

Unquiet Voices

Final Report

By Ethan Patrick and Angela McKenna

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



A prologue

It's the year 3321.

We're on an interstellar workstation in Earth's stratosphere.

Members of the *Augmented Archives and Museum System Operatives* – the legendary AAMSOs – are preparing a digital exhibition of artefacts retrieved from 21st century storage facilities and collections. To revive dwindling cultural relevance as perceived by *The Benefactors*, AAMSO content designators are creating digital displays for the question that occupies everyone in the field:

How on Earth did humanity survive the 21st Century?

Amongst the latest batch of artefacts excavated by field hacktivists from terrestrial ruins at *Miegunyah Sites One and Two* are:

a lithograph - *The Invalid Digger*
by Samuel Thomas Gill (c.1850s)

a photograph - *Benevolent Asylum*
by Charles Nettleton (c1860s)

a set of drawings – *Sick Woman in Dray*
by William Strutt (c. 1850s)

Meanwhile, ongoing speculation about the presence of nomadic AAMSO operatives on ancient terrestrial sites is reaching fever pitch at AAMSO workstations. Content designator, *Roger*, is convinced that AAMSO 'time fugitives' would provide first-hand accounts of the 21st century – "the most baffling century of all" - that could save archival teams in the 34th century from 'recyclable obsolescence'.

On the cover page of the first Batch Transfer file from *Miegunyah Site One*, AAMSO field hacktivist *Eli* notes:

*Someone took great care to preserve this material
in AAMSO-affiliated hardware shells.*

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1. An overview of Unquiet Voices

Unquiet Voices is a serialised speculative fiction set in the year 3321. It's a transversal tale about futuristic archivists, the Augmented Archives and Museum System Operatives (the AAMSOs), who are tasked with recovering and maintaining items from human history. The AAMSOs have recently discovered a cache of artefacts that were preserved sometime in the 21st century.

1.2 Project Artefacts

The narrative of *Unquiet Voices* unfolds over three instalments in multimodal format. This approach accommodates different writing styles, while also exploring a range of responses to selected artefacts from *The Russell and Mab Grimwade Collection*. The digital version also allows for ongoing development of the story and provides a platform for sharing research resources.



Three printed booklets

Digital version at:
<https://unquietvoicesproject.com/>

1.2 Serialised Instalments

Instalment One



The Invalid Digger



© T. Gill, *The Invalid Digger*, 1862/63, Lithograph, Miegunyah Collection

A contextualising note from 44th century hacktivists to 21st century storytellers

AAMSOs Eli and Roger analyse an artefact recovered from 'Miegunyah Site One'.

In the midst of growing speculation about their own 'recyclable obsolescence', Eli and Roger discuss what's wrong with the world.

Instalment Two



Benevolent Asylum



Charles Nettleton, *Benevolent Asylum*, albumen photograph, circa 1850s, The Miegunyah Collection

Field hacktivist Eli discovers 21st century mobile devices that capture his attention.

Field hacktivist Olivish steps in to analyse an ancient photograph excavated from 'Meigunyah Site Two'.

Olivish and Roger discuss future work options. Meanwhile, Eli manages to upload an image from a 21st century device to a 34th century AAMSO database.

Instalment Three



Sick woman in dray + the Benevolent Asylum



William Strutt, *The Sick Woman in Dray* (c1862) Drawing, Miegunyah Collection

Field hacktivist Eli discusses an ancient drawing in the opening segment of an AAMSO podcast show.

Eli and Roger conduct a 'simulcrum interview' with 21st century researcher, Lachlan Welsh.

Eli and Roger make contact with a time-fugitive AAMSO, Magda, who is operating in the 21st century,

2. Embodying disability research and lived experience in The Russell and Mab Grimwade Collection

A writer's statement by Ethan Patrick

Doctor of Philosophy, School of Culture and Communication

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

Introduction

This section of the report will focus primarily on the specific artefacts I selected from The Russell and Mab Grimwade Collection, Samuel Thomas (S.T.) Gill's *The invalid digger* and William Strutt's *The sick woman in dray (Study for Black Thursday)*. What follows is not so much an explanation of the process but rather an exploration. An exploration of how research into the field of disability studies, my lived experience as a disabled person and the voices of those who came before me influenced my process of creative writing during this project.

The serial speculative fiction narrative that we created for the Miegunyah Student Project Awards 2025, *Unquiet Voices*, was designed to be a meeting place for multiple voices and modalities, and to accommodate different approaches and writing styles. Its creation and execution was unquestionably one of ongoing collaboration and respect.

Discovering the artefacts

I feel the familiar sting of reading the words "insane," "idiot," "lunatic," "dangerous," and "dirty" not only within the record, but also reproduced within its digital description. I think how words such as "insane," "dangerous," and "dirty" have been used against my disabled community, implying that we are lesser than others (Brilmyer 2018, p. 1)

I chose to include the above quote from Brilmyer (2018), which describes their experience looking through the UK's National Archives for records concerning disabled people, because the emotional response they describe mirrors my own.

The 'sting', for me, comes when I'm scrolling through the images of various artefacts in the Grimwade Collection, and I come across S.T Gill's *The invalid digger (1852-53)*. The feeling doesn't come from the image, which is at that moment still too small for me to see, it's the title: the 'invalid' digger.

