Chapter Nine

A LABOUR OF LOVE: (RE)BIRTHING THE BABIES OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S DESTITUTE ASYLUM

CORINNE BALL and NIKKI SULLIVAN

THEATRE AND DRAMA scholars Mark Fleishman and Nadia Davids argue that performance is integral to the work of the museum, and to the politics of meaning-making as a community concern.[1] With this in mind, this chapter frames two memorial recitations at the Migration Museum, South Australia as performance, and as performative. We examine how our desire to recognize, remember, and memorialize stories from South Australia's past grew from our creative museum practice (as well as our identities as mothers) into an emotional, embodied experience for staff and visitors that mirrored the processes and relationships of childbirth: our memorial performance became a shared "labour."

We examine this shared labour by drawing on Jerome De Groot's work on performance, empathy, and how historical engagement affects the public's consumption and understanding of the past.[2] We reflect on meaning-making in the memorial recitations as a collaborative process that forged emotional and generational ties and connected history to the present. We seek to answer Fleishman and Davids's question: "what does theatre bring to the process of memorialization that the museum doesn't already

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1 Mark Fleishman and Nadia Davids, "Moving Theatre: An Exploration of the Place of Theatre in the Process of Memorialising District Six Through an Examination of Magnet Theatre's Production Onnest'bo," *South African Theatre Journal* 21, no. 1 (2007): 149–65.

2 Jerome De Groot "Empathy and Enfranchisement," *Rethinking History* 10, no. 3 (September 2006): 393.

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achieve through other means?"[3] Recalling their further assertion that memorials deal-ing with living memory must be more than exhibitions and photographs, we theorize our performances both at, and as, an intersection of embodiment, memorializing, and affect. We propose that our work adds important layers to existing interpretations of the history of the Destitute Asylum, and contributes to what Vanessa Agnew, cited by Jerome De Groot, calls "the democratization of historical knowledge."[4] Finally, we briefly draw on the work of Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin and the founder of postcolonial studies, Edward Said, to show how time and space became further linked in our performances: layered with connectivity, interwoven with intersubjectivity, and tangled with ancestors and descendants, pasts, presents, and futures.

The Social Experiment of South Australia

The British colony of South Australia was proclaimed in 1836 and introduced a radical new form of colonization where land was to be sold rather than granted, enabling the free passage of labourers who could then bring the uncultivated land into production. The new colony was thus removed from the scourge of the convict system, being instead envisaged as a balance between owners of capital and owners of labour. The migration of a desirable class of colonists was encouraged: the *Adelaide Observer* opined in 1844 that in South Australia "every man will find his fitting place and vocation; and the busi-ness of life, its joys and sorrows, will be borne and encountered with becoming cheerful-ness and manly fortitude."[5] Basic poor relief in return for labour on government works was promised as part of the social contract of assisted passage, although the authorities were mindful that only "fit objects of public charity" were to be given relief. This relief was "not intended to render the condition of those receiving it one of ease or enjoyment, but is limited to an extent merely compatible with their actual support."[6]

The peaks and troughs of labour demand, the time-lag in communications with Britain, intra- and intercolonial issues of exploration, settlement and supply, the mid-century gold rushes, and the sheer messiness of life meant that the colonial authorities were soon dealing with an increasing problem of destitution that stubbornly refused to go away.[7] While cases initially numbered only in the dozens, then low hundreds, within

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3 Fleishman and Davids, "Moving Theatre," 159.

4 Jerome De Groot "Affect and Empathy: Re-enactment and Performance As/In History," *Rethinking History* 15, no. 4 (November 2011): 589.

5 "The Labour Market," *Adelaide Observer*, June 15, 1844, 4.

6 Colonial Secretary A. M. Mundy, "Instructions to the Emigration Agent," *South Australian Register*, September 9, 1848, 3.

