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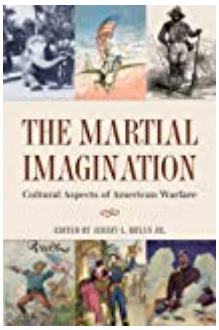

Jimmy L. Bryan, ed.. *The Martial Imagination: Cultural Aspects of American Warfare.* College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013. x + 248 pp. $29.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-62349-021-8.

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Military history is no longer limited to the "guns and trumpets" school or to "great man" studies. Although these approaches can be useful, a deeper understanding of military history has been developed by scholars who incorporate other perspectives. ***The Martial Imagination: Cultural Aspects of American Warfare*** is an essay collection that embraces this multifaceted approach, serving as both an exemplar of new military history and pointing towards areas for further research. Jimmy L. Bryan Jr., associate professor at Lamar University and a specialist in nineteenth-century U.S. culture, has assembled a wide array of scholars to explore the intersections of culture and war in American history. The essays range in topic and scope, examining American reactions to war, attitudes towards war, the construction of memories of war, depictions of war in popular media, and the effects of war on cultural institutions. Through these diverse studies, a few key themes emerge. First, America is marked by conflicting attitudes toward war, constituting a schizophrenic outlook that both glorifies and condemns warfare. Secondly, this work emphasizes that American martial attitudes and narratives are not formed haphazardly, but are purposefully constructed to justify, inspire, or meaningfully remember war.

The most obvious example of the schizophrenic attitude towards war is revealed in Bryan's own contribution, "Agents of Destiny: The Texas Rangers and the Dilemma of the Conquest Narrative." Here Bryan examines the constructed image of the Texas Ranger in the 1840s as a combination of exotic mystique, nobility, and the epitome of American frontier heroism. This image allowed Americans to reconcile the contradiction between the zeal for Manifest Destiny and the disturbing reality of harsh violence that accompanied westward expansion. Bryan makes excellent use of primary sources such as newspapers, visual art, poetry, and song to emphasize the degree of conscious mythmaking involved in constructing the popular image and narrative of the Texas Ranger. Bonnie M. Miller's essay, "'Remember the Alamo' to 'Remember the *Maine*': The Visual Ide-

ologies of the Mexican and Spanish-American Wars," builds on this theme through a comparative study of the visual representations of the Mexican-American and Spanish-American wars. Many historians, such as Thomas R. Hietala in his classic ***Manifest Design: American Exceptionalism and Empire*** (2003), have emphasized a connection between the expansion of the 1840s and that of the 1890s.[1] Miller examines the similarities between the popular visual representations of these conflicts in print media. Noting that the primary concern for these outlets was profit, Miller asserts that this predisposed them to create appealing romantic adventure tales that emphasized the heroism of American efforts against animalistic antagonists. These visual depictions perpetuated stereotypes and emphasized a paternalistic relationship between a childlike native population and a wise, beneficent United States. This concept is explored in a much more specific way in Belinda Linn Rincón's "From Maiden to Mambisa: Evangelina Cisneros and the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898." This piece examines how the tale of Cisneros' resistance to the sexual advances of a Spanish officer, subsequent jailing, and eventual rescue, was appropriated by William Randolph Hearst and transformed into a heroic rescue narrative similar to those described by Miller. However, Rincón emphasizes that Cisneros subverted her narrative of the story to both expand contemporary views of women and to further the Cuban independence movement.

Other essays continue this examination of martial attitudes through popular culture, especially through film. Susan L. Eastman's piece, "Randall Wallace's *We Were Soldiers*: Forgetting the American War in Viet Nam," posits that the film ***We Were Soldiers*** (2002) represents an unusual depiction of the Vietnam War that consciously attempts to present it in the context of a typical World War II narrative of heroism and sacrifice for a morally defensible cause. Eastman recognizes that this task requires that new cultural memories be created, and existing memories be purposefully forgotten. Eastman's analysis is wonderful, yet the essay raises the question of how the Vietnam War is currently remembered and whether that cultural memory is shifting towards that depicted in the film. Further analysis of other cultural portrayals of the war would contextualize her work. Linking the analysis of film with the discussion of American martial schizophrenia is Jonna Eagle's important work, "Virtuous Victims, Visceral Violence: War and Melodrama in American Culture." Eagle examines a broad swath of American culture, from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show to the ***Rambo*** film series to Frederick Remington's paintings, concluding that American culture employs the conventions of melodramatic fiction to construct a narrative that justifies war and violence. These cultural expressions continually cast America as an innocent victim that must seek either justice or vengeance. This essay provides an incredibly interesting and valuable overview of American martial culture, demonstrating that Americans tend to place themselves as a nation into roles defined by melodramatic revenge narratives. Thus, the potentially disturbing violence perpetrated by Americans was justified and necessary in response to perceived wrongs from supposedly aggressive enemies. For example, Wild West paintings accomplish this by emphasizing the savagery of Native American attacks, casting frontiersmen either as victims that must dispense justice for these attacks, or as heroes that must save the nation itself, wresting it from the threat of barbarity. Eagle's analysis of the ***Rambo*** films is especially insightful, highlighting that the construct of the Vietnam veteran allows America to transform the guilt from the disturbing acts it committed in the war into the source of victimization and inspiration for returning to refight the war in ***Rambo: First Blood Part II*** (1985). Eagle's essay is important, thought-provoking, and almost worth the price of admission on its own.