This feeling, this interaction between myself and the image, is what I consider to be the beginning of my work on *Unquiet Voices*. A moment which comes long before I have any conceptualisation of the project.

For context, I am a disabled person and I also conduct research in the field of disability studies, which ‘studies the social meanings, symbols, and stigmas attached to disability identity and asks how they relate to enforced systems of exclusion and expression.’ (Siebers 2008, p. 4).

Broadly speaking, my research focuses on the representations of disability in literature, the language used to describe disability in these texts and what that might say about how we treat disabled people in society. As Hall writes in *Literature and Disability* (2016):

language matters not merely as a question of political correctness, but because it shapes expectations and it conveys models and conceptions of disability that are fundamental to how disabled identities and agency are experienced (p. 8)

Consider the word invalid (noun, pronounced in-vil-id) for example. It a term from the mid-17th century meaning ‘an infirm or sickly person’ and nowadays is considered an outdated, non-specific and offensive way to refer to disabled people. Etymologically it is proceeded by invalid (adjective, pronounced in-val-id), late 16th century, meaning ‘not valid; of no force, weight or cogency’. Synonyms include worthless, unacceptable, improper, faulty, wrong. What might we say about the expectations and conceptions of disability based on the use of this word?



Figure 1: S.T. Gill, *The Invalid Digger* (1852-53)
Russell and Mab Grimwade Collection

Having discovered Gill's lithograph, I then searched the Grimwade Collection using more specific terms like 'infirm' 'ill' 'sick', to see if there were any other pieces that captured similar persons or expressed similar attitudes. Which is when I came across my second artefact, *The sick woman in dray (Study for Black Thursday)* by William Strutt.



Figure 2: William Strutt, *The sick woman in dray (Study for Black Thursday)*
Russell and Mab Grimwade Collection

Like the 'invalid' digger in S.T. Gill's lithograph, the woman in Strutt's sketch is defined simply by the identifier 'sick'. By representing individuals this way, it plays into the 'assumption that a disability cancels out other qualities, reducing the complex person to a single attribute.' (Garland Thomson 2017, p.12).

As I consider these artefacts, I find myself wondering who these people were. What were their lives like outside of this one moment, this one facet of their identity? How would I, a disabled person, be described in the same circumstances and what parts of me would be lost?

Creative Writing As Knowledge Generation

My aim with my writing on this project was not to simply create an enjoyable story but to prompt readers to consider these same questions of representation, identity and perhaps how they might speak to contemporary issues around disability.

With that in mind, a speculative fiction narrative, with its focus non-realistic elements like futuristic technology and time travel, might seem like a strange choice. But Attebery (2022) writes that while realistic fiction is good at depicting things on the surface, fantasy (which is a specific type of speculative fiction) is better at probing the hidden structures and underlying assumptions that make up that reality. As the late Ursula K. Le Guin once wrote:

Fantasy not only asks “What if things didn’t go on just as they do?” but demonstrates what they might be like if they went otherwise—thus gnawing at the foundation of the belief that things have to be the way they are. (2017, p. 82)

Hall (2016) states that representation of disability in stories is ideal for challenging prevalent negative ideas and attitudes towards disability because these texts not only ‘provide creative opportunities for close reading, but they can also initiate a re-imagination and a re-writing of literary and cultural history’ (p.1). Not only that but ‘[l]iterary writing has the potential to reach large and diverse populations.’ (p. 4).

Brilmyer (2018) suggests that by situating artefacts within an archival assemblage, this allows us to acknowledge the variety of connections this item has, personal, material, political and so on. This includes recording the affective responses the artefact induces and may continue to produce. By structuring *Unquiet Voices* as a speculative fiction and an assemblage, this allowed Angela and I to present the artefacts in a way that incorporated these different connections and demonstrate how they could continue to have ongoing meaning in the future.

With that in mind, I wanted to create a character who could in some way embody those same reactions that I had as a disabled person, that Brilmyer (2018) had, when confronting the negative language contained within these archives. Yet I was faced with the knowledge that within this genre of writing—that which concerns itself with the future—disability is largely absent, having been ‘solved’ by technological or scientific progress (Cheyne 2019, p. 92). I was unable to conceptualise a future in which this hadn’t at least been attempted but unwilling to contribute to the widespread absence and erasure of disability within these texts.

My answer to this conflict was to have my character Eli fitted with a technology that appeared to make him able bodied but was ultimately flawed and had severe side effects. This idea was based on specific examples of medical or technological interventions that are seen to make an individual “less disabled” but don’t necessarily improve their quality of life. An example of this would be the late disability activist Stella Young, a fulltime wheelchair user who was at various times in her life encouraged to undergo multiple surgeries and months of intense physiotherapy in order to be able to ‘walk a little bit’ despite the fact it would ultimately give her less mobility than a wheelchair (Young 2011).

My writing consisted mostly of using a method known as ekphrasis, which Holland-Batt (2023) defines as when the writer responds to and describes a work of art (or in this case, the artefacts from the collection) by way of reflection and reinterpretation (see Appendix 1 for an example of my writing from Instalment One). It allows a space for multiple temporalities to

converge, where the writer can comment on things like the artist's ideas, techniques, the passage of time since the object's creation and the context in which it now sits. It also considers multiple viewpoints: the artist, the writer and the reader (Holland-Batt 2023) and in my case the character's viewpoint.

