

Whose War of 1812? Competing Memories of the Anglo-American Conflict

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This is an updated version (December 2014) of a piece originally published in 2013, which extends the coverage of the review to include some more recent works on 1812.

The Canadian historian C. P. Stacey once remarked that the War of 1812 is ‘an episode in history that makes everybody happy, because everybody interprets it differently’. Americans believe they gave their former mother country a good drumming, Canadians pride themselves in turning back ‘the massed might of the United States’, and ‘the English are happiest of all, because they don’t even know it happened’.⁽¹⁾ These competing perspectives are the result of the different functions the Anglo-American conflict served in their respective nations’ historical master narratives.

In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, Americans celebrated the War of 1812 as America’s ‘Second War of Independence’, in which Americans allegedly repelled the former mother country’s attempts to subdue its lost colonies in North America back into the British imperial system. Hailed as a victorious campaign, the War of 1812 came to boost American nationalism, and nationalist historians and artists used wartime anecdotes, icons, and heroes to provide Americans with a national identity. Two generals active in the War of 1812 – Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison – used their wartime victories to successfully run for the Presidency. With the sectional controversy intensifying and the outbreak of the Civil War, however, memories of the unifying War of 1812 faded. Today, only three per cent of Americans believe that the War of 1812 was the most important war for the emergence of an American nationalism. Taking place between the epic War of Independence and the Civil War, which Americans hold to be the most important wars in the formation of American national identity (50 per cent and 25 per cent respectively), the War of 1812 occupies a middle ground and hence it has become one of the most neglected of America’s wars.⁽²⁾ Donald R. Hickey

called it 'the forgotten conflict'.⁽³⁾ In some states which saw military encounters, such as Arkansas and New York, memorials to the conflict were erected but the capital does not have a national site for commemorating the fallen soldiers in this conflict and Congress declined to create a national bicentennial commission.

Canadian nationalist narratives – by contrast – appeared only after 1867, since there was no independent Canadian nation to celebrate before that date. After the founding of the Confederation, Canadians tended to downplay the importance of the British regulars and the Royal Navy and instead congratulated themselves for having defended the embryo of their nation from an American invasion in the War of 1812. By successfully resisting Americans they had laid the foundation for an independent Canada, the narrative went. While the 'militia myth' – that British North America's inhabitants unified to repel the southern aggressor largely without the help of British soldiers – has been laid to rest, the claim that a Canadian national identity was born in the War of 1812 has endured.⁽⁴⁾ After all, 19th-century Canadian history lacks any other dramatic event on par with the American War of Independence or the American Civil War. 'If not for the War of 1812, what would Canadian re-enactors, deprived of the rich fodder of the U.S. Civil War, do on the weekend?' Karim M. Tiro asked ironically.⁽⁵⁾ In a recent opinion poll, Canadians therefore ranked their victory in the War of 1812 as the second most important part of their identity (25 per cent) after free health care (53 per cent).⁽⁶⁾ As a result, the current Canadian government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper decided to spend more than \$28 million on celebrations for the bicentennial, i.e. for exhibits, historic sites, historical re-enactments, and a new national monument, to make Canadians aware that the 'end of the war laid the foundation for Confederation and the emergence of Canada as a free and independent nation'.⁽⁷⁾

Unlike the Canadians, the British have never been particularly interested in this conflict. The English-born Canadian historian William Kingsford commented in 1895 that 'the events of the War of 1812 have not been forgotten in England for they have never been known there'.⁽⁸⁾ While his quip might carry the point too far, it is clear that the Napoleonic Wars have played a much larger role in British memory than the war with the former colonies on the outskirts of the European world. When it comes to the year 1812, Britons think of Napoleon's invasion of Russia. The Anglo-American conflict of the same year was merely an unwelcome distraction. British identity was not formed in the conflict with America but in the titanic struggle with Napoleonic France. While Americans celebrated the Battle of New Orleans as if the United States had won the War of 1812, the British hardly noticed it, as news of the battle coincided with Napoleon's escape from Elba. The subsequent showdown with the French Emperor resulted in the Battle of Waterloo, which the British remember to this day as a defining moment for their nation. Victory over France is viewed as one of Great Britain's greatest achievements, paving the way for Great Britain's global dominance until the 20th century.⁽⁹⁾ The War of 1812 does not make sense in this powerful historical master narrative. As a result, it is either ignored or described as an irritating diversion, forced on Britain by the United States, from the more important struggle on the Continent. Not surprisingly, British historians have never shown a keen interest in this conflict. In comparison to the European wars of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the War of 1812 was relatively bloodless and short in duration. Fewer than 4,000 soldiers died in combat in North America between 1812 and 1815, while the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France caused millions of deaths in Europe. It is for all these reasons that the War of 1812 usually plays little role in histories of Great Britain.⁽¹⁰⁾

To date, the various collective memories of the conflict are still largely premised on national historical narratives and the bicentennial of the war sparked yet more books on the conflict which reaffirm the national trajectories. Some of the new works, however, set out to deconstruct the celebratory national paradigms and transcend the national focus in order to analyze the War of 1812 either from a more global point of view or from the perspective of marginalized groups within the nation-states.

The catalog *1812: A Nation Emerges* – accompanying the exhibition of the same name that was being shown at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. from June 2012 through January 2013 – presents the traditional American narrative. It is edited by Sidney Hart, the senior historian of the National Portrait

Gallery, and Rachael L. Penman, the assistant curator of the exhibition. Three introductory essays by two leading experts in the field – J. C. A. Stagg and Donald R. Hickey – and by the curator open up the catalog. The main part features 115 large-scale color images of the objects displayed in the exhibition. Published for the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812, the book gives an overview of the conflict, the most important actors, and the major battles.

The artifacts displayed in the exhibition include portraits of American statesmen such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, and James Monroe as well as portraits of the numerous American war heroes such as William Henry Harrison, Winfield Scott, Oliver Hazard Perry, Thomas Macdonough, and Andrew Jackson. Great Britain is represented by portraits of Lord Castlereagh and King George IV as well as British commanders such as Isaac Brock, Robert Ross, George Cockburn, and Edward Pakenham. Besides portraits, the catalog includes numerous paintings of battle scenes such as the encounter between the USS Chesapeake and the HMS Leopard, the clash between the HMS Macedonian and the USS United States, the burning of Washington, the bombardment of Fort McHenry, and the Battle of New Orleans. Moreover, reprinted are cartoons depicting British atrocities or British defeats or mocking the Hartford Convention and uniforms of the contestants, contemporary maps, the American flag of 1812 that flew on the American privateer Blockade, Dolly Madison's dress, a model ship of the USS Constitution, a Congreve Rocket as used in the bombardment of Fort McHenry, the original manuscript of 'The Star-Spangled Banner', a copy of the first edition of Noah Webster's *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (11), and a copy of the flag which inspired Francis Scott Key to write what would later become the text of America's national anthem are shown as well. (12) Brief but accurate descriptions complement the images.

The major claim of the exhibition and the catalog is that an American nation emerged in the War of 1812 and that the war provided Americans with a set of symbols, heroes, and legends on which to build their national identity. Aside from giving a boost to American westward expansion and growing political support for a large standing army and a sizable navy, federally sponsored internal improvements, and a national bank, the war also produced symbols of national identity such as 'The Star-Spangled Banner' and 'Uncle Sam'. (13) 'It is perhaps only a modest exaggeration to say that in the course of that conflict, America completed its struggle for independence', Martin E. Sullivan, the Director of the National Portrait Gallery, asserts in his foreword (p. ix). The catalog demonstrates in particular the importance of art works for American nation-building. During and after the war, numerous American painters such as Charles Willson Peale, Rembrandt Peale, John Wesley Jarvis, Thomas Birch, and William Charles 'responded to the American public's demand to see their heroes and, in Charles' case, castigate their enemies', Sidney Hart explains in his introductory essay (p. 21). Art works thus contributed to the nationalist narrative of the war.

The catalog recounts the standard narrative of the War of 1812 as the 'Second War of Independence' and highlights its effects on American nationalism, thus not offering new insights into the War of 1812. The selection of artifacts is also not very revealing or daring. The exhibition displays objects not only from its own collection but also from the British National Portrait Gallery, the McCord Museum of Canadian History, the Canadian War Museum, the National Gallery of Canada, the National Maritime Museum in London, and private collectors in Ireland. Despite the international origin of numerous objects, however, the exhibition's story is solidly American in outlook. Since the catalog tells the story of how the War of 1812 proved to be a nationalizing event, moreover, it does not give much room to the domestic opposition to the conflict except explaining that revolutionary war hero Henry Lee who opposed the war was crippled in the Baltimore riot or that war opponent John Randolph was forbidden to bring his dogs into the halls of Congress.

Hugh Howard's popular history of the War of 1812 – *Mr. and Mrs. Madison's War: America's First Couple and the Second War of Independence* – also follows the national trajectory. Calling himself a 'narrative historian' seeking 'story lines' (p. vii), he uses an anecdotal approach to the War of 1812, reconstructing

particular episodes of the war in colorful detail. His claim, however, that his book will be a 'corrective' to the fact that the War of 1812 is 'perhaps the least understood of America's wars' (p. viii) is misplaced, since he neither provides a complete historical overview of the entire war nor does he examine and bring forward his own argument about why the United States declared war against Great Britain in 1812.⁽¹⁴⁾ He simply finds that the war was inevitable, as British foreign policy gave Madison no other choice than to ask Congress for a declaration of war (pp. 20–6). His historiographical contribution is to retell the story of the War of 1812 from the President's and the First Lady's perspective. Unlike most other accounts of the conflict, which largely ignore Dolly Madison, Howard finds that she 'was a principal actor in the events that unfolded between the war declaration in June 1812 and the Treaty of Ghent' (p. viii).⁽¹⁵⁾ While she played no direct role in the actual war effort (apart from her often-told rescuing of Gilbert Stuart's painting of George Washington that hung in the President's House as well as of government and personal papers when the British invaded and burnt the capital), she fulfilled an important function by organizing bipartisan social gatherings in the nation's capital. By describing the First Lady's ceremonial responsibilities, Howard provides us with a portrait of Washington's social life in the early 19th century. Yet, his judgment that '[i]n the nation's collective memory, Mr. and Mrs. Madison's War was better remembered for her role than his' might carry his point a bit far (p. 305).

