

Emergency! Truth-telling Dights Falls and the Grimwade Rare Books Collection.

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for the

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Part 1.

Dight's Falls

My research began with a delicate pencil, watercolour and gouache painting by Joseph Masters, *Dight's Falls on the Yarra*, painted on 21 August 1856¹. The artwork depicts an industrious colonial landscape during the early occupation and establishment of Melbourne². We see Dights' Mills³ on the stolen land of the Wurundjiri Woi-Wurring people of the Eastern Kulin Nation⁴. A sparsely forested cliffside, coloniser fisherman trying their luck, and a small boat enjoying the serenity. A romanticised scene of the early years of invasion and occupation in Naarm, erasing Aboriginal presence. In this way the painting captures the idealised colonial frontier, transforming a vital Wurundjiri cultural site⁵ into a colonial resource exposed by genocide to industry, terraforming, recreation and exploitation.

During my research I visited ~~Dights Falls~~ four times to develop an embodied relationship with the site. I made journal entries, voice notes, field recordings, video art, poetry, and wrote songs. I observed concrete and bluestone remnants of colonial infrastructure polluted with waste, scoured them for polystyrene fragments to collect⁶, all while listening deeply to the waterway and the landscape around me. I was attempting to connect with Country⁷, while mindfully present, engaged in active real time truth-telling through Deep Listening. Pauline

¹ Joseph Masters, *Dight's Mill on the Yarra*, 21 August 1856, pencil with blue watercolour and white gouache on light grey paper, 17.6 x 24.5 cm (sheet) 31.7 x 45.6 cm (mount), The University of Melbourne Art Collection, The Russell and Mab Grimwade Bequests, 1973, 1973.0286.000.000

² ~~Melbourne~~ has a strikethrough as I am following the anticolonial/decolonial UnMonumental style guide written by Matt Chun and James Tylor.

Explanation for strikethrough is written here below:

"UnMonumental uses the term ~~Australia~~ with a strikethrough: ~~Australia~~. We do this to interrupt the colonial name. We also strike through all other colonial place names, for example: ~~Queensland~~ and ~~Perth~~. Where appropriate, we use the Indigenous name first, for example: ~~Tarntanya Adelaide~~ or ~~Iutruwita Tasmania~~. Similarly, when describing colonial entities or impositions, we strike through ~~Australia~~, for example: the ~~Australian government~~, ~~Australia Day~~, ~~the White Australia Policy~~."

When referring to the entire landmass, we replace the term Australia with Aboriginal Land or the Continent, highlighting Indigenous land ownership. Chun, Matt, and James Tylor. "The UnMonumental Style Guide." Substack newsletter. *UnMonumental*, January 18, 2023. <https://unmonumental.substack.com/p/the-unmonumental-style-guide>.

³ I'm not striking through Dights Mills because it was once a building, and is now a ruin, and not a place name.

⁴ "The word Wurundjiri is the combination of the Woiwurrung words 'wurun' meaning the Manna Gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis*) and 'djeri', the grub which is found in or near the tree. Wurundjiri are known as the 'Manna Gum people'. Before invasion, there were multiple Woiwurrung speaking clans who neighboured each other. Today, those people who descend from the Wurundjiri willam clan of the Woiwurrung language group, refer to themselves as Wurundjiri Woiwurrung. Wurundjiri Country spans a large area, West to the Werribee River, North to the Macedon Ranges, East to Mount Baw Baw and South East to the Dandenong Ranges. Birrarung (Yarra river) is the lifeblood of this nation.

"Wurundjiri People." *Deadly Story*, Accessed September 22, 2025. https://www.deadlystory.com/page/aboriginal-country-map/Aboriginal_Country_Completed/Wurundjiri/Wurundjiri_People/

⁵ Shaun Canning, Francis Thiele, *Indigenous Cultural Heritage and History within the Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation Area* (Australian Cultural Heritage Management, February 2010), p22, https://www.achm.com.au/assets/files/Indigenous_Cultural_Heritage_and_History_within_the_VEAC_Melbourne_Metropolitan_Investigation_Area.pdf p22

⁶ Polystyrene is my favoured material and the subject of my Honours thesis.

