



By-Line: Selected Articles and Dispatches of Four Decades

Ernest Hemingway , William M. White (Editor)

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s/t: Selected Articles & Dispatches of Four Decades

Spanning the years from 1920 to 1956, this priceless collection of pieces written by Hemingway ranges from articles for the "Toronto Star" and the Hearst newspapers to popular magazines such as "Esquire, Collier's" and "Look", and includes Hemingway's vivid eyewitness accounts of the Spanish Civil War and World War II.

By-Line: Selected Articles and Dispatches of Four Decades Details

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Eclectic Indulgence says

Many parts deserve four stars and if you want to learn some great things about writing, you can do so here better than most places (IMO)

Theresa Glover says

This was another literature class read, but one worth of at least a few comments about it. I expected to incur eye-rolling headaches, or perhaps attacks of mid-homework ninja sleep that tend to accompany dry writing/reading. Instead, what I found was a deeper appreciation of Ernest Hemingway's skills, and a deep sadness in the changes to journalism. While there were some passages that took effort to get through (usually related to the subject matter at hand), I was pleased to discover that I enjoyed a good portion of it. The writing was evocative, and I gained an appreciation of Hemingway's development as a writer. I also realized the effect of dumbing down our society through TV and other brain-drain media. There was entertainment in what he wrote, not just using words to convey facts. He put the reader in his own shoes and made them feel the world as he experienced it, which is something that we have sadly lost the patience for in an increasingly digital world. Don't get me wrong, I'm not mourning the advancement of technology or society, just grieving the loss of a world that respected the art of a well-written story as a part of their everyday experience.

Diane Drake says

I'm a huge Ernest Hemingway fan. Okay, sure, there's the philandering and the alcoholism, the excessive machismo and wild animal slaughter (special condolences to the bulls of Spain, the elephants of Africa and the marlins in the Gulf Stream. Though, on balance, he did seem to quite adore his kitty cats.) Regardless, then there is the writing, and that's the only reason we care about any of the rest of it.

So I was excited when, years ago, I happened across this collection of articles he wrote while working as a reporter, some before he achieved great fame as a novelist and some after. The short excerpt below is one of my absolute favorites in it. It's from an essay Hemingway wrote for Esquire magazine in 1935, when he was thirty-six. It details the advice he gave to a young man who'd hitchhiked from Minnesota down to Key West and shown up on his doorstep, claiming he wanted to be a writer. He gave the kid a job as night watchman on his boat, the Pilar, and was from then on pestered endlessly about what he calls, "the practice of letters." Because the kid played the violin, (badly), Hemingway nicknamed him Maestro, which he then shortened to "Mice." Here is an excerpt from "Monologue to the Maestro." Hemingway refers to himself as "Y.C.," short for "Your Correspondent."

What I particularly love about this essay is not only its slightly jaundiced yet still good-natured wit, but also that the writing advice is real and good and honest. I think the knowledge imparted, particularly about paying attention, is valuable for any writer, artist or for that matter, for any human being.

Mice: How can a writer train himself?

Y.C.: Watch what happens today. If we get into a fish see exactly what it is that everyone does. If you get a kick out of it while he is jumping remember back until you see exactly what the action was that gave you the emotion. Whether it was the rising of the line from the water and the way it tightened like a fiddle string until drops started from it, or the way he smashed and threw water when he jumped. Remember what the noises were and what was said. Find what gave you the emotion: what the action was that gave you the excitement. Then write it down making it clear so the reader will see it too and have the same feeling that you had. That's a five finger exercise.

Mice: All right.

Y.C.: Then get into somebody else's head for a change. If I bawl you out try to figure what I'm thinking about as well as how you feel about it. If Carlos curses Juan think what both their sides of it are. Don't just think who is right. As a man things are as they should or shouldn't be. As a man you know who is right and who is wrong. You have to make decisions and enforce them. As a writer you should not judge. You should understand.

Mice: All right.

Y.C.: Listen now. When people talk listen completely. Don't be thinking what you're going to say. Most people never listen. Nor do they observe. You should be able to go into a room and when you come out know everything you saw there and not only that. If that room gave you any feeling you should know exactly what it was that gave you that feeling. Try that for practice. When you're in town stand outside the theater and see how the people differ in the way they get out of taxis or motor cars. There are a thousand ways to practice. And always think of other people.