This book includes insightful portrayals of Richard Rush, James Monroe, William Winder, Isaac Hull, Stephen Decatur, James Lawrence, Oliver Hazard Perry, and Joshua Barney as well as readable summaries of major battles such as the battle of York or the battle on Lake Erie, and naval encounters such as those between the USS Constitution and the HMS *Guerrière* or between the USS Chesapeake and the HMS Shannon. Of great interest is also his discussion of more unknown episodes such as the naval encounter between a squadron of American barges and British warships on the Patuxent River in June 1814. A thorough discussion of the British invasion of Washington in August 1814, however, comprises the main part of the book.

Mr. and Mrs. Madison's War is written in vivid prose, with colorful details of the battles. A distinct strength of this monograph is the inclusion of the First Lady's role in the social life of the capital, which is mostly overlooked in monographs on the War of 1812. However, it does not provide fresh insights into the conflict but takes a rather traditional American perspective on the war. As a result, Howard's judgments are strongly biased. He characterizes the British burning of Washington 'an act of international terrorism' (p. vii), dismissing any comparison to the American burning of York (capital of Upper Canada at that point in time) on the grounds that the 'destruction of several wooden structures in a regional capital' was different from the 'wholesale destruction of a nation's monumental public buildings' (p. 232). He also considers the outcome of the war in an entirely positive light. The British practice of searching American merchant vessels for British deserters on the high seas was discontinued, since the Napoleonic Wars ended at about the same time as the Anglo-American War of 1812 and thus the Royal Navy's need for tars decreased (it was not the War of 1812, however, that led to the end of impressment). He further emphasizes that American manufacturing had received a boost through the war, foreign trade was resumed, and Republicans abandoned their hostility to the federal government sponsoring internal improvements, the U.S. Navy, and a national bank. Finally, he celebrates the westward expansion as a result of the war. Unfortunately, however, he fails to consider the consequences of yet another chapter in the history of Indian displacement in his discussion of the war's results (p. 294).

The traditional American narrative of the War of 1812 is cut to pieces by Andrew Lambert, Professor of Naval History at King's College, London, in *The Challenge: Britain Against America in the Naval War of 1812*. Finding fault with the claim – frequently made by Americans – that the war was caused by Britain's maritime policies and ended in a U.S. victory or at least a draw, Lambert deliberately takes a 'British perspective, focusing on the development of policy and strategy in London and the conduct of war at sea' (p. 3). According to him, the Madison Administration declared war against Great Britain in 1812, believing that – in view of the calamitous situation she was in after Napoleon had invaded Russia – it was 'a golden

opportunity to seize land from the British' (p. 3). He claims that Republicans used British interference with American trade and the impressment of American sailors merely as an excuse to seek territorial conquest (p. 13). If America's war aim was the conquest of Canada, Britain clearly won the war, Lambert concludes, since she repelled the American invasions of its provinces in North America, destroyed the American capital, defeated the American navy, and established such an effective blockade of the U.S. – import customs being the primary source of its revenue – that the American government found itself bankrupt in 1814. Nonetheless, immediately after the war, Americans would boast that they had been victorious – promoting a nationalistic narrative of the conflict based on myths, which Lambert seeks to expose as such in his book.

Lambert dismisses America's three early naval victories in 1812 – the *USS Constitution* versus *HMS Guerrière* in August, the *USS United States* versus the *HMS Macedonian* in October, and the *USS Constitution* versus the *HMS Java* in December – since they were unequal contests: the U.S. 54-gun frigates fought against smaller and more lightly armed British vessels of only 46 guns. According to Lambert, there was little glory in these battles, since the American frigates were superior to their British equivalents in size, firepower, and crew. Moreover, the outcome of these encounters did not have an influence on the outcome of the war. 'They did not affect the balance of power at sea, impede the reinforcement of the Canadian army, or raise British insurance rates' (p. 102). The Republican Administration, however, used these naval exploits to arouse patriotic sentiment at home, which had suffered because of the failed invasions of Canada, and trumpeted the glory of the U.S. Navy. Furthermore, they downplayed the fact that Napoleon's invasion of Russia had met disaster and French forces were in retreat at the end of 1812. As a result, Britain would subsequently be in a position to redeploy forces from Europe to North America and effectively blockade the American coast with its superior navy.

The next year, 1813, moreover, witnessed British defeats of American frigates. The turning point in the naval War of 1812 came, according to Lambert, in June 1813 when the *HMS Shannon* defeated the *USS Chesapeake*, restoring British naval prestige in the North Atlantic. As Lambert found that the British frigate won the encounter because of superior seamanship, he is very critical of Americans' excuses for their defeat. In an attempt to turn the American captain James Lawrence into a martyr, the court martial blamed the defeat on bad luck and thus transformed it into a moral victory, making the words Lawrence ushered when dying in battle into a national rallying cry: 'Don't Give Up the Ship' (p. 184). By that time, however, British naval superiority had resulted in a close blockade of all important American harbors bottling up the remainder of America's small navy as well as its merchant marine. As a result, in 1814 only a 12th of America's merchant vessels were able to get out to sea and the customs revenues of the federal government plummeted, depriving it of the means to pursue the war effort on a meaningful level. American privateering, moreover, increasingly lost in importance on two accounts: the Royal Navy established an effective convoy system protecting British merchant vessels, and an increasing number of American privateersmen ended up in British prisons. At this point, according to Lambert, the U.S. had de facto lost the war.

In March 1814, U.S. naval operations in the Pacific came to an end when the U.S. frigate *Essex* had to surrender to a superior British force. According to Lambert, the American captain David Porter was to blame for the loss of his frigate since – in search for glory – he had deliberately sailed into the Chilean port of Valparaiso, even though he knew that the port was a trap in which a superior British force could easily blockade him. When he tried to escape, the *HMS Phoebe* wrecked his ship such that he had to surrender. Instead of admitting his mistake in sailing into the Chilean dead end, Porter blamed a series of misfortunes for his loss of the *Essex*. The Republican Administration – eager for good news to make up for the renewed failure to invade Canada – adopted Porter's version and hailed the battle as an exemplary display of American heroism. Instead of chastising Porter for irresponsibly taking up a fight with a superior force, Republicans – desperate for a new national hero – emphasized his unprecedented bravery. Consequently, Republicans prevented a court of enquiry from ascertaining the facts of the naval battle. Lambert is equally critical of Stephen Decatur who commanded the *USS President*. In January 1815, he had to surrender to the *HMS Endymion* after a fair fight in which the British gunnery had proven superior. However, Decatur would subsequently spread the lie that he had actually beaten the *Endymion* and that he had only struck his colors

after the *HMS Pomone* arrived and he was hence outnumbered.

In 1814, America's economy lay in shambles, the federal government was functionally bankrupt and defaulting on public debt payments, its capital was in ashes, and its navy had either been beaten or was bottled up in American ports. In consequence, the Madison Administration instructed its commissioners in Ghent to accept a peace upon the terms of the status quo ante bellum, effectively giving up all its war aims in the face of defeat. Lambert principally ascribes British victory in the War of 1812 to the failure of American invasions of Canada, to the successful naval blockade of the American coast by the Royal Navy, and its ability to put most of the U.S. Navy and American privateers out of action. Yet, since the War of 1812 was a mere sideshow to Great Britain, few British contemporaries bothered to investigate the conflict, leaving the field open to American writers who, Lambert complains, have tended to distort the facts. As a result, many American historians have come to the erroneous conclusion that the War of 1812 had not been an American defeat but a tie between both countries or even a U.S. victory.

It is to be much commended that a British historian has made a major contribution to the bicentennial literature, as to date the literature has been dominated by American and Canadian historians. Lambert's monograph represents a necessary correction to previous American interpretations of the naval engagements of the War of 1812. After all, while American historians can hardly deny that the invasions of British North America were dismal failures, they have commonly pointed to America's surprisingly apt naval performance in the first months of the war to claim that the military balance sheet was about even. After his fellow British historian Brian Arthur had, in 2011, shown that the Royal Navy won the naval War of 1812 and that Britain's naval blockade of the U.S. in 1813 and 1814 decisively contributed to the Madison Administration's decision to drop the neutral trade and impressment issues in the peace negotiations, Lambert now convincingly demonstrates that the emergence of American national heroes in the naval War of 1812 had less to do with their accomplishments than with Republicans' need for glorious news to generate support for the floundering war effort.⁽¹⁶⁾

