

encompassing discussion of early state formation, collective action among salmon fishery workers in the opening years of the twentieth century, public policy in the forestry industry, and workers' control at B.C. Tel in the 1980s. A closing essay addresses the long history of class relations among the province's schoolteachers. Little seems, at times, to hold these discrete analytic forays into the province's history together. Warburton's conclusion on capitalist social relations in British Columbia goes some distance toward resolving this problem, but a much-needed interpretive coherence is still lacking.

The book ends with a statement of purpose: "The dissemination of knowledge about the episodes examined in this volume is intended to be a small contribution to the education of those involved" (p. 285). Warburton wants the workers to learn from their history. It is an admirable aim, easier, however, to proclaim than to put into practice. University of British Columbia Press seems to have read this last line, taken it seriously, and tried to create a form that, in their vision of the process whereby class consciousness is instilled subversively in the working class, corresponds to the content and purpose of the book — for they have packaged it so that it appears as if wrapped in a grey paper bag, suitable for sale under the counter at your local class-struggle outlet.

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*Beyond the Blue Mountains: An Autobiography*, by George Woodcock.  
Markham: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1988. Pp. 300. \$24.95 cloth.

*Beyond the Blue Mountains* is the second volume of George Woodcock's autobiography, covering the period from his return to Canada in 1949 to his retirement as editor of *Canadian Literature* in 1977. Even those acquainted with Woodcock's career will be struck by the fullness of his life during these years and the prodigious extent and variety of his accomplishments.

Woodcock's opening account of his attempt to combine subsistence farming with an intellectual life offers a foretaste of the determination with which he addressed life throughout this period. In pursuit of this immigrant dream he built a cabin in the forests of Vancouver Island not once but twice. His attempts to live by his writing in the Canada of 1949 were equally quixotic, though royalties, radio talks, articles, friends, and, eventually, fellowships enabled him somehow to survive and carry out his

regular travels in Europe. A session of teaching at the University of Washington would have led to a very different New World career had the American authorities not prohibited his immigration on the grounds of his anarchist past. He finally found financial security in a teaching position at the University of British Columbia, a job which metamorphosed into the editorship of *Canadian Literature* after he had created that journal in 1959.

Long after he had thus established himself in Canada, Woodcock sustained his place in the English literary world through such writings as his history of Anarchism and his biographies of George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, and Herbert Read. If it offered nothing else, this volume would be of value for its personal glimpses of the literary scene in England, in the United States, through Woodcock's acquaintance with such figures as Kenneth Rexroth and Theodore Roethke, and in Canada, where Woodcock knew all of the leading writers. There is, in this connection, a puzzling omission in the chapter entitled "Literary Skirmishes." Woodcock's account of a legal confrontation between Margaret Atwood and the editor of *Northern Review* ends in mid-sentence at the foot of page 267. There is no leaf missing; a new chapter begins with page 270 printed on the verso of 267.

Much of *Blue Mountains* is occupied with Woodcock's travels, both domestic — to explore native villages, interview Doukhobors, or visit the Arctic — and world-wide. Most of these travels served, and were financed by, his writing projects, from travel books such as *South Sea Journey* and *Faces of India* to the biographies and other intensive studies such as *The Greeks in India* and *Kerala*. His journey to Mexico, typically, yielded five articles and a verse play for radio. Readers will be rewarded by Woodcock's astute commentary, particularly on the Indian sub-continent, to which he formed a deep attachment, even straying into philanthropy to organize the very successful Tibetan Refugee Aid Society after an acquaintance with the Dalai Lama.

Most readers will be abashed at Woodcock's capacity for life and his enormous productivity in editing and writing books, articles, plays, radio scripts, librettos, translations, and poetry. While writing *Who Killed the British Empire* (a work he compares with Gibbon's) he took on extra tasks, as he says, "to vary my work and earn ready money," including a series of lectures on philosophic pessimism treating Nietzsche, Spengler, Julian Benda, Ortega y Gasset, and Albert Camus. His ninety-minute verse drama on Maximilian he completed in five days; his *Gabriel Dumont* he completed "just three hours off schedule." I had a personal glimpse of

Woodcock's incredible efficiency when, in 1966, I submitted to him my fledgling attempt at a critical article. During that year he had five books coming off the press and was actually writing two, yet my manuscript was returned promptly with a full page of carefully detailed editorial advice. Those who come to Woodcock's autobiography looking for a bomb-throwing anarchist may be disappointed to find all this purposeful and constructive activity directed to ends so consistent with the values of a cultivated professional class.

*Beyond the Blue Mountains* is as readable and as rich in significant event as the first volume of Woodcock's autobiography, *Letter to the Past*, yet it is finally less satisfying. Its limitations may be partly explained by an observation Woodcock makes in *Letter*, that he reached maturity as a poet at about twenty-eight and as a prose writer at thirty-three. His style and literary persona were established, he says, and "by the time I published *William Godwin* my world view was established, and my perceptions of existence have not changed greatly since then. . . ." Woodcock returned to Canada mature and complete, and while this later segment of his life is not without crises and well-explained development, the details he recounts lack the universal significance of growth to maturity, and their sequence lacks the satisfying natural form of the *Kunsterroman* that shapes the earlier volume. The narrative proceeds, like the writer's mature life, from one achievement to the next, chronicling the success of the expert craftsman more than the growth of the artist or the man.

It is surprising to see Woodcock describe his "metamorphosis from an English-oriented writer living in Canada to a Canadian writer" as taking more than twenty years after his return and as, in part, an accidental slide tipped by the negligent behaviour of British publishers. George Woodcock is generally regarded as a pivotal figure in Canadian literature during its period of most dynamic development. It may be useful to consider his career not only as an influence but as an analogue to the process by which an essentially immigrant literature has taken root in Canadian soil.

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