

'Sweden's Memory': Museums, Monuments and Memorials¹

A museum of the future?

H.G. Wells's seminal novel *The Time-Machine* (1895) carries a gloomy prediction for the human race. It is destined to stratify into two separate species: the Eloi living above the ground and the Morlocks inhabiting the earth beneath. The former have the appearance and intellect of five-year old children; the subterranean existence of the latter has rendered their 'pallid bodies... the half-bleached colour of the worms and things one sees preserved in spirit in a zoological museum'. The time-traveller, realising that these beasts emerge at night to feast on the defenceless Eloi, despondently concludes that he 'had happened upon humanity upon the wane... the sunset of mankind'. It is a museum that dramatically confirms this fact. The narrator comes across a 'Palace of Green Porcelain... the ruins of some latter-day South Kensington'. These are the remnants of the Natural History Museum, which opened on Exhibition Road, London in 1881. Discernable, yet at an advanced stage of decay, is 'a remarkable array of miscellaneous objects', including: 'a huge skeleton of a Brontosaurus'; 'blackened vestiges of what had once been stuffed animals'; 'a brown dust of departed plants'; 'guns, pistols, and rifles'; 'huge bulks of big machines'; and 'a vast array of idols... [from] every country on earth'.²

This mausoleum is an 'ancient monument of an intellectual age'. The dim-witted Eloi use 'the shape of rare fossils' merely as beads to make pretty necklaces, whilst the cannibalistic Morlocks have dragged some of the exhibit cases underground for goodness knows what purposes. The museum is uniquely situated at the juncture of the two societies: the entrance is in the sunlit world of the Eloi; the entrails are in the dark land of the Morlock. In one enormous gallery are the 'charred rags... [and] decaying vestiges of books. They had long since dropped to pieces, and every semblance of print had left them'.³ Both Eloi and Morlock, despite their extreme differences, share at least one significant attribute: they are both illiterate.

Graphic witnesses to history

Museums and libraries are surely a gauge of any civilised society. Given the close interrelationship between the two⁴ it does not take too great a leap of the imagination to consider an institution such as Sweden's Royal Library (*Kunliga biblioteket*) as perhaps the ultimate museum. In a recent publicity document entitled *Sweden's Memory* it is asserted that 'Sweden's National Library strives to be the foremost source of knowledge for comprehending Sweden, its

people and institutions'. Since 1661 it has sought to collect every piece of printed matter published in Sweden: its mission is 'to preserve thoughts and ideas, irrespective of appearance and content, without selecting or passing judgement'.⁵

The building housing this collection in central Stockholm was completed in 1878 and considerably enlarged in the 1990s such that – like the Palace of Green Porcelain – it now extends far underground.⁶ The Royal Library is what every museum should strive to be: it is a definitive collection of both high art and popular culture; there is no entrance fee; everything is available from the store; it is undertaking a process of digitalisation in order to further increase access to even the most fragile artefacts; it is linked to other like institutions via the internet; it has a rapidly expanding collection. In this pseudo-museum it is only when a visitor orders a particular object that the memory work begins; the reader makes the necessary associations between the texts and builds his or her own narrative. It is the user who determines what constitutes Sweden's memory.

The preface to *A concise history of Sweden* avers that: 'Our knowledge of... [Sweden's] historical development is based on the collections to be found in Sweden's museums, archives and libraries. It is the unique task of the museums... to bear graphic witness to Swedish history'.⁷ The Swedish Railway Museum at Gävle does just that. Its exhibits and accompanying texts 'are intended to act as a kind of time machine'.⁸ Each section of the museum's guidebook commences with a timeline of significant historical events that took place in Sweden and the rest of the world. The local is entwined with the global.

This suggests that *where* an object is located determines to a large extent its biography. Take, for example, a tree. During a storm in 1940 a 2,400-year-old Sierra Redwood toppled over. An eight tonne plate cut from its trunk arrived at Sweden's Natural History Museum (*Naturhistoriska riksmuseet*) in 1952, a gift from the state of California. A horizontal line drawn onto it extends from the centre to the edge and moments in history are inserted: from the birth of Aristotle to Columbus' discovery of the Americas, and from the destruction of Pompeii to the First World War. Included within this chronology are events of a particularly Swedish flavour such as the arrival in Birka of the Benedictine Monk Ansgar in the year 830, or the birth of Carl von Linné in 1707.