While Lambert's monograph is refreshing as it undermines some of the major assumptions of traditional American narratives of the conflict, his account is also problematic as it is anything but neutral, seeking to replace American readings of the conflict through a narrow British interpretation. On the one hand, he displays his expert knowledge of maritime affairs in his detailed and eloquent analyses of the naval encounters, and his verdict that the U.S. Navy lost the war on sea is well founded. On the other hand, the larger framework in which he places his study is unnecessarily one-sided and fails to engage the substantial literature on the American political and cultural background of the conflict. For example, there is little appreciation for the complexities of Republicans' ideology and the domestic context in the U.S. when he writes that 'Jefferson was, at heart, authoritarian and anti-democratic' (p. 22) or when he detects in Jefferson's policies a 'trend towards totalitarianism' (p. 22). Lambert also underestimates the effects the British practice of impressing seamen from American merchant ships on the high seas had on American nationalism when he dismisses American complaints, observing that 'less than 10 per cent of the American maritime workforce suffered' impressment and that 'No more than half the men impressed from American ships were actually Americans' (p. 27). While Britain's blatant violations of America's sovereignty alone might not have constituted imperative and immediate grounds for an American declaration of outright war, they were certainly not irrelevant to the outbreak of armed hostilities. Lambert is too quick to discount Republicans' moral outrage at British maritime practices as mere rhetoric disguising their actual land hunger. The 'expansionist thesis', originally brought forward by American historians such as Louis Morton Hacker and Julius Pratt, has been thoroughly repudiated by scholars such as Bradford Perkins and Donald R. Hickey who each found little evidence for territorial ambitions as a cause of the war, but Lambert does not address this literature.⁽¹⁷⁾ Therefore his claim that Republicans declared war to annex Canada and that in view of their failure to accomplish this goal the U.S. lost the conflict – an interpretation most popular among British historians – is not very convincing.⁽¹⁸⁾ Finally, one could add that had Lambert incorporated the battles fought on the Great Lakes and interior waterways into his analysis of the 'Naval War of 1812' a more nuanced picture would have emerged, since the U.S. Navy defeated the British squadron on Lake Erie in September 1813, giving Americans control of the lake for the remainder of the war. The defeat of the Royal

Navy in the Battle of Lake Champlain in September 1814, moreover, spoilt the British invasion of New York.

Major John R. Grodzinski, Assistant Professor of History at the Royal Military College of Canada, made the major Canadian contribution to the bicentennial literature. In *Defender of Canada: Sir George Prevost and the War of 1812*, he provides us with an in-depth account of the military leadership of Sir George Prevost, Captain General and Commander in Chief of British North America, in the War of 1812. Grodzinski argues that historians have treated Prevost unfairly – portraying him either as overly cautious and hesitant or as utterly incompetent, instead attributing Canada's successful defense against the American invasions to other figures such as Major General Isaac Brock, Lieutenant General Gordon Drummond, or Commodore Sir James Yeo, whose deeds have been repeatedly praised and used to promote Canadian nationalism. Grodzinski takes issue with this interpretation that has come to shape the public perception of the War of 1812 in Canada and criticizes previous scholarship for failing to distinguish between strategic and tactical levels. Historians only blamed Prevost for his short-term failures, as in the Plattsburgh campaign in northern New York in 1814, but overlooked how, in the long-run, he successfully managed to organize the defense of a border that stretched over half a continent, even though he had little manpower and resources. 'Far from home, with irregular communication and responsible for the defense of a massive and complex theater, he employed a mix of regular soldiers, sailors, locally raised forces, and indigenous peoples with prudence and economy that magnified the stresses on his opponents, defeating most of their plans and preserving British North America's existence' (p. 8). According to Grodzinski, Prevost's reputation suffered badly in the wake of the war, since many of his subordinates did not appreciate the pressures he was under and the limitations the British government had placed on his leadership. Moreover, the war ended for him with the defeat at the Battle of Plattsburgh, after which he was recalled. His opponents in Canada used the occasion of Prevost's aborted campaign to accuse him of weak leadership, incompetence, and even mixed loyalties (Prevost's ancestors were French Huguenots and he had been born in New Jersey), even though, according to Grodzinski, Yeo deserved the blame for the failure of the 1814 invasion since he had refused to adequately support the naval squadron on Lake Champlain and therefore left Prevost's army without a reliable supply line once the naval squadron had been defeated. As Prevost unexpectedly died before his court-martial, however, he did not have the chance to defend himself and answer his critics. As a result, historians have usually followed the vituperative attacks directed against Prevost at the time, such that Grodzinski's biography of him is meant to right an historiographical wrong.

Grodzinski first traces Prevost's early career, stressing the military and administrative experience he gained first as lieutenant governor of St. Lucia, Dominica, and Portsmouth (chapter one) and then as governor and commander of the forces in the Maritime Provinces of North America and subsequently as lieutenant general in the successful 1809 campaign to conquer the French colony of Martinique (chapter two). As governor in chief of British North America – a post assumed in 1811 – Prevost organized defensive preparations for a possible war with the U.S., realizing that effective logistical arrangements were key to military success, since weapons, ammunition, and most other military supplies had to be imported from the mother country or depots in the West Indies and then had to be transported over the vast expanse of the Canadian territory (chapter three). Since British resources were tied up in the European conflict, Prevost would hardly receive any reinforcements. As a result, he had to adopt a defensive approach, because the U.S. possessed superior manpower. To make up for his insufficient numbers of troops, Prevost would seek support from Native American tribes and Canadian militias. To win the loyalty of the French-speaking populace in Lower Quebec, he improved their political representation and elevated the status of the Catholic bishop. Chapter four covers the first months of the war in 1812 and Grodzinski criticizes Isaac Brock, whom historians have usually praised for bravely defending Canada against the first American invasion, for prematurely and impulsively seeking to retake a battery in the Battle of Queenston Heights – a mistake that cost him his life unnecessarily. Next, Grodzinski analyzes how the British government's decision for the Royal Navy (instead of the Provincial Marine) to take charge of the naval affairs on the Great Lakes complicated the cooperation between land and naval forces, since Prevost's relationship to Commodore James Yeo, who assumed

command of the inland naval forces, was strained (chapter five). Grodzinski also defends Prevost's May 1813 decision to abort the attack on Sackett's Harbor in the state of New York: the British infantry had taken heavy casualties and could not break through Americans' effective defenses, and the American fleet on Lake Ontario could have arrived at the battle scene at any moment which would have given the American combatants a decisive advantage.

In the sixth chapter, Grodzinski examines how British North America repeatedly and successfully repelled American invasions in the second half of 1813, before, in 1814, reinforcements – four artillery companies, one cavalry regiment, and fourteen infantry battalions – would be sent to North America. With Napoleon's abdication, the European conflict was temporarily halted, allowing the British to take the offensive against the United States. Vice Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane took command of the North American Station in April 1814 and subsequently conducted raids along the American coast and captured Washington D.C. (chapter seven). Prevost, for his part, was to use the augmented manpower to invade America along Lake Champlain, and his preparations for the campaign are detailed in chapter eight. Grodzinski acquits Prevost from any blame for the invasion's failure. Given that the British squadron on the lake had been defeated by the American navy it would have been not only too costly to try to conquer Plattsburgh – located on the southwest shore of the lake – but also pointless (chapter nine). Without naval superiority on the lake, which alone would have ensured steady supply and communication lines, Prevost could have hardly stayed deep inside American territory. Grodzinski instead holds Yeo responsible for the naval defeat, since he had refused to send additional ships and seamen from his fleet on Lake Ontario to Captain Downie on Lake Champlain to assist in the campaign. The author does admit, however, that Prevost had left too much coordination of the naval and land forces to his aides, who were overwhelmed by the task. In the end, Prevost was never able to effectively defend himself against the charges brought up against him, as Grodzinski explains in the last chapter. Yeo complained to the British government that Prevost allegedly had pressed Downie to commence the naval campaign even though his squadron was not yet ready for combat, that Prevost had failed to begin the land attack in time to conquer the American batteries at Plattsburgh and then use them against the American ships at Plattsburgh Bay, and that Prevost could have regained the lost squadron if he had finished his attack on Plattsburgh instead of withdrawing. Moreover, the Duke of Wellington, wishing to uphold the reputation of his troops that had been sent to North America after Napoleon's defeat to take part in the campaign, reaffirmed Yeo's charges. As a result, Prevost was recalled – even though, as Grodzinski shows, Yeo's allegations were unfounded: the land attack on Plattsburgh had begun as scheduled and the American squadron had been too distant for any captured batteries at Plattsburgh to reach them. Before he could defend his conduct at the court-martial, however, Prevost died leaving his reputation tarnished.

In view of the multiple biographies that exist of other important actors in the War of 1812 such as Isaac Brock, a monograph on Prevost was long overdue and Grodzinski thus filled an important void in the historiography.⁽¹⁹⁾ In his meticulous and detailed study, Grodzinski convincingly rehabilitates Prevost's reputation showing that he was a competent wartime leader and successful defender of Canada, under whose overall command repeated invasions by a superior American army were repulsed. He correctly reminds critics of Prevost's conduct during the Battle of Plattsburgh that he might not have achieved a great field victory as Brock did, but that Prevost proved himself as a capable administrator and prudently managed the tremendously difficult preparatory and logistical operations, which were necessary to defend British North America with limited resources, irregular communication with the home government, and with wildly heterogeneous troops. In this work, Grodzinski demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of the British command structure, military codes and regulations, logistical requirements, and rivalries between the navy and army. Military historians will therefore find his study an insightful guide to military operations along the border. Moreover, since most recent works by Canadian scholars only consider regional aspects, particular battles, and other specific topics concerning the war, Grodzinski's monograph is also the only broader examination spanning the entire war years from a Canadian perspective that has appeared of late and is therefore of particular significance.⁽²⁰⁾

As impressive as Grodzinski's specialized knowledge of the military aspects of the war is, the more

generally interested reader will find little information on the larger political, diplomatic, and cultural background of the conflict. In fact, we do not even learn very much about Prevost himself. How did he interpret Anglo-American relations, British foreign policy, and the American declaration of war? What were Prevost's political views? Did he have sympathies for the young nation, having been born in New Jersey himself, or did he come to despise the young republic in view of the atrocities committed in Canadian towns along the border? Did his view of the U.S. shape his military approach to the war? Was his conciliatory policy towards the French-speaking population in Canada informed by his own family roots in French-speaking Switzerland? Unfortunately, Grodzinski avoids questions about personality, identity, perception, and ideology, such that the lead character of his book appears strangely impersonal and static, void of attitudes of his own towards the issues at stake determined far afield. He comes across as an unimaginative bureaucrat who dutifully followed rules and orders, reacted professionally to outside pressures, and competently improvised to make up for insufficient means at his disposal. To a neutral observer who would not automatically sympathize with the objective of Prevost's exertions, it therefore remains difficult to evaluate Prevost as an historical character.

