contemporary age. The problem of posthistoire lies in the perspective from which its theorists wrote—as educated bourgeois who could not bear to think of themselves as part of the unconscious and disempowered “masses.” Niethammer implores contemporary intellectuals—historians in particular—to understand the subjectivity of the “masses,” to ally themselves with the latter, and to “support the subjectivity of individuals in their historical perception of themselves” (p. 149).

Niethammer’s basic assumptions are so far away from the empiricism of North American historical research, even from our tentative and occasional ventures into theory, that most of us, I suspect, are going to find Posthistoire a tough slog. Nevertheless, those committed to history “from below,” those committed to exploring the questions of the uses of historical understanding in promoting change, will confront a stimulating and challenging set of ideas in this difficult book.

Peter Seixas
University of British Columbia


In this collection of eight essays, Harvey Kaye briefly examines the work of the English Marxist historians George Rudé, Victor Kiernan, Christo-
first as introductions to edited collections of the authors’ works. The main axis of Kaye’s criticism is typically the extent to which the author in question followed a Gramscian approach as opposed to a Leninist theoretical line.

Indeed, in his introductory essay, Kaye is concerned both to outline what he considers to be the essence of the Gramscian approach, and to argue that it was largely Gramsci’s influence that led the English historians towards social and people’s history, towards focus on hegemony and contradictory consciousness. It is somewhat ironic that Christopher Hill remarks, in the collection’s preface, his inability to recall the work of Gramsci being discussed in the Historians’ Group.

This book is well written and well endowed with incisive socialist aphorisms (even if several of them are quoted repetitively). It addresses both the important enterprise of exposition and recovery, with respect to the authors’ work discussed, and the increasingly bitter confrontation between socialist historiography and right-wing propaganda in the wake of the failure of the “Lenin experiment.”

And yet, this collection is unabashedly cobbled together out of bits Kaye couldn’t place in other books for reason of length, and out of glued-together occasional pieces. There is a good deal of repetition, in consequence, and such writers as Christopher Hill and Eric Hobsbawm receive a treatment that can only be described as cursory (perhaps they were treated in the bits that were not too long for inclusion elsewhere?). While Kaye frequently raises extremely important issues—the danger present in “history from below” of romanticizing the experience of the defeated, for example, or the ways in which these historians practically reconstructed the concept “class struggle”—such issues also receive cursory treatment.

These are demoralizing times for a disorganized left. If this exposition of the work of the English Marxist historians is also disorganized, at least it reminds us of the vibrant struggles for a better future these writers both reported on and pursued.

Bruce Curtis
Wilfrid Laurier University


Dr. Georges Sioui’s intriguing essay is a wampum. “At the beginning of a speech or negotiations, north-eastern Natives, particularly the Wendat-Iroquois, almost invariably offered several wampums, the effect of which was meant to ‘call reason back to its seat’” (p. 5). The offering of a shell belt or collar as a preliminary to serious discussions was based upon the Aboriginal view “that to attain reason, one must first treat the emotions with honour and respect” (p. 5). For an Amerindian Autohistory is conceived as just such a wampum; its purpose is to “treat