



# WEST WORDS

THE INTERNATIONAL REBECCA WEST SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 11 | WINTER 2015

## CALL FOR PAPERS

"Rebecca West and Dissent: The Politics and Poetics of Heresy"

Saint Anselm College, Manchester, New Hampshire

September 19-20, 2015

Rebecca West famously did not toe lines, whether these lines were associated with party, ideology, literary movement, genre, gender, religious beliefs, etc. In most cases, from her leftist anti-communism, to her bourgeois leftism, to her paradoxical feminism, to her anti-atonement Christianity, to her genre-bending, West was a dissenter, a rebel, and a heretic—even within movements that were already oppositional such as feminism. We invite papers that explore precisely and explicitly what rules she transgressed, how she transgressed them, and what the consequences of her transgressions were, whether they applied to literature, politics, society, religion, or philosophy. Was her non-conformism visionary and if so, did it have any real consequences in the long run? What techniques did West use to formulate and convey ideas that broke with convention? Was she not only the World's Number One Woman Writer in the middle of the twentieth century, but also the World Number One Female Heretic? We will also consider papers on other topics.

Abstracts of up to 200 words are to be sent to Caroline Krzakowski by April 15, 2015 [czkrzakowski@gmail.com](mailto:czkrzakowski@gmail.com).

## WEST IN THE NEWS

Lorna Gibb's biography continued to garner thoughtful reviews throughout 2014. Stephen Robinson, in the March 16, 2014 *London Times*, says that it "presents, with discerning succinctness, a sharply etched portrait of a true original." Culture; Features; Pg. 48.

Jonathan Yardley writes in the June 1, 2014 *Washington Post* that "*The Extraordinary Life of Rebecca West* is a fair, sympathetic but forthright portrait of its subject and should—so at least may be hoped—help her find new readers...all in all this is a lucid and accessible biography of this endlessly fascinating woman. As Gibb says, West was a woman of 'surprising contradictions,' and this biography captures them all without losing sight of the very real person in whom they resided." Pg. B08.

Bert Archer in the August 23, 2014 edition of the *Calgary Herald* claims that "the literary travel I've found most powerful is the kind that gets me into what I fancy is the heart of the writer, the places that seeped into them, geographical IV drips that then bled into their writing." He calls *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* "one of the most fascinating, entertaining pieces of non-fiction of the 20th century...She had a lot to cover, including the rest of the then Kingdom of Yugoslavia, but many of her best stories were Serbian. West managed not to be bowled over by the region's surfeit of history, mostly because of her heroic series of dark, serious talks with people who lived it." Pg. E4.

In a December 8, 2014, *New York Review of Books* Blog, Francine Prose—who was the keynote speaker at our 2007 Rebecca West Society conference—wrote that she

got the chance to teach two texts she'd "long admired: the opening twenty-five pages of Rebecca West's *Greenhouse with Cyclamens I* (1946), an excerpt from the first section of her lengthy report on the Nuremberg trials; and William Finnegan's 1994 account of a trial in Manhattan in which he sat on the jury. Both had appeared in *The New Yorker*." The whole column deserves a careful read, but I'll quote some of her points here. Her class read them when much "national attention was focused on the Brown and Garner cases," and she "thought it would be fun and interesting to teach these essays in a course on literary style, as a very general lesson about how two different styles can be used to portray a similar setting: in the texts in question, courtrooms in which cases of vastly unequal magnitude were being tried...In *Greenhouse with Cyclamens I*, West's writing is characteristically eloquent, surprising, and precise. The essay begins with a view of Nuremberg from the air, and after noting the stupefying boredom that has set in among the participants and observers after eleven months of the trial, West gives us a stunning description of the defendants—the only ones in the courtroom who wanted the process to last forever:

Hess was noticeable because he was so plainly mad: so plainly mad that it seemed shameful that he should be tried. His skin was ashen and he had that odd faculty, peculiar to lunatics, of falling into strained positions which no normal person could maintain for more than a few minutes, and staying fixed in contortion for hours. He

