



Curating relations between 'us and them': the changing role of migration museums in Australia

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Curating relations between ‘us and them’:

The changing role of migration museums in Australia¹

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I would also like to ask two related things ... which have puzzled me since a brief visit to the museum some years ago. One is to ask if you want donations of crafts and small items used in households in South Australia during [the] last century? These are from the wave of first settlers, ie. Anglo-Celtic. The related question is whether the museum is mainly about the subsequent waves of settlers or is the history of the early mainly Anglo-Celtic people given appropriate space? Perhaps when I was there I missed some rooms where their history is featured but ever since my visit I have thought of the museum as being about the migration to South Australia of the various ethnic minorities – I am correct in thinking this?²

Written nine years after the opening of the Migration Museum in Adelaide, the question posed by Evelyn Wallace-Carter in her letter to the Museum reflects some of the central problems faced by migration museums in a settler country like Australia—who are migration museums for, and how do they negotiate relations between different population groups? This chapter argues that the answer to these questions does not simply require an analysis of the ways in which museums have represented these relations over time, for the answers are not only about the politics of representation. The answers also require a recognition that there is a history to curatorial practices, and that this history has an impact on the ways in which relations

between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘self’ and ‘other’ play out. Furthermore, the history of these practices is not only a function of developments in historiography and changing political contexts, but a matter of curatorial approaches to collecting and interpretation that have also evolved in response to various technological possibilities.

These approaches make differing uses of the working elements of exhibitions—objects, images, text, and sound—to create a range of exhibition experiences, each of which prioritise different senses and activities on the part of the visitor. Individually and in combination with each other, these approaches shape the production of different sets of relations between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘self’ and ‘other’, effectively producing four very different ‘pedagogies’ in the way museums manage relations between different population groups. The first of these is a ‘pedagogy of looking’, the second a ‘pedagogy of reading’, the third a ‘pedagogy of listening’, and the fourth a ‘pedagogy of feeling’. Migration Museums are particularly rich sites for identifying the curatorial strategies involved in each, given they are, as intimated by the opening quote, centrally concerned with defining relations between different cohorts of people. The arguments will be developed with reference to two Australian museums—the Migration Museum in Adelaide, which uses the more conventional pedagogies of looking, reading, and listening, and the Immigration Museum in Melbourne which is experimenting with a pedagogy of feeling alongside the other three.

The inspiration for describing interpretative approaches as a form of ‘pedagogy’ comes from Tony Bennett’s³ work on late nineteenth century exhibitions and his focus on the way in which they embodied their pedagogical aims through the activity of walking alongside linear taxonomies of display. For Bennett, this form of pedagogy embodied a particular approach to collecting and display, based on formal

taxonomic systems which were a reflection of the prevailing social Darwinian theories which took the theory of evolution and applied it to human society, giving it a linear temporality from primitive to advanced. This was supported through a linear mode of display, so that as people walked alongside these displays, they took in an embodied evolutionary lesson which ended with themselves at the apex—audiences at this time being almost invariably white and middle to upper class and rarely the object of display themselves. Those on display, however, were objectified and thus framed as the other to those who were viewing them. While looking was important to the way this form of public pedagogy was produced, it was walking alongside a taxonomically displayed collection, supported by the theory of evolution, that allowed an embodied approach to the construction of relations between self and other to take form, making this a performative act.⁴

Bennett's argument suggests that there is a relationship between the curatorial practices of collecting, display, and interpretation which, when looked at as an assemblage, constitute a form of public pedagogy aimed at the management of relations between 'self' and 'other' and 'us' and 'them'. This chapter takes this idea and uses it to identify and analyse the development of a range of collecting and display practices from the 1980s to the early 2000s that have led to a suite of new forms of 'pedagogy' and to other ways of embodying relations between 'self' and 'other', 'us' and 'them'.

