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

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CHAPTER THREE: ‘Rites of Passage, Duties beyond Debt’¹: Love among the Savages

For the colonial imagination of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Central Australian landscape through which JRB Love had ridden on his ‘grand pilgrimage’ was both empty, and at the same time full of commercial promise, with immense potentialities of money and power on tap from the exploitation and development of the land, by ‘settling’ in stations and thus colonizing and civilizing the land. Naming the Centre as ‘empty’ was part of the process of removing the Aborigines from the scene, a process of erasure that went beyond mere representation and included dispersal, removal of children, and killings. This thesis interrogates to what extent missionaries were an oppositional force to this colonial erasure. It seems, on the face of it, that while most other Europeans viewed the original inhabitants of this country as impediments to the settlement and development of the land, even as they exploited their labour and their women, they remained a troubling but paramount presence to missionaries. This is apparent even in the discourse of the young missionary-to-be Love: no one (else) takes the Aboriginal question seriously.

Also evident in Love’s account of his journey across the Centre is the depiction of the Landscape as a point of mediation between the white visitants and the

¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Dieu, la mort et le temps* (Paris: Grasset, 1993), p. 21: cited by Derrida, *Adieu*, p. 7. The actual phrase is ‘a duty beyond all debts’ and the context is this passage from one of Levinas’ lectures at the Sorbonne in 1975-76: ‘The Other who expresses himself is entrusted to me (and there is no debt with regard to the Other - for what is due cannot be paid; one will never be even).’ The inset photograph is from Love’s *Stone-Age Bushmen of Today* (1936), opp. p. xvi, and is titled as the frontispiece. The caption reads: ‘The author showing Worora men some pigmy stone implements found in other parts of Australia.’ Love seems elevated and privileged in the photograph, the civilised European in semi-military garb and riding boots, facing his Others as expert and explicator, but in what appears to be a scene of amity.
original inhabitants, its small and stupendous effects profoundly influencing the relationship of the peoples who, though sharing a concord, shared common experiences of the Land. We will see in the narrative of the Central Australian missionaries the immense influence of the immense Land itself, which possessed Aboriginal people and was possessed (or was it ever really possessed?) by these white intruders, both sides bound together by an environment that forever now included the Other, the Land that was in some ways more powerful than any ideology or theology or discourse, that could produce, through drought and death, the sort of trauma that could force an orthodox German Lutheran missionary such as FW Albrecht to transform his conception of Christian mission. Love, too, was to experience the potency of the Landscape and its hosts, the strange beings, the blacks, inextricably attached to it, with whites the ‘uninvited guests’. But at the moment, at this moment, with his experience as an ersatz ‘explorer’ behind him and his life as a missionary to come, Love was captured by the excitement and tension of the Frontier.

the frontier

The Frontier and its stations were locales for ventures and adventures. In European narratives of development, the early explorers had traversed this tabula rasa, ‘discovered’ inland Australia, and ‘paved the way’ for settlers seeking land, wealth and excitement, and for missionaries seeking redemption for the shadowy indigenes. Roland Boer has noted that, just as the Central Australian missionaries were geographical and spiritual explorers of a kind, exploration narratives and missionary texts shared common motifs, such as the notion of the call, divine strength, divine assistance in time of trouble, the all-surveying eye of Providence. Yet explorers were transitory; they came, saw, described, mapped, and then left. They only set up camps; the missionaries came to stay, in stations, often for many years (as was to happen in Love’s future). The sense, though, of (adj)venture, the stirring of curiosity, the evocation of wonder (and sometimes contempt) and even in comprehensiveness of the Other and the otherness of life in the Aboriginal Landscape, were matters that influenced both the imported and evolving missionary discourses on the stations.

2 Boer, Last Stop before Antarctica, p. 62.
These stations, mission and cattle stations, were outposts on the Frontier.\(^3\)

Seen as the thin advancing line of white civilization, the frontier remained part of the Australian popular imagination until well into the 20th century and fed into the iconography of the 'pioneers' who peopled it, living pressed against the edge of darkness, of savagery and primitivity, on stations.\(^4\) Much of the literature of the outback was, and arguably still is, written and marketed in the genre of frontier, in the narratives of the exotic, the unknown, the primitive (referring both to Aborigines and the lives of the white settlers) and the masculine, and the freedom of the wide, open spaces.\(^5\) Mrs Aeneas Gunn's *We of the Never Never*\(^6\) constructed a widely read, classic representation of the bush frontier in 1908 which congealed for many Australians the sense of the frontier as a place of adventures, rough and loveable bush characters, brave station owners and, sometimes, their plucky wives.\(^7\) Aborigines were often absent from this frontier genre, or caricatured or, as Dewar notes, reduced to impotent figures on the