Abhishek says

Hemingway's writing can at times feel a little tense; a little self-conscious, what with him trying to write "the truest sentence" that he knows. So in this regard his articles and dispatches from the 20's to the 50's are refreshingly relaxed in tone. Sure, his sentences still bear his hallmark succinctness allowing him to recount details with clarity but without feeling "strained."

I was primarily interested in his writing on the civil war in Spain and his coverage of the second world war,

which are brilliant. However his accounts of hotels in Switzerland, German inn-keepers, free shaves, and his advice to a young writer are worth reading too. To my pleasant surprise his sense of humour surfaced at times, which doesn't occur in his novels for the above-mentioned reasons. However there's only so many fishing and shooting stories I was interested in so I gave most of them a miss.

I don't see casual readers picking up this collection. But for avid readers it's an interesting look at the profession that shaped the style of a great novelist.

J. Dolan says

Hemingway may have been born a macho jerk, and by the time the world started calling him Papa, as bitter and on his way to nuttiness as a fruit pit. But boy, could he live! And write!

Both are evident throughout *By-Line*, a collection of dispatches he penned for various newspapers and magazines from 1920 to 1956. No matter their age, though, there is a verve, a freshness to the best of them that has to rank him with, if not above, the most adept adventure/travel/war/human-interest journalists of the modern or any era.

Long before Mailer, Capote, Wolfe and others begat the New Journalism, i. e., the nonfictional novel among other creations, Hemingway was applying the art and technique of fiction to trout fishing, bullfighting, currency trading, you name it. The articles he fashioned for *Esquire*, *Look*, *Collier's*, etc. are more like short stories, with all of that genre's thrills and catharsis.

Want to be entertained, and learn a lot about history, geography, geology, exotic people and places and the ways of the world in the bargain? Don't let the ages of the little gems in it fool you-- *By-Line* is and always will be a book for the ages.

Bill says

Short non-fiction prose gems many from 1920's Europe on socio-political-economic observation of post WW I culture; the best on fly-fishing, bull-fighting, food, and money.

Brian Page says

Ambition must be a cruel mistress. Hemingway didn't seem to put much stock in his journalistic work. The sort of writing in this book filled the time between his literary pieces. Yet, had he never written a word of fiction, these stories would show him as a master all on their own. The articles and dispatches are brilliantly written; and, dare I say it, I like them even better than his novels. This is prose so beautiful that it will take your breath away or bring tears to your eyes.

Barnaby Thieme says

This is an outstanding selection of Hemingway's professional newspaper and magazine articles. Many of them deal with culture, geopolitics, and conditions in Europe from the 1920s through the end of World War II, with special attention on the rise of fascism in Italy and Spain and the conflict between Japan and China.

Hemingway gives a ground-level narrative of history as only he can, chronicling the Spanish Civil War and advocating a dubious position (with the benefit of hindsight) of isolationism late into the 1930s.

Much less interesting to this reader are the many articles on big game hunting in Africa, war stories of deep sea fishing, and an enthusiastic account of bullfighting in Spain.

It's tempting to read the book from cover to cover, but this makes for laborious and repetitive labor. It is an anthology of carefully crafted free-standing articles after all, many of them short but all of them punchy, and it's perhaps best browsed and sampled.

While the book is of uneven interest, the material on Europe *entre les deux guerres* is vital reading.

Dane Cobain says

Let's face it, we all know that Ernest Hemingway is a phenomenal writer, but this book here is what proves it. See, he started work as a journalist nearly 100 years ago, and the first piece of work in this collection is dated March 1920, a piece on a free shave by an apprentice barber in Toronto. It was journalism which paved the way for Hemingway's literary career, and this book collects together 75 articles written over the course of 35 years.

As you can imagine, it's a fascinating read, and not just because it's interesting to see how much the world changed across the intervening years – Hemingway's gift for words is just as apparent here as it is in his novels, and it's potentially even more powerful because he's writing about true events, the majority of which happened either directly to him or to his contacts.

