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EH-EH: ERNEST HEMINGWAY AND EUSKAL HERRIA /  
THE BASQUE COUNTRY.  
20TH BIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL HEMINGWAY  
CONFERENCE

**Abstract:** Every other year, the Hemingway Society organizes a conference dedicated to its namesake Ernest Hemingway. The conference location migrates between international and domestic US cities where the writer has some connection. On 14–20 July 2024, the conference was held in two cities in Spain — Bilbao and San Sebastian. Each city has relevance for both the biographical and literary Hemingway. San Sebastian is featured prominently in *The Sun Also Rises*. Bilbao and the surrounding area is relevant geographically for the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Spain, in general, is depicted in numerous short stories and Hemingway’s play, *The Fifth Column*. Therefore, the scene was set for compelling papers, presentations and discussions. Like many single-author conferences, this one has a diverse group of participants including academics, fans, would-be Hemingways, authors and simply the curious. From the academic offerings, much attention was given to the three panels of the *Hemingway Letters Project*. The *Out of the Archives* series of panels included one that was concentrated on Ernest and Mary Hemingway’s experiences with the Soviet Union. The closing session was offered by Valerie Hemingway, who worked as a secretary for the American author and is now one of the last people able to give a first-hand account of Hemingway’s life and literary works.

**Keywords:** Ernest Hemingway, The Hemingway Society, International Hemingway Biennial Conference, Spain, The Basque Country. *Hemingway Letters Project*.

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Фредерик Х. УАЙТ

## ЭРНЕСТ ХЕМИНГУЭЙ И ЭУСКАЛЬ ЭРРИА / СТРАНА БАСКОВ: XX МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ ХЕМИНГУЭВСКАЯ КОНФЕРЕНЦИЯ-БИЕННАЛЕ

**Аннотация:** Раз в два года Общество Хемингуэя организует конференцию, посвященную писателю, чье имя оно носит. Место проведения конференции каждый раз меняется — это разные города мира, которые так или иначе связаны с Хемингуэем. В этом году конференция прошла с 14 по 20 июля в двух городах Испании — Бильбао и Сан-Себастьяне. Каждый из них значим как для биографии, так и для литературного творчества писателя. Сан-Себастьян — важная локация для «Фиесты», Бильбао и его окрестности — для романа «По ком звонит колокол». Испания изображена во многих рассказах Хемингуэя и в пьесе «Пятая колонна». Тем самым место действия располагало к интересным докладам, презентациям и дискуссиям. Как это часто бывает на конференциях, посвященных одному-единственному автору, среди участников встречаются самые разные люди — исследователи, поклонники, литераторы, «будущие хемингуэи» и просто любопытствующие. Центральными научными событиями конференции стали три панели, посвященные проекту по подготовке многотомного собрания писем Хемингуэя. Ряд панелей был объединен общим названием «Из архивов»; на одной из них обсуждались советские контакты Эрнеста и Мэри Хемингуэй. Кодой конференции стало последнее заседание, на котором выступила Валери Хемингуэй: она была секретарем писателя и сейчас входит в число тех уже очень немногих людей, что могут поделиться личными воспоминаниями о жизни и творческой работе Эрнеста Хемингуэя.

**Ключевые слова:** Эрнест Хемингуэй, Общество Хемингуэя, Международная Хемингуэевская научная конференция-биеннале, Испания, Страна Басков, проект по подготовке собрания писем Хемингуэя.

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Every other year, the Hemingway Society organizes a conference dedicated to its namesake Ernest Hemingway. The conference location migrates between international and domestic US cities where the writer has some connection. This means that conferences have been held in Bimini (2000), Cooke City (2022), Kansas City (2008), Ketchum (1996), Key West (2004), Lausanne (2010), Madrid (1984), Pamplona (1992), Paris (1994; 2018) and other relevant locations since 1980. Like many single-author conferences, this one has a diverse group of participants including academics, fans, would-be Hemingways, authors and simply the curious. Arguably, this is one of the best parts of the Hemingway conference — that many times the “fans” know as much or more than the academics, which keeps the discussions lively.

This year, 14–20 July, the conference was held in two cities in Spain — Bilbao and San Sebastian. Each city has relevance for both the biographical and literary Hemingway. San Sebastian is featured prominently in *The Sun Also Rises*. Bilbao and the surrounding area is relevant geographically for the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Spain, in general, is depicted in numerous short stories and Hemingway’s play, *The Fifth Column*. Therefore, the scene was set for compelling papers, presentations and discussions.

THE HEMINGWAY SOCIETY  
20TH BIENNIAL INTERNATIONAL  
HEMINGWAY CONFERENCE



Joaquín Soriano, "Conversation Piece, Just Lovers" or "Hemingway and Dolores"; 1952. Courtesy of the Bilbao Fine Arts Museum.  
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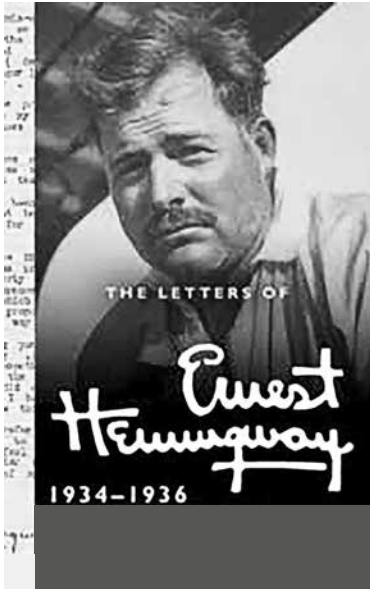
**EH-EH: ERNEST HEMINGWAY  
AND EUSKAL HERRIA**  
Ernest Hemingway and the  
Basque Country