⁷ Studies, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. 'Welcome to Country'. 25 May 2022. <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/welcome-country>

Oliveros describes this method as “going below the surface of what is heard, expanding to the whole field of sound while finding focus. This is the way to connect with the acoustic environment, all that inhabits it, and all that there is.”⁸

The area was considered a wasteland until efforts were made by the local council to install bicycle paths, and pollution and water quality has been a point of contention from the early days of invasion.⁹ I spent 4 months researching these histories, going on site visits to Birrarung and the Merri. I reflected on the Holocene, Pleistocene and Gondwanaland¹⁰ epochs in relation to colonial timelines, paid close attention to geological formations and infrastructure and ruins, markers of terraforming and industry. I began plans to conduct a cycling tour and sound walk.

I invited Eko, an Argentinian friend and collaborator on a guided cycling tour of Dight’s Falls on the Birrarung, an ancient Wurundjiri cultural site, a site of colonial ‘heritage’ value, and a site of significant terraforming and environmental disturbance. We reflected on its layered histories: a Wurundjeri cultural site, a colonial industrial hub, and now a celebrated feature of Melbourne’s bike trails and urban planning. This collaborative experience situating myself and Eko between archival representation, global colonial context and lived experience.

The video work we made during this site visit can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/1116525617>

⁸ *Deep Listening – The Center For Deep Listening*. n.d. Accessed September 23, 2025.

<https://www.deeplisting.rpi.edu/deep-listening/>

⁹ ‘Historic Mill Takes Shape Again at Dight’s Falls.’ *The Age* (Melbourne, Australia), 21 September 1996, 14–14.

<https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&issn=03126307&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA294237083&sid=google Scholar&linkaccess=abs>

¹⁰ When referring to a specific geological time period, we use: The Holocene Continent (11,650 years ago to Present), The Pleistocene Continent (2,580,000 to 11,700 years ago) or The Gondwana Continent (550 million years ago), Chun, Matt, and James Tylor. “The UnMonumental Style Guide.” *UnMonumental* (substack). *UnMonumental*, January 18, 2023. <https://unmonumental.substack.com/p/the-unmonumental-style-guide>.

The following images depict Dight's Falls at various stages of terraforming.



Fig 1. Joseph Masters, Dight's Mill on the Yarra, 1856, The Russell and Mab Grimwade Bequests 1973.¹¹ This is the image I selected to research for the Miegunyah Award Student Project.

¹¹ Joseph Masters, Dight's Mill on the Yarra, August 31 1856, pencil with blue watercolour and white gouache on light grey paper, The University of Melbourne Art Collection. The Russell and Mab Grimwade Bequests, 1973. The University of Melbourne Art Collection.



Fig 2. Charles Nettleton, Dights Falls, 1880¹².

¹² Charles Nettleton, Dights Falls, 1880, albumen silver print on card, 20.9 x 27.9 cm (image); 30.4 x 40 cm (mount), City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection.

