

**Sabbatical Report – Spring 2020**  
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My sabbatical proposal focused on researching journalist Martha Gellhorn. Specifically, I wanted to research her visit to Los Angeles in late January, 1941. She and her then-husband, Ernest Hemingway, stopped for two nights in L.A. on their way to San Francisco, where they boarded a ship toward a now famous journey through China. Her stop in L.A., however, is not famous, yet I am drawn to those few days. My research on Gellhorn intersects with a fascination I have for how stories move through media, changing and coloring as they go. As an English instructor, I notice and teach the importance of source credibility. A portion of my original plan was to trace stories through news outlets and time, developing a theme I then could build into a semester-long English 1A class. Along the way I would dig into Gellhorn's few days in Los Angeles, as any information gleaned on that front would add to the extant body of Hemingway research—and to our understanding of Gellhorn's role in American journalism.

A portion of my sabbatical plan I accomplished, but the novel coronavirus wiped out my ability to research on site. I found myself revising my original goals and thinking I should have been teaching, supporting my colleagues during a semester that was like no other. The result is that I'm not completely happy with the work I did finish, and I also realize I accomplished a great deal, considering the context in which I worked. I had planned, for example, to spend a significant amount of time at the offices of the *Hollywood Reporter*. Few research libraries hold this publication in their archives, and issues from 1940 and 1941 have not been digitized. The coronavirus stopped my plans.

I also had planned to spend many hours at the Los Angeles County Library in downtown Los Angeles, as few periodicals from the late '30s and early '40s are online. This, too, was

thwarted. Just before the California Safer at Home order, I had planned to go to Utah to view the Cecil B. DeMille papers at Brigham Young University. Again, I could not. Closer to home, I had contacted archivists at Claremont to research a portion of the Jerry Voorhis papers. They are not available online at all, and as I write this report, the research library at Claremont remains closed. DeMille and Voorhis are separated by political ideology, work contexts, and much more, yet I had found intersections with Gellhorn that were fascinating and I hope one day to explore. Finding these connections was the result of many hours of online research, using the LA Public Library's online databases while at home during the shutdown.

The on-site research I did accomplish was completed before my sabbatical started. I had included this research in my sabbatical proposal, and one particular day was truly an honor for me so I do want to describe the work here. The Martha Gellhorn collection is held at Boston University. It is not open to researchers, and a faulty Gellhorn biography published about a decade ago has made her son, the executor of her estate, wary. Yet he granted me access to the entire collection for one day, based on a letter I wrote him outlining my 1941 focus. I flew to Boston and spent the entire day reading letters: between Gellhorn and Hemingway; between Gellhorn and Eleanor Roosevelt (a family friend); between Gellhorn and H.G. Wells. I was in awe the entire day, and left the library feeling like I'd made lifelong friends in Gellhorn and Roosevelt. However, I did not discover anything about the two days Gellhorn and Hemingway spent in Los Angeles.

For that information, I had to look far and wide. Before the libraries shut down, I visited the Margaret Herrick Library at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Their online finding aid had led me to an archivist who pulled from their offsite facilities folders crammed with telegrams, letters, memoranda, and photos pertaining to Hemingway's sale to Paramount of

his book *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. In addition, another folder contained information about Hemingway and Gellhorn's Spanish Civil War documentary project made with filmmaker Joris Ivens in 1937. All this information is significant, and it is quite possible that I am the first researcher to learn that a series of letters exists between Hemingway and others outlining Hemingway's fight to recoup money he lent to Ivens during the filming. I am considering an article for the *Hemingway Review* discussing the argument. It's a fascinating story. Hemingway wanted his money paid back from the nonprofit formed to buy (using any funds raised by the documentary) ambulances for Spain. The result, in case you might want to know how the whole mess ended, is that the nonprofit paid Hem \$500 even though he had no receipt for the money, and even though at the time everyone (except, apparently, Hem) thought the money had been donated, not loaned. Basically, they paid the money to shut him up because his letters were long, effluent, and increasingly written under the influence of something other than coffee. I had a grand time reading through them.

This episode ended up, albeit disguised, in another publication. Through the Herrick Library I discovered that Hem had threatened to sue over an article that had been written in *Photoplay* mentioning Hemingway and the Spanish ambulances. More research uncovered the article. This article was a propaganda piece about how communists were manipulating well-meaning Hollywood stars into giving money for liberal causes. In reality, claimed the author, the money was going straight to communist Russia to fund further assaults on democracy. Hollywood's beloved stars were being duped! Hemingway was mentioned in the article as being one of those well-meaning dupes, who had come to Hollywood to raise money for ambulances, but really no ambulances were purchased. The money, instead, got handed off to communists in back alleys rubbing their hands with glee. This was the published version of the story. The first

draft, somehow shown to Hem's lawyer, had stated outright that Hem was in on the scam. After a threatened lawsuit, the author revised. One important note is that Hemingway's name in the article is deliberate and kind of nasty. He is the only person named in the article—at all. The other paragraphs mention vague “big stars” who have been taken in by the scam.

This *Photoplay* episode, too, seems to be unknown in the Hemingway literature. I'd stumbled onto a treasure trove waiting to be transformed into a dissertation.

