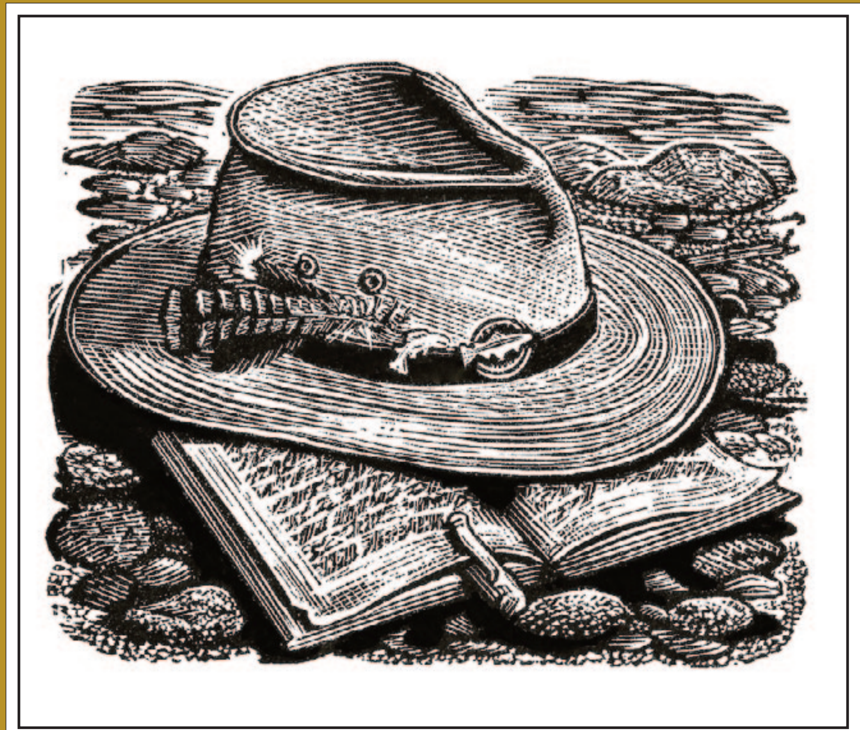
The American Fly Fisher

Journal of the American Museum of Fly Fishing



SPRING 2024 VOLUME 50 NUMBER 2

Big Two-Hearted Issue

When was the last time you read Ernest Hemingway's "Big Two-Hearted River"?

I can't recall when I first read it. But I can confidently say when I last read it.

Our Summer 2022 issue celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the release of the film adaptation of Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*. Henry Hughes, author of an essay about artwork created for various editions of the book, had received some positive feedback from John N. Maclean, son of the novella's author. John, fresh off publication of his own book, *Home Waters: A Chronicle of Family and a River* (2021), was writing the foreword to *Big Two-Hearted River: The Centennial Edition* (2023). He told Hughes he wanted to get in touch with me to make sure I was aware of this anniversary.

Maclean and I had a phone meeting in September. He pitched publication of a paper about Hemingway and Norman Maclean that had been presented at the most recent International Hemingway Conference. I agreed to give it a read, and John sent it to me. I liked it and followed up with its author, Bill Grover.

It was then that I began to wonder: When did I last read "Big Two-Hearted River"? It had to have been at least three decades. Possibly four.

I was sure I'd read it, but I didn't remember details—more of a feeling. Images.

I searched my still-more-binge-than-purge collection of books but found no trace of *In Our Time* or *The Nick Adams Stories*. But the two-part "Big Two-Hearted River," published in 1925, is in the public domain. I downloaded it on Halloween. I read it the next day. Refreshed and reminded, I got to work on Grover's article.

Grover calls the themes and imagery of Hemingway and Maclean "the background thrum of my outdoor life," the two being "a constant philosophical and spiritual presence, their contrasting writing styles an integral part of my journeys around the waters of southwestern Montana." In "A Big Two-Hearted River Runs through It: Fly Fishing with Hemingway and Maclean" (page 2), Grover compares, contrasts, and connects the two writers, focusing on fishing style, literary style, and thematic elements.

Meanwhile, in Ontario, Rob Reid was well aware of the centennial, had read John Maclean's foreword in the newly published book, and was working on his own Hemingway piece. "The essay I have in mind," he wrote, "sets out to answer the general question of why the story deserves to be celebrated as a literary classic. The specific question is, why should fly anglers care? . . . My main premise arises from my long-held opinion that Hemingway's writing has not been served particularly well by a disproportionate application of biographical fact and speculation. This certainly applies to 'Big Two-Hearted River.'" He then sweetened this proposal with wood engraver Wesley W. Bates's commitment to illustrate the piece. Bates's engravings grace the pages of not only the Reid/Bates collaboration *Casting into Mystery* (2020), but also Maclean's *Home Waters.*

It seemed to me that two Hemingway pieces were not too many Hemingway pieces, so we moved forward with "Big Two-Hearted Reader: Notes from an Armchair Angler" (page 10).

Happily, we still have space to include a Gallery piece. Curator Jim Schottenham, who has always been a fan of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century art, tells us about the Seth Steward pieces in our collection (page 8). In Museum News, we announce the 2023 Austin Hogan Award winner (page 26). And beginning on page 22, we thank all of you, our supporters, for your donations of money, resources, and time.

When was the last time *you* read "Big Two-Hearted River"? Have you *ever* read it? You may want to before diving into this big two-hearted issue. Then, armed with Grover and Reid, you may want to read it again.

Kathleen Achor
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ON THE COVER: *Wood engraving by Wesley W. Bates. From Robert Reid,* Casting into Mystery *(Porcupine's Quill, 2020), 14. With permission from the artist.*

The American Fly Fisher (ISSN 0884-3562) is published four times a year by the museum at P.O. Box 42, Manchester, Vermont 05254. Publication dates are winter, spring, summer, and fall. Membership dues include the cost of the journal ($50) and are tax deductible as provided for by law. Membership rates are listed in the back of each issue. All letters, manuscripts, photographs, and materials intended for publication in the journal should be sent to the museum. The museum and journal are not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, drawings, photographic material, or memorabilia. The museum cannot accept responsibility for statements and interpretations that are wholly the author's. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless postage is provided. Contributions to *The American Fly Fisher* are to be considered gratuitous and the property of the museum unless otherwise requested by the contributor. Copyright © 2024, The American Museum of Fly Fishing, Manchester, Vermont 05254. Original material appearing may not be reprinted without prior permission. Periodical postage paid at Manchester, Vermont 05254; Manchester, Vermont 05255; and additional offices (USPS 057410). *The American Fly Fisher* (ISSN 0884-3562) EMAIL: amff@amff.org WEBSITE: www.amff.org PHONE: 802-362-3300

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
The American Fly Fisher
P.O. Box 42
Manchester, Vermont 05254

A Big Two-Hearted River Runs through It: Fly Fishing with Hemingway and Maclean

by William F. Grover

Current is a mysterious thing. . . . Things that pass us, go somewhere else, and don't come back seem to communicate directly with the soul. That the fisherman plies his craft on the surface of such a thing possibly accounts for his contemplative nature.

—Thomas McGuane
An Outside Chance: Classic & New Essays on Sport

Paul Cézanne, The Brook, *c. 1895–1900. Oil on fabric (23 5/16 x 31 7/8 inches unframed). Courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art. Bequest of Leonard C. Hanna Jr., 1958.20.*

For the record, I want to be totally clear: contrary to the title above, I never actually fished with Ernest Hemingway or Norman Maclean. When Hemingway took his own life the day before my fifth birthday, I had yet to toss a worm into the Delaware River, my boyhood haunt. And Maclean died only a few years into my conversion from spin casting to fly fishing. But for me, the two have been a constant philosophical and spiritual presence, their contrasting writing styles an integral part of my journeys around the waters of southwestern Montana, particularly in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). Their themes and imagery are the background thrum of my outdoor life. And for many years they were an important part of my college seminar on the literature and craft of fly fishing.[1]

I must admit, though, to having a direct personal connection to trout waters favored by these two literary giants. I have yet to visit Michigan's Upper Peninsula—home of the Fox River, where Hemingway set "Big Two-Hearted River"—but I vividly recall my first visit to the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone, roughly 15 miles from Cooke City, which in 1930 Hemingway told a guide he considered "the best trout fishing in the world."[2] A longtime Cooke City angler put my friend Jerry Riordan and me onto it, and we chose a section below the Painter Outpost bridge near Crandall one July day. I started out in search of the usual adventure and relaxation, only to get caught up in a fish count of gawdy proportions as I landed fish after fish on dry flies and nymphs. Anything I threw produced a rainbow, brookie, or cutthroat of better-than-decent size. I was in a trance. In just a couple of hours, I hit the fifty-fish mark, which had somehow crept into my psyche as a goal. My first fifty-fish day in the GYE left me more than a bit embarrassed (and, truthfully, a bit ashamed) by the extent to which a number had become a fixation. *This is not my normal approach to fly fishing*, I reminded myself. But, as we shall see, it *was* Hemingway's, an inveterate scorekeeper on western rivers.

The situation was reversed—but oddly similar—a few years later during my first visit to Maclean's home waters (indeed, his family's home waters), the Blackfoot River east of Missoula. After asking around in what for us was new territory, that same friend and I settled on a section between Ovando and Lincoln, closer to the former, below what we thought might have been Blackfoot Canyon. The difference this July day was that the Blackfoot was under hoot-owl restrictions, so we had to be off the water by 2 p.m. Not knowing about the rule, we arrived late morning and found ourselves pinched for time: less than two hours on these gorgeous, famed waters. So there it was again, pressure to perform, albeit under different circumstances. Still, we were gifted a glimpse into the world of Norman and Paul Maclean. Over the next couple of hours, I worried I might get skunked. Every place that looked like it should have fish in fact held fish, but I was spectacularly unable to hook one, missing strike after strike. As 2:00 approached, I set upon an area of blowdown that slowed the water into a pool and then released into a run. The whole

scene looked as fishy as any stretch of river could be. At about 1:50, sweating profusely, I hooked and landed a nice 15-inch brown on a yellow stonefly. I bent over as if I had just run a marathon, beads of pressure and frustration running off me, recovered, and promptly caught a 10-inch cutt as time ran out. On my way back to our car, it dawned on me that I needed either to read fewer works of classic fly-fishing literature or grow up. Hemingway and Maclean were ruining me.

On one level, the two authors are not an immediately obvious pairing. For one thing, there is the disparity in sheer output. Hemingway was prolific throughout his writing life, whereas Maclean did not cast his fly into literary waters until he was in his seventies. Although they were contemporaries, Hemingway traveled the world (Europe, Africa, the United States) as a renowned war correspondent and literary giant whose novels and short stories revolutionized twentieth-century literature and earned him both a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction (1953) and Nobel Prize in Literature (1954). His 1925 short story "Big Two-Hearted River," published as part of *In Our Time*, was universally lauded as an early Hemingway masterpiece that remains revered today.[3] By the time of his death at age sixty-one, his canonical works cast a long shadow over the literary world.

Maclean, by contrast, had a distinguished forty-five-year teaching career as an English professor at the University of Chicago, specializing in Shakespearian literature and publishing his first slender book of three short stories at age seventy-three. He was decidedly not a world traveler, vacationing mostly at his family cabin at Seeley Lake in western Montana and focusing his writing on western life, characters in the Forest Service, and the Mann Gulch fire of 1949 (which became the topic of his posthumously published *Young Men and Fire* [University of Chicago Press, 1992]). Yet the novella *A River Runs Through It* left its own mark as the first work of fiction ever published by the University of Chicago Press and was the leading finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1976, a year in which ultimately no prize was awarded in that category.[4] Moreover, its status as a twentieth-century classic was solidified by the release in 1992 of the film adaptation, a directorial triumph for Robert Redford. The film won the Academy Award for Best Cinematography and is widely credited for the explosion of the fly-fishing industry in Montana in 1992 and 1993. For decades it has been common to hear people speak of Maclean's powerful story as the "bible" of fly fishing, as essential to any well-outfitted fly fisher as a rod and reel.

Raised in Missoula from age six, Maclean had no need to prove his connection to Montana or affirm his roots as a western writer. Every page of *A River Runs Through It* celebrates his love of southwestern Montana, his family's home, and the Big Blackfoot River, their home waters. Hemingway, by contrast, wrote very little about his time in the American West. As Chris Warren points out, it was University of Montana writer William Kittredge who—by including Hemingway's February 1939 *Vogue* essay, "The Clark's Fork Valley, Wyoming" in his *The Portable Western Reader*—first situated Hemingway within a category of western writers that included Maclean.[5] Hemingway spent part of the summer of 1928 in Sheridan, Wyoming, and the surrounding Bighorn Mountains, and significant portions of the summers of 1930, 1932, 1936, 1938, and 1939 at the L—T ranch (pronounced "L Bar T" and run by Lawrence and Olive Nordquist along the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone River, about 10 miles east of Cooke City, just over the Wyoming state line). His short piece in *Vogue*, written in the past tense, pays nostalgic tribute to the Yellowstone high country, with reminiscences of fishing, hunting, family life, and the environment around the L—T, and famously ends with the declaration, "It's a good country," the only present-tense sentence in the essay.[6] These memories stayed with him; references to former friends from the area and the greater Yellowstone landscape appeared in several of his later works.[7] His sense of belonging in that wild country can also be seen in the reaction of his friend from Chicago, Bill Horne, when he visited the ranch in 1930 with his wife Frances ("Bunny"). Upon being greeted by Hemingway on horseback when they arrived, Horne exclaimed, "He looked like the man who invented Montana."[8]

With these connections of place in mind, I would like to explore three dimensions of the life and work of both the man who invented Montana and the man for whom it was literally home—fishing style, literary style, and thematic elements—to assess the affinity between them.

