion of the *Betrachtungen* I added to my longer narratives a prose idyll, the animal story *Herr und Hund* (1919) [*Bashan and I*]. *Der Zauberberg* was followed by a bourgeois novella from the period of revolution and inflation, *Unordnung und frühes Leid* (1926) [*Disorder and Early Sorrow*]; *Mario und der Zauberer* [*Mario and the Magician*], written in 1929, is for the time being my last attempt at compositions of this size. It was written during my work on a new novel which in subject matter and intention is far different from all earlier works, for it leaves behind the bourgeois individual sphere and enters into that of the past and myth. The Biblical story for which the title *Joseph und seine Brüder* is planned, and of which individual sections have been made known through public readings and publications in journals, seems about half completed. A study trip connected with it led me to Egypt and Palestine in February-March-April, 1930.  Ever since his early days the author of this biographical sketch has been encouraged in his endeavours by the kind interest of his fellow men as well as by official honours. An example is the conferment of an honorary doctor’s degree by the University of Bonn in 1919; and, to satisfy the German delight in title, the Senate of Lübeck, my home town, added the title of professor on the occasion of a city anniversary. I am one of the first members, nominated by the state itself, of the new literary division of the Prussian Academy of Arts; my fiftieth birthday was accompanied by expressions of public affection that I can remember only with emotion, and the summit of all these distinctions has been the award of the Nobel Prize in Literature by the Swedish Academy last year. But I may say that no turmoil of success has ever dimmed the clear apprehension of the relativity of my deserts or even for a moment dulled the edge of my self-criticism. The value and significance of my work for posterity may safely be left to the future; for me they are nothing but the personal traces of a life led consciously, that is, conscientiously. **Biographical note on Thomas Mann** Thomas Mann (1875-1955) moved to Switzerland in 1933 shortly after the Nazis had come to power and begun a campaign of abuse against him. He was formally expatriated in 1936. In 1937 the University of Bonn deprived him of his honorary doctorate (restored in 1946), which aroused Mann to a famous and moving reply in which he epitomized the situation of the German writer in exile. Mann, who had anticipated and warned against the rise of fascism during the Weimar Republic (e.g., in *Mario and the Magician*), continued to combat it in many pamphlets and talks throughout the period of the Nazi regime and the Second World War. He became an American citizen in 1944 and, from 1941 to 1953, lived in Santa Monica, California. After the war he frequently revisited Europe: in 1949 he received the Goethe Prizes of Weimar (East Germany) and Frankfurt (West Germany), but when he finally returned to Europe he settled near Zürich, where he died in 1955.  Among the chief works of Mann’s later years are the novels *Lotte in Weimar* (1939) [*The Beloved Returns*], in which the fictional account of a meeting of the lovers of *Werther* grown old provides the framework for a psychologically and technically ingenious portrait of the old Goethe; *Joseph und seine Brüder* (1933-43) [*Joseph and his Brothers*], a version of the Old Testament story which interweaves myth and psychology; and *Dr. Faustus* (1947), the story of an artist who chooses to pay with self-destruction for the powers of genius, a fate that echoes the last days of the Third Reich; the collections of essays *Leiden und Grösse der Meister* (1935)[ Suffering and Greatness of the Masters]; and the essay on Schiller, *Versuch über Schiller* (1955). A complete edition of his works in twelve volumes was published in Berlin (1956) and in Frankfurt (1960).  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Thomas Mann died on August 12, 1955.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0993 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0994 |
| Biographical | My father’s family came from Østerdalen. The first ancestor of ours of whom anything at all was known was one Peder Halvorsen who, in 1730, lived in Grytdalen in the Sollien valley of the river Atna where some men from Østerdalen had been allowed to settle and farm the land. My father’s folk remained there until my grandfather, Halvor Halvorsen, came to Trondhjem as a non-commissioned officer and became warden of a workhouse. He took the name of Undset from a hamlet in which my grandmother had lived when she became a widow.  My father, Ingvald Martin Undset, obtained his doctorate in 1881 with a thesis on *The Beginnings of the Iron Age in Northern Europe*. In the same year he married my mother, Charlotte Gyth of Kallundborg, whose family had, for some obscure reason, settled in Denmark toward the end of the eighteenth century. Since most of my father’s life consisted of travelling to almost every part of Europe, he set up a temporary home at Kallundborg. It was there that, in 1882, I first saw the light of day – the eldest of three sisters. In 1884 my father moved to Norway to take up a post at the Museum of Antiquities which was attached to the University of Christiania. I was sent to a school run by Mrs. Ragna Nielsen because my father was already aware that his days were numbered, and he was anxious for me to acquire a good education and follow in his footsteps. Mrs. Nielsen’s school was co-educational and heavily committed to progressive educational ideas. It played an important role in shaping my character, inspiring me with an indelible distrust of enthusiasm for such beliefs! It was not that I disliked Mrs. Nielsen or suspected her of not being so noble-minded or attached to her principles as she appeared to be. No, it was those very principles which filled me with boundless scepticism; I knew not why either then or for a long time afterwards. Many years later I was to find some kind of an answer in the words uttered by St. Augustine concerning the leader of the Donatists: «securus judicat orbis terrarum». At the time, however, my only reaction was to roll myself up into a tight ball of resistance and it was thus, hedgehog-wise, that I went through my school years.  My father died in 1893 and Mrs. Nielsen offered my mother free education for all of us three children. Then when I was about fourteen, a memorable thing happened. Mrs. Nielsen called me into an empty classroom and told me that though she would keep her promise to my mother, «You, dear Sigrid, show so little interest in the school and there are so many children who would dearly love to be in your place and enjoy a free education, that I am asking you now: are you sure you want to take your entrance examinations?» «No, thank you», was my reply. Mrs. Nielsen looked somewhat startled but all she said was, «Very well then, you must now decide about your future like a grown-up person». I am afraid that my behaviour that day was more akin to that of a small animal! Mrs. Nielsen was as good as her word where my sisters were concerned, but this was one of the few decisions in my life I have never regretted.  My mother had no choice but to send me to a commercial school in Christiania. I did not like it there but it had one great advantage over my old school; no one there expected me to like anything!  Later on, I went to work in an office and learned among other lessons to do things I did not care for, and to do them well. I remained there for ten years – from the age of 17 until I was 27. Before I left this office, two of my books had already been published – *Fru Marte Oulie* in 1907, and *Den lykkelige alder* (The Happy Age) in 1908. After leaving the office job, I went to Germany and Italy on a scholarship.  I have published a number of books since, my last two novels being set in the Middle Ages. They are *Kristin Lavransdatter*, which appeared in three volumes (192O-1922): *Kransen (The Garland)*, *Husfrue (The Mistress of Husaby)*, *Korset (The Cross)*; and *Olav Audunssøn i Hestviken* (1925 ) [*The Master of Hestviken*] and its sequel *Olav Audunssen og hans børn* (1927) [*Olav Audunssøn and his Children*].  In 1912, I was married in Belgium to the Norwegian painter A. C. Svarstad. I was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1924, and my marriage was then dissolved, since my husband had earlier been married to a woman who is still living. We have three children.  Since 1919, I have lived in Lillehammer.  Biographical note on Sigrid Undset  Sigrid Undset (1882-1949) was forced by the Second World War and the Nazi invasion to leave her native Norway. She went to the United States but continued to support the resistance movement. After the war she returned to her country and received the Grand Cross of St. Olav for her writing and her patriotic endeavours. Her later works are determined by the experience of her religious conversion and are chiefly apologetic in character. *Gymnadenia* (1929) [*The Wild Orchid*], *Den brænnende busk* (1930) [The Burning Bush], *Ida Elisabeth* (1932), and *Den trofaste hustru* (1936) [*The Faithful Wife*] deal with contemporary subjects. *Madame Dorothea* (1939) is a historical novel. Her biography of Catherine of Siena was published posthumously in 1951. Sigrid Undset is the author of the autobiographical volumes, *Etapper* (1929 and 1933) [*Stages on the Road*] and *Elleve aar* (1934) [*The Longest Years*].  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Sigrid Undset died on June 10, 1949.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0994 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0995 |
| Biographical | Henri Bergson (1859-1941), the son of a Jewish musician and an English woman, was educated at the Lycée Condorcet and the École Normale Supérieure, where he studied philosophy. After a teaching career as a schoolmaster in various secondary schools, Bergson was appointed to the École Normale Supérieure in 1898 and, from 1900 to 1921, held the chair of philosophy at the Collège de France. In 1914 he was elected to the Académie Française; from 1921 to 1926 he was president of the Commission for Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations. Shortly before his death in 1941, Bergson expressed in several ways his opposition to the Vichy regime.  Bergson’s English background explains the deep influence that Spencer, Mill, and Darwin had on him during his youth, but his own philosophy is largely a reaction against their rationalist systems.  Bergson developed his philosophy in a number of books that have become famous not only for their fresh interpretation of life but also for a powerful employment of metaphor, image, and analogy. In his *Essai sur les donnes immédiates de la conscience* (1889) [*Time and Free Will*], Bergson offered an interpretation of consciousness as existing on two levels, the first to be reached by deep introspection, the second an external projection of the first. The deeper self is the seat of creative becoming and of free will. The method of intuitive introspection, first employed in this work, is developed further in his *Introduction à la métaphysique* (1903 [*An Introduction to Metaphysics*]. In *Matière et mémoire* (1896) [*Matter and Memory*], Bergson once again took up the study of consciousness, turning his attention to the relation of mind to body. He argued that this distinction is one of degree, not of kind. The limiting concept of matter is interpreted as a momentary mind, completely deprived of a memory that helps make possible freedom of choice. In L’Évolution créatice (1907) [*Creative Evolution*], Bergson developed the theory of time introduced in his other works and applied it to the study of living things, while in *Les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion* (1932) [*The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*], he explored the moral implications of his theory of freedom. In *Le Rire* (1900) [*Laughter*], of greatest interest to the literary critic, Bergson provided a theory of comedy and established its place in a survey of aesthetics and the philosophy of art. Many of Bergson’s essays and reviews have been collected in *L’Energie spirituelle* (1919) [*Mind-Energy*] and *La Pensée et le mouvant* (1934) *[Thought and Motion*]. Bergson’s works were published in seven volumes in 1945-46.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  *Henri Bergson died on January 4, 1941.*  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above. |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0995 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 0996 |