It is intriguing to ponder what other museums may have received a sliver of this great tree and inscribed their own national timeline into the rings. The same object can have innumerable functions and perform countless roles. This particular piece of wood was shown as part of a botanical exhibition until 1985. It took the efforts – and money – of the "friends of the museum"

to pay for its redisplay eleven years later. Why? This thing is far more eloquent, evocative and memorable than any piece of hi-tech equipment offering some pastiche of a virtual reality. Sweden's Natural History Museum has a ten million strong collection of plants, animals, fossils, and minerals. A fraction of one percent is visible.

“Real” things

A museum is a museum because it has “real” things. In contrast we live in the era of the ‘Absolute Fake’⁹, leading virtual lives and seeing through flickering screens. As such one can be forgiven for having mixed feelings about the experiment currently taking place in the ‘Vikings’ (*Vikingar*) exhibition at the *Historiska museet*. This pilot project is ‘aimed at using modern technology to intensify, extend and expand visitors’ experience of the exhibit.’ It thus seeks to ‘successively identify new forms of communication to use in society’s vital debate on the importance of history in our times.’¹⁰ A handheld colour monitor provides a visual and aural commentary on a selection of showcases and their contents. The undeniable impressiveness of this handy gadget cannot, however, suppress a nagging anxiety: it is a curious sensation to stand directly in front of an object and, rather than looking at it, concentrate instead on its virtual double. We glance in furtive abashment at the naked object whilst staring hungrily at the monitor, for we are used to the one but not the other.

Museums are bastions of the real and they should be very wary of manufacturing counterfeits of both the tangible and virtual kind. The ‘Expedition Space’ (*Expedition Rymden*) exhibition at Sweden’s Natural History Museum includes the skull of a Martian (*sic*).¹¹ A short distance away in the same museum are four little specks of inanimate material. A label claims that these are in truth pieces of rock from the Apollo 11 moon landing of July 1969, a gift from President Richard Nixon to Sweden. The fantastical followed by the absolutely authentic. Not only does the former encourage scepticism, it also leads to dissatisfaction with reality.

In 1840 Hans Christian Andersen visited Riddarholmen Church in Stockholm where he came across an old jerkin filled with holes and a dirty pair of boots. He marvelled that they were ‘mute and yet so eloquent’.¹² These sacred relics once clothed the all-too mortal frames of Gustav II Adolf (1594-1632) and Karl XII (1682-1718), the only Swedish monarchs to have had the dubious honour of being killed in combat. The former had in fact narrowly avoided such a fate in Poland during 1627. He subsequently ordered that his bullet-ridden suits from that campaign be preserved as mementos of his engagement with the enemy: transferred in 1633 to the Lesser Armoury, precursor of the Royal Armoury, they ‘have been on commemorative display for over

350 years'.¹³ A year earlier, on 6 November 1632 the lacerated corpse of the king lay on a battlefield at Lützen.

War had not lost its grisly appeal in the autumn of 1718 when Swedish soldiers under Karl XII found themselves, for a change, at war: this time with Norway. Whilst inspecting a trench around the fortress of Fredrikshald on the evening of 30 November the king was shot in the temple. The bullet passed through his hat; his gloves were bloodied; his cape encrusted with mud. These are all in the Royal Armoury collection complete with hole, blood and mud. The proscenium for these dramatic props is provided by the architect Sven Ivar Lind (1902-80). His bold concrete platforms articulate the eighteen-century vaults of the Royal Palace, home of the Royal Armoury museum (*Livruskammaren*) since 1978. With the dramatically subdued illumination the light-sensitive objects appear to hover in the gloom.¹⁴

The Royal Armoury claims to be the oldest museum in Sweden, tracing its origins back to 1628. Its current setting is redolent with historical associations and the collection is superb. Audio guides animate the narrative, allowing for levels of interpretation including a special trail for children. In addition regular guided tours also assist the visitors. One senses that dialogue can and does take place in the Royal Armoury. This is not to say that the museum is perfect. The displays, in need of refurbishment, are excessively rigid and static: when objects are removed for conservation or loaned elsewhere no others take their place. The entrance fee is prohibitive and, what is worse, there is an additional charge for the audio tour. Why, when it is so fundamental, is it not included in the entry fee? The principal criticism of the Royal Armoury, however, is more conceptual. There is a danger when dealing with particularly evocative objects to do too little and assume, quite wrongly, that they have a universal clarity. Compounding this is a failure to address the museum's moral responsibilities. It is not enough to merely present the "facts". History is not benign and museums ought to admit their complicity in the propagation of national myths. This is nowhere more apparent than in the case of Karl XII.