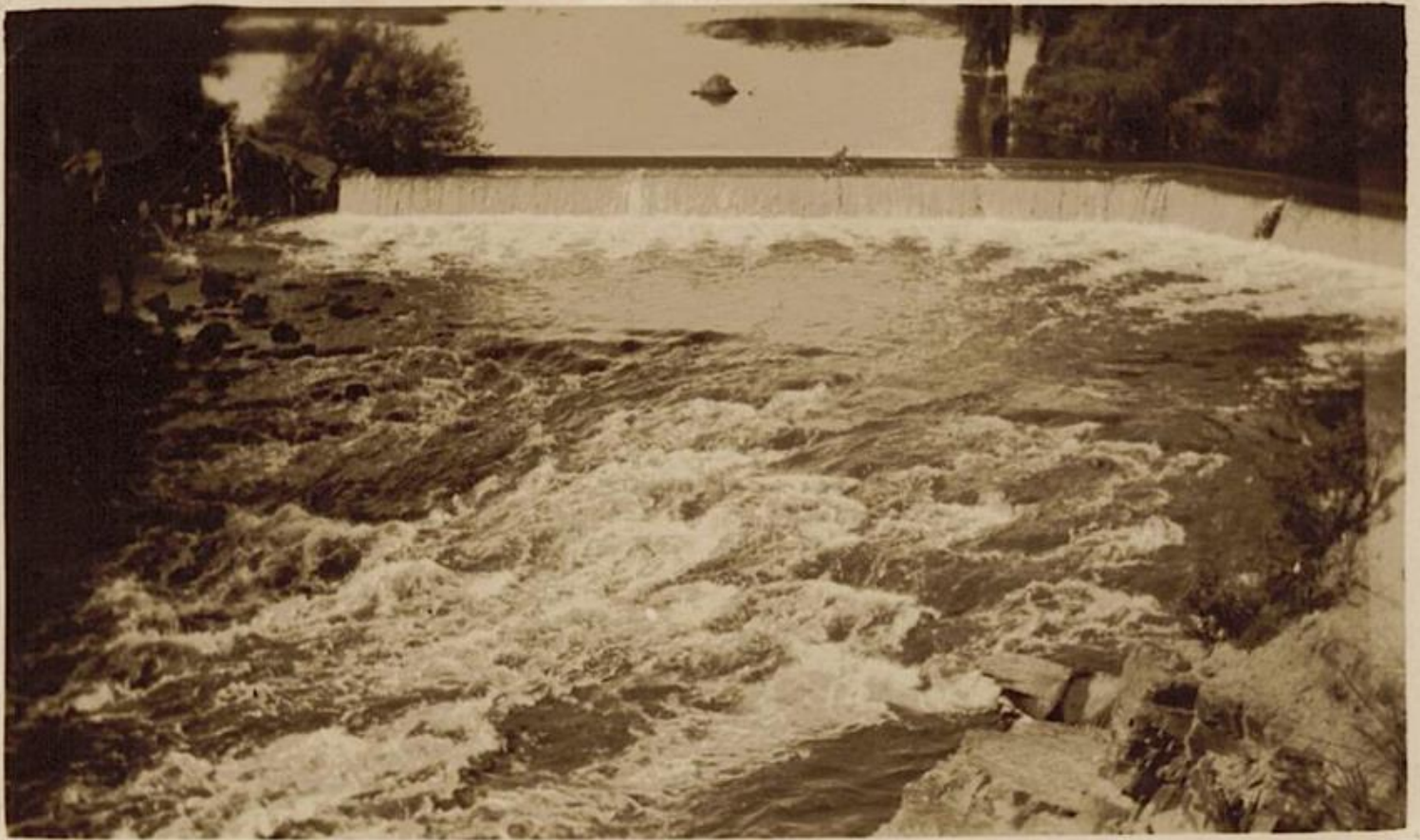


Fig 3. Artist unknown, The Race at Dight Falls, 1925¹³

¹³ Artist unknown, The Race at Dight Falls, 1925, Kodak photo print, 11.5 x 7cm, Kew Historical Society Inc, <https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/61282efc4f272f1e557ca4d8>



Fig 4. David Redfearn, Dight's Falls, 2021¹⁴

¹⁴ David Redfearn, Dight's Falls, 2021#, digital photograph, 5722 x 3948 pixels, Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/117830658@N03/51133832364>

Rare books, grim truths.

My engagement with the Grimwade Rare Books Collection revealed old tomes, racist poems, beautiful etchings amongst other perspectives¹⁵. My book selection process was intuitive: I scanned the catalogue PDF, following hunches and threads, seeking connections to Dight's Falls, waterways, colonial self-perception and Aboriginal history. I skimmed and read 20 texts from the rare books collection and below I shall dive deeper into a few of them.

In 'Melbourne'¹⁶ Town Charles Nuttall reflects idiosyncratic self perceptions of Melbourne that persist today. For instance, *"In Melbourne, everyone paints or sings or plays a musical instrument. Melbourne is a home of music and the graphic arts. Here are conservatoriums or music, here are schools of painting. Melbourne is a home of music and the graphic arts. Here are conservatoriums or music, here are schools of painting"*.

