

Book Reviews and Notices

Stealing Indian Women: Native Slavery in the Illinois Country, by Carl J. Ekberg. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007. xvi, 236 pp. Illustrations, maps, figures, tables, notes, index. \$38.00 cloth.

Reviewer Catherine J. Denial is assistant professor of history at Knox College. Her book manuscript, *Un/Making the Nation: Marriage and the Politics of American Expansion in Dakota and Ojibwe Country, 1805–1845*, was recently accepted for publication by the Minnesota Historical Society Press.

Stealing Indian Women is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarship on the myriad forms of slavery that have existed in North America. Focusing on the late seventeenth to late eighteenth centuries, Ekberg explores those areas of the Illinois country — modern-day Illinois and Missouri — settled and governed by non-Native people, with specific attention to the towns of Kaskaskia, Ste. Genevieve, and St. Louis. Through the meticulous analysis of parish documents, legal depositions, and the military and civil records of successive French, Spanish, and English regimes, Ekberg crafts a singular portrait of three bustling communities and the practices of Indian slavery that ran through each.

Ekberg's work is split into two distinct sections. The first focuses on the practice of Indian slavery in both Upper and Lower Louisiana in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Ekberg provides an exhaustive analysis of the French practice of enslaving Indian people, trading them, and governing their working conditions, balancing a global perspective on the North American colonial venture with a detailed portrait of the idiosyncratic implementation of European goals at the local level. Colonial laws, military practices, and religious rites are all given their due, but Ekberg demonstrates a shrewd understanding of local cultures — whether in New Orleans or in the small town of Ste. Genevieve, several months travel north — and the ways isolation, kinship, and neighborliness had the power to alter policy in meaningful ways.

In the book's second section, Ekberg expands this further by focusing on the "Céladon affair" — a legal drama that involved the communities of Ste. Genevieve and Kaskaskia from 1773 to 1774 and that turned upon the death of a local, kidnapped, female, Indian slave; the local woodsman who may have murdered her; a second enslaved

Indian woman who ran away from her owners at the woodsman's behest; a member of the French military who ran a sideline in liquor trading; and the new Spanish civil authorities who were technically responsible for untangling the situation. In the depositions surrounding the Céladon affair, we hear from governors, lawyers, soldiers, widows, wives, mothers, and priests; from the enslaved and the free; and from white, black, Indian, and mixed-heritage individuals. Ekberg is right to suggest that the incident provides a rare means to examine the social life of an eighteenth-century middle American community.

The first section is the strongest, blending an appreciation for new scholarship — notably Jennifer Spear's work on *métissage* in Lower Louisiana and Brett Rushforth's analysis of Indian slavery under the French regime — with a meticulous processing of French and Spanish parish and civil records. The Louisiana country that emerges from this section is an energetic, complex, far-reaching colonial enterprise — a welcome corrective to the common assumption that expansion into the Trans-Appalachian West was undertaken only by the English and their descendants. What weaknesses mar the text here are largely rooted in language. Ekberg defines marriage, for example, as a rite observed according to western strictures, whether religious or civil. This transforms all women in long-term partnerships contracted by a different means into "concubines" — a term weighted with pejorative meaning that obscures Native practices of partnership that would have existed alongside the rites of the Catholic church. Ekberg also often refers to Indian people as "red" — an archaic and pejorative term in American historical inquiry.

Section two lacks section one's energy and focus. Ekberg's narration of the Céladon affair stretches over three chapters, sometimes falling prey to repetition, and analysis of the affair is overwhelmingly reserved for the book's conclusion. What analysis is offered in the affair's earlier narration is often incidental to the kidnapping, murder, and escape with which the townspeople were dealing — a digression into the value of bear oil instead of butter in hot weather, for example; or the fortune of a deer hide after a buck had been killed. Were Ekberg seeking to undertake a wide-ranging analysis of middle American life, such details might be more pertinent. They rarely serve his articulated goal of making the Céladon affair a transparent demonstration of social and racial mixing — by choice and coercion — in this specific time and place.

Ekberg's work makes a valuable contribution to our understanding not only of Indian slavery but of the cultures of middle America in the eighteenth century. There is more work to be done here, particularly in

comparing the form and function of African slavery in the region, and the differences in an enslaved persons' experiences of bondage depending on their race and labor. Ekberg's book issues that challenge — for us to continue to think critically about community, society, rank, and cultural exchange, and to fully appreciate the wide range of human experiences rooted in the pre-United States west.

Catlin's Lament: Indians, Manifest Destiny, and the Ethics of Nature, by John Hausdoerffer. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009. 208 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Kate Elliott is assistant professor of art history at Luther College. Her dissertation (University of Iowa, 2009) was "Epic Encounters: First Contact Imagery in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century American Art."

Upon reading the title of John Hausdoerffer's slim book, *Catlin's Lament: Indians, Manifest Destiny, and the Ethics of Nature*, one might wonder if there is a need for another examination of the nineteenth-century artist, ethnographer, showman, and charlatan, George Catlin. Catlin's life and work have been chronicled in dozens of books, exhibition catalogs, scholarly articles, and dissertations since his death in 1872. This surfeit of material must be added to the copious body of work — both written and visual — that the artist himself left behind, meaning that those interested in the artist will have little difficulty satisfying their curiosity. Throughout *Catlin's Lament*, it is clear that Hausdoerffer relies on those who preceded him, but in his attempt to reconcile the many inconsistencies of the artist's life, the originality and the ultimate merit of his examination become clear, making it a worthwhile addition to the body of literature on the artist.

Scholars have struggled to make sense of the many inconsistencies in Catlin's life, his writings, and his professed beliefs. Known for his nuanced and humane portraits of Native American men and women, Catlin simultaneously bemoaned the destruction of Native culture and willingly perpetuated stereotypes of Native American savagery in exploitive public performances running in conjunction with his portrait exhibitions. Hausdoerffer explores these contradictions and explains them as evidence of Catlin's continued adherence to an ideology of expansion that governed Jacksonian America, despite his avowed commitment to Indian rights.

Each of the four chapters takes a different moment in Catlin's life when these inconsistencies rose to the surface. Hausdoerffer begins with Catlin's early career as a conventional portraitist in eastern cities, where he was exposed to Philadelphia's Enlightenment scientific