Museums and myths: the case of Karl XII

As one savours the satisfaction of locating the bullet-hole in Karl XII's hat the audio guide makes a curiously obscure comment: who shot the king? Can there be any doubt but that it was an obdurate Norwegian? Is there some suggestion that it might have been a Swedish soldier? Surely these loyal men adulated their heroic leader? Or was this the king that presided over the catastrophic campaign at Poltava in 1709, which led to many thousands of soldiers, their families and entire entourage being taken prisoners-of-war? Transported across Russia they were used as

forced labour for anything up to thirty-five years. Diaries and letters testify to their unenviable experiences.¹⁵

Posterity has been somewhat equivocal about Karl XII. This is hardly surprising given that the death of this absolute monarch marked the precipitous decline of Sweden as a Great Power. In the nineteenth-century a heady mix of patriotism and nostalgia witnessed the resurgence of his notoriety and, one-hundred-and-fifty years to the day after his death, a bronze likeness was unveiled in central Stockholm amid an outpouring of nationalist fervour.¹⁶ The sculptor, Johan Peter Molin (1814-73) chose to present the king in characteristically belligerent mood: he is to be imagined as if on the battlefield and, with a sword in his right hand, he points suggestively towards the east with his outstretched left arm.

No other image confirmed the status of this king as a national hero better than the iconic painting *Bringing home the body of King Karl XII of Sweden (Karl XII:s likfärd)*. A funeral cortège, consisting of wounded yet indefatigable *karolin* soldiers, snakes its way over an icy, inhospitable landscape towards Sweden, carrying aloft the uncovered body of their dead leader. This scene is indeed a far cry from the pathetic corpse of the king, sealed in a barrel of salt to prevent putrefaction, being lugged back by the starving, frostbitten vestiges of a defeated army. By favouring the fanciful over the prosaic the artist, Gustaf Cederström (1845-1933), won critical acclaim at the Paris Exposition of 1878 and his epic work was immediately purchased by a Russian aristocrat.

The canvas was not to "return" to Sweden until after the Russian revolution when, culturally surplus to political requirements, it was bought by *Göteborgs konstmuseum* (257 x 370, GKM 1100). Sweden's *Nationalmuseum* was therefore obliged, in 1884, to acquire a 'free replica' of this already famous image.¹⁷ This enabled Cederström to overcome some of the difficulties he had encountered when executing the original work in Paris: he had, for example, been obliged to scatter salt over his atelier floor in order to approximate the effect of the soldier's footprints in the snow.¹⁸ For the second version he used Swedish models and lightened the palette to give it more the quality of a *plein air* painting. It was completed in the natural light of the artist's studio at Krusenberg on 30 November 1885. This strikes one as a bathetic attempt to give credence to this most "Swedish" of images. It was, after all, a composition that had been wholly conceived of and executed in France. Even its non-identical twin was begun in Florence and continued in Paris before the final touches were applied, at long last, on Swedish soil.¹⁹

Fittingly it is a concoction of exacting verisimilitude and wild fabrication that gives Cederström's depictions of Swedish history such potency. The former is amply demonstrated by

his study of *The saddle and pistols of King Karl X Gustav of Sweden* (1910, oil on wood, 34 x 27, NM 2576). Here was someone really making use of a museum collection, going 'to great pains to achieve historical accuracy in his depiction of dress and weapons'.²⁰ It would therefore make perfect sense to mount an exhibition focusing in close detail on his most famous painting, *Bringing home the body of Karl XII*. In addition to the second version of 1884 the *Nationalmuseum* possesses a sketch for the initial work as well as an even more valuable accompaniment: a wax model of the standard-bearer made in Paris in 1877 and used by the artist as a substitute for the dearth of Swedish models.²¹

Simply displaying these items alongside the finished canvas would have an immediate and constructive effect. Consider, therefore, the consequences of supplementing this cluster of related objects with sculptures pertaining to the aforementioned statue of the king that stands but a short distance away from the museum. Works by the sculptor Molin at the *Nationalmuseum* include a plaster head of Karl XII (NM Sk 606) and two wonderfully expressive clay sketch models (NM Sk 662-3). Less than fifteen centimetres in height they show experimentation regarding the gestures of the figure. There is one further, particularly fine clay maquette not ten centimetres high (NM Sk 664). In this unrealised proposal the pedestal takes the form of a rocky promontory on which stands the fragmentary body of the king, beneath which a group of *karolin* soldiers discharges a cannon.

