

---

*Victorian Museum Culture:*

*Bernard Woodward  
and the  
Western Australian Museum*

---

Michael Malouf  
2003

52

069.09941

MAL

## *Contents*

---

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	iii
<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Chapter 1</i> <i>“The Temple of the Muses”</i>	4
<i>Chapter 2</i> <i>“Civilization, character and liberality”</i>	12
<i>Chapter 3</i> <i>“You shall be led to see only beauty or joy”</i>	20
<i>Chapter 4</i> <i>“The sheer pleasure of knowledge and beautiful things”</i>	28
<i>Bibliography</i>	35

---

## *Acknowledgments*

---

In all my years reading *Acknowledgments* I have tended to dismiss them as obsequious, simply unimportant or the academic equivalent of those Academy Award thank you speeches that make me squirm and invariably change channels. Now, for the very first time, faced with writing one of my own, my first acknowledgment is to admit how wrong I've been. This thesis, such as it is, *has* been a collaborative effort, and therefore collaborative thanks are well and truly due.

My academic supervisor, Dr. Judy Johnston, has been an absolute trooper, and on the numerous occasions I was inclined to chuck it all in, simply replied "Oh you'll be fine" and produced one of her famous calmative smiles. Judy also possesses the admirable ability of not only being able to laugh at my jokes but to subversively encourage them.

The assistance provided by the Western Australian Museum has been invaluable. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the museum's Director, Dr. Gary Morgan, for his permission to access the museum's library and archives.

The Western Australian Museum's librarian, Margaret Triffitt, has made visiting the library a pleasure and has converted me to the delights of ginger biscuits with afternoon tea. Margaret made the resources of the library available whenever I needed them, and pointed me to the various sections where my researches would prove most beneficial.

Through this wonderful experience I have begun working there as a volunteer, employing voice recognition software to (slowly) transfer the library's press clippings collection to an online database. In short, I've finally discovered after all these years that a library can be fun.

---

## *Introduction*

---

### *Preamble*

It was Czar Peter the Great's (1672-1725) penchant for pickled heads that first caught my attention. Added to my immediate fascination with such perversity, was the charmingly democratic pedigree of those heads: one was Peter's lover, Mary Hamilton, the other, the lover of his wife Catherine, William Mons. The latter head was ordered to be displayed in Catherine's chambers. I guess the fun of being an absolute ruler is that you can also be an absolute bastard and not have to worry about the consequences. Czar Peter's collecting impulses are chronicled in Stephen T. Asma's *Stuffed Animals and Pickled Heads*,<sup>1</sup> but however we might now view those impulses, public museums have always faced Czar Peter's same basic predicament, namely what to choose and how to display those choices (if at all). Peter the Great's museum, opened in 1719, was a public one, and although Asma doesn't say exactly who that audience comprised, some idea is obtained from observing that when the Hermitage in St. Petersburg was opened to the public in 1853 by Czar Nicholas I, "full dress was *de rigueur* and visitors were announced."<sup>2</sup> Public, yes, but only the right sort of public.

Asma's book was cleverly suggested by my academic supervisor, Dr. Judy Johnston, while I struggled to think what I would write about. I've always enjoyed visiting museums, but I can't say I'd ever put any great thought into what went on behind the scenes. Visiting the *Australian Museum* in Sydney as a young boy from northern New South Wales was my first introduction to a museum of any kind and to a town with more than one main street. I was immediately sold on both. That was my formative view of what a museum was, and, in truth, remains so to this day. The

---

<sup>1</sup> Stephen T. Asma, *Stuffed Animals and Pickled Heads. The Culture and History of Natural History Museums* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Susan M. Pearce, *Museum Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), p. 99.

*Australian Museum* seemed enormous and architecturally very impressive. There was a wonderfully eclectic collection of everything you could imagine, and much you could not. I loved seeing stuffed animals and birds, flash looking mineral collections, exotic headdresses from New Guinea, dinosaur skeletons and dioramas of native animals that you were supposed to have seen coming from the ‘country,’ but never had.

But writing a thesis topic saw me in Perth, not Sydney, so my target was eventually narrowed down to the Western Australian Museum, and in turn to its first director, Bernard Woodward. It was probably unreasonable of me to expect him to emulate a dictatorial Czar, but I confess I was looking for just a little more colour (alright then, a lot) in Woodward, at least in his role as museum director. In retrospect I now think Perth, and Western Australia, probably got the man it needed. After all, the museum survived and expanded, no mean feat in a colony eleven times the size of Great Britain with intensely competing demands for infrastructure funding. The great museums of Europe were already firmly established by the time the museum in Perth was first formed on its current site in 1889, and it was never going to have access to the vast European collections amassed over centuries from royal collections, colonial possessions, plunder, trade and bequests.

### *Argument*

This dissertation explores the way in which Bernard Woodward was able to emigrate and reconstruct himself into a position of power and influence in the colony of Western Australia, by calling on and by directly appropriating the work and writing of British Museum curators as offering the superior models for the development of a public museum. His appropriations seem to be naturalised in the period, unnoticed and even if noted, would doubtlessly not have been considered shameful. After all, the construction of a museum is a civilizing impulse and an inevitable outcome in imperial terms. David Spurr in *The Rhetoric of Empire* notes that “European colonial administrators” saw themselves as “custodians” or “trustees” of the

colonized lands they occupied.<sup>3</sup> They brought with them a sense of European superiority and European authority. For Woodward, then, that combination of superiority and authority would have been irresistible and so a reverse appropriation takes place in a geographical space where appropriation is, after all, the name of the main game. He becomes literally a custodian or trustee for the display of the colony's value to itself.

---

<sup>3</sup> David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 28.

---

# Chapter 1

## *“The Temple of the Muses”*

Bernard Woodward

---

### *Science and the Ideologies of Class and Imperialism*

Woodward’s literary contribution to my thesis involves the publication in 1900 of his *Guide to the Contents of the Western Australian Museum and Art Gallery* (*Guide*), together with a series of three lectures he delivered in 1905, “The Aims and Objects of Museums,” “Old Friends in the National Gallery,” and “What is a Picture?”, reported by *The West Australian* newspaper in the same year.

Woodward’s *Guide* and his lecture series demonstrate the differing museological approach taken towards, respectively, professionals and the public, and the manner in which the latter group was increasingly privileged to justify the museum’s continued existence and expansion. Woodward’s *Guide* is formal, detailed, scholarly in parts, quite dull and generally unoriginal. His lectures are formal, brief, virtually devoid of attribution, quite dull and generally unoriginal. Woodward was competent, not charismatic, and deferential, not dynamic, but this is the perfect tone, of course, for a director who needs to raise funds and to justify the project for which he is both instigator and curator. Moreover, his demeanour is faithful to an imperial ideology that recognises Britain (‘Home’) as offering the superior, and therefore dominant culture.

The manner in which Woodward’s writing forms a professional and public dichotomy in his *Guide* and lectures respectively, is analogous to the ascendant museological approach of the late nineteenth century known as the “new museum idea” which drew a corresponding distinction between the needs of the private scientist and those of the visiting public. It was named and espoused, most influentially, by Sir William Flower, director of the new British Museum (Natural History), or Natural History Museum, opened in 1881 in South Kensington. It is indicative of the power and prestige large public museums were now attracting, that

Flower's advocacy of the new museum idea in addresses both to the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1889, and again to the Museums Association in 1893, assured its worldwide success. This was despite Flower's acknowledgment that the original idea had come from Dr. John Edward Gray in 1864 when addressing the British Association. Quoting Gray, Flower noted there were two purposes for establishing a museum:

... first, the diffusion of instruction and rational amusement among the mass of the people, and secondly, to afford the scientific student every possible means of examining and studying the specimens of which the museum consists.<sup>1</sup>

It seems contemporaneously odd that this much vaunted "new museum" idea amounted to no more than separating the specialised study of exhibits from their static display for the public. Quite literally in fact. One private area for scientists and students, and another for the general public. In a society so class-bound that even railway carriages had their gradations, this division into professional and public is not surprising. What is more it remains to this day.

In his 1900 *Guide* Woodward acknowledged this arrangement philosophy in a section simply headed "The Museum."

Professor Huxley describes a Museum as a "consultative library of objects, where people can see for themselves the things of which they read in books."

Professor W. H. Flower says that "the real objects of forming collections are two, which may be briefly called research and instruction."

