

interchangeably, and even occasionally includes evidence from the history of sculling.

Benidickson is also vague on the definition of "pleasure paddler." His examples include early visitors to the wilderness who were under the care of professional guides as well as the members of the ill-fated Wallace-Hubbard expeditions in Labrador in the early part of this century. The former I would not define as "paddlers" since they were passive with regards to the actual transportation. The latter were certainly not in the bush for pleasure or recreation — Dillon Wallace and the Hubbards would have described themselves as explorers.

*Idleness, Water and a Canoe* is an absorbing look at the people who have paddled canoes as canoeing moved away from its origins as utilitarian transportation. The book gives context to the way in which the evolution of paddling paralleled the evolution of thinking about the wilderness from consumable resource to thinking about the wilderness as a repository of spiritual values — a fundamental evolution in the development of outdoor recreation. What Benidickson does not elaborate on, although he includes much evidence of it, is a third phase in the evolution of paddling for pleasure in this century. In the twentieth century, much canoeing has completely lost its connection with destinations. This development began

around the turn of the century when many of the canoes on the water were being paddled by people who rented them at city liveries such as those on the Charles River in Boston and paddled around for an hour or an afternoon. In the late twentieth century, many canoeists repeatedly shoot short stretches of rapids, "portaging" to the head of the run by car. Just being in a canoe is the aim.

Jamie Benidickson has given us an overview of the place canoeing has had in Canadian life for a century or more with evidence that almost always assumes a very close connection between paddling a canoe and what many would call "the wilderness experience." Non-Canadian readers may wonder if it isn't just an accident of geography that the wilderness experience in Canada is primarily gained from the quarterdeck of a canoe, for in the United States the reactions to wilderness Benidickson explores have been gained — and philosophized about — not only from a small boat, but from the back of a horse or on foot. What Jamie Benidickson has given us is not only a look at one place of the canoe in Canadian life, but the suggestion that the strong connection between canoeing and the distinctive Canadian landscape has much to do with the place of the canoe in Canadian *consciousness*.

## Richard Hoffmann, *Fishers' Craft and Lettered Art: Tracts on Fishing from the End of the Middle Ages*

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Hoffmann, Richard. *Fishers' Craft and Lettered Art: Tracts on Fishing from the End of the Middle Ages*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997. xv + 403 pp., illus. Cloth \$60, ISBN 0-8020-0869-0; paper \$24.95, ISBN 0-8020-7853-2.

Richard Hoffmann's *Fishers' Craft and Lettered Art* is a book packed with information for the historian, the literary specialist, and the angler. Although it is far less written about than sea fisheries, fresh water fishing is nonetheless well recognized for its importance to the diet and economy of communities so far inland that sea fish came only salted, smoked, or dried. Professor Hoffman's book is most welcome as a further contribution to the recognition of its importance. It is not a general history of freshwater fishing (although it gives a succinct historical overview), but a detailed analysis of

three early treatises on fishing from Germany and Spain. Specialists will find intriguing references not only to baits and artificial flies, but to lines, rods, lead weights, pots, traps, and lift nets. The three are *How to Catch Fish* (Wie man fisch und vogel fahen soll); a tract in 27 chapters and associated texts first printed by Jacob Kobel in Heidelberg in 1493; *Tegernsee Fishing advice*, circa 1500, the so-called Tegernseer Angel- und Fischbuchlein, from manuscript Cgm 8137 in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich; and Fernando Basurto's *Dialogue between a Hunter and a Fisher* printed in Zaragoza in 1539. All three are provided in parallel texts with extensive textual and historical notes, as well as extremely interesting introductions and commentaries.

The first short printed treatise is essentially a collection of recipes for bait, both for line

fishing and fish traps. The flavour of the book can be seen in chapter 25 when a bait mixed of human blood, saffron, pressed barley flour, unrisen bread wheat and doe's tallow is recommended. Recipes are also given for poisoning fish. The urge is clearly to catch fish in some numbers. It includes a list of fish and the months when they are at their best, and a short comparison of fish along the lines of "a stickleback is a king. A fresh-run salmon is a lord." The treatise has literary overtones with references to Albertus Magnus and to exotic imported ingredients for some of its baits and potions, but Hoffmann's notes indicate that it remains essentially a practical handbook. The second text is an individual collection of information in manuscript only from the Tegernsee Abbey and without a clear pattern. Its importance lies in that it offers the earliest descriptions of tying artificial flies (although the practice is referred to much earlier), and advises different flies for different seasons and waters. It provides instructions for making a good angling line for grayling, and a miscellany of local recipes for bait with fewer exotic elements than the first. It then incorporates many of the recipes of the first treatise, *How to Catch Fish*. The third treatise is very different. It is a debate between hunter and fisher, which is consciously literary and explicitly extols fishing as a sport. It sets out to prove the fisher superior to the hunter by emphasizing the patience, repose and contemplation to be found in fishing. However, it too provides practical advice and information at the end on bait, flies, and rods. Unlike the others it includes seafishing with long lines from shore as well as freshwater fishing, and its baits are those appropriate to local Spanish conditions.

The texts are interesting not only for their content, but for their contrasts with each other as literary texts. As Hoffmann points out, by being written at all the information has entered the literary sphere and has left the practical oral tradition that normally disseminated the skills of crafts including fishing. But each has its own level of literariness. The Tegernsee text remains closest to local oral traditions, with no

literary pretensions, except that it copies extracts from the printed treatise of 1493. That treatise is already one stage removed from the local craftsman with its reference to Albertus Magnus and inclusion of recipes with exotic imported ingredients unlikely to be available to most country fishermen. The third is consciously a highly sophisticated literary device, not uncommon in the period, acting as a vehicle for moralizing, teaching and entertaining the literate leisured class, to whom fishing could be a sport rather than a means of livelihood.

Hoffmann's commentaries are excellent in providing each text with its own precise historical and geographical context, as well as in providing a clear overview of the importance of fish in the middle ages, and of the exact position of these three texts in the early writings on fishing. He points out that, although these are the earliest manuscripts and printed books which could be called treatises, earlier individual bait recipes can be found in collections of miscellaneous information and scribbled in margins of manuscripts. He also relates them to contemporary writings in England at this period, long before Izaak Walton's well-known *Compleat Angler*. Hoffmann's notes to the content of the texts are exemplary and clearly the fruit of long engagement with angling. They are exceptionally full and careful, identifying precisely many of the plants, worms, larva and insects used, indicating how far the bait should work, and analysing the sort of rivers the texts were written about.

Altogether this is an interesting book for the scholar and for the fisherman. Hoffman's broad approach provides the practical, historical, literary and geographical commentary necessary to ensure a wide range of readers can benefit from it. His choice of contemporary illustrations also provides visual evidence of some of the equipment used by contemporary fishermen. This is a specialist book but one which has been made accessible to more general readers, and which provides a further valuable building block toward the eventual writing of a history of fresh-water fisheries.