| Biographical | I was born in the little town of Nuoro in Sardinia in 1871[1](https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1926/deledda/biographical/#1). My father was a fairly well-to-do landowner who farmed his own land. He was also a hospitable man and had friends in all of the towns surrounding Nuoro. When these friends and their families had to come to Nuoro on business or for religious holidays, they usually stayed at our house. Thus I began to know the various characters of my novels. I went only to elementary school in Nuoro. After this, I took private lessons in Italian from an elementary school teacher. He gave me themes to write about, and some of them turned out so well that he told me to publish them in a newspaper. I was thirteen and I didn’t know to whom I should go to have my stories published. But I came across a fashion magazine. I took the address and sent off a short story. It was immediately published. Then I wrote my first novel, *Fior di Sardegna* (1892) [Flower of Sardinia], which I sent to an editor in Rome. He published it, and it was quite successful. But my first real success was *Elias Portolú* (1903), which was first translated by the *Revue des deux mondes*, and then into all of the European languages. I have written a great deal:  *Novels: Anime oneste, romanzo famigliare* (1895) [Honest Souls], with preface by Ruggero Bonghi; *Il vecchio della montagna* (1900) [The Old Man of the Mountain] followed by a dramatic sketch *Odio vince*(1904) [HateWins] ; *Elias Portolú* (1903); *Cenere* (1904) [Ashes]; *Nostalgie* (1905); *La via del male* (1896) [The Evil Way]; *Naufraghi in porto* [originally *Dopo il divorzio*, 1902] (1920) [*After the Divorce*]; *L’edera* (1908) [The Ivy]; *Il nostro padrone* (1910) [Our Master]; *Sino al confine* (1910) [Up to the Limit]; *Nel deserto* (1911) [In the Desertl; *Colombi e sparvieri* (1912) [Doves and Falcons]; *Canne al vento* (1913) [Canes in the Wind]; *Le colpe altrui* (1914) [The Others’ Faults]; *Marianna Sirca* (1915); *L’incendio nell’oliveto* (1918) [The Fire in the Olive Grove]; *La Madre* (1920) [The Mother]; *Il segreto dell’uomo solitario* (1921) [The Secret of the Solitary Man]; *Il Dio dei viventi* (1922) [The God of the Living]; *La danza della collana* (1924) [The Dance of the Necklace], followed by the dramatic sketch *A sinistra* (1924) [To the Left]; *La fuga in Egitto* (1925) [The Flight into Egypt]; *Annalena Bilsini* (1927).  *Short Stories:* «Il giuochi della vita» (1905) [The Gambles in Life]; «Chiaroscuro» (1912) [Light and Dark]; «Il fanciullo nascosto» (1915) [The Hidden Boy]; «Il ritorno del figlio» (1919) [The Son’s Return]; «La bambina rubata» (1919) [The Stolen Child]; «Cattive com pagnie» (1921) [Evil Company]; «Il flauto nel bosco» (1923) [The Flute in the Wood]; «Il sigillo d’amore» (1926) [The Seal of Love].  *L’edera* (1912) [The Ivy], a play in three acts, with the collaboration of Camillo Antona-Traversi.  In 1900 I took my first trip. It was to Cagliari, the beautiful Sardinian capital. There I met my husband. We later moved to Rome, where I am presently living. I have also written some poems which have not been collected in a volume.  Biographical note on Grazia Deledda  Grazia Deledda (1875-1936) continued to write extensively after she received the Nobel Prize. *La casa del poeta* (1930) [The Poet’s House] and *Sole d’estate* (1933) [Summer Sun], both collections of short stories, reflect her optimistic vision of life even during the most painful years of her incurable illness. Life remains beautiful and serene, unaltered by personal suffering; man and nature are reconciled in order to overcome physical and spiritual hardship.  In many of her later works, Grazia Deledda combined the imaginary and the autobiographical; this blend is readily apparent in her novel, *Il paese del vento* (1931) [Land of the Wind]. In another novel, *L’argine* (1934) [*The Barrier*], the renunciation of worldly things, including love, mirrors the life of the author who, accepting self-sacrifice as a higher manner of living, is reconciled with God. The common trait of all her later writings is a constant faith in mankind and in God.  Two of Grazia Deledda’s novels were published posthumously: *Cosima* (1937) and *Il cedro di Libano* (1939) [*The Cedar of Lebanon*].  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  1. According to other sources 1875.  Selected Bibliography   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Works by Grazia Deledda: Collections and annotated editions | | | *Canne al vento*. Ed. Lucia Genovese and Elisabetta Erre. [Annotated and illustrated ed. with a glossary]. Milano: Sedes, 1993. | | | *Fabie e Leggende* / Grazia Deledda. Ed. Bruno Rombi. Milan: Rusconi, 1994. | | | *Leggende sarde* / Grazia Deledda. Ed. Dolores Turchi. Rome: Tascabelli Economici Newton, 1999. | | | *Novelle*. Ed. Giovanna Cerina. 6 vols. Nuoro: Ilisso Edizioni, 1996 [coll. Bibiliotheca Sarda]. 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| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
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| ID | 0997 |
| Biographical | George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was born in Dublin, the son of a civil servant. His education was irregular, due to his dislike of any organized training. After working in an estate agent’s office for a while he moved to London as a young man (1876), where he established himself as a leading music and theatre critic in the eighties and nineties and became a prominent member of the Fabian Society, for which he composed many pamphlets. He began his literary career as a novelist; as a fervent advocate of the new theatre of Ibsen (*The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, 1891) he decided to write plays in order to illustrate his criticism of the English stage. His earliest dramas were called appropriately *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* (1898). Among these, *Widower’s Houses* and *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* savagely attack social hypocrisy, while in plays such as *Arms and the Man* and *The Man of Destiny* the criticism is less fierce. Shaw’s radical rationalism, his utter disregard of conventions, his keen dialectic interest and verbal wit often turn the stage into a forum of ideas, and nowhere more openly than in the famous discourses on the Life Force, «Don Juan in Hell», the third act of the dramatization of woman’s love chase of man, *Man and Superman* (1903).  In the plays of his later period discussion sometimes drowns the drama, in *Back to Methuselah* (1921), although in the same period he worked on his masterpiece *Saint Joan* (1923), in which he rewrites the well-known story of the French maiden and extends it from the Middle Ages to the present.  Other important plays by Shaw are *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1901), a historical play filled with allusions to modern times, and *Androcles and the Lion* (1912), in which he exercised a kind of retrospective history and from modern movements drew deductions for the Christian era. In *Major Barbara* (1905), one of Shaw’s most successful «discussion» plays, the audience’s attention is held by the power of the witty argumentation that man can achieve aesthetic salvation only through political activity, not as an individual. *The Doctor’s Dilemma* (1906), facetiously classified as a tragedy by Shaw, is really a comedy the humour of which is directed at the medical profession. *Candida* (1898), with social attitudes toward sex relations as objects of his satire, and *Pygmalion* (1912), a witty study of phonetics as well as a clever treatment of middle-class morality and class distinction, proved some of Shaw’s greatest successes on the stage. It is a combination of the dramatic, the comic, and the social corrective that gives Shaw’s comedies their special flavour.  Shaw’s complete works appeared in thirty-six volumes between 1930 and 1950, the year of his death.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *George Bernard Shaw died on November 2, 1950.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0997 |
| Interview |  |
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| ID | 0998 |
| Biographical | I was born on May 7th, 1867, in the village of Kobielo Wielkie in that part of Poland which was under Russian rule.  My father was the church organist; the village curate was my mother’s brother, a former monk from the order of Pijar, a very well educated and ascetic man who loved nothing but solitude. The most ardent Catholicism ruled in our house. We led a hard life, almost like peasants. My family had taken a very active part in the insurrections of 1863 against Russia; some of its members had been killed; one of my uncles had been condemned to forced labour in Siberia. My mother had done her share of collaborating by serving as a messenger between various armed detachments. During my childhood I had a long, dangerous spell of illness, and my health has always been delicate. I was hardly a year old when my uncle was transferred to a small locality called Tuszyn, very close to the great manufacturing town of Lodz. There my father acquired a few acres of land without abandoning his post as organist. The management of our property was left to my mother, who was helped by some servants and her oldest children.  When I was six and already able to read and write Polish, my uncle the curate taught me Latin. Since he had no suitable textbook, he simply used the breviary. The lessons were tedious; the long stem of the curate’s pipe assisted him daily in his instruction. At that time I discovered very interesting books in the parish library. I plunged into the history and classics of the country. Reading became a passion with me. I carried books hidden under my clothes and read wherever I could. The study of Latin was maintained throughout the winter, but the spring turned me into a shepherd; as before, I was to tend my father’s sheep, and I plunged only more eagerly into the Crusades and Walter Scott. That reading led to painful misunderstandings by its very contrast to my ordinary existence.  