
Looking Back Parkman's Pontiac

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The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War after the Conquest of Canada: Volume I, *To the Massacre at Michillimackinac*; Volume II, *From the Spring of 1763 to the Death of Pontiac* (1851; reprint of 1870 edition, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994. Pp. xxxii, 367; ix, 384. Notes, maps, appendices, index. Paperbound, \$12.50 each.)

That history written in the middle of the last century should displease a modern reader is hardly surprising. But to be told that an author fostered "an ideology of divisiveness and hate based on racism, bigotry, misogyny, authoritarianism, chauvinism, and upper-class arrogance"¹ not only arrests one's attention, it strikes at the very integrity of the writer and his work. Was the nineteenth century so morally benighted as to generate such an affront to human decency? The culprit here is Francis Parkman, and his antagonist is Francis Jennings. This sweeping indictment might be easily dismissed as a case of hyper-anachronism that treats Parkman as though he were a politically incorrect inhabitant of the current era, when he was, in fact, a historian of the nineteenth century, an age with a much different conception of the human situation. Indeed, it would be strange if Parkman had not been guilty of some of these postmodern offenses against liberal rectitude. Still, if his language is intemperate and his conception of virtue cramped, Jennings does broach an important question. Can Parkman be read now with any confidence that his account of the past will reflect what actually occurred? Or is his work merely a particularly apt example of mid-nineteenth century romantic prose, revealing of the ideas and sensibilities of that era but hardly worthy of the exacting standards that ought to inform modern historical writing?

In reissuing the sixth edition of *The Conspiracy of Pontiac*, the University of Nebraska Press offers the first of Parkman's contributions to his life's work, a multi-volume history of France and Eng-

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¹ Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York, 1988), 480.

land in North America. The series eventually covered the whole of the imperial conflict between the two great powers, a contest that began in the seventeenth century and did not conclude until 1763 when the French lost their hold on North America. *Pontiac* served as a kind of epilogue in which Parkman treated the last desperate effort of the Indians of the Northwest to reconstitute the balance of power that had through the eighteenth century contributed so much to the preservation of their way of life. He told a good story; but was it true?

Parkman's merits and defects are patent even in *Pontiac*, the first written though actually an epilogue to the series. Few modern authors can command the sweep of his history. He could invest seemingly minor frontier events with the quality of an epic. His major characters, Pontiac and Henry Bouquet, are drawn to a heroic design, the forest setting brooding with life and expectation as the plot unfolds. Seen as a whole, the struggle between France and Britain for the continent can be portrayed in epic dimensions, but the contest between the western tribes and the English in the early 1760s seems hardly to merit that description. That Parkman can pull it off testifies to the enduring American habit of depicting the West with the aura of myth but more directly to the author's greatness as a craftsman of historical narrative. Although writing in a language and style alien to our own time, Parkman's appeal may even now be in this genius for raising the commonplace to the heroic. But, of course, the modern age also sees itself as free of illusions, and here Parkman is unlikely to please. As with many of his contemporary practitioners of literary history, George Bancroft, William H. Prescott, John Lothrop Motley, Parkman's images often lie thick on the page. The reader must slog through a sea of elaborately contrived metaphors that tend to obscure the story as often as they clarify it. Inevitably, one wonders whether the scene painting so important to the romantic style does not do a certain violence to the reality. Parkman may not be guilty of creating events (at least not often), but he is too often the inventor of the setting in which the events occur and which is essential in shaping his plot. The romantic wilderness lends a certain fictional air to the quite mundane struggle of Indians, soldiers, and settlers in the region south of the Lakes.

All of this ought to be enough to make the reader cautious. *Pontiac* may be good reading, but it is also a period piece. In what sense it is or is not good history is a more complicated question. If we are to believe Jennings, Parkman's work suffers from a good deal more than a failure to keep up with the times. He accuses the Boston Brahmin of falsifying the historical record in order to support his nefarious depiction of the native people. Jennings's favorite specimen (he uses it twice) comes from *Montcalm and Wolfe*, where Parkman describes a visit to the Ohio tribes undertaken in 1758 by