The sort of stuff that he covers is pretty typical for Hemingway – hunting, fishing, bullfights, women, booze, etc. He was the first great writer to make himself a reputation for being a great drunk, too – he's had many imitators, both in the way that he lived his life and the way in which he writes, but nobody has ever proved themselves his equal. In my opinion, no-one ever will, and it's fantastic that his personality has been thoroughly stamped on his journalism, as well as in the rest of his work.

Ultimately, you're probably not going to want to read this if you're not a Hemingway fan, and even if you are then I wouldn't blame you if you stuck to his novels, at least to begin with. But then, as with most great writers, even the lesser-read and seemingly less appealing work emerges in all of its triumphant glory, once you read it. My honest opinion is that you'd be a fool to pass this over just because a book of journalism doesn't sound particularly interesting, and that you'll learn a lot more about the world as it was and as it is than you'd expect to.

Of course, what with this being a classic, it includes commentary, a foreword and even, bizarrely enough, an introduction called 'Hemingway Needs No Introduction'. With most classic novels, it becomes something of a chore to have the author's work intruded upon by references – Noel Coward once said that "having to read footnotes resembles having to go downstairs to answer the door while in the midst of making love." Here, though, the extra notes just add to what you're reading, in a way that few other books ever manage.

Giórgos says

αν δεν σας αρ?σει το ψ?ρεμα, το κυν?γι, η ταυρομαχ?α, η απ?βαση στις ακτ?ς της νορμανδ?ας - ο ?ρνεστ με λ?γα λ?για - δεν γ?νεται να μη σας αρ?σει ο ?ρνεστ!

Simon Kearney says

I love this anthology. I wasn't going to read it again, one or two, but I couldn't stop.

Hemingway's journalism informed many of his fictional stories and they are damned good pieces of writing. I read it with a mixture of admiration and jealousy. The second has stayed in my mind from the first reading, it's about free things and Hemingway gets a free shave from the beginners at the barber's academy in Toronto. Then he gets a tooth pulled at the dentistry school, which is something I did when I was a young bloke in Adelaide. Worst pair of hands ever in my mouth.

The book recounts various journeys around Europe in the 20s. Hemingway fishes, flies and files his way around Spain, Germany and France in the first part of the book. He introduces Cuba of the 1930s in part two. His writing is like a visual almanac with weights, distances, records and all the necessary detail readers vacuum up subconsciously. When Hemingway writes about game fishing and bull fighting the details of the fight and participants (both human and animal) are all important. He counts enough to know that the biggest fish, at 343 pounds, 156 kilograms, caught in a two-month fishing trip in Cuba in 1933 jumped out of the water 44 times before it was brought in to the gaff. You either count that sort of thing very carefully, like a savant, or make an educated guess, like most hacks, and pass it off as an accurate observation. With Hemingway you'd like to think it probably wasn't the latter.

His political observation is engaging, more political sketch than commentary in the early years, biting later on. Writing for the Toronto Star about the 1922 Genoa conference in Italy, he prepares his readers with a gritty piece about the behaviour of the fascists and communists in Italy. Fifteen-hundred carabinieri from outside the region have been shipped in to keep the peace with orders to shoot. He paints a picture of constant skirmishing where the fascists have the upper hand.

Here, we already see his brilliance for the observational portrait. Later on in the book he talks about observation and the understanding of individuals being the underpinnings of his writing. His passing observation of the Canadian representative, Sir Charles Blair Gordon tells you all you need to know in nine words: "blonde, ruddy-faced and a little ill at ease." A piece called Russian Girls at Genoa teases the reader waiting for the mention of the girls, "the best looking girls in the conference hall" arrive in the second last paragraph. Nothing important was discussed on the opening day. This is wonderful reportage, the day-to-day happenings having been filed separately. While I'd like to see Hemingway's straight news reports this is stuff that historians use as crayons to colour their tomes. His writing is about incredibly accurate description of things and people, their feelings, emotions and the physical manifestations that describe them.

