

An Undeserved Nobel Prize in Literature

One purpose of literature is to draw people closer to the good, true, and beautiful. Authors find formulas to express the best of human nature, even when framed by tragedy or adversity. The writer should present perspectives that elevate, captivate, and draw others to consider sublime ideals. Thus, many literary authors were revered and remembered because they manifested something of the soul of their respective peoples.

Postmodern writers have long abandoned this powerful vocation. Today's literature does not aim toward universal perspectives but tends to dwell upon subjective narratives without meaning or purpose. Worst of all, literature has been weaponized to reflect class struggle, porno-sexual themes, and strange ideologies. Indeed, today's writers are largely unknown to the general public because they reflect little other than themselves, their feelings, and emotions.

A Predictable Award

Thus, few people noticed that Annie Ernaux was recently awarded the 2022 Nobel Prize in literature. Most do not know this 82-year-old French writer. Her works are limited to select audiences with little projection beyond the liberal establishment. She writes inside that narrow genre of memoir-fiction in which she records her inner emotions when dealing with shame, sexism, and class.

However, her selection was predictable since the choice was much more political than literary. Her style and content conform to the prevailing liberal agenda. The announcement

brought delight to the major media.

When asked if the choice might be political, the Nobel Committee for Literature felt the need to deny the charge of politicizing. It claimed that the award was given “for the courage and clinical acuity with which she uncovers the roots, extravagance and collective restraints of personal memory.”

Feminist Manifestos and Social Commentary

However categorized, her works abound with sexual and feminist themes. Indeed, her novels are much more manifestos than literary works since they challenge Christian morals. Her first book, *Cleaned Out* (1974), is an autobiographical novel that relates a back-alley abortion she underwent when abortion was still illegal in France. Yet another, *The Happening* (2000), is exclusively about the abortion. Other novels graphically detail her turbulent teenage years, her ill-fated marriage, her divorce, a sexual assault, and a passionate affair.

Her most acclaimed book, *The Years* (2008), is a historical memoir of her life as experienced year by year from 1940 to 2006. It is a collection of texts, images, and memories in which she avoids the use of the pronoun “I” and uses “she” or “we.” It is a social commentary on the evolving and chaotic society that formed her, which included Paris’ Sorbonne Revolution in 1968. She explains that it is not a narrative but an account of “the time that courses through her, the world she has recorded merely by living.”

An Award Wrongly Given

This Nobel Prize is wrongly given for two reasons.

The first is that her works defeat the purpose of literature as an art. Literature should represent writings having excellence in form, expression, and content. Even when critical of society, literature should show the better aspects of the human spirit as it faces adversity. It should express ideas of enduring and universal interest. From a Catholic perspective, literature should serve as a means of understanding better God's Creation and encourage the practice of virtue.

Annie Ernaux's perspective reflects an amoral universe that does not aspire to this personal excellence. Hers are accounts of sinful acts told without remorse and presented as part of life's sordid reality. They are sketches of pathos and tragedy without meaning. She does not explore the wonders of Creation but the contorted and introverted world of an erotic self.

If there is something the world does not need, it is the glorification of vice and self-obsession. Literature should inspire, not conspire against human nature.

The Postmodern Illusion

Secondly, Annie Ernaux should not be given the Nobel Prize because of the postmodern nature of her works. Real literature tells a story that conveys a strong moral message.

The author's writings are typical postmodern babble, deconstructing narrative, character and meaning. Such literature sees these literary mechanisms as oppressive structures that limit freedom. Thus, her intensely personal stories are jumbles of images, emotions and experiences that

do not convey coherence and order but disorder and wantonness.

In *The Years*, not even the narrator is given a stable identity as the author refers to herself in the third person. [One favorable reviewer](#) described the book as “the images of the past [that] reveal themselves in broken shapes and forms with holes all over.”

Indeed, her works communicate the idea that the experience of self, however sordid it might be, is all there is to life. All should be allowed, and nothing is forbidden. There is no higher purpose or eternal soul. All is reduced to fleeting memories.

A Broken System

Such nihilistic messages hollow out literature and deprive it of its noble purposes. No longer are there the enduring and universal themes that should characterize good literature and immortalize authors.

Thus, the Nobel Prize in literature should not be given to Annie Ernaux. The world needs and should present awards for works with a moral message that will inspire and regenerate society to virtue and bring people closer to God. Today, literature only reflects a debased wasteland.

Let there be no Nobel Prize for literature until writers can present a moral order that will return to the long-forgotten quest for the good, true, and beautiful.

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