

A black and white photograph of Ernest Hemingway and a woman sitting at a bar. Ernest Hemingway is on the left, wearing a suit and tie, holding a glass of wine. The woman is on the right, wearing a dark jacket over a white blouse, also holding a glass of wine. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background is dark and out of focus.

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Ernest Hemingway, life larger than fiction

A 52' movie directed by **Virginie Linhart**

Produced by **ARTE France & LES FILMS D'UN JOUR**

PROVISIONAL DELIVERY : NOVEMBER 2020

Synopsis

Hemingway's wives were the ones who knew Ernest best – the man behind a legend he forged by himself.

Only four married him, and none of them are alike: There was Hadley, the kind companion of his early days; Pauline, with whom he first gained recognition; then Martha, his double, a writer and war correspondent like him; and finally Mary, who watched over him until the end even in hard times.

These four love stories were sharply distinct from each other, even though each of his wives tried in turn to save him from a tormented childhood, his dark thoughts, his alcoholic frenzy and the terror of the

white page. And yet as he left each one of them for the next, the writer systematically repeated the same pattern: forming a love triangle, then abandoning his wife for the mistress that would then become the new Mrs. Hemingway.

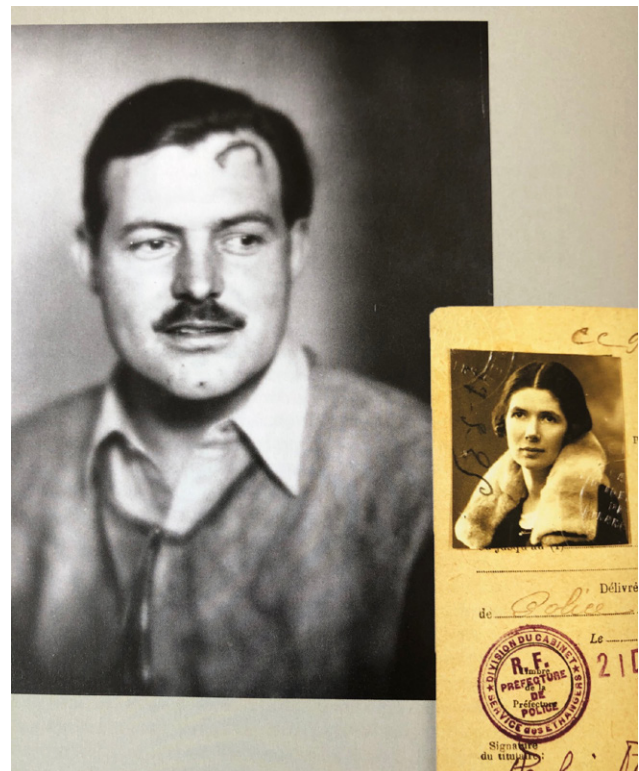
Each of them corresponds to a time and place during the author's life, allowing us to move from the bohemian Paris of the 1920s to the Florida of the 1930s, then back to Europe during World War II before discovering the Cuba of the 1950s; our story ends in Idaho, America, where Ernest Hemingway chose to kill himself at the age of 61.

Note of intent

2021 will mark the 60th anniversary of the death of Ernest Hemingway, one of the most famous American writers of contemporary literature, but also one of the least understood.

Hemingway wanted nothing more than for the "infringements of his existence" to fade behind his work. A wish that was far from innocent for a man whose intimate life enabled him to discover a being far more sensitive and tormented than the idealized vision of himself that he never ceased to work on. **With this movie, delve into Hemingway's intimacy; we will discover the writer's character through the women he loved and was loved by.**

We know that Ernest Hemingway was a womanizer, it was something he never stopped boasting about. But, in a fascinating game of mirrors, we have yet to understand the man and his work through the eyes of each of the women in his life.



Modus operandi

Choosing to tell an intimate Hemingway through his great love stories opens up the possibility for a **thematic narration** that breaks with usual portraits' customary straightforward chronology. Thus the life and work of this literary monument will be enlightened by his love interests in order to change up the biographical approach.

This perspective lends itself tremendously well to a narrative entirely comprised of archival images.

