

## **SOCIAL HISTORY MEETS ETHNOHISTORY: A RENEWED PATH FOR NATIVE STUDIES**

White, Richard: *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 544 pp., illustrations, charts, maps, index. ISBN 0-521-37104-X, Cloth, U.S. \$69.50, ISBN 0-521-42460-7, Paper, U.S. \$19.95.

The social and environmental historian Richard White has produced an extraordinary benchmark in the scholarship of European and Aboriginal relations in the Americas. Accepting the intellectual challenge of the recent developments in historical, anthropological, and social science theory, White has forged a new synthesis based on his critical reading of the massive corpus of sources for the Great Lakes region for the mid 17th through early 19th centuries. He suggests that the organizing paradigm of the "middle ground" was a cultural framework that functionally and ideationally provided a rationale for multigroup cooperation or competition between 1650 and 1815. White demonstrates how the middle ground was a mutual creation of various Aboriginal North Americans and Europeans. This movable feasting place is linked to the socially constructed concept of the *pays d'en haut* which was promoted within the French sphere of influence to be those regions to the west of their settlements which were considered as an uninhabited refuge within their own notions of space. According to White the *pays d'en haut* "had a meaning not because of its isolation from outside forces, but because of the very impact on those forces" (p.11). On the surface this might seem a fanciful reformulating of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis, and not dissimilar from Turner's own musings upon his vanishing Wisconsin wilderness origins. The frontier regions as places of transformation for both Indians and Europeans have long been recognized, but most often the debates have focused upon

degree. White, however, contends that the operational definitions informing these particular cultural constructions represent a distinct disjunction from previous scholarly theories of how territoriality where ethnic or local distinctions had countervailing influences were compared to either imperialism and metropolitanism. The villages of contiguous or amalgamated populations often became social formations of intimate neighbors or kin which reflected overlapping “homelands” unlike anything immediately recognizable by Europeans, considering their own perceptions of acceptable land tenure. The *pays d'en haut* came to symbolize also a social formation which went through several episodic and structural changes that White characterizes as being “in search of a political glue” (p.14); he demonstrates that the meaning of the *pays d'en haut* was sustained through time.

In giving considerable attention to issues of intentionality and motivations, White seeks to expose an ideological framework operating in the minds of particular historical actors. This agency was reflected in the negotiated praxis of historical interactions. White identifies “the whole logic of Algonquian actions”—the western Algonquian domination in this region, made increasingly complex by competition with the “Iroquois hammer.” In drawing such broad generalizations, however, he deemphasizes the specificity of a small number of groups in the larger Great Lakes region that are neither Iroquoian or Algonquian. Rather, White represents the Algonquian logic as a “mentalité” subscribed to or assumed of others which overlaid the region and spatially coincided with the region of the *pays d'en haut*. White also demonstrates how “dangerous strangers (were transformed) into actual or symbolic kinsmen,” and how this enabled these endogamous peoples “to survive hunger, disease, and Iroquois attacks” (p.15). Refugees forced into new regions created new social and cultural formations, and became the amalgamating crucible that White labels “the middle ground.”

For White, these refugees were “shattered peoples” in “a world made of fragments;” “the largely Algonquian-speaking world west of Iroquoia broke up, and the Iroquois pushed the fragments west” (p.1). He describes the massive dislocations of many Ottawas, Potawatomis, Fox, Sauks, Kickapoos, Miamies, Illinois, Mascoutens, and the refugee Iroquoian speaking Petuns and Hurons, and how they encroached on the native lands of Winnebagos and Menominees. These were reduced in numbers and strength by disease and war, and became reluctant hosts within the present day regions of Wisconsin and the upper peninsula of Michigan. Trader Nicolas Perrot documents the violence among the refugees towards one another, and White notes that more than “a common residence and a common enemy” were needed to “produce social bonds among refugees” (p.14). Perrot's exaggerated descriptions “underline” for White

...the reality of deep animosities smoldering among these peoples. It was precisely because the divisions, suspicions, dangers, and rivalries inherent in the refugee centers were so intense that Algonquians worked so purposefully to overcome them (p.15).