I was slowly preparing to enter the college attended by my elder brother. But unfortunately my uncle the curate died, and my father, deprived of sufficient resources to give me a higher education, decided to make an organist of me. He put me behind a piano and thus began my study of sacred music, so vigorously and so often punctuated by the cane that I quickly learned to abhor it.  Apart from my musical studies I had to help my father at the church and keep the parish register of baptisms, marriages, births, and deaths, assist daily at Mass, help the priest with the dying, etc.  I loved these diverse occupations since nobody checked my spare time, which I was able to devote entirely to reading. By the age of nine I had a thorough knowledge of contemporary Polish literature as well as of foreign literature in Polish translation, and I began to write poems in honour of a lady of thirty years. Naturally, she knew nothing about them.  During this period my brother, who had left college, tried systematically to make me pursue a regular program of studies. He took infinite pains, but did not succeed in tearing poetry out of my heart. I was at that time intoxicated by the romantic poetry of our great writers. I arranged the world according to my private use, looking at it through the poems I had devoured.  Within myself I felt vague enchantments, dull restlessness, and uncertain desires. I had hallucinations when I was awake. What wings carried me to unknown worlds!  Already I felt sick and confined at home; daily life was a burden. I dreamed of great actions, of voyages – rovings across the oceans of a free and independent life.  For entire weeks I would keep away from the house and try to live in the woods like a savage. I formed monstrous shapes in potter’s clay, or cut them in trees; I filled my notebooks and the margins of my books with rough sketches, and I spent more than one night crying without reason.  Such was my life until the age of twelve. I shall skip the following years until the age of twenty.  I lived in Warsaw and – being twenty years old – I naturally had a wild imagination and a tender heart. Misery was my inseparable companion; I was a socialist and the punishment was inevitable. The Russian authorities expelled me from Warsaw after suspecting me of having taken part in the strike that had then broken out in Lodz for the first time. Considering me an irresponsible minor, they entrusted me to the custody of my father and the surveillance of the local police. At that time my parents had a watermill and land of some importance in the vicinity of Piotrków, close to the railway from Warsaw to Vienna. I could tolerate neither the tyranny of my father nor the extreme conservatism and Catholicism of my family. After a few weeks I ran away with a small troupe of actors and travelled with them across the country. After a year I had enough of the wandering artist’s life with its miseries and lack of a future; besides, my talent for acting was nonexistent.  I was able to find a job in the technical service of the railway. I lived in the province in a peasant’s house between two stations. My income was pitiable, my life hard and tedious, my surroundings primitive. I had hit rock bottom. I was lucky to make the acquaintance of a German professor, a convinced and practising spiritualist. He dazzled and conquered me. A world of fantastic dreams and possibilities opened before my eyes. I left my job and went to join the professor, who lived at Czestochowa. He had constant and close contact with spiritualist circles in Germany and England, corresponded regularly with Madame Blavatsky and Olcot, wrote in spiritualist journals, and was always giving *ad hoc* séances. For him, spiritualism was both a science and a religion – a mystical atmosphere prevailed in his entire house. He was kind, childishly naive, and at every séance cheated by his medium. It was not difficult for me to see that very soon, and once my faith in his miracles was lost I abandoned them immediately. Once more I was free, penniless, and without a tomorrow. For a while I worked for a landsurveyor; I was a clerk in a shop that sold devotional articles, then a salesman for a lumberyard. Finally I returned to the theatre. For several months I toured small places with a travelling company and did a great deal of acting, but when the company was dissolved I was left on the road. I tried to give recitations, for I knew entire poems by heart. I offered my services as producer in amateur theatres and I wrote for provincial journals. But I soon learned to loathe these occupations and returned willy-nilly to the railway. As before I was employed in the technical service; I was to live in a village lost between two distant stations. There was no office building for the agents of the company; I had to content myself with a peasant cottage very close to the railway.  For a while I had a roof over my head, literally a piece of dry bread, and quiet. I was surrounded by impenetrable forests in which the Czar of all Russians hunted every year. I had installed myself at the end of autumn. I did not have much to do and I had free time for writing and being foolish. I lived on tea, bread, and dreams. I was twenty-two years old. I was healthy, had only one suit, and boots with holes in them. I had faith in the world and a thousand bold projects in my mind. I wrote feverishly: dramas in ten acts, novels without end, stories in several volumes, poems. Then I tore up everything mercilessly and burned it. I lived in solitude; I had no friends; the authorities as well as my fellow-workers were unfavourably disposed toward me; I did my duties badly. I could adapt myself neither to the mentality of those around me nor to the conditions of my existence. All this was painful and hard for me to endure. Misery did not release me; it undermined me, and then the cold… I had to spend whole days in the open surveying the workers; the nights I spent in a room so cold that I wrote wrapped in a fur, keeping the inkwell under the lamp lest the ink should freeze.  I suffered these torments for two years, but as a result I had finished six short stories that seemed to have possibilities. I sent them to a critic in Warsaw, but it took over six months until I received a favourable reply. He even condescended to recommend me to a publisher. After new efforts my stories were printed. My whole being was filled with unspeakable happiness: at last I had found my way. But this good fortune was not without results for my bureaucratic career. The management dismissed me; they needed workers, not men of letters.  I gathered my belongings, consisting chiefly of manuscripts, and with the generous amount of three rubles and fifty kopecks I went to Warsaw to conquer the world. I began a new Odyssey of misery, roving and struggling with destiny.  No help from anywhere! I broke completely with my family. They did not understand me and lamented my fate. For the first six months I did not know the taste of the most ordinary dinner. I went out only in moonlight. My rags were too shabby for any occasion. I lived with people as miserable as I was. I wrote in the cathedral that was opposite my refuge; it was warm, solemn, and silent. I fed my soul on organ music and the sight of religious ceremonies. It was there, too, that I read Augustine, the Bible, and the Church Fathers, for days on end. I contemplated suicide more and more seriously. The earth was already opening under my feet. An irresistible fascination with terrifying death killed me ahead of time.  The more profound my faith became, the more violent my fascination with annihilation, and then incessant hunger pushed me toward the abyss.  At the beginning of spring, in April, I saw pilgrims going to Czestochowa, the bright mountain that had the picture of the Madonna famous for its miracles. I broke my chains and joined them. I do not remember which journal gave me an advance of twenty-five rubles for the description of that pilgrimage.  For eleven days I walked in marvellous spring weather, under the sun and in the green. The account of that pilgrimage (*Pielgrzymka do Jasnej Góry*, 1895 [*Pilgrimage to the Mountain of Light*]) appeared in a Warsaw illustrated daily and attracted the attention of the critics. Some months later I wrote *Komedjantka* (1896) [*The Comedian*]. During this period I made the acquaintance of a group of spiritualists who included the famous Dr. Ochorowiecz. I went to London to pursue spiritualist problems at the Theosophical Society. On my return I wrote *Fermenty* (1897) [Ferments], the sequel to *Komedjantka*. I then went to Lodz to study conditions in heavy industry and after beginning *Ziemia obiecana* (1899) [The Promised Land] I left for Paris. I spent long months in a French village near Tours. I wrote *Lili* and some short stories. I travelled through Italy in a more systematic fashion and stayed especially at Sorrente. In 1902 I was wounded in a train accident near Warsaw, and I have never regained my health completely.  In 1903-04 I published the first verion of *Chlopi*; at first it was only one volume. I burned it and rewrote it. This time it was divided into four volumes (1904-09). Next I wrote *Wampir* (1911) [*The Vampire*] – the reflection of my spiritualist exercises – two volumes of novellas, and I began historical studies concerning the decline of Poland toward the end of the seventeenth century. I wrote a trilogy called *Rok 1794* (1913-18 ) [*The Year 1794*]. The last volume of that work, *Insurekcja* [Insurrection], was written in Warsaw during the German occupation after the explosion of the Great War. I also published another volume of novellas. In April 1919 I left for the United States in order to visit my compatriots in that country.  I returned in 1920. In 1922-23 I wrote *Bunt* [Defiance], and I began to have heart trouble. I still have many things to say and desire greatly to make them public, but will death let me?  Biographical note on Wladyslaw Reymont  W.S. Reymont (1867-1925) died the year after he received the Nobel Prize. His complete works were published in thirty-six volumes (Warsaw, 1930-32), his selected works in twelve volumes (Cracow, 1957).  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Władysław Reymont died on 5 December 1925.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0998 |
| Interview |  |
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| ID | 0999 |
