



fiction

Cataloochee

by Wayne Caldwell. Random House. 2007, 349 pages, hardback, \$24.95. Available at major bookstores or through the publisher at www.randomhouse.com.

Wayne Caldwell's first novel, *Cataloochee*, is an ambitious saga that intertwines the lives of three families through three generations. This is the story of the primary families who settled the wild Cataloochee region of western North Carolina after the Civil War. In these pages, Caldwell captures the idiomatic speech of the highlanders, their authentic lore, and their struggle to survive in some of the most beautiful yet most treacherous land in these United States. In a book filled with as many characters as blue ridges, one man becomes memorable: Ezra Banks. Banks is complex and cruel, ambitious and ambiguous — a hard man capable of violence and often engendering it as his family's patriarch. His character is as craggy as the rocky region he loves so dearly.

Through hard work and perseverance, Banks and the other families transform wilderness into home. But when the government prepares to relocate the valley's people in order to make room for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, tragedy strikes in the form of an unimaginable act.

Caldwell's love of the Appalachians and a lost way of life is expressed through his genuine writing in this historical tale. In *Cataloochee*, personal relations are as tangled as mountain laurel, although not quite as sweet. This book chronicles an imagined community as the people involved ride the wave of time. It's a love song to the Appalachians — and to a way of life forever lost.

— Anne Barnhill