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CONVERTING SALVATION: Protestant Missionaries in Central Australia, 1930s-40s

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CHAPTER EIGHT: ‘Strangeness and Intimacy, Distance and Proximity': Love and the Distant Face

Mission Stations were often utilized as sites of research and surveillance by scientists. So, as we glimpsed in the previous chapter, Ernabella was also a place where anthropologists, biologists and anatomists observed, studied and measured Aborigines in their desire to ‘study savages’. The scientific and anthropologist presence in Central Australia was a significant one from the late 19th century and the collusions and collisions between the discourses of anthropology and missionology in the Central Australian sites are important in the analysis of what missionaries said and thought about indigenous people. The boundaries between the two disciplines or professions

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1 A commentary on Levinas with a resonance for missionaries: ‘Face to face with this other who suddenly appears before me – this stranger for whom I, too, am and shall always remain a stranger, this being who by the appeal of his naked and vulnerable face solicits, even condemns, me to take responsibility for him, and calls me into a relation where strangeness and intimacy, distance and proximity coexist – I feel, according to Edmond Jabes, ‘this blind attraction for the distant face that blinding’: Richard Stamelman, "The Strangeness of the Other and the Otherness of the Stranger: Edmond Jabes" Yale French Studies 82 (1993): 118-134, pp. 120-121, citing Jabes: "Il n’y a de trace que dans le desert: Avec Emmanuel Levinas" in Le Livre des marges 11: Dans la double dependance du dit (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1984), p. 70. The inset photograph is entitled ‘Ernabella, Musgrave Ranges, 1940’ and is from the Mountford-Sheard Collection, State Library of South Australia.

2 The Horn Scientific Expedition of 1894, of which Baldwin Spencer was a member, was the beginning of a large-scale, long-term scientific (including biological and anthropological) surveillance of Central Australian Aboriginal people: see S. R. Morton and D. J. Mulvaney, eds., Exploring Central Australia: society, the environment and the 1894 Horn Expedition (Chipping Norton: Surrey Beatty and Sons, 1996). Later, the Arrernte of Hermannsburg became the most famous ‘native tribe’ in the world after Spencer and Gillen had written The Native Tribes of Central Australia and introduced Sir James Frazer and the world to the Arrernte. Two of the most significant subsequent figures in anthropology, AP Elkin and TGH Strehlow were influential in the discourses of the missions of Central Australia. Elkin had been an Anglican priest in his early working life and retained strong ties to the Protestant Churches; Strehlow was born at Hermannsburg, a son of the most important missionary of early Lutheran missionary work in Australia, Carl Strehlow, who was himself an important, if non-professional, ethnographical figure and was the author of a massive multi-volume work on the Arrernte: Strehlow, The Aranda and Luritja Tribes of Central Australia. Spencer and the older Strehlow had deep differences of opinion over crucial aspects of Arrernte language and cosmology: see Derek John Mulvaney and John H. Calaby, So much that is new: Baldwin Spencer, 1860-1929, a biography (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1985). It was perhaps inevitable that TGH Strehlow would enter the lists on behalf of his father: see TGH Strehlow, Songs of Central Australia (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1971).
were not necessarily stable or fixed, though a profound division is arguable between an anthropological desire to keep the traditional native culture unchanged in order to study it and a missionary desire to substitute a European, Christian, ‘civilized’ culture. One of the historical complexities with this notion is that some missionaries were anthropologists, or at least amateur ethnographers, with a genuine interest in the cultures, customs and beliefs of the indigenous people whom they hoped to civilise and Christianize. Carl Strehlow, Albrecht’s predecessor at Hermannsburg, is one of the most notable and important missionary-ethnographers in the history of missionary enterprise. JRB Love, as we have seen in chapters two and three, was another variant of the missionary-anthropologist, a member of the SA Anthropological Society, with links to the ‘Adelaide’ group of scientists and anthropologists centred in the University of Adelaide and the SA Museum, correspondent with Elkin, and occasional contributor to magazines such as *Oceania*, and *Man*, and the author of *Stone-Age Bush Men of Today* which won him ‘scientific’ recognition, at least within the Presbyterian Church. Love represented, to some extent, the uneasy ideological collaboration between missionaries and anthropologists, complicated by the personal blurring and crossing of professional lines, which influenced both the thinking and practices of the Central Australian missionaries.

In his 1936 book, Love had found in some of the ceremonies of the Kimberley Worora people ‘rites akin to the most sacred observances of the Christian faith.’ He had written of the rites being ‘practised in the spirit of the deepest reverence and awe by naked savages in north-western Australia.’ In 1937, his depiction of a different ceremony displays his revulsion at the ‘savagery’ and primitivity of the natives when presumably no traces of a ‘sacred’, Christian rite can be found. Invited to a corroboree at Erliwayawanya, near Ernabella, Love is disgusted by the production of blood by the participants ‘stabbing their penes...then they

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3 By ‘an anthropological desire’, I do not mean to suggest that all anthropologists desired to keep indigenous cultures unchanged. In Australia, Elkin for one was committed to change, although anthropologists/scientists such as Thompson, Cleland, Tindale and Pink, it could be argued, were committed to the preservation of relatively unchanged societies and cultures. Conversely, as I go on to suggest here, not all missionaries were proponents for change, although most were. Love himself was a realist and a gradualist: seeing change for Aborigines as inevitable but wishing to slow down the rate of change as much as possible, and arguing for the retention of much of their culture and customs.

4 Love, *Stone-Age Bushmen*, p. 219; also see above, chapter 2.
danced around the fire in such a way as to exhibit the bleeding penis. The thing was the most disgusting exhibition I have seen among blacks.' Love cannot bring his fastidious self to believe that such dances have ever been a 'normal part' of their life and, ironically, finds the blame in 'the scientists who have come up here to study the aborigines [and] have encouraged the exhibition of unseemly things, for the sake of recording pictures...'