7 Many scholars have written, and continue to write, about the appalling cost of European invasion to the Indigenous peoples of what became known as South Australia. By the 1880s, the beginning of our period of focus in this paper, there were separate missions established outside of the metropolis for the "care" of Aboriginal people—the population of the Destitute Asylum was always predominantly white European. Very occasionally a "Lascar" or "Mohammedan" will be seen recorded in the registers, but very rarely indeed.

fifteen years, when the European population had surged to 60,000, further measures had to be taken. In the early 1850s a government-funded Destitute Asylum was established to house poverty-stricken, destitute, and infirm citizens. It also provided "lying-in" accommodation (birthing and postpartum maternity care) for unmarried, widowed, or deserted pregnant women. In 1878 a purpose-built Lying-in Home was opened and between 1880 and 1909, 1678 babies were born there. Over a hundred of these babies were stillborn.

The Migration Museum opened in 1986 and occupies the last remaining buildings of the Destitute Asylum, including the former Lying-in Home. The Home houses a permanent exhibition that tells the story of the site called *In This Place*.

Abjected and Rejected

As hinted above, from the outset there was concern that only "fit objects" received public charity, and as numbers grew it becomes clear that those in the "labouring classes" who were unable to find their "fitting place and vocation" in the colony or meet life's sorrows with the necessary "cheerfulness and manly fortitude" were less than desirable citizens. Inhabitants of the Destitute Asylum ("inmates" in the parlance of the day) were constructed as abject "others" to be disavowed, contained, constrained, and kept out of sight. Older men were emasculated by their inability to work and contribute, and women and children abandoned by their husbands and fathers were left exposed by the absence of their menfolk.

At the very bottom of this social hierarchy of misery came the "fallen women," unmarried, working-class mothers who did not, could not, or would not, meet prevailing christian notions of modesty and moral hygiene. Regardless of the fact that many were young people we would now consider to still be children, preyed upon or neglected while under the care of the State Children's Council, these young women were cast out of their families and communities where they would usually have expected to give birth.

Yet these abjected others were integral to the colonial project, and the British nation state that both formed and framed it. Anne Curthoys, Marilyn Lake and many other feminist historians have explored the intersections between women and nation building, and challenged the masculine mythologizing so prevalent in Australian identity and history.[8] Women's work, both in the domestic sphere of house and home and through their literal labours in producing new generations of labouring stock were, from the outset, an unacknowledged but vital part of the continued (and desired) progress of (re)production in South Australia. The unruly and problematic bodies of the fertile destitute haunted the colonial project, an effect emphasized by the Asylum's placement literally a stone's throw from the main locus of colonial power, Government House and the Parliament.

It has long been acknowledged that colonial history is sanitized. This happens in museums, as museum studies academic Viv Golding argues, through the erasure and/

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8 Marilyn Lake, "Nationalist Historiography, Feminist Scholarship, and the Promise and Problems of New Transnational Histories: The Australian Case," *Journal of Women's History* 19, no. 1 (2007): 180–86.

No.	Name of Infant.	Date of Birth.	Mother's Name, &c.
1	Purchase Robert	January 1st	Mary Ann Purchase see No 436/79
2	Clarke Charlotte	January 5th	Bridget Clarke see No 409/79
3	Blue John	January 7th	Louisa Blue see No 472/79
4	Roberts William	January 8th	Margaret J Roberts No 46/79
5	Leonard Ann	January 9th	Mary Leonard No 440/79
6	Cusack William	January 27th	Mary Cusack No 8/80
7	Warner Alfred Alexr	February 11th	Pauline Warner No 463/79
8	Souter Wm Marshall	February 17th	Annie Souter No 441/79
9	Gray Elizabeth	February 2st	Margaret Gray No 47/80
10	Richardson (Stillborn)	February 29th	Elizabeth Richardson No 66/0
11	Thomas Fredk Geo	February 29th	Elizabeth Thomas No 85/80
12	Braslin Ann Maud	March 4th	Sarah Braslin No 5/80

