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The Roads of My Relations: Stories. By Devon A. Mihesuah. Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 2000. 240 pages. \$35.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper.

On reading *The Roads of My Relations* it became immediately apparent that I was reading more than a piece of fiction. The work is like a reflexive culture history of one Choctaw family as they labor to find peace in a rapidly changing world. As Mihesuah writes in her afterword, many of the stories evolved from family stories but are embellished to add interest. I would add to her admission, intricate, complex cultural nuances that lead the reader through a complex maze filled with humor, tragedy, and persistence.

The stories follow a rough chronology, tracing the lives of several generations. The work opens while living in their traditional Mississippi home, tracing their forced removal to Indian Territory. In Indian Territory the author fills each page with the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of life to construct graphic images for the reader. One experiences the horrors of removal and the Civil War. Readers also are treated to everything from the smell of traditional foods sitting on the table to the sharp bantering between relatives. Their daily struggles are filled with sorrows, joys, and humor of living in rural southeastern Oklahoma. Scattered among this collection of stories, Mihesuah captures the importance of kinship, generosity, cooperation, and cosmology that is at the heart of Choctaw life.

Far from being myopic by focussing on the experiences of individuals disconnected to the fabric of the social world, the work continuously embeds each character's life within the context of the larger events that shaped them. In "Ghosts of War," we witness, for example, the Civil War and its aftermath through the eyes of Dawson, Rufus, Sim, and Matthais. As Mihesuah writes, "Indians had lots of troubles before the war, but afterwards it seemed that everything went wrong for tribes everywhere. Even at my house" (p. 106). Every piece is filled with such interconnections.

While moving the reader along *The Road of My Relations*, the author transcends time by bringing past occurrences relevant to issues of the present. This work could have easily slipped into constructing a too-romantic picture of Choctaw life, but the author does not allow that to happen. All her characters and the situations they encounter are portrayed with human frailties that avoid any hint of noble-savage quality. Laid bare are the stark realities of rural poverty, spousal abuse, racism, as well as the challenge to continue as a distinct ethnic entity in American society. In raising these issues, the author rarely leaves anything uncovered for the audience.

The Roads of My Relations possesses a clarity of style and thesis that lays bare the struggle to remain Choctaw in the face of colonialism. Taken as a whole, Mihesuah's collection of stories strikes a universal cord for many indigenous peoples. Through tracing one family's journey across generations, the author creates a universal exploration of cultural persistence and survival. It is a struggle that every Native American family and many tribes continue to face today.

Apart from the sheer enjoyment of reading this work, anthropologists, historians, as well as other academics will find a journey of value. The work is suitable for courses in a variety of anthropology, Native American studies, and

literature courses that discuss issues of identity. With that said, however, the author's intent in writing the book, in my opinion, is not to satiate academic appetites, but to introduce to the general reading public the complexity of heritage and passing on traditions.

Every once in a while it is a delight to venture beyond the traditional disciplinary boundaries drawn by academia. By reading *The Roads of My Relations* I had the opportunity to do so. It was a pleasurable journey. The story is an absorbing tale, mixing history, legend, and the author's vivid imagination, accompanied by rich cultural insights. In her first collection of stories, Devon A. Mihesuah gives us a rich mosaic of interwoven lives. I look forward with great anticipation to the book's nonfiction counterpart.

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Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500–1676. By Joyce E. Chaplin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001. 384 pages. \$45.00 cloth.

Focusing on the years between Martin Frobrisher's Arctic expeditions and 1676, this ambitious book operates at the intersection of intellectual, cultural, and scientific histories. Using English writings about the North American environment and its inhabitants, this book investigates the connection Englishmen made between nature and empire. Chaplin's centers around her contention that current scholarship has created a false dichotomy between Europeans and Indians when it comes the connection between nature and science. She rejects the notion that "western views of nature are instrumental and native views are reverential" (p. 11). She argues that the separation between Europe's "scientific" reason and Native America's "savage" mind did not predate "the Columbian encounter," but "was a product of it" (p. 28). Her goal, then, is to explain how that separation occurred.

Chaplin identifies three overlapping periods of the colonial endeavor: 1500–1585, 1585–1660, and 1640–1676. In analyzing these periods, Chaplin sees the emergence of three distinct components to English colonization efforts. First, they introduced the concept of race to the colonial endeavor. Next, they identified technology as unique to a particular culture. Finally, English society rejected "mystical views of nature" (p. 14) for a more scientific perspective. Writings on America and Americans were essential in this evolutionary process, in part because the New World allowed Anglo-Americans to put Francis Bacon's call for experiential learning into practice.

In examining colonial endeavors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Chaplin uncovers a specific pattern to English colonial efforts. First, the English demystified nature. They then attacked the Indians' bodies—literally through disease and war and figuratively in exploiting Indian society. Finally, the English used science to justify the world around them. While others have tackled some of these issues, what gives this work its verve is Chaplin's integration of English scientific trends into her analysis.