Christian Post, a Moravian missionary. Parkman, according to Jennings, ignores the significant role of Post's Indian companion, Pisquetomen, hence exaggerates the part played by Post, makes the Indians into the villains of the piece, and underplays the danger presented to Post by the French. Parkman's treatment of the episode might, of course, be a misinterpretation of the events without being a deliberate effort to slander the Indians. But Jennings much prefers skulduggery to mistakes or even wrong-headed error. David Levin takes the same passage from Post's journal and makes a strong case for the Parkman interpretation, showing at the same time that by Jennings's standard of judgment he might himself be as guilty as he thinks Parkman. Parkman, it would seem, was not more inclined to mangle his sources than any other nineteenth-century historian or indeed many historians of our own time.²

But *Pontiac* does contain a source problem, one that casts doubt on the thesis of the book. Parkman asserts that in 1762 Pontiac sent ambassadors to the western tribes to organize a conspiracy to attack the British forts. In support of his contention he cites a 1764 letter from Sieur d'Abbadie, the French governor at New Orleans, to Neyon de Villiers who commanded at Fort de Chartres (I, 186) which, according to Wilbur R. Jacobs, no one has succeeded in locating since. In *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising* Howard H. Peckham cites a letter from d'Abbadie to Neyon dated January 30, 1764, but it contains nothing that will establish Parkman's case for a conspiracy. It would appear that his position cannot be justified by modern research. More likely, as most recent historians would argue, Pontiac was the leader of the native people only in the vicinity of Detroit and responsible for directing the attack on that fort. He was himself part of a larger, though unorganized, movement of the western Indians against the British.³

In a matter of less moment, but perhaps indicative of his proclivity to favor a good story over what research would yield, Parkman placed Pontiac at the head of a band of Ottawas in the French and Indian attack on Edward Braddock (I, 109). Pontiac may indeed have participated in that battle (Parkman qualified his assertion with the phrase "it is said"), but no evidence is cited.

² Jennings makes his case in detail in "A Vanishing Indian: Francis Parkman Versus His Sources," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXXVII (July, 1963), 306-23, and "Francis Parkman: A Brahmin among Untouchables," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XLII (July, 1985), 305-28. David Levin answers Jennings's first article and gives his take on Parkman in "Modern Misjudgements of Racial Imperialism in Hawthorne and Parkman," *Yearbook of English Studies*, XIII (1983), 145-54. Christian Post's "Journal" is in Neville B. Craig, ed., *The Olden Time . . .* (1846; 2 vols., Cincinnati, 1876), I, 98-125, 145-77; Parkman's account of Post's missions to the Indians can be found in *Montcalm and Wolfe* (1884; 2 vols., Boston, 1925), II, 150-57.

³ Wilbur R. Jacobs, *Francis Parkman, Historian as Hero: The Formative Years* (Austin, Tex., 1991), 71-72; Howard H. Peckham, *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising* (Princeton, N.J., 1947), 108-11n.

Nor have any later historians been able to support Parkman's contention.⁴

Odd that Parkman should have believed in a unified Indian conspiracy, galvanized by Pontiac, yet missed the importance of Neolin who was probably responsible for whatever concerted effort the warriors brought to bear against the British. Neolin was the Delaware prophet who lived on the Cuyahoga River south of Lake Erie and in 1762–1763, together with other religious leaders, attempted through his preaching to revitalize the tribes with a syncretic form of older native religious belief and additions of Christianity. There can be no question that this “revitalization movement” lay behind the Indian attempt to drive the British from the western posts. Parkman noted the role of Neolin, but he ranked it as merely one of the many causes of the uprising. He did acknowledge the significance of animism—“nature instinct with deity” (I, 39)—in Indian life, but he saw it as simply more evidence of savagery. Thus he was more inclined to evaluate Neolin and his disciples as merely “frivolous and absurd” (I, 179) rather than important actors in a concerted native assault on British power in the West.⁵

The activities of the prophets in fomenting the uprising raise yet another problem in Parkman's interpretation. Despite his conception of native life as savage, unstable, and irrational, Parkman argued that the Indians had gone to war for entirely rational reasons. The western tribes had long been Britain's enemies, but when Lord Amherst, at the close of the Seven Years War, ended the traditional practice of supplying the Indians with the goods upon which they had become dependent, they had an immediate reason to oppose the British displacement of the French. In addition, the Indians knew well that a British advance into the Ohio lands meant their own eventual displacement by settlers as the long French presence for trade and proselytization had not. Finally, though the French had lost the war, their western traders still hoped to retain a hold on the tribes by limiting British competition. Many of the French inhabitants encouraged the uprising (I, 170–80). If Parkman had seen the prophets as a major cause of the conflict, his explanation would at least have taken on a certain symmetry. A savage and irrational people stimulated by an overheated religious revival would have behaved as expected. As it was, his contempt for native religion prevented him from stressing one of the major reasons for the outbreak of war and at the same time verifying his larger conception of native culture.