Exhibiting the history of migration and settlement at the Migration Museum, Adelaide

When the Migration Museum opened in 1986, it did so as the world's first migration museum, in a context when the official Australian government policy governing the

ways in which the nation understood itself was framed by multiculturalism. Under this policy, explicit attempts were made to reframe the public understanding of Australia's migration history away from an understanding that migrants were 'others' that had to assimilate into the dominant Anglo-Celtic society into the idea that Australia was a nation of immigrants, and that therefore its cultural identity was the result of the rich tapestry woven together by all the different groups that had come to settle here.

The Museum was the result of a recommendation made in the Edwards report⁵ into the state of museums in South Australia which recommended the need for a suite of museums dealing with history. The result was the South Australian History Trust,⁶ which had, as part of its remit, an 'ethnic' museum. As the name 'ethnic' museum indicates however, multicultural heritage was understood as non Anglo-Celtic. The issue was quickly identified as problematic by a working party set up to develop the parameters for the Ethnic Museum. They argued that the name would set up distance between all the ethnic groups and the dominant Anglo-Celtic population. As a result, the working group 'proposed a "display programme developed around the interlocking themes of migration and settlement" as an "exciting alternative" to the proposed displays representing different ethnic groups'⁷. The Museum thus opened as the Migration and Settlement Museum, intent on using the history of migration to showcase the existence of cultural diversity from the moment of settlement.

As our letter writer's question to the curators of the museum indicates, however, the tensions were not so easily dealt with in the public imagination, as there the history of settlement is an Anglo-Celtic story, largely based on the pioneer myth in which British settlers opened up an uninhabited and uncultivated landscape, bringing civilization with them, while the history of migration is an ethnic story. This is due to

three issues: first, the idea of *terra nullius* which created a myth that despite the presence of Indigenous people the land itself was regarded as empty; second, the legacy of assimilationist thinking in which post-war migrants were expected to conform to Australian (ie. settler) values and give up their own; and third, any attempt to narrate the story of Australia as a nation of migrants has to deal with the fact that only one group brought the existing system of governance with them—the English. From this perspective, the desire to narrate the nation, or in this case, South Australia, as a nation of migrants elides the very real and unequal power relations between the various groups. Furthermore, such an approach to the history of the nation focuses the attention on each new arrival, inevitably presenting a history of increasing diversity but also an increasing focus on the ‘other’, as the original groups which make up the Anglo-Celtic majority disappear into the background.

As will become clear below, the curators that put together the initial suite of exhibitions at the Migration Museum were not unaware of these problems. Their response—to develop a strategy that combined a radical politics with pluralist representational strategies—was not, however, entirely successful, if the tension captured by our letter writer is any indication. To understand why this was so we need to delve into the structural characteristics of each of the pedagogies of looking, reading, and listening in order to analyse how they embodied social relations as relations of ‘us’ and ‘them’.

The first suite of exhibitions at the Migration and Settlement Museum was based on four key points its original curators—Director Margaret Anderson and curator Viv Szekeres—wanted to make as part of their attempt to deal with the problems discussed above. The first was that the history of South Australia reflected a continual process of migration whose impact on Indigenous people was one of

dispossession.⁸ In this, they were reflecting and supporting new developments in Australian history writing which were turning the conventional pioneer narrative upside down. The second point was that the history of migration reached back into the nineteenth century and thus included the dominant majority—those of British background—and was not to be understood simply as the influx of non-British migrants in the post-war period, challenging the association between migration history, multiculturalism, and ethnicity. The third was that nineteenth century migration also included non-British migrants, and thus that cultural diversity had always been part of the Australian social fabric. The fourth was a desire to look at this history from the point of view of the dispossessed as well as the ordinary person rather than the establishment, reflecting the new social history then emerging and its focus on class, race, and gender.

