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Chester G. Hearn. *Admiral David Dixon Porter: The Civil War Years.* Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1996. xx + 376 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-55750-353-4.

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By the end of the Civil War, David Dixon Porter stood second only to his foster brother David Farragut in the Union's pantheon of naval heroes. After stirring controversy while in command of the *Powhatan* during the Fort Sumter crisis, Porter distinguished himself during operations on the lower Mississippi in 1862, where he directed the mortar bombardment of Forts St. Philip and Jackson that facilitated the capture of New Orleans. As commander of the Mississippi Squadron, he played a key role in the success of Ulysses S. Grant's operations against Vicksburg in the summer of 1863 and narrowly avoided disaster during Nathaniel Banks's abortive campaign along the Red River in 1864. During the final months of the war, he played a key role in the capture of Fort Fisher as commander of the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron and accompanied President Abraham Lincoln on his famous stroll through the streets of Richmond. By the time the fighting ended, Porter had earned the thanks of Congress on four occasions, the admiration of Lincoln, Grant, and William T. Sherman, and the rank of rear admiral.

Porter has by no means been neglected by historians. Since his death in 1891, he has figured prominently in countless works on Civil War military history, and he has been the subject of three biographies. However, the most recent study of his life, Paul Lewis's *Yankee Admiral*, was published nearly twenty years ago, and since then a number of works, such as Rowena Reed's *Combined Operations in the Civil War* and Rod Gragg's study of the operations against Fort Fisher have appeared, that touch upon significant aspects of Porter's career. In *Admiral David Dixon Porter*, Chester G. Hearn draws upon some of this recent scholarship (neither Joseph T. Glatthaar's *Partners in Command* nor John Marzelak's biography of Sherman appear in the notes or bibliography) and a truly impressive range of primary sources to produce a first-rate study that will no doubt become the new standard work on Porter's career.

As he demonstrated in his recent work on the capture of New Orleans, Hearn is a skilled writer and diligent researcher. Even those already familiar with the events of Porter's career will find value in this informative, well-documented, and highly readable account. Hearn is particularly effective in making the complexities of nineteenth-century naval warfare and the often complicated operations in which Porter participated comprehensible to the lay person. He also does a fine job of handling Porter's frequent clashes with politicians, generals, and fellow naval officers in a balanced and fair manner. Although Hearn clearly considers Porter a figure worthy of respect, this is by no means a shallow exercise in hero worship. Hearn does not ignore Porter's penchant for intrigue, hypersensitivity to criticism, or arrogance; nor does he hesitate to criticize the admiral when appropriate. In the end, however, Hearn joins most historians of the war in reserving his harshest criticisms for political generals like John A. McClernand and Benjamin F. Butler.

As the subtitle indicates, this is not a full biography; 279 of the book's 321 pages are devoted to the war years. Although Hearn provides an effective description of Porter's antebellum life and career, the postwar years receive only seven pages. The book also at times gets bogged down in details that could have been omitted without diminishing the reader's understanding of Porter's career. This would have allowed space for Hearn to more adequately discuss the Civil War and Porter's career in the context of the professionalization of the navy during the nineteenth century. Still, Hearn and the Naval Institute Press are to be commended for producing an engaging and worthwhile study that must be considered the best book yet on this important figure in Civil War history.

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