⁴ Howard H. Peckham, “The Sources and Revisions of Parkman's *Pontiac*,” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, XXXVII (1943), 300–301.

⁵ On Neolin and the prophets, see Anthony F. C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (New York, 1972), 114–21; Gregory Evans Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance: The North American Indian Struggle for Unity, 1745–1815* (Baltimore, 1992), 33–37, 124–31.

Recent interpretations of Pontiac's activities have stressed the importance of native rationality. The Indians, so the story goes, acted as they did because they saw their interests clearly and adopted the measures appropriate for securing those interests. Pontiac's uprising was not a war fought by civilized Europeans against primitive societies hopelessly out of tune with the progress of the world, hence doomed to extinction, but rather a contest between cultural equals that struggled for quite sensible but opposed ends. In this version even the prophets can be interpreted as an expression of a well-integrated religious tradition that functioned to support the survival of native societies, not as an hysterical example of Indian savagery or of people driven to desperation by their inability to cope with powerful invaders whose very presence undermined the stability of native cultures.⁶

Needless to say Parkman did not share this high opinion of the Indian way of life. In some ways his views were a holdover from the previous century. He conceived of the Indian as part of the raw, untouched continent. For Parkman, as for Thomas Jefferson, the native was "the true child of the forest and the desert. The wastes and solitudes of nature are his true home." Waste, solitude, and "untamed freedom" nurtured a personality of haughtiness and pride, "in harmony with the lonely mountains, cataracts, and rivers . . . of primitive America, with her savage scenery and savage men . . ." (I, 1). Parkman could appreciate the sublimity and majesty of the continent, but the Indian struck him as strange, wayward, and ultimately murderous. "Unstable as water, capricious as the winds, . . . [Indians] seem in some of their moods like ungoverned children fired with the instincts of devils" (II, 298). Furthermore, they were children who would never grow up. He adhered to the vanishing race theory. The continent would change and yield plenty under the cultivation of the farmer and the merchant, but for the Indian there was no hope. "He would not," Parkman remained convinced, "learn the arts of civilization, and he and his forest must perish together" (I, 44). Unlike Jefferson and his generation, Parkman held out no hope for the native people. "Their intractable, unchanging character leave no other alternative than their gradual extinction." "Sentimental philanthropy" will always fail (II, 158). Thinking as he did, Parkman could find little sympathy for Pontiac's desperate effort to retrieve the Indians' future. The Ottawa leader was on the wrong side of the human drama, and his actions were not only futile but vicious and dangerous.

Consequently, it does seem strange that Parkman neglected the one point that might have supported his belief in the ultimate

⁶ See Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge, England, 1991), 279-85; Michael N. McConnell, *A Country Between: The Upper Ohio Valley and Its Peoples, 1724-1774* (Lincoln, Neb., 1992), 171-206; Dowd, *A Spirited Resistance*, chap. 2.

disappearance of the Indians. He wrote little of disease either as a significant factor in the failure of the Indian uprising or as the most important force working to reduce the tribal population. Of course, not even disease would spell the end of the Indian, but it is widely agreed nowadays that it caused a terrible demographic catastrophe in the New World. The story of the vanishing Indian derives from a number of sources in European thinking, most of which have little to do with reality, but it certainly gained credence from what seemed to many to be the inexorable decline in native population. Parkman scarcely mentioned the subject.⁷

Disease did come up in later editions of *Pontiac* when evidence appeared that in 1763 blankets infected with smallpox may have been given to native emissaries at Pittsburgh (II, 39-42). In treating the matter Parkman made no connection with the spread of disease among the tribesmen during the uprising or the more general consequences of disease for the native people. His concern was obviously the reputations of the officers involved, should they be guilty of such an inhumane policy. The evidence was irrefutable that both Amherst and Bouquet had proposed the transfer of the blankets. Parkman did at least tell the story in so far as he knew it though his defensiveness detracted from the candor of his account. What he did not know was that the blankets had already been given to the Indians before the suggestions by Amherst and Bouquet reached Fort Pitt. Nor, apparently, did he know that the Indians in the vicinity of Pittsburgh were already suffering from smallpox and that the spread of the contagion would be a significant factor in ending the Indian war.⁸

