

eth century. Lauck's comments here lack the sharp focus of his writing on the Prairie Historians, but his commentary on representative works from the succession of modern-day historiographical trends that undermined the midwesterners' prestige is instructive regarding perceptions of what was lost and what was gained in the process.

The book's brief epilogue considers the prospects for a revival of the Prairie tradition after a hiatus of more than fifty years. The author is sanguine about a renewal of midwestern history—and for good reason. For all the methodological and ideological controversy within the profession since the end of World War II, an enormous body of work, focused in one way or another on the Midwest, has been produced in the past half-century, much of it informed by the gender, class, and ethnicity distinctions of culture studies. "In addition to dusting off the older works of the Prairie Historians," Lauck writes, "these newer works can serve as building blocks for a more integrated history of the Midwest in the future" (85). No doubt there is plenty to work with on this score. The books and articles listed in the author's endnotes—this slender book's 90 pages of text are accompanied by 67 pages of endnotes—provide enough material to keep historians and their readers busy for years to come.

*Making Marriage: Husbands, Wives and the American State in Dakota and Ojibwe Country*, by Catherine J. Denial. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013. 191 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paperback, \$15.99 e-book.

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Marriage and family have long been key elements in the making of culture on the American frontier. As Catherine J. Denial writes in *Making Marriage*, "When the first significant numbers of Americans arrived in the region now known as Minnesota, they did so armed with the belief that good government and an orderly household went hand in hand" (3). They weren't the only ones. Native women had their own ideas and traditions pertaining to what marriage meant: "In the clash between these systems of belief is the story of Minnesota's beginning—a complex, uneven tale which does not offer a narrative of easy triumph for the American state" (23).

Denial's book is really four different stories that center in and around Fort Snelling in the first half of the nineteenth century. The

stories span race and culture in their discussion of competing conceptions of marriage, family and divorce. And the stories are subversive. At first glance, for example, one might overlook the tale of Pelagie Faribault's ownership claim to an island near the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers. Denial, however, sees something more. Pelagie, a woman of mixed French Canadian and Dakota heritage, was the wife of the fur trader Jean Baptiste Faribault. Decades after the land grant was made to Pelagie, the U.S. government tried to untangle the question of ownership as it worked to extinguish native claims in the area. Then things got complicated. American property law recognized the island as belonging to Pelagie's husband. Others claimed that Pelagie was first and foremost a Dakota woman; as such, she was capable of owning property in her own right. "Pelagie Faribault occupied a legal, social and cultural space quite different from the standard Euro-American model," Denial writes. "Her ownership of Pike's Island was an extension of the peculiar circumstances of the Upper Midwest and their ideas about gendered behavior and the meaning of land" (52).

The most interesting of the stories told by Denial is one not of marriage but of divorce. In the tale of "Margaret McCoy's Divorce," Denial continues to illustrate the complicated nature of intercultural family relations on the frontier. McCoy was a half-Ojibwe woman who wed trader Joseph Brown at Fort Snelling in 1836. They were granted a divorce five years later. While admitting that the story could be dismissed as "interesting trivia," Denial demonstrates what such "trivial" events can tell us about marriage and family in the "middle ground." Divorce, Denial writes, was uncommon in the territory. Couples seeking legal separation even on grounds of cruelty or abandonment rarely had their requests granted. Not so for McCoy and Brown, however, whose divorce was granted on the grounds that a state of war raging between the Dakota and Ojibwe made it dangerous for the couple to reside among either group. As Denial explains, "This was the very real and lively backdrop to Joseph and Margaret's petition—a country as yet sparsely settled by Americans and absorbed by violent episodes Americans could not control, where alternate meanings of place, family, law and spirit thrived" (125).

Other chapters cover the efforts of missionaries to alter marriage customs; yet another involves domestic life at Fort Snelling. The larger story here is one of the evolving nature of family on the Minnesota frontier at a time of dynamic and sometimes even violent change.