USE OF THESSES

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

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A thesis submitted in September 2004 for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University
CHAPTER SEVEN: ‘A Politics of Hospitality’\textsuperscript{1}: Early Love at Ernabella

‘Ernabella’:\textsuperscript{2} the site that was established between and around the gums and hills and creeks of that particular Interior space of the Musgrave Ranges has forever been represented now as a ‘mission site’ for white people who read about it or go there to visit or to work, and perhaps also for Aborigines, particularly Pitjantjatjara people, some of whom, as people do everywhere, look back with warmth and nostalgia at the site (sight?) of their youth. And so it was ‘established’ on a certain day in 1937, by a certain ‘Church’, ‘among’ a certain ‘tribe’ of Aborigines, with whom there was an ‘encounter’ and thus a ‘missionary enterprise’ or venture began from that day. Christianity was ‘introduced’, converts were made (eventually) and a ‘congregation’ formed.

This establishing language, lavished as it is on the beginnings of almost all missionary ventures by the mythologies of the venturers and their storytellers, tends to gloss and flow over the narrative, and by fixing it within this discourse of establishment, undermines the (hi)story of the ‘place’, its freshness, the novelty and unpredictability of the venture. This discourse may also contribute unduly to

\textsuperscript{1} A phrase Derrida uses in his discussion of Levinas: see Jacques Derrida, \textit{Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas}, Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas trans. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997) esp. p. 18: see especially the discussion in the Introduction, above, and in the Conclusion, below. The inset photograph is a Duguid photograph from the State Library of South Australia, captioned ‘Ernabella boys at play, early 1940s’: see Mattingly and Hampton, eds., \textit{Survival in our own land}, opp. p. 141.

\textsuperscript{2} Now that it is longer a mission site, it is called (by some) by another name: Pukatja. While in one sense, this is an appropriate indigenization of naming rights, since the ownership, if not control, of the Lands has reverted to the original custodians, it also tends to confine, also appropriately, ‘Ernabella’ to the historic and represented ‘mission site’. Pitjantjatjara people were, of course, not the only people to have been young at the ‘mission site’: children of missionaries also were, of whom I was one. It is a possible, and legitimate, critique of this thesis that its theme of hospitality (from both ‘sides’ of the \textit{karu}) reflects the author’s background. This may well be true: it is impossible to separate oneself fully from one’s particular and peculiar ‘context’. But if it is so, it has been more an unconscious or subconscious process than anything more deliberate, and if the evidence had been more in another direction, I would, I hope, have written a different thesis. But then perhaps I have only ‘seen’ the evidence I wanted to see.
the rupturing of the continuity of the site with the many pasts inhering in that place and moment in time, the pasts of the singular people who had lived there and who were living there when the ‘establishment’ occurred. And the establishing discourse was and is also inextricably mixed with both missionary and settler discourses of the time, which agree in certain respects with each other, that it was the whites did the encountering, the introducing and the converting, that is, the ‘establishing’, as whites do. The Other remained passive.

So this Interior place, Ernabella, has become, therefore, under the influence of this ‘establishing’ language, an interior space littered with preconstructed notions and concepts, a discourse which threatens continually to ‘make sense’ of all that happened on the site before we can attempt to make another sense of it here, in this work. It tends to assume an indigenous audience, for example, that has materialized out of the blue, as it were, for the ‘establishment’ of the mission, as if an imperious if not imperial and ethnocentric click of the fingers must have inaugurated the mission. This assumption clearly undermines and underplays the local indigenous response without which ‘the mission’ would not exist at all or would soon cease to exist. While this response is not a focus of the present study, the qualified and limited nature of our focus, which is necessarily only part of the missionary encounter, remains evident. All this is not a suggestion that we can now see the history of the mission site and the arguments about Aborigines that frame it, washed completely free of the accretions of ‘establishing’ discourses and other discourses of the time. After all, we are enmeshed in the discourses of our own time, which themselves have continuities and affinities, as well as discontinuities, with these discourses of the past.

We are also captured by the assumptions of predictability. We know what happened in the past; we conclude it was bound to happen. This is linked to the understandable but mistaken notion that simply because one thing happens after another, the first event was necessarily a cause of the second event. When we look back at any ‘history’, and know how it turned out, we are tempted to think, because this happened, that happened. Yet at the beginning, or at least the story’s beginning, which is not really the beginning, simply a beginning, no
one knew what would happen, neither the indigenous people nor the missionaries. The only ‘map’ they had is the pictures they had built up, through scraps of anecdotes, rumours, half-truths and experiences, of the Other, the Aborigine, the Missionary. The first great superintendent of the Ernabella Mission, JRB Love, half-glimpsed this existential character of the colonial encounter on the mission site, although he saw it through a characteristic gauze of exoticism and savagery. In a letter to the Board of Missions just before he set off to Ernabella as its leader, he wrote:

It is not possible for a man just to step into the midst of the life of a tribe so lately removed from savagery; but every man must win his position for himself. And it shows...that the missionary must be prepared to meet any eventuality, accident, murder, illness, or sudden death, on a remote station.3

This existential nature of the mission site was productive of, and helped to produce, improvisational relations between the missionaries and the Pitjantjatjara. The early contacts between the two sides were conducted and negotiated in the gestures and hesitancies of hospitality proffered and accepted by each. Between the native camp and the mission homestead lay Ernabella Creek, which flows metaphorically through our narrative as a kind of liminal space where the two Others met, face to face, in a Levinasian encounter, in their otherness, their alterity, their knowledge of their difference and separation, yet reaching out occasionally, at times uncomprehendingly, to each other in a politics of hospitality.4 The one is saying, share our land, as you have not come to

