



Indigenous Discourse and “the Material”

A Post-interpretivist Argument

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Abstract Following Judith Butler’s idea of “materialization,” the authors consider the effects of three different approaches to historical information about the educational relationship between indigenous and settler peoples. As a part of an argument about how one might legitimately study the establishment of such a relationship and take seriously the viewpoint of the indigenous people, the authors asks what it becomes possible to think when we eschew popular “multiple discourses” in favour of a strategic engagement with a post-interpretivist empiricism. The authors — respectively descendants of white settlers and indigenous Māori — focus on a material reality not present in the archives recording the initial interactions between the indigenous people and the first permanent British settlers in New Zealand.

This paper is about the politics of method, focused on an incidental site of study about how schooling¹ started in New Zealand. In doing this “history” work, we have been interested less in the problem of interpretation—the relationship between reality (‘what really happened’) and archival text—than with the possible effects of interpretive methodologies: what different approaches to text allow us to think, both politically and ontologically.

Work in the archives, curiously, is rarely called qualitative research. It is most often referred to as “doing history.” We are not historians, but (almost surreptitiously) we read in the archives, curious about the origins of the current educational relationship between our respective peoples. We do qualitative work, in that we seek, through reading and writing texts—as it happens, archival and historical—to produce a complex and reflexive account of real human relationships.

Our respective peoples are the indigenous Māori people (Kuni’s ancestors) and the British settlers (Alison’s and Kuni’s ancestors) who—in general terms²—jointly established the first schools in New Zealand. As educators, we are curious about how the educational relationship between the indigenous people (Māori) and the dominant Pākehā (white) people might be thought. We are driven by a conviction that how we understand the beginnings of the settler-indigenous relationship contributes to its current possibilities.

To interrogate originary moments in the educational relationship, we focus in this paper on what we know about the fascinating days following the arrival in New Zealand of the first permanent white British (Pākehā) settlers (including a teacher), nearly 200 years ago. When we turn to these beginnings as they are portrayed in published historical analyses and in the archives, we unexpectedly find ourselves preoccupied by what they do not say.

Our problem is this: reading from the imagined point of view of the indigenous people present, we find, in the shadows of the written settler accounts, events quite different from those recorded. In the arrival of the missionaries (the first permanent settler group), we see no missionaries. In the eyewitness description of an entertaining “sham fight” on the beach, we find no sham fight. In the story of the first sermon preached, there is no sermon. Our problem does not simply lie in debates of contested interpretations about what really happened; rather we want to consider the ontological and political effects of foregrounding an entirely different material reality. That is, we are preoccupied with the new material reality rather than various interpretations of it.

Rather than asking how the past might be radically reinterpreted in order to bring to light diverse accounts, or indigenous and settler stories, or to identify new discursive subjects, we ask a question about method: what occurs when we strategically foreground the material events over their interpretation? To put it another way, we have a deep curiosity about whether the language of the material and materialization might have different epistemological and political effects from the language of interpretation and the subject. In this era of “posts” (Lather, 2007), what might a post-linguistic-turn focus on “the material” make possible in thought — especially, in this case, in indigenous thought?

Materialization

We borrow the term “materialization” from Judith Butler’s work on the body. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler (1993) brings social construction and the material together to characterise real gendered bodies as the “materialization” of social norms (“‘sex’ is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time”, p.1). While we are located in an entirely different site of study, we are motivated by a similar methodological attitude to Butler’s — that is, a centering of the material in order to do particular theoretical work. Butler’s materializing methodology “makes real” norms and discourses (about sex and gender) expressed or performed via the body; in this way she works at the limits of discourse. Similarly for us, materialization names a methodology: a

form of reading practice that "makes real" scenes of action and actors in the archival gaps where the indigenous people are, but where they do not appear in the archival or historical text.

Butler emphasises that materialization of regulatory norms does not merely occur as an effect of naming; material effects are produced through a reiteration of norms (p. 2). We return to the idea of reiteration at the end of the paper in reflecting on the politics of interpretive work.

We see materialization as a possible escape from interpretivism's endless referentiality and deferral of representation, from its political inertness, from its inability to escape the threat of relativism, and from the danger of uncertainty in the face of those who do claim to know. In addition, we tend to avoid the methodological terms of others who address the problem of archival gaps, terms such as "finding voices in silence" (see Carter, 2006) or "reading against the grain" (Schwartz and Cook, 2002). As we argue below, we seek a more powerful and positive methodological terminology. Having perceived an (invisible) new reality in the archive and having resisted its representation as "merely another interpretation" or as a "silence" that needs to speak, we attempt to allow the real to re-enter the discussion without retreating to a simple-minded empiricism. So we write from what might be called a post-discourse standpoint: we always/already assume the inescapability of interpretation, multiple readings, and the incoherence of "the reality," but we also ask: if we reinstate the language of reality and materiality as dominant, what becomes possible, particularly for political indigenous thought? How might we talk strongly about "the material" post the necessary intervention of discourse, and why does it matter?