For most of the year Molin's statue stands unobtrusively at the southern end of Kunsträdgården. However, in recent years, 30 November has seen it become a rallying point for neo-nazis. This reminds us, lest we forget, that the events of an elitist and chauvinistic past need to be unpicked and re-evaluated. Why not tackle the less savoury aspects of Sweden's memory in the sacred confines of the museum? Surely the *Nationalmuseum* is the place to do this given that it has always 'played a central role, for good or bad, in the cultural life of Sweden'.²² What was once the Royal Museum (*Konglig Museum*) was terminologically democratised when it moved to its purpose built home in 1866. This edifice was significantly sited 'as a counterpart to the Royal Palace, on the opposite side of Stockholm's inner harbour'.²³ In the original layout national antiquities were exhibited on the ground floor whilst artefacts from the Royal Armoury collection were interspersed with works of sculpture on the storey above.²⁴

Why not bring home some of this progeny in the form of the Karl XII "relics"? Consider the effect of displaying the king's garb and the letters written by the soldiers held prisoner-of-war in Russia alongside Cederström's epic painting. These, accompanied by other sculptures and paintings by Molin and Cederström, would establish an interrelated network by which the mute

museum object could really be rendered loquacious. Such a display would permit reflections on art as well as history. It would also point out the distortions of the historical record and the uses of the past in the present.²⁵ The latter has been brilliantly demonstrated in the recent displays of the *Armémuseum* in Stockholm. A section tellingly entitled 'Carolinian collapse (1709-21)' features a striking diorama of two retreating soldiers freezing to death in the snow – a stark contrast to Cederström's canvas! Accompanying texts demonstrate how each epoch has had a differing image of Karl XII.²⁶ An exhibition such as this begins to unearth the constructed nature of Sweden's memory so that, amongst the cracks in the "official nationalism,"²⁷ other narratives can take root. As these buds flower they will displace the weeds of Eloi ignorance and the thistles of Morlock inhumanity.

Objects and identity

Sculptures and paintings of the kind just mentioned were produced throughout Europe during the latter part of the nineteenth-century and reflect the increasingly important role played by culture in the nation-building process. This was such that by 'the close of the century the people of the Nordic countries knew who they were through art, literature, history, iconography, and ritual'. These facets of 'cultural nationalism... [have] remained important down to the present day'.²⁸ It now comes under the all-encompassing epithet of "heritage". As in the late 1800s this cultural/political turn has been triggered by economic and social changes. The 1960s in Sweden, as elsewhere, ushered in sustained government support for 'art, education and the preservation of cultural treasures'.²⁹ The museum constitutes an essential institution of cultural promotion and protection where history is deployed in the service of national identity.³⁰

That this is the case is clearly evident from the foregoing discussion of Karl XII. However, it is not just discrete objects that are power laden, it is the entire milieu of the museum. Take, for example, the sumptuous Nordic Museum in Stockholm, so-called because of the political union that existed between Sweden and Norway from 1814-1905.³¹ In 1999 its director, Lars Löfgren, asserted that the '*Nordiska museet* is the collective memory of the Swedish people'.³² Constructed around the turn of the twentieth-century 'this huge cathedral of artefacts' centres on an enormous hall imbued with sacred significance.³³ It houses Carl Milles's gargantuan polychromed statue (1920-5) of *Gustav Vasa* cautioning the minions at its feet to 'be Swedish' [*Warer Svenske*]. With this in mind one should note that museum buildings are often architecturally synonymous with 'law courts... and other repressive agents of social control... In many cases the messages of the buildings may be enough to deter those who don't know about

classical culture, who do know about the power of the law and who have not found many images of the past that have served them well'.³⁴ This is likely to include those who have recently arrived as refugees or migrants: 'Today Sweden is a nation of many languages and many cultures. She has over one million immigrants or descendants of immigrants and by the year 2000 every other baby will be an "immigrant child"'.³⁵ It is imperative that Sweden's memory incorporates this multiplicity. Its wealth of museums ought to be spearheading a drive for inclusivity. However, do museums, linked as they undoubtedly are to 'repressive agents of social control', have the wherewithal or desire to address issues of difference as well as commonality?