Professor Ruskin states that "the first function of a Museum is to give an example of perfect order and perfect elegance."<sup>2</sup>

(*Guide*, p. 3)

All three, in their own way, were emphasising a museological duality which catered for both the professional and non-professional visitor, itself an acknowledgment of the increasing specialisation and reach of a burgeoning scientific elite. This was, after, all, the period in which the association between scientific education and the increased material wealth of a country was first argued and the period in which science began to take precedence over Letters and the Fine Arts. Thomas Huxley

---

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Henry Flower, *Essays on Museums And Other Subjects Connected With Natural History* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1898), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Huxley was an English biologist, during this period professor of natural history at the Royal School of Mines, and the foremost scientific supporter of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection. John Ruskin was an English author and art critic, champion of the artist Turner, the Pre-Raphaelite painting movement, and the first Slade professor of fine art at Oxford University.



was especially passionate about this, his essay on “A Liberal Education; And Where To Find It” lamenting, in a broad sweep, the education offered in England at the primary, secondary and university levels. Delivered to the South London Working Men’s College in 1868, his pithy advice to them was that they “could not copy any of these institutions if it would: I am bold enough to express the conviction that it ought not if it could.”<sup>3</sup> Addressing the Liverpool Philomathic Society the following year, Huxley said:

... the value of a knowledge of physical science as a means of getting on is indubitable. There are hardly any of our trades, except the merely huckstering ones, in which some knowledge of science may not be directly profitable to the pursuer of that occupation. As industry attains higher stages of development, as its processes become more complicated and refined, and competition more keen, the sciences are dragged in, one by one, to take their share in the fray; and he who can best avail himself of their help is the man who will come out uppermost in that struggle for existence, which goes on as fiercely beneath the smooth surface of modern society, as among the wild inhabitants of the woods.<sup>4</sup>

But how, exactly, to gain this knowledge of the physical sciences? In his essay “On the Study of Biology” in 1876, Huxley is lucid and direct; from practical experience. His students not only read and see about animals and plants from their textbooks, but they also dissect them and are educated about their structures by associating the two.

Thus the student has before him, first, a picture of the structure he ought to see; secondly, the structure itself worked out; and if with these aids, and such needful explanations and practical hints as a demonstrator can supply, he cannot make out the facts for himself in the materials supplied to him, he had better take to some other pursuit than that of biological science.<sup>5</sup>

This statement is the very analogy Woodward notes about Huxley, in which museums are a “consultative library of objects, where people can see for themselves the things of which they read in books” (*Guide*, p. 3). For Huxley, however, the problem with museums is that after:

You have walked through a quarter of a mile of animals, more or less well stuffed, with their long names written out underneath them; and, unless your experience is very different from that of most people, the upshot of it all is that you leave that splendid pile with sore feet, a bad headache, and a general idea that the animal kingdom is a “mighty maze without a plan.”<sup>6</sup>

As a precursor to Flower’s “new museum idea,” Huxley says that:

---

<sup>3</sup> Thomas H. Huxley, *Collected Essays* Vol. 3. (London: Macmillan, 1925), p. 108.

<sup>4</sup> Huxley, Vol. 3, p. 114.

<sup>5</sup> Huxley, Vol. 3, p. 286.

<sup>6</sup> Huxley, Vol. 3, p. 287.

What the public want is easy and unhindered access to such a collection as they can understand and appreciate; and what the men of science want is similar access to the materials of science. To this end the vast mass of objects of natural history should be divided into two parts—one open to the public, the other to men of science, every day.<sup>7</sup>

Woodward's inclusion of Flower's "research and instruction" criteria for museum collections provides a parallel to Huxley's two-fold division. By the time Flower mentions these criteria in his address of 1889, he is already advocating a desire that "instruction" of the public would predominate.

...I especially refer to the much more numerous class, and one which it may be hoped will year by year bear a greater relative proportion to the general population of the country, who, without having the time, the opportunities, or the abilities to make a profound study of any branch of science, yet take a general interest in its progress, and wish to possess some knowledge of the world around them and of the principal facts ascertained with regard to it, or at least some portions of it. For such persons museums may be, when well organised and arranged, of benefit to a degree that at present can scarcely be realised.<sup>8</sup>

Huxley and Flower clearly recognised that an instructed but not overburdened public would prove beneficial to the development of science as a prestigious and vital pursuit. Which brings me to Woodward's third citation, from John Ruskin.

You certainly wouldn't want Ruskin as your interior decorator for such a museum. The irony of including Ruskin's "perfect order and perfect elegance" quotation from a letter he wrote to an unnamed recipient and dated 20 March 1880, is that when seen in context, it envisages an institution impossibly parodying itself and quite literally stuck in time.

The first function of a Museum—for a little while I shall speak of Art and Natural History as alike cared for in an ideal one—is to give example of perfect order and perfect elegance, in the true sense of that test word, to the disorderly and rude populace. Everything in its *own* place, everything looking its best because it is there, nothing crowded, nothing unnecessary, nothing puzzling. Therefore, after a room has been once arranged, there must be no change in it. For new possessions there must be new rooms, and after twenty years' absence—coming back to the room in which one learned one's bird or beast alphabet, we should be able to show our children the old bird on the old perch in the accustomed corner. But—first of all, let the room be beautifully complete, *i.e.* complete enough for its proper business.<sup>9</sup>

While supporting the importance of access by the general public, Ruskin denounces that public as "disorderly and rude" in a class-bound attitude that suggests not that the public will learn and develop, merely that they will be soothed and kept quiet by the static passivity and quietude of museum exhibits. Today, museums try to be

---

<sup>7</sup> Huxley, Vol. 3, p. 288.

<sup>8</sup> Flower, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> E. T. Cook & Alexander Wedderburn, eds. *The Works of John Ruskin: Library Edition* Vol. 34 (London: George Allen, 1905), p. 247.

interactive and innovative and see change as essential. In 1900 Victorian class ideology was invoked to rule and regulate public institutions.

In a further letter, nine days' later, Ruskin again wrote to the same unnamed individual, elaborating that:

... "elegance" in that last letter contemplates chiefly architecture and fittings. These should not only be perfect in stateliness, durability, and comfort, but beautiful to the utmost point consistent with due subordination to the objects displayed.<sup>10</sup>

Given that on 7 June 1867 in an address at the Royal Institution Ruskin had also recommended that "your lower orders" when visiting places such as the Crystal Palace should be "washed and comfortable" and "under the continual care of a police superintendent,"<sup>11</sup> it may well be that the public was the ultimate target of subordination.

Woodward's 1900 *Guide* acknowledges a certain lack of "perfect order and perfect elegance" in the display arrangements forced upon the Western Australian Museum due to lack of space, accepting that:

At the present time the various collections of objects of Art, of Ethnology, and of Natural History have had to be arranged in the manner best suited to their display in the limited space available, rather than in strict accordance with scientific order. (*Guide*, p. 3.)

Nonetheless, in his own unique way, Ruskin shared with Huxley and Flower the essential philosophy of the "new museum idea," and the latter's belief in the museum as a public institution. Continuing his series of letters on museums in 1880, Ruskin wrote that:

A Museum, primarily, is to be for *simple* persons. Children, that is to say, and peasants. For your student, your antiquary, or your scientific gentleman, there must be separate accommodation, or they must be sent elsewhere. The Town Museum is to be for the Town's People, the Village Museum for the Villagers. Keep that first principle clear to start with.<sup>12</sup>

Ruskin and Flower were strong and influential men, and advocated the desirability of like-minded individuals running museums. Ruskin believed that museum trustees should:

---

<sup>10</sup> E. T. Cook & Alexander Wedderburn, eds. Vol. 34, p. 249.

<sup>11</sup> E. T. Cook & Alexander Wedderburn, eds. *The Works of John Ruskin: Library Edition* Vol. 19 (London: George Allen, 1905), pp. 215-16.

<sup>12</sup> E. T. Cook & Alexander Wedderburn, eds. Vol. 34, p. 251.

Put one man of reputation and sense at its head; give him what staff he asks for, and a fixed annual sum for expenditure—specific accounts to be printed annually for all the world's seeing—and let him alone.<sup>13</sup>

Flower was equally direct when addressing the British Association for the Advancement of Science on 11 September 1889.

What a museum really depends upon for its success and usefulness is not its building, not its cases, not even its specimens, but its curator. He and his staff are the life and soul of the institution, upon whom its whole value depends; ...<sup>14</sup>

The other significant force advocating the importance of a strong curator was George Brown Goode, assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and director of the United States National Museum. Woodward was clearly aware of his views having, in his 1905 lecture "The Aims and Objects of Museums," included an unattributed quotation by him. In 1895, Goode had delivered a highly influential address, "The Principles of Museum Administration," to the British Museums Association, in which he stated:

A museum without intelligent, progressive, and well-trained curators is as ineffective as a school without teachers, a library without librarians, or a learned society without a working membership of learned men.<sup>15</sup>

Woodward fails to make any such direct claims for himself, seeming more to assert his competence via an association with his curatorial peers and an assurance that he has investigated every possible source regarding the ideal museum:

The Museums Association, founded in 1888, by its annual conferences and its monthly journal has been a great help, for it publishes details of all improvements made in everything connected with museum work, and by its means I hear of many things that I should not otherwise ascertain, notwithstanding that I am in correspondence with the directors of most of the great museums of the world.  
("The Aims and Objects of Museums")

The whole-hearted adoption by Flower of the new museum idea was doubly significant for Australian museums, given the Natural History Museum's pivotal role in identifying many of the specimens 'discovered' in Australia, and its role in providing many of the curatorial staff for Australian museums, and indeed throughout the English-speaking world. Flower had also embraced another more

---

<sup>13</sup> E. T. Cook & Alexander Wedderburn, eds. Vol. 34, p. 250.

