

With your foodbasket and my foodbasket,  
the visitors will be well:

Combining Postcolonial and Indigenous  
Theory in Approaching Māori Literature

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**Abstract:** While postcolonial theory enjoys sustained popularity in literary studies, several Indigenous scholars remain skeptical of this framework. Yet proposed alternative approaches such as Kaupapa Māori are also linked to some difficulties, especially for Western scholars looking at Indigenous literary output. As this article demonstrates, it is important to acknowledge drawbacks on both sides, although doing so does not mean that either framework should be neglected. Instead, I argue that both provide valuable lenses and that their tensions generate possibilities of cross-fertilization. By applying Indigenous theories to and pitting them against postcolonial studies, a new critical perspective emerges that allows the reader/researcher to move beyond binary schemata while at the same time valuing the particularity of the respective Indigenous context. Drawing on the specific case of Aotearoa (New Zealand), this article contends that positioning oneself as a *manuhiri* (visitor) to Māori literature enables a foreign researcher to adopt an ethically sustainable, culturally viable, and credible position. The article thus opens up new possibilities for literary analysis in Indigenous contexts, particularly in relation to creative works from Aotearoa.

**Keywords:** Kaupapa Māori, postcolonial theory, Indigenous literature, visitor



In her 1997 article “Ko Taranaki te Maunga: Challenging Post-Colonial Disturbances and Post-Modern Fragmentation,” Māori scholar and educator Leonie Pihama (Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Māhanga, Ngā Māhanga a Tairi) criticizes Western theoretical approaches and asks: “How can we possibly refer to Aotearoa [New Zealand] as ‘post-colonial’ when every aspect of our lives is touched and imposed upon by the colonisers?” (9). More than a decade later, she still harbours skepticism toward postcolonial theory (“Kaupapa Māori Theory” 12).<sup>1</sup> She is not the only academic who voices such reservations. In an early 2000s Canadian context, Judith Leggatt reflects: “[Postcolonial] theories give me a framework in which to read, and they seem to fit the literature very well. However, many of my Native students, my colleagues[,] . . . and even the Native writers that I read . . . find the term and its theories neocolonial and repressive” (111). A more recent critic of this framework is Cherokee literary scholar Daniel Heath Justice, who argues that postcolonial studies “is limited in its applicability” to a First Nations context (485). In light of such widespread Indigenous rejection or at least unease, it seems necessary to ask some questions: (1) What exactly can be subsumed under the heading of post-colonial theory? (2) In which ways may its application or mere existence be problematic, especially in Indigenous contexts? (3) Can it be used nonetheless? (4) Would the approach of Kaupapa Māori, which derives from critical Indigenous thinking in Aotearoa, be a viable alternative for Native literature written in English? (5) What are some of the difficulties related to the latter approach? (6) Is it possible to combine both theoretical strands in one (complex, potentially flawed) framework?

None of these questions can be conclusively answered in the space of this article. The diversity of practices and interpretations among post-colonial theorists as well as Kaupapa Māori proponents leads to the dilemma of having to exclude some points of view while giving preference to others. What follows is therefore my individual take on both sets of theories which is based on extensive readings and several discussions with Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics. Presenting first the widely used postcolonial perspective, and subsequently drawing on a possible Māori alternative, this article eventually introduces a combination of both approaches by employing the concept of being a *manuhiri*

(visitor). Even though such a position may apply to any reader, I show how it is particularly apt in the case of a non-Indigenous literary scholar. Ultimately, I argue that, rather than neglect, explain away, or fear the frictions that arise in combining the two mentioned approaches, it is worthwhile to maintain such tensions.<sup>2</sup>

As can be deduced from the outline above, rather than venturing into a detailed analysis of literary texts, this article presents a more general discussion of my position as a researcher and *manuhiri*. An assessment of one's own stance, abilities, and constrictions creates transparency and allows for comparability with other academic approaches. In Māori culture, positionality is reflected in the notion of *tūrangawaewae*, which is usually translated as “a place to stand.” According to Wiremu Doherty (Tūhoe and Ngāti Awa), “[t]ūrangawaewae is achieved when a person is able to define their identity by linking themselves to the wider people of the tribe, their environment, and the tribal knowledge base” (31). This term may include a cognitive element, which “is best described as a ‘comfort zone’, or a person’s point of view” (31). In an academic context, providing my *tūrangawaewae* means making clear the methodological-theoretical basis upon which I build my literary analysis—hence my use of the first-person perspective in this article. Irene Visser claims that “[i]t is a time-honored tradition among non-Māori academic critics and researchers . . . to reflect explicitly on their position in relation to Māori culture and literature” (297).<sup>3</sup> Yet, curiously, what Alice Te Punga Somerville (Te Ātiawa, Taranaki) noted more than a decade ago still holds true, namely that “[l]ittle existing literary scholarship about Maori writing in English explicitly foregrounds ‘methodology’” (*Nau Te Rourou* 11). Even though this essay can only do so much, I take her challenge seriously. In doing so, I focus on the possibilities and especially the limitations connected to postcolonial theory and Kaupapa Māori as well as the potential interactions between them.

The basic work described above is important because methodology “frames the question being asked, determines the . . . methods to be employed and shapes the analyses” (L. T. Smith, “Towards the New Millennium” 19). What Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Porou) describes here can usually be equated with “theory” in literary studies.

That is, a selected theory shapes the questions asked of a text and the goals of analysis. Different theories open up different perspectives on the chosen literature and can be more or less illuminating depending on the degree of their relevance. In a nutshell, the position of the *manuhiri* is no cure-all and other approaches or perspectives may be more relevant for other projects or contexts.