For even a cursory glance at Sweden's wealth of museums demonstrates that its culture is far from monolithic. By examining any so-called "national" heritage one quickly discerns the inter-relatedness of differing cultures. Take, for example, Jeanette Greenfield's book, *The Return of Cultural Treasures*, which contends that the 'international race for antiquities' triggered by Sven Hedin's (1865-1952) numerous expeditions to Chinese Turkestan at the turn of the twentieth-century means that 'the treasures of Central Asia are today scattered throughout the world in over thirty museums and institutions'.³⁶ One such institution is the Ethnographic Museum (*Etnografiska museet*) in Stockholm. Within its collection of 170,000 artefacts are thirty fragments of second-century paper, amongst the oldest of their kind in the world and taken to Sweden after Hedin rediscovered the long-lost town of Lou-Lan: these 'fragments... remind us of the role played by paper in spreading culture, in carrying information and communication from one person to another, from one century to another'.³⁷ This provides yet another link between the library and museum as repositories of knowledge. Regrettably, none of the paper fragments are currently on display.

The acquisition and de-acquisition of objects chart the mutations of Sweden's memory. Thus, with the loss of Finland to Russia in 1809 'eighty-three cases of archival documents were shipped over from Stockholm to Turku. This material subsequently formed the basis of the Finnish archival system'.³⁸ Rather belatedly articles from the *Nordiska museet* have been returned to Norway following its independence in 1905.³⁹ What other objects might take flight? Perhaps the fourteen-century vessel of glazed earthenware known as the *Alhambra Vase*? In July 1648, as the Thirty Year's War approached its conclusion, the Swedish army enacted what has evocatively become known as the 'Prague Plunder'. Under the discerning eye of Queen Kristina (1626-89) a hoard of *objets d'art* was secured from the beleaguered city.⁴⁰ Among the queen's treasure trove was a large vase. Originating from Granada it was taken to Cyprus and then, in 1571, to Istanbul. It subsequently became part of Rudolf II's collection in Prague. In the course of its travels it had become venerated as one of the six stone water-jars from Cana-in-Galilee

with which Christ performed his first miracle by turning their contents into wine (John 2, 1-11). Its more credible Islamic provenance has been acknowledged since the mid-nineteenth-century. The judicious Queen Kristina remained sceptical about its Christian credentials and decided to leave it behind following her abdication in 1654 and subsequent exile in Rome. Had she included it with her luggage this intriguing object would have had only a fleeting part to play in Sweden's memory given that Kristina's magnificent collection remained on the continent after her death before being put up for auction in 1798. The forsaken trophy was instead incorporated into the collection of Queen Lovisa Ulrika (1720-82) and displayed at the royal library of Drottningholm. In the 1740s a bronze dragon was added to the neck of the vase to disguise signs of damage inflicted during its eventful life.⁴¹ Since 1792 the *Alhambra Vase* has been at the *Nationalmuseum* (KHV 47). It currently stands at the foot of the great staircase, occupying a fitting location betwixt the galleries of fine and applied art. It is an object that addresses a host of museological issues, including:

- why interpretations are contingent and never fixed;
- where an artefact is displayed affects its meaning(s);
- who owns an object of desire determines the power of that individual or state;
- what constitutes a sacred relic, a work of art, a piece of design or a utilitarian object;
- how Sweden's past has brought it into contact with other societies, religions and cultures.

An equally loquacious artefact obtained under similar circumstances is the *Codex gigas* (Giant Book) also known as the *Devil's Bible*.⁴² Written in the early thirteenth-century in the Benedictine monastery of Podlazice in Bohemia it had been acquired by the Imperial Treasury in Prague in 1594. Following the Swedish army's conquest of that city in 1648 it was taken to Sweden and entered the collection of the Royal Library the following year. It is currently at the literal centre of the collection within a vault in the subterranean extension. The vellum manuscript is open at the page that depicts a splendidly evil looking devil, from whence the item gets its name (legend has it that the scribe was a disobedient monk who, as penance, completed the manuscript in a single night courtesy of diabolic assistance). Little badges featuring the *Codex gigas* devil are available from the library shop. This object is something between a sacred relic and an imperial trophy. One thing is for certain: it must be the hardest thing in the collection to actually order.