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4 Levinas sees the ‘face’ more as a metaphor for the encounter between the One and the Other than as a literal, physical ‘fact’: ‘My power...is now produced as the possession of a world I can bestow as a gift on the other... For the presence before the face, my orientation toward the Other can lose the avidity of the gaze only by turning into generosity, incapable of approaching the other with empty hands. This relationship...is the relationship of discourse [discours]. The way in which the other presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me, we here name face’: Levinas, Totality and Infinity, p. 50. The Levinasian notions here are resonant; the notion of the avidity of the Western gaze is almost a summary of the history of European colonialism. To what extent missionaries generally, in that history, can be said to have replaced that avidity with generosity is of course problematical. Their gaze was often as avid, for the conversion and civilization of ‘the native’, as the general colonialist avidity for commerce, exploitation and subjugation. But that an element, if not more, of ‘generosity’ inhered in the discourse and praxis of Love, Albrecht and Duguid, to match the generosity of their hosts, who ‘welcomed’ them into their lands, and was largely unmatched by anything that could be characterised as ‘generosity’ from other European sources, is a continuing argument in this study. Also argued as a corollary is the unfashionable (then and now) sense of responsibility felt deeply
kill us; the other is saying, we have come as friends, if distant friends (or older brothers), we have not come to kill as others have.\textsuperscript{5} The hospitality of the hosts is exemplified throughout this narrative by their willingness to educate these intruders about their land, language and lore, and at least listen to these strangers’ stories. Some indigenous peoples have used what Margaret Jolly has called the ‘salience of silence’, the power of not speaking, hearing or listening, as ways of resisting colonial power.\textsuperscript{6} Others beat drums or ran away during sermons.\textsuperscript{7} The Pitjantjatjara exercised the resistance they did offer, along with their accommodation, in other subtle ways, which is perhaps to say that they were hospitable both in their resistance and their accommodation.

The first superintendent of Ernabella on arrival noted the quiet of the first nights when he had been used elsewhere to the sound of singing from the mission natives. When he asked them why they did not sing, they replied that the previous white occupant of the homestead would take pot shots at them with his gun if they sang at night. After that, the singing tentatively recommenced.\textsuperscript{8} Both sides had to establish and re-establish their boundaries and their bona fides. Nothing was guaranteed in their history.

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\textsuperscript{5} According to the Levinasian ethics, the face of the Other ‘speaks’ an originary prohibition: ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ The desire of the Self for possession is ultimately murderous yet ‘to see a face is already to hear; Thou shalt not kill.’ The encounter with the Other interrupts ‘the imperialism of the same [Self]’: Levinas, \textit{Totality and Infinity}, p. 39.


\textsuperscript{8} The superintendent was Rev. Harry Taylor, the previous mission Kunnunya. It is possible, from this story, to see Ernabella as almost a microcosm, even a metaphor, of the larger colonial world which had usurped the whole world of the Aborigines. The previous occupant of the homestead was a dogger, a small pastoralist, and shot at proximate blacks: a small-scale representation of the hostile settler. The missionaries, in contrast, came in amity, in a politics of hospitality, and ‘the singing started again’. Of course, the intrusive and reformational nature of some mission sites did render them problematical: see criticisms of various regimes in Swain and Rose, eds., \textit{Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions}, and Broome, \textit{Aboriginal Australians}, esp. ch. 7. This did not apply so much to Ernabella which quickly developed a reputation as a progressive mission: see below.
just another mission station?

From its inception, Ernabella carried the reputation of a progressive mission. It was labelled a unique experiment, radical, a new way of christianizing and civilising. Yet when FW Albrecht passed through Ernabella in 1942 on his way back to Hermannsburg after an enforced wartime exile he saw Ernabella as being ‘run along similar lines’ to his own mission. JRB Love himself was reluctant to concede Ernabella to being essentially any different from his Kunmunya. When a prominent scientist, Frederick Wood Jones, praised the Ernabella Mission as ‘the best yet’ in 1937, Love’s understandably defensive retort was that it was merely ‘carrying on’ the principles of the Kimberley mission. Love’s view, however, of the new Central Australian mission station as a ‘Kunmunya in the Desert’ was not general. The Duguidian experiment has almost universally been regarded as a new departure from a missiological tradition in Australia that had conspicuously failed. But were the reservations of Love and Albrecht merely those of two men protective of their own missions? Was Ernabella a radical experiment or was it in the final analysis little different from the orthodox, traditional mission station? It may help to catch a glimpse of it at the outset, to sense its themes, its concerns, the notions that sustained its missionaries and the representations they produced of their indigenous ‘hosts’, that is, their discourse about Aborigines, in the wilderness to which their God had sent them to make a discours, a ‘founding conversation’, with Aborigines.

in the company of savages

The diary that Love kept on his ‘inspection and establishment’ journey of 1937 is useful material for his initial representations of the indigenous people of Central Australia. Almost the first party of ‘blacks’ he sees are near Ernabella:

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9 Duguid himself, as founder of the Mission, was the principal, but not only, generator of the early ‘mythology’ of the Ernabella site, beginning with his Moderator’s Address in 1935 when he outlined the necessity for a new approach to mission work among Aboriginal people: Presbyterian Banner, vol. 40, no. 4.
11 See Broome, Aboriginal Australians, pp. 117-118; also see Jean Woolmington, Aborigines in colonial society, 1788-1850: from “noble savage” to “rural pest” (North Melbourne, Victoria: Cassell Australia, 1973); and Swain and Rose, eds., Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions.
12 Levinas, Totality and Infinity, p. 41.
we saw a scattered party of bush blacks, making towards a camping place, all carrying loads on their heads. The men and children were all naked and a reddish-brown colour, apparently from the red-brown dust of the country. The women that we saw were all wearing ragged and dirty remnants of dresses.13

While Love seems to identify the people with the country, naked, raw, red-brown, dusty, it is the female Aborigines who strike a discordant note. His representation of Aboriginal women frequently involved their ‘ragged’ dress. His attitude towards Aborigines was often patronising and fastidious, such was his predilection for cleanliness and European standards of ‘civility’. Thus he could be surprised by the presence of these ‘virtues’ in indigenous people:

Today I got Kathleen, or Nancy, or whatever her name may be, a lubra employed here at present, to wash clothes for me, which she did only middling. She said ‘thank you’ for a handful of lollies which I gave her in payment – a little to my surprise, as the blacks are so contemptuously regarded here that I did not expect to hear thanks.14