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\(^3\) The historiographical utility of the concept of the Frontier has been a matter for debate among historians, in Australia and overseas, especially in the United States since the publication of Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1947 (first pub. 1920)). The notion of 'frontier' used to be thought of in linear terms, as a definable line on the landscape. Recent historiography sees it as a much more complex phenomenon with mental and psychic elements in its construction: see Lynette Russell, ed., *Colonial frontiers: Indigenous-European encounters in settler societies*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001). Lynette Russell argues that the boundaries and frontiers produced by cross-cultural encounters are not 'neutrally positioned', but are 'assertive, contested, dialogic', negotiated. She calls this space a 'hybrid space': see ibid., (Introduction). One might also call it a 'liminal space', a place of meeting, where a face-to-face encounter may take place, a beach, a creek bed.

\(^4\) Henry Reynolds in his work has utilized the concept of the frontier as a means of understanding relationships between whites and Aborigines. He has emphasized frontier conflict and violence but has also acknowledged the (limited) accommodation on both sides of the frontier. Reynolds delineates the persistence of basic theories of 19thC racism and how they permeated white discourse and remained there. It would be facile to suggest all the fears and hatreds engendered by these frontier wars dissipated overnight: it was still something the missionaries had to contend with in their oppositional discourse. In any case, what strikes one about reading Reynolds on 19thC settler discourses regarding the Aborigines is how little ideas and attitudes changed between the mid to late 19thC and the thirties and forties in the 20thC. Almost all of the specific lines of racism and prejudice survived through to at least this period. Reynolds himself has characterized the 1930s as more racist than the 1830s. With scientific racism weakening belief in racial equality in colonial Australia and social Darwinism undermining it altogether, Aborigines came to be seen by secular society as beyond redemption. Most missionaries, however, managed to retain the belief in the Aborigines as (slightly inferior) brothers and able to be redeemed through the blood of Christ: see Reynolds, *Frontier: Aborigines, settlers and land* (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1996).


\(^6\) Mrs Aeneas Gunn, *We of the Never Never* (Melbourne: Hutchinson, 1908 (reprinted 1977)).
borders of European settlement. So when JRB Love wrote his *Stone-Age Bushmen of Today* in 1936, a book which in some ways, despite its title, presented a very different view of Aboriginal people from the orthodox settler and missionary discourses, it was subtitled *Life and Adventure among a Tribe of Savages in North-Western Australia*, and on its flyleaf, the publisher recommended other titles such as *Zambezi Days, Through Wildest Papua, Yukon Patrol* suggesting adventure stories, boys' yarns, exotic, wild frontier terrains in colonial lands. Yet the interest in 'frontier' literature was not only because of its depiction of the *primitif* and the savage, but was also generated by the domestication of this exoticism, by the normalizing *civilisation* being freighted to the primitive frontier by (ad)venturers, whether they were explorers or missionaries, or both. But in 1914, after his expedition, Love was neither, and it is to his story we return.

**rites of passage**

The next few years must have been traumatic and tumultuous for JRB Love. In 1914, soon after his return from the North, Love volunteered to spend six months among the Worora people at Port George IV Presbyterian Mission (which became Kunmunya) in Western Australia, to assist the mission during a staff shortage. In 1915, he enlisted with the South Australian Light Horse Regiment and served with the Imperial Camel Corps in Libya and the Fifth Light Horse Brigade in Palestine. Lieutenant Love was wounded in a skirmish in Damascus and was repatriated home 'with a wound in the chest, a disabled left hand, a