This approach allowed me to consider what connections we might draw between these artefacts and current events. What the treatment of 'invalid' people might have looked like in S.T. Gill's time versus disabled people in ours, particularly in light of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability which concluded in 2023. Or the parallels between the deaths of several disabled people during the recent wildfires in LA (Pereira, Pone & Shapiro 2025) and Strutt's sketch, which was a study for a painting titled 'Black Thursday, February 6th, 1851' that depicts the first large bushfires faced by the Victorian colonists (State Library Victoria 2025).



Figure 3: William Strutt, Black Thursday, February 6th, 1851 (1864)

In conclusion, working with Angela on *Unquiet Voices* has allowed me to explore new modes of writing and consider more broadly how my experiences and writings can interact with others to challenge limited or negative perceptions of disability. Overall, I believe this project demonstrates how creative writing can interact seriously and ethically with the archive in order to bring awareness to potentially forgotten people and places.

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Figure 2. William Strutt, The sick woman in dray (Study for Black Thursday), [c. 1862], pencil on wove paper, 14.5 x 22.2cm (sheet) 31.7 x 45.6cm (mount), The University of Melbourne Art Collection, Purchased through the Russell and Mab Grimwade Miegunyah Fund, 1993, 1993.0032.000.000

Figure 3. William Strutt, Black Thursday, February 6th. 1851, [1864], 1 painting: oil on canvas, 106.5 x 343.0cm, source: State Library of Victoria, H28049, <<http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/74159>>

3. Archival practice-led research in an encounter with the Russel and Mab Grimwade Collection

A writer's statement by Angela McKenna

It's May 6, 2025.

Hauntology

We're in the Old Quad. I'm trying to locate the meeting room for the first meeting of the Miegunyah Student Awards. The project team provided such clear directions to West Bay Room (NGO2). But I'm flustered. Running late. As I roam the stone corridors, it occurs to me that in all the years I've come and gone from the university, I've never had cause to be in any of the rooms around the Quad. I google 'Old Quad':

The Old Quad, located at the heart of the University of Melbourne's Parkville campus, is the University's original building. Old Quad is a place where history, architecture, faculty-led research and creative practices meet¹

I have passed through this place countless times. It's the same place now. But not. I recall Derrida's notion of 'hauntology': present experiences shaped by the past and unrealised future possibilities (Derrida, 1993). I wonder what the Quad will be like in the far future. I imagine ruins. But also remains. This fractured 'future Quad' becomes the setting for one of the terrestrial 'Miegunyah Sites' in *Unquiet Voices*. Even though I'm running late, I take photos. I'm just about to send an apologetic message to the project team when two friendly faces appear at the gallery door of NGO3. It's Shirley and Carly.

It's ten minutes later on May 6, 2025.

Preparing to Launch

We're in the West Bay Room in the Old Quad. I'm sitting at a table with people from the faculties of music, architecture, medicine, agricultural studies, and art history. There's an atmosphere of genuine yet tentative endeavour in the room. It's how I remember first play-readings to be in student theatre ensembles. It's how I imagine an interdisciplinary team of 34th century archivists to be as they prepare to launch into space and time.

¹ Old Quad page on website for Melbourne University at <https://www.unimelb.edu.au/old-quad>

It's May 12, 2025.

Human Figures

We're in a graduate study space in the *Old Physics* building. A chilly-dark sky is leaning hard against the first floor windows. I'm peering at the same computer screen as my colleague and collaborator on *Unquiet Voices*, Ethan Patrick. We're preparing our first project update. I've taken off my glasses and I'm polishing the lenses with the hem of my cardigan. Meanwhile, Ethan has opened an image of *The sick woman in dray* by William Strutt. The human figures in the digital artefact draw a sharp intake of breath from both of us. We spend the next few months exploring why.

It's May 18, 2025.

Narrative Design and Representation

We're in *Old Physics* again. I'm looking at more artefacts from *The Russell and Mab Grimwade Collection*. Ethan and I discuss research approaches and narrative design. I'm keen to weave our responses to the colonial artefacts into a speculative narrative that can also convey our contemporary social justice and environmental concerns. I envisage the transformational potential of the archives as 'tools for social justice' as described by Natasha Gerolami (2014).

I'm also aware that the Australian archive is a 'problematic and posthuman text' as encountered by David Wright in the development of a creative digital project based on the first camel to arrive in Australia. Through 'archival practiced-led research', Wright confronts 'gaps and misreadings of histories from a demographic perspective' (Wright, 2023. 2). As a settler scholar and writer, he questions his authority to 'fill a respectful void of silence' even if that silence 'begs interrogation' (2023. 6). One of Wright's solutions is to present a metafictional piece exploring his decision not to tell a particular story in which Indigenous people appear in photographs with camels.

In *Unquiet Voices*, the 'augmented' capabilities of the fictionalised AAMSO archivists also grapple with issues of representation when uncovering suppressed voices in the archives. Reflexive research practices deployed in the 'dioramatron', for example, entail that AAMSO content designators ask themselves: "Is this your story to tell?" In order to avoid reproducing further 'silences' or misrepresentations in my writing, I also utilised the multimodal formats of *Unquiet Voices* to provide direct links to published sites authored by Indigenous scholars or organisations. I hoped this would open up narrative vantage points for postcolonial perspectives without speaking on behalf of the lived experience of Indigenous people.

It's May 20, 2025.