When Love visited a native camp, on the other side of the creek, for the first time, he noted again that the men were ‘totally naked’ but the women, ‘as they saw us coming’, put on ‘some filthy scraps of ragged garments’. Love spent an ‘interesting half hour with the men’, acquiring some vocabulary; when he moved to the women, ‘the aged women crouched on their knees with their faces covered by their hands, heads to the earth.’ Love is not disconcerted:

I put a lolly in each woman’s hand. One or two raised their heads, the others did not move. Then we moved to where [a] young woman sat. Beside her was a scrap of a blanket, from which protruded the foot of a small child. I raised the blanket, and the little child crouched to its mother’s side, burying its face against her thigh. I put a lolly in its hand when it sat up.15

A few days later, he again visits a native camp across the creek with the children ‘laughing, white-toothed, unconscionably dirty, full of play and happy’ but again the women covering their heads. One had a sack over her head:

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14 Ibid., 29 May 1937.
15 Ibid., 27 May 1937.
I removed the covering, and a frightful spectacle met our gaze. She was apparently in an advanced stage of gangrene, both lips, nose and one eye were completely gone, the other eye seemed blind and deeply sunken. How she is still living is a marvel...16

At another fire a women held a small pup, the mother of which ‘came snarling at us...the children were all crouched behind a break-wind, by the fire, as a raw wind was blowing.’ Between these visits across the creek, Love had climbed a prominent hill to get a better, panoptical view of the land, to encompass it within his European gaze. He saw ‘the high broken ranges’ to the north; on the south, Glen Ferdinand flanked ‘by a high and rugged ridge.’ Closer the Ernabella Creek was timbered with gums, ‘a refreshing sight in this dry land’, but the plains were sparsely dotted with mulga, gidgee, and saltbush. The general appearance of the country, from Love’s vantage point, was ‘harsh and dry, forbidding and desolate.’17 On his return to Ernabella in August, Love again climbed to a high point, and saw once more ‘a desolating prospect’;18

Large patches of ground are bare. Out where the sheep are looks very bad. Nowhere is there much feed visible. If no rain falls before the summer, I doubt whether many of the 2,000 sheep now on Ernabella will survive...to the North, beyond the Musgraves, the Northern Territory appears as a dark ocean...the hills are beautiful but the land is almost a desert.19

The diarist writing is evocative. The rawness of the animal life and the desolate and forbidding country seem to match the primitivity of the inhabitants, just as the hues and red dust of the ‘rugged’ land appear to rub off on its ‘ragged’ denizens. JRB Love seems in the company of ‘savages’.

the liminal Creek

Living arrangements at the early Mission site were not untypical of ‘traditional’ missions sites both in Australia and elsewhere. A ‘block’ of colonial buildings, basic European style, a homestead or two, a store, a ramshackle school, various sheds, made up the missionary quarters. The church, an improved school building, some more residences, were to come later. All this was distinctly

16 Ibid., 31 May 1937.
17 Ibid., 30 May 1937.
18 Ibid., 28 Aug 1937.
19 Ibid.
separated from the natives’ quarters, which were across the Ernabella Creek. The Creek represented both a kind of dividing line, a boundary, and a copula between contiguous communities. Both fissure and fusion, it separated and connected Native and Stranger. It also represented the distance – social, racial, religious - between Aborigine and missionary, the separation and alterity of the Other who could be only be met face to face in the Creek, as it were, in that liminal space between the two sides, who then retreated to their separate ‘camps’, which remained still, at night, mysterious, forbidden and forbidding to each Other.

The separation was not merely metaphorical or symbolic. In JRB Love’s early ventures across the creek, in 1937 and in 1941, he often found a camp consisting of a small group of ‘blacks’, typically some men, a few more women, children and dogs. They were ‘interesting’, the diarist thought; he would pick up scraps of language, and note their ‘ragged, dirty’ clothes, or their wounds and burns; then return to the genteel domestication of the mission homestead, either to the dinner ‘around the tea-table’, sometimes with fellows up from the university, or the mission board – companionable white fellowship – or, later, with his wife, in a ‘clean, decent’ setting as a conspicuous and conscious contrast to the ‘sordid’ nature of aboriginal, primitive, savage life. Love put a premium on this dichotomy: he once explained patiently to the Board of Missions: ‘In all the sordidness of aboriginal mission life (did any of the members of the Board imagine it is often anything but sordid?) a man and his wife need the joy of a refined and happy home life to keep up this work.'20 We remember how, much later, an Ernabella missionary was appalled at the closeness of huts of the Arrernte to the whites’ living spaces at Hermannsburg: ‘There was no getting away from them, they were on top of you all the time.’21 Possession of Aborigines became important to the Ernabella missionaries; they wanted to attach them to the mission, they wanted them to become ‘our’ Aborigines:, yet it seemed that separation and distance from Aborigines was also seen as necessary and, perhaps, natural.

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21 See above, Introduction.
knowledge and expertise

Considered crucial too was the knowledge, experience and expertise which the Board of Missions and the Presbyterian missionary community assessed to exist plentifully in the human architecture of the site. Duguid had been into the Inland five times by the time Love took over at the mission.\textsuperscript{22} The Adelaide doctor had built up strong connections with the only other mission in Central Australia, Hermannsburg, through his relationships with Albrecht and TGH Strehlow, these nourished most recently on their 1939 trek through the Centre on camel. The anthropologists and scientists had been persuaded to support the mission. Cleland and Wood Jones were on side. Elkin, courted by Duguid, was interested, reminding Duguid that he [Elkin] had been the first man to take a motor vehicle to the Musgraves. Stating that he had ‘a good grip on the social organization and totemism of that area’, Elkin hoped that Love would take advantage of this. He also responded to some ‘confidential’ probing by Duguid by cautioning the doctor from his (Elkin’s) experience in the Kimberleys and his dealing with Love as editor of \textit{Oceania} that ‘Love is never keen to have an expert work either on the language or social anthropology of his mission region’.\textsuperscript{23} Despite Elkin’s warning, Duguid claimed in 1941 that Ernabella had, in Love, ‘perhaps the most experienced, sensible and anthropologically-minded Missionary to natives in Australia’.\textsuperscript{24} Albrecht, in temporary exile from Hermannsburg, too, passed on to Duguid his pleasure at Love’s appointment: ‘That is splendid. Your determination in this matter begins to show open results which nobody can question...May God bless his going there, and give him the strength and wisdom he will require for the job – our prayers are with him and for the whole work.’\textsuperscript{25} Despite his own initial reservations, the exemplary missionary was being carried to Central Australia on a wave of goodwill and great expectations.