Fishing Style

As avid fly fishers and outdoorsmen, Hemingway and Maclean seem like a good match. Both men were introduced to fishing very early in life and made it a central theme of their writing. Of course, as a larger-than-life figure, Hemingway also made saltwater fishing for big-game quarry, particularly marlin, a prominent part of his sporting and writing life, both from his home in Key West and from Finca Vigía, his home outside of Havana. His fly-fishing world included an international flare, notably on the Irati in Spain. But from a fly-fishing perspective, his passion first manifested itself in his 1925 two-part epic "Big Two-Hearted River," one of his early Nick Adams stories. In it, Nick gets off a train in Seney, Michigan, a totally burned-out U.P. town, and camps and fishes to begin to reconstruct his life and forget an unnamed trauma from his immediate past. In Part II of the story, although Nick fishes with a fly rod, he does not use artificial flies. Rather, he captures grasshoppers in the wet morning grass, before their wings have dried enough to take flight, and baits his fly rod with them. Of the five fish he hooks, only one of them hits after he casts the hopper like one would a fly. The other four are hooked after he strips line off his reel and lets the current pull the hopper downstream—hardly fly fishing in any classic sense.

In his own life, Hemingway's fly fishing is best documented in Wyoming and Montana from 1928 to 1939. His accounts of these trips appeared in the many letters he sent to friends, and except for his fond memories expressed in "The Clark's Fork Valley, Wyoming" piece for *Vogue*, not at all in his published works. Hemingway historian Carlos Baker recounts that during his first western venture in 1928, in the Sheridan area and the Bighorn Mountains outside of the Yellowstone high country, Hemingway and his second wife, Pauline, caught a total of 600 trout, the same number of pages he had written up to that point in the manuscript of the novel that became *A Farewell to Arms.*[9] In 1930 on the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone, he landed forty-nine rainbows in one day with his friend Bill Horne. And in July 1932, his second summer at the L—T, he and Pauline recorded 150 trout on the Clark's Fork and nearby lakes.[10]

Always extremely competitive (sometimes pettily so) in hunting and fishing, Hemingway put up flashy numbers on the water without much care for how he went about it. According to his older son, Jack, his favorite flies were the McGinty (a basic bee pattern), a Coch-y-Bonddu, and a Woodcock Green and Yellow, a three-fly rig of wet flies fished across and downstream. Nick Lyons concluded, "He never progressed as a fly fisherman much beyond wet-fly fishing," sometimes even using worms and other bait.[11] In autumn 1939, with World War II breaking out in Europe, Hemingway left the Wyoming–Montana area for the final time, but even during the later Sun

Jim Schottenham

According to Jack Hemingway, "This rod, a Hardy Fairy, one of only two surviving items of trout fishing tackle owned by my father, the late Ernest Hemingway, is the one with which he fished on the lower Cottonwoods section of the Big Wood River on the one occasion that he trout fished here in Idaho." From the collection of the American Museum of Fly Fishing, 1973.096.001.

Valley, Idaho, years, his basic approach to fly fishing remained unchanged. In fact, as Warren explains, after Hemingway left the Yellowstone high country in 1939, "even fly fishing would no longer play a meaningful part in his life."[12] This change in Hemingway was confirmed by his son Jack, who said that his father had "lost the heart to fly fish" after a steamer trunk containing his prized fishing gear was lost or stolen on the way to his new home in Idaho.[13]

There is certainly nothing "wrong" with how Hemingway fished, but for Maclean, fly fishing was a family passion on par with religion itself. The elder son of a Presbyterian minister, he opens *A River Runs Through It* with this now-legendary declaration: "In our family, there was no clear line between religion and fly fishing. . . . He [his father, Rev. Maclean] told us about Christ's disciples being fishermen, and we were left to assume, as my brother and I did, that all first-class fishermen on the Sea of Galilee were fly fishermen and that John, the favorite, was a dry-fly fisherman."[14] Thus, it is possible Hemingway might have been able to enter the ranks of Christ's disciples, but certainly not on the same plane as John.

Maclean described the precise technique that marked the Maclean fly-casting style as "an art performed on a four-count rhythm between ten and two o'clock," and he and his brother Paul "learned to cast Presbyterian-style" with their mother's metronome.[15] Although Norman regularly fished with wet flies, there would be no stripping off line and letting it float downstream. Likewise, tossing live grasshoppers, or any other live bait, was equally out of bounds, as was evident when Norman's brother-in-law Neal visits from California in the summer of 1937. Forced by his mother-in-law into taking the cocky surfer boy fly fishing, Norman enlists Paul's help, and his brother's immediate response is, "I won't fish with him. He comes from the West Coast and he fishes with worms."[16] Widely considered the best fly fisherman in western Montana, Paul continues his indictment of this soft west coaster: "Besides, he's a bait fisherman" who no doubt can be found "in the back garden with a red Hills Bros. coffee can digging for angleworms."[17] On the morning of their scheduled outing, Neal does, in fact, show up late and drunk, with a local whore in tow and a Hill Bros. can for his worms. The point here is not to suggest that Norman and Paul Maclean would consider Hemingway in the same light as the pathetic Neal, but only to show how firm was their negative judgment of anyone not wedded to fly fishing, particularly with dry flies. Later in the story, Norman talks a lot about their family friend, fishing companion, and neighbor George Croonenberghs, who became a legendary fly tier in the West. His precise dry-fly imitations of insects set the standard for the Maclean family, although he tied wet flies too.[18] Maclean invites us to think about the craft of fly tying both by directly talking about it and through passages like this: "One of life's quiet excitements is to stand somewhat apart from yourself and watch yourself softly becoming the author of something beautiful, even if it is only a floating ash."[19] Hemingway surely was the author of something beautiful, and he cast countless flies in his day, but it is unlikely he thought of any of them as a metaphorical floating ash.

Literary Style

Hemingway's literary impact during the modernist movement and stylistic innovations are impossible to overstate. "Big Two-Hearted River" is often cited as the best example. The story took shape when Hemingway returned from volunteering as an ambulance driver in Italy during World War I, leaving him with hundreds of pieces of shrapnel in his lower body. He traveled to Seney, Michigan, in 1919 with two friends to fish the Fox River, details he would change as he wrote the story in Paris in 1924. Nick Adams arrives in Seney alone, and Hemingway changed the name of the river to Big Two-Hearted (a stream 25 miles north of Seney) because the name, he said, "is poetry."[20] In an earlier article for the *Toronto Star Weekly*, he had been cagey about the location of a river that closely approximated his view of perfect water for rainbow trout, a stream about 40 miles from the Canadian Soo, a river "called the— well, called the river. It is about as wide as a river should be and a little deeper than a river ought to be," then fleshing out the location with appropriately vague comments about the setting.[21]

His use of ambiguity was magnified in what came to be known as Hemingway's iceberg theory of writing. As he told George Plimpton in the *Paris Review*, "If it is any use to know it, I always try to write on the principle of an iceberg. There is seven eighths of it underwater for every part that shows."[22] With the meaning submerged underwater, readers are left to sort through the visible details and make meaning for themselves. In "Big Two-Hearted River," the reader is bombarded with minute, seemingly tedious details of camping and fishing. When it comes to the former, Jeff Day commented that Hemingway's account of Nick Adams pitching a tent that feels welcoming like home, making coffee the way Hopkins did, preparing an onion sandwich, searching for grasshoppers, and other details amounts to "what has to be the most literate camping manual in America."[23] There is a minimalism, a spareness in Hemingway's prose that packs an emotional punch, what Joan Didion described as the power that comes from "deliberate omission, from the tension of withheld information."[24] World War I is unnamed, Nick's psychological trauma (what we today would call PTSD) is unattributed, the cause of Seney's burned-out demise is unknown, there is no context for understanding who Hopkins was or why he mattered, and so on. Hemingway told Gertrude Stein that in "Big Two-Hearted River," he was "trying to do the country like Cézanne and having a hell of a time, and sometimes getting it a little bit."[25] He was telling Nick's story as if it was an impressionist painting, with scattered light, fragmented blocks of color, imprecise background. Hemingway was excited by this experimental style and was happy with his work. In his posthumously published memoir *A Moveable Feast* (1964), about his early days writing in Paris in the 1920s, he commented on these efforts. His early manuscripts had been lost in transit, so when writing "Big Two-Hearted River" he was in many

respects starting over. He asks himself from a café in Paris:

> What did I know best, that I had not written about and lost? What did I know about truly and care for the most? There was no choice at all. . . . I sat in a corner with the afternoon light coming in over my shoulder and wrote in the notebook. The waiter brought me a *café crème* and I drank half of it when it cooled and left it on the table while I wrote. When I stopped writing I did not want to leave the river where I could see the trout in the pool, its surface pushing and swelling against the resistance of the log-driven piles of the bridge. The story was about coming back from the war but there was no mention of the war in it.[26]

It's all there: the passion, the memories, the bulk of the iceberg beneath the surface.

If Hemingway's style can be likened to an iceberg, involving what J. Gerald Kennedy has called, echoing Didion, "an aesthetic of omission" that gives the story "its edginess, its uncertainty,"[27] Norman Maclean, by contrast, wrote via inclusion, hiding very little from his reader. We know from the outset through Maclean's tone that his glorious and troubled brother Paul is destined to die young—no spoiler alert needed. He's a handsome, well-respected journalist in Helena and a master with a fly rod in his hand, almost angelic in his form and creativity, yet we also know he is a heavy drinker, a womanizer, and a hard-core gambler. He is quite simply a walking contradiction, a beautiful train wreck. Maclean's novella is situated in and around Missoula in the summer of 1937, when he and Paul are in their early thirties. The story chronicles with emotional heft the challenge of trying to be one's brother's keeper and the inability of Norman—and secondarily his father, the Reverend Maclean—to help Paul, to save him from himself. We meet many members of the Maclean family as well as those of his wife, Jessie Burns, from Wolf Creek. Norman as narrator offers insight into the thoughts and troubles of many characters, including Jessie's aforementioned brother Neal. We even learn more of the inner life of the prostitute Old Rawhide than we do of Hemingway's Nick or his old friend Hopkins. Maclean delivers these insights with narrative clarity and affecting depth. A side-by-side comparison of the two stories amplifies some of these stylistic differences.

Here is Norman describing his brother Paul as he readies to begin "shadow casting" on the heavy waters of the Blackfoot River.

> Below him was the multitudinous river, and, where the rock had parted it around him, big-grained vapor rose. The mini-molecules of water left in the wake of his line made momentary loops of gossamer, disappearing so rapidly in the rising big-grained vapor that they had to be retained in memory to be visualized as loops. The spray emanating from him was finer-grained still and enclosed him in a halo of himself. The halo of himself was always there and always disappearing, as if he were candlelight flickering about three inches from himself. The images of himself and his line kept disappearing into the rising vapors of the river, which continually circled to the tops of the cliffs where, after becoming a wreath in the wind, they became rays of the sun.[28]

Compare the soaring flourishes in this scene to Hemingway's clipped prose describing Nick fishing in Part II of "Big Two-Hearted River." The second fish of the day, which he loses: "His mouth dry, his heart down, Nick reeled in. He had never seen so big a trout. . . . Nick's hand was shaky. He reeled in slowly. The thrill had been too much."[29] And the third, which he lands: "Nick swung the rod back over his shoulder and forward, and the line, curving forward, laid the grasshopper down on one of the deep channels in the weeds. A trout struck and Nick hooked him. . . . Nick had one good trout."[30]

For context, the fish Nick hooked and eventually lost was the biggest fish he had ever seen, an epic moment of the one that got away, prompting his reaction, "That was a trout."[31] The simple, direct prose, stripped of adornment, allows readers to fill in the empty spaces with their own thoughts and emotions, to imagine how it might feel to lose a great fish. Now feel Maclean's description of a trout raised by Paul: "Shockingly, immensity would return as the Big Blackfoot and the air above it became iridescent with the arched sides of a great Rainbow."[32] His towering description of Paul's prowess as a fisherman leaves us in awe. We are wet with the spray of the Blackfoot and squint in wonder at the halo shining in the sun. But he has done much of the work for us.