Artefacts as Twisted Matter

We're in a carpark near the corner of Victoria and Errol Streets, North Melbourne. I've been on an arranged visit to a storage facility for the Russell and Mab Grimwade Collection. I'm still thinking about a photograph of the *Benevolent Asylum* taken by Charles Nettleton in the 1860s.



Charles Nettleton, *Benevolent Asylum* (c. 1860s) photograph
wet plate, albumen. Russel and Mab Grimwade Collection

I'm standing at a bench covered with photographs. I consider the sharpness of lines and light in Nettleton's image of the Benevolent Asylum - an effect of chemicals used a 150 years ago in the development of wet plate negatives, I suppose. The sepia glow in the paper I know to be a common feature of 19th century albumen printing processes. In my fleshy hands, the artefact takes on a delicate materiality. I note the care with which the photograph had been conserved and stored. I'm reminded of philosopher Thomas Nail's conceptualisation of image as:

a mobile process by which matter twists folds and reflects itself into various structures of sensation and affection (Nail, 2019, 11)

In a critical posthumanist sense, the photograph and its digital versions thus reflect interaction between the human and non-human elements of commercial production cycles and extractive industries. In *Unquiet Voices* these rhizomatic material and industrial connections are explored in AAMSO Roger's encounters with the artefacts as cultural assemblages in the 'dioramatron'.

It's moments later on May 20, 2025.

Urban Imaginaries

We're still in the carpark. I'm walking towards Abbotsford Street. I'm trying to identify the precise location of the asylum before it was dismantled in 1911. As the first major construction in North Melbourne - before the cherished Townhall even - you'd expect there'd be a plaque or something. I venture into Google Maps not expecting to see the red pin drop on the screen.

But the 'pin drop' has no material referent on the site. In Walter Benjamin's terms I'm experiencing a 'phantasmagoria of the urban.' Cultural theorist Kathryn Kramer explains Benjamin's notion as the 'dreamlike fantasies that intermingle with one's walking experience of modern cities' (2011, 14). This 'urban imaginary' rekindles 'memories of what was there before' through the 'dizzying overlap of banal everyday street life with architectural demolition and constructions' (Kramer, 2011. 14).

This particular area is situated on stolen lands that were once living spaces, meeting places, and hunting grounds for local Wurundjeri People and other clans of a broader Kulin Confederacy (Gatt, 2025). In a recent history of 'Old North Melbourne' (2025), I learn that:

The first European inhabitants of North Melbourne - aside from a few wooden houses at the swamp - were the 23 men, four women and five children admitted as the first inmates of The Victorian Benevolent Asylum when it opened on 27 November 1851 (Gatt, 2025, 3)

From a postcolonial perspective, Nettleton's photograph of the Benevolent Asylum thus has significance as an assemblage linked to a contemporary urban imaginary deeply entangled in the dispossession and violence of colonial settler occupation. In the narrative of *Unquiet Voices* this is realised as 'a silence that begs interrogation' (Wright, 2023).

It's June 14, 2025.

A Silence

We're in the Public Records Office of Victoria. I'm unpacking a box of archives from the Benevolent Asylum 1851-1911. I come across a report by a nurse at the asylum. She writes about the death of a female 'inmate' who took her own life during the night. There are doctor's reports and a police report but no documents produced by the woman at the centre of the tragic event. It seems her voice is forever quietened. I pack away the nurse's report. This is not my story to tell. It's a narrative hauntology in all subsequent encounters with the asylum and the images and artefacts it has left behind in the storage boxes.

It's June 15, 2025.

A Woman's Drift

We're on the State Library of Victoria website. I'm looking for first-hand accounts of experiences in the Benevolent Asylum. I follow up a reference from a history of the asylum by Mary Kehoe (1998). And there it is! A pamphlet by Rosa Lewis, *How I drifted into the Benevolent asylum: an inmate's story*. Excerpts from the Rosa's pamphlet are embedded in the narrative of Instalment Two.

It's July 23, 2025.

An Immersion

We're at the State Library of Victoria. I ask an attendant on the desk at Special Collections if I can have a look at a Register for The Benevolent Asylum:

When you request access to these documents you need to state your purpose.

I just want 'to get a feel' for the artefact.

The attendant shrugs.

I'm doing immersive research, I say hopefully.

I consider telling them about the 'insitu-intuito' and the 'dioramatron' but think better of it.

It's July 31, 2025.

