

Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands, *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. xii + 209 pp., notes, bibliography, index. Raymond Wilson, *Ohiyesa: Charles Eastman, Santee Sioux*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983. xiv + 219 pp., notes, bibliography, index, illustrations.

A major goal of the "new social history" in America has been to bring into prominence those previously ignored by historians — minorities, women,

working people — and to discover how they acted to determine their own lives within an often oppressive society. In different ways the two studies under review achieve this goal by showing individual American Indians as active participants in the events which concerned them.

Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands, associate professors of English at Iowa State University and Arizona State University respectively, begin by attempting to define their subject matter in *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives*. They see the autobiographies of Native American women as blending two traditions, an oral and communal Indian tradition, and a written, individualistic European tradition. Their analysis of the processes by which these autobiographies were created is especially revealing. At the turn of the century many narratives were collaborations between anonymous informants and anthropologists. Today some Indian women have attained a high degree of literary self-awareness and authorial control, a development likely to continue. Most autobiographers have seen themselves as important members of their societies, not the "drudges" of white stereotype. Many have tried to mediate between two cultures, and to live in both. Their narratives, write Bataille and Sands, "might be best described as stories of adaptability." These women "have been forced to be flexible, resourceful, and tenacious in facing struggles for survival and growth in constantly shifting circumstances" (p. 130).

Logically organized and clearly written, *American Indian Women* is soundly based on autobiographies, manuscript sources, and interviews. It contains a superb fifty-page annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources. The authors bring a feminist perspective to the study, but do not try to force Indian women into Western ideological moulds, and are sensitive to such Indian values as communalism, the land, and the sacredness of language. Their judgement of the growing "sophistication" of the autobiographies, however, suggests an uncharacteristic application of Western literary criteria to "a unique form of expression" (pp. 26, 102, 136, 4). Neither in text nor notes do the writers fully substantiate their claim that Indian women generally had real power in their societies; sources listed in the bibliography could, perhaps, have reinforced the claim. While alive to the problems of bilingual collaboration, Bataille and Sands might have given more attention to the difficulties of translation between very different cultures. These flaws detract little from a valuable contribution to both the "new Indian history" and to women's history.

Written by a historian at Fort Hays State University in Kansas, *Ohiyesa: Charles Eastman, Santee Sioux* is unadventurous in method — there is little psychohistory or ethnohistory here. Raymond Wilson nevertheless achieves a fair evaluation of a once-famous but misunderstood man. "It was never easy to be the most prominent Indian of one's day" (p. 192), writes Wilson of Eastman (Ohiyesa, "The Winner"), a Santee Sioux of part-white ancestry who became a symbol to Americans of what "uplift" could do for the Indian. At the age of fifteen Eastman was, in his own words, "hauled from ... savage life" (p. 17) by his Christian Indian father, and launched upon a remarkable and varied career in white society. He became a qualified doctor, and treated the injured after the Wounded Knee massacre of 1890. He worked for the U.S. government and for the Y.M.C.A., became a summer camp owner, was active in tribal and pan-Indian affairs, and travelled around America and to England as an Indian spokesman. And, through articles, lectures, and books such as *Indian Boyhood*

and *The Soul of the Indian* (both reprinted in 1971) Eastman brought his vision of Indian reality to large audiences in and beyond the U.S. He hoped always to build understanding between races, and to reform the administration of Indian affairs. Yet his life often became a frustrating attempt to combine such idealistic aims with the need to earn enough money to support his white wife — and literary collaborator — and their large family.

*Ohiyesa*, the product of research in numerous archives, is grounded in published primary sources, correspondence, and interviews; it contains sixteen good photographs. Wilson clearly places Eastman's activities in historical context, and conveys both his strengths and weaknesses. Eastman was, Wilson writes astutely, "an acculturated rather than an assimilated Indian" (pp. 189, 36). Like the women autobiographers, he struggled to make satisfactory adjustments to white America, while holding to what he saw as the essentials of the old way. We learn much about these struggles, yet Eastman the human being remains remote; the author might have quoted him more. Wilson might also have offered a more penetrating analysis of Eastman's writings — to what extent, for example, was his picture of Santee life ethnologically accurate? (Cf. David Reed Miller, "Charles Alexander Eastman, the 'Winner': From Deep Woods to Civilization. Santee Sioux, 1858-1939," in *American Indian Intellectuals*, ed. Margot Liberty [St. Paul, Minn.: 1978], 63-66, 70.)

Together these studies demonstrate the extent to which Indians could select from two societies, without becoming "marginals" lost between cultures. *American Indian Women* and *Ohiyesa* also alert historians to the need for understanding the motivations behind the various adaptive strategies practiced by Indians and other minorities in America — and elsewhere.

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