

her own truths when she takes a personal stand. She also poses a question so crucial to so many Aboriginal people around the world: where does a mixed blood person fit?

Poems about her family life, such as "Mom, Dad" (p.52) and "Murder of the Girl" (p.62), are filled with great sadness and pain as well as anger. One realizes that Rose has led a difficult life. Her romantic side is revealed in what she calls "The Brenda Poems" (pp.65-72) and "The Jane Poems" (pp.73-76). These express her sense of coming to terms with sexual identity and lost love.

All of Wendy Rose's poems are relatively short, so the book can be scanned easily. Reading the entire book at one time gives the collection more fluidity than simply reading individual works, for many poems seem to run into the next. Although they express diverse thoughts, there is a considerable degree of unity in the poems despite their having been written over a thirty year period.

Generally, Wendy Rose's collection is both interesting and moving. She has courageously revealed her inner, most personal thoughts through her poetry. This is a quality to be greatly admired. Those readers who accept her words of experience will greatly appreciate her work, although those who attempt to analyze her work too deeply might well get lost in her psyche.

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Sioui, Georges: *For an Amerindian Autohistory: An Essay on the Foundations of a Social Ethic*. Translated from the French by Sheila Fischman. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995, ISBN 0-7735-0950-X Cloth CDN \$39.95; 0-7735-1328-0 Paper CDN \$12.95.

In *For an Amerindian Autohistory*, Georges Sioui introduces a much needed philosophy and methodology into Amerindian history. Sioui's book is a call to abandon what he has dubbed "the evolution myth," the belief that more technically advanced or literate societies are superior and are therefore responsible for dominating and altering more "primitive" societies. This book urges us, instead, to replace this linear perspective with a more holistic belief in the sacred circle of life, allowing for a more tolerant, non-hierarchical approach to history and its actors. Sioui's book also strives to dispel the myth of the disappearing Indian and to show that Indian culture

is thriving and expanding in and beyond the Americas. Finally, Sioui introduces a new methodology, Amerindian Autohistory, to the historical and ethnohistorical discourse of recent years. This method, he claims, will serve as "a basis for establishing a new history to match the images of themselves that people have always had, or should have" (p.37). Sioui's *Amerindian Autohistory* is a history constructed with what he considers Native values. It must be written largely by Natives themselves.

An attempt to instill a more holistic and self-constructed approach into Amerindian history is long overdue. However, like any theory that tries to radicalize an existing approach, Sioui's methodology is not without what recent historians may perceive as problems. Some of Sioui's methods, such as a generalized Indian voice and the use of European primary sources, are surprising twists to a discipline which has recently sought to rid itself of these very approaches.

Throughout the book, Sioui claims to represent the spiritual perspectives of all Native Americans, "with particular reference to those in north-eastern North America" (p.xxi). He asserts, for example, that "The reality of the sacred circle of life, wherein all beings, material and immaterial, are equal and interdependent, permeates the entire Amerindian vision of life and the universe" (p.8). Throughout his book, sentences begin with phrases such as, "Amerindians always say..." (p.5); while other statements broadly claim that "Amerindians are naturally given to reflect on the order of life (the circle) and the essence of things" (p.23); or, "...Amerindians of all times feel perfectly at ease with their value system" (p.72). Furthermore, to stress the important role that Amerindians play in interpreting and representing their past history, Sioui claims that Amerindians possess a kind of timeless Indian nature or "essence." "[F]rom the Native point of view," he writes, "the persistence of essential values is more important than change..." Both contemporary oral history and Amerindian historians, therefore, are essential to interpreting Amerindian history for, while Amerindians have changed, he continues, "they are still themselves" (p.22).

Recently, the presentation of a uniform and essential Indian nature in Amerindian or colonial history, while politically powerful, has been considered problematic. The representation of a static Indian mentality—one that extends not only to all American Natives but across more than 500 years—risks shunning a diverse and dynamic community. This approach, some argued, contributed to the atrocities for which colonists were responsible.

Furthermore, while recent historical writing has hesitantly employed European sources to represent past Indian mentalities, Sioui considers Joseph Francois Lafitau and Baron de Lahontan as reliable observers and recorders of Amerindian views and manners. Basing his argument largely

on these writings, Sioui redefines issues often addressed in Amerindian culture: cannibalism, captivity, morality, and sexuality, for example. As a result, both Iroquois and Huron cultures (though Sioui extends these characteristics to all Amerindian value systems) are represented as highly moral, kind, and rarely cruel: much, it seems, in line with the Noble Savage concept of the 18th century. Again, this is a tough method for traditional historians and ethnohistorians to embrace, given the motives and philosophical discourses contemporary to these European authors. Here, one is forced to question whether empowering subordinate groups in the eyes of the dominant culture must involve rejecting potential values (past or present) that are not shared or understood by that dominant group.

Significantly, Sioui incorporates oral history into his work, citing Amerindian poets, songwriters and political figures. This further illustrates one of Sioui's primary arguments: that the Amerindian is far from obsolete.

For An Amerindian Autohistory serves a far more reaching purpose, however, than to provide testimony to the prolonged and permeating Indian voice. It is also an important and telling attempt at dialogue between Amerindian and non-Amerindian interpretations of historical events. This book serves as a significant catalyst in the movement toward a more analytically centered and self-constructed approach to the history of the New World. Few historians would argue that there is not a real and immediate need for methodologies that provide representation and offer value to spiritual or non-linear approaches. Sioui's book stands as an attempt to integrate a similarly aimed methodology into mainstream academic discourse, albeit not without some difficulty. Whether the integration of these discourses will be embraced, or is indeed possible, remains to be seen.

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