| Biographical | William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was born in Dublin. His father was a lawyer and a well-known portrait painter. Yeats was educated in London and in Dublin, but he spent his summers in the west of Ireland in the family’s summer house at Connaught. The young Yeats was very much part of the *fin de siècle* in London; at the same time he was active in societies that attempted an Irish literary revival. His first volume of verse appeared in 1887, but in his earlier period his dramatic production outweighed his poetry both in bulk and in import. Together with Lady Gregory he founded the Irish Theatre, which was to become the Abbey Theatre, and served as its chief playwright until the movement was joined by John Synge. His plays usually treat Irish legends; they also reflect his fascination with mysticism and spiritualism. *The Countess Cathleen* (1892), *The Land of Heart’s Desire* (1894), *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), *The King’s Threshold* (1904), and *Deirdre* (1907) are among the best known.  After 1910, Yeats’s dramatic art took a sharp turn toward a highly poetical, static, and esoteric style. His later plays were written for small audiences; they experiment with masks, dance, and music, and were profoundly influenced by the Japanese Noh plays. Although a convinced patriot, Yeats deplored the hatred and the bigotry of the Nationalist movement, and his poetry is full of moving protests against it. He was appointed to the Irish Senate in 1922. Yeats is one of the few writers whose greatest works were written after the award of the Nobel Prize. Whereas he received the Prize chiefly for his dramatic works, his significance today rests on his lyric achievement. His poetry, especially the volumes *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928), *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), and *Last Poems and Plays* (1940), made him one of the outstanding and most influential twentieth-century poets writing in English. His recurrent themes are the contrast of art and life, masks, cyclical theories of life (the symbol of the winding stairs), and the ideal of beauty and ceremony contrasting with the hubbub of modern life.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *William Butler Yeats died on January 28, 1939.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 0999 |
| Interview |  |
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| ID | 1000 |
| Biographical | Jacinto Benavente (1866-1954), the son of a well-known pediatrician, was born in Madrid. He studied law, but when his father died and left him with a comfortable income, he abandoned his studies and travelled widely in France, England, and Russia. On his return to Spain he edited, and contributed to, several newspapers and journals. He published a collection of poems (1893) and achieved some fame with *Cartas de mujeres* (1892-93) [Women’s Letters], a series of women’s letters, which was followed by another series in 1902. These letters gave Benavente a reputation as a brilliant stylist. His career as a dramatist began in 1892 with a collection of plays under the title «The Fantastic Theatre», but his first successes were *El nido ajeno* (1894) [Another’s Nest] and *Gente conocida* (1896) [High Society], a satire of Madrid society. Benavente’s plays deal with all strata of life; they are both serious and comic, realistic and fantastic, but it is chiefly as a writer of comedies of manners and of one-act farces that he made his name. His comedies usually take place in Madrid or in Moraleda, an imaginary provincial town in Castile. Whereas in his earlier plays Benavente had been chiefly interested in giving a faithful portrait of society, his later works show an increasing concern for a tight dramatic structure.  Benavente is best known for such plays as *La Gobernadora* (1901) [The Governor’s Wife], Rosas de otoño (1905) [Autumnal Roses], and particularly *Señora ama* ( 1908) [The Lady of the House] and *La Malquerida* (1913) [The Wrongly Loved], two psychological dramas which take place in a rural atmosphere. *Los intereses creados* (1907) [*The Bonds of Interest*] has repeatedly been called Benavente’s masterpiece, and it is certainly, of all his plays, the one that has most often been seen on the stage. A note of ironic resignation marks the delicate allegory of this play, the thesis of which affirms the necessity of evil. Mention should also be made of the play *Hijos, padres de sus padres* [*Sons, Fathers of Their Parents*], which appeared in the year of Benavente’s death. His collected plays were published in ten volumes between the years 1941 and 1955.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Jacinto Benavente died on July 14, 1954.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1000 |
| Interview |  |
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| ID | 1001 |
| Biographical | Anatole France, pseudonym for Jacques Anatole Thibault (1844-1924), was the son of a Paris book dealer. He received a thorough classical education at the Collège Stanislas, a boys’ school in Paris, and for a while he studied at the École des Chartes. For about twenty years he held diverse positions, but he always had enough time for his own writings, especially during his period as assistant librarian at the Senate from 1876 to 1890. His literary output is vast, and though he is chiefly known as a novelist and storyteller, there is hardly a literary genre that he did not touch upon at one time or another. France is a writer in the mainstream of French classicism. His style, modelled on Voltaire and Fénélon, as well as his urbane scepticism and enlightened hedonism, continue the tradition of the French eighteenth century. This outlook on life, which appears in all his works, is explicitly expressed in collection of aphorisms, *Le Jardin d’Épicure* (1895) [*The Garden of Epicurus*].  France had written several stories and novels before he achieved his first great success with *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard* (1881). The novel received a prize from the Académie Française, of which France became a member in 1896.  In 1885 he published *Le Livre de mon ami* [*My Friend’s Book*], a kind of autobiographical novel, which he continued with Pierre Nozière (1899), *Le Petit Pierre* (1918), and *La Vie au fleur* (1922) [*The Bloom of Life*]. From 1888 to 1892 France was the literary critic of the newspaper *Le Temps*. His reviews, inspired by the scepticism of Renan, but highly subjective, were collected in four volumes under the title *La Vie littéraire* (1888-92) [*On Life and Letters*]. About this time France turned sharply against the naturalism of Zola. His own work of this period consists of historical fiction that evokes past civilizations with great charm and deep insight. The period of transition from paganism to Christianity was one of his favourites. In 1889 appeared *Balthazar*, a fanciful version of the story of one of the Magi, and in 1890 *Thaïs*, the story of the conversion of an Alexandrian courtesan during the Christian era. *L’Étui de nacre* (1892) [*Mother of Pearl*] is the story of a hermit and a faun, an ironic conjunction typical of France’s art.  In 1893 France published his most celebrated novel, *La Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédauque* [*At the Sign of the Reine Pédauque*], a vast tableau of life in eighteenth century France. The central figure of the novel, the Abbé Coignard, a complex, ironical, and lovable character, reappears in *Les Opinions de Jérôme Coignard* (1893) and the collection of stories *Le Puits de Sainte Claire* (1895) [*The Well of Saint Claire*]. With the tragic love story, *Le Lys rouge* (1894) [*The Red Lily*], France returned to a contemporary subject and in the following years wrote *Histoire contemporaine* (1896-1901), a group of prose works, not really novels, that have their unity in the character of Professor Bergeret, one of France’s most famous creations.  In his later years France became increasingly interested in social questions. He protested the verdict in the Dreyfus case and developed some sympathies for socialism. Among his last important works were a biography of Joan of Arc (1908), *Les Dieux ont soif* (1912) [*The Gods are Athirst*], and *La Révolte des anges* (1914) [*The Revolt of the Angels*]. The collected works of Anatole France were published in twenty-five volumes between 1925 and 1935.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Anatole France died on October 12, 1924.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1001 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1002 |
| Biographical | Knut Hamsun (1859-1952) was born in Gudbrandsdalen, Norway, and grew up in poverty in Hamarøy in Nordland. From early childhood he was a shoemaker’s apprentice, but was also a road worker, stonemason, junior-level teacher, and so on. He spent some years in America, travelling and working as a tram driver, and published his impressions, chiefly satirical, under the title *Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv* (1889) [The Intellectual Life of Modern America]. The novel *Sult* (1890) [Hunger] and even more so *Pan* (1894) led to Hamsun’s literary breakthrough and *Sult* is regarded as the first genuinely modern novel in Norwegian literature.  Hamsun’s work is determined by a deep aversion to civilization and the belief that man’s only fulfilment lies with the soil. This primitivism (and its concomitant distrust of all things modern) found its fullest expression in Hamsun’s masterpiece *Markens Grøde* (1917) [*Growth of the Soil*]. His early works usually centre on an outcast, a vagabond figure, aggressively opposed to civilization. In his middle period, Hamsun’s aggressiveness gives way to melancholy resignation about the loss of youth. The decay of age is the theme of such plays as *Livets Spil* (1896) [Game of Life] and *Aftenrøde* (1898) [ Sunset], as well as of the novels *Under Høststjernen* (1906)[*Under the Autumn Star*], *Benoni* (1908), and *En Vandrer Spiller med Sordin* (1909) [*A Wanderer Plays on Muted Strings*]. In 1904 Hamsun also published a volume of poems, *Det vilde Kor* [The Wild Chorus].  Hamsun’s later works focused less on individual characters and more on broad attacks on civilization. Apart from *Marken’s Grøde* one should mention *Børn av Tiden* (1913) [Children of the Age], Segelfoss By (1915) [*Segelfoss Town*] *Landstrykere* (1927) [*Vagabonds*], *August* (1930), *Men Livet lever* (1933) [*The Road leads on*], and *Ringen sluttet* (1936) [*The Ring is Closed*].  Hamsun’s admiration for Germany, which was of long standing, made him sympathetic toward the Nazi invasion of Norway in 1940. After the war he was sentenced to the loss of his property, temporarily put under psychiatric observation, and spent his last years in poverty. A fifteen-volume edition of his complete works was published in 1954, two years after his death.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Knut Hamsun died on 19 February 1952.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1002 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1003 |
