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*Review by Dawn McDuffie*

## FISHING SECRETS OF THE DEAD

by Meredith Davies Hadaway

Word Press , P.O. Box 541106, Cincinnati, OH 45254-1106; ISBN # 193233999X,  
2005, 69 pages, \$17.00

Meredith Davies Hadaway shares all of the fishing secrets one person can know in this elegant first book of poems. An observant reader can learn the secrets of memory and of the power of language to transform experience at the same time. The first section of the book traces the sudden fatal illness of Hadaway's husband, Cawood, who loved the complex waterways of Maryland's Chesapeake region. His illustrations punctuate the three sections of the book. At first these sections seem to contain a clear sequence of poems: first the illness and death of Cawood, then poems of childhood and youth, and finally poems of life as Cawood's death retreats into the past.

But one secret of these poems is that time is meaningless to the human soul. Cawood was a part of these waters before he was born, and his life infuses water and land after his death. The title poem describes the dead as "...the secret we cannot tell." But even the dead are part of a transmutation from one state to another. The speaker insists they "become" that secret. In "Ashes" the speaker holds the husband's ashes and realizes that she is also holding a shared history of passion, love, and the landscape of islands and rivers.

*...It was water that licked at our thighs  
while we waded away from two boats bobbing  
--at separate anchor.*

*River and Bay round us, beneath us,  
as one love spilled into another. Now I hold  
you, white and fine as the beach we found  
at Jarrett's Creek. Why am I surprised  
to learn that all along inside you were the sands  
of your own private island?*

Hadaway is a close observer of change in all of its forms, physical and metaphorical. The reader starts as a fisherman and ends up caught. In a poem near the end, "Catch and Release," Hadaway says, "...everything // comes back. Even the darkness, // caught in a net // of stars, will be released // into daylight"

These poems speak of faith. There is confidence that love does not disappear, no matter how it may transform itself. There is also faith in poetry--a small but sturdy boat that can take each reader on an individual journey to fish the deep waters of memory and image.

*Note: Reviews may not necessarily reflect the opinions of RATTLE's editors and staff.*

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