It thus enables us to alternate the types of narration, giving a voice to all of our film's protagonists. Indeed, while there will naturally be a voice-over that takes care of the general information necessary for the story to progress, we will also rely on what Hemingway, his family and his successive wives have written. These first-person interludes will allow us to feel as if we were direct witnesses to the writer and his companions' lives. This polyphony will be composed from the texts at our disposal, **Hemingway's writings of course, but also those of his wives.**

Choosing intimacy as our angle of approach will enable us to make the most of the incredible iconography devoted to Hemingway. While there is only rare and fleeting film footage of the writer, there are countless photographs of him: the JF Kennedy library lists 11,000 of them!

In addition to this iconographic treasure, Ernest Hemingway's five childhood albums up to the age of 18 were compiled by his mother, Grace, her descendants' true archivist.

We use all current 3D graphic processing techniques to bring these photos to life and make the most out of them.

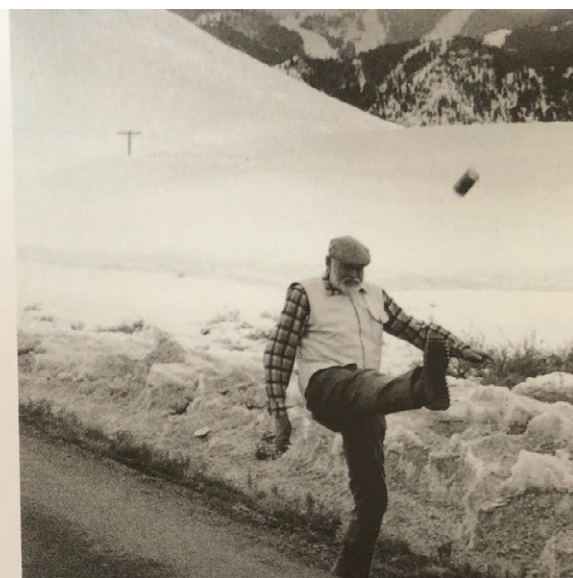
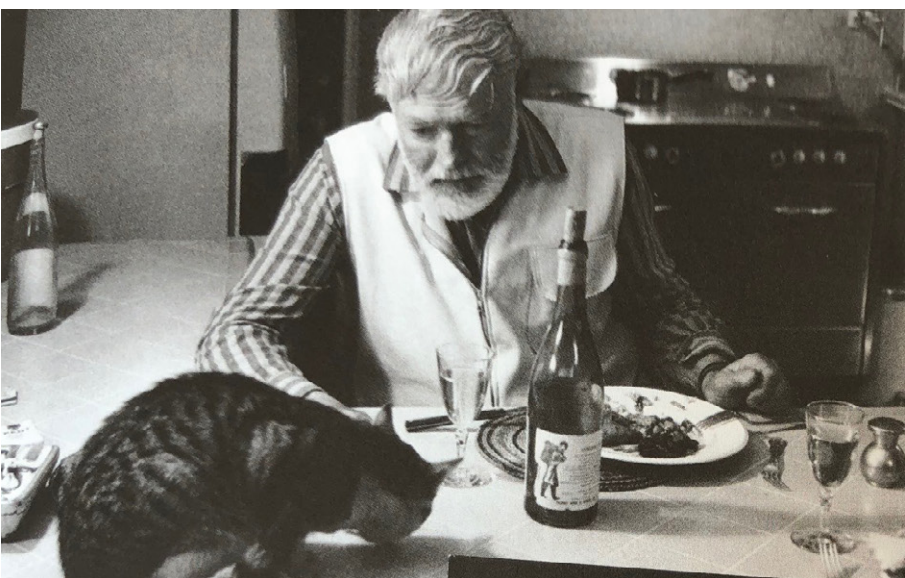
Hemingway's immense celebrity during his lifetime also allows us to illustrate the different eras by rediscovering the places where he lived, all of which have been filmed at length over the years.

Hemingway never stopped confronting History, which also allows us to dig into the film archives that retrace America at the beginning of the 20th century, the First and Second World Wars, the Spanish Civil War, Cuba before and after Fidel Castro, and rural America in the early 1960s.

To all of these sources, we must add the movies that adapted Hemingway's work, including monuments of American cinema such as Henry King's *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (1952) with Ava Gardner and Gregory Peck or Frank Borzage's *A Farewell to Arms* (1932) with Gary Cooper and Helen Hayes.