## SIXTH BIENNIAL REBECCA WEST CONFERENCE, 2013

Ten years after the formation of the International Rebecca West Society, when scholars first met to discuss Rebecca West in a conference solely dedicated to her extraordinary body of work, we gathered again in New York City but for the first time at New York University. Caroline Krzakowski, our bibliographer and, at the time, an instructor at NYU, found us a beautiful space—at the Humanities Initiative on historic Cooper Square—and provided all the amenities necessary for a successful meeting of Westian minds: good coffee and food, enthusiastic student helpers (one of whom found a way to donate rather than discard our leftover repast!), and a large, conversation-friendly seminar room. More than half of the attendees were new to the West conference, and we heard lots of positive feedback about their experience. And those of us who have attended all six agreed that the quality of papers and dialogue was very high. Our theme was “Rebecca West: Celebrity, Publicity, Memory.”

Caroline welcomed us to NYU before our president, Dr. Bernard Schweizer, opened with celebratory words about our ten-year anniversary as a society and the fact that our conferences continue to attract new and seasoned scholars, as evidenced by 2013’s largest-ever registration (if not attendance, which still belongs to our first): “West keeps on giving, as an artist and a thinker . . . her literary and intellectual output are still capable of stimulating new work, opening new perspectives, and inspiring a new generation of scholars and readers to embrace her legacy.” He also mused on teaching “Indissoluble Matrimony” and “Parthenope” as fascinating bookends to West’s ideas about marriage, pointing out that West’s treatment of mental illness in several texts begs investigation.

Then Carl Rollyson, Melissa Bradshaw, and Deirdre David spoke in our first panel on Rebecca West and her contemporaries. Rollyson and Bradshaw have both written biographies of American imagist poet Amy Lowell, so it was a treat to hear their perspectives on the ways in which West and Lowell compare and intersect. Both questioned why neither has achieved the canonization accorded to Orwell or Pound, Rollyson pointing out that the answer may lie in their “patriotic modernism”: each was comfortable with authority figures and structures and not ultimately critical of American culture. Deirdre David, examining the prophetic

nature of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* and two of Olivia Manning’s historical novels, *Friends and Heroes* and *The Battle Lost and Won*, discussed the ways in which narration and imagery differ in West’s travel narrative and Manning’s historical fiction.

The second panel, on West and Communism, began with Peter Baehr on the fundamental contradictions between West’s and Hannah Arendt’s ideas about the Alger Hiss affair, HUAC, and McCarthyism. Baehr pointed out that despite their differences, they had similar experiences including the facts that they wrote long, “preternatural” epics and were more fascinated by Whittaker Chambers than Alger Hiss. West, Baehr claimed, presents a more subtle and sociological reading of Chambers than Arendt. Loretta Stec looked at the anarchist influences on West, particularly Emma Goldman, showing that while West did not reject the idea of the state as thoroughly, she did share with Goldman and others a firm belief in individual liberty and equality, which can be seen throughout much of West’s career. Debra Rae Cohen looked at the various additions and revisions to *The Meaning of Treason*, returning to the subject of West’s declining reputation and “the smear” she believed she suffered in relation to her anti-Communist stance—which, Cohen posited, took on a formal quality in West’s later work—and the “clotted spite” of her son Anthony’s autobiographical novel *Heritage*. Caroline Krzakowski analyzed West’s correspondence with *The New Yorker* editor Harold Ross during her coverage of the Nuremberg trials, which offers interesting and new information about Ross’s belief that West could translate the postwar situation in Europe for American readers. Ross was apparently amazed that West could so rapidly churn out high-quality work, and in fact he changed little of what she sent for these initial articles.