San Sebastian & Bilbao, Spain  
14-20 July 2024

Yet, the one surprising characteristic of this conference, unlike the previous ones, was the large number of “no-shows.” On almost every panel during the first two days, one or two of the scheduled participants simply did not appear, often without an apology to the chair. It is unclear if this was due to the location or simply a new trend in academic conferences. Can you include the presentation on your resume even if you did not attend because your name appeared in the program? Maybe. This did have a positive outcome,

however, in that the presenters had a little more freedom to expand on their topics and the discussions afterward were more fulsome. Maybe this was a blessing in disguise as those who presented were truly prepared to engage with a critical and knowledgeable audience. Several changes were made to the conference schedule once the conference moved to Bilbao and “no-shows” were less of an issue.

As one might expect, with a diverse group of participants, comes a varied conference schedule from the highly academic to the more creative to the simply entertaining. From the academic offerings, much attention was given to the three panels of the *Hemingway Letters Project*. Within the Soviet/Russian academic tradition, the complete collected works publications, including correspondence, is quite normal. However, in the Western tradition, this is not the case. Therefore, the *Hemingway Letters Project* is currently considered the leading (and most ambitious) academic endeavor of Hemingway scholarship. Volume 6, covering Hemingway’s letters of June 1934 to June 1936, was published earlier this fall. Of the three panels on the project: one covered the recently published volume 6; one concentrated on the summers of 1959 and 1960, when the author was working on *The Dangerous Summer*; and one presented specific topics relevant to the letters now under consideration for volume 7 that mainly relate to the Spanish Civil War.



Included in what might be considered the more academic offerings was the *Out of the Archives* series of panels. The first included Japanese and American researchers focused on Hemingway’s Asia. Another addressed what is available to researchers and fans in public libraries. My own panel within this series was concentrated on Ernest and Mary Hemingway’s experiences with the Soviet Union. Timothy Christian, the author of *Hemingway’s Widow* (2022), focused on Mary’s trip to the USSR in 1968. I concentrated on the third approach of the Soviet security services during Anastas Mikoian’s visit to Hemingway’s house in Cuba in 1960.

There were several panels on “influences,” which can be broadly interpreted: Hemingway and film; attention given to specific works, especially *The Sun Also Rises* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; several panels addressing how to teach Hemingway in today’s academic environment and then the ubiquitous concentration on Hemingway and... (media, sports, the natural world, disability, gender, tourism, etc.). It is difficult to look at the program and know definitively, as mentioned above, that all of the papers listed were, in fact, presented.

One interesting panel featured four respected Hemingway scholars, each of whom had recently edited a newly annotated edition of *The Sun Also Rises*. This year the novel enters the public domain, meaning that publishers can offer their own editions without the permission of the original publisher – Scribner’s. It was interesting to hear the four editors discuss their different choices about the definitive version; about correcting (or not) errors that had occurred in punctuation over time; their approach to annotations, especially words that may now be considered highly offensive; perceived audience and more.

Among the more creative elements of the conference included a panel on Hemingway-inspired works. One panel featured the award-winning Basque novelist Kirmen Uribe. Another featured Australian lawyer and writer Dermot Ross who discussed a long list of works in which Hemingway appears or is a character in what might now be considered “fan fiction.” In this “fan fiction” authors to varying degrees adhere to the Hemingway biography, but often create their own dialogue, motivations, and explanations. The most successful example of this type of literature recently has been *The Paris Wife* (2012) by Paula McLain, that is written from the perspective of Hemingway’s first wife, Hadley Richardson.

As for the entertainment, there was poetry readings; team trivia; various optional excursions and dinners that allowed participants to mingle; film screenings including *The Spanish Earth* (1937); a Jai Alai demonstration (a classic Basque sport, played with a ball and a wicker basket-style glove). Once again, a diverse group of participants allowed for a more festive and celebratory attitude than what one might expect at more, strictly speaking, academic conferences. This conference is more of a celebration of Hemingway than anything else.

The closing session was offered by Valerie Hemingway, who worked as a secretary for the American author and then, later, married one of his sons — Gregory. She is also the author of the memoir *Running with the Bulls: My Years with the Hemingways* (2005). Her presentation was on



Hemingway's two, last birthdays. In 1959, Hemingway celebrated his 60<sup>th</sup> in Málaga, a grand affair with a star-studded guest list. The following year, the celebration was more subdued as Hemingway's health was beginning to fail. Valerie Hemingway is one of the last people able to give a first-hand account of Hemingway's life and literary works. It is always a special treat to hear these reminiscences because she was both a participant, but then also for many years now, a curator of the Hemingway legacy.

The conference ended with a very elegant banquet in the beautiful Hotel Carlton on Moyua Plaza in Bilbao. Hemingway himself had last stayed in this hotel while writing *The Dangerous Summer*; something that Valerie Hemingway mentioned just in passing. The evening could not have been more perfect with the promise of another Hemingway conference in two years in Toronto. For more information, the Hemingway Society website is: <https://www.hemingwaysociety.org/>

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