

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

Harvey J. Kaye. *The Education of Desire: Marxists and the Writing of History.* London: Routledge, 1992. Pp. xiv, 211. \$18.95 Cdn., paper.

In this collection of eight essays, Harvey Kaye briefly examines the work of the English Marxist historians George Rudé, Victor Kiernan, Christo-

pher Hill, Edward Thompson, Leslie Morton, and Rodney Hilton. Additional essays are devoted to the work of the American socialist historian Leo Huberman and to that of the eclectic cultural critic John Berger. Kaye also offers a number of reflections on the competing uses claimed for the past by socialist and by New Right politics, attempting thereby to reaffirm the importance of critical historical study in the face of pronouncements that history has ceased.

Many of the English historians covered here were connected at some time with the Historians’ Group of the British Communist Party, a venue for the articulation of a characteristic approach to historiography. Guided by the Marxist dictum that “the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle,” these historians were particularly responsible for the creation of history “from the bottom up.” Most of them have attended particularly to the recovery and investigation of the activities, culture, and experience of the “common people.” Through their efforts, our understanding of the transition from feudalism to capitalism has been altered and, perhaps more significantly, their work played an important role in the legitimacy acquired by “social history” within the larger historiographic enterprise.

In the essays devoted to Rudé, Thompson, Kiernan, Morton, and Huberman, Kaye outlines briefly the main interests and contributions of each, presents a brief biographical sketch, and probes some of their work in more detail. These essays are mainly expository, and some appeared

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 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

Georges E. Sioui. *For an Amerindian Autohistory: An Essay on the Foundations of a Social Ethic*, translated from the French by Sheila Fischman. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992. Pp. xxv, 125. \$29.95 cloth.

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