Wallace Stegner combined Maclean's fishing style and literary style, likening Maclean's writing to the artistry of the shadow casting that Paul has mastered and which Norman recounts:

> He called this "shadow casting," and frankly I don't know whether to believe the theory behind it—that the fish are alerted by the shadows of flies passing over the water by the first casts, so hit the fly the moment it touches the water. It is more or less the "working up an appetite" theory, almost too fancy to be true, but then every fine fisherman has a few fancy stunts that work for him and for almost no one else. Shadow casting never worked for me . . .[33]

Stegner disagreed. To him, Maclean's account of Paul skimming the water to create the illusion of an insect hatch replicated how he wrote. Maclean deploys Paul's artistry with long, florid and funny side stories of family fishing trips, sermons by the Reverend, hints of drama with Jessie's family. The novella is cluttered, careful, drawn out. As Stegner put it, "He [Norman] fills the air with flies that never really settle, he dazzles us with loops of glittering line,"[34] watching characters who don't really matter while never focusing sharply on Paul, who matters more than anyone. Then, two pages from the end, "the fly settles" and the reader strikes at the reality of Paul's death, the real bait the shadows had been obscuring through mimicry all along.[35] We are left empty, searching for answers, troubled.

Ultimately it is a challenge to characterize the differing writing styles at play here. Hemingway's iceberg theory leaves most of the story submerged, requiring his reader to wade through short declarative sentences about camping and fishing details without much of a clue to what is actually happening in Nick's mind and why. Maclean lavishes us with stories within stories crafted with beautifully evocative language, foreshadowing an outcome that is underexplained and perhaps, unknowable. In some ways, Maclean inverts Hemingway's iceberg, giving his reader the seven eighths that Hemingway hides, but ultimately leaving us with just as many unanswered questions. Still, "inverted iceberg" seems inadequate too. Maclean's son John recalled that his father referred to his writing style as "noble prose."[36] Suffice to say, despite their substantial differences, the style of both stories is noble.

Thematic Elements

If their literary styles were worlds apart while their styles of fishing were more closely related as fly fishers with differing emphases, thematically Hemingway and Maclean have an even closer connection—they could be considered kindred spirits, or at least as much more compatible than often thought. Of the many thematic points of contact, I would like briefly to explore two: the pursuit of truth and the healing power of water, which will inevitably circle back to fishing and writing style.

On his trip to Europe in 1922 with his first wife, Hadley, Hemingway was feeling especially alive and free as he nur-

tured his nascent talents as a writer. It was in Paris in the Latin Quarter that he made his now-iconic observation that "all you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know."[37] Truth must be derived from personal experience conveyed in a "true simple declarative sentence."[38] Hemingway would later expand on this thought in a Part III of "Big Two-Hearted River," an internal conversation Nick has about what makes for great writing, a coda of sorts on aesthetics. This third part was dropped from subsequent drafts of the manuscript, as it detracted from Nick's main journey. Still, it contained Nick's (now clearly Hemingway's alter ego) thoughts on what it means to seek the truth through writing, and it was clear that truth came through imagination, not the literal telling of events as they unfolded. "The only writing that was any good was what you made up, what you imagined," he wrote, contending that "you had to digest life and then create your own people."[39]

Maclean ends his novella in a similar place. In the final two pages, as Norman and his father struggle to make sense of Paul's death, they have their last direct conversation about it—really just fragments of questions with insufficient information out of which to fashion answers. But these questions would surface occasionally indirectly, as in this puzzling (to Norman) exchange, which begins with Rev. Maclean:

> "You like to tell true stories, don't you?" he asked, and I answered, "Yes, I like to tell stories that are true."
>
> Then he asked, "After you have finished your true stories sometime, why don't you make up a story and the people to go with it?
>
> "Only then will you understand what happened and why.
>
> "It is those we live with and love and should know that elude us."[40]

The difference between true stories and stories that are true is crucial. The deeper truth can only emerge from a fictionalized account, less wed to the particulars of what happened, more attuned to the underlying insights that come with reflection over time. For each writer, then, the search for truth is a fish that may not be caught, the elusive mysteries that will likely take a lifetime to unravel, if at all. But then, fly fishing offers a window into that pursuit of the elusive, as Maclean tells us with one of his trademark aphorisms, almost homiletic in tone, that "it is not fly fishing if you are not looking for answers to questions."[41]

That search for truth, for the answers to questions that haunt us, takes us to the second thematic commonality of Hemingway and Maclean: the healing power of water. Nick and Norman are both on a journey to reconstruct a life. For Nick, it takes him to the meadow that overlooks Big Two-Hearted River. It's a place beyond the charred ruins of Seney, where he stands on a bridge and watches the shadow of a kingfisher move upstream and a trout working the water in a pool down below, trout that in the typically understated language of Hemingway, "were very satisfactory."[42] In that moment, "He felt all the old feeling."[43] Nick's trip is meant to be restorative. His raw vulnerability is plain. With the completion of every task at his campsite—with the sheer number of mundane details, the pleasure he gets from each small accomplishment (opening a small can of apricots), the repetition of short, direct sentences, all of it—Hemingway conveys the process of Nick methodically remaking his life to what it was before the unnamed tragedy, step by step by step. He was happy, we learn. "Nick felt happy. He felt he had left everything behind. . . ."[44]

Monte Dolack, Haunted by Waters*, 2007. Oil on canvas (24 x 32 inches unframed). Reprinted with permission of the artist.*

Maclean also wrestles with trauma, with the loss of his brother Paul (whom he loved but did not really know), with his inability to help Paul escape the defects of his beautiful, troubled being. In the end, it is simply, painfully impossible to be your brother's keeper, just as it was impossible for Paul to replicate in his life the beauty and grace of his talent as a fisherman. Norman is haunted by that truth—literally, he writes the story in the twilight of his life to attempt to exorcise his own demons. The now-famous closing line of the novella—"I am haunted by waters"[45]—carries with it the complicated reality that for Norman the truth of his brother's fateful plight is told in the turbulent waters of the Big Blackfoot and the words of God that run under them, in a family for whom fishing and religion are intimately connected.

For Hemingway's Nick, too, the end comes with the metaphor of water, the mysterious swamp that for now he seeks to avoid: "In the swamp fishing was a tragic adventure."[46] And then the memorable concluding assertion that "there were plenty of days coming when he

could fish the swamp."[47] A great deal has been made of the imagery of a swamp. Some have downplayed its significance for Nick, as if the "swamp" is simply a confusing array of sad memories not on par with the tragedy of Paul's demise.[48] But the psychological damage Nick has endured is profoundly unsettling. He seeks to rebuild his life, in a sense to be reborn. He describes fishing the swamp as a "tragic adventure," and it is possible the word "adventure" minimizes the coming encounter, suggesting just another fun outing. But adventures surely can be long, painful journeys. Others put a pessimistic spin on Nick's coming "tragic adventure," offering that Hemingway meant for Nick's camping and fishing to represent a repudiation of the redemptive power of Maclean's belief in waters, however haunted they may be.[49] The point, for me, is that both stories leave their protagonists faced with swamps—the lifetime of sorting through the ramifications of conscience, actions, successes, and failures. It is hard, sometimes agonizing work, but the craft and grace of fly fishing can center a person and promote healing. As the two pictures that frame this essay suggest, waters—whether Paul Cézanne's fragmented impression of a brook or Montana's renowned artist Monte Dolack's depiction of a haunting river—hold out the possibility of hope and redemption, of rebuilding and salvaging sanity and beauty in a world seemingly out of control.

John Maclean remembered his father handing him and his wife a typeset manuscript titled "A River Runs Through It" to read and offer comments. Upon finishing it, they were at a loss for words, saying only that it was as authentic about fishing as "Big Two-Hearted River" and noting that "he sat back in the chair, relieved and gratified. He'd especially liked the admiring comparison to Hemingway."[50] More recently, John revealed that his father held Hemingway's classic story in reverence, saying that when his father first introduced the story to him long ago, he "presented it to me as if it were sacramental."[51] Hemingway and Maclean's stories continue to have that sacred effect on millions of readers. Both authors knew we all bring mental and emotional baggage to the river. Both were profoundly haunted, and healed, by waters.

~

ENDNOTES

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18. N. Maclean, *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories*, 59–61; and J. N. Maclean, *Home Waters: A Chronicle of a Family and a River*, 13–22.
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20. Quoted in Baker, *Hemingway: A Life Story*, 127. Norman Maclean's son John took up the literary mystery of identifying the precise place Hemingway had fished in 1919. John Maclean reconstructed Hemingway's steps, noting that the Fox River has many tributaries and branches, including an East Branch, a West Branch, and the Little Fox, forming "a watery maze." Although the mystery remains unresolved, he contends that "the evidence for the East Branch is considerable." John N. Maclean, "The Boy, the War, and the Big Two-Hearted River," foreword in Ernest Hemingway, *Big Two-Hearted River: The Centennial Edition* (New York: Mariner Classics, 2023), ix–xxxix, xxxiii, xxxviii.
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GALLERY

Seth Steward Paddles and Painting

I have always been enamored of the piscatorial art of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. With outdoor photography still relatively young, these works were often the best way to portray the sport fish that anglers prized and admired. Not limited to painting on canvas, artists often adorned somewhat eclectic items with their brushstrokes, such as these two canoe paddles embellished by a Maine resident more than a hundred years ago.

Seth Wyman Steward Jr. (1844–1934) was a talented artist, earning a living for several decades through his advertised occupation as a "painter, decorator and artist in oil."[1] A resident of Monson, Maine, Steward came from a large family who settled as farmers in the north-central lakes region circa 1822. With no formal art education, his skills were honed during time spent with a California artist, a Mr. Cameron, who summered in the nearby Moosehead Lake region.[2] Focusing on the natural beauty of the area, Steward's works depicted the lakes, mountains, and wildlife that surrounded him. With a built-in clientele of traveling sportsmen who frequented the region, he often painted to specifically appeal to them. These included hand-carved wooden paddles, in both full and souvenir size, many of which he displayed at the New York Sportsman's Exhibition Association trade shows at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The American Museum of Fly Fishing is fortunate to have two examples of Steward's hand-painted paddles as part of the permanent collection. The larger of the pair (at 46 inches) depicts on its paddle end a brook trout tempted by a multi-fly dropper; a canoe appears on the handle. The smaller (approximately 30 inches) also features a trout chasing a fly, with a finely illustrated rod and reel on the handle end. Each souvenir-sized example is in the traditional form of a Maine guide-boat paddle.

In addition to the paddles, the museum houses an original oil on panel by S. W. Steward depicting trout from Moosehead Lake, circa 1874.

Jim Schottenham
Curator

ENDNOTES

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Seth Wyman Steward's hand-painted souvenir paddles.
From the Trophy Art Collection donated by Mike Monier.
Top paddle (46 inches): 2019.051.035
Bottom paddle (30 inches): 2019.051.053

Seth Wyman Steward (American, 1844–1934), Trout, Moose Head Lake, *1874. Oil on panel (18¾ x 12 inches). From the Trophy Art Collection donated by Mike Monier. 2019.051.133*

Seth W. Steward. Photo courtesy of the Monson Historical Society.

Big Two-Hearted Reader: Notes from an Armchair Angler

by Robert Reid

> Going back to Hemingway's work after several years is like going back to a brook where you had often fished and finding the woods as deep and cool as they used to be. The trees are bigger, perhaps, but they are the same trees; the water comes down over the black stones as clear as always, with the same dull, steady roar where it plunges into the pool; and when the first trout takes hold of your line you can feel your heart beating against your fishing jacket. But something has changed, for the first time there are shadows in the pool that you hadn't noticed before, and you have a sense that the woods are haunted.
>
> —Malcolm Cowley, "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway," *The Portable Hemingway*, 1945

"At the bottom of the pool were the big trout." Wood engraving by Wesley W. Bates. From Robert Reid, Casting into Mystery *(Porcupine's Quill, 2020), 93. With permission from the artist.*

It's an undeniably attractive image: Nick Adams as a fictional embodiment of a young, handsome, virile Ernest Hemingway—a wounded war hero on the cusp of literary greatness—trout fishing on a mystical river in a backwater nestled in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The stuff of which Hollywood films are made.

Only one problem: the image is as thin as a movie poster pasted on a cinema billboard. It's neither the full-bodied story Hemingway intended nor wrote, let alone published—a story of nuance and texture, complexity and substance that conveys universal and timeless truths. In the realm of literature, "Big Two-Hearted River"[1] is acknowledged not only as one of Hemingway's best short stories, but one of the great stories in the English language.

Given its literary stature, it's appropriate to celebrate the story's twin centenary—written in Paris in 1924 and published in New York in 1925—with a special edition. *Big Two-Hearted River: The Centennial Edition*, a compact, handsome volume, was released in 2023 with a foreword by John N. Maclean and wood engravings by British printmaker Chris Wormell.[2] Maclean is author of *Home Waters*,[3] a family memoir revolving around his father, Norman, author of *A River Runs Through It*.[4]

I was introduced to Hemingway's writing more than half a century ago as an undergraduate and graduate student in English literature. I've been an avid reader of his fishing fiction and nonfiction ever since—much longer than I've been casting a fly rod.[5] Although my angling companions share my deep respect for "Big Two-Hearted River," they hesitate when I ask them to specify what makes the classic fishing tale so compelling and memorable. They invariably reply somewhat vaguely to liking how Hemingway writes about fishing.

"He really gets it," one of them said over drams of single malt shared after a day on the water. This response is accurate as far as it goes—Hemingway does write knowingly, attentively, and movingly about his first and most enduring sports passion—but it doesn't get to the heart of the matter. What makes the story great? What makes it important after a century? And what accounts for the current of mystery that flows between the lines and around the words of the story?