| Biographical | I was born on April 24, 1845, in the little town of Liestal in the Canton of Baselland. When I was four we moved to Bern, where my father had been appointed treasurer of the newly established Swiss Confederacy. In the winter of 1856-57 I returned home with my parents. I attended the Gymnasium at Basle and lived with an aunt; later I lived in Liestal and went by train to Basle daily to attend the Obergymnasium called the «Pädagogium». Wilhelm Wackernagel and Jacob Burckhardt were my teachers there. At my father’s request I took up the study of law at the University of Zürich In 1863. Later, 1865-70, I studied theology in Zürich, Heidelberg, and Basle. After taking my theological examination at Basle I went to Petersburg at the invitation of General Standertskjöld to be the tutor of his younger children. I left for Petersburg in August, 1871 and stayed there until 1879. During this period, spent partly in Russia and partly in Finland, I worked on *Prometheus und Epimetheus*, which, after my return to Switzerland, I published in 1881 at my own expense under the pseudonym Carl Felix Tandem. The book was completely neglected; because it was not even reviewed I abandoned all hope of making poetry my living and was compelled instead to teach school (Neuveville, Canton Bern, 1881-1885) and work for newspapers (*Grenzpost*, Basle, 1885-86; *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 1890-92). In July, 1892, fate suddenly granted me financial independence. I moved to Lucerne, where I have lived happily with my family ever since. The following works of mine appeared after *Prometheus und Epimetheus: Extramundana* (1883), a book which I consider mediocre; *Schmetterlinge* (1889) [Butterflies]; *Friedli der Kolderi* (1891); *Gustav* (1892) ; *Litterarische Gleichnisse* (1892) [Literary Parables]; *Balladen* (1896); *Der Gotthard* (897); *Conrad der Leutnant* (1898); *Lachende Wahrheiten* (1898) *[Laughing Truths*]. Between 1900 and 1906 the four volumes of my epic *Olympischer Frühling* [Olympian Spring] were published: I. *Die Auffahrt* [Overture]; II. *Hera die Braut* [Hera the Bride]; III. *Die Hohe Zeit* [High Tide]; IV. *Ende und Wende* [End and Change].  The first two parts remained as unnoticed as all my other books. But between the publication of the second and third volumes, a musician, the famous Felix Weingartner, suddenly announced *Olympischer Frühling* (together with *Prometheus*) to the German public in a special pamphlet called *Carl Spitteler, ein künstlerisches Erlebnis* (München, 1904). That was the breakthrough. Felix Weingartner had discovered me for the world. To the’Swiss public I had long before been recommended by J. V. Widmann.  In 1909 a revised edition of my epic in five volumes was published; by the end of 1920 it had run into several editions. After *Olympischer Frühling* I published *Glockenlieder* (1906) [Bell Songs]; *Imago* (I908); *Gerold und Hansli, die Mädchenfeinde* (1907) [*Two Little Misogynists*], translated into several languages; and *Meine frühesten Erlebnisse* (1914) [My Earliest Experiences]…  Biographical note on Carl Spitteler  Carl Spitteler (1845-1924) revised his early Prometheus epic and published it under the title *Prometheus der Dulder* (1924) [*Prometheus the Sufferer*]. His collected works have been published in nine volumes (Zurich, 1945-50).  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Carl Spitteler died on December 29, 1924.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1003 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1004 |
| Biographical | I was born on June 2, 1857, in the Roholte vicarage at Praestö. My father was Pastor Carl Adolph Gjellerup, my mother, Anna Fibiger. After my father’s death in 1860, in Landet vicarage on Lolland (from which I still have a number of memories), I went in November of the same year to the home of my mother’s cousin, Pastor Johannes Fibiger, parish minister of the garrison church in Copenhagen, and author of *Johannes den Døber* (1857) [John the Baptist], *Nogle sagn* (1865) [Some Stories], *Kors og kaerlighed* (1858) [Cross and Love], *Den evige strid* (1878) [The Eternal Strife], and *Mit liv og levned* (1898) [My Life]. I was graduated summa cum laude from Haerslevs Grammar School in 1874. Before this I had made several attempts at writing; immediately after graduation I wrote a tragedy, *Scipio Africanus*, and a drama, *Arminius*, both of which were shown to my uncle, Professor Edvard Holm, who encouraged me and showed the latter to Christian Molbech. Nevertheless, I studied theology and lived much in the country (in Vallensved on South Sjaelland, where Fibiger was the minister, and after 1881 in Ønslev on Falster), a country life which made an indelible impression on my mind and has left its mark in all of my novels. I earned my B.D. (summa cum laude) in June of 1878. I immediately began writing *En idealist* (1878) [An Idealist], which was published in November on the same day as *Den evige strid*, both under a pseudonym. Because both books created something of a sensation, I then came into contact with Høffding, Drachmann, Schandorph, Borchsenius, the brothers Brandes, J. P. Jacobsen, and many artists. Ceaseless production followed, temporarily taking a scientific direction in *Arvelighed og moral* (1881) [Heredity and Morals], a book with an evolutionary viewpoint, which was awarded the University Gold Medal. The novel *Germanernes laerling* (1882) [The Apprentice of the Teutons] (in its very title a program for existence), a collection of poems entitled *Rødtjørn* (1881) [Hawthome], end *Aander og tider* (1882) [Spirits and Times], a requiem on Darwin, are the most noteworthy works from this time. A small inheritance made it possible for me to undertake a longer trip abroad in 1883. During a three-month stay in Rome, I pursued studies in water colour with Kronberg; later I studied pastel and oil painting. My return trip went through Switzerland, Greece, and Russia, and via Stockholm I arrived home at Christmastime. In the meantime two short stories, «Romulus» (1883) and «G-Dur» (1883) [G-Major], had come out. The travel impressions, *En klassisk maaned* (1884) [A Classical Month] and *Vandreaaret* (1885) [Wander Year], followed. In the latter of these two I broke off from the followers of Georg Brandes. Then appeared the first work of mine which was received with excitement, the lyrical tragedy *Brynhild* (1884), which had already been sketched during my student years, and which was dedicated to Eugenia. From the summer of 1885 to the fall of 1887 I lived in Dresden, where I wrote the scenes from the revolution, *Saint Just* (1885) (reworked for the stage in German in 1913 and still not published), and the dramatic-lyrical poem «Thamyris» (1887). The latter along with *Brynhild* was responsible for my receiving a state pension for life. In October of 1887 I married Eugenia Bendix, née Heusinger, and settled in Hellerup. The lyrical tragedy *Hagbard og Signe* (1888) [Hagbard and Signe], the novel *Minna* (1889), the poetry collection *Min kaerligheds bog* (1889) [The Book of my Love], and the plays *Herman Vandel* (1891) and *Wuthhorn* (1893) (performed at the Dagmar Theatre over 100 times) were written in Hellerup. I also wrote an essay about Wagner’s Nibelungenring and translated the songs of the gods in the *Edda*.  In March of 1892 I settled in Dresden. The tragedy *Kong Hjarne* (1893) [King Hjarne] and the verse comedy *Gift og modgift*(1898) [Toxin and Antitoxin] were performed at the Dagmar Theatre. After *Fabler* [Fables], *Fra vaar til høst* [From Spring to Autumn], and *To fragmenter* [Two Fragments] I bade farewell to Danish poetry. The novels Møllen (1896) [The Mill], *Ved graensen* (1897) [At the Border], *Tankelaeserinden* (1901) [The Soothsayer], and *Rudolf Stens Landpraxis* or *Reif für das Leben* ( I9I3) [Ripe for Life] were written in German, and this language, in which I had made my debut with *Pastor Mors* (1894), now became my true artistic medium. The dramas *Die Opferfeuer* (1903) [The Sacrificial Fires] (produced at the court theatres in Dresden and Dessau) and *Das Weib des Vollendeten* ( 1907) [The Wife of the Perfect One] (produced at the court theatre in Stuttgart) and the poetic novels *Der Pilger Kamanita* (1906)[*The Pilgrim Kamanita*], *Die Weltwanderer* (1910) [The World Travellers], *Der goldene Zweig* (1917) [The Golden Bough], and *Die Gottesfreunde* (1916) [The Friends of God] belong chiefly to German literature and – like *Reif für das Leben* – have found their true understanding and appreciation almost exclusively in Germany. When my first book appeared forty years earlier, it had been influenced by German idealism. Just three years later (in the thesis awarded the gold medal) I was a follower of English naturalism, after which I returned to a position under those elevated signs of the zodiac which constitute my rightful habitat, only this time the guiding star was not Hegel as in *En idealist*, but Kant and Schopenhauer.  Karl Gjellerup died in Klotzsche, near Dresden, in 1919.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Karl Gjellerup died on October 11, 1919.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1004 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1005 |
| Biographical | My father, Dines Pontoppidan, belonged to an old family of clergymen and was himself a minister. My mother, whose maiden name was Oxenbøl, was the daughter of a government official. They had sixteen children. One of the middle ones in the flock, I was born on July 24, 1857, in the small Jutland town of Fredericia. In 1863, my father was transferred to Randers, another Jutland town, where a year later, at the age of six, I experienced the invasion of the allied Prussian and Austrian armies. When I was seventeen I went to Copenhagen, where I was accepted at the Polytechnical College. After a summer trip to Switzerland, which was rich in experiences, I started writing. In the beginning I aimed at descriptions of nature and folk life until, as the years passed, the description of man became my chief interest.  My first book was published in 1881. I began with a few volumes of smaller tales, among which was *Fra hytterne* (1887) [From the Cottages]. But the subjects which especially attracted me demanded a more spacious form and a broader style. I turned to the novel, an artistic form which had in former days been neglected and had thus acquired a bad reputation, but which during the nineteenth century had developed and elevated itself to the ranks occupied by drama and the ancient epic. In a trilogy, *Det forjaettede land* (1891-95) [The Promised Land], *Lykke-Per* (1898-1904) [Lucky Peter], and *De dødes rige* (1912-16) [The Kingdom of the Dead], I have attempted to give a continuous picture of the Denmark of today through descriptions of human minds and human fates which reflect the social, religious, and political struggles of the time. Aside from this, over the years I have produced a number of minor and more personal works, wherein imagination has been allowed to play more freely. I mention *Ung elskov* (1885) [Young Love], *Minder* (1893) [Memoirs], *Den gamle Adam* (1894) [The Old Adam], *Højsang* (1896) [Song of Songs], *Borgmester Hoeck og hustru* (1905) [Mayor Hoeck and Wife], *Den kongelige gaest* (1908) [The Royal Guest], and *Hans Kvast og Melusine* (1907) [Hans Kvast and Melusine]. My collected works comprise approximately forty volumes.  Biographical note on Henrik Pontoppidan  Henrik Pontoppidan (1857-1943) wrote his last novel, *Mands himmerig* [Man’s Heaven], in 1927. The most significant work of his later years consisted of five volumes of memoirs, published between 1933 and 1943.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  *Henrik Pontoppidan died on August 21, 1943.*  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above. |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1005 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1006 |
| Biographical | *Verner von Heidenstam did not submit a biography.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1006 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1007 |
| Biographical | *Romain Rolland did not submit an autobiography.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1007 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1008 |
