
Editorial

Gerald Vizenor has for over forty years been the voice of innovation in native literatures. From his campaigning early journalism and delicate natural haiku scenes, through his raucous satires and powerhouse unification of tribal tradition with continental critical philosophy, to his latest emergence as imaginative historical novelist and framer of constitutions, Vizenor has continuously embodied both the modernist credo of “make it new,” and also (paradoxically?) the continuing vitality of tribal narrative traditions. In founding *Transmotion*, only the second journal with Indigenous North American literatures as its primary focus, it is our intention to encourage this continuing spirit of creative *jouissance* in the field of Native critical studies. In particular, we are looking to promote the academic study of experimental and avant-garde Indigenous writers, and equally to encourage innovative, surprising, unexpected and creative critique of American Indian literatures and other creative arts.

It has been frequently perceived that Native American and First Nations studies are wary of overt theorizing, particularly of theoretical models derived from outside writer-specific tribal traditions. For instance, Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith describe in the introduction to their edited volume *Theorizing Native Studies* (2014) a “turn against theory” (1), and note that activist praxis and community engagement are seen as inherently, or at any rate ethically, more valuable scholarly interventions than a seemingly abstracted and rarified theorization of indigenous literary output. (It’s an attitude that they and the contributors to their landmark volume decisively disprove). On top of being seen as ethically removed, the spirit of philosophical play that motivates theoretical innovation also runs counter to both the anthropologically-inflected criticism of early studies and more recent emphases on archival research and a historicist approach to tribal literatures.

Yet imaginative literature is not the same thing as historical documentation, and writing a poem is not lobbying. Literary works slip and wriggle under the microscope: influences and intentions blur and contradict themselves. Writers self-contradict knowingly and unconsciously, and no writer can be reduced to being a robotic representative of culture. Literary interpretation of works by Native writers must take as its watchword Vizenor’s seven-word manifesto: to “elude historicism, racial representations and remain historical.” The fact that this manifesto issues from a wheelchair-bound hermaphrodite trickster’s dialogue with a cultural anthropologist, and thus is already unstable, ironic and contextual, further emphasizes just why literature in particular is best served by an imaginative, open and un-predetermined criticism. We hope that, if nothing else, the founding of this journal will allow for new critical perspectives to complicate the reading of Native literatures. We will also host new creative work, and welcome submissions of critical/creative hybrid pieces. Finally, it is our intention to host as many reviews of relevant books as possible, to ensure that the breadth and depth of the scholarship devoted to Native American, First Nations, and Indigenous literatures more broadly is brought to light in one place.

The journal itself is open access, thanks to the generous sponsorship of the University of Kent: all content is fully available on the open internet with no paywall or institutional access required, and it always will be. We are published under a Creative Commons 4.0 license, meaning in essence that any articles or reviews may be copied and re-used provided that the source and author is acknowledged. We strongly believe in this model, which makes research and academic

insight available and useable for the widest possible community. We also believe in keeping to the highest academic standards: thus all articles are double-blind peer reviewed by at least two reviewers, and each issue approved by an editorial board of senior academics in the field (listed in the journal's online 'About' section).

We chose *Transmotion* as a title to reflect the sense of intellectual movement and energy characterizing the Vizenorian project, and it is only right that this inaugural issue should concentrate in the main on this theme. We are particularly honored that Gerald Vizenor has himself contributed an original essay explicating the theme of transmotion, one that updates and expands his challenge to writers and critics to now “elude simulations, description, causation, denouement, and cultural victimry.” Joseph Bauerkemper in his examination of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation, a document that brings an artistic irony to the process of forming a nation, argues that the “Anishinaabeg are [through its adoption] reconstituting themselves as transnational citizens” and making transmotion a foundational part of their identity as a nation that refuses the dominant paradigms of statehood. Deborah Madsen takes this further in her discussion of the 17th century imprisonment of “praying Indians” on Deer Island: invoking Agamben’s “state of exception,” Madsen demonstrates the threat that transmotion poses to settler narratives. Finally, Paul Stewart places Vizenor’s communal and comic vision of continuance in *Dead Voices* against the agonized attempt to refuse identity found in one of his professed inspirations, Samuel Beckett. Rounding off the issue, Diane Glancy’s original poem “Kansas” brings transmotion to life, as the driving narrator muses that “In travel, I become the moving place that distance is.”

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