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# Martha Gellhorn's Border Crossings: Geography, Gender, Genre

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## Abstract

Martha Gellhorn was a pioneering American war correspondent from the Spanish Civil War through the Cold War. Born in St. Louis, she traveled America during the Great Depression as an investigator for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, then around the world as a journalist. Her travel was both professional and personal, and these geographical border crossings are important elements of her fiction. This paper examines Gellhorn's crossing of geographic, gender, and genre boundaries: How did her travel experience as a war correspondent inflect her fiction? More than setting, how does travel create themes and characters in select works of fiction across her career? How were the usual risks of the profession compounded by gender, and how did Gellhorn transgress gender expectations through travel and writing? How did her marriage to Hemingway from 1940-1945 affect her reception as a correspondent and fiction writer? Finally, how does Gellhorn's work cross boundaries of genre? Specifically, the paper will draw evidence from *Point of No Return* (1948), *A Stricken Field* (1968), and *The Weather in Africa* (1978), as well as her 1978 memoir *Travels with Myself and Others* and Caroline Moorhead's biography *Gellhorn: A Twentieth-Century Life*. Through these texts, Gellhorn provides a case study of the feminist potential of travel to not only cross boundaries, but also erase them. Although Nicole Kidman's recent portrayal in *Hemingway and Gellhorn* (HBO Films, 2012) acknowledges Gellhorn's career, its focus on her passionate relationship to Hemingway unfortunately reflects much of the scholarship on Gellhorn; critical attention is minimal and focuses on her journalism, with very little analysis of her fiction. This paper integrates New Historicism, biographical theory, and feminist theory in an initial attempt to fill this gap in literary history.

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