### **I. Scrutinizing Postcolonial Theory**

As is the case with many other theories, postcolonial theory, whilst extremely popular and productive, defies easy definition. Yet some delineating action must take place in order to situate my argument. For this purpose, Ato Quayson's definition of postcolonial theory as "a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the local level of ex-colonial societies, as well as at the level of more general global developments thought to be the after-effects of empire" ("Postcolonialism and Postmodernism" 93–94), is reasonable. Even though the field is ever-expanding and certainly not monolithic, scholars working with postcolonial theory tend to share three major concerns: the current condition of nation-states as a result of historical (colonial) processes; the "global interdependencies and entanglements" that negate national autonomy; and power relations and asymmetries, including discursive and materialist effects (Kerner 616). This theory, which can be applied in diverse disciplines and across them, has proven particularly apt for literary studies, since postcolonial literature encompasses "the representation of experiences of various kinds that subtend yet transcend the colonial encounter" (Quayson, "Introduction" 3). However, there are limits to postcolonial studies' assumptions and usefulness.

One of the most frequently criticized elements of postcolonial theory is the temporality invoked by its prefix. On the one hand, "there is disagreement as to whether there has been, or even can be, a 'historical end of colonialism'" (Langer 4). On the other hand, Indigenous scholars in particular criticize the theory's neglect of the pre-colonial past, a deficit which is exemplified in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's assertion that the term "post-colonial" "cover[s] all the cultures

affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (2). With regard to the former issue, Couze Venn voices the prevalent opinion that “the prefix in postcoloniality is not meant to signal the end of the previous period but to stand for the sign of an emancipatory project, that is, it announces a goal yet to be realized” (4). James Clifford’s 1997 assertion also remains valid and insightful: “The term ‘postcolonial’ . . . makes sense only in an emergent, or utopian, context. There are no postcolonial cultures or places: only moments, tactics, discourses. ‘Post’ is always shadowed by ‘neo-.’ Yet ‘postcolonial’ does describe real, if incomplete, ruptures with past structures of domination, sites of current struggle and imagined futures” (277). Despite the valid concern, then, “[i]t is difficult . . . to think of a postcolonial critic who does *not* in some way engage the issues that destabilize the term” (Langer 5; emphasis in original). Whereas the criticism thus may apply to the term, it is not necessarily predictive of the content or methods.<sup>4</sup>

Returning to the latter point of temporal criticism, the theory’s focus on colonization-related aspects is problematic because this may lead to a separation of modern Indigenous writing from older traditions and generally presupposes “a particular historical and intellectual genealogy that ironically traps Indigenous peoples within a colonial nexus” (Justice 492). Rather than being emancipatory and liberatory, as intended, the approach can thus also be restrictive. One may argue that it is perhaps doomed to be forever “designating a constant interplay and slippage between the sense of a historical transition, a sociocultural location, and an epochal configuration” (Quayson, “Postcolonialism and Postmodernism” 94). The contrasting allegations outlined above seem to pose the dilemma of having to take a stand for or against postcolonial theory. I argue that, as long as the difficulties are acknowledged and the above-mentioned limitations communicated, postcolonial theory should not be discarded as a whole. Instead, I recommend a careful selection from the large repertoire of this framework and a studied supplementation with other approaches. After all, there are quite a number of Indigenous scholars and authors who are not opposed to postcolonial theory or its terminology. An alternative conclusion is, for example, provided by Sāmoan writer Albert Wendt: “For me the *post* in post-colonial

does not just mean *after*, it also means *around, through, out of, alongside, and against*" (3; emphasis in original). The scope of postcolonial theory therefore seems to be a matter of personal academic interpretation rather than rigid theoretical or practitioner boundaries.

Another frequently invoked reproach is related to the question of homogenization. Jessica Langer concisely notes that

[p]ostcolonial theory has often been constructed largely as a dichotomy between East and West, . . . which is a construction that fails utterly to take into account the diversity of postcolonial experiences. In particular, it does not account for the participation of non-European powers in colonial and imperial activities, and does not properly include the experiences of the indigenous peoples of settler societies. (11)

Many scholars regret that postcolonial theory often focuses on colonial settlers and their descendants at the expense of the Fourth World. Generally, it seems self-evident that if postcolonial studies aspires to break down old hierarchies and hegemonies, it must be flexible enough to "respond to the heterogenous multiplicity of literatures we call 'postcolonial'" (Mukherjee 7). Indeed, like Heinz Antor, I argue that such literary works are "only . . . intelligible in the context in which they were uttered" (Antor, "Postcolonial Pedagogy" 256), although local specificity does not necessarily preclude overarching phenomena (258).

A third major point of critique concerns the topic of voice and the concomitant reproach of Eurocentrism. The latter issue is in turn tied to the problem of perpetuating the colonial dichotomy of the center and the margin.<sup>5</sup> A skeptical attitude toward such a classification is, for instance, expressed in Powhiri Wharemarama Rika-Heke's 1996 article "Margin or Center? 'Let me tell you! In the Land of my Ancestors I am the Centre,'" which provides a defiant challenge to the "continued relegation of colonized cultures to the margin" (Schacht 3). Eva Rask Knudsen warns that an exclusive focus on the literary act of responding to a European center entails "an actual danger that the indigenous spine of composite literature—the 'subtexts'—is not noticed" (*The Circle* 11). Especially in relation to settler colonies, then, scholars should not only

examine how literature is perceived and processed in former imperial nations, but also in what ways it is meaningful in the local contexts of its production, which in turn entails a broadening of possible discursive positions for the authors.<sup>6</sup> This recentering action is ever more important when considered against the background of hierarchies and the distribution of power, since an unequal relationship is potentially maintained through scholarly work as such and “can reinscribe colonialism” (Leggatt 120).