While the previously discussed books clearly interpreted the War of 1812 from national vantage points, the bicentennial also witnessed the publication of new studies that approach the conflict from a more international perspective. With *The War of 1812: Conflict for a Continent*, J. C. A. Stagg – Professor of History at the University of Virginia, author of numerous works on the War of 1812, and editor of *The Papers of James Madison* – has provided us with a concise 200-page synopsis of the Anglo-American conflict. Besides giving a diplomatic, political, administrative, and military overview of the conflict, his monograph's particular contribution to the literature is that it situates the war in the larger international context which was dominated by the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. He connects the developments of the European war with those in the American theater. How were, for instance, American and British war strategies adjusted after the defeat of the Grand Army in Russia and Napoleon's subsequent retreat and final expulsion from France? How was the British and American diplomacy at Ghent – to give another example – affected by the outcome of military encounters in the war?

In the first chapter, Stagg discusses the way the War of 1812 has been remembered in the United States and Canada. The second chapter gives an excellent overview of the international context and the events leading to the declaration of war. According to Stagg, the U.S. attacked Canada because its navy was too tiny to take up a real fight with the British, not because the acquisition of Canada was a war aim. Since America's manpower greatly surpassed that of Canada, it was simply an easier target. The following three chapters – being structured by the years 1812, 1813, and 1814 – examine the war years. The last chapter analyzes the diplomatic negotiations leading to the Treaty of Ghent and Stagg draws conclusions about the ramifications and the outcome of the war. He accurately outlines the wider diplomatic strategies and goals of both governments and explains how the military events in both North America and Europe played into the discussions. He does not agree with historians who – given that the U.S. did not achieve its stated war aims – consider the War of 1812 an American defeat. Great Britain also did not accomplish its goal of permanently securing Canada from a future American attack by readjusting the American-Canadian border, demilitarizing the Great Lakes, and creating an Indian buffer state in the Northwest, as Stagg argues (pp. 154–5). If anyone could be considered the victor it was the Canadians. With the help of British troops and the Royal Navy they were able to repel an American invasion and thus maintain their membership in the British Empire. Had the United States successfully conquered Canada, 'there could have been no Canadian confederation of the sort that was formed in 1867' (p. 155). If there was an outright loser in this conflict, it was the Native Americans residing within the territory of the United States. They lost significant amounts of land and were never again able to form a united resistance against American expansionism (p. 155).

Why then did the United States fail to take Canadian territory during the war, even though its larger population and resources gave it a distinct advantage over its northern neighbor? Again, Stagg disagrees with most of the explanations historians have given to this question. Madison was not as weak a wartime

leader as some scholars have claimed. Stagg also does not consider war strategy the most salient reason for America's failure to conquer Canada and he does not credit the British troops with superior performance. Once they took the offensive – as they did when they invaded the state of New York and marched down the Champlain Valley in 1814 – ‘the British were no more successful than the Americans’ (p. 159). Recruiting was also not the cause of the army's failure to take Canada, since the United States Army was far larger than the number of British regulars in North America. At the root of the army's problems was its poor organization and training. There was a high rate of turnover in the officer corps giving it little cohesion. Few officers had military experience and education. The War Department also promoted three ‘incompatible systems of drill’ during the war (p. 163). Finally, the U.S. Army did not employ most of its soldiers long enough to properly train them to march, to load and fire their weapons, and to practice battlefield maneuvers. ‘In short, the United States between 1812 and 1815 created the skeleton of an army, but it could never put flesh and muscle on that skeleton’ (p. 164). ‘The result was a largely untrained and haphazardly organized army, led by too many manifestly inadequate generals, that was in no condition to fulfill the strategic requirements of the Madison administration, namely that it seize enough Canadian territory to compel Great Britain to respect American neutral rights in a peace treaty’ (p. 164).

Stagg's *War of 1812* provides an excellent analysis of the international and domestic political context. Presenting the viewpoints of the various influential actors and drawing from his extensive research on the War of 1812, he makes very judicious and fair judgments. The large bibliographical section at the end of the book is very helpful and points to the important literature on various aspects of the war (unfortunately there are few footnotes referring to secondary literature in the text). The book is therefore to be highly recommended to students since it succinctly presents and analyses the policy choices, administrative requirements, military events, and relevant actors. The general reader however might find that there are too many details on the administrative aspects of the war and military campaigns, such as the in-depth recapitulation of the disputes between Armstrong and Harrison over military strategy in the Northwest (pp. 89–91), and between Armstrong and Wilkinson over where to attack Canada in 1813 (pp. 99–101). Stagg writes in detail about the mismanagement of financing the war, recruiting soldiers, and decisions about military personnel, but little about the cultural and social change surrounding the war. Nonetheless, together with Donald Hickey's account of the War of 1812, which appeared this year in a bicentennial edition, Stagg's book is the most authoritative general study of the conflict.[\(21\)](#)

While Stagg aptly outlines the international context of the War of 1812, he himself admittedly takes an American perspective concentrating on U.S. politics, diplomatic and military strategies, and the American administration of the war efforts. ‘Ideally ... the historian of the War of 1812 must acknowledge and synthesize the political histories of three, if not more, nation-states’. To give the monograph a narrative structure, however, Stagg organized his ‘new history of the War of 1812 around the story of the United States’ (p. 16). For a more global approach we therefore need to look at another work published for the occasion of the war's bicentennial, which also gives the British perspective its due attention.

Troy Bickham, Professor of History at Texas A&M University, is the first to provide an account that pays equal attention to both the American and the British side of the conflict.⁽²²⁾ He thus supersedes the usual national perspective that focuses on only one country's motivations and perceptions of international events. A glance at the table of content of *The Weight of Vengeance: The United States, the British Empire, and the War of 1812* makes his balanced approach clear. 'The American case for war' is followed by 'The British Empire's case for war' and 'Wartime opposition in the United States' is complemented by 'British opposition to the War'. He does not narrate the military history of the war, nor is his monograph a chronological account of the conflict. He rather scrutinizes why both nations found themselves at war with each other in 1812 and why the war ended in a peace treaty, which did not address the issues the United States had originally declared war for. His study is based on an analysis of an impressive array of primary sources, mainly contemporary newspapers and state papers from Great Britain, Canada, the British West Indies, and the United States.

Bickham's account places the War of 1812 in a more global context, emphasizing how intimately the War of 1812 was tied to the European conflict, and that the Anglo-American war transcended bilateral issues between the United States and Great Britain. American proponents of a declaration of war against Great Britain hoped that 'giving Britain a good drubbing would send an equally effective message to any other European power thinking of interfering with the United States' (p. 8). Many Britons considered the War of 1812 an extension of the European conflict. They were concerned about – what they perceived to be – the 'favoritism' Republicans showed to France. The U.S. provided France and her colonies with foodstuffs and other vital products, thus helping France keep up her war against Great Britain. The United States had furthermore bought Louisiana from France and thus provided Napoleon with fresh money to resume warfare against Great Britain. The Madison administration seemed to accept French restrictions on American trade, while it refused to compromise with Great Britain over neutral rights during wartime (pp. 65–6). British colonists in Canada also considered the United States a 'de facto ally of France, thereby linking their struggle in North America to the empire's global struggle' (p. 8).

Bickham also addresses the transnational linkages between both the United States and Great Britain and how they influenced the unfolding war. He emphasizes that Americans were not only heavily dependent on trade with Great Britain but that Americans also relied on British culture: 'fashion, news, literature, and music' (p. 11). This desire for British cultural products, 'along with the snobbish refusal of Britain's social elite to accept Americans as equals, helped to create an enormous chip on the shoulder of America's elite that bled into Anglo-American foreign relations' (p. 11). But the transatlantic flow of culture went both ways. America exported its republican ideology. 'In consequence, the British elite knew and resented, if not feared, the export of republicanism to the discontented peoples of the British Isles' (p. 12). British newspapers frequently quoted American papers to inform their readers what transpired on the other side of the Atlantic, and excerpts from British articles filled the columns of America's press. When they read American opposition papers, British policy-makers got the wrong impression about public opinion in America and assumed America would not go to war. 'Anyone reading a British newspaper in early 1812 could be forgiven for concluding that the United States was on the verge of breaking up, or at the very least that the vast majority of Americans opposed the war', since they mostly read Federalist papers from New England as a result of 'the structure of trade networks' (p. 94). U.S. policy makers on the other hand, reading British opposition papers, wrongly assumed there was widespread opposition to the orders-in-council in Britain, such that economic coercion or threats of war would make the British government relent. 'The close, and often selective, coverage in the American press of Britain's domestic opposition to the Orders in Council led many in the United States to believe that the pressure of a looming war would lead to repeal' (p. 89).

Bickham's original contribution to the discussions about the causes of the War of 1812 is that he does not only look at American policy makers' motivations and goals but also holds Great Britain responsible for the outbreak of war: 'the British government was not a spectator. Rather, it had a postcolonial agenda with regard to the United States that did not include its rise as the undisputed power in North America or as a commercial rival to Britain, and the War of 1812 was Britain's opportunity to advance that agenda' (pp.