\textsuperscript{22} Duguid, “Series 1: correspondence”: Duguid to Chinnery (copy), 1 Aug 1941.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., Elkin to Duguid, 27 Dec 1940: this letter was sent after Duguid had provided Elkin with information on Ernabella and had possibly, judging by Elkin’s response, asked for Elkin’s opinion of Love. See especially above, chapters 2-3, for details of interactions between Elkin and Love.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., Duguid to Chinnery (copy), 1 Aug 1941.
\textsuperscript{25} F.W. Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection: AA662": Albrecht to Duguid (copy), 7 Aug 1940.
to preach Christ to the savages

How did Love approach the ‘whole work’ of the missionary venture at Ernabella? During his first visit in 1937, HR Balfour, on behalf of the Board, had asked him to put on paper his views on ‘the Aboriginal question’ and Ernabella, perhaps to assess (discretely) the compatibility of his thinking with Duguid’s. 26 His summation of the principal aim of the mission was succinct: ‘to preach Christ to the savages.’ But his progressivism in the process of doing this was evident, wishing, he said, to ‘conserve all that is, as far as we are competent to judge, good in the primitive organization of the tribes’ and ‘to destroy nothing that we are not quite sure is definitely bad in native custom.’ This did not mean leaving the Aborigines untouched: ‘their old life must be modified, to enable them to meet contact with civilization, which has already reached every aboriginal in Australia. And their old way of living must be uplifted by the teaching of Christ.’ Love felt strongly that he had ‘already proved’ at Kunmuinya that it was possible ‘to engraft Christianity on the tribal system of law and belief’. As he put it, it was ‘futile’ for the missionary to beak down the traditional indigenous beliefs:

The new wine will burst the old bottle in its own time: the missionary ought not to do so, lest he bursts the old bottles and has not left an adequate substitute in their place.27

a bible in every home

But in what language was the ‘adequate substitute’ to be delivered? Another of Duguid’s fundamental principles was the acquisition and use by the missionaries of Ernabella of the local language. In 1937 Love told Matthews that he wished ‘to do something useful with this year...put the grammar of the local people on a written basis, for the use of future missionaries’.28 He worked hard to grasp the language, assisted by the indigenes: leaving Ernabella on a camel trip, ‘three little boys ran alongside us, pointing out objects to us, and naming them till late

26 Presbyterian Church of Australia, “BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1937”: Love to Matthews, 2 June 1937. HR Balfour, a member of the Board of Missions as well as a friend of Love’s, had accompanied Love to Ernabella during his first visit in 1937.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., Love to Matthews, 16 Jul 1937.
afternoon...29 He reported to Matthews regularly: 'Making tolerable progress with the language – the men are interested and eager to help me.'30 Love kept his notebook at the ready but felt he was not as quick at picking up indigenous linguistics as he had once been. It was not easy: at a camp he 'tried for more words, but there was so much chattering that I did not make much headway.' 31 Slowly things improved, 'wider connections' were made, and Love was able to leave the first superintendent 'some notes on the native language.'32 On his return in 1941, he struggled to pick the language up again, reporting to Matthews: 'the language study goes on slowly. My memory is not as good at 50 as it was at 25.'33 For some time he preached to the Aborigines in English, apparently not being either sufficiently fluent or confident enough in the vernacular to do so, at least initially, although we have evidence that by August of 1942 Love was readily conversing in Pitjantjatjara with mission Aborigines.34 The young schoolteacher, RM Trudinger, who had arrived at Ernabella in early 1940, was preaching in the local language almost from the start and was privately contemptuous of Love's preaching in English to a crowd of uncomprehending natives. Differences between the two men may have been partly personal, but later came to a head over language policy.35

The difficulties experienced over language on the mission site were due, in part, to ambiguities in Duguid's policy of privileging the local language. Duguid's view seems to have been that its validity was self-evident, given the overarching policy of retaining the traditional life of the Pitjantjatjara at the mission site. Duguid also appeared to believe that the missionaries, through the process of communicating with the Aborigines in their own tongue, would come to

32 Ibid., 11 Sep 1937; Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1937": Love to Matthews, 13 Nov 1937.
33 Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1941": Love to Matthews, 8 Aug 1941.
34 The evidence comes from Albrecht: see Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection": Journey North, p. 4. Certainly by 1943, we have confirmation from another visitor, Rev. J. Eric Owen, that Love was speaking and preaching fluently in the local language: Eric J. Rev. Owen, "A Visitor's Diary: Ernabella Patrol 1943," (Melbourne, Presbyterian Church of Australia, Board of Missions, 1943), p. 8.
35 See especially chapter 11, below.
understand the local culture better and help the Pitjantjatjara to retain as much of it as was possible in the context of a dominant white culture.\textsuperscript{36} It was in fact the rate at which the language of that dominant culture was introduced which became an issue at the site. Duguid much later suggested that it had been the plan to introduce English after three years 'as a foreign language', but there is little evidence that this was the understanding of the missionaries at Ernabella in the early 1940s.\textsuperscript{37} The resulting ambiguity of the policy allowed for small but crucial shifts of opinion on language. Historically, evangelical missionaries in Australia had worked along the more traditional missiological (and, to them, urgent) lines of 'saving souls', often (with some honourable exceptions) to the neglect of any serious interaction with indigenous culture and language. At Ernabella, the evangelical Trudinger had become convinced that the conversion project was best facilitated by a translation of Christian concepts, doctrine, narrative into indigenous forms, whether text, songs (hymns), or art. His primary object at Ernabella was eventually to have translations of the Bible – initially a Gospel or two - available for each family, in which there was at least one person sufficiently educated to read in Pitjantjatjara.\textsuperscript{38}