Putative Father.	Nationality.	Religion.	Date of Leaving.	Where gone to.
Robert Hutchins, Butcher, Mt Gambier.	E	R.C	Feb 4th 1880	Taken by Mother
Henry McCraig, Norse Clipper.	I	R.C	Jany 31st 1880	Taken by Mother
John Wood, Groom	E	Ch of Eng	March 11 1880	Taken by Mother
James McCardle, Labourer	E	Baptist	Jan 28th 1880	Taken by Mother
Thomas Crocker, Bellows Maker, Wright St	I	R.C	Jan 28 1880	Taken by Mother
John McDermott, Hawker	I	R.C	Mar 3rd 1880	Taken by Mother
Alexander Vogler, Labourer, Edithburg	F	Luth	Mar 8th 1880	Taken by Mother
William Kidman, Baker, Adelaide.	S	Ch of Eng	Mar 22 1880	Taken by Mother
Keith McCray, Seaman, Glasgow	S	Presbytn	April 1st 1880	Taken by Mother
Henry Rowe				
George Johns	E	Wes	May 13th 1880	Taken by Mother
George Higgins, Clare	I	R.C	April 2 1880	Taken by Mother

Figure 9.1. Page from *Register of Infants Born in the Destitute Asylum Lying-in Home* (GRG29/15, Unit 1). Courtesy of State Records of South Australia.

or containment of voices, experiences, bodies, and emotions that threaten its authority. But, as she writes, in the affective museum "things and people … might be brought closer to our 'skins'," an approach that embraces poetics and brings back what has been excluded, repressed, disavowed, and constrained. Golding continues, "the … poet's voice [can] break historical silences and open up possibilities for museums to have an impact on future lives, notably by pointing to embodied knowledge(s) and multisensory experiences."[9] We will now describe our museum's role in bringing close the disavowed women and babies of the Destitute Asylum's Lying-in Home.

Bringing the Past to Life?

Since opening in 1986, the Migration Museum has always had a gallery that tells the story of the Destitute Asylum site and buildings. The most recent iteration, *In This Place*, was developed from 2015 to 2016 by curator Corinne Ball, Migration Museum Director Mandy Paul, and curator Dr Nikki Sullivan. As with previous versions, the team consciously sought to emulate the work of feminist historians such as Miriam Dixson and Patricia Grimshaw in telling the stories of those who have been excluded from previous heroic and colonizing narratives.

As part of the archival research for *In This Place*, Corinne and Nikki transcribed the names from the Asylum's *Register of Infants Born at the Lying-In Home* (see Fig. 9.1).[10] After compiling this list, we reflected that the final total of 1,678 children seemed like a much larger number than we had expected, so the team workshopped ways to visually represent this mass of bodies in the exhibition. After spending so much time doing research for *In This Place*, we found it had become important to us as women, historians, and mothers to acknowledge the physical and emotional labour of the birthing women who had occupied the building we worked in every day. For us this commitment recalls sociologist Gaynor Bagnalls's assertion that the relationship between people and heritage sites is based as much on emotion and imagination as it is on cognition.[11]

We worked with our exhibition architect, Mulloway, to design a simple installation that could function as both a space/place of reflection and a visual way of representing the number of children born. When designing the memorial, we knew we wanted the babies' names to be "unbound" from the register, we wanted to disrupt the uniformity, stasis, and regulation of their recording by the institution. Each name and birthdate were written on a separate card that was attached by cord to a wire frame on the ceiling, and thus each card could move independently as air circulates in the gallery.[12] It was important that the names weren't all in one block and thus homogenized: by giving

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9 Viv Golding, "Museums, Poetics and Affect," *Feminist Review* 104 (2013): 80–99.

10 *Register of Infants Born in the Destitute Asylum Lying-In Home,* GRG29/15, Unit 1, Destitute Asylum Board, State Records of South Australia.

11 Gaynor Bagnall, "Performance and Performativity at Heritage Sites," *Museum and Society* 1, no. 2 (2003): 96.

12 An unanticipated but delightful aspect of this design is being able to interact with the babies by blowing gently upwards and making the cards move in response.

