



Border Life: Experience and Memory in the Revolutionary Ohio Valley

Elizabeth A. Perkins

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In this original and sensitive ethnography of frontier life, Elizabeth Perkins recovers the rhythms of warfare, subsistence, and cultural encounter that governed existence on the margins of British America. Richly detailed, *Border Life* captures the intimate perceptive universe of the men and women who colonized Kentucky and southern Ohio during the Revolutionary era.

In reconstructing the mental world of border inhabitants, Perkins draws on a pioneering source in oral history. In the 1840s, the Reverend John Dabney Shane conducted hundreds of interviews with surviving western settlers, gathering their recollections on topics ranging from food preparation to encounters with Native Americans. Although Shane's interviews have long been hailed as a rich, if complicated, source for western history, Perkins is the first scholar to consider them critically, as texts for cultural analysis.

Border Life also deepens our understanding of how ordinary people struggled to make sense of their own lives within the stream of history. Discovering a significant disjuncture between recorded memory and written history in accounts of the early frontier, Perkins shows how historians and popular authors reshaped the messy complexities of remembered experience into heroic--and radically simplified--conquest narratives.

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