Pernicious white 'contamination' of Aboriginal people, for Love, was not then limited merely to doggers and low whites but to scientists and anthropologists who encouraged 'primitive' displays for their own purposes. This may have been just the reaction of a prudish Presbyterian who after years of experiencing the 'sordid life' of mission stations so often used the words clean, decent, civilised to designate approval. Yet it seems somewhat incongruous for a 'missionary-anthropologist'. Perhaps it serves to reinforce Love's profound sense of the difference of the 'blacks', their absolute otherness and strangeness. One gets this sense with Love, that the 'black', while redeemable by the blood of Christ, has a primitive otherness that is beyond comprehension. One does not find in JRB Love the sense of difference inherent in Rousseauian primitivism, for example, the view that 'savages' are radically different from 'us', more authentic, morally superior, the notion of the noble savage. Love was hardly alone in this. The 'soft primitivism' that Bernard Smith discussed in his brilliant study European Vision and the South Pacific as being applied to representations of South Sea Islanders was rarely applied to Australian Aborigines, even by sympathetic missionaries. The protection and paternalism that Love seemed to

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5 Love, "PRG 214, Series 21, 1937 diary": 7 Jun 1937. For an interesting parallel with TGH Strehlow's similar reaction to what was admittedly his 'first sacred ceremony', see Barry Hill, Broken Song, pp. 176-179. It was also an object of horror to Strehlow, who had had to move away from the ceremony, away from 'the reek of hot human blood.' Apropos Love's point about the scientists, it may not be merely coincidental that Strehlow's ceremony was conducted for the benefit of JB Cleland's Board for Anthropological Research from the University of Adelaide, which had co-opted Strehlow to 'muster' Aboriginal specimens for testing. One of the tests involved taking blood samples, which Cleland explained (in pidgin) to the natives was to 'see if the blackfellow's blood was more like the white man's than that of a Chinaman or Afghan': ibid., pp. 177-178, citing Philip Jones, "South Australian Anthropological History: The Board for Anthropological Research and its early Expeditions", Records of the South Australian Museum 20 (1987): 71-92.

advocate as a duty of the white man to the Aborigine was not only to protect the ‘savage’ from white greed and cruelty but to protect them from their own dark and impenetrably primitive nature.

the conversion project

And what of Love’s original missionary objective of ‘preaching Christ to the savages’? Let us trace, through his 1937 diary and the early days of his superintendency, the first tentative trajectory at Ernabella of this objective, apparently fundamental to the missionary venture, and apparently antithetical to the anthropological enterprise. It began with a curious, abortive incident on 5 September 1937:

I walked up the creek intending to gather the natives for some form of divine service but found they had nearly all gone kangaroo hunting. I saw the goats, so went towards them, when 2 women ran away and hid in the saltbush. Daisy, in charge of the goats, stood her ground; but I could get no information from her...so my first projected service at Ernabella camp failed.7

There is in this episode a sense of the unstable, even disconnected nature of relations between the indigenes and the missionary. It is an early contact but much of the relations between Love and the Aborigines of the mission are of this tentative and uncertain kind. This introduces some complexity into Love’s venture: while his writing about Aborigines tended towards the authoritative, occasionally authoritarian, paternalistic rule-making, his actual relations with the Aborigines seem to be more hesitant, provisional, exploratory, speculative. The dominance and hegemony of the missionary-anthropologist is diminished or reduced in this light. Love, the inveterate collector and assiduous provider of Western Australian artefacts for museums, seems reluctant, for example, to meddle with indigenous ritual items. On his first visit, he was offered a small stone tjurunga by an Aborigine in return for sweets and tobacco, perhaps as Olive Pink was on her pre-mission visit to Ernabella:

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Manchester University Press, 2001): 68-81. The ‘hard primitivism’ in regard to Australian Aborigines that Smith and Johnston posit from an earlier period applies with as much force to Love’s 20th C Australia.

I gave the old chap a handful of lollies and a stick of tobacco for his *tjurunga*, then returned the *tjurunga* to him, as I did not want to collect these things. He looked puzzled, as did all of them; but when I told them to keep it, they went off happily.\(^8\)

When Love arrived as the head of the Mission, he laid down guidelines for Sunday Services. There would be a morning service, followed by an evening service after which a meal would be provided for the Aborigines. In the Superintendent's Log for 16 March 1941:

Mr Mac [Walter MacDougall] conducted morning worship. I conducted evening. I have asked all to attend both services. Children came in the morning, but few adults. All came in the afternoon. A meal is given at the end of the day. I wish the morning service to be a voluntary one, not just a service to be followed by a meal.\(^9\)

Love wanted to measure the indigenous response to Christianity without the artificial distortion produced by the offer of the free meal: thus the morning, meal-less service. The meal without question was an inducement for attendance at Service: while the Duguidian principle of 'no imposition of Christianity' was adhered to, the mission offered a 'sweetener' (literally, as tea and sugar were always on the menu) for people who came to the evening service. No service, no meal. The Pitjantjatjara responded. Invariably the whole camp turned up on Sunday evening! Both sides were being exemplary in their hospitality and civility.

**a promise of better things**

By September, Love had had an opportunity to take preliminary measure of that response. Even though 'the camp was full of rations', the people still came to evening service:

> so they come to the worship from interest, curiosity, because we like them to come and they like to come; not solely for the free meal which follows the Sunday evenings'. It is at least a promise of better things to come.\(^{10}\)

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\(^8\) Ibid., 9 Sep 1937.


\(^{10}\) Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1941": Love to Matthews, 10 Sep 1941.
In early 1942, Love noted with some gratification that the attendance at the morning Sunday service was almost as good as the Sunday evening service, although he was not convinced that they came for the spiritual food as well: 'It would be false to pretend that the people have any interest in the message of Christianity as yet; but they are interested in these weekly congregations and they like to come and join the crowd. Understanding will follow in due time.'

The early optimism of the missionary came, almost imperceptibly, to wane in the light of his experience. By July 1942, he was writing to Matthews:

Since coming here, I have spent most of my time in physical labour. I quite realise that this is, from the evangelical point of view, something of a waste of time. But on the other hand, I get more cautious as I get older, and no longer hope to evangelise all the people in a few short years. To get the Mission established on an easy and running basis may not be such a waste of time after all.