Cultural artifacts are explored not only for their expressive power, but for their ability to inspire and act as military recruitment tools. Timo-

thy J. Cathcart takes an interesting approach to U.S. Air Force literature in his contribution, "On Angel's Wings: The Religious Origins of the US Air Force." Cathcart investigates cultural expressions of air power in print, song, film, literature, and advertising, concluding that the Air Force was often discussed and portrayed with religious--explicitly Christian--symbolism. Pilots compared themselves to angels and thought of their flying experiences in spiritual terms. This religious culture created a strong Christian bias in the Air Force. Cathcart's analysis is interesting, although further research along these lines is needed. While Christian language and symbolism does appear often in Air Force cultural material, Cathcart avoids comparing the Air Force with other branches of the military, or with general American popular culture of the time, to determine the extent to which this Christian bias was unique. The work provides many anecdotal examples, but little overall data to establish the extent of a Christian bias that set airmen apart from other military personnel. Additionally, it would prove interesting to compare the euphoric, spiritual thought patterns that Cathcart identifies from the late 1940s with the explosion of "fear of flying syndrome" that Conrad Crane describes in the early years of the Korean War.[2] Jeremy K. Saucier conducts a similar examination of the culture of the post-Vietnam War U.S. Army through the lens of its advertising. He is concerned less with the effectiveness of (or the response to) the advertising than with what it reveals about how the Army viewed itself. After the Vietnam War, the Army underwent a dramatic transformation. Recruitment efforts reflected this shift, nearly erasing all references to combat, instead emphasizing the skills and experiences that would aid potential recruits in their civilian lives. Inclusion of minorities and women to more accurately represent the American public was also key. These advertisements created "a vision of the army as a liberal multicultural utopia" (p. 117). Saucier's work is an insightful look at how the Army transformed after Vietnam, although the essay would be greatly strengthened by comparisons to similar recruitment drives from other time periods, particularly earlier ones before the war, as a way to highlight the nature of these changes. Also exploring the Cold War era is John M. Kinder's intriguing contribution that examines zoos. Kinder argues that zoos simultaneously contributed to American patriotism and suppression of communism, were militarized (primarily as bomb shelters), and engaged in building peaceful relationships with communist nations and Third World countries by trading specimens. While his insistence that the Cold War created a military-zoological complex may be somewhat overstated, his essay offers a unique perspective on an often overlooked element of American life.

Some of the essays depict the way personhood is defined through war. Kathleen Kennedy's "War and Trauma: Francis Parkman and the Challenge of Writing the Pain of the Other" represents a call to historians to be attentive to the ways they describe (or fail to describe) pain in war. Through a case study of historian Francis Parkman, Kennedy reveals the degree to which pain, suffering, and the language used to describe them are often directly associated with the personhood of the sufferer. Failure to deal effectively with this aspect of historical writing can rob the subject of agency. James J. Schaefer's contribution, "A Prison without Bars: Charles Lee and the Society of Gentlemen Prisoners during the American Revolution," explores a similar angle through the lens of gender. Schaefer emphasizes that methods of treatment for prisoners of war can reveal how a host nation feels about the personhood of the prisoner, but they can also create or reinforce the prisoner's views of him or herself. In the case of Charles Lee, the British regarded him as an ignoble traitor, but their treatment of him as a gentlemen reinforced his sense of manhood and his view of himself as a figure of key importance.

The most important contribution to the book is Jason Phillips's "Prophecies of Civil War Soldiers: A History of the Future." This essay directly challenges the short-war thesis, which states that Americans expected the Civil War to be incredibly brief. Phillips argues that while this may have been the case in a general sense, it does not speak for many soldiers who had the opposite expectation--including Winfield Scott. Their prophecies of a long, protracted, bloody war affected the way they fought and the way they communicated. The essay is a call for further research on the ways that prophecies about the future affected the war, and Phillips proposes the creation of a new field, "a history of the future," to study this interaction. As he states, "Instead of asking why men fought, we need to study how they thought," and later, "instead of countering the short-war thesis with an equally abstract long-war thesis, we need a larger acquaintance with the myriad ways that American [sic] anticipated, dreamed, dreaded, and prophesied the war" (pp. 186, 191). Phillips's essay adds an interesting element to discussion of the origins of the Civil War, and hopefully other scholars can bolster his work in the future. Although the essay is brief and could be strengthened by more examples from primary sources, Phillips's points are stimulating and greatly enhance the value of the book.

The book closes with Amy S. Greenberg's contribution, "Marshaling the Imaginary, Imagining the Martial: Or, What Is at Stake in the Cultural Analysis of War?" Her essay summarizes the cohesive themes of the book, emphasizing the book's collective assertion "that subjective experience really matters, and that any historical account must contend with how historical actors experienced events in their particular ways" (p. 224). Overall, the book accomplishes this goal with aplomb, surveying a wide swath of American military history through a cultural lens. These essays reveal the inherent contradictions of American martial attitudes, emphasizing the tension between perceptions of justice and violence that mark so many seemingly different eras of American history. The essays could function wonderfully as supplemental reading for college classes at either the graduate or undergraduate level. The book transcends its intended audience and is incredibly useful for not only military historians, but cultural, material, intellectual, and social historians as well.

Notes

[1]. Thomas R. Hietala, *Manifest Design: American Exceptionalism and Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 255-272.

[2]. Conrad Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 93-109.

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