Thus, as a piece written to advertise the new museum and call for donations in a variety of South Australian newspapers put it, visitors

will start at a port of departure in England in the 19th Century, and then move into a gallery about early settlement. There, they can discover the number of different groups and individuals who made the long journey to settle in South Australia like the Germans, Poles, and Chinese, or the Afghan traders who with their camels opened up the northern areas of the colony ... One can not tell these stories without also looking at the impact of white settlement on the Aboriginal population.⁹

These stories, the article went on to explain, are told from a social history perspective which meant that ‘the focus is on “ordinary” people; the life experiences of the

average man, woman, and child. What it felt like to make the journey from a far off land, arrive in a new and strange country and to begin to build a home and a future here'.¹⁰ The twentieth century was covered in a further two galleries called respectively *Division and Dislocation: War, Depression and more War*, and *The Crest of the Wave: Immigration 1950s-1970s*, which looked at the experiences of post-war migrants, changes to immigration legislation, and the arrival of refugees from Indo-China and South America in the 1970s.

To achieve their reinterpretation of conventional narratives and redraw the relationship between the history of colonisation, migration, and our understanding of multiculturalism, however, there were a number of practical problems that the curators and their design team had to overcome. One was the lack of an existing historical collection dealing either with the history of settlement or indeed the history of migration.¹¹ Moreover, as both Margaret Anderson¹² and Viv Szekeres¹³ have remarked, not only did the poor, the dispossessed, and the marginalized leave little behind in the way of material culture, what did remain did not conform to traditional expectations of what should be in a museum—these were not valuable objects from a monetary or artistic perspective. Furthermore, such material, when it could be found, was largely unprovenanced, making it very difficult to anchor thematic displays in personal stories, particularly for the nineteenth century. More recent migration history was still within living memory and the relevant communities could be accessed, but this would take a few years to build. In response to these issues, the curators developed three very different forms of social history collecting which in themselves led to three of the different interpretative pedagogies referred to above.¹⁴

I. Collecting the representative and building a pedagogy of looking

The first, used mainly in the nineteenth century galleries, was a pedagogy of looking. It literally built a series of windows into the past that communicated thematic content through the use of well known images and representative objects or even props, rather than using provenanced objects to tell individual personal stories. While this was not uncommon in social history exhibitions being developed in the early to mid 1980s, the use of this window into the past interpretation technique at the Migration and Settlement Museum was unusual at the time for the depth of its critical aim—to question the pioneer narrative by naming settlement as colonisation, invasion, and genocide while also firmly placing settlers as migrants. Its aim was an activist one—to erase differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’ by narrating Australian history as migration history while recognising that one group was still fighting for inclusion—Indigenous people.

This interpretative approach begins in Gallery three¹⁵ in the introductory area called *Farewell Forever*. The space consists of a scene from East London, showing the poverty people were leaving behind as well as a recreation of two domestic scenes—one a middle class, the other working class, packing to leave. The recreation of the docklands area of London was done by sourcing images from the *Illustrated London News*. This practice effectively set up a process of recycling images that carried well known narratives, such as, in this case, leaving desperate circumstances behind. Props such as nautical ropes suggested the journey the people in the images were about to take in search of a better life—the long voyage, by ship, to South Australia (see Figure 1).

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE.]



To the left of these images, windows—for that is literally what they are described in the curatorial folders and what the designers alluded to in their design (see Figure 2)—allow visitors to peek into family parlours, looking into the decision making process of what to take and what to leave behind, introducing the idea that these immigrants came with particular kinds of ‘cultural baggage’ which were used when they got to Australia to recreate home.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE.]



These interpretative strategies enabled the curators to deal effectively with the lack of provenanced material culture with most items bought through auction or through local antique shops.¹⁶ Their value was not in an individual person's story but in the ideas that they could be made to embody. In this particular display, this was the idea of cultural baggage, or as the label puts it: 'their life in a "new" land will take not only a great deal of baggage, but also the cultural traditions of a middle-class background.'¹⁷

This notion of cultural baggage is what enabled the curators to develop a critical edge to their interpretation of a pedagogy of looking, enabling them to take it beyond a romanticized view of the past—a view they recognised many in their audiences would have. Thus, in another label for the window next to this one, they attempted to work against this possibility by asking their visitors to consider the following question:

What does it all mean?

For us the gun case represents the conflict between colonists of the British Empire and the Aboriginal people. For others the gun case is a testimony to the courage and bravery of the pioneers and explorers.