Part of the general power question is who holds the power of definition. In 1997, Pihama submitted that “few Māori people use the term to describe or locate their work[;] rather, Māori works tend to be labelled as ‘post-colonial’ by Pākehā [white, non-Indigenous people]. This then raises issues about who defines Māori writing, . . . as to be positioned . . . as ‘post-colonial writers’ is to remove the notion of ‘Māori writers’” (“Ko Taranaki Te Maunga” 11). However, I argue that multiple categorizations are possible at the same time; that is, a writer or text may be simultaneously classified as, for instance, Māori, Indigenous, and postcolonial. Concerns about labeling are regularly accompanied by accusations that postcolonial scholars tend to be aloof.<sup>7</sup> Ulla Ratheiser’s self-reflexive comment “that postcolonial theory does not necessarily establish any form of ‘contact’ with the people affected—they and their work become people ‘discussed’” (139) shows that several academics are aware of the pitfall of academic distance. In a similar manner, I suggest that an engagement with Māori authors, academics, and literature should also entail an openness toward Indigenous approaches, thus countering the criticism that “[d]ominant Pākehā/western forms of analysis are maintained in the colonially constructed centre” (Pihama, “Ko Taranaki Te Maunga” 11).

Clearly, then, postcolonial studies continues to be contested. Yet it remains current and widespread. Moreover, a consideration of colonization and colonial processes is essential for the study of Indigenous literature, since the influence of these processes on Indigenous lives continues to have repercussions in the texts—it is constantly criticized, negotiated, referred to, and emancipated from. Even if it is not an explicit topic, forms of colonialism—as well as its predecessors and descendants—have

had far-reaching physical, emotional, cognitive, and structural consequences. The value of and justification for postcolonial theory is thus that, ideally, it acknowledges and examines the tremendous and ongoing impact that (neo-)colonial interventions have on almost all societies of the world. While this does not mean that such interrelations or dependencies have to be the sole focus of literary analysis, they should certainly be considered as part of it.

In the face of the numerous points of critique that postcolonial theory faces, it is clear that it must remain flexible enough to enable local, inclusive, and comprehensive literary (or other) investigations. The mentioned terminological and theoretical indeterminacies can thus also be seen as the field's strength, since they grant it the desired flexibility and adaptability, while also presupposing constant critical re-evaluations. As a consequence, it is vital that "the question remains . . . what 'post-colonial' is supposed to include, exclude, contain and maintain" (Ratheiser 140). In the following, I will determine how the mentioned points of criticism "have led [many] indigenous scholars . . . to take what they can from postcolonialism and move . . . away from . . . its 'Pākehā centred theoretical framework'" (N. Mahuika, "Closing the Gaps" 18), and I will discuss one of the proposed alternatives to this framework. I will also demonstrate how "[a] close look at postcolonial and Indigenous theories suggests that these conflicts may not be as extreme as they initially appear" (Schacht 4). Arguably, if postcolonial theory "let[s] itself be more strongly informed and constructed by Indigenous scholarship" (Ratheiser 144), it could have augmented decolonizing potential.

## **II. Kaupapa Māori as an Indigenous Alternative**

Literary analysis draws on different frameworks, yet no individual approach provides a truly comprehensive picture of the texts. This partiality becomes problematic if a theory neglects or obscures important traits, either deliberately or undeliberately. When working with Indigenous literature, important methodological questions arise, including:

What kinds of methodologies . . . might enable us to better understand . . . how contemporary indigenous literary texts not only produce culturally-inflected, historically-situated



meanings for their several audiences, but also produce various kinds of aesthetic interest and pleasure? And what kinds of methodologies might help us to focus specifically on what is indigenous in contemporary indigenous texts? (Allen 45)

At a very broad, cross-disciplinary level, “[t]he main aim of indigenous methodologies is to ensure that research on indigenous issues can be carried out in a more respectful, ethical, correct, sympathetic, useful and beneficial fashion, seen from the point of view of indigenous peoples” (Porsanger 107–08). This includes both “the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge about indigenous peoples” (109) and is relevant for all stages of the research process (including inception, implementation, publication, feedback, and maintenance of relationships). Generally, of course, the usefulness of such methodologies is dependent on one’s research question, as there is no universal applicability or necessity, even in Indigenous research contexts.<sup>8</sup> However, whereas ethical concerns may seem more relevant to academic fields such as health and social sciences, literary scholarship also has ethical responsibilities. Before delving further into this issue, I will discuss the most widely used Indigenous research approach to originate in Aotearoa.

Even though there are many Indigenous frameworks through which to read literature, in light of what I have previously said about local specificity it is necessary for me to look for a suitable approach that originates from Aotearoa. In the following, I will focus on Kaupapa Māori, a theory that emerged in the 1980s as part of a larger socio-cultural movement, which in turn accounts for the theory’s political and cultural intent (Pihama, “Kaupapa Māori Theory” 8). Since then, its number of proponents and practitioners has continually increased, and the framework itself has evolved and expanded. The term’s versatility is also suggested by its many possible translations. Philosopher and *tohunga* (trained expert) Māori Marsden (Ngāi Takoto) notes that “‘kau’ means ‘to appear for the first time, to come into view’, to ‘disclose’. ‘Papa’ means ground or foundation. Hence, kaupapa means ground rules, first principles, general principles” (66). However, in a modern context, the term has many more potential meanings, including platform, standpoint, layer, scheme, proposal, subject, and intention. In the

case of the compound “Kaupapa Māori,” most scholars would agree that it covers “Māori philosophies, Māori approaches, and Māori ways of being” (Pihama and Cameron 230), with close connections to language and customs (Murton 91). Particularly in an academic context, the term is used to describe a “Māori theoretical positioning[,] . . . a social project[,] . . . and research philosophy” (Lee 95). Beyond these rudiments, however, there is disagreement amongst proponents and practitioners as to what Kaupapa Māori specifically entails. Rangimarie Mahuika (Ngāti Rangiwewehi Ngāti Whakauae, Te Rarawa) noted roughly a decade ago that this indeterminacy is “perhaps for fear of creating boundaries that may limit both the effectiveness and the widespread use and application of kaupapa Māori” (5). Similar to postcolonial theory, then, it defies easy definition.