Later, he reported that though church attendances were 'good', he was not so optimistic about 'progress'; but he concluded philosophically, 'time will tell'. He may well have meant panoptical time.

cheeky aborigines

In some respects, Love was a missionary of the old school who believed in the application of discipline and surveillance in respect of the 'blacks'. Yet he often seemed placed off balance by their unpredictable responses. His first letter to the Board of Missions after his arrival at Ernabella shows his concern with 'discipline': 'Things are in better shape than I expected. MacDougall has done well in tightening up the discipline of the Mission.' In his first year as Superintendent, he administered punishment to a boy who 'refused to come when called' and 'told other children to disobey'. Love had some initial difficulty securing him; when he had asked 'the men' to bring him, '[they] all disappeared'. Eventually, someone did bring him, and Love 'gave him half a dozen smacks on

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13 Ibid., Love to Matthews, 2 Sep 1942.
14 Ibid., Love to Matthews, 13 Mar 1941.
seat with a board’ and released him on ‘promise of good behaviour’. According to Love, the people ‘were very pleased at the affair being concluded, discipline has been publicly upheld...and all is satisfactory’.\(^{15}\) Perhaps ‘the people’ were more relieved than ‘pleased’ at the conclusion, given the acknowledged reluctance of traditional Aborigines to administer corporal punishment to their young. A few days later, another incident occurred when Love scolded an aborigine, ‘who gave a cheeky reply’, and Love threatened to hit him: ‘He went off to camp. Some [discussion?] arising about all going off, [so] I lined up all working men and gave them the option of leaving or remaining. All said they wanted to remain.’\(^{16}\)

But not all of Love’s orders were quickly acknowledged. There was often recalcitrance, even if polite and playful. When there was some ‘trouble in the camp’ in 1941, Love suspected ‘misconduct with females’, but ‘nearly everyone when questioned simply replies ‘Wompanti’ (don’t know) or disappears.’\(^{17}\) To Love’s discomfort, the relationship between missionary and the Aborigines was becoming more of a negotiated relationship, with both sides having a say, a stake in the resolution of conflicts or disagreements. This process began even in 1937, before Love became superintendent: when Love finds some lost sheep, he gave the shepherdess a scolding, ‘which she took with smiles’.\(^{18}\) Love is disconcerted by the Aborigines’ habit of cutting down the available timber and saltbush for windbreaks. He ‘orders’ them to move camp but they ‘misinterpret’ the instruction and ‘were camped just across the creek from the homestead.’ After being ‘instructed’ again, only half the camp moved and Love gave them a ‘scolding’. But ‘they were so smiling about it all that I had to relent and agree they could move tomorrow.’\(^{19}\)

In his early days on the new mission site Love often appeared disarmed and surprised by the ‘smiling’ hospitality of the indigenous people. On his return from a 1937 camel trip to Ayers Rock, as it was then, passing back through

\(^{15}\) Love, "Logbook": 5 Jul 1941.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., 24 Jul 1941.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 20 Nov 1941.
\(^{18}\) Love, "PRG 214, Series 21, 1937 diary": 17 Sep 1937.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 9 Sep 1937.
Oparina, Love was delighted at his reception:  

we saw smoke, and as we came close, we were welcomed with shouts by the people we left last week...these simple, kindly folk seemed really pleased to see us again, and had actually gathered a stack of firewood ready for us at our last camp. This was a delightful act, and we were as pleased to see them as they were to see us. The children capered about, the men smiled a welcome, and the women danced and wave their arms to us.  

Love was appreciative of the hospitality but there were limits to his gratitude: once, while eating, the Europeans gave ‘the black people’ a large billy can of tea as a treat, but ‘we are not giving them free food, partly because we cannot spare it, and partly because we do not wish to establish a bad precedent for the future mission.’ There were also limits to Love’s inclusiveness; he retained a sense of distance, of otherness, combined with a sense of patriarchal and paternalistic superiority: The little children play about our camp. The women keep at a little distance. We give them tea, but do not encourage them to come into the camp. Love was particularly fastidious about preserving correct and ‘distant’ relations with Aboriginal women, understandable given missionary anxieties about ‘going native’ and hybrid relations on the colonial frontier. But Love preferred to keep his distance from all ‘native people’, not just women:  

An elderly man, whom the doctor has been anointing for nasty sores, about [his] pudenda and all over his body, has been getting a little closer each day, till today I plainly told him to go off to his own fire. I do not like to seem discourteous to these generous people, but they must not be allowed undue liberties. The man questioned my order, I assured him, yes! And he went off. I find already that the few words I have acquired of the language are very useful.

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20 Not unexpectedly Love was impressed with Ayers Rock: ‘This Ayers Rock is a stupendous and awe-inspiring sight; such an enormous mass of red rock rising sheer from the plain... The Aboriginal name for Ayers Rock is ULURU, wrongly spelt OOLRA, with 2 syllables, on Findlayson’s map [HH Findlayson, a pioneer European in Central Australia and a mammal curator at the Adelaide Museum]. Mt Olga (also weird looking) is called ‘KATA TJUDA’ which means ‘many-headed’, an apt name.’: Love, "PRG 214, Series 21, 1937 diary": 24 Jun 1937.  
21 Ibid., 29 Jun 1937.  
22 Ibid., 29 Jun 1937.  
23 Ibid.  
24 Ibid.
the Aborigines Protection Board

The appointment of JRB Love as Superintendent to Ernabella coincided with an important change in the administration of Aboriginal affairs in South Australia. In 1940, the position of an individual Chief Protector of Aborigines (CP) was abolished and replaced by an Aborigines Protection Board (APB), with the last CP, William Penhall, becoming the influential Secretary of the Board.25 The APB was charged with 'the duty of controlling and promoting the welfare of the aborigines.'26 The equal emphasis on control and welfare was instructive. In Australia, the Aboriginal Acts and their amendments in the various states, at least up until the 1960's, gave Governments considerable powers over the lives of Aborigines under their 'control'.27

The APB was intimately involved with the early history of Ernabella Mission: rations, blankets, medical supplies, and educational resources were supplied and paid for by it, and the Mission, along with other missions and government aboriginal stations, had to report each year to the Board, which itself reported, through its Minister, to the SA Parliament.28 Ernabella superintendents and the

