



Rebecca West: Heroism, Rebellion, and the Female Epic (Contributions in Women's Studies)

Bernard Schweizer

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Rebecca West (1892-1983) was a prominent English critic, journalist, and novelist. She contributed to feminist and socialist magazines, had a lengthy relationship with H. G. Wells, and was named Dame of the British Empire in 1959. Her literary reputation declined after 1970 and was revived in the mid-1980s, with the posthumous publication of three novels and a memoir, as well as the reissue of several earlier works. With the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* catapulted her into the limelight and brought her wide critical attention. This book offers a much-needed assessment of her literary career.

Schweizer's volume analyzes West's spiritual and philosophical ideas, asserting that her novels and travel writings betray an epic impulse and therefore reinvent epic heroism in feminist terms. The first part of this study examines her fiction, including, *The Judge* and the trilogy of novels about the Aubrey family. Philosophical and conceptual elements in her fictional and nonfictional prose are explored, relating her ideas to other thinkers. The volume closes with a look at West's reworking of epic conventions in her travel writings, including her unfinished *Survivors in Mexico*.

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