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| Woodcock, George (1912-1995) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| George Woodcock was a British-Canadian poet, political activist, biographer, travel writer, novelist, dramatist, translator, and literary critic. He was born in Winnipeg, but spent his childhood and early adulthood in England. Returning to Canada in 1949, he moved “back to the land” on Vancouver Island and then to the city of Vancouver, where he lived until his death in 1995. Woodcock’s poetics and politics were informed by pacifism and anarchism. William Morris, Thomas Hardy, George Orwell, Roy Fuller, Julian Symons, Gabriel Dumont, the Dalai Lama, and Simon Gunanoot, a Gitksan rancher, contributed to Woodcock’s worldview. Woodcock taught at the University of British Columbia for over two decades and was the first editor of the journal *Canadian Literature* (1959-present), editing it from 1959 to 1977. |
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Link: http://canlit.ca/  1 Canadian Literature  Link: http://canlit.ca/woodcock  2 Canadian Literature page on Woodcock  In 1944, Woodcock published a political-historical work on anarchism, *Anarchy or Chaos*; it demonstrated his move from pacifism to anarchism and later informed his interest in Canada’s political and literary world. He also edited the short-lived but influential British anarchist journal *Now* (1940-1947), which attracted international contributors such as Mulk Raj Anand, Julian Huxley, Henry Miller, George Orwell, Herbert Read, and Kenneth Rexroth.  A long-time friend of George Orwell, Woodcock wrote a critical biography of Orwell and his work, *The Crystal Spirit: A Study of George Orwell* (1966), which won Canada’s Governor General’s Award. Woodcock was also awarded the Fellowship of the Royal Society of Canada (1968), the UBC Medal for Popular Biography twice (1973; 1976), and the Molson Prize (1973). He refused the Order of Canada on principle. He and his wife Ingeborg Woodcock established the Tibetan Refugee Aid Society in 1962, now the Trans-Himalayan Aid Society, Canada India Village Aid in 1981, and the Woodcock Fund for writers in 1989.  Poetics, for Woodcock, were primarily a matter of biography, or of autobiography. He states in his Introduction to his *Collected Poems* (1983), that a “*Collected Poems*, when prepared by the author himself, is in some way nearer to an autobiography than it is to an ordinary collection of verse” (19), because it is a “moral as well as a literary act” (21). Among his influences were Auden, the Imagists, and regional poets of the Pacific Northwest such as Theodore Roethke and Kenneth Rexroth. Like Roethke, many of Woodcock’s later in life poems meditate upon death against a backdrop of coastal mountains, the Pacific Ocean, and west coast neighborhoods. For an example, see “The Cherry Tree on Cherry Street” (*The Cherry Tree on Cherry Street and Other Poems* 1994), about his home on McCleery Street in Vancouver. The poem conveys a strong sense of continuity in place where poet and tree age together. When the tree is felled, the poet writes, “I felt my own heart fail. / You had become parallel.” Compare also Woodcock’s “The Box Canyon” (1994) with Rexroth’s “Lyell’s Hypothesis Again” (1950).  Link: http://canlit.ca/poems/12236  3 Copyright Canadian Literature  Woodcock’s contributions to Canadian modernism are, like his poetics and politics, individually focussed yet cosmopolitan; see, for example, his travel accounts of Canada, *Ravens and Prophets: An Account of Journeys in British Columbia, Alberta and Southern Alaska* (1952) and *Canada and the Canadians* (1970).  Link: http://canlit.ca/woodcock/interviews  4 An interview with Woodcock about his life and work. Copyright Canadian Literature.  The documentary “The Anarchist of Cherry Street” is a good place to start in learning about Woodcock.  Link: http://www.georgewoodcock.com/anarchist-of-cherry-street.html  5 Documentary copyright of A. R. T. BookWorld Productions; George Woodcock Lifetime Achievement Award website copyright of George Woodcock Literary Achievement Awards, 2011; website design by Jackson on the Moon Web Site and Graphic Design Selected List of WorksMajor Editions *Selected Poems of George Woodcock* (1967)  *A Political Art: Essays and Images in Honour of George Woodcock* (1978)  *Collected Poems* (1983)  *The Purdy-Woodcock Letters: Selected Correspondence 1964-1984* (1988)  *A George Woodcock Reader* (1990) Major Works *Anarchy or Chaos. London (1944)*  *Ravens and Prophets: An Account of Journeys in British Columbia, Alberta and Southern Alaska (1952)*  *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements (1962)*  *The Crystal Spirit: A Study of George Orwell (1966)*  *Canada and the Canadians (1970)*  *Odysseus Ever Returning: Essays on Canadian Writers and Writing (1970)*  *The Anarchist Reader (1977)*  *The Cherry Tree on Cherry Street and Other Poems (1994)* Autobiography *Letter to the Past, An Autobiography* (1982)  *Beyond the Blue Mountains, An Autobiography*. Markham: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1987.  *Walking Through the Valley: An Autobiography*. Toronto: ECW, 1994. Biography *William Godwin: A Biographical Study* (1946)  *The Anarchist Prince: A Biographical Study of Peter Kropotkin* (1950)  *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: A Biography* (1956)  *The Crystal Spirit: A Study of George Orwell* (1966)  *Henry Walter Bates: Naturalist of the Amazons* (1969)  *Hugh MacLennan* (1969)  *Malcolm Lowry: The Man and His Work* (1971)  *Mohandas Gandhi* (1971)  *Mordecai Richler* (1971)  *Wyndham Lewis in Canada* (1971)  *Dawn and the Darkest Hour: A Study of Aldous Huxley* (1972)  *Gabriel Dumont: The Métis Chief and His Lost World* (1975)  *Thomas Merton, Monk and Poet: A Critical Study* (1978)  *Ivan Eyre* (1981) Poetry *Six Poems* (1938)  *The White Island* (1940)  *The Centre Cannot Hold* (1943)  *Now* (1943)  *Imagine the South: Poems* (1947)  *Notes on Visitations: Poems, 1936-1975* (1975)  *Anima, Or, Swann Grown Old: A Cycle of Poems* (1977)  *The Kestrel, and Other Poems of Past and Present* (1978)  *The Mountain Road: Poems* (1980)  *Tolstoy at Yasnaya Polyana and Other Poems* (1991)  *The Cherry Tree on Cherry Street: And Other Poems* (1994)  Link: http://www.georgewoodcock.ca  6 An extended bibliography of Woodcock’s prolific publications  Link: http://matthewhiebert.ca  7 The George Woodcock Online Research Centre website copyright of Matthew Hiebert |
| Further reading:  (Fetherling) |