The transformation of fellow refugees either into real or symbolic kinsmen was motivated by their fear of outsiders.

The details within the ethnographic record need careful examination for the groups labelled as refugees by White in this interpretation. Early ethnologists who studied these tribes often gave static descriptions, full of historical contradictions, and the flux of social change was often ignored or misunderstood. The "village world" of social and political units—often characterized as tribes, nations and/or confederacies—were "only loose leagues of villages" (p.16). The French use of the term nations for these entities was not meant to imply the existence of nation-states; rather it referred to tribes that had a "circumscribed political standing."

Nations shared a common language, culture, and ethnic identity, but the various villages of a nation did not necessarily share a common homeland. Whatever distinct homelands these villages had once possessed, the diaspora provoked by the Iroquois had made irrelevant. The refugee nations now lived in contiguous villages or even in mixed villages (p.17).

The transformation occurred at the village level where the basis of political coherence was forged. Directional changes in social relations—and therefore the social structures—of these groups remains fragmentary. Patrilineality appears to have been valued, as was bilocal residence, both of which reflect a social flexibility enhanced by endogamous marriage patterns among groups. Adoptions were also easily sanctioned, becoming another important avenue for incorporation within these societies. In several cases earlier Bands became clans within new amalgamated villages.

Refugees were viewed as a recruitment pool to replenish groups who were contracting or expanding. The French consequently faced a fluidity they did not fully comprehend; they sought an alliance that "grafted together imperial politics and the village politics of kinship; the two became branches of a single tree" (p.40). White makes it clear that this was not a harmonious politics. Rather it was a consciously invented logic of alliance that would permeate political relations and act as a cohesive organizing principle, complete with elaborate metaphors and proscriptive expectations. This "middle ground" would be legitimized by French recognition. This alliance, with all of its symbolic elements, however, was the invention of both the French and the Algonquian amalgam, and would be the basis of the appeals

of each to their own cultural sense of order in their interactions. "The middle ground of the *pays d'en haut* existed on two distinct levels. It was a product of everyday life and a product of formal diplomatic relations between distinct peoples" (p.53).

Sex, violence, provisioning, disease and trade become competitive areas of interaction which, according to White, must not be reduced to universal laws. The fur trade became an arbitrary process from a "coherent spectrum of exchange that was embedded in particular social relations" (p.94). In approaching the substantive economic complexities of competing and distinct logics of exchange, White contrasts the goals and relations embodied in trade. The social streams through which commodities flowed become tributaries of obligation. Gift giving and exchange were comingled in the mentality of Algonquians with created kin relationships in which "each recipient incurred a reciprocal obligation to the giver, thus ensuring the goods were constantly in motion" (p.101). It was into this "watershed of family, clan and village" that the French brought their own expectations of the trade, and this different mental set was the paradigm of the market economy with the opportunism of profit and margin. One example of how this dynamic was encountered by the Algonquian amalgam was the collapse of the French fur markets at the end of the Iroquois wars, which, quite naturally from the French viewpoint, meant the traded value of a beaver pelt was reduced. However, the Indians interpreted this "failure to get the customary price" as the French no longer loved them and were abandoning them by stealing their beaver. The Algonquians sought other alliances and their connections to the fur trade had linkages to a world economy.

White characterizes the alliance itself as "Janus faced": the eastern face had the appearance of the French heading an Algonquian host bearing hatchets, while the western face found the French and the Algonquians carrying the calumet, fostering a pseudo-benevolence. The "tangled reality" where these faces met "was the middle ground where the politics of village and of the empire met" (pp. 142-143). White provides a wide range of examples from the Fox wars to the changes in the Illinois country to demonstrate the varied roles played by the allies in the early 18th century.

The alliance, with its particular blending of material interests and cultural logics, always served political purposes. It excluded the British from the *pays d'en haut*; it protected Canada; ideally, it preserved peace among the villages and distributed goods to Onontio's children. At one end of the spectrum, the alliance served imperial politics; at the other end, village politics. But the converse was also true. The alliance was vulnerable to changes in imperial politics, and it was vulnerable to rivalries within villages. In the 1740s and 1750s, the direct

clash of empires, largely absent for a generation, exacerbated bitter political rivalries within villages. Rebellion racked the alliance, and the result was the rise of what the French called Indian republics (p.186).

