



## WEST BIBLIOGRAPHY

At long last, the International Rebecca West Society Online Bibliography will be fully accessible to members of the Society and accessible in part to non-members. The Bibliography has been envisioned as a work in progress that can be edited and supplemented on an on-going basis, an appropriate template for a writer whose prolific career spanned decades and a variety of genres, and whose oeuvre contains many unpublished works, archived at the University of Tulsa and perhaps elsewhere. Moreover, as scholars and other readers continue to proliferate studies and commentary on West's works, the bibliography will continue to grow organically.

All users will soon be able to find the Bibliography on the Society Webpage [<http://www.rebeccawestsociety.org/>]. Rebecca West Society members will receive a password to access complete listings of West's works and secondary works about West. Non-members will have limited access to listings of West's

published works and to readily available books and essays that are principally about West. The Bibliography presently has 1347 entries in nine categories: "Audio and visual recordings of West"; "Dissertations"; "Primary works: Book Reviews"; "Primary Works: Books"; "Primary Works: Short Stories and Essays in Books"; "Primary Works: Short Stories and Essays in Magazines and Newspapers"; "Secondary Works: Books and Essays about West"; "Secondary Works: Books Reviews about West's works"; and "Translations." The next phase of the bibliography project will add a section listing unpublished texts and fragments by West.

The Bibliography is fully searchable and will be added to and edited. Society members are encouraged to bring missing items and new entries to the Society Bibliographer's attention: please send any corrections or additions to Thaine Stearns at the following e-mail: [stearnst@sonoma.edu](mailto:stearnst@sonoma.edu).



## FOREIGN SALES

There has been an upsurge in foreign rights sales of West's works in the past few years.

Helen Macleod provides here a list of sales since 2006.

	Language	Publisher	Contract
<b>Black Lamb, Grey Falcon</b>	German audio	Random House	01/02/2007
	Serbian	Mono & Manana	10/12/2007
<b>The Aubrey Trilogy</b>	Italian	Mattioli 1885	15/02/2007
<b>The Thinking Reed</b>	Italian	Mattioli 1885	06/11/2006
<b>The Meaning Of Treason</b>	Serbian	Algoritam	04/04/2006
	Spanish	Reino de Redonda	03/12/2008
<b>The Return of the Soldier</b>	Italian	Neri Pozza	25/06/2008
	Portuguese	Relogio d'Agua	07/01/2009
	Spanish	Herce Editores	28/03/2008



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Rebecca West Society leadership has reason to be pleased with a number of developments in 2008, the fifth year since the foundation of the Society. First of all, I would like to thank all the loyal society members who renewed their membership during the "inter-year" of 2008, that is, in-between the biennial conferences. As a thank-you, they received a free West Society T-shirt with the intriguing lettering "Idiot" and "Lunatic" on the front (making me wonder how long it would take until one of these shirts makes an appearance on YouTube). This wave of renewals was crucial for guaranteeing the financial viability of our Society. Although all our major goals were achieved purely on the basis of volunteerism, some costs like printing this newsletter, paying for permission to publish photographs of Rebecca West, and maintaining the website, do require some funds.

Among the biggest achievements of the past year is the completion of the bibliography project, spearheaded by Thaine Stearns (see his note in this newsletter). This is a big step forward in the history of West studies. Make sure to go online and check out this wonderful new feature on our website: [rebeccawestsociety.org](http://rebeccawestsociety.org). You will find this to be an invaluable resource for your future research and a major time-saving device for locating primary and secondary texts related to Rebecca West.

Then there is the matter of Rebecca West's presence on the internet. Thanks to indefatigable efforts by the West Society officers and other volunteers, the entry for Rebecca West on [Wikipedia.org](http://Wikipedia.org) has been completely overhauled, expanded, and diversified (see my note later on). This represents a new phase in the publicity of our writer. A substantial, world-wide accessible Wikipedia entry is certain to

have long-term effects in raising the profile of our author by catering to those who seek easily accessible information about her.

Another development that came to a head at the close of 2008 was the issue of a contract by Broadview Press for a critical edition of *The Return of the Soldier*. This project, which I had initiated two years ago, is scheduled to be completed later this year with publication scheduled for 2010. This critical edition will have a decisive impact on the teaching of this most popular of West's texts in the classroom.

An encyclopedia of twentieth-century literature would not be complete without a treatment of Rebecca West. But since our author is not as securely canonized as some of her fellow authors from the same time period, her inclusion in major anthologies and encyclopedias cannot always be taken for granted. I am therefore happy to report that the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century British and Irish Fiction* will carry a substantial entry on Rebecca West, written by myself. The encyclopedia is scheduled for publication later this year. It is, among other things, through major reference works such as the Blackwell encyclopedia that literary reputations are preserved and shaped. Not only that, but I negotiated with the general editor of the volume to nearly double the word count allocated to the entry on West, thereby visibly raising the level of importance attributed to her.