After lunch (easily found in the streets of the West Village), we returned to a panel that examined West’s most-taught text, *The Return of the Soldier*, and her “biography” of Saint Augustine. Madison Priest claimed that recent criticism of West’s first novel tends to ignore the soldier himself. She read Chris as functioning throughout as the guarantor of the “real” by virtue of his gender and thus “undoing” Jenny—in Judith Butler’s terminology—who gets excluded from his amnesic narrative. Rochelle Miller

looked at the cinematographic elements of *Return* in the context of the early twentieth century’s burgeoning visual culture, particularly as it relates to the “vanishing woman” in nascent cinema and the impact of photographic images on women’s lives. David Fine returned to the connections between Hannah Arendt and West, both of whom wrote on Saint Augustine in the 1930s. Fine argued that West uses Augustine’s religious understanding of temporality to criticize fascism’s genesis and that both Arendt’s and West’s texts deserve further scholarly attention.

In our second panel on West and her contemporaries, Margaret Stetz—whose talks are brilliant comic performances to which we all look forward—discussed the tensions between West and Pamela Frankau as they played out in print, particularly in West’s 1935 short story “The Addict” and Frankau’s 1939 novel *The Devil We Know*. Denise Ayo situated *The Strange Necessity* within the context of its reviewers and West’s other publications, analyzing West’s deliberate positioning of herself as a highbrow intellectual distanced from female middlebrow authors. Lorna Gibb—whose biography *West’s World: The Extraordinary Life of Dame Rebecca West* was published in 2013—examined the “private” versus “public” West as it showed through her correspondence with writer, artist, and friend Emanie Sachs Arling, which reveals the vulnerability beneath “Rebecca of the ‘wigs and smiles,’” as West’s secretary Liz Leyshon named her.

We were delighted then to hear Faye Hammill, our keynote speaker, deliver her talk, “‘My Dear, the People We Should Have Been Seen Dead With’: Rebecca West and Noël Coward.”

Hammill is Professor of English at the University of Strathclyde and author of, among other works, *Women, Celebrity and Literary Culture Between the Wars* (2007). She explored the ways in which West’s relationship with Coward—only reconstructed from passing references and fragments of text—might ask interesting “questions about the process and purpose of researching literary celebrity.” The two had not known each other well, and West considered his world separate from her own, but the connections between the two reveal some answers about “the negotiation of cultural value in the early to mid-twentieth century” and the “overlapping networks of influence in the worlds of literature, theatre and popular entertainment.”



At this point, we were ready to rest our brains but mull over the day's ideas as we sipped wine and enjoyed refreshments at a reception on the premises, followed by a lovely dinner for many of our attendees at Five Points on Great Jones Street. When we gathered for coffee and pastries on Sunday morning, we were ready to think about West, modernism, and celebrity in our fifth panel. Mark Hussey—a first-time West conference attendee whom many of us know from the Virginia Woolf Society and his prolific scholarship—began by considering how West's diminished cultural presence has perhaps been shaped by the stereotype of women's literary celebrity best represented by Woolf's "iconicity." Lauren Rosenblum looked at West's early and often uproariously funny newspaper articles, arguing that "play" sets her apart from her contemporary critics and that her style and form were "integral to the development of our evolving interpretations of modernism." Ann Norton discussed West's lifetime fascination with public performance and celebrity from the perspectives of artists

and audiences, particularly as gender influenced both, and West's insistence that actors, dancers, and musicians must have the same integrity as writers, especially women who might be tempted to portray stereotypes of feminine beauty and grace rather than essential humanity.

Our sixth panel was the first on "extending the West-ern canon." Alexandra Oxner connected the Bergsonian philosophy of time to West's decidedly idiosyncratic depiction of childhood, considering it as characteristic of Woolf's "modern elegy," which eliminates the sense of mourning characteristic of a traditional lament for the dead. Jane Marcus—editor of *The Young Rebecca* and an early West champion—talked about West's uncollected essays from the 1920s and 1930s, many of which she owns in manuscript (and which beg for energetic scholarly exploration) and which differ considerably from West's earliest feminist, socialist essays. Laura Cowan revisited the Gothic elements of *The Judge*, showing how relegation to this ostensibly low-brow genre in 1922 would have hurt the novel's critical reception, but that now we can see it as a superb example of the "female Gothic," and one in which she beautifully describes English landscapes in a Romantic sublime mode.

