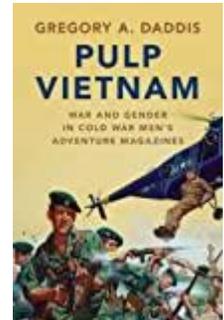


Gregory A. Daddis. *Pulp Vietnam: War and Gender in Cold War Men's Adventure Magazines.* Military, War, and Society in Modern American History Series. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Illustrations. 358 pp. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-108-49350-5.



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The Vietnam War plays an important role in not only the study of military history but also the creation of media and culture. Whether it is Stanley Kubrick's 1987 film *Full Metal Jacket* or Ken Burns and Lyn Novick's ten-part documentary series *Vietnam War* (2017), the Vietnam War continues to be depicted and consumed by people of all ages. While these popular films rightfully deserve scholarly analysis, frequently the “low-brow” media of men’s magazines during the Cold War only receive derisive remarks on their bacchanalian depictions of war. Gregory A. Daddis’s book *Pulp Vietnam* provides a lurid description of the “common” man’s culture during the Cold War, focusing on the macho pulp magazines, and demonstrates the magazines significance in analyzing perceptions at the time of the war in male society. In Daddis’s own words, the “macho pulps, however, were not known for their nuance. In general, they imagined war and sex based on unrealistic conceptions that were pervasive in Cold War popular culture, ones that were grandly heroic and lustfully violent” (p. 233). His book adroitly

combines the ideas of Edward Said’s Orientalism, with gender studies, and a dash of film analysis to provide a snapshot of grassroots culture throughout the Cold War. While his book mainly focuses on the titular Vietnam War, he includes numerous references to the Second World War and the more “peaceful” times of the Cold War. This range allows him to make connections with the triumphalism narratives of the Second World War and still examine the lasting effects of the “Vietnam syndrome.”

Daddis does an excellent job of combining Said’s study of the “Oriental” Other with gender studies. This not only allows him to describe the effects of this representation in the pulp mags but also provides him with the tools to analyze the internal fears of the men reading them. These fears included the red menace of Communism, as well as impotence, the threat of homosexuality (or Lavender Scare), and the “missed” opportunity for martial honor. If one had to boil down his major theme throughout the book to one word, it would be “sex”—both the act and the identity (gender

and sexuality). While some of the images he provides can easily be identified as containing sexual overtones, it is through his employment of queer studies that he is able to provide the significance of these images. His frequent links to the abovementioned fears also assist in understanding the United States' attempts to further the imperialistic mindset; the US needed to transform the "frontier hero"—like John Wayne's westerns—into a modern setting, like his film *The Green Berets* (1968). This transition from the physical frontier to the moral and sexual frontier not only propelled the men to act on these fantasies but also attempted to rationalize their participation in the gruesome and macho act of war. Ultimately, he concludes that the macho pulps died during the Vietnam War due to the lack of heroes to laude.

While Daddis thoroughly describes and scrutinizes the non-white female representation in the pulp mags, he only briefly discusses African American and other people of color's absence in the pulp magazine genre. He states that the white creators made these magazines for a white audience, and that magazines like *Ebony* and *Duke* catered more to African American readers. While this may be generally true it does leave out Latinos and other non-whites without as robust publication systems. Considering that the US census only officially listed Hispanic in the 1980s, he only briefly mentions Latino service members' limited coverage in the magazines. This is especially surprising, as chapter 3, "The Imagined 'Savage' Woman," describes many racial anxieties held by males and the use of feminization of non-whites to bolster white male heterosexuality. This is a minor critique as his book already propels the study of gender, race, sexuality, and culture in the military setting further than previous scholarship, with succinct and sober analysis.

This book assists in understanding memory and the manner the war became represented to many Americans after the war. While some topics, such as gender and Orientalism, may be new to a

casual military history reader, Daddis's book provides a great introduction into those themes with an easily digestible book. What is interesting to note about his conclusions pertains to the resurgence of not pulp magazines but such pulp books as *Phoenix Force* and *Able Team*, which arose in the 1980s and followed similar patterns previously established by pulp magazines. While a little outside of the period of his book, this interesting literature link and films produced in the 1980s on the Vietnam War demonstrate the lasting effects of these pulp magazines on the low-brow and even popular media and culture at the end of the century.

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