

Excerpt from Ernest Hemingway's short story "Big Two-Hearted River: Part I" published in the collection titled *In Our Time*, originally published 1925:

It was a long time since Nick had looked into a stream and seen trout. They were very satisfactory. As the shadow of the kingfisher moved up the stream, a big trout shot upstream in a long angle, only his shadow marking the angle, then lost his shadow as he came through the surface of the water, caught the sun, and then, as he went back into the stream under the surface, his shadow seemed to float down the stream with the current, unresisting, to his post under the bridge where he tightened facing up into the current.

Nick's heart tightened as the trout moved. He felt all the old feeling.

Annotation by Olivia Dubiel

This excerpt from Ernest Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River: Part I" illustrates the power of seeing oneself in nature. Historian and ecocritical scholar William Cronon examines this theme in his essay, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." In this piece, Cronon advocates for loving and preserving nature, not because it gives us resources or aesthetic beauty, but because it is our responsibility as humans. Cronon says, "As we gaze into the mirror [that nature] holds up for us, we too easily imagine that what we behold is Nature when in fact we see the reflection of our own unexamined longings and desires." Hemingway's story is about the character Nick Adams, who has just returned from being a soldier in World War I. The reader views Nick's experience dealing with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) while camping and fishing by himself in the woods he used to frequent before the war. Hemingway connects Nick to the trout in several important ways, one of which is Hemingway's use of shadow imagery in the piece. The trout seems attached to his shadow at first, but then leaves the shadow behind under the water as his, "shadow seemed to float down the stream with the current, unresisting, to his post under the bridge where he tightened facing up into the current" (134). The trout ridding himself of his shadow can be compared to Nick living with the shadow of his PTSD and the trout letting go of his shadow gives Nick hope for the future. Hemingway utilizes the symbolic imagery of moving upstream and downstream, suggesting that Nick's journey back into civilization will not be an easy, downstream journey.

Nick is going to have to swim against the current, like the trout, in order to achieve any progress in his mental state. This passage ends with a sentence that Hemingway decided to physically separate from the rest of the passage: “He felt all the old feeling” (Hemingway, 134). In this case the “old feeling” may be a sense of connection with the world that Nick lost while fighting in World War I. Hemingway and Cronon both suggest how often our connections with nature are more reflective of our own personal emotional states than we might realize.

Places where this might go on MVC website:

This passage fits on the brochures of any MVC site that offers fishing recreationally. People who love fishing, who feel that fishing connects them with the natural world, will be able to see the water in a new light when they read Hemingway. Just one of many examples is the brochure for Eagle Eye State Natural Area which advertises that, “This area is a popular trout fishing location only ¼ mile west of Duck Egg County Park. The land is now open to the public for hiking, hunting, fishing, snow -shoeing and cross-country skiing.”

“The Rapture of Bees”© by Annie Boutelle

Reprinted courtesy of Trinity University Press

Suddenly absent, vamoosed, as if
they'd never been, never spiraled
in air, nor clung to each other
through frozen dark, nor filled
the hive with their million lithe
bodies, packed shelves of wax
and gold, and all that honeyed buzz.
like a child in a bed in Portugal, just
not there—only space in her stead.
Or hair in coils on the barber's floor,
the neck abandoned and chill. Or
the breast with the other discarded
body parts, somewhere in a hospital
basement and only the stitches to show
where it was. How not envy
the bees? So fierce and uprush, it
can't be resisted, that soaring in air
to meet whoever is coming, the cell-
phone tower bristling with urgent
messages about the time, the place.
and the fake plastic branches are
arms that sweep them in, not one left,
and death is simple—just being where
the others are, a trembling vibration.

This appeared in *The Eco-poetry Anthology* (2013), \$ 24.95 published by Trinity University Press. For more information, please visit www.tupress.org.

Annotation by Mikayla Peters

Beginning with the title of this piece, “The Rapture of Bees,” one can begin to see some ambiguity. Sects of Christianity claim the rapture comes before or during the second coming of Christ, when those who are deemed worthy are brought up into heaven by God. Then, Christ returns to Earth to fight a battle with the demons and Satan in order to determine once and for all who wins. In this poem, those deemed worthy are the bees. In Christianity, the believers are taken away, and Christ is left to fight the demons who remain on Earth. In the poem, the bees are gone, which leaves humans, suggesting that humans are demons, and the bees were in search of a savior. Demons are known to bother people, to tempt them to sin, to harm them and their lives, etc. In this poem, the humans are demons because they are the ones who condemned the bees to die.