| Biographical | Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was the youngest son of Debendranath Tagore, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj, which was a new religious sect in nineteenth-century Bengal and which attempted a revival of the ultimate monistic basis of Hinduism as laid down in the *Upanishads*. He was educated at home; and although at seventeen he was sent to England for formal schooling, he did not finish his studies there. In his mature years, in addition to his many-sided literary activities, he managed the family estates, a project which brought him into close touch with common humanity and increased his interest in social reforms. He also started an experimental school at Shantiniketan where he tried his Upanishadic ideals of education. From time to time he participated in the Indian nationalist movement, though in his own non-sentimental and visionary way; and Gandhi, the political father of modern India, was his devoted friend. Tagore was knighted by the ruling British Government in 1915, but within a few years he resigned the honour as a protest against British policies in India.  Tagore had early success as a writer in his native Bengal. With his translations of some of his poems he became rapidly known in the West. In fact his fame attained a luminous height, taking him across continents on lecture tours and tours of friendship. For the world he became the voice of India’s spiritual heritage; and for India, especially for Bengal, he became a great living institution.  Although Tagore wrote successfully in all literary genres, he was first of all a poet. Among his fifty and odd volumes of poetry are *Manasi* (1890) [The Ideal One], *Sonar Tari* (1894) [The Golden Boat], *Gitanjali* (1910) [Song Offerings], *Gitimalya* (1914) [Wreath of Songs], and *Balaka* (1916) [The Flight of Cranes]. The English renderings of his poetry, which include *The Gardener* (1913), *Fruit-Gathering* (1916), and *The Fugitive* (1921), do not generally correspond to particular volumes in the original Bengali; and in spite of its title, *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* (1912), the most acclaimed of them, contains poems from other works besides its namesake. Tagore’s major plays are *Raja* (1910) [*The King of the Dark Chamber*], *Dakghar* (1912) [*The Post Office*], *Achalayatan* (1912) [The Immovable], *Muktadhara* (1922) [The Waterfall], and *Raktakaravi* (1926) [*Red Oleanders*]. He is the author of several volumes of short stories and a number of novels, among them *Gora* (1910), *Ghare-Baire* (1916) [*The Home and the World*], and *Yogayog* (1929) [Crosscurrents]. Besides these, he wrote musical dramas, dance dramas, essays of all types, travel diaries, and two autobiographies, one in his middle years and the other shortly before his death in 1941. Tagore also left numerous drawings and paintings, and songs for which he wrote the music himself.  *Rabindranath Tagore died on August 7, 1941.*  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above. |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1008 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1009 |
| Biographical | I was born on November 15, 1862. The place of my birth is Bad Obersalzbrunn, a spa famous for its medicinal springs. The house of my birth is the inn «Zur Preussischen Krone». My father was Robert Hauptmann, my mother Marie Hauptmann, née Straehler. I am the youngest of four children. I remember growing up in an educated and lively middle-class house.  I attended the village school, learned some Latin from a tutor, and had violin lessons. Later I went to Breslau, the capital of our province, where I lived in boardinghouses and attended a Gymnasium. Fortunately, my Breslau school period did not crush me, but it left scars from which I only slowly recovered.  I should have perished if there had not been a way out. I went to the country and began to study agriculture. The tortures of school, begun in 1874, ended in 1878. But agriculture remained an episode. Once in solitude I learned to stand on my own feet and have my own thoughts. I grew conscious of myself, my value, and my rights. In this way I gained independence, firmness, and a freedom of intellect that I still enjoy today.  Hungry for culture, I resumed to Breslau where I spent a second, happier period. I attended the art academy, did sculpturing, learned what youth, hope, and beauty are, the value of friends, masters, and teachers.  I drew, sculptured, drank, wrote poems, made plans, and built castles in Spain. In this mood I exchanged the art academy of Breslau for the University of Jena in Thuringia. In this mood I exchanged Jena for Rome, and later Rome for Berlin.  Although I still worked as a sculptor in Rome, it was here that I finally decided upon literature. A play *Vor Sonnenaufgang* [*Before Dawn*] made me publicly known in 1889.  My later works I wrote partly in Berlin, partly in Schreiberhau in the Riesengebirge, partly in Agnetendorf, partly in Italy: they are the condensation of outward and inward fortunes.  Biographical note on Gerhart Hauptmann  Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946) gained fame as one of the founders of German Naturalism. After *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, which created a scandal and, at the same time, was hailed as the beginning of naturalistic drama in Germany, he wrote his most successful play, *Die Weber* (1892) [*The Weavers*], the comedy *Der Biberpelz* (1893) [*The Beaver Coat*], the historical drama *Florian Geyer* (1896), *Fuhrmann Henschel* (1898) [*Drayman Henschel*], *Rose Bernd* (1903), and *Die Ratten* (1911) [*The Rats*]. But he also wrote symbolic works like *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* (1893) [*The Assumption of Hannele*] and *Die versunkene Glocke* (1896) [*The Sunken Bell*]. Hauptmann’s later works are often literary in inspiration to the point of being – in the widest sense – revisions of European classics. *Der arme Heinrich* (1902) [Henry of Auë] is modelled on a German medieval romance; *Hamlet in Wittenberg* (1935) challenged Shakespeare and *Der grosse Traum* (1942-43) [The Great Dream] Dante. Greece influenced him deeply, but in his image of Greece archaic and chthonic features predominated: *Griechischer Frühling* (1908) [Greek Spring], *Der Bogen des Odysseus* (1914) [The Bow of Odysseus], and above all the *Atridentetralogie*, of which the last two parts, *Agamemnons Tod* [Agamemnon’s Death] and *Elektra*, were published posthumously in 1948.  Other works include the erotic novel *Der Ketzer von Soana* (1918) [*The Heretic of Soana*], *Buch der Leidenschaft* (1930) [Book of Passion], a thinly veiled account of his divorce and remarriage in 1904, and the two autobiographical volumes *Abenteuer meiner Jugend* (1937 and 1949) [*Adventure of My Youth*]. His collected works in seventeen volumes were published in 1942.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Gerhart Hauptmann died on June 6, 1946.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1009 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1010 |
| Biographical | Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), born in Ghent, Belgium, came from a well-to-do family. He was educated at a Jesuit college and read law, but a short practice as a lawyer in his home town convinced him that he was unfit for the profession. He was drawn toward literature during a stay in Paris, where he associated with a number of men of letters, in particular Villiers de l’Isle Adam, who greatly influenced him. Maeterlinck established himself in Paris in 1896 but later lived at Saint-Wandrille, an old Norman abbey that he had restored. He was predominantly a writer of lyrical dramas, but his first work was a collection of poems entitled *Serres chaudes* [Ardent Talons]. It appeared in 1889, the same year in which his first play, *La Princesse Maleine*, received enthusiastic praise from Octave Mirbeau, the literary critic of *Le Figaro*, and made him famous overnight. Lack of action, fatalism, mysticism, and the constant presence of death characterize the works of Maeterlinck’s early period, such as *L’Intruse* (1890) [The Intruder], *Les Aveugles* (1890) [*The Blind*], and the love dramas *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1892), *Alladine et Palomides* (1894), and *Aglavaine et Sélysette* (1896). The shadow of death looms even larger in his later plays, *Joyzelle* (1903) and *Marie Magdeleine* (1909), Maeterlinck’s version of a Paul Heyse play, while *L’Oiseau bleu* (1909) [*The Blue Bird*] is marked by a fairy-tale optimism. *Le Bourgmestre de Stilemonde* (1919) [*The Burgomaster of Stilemonde*] was written under the impact of the First World War.  Maeterlinck developed his strongly mystical ideas in a number of prose works, among them *Le Trésor des Humbles* (1896) [*The Treasure of the Humble*], *La Sagesse et la destinée* (1898) [*Wisdom and Destiny*], and *Le Temple enseveli* (1902) [*The Buried Temple*]. His most popular work was perhaps *La Vie des abeilles* (1900) [*The Life of the Bee*], which was followed by *L’Intelligence des Fleurs* (1907) [*The Intelligence of the Flowers*], studies of termites (1927), and of ants (1930). In later life, Maeterlinck became known chiefly for his philosophical essays. In 1932 he was given the title of Count of Belgium.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Maurice Maeterlinck died on May 6, 1949.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1010 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1011 |
| Biographical | I was born in Berlin on March 15, 1830, the second son of the royal university professor K.W.L. Heyse and his wife Julie, née Saaling, who came from a Jewish family. After attending the Gymnasium between my eighth and seventeenth years, I studied classical philology at Berlin University for two years under Boeckh and Lachmann, and with the friendly support of Emanuel Geibel and Franz Kugler I dabbled in all sorts of poetry. In Bonn, where I studied for a year, I changed from classical to Romance philology, taught there by its great founder, F. Diez, and at the beginning of 1852 I received the doctorate for a dissertation on the refrain in Provençal poetry. In the autumn of the same year I went to Rome on a grant by the Prussian Ministry of Culture. For a year I stayed at various Southern places, continuing my Romance studies at Italian libraries. The findings were published by W. Hertz in 1856 under the title *Romanische Inedita*.  The year 1853 yielded even greater results in creative writing. In the spring of 1854 some of my publications persuaded King Maximilian II of Bavaria to offer me, at the suggestion of Emanuel Geibel, a position in Munich with an annual salary of 1000 guilders, to take part in his so-called symposia, weekly soirées at which scholars and poets were gathered. Before I moved I was married to Kugler’s daughter Margarete, whom death took away from me in the autumn of 1862 after she had borne me four children. Five years later I married a young woman from Munich, Anna Schubart, with whom for forty-four years I have lived happily, except for the premature deaths of two children and a son from my first marriage.  I have given a detailed account of the first four decades of my life until the death of my dear royal patron in my *Jugenderinnerungen und Bekenntnisse* (Berlin, 1900) [Memories of my Youth and Confessions]. From that time on outward events receded; my life has passed without particular events or adventures and has been devoted entirely to writing. Here is a list of books published by the Cotta Publishing House:  *Gesammelte Werke* (1871-191O) [Collected Works], 36 vols.; *Dramatische Dichtungen* (1864-1905) [Dramatic Works], 36 vols.; *Romane, Novellen, lyrische und epische Gedichte* (1902-1912) [Novels, Novellas, Lyrical and Epic Poems], series I, 12 vols.; series II, 40 vols.; *Italienische Dichter seit der Mitte des 18ten Jahrhunderts: übersetzungen und Studien* (1889-1905) [Italian Poets since the Middle of the I8th Century: Translations and Studies], 5 vols.  Published by other publishers: *Deutscher Novellenschatz* (1871-76) [Treasury of German Novellas], 24 vols.; *Novellenschatz des Auslands* (1872-76) [Treasury of Foreign Novellas], 14 vols.; *Neuer Deutscher Novellenschatz* (1884-88) [New Treasury of German Novellas], 24 vols. Also, a translation of José Caveda y Nava’s history of Spanish architecture, *Geschichte der Spanischen Baukunst* (1858).  Biographical note on Paul Heyse  Paul Heyse (1830-1914) was made a nobleman by the King of Bavaria in 1910. His complete works were published in fifteen volumes in 1924, ten years after his death.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Paul Heyse died on April 2, 1914.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1011 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1012 |