Melbourne considers itself to be the cultural, progressive hub of Australia, expressive and able to articulate the brutal histories of the colony while still maintaining an austere 'civilised' demeanor as a global destination for artists and musicians.

"One hundred years ago Melbourne was 'not on the map'. Today it stands as a fine effect of pioneer enterprise that was supplemented by generations of building." It is important for those of us that live, work and practice on this land to always hold in our minds that not-so-long ago our city was promoted as *"a loyal, English-speaking, British-hearted community, proud offshoot of the Empire, that mighty, many branched boles of oak."*¹⁷

¹⁵ **Content Warning:** Racism towards Aboriginal people - This is an undated racist newspaper clipping pasted (amongst many others) in the left blank intentionally pages in the Grimwade book, 'The Aborigines of Victoria'. My assumption is that Russell taped them in.

"During the recent dry season an 'Outback' blackfellow, the soles of whose feet had begun to crack with the heat, bought a packet of boot-protectors and hammered eight or nine into the sole of each foot. They stopped the wear-and-tear admirably, and he now declares that no nig. should be without a packet.

Smyth, R. Brough. *The Aborigines of Victoria: with notes relating to the habits of the natives of other parts of Australia and Tasmania*. Govt. Printer, 1878, The Russell and Mab Bequest 1973, Special Collections, University of Melbourne

¹⁶ I use Melbourne here to distinguish between Melbourne, the colonial and cultural project, and Naarm, the geographical area. Chun, Tylor, "UnMonumental style guide".

¹⁷ Charles Nuttall. *Melbourne Town: Text and Pictures*. Peacock Bros, 1933, The Russell and Mab Grimwade Bequest, 1973, Special Collections, University of Melbourne

In 'Colonial English: a glossary'¹⁸ familiar terms such as *no-frills*¹⁹ and *barracking*²⁰ were printed next to racist terms such as *blackbird*, *to*²¹ and *Shanghaiing*²² This sharpened the understanding of my own positionality in an extremely vulgar way.

Turning to *Australia in Palestine*²³ I suspected this text may have some contemporary value in humanising the plight of Palestinians²⁴ in a time of global chaos. Australia's involvement in World War I and the truth-telling entanglements with colonialism and empire remain cloudy today, hidden behind mythology. The discovery of the poem *Palestine Poppies* confirmed my suspicions. Written by Russell Grimwades' personal friend²⁵ and ANZAC soldier Charles Barrett in Palestine in 1919. Enchanted by wildflowers and insect life, our antagonist poetically muses on the beautiful landscape. Barrett writes, "*In spring, when the wattles shower gold on our streams, Palestine poppies are blooming.*" expressing colonial claims to the wattle falling in streams on Aboriginal land, as well as exemplifying extractive mythmaking and erasure of Palestinian voice, claiming the poppy as "our flower of War", as he acknowledges "*The blood-red poppy is Palestine's flower*".

Barrett writes, "*when we carried war to the Judean hills we found wild beauty there*", contrasting the ANZAC experience of Palestine during the World Wars with the current state of Palestine, demolished and destroyed by genocidal Israeli settler-colonial ambitions. There are no longer "*flowers among the terraced hills and olive trees in the valleys*" or "*Pink-holly-hocks grew on the heights along the Jerusalem road.*" "*The valleys [that] were gardens*" are now graveyards.

The listener is led to consider what comes next in contemporary Palestine through the line; "*Where dust had lain deep, and all plant life had perished under the feet of an army, Nature, healing earth's wounds with grasses and flowers.*"

This research culminated in performance through spoken word accompanied by viola. The depth of a sonic message of truth-telling is affectively woven together, welcoming the listener to safely reflect on the story that is being told, and on the identity of the white, colonial culture of Australia.

