

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The essays on Patrick White presented in this collection have been selected from some thirty essays published over a period of thirty-five years, initially through the support of a generous Postdoctoral Fellowship from the University of Queensland. They were published in a number of overseas countries as well as in Australia—in the US, Canada, England, France and India—the early ones in accordance with my intention then to make White better known throughout the world. While that may have helped to establish White's reputation outside Australia, it had the disadvantage that many of these articles, valid now as then, have become inaccessible outside major libraries. Collected in this volume, they give access to the varied body of my work on White.

Over the years I have broadened my work on White from specific, focused aspects of individual novels like the struggle between Voss and Laura for dominance in *Voss* to broader aspects of his work, like his preoccupation with epiphanies at the conclusions of his novels. Most of my studies have centred on his major novels, those that I believe will stand the test of time: *The Aunt's Story*, *The Tree of Man*, and *Voss*. Although there is clearly a first-rate mind at work in *Riders in the Chariot*, *The Eye of the Storm*, and *A Fringe of Leaves*, these novels will always be handicapped by one failing or another: the inadequate central symbol in *Riders in the Chariot*, the sheer negativism in *The Eye of the Storm*, the lack of a strong controlling theme in *A Fringe of Leaves*. My work on White culminates here with two long, previously unpublished essays,

both with broad and important themes: 'Mythmaking in Patrick White's Novels' and 'White's Style', a linguistic study of White's style as it kept changing over his career in accordance with his changing interests, themes and mood.

All my work on White has been carefully edited by my wife Rose Marie, who collaborated with me on a number of articles in this collection. I would be happier if her name were on the cover, but that is not her wish, so I can do no more than emphasise that my work would be greatly inferior without her contributions, suggestions and corrections. She is the *sine qua non* of my existence and of the publication of this collection of essays.