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25 South Australia, as a Colony and as a State, had, from 1837 to 1940, an almost uninterrupted succession of individual Protectors, sub-Protectors and Chief Protectors of Aborigines. In 1938, William Penhall was appointed acting Chief Protector (CP) and confirmed in the position the next year. In 1940, the Aborigines Protection Board (APB) replaced the CP arrangement. The Secretary of the APB was to be the permanent head of the Aborigines Department. William Penhall was the Secretary from 1940 to 1954: see Cameron Raynes, 'A Little Flour and a Few Blankets': an Administrative History of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia, 1834-2000 (Adelaide: State Records of South Australia, 2002). Note that Raynes queries the extent of the influence of Board members. He contends that from 1940 to 1954, Penhall effectively ran the Aborigines Department 'despite the existence of the Board.' As Secretary, all correspondences, requests and reports that came to the Board were directed to him; thus, Raynes argues, he effectively controlled the flow of information to the Board: ibid., p. 50. Be that as it may, there is some evidence in the voluminous APB files held in the State Records Office in South Australia that, at least as far as Ernabella was concerned, it was advantageous to have the founder of the Mission on the Board: see below, chapter 10. While the war years of 1939-1945 meant resources were often more scarce than ever, requests from Ernabella for extra rations in times of difficulty and drought, and additional medical and educational supplies were rarely refused, or unable to be met (although rations were reduced at times because of war conditions).

26 SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No.102 of 1940, APB Report for 1940.

27 The amended Act in SA brought every person in the State who was descended from the original inhabitants of Australia under its control. It was possible to apply for exemption from the provisions of the Act where an Aboriginal person 'by reason of character, standard of intelligence, and state of development' was considered 'capable of living in the general community without supervision': ibid. Other States enacted similar 'protective and restrictive' provisions, and exemptions: see CD Rowley, Outcasts in White Australia (Penguin: Ringwood, 1972 (first pub. 1970), see especially Part 1.

28 It may be noted here, in the context of financial and resource assistance to the fledgling Mission, that the admission of Ernabella to the Child Endowment Scheme, while unconnected to the APB (it was a
Board of Missions also corresponded regularly with the APB on other matters such as police or legal matters which involved Aborigines on the Mission; reports of patrols through the area, requests for adoptions of Aboriginal (including mixed-blood) children, and matters involving the removal of Aboriginal children. For Love it meant that he had to answer to two Boards: the Board of Missions, as their employee, and administratively to the APB. As well, the formation in 1937 of what became known as 'the Adelaide Committee', a Committee formed under the auspices of the SA Presbyterian General Assembly and reporting to it, headed by Duguid and comprising of ‘friends of the Mission’, to keep an watchful eye on the development of the mission, increased the surveillance and the pressure of the ‘metropolitan gaze’ on the exemplary missionary himself.

The formation of the APB provided an opportunity for white activists and academics interested in the Aborigines to have an influence in the administration of Aboriginal affairs in the State. The first Board included Duguid, who had lobbied the SA Government for his inclusion, Professor JB Cleland as Chairman,29 and two female activists, Constance Mary Ternent Cooke and Alice Maud Harvey Johnston, whose reports on Ernabella in 1943 were to create a controversy that shook the foundations of the new Mission and instigated a serious breakdown in relations between Love and Duguid. At the outset, however, all was sweetness and light. The establishment of Ernabella was praised not

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29 John Burton Cleland was Professor of Pathology at the Adelaide University medical school and a prolific scientific ‘expert’ on the anthropology, anatomy and pathology of Australian Aborigines. We have glimpsed Cleland before in this study. He was a major figure in the network of Adelaide academics from the 1920s to the 1950s which included people like Frederic Wood Jones, Robert Puleine, TD Campbell and Norman Tindale who contributed significantly to national arguments about Aborigines.
only by Duguid’s ‘anthropologists’ but also by the Acting Chief Protector of Aborigines (CP) in South Australia in his 1938 Annual Report. The Protector was firmly of the belief that ‘the influence of the mission and the interest of its superintendent and staff in the survival of the aboriginals as a pure race will go a long way towards arresting the drift which has set in through the immoral association of white men with the Aborigines’, noting, as the missionaries had, the deleterious impact of the ‘white doggers’. It was important that the indigenous people have first contact with ‘men of strict moral character and integrity’. High hopes were thus held of the new Mission.\footnote{30}

**the flow of APB supplies**

The CP, and after 1940 the APB, was immediately useful to the Mission in terms of medical and educational supplies, although the intervention of Duguid was apparently necessary to initiate the flow of rations from the APB to the mission station.\footnote{31} So, for example, in the State Records files for November 1939 under ‘Quantities of rations to be ordered for Ernabella’, were orders for 15 bags of wholemeal flour, 8 bags of yellow sugar, 2 cwt's rice and 10 lbs tobacco. Also ordered were: cotton wool (hospital quality – 15 lbs), lint (10 lbs), gauze (100 yds), bandages, sticking plaster, plaster bandages, Mercurochrome powder, Silver Nitrate, Atropine Ointment, Petroleum jelly; also eyedroppers, syringes, surgeon's needle, needles for yaws injections, and sterile horsehair for sutures.\footnote{32} The

\footnote{30 SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No. 43 of 1938, Annual Report of Chief Protector of South Australia for the Year ended 30 June 1938.}

\footnote{31 Duguid wrote to the Chief Protector in October 1939 complaining that at the outset of the mission, the Presbyterian Church had been promised rations for sick and aged natives: ‘the Church has been supplying rations for 2 ½ yrs but they have not been forthcoming from the Government.’ Duguid let it be known that he would appreciate a retrospective supply to the beginning of the year: SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No. 52 of 1939 (k), Duguid to Chief Protector Penhall, 3 Oct 1939. Penhall replied the next day that he would arrange the necessary details of supply and transport. As an example of the supply of medical resources, a letter from Harry Taylor to Penhall in June 1939 requested medical supplies, including bandages, iodine, cotton wool, Boracic Lint, Tincture of Aconite and Iodine, and ‘some opium for relief of Dysentery’. Taylor was not sure of the name but was sure Dr Duguid would know: ibid., No. 52 of 1939 (b), Taylor to Chief Protector, 23 Jun 1939. In a subsequent letter to Taylor on 30 Jun 1939, Penhall writes that Dr Duguid will bring the tincture of opium for the treatment of dysentery when he comes north.}

\footnote{32 Ibid., No. 52 of 1939, handwritten notes of orders; and later in file, a formal Advice Note in form of invoice re above items dated 25 Nov 1939. While some of the rations may have been in compensation for the delay mentioned in the above footnote, many of the subsequent orders appear to be of similar amounts. Rations were reserved for aged and infirm people, and children: the numbers of these varied. In his first telegram to the APM, two weeks after his arrival, Love asked for the March (1941) rations for ‘19 indigent aborigines and 40 schoolchildren’: Ibid., No 22 of 1941, Love to APB, 26 Mar 1941 (radio telegram). See
feeding and healing regimes at Ernabella, as rudimentary as they were, were beginning to gain assistance from the State. The early stages of this partnership between the missionary and the administrators charged with the 'control and welfare' of Aborigines is worth examining.