Figure 9.2. *The Babies Memorial* installation at the Migration Museum, designed by Mulloway Studio. Photograph by Andre Castellucci. Courtesy of the History Trust of South Australia.

them each a card we attempted to give them each an individual identity. We chose a cursive font that mimicked handwriting, and this gave the names a flow rather than a cognitive readability. This was to contrast with the fixedness of the register pages and also of more formal memorials with their carved, regulated letters in straight lines. The babies who were stillborn were given a black edge to the bottom of their card, akin to a mourning notice from the period (Fig. 9.2).

Mandy reflected on the impact of this installation in a 2016 interview about the exhibition, explaining that while "the memorial is clearly not about fact, you can look up and it gives you the volume, the numbers and you can see how many were stillborn because of the little black lines. And we know that it's actually a really emotional point for many people. And for those of us who have had babies, even being in a building that had that many babies born in those circumstances makes you feel a certain way."[13]

Primagravida—Our First Labour

The "unboundness," disruption, and flow we strived for in the memorial was echoed and literally given voice in two recitations of the memorial names. We became convinced that our exhibition and memorial had to have more than physical form. As Fleishman and Davids argue, performance is integral to the work of the museum, and to the politics of meaning-making as a community concern. They cite analytic philosopher Richard Rorty, who writes "human solidarity is to be achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers, as 'one of us' rather than as 'them.'"[14] In other words, the kinds of affective connections engendered in and

13 Michelle Toft, *The Writings on the Wall: Communicating with Visitors in the Exhibition Space* (Geelong: Deakin University Press, 2016), 19.

14 Fleishman and Davids, "Moving Theatre," 153.

through performance and *poesis* can, as we will argue, undo the work of abjection in which the Destitute Asylum once played such an integral role.

The first recitation event ("Remembering the Babies") took place on Mother's Day, 2016, and saw the curatorial staff responsible for *In This Place* read out the names and birthdates of the 1,678 Lying-In Home babies, in what we described in our advertising copy as "an immersive performance art event." Little did we realize the effect this memorial performance would have on our audience or ourselves, as (and after) it unfolded.

One of our main aims was to create a deeper feeling around our memorial installation so that our visitors might be able to reflect further on the Home's babies and their mothers, and experience empathy for these long-abjected persons. We understood that performance could, in the words of De Groot, contribute to meaning by reinserting the body, making the empty landscape of the past live again.[15] Professor Laurajane Smith, who examines heritage as a cultural process of meaning and memory-making, writes that "it is this ability to feel, particularly when dealing with contentious or dissonant issues, that is often central to the development of critical and progressive insights into the past and its meanings for the present."[16] Consequently, we looked to performance to demonstrate what De Groot calls "the uncanny, peculiar, odd way in which we relate to the past," and also importantly, to disrupt "the controlling and disciplining claims of an all-encompassing, authoritative historical mainstream."[20]

The end result was an emotionally and physically grueling experience for both the presenters and the audience. Reading the 1,678 names took almost two hours, and in many ways reflected the physical processes of childbirth, with its ebb and flow, its insistent rhythm, and its emotional crescendo. The three presenters dressed in black, with rosemary sprig buttonholes, to relieve the starkness and to invoke "rosemary for remembrance." The reading took place in the *In This Place* gallery, with no formal stage, just three chairs in front of the heritage fireplace, and the audience facing us, with the babies' memorial directly above their heads. As we read, the room seemed very quiet, even though there were over fifty attendees.

The litany of names was cyclical, with Reader A (Mandy) declaiming five names and birthdates in calendar order, then Reader B (Corinne) reading the next five, then Reader C (Nikki) the next five, in a relentless chain. There were no pauses and no interjections, for the whole time, about one hundred minutes. This unbroken chain was not intentional; rather, the readers were immersed in the process and almost physically unable to stop.

Corinne reflected afterwards:

> I was intensely aware of my turn coming around very quickly—there was a mini-release and pause as soon as I handed over to Nikki, and then when she handed over to Mandy my tension and anticipation rose as I kept a strict eye on the list and listened for the exact moment to take the next turn, in time and on the beat. I was very aware of the numbers passing, noticing when we reached 500, and intending to say something to the crowd

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15 De Groot, "Affect and Empathy," 587–99.

