



Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place

Louis Owens

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In this challenging and often humorous book, Louis Owens examines issues of Indian identity and relationship to the environment as depicted in literature and film and as embodied in his own mixedblood roots in family and land. Powerful social and historical forces, he maintains, conspire to colonize literature and film by and about Native Americans into a safe "Indian Territory" that will contain and neutralize Indians. Countering this colonial "Territory" is what Owens defines as "Frontier," a dynamic, uncontainable, multi-directional space within which cultures meet and even merge.

Owens offers new insights into the works of Indian writers ranging from John Rollin Ridge, Mourning Dove, and D'Arcy McNickle to N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Silko, James Welch, and Gerald Vizenor. In his analysis of Indians in film he scrutinizes distortions of Indians as victims or vanishing Americans in a series of John Wayne movies and in the politically correct but false gestures of the more recent *Dances With Wolves*. As Owens moves through his personal landscape in Oklahoma, Mississippi, California, and New Mexico, he questions how human beings collectively can alter their disastrous relationship with the natural world before they destroy it. He challenges all of us to articulate, through literature and other means, messages of personal and environmental — as well as cultural—survival, and to explore and share these messages by writing and reading across cultural boundaries.

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