

own the heritage of the founding generation. Yet after several decades of scholarship that has pointed to fundamental differences between slave society and the free labor North, McPherson's soldiers still appear strikingly similar. His tendency to treat Union and Confederate soldiers in the same chapter, sometimes in the same paragraph, can cause problems. In the chapter on religion, for example, McPherson notes that the Confederate army experienced large-scale revivals while the Union did not, but he fails to explore fully the implications of that difference.

This is a relatively minor problem, however. In this fine book, McPherson provides informative discussions of the psychology of combat, and is sensitive to changes in ideas over time. He clearly believes that the outcome of the Civil War—emancipation—justified its horrible cost. Yet he never romanticizes the ugly business of war, and he uses soldiers' words effectively to convey its terrors. He also notes that not all Civil War soldiers were self-motivated. His discussion of the use of cavalry to halt straggling and to force men to attack provides a welcome antidote to military histories that focus on the brilliance of generals or the heroics of soldiers.

McPherson's argument about the ideological motivation of soldiers would likely hold up especially well for Iowa, as the story of the state's solidly Republican troops is inextricably bound up with notions of free soil, free labor, and free men. Further study of the connection between politics and the Iowa soldier may be in order, however. It would add a dimension to our understanding of the heroism of Iowa troops in the famous Hornet's Nest at the Battle of Shiloh to suggest that they followed newspapers closely and wrote letters suffused with Republican ideals.

*The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat*, by Earl J. Hess. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997. xi, 244 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY RUSSELL L. JOHNSON, BILKENT UNIVERSITY, ANKARA, TURKEY

Earl J. Hess's *The Union Soldier in Battle: Enduring the Ordeal of Combat* represents a useful addition to the growing body of literature on the common soldiers' experience of the Civil War, focusing in this case on the experience of combat. Quoting extensively from the large quantity of letters, diaries, and memoirs which form his primary evidence, Hess allows the soldiers to speak for themselves as much as possible—all the better, he argues, to present his evidence "shorn of modern prejudices" (xi). Despite the problematic nature of the last assertion

and despite this reviewer's wish that Hess had approached his evidence more critically, he succeeds admirably in the limited task he sets for himself, namely, "to fill a gap in Civil War studies" (xi).

Through nine chapters with titles such as "the nature of battle," "paying for victory," and "the psychology of the battle line," Hess follows Union Army soldiers from their initial, often tentative, forays into battle to their eventual emergence as seasoned veterans, and, finally, to their postwar efforts to come to grips with their experience. Along the way Hess tries to discover what it was that sustained Union soldiers through the chaos and horror of mid-nineteenth-century battle and kept the vast majority ready, though not necessarily eager, for more. He cites various elements, avoiding the temptation (to which other historians succumb) to assign a single cause. But "if it were possible to pinpoint one factor as most important in enabling the soldier to endure," Hess argues that "it would be the security of comradeship" (117). Other elements of coping include the ideological—the soldiers' faith in the righteousness of their cause—as well as the soldiers' ability to call on civilian "models or metaphors" to "shape" the experience (127–28). These models included "romantic literary conceptions of war" (though in a subsequent chapter Hess notes that veteran soldiers "quickly rejected" these [154]), "nature," and "work," with the last being most prominent.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of *The Union Soldier in Battle* is one shared by the whole genre of Civil War soldiers' "experience" books. These books survey greater or lesser quantities of soldiers' writings about the war and try to distill some "common" experience, erasing all differences of prewar life. For example, in describing the physical experience of combat, Hess uses novelist and veteran John W. DeForest's work to argue that "industrialized warfare shattered the natural environment of the battlefield, representing in DeForest's mind the growing power of man over the wilderness" (49). But surely this part of the experience carried greater psychological significance for the Iowa farm boy than for the New Englander DeForest, whose civilian life did not involve the same daily struggle with nature. Similar examples could be cited for class, ethnicity, and other characteristics. Hess chooses not to analyze on these levels, however. Hence, although the book reveals much about the nature of Civil War combat, the reader seeking the war experience beyond some homogenized, northern level will need to look elsewhere.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.