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Book Review: Living with Strangers: The Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands

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Carroll, James T., "Book Review: Living with Strangers: The Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands" (2006). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 58.
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Living with Strangers: The Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands. By David G. McCrady. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006. xvi + 168 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00.

The history of the Sioux people of the Northern Plains is complicated by the artificial boundary line between the United States and Canada. This division has prevented a complete and thorough treatment of Sioux history since most scholars focus on either the American or Canadian portions of the saga. David McCrady's *Living with Strangers*, however, fills this gap for the nineteenth-century portion of Sioux history. McCrady defines and develops a theory of borderlands and adroitly applies his ideas to the Sioux who ignored diplomatic boundaries and benefited from multiple illicit crossings. Native peoples were pragmatic, self-serving, and clever in manipulating the border and relating with both governments.

The narrative covers a broad swath of nineteenth-century Sioux history in a coherent and logical fashion. Arguments are presented chronologically and hover at major historical epochs, ranging from initial contact to sedentary life on prescribed allotments. Moreover, the text is richly narrated with competing definitions of borderlands, discussions of emerging "middle grounds," portrayals of transboundary peoples, and examples of cultural mediation, especially those involving the Métis. Most important, *Living with Strangers* is a superb

example of reporting history of the northern borderlands. Unlike the Spanish borderlands, which receive frequent attention from scholars, encounters on the Canadian-U.S. borders are still largely unexplored.

As U.S. and Canadian historians begin to embrace and employ transnational comparisons, it is imperative that white-Native relations on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel be scrutinized. In addition, as McCrady clearly demonstrates, the role of the Métis as cultural mediators is an essential component of the relationship between the Sioux and the Canadian and U.S. governments. The dynamics and theories of mediation are pivotal and require scholarly engagement. This is particularly pressing for U.S. historians who have only dealt superficially with the American Métis and their role on the northern borderlands. *Living with Strangers* provides a richly nuanced framework for those dealing with these contemporary and engaging features of Anglo-Indian relations on the borderlands.

McCrady should be commended for blurring boundaries and producing a unified history of the Sioux in the nineteenth century. While additional analysis of the Métis on both sides of the boundary would have amplified cultural mediation and notions of a "middle ground" more clearly, *Living with Strangers: The Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands* is a long-overdue and superb treatment of this topic.

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