A Conversation

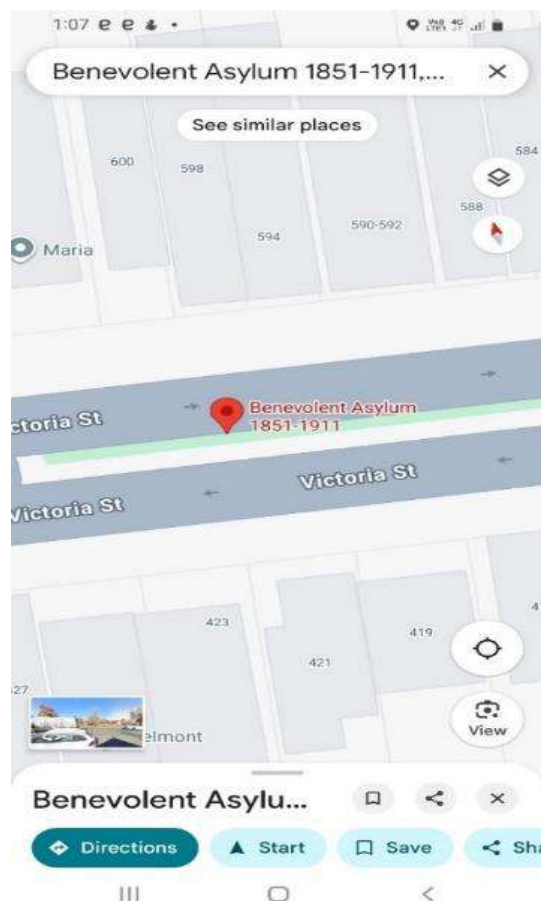
We're in a Zoom meeting. Ethan and I are chatting with Lachlan Welsh (see Appendix 5). Lachlan developed a project about the Benevolent Asylum for the Miegunyah Student Awards in 2021. We are very interested in Lachlan's ideas about the 'ideological function' of the building's construction – and demolition – and what this reveals about the 'colonial imaginary'. Towards the end of the conversation, Lachlan shares a memory about looking for the site of asylum with close members of his family. His experience further highlights the impact of the past on human activity in the present. I think of Nettleton's photograph as embedded in an assemblage that connects the cultural world that produced the asylum building to a cultural world that wants to know more about it – a hauntology not only of cultural significance but also of relational meaning.

It's September 24, 2025.

A Photograph

We're at my work desk at home. I'm looking at photograph of the Miegunyah Student Awards project team. There's Ethan and me feeling a certain 'pride of place' to be standing amongst the researchers we have come to know over recent months. I take off my glasses and polish the

lenses with the hem of my cardigan. I think about our exhibition a few weeks ago and how fascinated I was with all the artefacts and presentations. Ethan and I weren't the only ones attending to 'unquiet voices' in the archives. I look again at the group photo. It's an artefact of an intensive and rewarding experience - an assemblage that will link all my future research to this experience of transdisciplinary archival research. As a team we created multiple vantage points for analysing the past, understanding the present and for generating creative ideas about better futures.



Appendix 1

Example of ekphrasis from Unquiet Voices Instalment One, The Invalid Digger by Ethan Patrick.

Site	Batch	Artefact	Format	Source	Title
Miegunyah 1	1	A	Lithograph	Sam Gill 1852/53	The Invalid Digger



S. T. Gill, *The Invalid Digger*, 1852/53, Lithograph, Miegunyah Collection

It was the title of this work that first caught my attention, before anything else. Specifically, it was that word.

Invalid.

Though it's long fallen out of usage in this context, it still seems to link us, this 'digger' and me. The centuries between us felt inconsequential when I felt that spark of recognition, the hollow ache in my chest.

Because I knew, that had I been in his place, that word would be used without hesitation to describe me too.

The etymology of the word is as follows:

Invalid¹
noun
1. an infirm or sickly person
2. a member of armed forces disabled for active service
adjective
3. deficient in health, weak; sick
Origin
Latin, *invalidus*, literal meaning 'not strong'
Pronunciation: in-vil-id
Usage: Mid-17th Century
Synonyms: ill, sick, ailing, unwell, incapacitated

Not to be confused with:

*Invalid*²
adjective
1. not valid; of no force, weight or cogency
Origin
Latin, *invalidus*, literal meaning 'not strong'
Pronunciation: in-val-id
Usage: Mid-16th Century
Synonyms: worthless, unacceptable, improper, faulty, wrong

Though some confusion would be understandable, considering the second definition was the original.

This is just one of the many words that have been used to describe people like us, across time.

Crippled. Challenged.

Without these words, how else would those who look back know that ‘invalids’ existed? How else could they understand our abnormalities, our differences?

Our ‘otherness’?

Handicapped. Limited.

Because we couldn’t possibly be seen to be like ordinary people. We were strange, and behaviours towards us fluctuated across the centuries, ebbing and flowing with the passage of time.

History, at least that which was documented of places like *Naarm Fields*², at times saw us as something not even human. They called us changelings, creatures who had allegedly replaced a normal child, and were oftentimes ‘deformed’ in some way or reported to display unusually wicked or malicious behaviours.

Demented. Defective.

Creatures to be feared, hidden away or even discarded. At other times and in certain belief systems, we were seen as something to be worshipped, our bodies and minds becoming evidence of some higher power or divine purpose.

When I first began to understand what it was like to live in a body like mine, a body that needs ‘correction’, I became obsessed with discovering these different words.

Freak. Gimp.

In this, the enlightened 34th century, there is no word for those of us whose embodiment in the world is non-normative. The Correction Chip ensures the appearance of perfect functionality at all times, and as we are encouraged to only turn off our chips in private, our so-called lack of functionality is never observable to others.

And if that which is not witnessed, does not exist, why then, would there be a word for it?

Disabled.

In my naivety, perhaps, I thought these words would bring me some sort of closure, give me a name for that which haunts my body and simultaneously does not exist. Help me to understand myself and my place in the universe.

² I believe the terrestrials refer to it as ‘the Western World’, back when those non-existent binaries held some form of meaning

But I quickly realised that these were not simply words, or even names. They were expectations, experiences, limits that were assigned by so called 'normal' people.

Who decided this man was to be known as the 'invalid digger' I wonder?

Was it S.T. Gill, in a moment of inspiration? Were the words the final touch on this captured moment? Did he tell the man what they said or show him the picture at all?

