

**DISTANT WATER: The Fate of the North Atlantic Fisherman**

by William W. Warner  
 Little, Brown, 1983  
 338 pp. \$17.95

Combining an overview of the North Atlantic fishing industry since World War II with a firsthand look at the fishermen's daily lives, Warner has produced a book as authoritative and entertaining as his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Beautiful Swimmers: Watermen, Crabs, and the Chesapeake Bay* (1976). Warner went to sea aboard the ships of five different nations, finding distinctive styles of work on each. The Russians stay at sea for long stretches (up to five months), but good food, women crew members, and periodic pep rallies stave off boredom. The Spaniards, superstitious to a fault, never use the words "fox," "snake," or "priest" (and the author discovered he was one crew's lucky talisman). West Germans are the most successful distant-water fishermen, but the superlative means little: Innovations in technology have made the fleets of all nations perhaps too successful. Sophisticated fish-hunting scanners, 500-ton capacity nets, and automated factory trawlers have helped deplete the schools of cod, capelin, and pollock. Yields have not grown since 1974, despite a stronger worldwide fishing effort. The large fishing fleets may soon find their own ranks being thinned.

*Arts & Letters***THE ICON**

edited by Kurt Weitzmann,  
 Gaiane Alibegashvili, Aneli  
 Volskaja, et al.  
 Knopf, 1982  
 419 pp. \$60

With this volume, edited by a multinational team of scholars, the icon may be said to have completed its long passage from the monastery to the museum to the coffee table. One of the most varied and well-produced anthologies of holy pictures of the Christian East ever assembled in one book, it provides examples of icons from the early models in 10th-century Constantinople to the more abstract forms in 16th- and 17th-century Russia. It also includes a particularly rich array from lesser-known collections in Greece, Georgia, and Serbia. But something has been lost in the process of artistic recovery: quite simply, a clear sense of what icons were all about in the first place. As integral parts of the devotional life of Orthodox Christianity, icons



have served as a kind of pictorial theology, in contrast with the more strictly verbal theology of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Thus icons must be understood in terms of the Orthodox Christian's life of liturgical worship, veneration of the saints, and personal devotion through "meditation in colors." Weitzmann understands all this, and his introduction and commentary on the Byzantine and Crusader icons provide the best parts of the text. In much of the rest, unexplained historical details compete with overly technical description, and some commentary (such as a Marxist contributor's reference to "cultic objects") is actually offensive. The uninitiated reader will have to turn to two earlier books, Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky's *The Meaning of Icons* (1969) and Weitzmann's own *Age of Spirituality* (1979), to understand the broad historical context and the theological significance of these magnificent devotional works.

#### SHILOH AND OTHER STORIES

by Bobbie Ann Mason  
Harper, 1982  
247 pp. \$12.95

A country preacher's wife begins skipping vespers to watch TV talk shows and play video games. A drugstore clerk signs up for college English and body-building, then decides to leave her husband, a truck driver. Men lose their wanderlust, while women overcome what one character describes as their "fear of open places." Something has happened in rural Kentucky, Mason's native ground and the setting of her stories. Economic progress has brought shopping centers and discount drug stores, TV and pop psychology; it has also plowed under old traditions and assumptions. Folks who once simply persevered—bowing to local custom or to nature—now suffer uncertainty and life crises. Mason's stories invite comparison with those of two other outstanding Southern women writers, Flannery O'Connor and Eudora Welty. All create characters who suddenly awake to new possibilities; all are masterly creators of atmosphere and place. But Mason's stories finally lack the dramatic force of O'Connor's or Welty's. Her characters