Do the Bible, prayer books and christening gown show the steadfast faith of Christians in a new land? Or are they evidence of the way that Christians ignored the spirituality of Aboriginal people?¹⁸

As this label indicates, much of the critique was carried by words and direct mode of address which had, at times, a rather didactic tone. As Margaret Anderson, the inaugural director of the Migration Museum put it in a recent interview, ‘We were pretty earnest!’¹⁹ But the point was also made through the power of juxtaposition, by placing a series of jarring windows side by side.

This was the case in Gallery four where the suggestion made in the introductory gallery that fashion, the bible, and the gun were all instruments of colonisation was literally embodied in a series of displays. Titled ‘Colonization or Invasion? Nineteenth Century settlement’, the gallery used strong visual juxtapositions alongside uncompromising language to make its points.

The distance between past and present, however, was maintained by the use of the third person curatorial voice and the use of the past tense as this label (figure 3) demonstrates:

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE.]

HUNTED AND HERDED

1. The European invaders did not understand Aboriginal culture and most did not try. They thought their own was superior.

At best were settlers like the Government-appointed Protector of Aborigin~~ies~~, but his 'protection' in fact amounted to the

2. wholesale rejection of traditional Aboriginal values. His role was to Christianize and 'civilize' the natives. At worst Aboriginal people were hunted and herded like animals. Memories of atrocities, including raiding parties, poisoned wells and flour, survive in Aboriginal oral tradition, although they rarely appear in official government documents.

GENOCIDE

- Genocide is an emotive word, but how else should we describe the disappearance of whole communities like the Kurna of the
1. Adelaide Plains? Only in the harsh interior, in land unattractive to Europeans, did groups manage to survive the full impact of white settlement.

The effect is to implicitly suggest that 'we' know better at the same time as to continue to 'other' Aboriginal people by not giving them their own voice.

II. Mining the archive to construct a pedagogy of reading

The second strategy, mainly used in the twentieth century galleries is a pedagogy of reading. In Gallery five, for example, which dealt with the history of the White Australia policy²⁰ and the wider context which eventually saw its demise, the curators used images and documents from public archives and newspapers to convey the contrast between official policies on migration and attempts to market Australia as a migrant destination with accounts of racism during the Depression; displaced peoples camps in Europe to indicate the wider context for post-war migration with images of internment camps for ‘enemy aliens’ during both world wars; ethnic workplaces, and businesses to signal migrant contributions to Australian society with newspaper based examples of racism during the Depression.

[INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE.]



The approach reflects a different social history practice from that used in the pedagogy of looking. Rather than representative objects, curators wanted to anchor the history of migration in official records which would help them to give weight to the tensions between inclusion and exclusion—a point that they could make through their own curatorial voice in guiding readers/visitors through the ‘evidence’ as well as their choice of case studies. The approach allowed them to move through large swathes of time while pausing on particular vignettes whose inclusion prevented the chronological narrative from becoming an unreflective narrative that erased conflict and contradiction. In figure four, for example, curatorial attention was given to the ethnic tensions that arose during the Depression which were then contrasted with the

need to populate or perish in the period after World War Two in the next face of the graphic panels.

The chronological approach, however, supported the overall aim of documenting and interpreting the increasing cultural diversity of the population, adding to the impression that the main narrative at the Museum was about ‘the ethnics’. Furthermore, the impersonal nature of these displays did not provide a space for building empathy, making it clear that the function of a pedagogy of reading is the provision of information, which, while key to providing a holistic understanding of the history of migration, does not connect the past to the present nor provide bridges between ‘us’ and ‘them’. If anything, this approach is firmly about ‘them’ as a group of people that needed to be managed so as to ensure the boundedness of ‘us’. To break that effect down, a *pedagogy of listening* was needed.

III. Oral history and the pedagogy of listening

This is effectively what occurred through an audiovisual display on the experiences of Polish survivors from World War Two which used oral history as the basis of the narrative. According to Szekeres,²¹ the aim of the project was not to present another war story but ‘to recreate the atmosphere, experience and horror of those times in order to explain to the museum visitor the reason for the influx of large numbers of homeless refugees who came after the war from Europe to settle in Australia’. Placed within a display that sought to suggest the horror of concentration camps through the use of barbed wire, Prisoner of War (POW) uniforms and dark colours, the film followed the lives of each individual until they came to Australia, in their own voices, aided by various objects they had managed to keep from that time.