The Incidental Site of Research

Our paper focuses on the moment when Māori and Pākehā (British) came together for the first time in an organized way in New Zealand: a meeting, planned by both sides, which heralded British settlement and the start of western schooling in Aotearoa-New Zealand.³ Countless other moments in this history could be chosen to illustrate the effects of methodologies of interpretation and materialization. In this paper, we give attention only to two dramatic events that occurred during the initial days of the arrival of a settler group, described in eyewitness stories from which historians describe the first sustained formal contact on New Zealand soil.⁴ The original written accounts are by the chief Church Missionary Society missionary in New South Wales, Australia, Samuel Marsden, and his companion John Nicholas. No other written firsthand accounts⁵ exist of these events, which are: "a sham fight" and "the first sermon," which

took place on two consecutive days (December 24 and 25) on the shore at Rangihoua, a small cove in the north Bay of Islands, in northern New Zealand, at the end of 1814. Here are three possible types of readings of the events described in the original accounts.

1. Forensic Reading/Scene

We, the authors of this paper—a Pākehā and an indigenous scholar—read with interest the evocative eyewitness stories about what we saw as the beginnings of the educational relationship between Māori and Pākehā, told by Samuel Marsden (Elder, 1932, pp. 92–94) and by John Nicholas (1817, pp. 193–206), and now repeated by modern historians (for example, Salmond, 1997, pp. 462–465). We paraphrase from these men's journals below; let us call this paraphrased account a Forensic Scene, because it relies on "accurate" eyewitness written accounts that are kept in archives and carefully referred to by historians as evidence for the events.

In brief, a small group of British settlers from Australia arrived in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, at the end of December, 1814. These people had been accompanied to New Zealand from Australia by several chiefs from the Bay of Islands area, including Korokoro and Ruatara. According to Marsden's (1932) journal, on the third morning after their coming to the bay, the new arrivals were provided with a bit of "entertainment" (p. 92; see also Nicholas, 1817, p. 193). The chief Korokoro arrived alongside their ship, accompanied by about ten canoes filled with many dozen warriors in magnificent dress; Marsden and Nicholas and some of the settlers were invited into Korokoro's large canoe and were raced to the shore. Up a nearby valley were about two hundred more warriors, of Ruatara's tribe, also impressively decorated with red ochre. As the canoes landed, those arriving and those on the land engaged in a spectacular, and frightening mock battle with much noise and rushing back and forth. Marsden and his companion Nicholas refer in their journals to this entertaining, if terrifying, "sham fight" (Marsden, 1932, p. 92; Nicholas, 1817, p. 193) which involved them trying to keep up (Nicholas, 1817, pp. 196–197).

The next day, which happened to be both a Sunday and Christmas Day, another dramatic, though rather less vigorous, event occurred, again recorded by Marsden and Nicholas. Near the scene of the previous day's mock battle, Marsden spoke about the gospel at some length to three or four hundred people (including presumably those who had taken part in the previous day's fight). The chief of Rangihoua, Ruatara, had of his own volition arranged the event, and had even erected a small stage on which Marsden could stand to speak, and some seating for the guests. We know from Mars-

den's notes that Ruatara, who could speak reasonably good English as a result of his experience as a sailor on European ships, translated for Marsden. At the end of proceedings, during which the crowd were kept in order by Korokoro, the people rose in a great *haka* [a rousing chant] — in gratitude, concluded Nicholas (1817) for "the solemn spectacle they had witnessed" (p. 206). Marsden recorded that "the glad tidings" had been introduced for the first time into New Zealand (Elder, 1932, p. 93-94).⁶

The memory of the first sermon is repeated in the many books that recall the event; for instance: "on Christmas Day [Marsden] preached that famous first sermon" (McLean, 2005, p. 86); "Marsden conducted his first service in New Zealand on Christmas Day 1814. Preaching to a largely Māori congregation, he took his text from St Luke's Gospel" (King, 2003, p. 141); "Samuel Marsden, an Anglican chaplain from Sydney, a dumpy and determined evangelical, preached the first sermon in New Zealand on Christmas day, 1814" (Oliver, 1960, p. 42); "[Marsden] preached upon the text "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy" (Luke II. 10), and when he had finished, Ruatara explained to the congregation what he had been saying" (Appleton, 1958, p. 159)... and so on.⁷

In our discussions of the "sham fight" and the "first sermon," we (the authors) found ourselves in a further dramatic encounter with reality. Kuni (of the Ngāti Porou tribal group) expressed with some force her conviction that "there was no sermon" and "there was no sham fight." As we talked about whether the events we were reading about in the archives and history books actually took place and what the eyewitness accounts might refer to, we experienced a dramatic morphing of the textual scenes; a new reality materialized before us, peopled by characters who did not exist in the archive. Against the Forensic Scene above, what we called a Materializing Scene appeared, producing not only another interpretation of the two events, but an entirely different and new set of material events in their place.