The ground-breaking collection of West's journalistic work, in preparation since 2007 through the tireless efforts of Helen Macleod, Debra Rae Cohen, Ann Norton, and Bernard Schweizer, has made great progress this past year. We diligently typed up, proof-read, and edited dozens of essays, stories, and book reviews for the upcoming

## LONDON, A CITY LOVED

Here are some gorgeous West passages about London, a city she loved and lovingly, frequently described. I have a blatant agenda here: I hope to inspire all of you to join us at the 2009 conference!

This comes from the opening of the "Cordelia chapter," which I discovered in the Tulsa archives and which is reprinted in *Rebecca West Today: Contemporary Critical Approaches* (ed. Bernard Schweizer, Delaware UP, 2006).

Lovegrove Common was not one of our habitual playgrounds; it was a tram-ride away, and on weekdays so unfrequented that, as children, we were forbidden to go there without a grown-up, and so overcrowded at weekends that we did not care for it. But it meant a lot to us imaginatively. To get there we had to leave our modestly agreeable quarter and go down to the cluttered dinginess of High Street, which would strike modern eyes as even dingier than we thought it since in those days all the rich and the young wore dark dresses, and we took a turning between the big department store, the Bon Marché and the Theatre Royal, and found ourselves in a quarter agreeable like ours, but immodestly so, smugly so. After a few hundred yards we went into another street of plump villas and Lovegrove Common lay before us, strangely clean and wild. It was a square of bright turf and gorse banks, thickets of brick and fir, and fields of bracken, with, as its very centre, two oval ponds yellow and white with lily pads. The main pathway led across the neck of grassland which divided the two ponds and after a quarter of a mile came out on the remains of the primal village of Lovegrove. This was like a stage-set. A Norman church stood small under elms among washed tombs, one or two the fortresses of dead distinguished families, with a cluster of very old yews

## From the President Continued

anthology. The result, tentatively titled "Best of West," will contain some of West's wittiest, most scathing, and profoundest writings on subjects such as cats, social class, love, the Blitz, Nabokov, and Nixon.

In the meantime, preparations for the next conference, titled "Rebecca West in London" (and of course located in London), are in full swing (see Joanna Labon's note later on). We are all excited and looking forward to conducting the next Rebecca West conference in the birthplace of our author and in the city she cherished beyond any other place in the world. As part of the run-up to the conference, we have awarded two graduate student prizes, each one carrying a reward of \$1,000 (see Debra Rae Cohen's note in this newsletter). It was very rewarding to read six strong applications from very promising graduate students working on various aspects of Rebecca West, ranging from cultural studies approaches, to psychoanalysis, to comparative literature.

Before I close, I would like to thank the energetic members of the Society leadership, especially Ann Norton, Carl Rollyson, Debra Rae Cohen, Joanna Labon, Helen Macleod, Thaine Stearns, and Dennis Drabelle for their enthusiasm, their guidance, their cooperative spirit, and their commitment to the Rebecca West Society. —Bernard Schweizer

## London, A City Loved Continued

tussling in a black dance round the lych-gate. Beside it was a Jacobean vicarage, of blanched tan brickwork, and then a dozen thatched cottages, pretty enough but so small that the inhabitants must have been deprived of the possibility of serene relationships . . . [A]ll the cottages had gardens surpassing any in this age. There were hedges of sweet peas which seemed like a continuous floral bird about to take off, borne by their aerial colors, and there were round cabbages, green jewels with goodness, and palisades of beans that would have kept out Indians. There was a blacksmith's forge which had a name in the district: he was beginning to go in for bicycles. There was also a village shop; which did small but exquisite business as a bakery selling coarse and salted bread better

than can be bought anywhere in London today, and farmhouse plum cake made with yeast but never tasting of it. While whatever elder who had brought us was buying a loaf and a cake, we children stood outside and debated whether we should go home by the north or south side of the common.

These two routes then composed an extraordinary architectural exhibition. The highest side on both was occupied by a Palladian villa standing in a miniature park, each built by an eighteenth century grandee, who had so many interests at Court and in Parliament that they could only rarely visit their distant country houses, but liked in summer to breathe something fresher than city air. One belonged to a banker and the other to the owner of an engineering firm. They could not be seen from the road, but they both had very pretty lodges, which satisfied us well enough. On each side of these properties later builders had put up a few houses for City merchants who were following the fashion and ceasing to live near their offices and warehouses and finding houses in the suburbs. Some were graceful Regency houses with their tentative air, their shallow verandahs, and their featherweight pediments, their five-sashed windows, and after them had come plump and upstanding Italianate villas burgeoning into bell-towers and balconies. All alike shone with white or primrose yellow stucco, and stood in perfectly kept gardens full of standard roses, scarlet geraniums and carpet-bedding . . . Here were two whole rows of houses which obviously did not contain a single object justly to be described as shabby. The windows were so clear that they shone like lighthouses before the sun; their curtains were immaculate and precisely arranged just like the ones in the windows of furniture shops, and outside the lawns were inscribed with a regular pattern of dark green and light green alternating stripes because the grass was mowed by mowing-machines drawn by ponies wearing little boots. . .

