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David G. McCrady. *Living with Strangers: The Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006. xvi + 168 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8032-3250-1.

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A Transnational History of the Sioux

Anyone familiar with David McCrady's 1998 dissertation of the same name has been waiting eagerly for this work to make it into print. The wait is now over, and it was worth it. This monograph makes an enormous contribution to the history of the Canadian-American borderlands; the northern Great Plains and the region's Indian tribes; and, of equal importance, to our understanding of the different ways Canadian and American history gets written.

Canadian historians tend to think that the only Sioux presence in Canada occurred between 1877 and 1881, the time Sitting Bull and his followers spent at Fort Walsh to avoid the American army looking for vengeance after its 1876 defeat at Little Bighorn. Similarly, American historians tend to think that the Sioux are a uniquely American tribe and the four years outside the country are not always worth mentioning. As McCrady notes in his first chapter on "Partitioning Sioux History," this nation-specific perspective has led to "the creation of two separate histories–the first ending at the Forty-ninth Parallel, the second beginning there" (p. 1). Without a doubt the key contribution this book makes is to get past that divide and situate the Sioux as a decidedly transnational and borderlands people. In so doing, *Living With Strangers* shows "how the Sioux–not just in wartime, but in peacetime as well–had come to understand the boundary and to use it for their own purposes" (p. xi).

The lacunae this book fills are therefore significant. Beth La Dow's important monograph, *The Medicine Line: Life and Death on a North American Borderland* (2001) was the first to focus on Sioux territory as a borderlands region, but it situated Sitting Bull's interregnum at Fort Walsh in a narrative of white settlement. McCrady puts the Sioux into an earlier chronological context, and one which highlights the Sioux's relations with other Indian tribes and Métis in the region as well as their active choices in their own history. This work thus re-shapes our fundamental understanding of the Sioux's roles and choices in the nineteenth century.

The book is organized chronologically, beginning in chapter 2 with the long century 1752-1862. Here McCrady locates the Sioux as active players in the "middle ground" (to use Richard White's now-classic phrase) that was developing between Indians, Métis, and incoming whites in the northeastern Great Plains. This brief chapter sets the stage for the book's real focus, which are the two decades from 1862-81. Chapters 3 through 6 describe "The Dakota Conflict of 1862 and the Migration to the Plains Borderlands," "The Migration of the Sioux to the Milk River Country," "The Sioux, the Surveyors, and the NWMP, 1872-1874," and "The Great Sioux War, 1876-1877." Each chapter is based on significant primary research and the latest secondary scholarship. The wealth of information McCrady provides about the Sioux's careful negotiations with their Indian neighbors throughout the region, from the perspective of the Sioux tribes and their goals, will remind many readers of Ted Binnema's study *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (2001), which provided similar insights into the Blackfoot in the eighteenth century.

However the next two chapters, 7 and 8 are particularly fascinating. In chapter 7 McCrady shines new light on the relationship between the Sioux and the Métis. Many readers may be familiar with the tensions that existed between the two groups in the nineteenth century as a result of expanding and overlapping trading routes and hunting territories, and think this was as far as the relationship went. McCrady demonstrates convincingly that these conflicts were just the periodic downturns in what was actually a long-standing and reciprocal relationship based on trading goods and information across multiple borders.

The other highly original and interesting addition to the scholarship is in chapter 8, where McCrady comes at last to Sitting Bull's time in Canada. He argues that

Sitting Bull and the last of his people did not return to the United States because they were forced out by the Canadians, but because their efforts at multilateral negotiations with the Indians and Métis in the region finally completely failed. What is compelling about this argument is that it makes the most sense given the decades-old patterns of negotiations the Sioux had maintained in the region.

All of us who write borderlands history worry about the question McCrady poses in his preface: "how would such a divided audience receive this work" (p. xii)? I do not think he needs to worry, because scholars on both sides of the border have a great deal to learn from *Living With Strangers*. Whatever you think you know about the Sioux's story on your side of the border, this book will give you a more complete picture. There is no doubt that the book is more narrative than analytical, but in this case that is not a weakness because of the wealth of new information McCrady provides about the history of the Sioux and the Northern Great Plains. The book is another excellent contribution to the rapidly expanding field of Canadian-American borderlands scholarship and its transnational approach to Sioux history is further evidence that a borderlands approach has a great deal to offer historians on both sides.

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