The first line of the poem begins with “Suddenly absent, vamoosed.” The first word is “suddenly,” which suggests no one saw this event coming, even though there has been research on it for years. People refuse to accept that the bees are slowly dying because the chemicals that are killing them are considered “helpful” to humans as a species. This relates to Rob Nixon’s discussion of slow violence in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism and the Poor*, when he says that slow violence is “a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight” (Nixon, 2). Because people are used to violence that is “an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and...erupting into instant sensation visibility,” they tend to ignore things that happen slowly, such as “climate change, the thawing cryosphere, toxic drift, biomagnification, deforestation, the radioactive aftermaths of war, acidifying oceans,” and other things. Therefore, the bees suddenly dying or vanishing comes as a shock, because people don’t believe it is happening.

“Nor clung to each other/ through frozen dark.” With this, the author shows the hibernation patterns of the bees, who must live as a hive and work together not only to store food, create honey, and build hives, but also to keep each other warm through winter while being packed in together. Many bees live less than a year, but each is important to the hive. They have specific jobs from first being hatched to their last day. Every role in the hive is critical to the hive’s success and survival. With one line, Boutelle shows how much the hive depends on one another and personifies the bees with the verb “clung,” which encourages people to think of bees as a similar species. While during the summer they have their own specific jobs, during the winter, the bees pack themselves together for warmth. She continues this idea in the next few lines, “nor filled/ the hive with their million lithe/ bodies, packed shelves of wax and gold, and all that honeyed buzz.”

“Packed shelves of wax and gold” is important, because the gold refers to the honey that bees produce. This honey is, of course, useful to other animals for consumption, and for humans, it is a commodity that costs money. Honey can be used to treat and disinfect wounds, suppress coughs, regulate blood sugar, enhance flavors, add sweetness to dishes, fight cancer, and has antioxidants. It is precious to human animals not only as food, but also as medicine. Honey is made by honey bees, and it cannot be artificially produced with the same benefits. Raw honey is extremely nutritious, much more so than pasteurized honey, and is truly a liquid gold when it

comes to flavor, health benefits, and costs. This is why many people raise their own bees in order to make extra money or supplement their own diets and save money.

Possible places this piece might go on MVC website: “What’s at Stake?” or any of the individual sites.

Seduction © by Mary Heather Noble, as it appears in *Fracture: Stories, Essays, and Poems on Fracking in America* (Ice Cube Press, 2016)

It's a bit like adolescence, all this newfound attention that you think you understand, and the young man sitting on your mother's flowered couch is polite and respectful in a way that she'd sworn had gone extinct, talking about your future and security and the wealth of opportunities to come; and though you barely even know him, you can't help but feel a little taken with his outsider accent, his pressed polo shirt with the company logo over his heart, the way he folds his long fingers around your mother's chipped coffee mug, as the steam from the brew rises and dances around his lips—which keep moving and assuring you that it will be safe, and think of the potential of this place. He uses noble words like *exploration* and *independence* and speaks of *recovery* in a way that means returning to normal or a healthy state of being, as if the way that you've been living here is neither of these things. He speaks of recovery, as in returning something to its rightful owner, which is you and your family—of course you want what's yours. You'll remember those moving lips when the trucks come rumbling in hour after hour, again and again, and the midnight light from the drill pad trespasses through your drawn bedroom curtains, the clanging and pounding invading the silence of your room. You'll remember those promises as you try to ignore the chemical veil and swallow the anxiety of what could be seeping into your well. Of course you want what's yours. But you won't know what they are taking when you unlock the gate and let them in, forcing and drilling, injecting God-knows-what into God-knows-where, and you'll think you're doing this for your future, think you're doing this out of love, but what do you know of love except your mother's Palmolive hands and the dance of the willows before a storm? A clean glass of water. The crescendo of cicada in the afternoon, the smell of wildflower dew. You'll be fooled by the softness of what they promise in the beginning—the *FFF-finesse*—but shocked by the unexpected violence of frack. There's a persistent sting to innocence lost, a trace of diesel in the air.