Neither Duguid nor Love could be said to reside in the evangelical wing of the Presbyterian Church.\textsuperscript{39} Duguid's primary motivation was humanitarian and medical, to save bodies, not to save souls. He was interested in the retention of indigenous culture, which meant retention of the language. Love's position on language policy was more complex. He had been a notable translator of the

\textsuperscript{38} See Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 1/1939-46" (Mitchell Library, Sydney): Matthews to Love, 25 Sep 1943, with Matthews putting Trudinger's position as one with which the Board was in 'general agreement'.
\textsuperscript{39} If we need any further evidence as regards Duguid, his autobiography provides it. There is very little, if any, mention of God in the book, let alone Christ. The last paragraphs, when he writes of his faith, he speaks only of 'a Power greater than [our]selves' and of 'the astonishing power of selfless love'. This latter, he writes, remains 'the ultimate solution to the world's problems': Charles Duguid, \textit{Doctor and the Aborigines} (Adelaide: Rigby, 1972), pp. 218-219. This is not the way an evangelical would have written. JRB Love, as a practicing missionary, ostensibly 'preaching Christ to the savages', as he put it, is a little harder to place. He may have considered himself an evangelical in a broad sense. I place him in a more progressive, Moderate wing; he does not appear to display the rather single-minded concentration on the conversion project, the task of saving souls otherwise condemned to eternal death, that tends to identify the 'true' evangelical, the true believer.
Worora language, and a pioneer of Australian efforts to translate oral indigenous languages to a written form, and to translate the colonial Biblical text into an indigenous one.\(^{40}\) He was to pursue similar lines in Central Australia. An awkward partnership between Love and Trudinger, with Pitjantjatjara assistance, was to produce a translation of the Gospel of Mark in 1945. But Love was also a proponent of the view that Aborigines needed to be provided with what he saw as an essential tool, English, to be able to negotiate the inevitable culture clash between a ‘primitive’ people and what he saw as a more advanced civilisation. And so he began to resist, slowly, subtly, and stubbornly, the vernacular-only language policies dictated by Duguid’s master plan and implemented on the mission site by the linguistically gifted Trudinger.

**they are taught little or no English**

Education was of course the principal arena where this conflict was played out. The schooling of native children had always been an important priority for missions, and particularly Presbyterian missions which, historically, had placed education on an equal level with evangelisation as missionary objectives.\(^{41}\) The Board and Duguid saw the Ernabella School from its early days as the jewel in the crown of the Mission, perhaps of all the Australian Church’s missions.\(^{42}\) The reasons for this judgement were clear: the methodologies of education at the school aligned perfectly with the broad policies of the Duguidian enterprise: all the teaching, and learning, was in the local language, the children were encouraged to remain unclothed, live with their families and participate in the life of their families and the tribe, including ‘walkabout’. In the words of the first teacher:

They speak and are taught little or no English; all instruction is given in their own language and subjects are correlated as far as possible with native and natural life. They are encouraged to go away daily and hunt in the bush, that is, to be fully learned in their natural school with vital

\(^{40}\) See above, chapter 2; see also Harris, *One Blood*, pp. 836-838.

\(^{41}\) See Stanley, ed., *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment*. Even that redoubtable Presbyterian Mrs Smith of Dunesk had specified the objectives of her much desired Scottish coinage as the education and evangelisation (note the order) of the Aborigines of South Australia.

\(^{42}\) See for example Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 1/1939-46": Matthews to Trudinger, 18 Jun 1941; Duguid, "Series 1: correspondence": Duguid to Matthews (copy), 23 Jul 1941.
subjects as bush lore, keenness of observation, swiftness of limb...\textsuperscript{43}

This view of the school was reinforced by the SA Education Department, which subsidized the salary of the teacher and attested to its ‘unique’ qualities.\textsuperscript{44} The praise that was constantly lavished on the school, as remarkable and exceptional, did not sit easily with Love. He saw it as not dissimilar to the methods used at Kunmunya, with the difference that in the Kimberley mission, attention was also paid to teach English at school, which Love saw as necessary and prudent, given the inevitable collision of cultures to come. His first comment on the school on arrival as superintendent in 1941 reflected his immediate and continuing doubts as to its relevance: ‘The little school is away over beyond the goat and ram yards, and is rather out of the life of the mission. This is a defect, but has its good points, when a lot of children are shouting.’\textsuperscript{45}

The ‘little school’ had been under way for more than a year, beginning in the creek. It was somehow appropriate, at least metaphorically, that the first ‘formal’ attempt to ‘speak to each other’ took place in this liminal, indigenous space. But the ‘school’ soon moved up and out of the creek as it found a built European form. The SA Aborigines Protection Board (APB), which had come into legislative existence in 1940, assisted in the provision of considerable amounts of education materials for the school, as well as providing food rations for the children.\textsuperscript{46} It was the evangelical schoolteacher’s dream that the two missionary enterprises,

\textsuperscript{43} South Australian State Records, "GRG 52/1 - SA State Records Office - Aboriginal Affairs Department - Aboriginal Protection Board - Correspondence Files (letters received)" (Adelaide, 1866-1968): No 22 of 1941: copy of Ernabella newsletter, with article by Dr. C. Fenner, Director of SA Education Department, quoting RM Trudinger.

\textsuperscript{44} For example, the SA Chief Inspector of Education, Mr HC Hosking; ‘The school is unique, probably without counterpart anywhere in the world’; an early EM newsletter, prior to Love’s arrival, contained an article by the Director of Education, SA who wrote glowingly about this ‘unique and exceptional school’: see note above.

\textsuperscript{45} Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1941": Love to Matthews, 13 Mar 1941.