<sup>14</sup> Flower, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Susan Sheets-Pyenson, *Cathedrals of Science: The Development of Colonial Natural History Museums during the Late Nineteenth Century* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press,

controversial revolution, as had Woodward, the publication in 1859 of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, and the evolutionary paradigm that would challenge taxonomic classifications and the general philosophy of museum display.

While Woodward's exact connection with the Natural History Museum is unknown, his father and uncle worked there, so before coming to Western Australia in 1889 he would, at the very least, have been acquainted with its latest museological developments which he later unquestioningly followed. To a considerable extent he had little other option. 'Home,' with all its ideological assumptions of superiority and dominance, would classify the samples he sent them, Australian museums only gradually developing the specialised staff and expertise required to undertake such tasks. Australian colonial museums had also profited from the, by then, accepted international view that such institutions were for the benefit of the public, and as such, as Anderson and Reeves point out, "museums in Australia were 'born modern': no revolutions, either intellectual or political, were required to break down their doors."<sup>16</sup>

In other words, the form that Australian museums took had already been decided by a complex evolutionary history that had originally seen them the very antithesis of a modern public institution. As Woodward had also noted when introducing Huxley, Flower and Ruskin into the definitional domain of:

The word "Museum" is derived from the Greek *Mouseion*, the name for the Temple of the Muses, the Goddesses of Song, of Poetry, of the Arts and Sciences.  
(*Guide*, p. 3)

This was a world in which repositories within Greek temples, and later Christian churches, were taken for granted, possessed of an acquisitive rationale comprising religious or quasi-religious items whose ownership was typically royal or princely.<sup>17</sup>

This in turn:

contributed powerful ideas about objects as treasure, objects as relics connecting those alive with the mighty dead, objects as dedications, and accumulation as a way of manipulating social surplus, all of which have shaped our thinking about the nature of museums.<sup>18</sup>

---

1988), p. 26.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Anderson & Andrew Reeves, "Contested Identities: Museums and the Nation in Australia," in *Museums and the Making of "Ourselves": The Role of Objects in National Identity*, ed. Flora E. S. Kaplan London: Leicester University Press, 1994), p. 82.

<sup>17</sup> Pearce, p. 91.

<sup>18</sup> Pearce, p. 91.

Australian museums, by virtue of their mid to late nineteenth century founding, were inheritors of a collecting and display ethos which had begun with Renaissance princes and their associates, first in Italy, and then of Europe north of the Alps.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the overarching modernist models developed in the preceding three centuries had modulated into what can be called the classical period of modern intellectual activity and institution-creation which lasted, with some internal adjustments, until the early to mid twentieth century.<sup>19</sup>

The association with the Temple of the Muses would, however, maintain a classificational system that gave Art a privileged position at the head of hierarchical system that had been quantified as early as 1565 by the Dutch physician Quiccheberg, who:

... identified five main classes of collection which relate to the whole universe: paintings and sacred objects; objects made of inorganic material; organic materials representing the three realms of earth, water and air; artefacts; and material glorifying the founder.<sup>20</sup>

This bears a striking resemblance to the divisions employed over three-hundred years' later by Woodward in his *Guide*.

The collections in this Museum are arranged in three sections, viz., Art, Ethnology and Natural History.

Section I. ART. —Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting.

Section II. ETHNOLOGY. —The study of the history of man, or more fully of the rise and progress of civilization, as exemplified by the works of man.

Section III. NATURAL HISTORY. —This term is used to describe all the processes or laws of the Universe and the results of those processes or laws upon the materials of which it is composed, which are independent of the agency of Man. (*Guide*, p. 4).

The modern Temple of the Muses in Perth was predicated, ultimately, upon a far more ancient and surprisingly resilient one.

---

<sup>19</sup> Pearce, p. 91.

<sup>20</sup> Pearce, p. 95. (Flower, in his *Essays on Museums*, refers to him as Samuel Quicquelberg, p. 4.)

---

## Chapter 2

### “Civilization, character and liberality”

George Brown Goode

---

Bernard Woodward’s *Guide to the Contents of the Western Australian Museum and Art Gallery (Guide)* commences with a ‘Preface,’ the opening paragraph of which states:

In offering this Guide, I desire to emphasize the fact, that it is simply, that which its title denotes. It is not a Text-Book of Science or Art; neither is it a Catalogue, for such a work would fill a thousand pages were only a couple of lines devoted to each object exhibited. (*Guide*, p. ix)

Strange then that it should include essays of varying length on each of the museum’s major divisions of Art, Ethnology and Natural History, together with a catalogue of the museum’s acquisitions. Woodward’s *Guide* certainly doesn’t run to a thousand pages, but of its one-hundred pages, fully ninety-six are devoted to this combination of essay and catalogue. This style is probably based on the Guides to Art Galleries from the 1840s on as offering the most useful model. Woodward’s stated justification for the *Guide* comes in the following paragraph:

It is an attempt to answer the questions frequently put by the visitors, and it will, I trust, induce them to study some of the works, of which a list is appended, so that they may gain fuller knowledge of the subjects mentioned. (*Guide*, p. ix)

Woodward’s *Guide* was an official publication of the Museum of Western Australia, and, while public education was no doubt part of the *Guide*’s rationale, its language clearly indicates it was directed primarily at a professional audience and not the general hierarchical structure of visitors Woodward discusses at greater length in his lecture “The Aims and Objects of Museums.” There are enough clues throughout the *Guide* to view Woodward’s claim to “answer the questions frequently put by the visitors” as more an astute insurance policy to guarantee government funds for the museum’s expansion. The ‘Preface’ contains an appeal to the Premier, Sir John Forrest, for just such additional funding, and reminds him that he:

... expressed his approval, and promised to bring the question before Parliament next session. Consequently it may be considered certain that within a few months the building of an Art and another Zoological Gallery will be commenced, for Sir John knows the practical value of science to the community, and it is to him that our thanks are in a great measure due, for the rapid progress that has been made within recent years, for had he not so enthusiastically and so successfully advocated the granting of funds by Parliament, the Committee would not have been able to have achieved as much as they have already done in the cause of Technical Education.

(*Guide*, p. ix)

For his own *Guide* Woodward could refer to those superior models provided by the British Museum, which he noted in his “The Aims and Objects of Museums” lecture as “the most important of all such institutions.” The British Museum had two separate guides to allow for the division of its collection between Bloomsbury and South Kensington from 1881, specifically *A Guide to the Exhibition Galleries of the British Museum (Bloomsbury)* and *A General Guide to the British Museum (Natural History)*, which, incidentally, was under the directorship of Flower between 1884 and 1898. The essays Woodward uses to introduce the three major divisions of the Western Australian Museum are taken predominantly from the writings of Ruskin, Flower, and Richard Lydekker, who had co-authored zoological texts with Flower and edited the guide of the Natural History Museum during the directorship of Flower’s successor, Sir Edwin Ray Lankester.

While at this point it would be easy to criticise Woodward’s ‘borrowings’ in modern terms as plagiarism, the 1895 and 1906 editions of *A General Guide to the British Museum (Natural History)* in the library of the Western Australian Museum help put this ‘practice’ into some historical perspective. The 1895 edition was written and published during Flower’s directorship, the 1906 edition during that of Lankester, yet, by way of an example, both contain precisely the same definition of natural history:

NATURAL HISTORY is an old term, used to describe the study of all the processes or laws of the Universe, and the results of the action of those processes or laws upon the materials of which it is composed *which are independent of the agency of man.*

It is thus contrasted with the history of Man and of his works, and the changes which have been wrought in the Universe by his intervention.

(*A General Guide to the British Museum (Natural History)*, pages 16 & 98 respectively)



While no specific attribution is provided, *A General Guide to the British Museum (Natural History)* bears all the hallmarks of Flower's authorship, especially when compared with his "Museums Organisation" essay of 1889, in which natural history is:

Originally applied to the study of all the phenomena of the universe which are independent of the agency of man, ...  
("Museum Organisation," p. 7.)

Woodward's definition, while hardly original, can at least be seen as conforming to a status quo that was good enough for Lankester to neither change nor attribute:

This term is used to describe all the processes or laws of the Universe and the results of those processes or laws upon the materials of which it is composed, which are independent of the agency of Man.  
(*Guide*, p. 4)

The natural history definition from the 1895 and 1906 guides to the Natural History Museum comprise the opening two paragraphs in their respective chapters outlining the arrangement of the museum's contents. For the next several pages, both have precisely the same wording (pp. 16-21 & 98-104 respectively), as does another chapter devoted to an historical sketch of the museum (pp. 7-15 & 105-111 respectively). It hardly comes as any great surprise to find that both these chapters had previously been canvassed, albeit in a more complete form, by Flower in his "Museums Organisation" essay, and would in turn be paraphrased by Woodward in his 1905 museum lecture.

As noted in my first chapter, Woodward's *Guide* makes brief mention of comments by Huxley and Flower which can certainly be seen as advocating an educational component as an adjunct to the general role of museums. Huxley mentions the educational utility of seeing an object and comparing a written description of it, and Flower, in advocating "research and instruction," is thinking of the latter as an equally practical form of education. (*Guide*, p. 3). Despite Woodward's assurance that his *Guide* was not to be considered a text book of science or art, each of the main sections of art, ethnology and natural history begin with a rather text-book-like definition.