My purpose here is not to analyze "Big Two-Hearted River" to hook literary specialists. It is to offer a personal

interpretation, drawn from literary and nonliterary sources, as a way of inviting fly anglers to prospect formal and thematic tributaries they might otherwise dismiss.

As much as any twentieth-century writer with an international reputation, Hemingway's fiction has tended to be interpreted and evaluated through the opaque lens of autobiography, undoubtedly arising from his fame and notoriety. He's a colorful thread in a pattern of American literary celebrity that included Edgar Allan Poe and Mark Twain before him and Norman Mailer and J. D. Salinger after him. While understandable—most of us are fascinated by the lives of writers we admire—the autobiographical imperative hasn't served Hemingway's fiction particularly well. This is especially true of "Big Two-Hearted River."[6]

It's widely known that as a youth Hemingway spent his summer vacations at the family cottage in the Walloon Lake area of northern Michigan and that, in 1919, he and friends went on a fishing trip somewhere in the Upper Peninsula (commonly known as the U.P.). These facts obviously shaped the story, despite its author's objections.[7]

There also has been inordinate commentary about the identity of the river memorialized in the story, which is reflected in John Maclean's foreword in the centennial edition. This preoccupation perplexes me because Hemingway goes out of his way to name the village in which Nick disembarks from the train. Any map of the area will show that the Fox River traverses the town of Seney. I contend Hemingway adapts the name of the actual Two Hearted River, located 60 miles northeast of the village, to underscore the story's metaphorical and symbolic layering, not to mention the river's mythic flow.

These factual details add flesh to the story's bones and, in the process, increase our appreciation. However, they don't penetrate the story's marrow to advance our understanding of what makes it so existentially and metaphysically evocative, one might even say haunting—not in a supernatural sense, even though we glimpse ghosts shadowing Nick throughout his trip, but in the way it simmers in the imagination long after reading.

Identifying the story's "haunting" quality is easier than defining it. As a starting point, it has something to do with its literariness, which gives expression to a formed *fictional truth* rather than being based on an actual fishing expedition the young writer might have made. Hemingway was obsessed with the idea of truth being rendered through fiction.[8]

Armchair Angler

After contemplating the story for many years, I've come to believe that "Big Two-Hearted River" should be read neither as a naturalistic fishing tale à la Zane Grey nor as thinly disguised autobiography. It is read most rewardingly as a work of literature: a narrative that is a carefully constructed account of reality—a *representation* of reality—rather than something professing to be a literal depiction of empirical reality. As obvious as this might seem, my experience of discussing the story with fellow fly anglers convinces me otherwise.[9]

As an armchair angler who studied literature long before hatch charts, I'm dismayed by the imaginative reductionism that is routinely brought to bear on "Big Two-Hearted River." This constrictive focus compresses the story's layers of metaphor and symbol, fable and parable, rite and ritual, archetype and myth. To be fully understood it should be read figuratively as well as literally, imaginatively as well as factually, with an ear tuned to poetry as well as prose and an eye trained on truth as much as accuracy—in short, as literature enjoyed aesthetically rather than for its verisimilitude.

Such matters might test the patience of fly anglers unconcerned with the architecture of literature, but it shouldn't be a foreign concept. After all, to catch fish we must place flies throughout the water column in response to circumstance and conditions. I suggest this is how we should cast our imaginations to this deceptively simple, intriguingly complex story. Those familiar with Hemingway's ideas on writing will recognize the equivalence between my metaphor of the water column and the writer's well-known iceberg metaphor.[10]

Hemingway once confided that he altered the name of the story's river to make it more *poetic*.[11] Safe to say, he succeeded. By inventing an alluring name for his fictional river—and, in effect, replicating the christening ritual that anglers follow in marking and commemorating locations they fish—he transforms history into symbol, geography into myth. A river on a topographical map becomes iconographic, a river of the imagination, both magical and mystical.

Whether they have read much fishing literature, most fly anglers eventually acquire a sense of the way rivers weave a spell of memory and imagination. Rivers flow metaphorically and symbolically through spirituality, wisdom traditions, art, literature, music, and mythology. They are connected to mutability and mortality and the passage of time; to contradictory currents of permanence and change; to baptism with its rites of purification and salvation, renewal and regeneration; to unconsciousness and the hidden and unknown; and to the cycle of life, whether fish, insect, or aquatic critter, affirming birth, growth, death, and rebirth.

Similarly, the area surrounding the village of Seney is transformed from a pine-forested countryside devastated by wildfire to an interior landscape of introspection, contemplation, and reflection. No longer the rural surroundings through which a fisherman hikes, it becomes the dramatic setting through which an emotional, psychological, and spiritual quest takes place. In his foreword, John Maclean evocatively refers to Nick's fishing trip as "a solo pilgrimage,"[12] but he doesn't seem to consider it as a formal or thematic principle on which the story is constructed.

Maclean observes that he shared his father's fascination with how Hemingway combined fishing with literature.[13] Although he does not elaborate—Norman Maclean certainly fused art and sport masterfully in his novella—I took a cue from this observation for my essay. Maclean's foreword is based on the premise that the landscape through which the fictional river flows is exterior—an actual place expressed through literary naturalism, the language of journalism. In contrast, I base my essay on the premise that the landscape is not wholly exterior but, equally if not primarily, interior—the product of imagination, a creative construct expressed through literary devices other than naturalism.

Wendell Berry, a writer I greatly admire, casts an interpretive line over comparable water in his collection of literary essays, *Imagination in Place*.[14] Although he's known primarily as an agrarian author of fiction, poetry, and essays championing small, independent, sustainable agriculture, he has written widely and eloquently about rivers, riparian ecology, and traditional forms of rural fishing for recreation and the table.[15] He also wrote an insightful interpretive essay comparing and contrasting "Big Two-Hearted River" and *A River Runs Through It*.[16]

Discussing his multivolume Port William chronicle in *Imagination in Place*, Berry asserts what seems like a contradiction by acknowledging that "some of my own fiction has seemed to me to be almost entirely imagined," followed in the next sentence by the assertion that, "some of it has drawn maybe as close as possible to actual experience." He cautions, however, that "one should not be misled by claims of 'realism'"[17]—what I refer to as naturalism. He argues that

"works of imagination come of an impulse to transcend the limits of experience or provable knowledge in order to make a thing that is whole."[18]

He continues, "My effort to come to terms in writing with an actual experience has been, every time, an effort to *imagine* the experience, to see it clear and whole in the mind's eye"[19] (italics mine). Berry concludes, "What one actually or probably knows about an actual experience is never complete; it cannot, within the limits of memory or factual records, be made whole. Imagination completes the picture by transcending the actual memories and provable facts."[20]

I devote considerable space here to Berry's comments because I believe they accurately embody and reflect Hemingway's approach to writing "Big Two-Hearted River." As such, they offer a path through which to enter the story imaginatively rather than experientially.

Angling Pastoralism

When we cast our imaginations below the story's surface, we find ourselves accompanying Nick Adams as he negotiates the landscape of pastoral and georgic: traditional literary forms that evolved over a long history from classical antiquity to the present. In a selection of prose, Irish writer Seamus Heaney refers to this element in Hemingway's fiction by noting that "we have been hearing about Hardy and Hemingway as writers of pastoral novels, which seems a satisfactory categorization."[21]

Like Ted Hughes, who wrote some of the great angling poems in the English language, Heaney was a pastoral poet. Traditionally pastoralism has been characterized as a ragbag of literary themes about romanticized rural life and idealized nature. Many contemporary literary historians, in contrast, argue that pastoralism is derived from a fundamental fiction—that the lives of rural folk or other socially humble figures represent, and are emblematic of, the lives of human beings generally (including anglers). Although discussed for the most part in terms of classical, Renaissance, and Augustan literature, pastoralism is viewed as continuing into the new millennium, not as a vehicle of nostalgia for a golden age, but as a genre bearing witness to the possibilities and problems of living.

The same can be said of the georgic tradition. Originally a didactic form of instruction on farming or husbandry involving praise of rural life, the literary form has expanded to encompass such activities and pursuits as fishing. I view angling literature as a subgenre of the pastoral and georgic traditions which, in effect, are two parallel currents flowing in the same literary river.

Pastoralism and the georgic tradition link *The Compleat Angler* through "Big Two-Hearted River" to *A River Runs Through It* and Hughes's *River*.[22] The notion that the human mind is not only a product of and a connection to nature, but helps us understand our place in nature, explains its role in Hemingway's story.

Departing from civilization (represented by the train), Nick passes through a dark wasteland and retreats to a secluded sanctuary ("something mysterious and homelike . . . a good place"[23]) in a piscatorial arcadia before skirting a dark swamp on his return to civilization. It is not only a retreat *from* the violence and suffering of war, it's a retreat *to* a green world of renewal and salvation. This pastoral quest is not escape for its own sake, but a therapeutic journey toward health and sanity—in other words, the recovery and reclamation of spiritual vigor.

If insisting that the story is a pastoral quest is a river too wide for some literary anglers, I'm reminded of the introduction to the Modern Library edition of *The Compleat Angler*, in which Howell Raines maintains that Walton's masterwork isn't about how to fish but "about how to dream," adding that "the search for fish is really *a search for a grail*" (italics mine).[24] More recently, Canadian writer David Adams Richards refers to angling in his literary memoir *Notes on a Writer's Life* as the "*quest* for fish" (italics mine).[25] The same can certainly be said of "Big Two-Hearted River."

Fishing with Cézanne

Fishing was both a lifelong avocation and vocation for Hemingway. He not only enjoyed it as sport but relied on it as a source of income through journalism. And, of course, it was a recurring formal and thematic element in his fiction. He was a fly angler, beginning in his youth and continuing until he was in his early forties, when much of his fly gear was either lost or stolen while being transported to Ketchum, Idaho, in 1940.[26]

I believe Hemingway found in fishing a vocabulary through which to express the complexities of human nature and the vagaries of experience. Whether practiced on fresh or salt water, he presented fishing as a metaphor for life as he presented life as a metaphor for fishing. He also used the language of angling to articulate thoughts and feelings, values and attitudes about writing and literature, including his adaptation of the quest tradition.

Hemingway saw himself as the quintessential modern writer. He spent his formative years in the company of some of the world's most esteemed writers of the period.[27] Writing "Big Two-Hearted River" while living in Paris influenced the story profoundly. The writers with whom he discussed a range of the arts helped teach him to read as much as to write. He learned to read as a writer which, in turn, shaped his writing. We should take him at his word when he tells Gertrude Stein in a letter that he wants "to do the country like Cézanne."[28]

Much of the scholarship devoted to Hemingway has concentrated on biography and its impact on literary production. In contrast, I would encourage those who want to know more about his writing to pay attention to the books he read rather than to his multiple pathologies and serial brain injuries.[29]

Whenever he wrote about fishing, I contend, he was writing metaphorically or symbolically about the creative process. (Incidentally, I believe Norman Maclean was doing the same thing in *A River Runs Through It*.) Hemingway viewed rivers—both fresh and salt water, for he customarily referred to ocean currents as rivers[30]—as surrogates for the iconic blank page.

Mythic River to Cross

I maintain that a single mythic river runs through all of Hemingway's writing. Despite its various names and locations—whether fictional or factual—it's the river of the creative imagination, the River of Literature. Its source is *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*;[31] its estuary is *Moby Dick*.[32] Hemingway once compiled a list of books he considered "necessary," and these two classics of the American canon were included among twenty-five international titles.[33]

This mythic river includes the Big Two-Hearted; Irati in *The Sun Also Rises*; the jetty in the walled city of Aigues-Mortes in *The Garden of Eden*; and the Gulf Stream in *Islands in the Stream* and *The Old Man and the Sea*, among others. Not coincidentally, *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* open with pastoral scenes of a stream or river.

It had long been assumed that the river Nick fishes was a fictionalized version of the UP's Two Hearted River. This notion was first repudiated by University of Michigan English professor Sheridan Baker, who identified the river as the Fox.[34]

No less an authority than Robert Traver covered much of the same water. The wily UP writer approved of anglers trekking after Hemingway's "romantic sounding offbeat" river because it drew

"He felt he had left everything behind, the need for thinking, the need to write, other needs." Wood engraving by Wesley W. Bates. From Robert Reid, Casting into Mystery *(Porcupine's Quill, 2020), 14. With permission from the artist.*

them away from his "own precious trout water."[35] Jerry Dennis, a contemporary northern Michigan naturalist and angling essayist, follows Traver's example by recalling a pilgrimage he made to the river(s) immortalized by Hemingway.[36]

Portrait of the Angler

Although I enjoy the affectionate literary homages paid by Traver et al., questions about the identity or location of the river that runs through the story seem beside the point. Rather, my literary compass points to somewhere between James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*[37] and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*,[38] the latter of which was published around the time Hemingway was writing his story.

I believe "Big Two-Hearted River" is a response to Joyce's novel and Eliot's poem, both of which would have triggered lively debate in the literary soirées held in Paris salons and cafés—as well as Stein's apartment and Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare & Company bookstore—while Hemingway was residing there.

