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The Art of Angling: Poems about Fishing. Edited by Henry Hughes. Everyman's Library. New York, London: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011.

More than a pastime or a means to hunt food for one's family, angling is indeed an art.

In the anthology, *The Art of Angling: Poems About Fishing*, editor Henry Hughes provides a diverse array of poetry that showcases the differences and similarities of this age-old practice. Collecting poetry from around the world, Hughes has assembled an anthology that not only portrays the differences of various fishing cultures, but of particular eras, whether it be ancient China or present day America.

Following a graceful Preface that introduces the genre, the book is broken down into sections which beautifully illustrate the topic at hand by focusing on the different aspects of the fishing experience. These poems and sections —*Gone Fishing, Anglers, The Spot, The Fish, The Angle, The Catch, The Dish, Loss and Longing, and Reflections*—complement one another, and though many of the poems selected could easily fall into a number of categories, Hughes' thematic placement works exceptionally well.

Consider the section *Gone Fishing* where the editor chooses Ted Hughes' *Stealing Trout on a May Morning*. An English poet, Ted Hughes focused much of his earlier work on animals and nature. In *Stealing Trout on a May Morning*, the speaker describes the English countryside, wandering through sleepy neighborhoods to a prime fishing spot on private land. Once there, the angler reflects both on the beauty of his environment and the inescapable garbage of British society. This reflection, this meditative aspect of fishing, is one of the things that make angling so appealing to thinking poets.

In contrast, a selection from *The Catch*, James Dickey's *The Shark's Parlor*, epitomizes the need for two young men to go through a rite-of-passage by catching a hammerhead shark, even if involves the destruction of everything that lies in their path. The reflective nature of the speaker is vastly different from the secretive man *Stealing Trout on a May Morning*. The British angler may be breaking the law but he has an intense connection with his natural surroundings. The American teenagers legally destroy a house and a beautiful fish in their wild, unconscious Melvillian pursuit.

Similar cultural and attitudinal differences are highlighted in the anthology's treatment of fly fishing versus bait fishing. Hughes makes great choices that allow us to reconsider old prejudices and see the quality of fishing literature as a whole.

There is more than a broad range of American and British poetry in *The Art of Angling*, Hughes' extensive research has recovered moving verse from ancient Greece and Rome, including surprisingly appropriate lines from Homer's *Odyssey*. Hughes doesn't stop there, however.

Working with Chinese scholar Jin Lei, he added translations of poetry from Ancient China's Tang and Song dynasties, including work from Wang Wei, Yu Xuanji, Cui Hao, and Zhu Dunru. These wonderful poems prove that fishing is indeed a universal and longstanding activity in world culture.

One such poem by Yu Xuanji, one of the few female poets of her time, is *Hearing Li Had Gone Fishing, I Sent Him This Poem*, which appears in the section *Loss and Longing* and gives the reader a look into the emotions of a lover who is left behind when her man goes fishing. The speaker reflects on her desire to join her husband near his fishing rock, pleading with him to return to her. This simple yet meaningful poem not only offers long-range cultural and historical insight, but is a lovely example of how sadness and desire can be dramatized through fishing.

Along with works of international poets, this anthology provides a rich selection of poets local to the Northwest where the editor lives and fishes. In particular, the poems *Night Fishing* by Peter Sears and Ed Skoog's *Trotline* are memorable for their unconventional approaches to catching fish.

Another Northwest local in the collection is the wood engraver, Paul Gentry. Unlike any other title in the Everyman's Library Pocket Poets Series, *Art of Angling* features a number of beautiful wood engravings depicting scenes such as a creek trickling through a forest, an angler wading out into a river, and a young boy lazily fishing off the edge of a dock with his sleepy dog. These works make the collection a treasure of literary and visual art.

Although other efforts have been made to collect fishing poems, this is best angling anthology running this season.

—Christina Tilicki