## *Art*

Art, for example, “is a creation of the human brain. It is not a mere transcript from nature, but must contain an expression of thought” (*Guide*, p. 4). Woodward might have to wrestle with the competing needs of a new museum, but his *Guide* lists ‘Art’ before all other categories, and his 1905 lecture on “The Aims and Objects of Museums” proclaims “an art collection is one of its first essentials.” Despite the development of science, museums still retained works of ‘art’ that could give insights into the cultures of other places and earlier ages. As Pearce has noted in *Museums, Objects and Collections*, art has historically held a privileged position in the collections hierarchy of museums:

The public art museum makes the nation a visible reality, and the visiting public are addressed as citizens who have a share in the nation. The museum displays spiritual wealth that is owned by the state and shared by all who belong to the state. The political abstraction is given symbolic form in the shape of tangible ‘masterpieces’, which exhibit humanity at its best and highest, so identifying the state with these spiritual values and sharing them with all comers. The museum is the place where, in exchange for his share in the state’s spiritual holdings, the individual affirms his attachment to the state.<sup>1</sup>

These tangible ‘masterpieces’ were reflected in the official art and architecture of an imperial Britain that looked to imperial Rome for both artistic inspiration and literal appropriation of the tangible. While the Natural History Museum’s guides and Flower’s essays provided the layout and the natural history classificational scheme for Woodward’s own *Guide* and 1905 museum lecture, the original British Museum in Bloomsbury provided what the Natural History Museum could not, namely the classificational arrangement for Architecture and Sculpture, hand-in-hand with the tangible ‘masterpieces’ as spoils of empire.

The British Museum in Bloomsbury clearly has a spectacularly more extensive collection of antiquities than the Western Australian Museum, but Woodward’s basic sculptural divisions of Egyptian, Assyrian and Greek art mirror the British Museum (Bloomsbury) guide, as do most of the items listed. Those in the Western Australian Museum are casts, and the comment “the original is in the British Museum” commonplace. This applies to the sole representative of Egyptian art, the Rosetta Stone, and the two examples of Assyrian art, the Winged Lion and Bull from

---

<sup>1</sup> Pearce, p. 100.

the palace of Ninevah and a “bas-relief of horsemen flying before the Assyrians” (*Guide*, p. 5). Of the 26 casts of Greek art listed, fully 17 are from the British Museum (Bloomsbury), the remainder primarily from the Vatican and the Louvre (*Guide*, pp. 6-9).

Within the major division of Art, it is the section on ‘Painting’ that particularly demonstrates the influence of Ruskin. Woodward’s *Guide* acknowledges in its Appendix his reference to *A Popular Handbook to the National Gallery* (1893) and *A Popular Handbook to the Tate Gallery* (1898), both featuring occasional commentary by Ruskin and both compiled by Edward T. Cook. (*Guide*, p. 98) who would later edit, along with Alexander Wedderburn, *The Works of John Ruskin*. This Ruskinian influence is also prominent in Woodward’s 1905 lectures on “What is a Picture?” and “Old Friends in the National Gallery” and is discussed in my third chapter.

The comment “the original is in the British Museum” for sculptural items in the Western Australian Museum has its counterpart for its copies of old masters in “from the original in the National Gallery.” These are divided into the Dutch, Spanish and Flemish Schools, three of the fourteen schools listed by Cook’s handbook of the National Gallery, and which also provides a useful shortcut to Ruskin’s sweeping commentary on European art, picked up by both Cook and by Woodward.

*A Popular Handbook to the National Gallery*, p. 37

No one can fail to be struck at once by the contrast between what Mr. Ruskin has called “the angular and bony sanctities of the North,” and “the drooping graces and pensive pieties of the South.”

*Guide to the Contents of the Western Australian Museum and Art Gallery*, p. 10

The distinction between the early Northern art and that of the South is most noticeable, and very aptly contrasted by Mr. Ruskin in his reference to “the angular and bony sanctities of the North,” and “the drooping graces and pensive pieties of the South.”

The dominance of Ruskin’s discourse is never more pronounced than in its continued re-articulation in new ages, new centuries and across the “Empire.”

## *Ethnology*

As is so often the case with Woodward, his definitions have already thankfully been defined:

Ethnology (*ethnos*, a tribe) has already been defined as the study of the history of man, or more fully of the rise and progress of civilisation, as exemplified by the work of man; hence there can be no hard and fast boundary drawn between the objects to be considered in this section and those already referred to in the Art Section.

(*Guide*, p. 17)

The 'Ethnology' section of Woodward's *Guide* rests primarily upon Flower's essay "On the Classification of the Varieties of the Human Species" (pp. 274-289), together with additional classificational material from *A Guide to the Exhibition Galleries of the British Museum (Bloomsbury)* "Ethnological Gallery" section, and an article by Lydekker on Australian Aborigines that is quoted at length (*Guide* pp. 18-19). Woodward commences with the classificational races of man, namely 'Caucasian,' 'Mongolian' and 'Ethiopian, Negroid, or Melanian (black)' (*Guide*, p. 17), precisely those of Flower in his essay "On the Classification of the Varieties of the Human Species" (pp. 274-289). Australian Aborigines, however, confuse the issue:

... their coarse and black, curly or wavy hair, with beards and moustaches well developed, long skulls with projecting jaws, large teeth, thick and pouting lips, and deeply set eyes, has long been in dispute. (p. 17) (*Guide*,

But then, of course, Flower wasn't able to classify them either:

The inhabitants of the continent of Australia have long been a puzzle to ethnologists. Of Negroid complexion, features, and skeletal characters, yet without the characteristic frizzly hair, their position has been one of great difficulty to determine. ("Museum Organisation," p. 281)

Woodward's inclusion, in his *Guide*, of Lydekker's article from the January 1900 edition of *Knowledge* merely compounds and highlights this lack of knowledge:

Their unity of type and isolation from other races is strongly emphasised by their language, which is quite distinct from that of any other people. It has indeed been attempted to connect the Australian tongue with that of the Dravidian races of Southern India, but this, according to recognised experts, is stated to have resulted in total failure. (*Guide*, p. 17)

Whoever these “recognised experts” were, Flower and Lydekker were still being favourably mentioned in *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia* of 1912, together with their theory of a double migration of Aborigines, initially when Tasmania was connected to the mainland and later after its “severance.”<sup>2</sup>

In a marked example of an evolutionary rationale for the triumph of white settlement, Woodward notes Aborigines as having:

... attained the highest skill as hunters and trackers—a skill most marvellous and far beyond that of any other race in that one line, but which attainment, unfortunately for them, is of very little use now that their land is being occupied by a stronger race; by men who have proved themselves the *fittest to survive* in the struggle with their fellows in the larger continents during that period when the Australians, isolated from the rest of the world, were happy in hunting and fishing, but became unfitted for any other pursuits.  
(*Guide*, p. 18)

Woodward here is stating what he regards as the obvious, the superiority of the English and Englishness, qualities that he feels have demonstrably “succeeded” and are typified by the man he credits with founding the Western Australian Museum, the colony’s first Surveyor-General, Captain John Septimus Roe:

... one of the early explorers who, in spite of the greatest privations, and at the peril of their lives, by their courage and determination achieved the vast and important results attained by the colonisation of Australia by the English; ... (*Guide*, p. 1)

### *Natural History*

Although given an earlier definition in the introductory section of his *Guide*, Woodward further expands it in the section devoted to natural history where the ties to the Natural History Museum are more apparent than ever, its definition on the left and Woodward’s on the right:

---

<sup>2</sup> J. S. Battye, ed., *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia*. Vol. 1. (Perth, Western Australia: Hussey & Gillingham, 1912), p. 47.

*A General Guide to the British Museum (Natural History)*, (1895, p. 17 & 1906, p. 99)

Although the validity of the old division of all natural objects into *inorganic* and *organic* or *living* has been the subjects of some discussion, and although the separation of the latter into *vegetable* and *animal* is perhaps less absolute than was once supposed, yet for practical purposes, MINERAL, VEGETABLE, and ANIMAL still remain the three great divisions or “kingdoms” into which natural bodies are grouped, and this classification has formed the basis of the arrangement of the collections in the Museum.

*Guide to the Contents of the Western Australian Museum and Art Gallery*, p. 23

All Natural History objects may be separated into two great groups—Inorganic and Organic, and the latter again divided into two—Animal and Vegetable; for although recent research has shown that the boundary line formerly drawn between these had no existence, yet for practical purposes it is retained, for the division into the Mineral, the Vegetable, and the Animal Kingdoms forms a most convenient basis for the classification of the Natural History collections in a Museum.

As already noted, the definitional domain of natural history clearly originates with Flower, and the arrangement of the Western Australian Museum in this regard is taken directly from the Natural History Museum. Both owed the nomenclature of their classificational system to that of the Swedish naturalist usually referred to as Linnaeus (1701-78), and Flower devotes an entire essay to him, “A Century’s Progress in Zoological Knowledge” (pp. 153-170), from an address delivered in 1878 to mark the centenary of his death. It is Linnaeus’ *Systema Naturae*, the final edition of which was published in 1766, that forms the basis of all the nomenclature used to originally classify zoological specimens, and later botanical specimens, and which is familiar to us in divisions such as species, genera, families and orders. Flower’s address was to the British Association, in which he noted the association’s role, since 1842, of arranging for the regulation and expansion of Linnaeus’ original list, its subsequent revision and reprinting in 1865, and again in 1878 (“A Century’s Progress in Zoological Knowledge” p. 168).