We then tried a different approach to our business meeting. Rather than holding it on Sunday morning—when only a few hardy Westians used to appear—we fed attendees delicious box lunches as we discussed unavoidable practical matters. Our tireless, enthusiastic President of eight years, Bernard Schweizer, was voted in next as Secretary/Treasurer, and Ann Norton (yours truly) became the new president after ten years as Vice President. Martin Hipsky was elected Vice President (he has since stepped down, and Laura Cowan has been elected Interim Vice President), while Caroline Krzakowski was re-elected as Bibliographer/Librarian. We also discussed possibilities for the September 2015 conference, as well as Jane Marcus's West photos and papers and how they might be curated and collected. Marcus pointed to a difficulty in

publishing West's essays: today there are few readers willing to read the long pieces that used to be published as a matter of course in the newspapers and magazines for which she wrote. Still, there was much enthusiasm for these potential projects.

Our seventh panel took another look at extending the West-ern canon. Seamus O'Malley asked what would happen if we read "Indissoluble Matrimony" literally rather than as allegory, and suggested that this often-taught story critiques Wyndham Lewis's "vortex of gendered aesthetics of violence." Anne Donlon spoke about "Letter to a Grandfather," one of West's many texts that refer to clairvoyance, and one which seems to affirm W.E.B. Dubois's belief that "the problem of the Twentieth-Century is the problem of the color-line." Bethany Qualls examined the representations of work and occupation in West's story "There is No Conversation," arguing that West inverts masculine and feminine norms and shows that work was linked to gender, class, and the role of capitalism, which demonstrate a significant shift in social codes connected to marriage and divorce.

Our eighth and final panel, on memory and nostalgia, began with a fascinating visual presentation by photographer and scholar Dragana Jurisic, who has traveled in West's Balkan footsteps. She spoke of West's sense of Yugoslavia as a metaphysical "mythical motherland" whose people shared her fate of displacement. If West had been a country, Jurisic claimed, "she would have been Yugoslavia." Timothy Wientzen suggested that West's interwar work, particularly *The Strange Necessity*, displays a positive attitude toward the cognitive reflex we call "habit," which sets her apart from most modernists. West sees national belonging and cultural memory as ways to counter the twentieth century's dislocations. Bernard Schweizer closed the conference with another look at *The Return of the Soldier*, pointing out that it "asks us not to trust surfaces . . . to question everything, including the ostensible logic of the narrative itself" and especially attitudes toward nostalgia.

We departed from downtown Manhattan tired but happy on a gorgeous Sunday evening. Our next conference will be held at my lovely institution, Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire. Please read our Call for Papers and join us for the seventh celebration of Rebecca West. —Ann Norton

## WEST IN THE NEWS CONTINUED

had the classless air characteristic of asylum inmates; evidently his distracted personality had torn up all clues to his past...

A true West enthusiast, Prose goes on to say that they “discussed the elegance of West’s beginning, her gorgeous sentences, the nerviness of starting off with an invocation of boredom, the history of the word *genocide*, West’s portraits of the defendants, and her novelistic account of the desultory social life revolving slowly in the orbit of the Nuremberg courtroom.” She finished with words about her students that West, or Orwell might have written: “I want them to be optimistic, compassionate, and brave. I want them to make their voices heard. I’ve tried to teach them what language can accomplish: its ability to explicate and complicate in useful and beautiful ways. Or how easily words can do the opposite, if we forget how to read and reason and thus cannot understand what we’re being told.”

In a *New York Times* interview from April 13, 2014, novelist Michael Lewis—asked about his literary heroes—answers, “In the order in which I encountered them: Mark Twain. Walker Percy. George Plimpton. Tom Wolfe. John McPhee. F. Scott Fitzgerald. Saul Bellow. Vladimir Nabokov. Rebecca West. George Orwell, of the essays but not so much the novels. Alan Bennett. Neil Gaiman.” Section BR; Column 0; Book Review Desk; Pg. 8.