Parkman's interpretation may have been dated by his sources, but in one sense his works were quite advanced. In both *Pontiac* (1851) and the *Jesuits of North America* (1867), Indians have a central place. Both of these studies begin with an ethnological description of the native world. After publishing *Pontiac*, Parkman had read Lewis Henry Morgan's *League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee, or Iroquois* (1851), a major contribution to the development of modern ethnology. He had already seen Morgan's earlier work on the Iroquois, which he noted in *Pontiac* (I, 12), but there can be no doubt that his view of Indian life in *Jesuits* is a good deal more sophisti-

⁷ On the demography see Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (Norman, Okla., 1987); and on the vanishing Indian see Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U. S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, Conn., 1982).

⁸ Bernhard Knollenberg, "General Amherst and Germ Warfare," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLI (December, 1954), 489-94; Donald H. Kent to Knollenberg, January 19, 1955, in *ibid.*, 762-63; Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, 447-48. D. Peter MacLeod, "Microbes and Muskets: Smallpox and the Participation of the Amerindian Allies of New France in the Seven Years' War," *Ethnohistory*, XXXIX (Winter, 1992), 42-64, treats the problem of smallpox among the Indians in the war years immediately before the uprising.

cated than it had been in the earlier volume. It was not so sophisticated, however, as to transcend the limitations of the age. He had derived his views on savagery from the eighteenth-century sources as well as contemporary writers such as Albert Gallatin and Henry R. Schoolcraft and his own observations on the Oregon Trail. With Morgan he was introduced to the most recent ethnological thinking, which challenged his views on the question of the vanishing Indian. Although far more learned in his methods than the natural historians of the Jeffersonian era, Morgan retained their belief in the improvability of the Indians. Parkman disagreed generally, but he was sufficiently impressed by Morgan's writings to offer some hope that the Iroquois, if not the other tribes, might be capable of a happier future living like white men.⁹

Indeed, even in *Pontiac*, Parkman expressed a relatively high opinion of the Iroquois. He accepted without question the contemporary belief that the famous league had created a forest empire by dint of conquest and superior political organization (I, 7-28). That idea was almost certainly an exaggeration, but it is true that the Iroquois because of their Covenant Chain with the British occupied a special status among the Indian people east of the Mississippi River. Observers at the time sensed it, and Parkman could scarcely help but be influenced by their views. Thus, while he perpetuated a legend concerning the extent of Iroquois power, he was susceptible to evidence of Indian achievement.¹⁰

Parkman's conviction that the Indian people were doomed to extinction raises the question of race. What accounted for the Indians' dismal prospects in an age of progressive expectation? The answer until well into the nineteenth century was either ethnic (their way of life made it unlikely that they would move beyond their impaired condition) or more generally anthropological (they were savages, the lowest rung on the evolutionary ladder, hence severely limited in potential). Of course, neither of these explanations absolutely excluded the possibility that the Indian would change his ways. In fact, many had no doubt at all that given time and the right circumstances Indians would abandon savagery and move into the realm of civilization. But in the second quarter of the nineteenth century the age of biology dawned, displacing the looser and less scientific era of natural history. Biology became an important factor in defining human capacity and in the gradual develop-

⁹ Jacobs, *Francis Parkman*, 53, 60, 198n.

¹⁰ Francis Jennings, *The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from Its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744* (New York, 1984), chap. 2, rejects the Iroquois empire thesis. See also Calvin Martin, "The Covenant Chain of Friendship, Inc.: America's First Great Real Estate Agency," *Reviews in American History*, XIII (March, 1985), 14-20; and Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell, eds., *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800* (Syracuse, N.Y., 1987).

ment of a theory of race. Parkman's relationship to this trend remains ambiguous. He certainly did employ the term "race" in his writing, but most often the meaning is either not biological or so vague as to be indeterminate. He seemed frequently to use "race" simply to identify a social group. Thus he conceived of Indians as a whole as a race, but he also referred to Algonquians and Iroquois in an identical way (I, 2, 4, 27, 29, 44). That he was influenced by the growing nineteenth-century fashion to assign people to biological compartments and to attach invidious meanings to those categories can be seen in his attitude toward race mixing. He entertained a very low opinion of mixed-race *coureur de bois*, calling them a "mongrel race of bush-rangers" (I, 63). Parkman's touchiness about intermarriage between whites and Indians certainly links his use of race to biology and with obvious implications. Whether he recognized those implications, however, remains unclear.¹¹