Apart from showing how oral history became intimately associated with

collecting objects, what this display suggests is the emotional power of combining the pedagogy of looking with that of listening as a counter to the drier pedagogy of reading. Essential to this was the ability to reproduce the image and sounds of those interviewed within the context of exhibitions. The introduction of multimedia into the exhibition space is what made a pedagogy of listening possible. By providing personal accounts of historical experiences, other visitors who had shared similar experiences were able to see themselves within the museum. Furthermore, such displays asked visitors to extend tolerance to those who are 'other' by asking them to recognise their humanity.

A second strategy for giving voice to the experiences of new migrants was to use actors to read extracts from primary sources such as letters or diaries (or alternatively to quote from them in labels). This was used in a display about Elizabeth, a suburb of Adelaide specifically designed to house British post-war migrants in the final gallery. The display, called 'Letters home', used letters written in the 1960s and 1970s between British migrants and their friends and family back home to explore a range of themes, including the cost of living, the weather, as well as more intimate feelings like homesickness. In one extract, for example, visitors heard Shirley Gutteridge saying to her mother Olive Snuggs, that 'I had my first little homesick cry the other night but I'm alright now'.²² Instructed to 'Lift the handset. Listen to what it feels like to leave your home and start a new life in another country',²³ visitors could follow Shirley's emotional journey which indicated that it actually took her quite a long time to be 'alright'. While this approach facilitated the promotion of tolerance and understanding, however, it left the structural relations between migrant and host untouched. This was not the case with the final interpretative approach—a pedagogy of feeling at the Immigration Museum in

Melbourne.

IV. Anchoring the past in the present, or a pedagogy of feeling

Opened in 1998, this museum had the benefit of being able to study the Migration Museum in Adelaide. While dealing with similar thematic terrain, the Immigration Museum privileged a thematic approach over a chronological one, focusing on leavings, journeys, and arrivals to begin with and adding the history of immigration policy in 2003 and, most recently, an exhibition on practices of inclusion and exclusion called *Identity – Yours, Mine, Ours*.²⁴ Personal stories, or a pedagogy of listening is its strongest interpretative approach, which is used to deal with the limitations of the pedagogies of looking and reading. Here however, I want to explore how a pedagogy of listening is turned into a pedagogy of *feeling*, using an interactive developed for the *Getting In* Gallery—a gallery which uses a pedagogy of reading to provide information on the history of immigration policy in Australia.

Just as the Migration Museum in Adelaide used personal stories to provide a human anchor to the drier history of immigration policies, the Immigration Museum also knew that they had to use personal stories to interpret the significance of immigration policies to the lives of real people. Unlike at the Migration Museum, however, curators chose not to use oral histories but to stage an interactive ‘play’ based on hypothetical but historically accurate case studies with a part for visitors that could be acted out through an interactive screen. It is the nature of this interactive space and the way it connected visitors with the history of immigration policies that we need to focus on next.

The piece opened in 2003—the year in which the National Museum of Australia found itself embroiled in the history wars for its stance on colonial history and its

elevation of multiculturalism²⁵—as well as two years after 9/11 and, for Australians, the ugly *Tampa* incident in which the conservative Australian government refused to accept a boatload of asylum seekers picked up by the Norwegian merchant ship *Tampa*.

This multimedia interactive enables those who engage with it to occupy the position of immigration officer, making decisions on who can and cannot enter or stay in Australia. Each applicant is played by actors. Visitors have access to a dossier that contains information about each one—the same dossier used by the immigration official, played by an actor whom visitors temporarily replace at the decision moment. Visitors witness their interview and are asked to evaluate whether or not, based on their answers and the information in the dossier, they would allow them to remain in the country. Those seeking residency range from Chinese citizens at the start of the twentieth century to recent asylum seekers from the Middle East—a process that was already taking place in 2003. Visitors then witness the actual decision which is made on the basis of immigration policies at the time of application and the emotional reaction of the applicant to that decision. The contrast between visitors' decisions and those of the information officer is what enables visitors to confront the ethical and political overtones of Australia's immigration policies and their own relationship to them.