This second excerpt comes from an article Dennis Drabelle tore out of magazine years ago; he thinks it might have been *Good Housekeeping*. At any rate, it's terrific. If you have a research assistant, send him or her on a quest for the source!

Sometimes as I go about London I pass

a house, and a name stirs in my mind, and the walls become transparent, and I see a room with charming people talking and laughing, and me among them, young and in a state of enchantment, and I relive an agreeable moment of another age. This happens when I pass the pinched front of a Jane Austen-ish house in Bloomsbury, and I am sitting beside Virginia Woolf, who is uncombed and unpowdered, never befriended by Elizabeth Arden, hunched up in a gaunt chair with mud-colored cushions, but all the same a true Botticelli beauty and graceful as an almond branch. . . . There is another magic-lantern slide I see behind the front of a London house, and that shows me a cocktail party dominated by Rose Macaulay, a fine comic novelist who was also a fine comic figure in her own right. She was one of the flat-chested, noble, impulsive, and scatterbrained but intelligent English spinsters that Joyce Grenfell impersonates, and she was indulging in a premature outbreak of Women's Lib.

## GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE PRIZES

This February the Board of the Rebecca West Society named its first set of recipients of \$1000 Graduate Student Conference prizes, Caroline Krzakowski and April Pelt. The prizes, meant to defray the cost of travel to the 2009 West Society conference in London, include a place on the conference program. Winners were chosen competitively from submitted abstracts, with the awards going to proposals that promised the most rigorous and original work. The presentation by Krzakowski, a PhD candidate at McGill University, will be entitled "Aftermath: Ethnography and Rebecca West's Postwar Serial Novel." Krzakowski will situate Rebecca West's postwar serial novel *Cousin Rosamund: A Saga of the Century* (1957, 1984, 1985) as a late-modernist response to her witnessing of the aftermath of the Second World War, the dissolution of the British Empire, and the Cold War. Pelt, a PhD candidate at the University of Delaware, will speak on "Fashioning a Feminist Icon: Adapting Rebecca West's Life for the Stage"; Pelt will examine how two recent stage productions about Rebecca West's life make use of her impressively diverse oeuvre, and discuss how West's unconventional life

# WEST WORDS

The International Rebecca West Society Newsletter

Volume 6: Winter 2009

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### Join the Society

If you wish to become a member, please send your name, title, institutional affiliation, address, and a check made out to "International Rebecca West Society."

### Mailing Address

Bernard Schweizer

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### Membership Fees

Regular: \$30 per year

Reduced fee: \$10 per year  
for graduate students,  
retired, and part-time  
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hoping to host actress **Felicity Dean**, who played Laura in the 1978 BBC version of *The Birds Fall Down*, and **Liz Leyshon** and **Diana Stainforth**, West's former secretaries. Happily, many American colleagues from the Society will be speaking too (liberated for once from conference-organising). So this year we'll have research papers from **Debra Rae Cohen**, **Ann Norton**, **Carl Rollyson**, and **Bernard Schweizer**. West's nephew **Norman Macleod**, his wife **Marion Macleod**, and their daughter **Helen Macleod Atkinson** will also share their memories.

Please feel free to contact me directly if you have any queries about the conference: jll@kent.ac.uk.

Joanna Labon, University of Kent, UK



## REBECCA WEST AS PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL

Stefan Collini's *Common Reading: Critics, Historians, Publics* (2008) is a prime example of why Rebecca West has not received her due in contemporary intellectual discourse. What bothers Collini—and my guess is that it has also troubled many others who prefer the somber T. S. Eliot—is that West does not suit a certain image of the public intellectual. She is not just amusing—to use Collini's word—she is funny, even cute, and that is not how a PI is supposed to sound. That she often echoes Oscar Wilde ought to be a compliment, not the backhanded salute Collini gives her.

Collini's discussions of public intellectuals in *Common Reading* include quite a range of authors from Edmund Wilson to George Orwell to William Empson to A. L. Rowse, but I'm not aware of any audience or subject matter these PIs addressed that West did not speak to as well and often to better effect. Collini never even acknowledges the power of her political thought, for example, which

was ahead of Orwell in its anti-Communism. And Collini ignores the development of West's political thought—a common failing in assessments of her career—merely mentioning that she became an extreme anti-Communist after the war. This is highly misleading, since some of her most critical remarks on the Soviet Union came as early as 1918 and were again expressed at the beginning of the Second World War. That she attacked Communists from her position on the left made her much more vulnerable than conservative writers. That she was willing to attack leftist editors such as Kingsley Martin at the *New Statesman*—a journal that published many of her best pieces—meant that she lost a good deal of influence on the left.

