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The Middle Ground: Indians, empires, and republics in the Great Lakes region, 1650-1815. By Richard White.

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speaks to another person about one of his childhood memories; he apologizes to James for having thrown his ball into the river. It is a conversation of emotional import, the only one in the novel where the narrator externalizes his feelings. The last line circles back to the beginning of the novel and shows us how far the narrator has come. Will told us on the first page, "Autumn was the best season. It wasn't good, just better than the other three" (p. 1). At the end of the novel, after his conversation with James, he says, "The day had started out overcast, but standing in the kitchen window, I could see that the winter sun was out now and lying low on Medicine River. Later that afternoon, I went for a long walk in the snow" (p. 261).

Craig S. Womack

The Middle Ground: Indians, empires, and republics in the Great Lakes region, 1650–1815. By Richard White. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1991. 544 pages. \$69.50 cloth. \$20.00 paper.

Ethnohistorians are no longer content just to refute Frederick Jackson Turner's long-enthroned concept of "The Frontier" as a line between "civilization" and "savagery." Perceiving the nonexistence of a dividing line in regions where Indians and Euro-Americans mixed, some scholars now strive to understand and explain what actually happened in those regions. Richard White's *Middle Ground* is a welcome and important addition to this work. The book must be read for appreciation of its richness, but it requires careful analysis, and some guidelines may be helpful.

The title phrase, which permeates the book, alternates aspects. Sometimes it is a region with elastic boundaries. As such, its alter ego is the French term *pays d'en haut*. Elsewhere it is a relationship, a "cultural and social entity" of ethnic mixing, and, in still other cases, the phrase refers to a ritual of negotiation. In the latter unique form of diplomacy, French, British, or United States officials recognized Indian "chiefs" who often were not traditional tribal sachems. Such chiefs were selected for their flexibility as go-betweens and were given large presents to enhance their power and influence. White carefully notes that the presents were not bribes in an ordinary sense, because they were promptly redistributed among the chiefs' followers. (Thus Germanic tribes of the

early Middle Ages assured warriors' loyalty to their "kings" by generous gifts.)

White does not provide labels for the changes in his middle ground's significance. Although his thematic phrase refers regularly to empirical phenomena, it changes aspect so often as to seem almost mystical. It always embraces, one way or another, places and processes by which Indians and others got along together somehow in very troubled, often violent circumstances.

"This book," writes White, "is 'new Indian history' because it places Indian peoples at the center of the scene and seeks to understand the reasons for their actions But this book is also, and indeed primarily, a study of Indian-white relations, for I found that no sharp distinctions between Indian and white worlds could be drawn. Different peoples, to be sure, remained identifiable, but they shaded into each other" (p. xi).

Thus the book attends not only to purposes and policies of whites and Indians but also to those in-between types called white savages, civilized Indians, and Métis. Neither fish nor fowl, such synethnics abounded in all the manifestations of the middle ground and powerfully influenced the ways that tribes and state-form governments dealt with each other, not to speak of the commerce in which they became very prominent.

White's middle ground changed shape and character in response to historical developments of which it was part. It was invented by chiefs and Frenchmen early in the seventeenth century. Indians wanted French trade goods but demanded diplomatic relations as a condition for trade. Frenchmen wanted furs and mediated peace between hostile tribes in order to facilitate hunting.

We must notice a distinction that I think White has failed to stress enough, i. e., the different motives and practices of official Frenchmen and the very unofficial outlaws called *coureurs de bois*. The latter often settled in tribal villages and adopted Indian purposes as well as customs. Officials, however, aimed at increased power for the French empire. Both types cohabited freely with Indian women, but their Métis offspring became cultural brokers with objectives that depended on their self-identification. Some accepted status as Indians; others aspired to be French. All were valuable intermediaries, but they served different masters.