Authority structures within Indian societies were undergoing significant realignments, and both French and British observers were uncertain about the outcome. The republics represented the destruction of hierarchy and order, and especially older forms of authority. "No group, Indians believed, would attack a mixed village that contained some of their relations" (p.186). These multiethnic villages organized around elected headmen were composed of those who rebelled against their former authority structures and preferred to follow their newly elected war captains. This resulted in an open competition between the former societies and their systematic authorities and the new formations.

The increasing independence of western warriors left the French and the Chiefs (or "kings") whom they had coopted with either diminished or no influence. The political influence of kinship within villages was balanced with relations between villages, and a network developed to influence distant towns and recruit allies. The fact that Indian kinship systems and bases for alliance were cross-cutting in nature, mostly eluded the French, especially when village politics went far beyond the geographical locations of single villages. The sexual relations of French men and Indian women further complicated the melange. Revolts from traditional authority structures and other break-away situations occurred throughout the alliance, empowering the "rebel orbit" of these emergent Indian republics (p.221).

The clash of empires results, according to White, because of the failure of the republican Indians "to exploit this lucrative balance of power (that) brought European armies into the region, turned the contest into one of imperial force and threatened to destroy the political middle ground" (p.224). Any agreements, such as the relations of William Johnson with the Mohawk, resulted, in White's assessment, "from diplomatic and commercial opportunism rather than any coherent imperial strategy" (p.224). The republics were on the rise, and the Iroquois were in decline, but in the early 1750s "both stood in common fear of empires" (p.226). "So many interests (were) at stake in a region where no single group exercised significant control, the road to conflict became more and more slippery" (p.227).

Peter Wrauxell observed that the Iroquois regarded the struggle for the Ohio country as one in which two thieves were fighting over Iroquois property, and conveyed the larger Indian attitude that the rival imperial armies were reducing the options of the Indian republics. The Ohio Indians' commitment to defeat the British was also to turn on the French. While victories resuscitated an image of French Algonquian alliance, many

French no longer understood the diplomatic rituals or the moral obligations of "middle ground" invented by the previous generations.

The independence of the republican villages, however, was more about freedom from the hegemony of the Iroquois than disentanglement from the English or the French, even though they were drawn into fights on a situational basis. Meanwhile, the Iroquois, in their diplomacy with various English colonies, forced their sovereignty claims for the Ohio country and on the warriors in these drainages of the central and eastern Great Lakes. "The British victory over France (in 1762) allowed the British to think that the *pays d'en haut* was ripe for the kind of imperialism that civilized men thought they should by right exert over savages" (p.256). Fixated upon the return of captives issue, the English did not realize the integrative nature of the republics, with so many prisoners incorporated into families among the Algonquians. As Amherst assumed the role of conqueror, gift giving was emblematic to him of what was a problem with existing relationships with Indians. The Algonquian's greatest fear was the British seizure of their lands, and the suspension of what had always been understood as obligatory gift-giving reinforced this apprehension. The British in their discourse gave only lip service to the symbol of the middle ground. White describes how "in 1763, an Ottawa war leader, Pontiac, rose against the British to restore his French Father and created a British Father instead (p.268).

Pontiac attempted to restore the middle ground with a rebellion that was the result of a series of regional blocs struggling for survival within the *pays d'en haut*. White rejects the literary bias of Francis Parkman's interpretations of Pontiac; rather he suggests that Pontiac and his immediate followers tested the British attempt to make themselves into fathers according to the protocol of the middle ground. White states that the genius of Pontiac's movement was infusing "contradictory tendencies into a common ideology of revolt" (p.284). Pontiac took "the moral code and made it anti-British," tempering it by "a rejection of white ways" (p.284). Most significantly, while the rebellion derived much of its orientation from the traditions of the middle ground and the aim to restore it, White points out this was not an effort to return to a pre-European past; rather it was a revitalization movement to invent tradition.

