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*Surveillance and Spies in the Civil War: Exposing
Confederate Conspiracies in America's Heartland* by Stephen
E. Towne (review)

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Surveillance and Spies in the Civil War: Exposing Confederate Conspiracies in America's Heartland. By Stephen E. Towne. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015. 430 pp. Paper \$34.95, ISBN 978-0-8214-2103-1.)

Stephen E. Towne, in *Surveillance and Spies in the Civil War: Exposing Confederate Conspiracies in America's Heartland*, reassesses the role of military intelligence on the Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois home front. In doing so, he challenges the assertions made by Frank L. Klement and other historians that the opposition to the Union war effort in those areas posed no real threat, and that any claims otherwise were concocted for and by Republicans in order to maintain political control. Towne convincingly shows otherwise. He also helps move the discussion of Civil War military surveillance beyond the battlefield to southern regions under Union occupation, and the more “thrilling” exploits of amateur spies. As a result, *Surveillance and Spies in the Civil War* demonstrates the “widespread reach of the army’s espionage efforts during the war” (3).

Towne argues that many in the lower Midwest believed that “upheaval and violence were close to the surface” (6). Citizens, angered by conscription, organized secret political groups with connections to the Democratic Party that assisted deserters, encouraged men to avoid the draft, plotted prison escapes to free Confederate captives, and “threatened large-scale unrest” (6). State officials, who lacked the number of soldiers necessary to put down any significant challenges, failed to adequately squash the growing threats to the Union war effort. As a result, military leaders took control and implemented widespread surveillance. Although haphazard at times and without direct supervision from the federal government, the army worked with state provost marshals to spy on citizens and politicians suspected of membership in, or having support for, these secret groups. They used military officers and soldiers, hired detectives, and enlisted civilian informants whom they placed at recruiting stations, rendezvous camps, prisons, and draft offices to gather intelligence. They also examined private telegraphs and written correspondence. As a result, several plots were thwarted, conspirators were arrested, and some were tried. Towne attributes the overall failure of groups such as the Sons of Liberty, first called the Knights of the Golden Circle and later the Order of American Knights, to these wide-reaching espionage practices. The author, an archivist at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis, utilizes to the full extent state archival material that few have used so closely before, and along with newspapers and federal records provides an abundance of evidence for the wartime threats and responses to them by the military and state officials.

He convincingly portrays Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and areas around the state borders as a region that faced more serious challenges than those posed by Clement L. Vallandigham and his Copperhead followers. Towne claims the actions used to foil these challenges serve as a precedent for later government surveillance, but his analysis of these events ends in 1865.

One area missing from an otherwise thorough analysis of the wartime reactions to the Enrollment Act and the draft is a closer examination of issues related to race, particularly the Emancipation Proclamation, the Union Army's use of black soldiers, and the Democrats' insistence that former slaves would cross the Ohio River in droves and wreak havoc on wages and move into northern communities. Despite Towne's characterization of Lincoln's decree as having "a stunning effect on politics in the North" (46), there is little discussion of how groups and individuals who sought to disrupt the federal and state war efforts used—or did not use—the issues related to African Americans to garner support, or if they had any impact on attempts at surveillance. Also, at times the geographic terminology used when referencing Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois can be confusing; Old Northwest, Midwest, Northwestern, and lower Midwestern are not necessarily interchangeable.

Overall, though, Towne has produced a well-researched monograph that provides a much-needed reexamination of military intelligence during the Civil War in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. His work demonstrates the value of regional studies when assessing the myriad actions and reactions to state and federal wartime strategies. *Surveillance and Spies in the Civil War* makes a significant contribution to home-front, political, and military historiography and is therefore a valuable source for both nineteenth-century historians and students in graduate-level courses.

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John J. Gilligan: The Politics of Principle. By Mark Bernstein. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2013. 495 pp. Cloth \$45.00, ISBN 978-1-60635-113-0.)

In the 2007 anthology *Ohio Politics*, Alexander Lamis and John Gargan note that John J. Gilligan "would be a terrific topic" for a book.¹ And now we have it.

1. Alexander P. Lamis and Brian Usher, eds., *Ohio Politics*, 2nd ed. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State Univ. Press, 2007), 591.