Or was that all that was known about this man? Just that in-*vil*-id over there, for whom being an in-*val*-id digger had become the sum of his identity.

Perhaps he chose the moniker himself, in act of reclamation or defiance. Like the activists of 20th and 21st centuries, who took words that had been so long used against them like 'cripple', and used it to write their own stories. Stories that challenged the reductive assumptions made about allegedly 'non-normative' bodies, minds and experiences.

If that was the case, he would've been a man ahead of his time, and to simply call him the 'invalid digger' feels a grave injustice.

I wonder too about Gill. What were his motives in capturing this man, this moment in his lithograph? Did they talk while he worked, and if so, what did they talk about?

Did they discuss their families? Or the journeys that led them here? How far had the digger travelled, presumably carrying the dream of finding his fortune in gold?

Or did they not speak at all? Perhaps Gill simply observed his subject in what looks to be a moment of despair, without a single word. Captured his image on the page and departed, never to think on him again.

How many stories and moments were lost because they were never captured at all.

And what happened to the 'invalid digger' in the end?

Perhaps this was simply an injury, from which he recovered and life moved on. Or perhaps it was more, something for which there was no cure, not in his lifetime or for many generations after he was gone.

What might he have to say, about the way he was treated then. Would his tales sound anything like so many others I've heard echo through history of those once called 'invalid' or 'disabled'? Abuse, violence, neglect and those are just the stories that were heard.

Even in the 21st century, an era in which many humans believed themselves to be enlightened and inherently good. Even then, not far from where I sit now, the terrestrial government of the time held an inquiry into the treatment of those with disability. Over 9000 stories were recorded, many containing some

of the most horrific abuses I imagine humans to be capable. Yet so many people covered it up, so many turned away.

And I can't help but think of how easily that could've happened to the 'invalid digger', of how easily it happened to those in the 21st century.

Of

how

easily

it

could

happen

to

me.

Appendix 2

Lineage of Archival Research

A. Samuel Thomas Gill, The Invalid Digger

Our encounters with the artefacts of Samuel Thomas Gill came to us by way of the artists, collectors, archivists, researchers who have shared their interest in his work with all of us.

1852	Samuel Thomas Gill creates 24 lithographs in <i>Victorian Gold Diggings and Diggers As They Are</i> , published in Melbourne, 1852, and London, 1853.
1850s	Several editions of <i>The Australian Sketchbook, a portfolio of Gill's lithographs</i> .
1869	Trustees of the Melbourne Public Library commission Gill to produce watercolours depicting life on the goldfields.
1870s	Gill's work falls out of favour with colonial public taste.
1910s +	Russell and Mab Grimwade collect images created by colonial artists, including several of Gill's works.
1973	The University of Melbourne are formally bequeathed artworks, personal effects and archival materials from the estate of Russell and Mab Grimwade.
2015	Prof Grishin publishes <i>S.T. Gill and His Audiences</i> with the National Library of Australia in association with State Library of Victoria. He curates a retrospective exhibition, <i>Australian Sketchbook: Colonial life and the art of ST Gill</i> at the State Library of Victoria: https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/search-discover/galleries/australian-sketchbook-st-gill
2020	<i>Pride of Place: Exploring the Grimwade Collection</i> edited by Alisa Bunbury and published by Miegunyah Press includes discussion and images from Gill's work.
2025	<i>Unquiet Voices: Gill's images embedded in a speculative fiction</i> produced for the Miegunyah Project.