The religio-political role of the prophet Neolin, whose expanded influence beyond Delaware society became symbolic of recreating pan-Algonquian unity, overlapped with Pontiac's military revolt. The outcome was a stalemate both militarily and ideologically. While the Algonquians were not reduced to subjects, the negotiations "unleashed bitter and divisive competition among village leaders" which resulted in a new wave of "chieftainism."

White examines in detail the actions of William Johnson, who, as

Northern Indian Superintendent, used the language of the “covenant chain” coupled with the *Royal Proclamation* to create a western infrastructure for a new British alliance. Between 1765 and 1776, an already emergent third village world developed alongside those of the Algonquian and French. A long-standing Algonquian scepticism about British designs upon their lands resulted in anxieties that foreshadowed future developments. The White Anglo-villagers were openly aggressive and expansionist in their orientation, and the backcountry settlers were beyond the sanction and direct control of the colonial governments. Contrasted with the French accommodationist settlements of Kaskaskia, Detroit, Vincennes, and Michilimackinac and many other much smaller ones, the British presence sought selectively to replicate diplomatic space represented by the metaphor of the middle ground. However, animosities from the French and Indian war seethed beneath British village interactions with others; and they deeply resented any restrictions from colonial authorities on their actions. Indians feared uncontrolled Europeans, especially those engaged in unrestricted trade and settlement. The feeble British attempts to evict illegal settlers were coupled with General Gage’s inability to punish frontier Indian attacks over a wide and diffuse frontier. British authorities, by asserting increasing controls over colonists, further nurtured the seeds of revolution, and also demonstrated how British Indian policy had lost its centre.

Meanwhile, in the villages Chiefs faced factionalization and erosion of their authority over their young men. In the decade between Pontiac and Lord Dunsmore’s war (1774), the diplomatic middle ground shifted as British and Algonquian relations deteriorated. The ancient customs of renewal and requickening were not used, nor were new ones invented to give the alliance ritualized mechanisms for dispute settlement. The new middle ground involved a wider assortment of players—traders, Algonquian women, missionaries, ex-prisoners, some of the back country settlers, and eastern Indian refugees, in addition to the warriors, their families and their headmen. Within this amalgam were White prisoners—the human legacy of raids and wars. If they survived to become replacement relatives adopted and incorporated into Indian families and social formations, these prisoners “teamed through experience that actions took on quite different meanings in an Algonquian village than in the colonial back country” (p.328). Also in this mix were Algonquian women, who were “key-arbiters” of the newly transformed middle ground, mediating through sexual liaisons with traders; their offspring also became mediators of a reconstituted society.

The English, in turn, confused their own preconceived categories of “debauchery” and “prostitution” with the general commodification of sex and alcohol in the emergent frontier economy; this commodification was “anchored in the mix of reciprocity, profit and politics established on the

middle ground" (p.335). However, this new middle ground militated against keeping White villagers separate from the villagers of the *pay d'en haut*. The British, unwilling to comprehend and master the rituals and logic of exchange in their role as fathers, took land and threatened their children and all their relatives, including those of Indian and French descent. The young men in both Indian and English societies were increasingly uncontrollable; murders, ravages and subsequently revenge spread across the back country. The collapse of British authority in these regions enhanced the scorn of backcountry settlers who coveted Algonquian lands. General Gage in 1773 abandoned most of the western posts.

The American Revolution simply "created another expansionist state," which meant a recreation of the "familiar dangers and equally familiar opportunities for the Algonquian villagers in the region" (p.366). White states:

European-Indian alliances in the *pays d'en haut* had originated and thrived amid the contest of imperial powers; the independence of the United States once more restored serious imperial competition to North America. Algonquians could again test a father's love and once more judge between possible fathers. In this sense the Revolution came to the *pays d'en haut* like a violent storm after a drought. For all its clamor and destruction, it watered the political middle ground parched by the conflicts of the 1760s and early 1770s (p.366).