Finally, as we have read in the note of intent, it is now well-known that the six novels, the three stories and the hundred or so short stories written by the author form a thinly veiled, vast and fascinating autobiography.

We will use them in our narrative as raw material that will take us into the writer's inner world. No one spoke better of Hemingway than himself, so we must listen to him to understand him and to recall the genius of the man whose universe, described in short, abrupt sentences, took generations of readers' breath away.



Scenario

Hadley, the one who helped him become a writer...

Ernest Hemingway met her in Chicago. Elisabeth Hadley Richardson was a pretty redhead eight years his senior, he was only 21 years old. Hardly out of his teens, his military feats during the First World War in Europe had already made him grow past the country boy he used to be.

They were married on September 3, 1921, and decided to move to Paris to live on the bride's frugal pension.

In the 1920s, the French capital was a beacon of freedom, a polar opposite to the puritanical America during Prohibition.

All his life, Ernest will repeat that he owed the city of Paris to have become a writer... and to Hadley. Hadley is both the companion of these uncertain times, during which Hemingway is searching for the author he will become, and the outstanding ally of a rough but happy everyday life.

After several unsuccessful attempts, his first collection of short stories *In Our Time* (1925) is finally published and is immediately acclaimed by the critics. But it is after the birth of his first child, John



Hadley Hemingway, that the young father finally gets down to the brass tacks. That is when he wrote *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), a bestseller. At the age of 27, as the American established himself as a writer in his own right, his life was about to change.

Pauline, the one who made him famous...

In 1926, Ernest Hemingway met Pauline Pfeiffer, a wealthy American working at Vogue. She became his mistress and they were married in Paris on May 10, 1927. His new wife had money, connections, elegance and social poise that Hemingway's first wife could never possess.

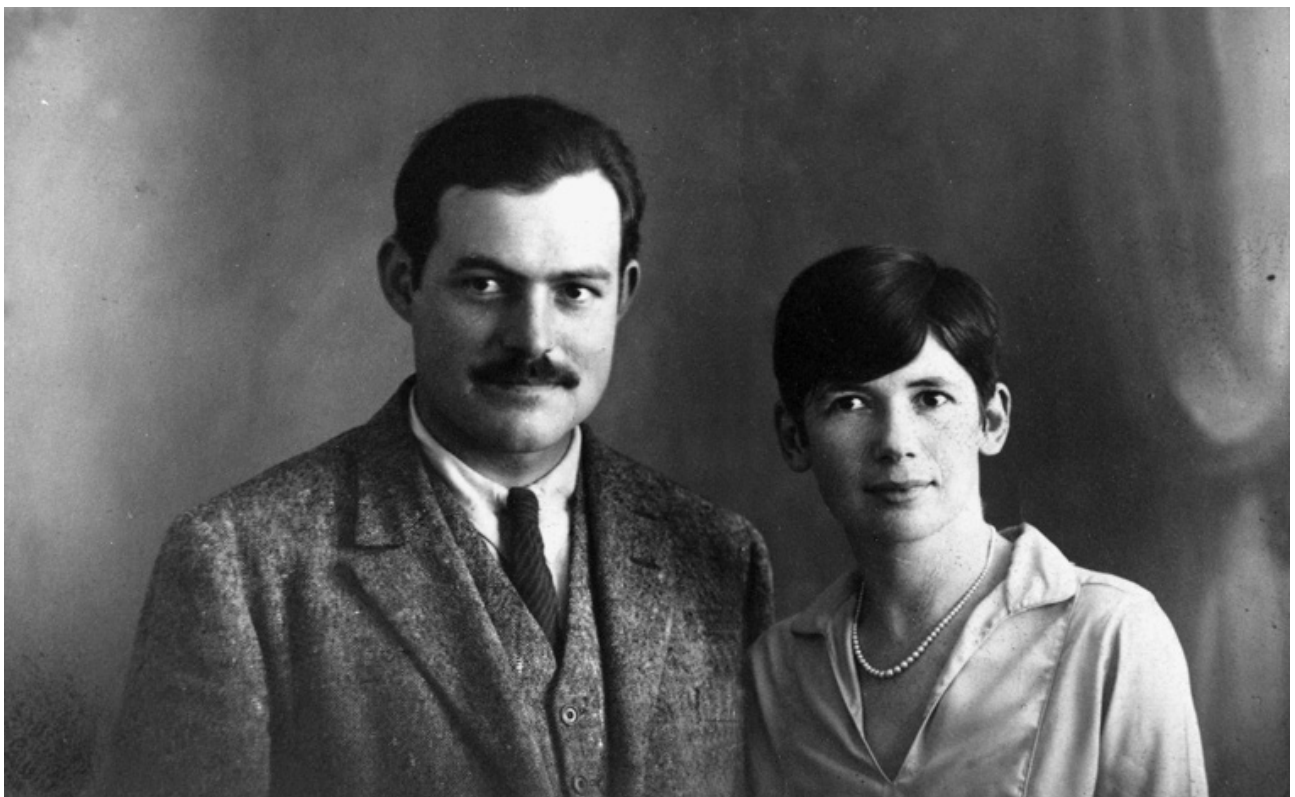
In 1928, the couple moved to Key West, a small, lush Florida island, and began a new life. Ernest continued to write his compact, violent, hard-hitting short stories, which changed the landscape and language of American fiction; all while writing *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), his second novel.

