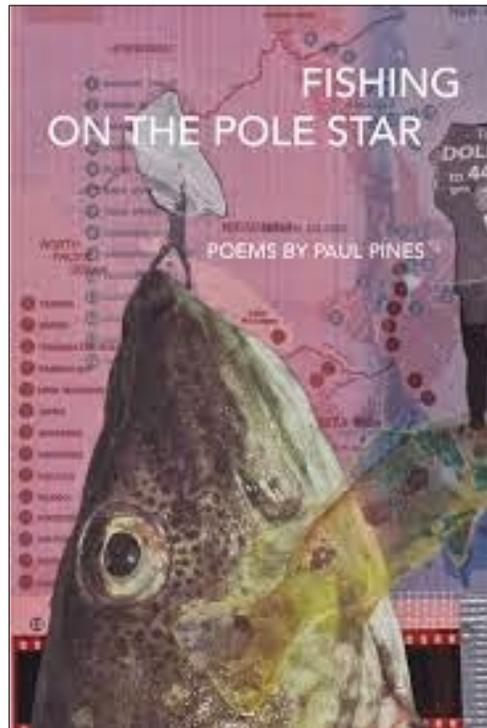


**Fishing On the Pole Star**  
Poems by Paul Pines  
Collages by Wayne Atherton  
Dos Madres Press  
Loveland, Ohio  
www.dosmadres.com  
ISBN 978-1-939929-11-2  
94 Pages



*Review by Dennis Daly*

Have writer's block or artistic ennui? Find yourself bereft of inspiration and adrift in life's doldrums? My advice: go fishing! Even better, get Paul Pines' new book of poems, *Fishing on the Pole Star*.

Pines turns this wonderfully chronicled fishing voyage with a family of friends through the Bahamian isles inward, across lines of deeper self-knowledge and surprising allegory. Dream-like collages and a contrast of gorgeous maps, both antique and modern, add a soulful surrealism that seems magically appropriate.

Many trolling poets would be more than satisfied with the transfixing images, ethical considerations, and iridescent lines that these pieces serve up, but Pines is after bigger fish. He seems intent on examining his sense of self and beyond into the deeper ocean of poetry and archetypes.

Early on, in a poem entitled *A Family At Sea*, the poet confronts the ethics of killing fish. He recalls,

*stalking a yellow tail family  
around a coral head in Belize  
the moment when father  
falling behind his wife  
and kids turned  
to face me  
gills puffed out  
his helpless fearlessness  
against my spear*

The use of the provocative word "wife" gives me some pause. But this goes beyond anthropomorphic considerations. Here the poetry confronts the nature of existence and at this node of consciousness the poet-fisherman recognizes himself. Other examples later on in the same poem elaborate on this singular lesson. One of them strangely happens in dreamtime.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 9/3

*Judith dreamed she  
was reeling in a dolphin then became the dolphin  
being reeled*

*relives how it felt to be gaffed  
hauled into the boat  
flopped on her side  
gasping in the air*

*as fishermen  
comment  
on her beauty*

And, yes, I see that there is obviously a lot more going on in these lines.

Uninhabited Concepcion Island offers sanctuary to birds on its tiny area of 2 miles by 2.7 miles. In his poem by the same name Pines meditates on the changing nature of conscious reality. His phrasing in the heart of the poem is quite lovely.

*all worlds are  
small worlds*

*clustered  
or standing alone*

*each with  
its own evolutionary  
history*

*atolls  
of longing*

*the hardened shale  
of volcanic anger*

In the third section of the poem Live Bait Buddha Pines details perfectly the frustrations of artistic creation. He's working with live bait and fishing for that moment of inspiration that all poets seek or should seek.

*suddenly  
a hit*

*I put the reel in free spool  
prepare for the impact  
its furious weight*

*as I do when trolling  
for a poem*

## Wilderness House Literary Review 9/3

*before the line goes slack  
and I pull up  
what the shark has left*

*ragged remains*

Mysticism of a sort rears its head in Pine's poem entitled Crooked Island Passage. Translucent lines troll the oceanic darkness for divinity's fire. Dolphins and their lovers respond, then are hooked and released. The piece opens with a religious connection,

*Caleb swims  
with Eagle Rays  
in formation off Cape Verde*

*long tails and wings  
like Tibetan temple flags  
unfold to include him  
in their play*

*the leader  
eye to eye  
at his mask*

*coveys  
silent acceptance  
of an alien species*

Without any doubt the poem Marlin Strike tail walks the water as the climatic piece in Pines' collection. In its movement the reader senses the powerful force and musical depth of poetry drawn up from a collective unconscious. The fishermen of the Pole Star wire and bring to heel a marlin of mythical significance. The contest ends serenely and in a life affirming manner. A hook is removed and wounds seem to heal—perhaps wounds afflicting both species. Here the poetry of another realm awakens into consciousness and connects with the artist as creator. Pines describes this numinous moment,

*he bites down twice  
gently on Caleb's hand  
signals he's ready*

*we gaze into  
the perfect roundness of his eye  
watch the boundary  
between us  
dissolve*

*glimpse*

## Wilderness House Literary Review 9/3

*in that great wink of eternity*

*the Divine Child*

*watch him swim  
away*

Creation demands the innocence and wonderment of a child. Even the momentary spark of conscious exchange will do. The poet at this moment becomes his art.

South of Concepcion (consider the allegorical implications in this now repeated name) Pines composes a most intriguing image—an alphabet of birds—in his title poem, *Fishing On the Pole Star*. The poet/explorer, here identified with Christopher Columbus, who died penniless, gets to have his moment of fame, albeit, in a preternatural way. Here's how Pines describes it,

*where Columbus  
touched terra incognita  
before dying  
sin centavo*

*an alphabet  
of birds spells out  
his name*

*on an visible  
world*

Using his penultimate piece as a denouement, Pines once again weaves dreamtime into his poetic adventure. The poet returns to his unmoving natural state—home,

*...Odysseus at sea  
on his way*

*back to reclaim  
his kingdom*

*a star among  
stars blown off*

*course seldom  
anchors*

*anywhere by  
choice*

A worthy Odyssey of words from a true fisher king!