As Paul Carter in *The Road to Botany Bay* points out “... the great advantage of the Linnaean system over the other methods of classification was its simplicity: it made the getting of botanical knowledge beguilingly simple.”<sup>3</sup> It was, as he also points out, a system of “universal taxonomy” (p. 20) which, in imperial terms, is a useful characteristic and Woodward embraces it enthusiastically.

---

<sup>3</sup> Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay. An Essay in Spatial History*. (London: Faber & Faber, 1987), p. 19.

---

## Chapter 3

***“You shall be led to see only beauty or joy”***

Woodward quoting John Ruskin

---

During 1905, Bernard Woodward gave a series of public lectures that were reported by *The West Australian* newspaper, and covered the topics “The Aims and Objects of Museums” (27 May 1905), “What is a Picture?” (18 August 1905), and “Old Friends in the National Gallery” (20 September 1905). The influences behind these topics were, as with his *Guide*, his “old friends” Flower and Ruskin.

### ***“The Aims and Objects of Museums”***

Woodward’s lecture “The Aims and Objects of Museums,” begins with an unattributed quote from George Brown Goode, assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and director of the United States National Museum:

The Degree of Civilisation to which any nation, city or province has attained is best shown by the character of its public museums and the liberality with which they are maintained. In mentioning museums, I, of course, include art galleries and libraries, for a library is an integral part of a museum, while an art collection is one of its first essentials.<sup>1</sup>

In the same lecture, the director of the Natural History Museum, Sir William Flower, was accorded some acknowledgment, even if only in a single reference. This reference is a single quotation repeated from Woodward’s 1900 *Guide to the Contents of the Western Australian Museum and Art Gallery (Guide)*, whereby: “The real objects of a museum, according to Sir William Flower, are research and instruction.” Woodward’s lecture is, in effect, a summary of the first three essays from Flower’s book *Essays on Museums And Other Subjects Connected With Natural History* (1898), a compilation of twenty essays and four biographical

---

<sup>1</sup> Susan Sheets-Pyenson, *Cathedrals of Science: the development of colonial natural history museums during the late nineteenth century* (Kingston Ont.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), p. 19. From G. B. Goode, “The Principles of Museum Administration,” Museums Association, *Report of Proceedings ... 1895 ... in Newcastle* (London: Museums Association

sketches spanning the period 1881—1897. The three essays in question are, “Museum Organisation” (1889), “Modern Museums” (1893) and “Local Museums” (1891 & 1895). Woodward actually delivered the latter as an address at the opening of the museum in Perth on 29th November 1895.<sup>2</sup> While Flower’s essays formed the bulk of Woodward’s 1905 museum lecture, Woodward also occasionally included material from his own *Guide*.

Clearly the attitude to such practices has changed. Copyright and plagiarism are very specifically delineated in the scholarly arena and are issues of legal contention today. Not so in 1905, *The West Australian* newspaper noting:

Under the title of “The Aims and Objects of Museums,” a lecture - the first of a series to be given on Science and Art - was recently delivered by Mr. Bernard H. Woodward, F.G.S., the Director of the Western Australian Museum and Art Gallery. The lectures are being given under the auspices of the committee of the Museum and Gallery, and a long and attractive syllabus has been prepared, covering a fairly wide range of subjects, and the gentlemen who have promised to deliver them are among those in the State best qualified for such an undertaking. (27 May 1905).

It’s unlikely the unnamed journalist who wrote that would have been aware of Flower’s essays, so even with the wonderful benefit of hindsight it’s still instructive to examine the museological thoughts of Flower and Woodward concerning the origin of museums and note the debt of the latter to the former:

William Flower  
“Museum Organisation”  
‘Museum of the Ancients’

The first recorded institution which bore the name of museum, or temple or haunt of the Muses, was that founded by Ptolemy Soter at Alexandria about 300 B.C.; but his was not a museum in our sense of the word, but rather, in accordance with its etymology, a place appropriated to the cultivation of learning, or which was frequented by a society or academy of learned men devoting themselves to philosophical studies and the improvement of knowledge.

*Essays on Museums*, p. 3

Bernard Woodward  
“The Aims and Objects of Museums”  
‘Ancient Museums’

Before entering into fuller details as to the aims and objects of modern museums, let us look into the past, when we shall see that the earliest museum of which we have any record was that founded by Ptolomy Soter, at Alexandria, about B.C. 300. It was, as the etymology of the name implies, a home of the muses, it was a place appropriated to the cultivation of learning, a meeting place for philosophers, who devoted themselves to the improvement of knowledge by delivering lectures and entering into discussions.

*The West Australian* 27 May 1905

Continuing in this vein, Flower speculates that “it is said that the liberality of Philip and Alexander supplied Aristotle with abundant materials for his researches”

---

1895), 141.



("Museum Organisation," p. 3.), while for Woodward "the Alexandrians greatly venerated Aristotle, who had been the first to make collections of and to describe such objects," (1905 museum lecture) though failing to note Flower's caution that "of the existence of any permanent or public collections of natural objects among the ancients there is no record" ("Museum Organisation," p. 3.). Both acknowledge the role of wealthy and titled individuals in collecting curios, and both note the failure of such collections to conform to the 'research and instruction' maxim. Flower mused that "in every case they were maintained mainly for the gratification of the possessor or his personal friends, and rarely, if ever, associated with any systematic teaching or public benefit." ("Museum Organisation," p. 5.) For Woodward, such collections were "more in order to display their power and magnificence than for the purpose of acquiring and spreading knowledge" (1905 museum lecture). Both mention Conrad Gesner from the mid sixteenth-century, though it is Woodward who credits him as the first to found a natural history museum on modern lines. Both also mention the two John Tradescants, father and son, of England, and their catalogue of rarities and oddities. Woodward reveals that amongst them are "the feathers of the phoenix, a claw of the roc, an egg of a dragon, and a dodo from the Island of Mauritius. With the exception of the head and foot of the latter, which are preserved in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, the others have all disappeared" (1905 museum lecture). Flower makes exactly the same observations ("Museum Organisation," pp. 4-5.).

Having addressed the issue of 'Ancient Museums,' Woodward advances to 'Modern Museums' and in particular, the British Museum, "the most important of all such institutions" ("The Aims and Objects of Museums"). For this, he returns to the Bloomsbury and South Kensington guides to the British Museum:

---

<sup>2</sup> Flower, p. xi.

*A Guide to the Exhibition  
Galleries of the British Museum  
(Bloomsbury)* (1896)

The British Museum has been of gradual, and until of late years of slow growth. It dates its actual foundation from the year 1753, when an Act of Parliament was passed “for the purchase of the Museum or Collection of Sir Hans Sloane, and of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts; and for providing one General Repository for the better reception and more convenient use of the said collections, and of the Cottonian Library, and of the additions thereto.”

p. xxxiii

*A General Guide to the British  
Museum (Natural History)*  
(1895 & 1906)

The British Museum dates its actual foundation from the year 1753, when an Act of Parliament was passed “for the purchase of the Museum or Collection of Sir Hans Sloane, and of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts, and for providing One General Repository for the better Reception and more convenient Use of the said Collections, and of the Cottonian Library, and of the Additions thereto.”

p. 7 & 105 respectively

“The Aims and Objects of  
Museums”  
(Woodward, 1905)

The British Museum was founded by an Act of Parliament, passed in 1753, “for the purpose of purchasing the collections of Sir Hans Sloane, and of the Harleian Manuscripts, and for providing one general repository for the better reception, and more convenient use, of the said collections, and of the Cottonian Library, and of additions thereto.”

*The West Australian*, 27 May  
1905

A description of ‘Our Museum,’ the Western Australian Museum, follows next in Woodward’s 1905 museum lecture, an opportunity, at last, for Woodward to paraphrase himself! This section of Woodward’s lecture is a summary of the more detailed “Historical Introduction” to his *Guide* in which he credits the Surveyor-General, Captain John Septimus Roe, for the impetus to found a museum.