Other Māori academics highlight that “[o]ne of the idiosyncrasies of kaupapa Maori research is that writers do not tell you *how to do* kaupapa Maori research; instead, they tend to focus on what it does and the effects that it has” (Walker et al. 335; emphasis in original). This emphasis on outcomes or benefits may potentially call into question the value of theory against a background of urgent practical problems to be solved (Hoskins, “A Provocation” 102), yet various authors point out that Kaupapa Māori needs to include both theory and praxis.<sup>9</sup> As a social or “critical decolonising project” (Hoskins and A. Jones, “Non-Human Others” 54), Kaupapa Māori is linked to Indigenous empowerment and activism. Both aspects are in turn connected to uncovering and counteracting processes of marginalization and discrimination. The framework thus deliberately addresses “negative statistics” and may potentially lead to “transformation and liberation” (Royal 68–69). Generally, the approach provides researchers with a few points of orientation while also outlining expectations of them, including culturally specific ethical principles to which they are expected to adhere. A compact list is provided by L. T. Smith in her seminal work *Decolonizing Methodologies*, including values such as respect, attentiveness, generosity, and honesty (124). Since then, several other lists have been compiled for different research projects and contexts, with varying degrees of applicability to literary studies. In spite of this variety, Kaupapa Māori projects collectively emphasize activist, outcome-based, and political as well as cultural

elements. These elements are frequently complemented by strategic essentialism, which may be temporarily reasonable yet is problematic because it continues to uphold simplistic identity constructions (Hoskins, "A Fine Risk"). It is today widely accepted that culture and ethnicity are dynamic constructs. Thus, Māori do not constitute a uniform group, instead including many subdivisions and individual trajectories.

Beyond the question of what Kaupapa Māori actually is, discussions often focus on who should be able to shape and utilize this framework. If Kaupapa Māori advocates try to limit the practitioner circle to those who are Māori, they run the risk of ostracizing those who are unsure of their cultural identity for a variety of reasons (R. Mahuika 8; L. T. Smith, "Kaupapa Maori Research" 230) and losing a chance for cross-cultural collaboration and learning. The former case has been noted by Pihama, Fiona Cram, and Sheila Walker, who in 2002 petitioned for recognition of intra-cultural diversity and accessibility to the theory and its applications by those who use and develop Kaupapa Māori (39). Indeed, "there are a great variety of 'insider' views" (Porsanger 109), irrespective of the approach, and they should all be seriously considered; no single perspective should be reified. The aversion to Pākehā involvement displayed by some Māori academics, on the other hand, often derives from previous negative experiences.<sup>10</sup> Understandably, then, there is a certain wariness of "Western theoretical imperialism" (Pihama, "Kaupapa Māori Theory" 12) and the Indigenous desire to reverse subject-object positions after having been merely informants or objects of interest in colonial times and beyond. From a historical perspective, it also makes sense that emerging disciplines are initially defensive of their boundaries (G. Smith 18), yet Kaupapa Māori can certainly be considered an established framework and its practitioners should not feel the need to suspiciously patrol its borders. Nonetheless, Pākehā academic Alison Jones noted in 2012 that, for some Māori, Pākehā scholars are still disqualified due to a lack of authority and embodied experience (102). This act of exclusion problematically negates any notion of empathy and possibility of communicative relationships.<sup>11</sup> For proponents of such a position, "kaupapa Māori work is, simply by definition, for and by Māori" (102). However, Indigenous scholars such as Nēpia Mahuika (Ngāti Porou, Waikato/Ngāti Maniapoto) ("Closing the Gaps" 19) and

L. T. Smith (“Kaupapa Maori Research” 323) argue that “outsider” involvement is permissible and indeed necessary. What should be targeted is thus a communicative and collaborative partnership.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, this partnership “will always be tricky, contingent, uncertain and constantly under negotiation” (A. Jones 108–09).

The discussion of who should be included is often complemented by a dispute over what should be included, especially concerning the framework’s relationship to Western theories as well as its independence. According to Tānia M. Ka’ai, Kaupapa Māori “acts as a counter-hegemonic force . . . through a process of critiquing Pākehā definitions and constructions of Māori people and asserting . . . the validation and legitimization of *te reo me ngā tikanga Māori* [the Māori language and customary lore]” (9–10). Kaupapa Māori involves a twofold strategy: “[T]alking back’ to ‘Western theory’, and centring ‘Maori’” (Te Punga Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 7). However, it is also in some ways dependent on Western models, which is why scholars such as Brian Murton argue that the framework is bicultural (91).<sup>13</sup> Drawing on L. T. Smith’s *Declonizing Methodologies* (185), he suggests that it “aligns with Western critical theory in that it seeks to expose the underlying assumptions that conceal and reproduce power relations within society, and is concerned with the ways that hegemonic cultural constructions actively normalize social inequalities and the continued oppression of Māori in particular” (91). Whereas some Indigenous academics view this relationship with Western theory as problematic, I argue that Kaupapa Māori is generally aware of its institutional and methodological connections while simultaneously “articulating the limits and distinctions from them” (Te Punga Somerville, “Te Kete” 69). This does not redeem Kaupapa Māori of its ties to other power structures and approaches, yet it renders the approach flexible and reflective enough to retain its emancipatory potential. Besides, any attempt at complete independence would seem incongruous. After all, being immersed in a non-Indigenous context tends to be an everyday experience for Indigenous peoples in settler countries and academia, which in turn has consequences for Indigenous thinking (R. Mahuika 12; Kovach 60). This seeming drawback bears potential for Pākehā scholars since it provides points of intersection and connection. More precisely, the

two theoretical strands examined in this article overlap in their need for self-reflexivity and complement one another in their critique of essentialist conceptions of authenticity (a notion that seems to be both dreaded and secretly desired by many who employ either framework). Taken together, both approaches furthermore highlight the importance of differently scaled perspectives: the integration of critical theory into Kaupapa Māori means that the latter “must be localized, grounded in the specific meanings, traditions, customs, and community relations that operate in each indigenous setting” (Denzin and Lincoln 6), whereas postcolonial studies encourages large-scale considerations.

