There are, in a sense, several Woodcocks - the anarchist poet and activist; the prolific author of travel books, biographies and popular histories; and the champion of Canadian literature. Woodcock's life was also divided, as biographer Douglas Fetherling notes in an engaging Prologue largely structured around obituaries that appeared at Woodcock's death in 1995, between his formative years in England and his 45 years in Canada, during which Woodcock shifted from being seen as an international author of middling stature to a leading Canadian literary figure best known in the rest of the world for his *Anarchism*, widely disparaged by actual anarchists but which nonetheless became the standard popular survey and has gone through several editions.

After a brief career as a clerical worker on the Great Western Railroad, Woodcock retired in 1940 (at age 28) to devote himself to his writing. He sat out the war as a conscientious objector, entered the British anarchist milieu, and struck up a friendship with Herbert Read, who would serve as Woodcock's mentor as the young author sought to establish himself. By 1942 Woodcock was heavily involved in the production of the anarchist fortnightly *War Commentary* and had published his first of several anarchist pamphlets, *New Life to the Land*. In 1949, he retired from the movement and moved to Canada.

Woodcock built on his emerging reputation as a serious literary historian and biographer with well-received volumes on Peter Kropotkin, George Orwell and Herbert Read. He also began a series of travel volumes and landed a one-year teaching position at the University of Washington in 1954. When the college offered a regular appointment the following year, Woodcock was barred from re-entering the United States. Instead he secured a position at the University of British Columbia, where he taught English, launched *Canadian Literature*, and established himself as a serious but popularly accessible critic and scholar of the emerging Canadian literary tradition.

In order to support himself, Woodcock found himself bringing out three or four books in a year, in addition to his editorial duties and the steady stream of articles and scripts that flowed from his typewriter. While it appears that Woodcock attained financial security, his letters indicate that he perpetually saw himself as hard-pressed and undertook many commissions simply to cover his bills.

Although he wrote several pioneering studies, some of which have stood the test of time, most of Woodcock's work was ephemeral, hastily written to meet a contract or to make possible one of Woodcock's many international journeys (which formed the basis for his travel articles and books). The quality of Woodcock's scholarship was often challenged, and he sometimes substituted hasty generalizations for a detailed study of his subject. Fetherling alludes to some of these controversies, but does not explore them. This is characteristic of a book that is unfailingly friendly and leisurely, raising its criticisms in the gentlest of tones while often tumbling into long excerpts from Woodcock's correspondence that may give a sense of the man, but rarely advance the narrative. To his credit, Fetherling does make clear Woodcock's unbridled ambition and vanity (in later years, he took to appending a long list of honorary degrees to his signature,
though he never actually graduated college), quoting Nicholas Walter's obituary: "He was inclined to be rather vain, but then he had a lot to be vain about" (p. xv).

Despite the prodigious work evidently put into this volume, it never really comes together. In an epilogue, Fetherling suggests that Woodcock may have made a mistake in choosing him to undertake the project. I am inclined to agree. Amidst a wealth of biographical minutiae, Fetherling seems unable to settle on a broader story line that could help make sense of the material. Extensive excerpts from Woodcock's letters litter the text, often to no apparent purpose. Given how prolific a writer Woodcock really was, readers might have been better served by a thematic approach, rather than a chronological narrative touching on nearly every work Woodcock cranked out. Instead of briefly mentioning the circumstances in which Woodcock produced more than a dozen volumes of travel writing, for example, I would have preferred a discussion of the themes and sensibilities that animated this work.

To judge from the title, Fetherling appears to have accepted Woodcock's anarchism as his unifying theme. But while Woodcock may have been something of a philosophical anarchist, he withdrew from active involvement in the movement even before his move to Canada and many of his later writings betray not just his distance from, but his ignorance of, developments since the 1940s. If Woodcock brought an anarchist sensibility to the dozens of biographical, literary, historical and travel studies he undertook, it is not evident in Fetherling's discussion. Fetherling describes Woodcock as a follower of Kropotkin's evolutionary anarchism - a portrayal that grossly misrepresents Kropotkin's approach. Fetherling would have done better to look to Herbert Read, another British literary figure influenced by anarchism, but whose sensibilities were catholic enough to accept a knighthood from the British crown. Like Read, Woodcock craved official recognition, remained aloof from (and even disdainful of) the anarchist movement after his early years, and when he returned to activism preferred the Tibetan cause to anything challenging existing power relations where he lived.

