

---

## Editorial

The contents of Volume 5.2 of *Transmotion* reflect the interdisciplinary breadth of our editorial vision, which allows us to continue to highlight the diverse range of work being produced by scholars in the field of Indigenous Studies today. The scholarly articles in this issue explore texts and topics in the realms of contemporary film, visual art, museum studies, and musical performance.

In “Do You Recognize Who I Am?: Decolonizing Rhetorics in the Indigenous Rock Opera *Something Inside is Broken*,” Shannon Claire Toll analyzes the decolonizing rhetorics displayed in an Indigenous rock opera that toured California and the Southwest United States in the Fall of 2016. Applying LeAnne Howe's concept of tribalography, Toll discusses the decolonizing potential of this musical performance, focusing on the implementation of Nisenan oral tradition, history, and language in its libretto. Leveraging the advantages of our online platform, Toll's article also includes links to songs from the production to allow the reader and listener to experience the music and Nisenan language featured in the work. While Toll's piece engages, in this way, in a bit of “curation” for the benefit of our readers, Courtney Cottrell's “Indian Made: Museum Valuation of American Indian Identity through Aesthetics” takes us directly into the heart of some key theoretical questions in museum studies. Cottrell explores that ways that ethnographic museums create and communicate a taste for American Indian art through their acquisition practices and their “rhetorics of value.” She goes on to argue that these rhetorical practices are creating rigid standards for what constitutes American Indian art that is deemed worthy for museum display, standards that often exclude traditional art forms and contemporary motifs deemed important by tribal nations and individual American Indian artists. Cottrell concludes her piece by exploring how some tribal museums (such as the Oneida Nation Museum) are employing their sovereign authority and citizenship standards to develop more inclusive collections and broaden the taste for American Indian art.

Contributing to this taste-expanding work, Kristina Baudemann's “Laughing in the Dark: Weird Survivance in the Works of Bunky Echo-Hawk and Daniel McCoy Jr.” employs and extends Vizenorian theoretical lenses to explore the role of humor in the work of two major contemporary visual artists. Focusing on the surreal, strange, outraging and simply *weird* elements in the artwork of Bunky Echo-Hawk and Daniel McCoy Jr., Baudemann introduces the concept of “*weird survivance*” as a way of encouraging readers to remember that survivance is not exclusively produced by positive and pleasing images. Her article focuses instead on dark humor—a kind of laughter that is spurred by confrontation with the weirdness of our reality, and that comes from a place of sadness, frustration, or even disgust, in spurring renewal and resistance. In this way, she engages in the playful, *transmotional* exploration of critical categories that is part of the spirit of this journal. Finally, turning to film, we have Matt Kliewer's “Translating Images of Survivance: A Trans-Indigenous Corporeal Analysis of *Spear* and *Malighlutit*.” Drawing on Michelle Raheja's theorization of visual sovereignty, Kliewer argues that, while the creation of tribally specific images of survivance represents a fundamental process in reinforcing visual sovereignty and enacting self-determination, the application of survivance characteristics across tribal boundaries creates a powerful inter-tribal, globally Indigenous challenge to the colonial gaze. Analyzing Indigenous images from vastly different geographical and colonial contexts, he suggests, allows us to find common colonial images that

---

Indigenous image makers strategically deconstruct and remake in performative acts of inter-tribal sovereignty. By analyzing Stephen Page's *Spear* and Zacharias Kunuk's *Maliglutit*, Kliewer demonstrates how this inter-tribal aesthetic directly engages Western colonial film conventions and colonial imagery, reframing narratives where Indigenous bodies encounter and resist their historically limited positionality in filmic mediums.

We complement these articles, as always, with our wide-ranging reviews section and cutting-edge creative work. For this issue, we feature a piece by Sámi poet, Niilas Holmberg titled "Máttu oahpus / A Lesson from an Ancestor." We are pleased to reprint this poem, both in the original Sámi version and in an English translation. Our readers will appreciate Brad Hagen's sharp reflection piece, a meditation "On Dreamcatchers" that opens up into wider consideration of memory, tradition, and identity. We are also pleased to feature a reflection (with video accompaniment) on indigeneity in Star Wars, by Stephen Graham Jones. With too many reviews to highlight individually here, we will content ourselves with drawing particular attention to Matthew Fletcher's graphic review of John Borrow's *Law's Indigenous Ethics*. Fletcher's piece highlights the innovative expansion of the boundaries of academic writing made possible by our journal's format. Also deserving of specific mention here is Deborah Madsen's review essay (really an article in itself) of Adam Dahl's, *Empire of the People: Settler Colonialism and the Foundations of Modern Democratic Thought*, which Madsen considers as a thought-provoking, yet limited, example of "complementary scholarship" for the field of indigenous studies.

---

*Transmotion* 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 Front Matter of the full PDF and in the online 'About' section).

David Carlson  
Theodore C. Van Alst  
James Mackay  
David Stirrup

December 2019