Collectively, the previous observations render questionable William Peterson’s assertion from 2006 that “Māori theorizing of their own culture seems to take place completely outside the Euro-American axis of postcolonial theory” (131). Even though this theoretical independence constitutes a scenario that is sometimes explicitly suggested or pretended, it seems both unrealistic and unhelpful. Rather, as Graham Smith (Ngāti Porou, Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Apa, Ngāti Kahungunu) argued almost a decade later, “getting involved with Kaupapa Māori is to understand theory and engage with Western ideas with an open mind” (15). This is also the hope of Te Punga Somerville, who “would like to imagine that . . . [Maori] can use [postcolonial theory] to better aid [their] complex and many relationships with aspects of the ‘wider’ ‘global’ (post)colonial world” (*Nau Te Rourou* 290). Besides, she rightfully warns that, even though criticism is important, making “wide claims about Western theoretical ideas, as if they are one composite mass, is to underestimate the modes in which those very ideas operate” (7). Therefore, the framework helps to deal critically with “Pākehā [sic] hegemony” but does not reject Pākehā culture per se (Pihama et al. 33). What is more, the interest can be described as mutual, since for postcolonial scholars “[t]he question of how important it is to acknowledge and embrace non-Western indigenous thought is a vital current topic” (Kerner 619).

This discussion highlights the fact that Kaupapa Māori, much like postcolonial theory, also suffers from homogenizing and dichotomizing tendencies. Te Kawehau Hoskins (Ngāti Hau, Ngāpuhi) suggests that, while the deployment of binary identity constructions has proven

“politically transformative” and “has been strategically crucial to making space for internal processes of unification, decolonisation, and cultural reclamation” (“A Provocation” 97), it ultimately precludes self-critique and creativity and risks encouraging political orthodoxy (95–96; R. Mahuika 9, 12). Indeed, Kaupapa Māori frequently fails to acknowledge the fact that “none of us carries only ‘one’ colonized/colonizer subjectivity/identity” (Swadener and Mutua 38). As Hoskins contends, it is too simplistic and deterministic to “cast all Māori as colonised victims” (“A Fine Risk” 89). Consequently, whereas a binary construction is certainly helpful in the political processes of decolonization and recompense, a simple reproduction of dichotomies will always be too reductive for literary analyses that strive to be multilateral and groundbreaking. Instead, what should be targeted is a critical and conscious use of the binary, which includes “a range of positions (evoking, refusing, and critiquing the binary) that are held in tension” (Hoskins, “A Fine Risk” 87).

Thus far, literary studies has only applied Kaupapa Māori rather superficially and implicitly.<sup>14</sup> While a mutual lack of attention does not mean that this framework cannot be successfully employed in literary scholarship, the question remains as to why a thorough exchange has not really taken place. One explanation may be that, according to many definitions, “[t]he idea of Kaupapa Māori contains the necessity of political action” (G. Smith 12), which literary scholars are often only indirectly concerned with. Put another way, literary studies does not save or materially alter lives and therefore in some respects fails to meet the demand put forward by Kaupapa Māori scholars that research must directly benefit the Indigenous community (Te Punga Somerville, “Te Kete” 72). The latter aspiration can be explained by the development and frequent use of Kaupapa Māori in social science, education, and health studies contexts. These disciplines work with a specific set of methods that are hardly helpful in a fictional context and according to whose standards literary criticism may appear to be—to put it harshly—“a decolonised fantasy, a good-enough, a meaninglessness, a problem, an abomination” (Te Punga Somerville, “Neither Qualitative nor Quantitative” 65). Yet it is fair to ask: “Must all research benefit communities in specific ways? What’s a benefit or contribution? Who is ‘community?’” (Te Punga Somerville, “Te Kete” 72). Moreover, the

combination of social sciences and the humanities in Kaupapa Māori theory works well when considered in connection to literary fields of interest such as time and space constructions or questions of agency and power. It thus becomes clear once more that literary studies itself is not a bounded field but subsists on its interdisciplinary junctions with, for instance, sociology and history.

A final important insight in this context is that there are varying interpretations and foci of Kaupapa Māori. This interpretive freedom has both advantages and disadvantages, as it can be a useful umbrella term but also runs the risk of being applied too universally (Durie, “Kaupapa Māori” 3). Ultimately, since it is a fluid and dynamic framework, reification would be fatal, just as it is for postcolonial theory. One of Kaupapa Māori’s key strengths is that it provides “a series of *Māori lenses* to view and describe Māori” and highlights “that Māori are . . . an eclectic grouping of tribes that have unique stories and histories” (Doherty 22; emphasis in original). Such Indigenous diversity is reflected in creative Māori literature, which is why the approach can be helpful when interpreting the respective stories. How, then, might the two major methodological strands be combined?

### III. Becoming a *Manuhiri*: A Combined Approach

As can be deduced from the two previous sections, a framework’s merit cannot be consistently determined—it will always be dependent on the context it is applied to. Consequently, I argue that in literary studies, approaches should be selected based on applicability or persuasiveness. While both postcolonial theory and Kaupapa Māori have theoretical weaknesses and practical drawbacks, they also have key strengths. In the following, I will outline how elements of these two research traditions can be successfully integrated through the concept of the *manuhiri*.