White rejects the "simple structural reading of the political dynamics of empire and village" which he believes has deceptively reduced local groups into the "coherent units" of the British, the Americans, and the Indians. Rather, White suggests that another reality dominated the *pays d'en haut* until well into the 1780s, that of distinct villages and settlements in which some were Anglo American, some French, and some Indian. What ensued was a struggle for power by villages amidst the Revolution and another round of Indian wars where imperial contests for dominance of the region were a backdrop for competition. "The particular interests of villages and factions within villages had as much to do with ultimate loyalties as did the imperial rivalry between the United States and Britain" (p.367).

In many examples of the ongoing war, the Indian-hating continued and indiscriminate wrath obliterated much of the diplomatic middle ground. The porous qualities of the "blurred boundaries" evident in previous ages became fixed. Symbolic of the shift, the practice of killing and torturing men was unleashed upon women's bodies: "Fighters who had rejected peace with its images of a common mother and common births now assailed actual mothers, ripping out their wombs. Men denied their common humanity by mutilating women" (p.388).

Remarkably many Algonquians retained their beliefs in the middle ground where relations were made permeable by cultural mechanisms of kinship and ceremony. In contrast, the Indian-haters believed that birth and race were indelible in that Whites and Indians should be “permanent strangers.” “The Indian haters adopted what they regarded as Indian means—massacre and torture—to keep the boundaries between Algonquian societies intact” (p.391). What really repelled these Indian-haters was the Algonquians' having for some time undermined the boundaries by adopting Whites, often as replacement relatives. Therefore the debate about captivities focused on resistance to the acculturation of the middle ground or to acceptance of new lives. “A captured Indian hater should have died or escaped. To remain raised the uncomfortable possibility that the Algonquians were right, that accommodations and transformations were possible” (p.391).

The clash of attitudes resulted in a decline of American influence in the *pays d'en haut*, and while the Indian hating allowed British imperial influence to expand, the presence of empire in both the Indian and French villages continued to be problematic. By 1780 most entities in the region were once again independent, and French and Spanish influences were being reasserted in the Illinois country. Traders postured to their sources of supply rather than to the symbolic imperial presence. Most Indians remained “resolutely localistic” and “few acted as tribal units” (p.398). Utilizing their advantages in trade and present-making, the British sought to resurrect the alliance. By late in the revolution, the British Indian Department created a network of alliance Chiefs in the *pays d'en haut*. This recruitment and recognition, with protocols of rank and appropriate gifts, were only the beginning; the next step was reinstating a system of annual presents, additional presents to cover the dead, to hold appropriate councils, and to reconcile the disputes or war between nations. Dressing warriors, provisioning their families, and repairing their weapons among the Indian allies did not replace the role of regular troops, through which Indians would only cooperatively fight. “The cost of maintaining an Indian alliance had always dismayed the British” (p.405), and the price of this restoration was dear.

The English clearly did not think like fathers, but the Algonquians had never demanded that of them; all they asked was the British understand how fathers should behave and then, as Hamilton, said, “act the part of Father to them” (p.405).

By 1782 more warriors were engaged in the British cause than ever before and were inflicting costly defeats on the Americans when the British made peace. The Algonquians ceased hostilities beyond defensive measures,

but asked only to be “remembered in the peace” (p.408).

White demonstrates the disjuncture in responses: “While empires and states went about making peace, the villages continued to act on their own” (p.410). In the backwater of the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, the British continued to encourage the interests of the alliance, urging Indians to consider themselves the rightful owners of the *pays d'en haut*. Firefights continued, diminishing by 1783 but returning again in 1784. White describes what he means by the localistic mentalité of Indian villages:

The Algonquians were warriors, not soldiers; their victories proved their courage, their fighting ability, and the strength of the manitous, but they did not drive out the Americans, for Algonquian warriors would neither submit to discipline nor remain long in the field. They fought to kill their enemies and to defend their homes, not to take and hold territory. The result was a war of small parties in which each side's settlements were vulnerable to attack but in which neither side gained lasting advantage (p.407).