Love commenced at Ernabella in March 1941. His first communication with the APB was to report the death of an infant and discuss the removal of two 'half-caste children'. Then, two days later, he asked for an explanation of the rationing regime in SA. Penhall advised that rations were to be issued 'to natives who are old and infirm or sick and unable to look after themselves; also to half-castes and such other children attending school who, in your judgement, cannot be provided for by parents.' He also advised the scale of rations each week: for adults, rations consisted of 7lbs flour, 2lbs sugar, 4ozs tea, 1lb rice, 2 sticks tobacco. For children, they were entitled to 5 lbs flour, 1 ½ lbs sugar, 1lb rice. These scales could be varied 'according to your judgement', Penhall advised: for example, growing children might need as much as adults. There were regular communications between Love and Penhall on rations and other supply issues. Love queries, at one point, the non-arrival of blankets, which turns out to be a war-related supply problem. At another time, he asks for '2 tons of rations' to be at Finke by a certain date to be picked up by the mission truck; he also asks that the flour be part coarse and part fine: 'coarse makes an attractive porridge, fine not so good but better for damper.'

the removal of children

The Chief Protector, and from 1940, the APB, also administered and approved removal of Aboriginal children. A forerunner to some of the cases that came up during JRB Love's regime at Ernabella was the 1939 case of M. An Adelaide family requested CP Penhall to allow their adoption of an Ernabella child, M., a

discussion below on rations. Of course, the nutritional value of the government rations is another matter: see discussion in chapter 10, below.

33 Ibid., No 22 of 1941, Love to APB (Penhall), 20 Mar 1941.
34 Ibid., Love to APB, 22 Mar 1941.
36 Ibid., a series of telegrams between Love and Penhall, April-May 1941.
37 Ibid., Love to APB, 27 Jun 1941.

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female 'half-caste', who had come down to Adelaide with Superintendent Taylor on a visit. The family promised a 'good home', a private education, and a companion, a white daughter of the same age. Penhall refused the request on the grounds that the mother of the child had agreed to allow M. to come to Adelaide only after Taylor had promised to bring her safely back to Ernabella: 'this promise must be honoured'. However, Penhall made it clear that under the Act he had the power 'to hand her over to your care' and noted that: 'It is intended to give consideration to removing all the half-castes from Ernabella a little later, and if you then desire to adopt, an opportunity will be given for application. As we have seen, both Love and Duguid were essentially in agreement with this policy of removal. Love acted quickly. Within a few days of arriving at the mission station, he wrote to the APB regarding the possible removal of two mixed-blood children from Ernabella. The two children, said Love, should be removed 'to a more suitable environment' as soon as possible:

The girl is fighting with other children, and is getting too big to leave safely in a blacks' camp; the boy is old enough to adapt himself to white ways, and is too old to leave in a savage environment.

Love wanted the Board's instructions. He 'regretted to say' that there were 'several small half-caste children here' who he thought were too young to leave their mothers yet: 'I would urge leaving half-caste children with their mothers till 4-6 years, then removing them to their future environment before they get too old to feel the change too hardly.' Penhall called the proposed removal 'a good plan' and suggested talking to the Oodnadatta police on their next visit to Ernabella: 'if the opportunity occurs send the two south after advising me of the arrangements made with the Oodnadatta Police.' On the general question of 'half-castes at Ernabella', Penhall repeated his view that 'these children should be removed from Ernabella, not only for their own preservation, but as part of our effort to maintain the pure blooded race on the northwest reserve. No doubt

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38 Ibid., No. 52 of 1939 (d), Edwards to CP Penhall, 27 Nov 1939.
39 Ibid., CP Penhall to Edwards, n.d., probably December 1939.
40 Ibid., No 22 of 1941, Love to APB, 20 Mar 1941.
41 Ibid., Love to APB, 20 Mar 1941.
this ideal will be difficult of attainment, but I think it is worth a strong effort.\textsuperscript{42}

When the two children arrived at Quorn unannounced, the United Aborigines Mission (UAM) Superintendent Erskine wrote a blunt letter of complaint to Penhall.\textsuperscript{43} Colebrook Home had received a telegram from the police at Oodnadatta requiring them to ‘meet north train 2 children Ernabella. Oodnadatta Police.’ The Colebrook authorities had no alternative but to respond, stated Erskine, although ‘our missionaries are instructed that no child is admitted to our home without the consent of our Council’. Penhall replied ‘to your rather peremptory letter’ that he had not known the children were being sent down immediately. Tentative arrangements were being made for children to be removed from Ernabella and he had intended asking the UAM to receive them in Colebrook.\textsuperscript{44} In fact, a letter had been sent from the Oodnadatta police advising Penhall of the removal of the children from the Mission Station. Whether he had not received or received but not read the letter by the time he received the UAM letter is unclear. Sergeant Bradley from Oodnadatta reported that on a recent patrol, Superintendent Love had asked him to take ‘the two half-castes’ to Oodnadatta, to be sent to Colebrook at Quorn: ‘he told me that you had advised him to hand over the children to me on my next visit.’\textsuperscript{45} As it turned out, Love also had written to Penhall immediately the children had been sent on their way but the letter did not arrive at the APB until 22 August.\textsuperscript{46} Such were the vagaries of communications in the early 1940s, and such were the cavalier ways in which removals occurred in this era, with all white actors, police, missionaries, and administrators concurring (with only their timing out of step), carelessly complicit.