As noted above, disclosing one’s position is crucial in contemporary research and allows one to eschew flawed assumptions of objectivity. Responsibility and accountability are thus best combined with reflexivity, which is essential in order to avoid accidentally furthering neo-colonial methodologies, as Leggatt argues: “Allowing my own research to be influenced by Indigenous methodologies—while at the same time

remaining aware that . . . I am not . . . an Indigenous researcher—is an important first practical step” (125). Based on these preliminary considerations, I would, for instance, position myself as a young, female, and white literary scholar with a middle-class background, thus acknowledging my privileged cultural and social position.<sup>15</sup> Also, like Colin G. Pooley, “I am well aware that there are many gaps and that someone with another background and perspective would most likely present the material rather differently” (127). After such general clarification, the question remains as to what can be an ethically sustainable and simultaneously culturally viable and credible researcher position for a European scholar in an Indigenous literary context. In my case, the notion of being a *manuhiri* or visitor has turned out to be adequate. This status may be true for different areas and levels of the literary research process. First, it applies to the aspect of physically and geographically visiting universities and people in the host community during research or conference stays, which effectively makes the researcher a literal visitor in Aotearoa. Second, one imaginatively visits Māori culture and people during the reading process. Third, one methodologically visits Aotearoa by employing Kaupapa Māori for interpretive processes in the course of conducting literary analysis. All three stages are closely intertwined and can only be separated analytically. Each of them is important for the overall process and product. However, being a *manuhiri* is more than being a regular visitor. Paying a call to another *iwi* (tribe) or *hapū* (sub-tribe) involves multiple culturally specific conventions, including an acknowledgement of the *tangata whenua* (local people): “We give to the people we are visiting the power to define how we should conduct ourselves when in their areas” (Irwin 38). This distribution of authority is also desirable from a Kaupapa Māori point of view and can be applied to communicative relationships with Indigenous experts. Māori guest-making processes can thus have an educational function (Harvey 21); that is, engaging with Māori (or Indigenous people) as a visitor is ultimately about respect, relationships, reciprocity, and continuity.

The idea of constructing oneself as a *manuhiri* is not new. Māori scholar Carwyn Jones (Ngāti Kahungunu, Te Aitanga-a-Māhaki), for example, applies this concept to his research in Canada, while also noting that the visitor metaphor can be used to describe his



methodological stance and allows for interdisciplinary interaction across boundaries (39). Ngāti Porou historian N. Mahuika emphasizes that the “manuhiri status requires an acknowledgement of the home people” (“New Zealand History” 17). He suggests that Pākehā can only find “a way beyond the colonizer position” by sharing power and accepting Indigenous expertise, thus “avoiding the problem of speaking for indigenous peoples, and effectively silencing native voices in the process” (14). By considering oneself a *manuhiri*, one ensures that concepts such as reciprocity are incorporated into a project without concealing or ignoring one’s academic and cultural upbringing. The act of reading and writing about Indigenous literature then becomes a process of learning and negotiation. The interplay of outsider/insider, reader/writer, and visitor/host is reflected in Ann Katherine Pistacchi’s spiral reading strategy, which “offers an indigenous critical model for moving out from, while at the same time working back towards . . . the indigenous/Māori texts themselves” (8). Her analysis is thus an example of how such role ambiguities can be productively applied to literary analysis. Knudsen voices similar thoughts and draws on the visitor/host distinction to comment on the reading process:

A positive outcome of cultural meanings—whether they take place when the host invites the visitor or when the text meets the reader—depends on a willingness to enter into the situation with an attentive mind. Before speech there must be silence, before statement there must be story, before interpretation there should be inquiry, and, equally important, a curiosity to discover the contents of the form, the form of the contents. (“On Reading Grace’s *Potiki*”)

This division means that the critical and interested scholar invests time into exploring local customs that may have influenced the selected literature, rather than merely contemplating it from a removed standpoint (Knudsen, *The Circle* 221). Similarly, in 1992 Antor argued that literature is an important place of cross-cultural encounters and that, as readers, we ought to actively deal with the differences highlighted by such reading experiences. Despite the desirability of interpretive openness and readings that are influenced by local contexts, Antor cautions

that our pre-existing patterns, horizons, and memberships in interpretive communities cannot be ignored or escaped during the construction of literary criticism (“Ethical Plurivocity” 38–39). Rather than condemning this entanglement or showing resignation, he suggests that what is preferable is an “emancipated and positively prejudiced reader, i.e. one who is aware of [their] individual preconditions of understanding and willing to critically question and analyze them” (39). Ultimately, readers and literary critics are in many ways both insider and outsider at the same time.

In this context, it also makes sense to briefly discuss the role of an “indigenized” position or reading. This notion is employed by Knudsen, who in a footnote defines it as “the outsider’s attempt to read with an understanding of the indigenous perspective” but adds that “[o]f course, a white European critic should not feel at ease with the use of the term ‘indigenous’ in relation to his or her own interpretations” (*The Circle* 3). The concept is re-employed by Paola Della Valle, who proposes that such a strategy “allows the critic to vocalise indigenous concerns and be open to new composite forms” (152). She argues for an integrative approach that employs both postcolonial theory and a more “localized perspective” (vii). She also draws a comparison between an indigenized reading and Māori oratory, which involves different orators speaking in turn and articulating their views on the same subject (163–64). As such, her self-positioning is very similar to the one presented here. What neither Knudsen nor Della Valle discusses, however, is whether this constructed position or its name are appropriate. Like postcolonialism, the term “indigenized” could be refuted on semantic grounds because it implies mimetic qualities. I have personally decided to drop the term in favour of the *manuhiri* construction, since the latter seems more specific and fruitful as well as less ambiguous, while incorporating all the values associated with the former position. Overall, it should be clear that “putting oneself outside the sphere of Western hegemonic discourse and into the subject position of the colonized should lead neither to an invasion of that subject position in an act of reverse mimicry or of neo-colonialist seizure of voice nor to a relativist non-involvement and lack of positionality” (Antor, “Postcolonial Pedagogy” 251), thus opting for a pragmatic middle ground.