Materializing Reading/Scene

There was no sham fight. In place of the mock battle, we see there, in the rushing to and fro on the beach, a *pōwhiri* or *waka taki*.⁸ In this vigorous, choreographed and deeply pedagogical event, the chiefs of the area, through the traditional and ritualised form of welcome/encounter that enacted the spiritual and physical strength of the people, established the new arrivals as "allies" within the chiefs' own ambitious plans for their people. In its simplest terms, the *pōwhiri* took the arrivals into the local indigenous social structures, to be protected "as our own," as useful allies, and maybe even as *whānau* ["family" in the broadest sense].

Then the sermon; there was no sermon. Rather, there was a political meeting [*hui*], again choreographed by the leading chiefs of the area, particularly Ruatara. At this *hui*, Ruatara, the most chiefly Māori who spoke English, got to speak to the people about the white strangers now coming to live — at his behest — in this place. Marsden did not speak the Māori language, and the audience aside from Ruatara did not understand English.⁹ The rousing chant [*haka*] was a ritualized recognition of Marsden's chiefly status as denoted by the previous day's *pōwhiri*. More importantly, the *haka* would have been an expression of the authority of the situation organised by Ruatara, and the people's recognition and (at least conditional) support of Ruatara's leadership and his decisions with regard to the Pākehā. Māori would accept that the *haka* was a *kina-ki* — an embellishment for Ruatara's speech. By their actions, the crowd indicated that Māori on the day upheld Ruatara's words (rather than Marsden's which they did not understand). In other words, in helping to attract the curious crowds, Marsden unwittingly became Ruatara's helper as Ruatara persuaded the people to accept his — Ruatara's — futuristic plans.

No missionaries exist in this Materializing Scene. Why would they? For the Māori present, the arrivals were white people who had promised to assist with the acquisition of and instruction about western technologies, animals, and knowledge. Māori already had their own gods, and did not (at least initially) seek a replacement for them “Missionaries,” as they were known to themselves and to their British and European counterparts,¹⁰ did not exist as such amongst the people Māori invited from the ship to their shore. And we strongly doubt that Ruatara would have tried literally to translate Marsden's sermon from St Luke, bringing “glad tidings.” Marsden's talk would have been a perfect opportunity for Ruatara's own *whaikōrero* [speechmaking], and his education of the people about what he had learned on his overseas travel, how these new arrivals would benefit the *iwi*, and an exhortation to his people to be good to the settlers.

So, in what we have called a Forensic Scene there is an entertaining fight and a sermon determined by Marsden's needs — his entertainment needs, and his desire to spread the word of the one God. In a Materializing Scene, by contrast, are two social-political events controlled, determined and arranged by Ruatara. Within these two contrasting sets of events, quite different real people appear. In the archival scenes of the fight, the indigenous actors are excited performers, and the British are important, though nonplussed, visitors, marvelling at the spectacular native entertainers. At the sermon are grateful heathens, and saviour missionaries. On the other hand, attending the social-political events of the *pōwhiri* and the *hui* we can discern no missionaries, only allies and “family,” and political leaders determining both the future of their people and the place of the new arrivals within that future.

The second account materializes new people, and new flows of authority and power, that were not present at the sermon and the fight. As we go on to explain below, we maintain that the Forensic and the Materializing scenes are not simply alternate readings of one material event. Rather, they indicate two materially different events occurring simultaneously: there was a fight and there was no fight; there was a sermon, and there was no sermon. The impossibility presented by this apparently contradictory proposition is deliberate; within the ontological tension of "x and not x" we find the very difficulty we seek in order to force thought towards new possibilities.

Interpretivist Reading/Scene

A third position might be taken for the sake of our argument, but one we intend to discard: the events at Rangihoua can be read in various ways. This Interpretivist account suggests that we see the scenes on the beach as multiple—both/and—as a fight and sermon and a *pōwhiri* and political meeting. Multiple readings are now a popular methodology in education and related fields of social practice where the idea of "diversity," and "multicultural" discourses, are dominant. Multiple readings, typically expressed in the language of social constructionism, interpretivism, and discourse theory, have become the liberal solution to difficult tensions and differences exposed in social research. This inclusive and equitable approach allows everyone to have a say and everyone to be partly right—thereby neatly addressing modern desires for democracy and equity.

A simple social constructionist reading of the scenes above would perceive in them different viewpoints on, or cultural constructions of, reality: from the missionaries' point of view, there is a fight and a sermon. From an indigenous viewpoint, a *pōwhiri* (alliance-forming greeting) and a *hui* (meeting). This difference, according to social constructionists, provides an example of the multiple readings necessary in any culturally diverse context. Various cultural "lenses" provide the different realities we all live with. Hence the rich complexity of social life, and the need for an understanding of diversity, "multiple realities" and a toleration of difference, in order to get "a full understanding of reality." This move to multiplicity of readings, and a recognition of various interpretations depending on the cultural frame of the reader or actor, is common in diversity analyses.¹¹

From a critical or politically-informed social constructionist perspective, the spectre of silent voices, or invisibility is raised.¹² The fact that modern historians tend merely to repeat/report the perspectives of dominant groups such as the missionaries is critiqued as a "silence in the archives" (Carter, 2006), or as perpetuating an invisibility of the experiences of the indigenous people.

