

ENGL102

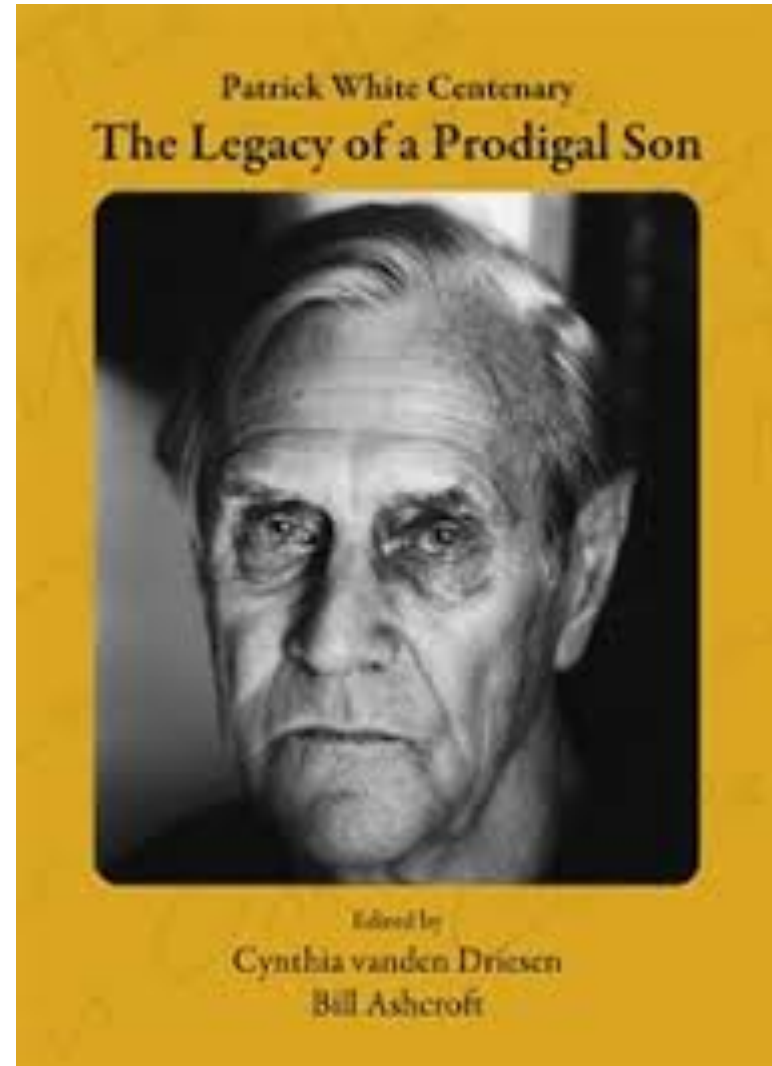
Australian Literature:
An introduction

Week 9

What are we doing today?

Patrick White
1912–1990

‘The Prodigal Son’
‘Down at the Dump’



Vincent Buckley on Patrick White

“Most of the interest in Patrick White has been centred on his attitude to Australia and to the creation or re-creation of grandiose myths. The interest is misplaced; for it is neither as a patriotic sociologist nor as a myth-maker in the narrow sense that White is important. His greatness is that of a novelist remarkable among his contemporaries for combining brilliant and wide-ranging comic insights with a world-view of magnanimous proportions and with a serious interest in the resources of language.”

(‘The novels of Patrick White’ in *The Literature of Australia*, ed G. Dutton, 1972, p. 413)

‘The Prodigal Son’, 1958

- What makes Patrick White discontented about Australia? Do you understand his reasoning? (p. 558)
- White talks about wanting to “discover the extraordinary behind the ordinary; the mystery and the poetry which alone could make bearable the lives of such people, and incidentally, my own life...” (p. 559) – what do you think he means?
- “There is the possibility that one may be helping to people a barely inhabited country with a race possessed of understanding” (p. 560) – what is White saying about his role as an Australian author?

Patrick White and the Australian novel

“On his own merits, White, it might be argued, is the first indisputably great novelist that Australia has produced, the first whose work can properly be judged in an international rather than a national forum....before White, Australian novelists used their plots as a means of *celebrating* their subject matter, whereas White uses his as a means of *discovering* the meaning of his material...It was not until White’s novels of the fifties that Australian fiction was granted a full-scale demonstration of a literary mode which did not begin and end in objective, or social, realism.” (Harry Heseltine, ‘Australian Fiction Since 1920’, in *The Literature of Australia*, ed. G. Dutton, 1972, pp. 209–210)

‘Down at the Dump’

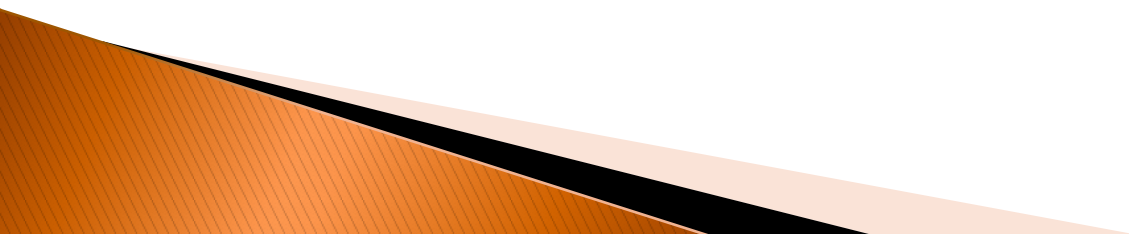
- ▶ What is Patrick White’s attitude to Daise Morrow’s relationship with Ossie Coogan? (p. 9 of printout)

Remember:

7 October: 5th blog & 4th peer review due

8 October: 20th century poetry and prose

14 October: 6th blog & 5th peer review due



Mrs Norm (Edna) Everage

