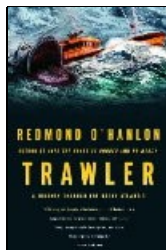


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**Book Review**  
**Trawler**  
by [Redmond O'Hanlon](#)

Reviewer: [Geoff Wisner](#), Staff Reviewer  
Posted: May 2, 2006

In books like *Into the Heart of Borneo*, *In Trouble Again*, and his masterpiece *No Mercy*, the English writer Redmond O'Hanlon has developed a modus operandi. He takes his vast learning, quirky sense of humor, and sensitive nerves to the most remote and demanding places he can find, drives himself to the point of collapse, and records

the result.

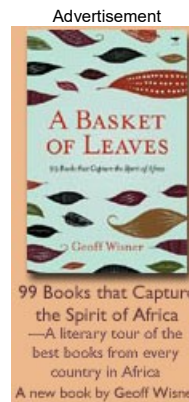
In *Trawler*, O'Hanlon tries somewhere closer to home: the North Sea. But he insists, at least, on going to the wildest corner of the British Isles at the worst time of year (January), when foul weather and even hurricanes can be expected. Because no sensible fisherman would go there, O'Hanlon finds a young trawler captain who owes the bank two million pounds and must therefore go out pretty much all the time.

The result is sometimes like an Expressionist canvas, chaotic and emotional, and sometimes like a Eugene O'Neill play, with characters baring their souls in long monologues fueled by stress and lack of sleep.

The reason to read this book is not so much for its account of the hardships and dangers of shipboard life, or even for the glimpses of peculiar fish from the depths of the sea, but for its wild extended riffs. Because O'Hanlon's brilliance comes in long bursts, this is a hard book to quote from. But few books will tell you this much about subjects ranging from divorce and memory to the methane-bubble theory of sinking ships to the sex lives of newts.

**About the Reviewer**

*Geoff Wisner* is a freelance writer and staff member of Indigocafe.com. He is the author of [A Basket of Leaves: 99 Books That Capture the Spirit of Africa](#). Visit his website at [www.geoffwisner.com](http://www.geoffwisner.com).



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—Mahatma Gandhi

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