\textsuperscript{46} RM Trudinger, the first teacher, wrote to the APB in June 1940 appreciative of the materials which had been sent to the school in response to a 3-page request form he had sent earlier: SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No. 24 of 1940, Trudinger to APB, 18 Jun 1940. The materials included: 3 boxes white chalk, coloured chalk, 40 individual blackboards, tins of blackboard blacking preparation, blank ‘newspaper’ paper, pastel books, rulers, painting brushes, paint colours), enamel paint for desks, counting-boards, globe, 2 saws, 20 sharp knives, sandpaper, 4 chisels, bags, scissors, reels of cotton, thimbles, soaps, towels, combs, washbasins, mirrors, scrubbing brushes, billycans, and even some old linen or cheap cloth for handkerchiefs! On the APB, see especially chapter 8, below.
the teaching of young Aborigines to read and write in their own language, and the translation of the Gospel into that language, would result, eventually, ‘in the creation of many converts to Christianity.’ To Love, it seemed at least as important that education provided the necessary skills to assist in the Aborigines’ eventual and inevitable ‘conversion’ to living in a European-dominated nation, but with their cultural and tribal integrity relatively intact. The tensions caused through the pursuance of these different objectives would continue to surface in the remaining years of Love’s superintendency.

**scalping the doggers in a desert for intellectuals**

Duguid and the Board of Missions saw as a significant priority for the mission the proscription of the white scalper, or the dogger, in the Ernabella area. This was seen as an important precondition for a successful venture. So the experienced and exemplary missionary, during his 1937 visits, began to prepare the stage in this regard. The doggers had permeated both the boundaries of the Reserve and the boundaries of good behaviour according to Duguid and Love who both believed that they exploited Aboriginal people, and especially abused the women. The salvation of indigenous women, from unscrupulous men, both white and black, and perhaps from their own ‘savage sexuality’, had often been a priority of the missionary enterprise. Love took a strong stand in his 1937 visits: he ‘instructed’ a secular employee of the station that ‘private traffic’ in dingo scalps was not acceptable: they were to be bought by the Mission from the Aborigines themselves at full nett value and then forwarded to Oodnadatta to the credit of the Mission. His diary provides an instructive context to this ‘instruction’: A party of ‘anthropologists’, which included Professor Stanton Hicks from Adelaide University, was visiting the inchoate mission site in 1937.

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48 See chapter 5, above.
51 Sir Cedric Stanton Hicks was Professor of Human Physiology and Pharmacology at the University of Adelaide 1926-58. Love’s comment here was: ‘[the Aboriginal] men were all over with the University party at their tents, where they were making tests of skin temperature’: Love, "PRG 214, Series 21, 1937 diary": 22
The men, the missionary, the anthropologists, and the doggers, were all taking ‘tea’ at the homestead, the ‘natives’ somewhere out in the dark surrounding them. The talk was about them, of course, and Love’s diary gives us a glimpse into this ‘colonial’ setting:

at the tea-table tonight, Sir Stanton Hicks asked Ted [Briscoe], ‘What were those men carrying flour and sugar?’ Ted replied that they had brought in scalps. I asked if he had bought them. He said he had bought some and Davis had bought some. After tea I spoke to Ted privately and told him that the Mission was, among other things, against the exploiting of natives for scalps, and that scalps brought to the Mission would be purchased for full nett value. I gave him the option of handing the scalps over to the Mission or leaving. He elected to hand over the scalps...so the gauntlet is thrown down between the Mission and the doggers.\(^{52}\)

We may picture the colonial actors ‘at tea’: here is the exemplary missionary, with the anthropologists on one side, there to test, pinch and measure the primitive indigenous body as was the scientific practice and passion in the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century, and on the other, the ‘low whites’, the doggers, who bought skins cheap and sold dear, despised by the missionaries as carriers of the temptations of Mammon and Lust.\(^{53}\) It was to ‘save’ their Aborigines from such as the doggers, and to keep a wary eye on the intrusive scientists that missionaries like Love perceived as part of their duty. It was ironically their destiny to be seen by ‘history’ as themselves more intrusive than the scientists, and as exploitative in their way as the doggers.

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Aug 1937. Hicks was in fact testing as to how Aborigines who lay unclothed on cold desert nights were able to exhibit normal European metabolic values. This was part of a scientific project sponsored by JB Cleland to establish that Aborigines had relied on physiological adaption to their harsh environment in order to survive. Warwick Anderson provides a wonderful word picture when he writes that at some time at Ernabella during the late 1930s (possibly referring to the occasion Love relates) ‘two tents were pitched side by side, and in one of them a physiologist lay naked on the ground and in the other an Aboriginal male did the same. The investigators found that the nomads of the desert possessed far greater powers of peripheral vasoconstriction, the ability to reduce the blood supply to the skin to reduce heat loss...Hicks believed that this ability was a ‘biological adaption’: Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, pp. 202-204. Interestingly, Howard Florey had warned Hicks that going to Adelaide in 1926 from Cambridge University where Hicks had completed his PhD was going to an ‘intellectual desert’. Anderson comments that as Hicks was one of the most assiduous scientists in testing Aboriginal people, he had ‘found not an intellectual desert so much as a desert for intellectuals’! He possibly enjoyed, then, sitting ‘at tea’ with the ‘out-of-the-way intellectual’ JRB Love.