West as public intellectual parts company with those like Edward Said who are satisfied with defining intellectuals as critics of the status quo. Contemporary public intellectuals like Said and Susan Sontag ignore West because she rejects the all-too-easy dividing line they wish to preserve between truth and power.

The leftwingers of West's day saw the U.S.S.R. as a new and hopeful phenomenon in history whereas she saw it as a species of the old: not the Soviet Union but rather Soviet Russia—as she preferred to call it. In this respect, the intellectuals who propped up the U.S.S.R. were no different from imperialists: they shared the same psychology, the desire to dominate, in the guise of bringing progress to the world.

What public intellectual today could rival West in her range of subjects, or in the venues she chose for publication? What public intellectual today would be able to perceive and describe so vividly the ways in which intellectual life and the feelings of the public at large coincide? To say, as Collini does, that West was merely interested in "pleasing the broader publics," seems wholly inadequate—as does his dismissal of her as a literary personality infatuated with the need to be entertaining, an intellectual show-off.

That influential writers like Collini continue to discount West demonstrates how much she still stands apart from her fellow intellectuals. Rebecca West is out of category—she does not fit the standard discussions of public intellectual—because she is a category unto herself and a continual affront to more narrowly conceived notions of the public intellectual. —Carl Rollyson

The full-length essay by Carl Rollyson, titled "Rebecca West as Artist and Intellectual: Roaming Outside the Herd," appears in the forthcoming special issue of *Studies in the*

## West in the News Continued

‘Anyone can do the washing-up; just get a big bowl and some liquid; so why complain about it?’ The novel in question was *The Waterfall*, which both Richard Hoggart and I admired greatly (and didn’t think it was about washing-up). I knew Rebecca West, since she was a friend and neighbour of my parents in Sussex, and was very fond of her; all the same, it occurred to me that she was possibly one of the brilliant old ladies who felt threatened by a brilliant young one in the shape of Maggie Drabble.” (*Guardian Review*, p. 2)

In the August 29, 2008, edition of *The Age*, Felicity Lewis and Bronwen Sewell asked 100 Melbourne women, “Is it still a man’s world?” It resulted in my favorite West misquote of the year when one young woman attempted her famous 1913 Clarion line, “I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute.” Here’s her version: “Rebecca West said something like, ‘If a feminist is different from a doormat, then yes, I’m a feminist.’” (*The Melbourne Magazine*, p. 68)

The Wyndham Lewis exhibit “Portraits” in the National Portrait Gallery, London, last fall generated much comment on his portrait of West. In the July 13, 2008, edition of *The Observer*, Laura Cumming comments, “The paintings are graphic, mechanistic, edging towards illustration, whereas the drawings are rich with grace, emotion and insight. Surely nobody has ever made a better portrait of Joyce, his myopic eyes like twin locks to which there is no available key; or Rebecca West, the two sides of her face—beautiful and painfully intelligent—epitomising the perfect mismatch (and misfortune) of her life.” (*Observer Review Arts Pages*, p. 15) In the July 8, 2008, edition of *The Daily Telegraph*, Richard Dormant remarks, “In a wonderful pencil portrait of Rebecca West, he shows the face from two slightly different points of view. In the way West cradles her neck in one hand, the artist catches some anxiety and intensity that no other portrait or photograph I’ve seen does.” (*Features; Arts*; p. 25)

In the June 29, 2008, edition of the

South Africa *Sunday Times*, writer and medical doctor Dawn Garisch discusses and names her favorite writers, including West. “The best books are doors opening onto new vistas, or at the very least, they are mirrors, revealing something about who we are. Discovering an author who depicts the world in a way that catches my breath in recognition, and who uses language with originality and music, is a gift... Writers that have fed and helped me include Doris Lessing, Ursula le Guin, Rebecca West, Patrick White, Virginia Woolf, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Margaret Atwood, Ellen Gilchrist and Alice Munro. Currently I am reading predominantly South African writers: Finuala Dowling, Ivan Vladislavic, Kopano Matlwa and Wilhelmina de Villiers. Going by burgeoning publishing of fiction in this country, and the amount of space reserved for local novels in book stores, it appears they are at last no longer generally regarded as second rate.” (*Arts, Culture, and Entertainment*; p. 18)—Ann Norton

A new book on an earlier global economic crisis quotes from Rebecca West’s classic account of the Nuremberg Trials in *A Train of Powder. In Lords of Finance: The Bankers Who Broke the World* (Penguin Press, 2009), Liaquat Ahamed examines the misguided policies of the finance ministers of four great powers—the United States, England, France, and Germany—between the two world wars. In a late chapter, Ahamed carries the story forward to the lives of his “lords” after they gave up power.