This emotional engagement is achieved through the close ups of peoples' faces and their tone of voice—the impassive face of the immigration officer who nevertheless conveys his own values through this tone of voice, the stressed, emotional faces of the applicants for whom this means life and death or the ability to be with their families. Visitors experience outrage when the immigration officer remains impassive while excluding a Chinese migrant from remaining in Australia at

the turn of the last century who will be deported and have to leave her husband and children behind; betrays no empathy for an Iraqi asylum seeker who fails to get in on the count that he cannot produce official papers, but welcomes a British couple despite the fact that the wife is not as enamoured of coming to Australia as her husband. They are distressed by both the cruelty and unfairness of the system and the officer's coldness. Empathy is the last thing that is present in immigration policies and their application in practice. The net result is a recognition that policies concerning immigration are based on cultural values that define who are 'us' and who are 'them' and that these values have a long history in Australia which is very difficult to dislodge.

[INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE.]



Collecting practices are not key to a pedagogy of feeling. What is key is the form of display which reflects the self through the other. In other words, the form of

interactivity on offer is a reflection on the ‘self’ or ‘us’, rather than an insight into the other. This is done through a focus on people’s emotions. Applicants are presented in a mis-en-scene that encourages eye to eye contact, or some form of bodily sensation/connection so as to establish a sense that direct communication is going on, that there is a conversation happening.

This intense form of sensory engagement, in which meanings are emergent rather than didactic, and which necessitates both emotional and cognitive labour on the part of visitors, takes this form of pedagogy into the realm of affect, making it more than a matter of representation. This becomes clear if we understand what is going on as a process of mimetic communication.²⁶ As Anna Gibbs explains it, this is a form of communication practice that embodies relations between people, rather than the communication of information. It involves ‘corporeally based forms of imitation, both voluntary and involuntary,’ producing a tendency for those involved ‘to converge emotionally’.²⁷

It seems to me this is exactly what is happening in this interactive as visitors ‘witness’ the emotional journeys of the applicants and the impassivity of the official. Responding to the facial expressions of the applicants, as well as their voices, they become embroiled in their emotional predicaments, responding negatively to the impassivity of the immigration officer in the presence of these very same emotions, and ultimately bonding with the applicants—as Gibbs puts it, the ‘facial expressions and the tonal quality of the human voice spread contagion like, across bodies, building emotional landscapes that build as well as break social bonds’.²⁸ At that moment, the distance between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘self’ and ‘other’ is minimised, and empathy, rather than tolerance, becomes a possibility. At the same time, an insight

into the cruelty and politics of a system, in this case policies of immigration, also become apparent, making critique a possibility.

Although visitor research is not part of the current study, the power of a pedagogy of feeling to challenge traditional understandings of relations between us and them was suggested in a recent audience study by Philipp Schorch which looked at this same interactive,²⁹ pointing to the need for further research into how visitors experience each of the pedagogies discussed above. In his discussion of various visitor's reflections about this interactive, Schorch points to the ways in which the face to face encounters experienced by these visitors led them to think critically about the impact of present day immigration policies, prompting them to respond to the emotional landscape which the interviews performed on the screen elicited for them.

Analysis and conclusion

What emerges from this brief analysis of these migration exhibits at two Australian museums is the fact curatorial methods of collecting and research have a bearing on the form of display. In turn, these forms of display privilege different activities—looking, reading, listening and feeling—which elicit a different set of relations between visitors and the subjects of display. In so doing, these forms also use different pedagogical modes, from outright didacticism to more constructivist and interactive modes based on more affective forms of interpretation.