9–10). The British government was aware that America might declare war because of the orders-in-council and the practice of impressment (p. 90). If the British government had wished to avoid war, it would have had ample opportunity to do so before June 1812 (p. 79). ‘To a great extent, Britain’s failure to yield has been dismissed by historians as a combination of British ignorance and arrogance, but such explanations seriously undermine the depth of British interests in the conflict’, Bickham argues (p. 90). ‘In fact, for many Britons war was preferable to the status quo, because a wartime setting would allow Britain to thwart more aggressively the rise of the United States’. As soon as war was officially declared, the Royal Navy would be in a position to capture American merchant vessels and sailors without having to follow peacetime regulations. American trade with the British Empire could be prohibited, benefitting the West Indian interest and British North America. American expansionism could be effectively stopped, and ‘perhaps greatest of all, the United States would at last be put in its proper place’ (pp. 90–1).

According to Bickham, the War of 1812 was both a power struggle over dominance in North America and an ideological struggle between American republicanism and British imperialism. ‘American supporters of the war argued victory would signify that the United States had shed its colonial past once and for all, placing Americans in control of what they increasingly believed was their destiny: dominance of the North American continent’ (p. 10). Furthermore, a successful war against the former mother country would vindicate the American experiment in republicanism, which had been subject to severe criticism after the French Revolution had turned radical and resulted in the dictatorship of Napoleon (p. 10). For Great Britain, the War of 1812 offered the chance to put a halt to American expansionism, which was viewed as increasingly threatening. The British government and British colonists in Canada feared that land-hungry Americans had ‘set their sights on the remnants of the British and Spanish North American empires’ (p. 74) and that the United States thus had to be subdued before it became too powerful. Had Great Britain won the war, she would have placed insurmountable barriers against further American westward expansion. In the peace negotiations, the British demanded an Indian buffer state in the Northwest and a readjustment of the American-Canadian border (pp. 10–11). ‘Thus for Britain the War of 1812 became a gamble for renewed empire in North America and the retention of British hegemony over the Atlantic world’ (p. 11) Defeating the American upstart republic was, moreover, a welcome opportunity to discredit republicanism. ‘The long war with Revolutionary France and fears of similar upheaval at home had clarified and entrenched British antipathy for republicanism and democracy’ (p. 52).

At face value it appears as though America lost the War of 1812 as the Treaty of Ghent did not settle the issues for which the United States had gone to war in the first place: neutral rights, impressment, and alleged British assistance to Indians on the frontier. In the end, America could be content to have survived the conflict which had increasingly turned in Britain’s favor. Bickham, however, does not consider the United States the ‘loser’ of the War of 1812. For him the major issue of the War of 1812 was ‘whether or not the United States would be respected as a sovereign nation rather than humbled as a quasi-part of the British Empire’ and by this account ‘Britain had lost’ (p. 263). Bickham claims that the British government was not just reacting to America’s ambitions but had itself pursued an aggressive agenda before and during the war. ‘It went to war to crush an emerging rival’ (p. 276) and in that endeavor it failed. British war aims became visible in the peace negotiations at Ghent, when the British diplomats demanded territorial gains for British North America and an independent Indian buffer state. Since the American negotiators were able to thwart Britain’s goals, and the British government accepted a peace on the basis of the pre-war status quo, Bickham concludes that Great Britain cannot be called the victor of this war. Great Britain was not able to decisively beat the United States after the British invasion force was defeated at the Battle of Plattsburg, the British public demanded a reduction of war-time taxes, and the Vienna Conference did not proceed as smoothly as the British government had hoped. These factors forced the Liverpool ministry to give up their territorial ambitions in North America. As a result, the War of 1812 encouraged and made possible Americans’ aggressive expansionism in the antebellum period. ‘Rather than humbling the United States, the war helped to create a nation that was far more powerful and resolute in its expansionist plans’ (p. 277). Moreover, it convinced European powers that attempts to meddle in North American affairs would prove futile. According to Bickham, the fact that the European powers did not intervene in America’s wars in the 19th

century – such as the Mexican-American War or the Civil War – was a direct result of the War of 1812 (p. 263).

Bickham's monograph is one of the most original reassessments recently published on the Anglo-American conflict. He masterfully synthesizes the large body of scholarship on the War of 1812, uses a wide array of primary sources, and successfully weaves together the American, Canadian, British, and West Indian perspectives. His monograph is up-to-date, carefully researched, and well-written, and his claims are informed by a broad outlook. Relegating explanations that are exclusively concerned with American reasons for declaring the war, his investigation into the perceptions of the British government in particular adds to the academic debate on the causes of the War of 1812.

At times, however, Bickham – exaggerating his conclusions on British motives – carries his case too far, for example when he insinuates that the British government actually wanted war and intentionally provoked the United States into declaring it: 'The British government had encouraged the United States into a war partly in order to curtail its power' (p. 243). This reading ignores that Great Britain could not wish an additional war with the United States, as she was tied up in a titanic struggle with Napoleonic France (evidenced for example by the fact that Great Britain hoped, for more than two months after the American declaration of war, that her repeal of the "offensive" orders-in-council would cause the American government to revoke its decision to engage in armed conflict), and that the American commencement of hostilities was not solely the result of diplomatic disputes, but – at least in part – the result of an anti-British American nationalism, which the British government certainly did not deliberately incite.⁽²³⁾ Bickham misinterprets his sources when trying to back his claim of British responsibility for the war. Britain's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Lord Castlereagh told Britain's Minister in the United States, Augustus John Foster, that he should 'conduct [himself] with the utmost Conciliation towards America' without giving up what Britain considered her rights and essential for her national survival, such as the right to impress British subjects from American merchant vessels on the high seas. If the American government concluded that this was grounds for war, Foster was 'to throw distinctly upon the United States the option of War' (p. 98). The British government preferred risking war with America to compromising its naval superiority, but to infer from this that it actively sought war is too sweeping a conclusion. Bickham claims: 'America was intentionally being forced into a corner, leaving its government no choice but to yield or to fight its way out' (p. 99). One might more accurately argue that the Jefferson and Madison Administrations had positioned the United States to either give in or declare war, notably by refusing compromise in the abortive Monroe-Pinkney Treaty of 1806 and waging ill-conceived economic warfare against Great Britain through the Embargo Act, Non-Intercourse Act, and Madison's acceptance of the Cadore-Letter. The fact that the British government wished to cast the responsibility of war onto the United States – if the latter was to declare it – is not tantamount to a British desire for war.

In his evaluation of the conflict, moreover, Bickham does not consider the fact that at the war's beginning many Britons and Canadians feared that Canada would be easy prey for the Americans. Yet one of the results of the inconclusive War of 1812 was that the United States never again attacked Canada or tried to incorporate it into the union. In this sense, Great Britain was successful in convincing Americans that attempts to conquer Canada would be futile and would meet massive British resistance. His monograph will in any event fuel the ongoing debate how to interpret the result of the Treaty of Ghent.⁽²⁴⁾

Finally, one might add that a truly global history of the War of 1812 would have required an analysis of Napoleon's policies, the positions and perceptions of the Spanish, and the situation, aims, and clashes of Native Americans on both sides of the United States-Canadian border as well. Generally, the bicentennial literature on the War of 1812 suffers from a lack of attention to Native Americans and their motives, strategies, and intra-tribal conflicts, even though between 1812 and 1815 the U.S. waged war not only against Great Britain and its North American territories, but also against various Indian tribes. The Patriot War between American filibusters and Spanish East Florida also took place at the same time and was linked to the Anglo-American conflict. Furthermore, Lawrence S. Kaplan's research on how Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 was connected to the American declaration of war deserves reconsideration and

integration into a global account of the conflict.(25)

As argued in the two preceding reviews, one way to go beyond the national narratives that have dominated academic discussions of the War of 1812 is to take a more international approach by integrating the perspectives of the various participating nations into an interpretive thread. Yet another way to transcend the nation-state framework is to focus on marginalized groups whose roles and contributions have been largely ignored by the scholarship that is concerned with governments, diplomatic negotiations, and military encounters. Two such works examining the conflict from hitherto neglected points of view – gender and race – are particularly worthy of thorough discussion.

While not focused on the experience of women during the war as such, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism* by Nicole Eustace, Associate Professor of History at New York University, investigates how the American nationalism incited by the War of 1812 was linked with gender *representations*.(26) The war became popular, she argues, since Republican writers and artists were able to link love of country to participation in the war and to romantic affections (p. xiii). Examining primarily presidential speeches, newspaper editorials, political cartoons, novels, plays, poems, and tavern songs, Eustace shows that during the conflict Republicans depicted the war ‘as a romantic adventure, one in which dashing young men went to war to win the hearts of patriotic maidens and in which the thrill of romantic love contributed directly to the surge of patriotism’ (p. xiii).

Since Eustace unravels many new fascinating aspects of the war and its cultural representation, it is worthwhile recapitulating some of her arguments. In chapter one, she demonstrates that Republicans, before and during the War of 1812, came to equate population growth with national power. Individual reproduction and national expansion were thus intrinsically linked. ‘So long as population was *the* fundamental source of strength for the country then anyone’s sexuality could not only foster personal happiness but also contribute to the very foundation of the nation’ (pp. 33–5). In this way existing political inequalities could be fomented. Even though women were not allowed to vote, they could still become members of the nation: by producing progeny for the nation and thus adding to the strength of the nation. In return, they would be protected from America’s external enemies (p. 30).