¹⁸ Karl August Lentzner, *Colonial English: A Glossary of Australian, Anglo-Indian, Pidgin English, West Indian and South African Words*. Kegan Paul, French, Trübner, 1891, The Russell and Mab Bequest 1973, Special Collections, University of Melbourne

¹⁹ **Frill**: swagger, conceit. When a slangy Australian sees a person very conceited, or swaggering very much, he says, "he has an awful lot of *frill* on", "He can't walk for *frill*". Probably the root of *no-frills*, current Australian slang. Lentzner, "Colonial English" p22

²⁰ **Barracking**, Bantering. Probably from the slang term *barrikin*, jargon, speech, or discourse, on account of the "palaver" which traders must hold before they can strike a bargain. Lentzner, "Colonial English" p5

²¹ **Blackbird, to**, to kidnap, from the colour of the skin of those kidnapped, such as negroes, natives of New Zealand &c. In the quotation reference is made to "Kanakas" But sometimes – we are glad to say in the past – inquisitiously *black-birded* or kidnapped, and practically sold into slavery. Lentzner, "Colonial English" p7

²² **Shanghai-ing (Australian)**, Small birds are not a favourite quarry of the small Australian catapult; like his rival, the larrikan, his special prey is the Chinaman. It has happened that even the songs of high police officials found themselves in the dock charged with *shanghai-ing* Chinamen. Perhaps the instrument is so called in delicate allusion of those whom it is used to execute. Lentzner, "Colonial English" p41

²³ *Australia in Palestine* / H.S. Gullett, Chas. Barrett, editors ; David Barker, art editor. 1919, The Russell and Mab Bequest, 1973, Special Collections, University of Melbourne. p61

²⁴ Legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-crp-3.pdf>

²⁵ According to Grimwade descendent Fred Grimwade, shared with me in conversation after the Miegunyah Presentation, 11 September 2025, Potter Museum of Art.

Link to performance: <https://spillwaystrings.bandcamp.com/track/palestine-poppies>

Part 3.

A lyrical analysis of the song Emergency!

Song title: Emergency!

Year: 2025

Written by Spillway

Lyrics and guitar: Alexander Pug Williams

Viola: Camilla Eustance

Lyrics:

To stop the train in cases of emergency
This is an emergency
Can't you see
Been reading lots of books, these old rare dusty books,
They're filled up dark truths from not so long ago
I knew it would be ugly, but I didn't think this through
The truth, the truth, the truth

Emergency

From the river to the sea,
Ancestors can't you see
The suffering, the land bleeds.
It echoes here today
Like nothing ever changed
Old roots run very deep.
Bluestone and plastic roots.

Emergency

In promo for the Empire
Melbourne town was spruiked
Where Hoddle plotted plans
To grow fat upon the land
The Crown stole.
This is all land the Crown stole²⁶
From Wurundjiri²⁷

²⁶Isaac Selby, Robert Hoddles survey: a photographic atlas of early Victoria 1837 to 1856, 1928. The Russell and Mab Grimwade Bequest 1973, Special Collections, The University of Melbourne. p1

²⁷ If you saw the performance, or listened to the song online you may notice that I didn't sing this chorus live. I was nervous and forgot!

I Encountered the Cairn
On top of the Hill
Marking the site of an emergency, cattle farmers, politicians, millers, distillers, invaders, destroyers, crossing
this land. Dights Falls was filthy and green.
The truth, the truth, the truth

Listen to the truth
Listen to this song
It's more that simply hearing
Attune to what was done
And what's still happening
The facts are harsh in daylight
But the fast are clear to see
The racist, brutal beginnings spawning me

Context

Emergency is a Spillway song. Spillway is Pug and Camilla. They share a deeply intuitive collaborative bond, as performance artists, sculptors, painters and musicians. They love magpies, plastic bags, folklore, absurdism and trams.

Pug grew up in punk and metal bands before playing solo folk-punk for many years. He is interested in world music, noise, drone and experimental sound.

Camilla is classically trained and spent much of her childhood around choirs and orchestras. She has played in folk, indie and experimental bands.

Pug wrote *Emergency* as an intuitive response to the folk song, 'To Stop the Train'.

