

ever presented on a British stage, and the quiet moralizing of Cowper's *The Task*.

McCormick has read the lot (he might perhaps find something more in Rétif de la Bretonne's *La découverte Australe?*) and summarizes them deftly. Surely for once the cliché 'meteoric' is in order: a bright flash, but fleeting; then an exhumed immortality of a kind, but a spurious immortality, a name used merely to point a moral or adorn a tale.

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Whaowhia: Maori Art and its Artists. By Gilbert Archey. Collins, London and Auckland, 1977. 136 pp. Illustrated, 242 figures in black and white, 8 colour plates, map. N.Z. price: \$15.

THIS handsomely produced book is the last work by one of New Zealand's great scholars on Maori art. Sir Gilbert Archey, whose publications span the years from 1933 to 1977 was well-known internationally for his carefully considered analyses of Maori art and for his rather guarded interpretations. Not for him the unfettered imagination of the diffusionists who would derive most of Maori art from civilizations far removed from New Zealand. Instead he became the champion of local development venturing no further than Polynesia itself for possible outside influences on Maori art and then conceding only a very limited range of compositional arrangements which might have belonged to a common Polynesian heritage.

He stands apart from his generation of scholars in one important respect: he was willing to credit to Maori artists the artistic achievements which he saw and admired in their art. He regarded the art 'as mature and self-confident in all phases of its stylizations and complex patterns' (p.102) and the artists as not being slaves to traditions but as men 'with independent outlook that allowed [them] to explore new lines' (p.116).

This last work plays on old themes and presents them once more for our consideration; perhaps grander in scale than before because of the lavish production in which the message is carried. There is some evidence of 'one more time from Gilbert Archey' but only because this is really his final opportunity to do so. For example, in the appendices where he compares the Kaitaia lintel with selected works in the Society, Raivavae and the Marquesas islands, he can not resist the temptation to have a 'little dig' at T.T. Barrow. He also challenges Skinner's interpretation of 'the curved end-marginal members of the door lintel composition' (p.104) as being snakes, and questions the need to seek derivations from remote sources for other features

of Maori art such as the *manaia*. But his prodding is done with grace and dignity and not with malice.

In *Whaowhia : Maori Art and Its Artists* Archey set out 'primarily to describe the range of endeavour and accomplishment of Maori wood-carving to discern the lines of its development and to consider its likely relationship with other Polynesian arts' (p.116). As I have already discussed the last goal, I will omit any further exploration of it and focus instead on the first two goals. Archey does, in fact, describe a wide range of endeavour from mammoth gateway figures to small personal ornaments, from the sometimes large tribal assembly houses to treasure chests and from rock art to clothing. What he has to say about each category is interesting as he discusses compositional arrangements, looks at affinities, sometimes considers meaning (as in the case of lintels (p.34-51)) and generally tries to describe the significant features of each.

Matters relating to tribal styles are discussed incidentally when the diagnostic types appear for consideration. For example, the topic receives concentrated attention in the section dealing with houseposts and door lintels. It becomes an incidental matter in the sections dealing with canoe prows and treasure boxes. One cannot really take issue with Archey for treating the topic in this matter because it was not a major aim of his.

Archey's efforts to discuss 'lines of development' are handicapped first by a scarcity of reliably provenanced examples and second by an acute shortage of reliably dated material. This has always been a problem with analyses of Maori art and must remain a serious handicap until more archaeological work and stylistic analyses are undertaken by New Zealand scholars. The pity of it is that there are, in some cases, lots of material to work with but nearly all of them are unreliably dated and so ultimately frustrating. So most of the statements made about development through time are tentative and often speculative.

The title of Archey's book leads a reader to expect that he or she might learn something about the artists who created our national heritage. Those readers who have more than a passing knowledge of Maori art may well be forgiven for saying 'At last! Someone is going to write about the artists!' It is a well known fact that ethnographers of New Zealand life at the early contact period and into the 19th century failed to record details about the lives of the artists. They failed to ask even the most elementary question: Who carved this piece? While we understand that most of Polynesia suffers a similar deficiency in the ethnographic record and while we understand why the questions were not asked at the time, these facts do not help to lessen the frustration of modern-day students of Maori art.

With this said, the reader should not be surprised to discover that Archey does not, in fact, tell us very much about the artists. Only in a few instances is he able to supply us with the names of the carvers. For the vast majority of art objects the artists who produced them remain anonymous – and their anonymity becomes a monument to the folly and limited vision of our ethnographers.

We should, therefore, not heap scorn upon the shoulders of Sir Gilbert Archey because he could not tell us who the artists were. Nor should readers not borrow or buy the book because of the criticisms made above. In his lifetime Archey advanced both our knowledge and our understanding of

Maori art. He leaves behind him a valuable contribution which will be mined, no doubt criticized, and used by scholars of the future.

Those of us who are still studying Maori art must make our personal contribution with the same attention to detail which characterized much of Archey's work. If the present students of art can solve some of the problems which handicapped Archey in his work he would be pleased with us. Much remains to be done and it would be a mistake to think that the two grand coffee-table books which we now have (Barrow's and Archey's) together say all that needs to be said about Maori art. Serious research into Maori art has, in fact, barely begun.

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Bristol and its Municipal Government 1820-1851. By Graham Bush. Bristol Record Society, Bristol, 1976. 264 pp. U.K. price £9.00.

SCHOLARLY histories of British or New Zealand local government are comparatively few. And more's the pity, for such works provide the vital substructure of urban history. The research of Dr Graham Bush is thus to be welcomed. The author of *Decently and In Order* (the centennial history of the Auckland City Council) has published a second study based this time on his Ph.D. thesis.

The origins of the book account for its orientation. Dr Bush is concerned to show how Bristol was governed in the years before and after the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835. The scope is narrow, but approach important. To Joseph Parkes, a moving spirit behind the Act, 'Municipal Reform is the steam engine for the Mill built by "Parliamentary Reform"'. For their part, the Tories also saw municipal reform in political terms. Inevitably, contemporary perceptions coloured subsequent interpretation. To the Webbs, authors of a massive and indispensable study on English local government, the 1835 Act was 'revolutionary' in its intentions and effects. Yet how revolutionary was the change from the 'unreformed' to the 'representative' system?

Dr Bush treads warily. He emphasizes the continuities. However profound the changes after 1835 might seem to have been nationally, in Bristol there were considerable continuities in the structure, functions, composition and politics of municipal government. After 1835, the three tiers of Mayor, aldermen, and councillors remained. And aldermen were still chosen by co-option. Partly as a result the political purposes of the 1835 Act were nullified in Bristol. The Conservatives captured control of the aldermen and thereby maintained their ascendancy in the new Council. Nor was an Anglican oligarchy replaced by a nonconformist 'shopocracy' — in Bristol at least. (However, the author does not analyse separately the backgrounds of the Conservative and Liberal councillors: any subtle differences remain undetected.) Affluent Anglican merchants continued to predominate in the ranks of the new councillors. Why? This question is not tackled directly, but