White cautions how misunderstandings about the period of 1785 to 1795 were the result from interpretations which were preoccupied with the rise of the American nation-state and the “defeat, death, and eventual removal” of Algonquian nations in the Ohio country. Conflicts always remained on the village level, but larger political units were forming on both sides. Confederacies became the preferred formation with a parallel between the American state as a confederation until 1788 and the rise of the first Indian confederation at Sandusky in 1783. Within the *pays d'en haut* tribes became “less meaningful as political than as ethnic units” (p.413).

The identity of Algonquians as Shawnees, Delawares, or Weas influenced their actions and political loyalties just as the identity of backcountry settlers as Scots-Irish, Germans, or Anglo-Americans influenced their actions. But this did not mean that the Weas, Shawnees, and Delawares acted as unified political entities any more than the Scots-Irish, Germans, and Anglo-Americans formed unified and independent political groups. The basic political unit remained the village, which sometimes corresponded to the smaller tribal divisions of phratry and clan but most often did not. These various ethnic and village groups took on a common identity only when they opposed other groups. Thus the Scots-Irish, Germans and Anglo-Americans all became Americans when opposed to the Algonquians; the Shawnees, Delawares, Piankashaws, and others became Indians when opposed to the backcountry settlers (p.413).

These confederacies were “strikingly similar” and made competing

claims for territories. The similarities in social and political organizations gave way to differences in the institutionalization of their governments. The American confederacy was a centralized state, with a standing army, a treasury, and agents of authority; the Algonquin counterpart did not have the same aspirations. The weakness of the American Confederation was its minimal presence; its assertions of having conquered most of the *pays d'en haut* were bravado, obscuring the group of powers still competing for the region. The American treaties of Fort Stanwix in 1784, Fort McIntosh in 1785, and Mouth of the Big Miami in 1786 were “products of American illusions, (and) launched the republic into a confrontation with the western Indian confederation and the British” (p.417). Through the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 the lands north of the Ohio were flooded with new immigrants, and the combination with the older settlers “formed a volatile mix” (p.418).

Violence ensued, counter claims were in dispute; speculations and resistances were in competition; and the right of conquest argument was continually dispelled in practice by the complex conflicts that occurred in addition to the competition between new republic and Indian tribes. Village wars of the border resulted, which were as much about assertion of American authority over its own new citizens as about the problem of occupation and presence in the face of stubborn British interests in the region.

Indians found their past relationships with the British increasingly entangling. British peacemaking after the American Revolution had left the Algonquians in an ambiguous state. The British waited for the American republic to disintegrate from its internal and external pressures. Even without direct aid from the British, the Indian confederacies found that the more they fought, the more dependent they grew on British supplies. They were fighting in defence of their greatest political achievement which was the common ownership of the lands of the *pays d'en haut* by all Indians, and the affirmation that it could not be ceded without the consent of all.

However, this principle unravelled amidst new pressures. No matter how formidable Algonquian warriors were in battles, they were unable to sustain long campaigns, and consequently, were dependant upon the British in their structural weakness. Terms of peace eluded the Americans and the backcountry confederations; issues of boundaries, payments for lands, and the legal status of the confederation and individual villages never became central; rather, “the diplomatic conversation was a struggle over images and it took place within rather than between groups” (p. 456). Once again White's analysis is particularly insightful:

This was a diplomacy of mirrors, and image making became

the real basis of negotiations. Once established, the image of the enemy as the Other demanded certain responses regardless of what the Other said or what concessions the Other offered. What the confederation was to do about the Americans, for example, ultimately depended on who the Americans were—what their true nature was—just as what Americans would do about the Indians and the British depended on who they were. Interpreting the actions of the Other, deciding what those actions meant was the critical activity on both sides. Images of the Other were not set in stone; they had to be constantly tested against the world of action and alternative images. This process was not new, but what complicated it immensely was that between the Americans and the Indians it had ceased to be face-to-face. The common world yielded to a frontier over which people crossed only to shed blood (p.456).