For more information about Heather Noble, please visit: www.maryheathernoble.com

Annotation by: Autumn Pedersen

The way that this piece by Mary Heather Noble is written is very emotional to me. It uses second person writing pronouns, addressing the reader as 'you', placing the reader directly into the specific situation being described. The situation is a company representative coming to your home and persuading you and your family to let the company use your land for fracking. The long sentence structures describe the company representative coming to your home and

convincing your mother that this operation is good for your future and security, and will bring wealth. Word choices like *independence*, *exploration*, *recovery*, are all used to describe how the employee influences you to agree to let them use the land. The text then goes on to describe how the decision will affect you once they begin the work on the land. Noble uses descriptive language like *rumbling*, *trespasses*, *clanging*, *pounding*, *invade*, *anxiety*, *seep*, all to provide an idea of what the fracking is actually like when it occurs on your land. The ending sentence of the piece is what struck me the most: “You’ll be fooled by the softness of what they promise in the beginning—the *FFF-finesse*—but shocked by the unexpected violence of frack. There’s a persistent sting to innocence lost, a trace of diesel in the air.” These lines are so powerful in that they use the alliteration of *finesse* to *frack* and draw such a drastic comparison, that separates the two. What you are told isn’t what actually will happen to the land. The message is: Don’t be fooled by the persuasive attitude that the company’s representative possesses. This piece is important for MVC because to me, it shows what could happen and may have already happened to some people who are members of MVC. When Carol Abrahamzon visited our class, she described a situation that sounded very similar to this one at the beginning, where a company came to a woman’s home and tried to convince her to sell the land for a large sum of money to use for frac sand mining. The only difference was the ending of the story. The woman refused and then contacted MVC to help her with protecting the land from companies like that one. I think this story is important and shows how the land can be abused, and treated badly if it isn’t protected.

Possible places this piece might go on MVC website:

I am thinking that this could be placed in the “What’s At Risk” section from the MVC site. But I am wondering if there is a better place to put it, perhaps there is a specific site that is protected by the MVC that was almost used for frac sand mining. I am thinking in particular at the story that was shared during your time in our classroom about the woman who was offered a large sum

of money for her land to be used for frac sand mining but instead she donated it to MVC.
Perhaps that story could be paired with this poem.

From “A Blizzard Under Blue Sky” in *Cowboys Are My Weakness* by Pam Houston (W.W. Norton, 1992)

We broke camp and packed up and kicked in the snow cave with something resembling glee.

I was five miles down the trail before I realized what had happened. Not once in that fourteen-hour night did I think about deadlines, or bills, or the man in the desert. For the first time in many months I was happy to see a day beginning. The morning sunshine was like a present from the gods. What really happened, of course, is that I remembered about joy.

Annotation by Sabrina Kinsey

While this is a very brief excerpt in what is already a short story, I don't think it lacks powerful meaning. In the beginning of the story, the reader is introduced to a woman who has just been deemed, “clinically depressed” by her doctor. She goes into a list of issues going on in her life that are weighing her down, and eventually comes to the conclusion to spend a night camping, despite the fact that it was winter. Now, we live in Wisconsin, and I think most people would definitely agree that camping in negative 32-degree weather would just be insane, but regardless, she packs up her gear and heads out with her dogs. Upon reaching her destination and successfully building a “snow cave,” she spends the night inside with her two dogs, filled with fear that she was risking not only her life, but her dogs lives as well. She notes how there had been “no doubt that it was the longest and most uncomfortable night of her life.” She didn't sleep, and she wished the night away, and when the sun rose into the sky the next morning, she was grateful.

Going back to the excerpt I chose, I liked this particular piece because it showed how nature had “healed” her. Whereas before in her life, all of those stressors of deadlines and bills and the man whom she loved, being in love with someone else, had weighed her down...the freezing and terrifying night out in the snow, the rising of the sun, all gave her a new sense of appreciation for life. As she mentions, she hadn’t been thinking about the issues going on her life, but instead focused on surviving. And with her survival came joy.

It's a beautiful, real, and often underappreciated aspect about nature, I think. The idea of realizing how precious life is, only by being filled with fear of losing it to something as unforgiving and powerful as nature. She embarked into the cold winter day hopeless and unhappy. She emerged hopeful and with the memory of joy.

Possible places this piece might go on MVC website:

I think this piece would best be suited under the “What’s at Stake” tab, because it’s focused on the positive reinforcements of what nature can do for us as humans, and I think that that is something that should be protected and acknowledged.

CAROL SELECTED THIS ONLY AS A “MAYBE” PIECE

“Of the Land” by Baxter Black

We are of the land. The land that everybody’s trying to save.
We are of the earth. Of the earth from the glimmer to the grave.
We’re the plankton in the ocean, we’re the grass upon the plain,
We’re the lichen on the tundra, we’re the clevis in the chain.

You will find us on the outskirts
Coaxing bounty from the ground
With our watchful eyes cast skyward,
Well beyond the lights of town.
Dust to dust we are committed to the earth in which we stand,
We are farmers by our birthright, we’re the stewards of the land.

There are those who sit in towers
Who pretend to know what’s best,
They pontificate and dabble. They bray loudly. They protest
That a peasant can’t be trusted with the land to which he’s bred
And they rail with the courage of a person who’s well-fed.