The German minister, Hjalmar Schacht, worked for the Nazi regime but considered himself better than and apart from the party hacks and thugs (and, indeed, he was eventually acquitted). Ahamed quotes West’s memorable description of the indignant Schacht’s body language during the proceedings: He sat “twisted in his seat so that his tall body, stiff as a plank, was propped against the side of the dock. Thus he sat at right angles to his fellow defendants and looked past them and over their heads: it was always his argument that he was far superior to Hitler’s gang. He was petrified by rage because this court was pretending to have this right. He might have been a corpse frozen by rigor mortis. . . .”

—Dennis Drabelle

CRASH, CRUNCH, CONFERENCE!  
Friday 18 and Saturday 19 Sept. 2009

Last year, I realised that our 2009 conference would mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of West’s London novel *Harriet Hume* (1929). I hope we’ll have a chance to revisit and to reflect on that extraordinary book. However, I did not foresee that we would be recalling the Wall Street Crash of the same year with quite such feeling. Perhaps the uncanny parallel and our echoes of economic crisis will provoke insights into Rebecca West’s own turbulent times. Yet, remembering her enthusiasm for the Kennedys, we in London might imagine Rebecca’s smile if she gazed “across the pond” these Obama days—and share it.

The conference is promising to be truly transatlantic, and I look forward to welcoming everyone to London. Conference registration will be at the Institute of English Studies, Senate House, London University, Malet Street, London WC1. <http://ies.sas.ac.uk/events/conferences/2009/RebeccaWest/index.htm>.

The Institute of English Studies is housed by the towering white edifice of Senate House, on which George Orwell is said to have based his Ministry of Truth in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and which also holds the main Library for the University of London. It has been a good host to hundreds of gatherings on all aspects of English studies, and has a deserved reputation for being an important centre for scholarly debate, so it should prove a fitting place to hold the first UK conference devoted to Rebecca West.

What do we hope to achieve? Well, by bringing together under one roof those who have enjoyed Rebecca West’s work, we hope to learn more about her and to bring the work of the Society to the attention of new readers and writers.

Our speakers’ list is an exciting one so far, and a growing one. It includes **Victoria Glendinning** (biographer of RW 1987), novelist and journalist **Melissa Benn, Kathryn Laing** (excavator of *The Sentinel*), **Catherine Clay** (*Time and Tide* voyager), **Janet Montefiore** (*Men and Women of the 1930s*), and **Vesna Goldsworthy** (*Inventing Ruritania*). We are also

and body of work challenge the conventions of traditional biographical adaptations. The prizes will be awarded at a ceremony during the London conference. —Debra Rae Cohen

## SPECIAL ISSUE OF STUDIES IN THE HUMANITIES

Bernard Schweizer has guest-edited the December 2008 issue of the journal *Studies in the Humanities*. The subject of the special issue is “Twentieth Century Writers as Public Intellectuals.” It is intended both as a ringing endorsement of the concept of the writer as an essential critical public voice and a close examination of the various specific contributions to political and social debates that writers like George Orwell, Storm Jameson, Virginia Woolf, and Rebecca West have made over the course of the twentieth century. Here is the table of contents:

***Studies in the Humanities***  
(December 2008)

**Introduction: Twentieth-Century Writers as Public Intellectuals**  
(Bernard Schweizer)

**“Virginia Woolf & Vera Brittain: Pacifism and the Gendered Politics of Public Intellectualism”**  
(Rebecca Wisor)

**“Storm Jameson: Author, Activist, and ‘Cassandra’”** (Elizabeth Maslen)

**“Rebecca West as Artist and Intellectual: Roaming Outside the Herd”** (Carl Rollyson)

**“Ayn Rand as Public Intellectual: Notes from the Margin”**  
(Susan L. Brown)

**“Octavio Paz’s Perspectives on Politics: The Other Voice”**  
(Yvon Grenier)

**“Günter Grass as Literary Intellectual: Memory, Ambiguity, and Constructive Conflict”**  
(Sofia Ahlberg)

**“George Orwell: Politics, Rhetoric, and the Public Intellectual”**  
(Ben Clarke)

Please consider buying a copy of this issue for \$10 or have your library consider a subscription to *Studies in the Humanities*, a semi-annual journal of theoretical investigations in literature, film, drama, and cultural studies; it aims

to deepen our understanding of a work, an artist, a genre, an artistic milieu, or the conditions of artistic production. For orders contact Jackie Rohrabough at [jrohra@iup.edu](mailto:jrohra@iup.edu). —Bernard Schweizer

