

The Ernest Hemingway Society

American Literature Association Conference

May 26-29, 2022

Chicago, IL

Documenting the Author: Examining the Role of and Impact of Author-Based Documentaries

This past April, the highly anticipated documentary, *Hemingway* (2021), premiered on PBS, coupled with watch parties and much discussion of reactions to the film. The reception of the documentary spurred debate, provided new perspectives of Hemingway through visual footage and images, and perhaps most importantly, presented the author's life and work to a public audience, inviting both casual and dedicated readers to watch and learn.

While *Hemingway* is one of the more recent documentaries to air, the past several years have seen a flurry of author-based documentaries, include *Gabo: The Creation of Gabriel Garcia Marquez* (2015), *Joan Didion: The Center Will Not Hold* (2017), *Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am* (2019), *Amy Tan: Unintended Memoir* (2021), and *I Am Not Your Negro* (2016), to name a few. Though these documentaries vary in form and approach to the subject's life and work, they seem to share the goal of attracting a wide, public audience, inviting viewers to read and re-read the authors whose lives are represented on screen. The consistent release of these films also invites a discussion of their role in bridging the gap between scholarship and the everyday reader, along with the challenges and potential pitfalls that accompany their production and reception.

This panel will present a conversation on author-based documentaries, broadly and specifically, with the goal of discussing both individual documentaries, and how they paint a living portrait of the authors they take for subjects, and the role of these author-based documentaries more broadly, including problems and questions surrounding their production and rhetorical moves and the possibilities for reaching and informing a broad audience.

Although this panel is sponsored by the Ernest Hemingway Society, we invite papers that focus on the recent Hemingway documentary AND those that focus on other author-based documentaries, or treatments of author-based documentaries at large.

Potential paper topics might include:

- The purposes of author-based documentaries and their involvement in shaping, revising, disputing, or otherwise revisiting an author's life and work
- The public-facing nature of author-based documentaries and the impact they have on readership and scholarship
- Challenges and disappointments of author-based documentaries
- Glamorizing or "Hollywoodification" of an author's life
- The use of author-based documentaries in classrooms and educational settings
- The use of textual selections and scholarship in author-based documentaries

- Major similarities or significant differences between various author-based documentaries
- The treatment of (or even creation of) controversy related to an author's life and work

Please direct your 250-350 word proposal and a short bio to Kayla Forrest (kmforres@uncg.edu). **The deadline for proposals is January 23.** Papers are generally limited to 15 minutes.

Additional details about the 2022 ALA Conference may be found online at: <https://americanliteratureassociation.org/ala-conferences/ala-annual-conference/>

For more information about the Ernest Hemingway Society, please visit the Society's website at: www.hemingwaysociety.org.