

**“In search of our better selves”: Totem Transfer Narratives and Indigenous
Futurities
[ABSTRACT]**

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Much contemporary science fiction urges us to focus on eco-activism and sustainable futures in order to prevent environmental catastrophe. From a critical Indigenous and anticolonial perspective, however, the question becomes “for whom are these futures sustainable”? Set in a nondescript desert dystopia, George Miller’s film *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) alludes to the westerns of yesteryear and the Australian “outback”—spaces coded as menacing in their resistance to being tamed by settler-colonial interests. This article charts how Miller’s film, while preoccupied with issues pertaining to global warming and ecological collapse, replicates and reifies settler replacement narratives, or what Canadian literature scholar Margery Fee has referred to as “totem transfer” narratives (1987). In these narratives, ultimately the “natives” transfer their knowledges and then disappear from view, helping white settlers remedy the self-created ills that currently threaten their worlds and enabling them to inherit the land.

In the second half, I also consider how Indigenous futurist texts offer decolonizing potentials that refute the replacement narratives that persist in settler-colonial contexts. In particular, I examine how Indigenous cultural production emphasizes the importance of the intergenerational transfer of Indigenous knowledges and refuses the hermeneutic of reconciliation that seeks to discipline Indigenous futures in the service of a settler-colonial present.

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