

- . Tono-Bungay. Ed. with an introduction and notes by Bryan Cheyette New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. 1 + 427 pp. "World's Classics" series.
- . The War of the Worlds. Ed. by David Y. Hughes with an introduction by Brian W. Aldiss. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. xlvii. + 188 pp. "World's Classics" series.

OBITUARY

We regret to announce that George Hay, who was Chairman of the Society from 1975-1978, died on 3 October following an operation.

George became Chairman at a very difficult time, when the Society was seeking to re-establish itself after a long period of quiescence. He inspired all who knew him with his energy and enthusiasm, and his total commitment to the Society and the works of H.G. Wells. His zest and drive were infectious, and he possessed the ability to enthuse the committee to give of their best. Despite his encyclopaedic knowledge of science fiction and his undoubted skills as a Chairman, he remained a modest man and was always courteous and kind.

In addition to his work for the Society, George was instrumental in persuading a leading paperback publisher to re-issue a number of Wells' titles which had been long out of print including *Star Begotten*, *Men like Gods*, *The Food of the Gods* and *A Story of Days to Come*. He edited a number of anthologies for the Penguin Science Fiction series including the excellent *Pulsar* anthologies containing pieces by Wells, Isaac Asimov and others.

As Chairman, George steered the Society through some difficult waters, and when he handed over the Chairmanship to Bob Watkins in 1978, he left it in much better shape than he had found it. We are indebted to George for his sterling contribution to our work, and we will remember him with affection.

John Hammond

Review Articles

H.G. WELLS AND REBECCA WEST

Carl Rollyson, *Rebecca West A Saga of the Century*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1995

442 pp., index, notes. £20.00 ISBN 0 340 59050 5

The sub-title of this new biography of Rebecca West is well-chosen. Carl Rollyson *does* present us with a saga of the century because his avowed aim is to cover all of West's long life and all aspects of her work in as much detail as possible – most studies, he claims, have tended to "chop her up" (Preface) by concentrating on one or other aspect of her life and work at the expense of the others. He points out that Victoria Glendinning's biography, which appeared in 1987, four years after its subject's death, focused on her early life – in expectation of a massive authorised biography – and was hampered by not having access to the Yale archive of West's papers, which was restricted until Anthony West's death in December 1987.

This book is of considerable interest to Wellsians because it gives us an insight into the ways in which Rebecca West's ten year relationship with H.G. Wells continued to be important to her through her entire life. Up until now we have had Anthony West's account of his parents in *H.G. Wells: Aspects of a Life*, which – although it was projected in 1949 – was not published until after his mother's death, and is, in any case, a book which tells us far more about the writer than it does about his subjects, and Gordon Ray's 1974 *H.G. Wells and Rebecca West*, written with Rebecca West's help, which, it now seems clear, was circumscribed if not distorted by her perspective on events. John Hammond's 1991 study of the relationship presents a far more balanced and sympathetic view, but the emphasis tends to be on Wells rather than Rebecca, and the scope of the book does not allow for a detailed portrayal of their subsequent lives.

Rollyson's biography, however, gives us both an in-depth view of the ten year partnership Rebecca West and H.G. Wells and an account of how their lives interconnected after their separation, partly because of their concern about Anthony, and the quarrels this entailed. Then, in the 1970s, nearly thirty years after Wells's death, Gordon Ray's and the Mackenzies' biographies aroused conflicting feelings in West – she resented the exposure of her private life, but at the same time was anxious that her

version of events should be known. We are told that she wrote many letters to friends before Ray's book appeared "justifying its existence 'now that biography has become a bloodsport'" (340).

The relationship between Rebecca West and her son is explored at length – and here the material provided by the Yale Archive has evidently been of great help – and Rollyson attempts to present both points of view; after reading this book it is hard to take sides. Similarly, he is frank about what he terms Rebecca's "gift for drama and making events cohere into a myth" (140) and he shows her attempts to re-write the past "to satisfy her emotional needs" (340), but at the same time he seeks to explain rather than to condemn. In fact, one receives the impression that the writer likes and respects his subject, whatever her faults, and has considerable admiration for her genius.

As Rollyson's account of his research makes clear, he was tireless in his attempt to track down and interview every relative, friend and contact he could find, and this, together with the vast amount of written material now available to Rebecca West's biographer does provide for an extraordinarily detailed and well-researched account of her life, but it does present its own problems. The text abounds in claims such as "Then she felt," "Rebecca was distraught," "She suspected" and so on, and recourse to the notes reveals that Rollyson feels able to take such an intrasubjective approach because he is drawing on letters and diaries or – increasingly frequently in the later chapters – on interviews with younger family members. No matter how balanced and dispassionate a biographer may wish to be, he can hardly refute or directly contradict the recollections and judgements of people who have taken the trouble to help him – have often, according to the acknowledgements at the back of the book, given him lunch. There are times, therefore, when the evidence becomes markedly anecdotal, and the reader starts to ask, "How could she be sure about that?" or "What interest does he have in remembering that incident in that way?" How far, for instance, can we rely on the revelations about Rebecca's and H.G.'s sex life when their source is a doctor to whom she spoke in confidence long after the event. I would have liked the biographer to address some of these questions in a more discriminating way. And this is where my one real gripe about the book comes in. Because of the extent of his research, Rollyson has resorted to an over-condensed referencing system. There are no precise indicators in the text, and the notes are not specifically ascribed except by page number and a brief quoted phrase, which leads to frustration when, after considerable searching, it is impossible to identify the source of a particular claim or quotation with any degree of certainty.

Nonetheless, this is a consistently well-written, entertaining and well-informed biography, and, of course, it has to be acknowledged that the opacity of any individual's personality is ultimately impenetrable. What is more, Carl Rollyson is engagingly frank about the things he does not know but would like to. Towards the end of Rebecca West's life, Rollyson tells us, she received a visit from the journalist Martha Gellhorn, who was widely known to have had a close links with Ernest Hemingway: "No-one raise the subject of Ernest Hemingway – a touchy one for Martha – but Rebecca had no doubt that the brute had abused Martha. If they discussed H.G., there is no record of it. Would Rebecca have been upset or amused to learn that the feisty Martha had also been H.G.'s mistress?" (369) – wouldn't we all like to know!

2016: A PUBLISHING ODYSSEY

Patrick Parrinder & Warren Chernaik, eds. *Textual Monopolies: Literary Copyright and the Public Domain* (London: Office for Humanities Communication, 1997)

This is not an entirely disinterested review. From time to time you may hear the noise of an axe being ground.

Here's why.

In 1990 I was asked if I'd like to edit Wells's *The Country of the Blind and Other Stories* for the Oxford University Press World's classics series. Naturally, I said yes. Though the pay was somewhat modest, I could console myself with the thought that I'd be the first person to edit a scholarly edition of Wells's stories and would have the glory of seeing the end product in bookshops around the country – maybe even in the Arndale Centre, Luton, near where I live. In 1992, however, word reached those twin centres of learning Luton and Oxford, that the European Union intended to harmonise copyright periods within the community, rounding them all up to the German duration of seventy years. Wells's writings would not after all be going out of copyright in 1996, but in the year 2016. OUP would be unable to publish Wells without securing permission from and paying royalties to the Wells Estate, and that permission would certainly not be forthcoming as the Estate had already chosen to sell exclusive rights to Dent Everyman. After some reflection, OUP scrapped some of the projected Wells titles, then went ahead with just six volumes for sale outside Europe. *The Country of*