Thus, in a 'pedagogy of looking', the lack of a curatorial methodology for sourcing provenanced personal objects, leads to a collecting practice that locates representative objects that can then be used to illustrate already established narrative tropes. Any critique of those tropes requires a very didactic form of text which uses the second person to direct how visitors look at the displays and what thoughts to take

away from them. The display is image-rich, whether from reproductions of images or theatricalized settings which invite visitors to look into the past and at others, effectively producing what Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett³⁰ refers to as an ‘in-situ display’. The window effect, however, literally separates ‘them’ from ‘us’, as does the use of past tense and third person curatorial voice in the labelling. The effect of a pedagogy of looking is thus of producing a notion of the past which is framed as distinct from the present and as separate from ‘us’. This is because those who inhabit that past are types rather than individual people with whom we can have a personal relationship.

In contrast to the immersive qualities of a ‘pedagogy of looking’, a ‘pedagogy of reading’ is a non-immersive two-dimensional environment, dominated by graphic panels with images and text. Based on archival research from sources such as institutional archives, the approach is more likely to reflect official narratives, unless there is an explicit curatorial attempt to counteract such narratives through the use of juxtapositions or direct critique. It too uses the third person curatorial voice to produce institutional authority and the second person to provide direct and didactic modes of address to the visitor to get them to reflect on particular points of interpretation. Reflecting a shift away from collecting representative objects, it points to the way in which history curators began to use archives to build the narrative structure of their exhibitions rather than simply illustrating received historiographies with representative images already available in books. While in the 1980s curators had to physically travel to the archive, limiting their ability to access a wide variety of sources, digitisation has enabled a much wider access to institutional and public archives, aiding the ability to juxtapose contrasting and competing narratives and introduce a more pluralistic curatorial practice. However, the lack of personal stories

as well as the institutional voice means that it is hard to establish close relations between past and present and between ‘self’ and ‘other’, ‘us’ and ‘them’.

In a ‘pedagogy of listening’ however, personal stories are what drive the larger narrative. Based largely on oral history projects, curators focused on collecting stories, with objects playing a secondary role.³¹ This meant that suddenly it was possible to provoke more critical insights into the past by using the first person narrative voice—rather than the third person voice of the curator trying to ask challenging questions themselves or presenting contrasting institutional perspectives.

Visually, the look of exhibitions also changed. Rather than either dioramas or strong graphic design using image and text, telephones, video booths and later touch screens appeared next to supporting objects or even without them, pointing to the importance of multimedia in display practices. Photographs of individual people, or video of them are central as is their voice—either through a recording or quoted directly in labels (as opposed to the curator using the information contained in the oral history to renarrate the story in third person voice). The voice of those being represented is thus prioritised leading to a pluralist curatorial practice that encourages visitors to listen. Visitors are not, however, implicated as witnesses. This means that while the increase in voices lends itself to a recognition of the politics of identity, a ‘pedagogy of listening’ leaves untouched the ways in which these politics are embedded in the power relations between self and other. Indeed, quite often it reasserts such relations.³²

A ‘pedagogy of feeling’ attempts to address this problem by making the subjectivity of the visitor the ground for inquiry as well. Here the objective is not just to represent diversity but to make the space between ‘self’ and ‘other’, ‘us’ and ‘them’, the subject of inquiry. The curatorial practice is dialogic in that visitors are

required to engage with the aims of the display using their own identities and collective memories in order to rethink relations between themselves and others. Oral histories become testimonies and visitors become witnesses leading to a curatorial practice that invites a rethinking between ‘self’ and ‘other’, ‘us’ and ‘them’.

Endnotes

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² Migration Museum, Adelaide, *Chops & Changes* Gallery 8 curatorial folder ‘1995-1997’ Bread, Sweets. Meets, Towers, *Letter to the Migration Museum* by E. Wallace-Carter, 13 October 1995.

³ T. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁴ T. Bennett, ‘Museums and Progress: Narrative, ideology, performance’, in *the Birth of the Museum*, pp. 179-186.

⁵ R. Edwards, *Museum policy and development in South Australia, Final Report* (Adelaide: Government Printer, 1981).

