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 ***All Man!: Hemingway, 1950s Men's Magazines, and the Masculine Persona (review)***

Carl Eby

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REVIEW

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**In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:**

Reviewed by:

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In his biography of Ernest Hemingway, Carlos Baker tells a funny story about Hemingway entering a saloon in Sheridan, Wyoming in 1958. Men were lined up at the bar watching the World Series on television. Turning to look at the burly, bearded newcomer, one of them taunted sarcastically, “Well, look who thinks he’s Hemingway” (541). When, a few minutes later, the crowd realized that this was, in fact, Ernest Hemingway, there were laughs and back slaps all around. But to be mistaken for some sort of imposter, a feeble simulacrum of oneself! The incident speaks volumes about Hemingway’s celebrity in 1950s America. The larger-than-life Hemingway persona—“America’s No.1 He-Man,” as the cover of a 1956 issue of *Modern Man* magazine put it—was more immediately recognizable than the man himself.

The tension between the private and the public Hemingway, between the writer and the celebrity, has always been central to Hemingway scholarship—much as it was inescapable for Hemingway during his own lifetime. It is now a commonplace that these selves were hopelessly intertwined and that Hemingway was complicit in the creation of a public image against which he nonetheless chafed and rebelled. His public image powerfully shaped both the popular and academic reception of his work, and generations of scholars have now labored to see past or through the public image to the man and writer beneath. The great value of David M. Earle’s new book, *All Man!: Hemingway, 1950s Men’s Magazines, and the Masculine Persona*, is that it reveals a side of the public Hemingway that, while little known and appreciated today, was enormously important in the 1950s, and contributed substantially to Hemingway’s popular reputation for misogyny and hypermachismo. Anyone who hopes to understand Hemingway’s popular image, or to see more clearly through its distorting lens, needs to take note of this book.

*All Man!*, writes Earle, “is not about Hemingway’s fiction but Hemingway himself as a fiction, as a popular representation, and as an innately visual image that grows out of twentieth-century mass media

and the [End Page 149] dynamics of midcentury gender.” The book “explores three interdependent manifestations of troubling masculinity in postwar America: the 1950s men’s magazines as a text of masculinity, Ernest Hemingway as the hero of that text, and the construction of that hero as a role model of the masculine persona” (4–5).

With 122 color illustrations—many full page, lurid, and hilariously kitschy—Earle’s book could usefully be regarded as a visually stunning companion to John Raeburn’s now classic 1984 study, *Fame Became of Him: Hemingway as Public Writer*. Whereas Raeburn focuses on Hemingway’s ubiquity between 1930 and 1960 in the pages and on the covers of such “respectable” periodicals as *Esquire*, *Time*, *Life*, *Collier’s*, the *Atlantic*, *Look*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Vogue*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and the *New Yorker* (not to mention such popular sporting magazines as *Field and Stream*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Fisherman*, and *Popular Boating*), Earle explores Hemingway’s similar ubiquity in 1950s men’s pulp magazines—a class of periodical once read by millions, but now so denigrated (and uncatalogued) that few have bothered to study them. The jaw-dropping hypermasculinity and misogyny of such publications as *Man’s Magazine*, *Man’s True Action*, *Rogue*, *Male Magazine*, *Modern Man*, *Man’s Illustrated*, *Real*, *Man’s Life*, *Rugged Men*, *True: The Man’s Magazine*, *Man’s Conquest*, *Climax: Exciting Stories for Men*, *Jem: The Magazine for Masterful Men*, and *Argosy* simply beggars belief. And Ernest Hemingway was their poster-boy—their exemplar of masculinity as they defined it.

Of course this would never have happened had not Hemingway laid the groundwork for it in his non-fiction writing of the 1930s and ‘40s—his *Esquire* letters, NANA dispatches, and *Collier’s* journalism, as well as *Death in the Afternoon*, *Green Hills of Africa*, and his preface to *Men at War*—not to mention his very public responses to...

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*All Man!: Hemingway, 1950s Men's Magazines, and the Masculine Persona.*  
By David M. Earle. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2009. 224 pp.  
Cloth \$35.00

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