## WIKIPEDIA

The subject of Wikipedia is controversial, and not everyone appreciates the free encyclopedia that can be written and edited by anyone who has access to the internet. While a good many instructors do not allow their students to cite Wikipedia for their papers, deeming it an unreliable resource, other intellectuals see in the free, evolving, democratic storehouse of information that is Wikipedia the reflection of a new age of knowledge-making. Supporters of Wikipedia say that a million volunteers are better than a few experts and that the “history” feature to every entry (tracing the evolution of any given page) reflects a twenty-first century understanding of knowledge as the evolving product of consensus and negotiation rather than as fiat. As the influence of Wikipedia grows, more and more experts are willing to volunteer their time to guarantee the accuracy, thoroughness, and “neutrality” of the information on this site. Whatever ones position vis-à-vis Wikipedia, the prominence and visibility of entries on that site have made it paramount for anybody with a claim to notability to be well represented there. Google searches of any given topic will usually bring up the Wikipedia entry in the first or second place. Type West’s name into the Google search engine, and the Wikipedia page will be the first one to be listed.

Until last summer, however, the Wikipedia page for Rebecca West was inadequate. It was nothing more than a brief biographical blurb—just about what would fit on the back cover of a paperback—followed by an incomplete list of publications. Things have greatly changed since then. Go to the Wikipedia entry for West now, and you will see a fully developed page complete with pictures and a table of contents comprising 22 items, ranging from her biography to her politics, her religious thoughts, and her cultural relevance. I wrote part of the entry myself and outsourced other parts to members of the West community, serving as the coordinator and the responsible party for editing and uploading the content. A

particularly tricky part was the handling of photos. I paid a fee and obtained permission to put up a portrait of West on Wikipedia, but it was soon taken down by a Wikipedia administrator because it was suspected of violating copyright. So, I had to get back to the copyright owner and request a specific permission (GNU Free Documentation License) and then communicate this to the Wikipedia administrator overseeing the use of pictorial content; only then was the image allowed to stay. The second image currently on the website, a low-resolution facsimile of the cover of *The Selected Letters of Rebecca West*, posed less of a problem because low-resolution images of book covers are considered to be in the public domain.

Since this major expansion of the Wikipedia page on West, it has been tinkered with by other editors unknown to me. I must say that my faith in Wikipedia was strengthened because the changes that subsequent (anonymous) editors made to the page were generally improvements. I even learned a few new things, such as that saying the Queen of England conferred the degree of DBA on West is wrong on two counts: first, there is no Queen of England. Instead, the proper title is “Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.” Well, good. Next, the Queen is not the one deciding who gets knighted and DBAed (apparently, the Prime Minister makes that call), she simply performs the ritual conferring the honor. Okay, good.

So, after having upgraded the West entry on Wikipedia from a small dinghy to a more stately vessel, and having launched it on its journey into the world wide web, I do of course encourage you to look it over yourself and make any amendments, corrections, and improvements that you deem necessary. I hope you will agree that the site, while not being scholarship in the strict sense of the word (Wikipedia does not allow original content), represents a solid, dependable, and stimulating resource for people looking to gain some insight into the life and work of Rebecca West. It is, thus, a valuable interface between the small circle of West experts and the wider world, and it can serve to broaden West’s appeal by reaching out to many potential and actual readers of her work. —Bernard Schweizer

**Accommodations**

Staying in London can be an expensive business, but there are some bargains to be had.

First off, there's the The Kings Cross Royal Scot Travelodge, which often charges GBP 50 pounds or less. There are other Travelodges in London. Check out the booking site at: <http://www.Travelodge.co.uk>

Another place to stay, closer to the London Library, but fairly down-market (think backpackers) is The Edward Lear Hotel, just behind Marble Arch. <http://www.edwardhotellondon.co.uk/>

As ever, TripAdvisor is a great resource: [http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotels-g186338-London\\_England-Hotels.html](http://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotels-g186338-London_England-Hotels.html)

**Restaurants**

Eating out in London has improved beyond measure in the last decade, and there's no need to suffer over-boiled cabbage. But the prices have risen commensurately. For good, cheap grub, try Chinatown and Soho's Greek and Italian cafes. Time Out recently updated its "Cheap Eats" section for London: [http://www.timeout.com/london/restaurants/features/5617/Londons\\_best\\_cheap\\_eats.html](http://www.timeout.com/london/restaurants/features/5617/Londons_best_cheap_eats.html)

Chuen Cheng Ku, at 17 Wardour St., London, W1D 6PJ, 020 74371398, is a great place for the always-cheap option of dim sum, complete with steam trolleys, and is big enough to comfortably hold large groups of people.

