

methodology allows Alberti to compliment those studies which have conceptualized museums as part of the imperial project by developing a narrative of the roles played by natural history collections within British civic life.

The primary historical time-frame of 1890–1990 is extended in a concise prologue, which traces the genealogies of the collections and their sites of display prior to their coalescence in the Manchester Museum. This traces the genealogy of the collections through the private cabinets of John Leigh Philips (1761–1814), and the associational spaces of the Manchester Natural History Society, the fledgling Owens College and the nascent Manchester Museum. Alberti then broadens his focus to set the Museum within a wider context. He engages with the cultural nature of collections of natural history in museums by dividing the book into two primary sections. The first section considers the role of museums in apportioning and delineating objects and knowledge into disciplines; the second adopts a “cultural biography of things” approach (Kopytoff 1986). Here Alberti is careful not to be seduced into merely recounting a series of object biographies. Instead, he uses the biographies’ structure to frame a consideration of the processes a museum performs on (and with) objects. Through the device of these two strands Alberti sets the stage for his conclusion, which is presented almost in the form of a dénouement. He reveals that “objects have not been the main players in this story after all”. Instead, for him, the story of the Museum (the story of museums) is the relationships between objects and disciplines and the changing status of material objects in knowledge production.

This book is not a top-down exploration of directors’ visions for what a museum should be and what functions it should serve. Instead, discussions of such grand visions are integrated into a rich narrative that provides intriguing glimpses into the agency of a variety of collectors, technicians, labellers, printers, designers, cleaners, and the visitors, who enact a building and its contents as a museum. This eminently readable and engaging book develops new methodologies, establishes new agendas, and suggests new avenues of research into museums in general and into a multiplicity of aspects concerning roles of natural history’s public collections.

The production values of the hard-back volume are high and it is well-indexed. At £60 the price of the book is also high. Hopefully its price will not be a deterrent to potential purchasers, as this is an important work, which sets new standards and is likely to exert a sustained influence across a variety of historical disciplines.

REFERENCE

KOPYTOFF, I., 1986 The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process, pp 64–91 in APPADURAI, A. (editor), *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge.

DOI: 10.3366/E0260954110002172

GEOFFREY N. SWINNEY

ROOKMAAKER, L. C. *Calendar of the scientific correspondence of Hugh Edwin Strickland in the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge*. University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge: 2010. Pp 379. Electronic edition (pdf). (Paperback also available. Price UK£ 12.)

From the date that Hugh Edwin Strickland went up to Oxford in 1829 to the date of his tragic death in 1853 the 24 years of Strickland’s scientific endeavour were remarkable by any standard. He rapidly became one of the most influential ornithologists and geologists of his day. Jardine (1858) provided a substantial account of the life of his son-in-law and this careful annotated enumeration of his correspondence adds much to that account. It illustrates his multiple interests extremely well and shows the discipline, perseverance and political judgement that Strickland brought to his varied endeavours as well as the extent to which he exchanged specimens, books and knowledge. The collection is from more than one source and that it should have been brought together in Cambridge

is evidently due to Alfred Newton's cultivation of Catherine Strickland, Hugh's widow and the daughter of Sir William Jardine. She and Newton both appreciated Strickland's wide connections and the likelihood that his papers would contain important information. He had been in correspondence with the most eminent ornithologists and geologists of his day and through his involvement with the British Association became involved with zoologists in general through his recognition of the need for firm rules of nomenclature.

Overall, the structural framework used to organize the calendar works well. It becomes a chronological treatment only after certain key strands have been segregated and in some cases after being organized alphabetically by the names of Strickland's correspondents. The key strands that have been segregated are the dodo book (chapter 6), zoological nomenclature (chapter 7), and the Ray Society (chapter 8). In each of these the letters briefly summarized are essentially subject specific and in chronological order not ordered by author. The preceding chapters, English correspondence (chapter 4) and foreign correspondence (chapter 5), where geology, ornithology and other topics are all included often include letters with content that bears on one or more of the subjects dealt with in the later chapters and researchers using this valuable guide should not content themselves with working through a single specialist chapter. Of course it would have been possible to subdivide the correspondence but keeping together most of the letters to and from any given person has obvious archival benefits and Rookmaaker has wisely used his bibliographic index (chapter 11) to display the coding of all the letters relating to each correspondent so that here one can find where letters may be found in another chapter. Two further chapters are not composed of listed and summarized letters: the "Chart of bird affinities and additional material" (chapter 9) and the bibliography of Strickland's publications (chapter 10). These are followed by the bibliographic index and a list of Rookmaaker's references.

I suspect that each researcher using this work will begin by wishing that his or her subject had been given the blessing of a listing as subject matter, pages 38–39. They will soon come to realise that a sensible job has been done and the result is as good as could have been hoped for. It is the exchanges of letters over many years that are most revealing. For example from Blyth's letters to Strickland we learn of his frustrations in Calcutta, already reported by Brandon-Jones (2006), and that J. E. Gray was an obstacle to the development of rules for nomenclature; and from letters exchanged with Jerdon we learn more about what became of Jerdon's bird collections of which so little is to be found at the Natural History Museum, Tring, and are reminded that at this period, when the importance of a type as a voucher specimen was little recognized, collections could be and often were sold, often to private collectors and frequently at the cost of later traceability. In some cases, well before Strickland's death, correspondence ends rather abruptly leaving one wondering what happened: for example letters exchanged with Shuckard stop with the implication that no publisher could be found for the planned "Universal dictionary", into which Strickland had put some work, and that this news can only have been given to Strickland when they met. In other cases such as Spencer F. Baird, Prince Bonaparte and Thomas Jerdon correspondence seems to have ceased prematurely. In each case one would expect two to several more years of letters.

REFERENCES

- BRANDON-JONES, C., 2006 A clever, odd, wild fellow. The life and work of Edward Blyth, zoologist. 1810–1873. *Hamadryad* **31** (1): 1–175.
- JARDINE, W. 1858 *Memoirs of Hugh Edwin Strickland* M. A. London.