There was an instructive denouement to this sad episode, giving us some clues as to how these things were sometimes worked out. The UAM advised the APB subsequently that they were willing to keep the two children at Colebrook

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., APB to Love, 31 Mar 1941.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., No 10A of 1941, United Aboriginal Mission (UAM) (Erskine) to Penhall (APB), 19 Aug 1941.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., Penhall to Erskine, 22 Aug 1941.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., No 7 of 1941, Bradley to Penhall, 13 Aug 1941.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., No 22 of 1941, Love to APB, 11 Aug 1941.
provided the APB paid 5/- pw for their maintenance.47 This was agreed. Penhall then sounded the UAM out regarding a further eleven half-caste children at Ernabella: was Colebrook able to take these as well?48 The UAM’s answer was considered. They agreed fully with the aims of ‘bringing all half-caste children away from the Ernabella district’ but were concerned at such ‘a large influx of children’ and some of their ages. They preferred children under seven years ‘as after that age they are difficult to control, as they have learned so much of bush ways and habits.’ Water was a problem: if the APB could help with some financial assistance, then perhaps...49 The APB subsequently approved a grant of £200 towards the cost of an improved water supply at Colebrook.50

**the death-knell for gin-men**

Towards the end of the 1930s, the Chief Protector and the Ernabella missionaries were agreed on the pernicious influence of the doggers. Consequently the concerns of the Ernabella missionaries regarding the ‘contamination’ of the natives were often raised with the CP/APB. In December, 1939, for example, after Rev. Taylor had resigned, the acting superintendent of Ernabella, Stephen Ward, raised concerns about a dogger who ‘invariably has a crowd of native women around his camp...last week he took away our very capable house girl by giving her a new dress...Is there no law by which I can order him off the place?’51 Penhall’s response indicated he was as zealous as the missionaries to rid the area of doggers. He advised that amending legislation was soon to be proclaimed that ‘will sound the death-knell of every gin man in the state and I can assure you it will be used without mercy as far as I am concerned.’52

**the buffer station**

Part of the strategy against the ‘gin men’ was to cordon the Great Aboriginal

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47 Ibid., No 23 of 1941, UAM to APB, 24 Aug 1941.
48 Ibid., APB to UAM, 29 Aug 1941.
49 Ibid., UAM to APB, 5 Nov 1941.
50 Ibid., see No. 36 of 1942, re: grant towards cost of improved water supply at Colebrook.
51 Ibid., No. 52 of 1939 (e), Ward to Duguid, 2 Dec 1939. Duguid passed on the letter to Penhall.
52 Ibid., No. 52 of 1939 (e), CP Penhall to Duguid, Dec 1939. The Aborigines Amendment Act became law in 1940 and section 30 of the Act made it an offence for a non-Aboriginal male person to ‘habitually consort with’, or have a sexual relationship with, an Aboriginal woman, unless married to her: see Raynes, ‘A Little Flour...’ p. 50; also SA State Records, “GRG 52/1”: No. 102 of 1940, APB Report for 1940.
Reserve to the West of the new Mission Station off from the depredations of such men. The mission was thus to perform a 'buffer' function as part of the Duguidian vision of a 'protectorate' in the Musgraves. The Chief Protector, too, saw the real benefit of the Mission in secular terms:

The work of the Ernabella Mission is of great importance in that it is expected to retard the detribalisation of the natives living on the adjacent reserve and ensures that the inevitable contact with civilization is made first of all with people whose moral character is above reproach.\(^5^3\)

The Chief Protector's view thus aligned precisely with Duguid's vision of Ernabella as a 'buffer station' between the Aborigines of the Reserve and the Musgrave Ranges, and the encroaching white settler civilisation. The 'buffer station' notion, however, inevitably raised the old issue of the three blocks between the Mission and the Reserve. The leasing of these blocks would immediately undermine the logic of the buffer station. So the missionaries and the Church began a concerted campaign to resolve the situation. Matthews wrote to the APB, initially raising the tenure of the pastoral lease on the Ernabella property itself.\(^5^4\) His Board, advised Matthews, felt that a pastoral lease gave insufficient security of tenure, and preferred a perpetual lease on the property. He then raised the matter of the three adjacent blocks, referring Penhall to a letter of Love's to the Board of Missions:

[the blocks] support 200 natives, especially through killing kangaroos. No settlement by white men could put anything like 200 white people in the place of the 200 natives who are now getting their food in these hills...the most kindly disposed settlement will be followed by the disappearance of the natives, unless they are preserved as we are doing it at Ernabella. Ernabella is keeping sheep on the flats and keeping the hills for the hunting parties of the natives, who also roam all over their country.\(^5^5\)

In the letter, Love concluded that the only proper action was to add these blocks to the Mission, or to add them to the Reserve, rather than throw them open for white settlement. Penhall agreed with Matthews and Love and proposed to pursue the matters with the responsible officer, the Commissioner of Crown

\(^5^3\) Ibid., No. 116 of 1939 (b), Chief Protector's Annual Report to the Commissioner of Public Works, 1939.
\(^5^4\) Ibid., No 22 of 1941, Matthews to APB, n.d., probably April-May 1941.
\(^5^5\) Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893 /Folder 4/1941": Love to Matthews, 20 Apr 1941.
Lands. In August 1941, Penhall advised Matthews that the tenure of the adjacent blocks was held under an annual licence which arrangement would not be reconsidered until 1944. This decision to defer, he advised, did not indicate any hostility to the issue of a pastoral lease at a later date. In relation to the matter of the perpetual lease on the mission property, the Pastoral Board had advised Penhall that a conversion of the three pastoral leases the Church held on Ernabella to perpetual leases was not possible, as such as action would set an undesirable precedent. However, the leases ran for considerable periods of time so, Penhall told Matthews, the tenure under which the land at Ernabella was held could be regarded as being of a fairly permanent nature. And there the matter rested for the moment. The efforts of the Church and the mission were directed towards ensuring, as much as possible, the security of the Mission as a going concern and as a haven and buffer for a people, in Love’s words, ‘so lately removed from savagery’.