There is an excellent profile of the first Soviet Foreign Minister Tchitcherin at a subsequent conference in Lausanne, "he has plump, cold hands that lie in yours like a dead man's." Hemingway ridicules Tchitcherin for having a portrait of himself taken in a military officer's uniform after revealing the Soviet diplomat had been made to wear dresses by his mother until he was 12. There is awareness of his closet homosexuality if you care to pick it up, coupled with admiration of his intellect and tenacity. "He is all brain and he simply feeds his body because it is a supporting part of his brain." The over-riding conclusion is of an emotionally fragile but intellectually towering advocate fighting single-mindedly for an impossible outcome.

A curiously out-of-place story about a death knock in which he and another reporter have to approach the surviving victims of a tsunami in Japan has always stuck in my mind for one quote. Hemingway is trying to

convince a mother to speak to them. The mother is sceptical and doesn't want their names used, saying all newspaper reporters are liars. "They'll promise it and then they'll use them (their names) anyway," she says. Hemingway responds: "Mrs. So and So, the president of the United States tells reporters things in confidence which if known would cost him his job. I'm talking about newspaper reporters, not cheap news tipsters." That quote stuck in my mind from my first reading 20 years ago. The real professional honour for a journalist is in getting the story. While Hemingway sticks to his word and doesn't name the woman in his piece he does get the story. Like all his journalism there are paragraphs that could (I'm sure some did) leap onto the pages of a novel. The description of the daughter should if it didn't already. "She went upstairs, quick and lithe, wearing a Japanese kimono. It ought to have some other name. Kimono has a messy, early morning sound. There was nothing kimonoey about this kimono. The colours were vivid and the stuff had body to it, and it was cut. It looked almost as though it might be worn with two swords in the belt." To read in one anthology a lifetime of journalism you see the man's character change over time. He starts out a great stylist, and ends up, like most of us, becoming a curmudgeon. The drive to write really well is there all the time but it presents itself more in later years. Arguably his greatest book, the one he was awarded the Pulitzer for, and in a large part gave him a Nobel Prize, *The Old Man and the Sea*, was written in 1951, when the author was in his fifties. You see the origins of *The Old Man and the Sea* in a letter for *Esquire* in April, 1936, fifteen years earlier. Which reads like a synopsis: "An old man fishing alone in a skiff out of Cabanas hooked a great marlin that, on the heavy sash cord handling, pulled the skiff far out to sea. Two days later the old man was picked up by fishermen sixty miles to the eastward, the head and forward part of the marlin lashed alongside. What was left of the fish, less than half, weighed 800 pounds. The old man had stayed with him a day, a night, a day and another night while the fish swam deep and pulled the boat. When he had come up the old man had pulled the boat up on him and harpooned him. Lashed alongside the sharks had hit him and the old man had fought them out alone in the Gulf Stream in a skiff, clubbing them, stabbing at them, lunging at them with an oar until he was exhausted and the sharks had eaten all that they could hold. He was crying in the boat when the fishermen picked him up, half crazy from his loss and the sharks were still circling the boat."

We hit the Spanish Civil War and the now world-famous author, Hemingway is a bit more circumspect in his writing, the possibility of death is more apparent but at a distance, which is surprising because it was probably his most dangerous assignment. His piece about World War II London Fights the Robots is considered one of the finest pieces of war writing but I like his writing about running around with the French resistance fighters - for which he was charged with breaching the Geneva Conventions but eventually acquitted.

The last part is a series of pieces from Africa including one describing the two air crashes which led to a number of premature obituaries. His character is strongly set in these pieces and you see him playing down the injuries that plagued him for the rest of his life. The final piece about the Navy NCOs who came to visit him once in Cuba is quite evocative, far from the popular discussion about Hemingway not able to live with the rigours of age and eventually committing suicide, I think it reveals a man trying to come to terms with his position in American life at the end of his career. A man who can sit with the ranks or with Admirals, a man who will give boons, is courteous and self aware. This is a fine anthology and I'd recommend it to any writer or journalist, or those aspiring to be.

Charles says

I will get to all of Hemingway someday and I think the fact that he's been dead over 50 years ('62) and I am still learning about him make him an incredible literary and historical figure. This book got good reviews, was on Audible and of course is about Papa, so I was in.