Equally unclear was Parkman's habit of associating Indians with darkness. They were "a race dark and subtle as their sunless mazes" (I, 157). Iroquois, he noted, had "dark faces" (I, 18); Pontiac was darker than his brethren (I, 202). He described a group of warriors at Ouiatenon as "a perilous multitude, dark, malignant, inscrutable" (II, 291). Yet for all his fixation on darkness, it does seem to be the Indians' savagery, their stage of life, that offended him most. As he wrote in reference to Pontiac, "all savages, whatever may be their country, their color, or their lineage, are prone to treachery and deceit" (II, 229).

David Levin, in his discussion of the romantic historians, points to their practice of associating darkness with the wilderness and demonic powers to illustrate certain character types. In European thinking the Indians had long been linked with the darker forces in the world. Both the Jesuits and the Puritans affected such images, and Parkman was a descendant of the Puritans and steeped in the writings of the Jesuits. His views of Indian savagery and the hopeless future that awaited the tribes plainly suggested the employment of dismal, even funereal metaphors. While romantic gloom does not in itself exclude a tendency toward nineteenth-century racism, it does show that Parkman's thinking about Indians and Europeans was more complex than critics like Jennings have supposed.¹²

What, then, are Parkman's achievements? First, in the two books in which the Indians counted most, *Pontiac* and *Jesuits*, he gave them a prominent place in his story. In *Pontiac*, especially, the native people initiate events. It is they who fight to preserve their

¹¹ On the scientific racism of the nineteenth century, see Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), 184-86, *passim*.

¹² David Levin, *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman* (Stanford, Calif., 1959), 14, 132-41.

way of life and to whom the British are forced to respond. Considering his views on native culture and his notions on the outcome of the struggle for the New World, this literary construction constituted a remarkable concession. Unfortunately, it cannot be said to have really shaped his interpretation. His Indian still loses, as it was inevitable and quite appropriate that he should. Parkman sees little in the way of tragedy in this denouement. He can occasionally muster a modicum of sympathy for the Indians' desperate and hopeless struggle. After all, he notes at one point that the Indians had been "goaded by wrongs and indignities" (I, 185). They faced a settler population "rude, fierce and contemptuous . . . [who] daily encroached upon . . . [their] hunting grounds . . . , and then paid them for the injury with curses and threats" (I, 79). For Parkman the Indian could rise above passivity, but he could never emerge triumphant even in the short run.

Also, Parkman turns out to be an early practitioner of the art of Indian biography. He returns repeatedly to Pontiac as the nub of events even while he unfolds a complex plot in a panoramic stretch of the continent. Indeed, the thesis of the book, that the Indian war originated in a conspiracy, demands that Pontiac assume a critical role. But Parkman could not avoid the limitations of the genre. Indians leave slim records of the kind that informed biography on the seaboard and in Europe. He had no faith in the oral record. He was left largely with snippets of what Pontiac said himself and with what Europeans said of him. The result would not sustain a full description of the Ottawa chieftain's life. Yet Pontiac's presence in the story does unquestionably lend a quotient of personal drama that would not be present in a more general account. The addition of Bouquet, in many ways a more interesting character if only because he had more to say for himself, sets off a contrast between the Swiss defender of civilization and the Indian representative of the primitive past, a contrast dear to Parkman's heart.

For this reason one suspects that Parkman preferred Bouquet, but he strained to give Pontiac his due. Unfortunately what Parkman saw as his due had necessarily to be qualified by his misgivings concerning the Indian world. Pontiac, according to Parkman, was a self-made man. Although he was the son of a chief, heredity among the tribes was not sufficient to secure leadership. "Courage, resolution, address, and eloquence" were the "sure path to distinction." These qualities together with a "vehement ambition," "commanding energy . . . , force of mind, and . . . subtlety and craft" established Pontiac's greatness. But here the praise took an inevitable turn. He was, after all, a member of a "wily race." "Though capable of acts of magnanimity, he was a thorough savage, with a wider range of intellect than those around him, but sharing in all their passion and prejudices, their fierceness and treachery." Yet these were the "faults of his race"; they could not "eclipse his

nobler qualities" (I, 183). One suspects that Pontiac emerged from this literary ordeal with a personality more the offspring of Parkman's imagination and his nineteenth-century anthropology than anything close to the reality.

