
BOOK REVIEWS

The Martial Imagination: Cultural Aspects of American Warfare. Jimmy L. Bryan, Jr., ed. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013. Pp. x, 248. \$29.95.

When describing recent developments in military history, many scholars have used the phrase “New Military History” to define the broadening of this field to include events beyond the battlefield, including war and society studies. Since this term was coined decades ago one might wonder if there was anything new in military history today. In an extraordinarily valuable collection of essays edited by Jimmy L. Bryan, Jr., *The Martial Imagination: Cultural Aspects of American Warfare*, a stellar lineup of scholars demonstrates that there may be a new, new military history rooted in cultural studies methods. As Bryan explains, these contributors “probe and analyze the many meanings of warfare and its integral connection with American culture” (p. 6) by examining the martial imagination; warfare not as it was, but how people imagined it to be.

The twelve essays in this volume most certainly achieve their goal. What is striking about this collection is the wide-ranging nature of these contributions; from a study of General Lee, a prisoner in the Revolutionary War who imagined himself a “gentleman” in the 1770s, to the all-volunteer Army that imagined itself as a diverse organization in the 1970s. Other topics examined include the following: zoos in World War II and the Cold War, antebellum military historian Francis Parkman, nineteenth-century Texas Rangers, a Cuban woman in the Spanish-American War, imagery in the Mexican and Spanish-American Wars, war and melodrama, religious imagery and the U.S. Air Force’s origins, Civil War prophesy, the Vietnam War movie *We Were Soldiers*, and, finally, a memorable essay on, among other things, forgetting the Mexican War. This summary may seem disjointed, but this is the order in which this volume presents these topics based on separate themes, such as gender and ethnicity. While thematic presentations have their value, understanding this issue may require a more chronological

approach because each U.S. war contributed to a larger discourse that shaped the construction of the American martial imagination. The essays linking the Mexican and the Spanish-American War demonstrate this relationship. This criticism does not detract from this volume's significance; this collection would be invaluable in a senior seminar or graduate course on military history. Its importance is underlined in Amy Greenberg's excellent essay when she asks, "What is at stake in the cultural history of warfare?" She answers her own question; "perhaps nothing less than peace" (p. 231).

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Busy in the Cause: Iowa, the Free State Struggle in the West, and the Prelude to the Civil War. By Lowell J. Soike. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014. Pp. xvi, \$30.00.

When many of us think of abolitionism, the first names that come to mind are William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Frederick Douglass. While the story of the movement to end slavery acknowledges the Midwest, particularly Kansas, the region in the Civil War era is often stereotyped as a bastion of racism and conservatism. Lowell J. Soike's new book upends the traditional story by focusing on Iowa radicals, who played a central role in the fight over Kansas in the 1850s. Soike's *Busy in the Cause*, an engaging narrative history, makes the story of frontier radicalism seem new and fresh through a clear prose style and diligent research.

The fight over "Bleeding Kansas" was a central cause of the Civil War. Southerners, especially Missourians, attempted to impose slavery on the territory via the doctrine of "popular sovereignty" and violence at the polls. Soike shows how Iowans fought back against the rising proslavery tide in the Midwest, leaving me surprised to learn that the state produced more settlers (and seemingly more defenders of freedom) in Kansas than all of New England combined.

After the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, anti-slavery settlers relied on traditional transportation routes up the Missouri River to get to Kansas. When the river was blocked by proslavery forces, they were forced to struggle with traveling across southern Iowa, which had bad roads at best. Here the narrative begins, with a cast of characters which combines familiar figures with relatively unknown people. Soike illustrates,

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