⁶ This Trust was composed of the Constitutional Museum, the National Motor Museum, the Migration Museum and the South Australian Maritime Museum.

⁷ History Trust of South Australia and the Ethnic Museum Working Party, *Ethnic Museum Working Party report* (Adelaide, History Trust of South Australia, 1982), p.12 in E. J. Henrich, ‘Whose stories are we telling? Exhibitions of migration history

in Australian Museums 1984-2001' (PhD Dissertation, University of New South Wales, 2012), p. 32.

⁸ V. Szekeres, 'The problems of collecting and interpreting our multicultural heritage', in M. Birtley and P. McQueen (eds), *New Responsibilities: documenting Multicultural Australia: a record of the conference for museums, Libraries, archives and historical collections: towards a national agenda for a multicultural Australia* (Melbourne: Museums Australia Inc. Victorian Branch and Library Council of Australia, 1989); V. Szekeres, 'Representing diversity and challenging racism: the Migration Museum', in R. Sandell (ed), *Museums, Society, Inequality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁹ Migration Museum, Adelaide, 'The Migration and Settlement Museum – a new Museum for South Australia and a first for Australia' in File P2, History Trust of South Australia, *Appeals through Media MM*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ V. Szekeres, 'The use of oral history in museum displays', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, 9 (1987), 112-116; V. Szekeres, 'The problems of collecting and interpreting our multicultural heritage'. See Labrum this volume, for a further discussion of this point.

¹² M. Anderson, 'Museums, history and the creation of memory, 1970 – 2008', in D. Griffin and L. Paroissien (eds), *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology* (2011), http://nma.gov.au/research/understanding-museums/MAnderson_2011.html. Accessed 4 January 2017.

¹³ V. Szekeres, 'Oral history in museum displays'.

¹⁴ The exhibitions discussed here no longer exist. The discussion is based on archival sources at the Migration Museum, particularly the working files for each gallery of the initial suite of exhibitions developed between 1984 - 1986.

¹⁵ Gallery 1 provided a history of the site, which was a former destitute asylum and Gallery 2, the Forum Gallery, had a changing program of community based exhibitions.

¹⁶ Migration Museum, Adelaide, Gallery 3 Working files, individual object sheets.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Andrea Witcomb, oral history interview with Margaret Anderson, 22 November 2016.

²⁰ For the White Australia policy see the National Museum of Australia website: www.nma.gov.au/online_features/defining_moments/featured/white_australia_policy_begins. Accessed 15 January 2017.

²¹ V. Szekeres, 'Oral History in Museum Displays', p. 113.

²² Migration Museum, Adelaide, Panel 24, Working file for Gallery 6, Letters Home.

²³ Migration Museum, Adelaide, Working file for Gallery 6, Letters Home.

²⁴ See A. Witcomb, 'Cultural pedagogies in the museum: Walking, listening and feeling', in M. Watkins, G. Noble and C. Driscoll (eds), *Cultural Pedagogies and Human Conduct* (London: Routledge, 2015).

²⁵ G. Davison, 'What should national museums do? Learning from the world', in M. Lake (ed), *Memory, monuments and museums: The past in the present* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006).

²⁶ A. Gibbs, 'After affect: sympathy, synchrony, and mimetic communication', in M. Greg and G. J. Seigworth (eds), *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

²⁷ E. Hatfield, J. T. Cacioppo and R. L. Rapson quoted in A. Gibbs, 'After affect: sympathy, synchrony, and mimetic communication', in M. Greg and G. J. Seigworth (eds), *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 186; E. Hatfield, J. T. Cacioppo and R. L. Rapson, *Emotional Contagion Studies in Emotion and social interaction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 5.

²⁸ A. Gibbs, 'After Affect', p. 191.

²⁹ P. Schorch, 'The cosmohermeneutics of migration encounters at the Immigration Museum Melbourne', *Museum Worlds: Advances in Research*, 2:1 (2014), 81-98.

³⁰ B. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 'Objects of Ethnography', in *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

³¹ See Macdonald and Morgan this volume.

³² See A. Witcomb, 'Cultural pedagogies in the museum'.