16 Laurajane Smith, "Visitor Emotion, Affect and Registers of Engagement at Museums and Heritage Sites," *Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage* 14, no 2 (December 2014): 125.

when we reached halfway or 1,000, but the momentum of the list (like the momentum of
the stages of labour) was too great to resist.

After the event, when we had sore muscles and dry throats from our recitations, we
received feedback that told us our performance, the "re-enactment" of the Lying-In
Home register, had been successful as what scholar (and fan) of historical re-enactment
Vanessa Agnew calls "affective history."[17] She defines this as historical representation
that both takes affect as its object, and attempts to elicit it. These types of historiographic
performances are, says Agnew, less concerned with events, processes, or structures than
with the individual's physical and psychological experience during the performance.

One attendee, Kate, recognized the physical labour we undertook, writing "congratu-
lations to you on the performance yesterday. 'Remembering the Babies' was a great idea,
beautifully and simply executed. You must all be exhausted today. I thought the event
had a real solemnity to it … I loved sitting and listening to all those names and wonder-
ing about their destinies … You read my aunt's name beautifully."[18]

Our impact was also more than personal. De Groot argues that "[t]he embodiment
of the past in the contemporary offers an empathic, emotional and … queer version of
both then/now, leading to a possible reclamation and a revelation of the power struc-
tures that seek to discipline and fix identity." Re-enactment/performance can, he writes,
"counter the monumental fictions of the State."[19] Our event attempted to disrupt the
previous hegemonic power structures that have shaped both the lives and experiences
of the women and babies of the Lying-In Home, and the colonial state from and for which
they were abjected. It achieved this aim, we argue, through a performative re-inscription
of the literal space of abjection/incarceration, and through its proximity to the more
traditional, martial memorials directly outside the museum, at Government House.
These remembrances of war are typical of what Fleishman and Davids refer to as "static
remembrances" that contribute to the monumental fictions of the State.[20]

As feminist philosopher Sara Ahmed has argued, "[a]ctivities performed in certain
spaces at certain times may 'reorientate' bodies in space and work to subvert taken-for-
granted ideas about gender, race and class … [R]e-orientation forces movement, and …
as one shifts position, that which lies behind—the background—comes to the fore. In
this activity, categories we do not usually inhabit are recognised: this causes discomfort,
but at the same time it opens up our world to new kinds of connections."[21]

One visitor explained how our event's "queering" (destabilizing, upsetting) of sys-
tems of power and privilege had a very real transformative effect on her family story,
and on the emotional connections between those attending the event and their ances-

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17 Vanessa Agnew, "History's Affective Turn: Historical Re-Enactment and Its Work in the Present,"
Rethinking History 11, no. 3 (July 2007): 299–312.

18 KW, personal correspondence with authors, May 10, 2016.

19 De Groot, "Affect and Empathy," 593.

20 Fleishman and Davids, "Moving Theatre," 153.

21 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University
Press, 2006) in Golding, "Museums, Poetics and Affect," 94.

tors. Madelena attended with her teenaged daughter and elderly mother, whose own father was one of our Lying-In babies. She came to hear her grandfather's name, and "looked across at my seventy-nine-year-old mother when her dad's name was called. It was a very emotional moment, and for my daughter it was also touching: this was her great grandfather that she hadn't ever met but now she knew a bit about. It was a grounding moment for mum, myself, and my daughter. The curators used their voices beautifully and cleansed some of the tarnish of the past. It's lovely that my grandad now has a legitimate place in an illegitimate history."[22]

Even those who could not attend felt a connection to the event, demonstrating the power of live performance, even when it cannot be directly witnessed. Graeme emailed from New South Wales, asking "will you please confirm that my mother's and uncle's names were read out on Mother's Day? I wished I could have been there."[23]

We came to understand our first "performance" of the babies' names as a form of poetics, an attempt to inject a dynamic sense of shared humanity, life, and respect into our museum space, and to create something that supplemented and complemented our memorial installation. The endless litany of the baby names had an epic form, which, we hoped, further disrupted the established story of the Destitute Asylum. Citing Bachelard, Viv Golding describes the power of poetics, "an imaginative 'awakening' that the 'exuberance and depth of a poem' may bring about in audiences."[24] Imagination and poetics, she writes, "provide a 'tool to dissect' racism and sexism and give a language and voice that can undermine prejudice."

