

Acknowledgments

There's an adage among academics that teaching and scholarship should reinforce one another. This work is proverb in practice, as the central idea for *Pulp Vietnam* first took root in an undergraduate course at West Point. In the spring of 2015, my colleague Jen Kiesling and I co-taught an elective titled "War and Gender in Modern America." We had discussed the idea for years and after wrangling over course goals, readings, and writing requirements – mostly while swimming laps in Crandall Pool – we started on an intellectual journey that was one of the most satisfying teaching assignments during my entire tenure at the US Military Academy. Jen and I learned as much from our discussions in class with a group of phenomenal cadets as we did from lesson planning with each other.

As we read K. A. Cuordileone's *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War*, I started searching for pop culture images of American soldiers in the 1950s and 1960s. It was then that I came across the January 1953 cover of *American Manhood* magazine. A barrel-chested GI, whose bare pectoral muscles rivaled Arnold Schwarzenegger's in his prime, stands upon a tank while holding a semi-automatic rifle, unsubtly extending forward from his hips. The cover teased some of the exhilarating articles within: "Hell's Hill in Korea" and "What You Should Know About Sex." Clearly, this was not the GI Joe I had played with as a child. My interest was piqued.

From West Point, I moved to Chapman University, directing a graduate program in War and Society Studies and eventually procuring funding to purchase a collection of some 250 men's adventure magazines, now housed in Chapman's Leatherby Library. I integrated the magazines into our graduate course on war and gender and, once more,

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benefited from my students' insightful reflections on how these postwar "macho pulps" were illustrating a conception of militarized masculinity that suggested something rather profound about the Cold War era.

And, because timing is everything, I had the good fortune to share my ideas on a book project with Beth Bailey, one of my real-life heroes in the historical profession. Along with Andrew Preston, Beth was starting a new series on war and society with Cambridge University Press. Beth invited me to the University of Kansas to hone my ideas with some superb historians and gender scholars before I had the chance to pitch my idea to Cambridge's Debbie Gershenowitz. Thankfully, all three saw merit in pursuing this project, Debbie more than matching her reputation as one of the finest editors in business. To work with these amazing professionals has been a dream come true. I admire each of them and am so grateful to have had this opportunity to work with the very best of the best.

At Cambridge University Press, I also want to thank Cecelia Cancelaro, Thomas Haynes, Steven Holt, and Michael Watson for seeing *Pulp Vietnam* across the finish line. Special thanks go to Rachel Blaifeder, a spectacular senior editorial assistant, for all her hard work that too often goes unnoticed. Truth be told, Rachel did far more work getting this book to print than the Jonas Brothers ever did!

I also have been incredibly fortunate to share ideas with an immensely talented group of graduate students at Chapman University. Spenser Carroll-Johnson and Robbie Del Toro were instrumental in helping collect research materials, even if Robbie is still scarred by a certain copy machine incident. Cameron Carlomagno deserves special recognition for her careful reading of every draft chapter and for providing exceptional feedback along the way. All three went above and beyond. So too did Sarah "Eagle Eye" Markowitz, whose perceptive advice and stunning attention to detail I greatly appreciated as the final manuscript took form. Each represents a wonderful graduate program in War and Society Studies at Chapman, and I can't thank these four young scholars enough for their first-class assistance.

Just as helpful were my Chapman colleagues, who graciously endured my incessant talk of the macho pulps and offered insightful recommendations, even as they winced at some of the more outrageous stories and artwork I shared with them. First and foremost, Bob Slayton solidified

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himself as “mentor supreme” in the Chapman history department, guiding me through Cold War-era social and cultural history with a scholarly eye and the experience of a true Bronx native. Alex Bay provided wonderful counsel as perceptive historian, talented department chair, Foucault–Danzig lover, and my favorite beer aficionado. Charissa Threat was a phenomenal sounding board from her very first day joining Chapman’s faculty, as were Marilyn Harran, Jeff Koerber, Erin Mosely, Bill Cumiford, and Mateo Jarquin. Shira Klein put together a marvelous reading group in our department, whose members offered sensible and practical feedback in the draft’s final stages. I could not ask for better friends who, luckily, are also my colleagues.

Thanks also to other Chapman University faculty and staff who proved instrumental to this work: our extraordinary college dean Jennifer Keene, whom I admire greatly, by far leads the list; and to art historian Denise Johnson and special collections and archives librarian Rand Boyd for all their remarkable assistance. Leatherby Library’s Robert Ferrari and Catalina Lopez were amazing resources, helping me manage what I’m sure was an overload on the interlibrary loan system. Special thanks go to Allison Devries, Stacy Laird, and Mary Shockey, without whom our graduate program and history department would not function.

I have benefited from the generosity of a terrific group of enthusiasts and scholars. Robert Deis was an early supporter, helping me collect magazines and, more importantly, providing me with expert advice at critical moments. Bob is a wealth of knowledge on the genre and a charitable collaborator. Amber Batura, whose work on *Playboy* in Vietnam inspired me to think more deeply about the consequences of popular culture on American soldiers serving overseas, was a superb partner in crime. Kara Dixon Vuic, one of the nation’s finest gender military historians, helped with far more than just “blahahahaha,” even if this was some of the very best feedback I received along the way! Another stellar historian, Meredith Lair, generously shared her research notes on the post exchange system in Vietnam and conversed with me on a number of vital topics. I could not have made sense of this complex topic without their assistance.

I also have relied on the scholarship – and, much more importantly, friendship – of some of the most accomplished historians in the business. Bob Brigham, Jim Willbanks, and Ron Milam deserve special mention.

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My family continues to be an integral part of my scholarship because they are an integral part of my life. Thanks, as always, to my mom for our regular calls and far too infrequent visits and shared glasses of wine. (We need to move Florida closer to California!) Jim and Judy, Carol, Jill, and Paul were amazing supporters these past few years, to me as much as to Susan. My feline writing assistants George and Beatrice regularly checked in on my progress. Any mistakes in this work can be attributed to their stepping on or lounging about my computer keyboard. And what dad could be more proud of his daughter – and benefit from her professional editorial “skillz” – than I am of Cameron? Cam read nearly the entire manuscript and offered fabulous advice ... in between the “eeewws” that these men’s magazines so often prompted.

Finally, this book is dedicated to my best friend. For the last three years, I have been immersed in pulp stories of heroism and courage, of bravery and determination that, to be frank, always seemed just a bit unbelievable to me. No one could be *that* tough, *that* resilient, *that* formidable. As this book was being written, however, I watched my wife battle breast cancer in a way that made the pulp heroes look downright fragile and weak by comparison. Every single day, I was so humbly fortunate to stand next to a companion who showed me the true definition of courage and bravery. I knew long ago I had been lucky in marrying a strong woman. I never fully realized how strong.