This artefact has survived the ravages of time, but what of other less fortunate things? On 7 May 1697 thousands of books and manuscripts, equating to 'a third of the nation's documents', were lost in a disastrous fire at the Royal Palace.⁴³ That such threats to the heritage are perennial and take many guises can be further demonstrated by the example of a male Ethiopian *burnous* of uncertain provenance held by the Ethnographic Museum.⁴⁴ It is made from black wool edged

with red leather. Unfortunately this beautiful object is in a parlous state and is pitted with holes, a legacy of a disastrous outbreak of Cloth Moth (*Tineola bisselliella*) which struck the museum in 1995. This led to thirty-five thousand items of textile having to be frozen at minus thirty degrees centigrade for a period of ten days. This painstaking process took three years to complete and now, thanks to the installation of atmospherically controlled storerooms, these vulnerable items are held in adequate conditions. Are all Swedish museums quite so fortunate? Whilst the problem of collection maintenance at the Ethnographic Museum has been remedied, the situation at, for instance, the Natural History Museum's Herbarium is far from satisfactory. Is it destined to preside over 'a brown dust of departed plants' just like the Palace of Green Porcelain? How many objects in Swedish museums are disintegrating as you read these words?

And what about the Swedish things that are still extant but no longer Swedish? In 1769 Carl von Linné (1707-78) established a museum at his home in Hammarby to display his herbarium of nearly 20,000 plant specimens.⁴⁵ The tiny building was beset by damp and, in any case, the bulk of its contents including Linné's sheets of pressed plants along with thousands of specimens of insects, shells, coral and minerals in addition to his books, manuscripts and entire correspondence was sold after his death for only one thousand guineas. The purchaser was James Edward Smith who went on to become the first president of the Linnean Society of London founded in 1857. From that date the holdings were stored in a purpose-built, environmentally regulated strong room at Burlington House, where they remain to this day. Wilfred Blunt, in his book *The Compleat Naturalist: a life of Linnaeus* stressed the magnitude of this loss to Sweden, remarking that it has always been rued with mingled regret and shame.⁴⁶

That the work of one of Sweden's most famous sons has been in London for over two hundred years emphasizes the porous nature of the historical fabric. A further manifestation of the permeability of culture is the rich variety of World Heritage Sites in Sweden. Their very designation is an affirmation that, rather than being the preserve of one nation alone, they are in fact archetypes for the whole of humanity.⁴⁷ A further demonstration of this is the important work done by Sweden in initiating the organisation Cultural Heritage Without Borders (*Kulturarv utan Gränser*). Founded in 1995 it espouses 'that we all share responsibility for the protection of our common cultural heritage.'⁴⁸ Following the iconoclasm and genocide unleashed in the former Yugoslavia it becomes appallingly clear what happens to a society when libraries and museums are lost.

Society on the wane?

If H.G. Wells's time-traveller had ventured to Sweden at the start of the twenty-first century he too could have entered museums and encountered stuffed animals and fossils at the Natural History Museum; 'huge bulks of big machines' at the Swedish Railway Museum; 'guns, pistols, and rifles' at the Royal Armoury; and 'a vast array of idols' at the Ethnographic Museum. Every object no matter how precious must return to the dust from whence it came. The time it takes for this to occur will indeed be a measure of Sweden's memory and a gauge of the viability of Swedish society. Museums perform a crucial role in safeguarding cultural heritage. Yet just as important is their communicative function. They do not exist solely to preserve the past in stasis. Instead they serve to sustain its relevance by initiating a dialogue between that which has already taken place, that which is happening now and that which is yet to transpire.

The political present dictates the cultural past. A recent and spirited debate in the pages of the *Dagens Nyheter* newspaper concerned the level of funding for museums in Sweden.⁴⁹ Decreasing financial assistance is perversely combined with increasing demands and expectations: ambitions that are made clear by the government's decision to introduce free admission to all national museums in Sweden from 2004.⁵⁰ This reinforces the universal aspirations for museums, even if the messages they convey are inevitably contingent, constructed and contentious. Because of these perpetual challenges those involved in the museum sector must defend their position with vigour and always with an open mind. For, as H.G. Wells perspicaciously observed, a situation in which museums are ignored and allowed to decay bespeaks of a society on the wane.

Notes

¹ This paper is the result of a research post at Stockholm University generously funded by the Swedish Institute (*Svenska institutet*). My thanks also go to the British artist Duncan Mountford who first drew my attention to the relationship between H.G. Wells's novel and the museum through his exhibition *The Archive of Lost Knowledge* held at The Yard Gallery, Nottingham (December 2001 – February 2002).

² H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine: An Invention*, London, [1895] 1914, pp. 50, 86 & 108-9.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁴ 'Lacking a good library, a natural history museum is like an arm without a hand'. W.T. Stearn, *The Natural History Museum at South Kensington*, London, 1981, p. 318.