This important ethical work demands physical, emotional, and intellectual labour, from those designing and programming content, and from visitors, and this was certainly the case in both our performances, but particularly in the second, which we will discuss shortly. Poetics, Golding writes "moves us to reflect on the ethics of colonial encounters, the stories we tell about self and others, and to relate this to our lived experiences today and in the global future."[25] In connecting with the women who laboured and the babies who were born in the space in which the performances took place, the audience members—our birthing partners—were moved (not just cognitively, but also viscerally) by the ethical dilemmas that constituted colonial relations and that continue to resonate today.

Golding's further assertion that the value of poetics "lies in its potential to open disciplines and spaces up to voices that have been historically excluded" is also poignantly demonstrated in and through our event.[26] Poetics, as our performances showed, provide opportunities to challenge colonialist narratives, notions of nation, and so on. When deployed in such ways as our reading, poetics also challenges the dehumaniz-

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22 Madelena B, personal correspondence with authors, February 23, 2017.

23 Graeme W, personal correspondence with authors, February 15, 2017.

24 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon, 1994) in Golding, "Museums, Poetics and Affect," 81.

25 Golding, "Museums, Poetics and Affect," 81.

26 Golding, "Museums, Poetics and Affect," 81.

ing construction of "others" in dominant narratives as lacking, or otherwise unfit, as an anonymous homogenized "class."

All three of the readers experienced an embodied affect during the recitation, and we knew that some of our audience had too. However, we were also aware that some visitors had, understandably, felt unable to "stay the course" of our birthing process, and those that stayed the whole time found it to be a feat of endurance. (Of course, this discomfort ironically reflects literal labour and delivery). One respondent identified for us what was lacking: "while the reading was a solemn occasion that sought to honour those babies and their mothers, it lost some opportunities to reflect on the possibility that each mother's experience was different, and that some occasions were happy, others exhausting, and some tragic."[27] After some months of reflection and reading, we realized we wanted to hold another event in which we used more actively engaging performance techniques. We wanted something "more."

Our Second Labour

In early 2018, we planned another reading of the babies' names, timed to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the last birth in the Lying-In Home in June 1918. We were somewhat apprehensive about doing the lengthy performance again, knowing how taxing it was, and how it was a challenge for the audience to stay focused over such a lengthy period of contemplative time.[28] We began to think about ways to make the performance shorter, while still remembering the women and their babies, and how we might make it a more participatory experience for our audience.

At this point in our narrative, we would like to acknowledge the labour of Bec Pannell, who is part of our education team and a well-known South Australian theatre director. Bec was able to midwife us through the process of workshopping the recitation and develop a strong vision of an event that would involve the audience in more participatory elements, while still honouring the babies and celebrating the achievements of the labouring, destitute women.

Bec suggested that we take the chronological list of babies and break it up into discrete years, which would be read with varying style, pitch, rhythm, and emphasis. This time-play was a vital part of our second labour, recalling what De Groot highlights as "the unique but repetitive quality of performance, the ways in which the dramatic moment (or dramatized moment) interacts and intersects with time, linearity, temporality."[29] Some year blocks were read by just one person, some by two or three of the curatorial team. Voices got quieter or louder during the recitation of names, with some names to be read "with joy," while others with a sepulchral and sombre sadness. These "dramatized moments" layered on top of each other to form our poetic.

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27 RP, personal correspondence with authors, no date.

28 This once again recalls the literal experience of birthing, when one's first delivery is an unknown, but the second time around, one can at least recall to some extent the physical experience, and make perhaps different, or more informed, choices.