Woodward’s museum lecture continues to a section called the ‘Present State of the Collections,’ in which claims for the Western Australian Museum’s intention of being a repository of note are made. Woodward now includes the museum’s committee:

... who, at one of the earliest meetings, resolved that this being the National Museum of Western Australia, it ought to contain specimens of all the fauna and flora, that is to say, of all the animals and plants, of all the minerals and rocks, of all the weapons, utensils, etc., of the natives, and also of everything obtainable connected with the early history of the State.  
 (“The Aims and Objects of Museums”)

Despite this grand objective, for Woodward there is still something unsatisfactory about a museum that limits its collection in this manner, and:

... to make the collections of real educational value, types of orders not found here were to be obtained; ...  
 (“The Aims and Objects of Museums”)

In the adjoining section, 'The Educational Value of the Museum' Woodward expresses the hope that it will "be greatly enhanced by this series of lectures," this emphasis is a notable development when compared to that of his earlier *Guide* in which the public and educational function of the museum is rarely mentioned. Visitors to the Western Australian Museum are specifically mentioned by Woodward in his museum lecture for their ability to learn from such visits, though he is unable to resist the museological need to classify:

The visitors may be thus classified :- Prospectors and others who come to learn all they can about the natural resources of the State, to compare and name specimens they have found, students who are taking definite lines of study, with these I include local and foreign scientists, also the art students and craftsmen who make studies for the casts, etc.; thirdly, and most numerous, are the general public, to whom the collections provide rational recreation of an elevating character.  
("The Aims and Objects of Museums")

Rational recreation immediately reappears as Woodward rounds off his museum lecture in a section headed 'Objects of Local Museums':

(1) To provide rational recreation of an elevating character to the ordinary visitor; (2) to provide an educational institution accessible to all classes; (3) to provide a home for local objects of interest, zoological, geological, antiquarian, etc.; (4) to contain specimens of all manufactures resembling those produced in the district, and of the raw materials used in their production.  
("The Aims and Objects of Museums")

While some this is a repetition of earlier ideas, some is also taken from Flower's essay "Local Museums." Flower's division of major established museums into the 'natural' and 'artificial' is repeated by him for local museums:

I think we are all agreed as to the local character predominating. One section should contain antiquities and illustrations of local manners and customs; another section local natural history, zoology, botany, and geology. The boundaries of the county will afford a good limit for both.  
("Local Museums," p. 56).

Gone, however, is the primacy of a central figurehead when directing a national museum, the role of research appropriated by the metropolitan museum. Research, presumably, is predicated upon the availability of suitable 'objects,' but for local museums Flower claims: "It is not the objects placed in a museum that constitute its value, so much as the method in which they are displayed, and the use made of them for the purpose of instruction." ("Local Museums, p. 55). The locals must be instructed, Woodward grandly asserting in his museum lecture that the primary role of a local museum is: "To provide rational recreation of an elevating character to the

ordinary visitor” (“The Aims and Objects of Museums”). This would seem to exceed even Flower’s view of the necessity for instruction, Woodward’s secondary consideration being that it: “provide an educational institution accessible to all classes,” and only then that it should “provide a home for local objects of interest, zoological, geological, antiquarian, etc.; [and] contain specimens of all manufactures resembling those produced in the district, and of the raw materials used in their production” (“The Aims and Objects of Museums”).

***“What is a Picture?” &  
“Old Friends in the National Gallery”***

In addition to the familiar territory of natural history, both through his museum *Guide* and lecture, two of Woodward’s lecture series revolved around the issue of art, an issue which became increasingly important to him as he grew older. He began his lecture “What is a Picture?” by saying that:

Art is essentially democratic in its character. There is, universally, a liking for the beautiful; the eye of the most ignorant will turn naturally to the pretty and beautiful, and be repulsed from the ugly and grotesque, if the two are side by side.  
 (“What is a Picture?”)

It’s perhaps best to stress the “essentially democratic” in that quotation, for in his lecture the following month on “Old Friends in the National Gallery,” Woodward agrees, provided he can be “allowed to add one qualifying adjective, ‘cultured.’”

For the cultured in his audience, the pinnacle of the painter’s craft might well be Raphael’s “Ansidei Madonna,” approvingly noted in the “What is a Picture?” lecture as being regarded by Ruskin as “one of the most perfect pictures in the world.” In his *A Popular Handbook to the National Gallery*, Cook introduces the same painting as: “by common consent one of the most perfect pictures in the world” (p. 663). Somewhere along the way, Cook’s “common consent” of 1893 had become Ruskin’s alone by the time of Woodward’s 1905 lecture. The democracy of art is the democracy of supporting Ruskin’s artistic assessments and those who write about them. Cook includes Ruskin’s quotation from the *Relation between Michael Angelo*

and *Tintoret* concerning the “Ansidei Madonna,” and Woodward repeats it, with minor editing, in his “What is a Picture” lecture.

It is the lecture “Old Friends in the National Gallery” which demonstrates the extent to which Woodward, for matters connected with art, relied on the works of Ruskin and, by extension, Cook’s commentary on Ruskin. The manner in which the National Gallery in London was regarded by Woodward is powerfully evidenced by his introductory quip:

The chairman, in announcing this lecture on ‘Old Friends in the National Gallery’ stated that he had inquired ‘what National Gallery?’ and that the only reply he could get was ‘the’ National Gallery! This, of course, was merely said to attract attention, for we all know that there is only one institution in the world entitled ‘The National Gallery,’ and that it is situated in Trafalgar Square, London, and that it contains the finest collection of pictures in the world.  
 (“Old Friends in the National Gallery”)

Woodward’s lecture is, in large part, taken from the ‘Preface’ of Cook’s *A Popular Handbook to the National Gallery*, prefaced in turn by introductory commentary from Ruskin. Woodward notes that the National Gallery is: “Not the largest, for the Louvre, the Dresden, the Prado, each contains many more paintings, and the Berlin, Munich, and St. Petersburg galleries are also larger. There are also many collections richer in the works of certain schools, but not one of them approaches *our* [my emphasis] British collection in containing such a thoroughly representative set of pictures of the famous painters of all the schools of the six centuries 1200 to 1800. No other collection has been so carefully selected or so wisely weeded.” It might have been easier just to read Cook aloud to advance the idea that quality will beat mere quantity any day, the National Gallery’s collection: “... is very much smaller than that of the galleries at Dresden, Madrid, and Paris—the three largest in the world, and somewhat smaller than that of the Galleries at Berlin, Munich, and St. Petersburg. On the other hand no foreign gallery has been so carefully acquired, or so wisely weeded, as ours” (*A Popular Handbook to the National Gallery*, pp. xvi-xvii). So there.

We are informed by Woodward that Ruskin thought “... the National Gallery was a European jest, while forty years later he said it was without question the most important collection of paintings in existence” (“Old Friends in the National Gallery”). A change of year and syntax gives us Cook’s account: “For the purposes

of the general student, the National Gallery is now,' says Mr. Ruskin, 'without question the most important collection of paintings in Europe.' Forty years ago Mr. Ruskin said of the same Gallery that it was 'an European jest.'" (*A Popular Handbook to the National Gallery*, p. xii).

An account of the National Gallery's history and major acquisitions follows for both Woodward and Cook and an exposition of the major artistic schools of Byzantine, Florentine and Flemish. While Woodward separates Cook's chapter on "The Early Florentine School"(pp. 3-7) into Byzantine and Florentine, he otherwise follows its chronology exactly from the artistic rise and fall of Constantinople to the re-emergence of Italian art, mentioning exactly the same artists of Cimabue, Giotto, Orcagna.

From these classical beginnings, through to the pre-Raphaelites of the nineteenth century, Woodward adheres to the plan of *A Popular Handbook to the National Gallery*, finishing, as does Cook, with the artists of "The British School" who Woodward says have been "selected to show the development of power and of truth to nature in the art of painting" ("Old Friends in the National Gallery"). Finishing his National Gallery lecture on this note is hardly a surprise, given that Ruskin, in *Three Classes of Artists*, regarded the greatest artists as those who "... render all that they see in nature unhesitatingly, with a kind of divine grasp and government of the whole ... ." <sup>3</sup> How fitting, then, that Ruskin should include Turner, his favourite, and English painter, in this category, as a representative of all that was powerful and true in what he and Woodward regarded as the world's greatest repository of art, the National Gallery.

---

<sup>3</sup> John Ruskin, *Selections From the Writings of John Ruskin* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1871), p. 97.

---

## Chapter 4

### *“The sheer pleasure of knowledge and beautiful things”*

Dr. Gary Morgan

---

As the first director of the Museum of Western Australia, Woodward was in the unique position of being able to define its curatorial philosophy, managing a public institution that, like its counterparts around the world, had been irrevocably altered by the scientific ascendancy of the Darwinian revolution, while predisposed to favour the artistic tenets of Ruskin. This was primarily to manifest itself in an intellectual dichotomy, the scientific utility of Huxley and Flower sitting uneasily with the aesthetic of Ruskin’s “perfect order and perfect elegance” (*Guide*, p. 3).

The philosophical approach to Woodward’s directorship of the museum owed significantly to a series of developments that had all had their origin in England and were replicated in Western Australia. The colonial imperative was to map, explore, and in doing so, ‘discover.’ The model for this was provided by the Geological Survey of Great Britain, which had gradually mapped first England and Wales, and later Ireland and Scotland. The Survey contained a geological museum, opened to the public in 1841, its head Edward Forbes believing that museums should both educate and be practical. Accordingly, when its new museum opened in 1851 in Jermyn Street, London, Forbes organized a series of lectures with one on gold for prospective Australian emigrants, which “nicely made the point that the museum could assist the ordinary citizen.”<sup>1</sup>

In an apposite coincidence, 1851 also saw the establishment of the Swan River Mechanics’ Institute in Fremantle, based on the London Mechanics’ Institute established by the English physician Dr. George Birkbeck in 1824. Birkbeck’s free lectures to the working classes were eventually duplicated throughout the British empire, and from their humble beginnings in Fremantle, the Swan River Mechanics’

---

<sup>1</sup> Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, “Australian Museums of Natural History: Public Priorities and Scientific Initiatives in the 19th Century,” *Historical Records of Australian Science*, Vol. 5 no. 4 (1983), 4.