| Biographical | Selma Lagerlöf (1858-1940) was born in Östra Emterwik, Värmland, Sweden. She was brought up on Mårbacka, the family estate, which she did not leave until 1881, when she went to a teachers’ college at Stockholm. In 1885 she became a teacher at the girls’ secondary school in Landskrona. She had been writing poetry ever since she was a child, but she did not publish anything until 1890, when a Swedish weekly gave her the first prize in a literary competition and published excerpts from the book which was to be her first, best, and most popular work. *Gösta Berlings Saga* was published in 1891, but went unnoticed until its Danish translation received wide critical acclaim and paved the way for the book’s lasting success in Sweden and elsewhere. In 1895 financial support from the royal family and the [Swedish Academy](https://www.svenskaakademien.se/en) encouraged her to abandon teaching altogether. She travelled in Italy and wrote *Antikrists mirakler* (1897) [*The Miracles of Antichrist*], a novel set in Sicily. After several minor works she published *Jerusalem* (1901-1902) [*The Holy City*], a novel about Swedish peasants who emigrated to the Holy Land and whom she had visited in 1900. This work was her first immediate success. A book intended as a primer for elementary schools became one of the most charming children’s books in any language: *Nils Holgerssons underbara resa genom Sverige* (1906) [*The Wonderful Adventures of Nils*].  None of her later works matched the power or success of *Gösta Berlings Saga*. In the mid-twenties she published the historical trilogy: *Löwensköldska Ringen* (1925), *Charlotte Löwensköld* (1927), and *Anna Svärd* (1928) [*The Ring of the Löwenskölds, 3 vols.*]. She also published several volumes of reminiscences under the title *Mårbacka* (1922-32).  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  *Selma Lagerlöf died on March 16, 1940.*  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above. |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1012 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1013 |
| Biographical | Rudolf Eucken (1846-1926) was born in Aurich, Germany. He studied philosophy, philology, and history at the universities of Göttingen and Berlin and wrote his dissertation on the language of Aristotle. He became a professor of philosophy at Basle in 1871 and from 1874 on held the chair of philosophy at Jena. Eucken was an idealist philosopher who developed his flexible system in many works. He revised his books and brought them up to date over a period of several decades, so that some of his works ran into more than a dozen editions. His main works were *Geistige Stromungen der Gegenwart* (1908) [*Main Currents of Modern Thought* ], *Die Lebensanschauungen der grosser Denker* (1890) [*The Problem of Human Life as Viewed by the Great Thinkers from Plato to the Present Time* ], *Der Kampf um einen geistigen Lebensinhalt* (1896) [The Struggle for a Spiritual Content of Life], *Der Wahrheitsgehalt der Religion* (1901) [*The Truth of Religion* ], *Grundlinien einer neuen Lebensanschauung* (1907) [*Life’s Basis and Life’s Ideal: The Fundamentals of a New Philosophy of Life* ], *Present Day Ethics in their Relation to the Spiritual Life* (the Deem Lectures given at New York University in 1913), and *Der Sinn und Wert des Lebens* (1908) [*The Meaning and Value of Life* ]. Eucken developed his philosophy of history in an essay entitled «Philosophie der Geschichte» (1907), which appeared in the series *Die Kultur der Gegenwart* [Contemporary Civilization].  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Rudolf Eucken died on September 14, 1926.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1013 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1014 |
| Biographical | Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was born in Bombay, but educated in England at the United Services College, Westward Ho, Bideford. In 1882 he returned to India, where he worked for Anglo-Indian newspapers. His literary career began with *Departmental Ditties* (1886), but subsequently he became chiefly known as a writer of short stories. A prolific writer, he achieved fame quickly. Kipling was the poet of the British Empire and its yeoman, the common soldier, whom he glorified in many of his works, in particular *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888) and *Soldiers Three* (1888), collections of short stories with roughly and affectionately drawn soldier portraits. His *Barrack Room Ballads* (1892) were written for, as much as about, the common soldier. In 1894 appeared his *Jungle Book*, which became a children’s classic all over the world. *Kim* (1901), the story of Kimball O’Hara and his adventures in the Himalayas, is perhaps his most felicitous work. Other works include *The Second Jungle Book* (1895), *The Seven Seas* (1896), *Captains Courageous* (1897), *The Day’s Work* (1898), *Stalky and Co.* (1899), *Just So Stories* (1902), *Trafficks and Discoveries* (1904), *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906), A*ctions and Reactions* (1909), *Debits and Credits* (1926), *Thy Servant a Dog* (1930), and *Limits and Renewals* (1932). During the First World War Kipling wrote some propaganda books. His collected poems appeared in 1933.  Kipling was the recipient of many honorary degrees and other awards. In 1926 he received the Gold Medal of the Royal Society of Literature, which only Scott, Meredith, and Hardy had been awarded before him.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Rudyard Kipling died on January 18, 1936.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1014 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1015 |
| Biographical | Giosuè Carducci (1835-1907) was born in Val di Castello, a small town near Pisa. He was early attracted to the Greek and Roman authors; in addition, he conscientiously studied the Italian classics: Dante, Tasso, and Alfieri. At the age of twenty he graduated with a degree in philosophy and letters from the University of Pisa. After several difficult years in which he taught in various high schools, he was appointed to the chair of Italian Literature at the University of Bologna, a post that he held until his retirement in 1904.  Inspired both by his own time as well as by his study of the classical and Italian poets, Carducci began writing poetry when he was a child. The first two collections of his poetry were *Rime* (1857) [*Rhymes*] and *Levia Gravia* (1868) [*Light and Heavy*]. Both reveal his enthusiasm for and imitation of the ancients as well as a strong revolutionary tendency. *Inno a Satana* (1865) [*Hymn to Satan*], for which Carducci was considered to be a «notorious praiser of Satan», is the full expression of his free thought and of modern ideas, inventions, and revolutions. *Giambi ed epodi* (1882) [*Iambics and Epodes*], a collection of satiric poems of a political nature, expresses Carducci’s indignation with his compatriots. In the *Nuove poesie* (1873) [*New Poems*] end the three collections of Odi barbare (1877, 1882, and 1889) [*The Barbarian Odes*], his poetic forms reach perfection.  Carducci was also an excellent translator, and the lyrics of Goethe and Heine greatly influenced the development of his own poetry.  In addition to his fame as a poet he was a noted literary historian and an eminent orator. He conducted research in every phase of literature and eloquently expressed his findings in *Studi letterati* (1874) [*Literary Studies*], *Bozetti critici e discorsi letterari* (1876) [*Critical Sketches and Literary Discussigns*], and many other works.  Carducci, moreover, led an active political life. After having been named an honorary citizen of Bologna, he was elected to the Senate in 1890; he served as deputy in the House of Representatives for a short time. Carducci’s poetry inspired his compatriots in the war for Italian independence, and he enjoyed an immense popularity both at home and abroad. Having manifested a scholarly and dynamic personality in all his endeavours, he stands as the greatest Italian literary figure in the latter part of the nineteenth century.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Giosuè Carducci died on February 16, 1907.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1015 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1016 |
| Biographical | Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846-1916), the most outstanding and prolific Polish writer of the second half of the nineteenth century, was born in Wola Okrzejska, in the Russian part of Poland. His father’s family was actively engaged in the revolutionary struggles for Polish independence, which accounts for the strong patriotic element in Sienkiewicz’ work. Historical scholarship on the other hand ran in his mother’s family.  Sienkiewicz studied in Warsaw, but without any visible results. His talent as a writer was soon discovered. His early works are satirical sketches, betraying a strong social conscience. He made a trip to America in 1876 and travelled as far as California. His impressions were published in Polish newspapers and received very favourably. His travels provided him with material for several works, among them the brilliant short story *Latarnik* (1882) [*The Lighthouse Keeper*].  After his return to Poland, Sienkiewicz devoted himself to historical studies, the result of which was his great trilogy about Poland in the midseventeenth century. *Ogniem i mieczem* [*With Fire and Sword*], *Potop* [*The Deluge*] and *Pan Wolodyjowski* [*Pan Michael*] were published in 1884, 1886, and 1888 respectively. The historical novels were followed by works on contemporary subjects: *Bez dogmatu* (1891) [*Without Dogma*], a psychological study of a sophisticated decadent man, and *Rodzina Polanieckich* (1894) [*Children of the Soil*], a peasant novel. In 1895 Sienkiewicz published his greatest success, *Quo Vadis*, a novel of Christian persecutions at the time of Nero.  In his later novels he returned again to historical subjects. *Krzyzacy* (1900) deals with a period of medieval history, the victory of the Poles over the Teutonic Knights; *Na polu chwaly* ( 1906) [*On the Field of Glory*] is a sequel to his seventeenth-century trilogy. His last works *Wiry* (1910) [*Whirlpools*] and *W pustyni i w puszczy* (1912) [*In Desert and Wilderness*] again deal with contemporary subjects.  Sienkiewicz was immensely popular. In 1900, a national subscription raised enough funds to buy for him the castle in which his ancestors had lived. The complete edition of his works, published 1948-55, runs to sixty volumes.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Henryk Sienkiewicz died on November 15, 1916.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1016 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1017 |