In chapter two, Eustace shows that war proponents linked love of country to romantic ardor. Men should win the hearts of women by taking part in the war and women should ‘sport’ with soldiers, ‘for men who met their obligations to country would never fail to respect those to their sexual partners’ (p. 53). By presenting women as the reward for soldiers, war supporters – for example, in songster books or broadside ballad posters – linked nationalism, war-making, and sexuality: ‘all women were encouraged to incite in men the sexual ardor that both spurred population and stirred acts of patriotism’ (p. 53). Eustace comes to the conclusion: ‘the message for women was clear: they were to enter marriages as men entered military service’ (p. 100). The message for young men was that they could more easily find a woman willing to marry them if they first showed their devotion to the nation through military service (p. 54).

According to Eustace, the issue of impressment allowed Americans to gain the upper hand in arguments with the British over who possessed more virtue, as laid out in chapter three. Whereas the British criticized Americans’ hypocrisy claiming liberty for themselves, while enslaving the black population and driving Indians off their lands, American politicians and popular polemicists used the issue of impressment ‘to tip the scales of virtue back toward the United States’ (p. 78). They insisted that American sailors forced into the service of the Royal Navy not only lost their personal freedom and their freedom to choose a national allegiance; but also that they were violently separated from their families (p. 78). ‘Portraits of gallant husbands and dedicated fathers severed from their families and compelled to miserable toil in the floating dungeons of an enemy nation proved highly effective in American efforts to dramatize the issue of British impressment’ (p. 78). Waging war against the former mother country, she explains, thus ‘became a means of reuniting lost lovers’ (p. 81). Americans – by contrast – honored Britons’ and Canadians’ familial ties, as

war supporters claimed. When Captain Oliver Perry defeated the British fleet on Lake Erie, he allegedly allowed Canadian sailor-husbands to reunite with their wives and thus displayed his respect 'for the marriage obligations of the Canadian men who fell into his hands' (p. 80). The Republican public could find comfort in this 'sharp contrast between the American naval hero and the standard procedures of the British press gang' (p. 80).

In chapter four, Eustace hones in on 'the key relationship between population expansion and territorial expansion' (p. 119). More land would allow American families to grow larger; more descendants would allow America to seize more land from the Indians. In this context, captivity novels (stories of white Americans being abducted by Indians), of which a dozen appeared during the war years, played an important role in fostering pro-war sentiment. They warned about the dangers of 'illicit love between the politically distinct populations of the United States and Indian nations', since it would undermine America's position in this 'war for population domination' (p. 123). Novelists thus sought to elicit 'feelings of repulsion toward Indians' by depicting Indians as sexually unattractive and to stir 'domestic desires' at the same time in order to promote American patriotism (p. 124). The happy ending of many of these captivity narratives consisted of a marriage between a returning captive and another white American. 'Patriotic white women did *not* have to avoid sexuality altogether; but the sole focus was to be on forming a fruitful and faithful relationship with a white husband' (p. 131). Patriotism, war-making, expansionism, and gender relations were thus bound together in a powerful mix: 'The nation needed men to win the land and women to populate it' (p. 138).

The War of 1812 was not only a military battle, as Eustace makes clear in chapter five, but also a symbolic battle over whether the United States or Great Britain was the true 'land of liberty'. Given the existence of slavery in the United States, and the fact that Great Britain used her Royal Navy to put an end to the Atlantic slave trade, the American republic 'lost significant moral ground to the [British] monarchy whenever anyone raised the issue of slavery' (p. 169). Abolitionists in the United States sought to gain the upper hand in this struggle by suggesting slavery should be abolished there. Most Republicans, however, did not embrace such a solution in this symbolic fight with the British but instead came up with ways to defend American slavery. One strategy was to depict the British practice of impressment as worse than American slavery. America's chargé d'affaires in London, Jonathan Russell, for example told Britain's foreign minister that impressed U.S. seafarers suffered more than enslaved Africans, 'because once Africans had been torn from their homeland they had no chance of ever meeting kith or kin again, whereas American sailors forced into British service might very well be put into the position of having to fight against members of their own families' (p. 174). Not only did British press gangs sever American men from their families, but Britain's Indian allies killed American women and children in the Northwest, they argued (p. 170). Yet another strategy to justify slavery was to declare black slaves as part of the larger 'family' of the plantation owner. When the British tried to encourage slaves to escape, they were, in fact, breaking apart American households (p. 203). Finally, Republicans depicted the British burning of the American capital in August 1814 as proof that the British – allegedly laying waste to the homes of American families – were worse than Americans who incorporated black slaves into their own families (p. 204).

Finally, Eustace explains how Republicans could proclaim the War of 1812 as a success, even though the stated diplomatic war aims were not mentioned in the Treaty of Ghent. After the Battle of New Orleans, Republicans throughout the United States circulated the lie that the British soldiers had allegedly been promised the women of New Orleans as their reward. This story, although untrue, 'helped validate assertions that American men fought for country because of the romantic ardor they felt for their wives and sweethearts' (p. 214). Even though it had not resulted in diplomatic gains, Americans could thus celebrate the Treaty of Ghent because, it seemed, 'American men had protected their women' (p. 216). This tale about how American men had protected their women against sexual violence by British soldiers allowed men to ignore the issue of women's citizenship and of gender inequality in marriage. 'Framing Jackson's victory at New Orleans as a strike against sexual assault helped men maintain the proposition that, even in the absence of any other economic or political rights, wives owed unquestioned allegiance to their husbands and their nation in return for simple protection from rape' (p. 218).

Among the most significant results of the War, according to Eustace, was the defeat of Great Britain's Indian allies. As the Indians in the Northwest and Southwest had been beaten during the war and as Great Britain withdrew her demand for an independent Indian buffer state in the peace negotiations, the remaining barriers to Americans' westward expansion were lifted. 'The decision to do nothing at Ghent meant everything to the Indians who faced certain dispossession from that day forward' (p. 227). The exclusion of women from full citizenship was another important result. The war and its depiction as a fight between virtuous American husbands and English, Indian, and black rapists put the issue of whether women should be given equal citizenship off the agenda (p. 218). Finally, the War of 1812 resulted in the marshaling of patriotism: 'it mattered less who took up arms to fight than who opened their hearts to feel. Sharing in the emotional experience of patriotism created real and recognized contributions to the strength of the nation even in the absence of any concerted action' (p. 220).

Probably no book published on the occasion of the bicentenary of the War of 1812 offers such an original and refreshing perspective on the War of 1812 as Eustace's. The role of gender in popular representations of the war but also its relation to the burgeoning American nationalism in the war years had hitherto yet to be addressed in such a compelling manner. What could however have strengthened Eustace's case is if she had also investigated the causes of the War of 1812 through a cultural lens and thus been able to draw links between the development of American nationalism and changes in gender relations to the outbreak of war. It is also not clear in what way the popular depiction of the war influenced either the decisions of federal policy-makers or the conduct of American soldiers in military encounters with the British. What effects the skillfully unraveled narrative structures had on public policy is thus not clear. This is not so much a criticism, however, but rather a call for scholars to build upon Eustace's perceptive study to investigate, using a cultural approach, the origins and the course of the War of 1812 anew.

Gene Allen Smith, Professor of History at Texas Christian University, examines the various responses of African Americans to the challenges of the War of 1812 in *The Slaves' Gamble: Choosing Sides in the War of 1812*. Both free blacks and slaves faced a multitude of options at the outset of the conflict and they chose different sides. Some of them fought for the United States, some fled to the British lines, others supported the Spanish, formed maroon communities of their own, or joined Native American tribes. Whatever path they took, the War of 1812 offered them the chance to actively 'advance their own agenda' (p. 2). As all parties taking part in the War of 1812 tried to leverage the African American population for their purposes, blacks in turn sought 'to better their material conditions' and to attain freedom by playing 'the competing powers against one another' (p. 3). Several thousand free blacks enlisted in the U.S. Army and Navy. But numerous slaves in the South also fled to Spanish Florida, escaped to British outposts, or ran away to the western frontier in order to found or join mulatto and Indian communities, which were out of the reach of the U.S. government, in order to wrest their freedom from southern slaveholders.

In the first chapter, Smith gives an overview of how black Americans had joined military forces in the colonial period and the American Revolution. Due to a shortage of white manpower, colonial administrations had frequently resorted to the inclusion of blacks in their troops in imperial wars and conflicts with Native Americans. During the War of Independence, the British had promised freedom to slaves if they enlisted in the British army. The Spanish government had also welcomed runaway slaves and free blacks in Florida, as it hoped they would help defend the peninsula from American incursions.

The main section of Smith's monograph then covers the various theatres of the War of 1812, starting with the fighting along the American-Canadian border and on the high seas. Some of the former Canadian slaves – who had fled to the Michigan Territory, where prior to the war slavery was forbidden – joined American forces. Still, blacks' participation on the American side of the war in the northwest was limited, Smith finds, as there were no all-black units in the militia and enlistments in the regular army were not yet possible. The contribution of African-Americans to the American maritime forces was more important, as the U.S. Navy

recruited seamen from all races and nationalities – an official policy of non-employment of ‘any persons of color’ notwithstanding (p. 52). Despite the harsh life on the ships, blacks had an incentive to join the navy, since it allowed them ‘avoid the overt racism and bigotry of the landed world.’ (p. 51) They made up between 10 and 20 per cent of the crews of U.S. naval vessels and privateers; yet, they were mostly plain seamen and cooks, and there was hardly any chance for them to be promoted. Blacks also served as soldiers on the Canadian side providing ‘the necessary manpower that permitted Britain to withstand repeated American onslaughts and hold on to Canada’ (p. 46).