Institute had by 1860 also erected a museum wing, a suitably humble single room.<sup>2</sup> Its collection was founded upon a public collection of rocks, minerals and fossils assembled by the Reverend Charles Grenville Nicolay and eventually opened as the Geological Museum in 1881, “the first government funded museum in Western Australia.”<sup>3</sup> After the collection’s transferral to Perth in 1889, and Woodward’s official curatorship from 1891, the museum has been variously called the Public Museum, the Perth Museum, and the Western Australian Museum and Art Gallery, before a final division into the Western Australian Museum and the Art Gallery of Western Australia in 1959.<sup>4</sup>

In this respect it was belatedly following the previously noted division of the British Museum’s collection, brought about through the sheer scale of its collections and the impracticality of housing it in a single institution. Since then, the Western Australian Museum has, in some respects, quite literally become a community museum, its central Perth collection now classified as representing ‘Science and Culture,’ with additional decentralised branches in Albany, Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Geraldton, together with the Western Australian Maritime Museum in Fremantle.

The Western Australian Museum’s origin as a geological repository was hardly surprising given the vast size of the colony and the crucial importance of mining to its maintenance and growth. This practical approach to museums was replicated in all the Australian colonies, an evolutionary stage reached via a typical pattern of vice-regal initiative in the formation of museums based upon the geological collections arising from mapping and exploration. In the colony of Western Australia there were respectively the Governor, Sir William Robinson, and the Surveyor General, John Septimus Roe. At the formal opening of the museum in 1891, the Governor reaffirmed this when he said:

And now we have here an illustration of one great value of such a collection of mineral specimens, and which collection we hope presently to increase: it is that when strangers come to Perth or to other parts of the colony, and want to know reliably what part they should go to in search of gold or other minerals, they may learn from these specimens where

---

<sup>2</sup> I. M. Crawford, *A History of The Western Australian Museum 1889-1959* and available in the Western Australian Museum library.

Note: Commissioned by the Western Australian Museum but unpublished, (1992), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Alex W. R. Bevan, & Peter, J. Downes. “Mineralogy at the Western Australian Museum,” *Australian Journal of Mineralogy*, Vol. 6 no. 2 (December 2000), 94.

<sup>4</sup> Bevan & Downes, 94-95.



to go, and what are their prospects of success. If only in this respect, this collection will be of great practical value to the colony.<sup>5</sup>

This legacy remained important and was acknowledged nine years later in Woodward's 1900 *Guide* to the museum, when he noted that:

A Colonial Museum has, in addition to being the chief centre of technical education, to be also the SHOW-ROOM of the raw commercial products of the country. Hence the prominent position and space given the Minerals.  
(*Guide*, p. 4)

Practicality may have opened the Western Australian Museum, but more was needed to assure its growth. This was a pattern evident throughout Australia, and during the 1870s and 1880s "a shifting rationale for museums placed them in the domain of public education and culture,"<sup>6</sup> a shifting rationale also embraced by Woodward.

Given that so much of the museological inheritance of the Western Australian Museum originated with the British Museum, it is instructive to note the same evolutionary emphasis placed on it regarding its public and educational role. As already discussed in my Chapter 2, the 1895 and 1906 guides to the Natural History Museum were identical with regard to their respective sections on its history and arrangement. The library of the Western Australian Museum also contains a 1931 edition of this guide, now called the *Illustrated Guide to the Exhibition Galleries of the British Museum (Natural History)*.<sup>7</sup> It essentially builds on the 'history' and 'arrangement' sections, adding a more detailed history of museums generally from classical times, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (pp. 4-6), while natural history is given a separate two page section that had previously been part of the 'arrangement' section (pp. 13-14). The museum's rationale remained the same, though better expressed as: "investigation, instruction and inspiration." (p. 20).

The *Report on the British Museum (Natural History) 1981-1983*, which marks the centenary of the Natural History Museum's opening in 1881, continues the philosophy begun by its first director Sir William Flower and reinforced in its 1931 guide.

---

<sup>5</sup> Bevan & Downes, 94.

<sup>6</sup> Kohlstedt, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Illustrated Guide to the Exhibition Galleries of the British Museum (Natural History)*. London: R. Clay & Sons, 1931.

The Museum has always had the role of advancing and disseminating knowledge of natural history. This it fulfils, firstly, through its scientific investigations based on the collections and, secondly, by means of its exhibition galleries, educational facilities, popular publications and other activities in the area of public education.<sup>8</sup>

The final handbook to the Western Australian Museum was produced in 1952, gradually replaced, as with the British Museum, by more specific publications and catalogues of individual exhibitions. The 1952 *What to Look For in the Museum and the Art Gallery of Western Australia* is a decidedly slim volume of just eight pages, a decline from twelve pages in the 1950 edition. By 1952, all that can be mustered is:

This pamphlet is not intended to be a scientific guide but an indication of what is most likely to be of general interest to visitors. Visitors desiring special information about the collections should apply to the Director of the Art Gallery or to the Curator of the Museum. (*What to Look For in the Museum and the Art Gallery of Western Australia*, p. 1)

Despite this the educational rationale triumphed and remains, arguably, *the* primary justification of the public museum supported by public money. The *Western Australian Museum Annual Report 2001-2002*, the most recently produced, contains numerous examples of this philosophy, beginning with Dr. Ken Michael, Chair of the Board of Trustees, in his 'Letter to the Minister.'

It is the belief of the Trustees that a good museum is an active museum, one that engages with people in a variety of ways. (*Western Australian Museum Annual Report 2001-2002*, p. 5)

It's almost as though Flower is speaking from the grave, whether remarking that: "A Museum is like a living organism—it requires continual and tender care" ("Museum Organisation," p. 13), or when he is favourably mentioning Goode's comment that: "A finished museum is a dead museum, and a dead museum is a useless museum" ("Local Museums," p. 56). In reply, the Western Australian Minister for Culture and the Arts, Sheila McHale M.L.A., approvingly notes that she is "... particularly pleased to see the Museum placing an emphasis on partnerships, with other Government agencies, the private sector, and, most importantly, with the community (*Western Australian Museum Annual Report 2001-2002*, p. 7). Considering that the minister's department alone provides in excess of \$9,000,000 a year in public funding it would be wise to listen to her (*Western Australian Museum Annual Report 2001-2002*, p. 83).

---

<sup>8</sup> *Report on the British Museum (Natural History) 1981-1983*. London: Trustees of the British Museum (Natural History), (1984), p. 9.

The museum's strategic aims unashamedly privilege the public, the first two such aims reversing Flower's objectives of research and instruction, the museum now setting out to:

—provide enjoyable, safe and stimulating experiences in which Museum visitors learn about and value their natural, social and built environment through a process of discovery and interaction

—position and promote the Museum throughout the state as an expert, responsive and engaging institution

(*Western Australian Museum Annual Report 2001-2002*, p. 11)

The Western Australian Museum's current director, Dr. Gary Morgan, continues the tradition of employing classical analogy as a means of introducing and explaining the museum's general thrust. Woodward, as previously noted, began his introduction to the museum by providing its Greek derivation and noting it was "the name for the Temple of the Muses, the Goddesses of Song, of Poetry, of the Art and Sciences" (*Guide*, p. 3). For Morgan, the Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius' three principles of architecture, 'Firmness,' 'Commodity' and 'Delight,' can also be seen as providing a set of three parallel principles of good museums. 'Firmness' is viewed "in terms of strength and substance" while 'Commodity' "refers to use," and encompasses both the three-quarters of a million visitors to its sites and the central museum assisting smaller institutions with research and enquiries. Finally, 'Delight' "speaks for itself," the museum existing "to demonstrate the sheer pleasure of knowledge and beautiful things" (each quote from the *Western Australian Museum Annual Report 2001-2002*, p. 12).

It is as though Flower's "research and instruction" has been reincarnated as "commodity and delight," if not Ruskin's "perfect order and perfect elegance." Nonetheless, I'm sure Ruskin would approve of these qualities, the architectural analogy particularly apt given he thought:

... architecture must be the beginning of arts; and that the others must follow her in their time and order; and I think the prosperity of our schools of painting and sculpture, in which no one will deny the life, though many the health, depends upon that of our architecture.<sup>9</sup>

Trying to assess the legacy of Bernard Woodward is to a considerable extent fraught with the difficulty of trying not to judge him by contemporary standards. His *Guide*

and 1905 lecture series effectively contain nothing original, and much that might contemporaneously be regarded as plagiarism. But that doesn't mean it was regarded in that way by either his scientific or public audience. That his arguments incorporated the work of Flower, Ruskin, Huxley and Lydekker could just as easily indicate a museum director aware of, for the time, quite modern and widely accepted views on matters as diverse as museum arrangement, evolutionary theory, artistic sensibilities and anthropological classification and debate.