In a letter to Arnold Gingrich, who wrote an elegantly concise essay about fishing with the famous writer,[39] Hemingway conceded that although he didn't worship Joyce, he liked him as a friend and thought that nobody wrote better, technically. "I learned much from him," he wrote.[40] As for Eliot, Hemingway once acknowledged that while many in his circle viewed Conrad as a bad writer and Eliot as a good writer, he would have happily ground the poet "into a fine dry powder" and sprinkled it over Conrad's grave if it would make him appear.[41] In today's jargon we would describe Hemingway's troubled relationship to Eliot as complicated.

First let's consider *Portrait*. An English degree isn't required to recognize that "Big Two-Hearted River"—one of twenty-four stories and sketches published in chronological order in *The Nick Adams Stories*[42]—traces an artist's creative growth as part of a more comprehensive rite of passage on a quest toward artistic maturity. Pioneering Swiss psychologist and writer C. G. Jung coined the term for such a lifelong developmental experience as the myth of individuation. He succinctly defines the term in his spiritual autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*.[43]

Despite obvious differences, Hemingway's Nick Adams and Joyce's Stephen Dedalus are literary soulmates who share comparable emotional connections to the creative process. "Big Two-Hearted River" could be subtitled *A Portrait of the Angler as a Young Man*. We know from Hemingway's fictional fragment "On Writing"[44]—which he deleted from the story on Stein's advice—that Nick was as determined to become an author as was Stephen. Still, a subtle reference regarding Nick's writing remains in the story. "His muscles ached and the day was hot, but Nick felt happy. He felt he had left everything behind, the need for thinking, *the need to write*, other needs. It was all back of him" (italics mine).[45]

Joyce's influence affects the story in other important ways. While not invented by him, a couple of literary devices associated with the Irish writer—stream of consciousness and epiphany—play crucial roles in "Big Two-Hearted River," as they do throughout the Hemingway oeuvre.

Although the story flows between first- and third-person narrative, it unfolds as stream of consciousness inside Nick's mind. Hemingway demonstrates his brilliance by showing that what is happening in Nick parallels what is happening in the living landscape, with its cycle of birth, growth, death, and rebirth. Likewise, Nick's identification with the trout from the bridge in Seney[46] and his realization that fishing in the swamp would be tragic are epiphanic revelations that pulsate with meaning, as do other instances throughout the story.

Healing Waters

John Maclean recognizes in his foreword that Nick goes fishing to heal wounds and excise demons suffered from an injury he sustained in World War I.[47] The antiquated term *shellshock* doesn't begin to describe the depth of Nick's trauma. The sense of dislocation, disillusionment, alienation, and crisis in faith that rose like mustard gas from the trenches of the Great War contributed to the emergence of modernism as a literary movement, which is embedded in the story through its departure from traditional ways of naturalistic writing, its questioning of romantic views of nature, and its focus on Nick's interior life.

From Dame Juliana and Izaak Walton onward, angling writers have praised the virtues of fly fishing in its evolving form.[48] These were often framed within conventional religious orthodoxy or in terms of the salutary benefits of rest and relaxation during turbulent times. As far as I know, "Big Two-Hearted River" is the first literary work to portray fly fishing as a therapeutic means of healing what is now known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).[49] The anxiety, flashbacks, nocturnal terrors, insomnia, and nightmares that are prominent in the other stories in which Nick appears are textbook symptoms of PTSD. The fact that he can sleep while on his fishing trip cannot be overstated. It's one of the story's significant elements in the context of all the Nick Adams stories.

Nick embarks on a quest in the shape of a solo fishing trip, as much through intuition as rational design, to cure what ails him. This not only constitutes a literary

achievement for Hemingway; it validates the story as revolutionary, transcending the author's own well-documented medical profile.[50]

To interpret Hemingway's fiction as thinly veiled autobiography is a critical trope, but I contend that in his artistic prime, he brought a powerful creative imagination to bear on a collective societal and cultural condition that defined what became known as the Lost Generation. The injuries Nick suffers result from more than his war experience. He's traumatized by a series of harmful events from childhood through adolescence, exacerbated by recurring sleep deprivation and fear of the dark. We know this from the other stories with their patterns of implicit and overt violence, chronic pain, debilitating ennui, and, even more disturbing, intimations of insanity and evil.[51]

"In the swamp fishing was a tragic adventure." Wood engraving by Wesley W. Bates, 2024. With permission from the artist.

"Nightmares at Noonday"

Malcolm Cowley, an astute early commentator on Hemingway, described "Big Two-Hearted River" as "nightmares at noonday . . . having the nature of obsessions or hypnagogic visions between sleep and waking," adding that Nick's fishing is "an incantation, a spell to banish evil spirits."[52] In his foreword to the centennial edition, John Maclean acknowledges the story's "dreamlike, almost hallucinatory landscape of distorted reality"[53] without delving into its causes and effects.

I think it's illuminating to refer once again to C. G. Jung by applying his topology of states of consciousness to the story as an entry point to understanding its hallucinatory quality.[54] For readers unfamiliar with Jung's concept, he maintained that individuals have two levels or states of unconsciousness that lie beneath the conscious ego. The personal unconscious contains elements derived from experience; conversely, the collective unconscious contains primal universal archetypes shared by humankind that arise in dreams, visions, and nightmares.

The dream narrative through which the activity of fishing unfolds mediates between ego consciousness and the two layers of the unconscious. This symbiotic imaginative process enables Nick to muster the courage to confront both his mortality and vulnerability to suffering. It helps him cope with the grief that casts a dark shadow across his life.

After beginning at a conscious ego level, the story shifts to a personal unconscious level when Nick falls asleep in the "sweet ferns" against the backdrop of "a wind high up in the branches."[55] The story slips deeper into a collective unconscious level when he wishes "he had brought something to read."[56] When he confronts the swamp, he experiences the sensation of sinking deeper as "a reaction against deep wading with the water deepening up under his armpits, to hook big trout in places impossible to land them."[57]

I've always thought the story should conclude at the swamp but, of course, it doesn't. It ends with Nick cleaning the trout in specific, almost reverential, detail. This is where the story returns to ego consciousness, with Nick preparing to head back to camp and his meal, recalling the feasts that conclude many traditional quest romances when the hero returns home with tales of daring adventure—with one notable ironic twist. Nick is not returning to the shared community of home; rather, he is preparing a meal for one.

Those who acknowledge the story's dreamscape have no alternative than to question its apparent naturalism as resembling something more akin to parable, fable, or folktale. While much has been made of the story's location in the UP, the landscape is so generalized and abstract that it's impossible to connect it to a specific place. By virtue of its postimpressionistic features, it could take place anywhere in the western Great Lakes region of the United States or Canada.[58]

This casts intriguing light on the story's opening passage. Hemingway seems to go out of his way to pinpoint the story in Seney (like a thumb tack on

a wall map). I suggest this is literary sleight of hand designed to misdirect readers from what the writer really intends: to build a highly symbolic story on the architecture of myth. This is commonplace in literature, where the eternal and the universal arise out of a specific time and a particular place.

The story begins in the dark, foreboding, nightmarish wasteland and ends for the most part in the dark, foreboding, nightmarish swamp where "the fishing would be tragic."[59] Nick's use of the word *tragic* is intriguing.[60] He declines to embark on "a tragic adventure," acknowledging that "there were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp."[61]

Perhaps. Within the context of the story, I've never been convinced that another day would *ever* come. However, in a later story, "Now I Lay Me,"[62] Nick refers to fishing the swamp. His experience is neither happy nor fulfilling, but deeply disturbing. Unable to find some live bait, he cuts up a trout he caught. This is common practice among bait fisherman, but within the context of the story, the suggestion of cannibalism is sinister. The swamp remains a dark, troubling, evil place.

On the surface, Nick's aversion to the swamp could be linked to its similarity to the terrain of his war injury, but swamps also have a long metaphorical and symbolic tradition in literature. In fables, parables, folktales, and quest romances, swamps are places where even heroes fear to tread. They are not for the faint of heart because they are dark, wild, and sinister—dangerous to body and mind, heart and soul. They symbolize transition and transformation, where heroes confront anxieties, doubts, and uncertainties on the way to discovering new aspects of themselves—their true innermost being. Swamps are associated with challenge and adversity, but also with triumph and perseverance for those who prove themselves worthy of the test before them. Heroes battle deadly creatures, monsters, and demons representative of both external and internal forces. Some who enter become lost and stranded and never leave. As places of judgment, swamps are where heroes confront darker aspects of their own nature but also where redemption, salvation, and grace are bestowed. In their darkest depths, swamps house symbols of spirit, whether chalice or grail—or big trout—which are revealed and recovered with sword, lance, or (fly) rod. In Jungian terms, the swamp can be interpreted as a manifestation of the shadow, which is the dark, hidden, repressed part of the collective unconscious whose elements extend back to "the realm of our animal ancestors."[63]

Casting into Modernity

The intellectual foundation of the modern age, which provides the backdrop to "Big Two-Hearted River"—as it does for much of Hemingway's writing—was laid by influential writers from the mid-nineteenth century through the early-twentieth century. These include, among others, Hegel and Marx, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, Wallace and Darwin, and Freud and Jung, whose work cut deeply into society, politics, and culture, including the arts. This places Nick among the vanguard of modern existential heroes (pre–Camus and Sartre).

The postapocalyptic, scorched-earth landscape[64] Nick navigates after getting off the train at Seney represents a psychic and spiritual wasteland that Hemingway represents as emblematic of modernity. This seems to be what he, in part, is invoking through the title *In Our Time*, his first commercially published book, which "Big Two-Hearted River" anchors.[65]

Although the horrific violence and mechanized destruction of World War I traumatized Nick, Hemingway goes to subtle lengths to affirm that his psychic wounds are both broader and deeper than any single set of causes. They embody and reflect the temper of the times, the condition of the age, to which Eliot gave such memorable expression in *The Waste Land*. Nick's description of "the hills of burnt timber"[66] in the story's opening sentence points to a direct cause of wildfire; Eliot uses fire in his poem to describe the hellishness of the modern world.[67]

In the footnotes to *The Waste Land*, Eliot acknowledges his debt to Jesse Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*.[68] Through her book on medieval Arthurian texts including the Holy Grail, Eliot found in the Fisher King a figure through which to explore the modern condition. Hemingway takes his cue from the poet by adapting the Fisher King to serve his own artistic purposes.

Although the poem was set and written in London and Hemingway was living and writing in Paris, the brash young writer displays literary audacity by transporting one of Britain's most enduring national myths to the American *heart*land—a place that not only remained dear to him throughout his life but was the source from which his creative imagination flowed.[69]

Kingfisher or Fisher King

Malcolm Cowley was one of the first literary critics to observe that Hemingway's stories "come close to being adaptations of ancient myths," adding that the Fisher King legend informs *The Sun Also Rises*.[70] Gregory S. Sojka agrees with Cowley when he acknowledges that "Jake is Hemingway's Fisher King."[71] Also, like Cowley, he doesn't acknowledge that Nick assumes the role before Jake.

I contend that Hemingway first adapted the legend in "Big Two-Hearted River," making Nick the prototype of the Fisher King figure subsequently developed through various protagonists, including Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises*, Lieutenant Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*, and Colonel Richard Cantwell in *Across the River and into the Trees*.

If applying the Fisher King legend to an apparently simple fishing tale seems

"Now, as he watched the black hopper . . . he realized that they had all turned black from living in the burned-over land." Wood engraving by Wesley W. Bates, 2024. With permission from the artist.

too far-fetched, I refer to the *kingfisher*—signifying the wounded fisherman of legend—that appears early in the story. Although a common sight on streams and rivers throughout most of North America, the bird is strategically placed. In his foreword, John Maclean observes that the bird provides an edge of suspense;[72] however, I maintain it plays a more portentous role.

With sly literary dexterity Hemingway presents a modern Fisher King in the guise of a wounded young man—with a broken wing, so to speak—who is on a quest through a symbolic wasteland with a magic fly rod in hand rather than the magic sword of medieval romance.

Although there are multiple versions from different sources, the Fisher King legend centers on a figure in the Arthurian myth who guards the Holy Grail. Variously known as the Rich Fisher or Rich Angler, the Fisher King bears a wound in his groin or thigh: the generative, creative part of his being. The wound, which renders him impotent, is mirrored in the wasteland's stark barrenness.

In the Fisher King legend, Parsifal is the knight assigned with the task of curing the wounded king. While a young man, Parsifal fails on his first meeting with the monarch, only to succeed many years later after maturing into a celebrated knight errant. This encapsulates Nick's predicament regarding the swamp, wherein the grail he seeks (symbolized by the big trout) is simple but elusive: physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. In other words, his very sanity.[73]

Nick Meets Sir Izaak

Debilitated and incapacitated, Nick spends his time fishing—the only activity that relieves his suffering—until his wounds are healed after completing the knight's heroic task. Echoing the Fisher King legend, he spends his time immersed in the contemplative pastime of fishing, which makes his suffering bearable while connecting him to his unconscious, the seat of art and healing. In the process Nick becomes a modern-day Izaak Walton.[74]

Like Walton's classic, "Big Two-Hearted River"—and *A River Runs Through It*, for that matter—cannot be reduced to a discourse on fishing. In fact, it's illuminating how much Walton's book echoes throughout Hemingway's story and Maclean's novella. The care and attention Nick applies to both mundane camping tasks and the practice of fishing seem to me to be a direct response to Walton. Moreover, the practical skills that fishing requires is only one aspect of what Nick values: appreciation of his surroundings, his intimate connection to nature, and the contemplative state of mind nature inspires. Nick and Norman (the character)—and their authors—would undoubtedly agree with Sir Izaak that fishing is a calling, a way of life that engages the whole person: body and heart, imagination and soul.