The next chapter examines the role African-American played in the Florida Patriot War – an unofficial conflict between Spain and American volunteers over the Spanish-American borderlands. Over the course of the early republic, many slaves in the South had fled across the border, as the Spanish colony offered them freedom. The Spanish government had an interest in escaped slaves’ immigration, since they could help defend the colony against aggressive Anglo-American settlers. Slave-owners in the U.S. on the other hand feared that the example of free blacks across the border could inspire a slave revolt in the American South. When war broke out, blacks and Native Americans in Florida joined the Spanish to fight off the white American intruders. Without African Americans’ contribution, Smith argues, Florida could not have been successfully defended. Unfortunately, their efforts proved to be in vain, as Spain would sell Florida to the U.S. in 1821. Spanish officials had come to the conclusion that the colony could not be defended infinitely against American expansionism.

The British attacks on Washington and Baltimore are the topic of the next chapter, and Smith details how the British tried to take advantage of southern slave owners’ fears of a slave rebellion by promising freedom to slaves who would make it to British lines when the Royal Navy raided the Chesapeake coastline and established a post at Cumberland Island off the coast of southern Georgia. Thousands of slaves took the risk of being wounded or captured and punished or even killed to escape from bondage. What is more, numerous slaves joined British forces and returned armed to fight their former slave masters. British commanders were aware that the employment of former slaves did not only offset the manpower constraints problem faced by a Britain simultaneously embroiled in a war against Napoleonic France, the measure also sent shockwaves to terrified slave-owners in the South. Yet, black slaves would only dare escape if the British operated in their immediate vicinity. Otherwise, the risk of being captured would be too great. Most slaves, therefore, never had the opportunity to flee. Free blacks, moreover, often chose to fight on the American side, such as in the defense of Baltimore in 1814, because they feared they had more to lose were a regime change to occur. Their contributions to the American cause, however, would rarely be appreciated.

The next chapter on the war operations in the American South examines inter alia how the British reacted to news of peace and how they dealt with the ensuing problem of what to do with the slaves that had escaped to them during the war. After all, southern slave-owners, pointing to the peace treaty’s stipulation that slaves should be returned, now demanded them back. However, the British Admiral George Cockburn, who was in command of the North American station, stalled proceedings in order to gain time to remove as many slaves from Cumberland Island, where they had been assembled, as he could. When he finally transferred control of the island back to American troops, only 81 slaves remained. News of the peace treaty not yet having reached Louisiana, General Andrew Jackson, on the American side, meanwhile chose to accept free blacks in his army’s ranks in order to defend New Orleans against a British attack, promising them bounty in lands and money. He even welcomed slaves but later refused to reward them by giving them freedom, instead returning them to their owners. Free blacks’ military service also failed to elevate their social status. To the contrary, their contributions to the campaign had actually raised racial tension rather than built interracial trust.

The final chapter investigates the fate of African-Americans in the aftermath of the war. The slaves whom the British had evacuated to Bermuda during and at the end of the war to protect them from American assaults were sent to Britain’s New World colonies. Most liberated slaves were moved to Canada, where most of them remained impoverished for the next decades, but at least they were no longer enslaved. Others were relocated to Trinidad and Tobago where they helped the British expand their control of the islands and

became successful farmers. While a significant number of slaves died of hunger or diseases during the resettlement process, the British did not sell any of them back to American slave-owners and kept their promise of freedom. 'Many British officials in London were trying to dismantle the slave-based Old Colonial system and replace it with a modern free market empire where British commerce dominated the world. Those same officials ultimately saw the choices made by refugees as a method for taming harsh and remote British colonial lands, creating British consumers and producers, and expanding the reach of the growing British Empire', Smith concludes (p. 205). For free blacks who had fought for the U.S., by contrast, little changed for the better after the war. Promises of land and pensions would only be fulfilled decades later – if at all – and racial segregation and discrimination would become even more severe in the antebellum South. Maroon communities in the U.S.-Florida borderlands would not be able to enjoy their freedom for long, as American troops raided runaway-slaves' forts and re-enslaved their inhabitants in the immediate post-war years.

For the next three years, the American and British governments would haggle over how many slaves the British had evacuated and negotiate how much indemnification American slave-owners were due to receive for their 'property' loss. In the end, the governments agreed that Great Britain would pay \$1,204,960 to the U.S. for 3,582 slaves taken from U.S. soil during the war. Based on reports of refugees arriving in Britain's colonies and on their enlistments in the British Army and Navy, Smith estimates that the actual number could have been even higher. In view of the fact that there were more than 1.1 million slaves living in the U.S. at the time, Smith, however, argues that the War of 1812 never really threatened the institution of slavery in the South.

Nonetheless, the Anglo-American conflict substantially increased Southerners' fears of slave rebellions. As many slaves escaped during the war – taking advantage of the fact that British forces were in the vicinity and the absence of the militias – slave-owners became convinced 'of the need to tighten their bonds of control' (p. 3). While Smith lays out in detail how African Americans sought to use the war to advance their status, he also emphasizes that the War of 1812 would have profound repercussions on blacks who had not achieved freedom by escaping to the British. White southerners would also force free blacks who they believed might foment a slave rebellion to migrate north. Of even greater impact would be the trouncing – once and for all – of concerted Native American resistance in the hinterland, which opened up the West to settlement and thus allowed for the expansion of slavery, giving the institution a future which before the War of 1812 many Southerners had started doubting. Before the War of 1812, slavery was a fragile institution, as Smith claims. In the North, it had been abolished or was about to disappear. In the South, slavery was not as entrenched as at the time of the revolution and it regularly happened that individual slaves were set free. The Anglo-American war, however, reversed this trend. 'The results of the War of 1812 were undeniably for slavery', Smith concludes (p. 214).

By analyzing a multitude of sources such as public records, personal memoirs, and diplomatic and military correspondence in archives throughout the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain, Smith provides an in-depth account of the role of African-Americans in the War of 1812 and thus filled what might have been the most serious gap in the literature on the conflict. Since – with the exception of the Florida Patriot War that has been examined in detail elsewhere – he moved into terra incognita, it is not surprising that his monograph is at times more descriptive than analytical.⁽²⁷⁾ Smith also does not discuss the role of slavery in the coming of the War of 1812 and – by focusing on African-American experiences – does not comprehensively reconstruct white Americans' reactions to the escape of black slaves. Since Smith's book is a pioneering work, this does not amount to a criticism of his research but is rather an expression of hope that future scholars will use Smith's meticulous study as a starting point to delve deeper into the cultural background of the War of 1812 with a focus on race relations in the early republic. One could investigate, for example, whether Southern slave-owners feared that black slaves' achievement of freedom through their escape behind British lines and the simultaneous 'enslavement' of white Americans by the British through the practice of impressment would challenge the racial basis of slavery in the American South.

While the occasion of the bicentennial has, on the one hand, seen the publication of monographs reaffirming and adding new layers to the traditional national narratives (Hart and Penman, Howard, Lambert, and Grodzinski), it has, on the other hand, also witnessed the application of new approaches which transcend the national perspectives. Eustace and Smith examined the war's impact on gender relations and African-Americans. The former demonstrated that the War of 1812 served to reaffirm traditional gender roles and to exclude women from politics; the latter detailed how free blacks and slaves responded to the opportunities and challenges the war offered them and emphasized that the war gave slavery a future by allowing for the expansion of this 'peculiar institution' to the west. More than simply a nationalizing event, the War of 1812 thus cemented existing gender and racial hierarchies. Future research could build on these studies to find new explanations for the origins of the war. While it is understandable that scholars investigating the role of women and African-Americans are initially little concerned with the causes of the conflict, as these groups had little influence on public policy in the early 19th century, it is possible that changes in and anxieties about gender and race relations might have contributed to the larger cultural context of America's declaration of war.

Bickham (and to a lesser extent Stagg) analyzed the War of 1812 from multiple national perspectives and persuasively argued that, in order to understand why the war came about and why it resulted in the Treaty of Ghent, one cannot simply look at American sources but must take into account how British and Canadian actors perceived and shaped developments in the Euro-Atlantic world and which objectives they pursued. A truly encompassing interpretation of the War of 1812 would, however, also have to incorporate French, Spanish, Native American, and African American sides of the story. The various Native American populations' perspectives in particular are markedly absent from most general accounts of the conflict. While they do mention that Native Americans took part in battles, they usually represent them as mere allies or proxies of American and British forces with little to no agenda of their own. We still know too little about the options they had, the pressures to which they were exposed, the goals they pursued, and thus why they decided to participate in the conflict and chose a particular side. This interpretive framework that leaves the Indian populations at the sidelines is all the more in need of revision, since it was them who were affected most by the war's outcome. Admittedly, excellent studies on Tecumseh and the Shawnees in the Old Northwest (28), the role of the Iroquois in the War of 1812 (29), and the Creek Wars in the Old Southwest do exist (30), but they have not been integrated into a coherent narrative and their findings are rarely connected to the larger story as to how the U.S. and Great Britain became embroiled in a war with each other. Since scholars used the bicentennial to publish their individual research on specific topics related to the war, it is not surprising that no authoritative overarching study on the conflict has come out in recent years. One might hope, however, that in the near future the abundance of new literature will be integrated into a compelling synthesis which would take into account the competing perspectives of all the groups that took part in the conflict.

