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Indigenous Degrowth versus Western Capitalism: negotiating Notions of Development in New Zealand Literature

The clash between European colonizers and indigenous peoples implied a confrontation of different economic and environmental attitudes. Western models of development grounded on the notion of economic growth seem to be diametrically opposed to the indigenous holistic view of reality. Interestingly, indigenous attitudes to economy and the environment seem to be close to the theory of “degrowth” (currently championed in Europe by French economist Serge Latouche), which rejects the progressivist growth economics of capitalism, advocating the passage to a post-capitalist society based on economic downscaling and social conviviality. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Maori fight their battle to negotiate a notion of development aligned with Maori principles, as depicted in numerous literary works: for example, Patricia Grace’s novels *Potiki* and *Dogside Story*. Their aim is not going back to a pristine pre-colonial society and subsistence economy but escaping the logic of profit for profit, viewing progress in their own terms. By affirming the primacy of “quality” over “quantity” and “well-being” over “well-having”, they unintentionally apply a post-development approach like the degrowth one. In the middle of last century, some New Zealand writers of European origin, namely Roderick Finlayson and Noel Hilliard, had already expressed vocal criticism towards the capitalist system. Unsurprisingly, they had both come directly in touch with Maori culture. This paper explores the affinity between the Maori view and degrowth theory, as shown in Maori literature, and the Maori influence on Finlayson and Hilliard, who were ahead of their time in advocating post-development models of economy.

Paola Della Valle completed her doctorate in English at the University of Torino in 2008, specializing in New Zealand literature. Her articles appeared in *English Studies*, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *NZSA Bulletin of New Zealand Studies*, *Il Castello di Elsinore* and *Quaderni del '900*. She has published the monographs *From Silence to Voice: The Rise of Maori Literature* (Oratia Media, Auckland 2010) and *Stevenson nel Pacifico: una lettura postcoloniale* (Aracne, Roma 2013), and is a contributor to the volume *Experiences of Freedom in Postcolonial Literatures and Cultures* (Bassi and Oboe eds, Routledge, London & New York 2011).