29 De Groot, "Affect and Empathy," 592.

These moments became performative as they snowballed together. Cultural theorist Moya Lloyd has traced the evolution of performativity from J. L. Austin's "words that do things" through to Judith Butler's assertion that to succeed, performatives must repeat or recite a "prior and authoritative set of practices." A successful performative speech is more than the sum of its parts: it "exceeds the instance of its utterance" and as Lloyd says, has a past, present, and future iterative context.[30] Our event was performative in its repetition, its call on drama, the way its moments, each baby's name, recalled our long human history, the brief span of a life, and the vast potentiality of each person.

We suggest that this time-play could be thought of in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope, a concept he developed for literary theory that fuses space and time. As Bakhtin describes, in the chronotope, time becomes "thickened," artistically visible as a force and narrative structure in itself. Things don't just "happen," they unfold and refold along a timeline. Space in the chronotope becomes almost an actor itself, and is charged and responsive to movements of time, plot, and history.[31] The two combined in a museum, already a repository of history, have a narrative power and force beyond the ordinary.

Our recitations combined hundreds of individual strands of space/time, through the births represented in our recitations, our transcription of the *Register of Infants Born*, even the Lying-In Home building itself, which is tightly enmeshed in time as the marker of lifetimes and lifecycles *and* museologically as a historical object. The *Register*, our "source of truth," has further "thickness" because it was also the tool that was used to manage women's experiences of time at the Lying-In Home—mothers were legally mandated to remain at the home for a six-month period after they gave birth. Mimicking a more active labour, physical motion was deployed during this second performance to muddy space/time: small movements around the gallery space were choreographed to give the audience a shift of focus and a moment to take a group pause.

While scripted and rehearsed, there was a delight in the challenge of the second recitation, and it was a much less "in your head" experience, more collaborative within our group and with the audience. Interestingly, as Viv Golding points out, "one voice cannot speak for all subalterns" and this is relevant to our approach. We did not seek to tell "the historical truth" from a position of authority, but rather, to break open that logic through the use of multiple voices—polyphony—and the contrapuntal.[32]

We can also use Edward Said's notion of the contrapuntal to think about our performance. Originally a term from music, the contrapuntal ("counterpoint") in literature provides a duality of viewpoint, is syncopated, almost disruptive, and further adds

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30 Judith Butler cited in Moya Lloyd "Performativity and Performance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 23.

31 Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Towards a Historical Poetics," in *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure, and Frames*, ed. Brian Richardson, James Phalen, and Peter Rabinowitz (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002), 15. Fans of *Doctor Who* might think of this as the Time Vortex: in fact, the chronotope is the very definition of "wibbly wobbly, timey wimey" stuff!

32 Golding, "Museums, Poetics and Affect," 86.

depth.[33] Our recitation provided a counterpoint to the *Register of Infants Born* and used the contrapuntal as a methodology. We spoke quietly, then shouted names, we put questions in our voices, awe, laughter, spoke in monotone, and even sang a year block. Breath was actively employed by the readers as a tool to bring the audience into the mood. On occasion, the stillborn babies' names were whispered as another counterpoint, forming pauses. We waterfalled our voices, rapidly overlapping from name to name and shifting speaker with each name.

In short, we deployed changing rhythm, repetition, tonality, staccato, silences, dialogic exchange, stillness, and movement to "insert points of difference into established routes through what counts as knowledge in museums."[34] Our polyphony was further deepened by inviting the audience to add their voices in a collective chanting of year blocks facilitated by projection on the gallery screen, which was stage-managed by Bec.[35] As people joined in, they became visibly more engaged with the names, more animated, and also more focused. We laboured with them as our voices moved down the list: we rebirthed the women, the stories, the experiences together. The audience's labour was integral to our contrapuntal disruption of colonial narratives and the abjection of the other that such narratives at once engender and rely on. Together, the work we did produced uncanny effects as it brought to light the abjected persons that the colony disavowed yet could not exist without. The bodies of the Lying-In Home women and babies are forever tied to the regulatory norms of colonial South Australian society, and serve, as Butler notes, as the "constitutive outside of the domain of the subject" (the colonial state).[36]

The most powerful demonstration of empathy and affective response noticed during this second recitation was a visitor quietly making the sign of the cross and whispering (a prayer?) every time a stillborn baby's name was read out or chanted. Given that, in Catholic theology, unbaptized babies are in limbo, we theorized that this woman was interceding on their behalf—for her, in that moment, those little souls were utterly real and of desperate importance.