A personal favourite of mine is Ed's Easy Diner, 12 Moor Street @ Old Compton Street

Soho, London, W1D 5NG, Tel: 020 7434 4439 <http://www.edseasydiner.co.uk/>

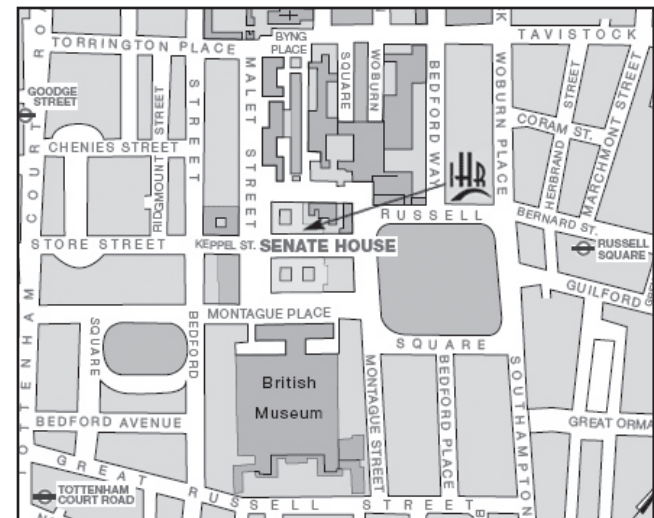
Whatever else you do, take a walk down Brick Lane—five minutes walk from Liverpool St. Station—and have a cheap, delicious, authentic Anglo-Indian curry. Most highly recommended is Standard Balti House at 71 Brick Lane London, E1 6QL

Tel: 020 72475 855. <http://www.standardbaltihouse.co.uk/> Try the rupchanda – a whole, freshwater fish.

**Transport**

If arriving at Heathrow Airport, you have the option of taking the very fast train service to Paddington Station – the Heathrow Express, which is GBP 32 round trip (we call a round trip "return" in the UK). Or you can take the London Underground for a lot less (fares vary, see below), but it will take you around 90 minutes to get into the center of town. From Gatwick, which is much further out than Heathrow, there is a fast, efficient rail service into Victoria Station, which is pretty much your only viable option. It's too far to take a cab. A cab into central London from Heathrow will cost you upwards of GBP 60 each way. Taxis, in general, are substantially more expensive than in the US, and they tend to get stuck in traffic, too. They should be used very sparingly.

The London Underground, or "the Tube," is one of the oldest and fastest in the world, and the station entrances easily recognizable by the simple logo of a circle with a horizontal line through it. Buy an Oyster card at any tube station and you'll save money on fares. It contains an electronic chip that you tap against the turnstile entrance, and it automatically calculates lower fares according to your usage. I suggest you put GBP 10 on the card at first. You can then replenish it at the electronic ticket machines without having to wait in line for an attendant at the ticket counter. The Oyster card also works on the extensive bus network. Climb up to the upper deck of a red London bus, and get a free tour of central London.



**Language**

Also, don't be confused when you see a sign for "subway"—it generally means a tunnel that allows pedestrians to cross under a busy road or intersection. It never refers to the Tube. Also, "concessions" are not hot dog stands, but reductions on fares and charges, for example, a reduced fee for getting into a museum because you're a student. Since many of you are students, be sure to look out for these concessions. By the way, a huge number of museums in the UK are free in any case.

What you call "chips", the Brits call "crisps".

What you call "fries", the Brits call "chips".

What you call "pants", the Brits call "trousers".

What you call "panties/shorts", the Brits call "pants".

What you call an "eraser", the Brits call a "rubber".

In Britain, "real" is not an adjective.

**Etiquette and Safety**

Don't tip your barman. If you feel you've gotten exceptional service, say: "And one for yourself," when you buy the next round. He or she will ring up the price of, say, a pint of beer, and take the cash. Sometimes, they even take the drink. Check all restaurant bills to see if they've added a service charge (this used to be absolutely standard, but it's not so predictable now), or ask. If there

is no service charge added, a tip of 12-15% is the norm. Taxes on all meals, and all goods you buy in the stores (or "shops"), are already baked into the price.

Be prepared for a lot more swearing than you're used to, even if you're from New York! Also, be prepared for a great deal more public drunkenness, even by respectable-looking middle-class business folk. Britain has a huge "binge-drinking" culture that's become a

downright nuisance in the last, oh, 400 years. There is also an underlying culture of recreational violence that's best avoided, obviously. If you feel in the least bit threatened, politely absent yourself from the situation. However, don't forget that the Brits love a good bit of irony, and they also feel at liberty to rib Americans about pretty much everything—be prepared for some good-natured teasing. And, above all, be gracious. Britain was still on food rations when Americans were eating steaks the size of your head prepared in gleaming new kitchens in comfortable cocktail-ready suburban sub-divisions, having a good laugh about the brief hardships of the war, and somehow Britain, "Cool Britannia" notwithstanding, has never quite caught up. There's a lot of envy buried in all that sarcasm.

