

tional military and political history are among the subjects excluded from the book.

The editors' decision to exclude traditional subjects is due in part to a desire to introduce readers to new areas of Civil War studies, to follow roads not yet traveled. Yet, the editors' interest in military subjects is also limited to soldiers' experiences, an emphasis on social history that reflects the view of many, perhaps most, new scholars in the field. *The Civil War Era* will be a popular, valuable text, but it is also an illustration of Civil War historians relegating military history to the margins of their field.

Sharon S. MacDonald

Illinois State University
Normal, Illinois

Army of the Potomac, Vol. 2, McClellan Takes Command, September 1861–February 1862. By R. H. Beatie. Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2004. ISBN 0-306-81252-5. Maps. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xxxv, 636. \$45.00.

Russel H. Beatie calls his multi-volume history of the Army of the Potomac "A wide-ranging study of the Army's leaders and their decisions." Wide-ranging indeed! In *McClellan Takes Command* we learn that William F. Barry told Henry Hunt, "please keep your horses harnessed until further orders" (p. 31), and that the Army had "many recent Harvard graduates" (*twice*, on pp. 89 and 104). The chapter that addresses the Army's West Point graduates explores both the leadership selection processes of Sir Bernard Law Montgomery and of Erwin Rommel, and it describes the late-eighteenth-century French and Prussian armies' officer corps and that of the Red Army between 1917 and 1940 (pp. 197–202). What these and the volume's many other digressions and bits of minutiae have to do with its subject is not clear. A good editor might have solved some of these problems.

But the book contains more fundamental flaws, among which is the evidence the author uses and how he chooses to use it. For instance, he accepts Emory Upton's *Military Policy of the United States* as an accurate account rather than as the polemic that it is (p. 213). He draws on testimony before the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War as a source for conversations that allegedly took place during the Battle of Ball's Bluff. These conversations conform to Victorian standards of chivalry, honor, and bravery, but they do not begin to reflect the confusion and mayhem of battle. Why did it not occur to Beatie that the witnesses' accounts, for any number of reasons, might not represent accurately that controversial day's events? He lets stand without comment McClellan's assertion that his Munson Hill "offensive" failed because of "security leaks very near the president" (p. 115), yet he draws no conclusion from the fact that, in McClellan's headquarters, "Telegrams and reports lay in piles on desks, and reporters simply helped themselves. At times a document would find its way into a newspa-

per before it reached the addressee" (p. 138). To prove Edwin Stanton's disloyalty to Lincoln, Beatie accepts McClellan's assertion, made in his memoirs, that Stanton "never spoke of the President in any other way than as the 'original gorilla'" (p. 141). Does Beatie not know that McClellan used the very same term and others that were equally disrespectful of the commander-in-chief? This history of *The Army of the Potomac* lists in its bibliography not one (albeit dated) work by Bruce Catton (who knew a thing or two about the subject) while listing (even more dated) works by Douglas Southall Freeman.

Much like McClellan, Beatie appears to understand neither the appropriate relationship between politics and military policy, nor the fundamental issues that underlay the Civil War. Regarding the former, "The definition of war aims," Beatie argues, "must always remain in the hands of the political representatives of the body politic. The achievement of those ends by the military action should remain in the hands of the military. . . . And the line between . . . should remain as well defined [*sic*] as possible" (p. 130 n2). Regarding the latter, Beatie quotes McClellan telling a friend "Help me to dodge the nigger—we want nothing to do with him. I am fighting to preserve the integrity of the Union and . . . on no other issue," after which the author calls the general's views on the issue "prescient" (p. 136).

This book is not history but Greek tragedy disguised as history. The appropriately flawed hero, McClellan, fought a great moral struggle to save the Union. The villains were not the Confederates but the Radical Republicans and Edwin Stanton. The Radicals were "zealots if not fanatics" (p. 124) who "to a man possessed a masterly ignorance [?] of military concepts" (p. 133). Stanton was "much like the revolutionary hero Trotsky, with the zealotry of a religious fanatic" (p. 140). Forces beyond McClellan's control swept him "into the vortex of the political struggle between Radical Republicans and the president" (p. 130). Though this tragedy's "concluding act" is yet to be published, as must be true of the genre, the hero will fail in his great struggle.

In sum, this is a very disappointing volume, one I cannot recommend to the *JMH* readership.

David Fitzpatrick

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Commander of All Lincoln's Armies: A Life of General Henry W. Halleck.
By John F. Marszalek. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004. Illustrations. Bibliographical essay. Notes. Index. Pp. ix, 324. \$29.95.

When first opening this book, the combination of a capable author and a subject badly in need of reappraisal raised my expectations. And indeed there are a lot of good things about it. John Marszalek has provided the most detailed and authoritative account of Halleck's early life, initial military