especially the events leading up to the War of 1812, shed light on the importance of women as political agents. One of Jortner's most intriguing stories involves a Delaware prophetess, Beata, “an apostle” of the Prophet (p. 110). The author suggests that the Prophet articulated inconsistent religious laws regarding women and increasingly limited their role within newly formed communities. His work suggests room for more study here.

The Gods of Prophetstown contains few faults, however, Jortner's analysis will undoubtedly face challenges from those who hold dear to the assumptions about the inevitability of Native American dispossession and the success of American nationalism. His work is important and fits neatly into a growing body of scholarship that may eventually dislodge those calcified notions.

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Illinois in the War of 1812
By Gillum Ferguson

Illinois in the War of 1812 opens with a vivid portrait of the Illinois prairie on the eve of war, a landscape beautiful and foreboding, accessible only to the most adventurous and determined American settlers. Each subsequent chapter describes in rousing detail Illinois battles and the remarkable men behind them. Unfortunately, Gillum Ferguson's partisan retelling of events gives readers a foggy picture of American Indian history. In this narrative, settlers push westward without government aid and battle frequently drunken Indians to build a territory worthy of becoming a state. Ferguson argues that the War of 1812 was crucial to Illinois statehood. Just as striking, however, is Ferguson's secondary thesis that the genocide of American Indians was the necessary and inevitable choice of heroic settlers who acted not out of self-interest, but rather, out of longing for the American dream.

Scholars of American Indian history will have difficulty accepting Ferguson's assertion that since most of the Indians in Illinois were newcomers, white American settlers had equal claim to the land. His statement that tribes like the Piankashaw and the Kaskaskia had claimed “more land than they could possibly use or defend” is equally troubling (p. 17). Ferguson's omission of how American disregard for the Treaty of Greenville forced Indian peoples westward, threatened their remaining land base, and depleted their food
supplies distorts the reasons behind American-Native conflict in Illinois.

The author’s treatment of violence throughout this work provides another point of contention. Here, Indians murder Americans, while Americans kill Indians—often, according to Ferguson, with good reason. While Ferguson pulls on readers’ emotional heartstrings with stories of drunken Indians who murder white women and children in surprise attacks, readers are hard-pressed to find such sentiment when it comes to Indian life. Nor does Ferguson give more than passing mention of a bounty for killed and captured Indian men, women, and children (pp. 180-81). Indeed, in a climate in which, as Governor William Henry Harrison wrote, many settlers “consider the murdering of the Indians in the highest degree meritorious,” Ferguson neglects to analyze both official and unofficial acts of anti-Indian cruelty (see, for example, R. David Edmunds, “Tecumseh, The Shawnee Prophet, and American History: A Reassessment,” The Western Historical Quarterly 14, July 1983).

The book’s account of an attack on a Kickapoo village offers a further example of this shortcoming. Ferguson uses the reminiscences of a soldier to describe how troops killed women, small children, and the wounded in cold blood. One of the “saving instances of humanity,” as he points out, was exhibited by a white soldier who stopped his colleagues from using a six-year-old Kickapoo girl for target practice. Yet Ferguson describes this raid—in which over one hundred Native Americans and two whites died—as a modest success: “It has been claimed that the brutality of the raid alienated [Native Americans],” he writes, “but this is incorrect.” Instead, Ferguson suggests, “The Kickapoo had long been hostile, as the white scalps found in their village attested” (p. 87).

Ferguson’s refusal to call this attack on innocent villagers a “massacre” leaves the reader to wonder if the author considers that the Kickapoo were the authors of their own misfortune.

This editorial tone informs the whole book. Although it incorporates a great number of records, Ferguson’s book wants for more critical analysis of its sources. The root of the book’s problem is its failure to acknowledge that American policy was deliberate and contemptuous in its aim to wipe out Native peoples—from broken treaties to mass violence to judicial inequities. In Ferguson’s words, “What happened to the Indians was tragic, to be sure, but it was also inevitable, and the heroism of the generations of pioneers that subdued them must not be overshadowed by the darker aspects of the story. Where the hard-handed men and women of 1812 had destroyed, they also planted and built” (p. 207).