

Exhibiting Maori: A History of Colonial Cultures of Display. By Conal McCarthy. Te Papa Press, Wellington, 2007. 243pp. NZ price: \$69.95. ISBN 978-1-877385-33-9.

THIS BOOK BRINGS TO MIND the National Museum of the American Indian, situated on the Mall in Washington DC. That museum — an architectural and artistic jewel in the crown of the United States capital — offers an altogether ‘unconventional’ representation of modern America’s Indian tribes. No static displays are to be found there. Instead, visitors hear the stories the tribes themselves wish to tell and be heard; challenging orthodox linear museum narratives, the cultures on display are not frozen in time, but vibrant, future-focussed and full of life. The message is clear: ‘we are still here’. Conal McCarthy’s thoroughly researched and cogently argued case study, based on his doctoral thesis on the history of the display of Maori taonga in New Zealand museums, argues for a similar position — albeit within a slightly different postcolonial settler dynamic.

Exhibiting Maori makes the point that museums were not (and are not) simply sites of settler domination; rather, the history of Maori interaction with and patronage of museums reveals a complex dialectic and intimacy, where Maori have often been able to co-opt and manage the relationship to better achieve their own goals. In other words, Maori have historically exercised agency within the space of the museum — shaping, influencing and retelling their stories both as cultural mediators and as consumers of culture. In sum, McCarthy presents a compelling argument for why we need to appreciate our social institutions (of which museums are but one variety) as sites of ongoing cultural interaction, exchange and contest, and that in New Zealand museums from the late nineteenth century onwards Maori have taken up the invitation to contest modes of interpretation and display.

Museums have in recent years come to be seen as the ultimate colonial site; after all, they are the spaces where cultures come to be publicly and visually known, named and ultimately ‘othered’. Postcolonial critics have tended to see museums in this way. After Foucault and Said, scholars have veered towards reading museums as sites of settler authority, limiting the opportunities for colonized subjects to ‘write back’ to empire and thus resist being objectified and assimilated by the dominant culture. Yet McCarthy’s careful analysis of Maori and the museum reveals a more nuanced and subtle picture. He traces in the historical record a relationship that is much more interactive and fluid than we might expect. His particular skill lies in synthesizing a vast interdisciplinary and international literature — from critical anthropology and history through to museum studies — and weaving this into a careful examination of the rich archival record. The book is unashamedly theoretical in its methodology and interpretation. And it is a hugely welcome addition both to our historical literature and to critical commentary on museum practice.

Exhibiting Maori does not offer a history of museums in New Zealand *per se*; rather, it charts the history of taonga Maori and their changing meanings in the museum. Starting with the establishment of the Colonial Museum in 1865, the book falls into discrete themed sections. The early chapters cover a time of significant change for Maori societies and contemporaneously, the age which celebrated the collection of cultural objects as trophies and specimens, presented in the contexts of international exhibitions and ‘salvage ethnography’. Nonetheless, the objects that Maori chose to exhibit within the walls of the museum revealed a confidence in their culture that land loss and economic dislocation could not undermine. The book then follows through the inter-war years and the consequent transition from ‘specimen’ to ‘artefact’, particularly within the emerging field of academic anthropology. This period also saw the transition from object to ‘art’ (and then to ‘craft’), frequently with active Maori participation (Ngata, Buck and others). Maori cultural heritage quickly became part of the nation’s heritage but, as McCarthy argues, this was often on its own terms and not just within

the straitjacket of official assimilation policies. The later sections of the book explore the history of Maori exhibitions at the National Art Gallery from 1949 and trace the politics of decolonization as art and object found their way into new discourses of resistance. Then from the 1980s, an indigenous nationalist discourse saw the rise of Maori audiences visiting the museum. With Te Maori receiving international acclaim, the museum was reinvented as a new Maori space. The museum also became a means as well as a locale for decolonization, especially through the art of Bick Nin, Ralph Hotere and others. Nowhere was this more apparent than at Te Papa Tongarewa the Museum of New Zealand, where Maori have opportunities to tell their own stories with their own objects. Perhaps with Te Papa we are getting closer to what McCarthy describes as the 'indigenization' of the museum.

Te Papa Press have taken care to produce a text that is theoretically rich yet also very accessible. The black and white images are judiciously and sensitively employed throughout; many of the images will be familiar to readers, revealing both 'front of house' publicity shots as well as 'behind the scenes' perspectives. The cover photograph is an appropriately chosen visual metaphor for the book; while the deliberately posed shot portrays the exhibition space as the meeting ground for both cultures, a Maori woman sitting in the centre of the image looks squarely down the lens (and by implication) at the reader.

This is an important and timely book which ought to find its way onto essential reading lists for courses in History (especially Public History), Maori Studies and Museum Studies; but it will also strike a chord with scholars from an array of cognate disciplines. Theoretically informed and intellectually rigorous, this text delivers on the promise to engage with postcolonial debates around authenticity and representation and makes a strong and compelling case for the need to constantly interrogate the politics and intentions of display. Museum objects are not static and fixed remnants of bygone eras; rather, they are, to borrow Nicholas Thomas's phrase, 'entangled' in a web of meaning and political, institutional and transnational networks.

GISELLE BYRNES

University of Waikato

Heaphy. By Iain Sharp. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2008. 232pp. NZ price: \$64.95. ISBN 978-1-86940-421-5.

CHARLES HEAPHY WAS A REMARKABLE CHARACTER and Iain Sharp's biography is a remarkable book. Gifted artist, intrepid explorer, decorated soldier, surveyor, politician and judge, Heaphy was a central figure in New Zealand's early colonial history. Sharp has skilfully rendered a coherent picture of a complex and contradictory man whose life and legacy continue to resonate.

Generously illustrated with almost 100 paintings, sketches, maps and other images, *Heaphy* is organized into an introduction and six more or less chronological chapters. The introduction opens with what Sharp describes as the 'standard image' of Heaphy, a photograph taken in about 1867. Heaphy is portrayed in military attire, prominently displaying the Victoria Cross awarded for his actions in helping a wounded soldier during the skirmish at Waiari in February 1864, the first such medal to be awarded to a colonial volunteer rather than a regular British Army soldier. While Sharp reads too much into this photograph, detecting in Heaphy's expression the anxiety and sorrow of a man 'haunted by private disappointment' (p.8), his analysis of Heaphy's character relies much less on this image of him than on those by him. In this way the 'standard image' is considerably augmented by both the content and approach of the book.

Heaphy came to New Zealand in 1839 on the *Tory*, one of the contingents of New