

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*

the Blind survived the purge and American readers may well see a copy in their local mall. I, however, will not.

The inevitable consequence of this is that, if you were to ask me my views on the prolongation of copyright, I would clench my teeth, turn an interesting shade of red and tell you that it deprives the public of a variety of competitively-priced, attractively-packaged editions, and does so for no better reason than to line the pockets of the author's descendants, who did not exist when the books were written and who in a sane society would be expected to imitate their distinguished forebear by going out and earning their own living instead of sponging off the rest of us. If you were to ask the same question of one of Wells's descendants, no doubt you would receive a very different reply, one citing the lengthening lifespan of Europeans and the need to guarantee the property rights of the individual in a world of mass exploitation.

For an illuminating and comparatively objective discussion of the issues surrounding copyright at the end of the twentieth century – inside Europe and out – your best bet is not to question me or, for that matter, one of Wells's relatives but to turn instead to *Textual Monopolies*, a collection of papers edited by two highly-informed academics, Patrick Parrinder (himself not entirely disinterested, as he is series editor of the OUP Wells and a vice-president of the H.G. Wells Society) and Warren Chernaik (co-edition of two previous books on the "electronic text"). Most of the nine papers were originally written for a seminar held on 16 December 1994 at the University of London; they have since been updated.

The contributors trace the history of copyright legislation, mainly in Britain, attempting to put the EU directive in the context of earlier rulings and tease out the somewhat elusive principles behind the ways in which different judgements have balanced various interests. For those of us whose cultural interests lie in literature rather than in law, the most accessible and engaging papers will probably be those devoted to the practical effects of copyright legislation on the availability of texts by three specific authors: Wells, Yeats, and Lawrence. Here we learn of the merits and fates of rival editions, and of some fearsome-sounding disputes between publishers and agents. Professor Parrinder, in a temperate and enlightening contribution, "Licensing Scholarship: some encounters with the Wells Estate," argues that there is rarely such a thing as a definitive edition and the public is entitled to a number of

versions of, say, *The Time Machine*, offering different stages of the text and differing critical interpretations.

The EU directive itself, like any good modern text, is open to a plurality of interpretations. What will happen in the case of works which have come out of copyright and now have to go back in again? Will the film-of-the-book get the same treatment as the book? Will it always be clear who is entitled to claim copyright? The answers to such questions are not straightforward, will differ to some degree from country to country, and will ultimately have to be settled in the law courts. In one article Clive Reynard, Chief Editor of Wordsworth Classics, sketches the messy situation in which he has found himself as he tries to interpret the legislation and cope with the rival interpretations of demanding copyright holders. He also includes handy lists of leading authors who have recently been out of copyright but will not remain so, and those who were scheduled to come out during the next twenty years but will not.

To my mind, the most fascinating contribution is that of Charles Oppenheim, "Copyright in the Electronic Age." We may be living in the era of the Internet, CD Roms, electronic databases and networking, but copyright law, it seems, is still struggling to assimilate the photocopier. Suppose you sit in Country 1 and send instructions to a computer in Country 2, telling it to transmit copyright information to Country 3. Whose law applies? Where is publication taking place? Come to that, would sending an e-mail count as "publishing"? Is putting information on a bulletin board on the Internet "publishing"? In the case of multimedia products, which medium's copyright rules should be applied and which country's? Oppenheim concludes that copyright will not go away, but that we will pass through an era of serious uncertainty and litigation before the situation stabilises. Till then, please note that this review is MFD Sherborne GmbH (Holding Company © Haiti) and that the author's moral right is asserted. Do not under any circumstances read this review aloud or even allow yourself to be photographed in the vicinity of an open copy. It could cost you dearly.