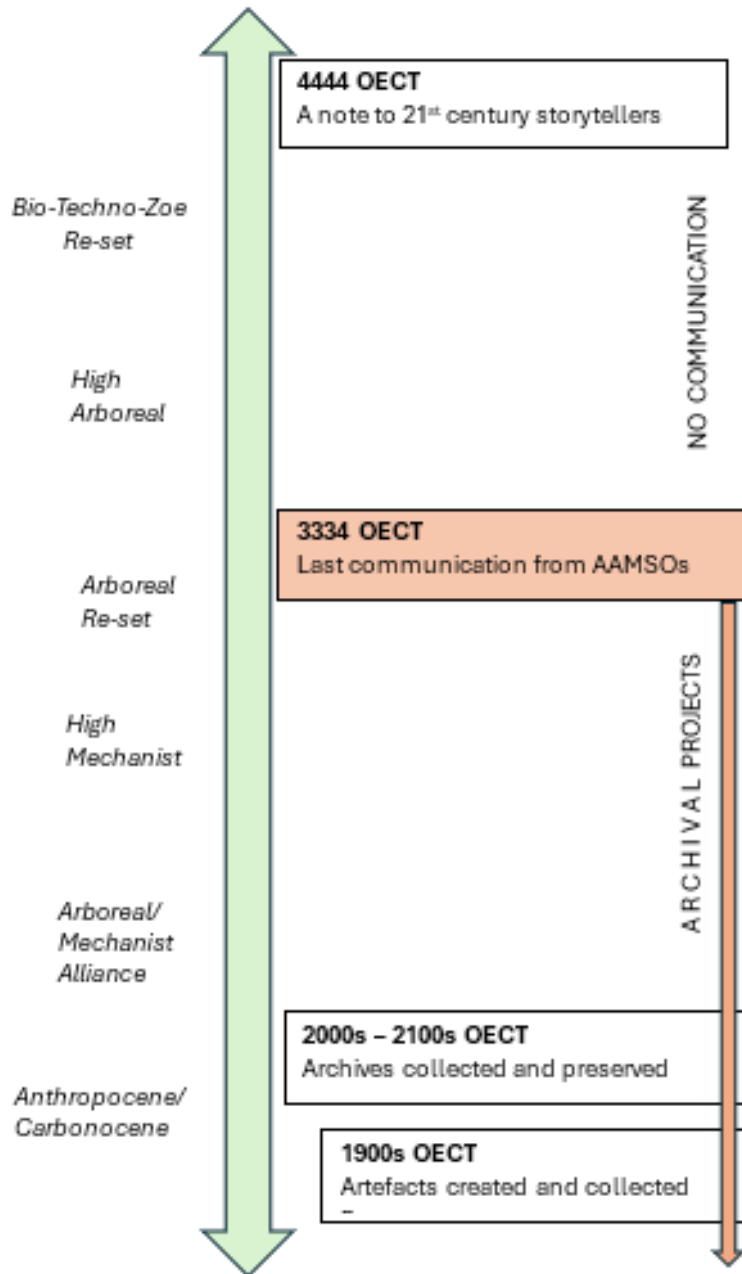
B. Benevolent Asylum

Our encounters with the artefacts of the Benevolent Asylum that once stood in North Melbourne came to us by way of the photographers, artists, journalists, collectors, archivists, and historical researchers who have shared their interest with us all...

1850s+	The first stage of the Benevolent Asylum is constructed and funded by the colonial government and the Victorian Benevolent Society.
1860-80	Charles Nettleton creates photographs of <i>The Benevolent Asylum</i>
1910s+	Russell and Mab Grimwade collect several of Charles Nettleton's photographs.
1960s	An unknown author produces an undergraduate thesis in architecture: <i>The Benevolent Asylum, North Melbourne 1851-1911</i>
1973	University of Melbourne incorporate archives from the Miegunyah Collection with The Grimwade Collection
1998	Mary Kehoe writes a history of <i>The Melbourne Benevolent Asylum</i> published by the Hotham History Project
2020	Alisa Bunbury and Kelly Gellatly document Nettleton's significance as a colonial photographer in <i>Pride of Place</i> published by The Miegunyah Press
2021	Lachlan Welsh explores the history of The Melbourne Benevolent Asylum and creates a physical model and a 3D digital model for the Miegunyah Student Awards: https://art-museum.unimelb.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/LachlanWelsh_BenevolentAsylum_2022.pdf
2022 +	Hotham History Project: ongoing research and public awareness about the history of The Benevolent Asylum, https://www.hothamhistory.org.au/the-benevolent-asylum/
2025	<i>Unquiet Voices</i> : Nettleton's photograph of The Benevolent Asylum is embedded in a speculative narrative for the Miegunyah Student Project Awards

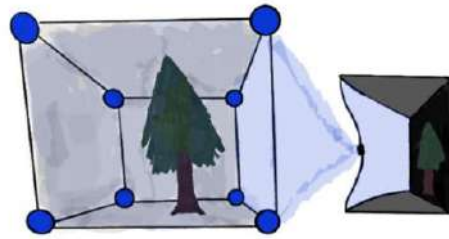
Appendix 3

OECT Timeline



Appendix 4

AAMSO research innovations and narrative motifs



Camera-futura-obscura
drawing by Ethan Patrick



Insitu-Intuito
Ekphrastic Response Immersion



Dioramatron
Serendipity in Research Rabbit Holes

Appendix 5

Discussion Points for Interview with Lachlan Welsh

Discussion via Zoom on Thursday July 31

Participants: Lachlan, Angela, Ethan

Items for discussion

- ‘Benevolent Asylum’ Research Report
- 3D Digital Model of the Asylum (at the Potter Museum)
- Collection of Photographs (in the report)
- Lachlan’s talk with Hotham History Project

Purpose

To explore how artefacts impact our thinking about the past, the present and the future.

Some general questions

When you look back on your work for the Miegunyah Project, what stands out in your memory?

What prompted you to focus on the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum?

What prompted you to construct an artefact of the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum?

Can you describe the process for developing the 3D model?

How does “isometric projection” impact the viewer and the viewing of the model as an artefact?

Has that research and the development of the model impacted subsequent ideas?

What other artefacts do you recall as significant at the time and now?

How did you discover the thesis written by the unknown student in the 1960s?

How was your research received by the local North Melbourne community? (e.g. at your talk for the Hotham History Project)

About the building/architecture

How does architecture “act as a bridge back in time?”

What was it about the Benevolent Asylum, as a building, that prompted your research?

What does the building say to you about the colonial imaginary?

Why do you think the building was dissembled?

What do the floor plans tell us?

How can architecture of the past impact our thinking about the future?

About the artefacts

What does the photograph say to you about the colonial imaginary?

What is about present-day absence of the building that attracted you?

Why do you think they dissembled the building?

The photographs reproduced in the report are originally a mixture of albumen silver prints and engravings (wood mostly) – did you notice any difference in the style?

About the imagery

What do the images of people as shown in your report suggest to you about the people who lived and worked at MBA asylum?

What role did the MBA play in the lives of people who lived and worked there?

What did the MBA represent to the local community and Melbourne colonial society in general?