A mixture of approaches has often been proposed by scholars. In his 2004 doctoral thesis, for example, Ngāi Tahu scholar Jim Williams picks up the common anthropological differentiation between emic and etic approaches, or—in simplified terms—insider and outsider perspectives. Both have certain disadvantages: whereas the etic view is prone to misunderstandings (“monocultural myopia,” [Williams 111]) and lacking specific knowledge, an emic position tends to be overly subjective, missing any sense of distance (52). Williams’ solution is the introduction of an “etic” approach, which combines both frameworks to efficiently deal with “their relative strengths and shortcomings” (40). He argues that “[i]t is only through consideration of all the forms of available evidence that a full picture emerges” (52). In an article published two years earlier, Te Punga Somerville forwards a similar argument in which she equates existing Māori and Pākehā approaches with light bulbs; she contends that her strategy of the “waharoa/gateway” offers another bulb that can throw a different light on what she terms mixed race literature and “is not in competition to the others, but allows dimensions of the texts that are currently underlit to become visible” (“Waharoa” 218).<sup>16</sup> What is put forward by these two Māori authors is also voiced in other Indigenous contexts. For instance, Mi’kmaq scholar Marilyn Iwama and her colleagues introduce the term “Two-Eyed Seeing,” which can be paraphrased as a binocular “research, practice, and way of living that incorporates Western and Indigenous knowledges” (3), drawing on the strengths of each and allowing for “a wider, deeper, and more generative ‘field of view’ than might either of these perspectives in permanent isolation” (4–5). Nevertheless, the practice “neither merges two knowledge systems into one nor does it paste bits of Indigenous knowledge onto Western [knowledges]” (5).<sup>17</sup>

In order for scholarship not to revert to colonial patterns, Iwama and her research partners suggest that non-Indigenous academics try to “listen, wait and be prepared to follow as well as lead” (6). This willingness to engage cautiously and openly should be accompanied by other measures. As Leggatt argues, “[a]cademics need to learn the limits of their own understanding” and refrain from “defin[ing] the terms of the encounter themselves” (124). The idea of listening rather than always

talking has been promoted by numerous scholars, perhaps most famously by Standing Rock Sioux author Vine Deloria Jr., who wrote the book *We Talk, You Listen*. However, positions such as speaker and listener are in danger of being assigned unvaryingly to Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons, respectively, in an attempt to reverse formerly established roles. This act of reversal is problematic in that it denies historical Indigenous peoples' agency (by classifying them consistently as passive listeners), risks reifying any minority opinion without questioning its intent or repercussions, and does not satisfy the proposed ideal of a communicative relationship. Consequently, being prepared to listen should not mean that the foreign researcher falls or remains silent. Engagement is a basic sign of respect and prevents analytical aloofness as well as armchair research. Such an attitude is likewise encouraged by Māori ethical principles. L. T. Smith mentions that "the expression *Kanohi kitea* or the 'seen face' . . . conveys the sense that being seen by people . . . cements your membership within a community in an ongoing way and is part of how one's credibility is continually developed and maintained" (*Decolonizing Methodologies* 15). This idea ties in with the Māori concept of *ako*, which denotes "a sharing idea, sharing knowing, experience, time, space and energy" (Edwards 58). However, engagement needs to be recurrent and reciprocal. In research contexts, this entails "giving back" through reporting back to the Indigenous community on the results of research (Porsanger 113) and acknowledging intellectual sources (N. Mahuika, "New Zealand History" 20–21).

Returning to the two major frameworks under discussion in this article, I must once more ask: How can Kaupapa Māori and postcolonial studies fruitfully interact? Some clues have already been provided in previous sections. Generally, it is important to note that, rather than being two diametrically opposed frameworks, both methodologies intersect at various points, creating multiple interfaces. Anne-Marie Jackson observes that critical discourse analysis (which is part of the postcolonial studies repertoire) is connected to Kaupapa Māori not only "through critical theory, [but also through] tino rangatiratanga [self-determination], social change and a need for research that is transdisciplinary" (264). Furthermore, both research methodologies ideally promote an

awareness of and engagement with issues of language, realizing that “[s]eemingly useful . . . terms like colonisation, injustice, disadvantage, and underachievement continue to require the coloniser, or ‘mainstream’, to be at the centre of attention, with critical analysis inevitably referenced to those in power” (A. Jones 103). What is desirable is consequently a reflective amendment and fortification of both theories through mutual criticism. For instance, “a Kaupapa Māori-inflected research method opens us to a range of new terms, impressions, languages, expressive forms, and ways of seeing” (Hoskins and A. Jones, “Non-Human Others” 55). Postcolonial theory, on the other hand, extends Kaupapa Māori’s focus by highlighting comparative global contexts.

This bilateral approach can be linked to a well-known *whakataukī* (proverb): *Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora te manuhiri*. Even though there is some variation regarding both the wording and translation of the maxim, most sources agree that its meaning is roughly: “With your foodbasket, and with my foodbasket, the visitors will be satisfied” or well (Te Punga Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 17). This *whakataukī* emphasizes the value of collaboration for satisfactorily fulfilling a task.<sup>18</sup> A *rourou* is part of the general category of *kete* (baskets), which are “inextricably tied to the acquisition and organisation of knowledge in a Maori context” (24). These elements make the proverb a suitable metaphor for the methodological process, as one is able to draw on two distinct “host frameworks” that provide “intellectual food” for analysis. What is more, the *whakataukī* can be read as encouraging the coexistence of multiple literary voices. (This reading can in turn be applied to the act of reception.) In writing this essay, I am not only a visitor but also a host, taking care of a new range of attendees consisting of the current readership. It is then my task to provide appropriate and substantial “food” or thoughts. The proverb thus exhibits a productive ambiguity that is helpful in structuring and steering literary analysis.