**our job is to defend the Aborigines against wrong**

What was then the relationship of Ernabella and Love, then, with the white pastoralists, stockmen and settlers, the ‘contaminating whites’, whom the missionaries went to considerable efforts to separate from contact with Aboriginal people? Love often assured the Board of Missions that, generally, relationships with other whites in the area were good. However, during the notorious Kitto trial, when opinions and feelings were inflamed, Love wrote to Matthews that ‘every white resident, [from] whom I have heard an opinion, has shown a violent anti-black and pro-white attitude, without regard for the question of right or wrong’. Love recognised that it was not possible for the Mission to court favour or popularity with the settlers in the Centre:

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56 SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No 22 of 1941, APB agreed to refer matter to Commissioner for Lands 10 Jun 1941: APB Minute Book Folio 107.
57 Ibid., No 22 of 1941, APB to Matthews, 27 Aug 1941.
58 Ibid., No 22 of 1941, APB to Matthews, 15 Sep 1941.
59 Pastoralists Kitto and O’Conlay were brought to trial in Alice Springs in 1941 charged with the murder of a Pitjantjatjara man, Lilliliki. After a number of unusual and unsatisfactory occurrences, including the disappearance of Aboriginal witnesses, and possible tampering with the physical remains of the deceased, the two men were acquitted, to the dismay of Southern friends of the Aborigines, including Albrecht and Duguid. For an account, largely from the perspective of TGH Strehlow, who was a patrol-officer in the NT at the time, see Hill, *Broken Song*, pp. 357-362.
If Ernabella had been popular in the district after the trial, then it would have been shame to Ernabella...we here all wish to live at peace with all men, as much as is possible, but popularity is not to be sought at the cost of right bowing before a wrong to the Aborigines, or to anyone else. Our job is to defend the Aborigines against wrong, and when wrong may be done by a white man to a black, then the missionary who champions the cause of the black man here will not be popular in this district.60

Again, we see that JRB Love, despite the ambivalence of his discourse about Aborigines, was ‘with the black people’ when it mattered.

**the Hermannsburg missionary at Ernabella**

The hospitality that the missionaries and the indigenes extended to each other at Ernabella was often shown to others. Many visitors, scientists, anthropologists, geologists, ministers of religion, tourists, began to come to Ernabella. In 1942, similar hospitality was shown to Pastor Albrecht. He had been detained in Adelaide during the early war years after he had been seen as a security threat. In August of 1942, Pastor Albrecht was allowed to return to Hermannsburg, and he did so via Ernabella.61 Albrecht wrote a lengthy and enthusiastic report about the experience.62 He was also quoted in the Ernabella Newsletter as describing the visit as a ‘real highlight’ of the trip. He fully endorsed Ernabella, saying that he left ‘with a heart full of joy and satisfaction that at least here, as at Hermannsburg, the native has a home where he is understood, feels his own, and has a future.’63

Albrecht described his ‘Journey North’ with a lyrical passion. His ‘view’ of the countryside around Ernabella as he approached it contrasted with Love’s ‘desolate scenes’. Albrecht writes that his party drove for a hundred miles through ‘the most beautiful flowers’ that hid the ‘arid’ land; there were green bushes with blue, yellow and pink flowers, with the atmosphere filled with ‘rich

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60 Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893 /Folder 4/1941": Love to Matthews, 14 Nov 1941.

61 Albrecht was not permitted at this stage to take his wife and children back with him. He notes in his report on the trip, *Journey North*, that this was the first time he had had to ‘say goodbye’ to them: see Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection", *Journey North*, n.d., probably about September 1942.

62 Ibid., (*Journey North*). Love’s reaction was more muted and prosaic. The Superintendent’s Log for 24 August 1942 reads: ‘Rev. W. Albrecht (sic) of Hermannsburg with Mr Borgelt, arrived here this afternoon in their truck, on the way from Adelaide to Hermannsburg. Shearing started today’: Love, "Logbook".

scent’. Albrecht stayed at the Presbyterian Mission for three days. He was impressed by the ‘busy, cheerful’ activity of the mission site and, particularly, by the school and the children there: ‘What a cheerful crowd they were; it was a joy to look into their happy faces.’ But just as Albrecht saw some parallels between the two missions (‘...at Ernabella you have many of the things we see [at Hermannsburg] fairly developed, just in the making.’) he also foresaw difficulties for the new Mission. He noted the Duguidian policy to ‘keep the natives in their natural state as long as possible’ but wondered ‘how long will they be able to carry on in this way?’ Noticing requests to Love from the natives for clothes as part-payment for work, Albrecht saw this tendency as becoming irresistible: ‘it is absurd to imagine that [they] can be kept away from such influences – like a monkey in a zoo. The problem is there and cannot be dodged’. Albrecht saw ‘clothing’ as a metaphor for the changes and ‘temptations’ – a favourite missionary term - that the white society, through cattle stations and townships, would bring and that Aborigines would desire.

the ugly face of the loafer

Albrecht also discerned the beginnings of what he called ‘the ugly face of the loafer’, the person who lives off the work of others. While the Lutheran had tried to understand the collective nature of traditional indigenous society, the individualistic work ethic had profoundly permeated his Puritan and Pietist mentality. Albrecht was deeply contemptuous of the loafer and saw him as an immoral sickness, a cancer: ‘at Ernabella we could just study this problem in the beginning, but it is there.’ Love had already made the connection between easy money and ‘loafing’. When it came to the problem of work and the Aborigine, missionaries everywhere usually spoke the same language. Forming part of the