2025 has been an endless stream of emergencies. The grim, relentless news cycle has collectively fried our nervous systems, and *Emergency* attempts to grapple with this experience

Lyrical analysis:

1. Emergency as Siren/Art as Siren

The repeated invocation of "Emergency" functions as structural refrain and conceptual anchor, creating a sense of alarm, urgency, and crisis. Past and present injustices are not remote or resolved, but immediate and in your face. I observe Australian identity struggle to reconcile with its past, instead manufacturing mythologies and disassociating from colonial crimes. The phrase also plays with multiple registers: the literal (stopping a train in an emergency), the political (colonisation/climate/war/facism), and the existential (truths too difficult to ignore). This alarm does not occur in isolation, it is rooted to the initial invasions and industrial incursions that set these emergencies in motion.

2. Capitalism and industry

The recounting of important colonial jobs "*cattle farmers, politicians, millers, distillers, invaders, destroyers, crossing this land*", rhythmically canters with waves of invader industry that poured across ~~Dight's Falls~~ at the

Birrarrung starting with the first overlanders from NSW, John Gardiner, Joseph Hawdon and John Hepburn in December 1836. This is marked by the memorial cairn erected on Aboriginal land.²⁸ Alongside industrial expansion, the song insists on unearthing uncomfortable truths buried in archives and landscapes.

3.. Truth-telling

The motif of *“the truth, the truth, the truth”* confronts uncomfortable realities in the *“old rare dusty books”* of the Grimwade rare books collection, while dramatizing the shock of discovering *“dark truths from not so long ago.”* This establishes tension between ignorance, revelation, and the moral responsibility of truth-telling. *“Spawning me”*, acknowledges intergenerational colonialism, implicating past, present and future. This acknowledgement of complicity and inheritance underscores contemporary settler obligations to the truth. The song frames colonial violence a condition that continues to shape subjectivity, identity, and privilege in the present. These truths are inseparable from the violent processes of dispossession that created the archive and terraformed the landscape.

4. Colonial Violence and Dispossession

The lyrics directly confront Australia’s colonial history. The British Crown’s theft of land from Wurundjeri, Robert Hoddle’s survey of Victoria from 1837 - 1856²⁹, ending the same year that *Dights Falls on the Yarra* was created. *“Promo for the Empire”* references Grimwade rare books, in *Melbourne Town*³⁰ Charles Nuttall writes, *“Melbourne has dignity, poise, consciousness of a hectic past, faith in a future of increase”* and in *Victorian El Dorado* Carter *“paints the province of Victoria as one of the most promising and prosperous emigration fields within the British dominion”* promoting the liveability and lifestyle of early Melbourne³¹. This practice continues today with Melbourne consistently being rated in the top 5 most ‘liveable’ cities in the world.³² Invoking *Dights Falls* and the Cairn situates the critique geographically, activating the colonial narratives embedded in the landscape of Naarm through personal revelation and histories of invasion, destruction, and erasure.

5. Singing to/for/with Country³³.

Nature and land appear as both victim and witness. Phrases like *“the land bleeds,” “old roots run very deep,”* and *“bluestone and plastic roots”* merge ecological imagery with cultural and colonial histories. The juxtaposition of bluestone (a loaded material associated with Melbourne’s built colonial architecture)³⁴ and

²⁸ “Charles Grimes Expedition | Monument Australia.” Accessed September 23, 2025.

<https://www.monumentaustralia.org/themes/landscape/exploration/display/31786-charles-grimes-expedition>

²⁹ Selby, Isaac, Robert Hoddles Survey. p1

³⁰ Charles, Nuttall, *Melbourne Town: Text and Pictures*. Peacock Bros, 1933. The Russell and Mab Grimwade Bequest 1973, Special Collections, University of Melbourne. p1.