There are way too many articles for me to talk about each one. So instead I'll give thoughts on each time period that is covered here (its over 4 decades and 5 parts).

Part 1:

This is a young Hemingway taking place 1920-1924. While there were many articles I enjoyed, some others were rather dull and tedious. I love a light-hearted Hemingway doing things like getting a shave from a barber college and getting a tooth pulled by a student (these were both funny). As time passes we already get to see glimpses, though, of his realistic views of the world, the state of other countries, his hatred for Mussolini (if only he really had been a bluff as Hemingway stated) and of course his fascination with bull-fighting. The weird part with the bull-fighting is that he admits its a tragedy, the bull always dies of course and sometimes even the matador but he still finds it incredibly exciting and loves to watch.

Part 2:

Here we see Hemingway's long-standing love for Cuba and of course for fishing and hunting. We also see where he gets the inspiration for "The Old Man and the Sea", I had always thought this was something Hemingway did but it turns out it was a story about a fisherman off Cuba who struggled with a huge fish for days, only to have it eaten away by sharks. His love of Key West (and boxing) show up here, along with some unexpected humor about birds. Again not the best section of the book, some parts were dull but as a big fan of Papa I still enjoyed it.

Also in this section there is a wonderful part where Ernest gives advice to a young writer. It is similar to things he said in "A Moveable Feast" but still just wonderful for me as a writer myself. He actually gives a long list of books to read and perhaps his best advice (which I'll paraphrase). "Whatever you write about you have to capture the emotion of it. Whatever it felt like to be there, do to the act, what the other people felt, what they said. If you can capture the feeling of act and make it true, make the reader believe it, then you're done your job as a writer."

Part 3:

Hemingway, despite his flaws like animal cruelty, a huge amount of hunting, womanizing, alcoholism, racist tendencies and by some accounts misogyny, was a true patriot, brave, heroic and a great reporter will do go in the most dangerous places to get the truth.

In this part we see Ernest in the Spanish Civil War and right on the front lines. Here we get descriptions of the gruesome sights of war but also the heroics and the strange way life carries on. He also manages to bring us some humor along with the importance of true reporting. He talks of one reporter who wanted a false story reported, a story that had it been discovered would have been death for the poor female tricked into taking it out of the country. Here also we see keen Ernest views of the world have become, he predicts the start of WWII within six months. Even Ernest could not have predicted Pearl Harbor, though, and along with many other Americans feel they should have stayed out of a war in Europe.

Part 4:

This is the best part of the book for me. It starts with a something I've never heard before, an interview with Ernest, which I had hoped would actually be audio somehow preserved but no. Still the incredible part is that he corrected it himself, even with just an interview he was always the perfectionist and the storyteller.

His assessment of Japan-China relations is very interesting and it gives details to the war I didn't know, that Russia was making money by funding both the Axis and the Allies. Again here we are left to wonder if his advice was correct, Japan had some skirmishes with China but never did invade a country so large. If Japan

had taken China, they may have continued inland and the whole course of the war may have been different (perhaps its a good thing he was wrong).

He also shows the incredible determination and resourcefulness of the Chinese with a great story of how they build a massive runway with almost no tools, just a lot of people working night and day as hard as they can. Speaking of, I knew that Hemingway was there in WWII but I didn't know all the details. His descriptions of his landing on D-Day in France was amazing, how close he came to death just to get a story is nothing short of astounding. He said himself that he could have wrote a book on D-Day, it's sad that it never happened. Hemingway was in WWII as a reporter but he stayed so long that the men started to think of him as an officer. He even had fun by telling one man that he couldn't rise above the rank of Captain because he couldn't read or write.

This review has gotten long but as always it shows my love of Hemingway and I was on vacation when I wrote this with lots of time to spare. His descriptions of the fight for Paris and then for Germany are incredible to listen to. Especially when they are getting German's out of this entrenched bunkers. Hemingway, whom I read did fight but got away with it when discovered, threw a grenade and even shot and killed German soldiers. They way I read it, he was defending himself in a time of war and would not have been charged with anything, still though he acted like a soldier and really became one that day, when he was a reporter. For me, though, it just cements by vision of him as a hero. How many reporters have you heard of fighting right alongside of troops? I've never heard of anyone, except Hemingway.