Travel writer Lawrence Osborne muses on the difference between “‘writers about travels’ and ‘travel writers.’ Is the voyaging writer telling us canny stories from a romping trip or using his peregrinations to relocate his place in the world?” Osborne discusses Tim Butcher’s *The Trigger*, which describes 1990s Bosnian war correspondent Butcher’s “walk across a mountainous area of Bosnia in the more or less exact footsteps of Gavrilo Princip, the man who assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on that fateful day in June 1914, setting in motion the slaughter of World War I. Seven years earlier, in 1907, when he was 13, Princip had walked from his home village of Obljaj, in a remote area known as Herzegovina, to a town called Bugojno and from there traveled by rail to Sarajevo. Butcher decides to do the same. It’s an

elegant enough way of opening up the history of the Balkans and its conflicts, and of exploring the wider perspective... The fracture lines that run through the Balkans, between Roman Catholics and Orthodox believers, between Christians and Muslims, between Slavs and Ottomans, are parsed peripatetically as he wanders with backpack across the mountains, the follower not just of the rash and excitable Princip but also of Rebecca West, whose *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is perhaps the greatest work on the Balkans the English language is likely to produce. His own book is an honorable follow-up, and contrast, to West’s.” Section BR; Column 0; Book Review Desk; Pg. 26.

“I’m a feminist, and it’s not fun”—a pointed and hilarious anonymous essay in New Zealand’s *The Nelson Mail*, June 11, 2014—begins, “Don’t let the bra-burning parties, mass protests, and celebratory parades fool you. Here’s a hint: I’ve never attended any of those things and I doubt I’ll start, even if they happened in Nelson, which they don’t. My feminism is not unlike a bra. I wear it all the time, it stabs me with underwire when I least expect it, and people don’t like talking about it at the dinner table.” It goes on. “Before I met any feminists and asked them about what feminism meant, I believed the stereotypes. They hated men. They were ungrateful whiners. What were they banging on about? We got the vote, what else did we want? Not worrying about being sexy when you’re 13 would be a good start. For me, feminism is about three things: equality, inclusion, and respect. Women don’t get these things as easily as men do, and often we don’t get them at all. I don’t hate men. I just don’t think they are better than me.” Like Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One’s Own*, she cites only one famous feminist. “Change doesn’t happen quickly, and it can be challenging, trying to champion ‘the radical notion that women are people’ (from suffragist Rebecca West) in the face of unrelenting pressure to look and act like pretty furniture.” I love the last line, from Tina Belcher, a character in the animated American sitcom *Bob’s Burgers*. “I’m no hero. I put my bra on one boob at a time, like everyone else.”

In the July 20, 2014 London Sunday Times, David Jays reflects on the great leaps male ballet dancers make and have made throughout dance history. “Ballet has not

always been in thrall to lads a-leaping... But the Russian classics that still rule the repertoire (*Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Don Quixote*) matched the ballerina’s diamond dazzle with a pouncing prince, and by the time Vaslav Nijinsky caused a sensation with Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes, men were in the ascendant: literally, as Nijinsky appeared to hang in midair during *Le Spectre de la rose* (1911). ‘The climax of his art was his jump,’ reported the novelist Rebecca West. ‘He leaped high in the air, and there stayed for what seemed several seconds...But then he came down—and here was the second miracle—more slowly than he had gone up, landing as softly as a deer clearing a hedge of snow.’” Culture; Features; Pg. 8, 9.

I can’t resist this one from the *London Evening Standard*, March 20, 2014, especially since Rosamund Irwin quotes West’s most famous sentence correctly. “Katy Perry has been criticized for failing to grasp what feminism is. Asked on an Australian TV show if she subscribed to the ways of Wollstonecraft, the singer replied: ‘Yeah, actually. I used to not really understand what [feminism] meant and now that I do it just means that I love myself as a female and I also love men.’ Okay, so this is hardly the definitive definition of a movement that demands equality between the sexes. Nor is it as pithy as Rebecca West’s ‘I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute.’ But it seems unsisterly to lambast and patronise a woman for her misinterpretation of feminism. Far better if someone simply wings a copy of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Perry’s way.”