³¹ Carter, C. R. and *A colonist of twenty years’ standing*. Victoria, the British ‘El Dorado’, or, Melbourne in 1869: Shewing the Advantages of That Colony as a Field for Emigration. E. Stanford, 1870. The Russell and Mab Grimwade Bequest, Special Collections, University of Melbourne. p192

³² Department of Economic Development, Jobs. “Why Melbourne? Live in Melbourne”, accessed 23 September 2025, <https://liveinmelbourne.vic.gov.au/discover/melbourne-victoria/why-melbourne>

³³ I am interpreting ideas of Country I have heard Elders and other aboriginal people talk about, as well as settlers, migrants. I do not claim knowledge, but will continue to decolonise my actions and behaviours and not be afraid of making mistakes. Thank you Uncle Bill Nicholson for challenging me to continue to push my limits with settler obligations. Uncle Bill Nicholson, Wurundjiri Woi-wurrung, truth-telling, conversation, November 2023.

³⁴ Find an Expert : The University of Melbourne. “From Molten Lava to Cobbled Laneways: How Bluestone Shaped Melbourne’s Identity.” Accessed September 19, 2025. <https://findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au/news/2895-from-molten-lava-to-cobbled-laneways-how-bluestone-shaped-melbourne%E2%80%99s-identity>.

plastic (a modern pollutant) collapses time, linking continuity between past violence and ongoing ecological destruction. From here, the song's ecological and historical layers open into a reckoning with ancestry, calling colonising forebears directly into the conversation.

6. Colonial Ancestors

The invocation of "ancestors" ties present-day realities to my white, migrant colonising ancestors from Wales, England, Ireland, Scotland, Italy and Sweden. The ancestors are questioned, "*can't you see the suffering? It echoes here today, like nothing ever changed*" acknowledging complicity

7. Deep Listening

The final verses shift towards urges for embodied listening:

"Listen to the truth / Listen to this song"

"It's more than simply hearing / attune to what was done."

This redefines listening as an ethical, embodied act, drawing from Pauline Oliveros' Deep Listening practice, exemplified in this quote from her most recent and final manifesto, Quantum Listening.

*"Deep Listening is exploring the relationships among any and all sounds, whether natural or technological, intended or unintended, real, remembered or imaginary. Thought is included."*³⁵

I have reframed this method for Australian truth-telling discourse. Deep Listening on Aboriginal land means confronting silenced histories, acknowledging violence, and attending to ongoing injustice through truth-telling. This method of Deep Listening is radically open, the listener is welcomed to participate in an act of solidarity.

Palestine Poppies written by Charles Barrett³⁶

From the hills to the sea, a scarlet trail of flowers in the spring, the little grey larks are singing and the low country is green with barley. Wild flowers everywhere, yellow and purple and butterfly-blue—but the poppy is our choice. It glows on Australian graves in the plains and down by the sea where the surf croons all day long ; it makes beautiful old battle-grounds, and flakes the waddy's brown banks with scarlet. The blood-red poppy is Palestine's flower, and our flower of War, and in the tranquil days of Peace will be our flower of Memory.

Palestine is a wild garden in spring. Many plants blossom on through the summer, fading at last in the season of mists, when dawn comes veiled like a bride and the earth is pearly with dew. In spring, when the wattles shower gold on our streams, Palestine poppies are blooming. From the white sea-dunes to the long blue hills the land is alight with flowers. Over every blossom some bird is singing or a butterfly floating on sunlit wings. A murmur of bees in convolvulus bells; grasshoppers leaping over the tall grass; wagtails gleaning in sheltered places; white vultures high in the blue.

Those long rides across the plains, before the Turks were driven back to the hill country, were wonderful. Our horses breasted a green sea of barley, and it was hard to urge them on. Often we drew rein to look at leisure on the earth's green mantle inwrought with flowers. The plains and the valleys were beautiful. We

³⁵Pauline Oliveros, Quantum Listening. With Carole Lone and Laurie Anderson. Spiral House, 2024. p37.

³⁶Gullett, H. S., Charles Barrett, and David Barker, eds. Australia in Palestine. Angus & Robertson, 1919. The Russell and Mab Grimwade Bequest 1973, Special Collections, University of Melbourne. p61-64

rode inland along the blue ways of Darn, rode on till noon, then, after resting, took the sunset trail, when aloud shadows were skimming over the Earth. We gazed at the purple ranges and wondered what lay beyond. Under the stars we slept well.