However dated it might now appear, Woodward carried with him, as no doubt did many other emigrants to various parts of the British Empire, a sincere belief in the cultural centrality and significance of England and Englishness. Part of that colonising experience is that you can leave an awful lot behind and potentially recreate yourself elsewhere. Crawford's *A History of The Western Australian Museum 1889-1959* indicates that Woodward's father and uncle worked at the Natural History Museum, but Woodward's time in England is a mystery and his claims to have "attended King's College, University College, the Royal School of Mines and the Royal Institute, and the lectures of Huxley, Lyndall, Hofmann, Morris, Tennant and others"<sup>10</sup> remain untested.

For Woodward, reproducing his *Guide* from those of the British Museum in Bloomsbury and South Kensington, or paraphrasing or quoting Flower and Ruskin in his series of lectures would have been a mark of respect. While his *Guide* contains some attribution, at least in its Appendix, it would be fanciful to imagine Woodward contemplating his lecture series dissected over one-hundred years later when they were intended, as were the collections in his museum, to "provide rational recreation of an elevating character" ("The Aims and Objects of Museums").

---

<sup>9</sup> Ruskin, p.202.

<sup>10</sup> I. M. Crawford, p. 7.

In e-mail correspondence with Sue Snell, Archives and Records Manager of The Natural History Museum, concerning Bernard Woodward and any details of possible employment there, all that could be ascertained after an archive search by her colleagues at the Norfolk Record Office and the

Bushey Museum concerning his parents Samuel (1790-1838) and Elizabeth (Bolingbroke) Woodward, was that they had two sons of whom no further details were known.

---

## *Bibliography*

---

### **1. Primary Sources—Western Australia**

*Journal of the Royal Society of Western Australia*, Perth, 1925 -

*Journal of the Western Australian Natural History Society*, Perth, 1904-1909.

*Records of the Western Australian Museum and Art Gallery*, Perth, 1910-1939.

'The Western Australian Museum & Art Gallery, Perth,' *Museums Journal*, London Dec. 1903, p. 183.

*The West Australian*

- 'The Aims and Objects of Museums'  
27 May 1905

- 'What is Picture?'  
18 August 1905

- 'Old Friends in the National Gallery'  
20 September 1905

Woodward, Bernard. *Guide to the Contents of the Western Australian Museum and Art Gallery*. Perth, Western Australia: Ames & Heller, 1900.

Glauert, Ludwig. *What to look for in the Museum and the Art Gallery of the Western Australian*. Perth, Western Australia: Trustees of the Public Library, Museum & Art Gallery of W.A., 1952.

*Western Australian Museum Annual Report 2001-2002*. Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Museum, 2002.

### **2. Primary Sources—United Kingdom**

*A Guide to the Exhibition Galleries of the British Museum (Bloomsbury)*. London: Woodfall and Kinder, 1896.

*A General Guide to the British Museum (Natural History)*. London: William Clowes and Sons, 1895.

*A General Guide to the British Museum (Natural History)*. London: William Clowes and Sons, 1906.

*Illustrated Guide to the Exhibition Galleries of the British Museum (Natural History)*. London: R. Clay & Sons, 1931.

*Report on the British Museum (Natural History) 1981-1983*. London: Trustees of the British Museum (Natural History), 1984.

### 3. Primary Sources—United States

*Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution. Report of the U. S. National Museum*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906.

### 4. Secondary Sources

Asma, Stephen T. *Stuffed Animals and Pickled Heads. The Culture and History of Natural History Museums*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Bailey, E. *The Western Australian Museum*. 1979.  
(Available in the Western Australian Museum library).

Battye, J. S., ed. *The Cyclopaedia of Western Australia*. Vol. 1. Perth, Western Australia: Hussey & Gillingham, 1912.

Bennett, Tony. "The Political Rationality of the Museum." *Continuum*, Vol. 3 no. 1 (1990), 45-49.

Bennett, Tony. "Museums & Public Culture: History, Theory, Policy." *Media Information Australia*, no. 53, (Aug. 1989), 60-61.

Bevan, Alex W. R. & Downes, Peter, J. "Mineralogy at the Western Australian Museum." *Australian Journal of Mineralogy*, Vol. 6 no. 2, (December 2000), 93-100.

Black, Barbara J. *On Exhibit: Victorians and their Museums*. Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2000.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Modern Critical Views: John Ruskin*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986.

Carter, Paul. *The Road to Botany Bay. An Essay in Spatial History*. London: Faber & Faber, 1987.

Colebatch, Sir Hal. *A Story of a Hundred Years. Western Australia 1829-1929*. Perth, Western Australia: Government Printer, 1929.

Cook E. T. & Wedderburn, Alexander, eds. *The Works of John Ruskin: Library Edition*. Vols. 19 & 34. London: George Allen, 1905.

Crawford, I. M. *A History of The Western Australian Museum 1889-1959*  
Note: Commissioned by the Western Australian Museum but unpublished, 1992.  
(Available in the Western Australian Museum library).

Darwin, Charles & Wallace, Alfred Russel. (Foreword by Sir Gavin de Beer)  
*Evolution by Natural Selection*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958.

Darwin, Charles. *The Origin of Species*. London: Penguin Books, 1985.

Davison, Graeme. "The Use and Abuse of Australian History." *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 23 no. 90-93 (April 1988—October 1989), 55-76.

De Beer, Gavin, ed. *Charles Darwin. Thomas Huxley. Autobiographies*. London: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Delroy, Ann. *Pragmatism & 'Progress': The Evolution of the Perth Museum at the Turn of the Century*. History Dept., Western Australian Museum 1991.  
(Available in the Western Australian Museum library).

Dempster, W.J. *Evolutionary Concepts in the Nineteenth Century. Natural Selection and Patrick Matthew*. Edinburgh: The Pentland Press, 1996.

Erickson, Dorothy. *A History of the Metal Collection of the Art Gallery of Western Australia*. (Masters preliminary dissertation, UWA Feb. 1987)  
(Available in the Western Australian Museum library).

Erickson, Rica, ed. *Dictionary of Western Australians 1829-1914*. vols. 4 & 5.  
Nedlands, Western Australia: University of Western Australia Press, 1984 (vol. 4) & 1985 (vol. 5).

Flower, Sir William Henry. *Essays on Museums And Other Subjects Connected With Natural History*. London: MacMillan & Co., 1898.

Gascoigne, John. *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Griffiths, Tom. *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Hage, Ghassan. "Republicanism, Multiculturalism, Zoology." *Communal/Plural* Vol. 2 (1993), 113-137.

Hall, A. Rupert. *The Scientific Revolution 1500-1800. The Formation of the Modern Scientific Attitude*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1962.

Harrison, J. F. C., ed. *Society and Politics in England, 1780-1960. A Selection of Readings and Comments*. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.

Hewison, Robert. *Ruskin and Oxford. The Art of Education*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

Hole, James. *An Essay on the History and Management of Literary, Scientific, & Mechanics' Institutions*. London: Frank Cass & Co., 1970.

- Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean. *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Horne, Donald. *The Great Museum: The Re-Presentation of History*. London: Pluto Press, 1984.
- Hudson, J. W. *The History of Adult Education*. London: Woburn Press, 1996.
- Hudson, Kenneth. *A Social History of Museums: What the Visitors Thought*. London: Macmillan, 1975.
- Huxley, Thomas H. *Collected Essays*. Vol. 1. London: Macmillan, 1912
- Huxley, Thomas H. *Collected Essays*. Vol. 3. London: Macmillan, 1925.
- Huxley, Thomas H. *Science and Education. Essays*. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1896.
- Kaplan, Flora E. S., ed. *Museums and the Making of "Ourselves": The Role of Objects in National Identity*. London: Leicester University Press, 1994.
- Kelly, Thomas. *A History of Adult Education in Great Britain*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1970.
- Kohlstedt, Sally Gregory. "Australian Museums of Natural History: Public Priorities and Scientific Initiatives in the 19th Century." *Historical Records of Australian Science*, Vol. 5 no. 4 (1983), 1-29.
- Lumley, Robert, ed. *The Museum Time-Machine*. London: Comedia, 1988.
- Macdonald, Sharon & Fyfe, Gordon, eds. *Theorizing Museums*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.
- MacLeod, Roy M. *The 'Creed of Science' in Victorian England*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2000.
- Morgan, Thais E., ed. *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- Pearce, Susan M. *Museum Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study*. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992.
- Raby, Peter. *Bright Paradise. Victorian Scientific Travellers*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Rickard, John & Spearritt, Peter, eds. *Packaging the Past? Public Histories*. Brunswick, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1991.
- Ritchie, John, ed. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. vol. 12. Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1991.



Ruskin, John. *Selections From the Writings of John Ruskin*. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1871.

Sheets-Pyenson, Susan. *Cathedrals of Science: The Development of Colonial Natural History Museums during the Late Nineteenth Century*. Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988.

Spear, Jeffrey L. *Dreams of an English Eden: Ruskin and His Tradition in Social Criticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.

Spurr, David. *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

Yeo, Richard. *Science in the Public Sphere. Natural Knowledge in British Culture 1800-1860*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2001.