

Introduction



Addressing current questions about unity in diversity in a multicultural world of change, several Nobel Laureates of Literature have also focused on the difference between their identity as an author and their identity as a social being. This aspect of their creative selves makes them living in, as it were, two different and quite distinct worlds. There is a distance between them that is bridged only in the literary work, where these two worlds are intimately connected and presuppose one another. V. S. NAIPAUL, living in England and born in Trinidad, discusses this topic in his Nobel Lecture of 2001, “Two Worlds”. His literary domain, encompassing the West Indies as well as India, Africa, America, and the Islamic countries of the East, reflects his own multicultural background, and in some of his most famous texts, the difficulty of settling down or finding a way “home” is the theme. An example is his novel *The Enigma of Arrival*.

In a similar note, NADINE GORDIMER discussed the complex role of the writer in her Nobel Lecture ten years earlier, “Writing and Being”. A white woman of Jewish descent, living all her life in South Africa, she early sided with the black liberation movement. Her work features a transcendence of human identity reaching far beyond race and gender. In her novels she identifies with her protagonists, be they white or black, men or women, criminals or saints, making them deeply understandable.

“A Single, Homeless, Circling Satellite” is a line drawn from a poem by DEREK WALCOTT, referring to himself and many other people in the heterogeneous and colonial world of the West Indies. The small Caribbean Island republic of St. Lucia, which gained independence in 1979, had been the focus of a prolonged struggle between the colonial powers, changing hands fourteen times. Europeans, who brought slaves from Africa, Walcott stemming from both, populated it. In this mid-world between the continents, a point of connection and passage between North and South America, Africa and Europe, Derek Walcott’s intense search for an identity — by connecting to local as well as foreign traditions — represents an existential struggle of universal significance.

In the novels and short stories of NAGUIB MAHFOUZ, there is a constant seeking for Egyptian identity behind the weft of illusion and reality. Calling himself “a son of two civilizations” — the Egyptian and the Arabic-Islamic — he started his career as a writer by exploring ancient Egyptian history. He did not only do so to understand the contemporary scene or to criticize it in a covert fashion. His aim was to seek the identity of his own country in the space-time of his existence and the sphere of his Self. He also obviously sought for a reliable anchorage in the distant past during years of war, upheaval, and calamity. As an Arabic author, he transcends the limits of Arabic and Moslem tradition, to which he belongs, tracing his heritage and seeking his identity as an Egyptian.

Born in London by Australian parents, the Australian writer PATRICK WHITE is yet another instance of mixed identity, the difficulty of settling down and a feeling of being lost in this world. His autobiographic book *Flaws in the Glass*, describes how he became a skeptic and an endless seeker. The article found in the present collection shows that his main identity as a writer is that of an existential explorer aiming at a deep sense of humanity.

After that, attention is paid to ERNEST HEMINGWAY (USA) in an inquiry into the person behind the popular image and the macho myth; a penetration based on new research and posthumously published writings. Modern scholarship has added immensely to the depth of our understanding of Hemingway, and many new aspects of Hemingway’s life and works that were previously obscured by his public image have

now emerged into the light. Later biographic research has revealed, behind the macho façade of boxing, bullfighting, big-game hunting and deep-sea fishing he built up, a sensitive and vulnerable mind that was full of contradictions. In Hemingway, sentimentality, sympathy, and empathy are turned inwards, not restrained, but vibrant below and beyond the level of fact and fable. In the new light, he emerges as an identity-seeking and insecure man, unknown to the public.

GRAZIA DELEDDA — the first Italian woman to receive the Nobel Prize for literature — remained the spokeswoman and storyteller of her Sardinian culture even after her removal to Rome. She wrote in Italian, but her mother’s tongue was *logudorese sardo*, a local dialect that can be regarded as another Roman language altogether. Her official education lasted only four years and was on the level of primary school, yet her career as an Italian writer started in her teens, when she began writing short stories for a Roman magazine. Deledda found more infamy than fame in her Sardinian village. Suspicion and rumors followed her. Her mother was attacked for being an irresponsible parent; village women burned a magazine and shouted their reproaches. To deflect the shock and anger engendered by her fiction, Deledda published under pseudonyms for a while, but her literary output grew to enormous proportions. For life sticking to her Sardinian identity and origin, her life project was to create a genuine Sardinian literature on her own and become the Italian voice of her island. However, having attained her goal to immortalize the society she came from, Grazia Deledda ended up as one of its severest critics.

AMARTYA SEN, who received The Bank of Sweden Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel 1998, lives in the USA and Great Britain but grew up in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, and spent three of his childhood years in Mandalay, Burma. He was, however, born in Santiniketan, on the campus of Nobel Laureate RABINDRANATH TAGORE’s Visva-Bharati (both a school and a college), where his maternal grandfather Kshiti Mohan Sen used to teach Sanskrit as well as ancient and medieval Indian culture. During his education in Dhaka, Amartya Sen was struck by Rabindranath Tagore’s approach to cultural diversity in the world: “Whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly becomes ours, wherever they might have their

origin.” Tagore argued against all separatist views, “against the intense consciousness of the separateness of one’s own people from others.”

This idea is in a particular sense embraced by Peace Prize Laureate NELSON MANDELA, whose fight for the liberation of the black nations of the Republic of South Africa originally was inspired by Indians, with whom he was soon to cooperate. The multiracial vision of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi played an important role, and the Mahatma had in fact lived and worked in South Africa for many years. By Mandela referred to as “a South African”, Gandhi’s dream was a lasting influence — “that all the different races commingle and produce a civilization that perhaps the world has not seen.”

In this spirit, Nelson Mandela’s fight for freedom was guided by an idea of integrated integrity: all nations and all religious groups of the country should have equal rights and preserve their native tongues and cultural characteristics. Thus, when the first “black” government was formed in 1994, it was in reality a “rainbow government”. Ministers of state were blacks, whites, Indians, Coloureds, Muslims, Christians, communists, liberals. When the new Constitution was accepted in 1996, twelve languages were declared official language of the country. In Mandela’s solution to the main problems of the world, all cultures meet.

In sum, this book presents some Nobel Laureates and their work, which show us how rich is the human soul and how far is the reach of human empathy.

Anders Hallengren