We have labored through the ages for these power hungry kings.
We have fueled the wars of nations
With their arrows and their slings,
We have fed the teeming masses
With out fish and loaves of bread
So the poor would sit and listen to the words the prophet said.

Mother Earth can be forgiving when, in ignorance, we err.
But, she can die of good intentions.
She needs someone who will care.
Not with platitudes of poets touting blood and seat and toil,
But with daily care of someone with his hand upon the soil.

Though the bullets become ballots
And the rulers change their names,
They will still march on their bellies,
So our job remains the same.
For the bureaucrats and battleships,
The Einsteins and the choirs
Would spend their life behind the plow, if no one fed their fires.

Used with author permission from his book, "Poems Worth Saving" (2013)

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Annotation by Londyn Lorenz

One of the images that is prominent throughout Baxter Black's poem "Of The Land" is that of death. He makes reference in the first stanza to the "grave", in the second stanza "dust to dust", in the fourth stanza "wars", and in the fifth stanza to the possibility of Mother Earth's death. This motif of death serves two purposes, one is that it reinforces the fact that people, and farmers in particular, are connected to the land even after death. The reference to the grave reminds people that within the grave people become a part of the earth and dust is a part of soil, thus people are a literal part of the land. The abuses he speaks of are largely those done by political figures in ivory towers who believe they know how to best use the land. These political figures are likely attempting to use it in a capitalistic mindset that does not take into consideration the farmers extensive knowledge on how to do what's best for the land. This is one of the reasons that Mississippi Valley Conservancy is so important. They are also trying to protect farmers' lands from big interest companies and politicians who would see their land used in a way that they know is wrong.

The theme of death also serves as a warning against those who would misuse and abuse the land. While the first four stanzas initially may give the reader the idea that Black views the land as nothing more than something to be used, it is the fifth stanza that changes the focus of the whole poem. In it Black talks about Mother Earth, reinforcing that the earth as something that needs to be taken care of and respected as one would their mother. By portraying the land as a mother Black implies that the land provides and nurtures us, her children. She provides food,

work, materials, our homes and to abuse these gifts by abusing her is something Black advocates against.

He also talks about how we can make mistakes and while we can be forgiven, if we do not learn from those mistakes, she can “die of good intentions”. He warns that while Mother Nature can recover from someone occasionally misusing it in ignorance, unless something changes in systemic abuse, the land can die. This thought that we have the power to destroy the land is a powerful one, it puts the responsibility of preserving the land on us. Destroy seems like a strong word; however when one thinks of destruction as more of a slow violence it makes more sense. Slow violence is a term used by Rob Nixon in his book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, where he defines a type of violence that is “incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales” (2). Essentially this means that this disaster, this destruction is not something that is instantaneous and easy to see, but is much more sinister in its incremental negative changes that happen over time. This power also highlights the fact that the land can only take so much abuse, it is not a resource that can be used carelessly without real consequences, consequences that can include our own death due to our reliance on the land to survive.

Possible places this piece might go on MVC website:

How we Protect Land

MVC Project

Manifest by Bill Stobb

Twelve thousand versions of twelve dozen ivy blossoms
in the compound eye

of a dragonfly
Shoulder-wide
crevice opens above a gravel run
bottles
and a condom we decided
not to touch
part of the preserve

Grove of future dirt
surrounds a cluster of brightly-
clothed children One
as they say
is mine

Near the scout shelter along the tracks
a woodpecker harvested termites
from the decaying limb of an Ash

Sawdust
sprinkled over
the sumac's beseeching leaves

Idea's that
we're getting what birds are just doing?

*Who drew that
white line*

on the sky?
Mine's spied
the day's first vapor trail—
passenger plane on the hop to Chicago
By nine
it's diffused
combined with others of its kind
and high cirrus

One white charge
snaps through made weather

Twelve thousand versions
of twelve dozen blossoms
in the compound eye

Year Published: 2007

Annotation by Emilie Clavette

“Manifest” by William Stobb explores the connection between the natural and the man-made, pushing the boundaries of the typical definition of nature. Gary Snyder, in “The Etiquette of Freedom”, also questions humanity’s concept of nature, writing, “The physical universe and all its properties—I would prefer to use the word nature in this sense.” Coming to a similar conclusion as Stobb, Snyder emphasizes that everything within the world should be considered a part of nature, which includes man-made objects and phenomenon. This includes the “made weather” described by Stobb in his poem. The description of the clouds created by vapor trails of planes shows a creation of nature by the human species. Stobb emphasizes the fact that humans are changing the world, but does not comment on whether or not this influence is positive or negative. The Mississippi Valley Conservancy’s goal is to interact with nature in a positive way, so when they alter nature the purpose is to restore it to what it used to be. Their ecological restoration projects focus on removing invasive species and using land management techniques in order to help the ecosystem reach a healthy state.