Conclusion

Jerome De Groot suggests that the broad appeal of performance can be helpful in democratizing historical knowledge. This is particularly relevant when considering the role of our audience in the production of meaning—the performances would not have been the same had there not been others present. To us, this claim of democratization is also relevant in another sense: in the fact that the performance shared histories of people who have largely been forgotten, some of whose existence may not have ever been known to

33 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993), 51.

34 Golding, "Museums, Poetics and Affect," 104.

35 It was clear the audience became more comfortable with it the second, third, and fourth times we did this. They had been warned before the performance, and of course had the option to not participate vocally.

36 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3.

more than a couple of people (the stillborn babies). De Groot asks how does/can performance, as a hybrid museum practice, "challenge, upset, undermine, unsettle and solidify conceptualizations of the past?"[37]

We answer by framing our recitation events, which challenged visitor (and staff) conceptualization of the Lying-In babies, as what Nikki Sullivan has elsewhere called "transmogrifying (un)becoming(s)."[38] Throughout our performances, visitors were asked to consider the babies *and* themselves, as if magically connected across space and time: this reforms one's concepts of self and other. In Bakhtinian terms, our recitations gathered "eventness," which Bakhtin describes as happening when an occurrence in the present moment becomes more than the automatic result of prior moments. Only a moment with "eventness" can have real weight, and this weight can actually constitute a force of its own in the chronotope. The eventness comes from the tangle of human relationships and people at work during our performances; the children whose names we cited, and their mothers, who were un-named at, but integral to, the event; the audience (those who stayed, those who moved in and out of the space, even those who were present in thought but not body); the generational past(s), the present(s), the future(s).[39] Our two recitations were dialogic processes that strengthened this meshing of space, time, bodies, and embodiment at the Destitute Asylum, demonstrating that performance, per Schneider, is "an activity that nets us all in a knotty and porous relationship to time. It is about the temporal tangle, about the temporal leak, and about the many questions that attend Time's returns."[40]

History, as the saying goes, is written by the victors: it is a story written later, not necessarily "true." In this vein Jerome De Groot references history, be it professional or amateur or fictive, as "at base a rehearsing of things that have been asserted to have occurred, a performative (in the loosest sense of the word) echoing and misrepresentation."[41] We suggest, then, that museums can and should harness this "misrepresentation" by performing history in ways that are not didactic, but rather *affective*. Our events were not about us speaking *for* the othered women and babies, or representing them, but rather about our participation in an imaginative process of (un)becoming *with* them, of breaking the bounds that previously held them, and of moving them from invisible to valuable in the minds of our visitors (they have been valuable to us for many years). To us this is an essential ethical practice that acknowledges connectivity, intersubjectivity, and the entanglement of not just people, but of pasts, presents, and future. As De Groot asks, "what is the writing of history if not the attempted revoicing or reclamation of an expe-

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37 De Groot, "Affect and Empathy," 587–99.

38 Nikki Sullivan, "Transmogrification: (Un)becoming Other(s)," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2013), 552–64.

39 Gary Saul Morson, "The Chronotope of Humanness: Bakhtin and Dostoevsky," in *Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives*, ed. Nele Bemong, Pieter Borghart, Michel De Dobbeleer, Koen De Temmerman, Kristoffel Demoen (Ghent: Academia, 2010), 94.

40 De Groot, "Affect and Empathy," 592.

41 De Groot, "Affect and Empathy," 594.

rience that cannot be touched but might be reconstructed, represented, rethought?"[42] History is always performative, and acknowledging and harnessing this in a museum setting can be transformative, indeed emotionally transmogrifying, for all involved.

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42 De Groot, "Affect and Empathy," 594.