

William Wells and the Struggle for the Old Northwest. By William Heath (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2015. 500 pp. Cloth \$34.95, ISBN 978-0-8061-5119-9.)

Before composing the book under review here, William Heath had already written a novel about William Wells, the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century frontiersman killed at the Battle of Fort Dearborn (Chicago) at the start of the War of 1812: *Blacksnake's Path: The True Adventures of William Wells* (2008). By contrast, *William Wells and the Struggle for the Old Northwest* is a documentary history, but rarely breaks the general narrative established in *Blacksnake's Path*. This is not meant to denigrate either: each recreates the life and times of a fascinating liminal yet wholly representative figure whose story is essentially *the* story of Ohio and Indiana between 1790 and 1812, the early republic era that prepared the ground for massive and rapid white colonization after 1815. Wells's story is well worth knowing, and Heath is certainly the person to tell it: which version you select should be based on your preference for historical fiction or narrative history.

The strength of *William Wells and the Struggle for the Old Northwest* is in its adherence to its sources, a generic obligation that lends a consistent authenticity sometimes missing from *Blacksnake's Path*. Wells was born in 1769 to British settlers in southern Ohio and captured as a boy by the Miami. As was the custom in the depopulated "middle ground," Wells was adopted and initiated as a warrior and hunter, marrying and joining the confederated Indian forces that resisted American entry into the region. In 1791, he fought against the American Army led by Arthur St. Clair, but later switched sides and fought with the Americans at the decisive Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794, leading to his role as translator at the subsequent Treaty of Greenville in 1795. Subsequently untrusted by both sides, the rest of his life was largely migratory, between red and white and, I would argue, past and present.

Between 1795 and 1812 Wells continued to live in white and Miami communities simultaneously and spent time among the Miami who lived in Prophetstown, Tecumseh, and Tenskatawa's multitribal village, which was later destroyed in the Battle of Tippecanoe. This exposure is important. Tecumseh wisely insisted that tribal loyalties be subordinated to a more pressing need for racial unity. In doing so, he was defensively reacting to the Anglo-American imposition of racial divisions on the middle ground. Within that, Heath depicts Wells as a figure increasingly split between his Miami and white identities. More accurately, he was split between an older French-

based frontier in which race was subordinated to behavior as a means of establishing identity, and a new Anglo-American frontier on which race was all that mattered. As such, his shifts were not necessarily traitorous. Little Turtle's and Tecumseh's confederacies were just as racialized as Wayne's and Harrison's American forces. As an intercultural figure, Wells's loyalty was to neither, but rather to the older, more diverse middle ground in which figures like Wells were not forced to choose one race or another.

After 1815, men like Wells, had he survived, were forced to adhere to more rigid definition. By contrast, John Tanner, a contemporary of Wells, captured by the Miami who sold him to the Odawa, ultimately fled Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's Sault Ste. Marie in 1830 to vanish into Anishnabe culture as they fled farther north and west. By contrast, Wells's death embodies the demise of the region as an intercultural middle ground prior to its becoming segregated and "white." This, then, might also be understood as a switch from the French model of cohabitation and collaboration to an Anglo-American paradigm of ethnic cleansing and racial singularity. Heath sets Wells's story against the broad historical movements that shaped his experience, perhaps at times overly so. Wells himself too often gets submerged in the longer digressions Heath uses to establish context and authenticity.

However, in the end, it is easy to understand why Heath's first impulse was to tell the story of Wells as a novel. His death in 1812, in a way, symbolizes the death of the older frontier in which such idiosyncratic figures could move freely between and among their many neighbors. To navigate this transitional region, Wells, as depicted by Heath, becomes a shape-shifting trickster and chameleon of convenient voice—a term from Charles Brockden Brown's 1800 novel *Arthur Mervyn*. Wells comes across as someone almost unreal in his many iterations and convolutions, not unlike Brown's protagonist, reflecting the early republic's treacherous shiftiness and rapid transitions, on the banks of both the Delaware and the Wabash.

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Grant Under Fire: An Exposé of Generalship & Character in the American Civil War. By Joseph A. Rose (New York: Alderhanna Publishing, 2015. xviii + 798 pp. Cloth \$42.50, ISBN 978-1-943177-00-4.)

Over the past 150 years, Civil War scholarship has influenced the way Americans understand the war's events and key players. Perhaps the most

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