Similarly, a simple discourse-interpretive reading would portray the Forensic Scene and the Materialization Scene as simply different accounts produced by the available discursive lenses brought to the events on the beach, and peopled by various discursive subjects formed through available meanings. When framed within indigenous discourses, Māori appear as acting subjects, as warriors in a *pōwhiri* or a political meeting run by their leader. The white settlers might appear in these discourses within an economy of indigenous desire for western material goods. Read within available missionary discourses, on the other hand, Māori are entertainer-subjects, and a heathen congregation hearing the word of God for the first time. Again, a more critical discourse reading might draw attention to the operation of dominant discourses and meanings in historical texts, and how these dominant meanings produce a colonizing reality.

Three Scenes — Possible Effects

What might be the ontological effects and knowledge effects of these three Scenes (Forensic, Materializing, Interpretive), which we could also call “readings” or methodologies? What realities do they invoke, with what possible effects on what we can know, in a “critical ontology of ourselves” (Foucault, 1984, p. 50)? The readings can be represented diagrammatically (See Table 1) to indicate the possible realities each reveals; each Scene, we suggest, produces real objects or actors, using different terms in bringing these into being.

- *Column one* summarises a Forensic reading of the sham fight and the sermon. The accounts are located in the archives and in the reports of historians who locate and examine the archival eyewitness diaries and letters as the evidential basis of their work.
- *Column two* summarises what we have called a Materialization reading. This account “makes material” two events that are not recorded in the archives, but are discerned, or “materialized” by us—using our interpretation of the events described in the archives, informed by Māori recognition (in this case by Kuni Jenkins)¹³ of the “shape” of the events described there.
- *Column three* offers an Interpretivist or Constructivist reading that allows for liberal and critical interpretations of the events, focusing in particular on the fact of the domination of one account, and the concomitant “silence” of a Māori account of the events. This reading celebrates multiple readings and multiple realities, and the more comprehensive understanding enabled by diverse accounts of the world.

Table 1 Scenes of Two Events

Scene	1. Forensic Scene	2. Materialisation Scene	3. Constructivist Scene
<i>Work</i>	<i>Locating evidence in the archive</i>	<i>Materialization work; finding material events and people not present in the archive</i>	<i>Interpretive work; liberal and critical readings of the archive</i>
<i>Event</i>	There was a sham fight (24 Dec 1814)	There was no sham fight. There was a <i>pōwhiri</i> /assimilation of arrivals into local structures.	Sham fight AND <i>pōwhiri</i> can be discerned via multiple interpretations
<i>People present</i>	<i>missionaries, native entertainers</i>	<i>allies, whānau [family], rangatira [important people]; no missionaries present</i>	<i>missionaries, natives, allies, whānau, rangatira [depending on interpretation]</i>
<i>Knowledge Effect</i>	Indicates ‘what happened’ according to the archival record	Materializes Māori power and strategy	Makes visible various interpretations. Noted: Invisibility of Māori interpretation in archive.
<i>Event</i>	The first sermon was held (25 Dec 1814)	There was no sermon. There was a political meeting commanded by Ruatara.	Sermon AND political meeting can be said to be occurring depending on perspective
<i>People present</i>	<i>missionaries, native congregation</i>	<i>whānau, allies, rangatira; no missionaries present</i>	<i>missionaries, natives, allies, whānau, rangatira</i>
<i>Knowledge Effect</i>	Indicates ‘what happened’ according to the archival record	Materializes Māori power and strategy	Makes visible various interpretations

1. Forensic Effects

The Forensic Scene (Column 1) claims reality (“the material”) and proper knowledge, for itself. It claims to operate in the realm of the real to the extent that the forensic work it requires keeps it close to the original eyewitness representation, rather than adding guesswork and interpretation that cannot be validated. A Forensic reading — the work of traditional historians — might claim “this actually happened, here is the evidence,” but will acknowledge its limitations: “we know this much, and no more, because this is the extent of the record.” Anything else is speculation and therefore subjective and an object of epistemological suspicion. Good forensic work, it is asserted (and we would agree at least with the first part of this proposition), is necessary to any proper knowledge of the past; it presents events that really happened, and studying the archives thoroughly and closely guards against inaccurate accounts. In the case of Ruatara and

Marsden, the archives and their stories add to knowledge about the activities of the missionaries in the early nineteenth century, their introduction of Christianity to New Zealand, the receptivity of Māori, and the drama and pageantry of the first formal engagements between Māori and Pākehā settlers.

One effect of this sort of evidential reading—and its exclusive claim to reality—is that Māori and Pākehā can only confidently “remember” and “know about” the sham fight and the first sermon, at which Māori are present as entertainers and the entertained; we know from the archive that in each scene Māori perform for the settlers—once as warriors in a mock performance of war, and once as a congregation hearing the words of the strangers. Archival accounts are usually the stories of the colonizers and settlers. They can be seen as scenes of arrival (rather than reception), and indigenous attention to someone else’s authority. They are moments in the beginning of Māori assimilation into a Pākehā world. In the archival stories, especially prior to the period when indigenous peoples wrote their own accounts, the written-story-telling power is held by the new arrivals, and the events are—apparently—largely determined by their needs.