⁵ *Sweden's Memory: The Royal Library*, trans. J. Pearman, Växjö, 2000, pp. 1 & 6.

⁶ R. Wærn (ed.), *A guide to Swedish Architecture*, Värnamo, 2001, p. 233.

⁷ A. Åberg, *A concise history of Sweden*, trans. G. Elliot, Stockholm, 1985, p. 7.

⁸ B. Kullander, *The Time Machine: Swedish Railway Museum*, Sveriges Järnvägsmuseum, 1999, p. 1.

⁹ U. Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality*, London, 1987, p. 31.

¹⁰ Information about the IDUN guide (being piloted by Ericsson and Abstract Teknisk Design) is derived from an explanatory display in the foyer of the museum. The project is scheduled to run for five years and one ought not to unduly criticise what is, after all, an experiment and an important one at that.

¹¹ The accompanying panel reads: FAKE ALIEN – There are lots of hypothetic ideas regarding the appearances of alien. This is a fake "cranium"! H.G. Wells wrote in *The War of the Worlds* of 1898: 'Those who have never seen a living Martian can scarcely imagine the strange horror of their appearance'.

¹² Cited in A. Dahlberg, *Royal Splendour in the Royal Armoury*, trans. R. Tanner, Stockholm, 1996, p. 7.

¹³ This quotation is derived from an explanatory panel accompanying the object at the *Livruskammaren*.

¹⁴ C. Caldenby et al (ed.), *Sweden: 20th-Century Architecture*, Munich & New York, 1998, pp. 163-4.

¹⁵ H. Lindqvist, *A journey through Swedish history*, trans. A. Tapsell, Stockholm, 1994, pp. 52-3.

¹⁶ B. Järbe, *Stockholms statyer*, Stockholm, 1997, p. 60.

¹⁷ P. Bjurström, *Nationalmuseum 1792-1992*, Höganäs, 1992, p. 153.

¹⁸ G. Cederström, *Minnen*, Stockholm, 1913, pp. 146-8.

¹⁹ A.L. Romdahl, *Gustaf Cederström*, Malmö, 1948, p. 167.

²⁰ T. Heinemann (ed.), *Uppsala University Art Collections: Painting and Sculpture*, Uppsala, 2001, p. 80.

²¹ These are respectively: 1884, oil on canvas, 265 x 371, NM 1363; 1877, oil on wood, 31 x 44, NM 5205; 1877, wax, height 37.5, NM sk 1373.

²² K. Alexis & P. Bjurström, *Nationalmuseum 200 Years, 1792-1992*, Stockholm, 1992, p. 1.

²³ G. Cavalli-Björkman in U. Abel (ed.), *Nationalmuseum Stockholm*, trans. J. Havell (ed.), London, 1995, p. 10.

²⁴ The considerable painting collection occupied the top floor. The Royal Armoury holdings were removed in 1884. Other items from the *Livruskammaren* were displayed at the Royal Palace in Stockholm from 1844 until 1906 and from 1909 at the *Nordiska museet*. See Bjurström, 1992, pp. 122-4; M. Olausson, 'The Museum' in A. Leander Touati, *Ancient Sculptures in the Royal Museum: the eighteenth-century collection in Stockholm*, Vol. I, Stockholm, 1998, p. 65, note 283; H. Medelius et al (ed.), *Nordiska museet under 125 år*, Stockholm, 1998, p. 484.

²⁵ That there is a correlation between museum objects and constructions of the nation is highlighted by such projects as *Nationalism – from Midsummer Dance to Sliced "Dala" Horse*. See M. Gynning's article on this in the *Art Bulletin of Nationalmuseum Stockholm*, Vol. 8, p. 55.

²⁶ See <http://www.armemuseum.org/utstallning/sal7.html> [accessed 20.12.02]. Cf. B.M. Holmquist (ed.), *Gustaf Cederström* [exh. cat.], Armémuseum, 22 oktober 1977 – 26 februari 1978, pp. 5-6.

²⁷ S. Sörlin, 'Artur Hazelius och det nationella arvet under 1800-talet' in Medelius, 1998, pp. 17-39.

²⁸ B.J. Nordstrom, *Scandinavia since 1500*, Minneapolis & London, 2000, p. 187.

²⁹ *Museums and preservation of the national heritage within the framework of Sweden's cultural policy*, Riksantikvarieämbetet, Stockholm, 1973; S. Bohman, 'Museums in the melting pot' in Medelius, 1998, pp. 401-9.