In Key West, the writer forged his legend. That of a virile man, a skilled hunter and fisherman, a bullfighting enthusiast, and a ladies' man. No matter

what he does now, the fame of the man affectionately known as «Papa» only grows.

Pauline and Ernest will have two sons: Patrick born in 1926 and Gregory born in 1931. Behind the radiant images of "la dolce vita" in Key West, the relationship between husband and wife is deteriorating. Glory and success have made Hemingway obsessive: **the writer is hounded by the anguish of the blank page, a sorrow he drowns in alcohol.**

However, during the years he spent with Pauline, he wrote two of his best short stories, in which his wife appears as "a rich bitch": *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* and *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* (1936).



Martha, the one who wanted to be his equal...

Hemingway decides to tear himself away from his luxurious life in Key West to return to what fascinates him more than anything else in the world: combat, the real thing. Papa becomes a correspondent to cover the Spanish Civil War that began in 1936. In Madrid, the writer falls madly in love with the American journalist Martha Gellhorn,

Back in Key West, Hemingway divorces Pauline in September 1939 and moves to Cuba with Martha, whom he married in November 1940. They lived at the "Finca Vigía", a vast estate surrounded by nature, rising over the lights of Havana. Martha was eight years younger than Hemingway and had a competitive spirit that his other wives never had. Like Hemingway, she writes fiction and feature stories, and she wants to be his equal.

The author is very prolific then, as always when he is in love: he publishes *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War.

The relationship between the newlyweds is both passionate and extremely conflictual. Rapidly, their union deteriorates. More independent than Hadley



and Pauline, Martha intends to pursue her own career. She appreciates the author at his true value but clearly perceives his weaknesses: his hatred of loneliness, his ancestral fears, the shame of having been treated like a daughter by his mother, his need to shine constantly and everywhere.

Throughout their marriage, Martha struggles to maintain her fierce independence.



Mary, the one who was by his side until the end...

The outbreak of the Second World War gave Hemingway the opportunity to escape his marital woes. He flies to London where he meets the sweet Mary Welsh, a 36-year-old journalist. He falls in love with the young woman while he is still married to Martha, and marries her in 1946.

But the return to the marital routine and writing is difficult for Hemingway. Too fat, depressed, unable to write, he drinks a liter of whiskey a day.

Yet another woman will give him the energy to start writing again: Adriana, a 19-year-old brunette beauty he met in Italy in 1948, becomes his muse, even though he lives with Mary. As always, the love triangle inspires him and pushes him to start writing again. *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) wins the Pulitzer

Prize and is a huge critical and public success. The writer even received a Nobel Prize for it in 1954.

Similarly, the reception in 1956 of two small trunks forgotten at the Ritz at the end of the 1920s enabled him to write *A Moveable Feast* (1964), a memoir of the most beautiful years of his life, between 1921 and 1926. The book was written in the breathless style of his best short stories; as if this return to the past had allowed him to return to his original writing.

But Ernest and Mary's move to Idaho in 1960 was a disaster for the writer, who delved into a permanent depression and paranoia. After several stays in a psychiatric hospital, it was a terribly thinned, old man, suffering from memory loss, who committed suicide on July 2, 1961.



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