Both postcolonial theory and Kaupapa Māori have been valued and condemned for their fluidity, dynamic development, and homogenizing tendencies. Rather than repudiating them, I suggest that they can mutually enhance one another through critical and candid conversation. On a broader level, I encourage the reader to scrutinize and value the

tensions that may exist between different approaches. Such frictions are the substrate for scholarly debates and catalysts for new insights.

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### **Notes**

- 1 There have been heated debates on the use of hyphenation and capitalization with this field of study, as well as differences between postcolonial theory, postcolonial studies, and postcolonialism. This article uses the terms “postcolonial theory” and “postcolonial studies.” Similarly, there are two major spelling varieties of “Indigenous.” Many scholars have argued persuasively in favour of capitalization, which I adopt (e.g., Williams 1). Although such discord may appear trivial, it importantly highlights the variety of people and views associated with each term.
- 2 See also A. Jones and Jenkins 473.
- 3 One should beware of reification, though. One’s position as well as literature and culture are all malleable and dynamic constructs. Besides, such reflections need not be limited to non-Māori researchers.
- 4 Still, the recurrent use of the term may be hurtful to those living under oppressive conditions. After all, language is related to power, too. While acknowledging this, I continue to deploy the term “postcolonial” because the precipitant introduction of alternatives within the scope of this article would seem artificial and may be confusing. This is a task that other scholars should seriously and more comprehensively deal with.
- 5 Any dichotomous contemplation is problematic because it denies diversity. L. T. Smith notes that “[t]hese two categories [colonizer and colonized] are not just a simple opposition but consist of several relations” (*Decolonizing Methodologies* 28).
- 6 Compare with Mukherjee 6.

- 7 See, for example, Peterson 131.
- 8 See Jackson 264; Durie, “Interview” 26; and Kovach 38.
- 9 See, for example, G. Smith 11.
- 10 See G. Smith 18 and A. Jones 103.
- 11 Ratheiser provides a lucid appraisal of this issue in the context of literary studies, arguing that “good literature often goes beyond the readers’ immediate sphere of knowledge and understanding” and that, “if dealing with literature becomes an exclusive act—in any direction—then some of the central features of a text, a story, be it written or orally transmitted, get lost: its ability to connect, to entertain, to teach and to be tolerant of differences” (144–45).
- 12 A. Jones and Jenkins critically remark that such a “desire for shared talk is, at its core, a desire for the dominant/colonizer group to engage in some benevolent action—for them/us to *grant a hearing to* the usually suppressed voice and ‘realms of meaning’ of the indigene. After all, . . . *indigenous* access into the realms of meaning of the dominant Other is hardly required; members of marginalized/colonized groups are immersed in it daily” (478; emphasis in original). On the other hand, “[o]ld relationships will never change except through dialogue and the exchange of perspectives” (Knudsen, *The Circle* xii).
- 13 Such bicultural constructions are frequently linked to the Treaty of Waitangi. However, they are problematic because they eclipse the transcultural situation of Aotearoa and tend to limit methodological diversity. Whereas the scope of this article does not allow for more inclusive considerations, it shall be noted that, for instance, Pacific Islanders have already commented on broader Polynesian methodological and conceptual possibilities, using the term “Teu le va” (which can be loosely translated as “tending to the relational space”).
- 14 In a 2012 publication, Brewster only briefly mentions, but does not further explain, that “[t]here are protocols for research in Maori literature by non-Maori. The rubric of ‘Kaupapa Maori research’ provides guidelines for approaches and issues relating to intellectual property. Non-indigenous researchers are advised to develop a ‘Kaupapa Maori orientation’” (534). Similarly, Pistacchi notes that she “utilizes a Kaupapa Māori *orientation* . . . that demands a privileging of the following principles inherent to the Kaupapa Māori paradigm” (24; emphasis in original), yet the term is not mentioned beyond a brief discussion in the introductory section of her 2009 dissertation. Other authors such as Della Valle (2010) and Schacht (2008) use aspects of this framework without explicitly forging a link to it. Additionally, Otto Heim was an early advocate of a self-critical and reflective approach that does not subscribe to postcolonial theory in an unquestioning fashion. Unfortunately, though, a more elaborate comparison and criticism of these conceptualisations cannot be conducted within the scope of this article.
- 15 Compare with Luh 11.

- 16 Shohat, in a comparison of different approaches (including postcolonial theory), also emphasizes “that each frame illuminates only partial aspects of systemic modes of domination, of overlapping collective identities, and of contemporary global relations” (111–12).
- 17 In a similar fashion, Hoskins and A. Jones warn against “a kind of tick-box research culture[,] . . . where Māori consultation or relevance to Māori are reduced to elements of procedure rather than substantive questions” (Introduction 3). At this point, it is also worth mentioning that the majority of examples provided in this section, while valuable due to their emphasis on the deficiency of a singular point of view, once more run the risk of perpetuating binary structures that insufficiently reflect varied degrees of integration and exclusion. I agree with Mutua and Swadener, who argue for a “multiplicity of the subject positions that we occupy, which often locate us fluidly in ever-shifting positions” (3).
- 18 I have omitted the more belligerent second part of the saying, which can be translated as: “With your weapons, and my weapons, our enemies will be killed” (Te Punga Somerville, *Nau Te Rourou* 17). Te Punga Somerville helpfully equates the latter part of the *whakatauki* with limitations as opposed to possibilities (26). It would be enticing to examine this further with regard to the constructed researcher position.

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