³⁰ See R. Lumley (ed.), *The Museum Time-Machine*, London & New York, 1988, p. 2.

³¹ This institution, as conceived in 1873 by Artur Hazelius (1833-1901), was known as the Scandinavian-Ethnographical Collection. In 1880, Hazelius established the *Nordiska museet* Foundation and donated it to the nation.

- ³² Cited in B. Nyström (ed.), *Nordiska Museet: the national museum of cultural history*, Stockholm, 1999, p. 3.
- ³³ J. Mårtelius, *Göra Arkitekturen Historisk: Om 1800-talets arkitekturtänkande och I G Clasons Nordiska museum*, Stockholm, 1987, p. 197; Wærn, 2001, p. 237.
- ³⁴ E. Hooper-Greenhill cited in Lumley, 1988, p. 225.
- ³⁵ Lindqvist, 1994, p. 87.
- ³⁶ J. Greenfield, *The Return of Cultural Treasures*, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 91-2.
- ³⁷ H. Wahlquist, *Sven Hedin – teknaren med papper och penna i Centralasien* [exh. cat.], Stockholm, 1990, p. 3.
- ³⁸ U. von Schultz (ed.), *The Cultural Heritage in Sweden: Preserving the Past for Posterity*, Trelleborg, 1999, p. 22.
- ³⁹ In contrast, the blood-stained buff jacket of Gustav II Adolf was given back to Sweden by Austria in 1920 in gratitude for the assistance afforded them by the Swedish Red Cross during the First World War (according to information stated in the *Livrustkammaren* display).
- ⁴⁰ See T. Kleberg, *Codex Argenteus: the Silver Bible at Uppsala*, trans. N. Tomkinson, Uppsala, 1984, p. 15; information on the *Alhambra Vase* is derived from an exhibition panel in the *Nationalmuseum* by M. Laine.
- ⁴¹ M. Olausson & R. Millhagen (eds.), *Carl Hårleman: människan och verket*, Stockholm, 2000, pp. 124-5.
- ⁴² The comments that follow on this object could equally apply to another book acquired at the same time: the fourth-century *Codex Argenteus*, i.e. the Silver Bible or Silver Book (see Kleberg, 1984). It is at present brilliantly displayed in the exhibition hall of *Carolina Rediviva*, Uppsala University Library.
- ⁴³ von Schultz, 1999, p. 17. The year 2002 saw Stockholm celebrate its 750th anniversary (yet another manifestation of "Sweden's memory"). In a run-up to the festival week (1-8 June), the *Dagens Nyheter* newspaper published a series of articles on topics relating to the history of the city. On 7 May it marked the 305th anniversary of the fire at the 'Three Crowns' palace: E. Gyllenberg & M. Stugart, 'Branden ödelade slottet Tre kronor', *Dagens Nyheter*, 7 May 2002, p. A8.
- ⁴⁴ This is item number 1966.11.1. It was a gift to the museum bequeathed some time prior to 1966. My thanks go to Kerstin Petersson, textile conservator at the *Etnografiska museet*, for so freely supplying me with information about this object. Any observations made regarding it and the museum as a whole are entirely my own and should not be construed as reflecting the opinions of either Ms Petersson or the *Etnografiska museet*.
- ⁴⁵ P. Parker, 'An end of chaos', *Daily Telegraph*, 16 March 2002, p. 3.
- ⁴⁶ W. Blunt, *The Compleat Naturalist: a life of Linnaeus*, London, [1971] 2001, p. 241.
- ⁴⁷ Currently twelve sites have attained UNESCO recognition: see U. von Schultz (ed.), *World Heritage Sites in Sweden*, Västra Aros, 2002; <http://www.raa.se/varveng/index.asp> [accessed 20.12.02].
- ⁴⁸ The homepage of this organisation is: <http://www.chwb.org> [accessed 20.12.02].
- ⁴⁹ 'Trettioen kulturpersonligheter protesterar mot förskingring av kulturarvet: "Systematisk utarmning av museerna"', *Dagens Nyheter*, 21 April 2002, p. A4; A. Persson, "Museerna har fått det bättre", *DN*, 22 April 2002, p. B1; G. Cederskog & A. Persson, "Museernas anslag har minskats", *DN*, 23 April 2002, p. B4.
- ⁵⁰ This matter is discussed in: <http://www.museif.a.se/svenskamuseer/ifokus/ifokus04.html> [accessed 20.12.02].