Parkman did in one sense manage to transcend the anthropological thinking of his age. The idea of the savage, which he employed with great abandon, served to minimize the distinctions among native groups, to include all Indians in one encompassing classification. But Parkman, an author of strong, almost visceral preferences, drew sharp distinctions between the various human types that populated his writings. Modern anthropology has, of course, displaced the idea of the savage and has much diminished the significance even of the tribe as a taxonomic instrument, stressing instead the significance of clans and smaller social groups. In the earlier period, however, tribal identification of the Indians was inescapable. Although Parkman used tribal nomenclature, his principal designation was larger. He referred to the Iroquois and the Algonquians as families (I, 289), an untechnical designation to be sure, but one demonstrating that he possessed a fairly accurate sense of language differentiation.

Unfortunately, Parkman then went on to attribute broad cultural characteristics to each group in a way that seems more illustrative of his biases than any accurate accounting of native traits. He much preferred the Iroquois even though he recognized the Algonquians had produced a number of major native leaders. Pontiac and Tecumseh had their origins in that "family." He found in the Iroquois "a robustness of mind unparalleled among tribes of a different lineage" (I, 14). They were subtle, sagacious, eloquent, and given to "caustic irony" (I, 15). He did criticize their craftsmanship but went on to offer high praise for Iroquois farming and architecture (I, 16). They might have been burdened with a certain "primitive rudeness" and a "boundless pride," but they enjoyed a clear "mental superiority" over the other Indian peoples (I, 16, 21). Conversely, he could find little to praise about the Algonquians. He concluded that "in moral stability and intellectual vigor, they . . . [were] inferior" (I, 37). Regrettably, whatever gain might have accrued from the abandonment of a single classification for the Indian, Parkman lost by persisting in his use of the language of savagery.

In defining the setting for his wilderness epic, Parkman anticipated another important modern conception. His century-long struggle of France, England, and the Indians occurred in the lands south and east of the Lakes, in what historians have recently come to call the "middle ground."¹³ The notion of the savage assumed a two-sided conflict, Europeans and Indians, with the tribesmen

¹³ White, *The Middle Ground*.

fated to lose. But the actual story Parkman told involved three participants, which similarly presupposed Indian defeat yet went on for the better part of a century. As the final act in this struggle *Pontiac* may have lent itself to the implicit resolution, but it built on the long contest in which the three sides staked out positions, established bonds, and redefined their worlds in the setting of the middle ground. Until the 1790s, after the time of Parkman's story, no party could either occupy the whole or within it fulfill more than part of their intentions. Out of this struggle came the polyglot native societies that so vexed the British and Parkman in Pontiac's uprising. Great numbers of these people in the lands west of the Ohio were immigrants from elsewhere, the refugees of past wars. Because of his fixation on the distance between savagery and civilization, Parkman missed the opportunity to describe the tentative convergence between Europeans and Indians. In the instances where he did recognize that some of the participants had taken on the characteristics of the other, he found the results quite unpleasant. The *coureur de bois* were mongrels, and the Pennsylvania frontiersmen from Paxton who attacked peaceful Indians in 1763 had taken to behaving like the savage warriors who had inflicted such punishment on them (II, 154-55). Finally, his commitment to the vanishing Indian seriously undermined recognition of a gradual process of acculturation among the native people. And yet, Parkman's account of Pontiac's career and the Indian illustrated a major transition in the history of the middle ground, the point at which the French dropped out of the tripartite struggle to be replaced by the Americans. He saw clearly that the removal of the French had been crucial in fomenting the war and that the American settlers constituted a force that would soon make the middle ground only a memory.

Parkman's history is surely dated. His exaggeration of Pontiac's role, his insistence on a unified Indian conspiracy, and his obsolete anthropology make his writing in many ways a quaint vestige of the past. Despite Parkman's shortcomings his writing remains hard to resist. Inflated as the prose may be, the Victorian periods do roll forward with compelling force, the narrative has a spaciousness that modern history writing will seldom match, and the depiction of personality a vividness and vitality that survives a century and a half after it was written. Parkman must be read with a critical eye, but a reading of his work will always return both pleasure and profit.