\(^{53}\) On early 20\(^{th}\) C scientific practices on the indigenous body, see Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, especially chapter 7.
not a word was said

Yet both Love and Albrecht saw themselves in fact as establishing a ‘protectorate’ for Aboriginal people against the ‘intrusions’ of these colonial actors, particularly the doggers and the pastoralists, not entirely unaware of the intrusive nature of their own ventures, but attempting to minimize it as much as possible. In the same year that Love was on his first visits to Ernabella, Albrecht was writing to John Sexton of the AFA about the intrusions of pastoralists into the country of the Ngalia, noting that their ‘Pikili Water Hole, sacred to the tribe’ had been lost: ‘Not a word was said, and nothing at all done for the Natives who lost their Corroboree place, their spiritual home.’ His duty was clear: ‘we regard it as part of our work to do all we can to make these people feel at home on their old hunting grounds.’ Proselytizing work went on, mainly through ‘our Christian native men’ but, in a more progressive approach than the early Hermannsburg missionaries, ‘no direct attempt [had been] made to denounce Corroborrees, circumcision and polygamy, [however] a number of their dirtiest practices have been given up by themselves.’ While the flow of water from the Kaporiltja pipeline was regarded by the Lutherans as ‘a monument to the Mercy of our God who has heard the prayers of his dark people here suffering agony and death of Scurvy’, man was not able ‘to live off green vegetables alone’. The Mission Station could not carry the burden of ‘feeding the population under semidesert conditions’ for too long without danger of financial collapse. Albrecht thus urged the AFA to ‘get the Government to see its duty to those who through the advent of the white man here have been dispossessed and are unable to make a living in the old ways.’

big money, easy money

Love, too, was adamant that the Pitjantjatjara be allowed to ‘keep their country’ free from the depredations of the pastoralists and the doggers. Yet while Love championed the policy of eradicating the pernicious influence of the doggers, particularly on Aboriginal women, his diary in 1937 suggests some disquiet

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54 Albrecht, "Burns-Albrecht Collection", Albrecht to Sexton (copy), 21 Jan 1937.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
about the consequences that ensued as the ‘scalping’ income now flowed, either in money or in goods, to the natives: ‘the natives will be getting big money and easy money.’ Later, Love made the inevitable linkage between the availability of ‘easy money’ and a reluctance to work: ‘Large numbers of scalps – pups – coming in, with consequent big out-going of flour, tea, sugar from the store. Also a lessened desire for work on part of the men.’ Later, he wrote to Matthews:

the dingo scalps are pouring in...the numbers are astonishing – so flour, rice, tea, sugar, jam, treacle, are flowing! It is not an unmixed blessing: the people naturally with all their food just want to lie around all day and eat, and sing and make corroboree all night...We may need to think of spreading the proceeds of scalps out.

Work and money, and the moral connections between the two, the stock-in-trade of European and Protestant Christian notions of capitalism and the work ethic, were to be nodes of dissension within the Ernabella missionary community, and between missionaries and Aboriginal people.

Colonial missionaries constantly struggled with the transference of European notions of work to the indigenous site. The mission site across the colonised world was as much as anything an attempt to import Protestant and Puritan notions of work and labour into indigenous environments where these notions were alien. Ernabella, however, as it also put an unusual premium on the retention of traditional life, was caught between this objective and Western ideas regarding the linkages of monetary rewards (or payment in kind) with work. The dilemma presented by the retention of traditional nomadism along with a collectivist, sharing culture, and the missionary attempt to graft the values and methods of a rudimentary European individualistic capitalism onto the indigenous regime only came to be seen gradually. Indeed, it was the Hermannsburg missionary, Albrecht, who in 1942, as we shall see, was the first to articulate questions concerning the Ernabella moral economy by raising the

57 Love, "PRG 214, Series 21, 1937 diary": 15 Sep 1937.
59 Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1941": Love to Matthews, 10 Sep 1941.
60 See, for example, Comaroff and Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution, vol. 1, pp. 142-143.
spectre of ‘pauperisation’ at the Presbyterian Mission site. At the outset, however, Love retained some optimism that the white and indigenous economies could coexist:

the only industrial future I can see here is to develop Ernabella as a sheep proposition, with all the industrial work that that entails – the Aborigines are being trained now in the use of tools, handling sheep, horses, camels, building jobs, gardening... As the years go on, some people will become less nomadic, but the majority will remain, for a generation at least, nomadic, Ernabella their headquarters, and hunt through the Reserve, where we want them to be.

Love’s sanguinity was to be put to the test over the next few years.

the lifting up of half-caste children

Love shared with the white settler caste, as we have seen, the colonial obsession and anxiety regarding hybridity and miscegenation, or as it was known in Central and Northern Australia, ‘the half-caste problem’. In his Report for the new Mission, Love advocated a two-tiered system for mission children, with dormitories for half-caste boys and girls, who must be taken from their mothers ‘at, say, three or four years’, and ‘lifted up to take their place among the whites’. He estimated that there could be 20 or so such children at the Mission by the end of the first year. On the other hand, Love said he would ‘strenuously oppose’ the taking of the full-blooded children from their parents and placing them in Mission dormitories. The black children must stay with their parents, he urged. Love accepted that this would mean that school progress would be disjointed by frequent wanderings in the bush. That was good, he declared: ‘they are learning the lore of their parents and can get their own food in the bush.’ What was important, Love said, was that Aborigines were evangelized within the tribe, not by taking them outside the tribe. But for the half-castes, of course, it was to be different. On this issue, it appears, both Love and Duguid, the exemplary missionary and the combative humanitarian, were agreed. Files of the SA Aborigines Protection Board indicate that at about this time the Presbyterian

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61 See chapter 8, below.
62 Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1941": Love to Matthews, 10 Sep 1941.
64 Ibid.
Church, on the suggestion of Dr Duguid, was considering establishing a Home for half-caste children in SA along the lines of the UAM Colebrook Home, with the children being 'lifted up' from stations, missions and government settlements throughout South Australia. While, in the end, the matter did not proceed, the episode demonstrated that the conventional wisdom of the Presbyterian and humanitarian communities was that the removal and 'uplift' of children of mixed blood was a desirable goal of social policy.

the Medical Mission to the Aborigines

The original Duguidian conception of the new Mission had been, as we saw earlier, of a Medical Mission to the Aborigines. We noted briefly in chapter five Love's influence in the evaporation of that ideal after his edict that a doctor was not needed at Ernabella. Here Love's concerns and comments on the health of the indigenes of the Musgraves can begin to be traced more fully. In 1937, Love commented frequently on the health, or otherwise, of the people in the area. At a small camp, for example, 'a tiny baby has a suppurating ear, a man has two sores, lumps, on either side of the scrotum...An old woman is blind, [is] led with a stick, and two young women have sore legs, one a fire-burn, the other large sores on shin and foot.' Illness and injuries, as well as hunger, had to wait, however, for the formal start of the Mission. Love's hospitality was constrained and contained within the strict and proper conventions of the 'establishment' of a mission. Thus, Love noted to Matthews towards the end of his reconnaissance mission in 1937:

There are men here with bad sores and blind women. I am not feeding any of them. I do not intend to incur any system of expenditure before Taylor makes his own plans. He will need a set of apothecary's scales. I've got a set of dental forceps and soaps, boric acid [acid], vaseline.