We travelled on, with Fara on our left—a great grey bulk against the sky—coming at length to old pasture-lands that War had restored to Nature. Where dust had lain deep, and all plant life had perished under the feet of an army, Nature, healing earth's wounds with grasses and flowers. It seemed an idle dream that the red time of war had surged where poppies flamed in the sun.

Far as our vision ranged the land was bright with flowers—tulips, blue salvias, scarlet pimpernels, asphodels, white daisies, anemones, and lilies swaying on tall stems ; hollows brimming with sunshine and pink with cyclamens ; acres of red poppies set in emerald.

For miles we rode, seeking vainly an easy descent for the horses. Every cleft was starred with flowers ; over the ledges melon plants trained, making caves of tiny crevices haunted by lizards and spiders. Down a steep track we rode carelessly, letting our eyes dwell on blossoms and giving the horses free rein. We won to the other side safely, then on again through flowerland. A long, glad ride from dawn till dusk across the plains in spring.

When we carried war to the Judean hills we found wild beauty there; flowers among the terraced hills and olive trees in the valleys. Pink-holly-hocks grew on the heights along the Jerusalem road. The valleys were gardens. Gehenna's goat-tracks winding among old tombs, were boarded with scarlet poppies.

Wild flowers are Palestine's glory. No one has named them all. From Dan to Beersheba, among the hills of Moab and Judea, on the wide plain of Esdraelon, in Gilead and Bashan; everywhere in Palestine spring casts down her kindling buds. We have seen them all in our long campaign, and out of the shining company have chosen for remembrance: her little red poppy.

Conclusion

The Miegunyah Award has profoundly shaped my practice, the direction of my research, and validated my commitment to continuing into academia. It has turned my attention towards Birrarung, reshaping how I approach field visits, write reflexively, and continue to deepen my truth-telling practice and understanding of Country. The Award has also sharpened my methods as an artist navigating the archives and offered me opportunities to share my perspective publicly, including as a member of the CAST research panel³⁷ at RMIT.

Through this process, I have begun to develop and test the idea of Art as a Siren, bringing alarm and attention to waste, precarity and to our colonial past, present, and future. This is not to strike fear, but to call for truth-telling and to act towards healing. The Award has revealed many threads for future research, and I am extremely grateful for the opportunity.

*This research was undertaken through the generous support of **The Russell and Mab Grimwade Miegunyah Fund***

³⁷ CAST is a research hub CAST producing art research that critically engages with social and public spheres with a particular interest in how artistic practices intersect with issues of equity, access and democracy. 'Contemporary Art and Social Transformation (CAST)'. Accessed 23 September 2025. <https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/schools-colleges/art/research/cast>

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List of Figures:

Fig 1. Masters, Joseph, Dight's Mill on the Yarra, August 31 1856, pencil with blue watercolour and white gouache on light grey paper, The Russell and Mab Grimwade Bequests 1973, The University of Melbourne Art Collection.

Fig 2. Nettleton, Charles Dights Falls, 1880, albumen silver print on card, 20.9 x 27.9 cm (image); 30.4 x 40 cm (mount), City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection.

Fig 3. Artist unknown, The Race at Dight Falls, 1925, Kodak photo print, 11.5 x 7cm, Kew Historical Society Inc, <https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/61282efc4f272f1e557ca4d8>

Fig 4. David Redfearn, Dight's Falls, 2021#, digital photograph, 5722 x 3948 pixels, Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/117830658@N03/51133832364>

Appendices:

The following titles are books that I read/skimmed through/or vetoed after request and did not use in this paper. They have still contributed to this however, by teaching me about the nexus quagmire of the archive,

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Are Added Life and Labours of Abel... by J.E. Heeres... and Observations Made with the
Compass... by W. van Bemmelen. Frederik Muller, 1898.

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Animals, Birds, Lizards, Serpents, Curious Cones of Trees and Other Natural Productions.*
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