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Foreword Review CULTURE

## Hemingway in Comics

**Robert K. Elder**
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Larger-than-life writer at large Ernest Hemingway always made it his practice to seek out the world's centers of attention, whether they were war zones, Parisian literary salons, prerevolutionary Cuba, or idyllic Key West and Idaho. In his lifetime, he seemed to be everywhere everyone else wanted to be. And in death, he's chumming around with Superman, Captain Marvel, and other comic book heroes, places he surely never expected to be.

In *Hemingway in Comics*, we learn that comic artists and writers have long found megamasculine Hemingway to be a perfect supporting character to enrich their stories. In addition to his iconic traits (beard, turtleneck wool sweater) and habits (hard drinking, brawling, promiscuity, and sportiness), Hemingway's depressive, vulnerable artist alter ego offered comic creators a contemplative vessel to express worldly profundity. He was, after all, Hemingway, and readers knew what to expect.

But perhaps the simple declarative sentences of Hemingway's great novels most attracted comic writers, themselves constrained by space in the wee panels and word bubbles. Comics require readers to fill in a lot of blanks between static images and panels. To get inside a good comic requires you to become an active reader. Similarly, as Brian Azarello explains in the foreword, "Hemingway's characters rarely exactly say what they mean, which means you have to interpret what they say."

Robert K. Elder identifies more than 120 Hemingway appearances in comics from around the world, and with 270 colorful illustrations, *Hemingway in Comics* reveals a great many of those sightings. Indeed, we see how Hemingway inspires comic writers and artists to create new stories of immense entertainment.

MATT SUTHERLAND (July / August 2020)

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