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The Gods of Prophetstown: The Battle of Tippecanoe and the Holy War for the American Frontier by Adam Jortner (review)

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ed, to notice the uniqueness in the ordinary. This emphasis on *seeing* is indeed what I've long believed is the central theme of contemporary midwestern literature, especially as we become more and more immersed in the increasingly intrusive and distracting world which surrounds us. Were I still editing anthologies of contemporary midwestern literature, such insightful and enjoyable essays as "A Sense of Snow," "Parade Season," or "Summer Night" could certainly be included.

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Adam Jortner, *The Gods of Prophetstown: The Battle of Tippecanoe and the Holy War for the American Frontier*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

310 pp. \$27.95.

In the predawn of November 7, 1811, in what is today northwestern Indiana, a pan-tribal force of American Indian warriors under the spiritual guidance of Tenskwatawa, known to Anglo American contemporaries as the Shawnee Prophet, launched a preemptive attack on an American army under the command of William Henry Harrison, the Indiana Territorial Governor. Harrison was leading his own preemptive invasion of Indian country, hoping to cow and discredit Tenskwatawa's movement. Despite the nighttime surprise and a determined Indian assault, Harrison's forces held. Subsequently Tenskwatawa's followers abandoned their town, and Harrison's forces destroyed it and its valued agricultural stores. Adam Jortner's *The Gods of Prophetstown* is an ambitious dual biography of the two antagonists whose followers met at this battle, known to history as the Battle of Tippecanoe.

This is not an untold story. Immediately following the battle, Harrison's provocative actions were debated among his partisans and rivals. Superiors chided him for potentially prompting an unnecessary Indian war. Fortunately for Harrison, the outbreak of the War of 1812 on the heels of battle accommodated some artful revisionism. Although occurring before the outbreak of war, Tippecanoe was recast as a successful chapter in a war that advanced America's destiny as an expansive, continental empire. In pursuit of the Presidency, Harrison played no small role in this revisionism. Others, more interested in what the battle had to say about Ameri-

can Indians, saw in the battle a lost revolution, a multitribal army able to overcome parochial differences. From this vantage, the Prophet's brother, warrior-diplomat Tecumseh, was the leader of the movement. Likened to other New World heroes Washington and Bolivar, he has been cast as the symbol of national unity and the practitioner of anticolonial military genius. In this light, his untimely absence from Prophetstown helps explain the Indian defeat. More recently scholars interested in histories that take into account Indian experiences and perspectives have considered the rhetoric of the movement and the motivations of its participants. These scholars relocate the impetus for the movement with Tenskwatawa and his spiritual attack upon colonialism.

Jortner promises to bring new life to this story and its chief protagonists by taking the realms of faith seriously and by recognizing that history might have turned out differently. First he suggests looking at the conflict as a "very much religious war—the Great Spirit against providence." He suggests that previous historians who have emphasized the Prophet's religious role have done so in ways that actually, if unintentionally, slight religion and its practitioners. Particularly by casting the Prophet as disingenuous and his resistance as futile, these historians have too readily dismissed the possibility that the Prophet was genuine and that his movement offered a practicable solution to American expansion. In Jortner's view, Tenskwatawa's practicable solution was a religiously inspired military victory that would have crushed the United States' providential notion of Manifest Destiny before it took full shape.

Many ethnohistorians will disagree with Jortner's view of the current scholarship. Although historians R. David Edmunds, Gregory Dowd, Stephen Warren, and Alfred Cave make use of A. F. C. Wallace's theory of revitalization movements to explain the appeal of the Prophet's movement, their writings do not reflect Wallace's own doubts about the place of religion in the modern world. Indeed these scholars have used the idea of "revitalization" to reveal how Indian prophets such as Tenskwatawa creatively borrowed from colonial ideas about race and nation while employing the rhetoric of tradition to at once propose a conservative revolution. Despite Wallace's views of religion, the enduring value of his idea of "revitalization" is that it succeeds where Jortner's book generally fails; it demonstrates how a genuine spiritual response can be prompted and shaped by the social, cultural, and economic experiences of colonialism. The despair wrought by the experience of colonialism is for the most part miss-

ing from Jortner's discussion of the Indigenous Midwest in the early nineteenth century.