For indigenous readers, the response to the forensic reading (in this case of the sermon and the fight) is likely to be one of two main types: the archival account can either be easily discarded by indigenous people able to identify their own “silencing” in the histories and ready to condemn and discount any colonising portrayal of Māori. Or else the archive-based account can be angrily embraced as evidence of the colonisation of Māori, as illustrating the way that Pākehā successfully imposed their own religion and authority upon the indigenous people. We consider both of these effects problematic—the first, because it avoids the useful knowledge available in the archive (and many Māori do dismiss or remain deliberately ignorant of missionary and other settler stories), and the second, because it simplistically (and paradoxically) accepts a dominant account.

2. Interpretive Scene effects

An interpretivist argument (Column 3) is alert to the possibility that the story told in the archive is necessarily the interpretation by the author of the story, and therefore can only be one of a number of possible readings of events. Constructivism does not typically set out to make ontological trouble by asserting multiple “actual” realities. Rather, constructivism’s foregrounding of interpretation and the discourses or frameworks of meaning used to “tell” events requires a scepticism towards what is portrayed as reality. The material events become properly interpretations, populated by subjects

of discourse that shift and change depending on the author's perspective. Missionaries appear at the centre of the story in the dominant Pākehā reading of the events above, and Māori strategic planners and leaders appear central in the nondominant "indigenous" reading. A kaleidoscope of different readings can provide a rich, complex picture of the possible engagements of the past, with none providing the only truth about "what really happened" — which is, after all, inaccessible. However, while none provides the truth, all the readings together provide a "better picture" of the one complex reality that played itself out on two momentous days in December, 1814.

In summary, while an archival reading stakes a claim to the material, and presents itself as the only legitimate — if limited — conduit to what "really happened," a simple constructivism disavows the idea of the material altogether. It claims that any real events and objects can only be seen as readings made via available discourses and perspectives that provide meaning and a sense of "reality" to the events that took place.

What might be the dangers of such constructivism, and what might be the effects of a "multiple" account of what happened? It is worth pointing out that our alternative "materializing" approach to reality accepts the basic arguments of constructivism — that interpretation is fundamental to human apprehension of events. We also seek to foreground the material in a move that takes seriously the desire for the real. This desire is particularly strong among indigenous people for good reason. As people struggling to wrest control of their past, both metaphorically and literally, from dominant white groups, indigenous peoples have little patience with a constructivism that disallows "a truth" about the past in favour of diverse viewpoints. Multiple interpretations may be satisfying for those who have the power to "play" with alternatives and to enjoy the intellectual "challenges" of complexity and multiplicity. But for indigenous peoples whose interpretations are regularly denied or ignored or misunderstood, attitudes of play and challenge are usually too risky.

The conditions of speaking pose a further problem. If indigenous people are to speak in the terms of a social constructionist critique, what can they say? The only option, it appears, is: "We are silenced, hear our voices! Add our views to yours!" To insist that one's hitherto silent voice is inserted in the existing conversation is always/already to assume that the usual story (in which Māori are still relatively silent) is the story — as though the dominant discourses necessarily determine the volume of the indigenous voice. Such is the paradox inherent in the popular demand to "hear the voices of others." Is it possible that to demand a voice in the conversation is already to assume, and therefore to "allow," a relationship of domination?

Another problem with a multiplicity of interpretation is its enthusiasm for a form of democracy troubling to indigenous peoples. Interpretivism allows everyone, within

reason, to interpret, debate and provide meanings for events. Interpretation theoretically puts nearly everyone on a par, makes everyone equal; we can all name the event, or the past. The event sits outside; it recedes behind the diverse interpretations, words replace the thing. And in doing that, all interpreters can “own” the moments of the past. For a people struggling to regain the past, such a liberal democratic move is another danger, a threat to take the past from those who “lived” it by those who would name it. It might be argued that interpretation and the linguistic turn in social theory have enabled indigenous people to give different, empowering accounts — to move from the usual narratives of rescue, improvement, and conversion, to those alternative stories of oppression, theft, and colonization, as well as self-determination and resistance. However, for all these options, behind the various possibilities lies a material past that becomes simply an object of debate, robbed of its sovereignty and power by its necessary interpretation.

The power of the past within an indigenous world view makes ongoing trouble for academic interpretivism. For Māori, for instance, the concepts of present and the past are seen and named very differently from the ways English speakers see and name them: *mua* means “in front” of our faces and also “the past,” while *muri* means “behind us” and refers to “the future.” We cannot see the future, all we can see is what is before our eyes, and that is the past. The future, behind us, is not “real,” it is the realm of the imagination and, being behind us, is a ghostly, unknown and scary place, needing eyes in the back of our head to see.