Keith Perry’s succinct article from London’s *Daily Telegraph*, February 28, 2014, explains that “H.G. Wells’s family feared that he had been brainwashed by Soviet agents, including his lover Baroness Budberg, Nick Clegg’s great-great aunt, MI5 were told. The claims were made in an MI5 interview with Dame Rebecca West, which was among a number of secret documents released by the National Archives yesterday. The British author complained of a London party at which she thought the guests to be ‘the most unsavoury crowd of communist sympathisers judging by their adulation of Baroness Budberg.’ The MI5 memo goes on: ‘Miss West recalled that

the Wells family [she had been an old friend of theirs for many years] had always stated that they considered Baroness Budberg a Soviet agent. Apparently HG Wells had been taken in a good deal by this type of person during his latter years.”

As usual, Rebecca West got many a mention among the year’s obituaries, including that of Mary Soames, Winston Churchill’s youngest daughter and her mother’s biographer. In the June 2, 2014 edition of *The Independent*, Hugo Vickers explains that *Clementine Churchill* won the 1979 Wolfson Literary Award. “Dame Rebecca West judged it admirable, though she declared: ‘Winston Churchill as a husband chills the blood.’”

Rivers Scott, the great London literary agent who died in May, worked with many important authors, as noted in the September 22, 2014 edition of *The Daily Telegraph*. “In addition there was the formidable Dame Rebecca West, who succumbed to Scott’s charm over the phone as he cut her back to 1,000 words.”

In a July 8, 2014, editorial in *The Daily Telegraph*, Allan Massie compares and contrasts the “Cambridge Five”—British spies who passed state secrets to the Soviet Union during World War II and into the 1950s, and of course a significant subject for Rebecca West—focusing particularly on Donald Maclean. “Son of a Cardiff solicitor who was briefly leader of the Liberal Party, he was a complicated man of considerable ability. Possibly on account of the strain of leading a double life, he was given to violent alcoholic bouts, during which he also gave vent to his usually suppressed homosexual impulses. Nevertheless he was outstandingly good at his job. Despite writing of him with distaste and even contempt, Rebecca West made this point in her book *The Meaning of Treason*. He was one of those alcoholics in whom the ability to work was unimpaired. He could emerge from a three-day debauch to draft a minute of exemplary quality—concise, detailed, lucid and elegant. Of course, she added, this didn’t excuse the excesses, which made him not only a security risk, open to blackmail, but someone who should have been required to resign.” Massie ends with a final comparison. “What a long time ago it was, and what a different world. Today’s

security risks, just as dangerous as the Cambridge spies, and perhaps even more frightening, are not to be found in the establishment, but in radical mosques and the Islamist societies of provincial universities. It makes you nostalgic for the Gargoyle, or the days when the Reform Club depressed Guy Burgess because of the lack of page boys.” Opinion, Columns; Pg. 16.

Novelist Sarah Waters was inspired to write *The Paying Guests* by reading Fryn Tennyson Jesse’s 1934 “true crime” novel *A Pin to See the Peepshow*, as she explains in the August 23, 2014 edition of *The Guardian*. Jesse’s book was “a thinly fictionalised account of the life of . . . Edith Thompson, one of the three main players in the “‘Ilford murder’ case of 1922. I first encountered the novel nearly a decade ago and was gripped by it from the start: rarely, it seemed to me, had I been plunged by a piece of fiction into an emotional world so vivid, so complete, so convincingly untidy. It stuck in my mind as a small masterpiece, so that, returning to it a few years later, I was, to begin with, slightly puzzled. As a novelist, Jesse had none of the luminous talent of, say, her friend Rebecca West; on a re-reading, the prose of *Pin* seemed oddly less marvellous than I had remembered. Its power, I soon realised, is more creeping than that, and at the end of that second read I was as impressed as before, seduced all over again by the intensity of the narrative, by its dogged commitment to its flawed, doomed heroine. This time, too, I had brought along crucial new knowledge: the dynamics of the case on which Jesse based the book had formed part of the inspiration for my own novel of 1920s domestic turmoil, *The Paying Guests*. More intimate with the details of Thompson’s story than I had been first time around, I was able to appreciate the fidelity - and the tremendous humanity - with which *A Pin to See the Peepshow* embraces Thompson’s tragedy.” *Guardian Review* Pages; Pg. 6. —Ann Norton