While the United States did pose a military threat to Indian sovereignty, it posed a far more profound threat in the form of economic and cultural hegemony. The architects of early American Indian policy realized that the force of arms would not be necessary to bring most Indians into submission. Rather, a crisis of economic dependency would bring about the collapse of the fur trade and force Indian communities to trade their lands to the United States in exchange for sustenance. This loss of economic independence would leave Indians with a dire choice: physical disappearance or acquiescence to an Anglo American majority.

By characterizing Tenskwatawa's movement as one aimed primarily at emboldening military resistance, Jortner misses the central thrust of the Prophet's preaching, the twofold message of avoiding economic dependency and of sustaining cultural autonomy. As Tenskwatawa noted, this was not a challenge faced by a particular tribe, but by all Indian peoples caught in the web of colonization. In this observation, Tenskwatawa was borrowing from modern and colonial notions of race and nation. As such, Indians needed to meet the challenge together, as Indians rather than as oft-divided tribespeople. And for Tenskwatawa the creation of this unity was a broad social and cultural endeavor, not simply a political one.

In Jortner's telling of this story, Tenskwatawa's less militant Indian rivals, such as the Shawnee civil chief Black Hoof, emerge as one dimensional "accommodationists." But Black Hoof did not intend to facilitate the federal government's assimilation program. He was no more a champion of assimilation than was Tenskwatawa. He, like Tenskwatawa, understood that the times required new ways to be Indian. Unlike the Prophet, he believed that Indian communities were unlikely to survive outside the marketplace and encouraged his followers to embrace viable commercial activities, albeit in a communalistic vein. But in some critical ways he was more a traditionalist than was Tenskwatawa. Black Hoof rooted his new way of being Indian in the survival of tribal communities and governments as recognized sovereign entities. The economic and diplomatic position of tribal nations might be altered. But they would endure.

Jortner argues that American victories at Tippecanoe and in the War of 1812 set the table for Indian removal from the Midwest. But from the long perspective of American Indian history, neither the battle nor the subsequent war defeated either Black Hoof's vision of sovereign tribal nations

or Tenskwatawa's dream of pan-Indian identities. Both survived removal and today flourish throughout Indian Country. Tenskwatawa may have come up short against Manifest Destiny at Tippecanoe. But today Manifest Destiny comes up short against Indian Country, a country that is at once tribal and Pan-Indian. Today's Indian Country thrives in no small part because the ideas of both Black Hoof and Tenskwatawa proved impervious to American musketry at Tippecanoe and elsewhere.

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Jenny Barker Devine, *On Behalf of the Family Farm: Iowa Farm Women's Activism since 1945*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013. 188 pp. \$19.95.

Feminist and rural historians frequently bemoan the conundrum of understanding gender relations in farm country. In her 2009 book, *More than a Farmer's Wife: Voices of American Farm Women, 1910–1960*, Amy Mattson Lauters found “a cultural gap” so wide that by 1960 “urban women and rural/farmwomen had virtually nothing in common: no common language, no common ideology, no means of communication that made sense to either party.” Nevertheless, Jenny Barker Devine attempts to make sense of farmwomen's reality in *On Behalf of the Family Farm: Iowa Farm Women's Activism since 1945*. Devine's objective is to create a conceptual frame for understanding a distinct “agrarian feminism,” fashioned by midwestern farmwomen in the context of near catastrophic economic change due to depopulation, technology, and agribusiness. “Agrarian feminism” challenged the men who shaped state and federal policy, agribusiness, and farm organizations. Farmwomen drew on the deep traditions of farm families and rural communities by deploying strategies of negotiation and promoting mutuality to ensure the survival of the family farm and community.

Because Devine limited her research to Iowa she is able to provide detailed accounts of the ideological, political and institutional context in which farmwomen's activism grew. She devotes a chapter to women in each of the major twentieth century farm organizations including the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation (IFBF), the Iowa Farmers Union (IFU), the National Farmers Organization (NFO), and the Iowa Porkettes. While the title suggests the topic is activism since 1945, in fact Devine begins her story