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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Hilary Hemingway, Jeffry P. Lindsay. *Hunting with Hemingway: Based on the Stories of Leicester Hemingway.* New York: Riverhead Books, 2000. 316 pp. $22.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57322-159-7.

Reviewed by Marc Seals (University of South Florida)
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On the surface, *Hunting with Hemingway*, by Hilary Hemingway and Jeffry P. Lindsay, is a collection of Leicester "Baron" Hemingway's adventures with his famous older brother. If these tales possess even a seed of truth, then it is astounding that Ernest and Les survived these exploits. On a deeper level, this book tells the story of Hilary Hemingway coming to terms with the death of her father, who, like his brother Ernest, committed suicide.

Upon the death of her mother in 1997, Hilary Hemingway was given a cassette tape of informal interviews conducted by an overeager English professor, identified only as "Leech." Leech is attempting to persuade Les Hemingway to tell stories that might give insight into the life of Ernest Hemingway. This seems to annoy Les, but he obliges, telling story after story of fantastic adventure, ranging from vicious attacks by feral ostriches, tigers, and komodo dragons to the attempt to capture a Nazi U-boat.

The authors spend a lot of time attempting to determine the veracity of these tales. Perhaps, given the protagonists of the stories, whether or not they are true does not matter. "Truth," Les Hemingway said, "is a strange thing" (315). Ernest Hemingway was a man who was larger than life, perhaps even larger than his work. Much myth has developed regarding his life. Nevertheless, this is not a book aimed at the academic market; in fact, Les Hemingway has a great deal of contempt for scholars who all seem to want a piece of the Hemingway myth in order to gain tenure. Co-author Lindsay (Hilary Hemingway's husband) calls these scholars "Hemingleeches" (273), which makes one suspicious of Professor Leech's name. Les dismisses stories of his brother's six-toed cats in Key West as totally inaccurate and speculation that Ernest might have been homosexual as absurd and insulting. The perception of literary academics by the Hemingways is funny and at times painfully accurate. This is criticism that academics perhaps have reason to heed.

On the book jacket, Les Standiford opines that *Hunting with Hemingway* is "part old-fashioned adventure tale, part fable, part journey into self-awareness." He is correct, but it is not equally successful in all of these aims. As adventure, it excels. There is something wonderful in a good yarn well told, and this book has these in abundance. This book also makes a contribution to the growing body of myth that surrounds the Hemingway family. Through the eyes of an adoring little brother, it makes Ernest Hemingway seem a bit more human. Where it falters is in the inward journey of self-awareness that Hilary Hemingway embarks upon. Hilary Hemingway's cloyingly emotional denouement in Bimini is quite annoying. Regardless, the tales of Papa and Baron make the reader's journey well worth the trip. In addition to providing a fun read, *Hunting with Hemingway* provides a fascinating insight into the psyches of Ernest and Les Hemingway.

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