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65 SA State Records, "GRG 52/1": No 30 of 1942: From: Dr Charles Duguid Re: Presbyterian Church of Australia Establishing a Home for half-caste children in SA; also ibid., APB to Matthews, 19 Mar 1942.
66 Communications on the matter went between the APB and the Board of Missions. When HC Matthews indicated the Board of Missions was interested, the APB commenced enquiries regarding suitable properties. The matter was finally put to rest due to the pressures of the war effort; see ibid., No 30 of 1942, Matthews to APB, 2 Apr 1942; also see ibid., APB minute bk folio 159; APB to Matthews, 8 May 1942; Matthews to APB, 25 May 1942; APB to Matthews 28 May 1942 and 4 Dec 1942; Matthews to APB 31 Mar 1943.
68 Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1937": Love to Matthews, 8 Sep, 1937. Boracic acid was a weak acid used as an antiseptic dusting powder.
Missionary medical knowledge and understanding of the interaction of health and spirituality in indigenous life were still basic when Love took over the administration of the Mission in 1941:

This morning it was reported by the house women that [the] infant girl, who had had bad sores, died last night...I do not know how the people dispose of the body. The mother and her friends all said that the child had 'mamu' i.e. devil. Another woman, who has been bringing an infant suffering with yaws, did not bring it today, apparently fearing that my medicine (ointment and cod liver oil emulsion) is not [working].  

By August of his first year, Love had decided that 'burns and colds' were the 'chief complaints' of the natives. In October, he reported 'a serious influenza epidemic': 'two men had died, and most of the camp (a hundred or so people) were ill.' Three days later, the Log's entry reads: 'For several mornings I have had made a drum of tea and given all a hot drink, which cheers them up. All sick much better now.' In fact, Love had brought many of the sick up from the camp, laid them around the homestead, and spent most of the three nights up attempting to look after his 'patients'.

However, the missionaries were not doctors, despite the medicinal qualities of hot tea. Yet Love continued to resist the idea of a doctor for Ernabella, while the Board was keen to initiate something in this area if resources were available. Matthews reminded Love that Duguid and two doctors on the Board wanted to see research done regarding illnesses of Aborigines. He also suggested that Dr Jean Davies visit Ernabella. Love was quite willing for Davies to come up. He again was not sure if there was enough work for a Doctor at Ernabella, but said he would welcome Dr Davies' opinion.

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69 Love, "Logbook": 31 Aug 1941.
70 Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1941": Love to Matthews, 2 Oct 1941. Love described the 'epidemic' in the Superintendent's Log as 'a bad cold': Love, "Logbook": 5 Oct 1941.
71 Ibid., 5 Oct 1941.
72 Perhaps it was not so much the tea as the indigenous imagination: a missionary in Vanuatu wrote (in 1910) that 'we are not good doctors, but sometimes even sugared or bitter water will do the trick. The natives' imagination is so powerful it can make them cured as well as dead': Roux to Doucere, Tolomaco, 2 Feb 1910, cited in Margaret Jolly, "Devils, Holy Spirits, and the Swollen God", p. 246.
73 Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1941": Matthews to Love, 16 May 1941. Dr Davies had been a medical missionary in Korea.
In May 1941, Matthews put to Love the idea of adding two rooms to the planned dispensary hospital for the accommodation of a doctor if one could be appointed.\(^{74}\) In a revealing comment, Love replied: ‘Much as I love the people and am willing to work for them, I do not think it good to live under the same roof...I have an idea of a little guest cottage.’\(^{75}\) To Love, medical practice appears always constrained to remain within the boundaries of ‘good’ or civilised racial behaviour. To ‘live under the same roof’ was to admit of no boundaries at all; it was ‘familiar’ behaviour, it allowed of the possibility of no space between the two peoples, no differences existing between white and black, of ‘going native’, whereas to Love the differences were all too obvious, as much as he ‘loved the people’. In his succinct manner, he stated in his 1937 Report to the Board of Missions: ‘The general station attitude to the natives is too contemptuous, the temptation to the novice in Mission work is to be too familiar.’\(^{76}\) Experienced and exemplary missionaries tended to find the right balance.

While, in early 1942, Love pronounced the health of the people ‘good’, there appears some relief in his note to Matthews in April that ‘Dr Davies is here, and has taken over the medical work of the Mission.’\(^{77}\) But the doctor could not stay, and Ernabella, which had been promoted initially as ‘the Medical Mission to the Aborigines’, continued to operate with its lay missionaries only and without an expert medical presence. With Dr. Duguid, an opinionated and combative ‘father of the mission’ watching Love’s performance like a hawk from the sidelines as Chairman of the Adelaide Committee, set up to ensure and secure the ‘good establishment’ of the Mission, it was a situation with some potential for tension and conflict. Imagined, established and constructed as a model protectorate amid an intended ‘pastorale’ of adequate feeding mechanisms, good health practices, and the privileging of the vernacular, the mission venture was susceptible to dissenion following any perceived failure to save ‘men without food’. Disension, like complexity, was built into the structures and sinews of missionary discourse and praxis.

\(^{74}\) Ibid.
\(^{75}\) Ibid., Love to Matthews, 13 Jun 1941.
\(^{76}\) Presbyterian Church of Australia, "Proceedings, GAA, 1939": Love, 1937 report, p. 139.
\(^{77}\) Presbyterian Church of Australia, "BM correspondence: ML MSS 1893/Folder 4/1942": Love to Matthews, 17 Apr 1942; also ibid., Love to Matthews, 4 Mar 1942.