While Māori cultural orientation is to the past, Pākehā cultural orientation is to the future: new beginnings, exciting prospects, “leave the past behind” and “don’t look back.” In Māori terms the past sits here, in front, with a reality that demands attention. Māori therefore can address those who “went before,” and must constantly keep an eye on the past. It is the past, Māori believe, that shapes us in the present, and into the unknown future. This cultural orientation alone makes the past a particularly important — and clearly material — place. To muddy the past with interpretation, ambivalence, contingency and alternative readings might be intellectually interesting, but it could also be a politically dangerous as it takes from sharp focus that which is before our eyes and which forms us.

All this is not to suggest that Māori somehow have access to an uninterpreted past “before the eyes”; Māori and all indigenous peoples survive on multiply-told and multiply-shaped stories about the past, stories that form and reform that past, and the future.¹⁴ Maori views of the past and present draw attention to the grounds for Māori ambivalence towards interpretivist work in relation to the past. From within an academic context — the context increasingly of indigenous students — we are curious about the possibilities for thinking about the past in ways that complicate, but also

speak to, existing ontological and epistemological debates in our field of education, without defaulting to a limited, politically risky and epistemologically unsatisfying interpretation.

3. Materialization effects:

Going beyond constructivism, our process of what we have called Materialization (Column 2) eschews the soft assertion that "there was a sermon run by Marsden if you look at it this way, and a political meeting run by Ruatara if you see it that way." With much more drama, and a suspicious disregard for multiplicity, materialization work announces: "there was no sermon." In preparation for Marsden's sermon, and being familiar with the Sunday ritual from living with Marsden in Australia for many months, Ruatara had set up a small area on which Marsden was to speak. The stage was now literally and metaphorically set for Ruatara's political speech. The spectacle of the arrival of Marsden, and the settler families and their goods and animals, including a horse, attracted a good deal of local attention. Ruatara — and the other chiefs who wanted Pākehā settlers in their areas as well — would have planned the arrival of Marsden and his people into his territory in order to reinforce his own *mana* [authority] and power. We know from Marsden's accounts that Ruatara had requested that Marsden send settlers to Ruatara's land, and in particular a teacher to teach the children "to read and write" (Letter from Marsden to Duaterra King, reproduced in Salmond, 1997, p. 433; Marsden to Church Missionary Society, March 15, 1814, in McNab, 1908, p. 320).¹⁵ We also know that Ruatara had plans for his area, including wheat growing and exporting to Australia (Elder, 1932, p. 70). Importantly, Ruatara had already started amassing guns. And for his plans to work he needed his people's support.

In this scene of Marsden's arrival, there were no missionaries. While Ruatara and a few other Māori travellers would have known that Marsden was interested in gods and religion, there is no reason to believe that Ruatara was at all interested either in allowing Marsden's view of the spirit world to take over from his own, or in Marsden's desire to "spread the Word." The white people arriving were teachers and allies, people who Ruatara expected to take a special place within the tribe, and to assist its enrichment¹⁶. Marsden and the settlers became players in Ruatara's desire for knowledge and his need for power (and the power of allied chiefs such as Hongi Hika, after Ruatara's untimely death within a few weeks of the settlers' arrival). It was Māori politics and social order that determined the events on the 24th and 25th December 1814. The events were not a colonizing moment, but moments of strategy and struggle, and assertive assimilation of the strangers into the existing Māori world.¹⁷

This “materializing” account, it might be argued, is merely our interpretation. That, we do not deny. But, provocatively, we do not offer it as merely “another possible interpretation” to add to that of the archival account. We want to assert it as a set of real events that bears little—or even no—relation to the real events in the forensic/archival account. At the same time, it is obvious that the events in the archival account provide the spaces within which a different real can be discovered. After all, if Marsden had not recorded the fight or the sermon in writing, the *pōwhiri* and the *hui* would have been lost to memory (if these latter events were not lodged in oral memory, as they seem not to be¹⁸).

What is at stake for indigenous people in the telling of a different “real”? Of course, the concrete events that occurred in the past remain untouchable—in the sense that they have already occurred, they cannot change “in themselves.” But insofar as our knowledge and memory of the past changes, the past changes. So in material events where a political meeting occurred rather than a sermon, Māori are no longer rather nonplussed observers on a scene, or its victims. Māori are active, strategic players in events Māori sought to control and benefit from. Without that other real, the real in the archive threatens to overwhelm.