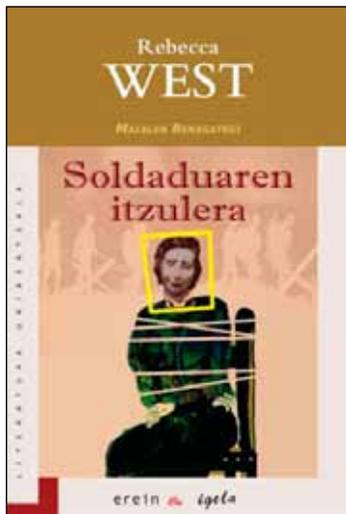
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—Caroline Krzakowski

## UPDATE FROM THE REBECCA WEST ESTATE

It's been another stellar year for Rebecca West fans the world over, as her work gets translated into more and more languages, even Basque, by publishing house Erein in San Sebastian (*Return of the Soldier*—cover pictured)! Particularly exciting is the emerging trend of excerpting important pieces of work and publishing them as standalone books. This is the case of the upcoming Portuguese translation of the "Greenhouse with Cyclamens" portion of *A Train of Powder*, to be published by Relógio D'Água Editores



(Lisbon). Similarly, these three chapters are being published in Italian by Skira (Milan). We hope to see a lot more of this in the future, in any language. With the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War hot in the media right now, I think we can expect continued interest in Rebecca's perspective on the Nuremberg trials. We have a request: anyone watching coverage from the Trials, please let us know if you spot Cissie! We'd love to source a clip of her actually there.

Further, Rebecca's venture into the world of ebooks has been an amazing success. OpenRoad Media, the terrific e-publisher that took over the entirety of her backlist except *Black Lamb*, has worked tirelessly to promote and repackage Rebecca's work to appeal to a new, younger audience. They do terrifically smart things such as the campaign they ran in January for a selection of ebooks centering on The Cold War, in anticipation of the season premiere of the highly acclaimed series on FX, *The Americans*. They promoted *The Birds Fall Down* as part of the campaign, which includes online advertising, retail promotion, and social media. The ebook was downpriced to \$1.99 for the period across all retailers. Sales were healthy and Rebecca, overall, made Open Road's Top Ten Downloaded Authors of 2014 list.

*The New Yorker* published an anthology of works that appeared in the 1940s titled *The 40s: The Story of a Decade*. "Opera in Greenville" along with "The Birch Leaves Falling" by Rebecca West are two of the featured pieces.

Irish radio station RTE offered to make a straight reading of *The Return of the Soldier* for their "Book on 1" programme. The programme goes out over five nights, Monday–Friday at 11:10 pm for fifteen minutes with excerpts being read from the book. To be honest, I haven't caught up with that!

A chamber musical adaptation of *The Return of the Soldier*, with music by Charles Miller and lyrics by Tim Sanders appeared briefly at the Jermyn Street Theatre in London, and made *The Stage* magazine's "Top Ten Musicals of 2014" list, about which the producers were thrilled. It may well go places; we'll see.

Phyllis Lassner made an exciting discovery while researching her scholarly monograph, *Espionage and Exile*, to be published shortly by Edinburgh University Press; an unpublished typescript of a preface Rebecca West wrote, intended for Pamela Frankau's 1968 posthumously published novel, *Colonel Blessington*. The typescript is in the Pamela Frankau collection at Boston College, Burns library. Lassner will be quoting a passage in her monograph.

All in all, a grand year for Rebecca's legacy. Keep the faith out there, and thanks from the Estate for all you do to keep her in people's hearts and minds.

—Helen Atkinson, Jan. 2014

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