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Donald R. Hickey. *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict, Bicentennial Edition.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012. xvii + 454 pp. $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-252-07837-8.

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey

Military historians will welcome Donald R. Hickey's bicentennial edition to his classic 1989 synthesis, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*. The new edition maintains its focus on Washington DC politics while retaining the two excellent chapters on the Republican Riots in Baltimore and the Hartford Convention. Hickey focuses his revisions on the chapters that concentrate on the U.S. military campaigns. Those who enjoy reading about the strategic positioning of armies, personalities of generals, and various movements of troops will appreciate Hickey's chapters on the campaigns of 1812 and 1813 as well as his chapter on the 1814 British counteroffensive. Although Hickey's focus is on land battles, those interested in naval battles will not be disappointed. By covering almost all the major engagements of the war while allowing the reader an opportunity to get to know a few significant personalities, Hickey is able to incorporate detail without sacrificing breadth.

War of 1812 is much more than a military history, however. Hickey provides an excellent overview to the causes of the war and the political battles between Federalists and Republicans, along with a thought-provoking, albeit incomplete, discussion of the consequences of the War of 1812. For readers interested in the political causes of the war, the opening chapter is an excellent place to begin. Hickey covers the basics well, noting the growing political divisions between Federalists and Republicans along with foreign policy changes made by Republicans after 1800. Impressment, the British Orders-in-Council, and the restrictive system also receive attention. He attempts to branch out beyond white American concerns by including an all-too-brief section on Tecumseh and Native American struggles to preserve autonomy. Subheadings of titles within the chapters, new to this edition, are useful for following Hickey's narrative and add to the book's appeal for nonspecialists.

The potential reader should be aware that this book is narrative driven and does not offer much in the way of new interpretation or argument. While readers encountering the War of 1812 for the first time will appreciate Hickey's summary and narrative, the absence of interpretation can be frustrating. For example, readers may wonder why state militias refused to enter Canada; or why U.S. citizens in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine were so willing to trade with the Canadian "enemy." The political chapters in particular are bogged down in detail, which, in the absence of analysis, seems superfluous. For instance, why is it necessary to know about the various shakeups in James Madison's administration throughout the war? Certainly, Hickey had a reason for including this information, but without some explanation of its significance the reader is left in the dark.

Part of the problem lies not only in Hickey's lack of analysis, but also in his choice to tell a nationalist story. Hickey focuses exclusively on U.S. politics and the U.S. military. He does point out this limitation in his preface, noting that while the new edition incorporates more Canadian, Native American, and British sources, "this edition, like the first, focuses mainly on the American side of the story" (p. xvi). He includes a useful annotated bibliography at the end of the book for those wishing to explore diverse perspectives. Nevertheless, the nationalist story is more limiting than Hickey would like to admit. After reading Alan Taylor's *Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Revels, and Indian Allies* (2010), which details the multiple local loyalties of diverse participants, one wonders whether the nation-state is a useful lens through which to examine the War of 1812. Moreover, by defining "American" as synonymous with white U.S. citizens and by not explaining or exploring the uncertain national identity among many who lived in the United States and in Canada prior to the war, Hickey limits his subjects. Generals and politicians are his actors; they have clear national and political identities. In contrast, the voices, perspectives, and experiences of those who joined the militia or enlisted in the army or navy

are not present.

Hickey's nationalist narrative further limits his ability to explore Native American experiences. In his telling, Indians are either British allies or U.S. allies, "friendly Indians" (p. 150). The reader does not get a sense of why some Native Americans chose to side with the British or the United States, or to remain neutral. Citing Claudio Saunt's *A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1773-1816* (1999), Hickey does expand his brief section on the Creek War. Yet he does not take full advantage of Saunt's analysis, and as such Creek perspectives in Hickey's narrative remain incomplete. When it comes to the Great Lakes region, he fails to take advantage of scholarship published since he first wrote *War of 1812*. Richard White's *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (1991), Gregory Evans Dowd's *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1747-1815* (1992), and Susan Sleeper-Smith's *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounter in the Western Great Lakes* (2001), just to name a few, have become essential to our understanding of the Great Lakes region. Not only are these works conspicuously absent in his otherwise detailed footnotes, but they also do not appear in his annotated bibliography.

Hickey's *War of 1812* is a finely crafted narrative that provides an excellent introduction to the multiple causes and political upheavals (among elite whites in the United States), and presents a thorough account of the major battles. Nevertheless, its narrow nationalistic frame offers a skewed understanding of the war. As Taylor reminds us, nationalism did not precede the war; it was, in part, a product of the War of 1812. Hickey's determination to focus on the "American" side of the war assumes a nationalist identity that for most participants was either nascent or nonexistent. A regional rather than a national perspective has proven and will prove more fruitful for understanding the complex motivations and experiences of all historical actors.

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