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Review of *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place* By Louis Owens

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writing by authors identified as mixedblood," he explains, and the collection "is concerned with two major issues: questions of mixed heritage . . . and the way in which we relate to the natural world."

In the first of the book's four sections, Owens addresses some difficult questions, perhaps the most challenging of which deals with authenticity: if "the Indian must conform to an identity imposed from the outside" in order to be seen, what constitutes Indian authorship? The author rewrites his readings of Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* as modernist achievement and of *Cogewea* as radical frontier novel, borrowing from while subverting the Western genre. He includes a version of an earlier essay on Vizenor's *Bearheart* and calls into question sometimes commercially successful novels as depicting "Indians who are non-threatening to a white readership." Beware of "presold, commodified Indian fiction," he warns.

Owens takes on John Wayne and Kevin Costner in the section on film, arguing that *Dances with Wolves*—for all its political correctness—is more damning than Wayne's early westerns: "When Dunbar has absorbed everything possible from the fragile Lakota band, the Indians become disposable. It is time then to erase and replace the Indian—the ultimate fantasy of the colonizer come true." Wayne's racist and genocidal movie, *The Searchers*, on the other hand, at least "honestly faced the consequences of American history."

In recounting his family history (complete with photos), Owens links autobiography and art, demonstrating how his people deserve to be honored "as human beings who loved one another while crossing and erasing borders and boundaries"; they remain survivors who embody and occupy the borderland. His personal history, he argues, bears "on the subject of mixedblood identity as it is articulated in literature."

The final section develops the argument that as a culture "we must achieve a transition from egocentrism to ecocentrism." Owens asserts that the dominant culture in the United

Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place. By Louis Owens. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998. Illustrations, notes, references, index. xvii + 263 pp. \$27.95.

In *Mixedblood Messages*, novelist and critic Louis Owens combines literary and film criticism with personal memoir and environmental writing. The "core subject in this book is

States has much to learn from Native Americans: "The Indian is . . . an essential part of that complex of relationships we call environment."

Despite the re-presentation of some earlier essays, *Mixedblood Messages* is an important addition to Native American studies, especially in its fusing of genres. Although Owens asks questions on the cutting edge of current scholarship, his study remains remarkably readable and provocative. The book serves as a succinct introduction to the field while taking that field a step further.

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