On no account attempt to mimic the British accent. You'll just sound like you're choking. And don't rib the locals about saying "sorry" all the time. There are at least 89, quite separate, meanings of the word "sorry", most of them nothing to do with apologizing. Finally, don't tell someone they don't "sound" Scottish or Irish or Cockney or whatever. Accents are the last remaining legacy of the complex British class system, and you don't have any idea what you're getting into. For more on this, see Zadie Smith's excellent essay: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/22334>.

For other suggestions, you might try [www.visitlondon.com](http://www.visitlondon.com) where you will be able to find several suggestions of things to do in London and also special offers.

Also check out: <http://www.visitlondon.com/areas/explorer/> which highlights attractions near a tube stop or locations.

Another useful link for events in September is: <http://www.visitlondon.com/maps/guides/london-planner>.

—Helen Macleod

**WEST IN THE NEWS**

In his February 7, 2009, London *Independent* article "War Reporters used to prefer morality over impartiality," Robert Fisk approvingly names West's "sharp tongue" at the Nuremberg trials as one of an earlier generation who reported war with more "power and passion," and he quotes (loosely) from "Greenhouse with Cyclamens I." "Though one has read surprising news of Göring for years, he still surprises. He is, above all things, soft. He wears either a German air-force uniform or a light beach-suit in the worst of playful taste, and both hang loosely on him, giving him an air of pregnancy. He has thick brown young hair, the coarse, bright skin of an actor who has used grease paint for decades, and the preternaturally deep wrinkles of the drug addict; it adds up to something like the head of a ventriloquist's dummy. His appearance makes a pointed but obscure reference to sex . . . it appears in the Palace of Justice that it is only the Americans and the British who can hold up a mirror to Germany and help her to solve her own perplexing mystery - that mystery which, in Nuremberg and the countryside around it, is set out in flowers, flowers which concert by being not only lovely but beloved . . . 'The people where I live now send me in my breakfast tray strewn with pansies,' says the French doctor who is custodian of the relics at the Palace of Justice (the lampshade made of human skin, the shrunken head of the Polish Jew)."

Fisk admires the specific prose: "It's not just the power of the writing I'm talking about here; the screaming soldiers, the dying Communard, the condemned men, the woman wanting to sell her car, the death of an age, the flowers. These reporters were spurred, weren't they, by the immorality of war. They cared. They were not frightened of damaging their 'impartiality.' I wonder if we still write like this." (*Comment*, p. 46)

The London *Guardian* ran a column called "1000 Novels Everyone Must Read," and several critics and writers named West novels, including *The Return of the Soldier* and *The Fountain Overflows*. Joanna Hines, in the January 21, 2009, edition, describes West's first novel: "West's small masterpiece centres on three women who in their different ways love Chris Baldry, a first world war captain sent

home because of shellshock. Amnesia makes him forget his beautiful wife Kitty, fixing instead on the dowdy and socially inferior Margaret from whom he had parted 15 years before. The repercussions of his illness, and his brutal cure, are described with insight in prose as elegant and precise as the world of the Edwardian country house in which their tragedy takes place." (*Guardian Newsprint Supplement*, p. 17)

On November 13, 2008—as part of a series called "The First World War"—the London *Guardian* reprinted the first chapter of *The Return of the Soldier*, wanting to show how our understanding of the Great War is "shaped by the [literature] we have read and the paintings that depict its suffering." (*Guardian Magazine Supplement*, p. 3)

*Love's Civil War* (McClelland & Stewart, 2008) publishes the diaries and letters of Charles Ritchie, a Canadian diplomat, and Elizabeth Bowen, with whom he had a long love affair (the letters were collected and edited by West's first biographer Victoria Glendinning). Robert Fulford, reviewing the book in the Canadian *National Post* of October 21, 2008, quotes from Ritchie's diary, saying that West was a writer both he and Bowen admired, and that "West has a character in *The Fountain Overflows* say that 'You must always believe that life is as extraordinary as music says it is.' Charles told his diary that he believed just that—and he would be dead if he ceased to believe it." (*Arts and Life*, p. AL1)

The September 6, 2008, London *Guardian* marked the fortieth anniversary of the Booker prize and the impending announcement of the 2008 shortlist by asking judges from every year to tell them "the inside story of how the winner was chosen." These included Frank Kermode, Antonia Fraser, John Gross, George Steiner, Edna O'Brien, Ion Trewin, Susan Hill, Francis King, Beryl Bainbridge, Derwent May, Hilary Spurling, Claire Tomalin, Hermione Lee, and Paul Bai. Antonia Fraser reports that the "judging of the 1970 prize was a low-key affair except for the feisty behaviour of Dame Rebecca West, a judge for the second year running. At one point she denounced Margaret Drabble for her novels of domestic life on the grounds that

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