| Biographical | Frédéric Mistral (1830-1914) came from an old and well-to-do family of landowners that had settled in Provence in the sixteenth century. He was deeply influenced by his early years in the leisurely and patriarchal manor of his father. Mistral read law, but after taking his degree devoted himself entirely to writing poetry in Provençal, the passion for which had been aroused during his school days by one of his masters, the Provençal poet Joseph Roumanille. Mistral’s aim was to make neo-Provençal a literary language conforming to fixed standards of purity. For this purpose he spent many years on the compilation of the *Trésor dóu Félibrige*, a dictionary of Provençal published by the «Felibrige», a literary society that Mistral had founded.  Mistral was both an epic and a lyrical poet. His work is determined by Provence, not only in language, but in content and feeling. Provence is the true hero of all his poems. His first great success was *Miréio* (1859), a story of two star-crossed lovers. It was followed by *Calendau* (1867), a fantastic narrative poem about a Provençal fisherman. Other works include *Lis Isclo d’or* (1876) [*Islands of Gold*], a collection of poems; «Nerto» (1884), a narrative poem based on a chronicle of the Avignon Popes; *La Rèino Jano* (1890); and *Lou pouémo dóu rose* (1897) [*The Song of the Rhone*]. A five-volume edition of his works appeared between 1887 and 1910; three volumes of unpublished works appeared posthumously (1926-30). Mistral wrote an autobiography *Moun espelido: Memori è raconte* (1906) [Memoirs of Mistral]. His efforts to revive Provençal were at various times supported by the Academie Française and the Institut de France.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Frédéric Mistral died on March 25, 1914.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1017 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1018 |
| Biographical | José de Echegaray (1833-1916), son of a professor of Greek, was born in Madrid. He went to an engineering school, studied economics, and had a distinguished career in the Spanish Government. He was successively Minister of Public Works and Finance Minister. At the height of his career he turned to the stage, a passion that dated back to his youth. A mathematician, engineer, and administrator, he built his plays with the same regard for exactitude and duty that inspired his public life. Conflicts involving duty are at the heart of most of his plays, and he upheld the idea with uncompromising severity. His exalted romanticism appears in his choice of subjects. Like his great predecessors of the Spanish Golden Age, Echegaray was a prolific playwright. His most famous plays were: *La esposa del vengador* (1874) [The Avenger’s Wife]; *En el puño de la espada* (1875) [The Sword’s Handle]; *En el pilar y en la cruz* (1878) [The Stake and the Cross], a play defending the freedom of thought, which aroused much controversy; *Conflicto entre dos deberes* (1882) [Conflict of Duties], the title of which is programmatic for Echegaray’s entire work; *O locura ó santidad* (1877) [*Madman or Saint*]; and *El gran Galeoto* (1881) [*Great Galeoto* ].  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *José Echegaray died on September 4, 1916.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1018 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1019 |
| Biographical | Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson (1832-1910) was the son of a Norwegian pastor. At school in Christiania (Oslo) Ibsen was one of his fellow students. Bjørnson participated early in the movement for a national Norwegian theatre and wrote some poetic plays which he did not publish. While a student, he became a literary critic for the *Morgenbladet* in 1854 and contributed criticism as well as stories to various other newspapers. In 1857 he succeeded in starting a literary career when he wrote the historical play *Mellem slagene* (Between the Battles) and became stage director at the Norwegian Theatre in Bergen. During the following years he took part in national politics (as he did all his life) and divided his creative activities between historical tragedies and country tales such as *Arne* (1858) and *En glad gut* (1860) “A Happy Boy”, both of which were meant to show a kinship between the contemporary peasant and the saga heroes of old in their taciturnity and love of adventure. The years 1860-1863 he spent abroad, mostly in Italy, where he was deeply affected by Michelangelo and Greek sculpture.  The seventies were marked by a second visit to Italy (1873-1875) and a turn toward realism and social problems which produced the plays *En fallit* (The Bankrupt) and *Redaktøren* (The Editor), both in 1875. In *Kongen* (1877) “The King”, he dealt with the loss of Christian ideals in today’s secular society, a concern which led him into a religious crisis and to a rejection of the church dogma. In 1882 he left Norway and spent five years abroad where *En hanske* (1883) “A Gauntlet” was written, a play in which he attacked hypocrisy concerning sexual matters as well as the liberal attitude of the Bohemians. During the following years he wrote educational novels such as *Det flager i byen og på havnen*(1884) “The Heritage of the Kurts” and *På Guds veie* (1889) “In God’s Way”, with its main theme of religious tolerance, as well as the educational play *Over oevne, annet stykke* (1895) “Beyond Human Power”.  His last important plays were *Paul Lange og Tora Parsberg* (1899), which treats the theme of political tolerance, and finally *Nar den ny vin blomstrer* (1909) “When the New Wine Blooms”. Bjørnson’s collected works were published in nine volumes in 1919.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson died on April 26, 1910.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1019 |
| Interview |  |
|  |  |
| ID | 1020 |
| Biographical | Theodor Mommsen (1817-1903), the greatest classical historian of the nineteenth century, was born in Garding, Schleswig, the son of a Protestant minister. He read law and classics at Kiel from 1838-43, and after a few years in France and Italy and a short career in journalism, he became a professor of law at the University of Leipzig. His involvement in the revolution of 1848-49 led to his dismissal in 1850. After holding academic positions at the universities of Zürich and Breslau he was appointed to the chair of Ancient History at the University of Berlin in 1858. He was permanent secretary of the Prussian Academy of Arts and Sciences. In the seventies he was an active and prominent member of the Prussian Parliament, first as a National Liberal and later as a Liberal.  Mommsen’s many writings – a bibliography up to 1887 lists over 900 items – revolutionized the study of Roman history. He was the general editor of, and chief contributor to, the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, the gigantic collection of Roman inscriptions published by the Berlin Academy (1867-1959). This work laid the foundations for a systematic study of Roman government, administration, economics, and finance. Mommsen’s books on Roman coinage and on Roman constitutional and criminal law are still classics in their fields. But he was more than a brilliant scholar with a tremendous grasp of detail and a powerful talent of organization. He was a vivid and powerful writer. His passionate involvement in the revolution of 1848-49 deeply affected the point of view of his main work, the incomplete *Römische Geschichte* (1854-55, 1885) [History of Rome]. His contempt for the senatorial oligarchy and the «weakling» Cicero, as well as his boundless admiration for the energy and statesmanship of Julius Caesar, for a long time dominated the standard view of the history of that era. The work covers the history of the Roman Republic; a history of the Empire was planned but never written, except for a volume on provincial administration under the Empire.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Theodor Mommsen died on November 1, 1903.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
| Podcast |  |
| Telephone  interview | 1020 |
| Interview |  |
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| ID | 1021 |
| Biographical | Rene Francois Armand Prudhomme (1839-1907) was the son of a French shopkeeper. He wanted to become an engineer, but an eye disease terminated his training at a polytechnic institute. He studied literature, and after a brief and unsuccessful interlude in industry, he took up law, though without much conviction, and worked in a solicitor’s office. Sully Prudhomme was a member of the «Conference La Bruyère», a distinguished student society, and the favourable reception that his fellow members gave to his juvenilia encouraged him to go on writing poetry. His first volume, *Stances et Poèmes* (1865) [Stanzas and Poems], was well reviewed by Sainte-Beuve and established his reputation. Sully Prudhomme combined a Parnassian regard for formal perfection and elegance with philosophic and scientific interests, which are revealed, for instance, in his translation of the first book of Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* (1878-79). Some of his other poetic works are: *Croquis Italiens* (1866-68) [Italian Notebook]; *Solitudes* (1869); *Impressions de la guerre* (1870) [Impressions of War]; *Les Destins* (1872) [Destinies]; *La Révolte des fleurs* (1872) [Revolt of the Flowers ]; *La France* (1874); *Les Vaines Tendresses* (1875) [Vain Endearments]; *La Justice* (1878); and *Le Bonheur* (1888) [Happiness]. *Les Epaves* (1908) [Flotsam], published posthumously, was a collection of miscellaneous poems. A collected edition of his writings in five volumes appeared in 1900-01. He also wrote essays and a book on Pascal, *La Vraie Religion selon Pascal* (1905) [Pascal on true Religion]. Sully Prudhomme was a member of the French Academy from 1881 until his death in 1907.  From [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html)*, Literature 1901-1967*, Editor Horst Frenz, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1969  This autobiography/biography was written at the time of the award and first published in the book series [*Les Prix Nobel*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lesprix.html). It was later edited and republished in [*Nobel Lectures*](https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_organizations/nobelfoundation/publications/lectures/index.html). To cite this document, always state the source as shown above.  *Sully Prudhomme died on September 7, 1907.* |
| Autobiographical |  |
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