In terms of imagery, this piece reminded me of the Trempealeau Lakes Nature Preserve and allowed me to more fully take in what surrounded me while I was there. The idea of seeing through a dragonfly’s eyes is introduced in the first line when Stobb writes, “Twelve thousand versions of twelve dozen ivy blossoms / in the compound eye / of a dragonfly.” Stobb continues this idea of seeing through the dragonfly’s eyes through his use of white space, creating an image similar to what one would imagine looking through a dragonfly’s eyes would be. Gazing out at the lake and hearing the frogs chirp, imagining what it would be like to see this scene through the eyes of a dragonfly helped me to experience the lake in a new way. Allowing my attention to flit

around, focusing on new sounds and sudden movements, trying to take in everything at once, but being swiftly moved on to the next experience. Taking in the trees as if I were seeing twelve dozen of the same oak at a time. Experiencing nature in a more swift, sporadic way and coupling that with the more calm and serene way I would normally view nature helped to create a sense of fullness when visiting Trempealeau Lakes Nature Preserve.

ENG 445: Environmental Literature

MVC Project

Wild by Cheryl Strayed

“Do you know you could die?” he’d said with disgust, as if he had wished I had so he could prove his point. “Every time you do heroin it’s like you’re playing Russian roulette. You’re putting a gun to your head and pulling the trigger. You don’t know which time the bullet’s going to be in the chamber.” I’d had nothing to say in my defense. He was right, though it hadn’t seemed that way at the time. But walking along a path I carved myself—one I hoped was the PCT—was the opposite of using heroin. The trigger I’d pulled in stepping into the snow made me more alive to my senses than ever. Uncertain as I was as I pushed forward, I felt right in my pushing, as if the effort itself meant something. That perhaps being amidst the undesecrated beauty of the wilderness meant I too could be undesecrated, regardless of what I’d lost or what had been taken from me, regardless of the regrettable things I’d done to others or myself or the regrettable things that had been done to me. Of all the things I’d been skeptical about, I didn’t feel skeptical about this: the wilderness had a clarity that included me.

Year Published: 2012

Annotation by Sabrina Kinsey

This book, in its entire context, is about using nature as a source for healing. Being that this book is a memoir, the reader gets to follow Cheryl herself through all of her many trials and tribulations on the trail. It would be easy and simple enough to focus on themes and imagery portrayed in this novel, but I think that by doing so, it takes away from the power of the story itself. While the book does have extremely beautiful and detailed imagery of what she sees throughout her hike as well as a solid theme of healing through nature, I think that focusing on the *story itself* would be far more rewarding.

Cheryl has lost her mom, and in her grief, she also lost herself. Drinking, drugs, infidelity in her marriage, all leading her to decision to hike the PCT. She had no experience hiking, let alone for long

distances, and alone. But she did it. She planned it out best she could, and set out on her way. There were so many instances where she questioned what she was doing, why, and how she could possibly manage it, but despite it all, she kept going.

The excerpt I chose was an extremely pivotal moment in the book for me because I identified with Cheryl so much. Three years ago, I also lost my mom. I found myself in many of the dark places that Cheryl had found herself, and when I saw the preview for this movie I was drawn to the line that said, "I'm going to walk myself back to the woman my mom loved." Being a lover of literature, I chose to read the book first, and everything about it changed my life.

Living in La Crosse, we literally get to be surrounded by beautiful nature. In any given direction that one might look, their eyes will be met with the stunning bluffs filled with trees and trails and places to escape to and within. Whether people realize it or not, we are blessed with these opportunities, and having organizations such as the MVC to protect it against industrialization is incredibly important. Everyone needs to have a place to go where they can take a break from the technology, the bars, the negativity, and just reconnect with nature and themselves. If the ability to go to the top of the bluff in winter and to see the way the snow covers all of the trees and the town is taken away, it would take away moments of beauty. It would take away moments of respect and that awe filled feeling of how much bigger the world is than what might presently be going on in someone's life.

Cheryl spent months hiking from deserts to mountains, town to town, seeing incredible wildlife all around her. She spent time away from people, away from technology, and away from the temptations the outside world had to offer her, and she reflected back on everything she had tried to ignore, and in the process, she began to heal. Nature had taught her that she belonged, that she mattered, that she could be forgive, and be forgiven. Nature saved her.