All of this is work for the future. For the present, I did find out what happened to Gellhorn and Hemingway on January 29-31, 1941, in Los Angeles. This information also is new, and would be of interest to Hemingway and cinema history researchers. Here is the result of several months researching the Paramount and Joris Ivens papers at the Herrick Library, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, several Hemingway biographies, Gellhorn's fiction, nonfiction, articles, letters, unpublished photographs, and authorized biography, the Hemingway papers at Boston's JFK Library; the Honolulu daily; approximately two hundred issues of the *Los Angeles Times*; and (oddly) a midwest gossip columnist: Gellhorn and Hemingway had married two months earlier and had just spent some days in New York, where Hemingway grieved over the news that his friend F. Scott Fitzgerald had died of a heart attack in Los Angeles. Two days after Scotty's death, another writer, Nathanael West, died with his wife in a car accident outside of L.A.

It was in the middle of this grief that Gellhorn and Hem flew to Ontario, CA, and were met at the plane by Gary Cooper, his wife, Rocky, and a gaggle of photographers. The photographers were planned. Hemingway needed to make a splash because he was in L.A. for a reason: to push his casting choices for Paramount's upcoming movie, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Paramount had bought the screen rights for an unheard-of \$110,000. Paramount exec Y. Frank Freeman had tapped Cecil B. DeMille to direct. He'd also already agreed to cast Gary Cooper's

best friend, Joel McCrea, as the male lead. An unknown actress would play the female lead. Hemingway was unhappy with this; he wanted his new friend (they had met on a hunting vacation in Idaho the previous fall) Gary Cooper as lead, and for the role of Maria, only Ingrid Bergman would do, although she was an MGM actress. The big meet at the airplane, then, was publicity aimed at presenting Hemingway and Cooper together. Also in these photos is Hem's new wife, Martha Gellhorn.

The couple stayed for two nights at Coop and Rocky's home, a property in Brentwood that no longer exists but at the time was 2 ½ acres of vegetable garden, a fruit orchard, chickens, and one shed the size of a large garage built just to hold Coop's gun collection. The house itself was modeled on homes Coop and Rocky had seen while visiting the Caribbean. The inside décor was in a new style eventually termed Hollywood Regency, and exists now only in photos and drawings inside an extinct interior decorating magazine that has never been digitized and is not readily available except for one extant copy at the Los Angeles Public Library. That copy describes the color scheme as pink and "acid green." Gellhorn and Hem, who lived in a messy house in Cuba decorated entirely by themselves and a shifting gang of cats, must have been appalled.

The two couples went skeet shooting. They went sightseeing. While they were out and about, a columnist from the *L.A. Times* came calling and was turned away by the Coopers' butler, an incident that made its way into a scathing newspaper column about high-falutin' writers who can't even bother to be interviewed when they come to town and instead, high-falutin' British butlers are used as bouncers.

The big moment, though, was a luncheon for Hemingway given on the Paramount lot. Only one photo, unpublished and tucked in a file tucked in a larger file, exists of this luncheon, and it

shows Y. Frank Freeman, Hemingway, and DeMille sitting at a table. Hemingway is center, holding an apple in his hand. About 50 people attended this luncheon, including Martha Gellhorn and Gary Cooper. Somewhere along the way, Hem had talked the execs into handing the role to Coop. Interesting to note here is that the authorized biography of Gellman gets this moment wrong. That biography says that Hem and Gellhorn attended a banquet given in honor of DeMille. I looked far and wide, and found no banquet. Instead, it was Hem who was feted at the Paramount luncheon. DeMille, who was important enough in 1941 to direct his choice of just one or two movies a year, had not yet read *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. That is why the photo shows him sitting next to its author. Once DeMille read the book, he backed out of the project, calling the story too “red” for him to be involved. The studio phrased it differently, announcing that DeMille had a conflicting project. Director Sam Wood was assigned, and the resulting film is considered by film critics a Golden Age masterpiece.

That’s it. That is what happened. Rocky and Coop dropped the couple at the airport, and they flew to Oakland where they were met by more photographers because Hem had not yet finished his publicity tour. Sitting in the airport bar, Hemingway and Gellhorn regaled journalists with their—but mostly Hem’s—views on the war in Europe: if Germany invades England, then it’s all over. But if England can repel an invasion, the war will last for twenty years. Gellhorn thought differently: war will last for five years. Though both were making it up on the spot, Gellhorn’s prediction was correct. Toward the end of those five years, Gellhorn will be the only woman journalist to land on Omaha Beach on D-Day. She did so by sneaking off a U.S. military base, sneaking onto a hospital ship, and locking herself in a bathroom.

In San Francisco photographer Robert Capa took photos of Hem, Gellhorn, and Ingrid Bergman lunching at Fisherman’s Wharf. Bergman, who had been on a skiing vacation in Idaho

with her new husband, had left her skis and driven straight through to San Francisco for the meeting. Those photos appeared two weeks later in *Life* magazine. Hem had realized both his goals: to appear publicly with his choices for leads in the movie based on his novel.

One side note that reverberated through cinematic history: A couple years after meeting Capa in San Francisco, Bergman had left her husband and happened to meet Capa again. Their affair was later immortalized in the Hitchcock movie *Rear Window*.

The day after lunching with Bergman, Hem and Gellhorn boarded *The Matsonia* and sailed to Honolulu. After a week of drinking and fishing, they continued to Hong Kong and then to China.

I still have many holes in the story. Not in the Los Angeles days, but in how they touch other people, other issues. I may never resolve them. I did accomplish quite a lot, and some of that research adds new information and insights to the body of Hemingway research. Had I been able to extend my work to on-site archives, I may have accomplished more. It was an unusual sabbatical, and given the circumstances, I adapted as best I could.