Part 5:

With the war over we see Hemingway return to what he loves, exploring the world, hunting, fishing and writing. His description of Cuba is wonderful and makes me wish I could have seen the countryside as he did back then (I've been to Havana and a resort on Cuba but wasn't overly impressed). We see Hemingway now as he becomes weary with the world, he gives hints that he is drinking more and that he wants to see people less. He talks about several places he has lived as being ruined and says that Cuba is one of the only true places left for him but even there he knows it will change and he'll have to leave.

He made me sad when he talks about cock fighting, not just watching it but raising his own roosters just to have them fight and die. It's always hard to comprehend who someone who loved cats and dogs would want to watch (and participate in) such a brutal act. Some would say it was Hemingway repressing his feelings, that perhaps he was homosexual or at least curious, maybe they are right, I've come to see his hyper-masculine activities were certainly a cover for some kind of issue (or issues) he had.

The book ends with another incredible (and sad) story. How he and his wife survived not one, but two plane crashes. Hemingway tells us of a time he was trapped by an angry elephant on top of a small hill, without his gun all he could do was fling rocks at the animal until it finally gave up. The saddest part is that once he does make it out of the wilderness of Africa he has to prove that he is still alive and later becomes obsessed with reading his own obituaries. In fact he wrote this final report to clarify all the mistakes made in the obituaries! Hemingway is in his 50's here and he knows he is getting older, can feel himself slipping. Still he doesn't seem like a man who would later take his own life, it is a tragedy that more people couldn't have helped him after this point, maybe he could have written another masterpiece? He at least could have finish several stories of his. Despite all the sadness here I was also amused at a tale of how he finally agrees to get a bodyguard/assistant. It shows us that Hemingway was an intensely private man and didn't like all the fame he would get in public places. He loved those friends and associates close to him and he makes an incredibly sad (and true) statement towards the end. Once more I'm paraphrasing, "All of the jerks, idiots and losers live on and on, yet the ones we love, the special people in our lives die all the time. As the years, months and days go by we continue to lose them, their lights forever snuffed out and never to return." As someone who has recently lost his father I couldn't agree more, life is terribly unfair and it's true that the good people seem to die first, old assholes seem to hang on forever.

I've always been fascinated with WWII and Nazi Germany in particular. So for me learning more details of the war both the political aspects and the first hand accounts of Hemingway, was wonderful. I've always love Hemingway, despite all his flaws. He was an incredible man, an amazing writer and ultimately a sad and tragic figure. Like most great writers he was tortured, in mind, body and spirit and ultimately those demons won. This is an excellent non-fiction collection of Hemingway's life and his adventures as a reporter. I'll admit there were times I was bored and I did find it long in places. Still though I highly recommend it. I was sad to have it end. Not for children, due to graphic violence and language I would say ages 16+.

Thomas Nelson says

If you like Hemingway, you'll like this. He is telling his daily life struggles and meanderings in a 'Reporter' Style. He was after all a 'Toronto Star Weekly' contributing writer. The books span is from 1920 thru to 1956. He writes from all over the World, France, Spain, Africa, Havana, etc. His adventures and his language fit another age, long before Political Correctness. If you are offended by hunting of big game or Bull Fighting, this book may give you pause.

Margaret Elder says

The older I become, and the more I read the writings of Hemingway, the better I like him. This collection of his published newspaper and magazine articles came to my attention after reading another work about World War II. His essay on fighting in Hurtgen Forest was mentioned in that book, and I knew he was embedded with my Dad's unit during that battle. I really only expected to read that one essay and perhaps scan a few more, but I ended up reading all of them. Some were funny, and I had never read anything humorous by him before. I really enjoyed those. Many were philosophical, especially his war correspondence. Some were straightforward reporting, but always with excellent writing! Those interested in the sports of big game hunting and fishing, history of the Spanish Civil War and World War II, descriptions of exotic places, etc. will like this anthology of articles. In these works, he frequently refers to himself as "Your Correspondent." I'm glad that, even though these were written decades ago, as I read, he for a while became "My Correspondent", too.