Notes

1. C. P. Stacey, 'The War of 1812 in Canadian history', in *The Defended Border: Upper Canada and the War of 1812*, ed. Morris Zaslow and Wesley Turner (Toronto, 1964), p. 331.[Back to \(1\)](#)
2. The percentage numbers are the result of a poll on the War of 1812 conducted by Phoenix Strategic Perspectives for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces.[Back to \(2\)](#)
3. Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana, IL, 1989).[Back to \(3\)](#)
4. In fact, given the large number of French Canadians and the 'late loyalists' – U.S. Americans who had emigrated to Canada after the American Revolution in search for cheap land – and also given the intensive family and trade relations between inhabitants on both sides of the border, Canadians' allegiances were not clear at all in 1812. For the personal ties between inhabitants on both sides of the border see Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York, NY, 2010).[Back to \(4\)](#)

5. Karim M. Tiro, 'Now you see it, now you don't: the War of 1812 in Canada and the United States in 1812', *Public Historian*, 35, 1 (2013), p. 90.[Back to \(5\)](#)
6. The poll was commissioned by the Historica-Dominion Institute and conducted by Ipsos-Reid in January 2012.[Back to \(6\)](#)
7. Government of Canada, *The War of 1812, Historical Overview, Did You Know?* <<http://1812.gc.ca/eng/1305743100762/1305743162190> [9]> [accessed 2 August 2014].[Back to \(7\)](#)
8. William Kingsford, *History of Canada* (10 vols., Toronto, 1887–98), viii, pp. 579–80.[Back to \(8\)](#)
9. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging of the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven, NY, 1992); C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780–1830* (London, 1989).[Back to \(9\)](#)
10. See Roy Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807–1815* (New Haven, NY, 1996), p. 232. Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England 1783–1846* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 230–1. Arthur Herman, *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World* (New York, NY, 2004), p. 411.[Back to \(10\)](#)
11. Noah Webster – engaged in efforts to promote American nationalism in the postwar period – produced an American dictionary which distinguished American English from the British original.[Back to \(11\)](#)
12. The original flag can be seen in the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.[Back to \(12\)](#)
13. Samuel Wilson, a supplier for meat to the Army from Troy, New York, stamped his barrels 'U.S.' This abbreviation later evolved into the figure 'Uncle Sam'.[Back to \(13\)](#)
14. More comprehensive popular histories of the War of 1812 are Walter R. Borneman, *1812: The War That Forged a Nation* (New York, NY, 2004). A. J. Langguth, *Union 1812: The Americans Who Fought the Second War of Independence* (New York, NY, 2006).[Back to \(14\)](#)
15. For Dolly Madison's role in the War of 1812 also see Catherine Allgore, *A Perfect Union: Dolly Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York, NY, 2006).[Back to \(15\)](#)
16. Brian Arthur, *How Britain Won the War of 1812: The Royal Navy's Blockades of the United States, 1812-1815* (Woodbridge, 2011).[Back to \(16\)](#)
17. Jasper M. Trautsch, 'The Causes of the War of 1812: 200 Years of Debate', *Journal of Military History*, 77, 1 (2013), pp. 275–8.[Back to \(17\)](#)
18. Another British historian who argued that the American declaration of war was an attempted land grab was Jon Latimer, *1812: War with America* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).[Back to \(18\)](#)
19. The bicentennial witnessed the publication of yet two more biographies of Brock. Wesley B. Turner, *The Astonishing General: The Life and Legacy of Sir Isaac Brock* (Toronto, 2011). Jonathon Riley, *A Matter of Honour: The Life, Campaigns and Generalship of Isaac Brock* (Montreal, 2011).[Back to \(19\)](#)
20. For this recent Canadian literature see John R. Grodzinski, 'Opening shots from the bicentenary of the War of 1812: a Canadian perspective on recent titles', *Journal of Military History*, 76, 4 (2012), pp. 1187–1201.[Back to \(20\)](#)
21. Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict*, bicentennial edition (Urbana, IL, 2012).[Back to \(21\)](#)
22. Bradford Perkins also examined both American and British sources for his classic on early Anglo-American relations in the early 19th century but he came to the conclusion that Britain's foreign policy was largely reactive and was not based on a larger 'grand design' for North America. Bradford Perkins, *Prologue to War: England and the United States, 1805–1812* (Berkeley, CA, 1961). Jeremy Black also analyzed the war in a global context but he was more concerned with the military history of the war than with its origins and long-term effects. Jeremy Black, *The War of 1812 in the Age of Napoleon* (Norman, OK, 2009).[Back to \(22\)](#)
23. For the linkage of American nationalism and the American declaration of war see Jasper M. Trautsch, "'Mr. Madison's War" or the dynamic of American nationalism?', *Early American Studies*, 10, 3 (2012), pp. 630–70.[Back to \(23\)](#)
24. The contentious national perspectives on the conflict have sparked vigorous debate in the past. Wikipedia editors, for example, would find no compromise over the question who won the War of 1812 such that they had to appeal to Wikipedia's mediation process to solve the issue. Richard Jensen, 'Military History on the electronic frontier: Wikipedia fights the War of 1812', *Journal of Military History*

- , 76, 4 (2012), pp. 1165–82.[Back to \(24\)](#)
25. Lawrence S. Kaplan, 'France and Madison's decision for War, 1812', *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 50, 4 (1964), pp. 652–71. Idem, 'France and the War of 1812', *Journal of American History*, 57, 1 (1970), pp. 36–47.[Back to \(25\)](#)
 26. The experience of American, British, and Native American women during the war is examined in Dianne Graves, *In the Midst of Alarms: The Untold Story of Women in the War of 1812* (Montreal, 2007).[Back to \(26\)](#)
 27. For the role of African-Americans in the Florida Patriot War see, for example, Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana, IL, 1999). Larry E. Rivers, *Rebels and Runaways: Slave Resistance in Nineteenth Century Florida* (Urbana, IL, 2012).[Back to \(27\)](#)
 28. Cf. R. David Edmunds, *Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY, 2007). Colin G. Calloway, *The Shawnees and the War for America* (New York, NY, 2007).[Back to \(28\)](#)
 29. Cf. Carl Benn, *The Iroquois in the War of 1812* (Toronto, 1998).[Back to \(29\)](#)
 30. Cf. Frank L. Owsley Jr., *Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812–1815* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2000). Gregory A. Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813–1814* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2006). *Tohopeka: Rethinking the Creek War and the War of 1812*, ed. Kathryn E. Holland Braund (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2012).[Back to \(30\)](#)

Other reviews:

New York Times

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/26/arts/design/1812-a-nation-emerges-at-national-portrait-gallery.html>
[10]

Washington Post

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/gog/exhibits/1812-a-nation-emerges,1230708/critic-review.html> [11]

Washington Independent Review of Books

<http://www.washingtonindependentreviewofbooks.com/bookreview/mr-and-mrs-madison%E2%80%99s-war-america%E2%80%99s-first-couple-and-the-second-war-of-independence%E2%80%A8/> [12]

Washington Independent Review of Books (2)

<http://www.washingtonindependentreviewofbooks.com/bookreview/the-war-of-1812-conflict-for-a-continent/> [13]

History News Network

<http://hnn.us/articles/jim-cullen-review-troy-bickham-weight-vengeance-united-states-british-empire-and-war-1812-o> [14]

Wall Street Journal

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304211804577504682349762066.html> [15]

Weekly Standard

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[6] <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/item/129259>

[7] <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/item/129260>

[8] <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/item/129261>

[9] <http://1812.gc.ca/eng/1305743100762/1305743162190>

[10] <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/26/arts/design/1812-a-nation-emerges-at-national-portrait-gallery.html?pagewanted=all>

[11] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/gog/exhibits/1812-a-nation-emerges,1230708/critic-review.html>

[12] <http://www.washingtonindependentreviewofbooks.com/bookreview/mr-and-mrs-madison%E2%80%99s-war-america%E2%80%99s-first-couple-and-the-second-war-of-independence%E2%80%A8/>

[13] <http://www.washingtonindependentreviewofbooks.com/bookreview/the-war-of-1812-conflict-for-a-continent/>

[14] <http://hnn.us/articles/jim-cullen-review-troy-bickham-weight-vengeance-united-states-british-empire-and-war-1812-o>

[15] <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304211804577504682349762066.html>

[16] http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/war-without-victory_657905.html

War of 1812, conflict fought between the United States and Great Britain over British violations of U.S. maritime rights. It ended with the exchange of ratifications of the Treaty of Ghent. Learn more about the causes, effects, and significance of the War of 1812 in this article. The practice during the Napoleonic Wars of the British Navy accosting American merchant ships and seizing alleged deserters who were actually U.S. citizens. outcomes. The arbitration clauses in the Treaty of Ghent that ended the war established methods for dealing with outstanding disagreements that could be adapted to changes in both American and British governments, sowing the seeds of the lasting Anglo-American comity. In the immediate aftermath of the war, American commentators painted the battles of 1812-15 as part of a glorious "second war for independence." As the 19th century progressed, this view changed into a more general story about the "birth of American freedom" and the founding of the Union. But even this note could not be sustained, and by the end of the century, the historian Henry Adams was depicting the war as an aimless exercise in blunder, arrogance and human folly. All British accounts of the war "no matter how brief" concentrate on the perceived inequality of purpose between the conflict across the Atlantic and the one in Europe: with the former being about wounded feelings and inconvenience, and the latter about survival or annihilation. THE WAR OF 1812 stands out as one of the most ironic conflicts in U.S. history. For openers, the two-and-a-half-year Anglo-American feud should never have happened. It sprung from a diplomatic impasse between Washington and London that had already been resolved by the time the first shots were fired. Also, there was no winner in the War of 1812. And no loser; both sides simply agreed to terminate hostilities. And the many oddities of the War of 1812 don't end there. Here are a dozen even more surprising facts about America's most outlandish armed conflict. George Washington accepts the English surrender at Yorktown. The War of 1812 sprung from lingering resentment between Britain and America held over from the Revolution. (Image source: WikiCommons).