As with the many rivers in Hemingway's writing, which are really a single river, all the major protagonists in his fiction—*many of whom are fishermen*—are aspects of one modern hero, sometimes called the Hemingway hero. I believe this composite figure should not be confused and conflated with the author, despite the many similarities they share. To do so subordinates the creative imagination that produced some of the twentieth century's most enduring literature, including "Big Two-Hearted River."

If the story is restricted to a surface reading, it might seem pointless, wherein little seems to happen.[75] Nothing could be further from the truth. When read at a deeper level, Nick is seen as trying with courage, even with nobility, to cope with what Thoreau famously termed "quiet desperation."[76] The tension of Nick's tightly wound psychic spring is palpable.

The patterned and purposeful actions he undertakes—in a word, *ritualistic*[77]—in setting up camp and pitching tent; preparing, cooking, and eating food; making coffee; catching and storing grasshoppers for bait; and, finally, going through the choreography of fishing with a magic wand (as does Paul in *A River Runs Through It*) reminds me of the sacramental rites of communion, baptism, and confirmation I observed in the Anglican church—as did Walton when he was warden of St. Dunstan-in-

"A kingfisher flew up the stream." Wood engraving by Wesley W. Bates. From Robert Reid, Casting into Mystery *(Porcupine's Quill, 2020), 274. With permission from the artist.*

the-West under the vicarship of John Donne (Walton's angling companion when he wasn't writing poetry).

In his brilliant collection of interrelated stories, *The Things They Carried*, Tim O'Brien observes that "story-truth" is "truer sometimes than happening-truth" because it "make(s) things present."[78] By imagining, inventing, or simply making things up, the writer looks "at things I never looked at. I can attach faces to grief and love and pity and God. I can be brave. I can make myself feel again."[79] This stark, honest literary confession informs what I have tried to do here. Throughout I have maintained that "Big Two-Hearted River" is best served by drawing a distinction between autobiography and literature and interpreting it as something deeper, profoundly deeper, than a simple fishing story.

Artist as Hero

If my interpretation of "Big Two-Hearted River" has any validity and is in any way persuasive, an obvious question arises: Does it shine any light on Hemingway's other writing, or even on the author himself? I would like to step out of the river of symbol and myth and conclude by contrasting Hemingway the man to Hemingway the artist. This is not as easy as it might sound. Hemingway developed a powerful personality as his fame grew, which overshadowed his writing—at least in the common imagination. No writer of his time was bathed in a brighter glare of celebrity. Moreover, few writers of his time were more thoroughly dissected through the publication of biographies that confused and conflated a deeply flawed man with an artist of rare talent. Hemingway himself often blurred the line between fact and fiction, autobiography and imagination, by applying literary methods to writing drawn from lived experience.[80]

Hemingway's public image is of a man to whom winning isn't everything; it's the only thing.[81] Fishing—like big game hunting, bullfighting, boxing, drinking, romance, celebrity, or writing—was foremost a competition, a contest to the finish. Winner takes all. Think about all those grip-and-grin trophy photographs of the victorious angler standing self-consciously alongside the vanquished marlin, swordfish, mako shark, or other mighty saltwater leviathans. In a 1986 essay on Hemingway, E. L. Doctorow recounts an incident in Cuba when Hemingway caught a huge marlin that he "brought to port in triumph, receiving noisy congratulations. But this was not, apparently, enough. After a night of drunken celebration . . . he was seen back at the dock, all alone under the moon, the great game fish hanging upside down on block and tackle; he was using it for a punching bag."[82]

Men addicted to winning are invariably sore losers, bad losers. It goes with the terrain. And Hemingway was no exception. This unflattering proclivity is most famously illustrated in a defining event in his life: going toe-to-toe in the boxing ring against writer Morley Callaghan (with Scott Fitzgerald as timekeeper). His loss hounded him to the grave; he never forgave Callaghan or Fitzgerald.[83] It was the defeat from which he never recovered because, *in his mind*, it eroded his sense of masculinity, his sense of himself—which we discovered after his death was as fragile as porcelain.

I contend that when the artist is separated from the man and viewed as a distinct entity, a different portrait emerges. While the man attracts our curiosity, the artist appeals to our imagination.

"Big Two-Hearted River" is one half of a pair of angling literary bookends with *The Old Man and the Sea*. Both the summation and the apex of Hemingway's canonical writing about fishing, the last novel published in his lifetime deserves to sit on the bookshelf alongside the works of Twain, Melville, and Conrad—writers he admired unreservedly. In the short story, Nick declines to fish the swamp, ostensibly leaving it for another day. In the novel, Santiago catches the marlin only to lose him to sharks before he returns home with the spoils of victory. In both cases, the fisherman is vanquished by raw, elemental forces of nature.

The artist in Hemingway knows that life is not about winning; it's a quest about how to live. This always was, and remains, the hero's task: to become the man he was meant to be, to fulfill his destiny and embrace his fate—what Jung called the myth of individuation. In their different ways, Nick and Santiago *triumph* because of how they lived.

Hemingway the man ended his life abruptly in Ketchum, Idaho, on 2 July 1961, nineteen days before his sixty-second birthday. Meanwhile, Hemingway the artist continues his "tragic adventure" fishing mythic rivers, the source of which springs from "Big Two-Hearted River."

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Endnotes

1. The title acknowledges a dynamic of contraries that inform the story, including light and dark, war and peace, sanity and madness, civilization and wilderness, culture and nature, human and animal, wildness and tameness, health and sickness, consciousness and unconsciousness, the inner and outer, sleep and wakefulness, dream and nightmare, wasteland and arcadia, water and fire, good and evil, and, not to be forgotten, the catching and not catching of fish.

2. Ernest Hemingway, *Big Two-Hearted River: The Centennial Edition* (New York: Mariner Classics, 2023), with foreword by John N. Maclean.

3. John N. Maclean, *Home Waters* (New York: Custom House, 2021).

4. Norman Maclean, *A River Runs Through It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

5. To fly anglers seeking convenient access to Hemingway's best fishing writing, both fiction and nonfiction, I recommend Nick Lyons (ed.), *Hemingway on Fishing* (New York: Scribner Classics, 2012), with introduction by Nick Lyons and foreword by Jack Hemingway.

6. *Autobiographical fallacy* is a term in literary criticism which asserts that the meaning of a work can be explained by an author's life. I think Hemingway's fiction generally, and "Big Two-Hearted River" especially, have been unduly subjected to this fallacy. Although an author's life can cast light on his or her fiction, I stand with New Criticism, a critical theory that emerged in mid-twentieth-century America that confines the analysis of a literary work to the work's text while ignoring all extraneous matters, such as the author's biography, historical context, or cultural significance. However, I diverge from the New Critics by maintaining that a literary work cannot be fully appreciated and understood without considering the historical, cultural, and literary context of the work within the framework of the author's life.

7. Sheridan Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 37. Baker records a letter to Gertrude Stein written 15 August 1924 in which Hemingway insisted the story was the product of his creative imagination, stating "the country is swell, *I made it all up*, so I see it all and part of it comes out the way it ought to . . ." (my italics).

8. Larry W. Phillips, *Ernest Hemingway on Writing* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 28. Phillips reprints a passage from *A Moveable Feast* in which Hemingway writes, "All you have to do is write one true sentence. Write the truest sentence that you know."

9. I host a regular book club with a group of angling companions as well as participate in a Zoom book club hosted by *Anglers Journal*. In both cases, when we discussed "Big Two-Hearted River," participants voiced skepticism when I suggested the story has currents of metaphorical and symbolic meaning that flow deeper than surface literary naturalism.

10. Phillips, *Ernest Hemingway on Writing*, 77. Phillips reprints a passage from *Death in the Afternoon* in which Hemingway writes, "If a writer of prose knows enough about

what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water."

11. James R. Mellow, *Hemingway: A Life without Consequences* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 102. Mellow refers to Hemingway's "The Art of the Short Story" (*The Paris Review* [Spring 1981], 88), in which he comments, "So the war, all mention of the war, anything about the war, is omitted. The river was the Fox River, by Seney, Michigan, not the Big Two-Hearted. The change of name was made purposely, not from ignorance nor carelessness but because Big Two-Hearted River is poetry."

12. John N. Maclean, foreword, in Hemingway, *Big Two-Hearted River*, ix–xli, xi.

13. Ibid., xv.

14. Wendell Berry, *Imagination in Place* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2010).

15. See Wendell Berry, *The Unforeseen Wilderness* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 1991); Wendell Berry, "The Long-Legged House," *The Long-Legged House: Essays* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2021), 123–190; and Wendell Berry, "The Presence of Nature in the Natural World: A Long Conversation," *A Small Porch: Sabbath Poems 2014 and 2015 Together with The Presence of Nature in the Natural World: A Long Conversation* (Berkeley, Calif.: Counterpoint, 2016), 77–153.

16. Wendell Berry, "Style and Grace," *What Are People For* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990), 64–70.

17. Berry, "Imagination in Place," *Imagination in Place*, 1–16, 3.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 4.

21. Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968–1978* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), 173. Extensive critical commentary has been devoted to pastoralism and the georgic tradition, but the books I've found indispensable in terms of angling literature include *What Is Pastoral* by Paul Alpers (University of Chicago Press, 1996); *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture* by Lawrence Buell (Harvard University Press, 1995); *The Art of the Compleat Angler* by John L. Cooper (Duke University Press, 1968); *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* by Leo Marx (Oxford University Press, 1964); and *Wilderness and the American Mind* by Roderick Frazier Nash (Yale University Press, 4th ed., 2001). Before he became an authority on Canadian literature, W. J. Keith published three seminal works on the British rural tradition, including *The Rural Tradition: A Study of the Non-fiction Prose Writers of the English Countryside* (University of Toronto Press, 1974), which features a chapter on Izaak Walton that serves as an excellent introduction to *The Compleat Angler*.

22. Ted Hughes, *River* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983).

23. Hemingway, *Big Two-Hearted River*, 19.

24. Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler* (New York: Modern Library Paperback Edition, 1998), xi. Introduction copyright by Howell Raines, 1996.

25. David Adams Richards, *Notes on a Writer's Life* (Lawrencetown Beach, N.S.: Pottersfield Press, 2023), 108. I recommend his "fishing book" *Lines on the Water* as required reading for fly anglers with an interest in literary memoirs.

26. Jack Hemingway, the famous writer's eldest son who was also a celebrated fisherman, recalled this incident while fishing with Keith McCafferty in British Columbia. McCafferty drew on the story as inspiration for his 2017 Sean Stranahan mystery novel *Cold Hearted River* (Penguin Random House, 2017), which he recounts in the preface.

27. A selection of writers with whom Hemingway kept company: Sherwood Anderson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot (through Pound), John Dos Passos, e. e. cummings, Archibald MacLeish, Hart Crane, Gertrude Stein, Ford Maddox Ford, Malcolm Cowley, as well as Canadians Morley Callaghan and John Glassco.

28. Quoted in Sheridan Baker, *Ernest Hemingway*, 37. According to Malcolm Cowley—in *A Second Flowering: Works and Days of the Lost Generation* (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), 59—Hemingway spent considerable time in the Musée du Luxembourg looking at paintings by Cézanne, Manet, Monet, and other impressionists and postimpressionists.

29. Andrew Farah, *Hemingway's Brain* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2017). In contrast, in the introduction to his interview with Hemingway, George Plimpton makes a big deal of the many, many books cluttering the writer's house in Cuba. George Plimpton, "Ernest Hemingway: The Art of Fiction No. 21," *The Paris Review* (Spring 1958, Issue 18), reprinted in *The Paris Review Interviews*, Vol. 1 (New York: Picador, 2006), 34–61.

30. An example of this is Hemingway's magazine article "The Great Blue River," published in *Holiday* (July 1949) and reprinted in Lyons (ed.), *Hemingway on Fishing*, 137–49. He also referred to the Gulf Stream as a river in *Islands in the Stream* and *The Old Man the Sea*.

31. In *The Green Hills of Africa* (reprinted in part in Phillips, *Ernest Hemingway on Writing*, 93), Hemingway wrote: "All modern literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn* . . . it's the best book we've had. All American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good."

32. In a letter Hemingway wrote to Charles Scribner in 1949, published in *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters, 1917–1961* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981) and reprinted in Phillips, *Ernest Hemingway on Writing* (101), he boasted about throwing mud in the faces of Melville and Dostoevsky, whom he viewed as two of his toughest literary adversaries.

33. Hemingway's list (reprinted in Phillips, *Ernest Hemingway on Writing*, 92) was originally published in William White (ed.), *By-line: Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967).