But if Woodcock's anarchism is to serve as organizing principle for the book, then it needs to be engaged more substantively. Fetherling largely accepts Woodcock's characterization of his anarchist period, but in fact he was an extremely controversial figure, regarded by many (including ASR founding co-editor Sam Dolgoff) as a renegade. Certainly Woodcock returned to anarchist themes in many of his books. In addition to his popular history of anarchism, Woodcock coauthored the first English-language biography of Peter Kropotkin, a work that has stood the test of time reasonably well, even if it has been superceded by more recent works by Martin Miller and Caroline Cahm that benefit not only from the opening of archives but also from a more theoretically informed approach. And in his final years, Woodcock undertook what Fetherling describes as "the labour of which he would be proudest" (p. 26), an 11-volume edition of the Collected Works of Peter Kropotkin published by Black Rose Books. This characterization is not supported by a footnote or other citation, but is presumably drawn from the biographer's extensive conversations with Woodcock before his death. However, it took me by surprise as I remember being struck by the mediocrity of that series when I first encountered it. So I headed down to the local anarchist bookshop to take another look.

That collection is somewhat of a mixed bag. Supplemented by a reprint of Woodcock's coauthored biography of Kropotkin (to which has been added an introduction recounting how the
work came to be written, and very brief bibliographic notes addressing the scholarship since the book was first published in 1951), the "collected works" is dominated by reissues of books that have long been in print. Each volume includes an introduction in which Woodcock sets the work in historical and biographical context. Sometimes Woodcock argues with Kropotkin, as in a 14-page introduction to Kropotkin's first book, Words of a Rebel (volume 7 in the "collected works"), where Woodcock's discomfort with Kropotkin's uncompromising revolutionism is made quite clear. This is the series' most significant contribution to Kropotkin scholarship, as it is the first English-language translation (from the French) of the entire book (some essays were previously published in English as pamphlets). But many of the volumes are simply reprints of earlier editions, accompanied by Woodcock's introductions but without any of the scholarly apparatus one might expect in a "collected works." There is only limited publishing information (found anecdotally in the introductions), indexes only when the edition being reproduced included one, no annotations aside from the few in Words Of A Rebel, and the introductions rarely engage Kropotkin's ideas in a rigorous way (instead focusing on the biographical context in which the books were written). Most seriously, while every book published by Kropotkin in his lifetime is included, the collection includes only a small fraction of his prolific pamphlet and periodical writings. Fugitive Writings (volume 10) reprints a smattering of these writings - but explicitly excludes several important articles that appear in a recent collection brought out by Freedom Press. Another volume, Evolution and Environment, includes Modern Science and Anarchism and several previously uncollected articles on evolution (the jacket copy calls them "unpublished," but that is not the case). Given that Kropotkin devoted much of his energy to writing for and editing anarchist periodicals, the decision not to include these writings, while no doubt saving time perusing through old periodicals, is far from acceptable in what purports to be a "collected works." In all, eight and a half of the eleven volumes are reprints of previously published volumes (although several have been reset, to reduce space, in smaller type), most readily available in other contemporary editions. Those editions are uniformly less expensive, and sometimes include stronger introductions and other supporting material.

In conclusion, this is a useful but ultimately unsatisfactory work. Scholars of Woodcock would surely appreciate the bibliography (though they might wish it included information on later editions and translations), and the brief discussions of nearly every book-length project Woodcock attempted may steer readers to the more substantive of his works. But Fetherling's evident admiration and friendship for his subject has resulted in a volume that does Woodcock an injustice by failing to adequately grapple with the contradictions that shot through his life and work, or to give sufficient attention to the social context in which he wrote and shaped his ideas.

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