A literal materialization of the archival story means that account is daily, forcibly reiterated (Butler, 1993, p. 2). Today in the place where Marsden held his sermon is a large concrete monument in the shape of a cross, called Marsden’s Cross. In fact, many locals (Māori and Pākehā) know the area by this name, rather than Rangihoua, or Oihi, as it was known when Ruatara was in charge. Marsden’s Cross is a publicly accessible plot of land that commemorates Marsden’s sermon. It is not a place where Ruatara’s political meeting is remembered. Ruatara’s *pā*—a large steep hill adjacent to the cross, dropping in a dramatic cliff to the rocky shore below—and the valley from which the first *pōwhiri* was mounted, are not marked with any sign, nor are they remembered in stories. Marsden’s reality—one might say, his fantasy—is made material in the concrete monument which feeds the reality of our memory.¹⁹

Judith Butler (1993) characterises matter as “a process of materialization that stabilises over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter” (p. 9). Is it now possible to materialize through argument, repetition, and reiteration the *pōwhiri* and the *hui* so that they produce such reality effects over time? The possibilities seem remote: materialization is after all, an effect of power (p. 2). As a result, of course, the “first sermon” has been materialized in a range of sites—not just the concrete memorial, but in popular as well as academic history books, songs, and paintings. And the “sham fight” involving Ruatara, Korokoro, and Marsden’s people exists in Pākehā journal records, mentioned in passing in academic histories; can a *pōwhiri*

be “made material” out of a fight?²⁰ Without this materializing work, it is impossible to track the possibilities in the past (and therefore into the future) of a proper engaged relationship when the two groups of people were not present in a material sense to the other — that is, when the missionaries arrived and there were no missionaries. When a *pōwhiri* (alliance-forming welcome) took place, but there was no *pōwhiri*.

An Ontological Politics

Our unexpected — and initially intuitive — materialization methodology throws up serious ontological questions. How is it possible rationally to say, “x and not-x”: “there was a sermon” and “there was no sermon”? Can a new reality appear when we read between the lines — or must we only see multiple discursive, speculative, “realities”? Can new actors materialize in texts, and become real in the past when they were not there before — or can the actors only be discursive subjects? We must return to our original question about the effect of such materialization. Our aim has been to meditate on what thinking is made possible by materialization; to ask what might be materialization’s effects in thought, especially for indigenous peoples in academia contemplating a past in the archives.

As some indigenous researchers point out,²¹ indigenous work cannot exist merely within academia. There is another form of “the material” that affects fundamentally what we say: in the case of this paper, it is the real (embodied and political) presence of Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Rehia, and Ngāti Hine people with whom we talk and who we want to persuade and address, and who “own” the history of which we as outsiders speak — that is, whose ancestors were the very people who greeted Marsden in December 1814. This materiality is very pertinent: some of these people have said to us, when we relay to them the archival stories of the eyewitnesses, “that is not what happened”; “I do not want to read these stories because they change the way I think”; and “that is not a Māori story.” The archival accounts, however “true” on their own terms, are sometimes resisted in the stories of the *marae* [Māori village], or of the old people, of dreams, oral recitations, or of the guidance of the gods and ancestors. It is hard, often, for us as academics to know how to react to these resistances, and it is usually difficult to find concrete “rational” stories to replace the ones we seek to critique. In the case of the *pōwhiri* and the *hui*, we have not yet found any Māori stories about these events in oral accounts (this search is the subject of another paper). We find that we cannot ignore the scepticism of the people with whom we speak; what is the point of archival stories about people — however forensically accurate — if the people can not or will not take them seriously? In our own desire for an academically defensible story

of the past, we (the authors) want to offer, to indigenous students at least, the possibility of a meaningful, as well as legitimated, real past, not present in the eyewitnesses' journals but also not "merely" speculative interpretation.

It may be that this enthusiasm for a legitimate real story — and our interest in materialization as a post-interpretivist move — is simply an effect of our "yearning for the true real" (Taussig, 1993, p. xvii), a persistent desire for certainty and pure presence in a time of uncertainty and "getting lost" in the social sciences (Lather, 2007). For indigenous peoples, getting lost is not an option quite yet. Finding forms of certainty, especially those that produce a material past not of oppression and loss but of engagement and strategy is necessary to the "non-stupid optimism" (Kushner, cited by Lather, 2007, p. 10) demanded in indigenous political work.

We have been less interested in whether the *pōwhiri* and *hui* can be "made real" than in considering the effects of this idea. In an act of methodological experimentation, we speculate on how the act of materializing people and events in writing the past makes it possible to think in the present (and future). Finding in particular scenes of the past a strategic engagement by Māori with Pākehā settlers enables the development of a new logic, within the terms of the academic debate. The meta-story of colonization recedes, and increasingly a meta-story of struggle is able to emerge, where Māori were and are primarily engaged not in being colonized, but in a difficult and interminable struggle in Māori interests.