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64 Ibid., p. 1.
65 Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection": Journey North, p. 4.
66 See Henson, A Straight-out Man, p. 3. In fact, Albrecht does discuss the problem of ‘work and the Aborigine’ in a number of his (especially later) papers and articles with a great deal of understanding and empathy for the predicament of his Aborigines, but always within the strong framework of his upbringing. Even a paper written probably around this time deals perceptively and not merely critically with the attitudes of indigenous people to Western notions of work: see Albrecht, “Burns-Albrecht Collection”: Is the Assimilation of the Aborigines Possible? (n.d.); see also Albrecht, “Albrecht Material”, Lutheran Archives: The Question of the Economic Rehabilitation of Aborigines (1953); Stages of Transition (1961); Employment of Aborigines on Cattle Stations (n.d).
67 Ibid., Journey North, p. 3.
anxious border of white civilization, mission stations were places where the marks of that civilisation were to be inscribed on the indigenous body and soul. One of those marks was 'work': the station was a site that privileged work in the Western sense. Work was the fundamental activity of pastoralists and mission stations, where even proselytizing activity was referred to in such terms: *we worked among the Pitjantjatjara, we worked among the Arrernte*. One of the standard ways in which to civilise and reform the indigenous body was to reform indigenous habits of industry, or what was often seen by many Europeans, including missionaries, as lack of industry. Most Mission Boards and missionaries during the 1930s and 1940s saw the introduction to even remote parts of Australia of a form of capitalist economy as inevitable and natural. The station was one site where this transition was to be managed and where the 'native' was to be guided into capitalist work-disciplines and rhythms of time-labour. The theological and philosophical reconstruction of work by the West—by Luther, Calvin and Wesley among others—had predisposed Protestant missionaries to regard disciplined capitalist enterprise in the world as a virtue.\(^68\) Missionaries such as the Hermannsburg Lutherans drew a connection between Christianity and economic activity by advocating a gospel of work designed to instill the self-discipline that would make 'natives' good wage-labourers.\(^69\) The Arrernte at the mission were taught the disciplines of punctuality, cleanliness, moral purity, self-restraint, and industriousness that were required of a good worker and a good Christian.\(^70\) Albrecht saw the ‘loafer’ as the antithesis of these virtues: as he famously wrote to his Board Chairman in 1937, 'a Christian cannot be a parasite'.\(^71\) He thought he had 'glimpsed' the

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\(^69\) See Leske, ed., *Hermannsburg: a vision and a mission*.


\(^71\) Cited in Henson, *A Straight-out Man*, p. 112, referring to a letter from Albrecht to Reidel, 29 Sep 1937. Rowse uses the phrase as a chapter heading in his *White flour, white power*. Noel Loos writes of the 19th Lutheran missionaries at Hope Valley in North Queensland that European patterns of economy and work were so ingrained that 'the need to induce the semi-nomadic food-gathering and hunting Aborigines to accept
loafer in the early history of the new Mission and was warning the superintendent. For while Love wished to retard as long as possible the incorporation of the Pitjantjatjara into Western economies, the straight-out Lutheran saw this as an ultimately futile exercise, with the Aborigines themselves pushing for the incorporation.

the matter of the incorporation of Christianity

The two missionaries, from different religious and theological contexts, differed more seriously on the question of the ‘incorporation’ of Christianity into indigenous spiritual lives. Albrecht did note that Love had a fine record of service and he admired the fact that after only fourteen months at Ernabella, all conversations between Love and the indigenous people were conducted ‘in the vernacular’. While Albrecht thought that ‘the Presbyterian brethren here are working much on the same lines as we at Hermannsburg…’ he conceded that Love and he differed on some fundamental points of doctrine and missiology:

Rev. Love believes that if the Gospel is offered to the native, there is no need to trouble any further about his religion. The two, Christianity and their beliefs of old, can well stand together and be of benefit to the people. Our attitude, on the other hand, is that Christianity is exclusive and if mixed with other beliefs becomes diluted and loses its power to transform and regenerate.

A reflective Albrecht later provided a more acerbic account of a conversation between them at this time:

A missionary from Ernabella, Rev JRB Love, once told me that he saw in their blood-drinking ceremony a foreshadow of the Holy Communion. I told him that in my opinion this was a shocking statement but he replied this was only my narrow mind that could not see further. Such attitudes and principles will never build the Church of Jesus Christ. And surely the Church has not sent Missionaries to the Aborigines to re-establish old

regular agricultural employment was seen in itself as essential to conversion. There was no appreciation of the Aboriginal economy': Loos, “Concern and Contempt”, p. 108. Albrecht’s Protestant Lutheran obsession with 2 Thessalonians 3:10 admittedly often seemed to bring him close to this position. Certainly the ‘loafer’ and ‘parasite’ maddened him beyond anything else in Aboriginal society, despite his genuine and empathetic attempts to understand it.

72 Ibid., Journey North, p. 2.
73 Ibid., p. 4.
It was a significant encounter: Love the exemplary Presbyterian progressive, and Albrecht, the conservative Lutheran evangelical. It could perhaps be portrayed with apparent justice by a certain historiography as a defining moment in Australian missiology, when the old met the new, when the conservative, evangelical, fundamentalist, Word-driven missionary came face to face with a progressive, moderate, liberal, anthropologically and culturally sensitive missionary. But was it such an encounter? History rarely allows us the luxury or latitude of forgetting the complexity of things. We may need to reassess such a view after we look more closely at the core of Love’s experience at Ernabella, from 1942 to 1946, in the next three chapters. The formidable figure of the Hermannsburg missionary will be useful as a context against which to weigh that experience. After all, Albrecht had significant links with each of our Presbyterian triumvirate of Duguid, Love and Flynn, and was involved in explicit and implicit conversations with them and with the wider settler community on what they all tended to call ‘the Aboriginal problem’. Curiously it was Friedrich Wilhelm Albrecht, the German Lutheran pastor born in Poland, who, even more than the others, spoke almost always of ‘our’ Aborigines. They had possessed him, as they possessed JRB Love in different ways, from the moment he had arrived in Hermannsburg in 1926 to the ‘joyful waving of their hats’ and the ‘friendly voices’ amid ‘the stately station buildings beneath the green trees’ to his response as an old man in an Adelaide nursing home to his biographer’s first approach to him: ‘in spirit, I’m still there [in Central Australia]. They were my life, you see.’


75 It was a characteristic of missionaries to use the possessory pronoun in relation to the Aboriginal people on their mission. Russell McGregor has pointed out that it was (is?) a common practice among anthropologists in referring to those people they are studying but suggests that it was a matter of academic possession, which led on occasion to dissension: McGregor, “The Clear Categories of Olive Pink”, p. 6. I suggest with missionaries (and not a few anthropologists) such as Albrecht, Love and others that it was much more a marker of identification and empathy with the particular community or ‘tribe’ with whom they were associated, or even with all Australian Aborigines. Almost a thesis could be written on the historical and social meanings of the ‘case of the two pronouns’; that in essence the white settler spoke of ‘the’ Aborigine while the missionary spoke of ‘our’ Aborigine. Perhaps this thesis could, in one sense, be characterised as such a thesis.