34. Sheridan Baker, *Ernest Hemingway*, 38.

35. Robert Traver, "Hemingway's Big Two-Hearted Secret," in *Trout Magic* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1974), 18–28, 28.

36. Jerry Dennis, "A Big Two-Hearted Pilgrimage," in *A Place on the Water* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1993), 84–90.

37. James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1916).

38. T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922).

39. Arnold Gingrich, "Horsing Them in with Hemingway," in *The Well-Tempered Angler* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), 20–27.

40. Letter originally written to Arnold Gingrich in 1933 and published in *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters, 1917–1961*; reprinted in Phillips, *Ernest Hemingway on Writing*, 95.

41. Originally quoted in White (ed.), *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway*, and reprinted in Phillips, *Ernest Hemingway on Writing*, 105–06.

42. Ernest Hemingway, *The Nick Adams Stories* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972). The collection was published posthumously.

43. C. J. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961). In his spiritual autobiography, Jung describes the myth of individuation as "becoming a single homogeneous being, and, in so far as 'individuality' embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could therefore translate individuation as 'coming to selfhood' or 'self-realization'" (383). For a detailed analysis of individuation, see James A. Hall, *The Jungian Experience: Analysis and Individuation* (Inner City Books, 1986) and Aldo Carotenuto, *The Vertical Labyrinth: Individuation in Jungian Psychology* (Inner City Books, 1985). I don't know how much Jung Hemingway ever read, if any. However, in his interview with George Plimpton ("Ernest Hemingway: The Art of Fiction No. 21," *The Paris Review*), he acknowledges the existence of something that resembles Jung's concept of the collective unconscious. In response to Plimpton's suggestion—first advanced by Philip Young, an early Hemingway biographer—that trauma influenced Hemingway as a writer, Hemingway replies, "I do remember telling you that I believed imagination could be the result of inherited racial experience" (42).

44. Hemingway, "On Writing," *The Nick Adams Stories*, 233–41.

45. Hemingway, *Big Two-Hearted River*, 6.

46. Philip Young, *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 44. Young suggests that Nick's behavior reflects the behavior of the trout he watches from the bridge. The connection between Nick and fish, however, is a current that runs deeper. It establishes metaphorical, symbolic, and mythic connec-

tions including unconsciousness, wisdom, rebirth, fertility, change, and health. Fish are related to Christ, which in psychological terms represents the Self.

47. John N. Maclean, foreword, in Hemingway, *Big Two-Hearted River*, xxv–xxvi.

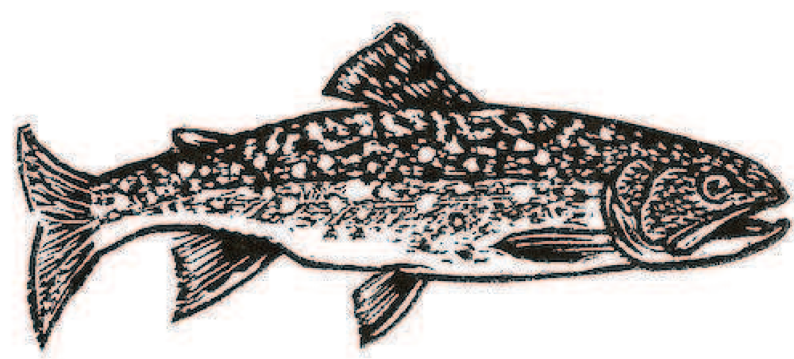
48. Like the nineteenth-century controversy between dry-fly purists and wet-fly proponents, the question of whether Nick Adams is a fly fisherman by virtue of using live grasshoppers is debatable. I consider Nick a fly angler not because of bait, gear, or tackle (fly rod and reel), but because of the ethos and aesthetic Nick applies to the practice of fishing. I believe the use of bait is fly fishing's little dark secret, especially in earlier times or when it's essential to catch fish for the frying pan. In terms of a literary device, Hemingway uses the color of grasshoppers as a metaphor, which artificial flies would not serve.

49. I propose that fly-angling recovery programs developed for cancer survivors, first responders, military veterans, and sick or disadvantaged children have their genesis in "Big Two-Hearted River."

50. Hemingway's physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual health as it relates to his writing has been studied exhaustively. It's fascinating to consider the extent to which trauma shaped his life and his death, as well as his art.

51. Nick Adams wades through a considerable amount of subsequent American literature, which extends beyond angling fiction. Tim O'Brien, one of Hemingway's most accomplished literary inheritors, does the same thing with PTSD and the Vietnam War. When the main character (named Tim O'Brien) in the final story of *The Things They Carried* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1990) returns to his childhood, we realize that while the war was part of the trauma, there were key events from childhood that paved the way for PTSD. There are many contact points between the Nick Adams stories and O'Brien's story collection. O'Brien's description of his narrative method could as easily apply to Hemingway. "By telling stories, you objectify your own experience," he writes on page 152. "You separate it from yourself. You pin down certain truths. You make up others. You start sometimes with an incident that truly happened . . . and you carry it forward by inventing incidents that did not in fact occur but that nonetheless help to clarify and explain." Similarly, he writes on page 218 about the relationship between story and dream: "The thing about a story is that you dream it as you tell it, hoping that others might then dream it along with you, and in this way memory and imagination and language combine to make spirits in the head." This is a superb description of the method Hemingway employs in "Big Two-Hearted River."

52. Malcolm Cowley, "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway," *The Portable Hemingway* (New York: The Viking Press, 1945). Reprinted in Robert P. Weeks (ed.), *Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 40–51, 41, 49.



Brook trout. Wood engraving by Wesley W. Bates. From Robert Reid, Casting into Mystery *(Porcupine's Quill, 2020). With permission from the artist.*

53. John N. Maclean, foreword, in Hemingway, *Big Two-Hearted River*, xxvii.

54. See the *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Vol. 9 (Part 1): Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2nd ed., 1969). Edited and translated by Gerhard Adler and R. F. C. Hull.

55. Hemingway, *Big Two-Hearted River*, 14.

56. Ibid., 56.

57. Ibid.

58. I invite readers to peruse the work of legendary Canadian artist Tom Thomson (1877–1917). Any number of Thomson's paintings could easily depict landscapes in Hemingway's story. For example, *Northern River* (1914–1915) could illustrate the swamp in "Big Two-Hearted River." Similarly, his bleak, barren paintings of Algonquin Park devastated by logging and wildfire—including *Burnt Land*, *Burnt Land at Sunset*, and *Fire-Swept Hills*, all completed in 1915—could illustrate the scorched landscape around Seney.

59. Hemingway, *Big Two-Hearted River*, 56.

60. I doubt Nick Adams is referring to the word's common usage (for example, when we say in casual conversation, "It was a tragic accident," meaning sad, unfortunate, and distressing). Instead, he seems to be acknowledging something closer to its literary definition as applied to Greek tragedians, Shakespeare, or Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. For a discussion of literary tragedy, see Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, rev. ed. (New York: Princeton University Press, 2000).

61. Hemingway, *Big Two-Hearted River*, 56.

62. Hemingway, "Now I Lay Me," *The Nick Adams Stories*, 144–53.

63. Jung, *Memories Dreams, Reflections*, 387. For a more accessible examination of Jung's concept of the shadow, see Robert A. Johnson, *Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991).

64. I believe Cormac McCarthy, another Hemingway inheritor, was inspired by the story for his postapocalyptic dystopian novel *The Road* (New York: Knopf, 2006), which concludes with this exquisite passage: "Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains. You could see them standing in the amber current where the white edges of their fins wimpled softly in the flow. They smelled of moss in your hand. Polished and muscular and torsional. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again. In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery" (241).

65. Ernest Hemingway, *In Our Time* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1925).

66. Hemingway, *Big Two-Hearted River*, 1.

67. T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909–1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1952). In lines 308–11 of *The Waste Land*, the speaker screams about the "Burning burning burning burning" while beseeching the Lord to let him die: "Thou pluckest me out" (46).

68. Jesse L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993; first published by Cambridge University Press, 1920). Eliot's footnote to Weston in *The Waste Land* can be read on page 50 of T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909–1950*.

69. I do not know whether Hemingway ever read Weston's seminal study, but he was certainly familiar with Eliot's poem, in addition to knowing Ezra Pound, who famously edited the poem. It's interesting that the expatriate American writers who converged on Paris were from the American heartland (largely midwestern or western), a point that would not have been lost on Hemingway. Note the following with state of birth in brackets: Anderson and Crane (Ohio), Pound (Idaho), and Fitzgerald (Minnesota), in addition to Dos Passos, MacLeish, and Hemingway (all Illinois). Eliot was also midwestern, having been born in St. Louis, Missouri. For her part, Stein was born in the Rust Belt of Pennsylvania.

70. Cowley, "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway" in *The Portable Hemingway*, 49.

71. Gregory S. Sojka, "The Education," in *Ernest Hemingway: The Angler as Artist* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1983), 65–96, 67.

72. John N. Maclean, foreword, in Hemingway, *Big Two-Hearted River*, xxix.

73. Robert A. Johnson, *The Fisher King & the Handless Maiden: Understanding the Wounded Feeling Function in Masculine and Feminine Psychology* (New York: HarperCollins,

1993). In this study, one of America's leading Jungian interpreters and authors maintains that the archetypal Wounded Fisher King of the Grail Myth provides insight into understanding the wounded masculinity of the contemporary male. Johnson's ideas cast illuminating light on "Big Two-Hearted River."

74. Hemingway apparently knew his Walton. In "Out in the Stream: A Cuban Letter," published in *Esquire* (August 1924) and reprinted in Lyons (ed.), *Hemingway on Fishing*, 107–13, he writes about a journalistic piece he is working on by referencing the English angling sage: "This is one of the contemplative pieces of the sort that Izaak Walton used to write (I bet you never read him either. You know what a classic is, don't you? A book that everyone mentions and no one reads) except that the charm and quaintness and the literary value of Walton are omitted" (110).

75. James R. Mellow, in *Hemingway: A Life without Consequences*, observes that "little happens in 'Big Two-Hearted River.' There is only the slow motion of description; moments of tedious, compulsive detail followed moments of surprising lyricism—and the sense of ongoing immediacy, of the continuing present that Stein claimed was another condition of modern writing" (272).

76. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Boston: Shambhala Library, 2008), 7.

77. Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Artist as Writer* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963). Baker observed that "the story is full of rituals" before delineating Nick's series of rituals, beginning with the long hike across the country ("ritual of endurance") and including fishing ("conducted according to ritualistic codes of fair play"). He cautions, "there is more to the symbolism of the story than the ritual of self-disciplined moral conduct" (126).

78. O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*, 171.

79. Ibid., 172.

80. Ronald Webber, *Hemingway's Art of Non-fiction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

81. This quote is generally attributed to both UCLA Bruins football coach Henry Russell ("Red") Sanders and to legendary Green Bay Packers coach Vince Lombardi. I'll leave it to others to settle the score. It certainly sounds like something Hemingway, the man, would have said.

82. E. L. Doctorow, "Ernest Hemingway RIP," in *Jack London, Hemingway, and the Constitution: Selected Essays, 1977–1992* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 40–49, 43.

83. Although Hemingway harbored a grudge against Callaghan until his death, Hemingway never lost respect for Greg Clark, a celebrated Canadian outdoor humorist he met while working at the *Toronto Star*. Clark, a decorated World War I veteran, took Hemingway fishing in Ontario. To his dying day, Hemingway considered Clark a better writer than Callaghan, an eccentric opinion few commentators on Canadian literature would share. In his oral biography of Clark, *The Life and Times of Greg Clark: Canada's Favourite Storyteller* (Doubleday, 1981), fellow *Star* writer Jock Carroll recalls Clark observing that Hemingway's tales about fishing were "probably mythical" (151)—surely a prerequisite for an aspiring literary storyteller.

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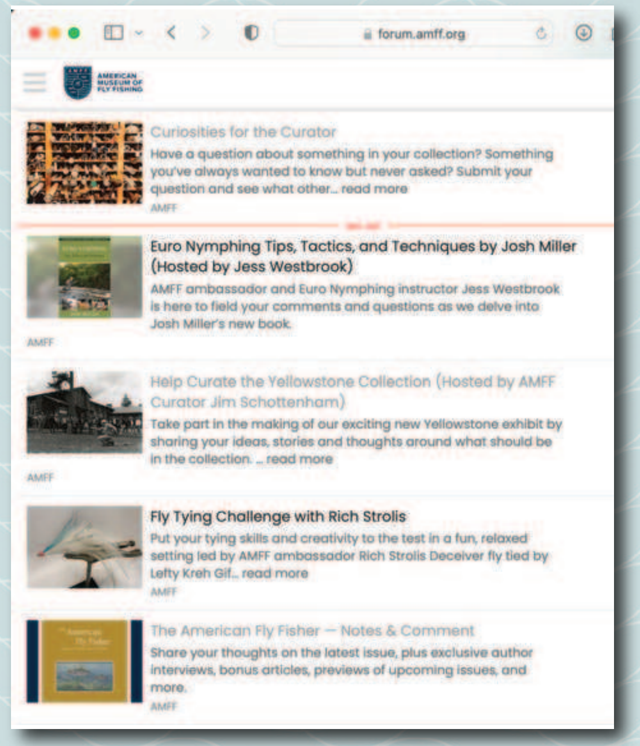

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The American Museum of Fly Fishing is pleased to announce that Guido Rahr is the recipient of the 2024 Izaak Walton Award. An event honoring his accomplishments will take place in San Francisco on November 14.

