

Patrick White Thirty Years On

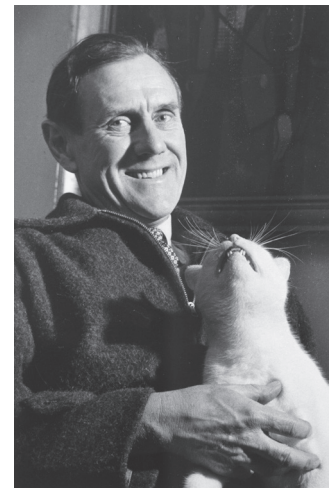
To date, Patrick White remains the only Australian to have won the Nobel Prize for Literature. And yet, the thirtieth anniversary of his death in 2020 passed by with barely a murmur. Was this merely a consequence of the pandemic or are there larger cultural forces at play? In his feature commentary in this month's *ABR*, historian and prize-winning essayist Martin Thomas considers the posthumous neglect of the great Australian writer who once described himself as a 'Londoner at heart' and who continues to challenge jingoistic and complacent forms of nationalism.

Extract from Martin Thomas's article

I suspect that White's supranational outlook and his caution in even classifying himself as 'an Australian' are among the reasons why he has receded from view, at least in his own country. He was near the end of his life in 1988 when Australia threw its birthday party to commemorate the 200 years since British arrival. Appalled that a date so unholy for Indigenous Australians could be officially celebrated, White prohibited the publication or performance of his work for the entire bicentennial year. 'More than anything, it was the need for justice for the Aborigines which put me against the Bi,' he explained.

About Martin Thomas

Professor Martin Thomas co-directs the Menzies Australia Institute at King's College, London. In addition to being an academic historian with a special interest in transnational histories, Professor Thomas is a documentary filmmaker who has worked with Indigenous communities in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory to record the theft and repatriation of ancestral remains. This was the topic of his 2013 Calibre Prize-winning essay, "Because it's your country': Bringing Back the Bones to West Arnhem Land'.



Patrick White (NLA)



Martin Thomas

Interviews

Martin Thomas is available for interview.

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