White suggests that the frontier was not a place that had been won; rather the Americans and Europeans had appeared the greedy aggressors. The British stated that the United States had not conquered Indians in its revolution, and that therefore the Americans did not have title to Indian lands by right of conquest. It follows then that neither could England make such claims without cession by Indians. While recognizing that the lands were the Algonquians' to sell or keep as they chose, the Americans hoped eventually to negotiate for lands and split the members of the confederacy from one another. Americans were divided over their own conflicting images of Indians and the complexities of Indians' own representations to themselves and others. Boundaries grew increasingly meaningless. By creating the Americans as their Other, the Algonquians resurrected the British as fathers. However, the Algonquian confederation was unable effectively to back its bluster because of its "indecision, divisions, and impotence" (p.464), and the English wanted little to do with leading demoralized resistance efforts. Coming to terms with the Americans appeared increasingly necessary.

The politics of benevolence arose along with the prediction that Indians must disappear because the frontier was to be transformed. Indians were expected to change or die. The Americans at the Treaty of Greenville had negotiated among what they perceived to be "quarrelling and embittered groups of villagers" (p.472), demonstrating that the Algonquians had lost their ability to manage Whites to act as fathers towards them. The Americans no longer feared Indians, and used a system of annuities to try to coopt them; they therefore, extended control over villages—Indian and White—holding out the model of becoming farmers or for the resisters to

withdraw. This was not a coexistence of the middle ground; rather, Indians were expected to become indistinguishable or disappear. The commerce that had fostered and sustained the middle ground was itself transformed, and the fur trade moved westward and incorporated Indians into capitalistic obligations through credit and debt.

White addresses the complexity of dependency and suggests that it “is an economic, political, and social relationship, but can also be an environmental relationship” (p.486). In this respect he discusses the depletions of the region of the *pays d'en haut* by the 1780s. Coupled with social disintegration around the authority of Chieftainship, inroads of liquor, and competing nativism, White ends his history of transformations with his interpretation of the story of Tecumseh and his brother, Tenskwatawa, which further exemplifies this devolution. By the closing days of the War of 1812, a last feeble attempt was made to restore the alliance of the middle ground. Tecumseh died at Malden, and the curtain fell upon “imperial contest” for the *pays d'en haut* and the political consequences of Indians within the regional dynamic simply faded. The machinations of removal that followed were an epilogue.

White closes his insightful reinterpretation with a discussion that Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa symbolized the transformative end of the middle ground which “yielded to stark choices between assimilation and otherness” (p.518). The early 19th century was an era of reinventing Indians as ignoble savages. The manipulation of nativism by segments of what was becoming the dominant Anglo-American society mythologized differences between Indians and Europeans and resulted in rigid categories that finally denied the fluidity of interactions possible among earlier generations in the middle ground.

White's powerful analysis offers ways in which a geopolitical world-systems approach more thoroughly frames the power relations of Indian nations and their subsets. These were not at all different from European interrelations, and were glossed by imperialism, mercantilism, and colonialism. White's discussion of the interpenetration of an emerging globalism in events and interactions allows many patterns to be identified; this is not possible when historical treatment is limited to single groups and their isolated spheres of action. White examines formative influences ethnohistorically, with perspectives and theories drawn from political and economic anthropology, the historiographical insights of Braudel (*longue duree*) and others of the Annale School, and insights gleaned from the new cultural critique led by Edward Said among others. White clearly explicates a motivational or ideological level within cultural and social dynamics, beyond charismatic or instrumental persons, and behind stories of events. These emergent relations often structure other permutations. White, however,

does not view these processes as simplistically mechanical or deterministic; throughout he acknowledges the diverse ways both individuals and groups are actors influencing events. Therefore, interest theory and ideology are balanced in his interpretations. The command of diverse sources is impressive.

The importance of White's monograph, considering this greater region's complex history and the time period treated for North American Indian/Native studies, is its impressive new standard for scholarship. White's innovative interpretative study is worthy of extensive exegesis within instructional contexts. The challenge for a similar study with emphasis upon the north side of the Great Lakes is obvious. White's reinterpretations are revealing, uncompromising, and at times unsettling as he allows quotes from texts and detailed vignettes to reveal the often brutal consequences of attitudes and actions, and seeks to explicate the patterns of long duration among human interactions in this contested region.

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