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Guido Rahr

A globally recognized pioneer in the conservation movement, Guido Rahr is the president and CEO of the Wild Salmon Center in Portland, Oregon. Under his leadership, the organization has developed scientific research, habitat protection, and fisheries improvement projects in dozens of rivers across Japan, the Russian Far East, Alaska, British Columbia, and the U.S. Pacific Northwest. His efforts with the Wild Salmon Center have raised more than $200 million in grants; established fourteen new conservation organizations; and protected 7.7 million acres of habitat, including public lands management designations and ten new large-scale habitat reserves on key salmon rivers across the Pacific Rim.

Mr. Rahr developed the stronghold strategy: a strategy of protecting ecosystems before they become endangered. Targeting the most pristine and productive river systems in each region of the Pacific Rim and taking the long view toward conservation, the Wild Salmon Center and local partners have defeated hydroelectric dams, industrial mining, road building, overfishing, clear-cut logging, water withdrawals, and other threats to stronghold watersheds.

He developed a love of nature from an early age, becoming an expert in the study of reptiles and amphibians. He comes from a family of fly fishers, and he became an accomplished and passionate angler and fly tier, hosting a public-access show called *On the Fly* while earning a BA in English literature from the University of Oregon. He also holds a master's degree in environmental studies from Yale University.

Before coming to the Wild Salmon Center, Mr. Rahr developed conservation programs for Oregon Trout, the United Nations Development Programme, the Rainforest Alliance, and Conservation International. He is a member of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) Salmon Specialist Group. He lives in Portland with his wife, Lee, and their three sons.

The Izaak Walton Award was established by AMFF in 2014 to honor and celebrate individuals who live by the *Compleat Angler* philosophy. Their passion for the sport of fly fishing and involvement in the angling community provides inspiration for others and promotes the legacy of leadership for future generations. Mr. Rahr's conservation efforts (and successes!) will have a lasting impact on the sport of fly fishing—a contribution that is immeasurable and one of the many ways in which he embodies the spirit of the Izaak Walton Award.

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Museum News

Sage Yazzi

Above (from left): Jim Schottenham, Brendan Truscott, Sarah Foster, and Alex Ford represent the museum in Denver.

Right: A look at the museum's booth in Edison, New Jersey.

Sarah Foster

Joseph Grigely Named 2023 Austin Hogan Award Recipient

Joseph Grigely has been named the recipient of the museum's 2023 Austin Hogan Award. The award, which recognizes exemplary contributions to the *American Fly Fisher*, was established in 1985 to honor the memory of Austin Hogan, who founded the museum's journal in 1974.

Grigely received the award for "Edward Hewitt and the Neversink Skater," which ran in the Spring issue. Hewitt's Neversink Skater was never sold by any retailer—anglers had to order it from Hewitt or figure it out how to tie it themselves. With the discovery of a copy of Martin Bovey's film *Hewitt on the Neversink* and late-1930s letters from Hewitt to Harry Darbee, it became possible for Grigely to piece together a more detailed history of this perplexing fly.

Grigely is an artist, writer, and lifelong angler whose art can be found in collections that include the Tate Modern, London; the Stedelijk, Amsterdam; Kunsthaus, Zurich; and both MoMA and the Whitney in New York. He has a DPhil from Oxford University and is professor of visual and critical studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Amy Vogel

Joseph Grigely

AMFF at Winter Shows

AMFF headed west in January for the Denver Fly Fishing Show. Staff members Sarah Foster, Brendan Truscott, Alex Ford, and Jim Schottenham enjoyed meeting with fly-fishing enthusiasts

from the Colorado region and sharing the museum's mission with a new audience. The amazing scenery of the Rockies was matched only by the hospitality of the large crowd attending the show. Just a week later, our team returned to the Fly Fishing Show in Edison, New Jersey, where we met with old friends and new. Huge thanks to Cross Current Insurance, Oakpool, and Kismet Outfitters for sponsoring the Saturday evening industry party. Not only was it a great opportunity to mingle with other exhibitors and guests, but the fundraising spirit was high and allowed us to raise $22,500 to be split between three great nonprofits: Casting for Recovery, Bonefish Tarpon Trust, and the American Museum of Fly Fishing.

Recent Donations to the Collection

Ron and Joan Stuckey (Hopewell Junction, New York) gave us a Paul Young fly-tying vise, a Holtzappfel fly-tying vise, a collection of fly-tying business cards, and an extensive bibliography of angling literature. **Sandra Demasters-Reynolds** (Gainesville, Florida) sent us a cased fly rod and reel used (and autographed) by Ted Williams. **Paul Schullery** (Manchester, Vermont), former executive director of AMFF, donated three fly rods, including a presentation rod bestowed to him by colleagues at Orvis as a farewell gift, an Orvis rod given to him by John Harder, and a Fenwick rod that he used out west. **Richard Morrison** (Rapid City, South Dakota) sent us a Granger rod, circa 1918–1919.

The **Estate of Jeffrey U. Ostrom** (West Linn, Oregon) left us a large collection of flies tied by the late Pacific Northwest fly tier. **Dixie R. Havlak** (Olympia, Washington) shared four flies tied by Helen Shaw when she worked with Art Kade.

Julie Letourneau Dupont (Waterville, Maine) sent us a special assortment of objects related to Gene Letourneau; another family member, **Richard Miller** (West Paris, Maine), followed up by donating a tandem streamer fly tied by Emile Letourneau. **Bob Demott** (Athens, Ohio) passed along two copies of the *Yale Anglers' Journal* and **Michael Sinclair** shared a copy of his book, *Goodwin Granger: The Rod Man from Denver*; both submissions will be added to our library.

Upcoming Events

Events take place on the museum grounds in Manchester, Vermont, eastern time, unless otherwise noted.

April 18
Heritage Award honoring the Jackson Hole One Fly Foundation
Kick-Off Dinner and Auction
New York Yacht Club
New York City
6:00 p.m.

April 25
Reel Talk with Jim Schottenham
Via Zoom
3:00 p.m.

May 30
Tackle Talk with Jim Schottenham and John Marci
Via Zoom
6:00 p.m.

July 11, 18, 25
Kids Clinics

August 10
Annual Fly-Fishing Festival
10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

August 10
Streamer Fly Tying with Jim Schottenham and Scott Biron
Via Zoom
3:00 p.m.

October 3
Annual Members Meeting
Wonders of Wildlife Museum and Aquarium
Springfield, Missouri

November 14
Izaak Walton Award honoring Guido Rahr
San Francisco, California

Always check our website (www.amff.org) for additions, updates, and more information or contact (802) 362-3300 or amff@amff.org. The museum's e-mail newsletter offers up-to-date news and event information. To subscribe, look for the link on our website or contact the museum.

The Dancer. *From Geo. M. Kelson,* The Salmon Fly *(London: Wyman & Sons Ltd., 1895), 397.*

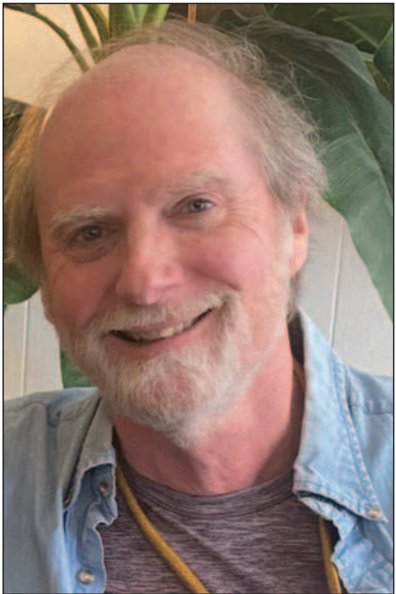
CONTRIBUTORS

Author photo

Wesley W. Bates is a Canadian artist whose primary medium is wood engraving. He works full time as a printmaker and letterpress printer under his own imprint at West Meadow Press in Clifford, Ontario. His wood-engraved prints have been exhibited widely and are held in public and private collections in Australia, Spain, Japan, England, the United States, and Canada.

Bates has illustrated for major publishers in Canada and the United States and for private presses in North America and England. He is the author of five books: *The Point of the Graver* (The Porcupine's Quill, 1994); *In Black & White: A Wood Engraver's Odyssey* (Bird & Bull Press, 2005); *Flight: A Poem without Words* (West Meadow Press, 2014); *Out of the Dark* (The Porcupine's Quill, 2022); and, with Robert Reid, a book on fly fishing, *Casting into Mystery* (The Porcupine's Quill, 2020). Bates was commissioned to engrave twelve images for a 2016 film documentary by Two Birds Film, *Look & See: A Portrait of Wendell Berry*, directed by Laura Dunn. He is presently at work on a wordless novel told entirely with wood engravings, and yes, fly fishing is caught up in the story. You can learn more about Bates and his work at www.wesleybates.com or by following him on Instagram at @westmeadowpressgallery.

The Livingston Enterprise



William Grover teaches at Montana State University, Bozeman. At the 2022 International Hemingway Conference in Cooke City, he presented a paper titled "A Big Two-Hearted River Runs through It: Fly Fishing with Hemingway and Maclean," which served as the basis for this article. He has twice spoken at the International Wild Trout Symposium and has been published in the *Big Sky Journal*, the *Yale Anglers' Journal*, and the *Livingston Enterprise*. He is emeritus professor of political science at Saint Michael's College in Vermont, where he published numerous books, articles, and conference papers on American politics. He lives in Livingston, Montana.

Dan Kennaley

Robert Reid is a Canadian arts journalist. He covered a range of arts for more than thirty years at newspapers across Ontario, wrote two arts programs for television, was a regular arts lecturer, and was the first nonfiction writer-in-residence at the University of Waterloo. Author of *Casting into Mystery* (Porcupine's Quill, 2020), a fly-angling memoir with a cultural twist, he is writing another volume, tentatively titled *The Angler's Share*. Reid was an avid reader of angling literature long before he picked up a fly rod twenty years ago. He has been a book reviewer for Britain's *Classic Angling* and was published by *Flyfishing & Tying Journal*. When he isn't on the water, he maintains a couple of websites at www.reidbetweenthelines.ca and www.castingintomystery.com.

A Double Dose of Hemingway

Jim Schottenham

One direct result of the loss of his freshwater fishing tackle by the Railway Express Company is that any surviving flies or trout tackle owned and used by Ernest Hemingway must be considered rare. These fourteen flies were originally given to a member of the board of the New England Museum Association by one of Hemingway's wives. They were in turn gifted to longtime museum trustee Allan K. Poole, who then donated the flies to the museum in 2008. The unique assemblage includes an interesting Gray Ghost streamer that lacks the traditional jungle-cock eye. AMFF permanent collection. Gift of Allan K. Poole. 2008.186.001.

WHO DOESN'T LIKE a good theme party, theme park, or theme song? A theme can create engagement (think school spirit week!) and bring a sense of comfort and community. Of course, the *American Fly Fisher* is inherently fly-fishing history themed, but it's not often that a single issue is devoted to one topic. (Two examples come to mind: Summer 2022's *A River Runs Through It* issue, dropped thirty years after the movie release, and Fall 2011's accompaniment to the museum's acclaimed exhibition *A Graceful Rise*, which featured women anglers.) As you explore this issue, I hope you come to better understand the complicated life and work of Ernest Hemingway, whose writing has become part of our cultural heritage and whose short story "Big Two-Hearted River" is the focus of this issue.

Now in its fiftieth volume, the *American Fly Fisher* has featured or mentioned Hemingway in more than twenty issues. In fact, our very first issue (Winter 1974, vol. 1, no. 1) lists among the highlights of the museum's 1973 acquisitions "Ernest Hemingway's trout rod donated by Prescott Tolman" (page 22). Way back in 2002, we were drawn into John Mundt's assemblage of stories in "Anglers at War" (vol. 28, no. 4), which included Hemingway's adventures in World War I as an ambulance driver and World War II as a war correspondent for *Collier's* magazine; some WWI photos from the John F. Kennedy Library's Ernest Hemingway Collection helped to tell the story. In 2006, Robert DeMott drew a stark comparison between Hemingway and John Steinbeck in "Of Fish and Men" (vol. 32, no. 4). Paul Schullery, in his 2012 piece on the grasshopper fly ("Grasshopper Country," vol. 38, no. 3), noted specifically that "one of the most famous of all American fishing stories, Ernest Hemingway's 'Big Two-Hearted River,' is a tale of grasshopper fishing, using live grasshoppers cast gently on a fly rod" (page 12). There have been countless references to Hemingway in the *American Fly Fisher* and other fishing and literary journals.

I hope these Hemingway articles act as a reminder of the treasure trove of fly-fishing history that is held at AMFF—and more specifically, in the pages of the *American Fly Fisher*. Is there a theme to your interest in fly-fishing history? We invite you to get lost in own your research and enjoy where it takes you!

SARAH FOSTER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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