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Glossary

Glossary of Māori terms as used in this article

aitanga — a Ngati Porou term referring to lineage, and the practice of sex

haka — a rousing chant

hui — a meeting

kīnaki — embellishment for someone else's speech

Māori — indigenous peoples of New Zealand

marae — meeting place, village area

mua — in front, the past

muri — behind, the future

pā — fortified village

Pākehā — white New Zealander usually with British ancestry

pōwhiri — alliance-forming greeting or welcome

rangatira — chief, warrior

waka taki — a pōwhiri with arrivals from the water

wānanga — traditional place of learning

whaikōrero — speechmaking

whānau — broad family grouping

Notes

1. This paper is not about the traditional “schools of learning,” wānanga, that existed separately from the western practices of schooling implemented with the British settlement of New Zealand.
2. Kuni Jenkins is from Ngati Porou, a tribal group from the east of New Zealand. The first schools were established in the territories of the tribal groups now called Ngapuhi, Ngati Hine and Ngati Rehia in the north. Alison's ancestors came and settled in Dunedin, in the south of the country. So while we write generally and for overseas audiences as Māori and Pākehā, in more specific terms for this project we work in the territory of other specific descent lines.
3. It is often assumed that the first and most important scene of organised engagement between the indigenous people and the settler people in New Zealand occurred at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in February 1840. Here we draw attention to some other but barely known-about organised events some 26 years prior, in December 1814.
4. By “sustained formal contact” we refer to engagement other than the more casual (but sustained) contact by whalers and sealers especially in the south island where indigenous villagers and sailors interacted and sometimes married.
5. In our conversations with Ngapuhi and Ngati Hine informants, we have encountered no

- story or memory of the "sham fight" or *pōwhiri*. Stories of the sermon tend to repeat those of the published historians.
6. Marsden's sermon may not in fact have been the first Christian service held in New Zealand (although it was the first to Maori specifically, and on land). It has been speculated that a Christmas mass would have been celebrated in Doubtless Bay in 1769, by the chaplain on board the *St Jean Baptiste*. While this seems likely there is no record of it in the ships journals (McLauchlan, 2005, pp. 33-4).
 7. For other examples, see Patricia Bawden (1987, pp. 86-88); Alison Dench (2005, p. 34); Shirley Maddock (1979, pp. 64-65); Gordon McLauchlan (2004, p. 50); Gavin McLean (2002, pp. 40-41); Anne Salmond (1997, pp. 464-465); Keith Sinclair (2000, p. 37).
 8. A *pōwhiri* is usually a very large welcome ceremony put on by the host group to their visitors who come by land. In the ceremony a *taki*—a challenge—might be made (where a warrior lays down a dart that has to be picked up by the leader of the visitors). Once the challenge is received it is followed by calls from the women. The calls can range from wailing cries to high-pitched chanting with actions beckoning the visitors to come. The men may also perform very vigorous *haka* in raised voices that reach screaming point accompanied by energetic actions and ritual movements of their bodies which to the onlooker could look very fearsome and violent as to be described as a "sham fight." A *waka taki* (meaning a canoe challenge) is a *pōwhiri* that sees visitors arriving from the sea and on to the land to complete the welcoming ceremonial formalities.
 9. Tui (Tuai) was also present, and also spoke English. He was a brother of Korokoro, and eventually assisted Kendall, as a "monitor," at the first school when it was established at Rangihoua.
 10. This argument is made quite aside from discussion about whether or not any of the settlers with Marsden were ordained (they were not).
 11. Particularly in education, diversity work emphasizes the importance of different "realities" in terms such as these: "I have argued that educators must learn that difference is normal. It is neither to be celebrated nor denigrated. It just is. The differences in our schools provide a rich tapestry of human existence that must be the starting point for a deeply democratic, academically excellent, and socially just education" (Shields, 2004, p. 127).
 12. Numerous books and articles foregrounding the value of "silenced voices" as a form of analysis are to be found in education, for instance: Nathalie Piquemal (2005); Jennifer Tupper (2002), Shields (2004).
 13. In consultation with Professor Patu Hohepa of Ngapuhi.
 14. For a fascinating example of the "working" of Maori (in particular Ngāi Tūhoe) accounts of the past, see Binney (2007).
 15. In the letter, reproduced in McNab (1908), Marsden records: "Before Duaterra left Parramatta he was very urgent with me to send him a man to teach his boys and girls to read and write. I told him then I would send for Mr Kendall, and he should come" (p. 320).
 16. In another paper (Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins, 2008 in press) we discuss the establishment of schooling as a product of the relationship between Marsden and Ruatara.
 17. One way of asserting the logical power of the "Maori" story is to argue that a "Māori" view in fact is more likely to have been determining the real events—the *pōwhiri* and

- the *hui*—simply due to the numbers of Māori present. Given only the few settlers would have experienced the reality reported in the archives by Marsden, and the vast majority of people present at the *pōwhiri* and *hui* would have been responding to Māori politics and actions, the most significant flow of meaning and power would have been those of Māori.
18. As part of the research, we are interviewing several elders and other people related to the area in which these events historically took place (see Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins *Aitanga: Maori Desire for Schooling*, unpublished book ms; work in progress).
 19. At least three commemorative imaginary pictures of “the first sermon” have also been painted, each confirming Marsden’s “real” centrality (Clark, 1964; Morgan, 1964; for the third we have no provenance).
 20. Now, it is probable that different people, if they were to remember the *pōwhiri*, or even if they were to “materialize” from the gaps in the archives and in our account, might find the *pōwhiri* expressed most importantly a power struggle between Korokoro and Ruatara, and so on. We are not denying multiple possibilities for the real, material events. At this point, we are making a theoretical argument about ontology and the possibility, and implications, of making real some past events. The authors of this paper make our materializing reading, and offer it for analysis.
 21. See in particular, Smith (1998).

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