French mediation in Indian territory was a means of acquiring political power and therefore worth considerable subsidization, but it was far from being an altruistic effort to spread peace and goodwill. Official Frenchmen mediated between their tribal allies

to strengthen them against their enemies, who were also New France's enemies. The most effective tactic of seventeenth-century French traders in the middle ground "was to claim that trade alone made victory in the war against the Iroquois and Sioux possible" (p. 25). As time went on, French officials recruited allied warriors for the empire's purposes wholly irrelevant to tribal welfare. Thus, in the mid-eighteenth century, Wyandot chiefs "denounced the French for the endless wars they demanded of their allies" (p. 196).

White is hard on the seventeenth-century Iroquois, blaming them for depopulation and clustering of refugees in the *pays d'en haut*, which here seems to mean the Illinois country. Accepting his data, I am inclined to think there were more refugees from smallpox than from the Iroquois, who were defeated as often as not. Iroquois "conquest" was a diplomatic myth invented by New York's governor Thomas Dongan and propagated by Robert Livingston and Cadwallader Colden. Naturally enough, the Iroquois made it into a tradition.

Dongan and his aggressions are missing here, although he drove straight for the heart of the *pays d'en haut*. Missing also are the South Carolina traders who armed the Chickasaw to attack and enslave New France's Illinois allies. Some of the responsibility for the chaos of the seventeenth century rests with the British.

We must accept that White's term *Algonquian* is inaccurate shorthand for easy reference to New France's Indian allies, who included also the Iroquoian Huron-Petuns and Wyandots. So also, the *pays d'en haut* is an umbrella for the Ohio country, the Illinois country, the Lakes region, and the Bay region.

One last cavil: White is among the younger scholars who insist, quite rightly, that more attention must be paid to Indian initiatives and motives than hitherto. I admit to personal fault on this score but within limits. I cannot accept such a statement as, "White and Indian villagers, not imperial officials, would *determine* [my emphasis] events in the *pays d'en haut* for the next generation" (p. 314). This is simply silly dogma, as White's own data show plainly (cf. pp. 340, 476). If the Indians could have determined events, the Midwest would still be tribal.

Enough of carping. Despite my gripes, this is a very good book that all ethnohistorians of American Indians will have to know. White demonstrates how tribal policies were the product of village decisions. He shows that the intersocietal trade, instead of being idyllic, was hazardous and often violent. (I think contexts would bear closer examination.) He shows how Indian and Afri-

can slaves were shunted about in commerce and diplomacy. In enlightening detail, he shows how and why neither the French nor the British empire had controlling power in Indian territory during two centuries; how the empires chose varied means of gaining needed Indian cooperation; and how the French method of influencing village decisions from within was superior to British reliance on formal treaties at the top.

Best of all, White shows how power relationships changed and why; and he depicts Indian ingenuity in coping with situations beyond anybody's control. He not only names the chiefs, he gives as much background biography of each as sources permit. Yet he never falls into the romantic fallacy of idealizing them. These chiefs are real people. These times change. This is real history.

Space limitations prevent more exposition. I must add, sorrowfully, that Cambridge University Press has done a poor job of copyediting. Typos abound, and the crudely drawn maps even lack captions. Especially considering the extortionate prices, such negligence is inexcusable. Its unfortunate consequence must be to diminish the sale of a book that deserves widespread circulation.

Francis Jennings
Newberry Library

Mourning Dove's Stories. Edited by Clifford E. Trafzer and Richard D. Scheuerman. San Diego, CA: San Diego State University, Publications in American Indian Studies, 1991. 117 pages.

Christine Quintasket McLeod Galler was an enrolled member of the Colville Confederated Tribes of north-central Washington State. Despite a minimum of schooling, she set herself the task of writing for a popular audience. She determined to write Westerns and finished a novel before the First World War that did not appear in print until 1927. Except for a year or two as a teacher on a Canadian reserve, she always held menial jobs, often as a migrant worker. As has been frequently noted, after ten hours picking apples, she would stay up most of the night typing stories she had been told by various elders.

Galler's published works were always the result of careful collaboration with literate advisors. Lucullus Virgil McWhorter and Hester Dean Guie of Yakima often were her editors. They would meet or write back and forth to iron out difficulties and