Did attitudes towards the MBA change over time? Why? Why not?

About the language

What does *benevolent* mean to you? Did the project change its significance as a word?

What do you think it meant to people in colonial Melbourne?

How about *asylum* – how has that word changed in usage?

Appendix 6

Excerpt from writer's statement on distributed knowledge and narrative temporality

It's May 12, 2025

Distributing Knowledge

We're back in *Old Physics*. Ethan and I are still preparing for our first project update. As postgraduate students of creative writing, we are keen to explore the critical and creative possibilities of interdisciplinary research and art practice. A central question for our project is:

What kind of knowledge can speculative fiction generate for the purposes of critical analysis and social transformation?

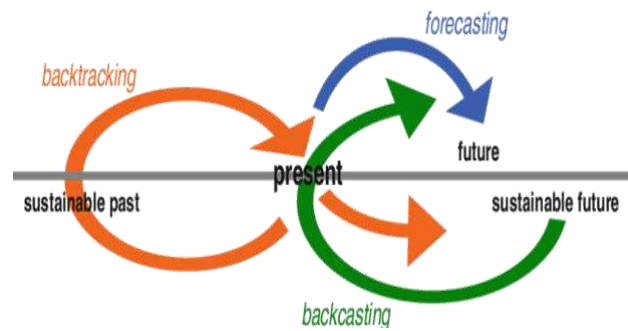
As a collaborative project, we also have the opportunity to take up multiple vantage points for exploring the Gerolami draws on Deleuze and Guattari (1994) to construe archives as 'institutional assemblages' with creative and transformational potential to 'produce new social networks' (Gerolami, 2014, 168). Through our research for *Unquiet Voices*, we are beneficiaries of ideas, artefacts and research shared by a network scholars and writers (see Appendix 3). The digital version of *Unquiet Voices* thus provides a platform for sharing the benefits of this 'lineage' via hyperlinks embedded in the text, while also facilitating ongoing storage, distribution and development of our narrative.

It's May 13, 2025

Narrative Temporalities

We're in the West Bay Room in the Quad. The Miegunyah research teams are presenting their first project update. Everyone is interested in Ethan's ideas about lived experience and representations of disability in the archives. I am also fascinated by his deployment of ekphrastic writing as a response to selected artefacts.

In my section of the presentation, I discuss how *Unquiet Voices* invokes major system changes to explore better - not utopian - social and environmental futures. According to futurists Rob Roggema and Wim Timmermans, making the 'changes we desire' is the best way to stimulate the 'transformation we need' (Roggema and Timmermans, 2012. 87). For this reason, *Unquiet Voices* is positioned in a multi-dimensional setting (see Appendix 3), using narratological strategies now commonly deployed in futures design such as backtracking, backcasting and forecasting outlined in the diagram below:



'The difference between forecasting, back-casting and backtracking' (Van den Dobbelstein et al. 2006) and sourced from Roggema & Timmermans (2012)

The transversal aspects of *Unquiet Voices* thus incorporate social transformations in the plot design and characterisation. The overarching story for the series traces the impact of *The Aborealist* 'environmental re-set' in which *Mechanist* AAMSO research innovations are abandoned in favour of non-invasive engagement with planetary ecosystems. These otherwise positive changes in the storyworld of *Unquiet Voices* come at a price for the AAMSO characters; the 're-set' entails an immediate rejection of their specialised skills in the operation of research technologies such as the 'camera-futura-obscura', 'insitu-intuito' and 'the dioramatron' (see Appendix 4). As narrative motifs, the shift away from these technologies signals disruption for the AAMSO characters as they come to terms with changes in their working lives and how this impacts on their sense of belonging in their own world.

The temporalities of the narrative world also add suspense to the serialised storytelling. The instalments have been constructed so that each segment contributes to plot points in the overarching story, while also containing dramatic story arcs of their own. In Instalment Two, for example, we learn that Eli has discovered 'something' about 21st century mobile devices on the *Miegunyah Site* that propels him to leave his workstation. This story line is not resolved until the end of Instalment Three and creates a narrative space for the introduction of a new character, 'Olivish', in Instalment Two. In this way, we hoped to maintain reader engagement through the dynamics of characterisation and through 'suspended seriality' between the two instalments.

I concluded my section of the presentation by highlighting how digital images embedded in the narratives also add the weight of visual perspective to plot development and characterisation in *Unquiet Voices*. The 'mechanical eye' of the camera mediates an interplay between 'what is seen and what is known', and as asserted by John Berger (1972), the images are thus 'freed from the boundaries of time and space'. We respond to the artefacts and their images as

assemblages linking contemporary times to Melbourne's colonial and pre-colonial past while also creating an imagined space for future vantage points (see timeline in Appendix 3).

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<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/heritage/ahc/publications/thematic-study>

Dhoombak Goobgoowana, Volumes 1 & 2 <https://www.unimelb.edu.au/dhoombak-goobgoowana>

Energy and Climate Change: [Alien civilizations are probably killing themselves from climate change, bleak study suggests | Live Science](#)

Hotham History Project: ongoing research and public awareness about the history of The Benevolent Asylum, <https://www.hothamhistory.org.au/the-benevolent-asylum/>

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The State Library of South Australia at: https://guides.slsa.sa.gov.au/Aboriginal_peopleSA/Kaurna

The Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders at:
https://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/research_pub/one-law-for-all-intro.pdf

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