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8 Ibid.
10 The Mission desperately needed someone to stand in for missionaries who were due to leave on furlough. Love volunteered his services to the Foreign Missions Department of his church. The mission was originally at Port George IV, but, according to Harris, 'Love found the site unsatisfactory and moved it to Kunmunya in 1915': John Harris, *One Blood*, p. 872 (n. 112). Harris is almost but not quite right. According to McKenzie, Love arrived at Port George IV on December 1914 to relieve the Williams (the first missionaries there) who were going on furlough for six months. Robert Wilson, who had tentatively decided on an alternative site, had already designated the original site as unsatisfactory. While Wilson was still at the mission, Love had taken two exploratory journeys to check various sites out and agreed with Wilson’s decision. The actual move to Kunmunya took place after the Wilsons’ return and Love’s subsequent departure. Love was to return to Kunmunya as Superintendent in 1927.
Military Cross, and the Distinguished Conduct Medal.\textsuperscript{11} He completed his Arts degree, which he had begun before his expedition through the Centre, then entered Ormond College at Melbourne University as a theological student. He was ordained as a Presbyterian minister, as his father had been, in Adelaide in 1921. He again volunteered for missionary work with the Aborigines, and was sent to Mapoon in North Queensland, where he was to remain for five years. In 1923, he married Margaret Holinger, a schoolteacher at the mission. Four years later, when Kunmunya was in financial trouble, he and his wife decided to go back: in Maisie McKenzie’s reverential words, ‘The die was caste. Bob Love’s face was turned towards Kunmunya once again.’\textsuperscript{12} He was appointed superintendent and remained there for fourteen years. In the 1930s, he supported Charles Duguid’s proposal to establish a mission in Central Australia, one that in some respects was similar to the type Love had recommended in ambiguous terms to an unreceptive Church in 1914, ‘primarily industrial but ultimately religious’. In 1941, twenty-seven years after his earlier expedition, JRB Love retraced his ‘grand pilgrimage’ to the Centre, to Duguid’s Ernabella. But we need to retrace our steps to continue following the development of his thinking on Aboriginal people.

\textbf{not yet a civilized construction}

By 1922, Love already had moved a long way from the young school-teacher at Leigh Creek. He had been to war, studied theology and become a minister, and had had some experience on two missions. While he was a missionary at Mapoon, Love published a small 36-page booklet for children called \textit{Our Australian Blacks}.\textsuperscript{13} It is written in a simple style, because of its intended audience, and has the advantage of clarity. In the booklet, Love at times represents ‘the blacks’ positively: the skills of the traditional hunter-gatherers, their ‘loveable’ natures, their ‘patience and generosity’, the similarity of the children’s games to white ones; but he also writes of the ‘cunning old men’ who take up all the wives, ‘the poor old women who almost starve’, the fear of spirits

\textsuperscript{11} Scrimgeour, \textit{Some Scots Were Here}, p. 215.
\textsuperscript{12} McKenzie, \textit{The Road to Mowanjum}, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{13} JRB Love, \textit{Our Australian Blacks} (Melbourne: Brown, Prior & Co. Pty. Ltd, 1922). A copy of this booklet is held in the AIATSIS Library in Canberra.
in the dark, the strange customs, and that 'space of death', cannibalism.¹⁴ Love represents Aboriginal people as different from white people – the trace of the Other – yet also sufficiently 'like ourselves' that they can be 'uplifted'. The tone is patronizing and permeated with conventional images of Social Darwinism, allied to a Moderate missiology:

And remember, too, that with all their bad habits, they have a great many characteristics that are good and loveable, and that makes it possible to do work among them to lift them to higher things. Would you expect savages, who have lived in ignorance for countless years, to be good and attractive in every way? Yet, again, we believe that all men are made in God's image. This means that even the lowest of men have in them much that is good, and the possibility of becoming better.¹⁵

Missions and missionaries, then, are necessary to 'raise' the Aborigine to our level. They are not yet a 'civilized construction', like the huts at Alice Springs. Love puts forward a vision of mission work as an all-encompassing, cradle-to-the-grave duty of care: 'You see, then, that the missions to the aboriginals not only take the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus to these people, but also take care of the children, feed and clothe them, train them to earn their living, and watch over them when they are grown up.'¹⁶ In 1922, with Love at the outset of his missionary career, a strong sense of duty, of responsibility touched with a sort of paternalism, was growing, along with a more conventional Protestant conviction

¹⁴ On the poor women who starve: it may be, as Regina Ganter suggests, that Love's depiction of Aboriginal women as weak and powerless tends to render Aboriginal society familiar and decipherable: see Regina Ganter, "Letters from Mapoon: Colonising Aboriginal Gender", Australian Historical Studies (1999): 267-285, p. 282. If so, then his discourse serves both to differentiate (very different examples of powerlessness) and to familiarise (powerless is also apparent in Aboriginal as well as white society). We may also note that, perhaps as a corollary, Love's depiction of Aboriginal society is invariably patriarchal. There was nothing particularly unusual in this for his time, although both Albrecht and Love, perhaps because of their gender and age, appear to be much more comfortable in dealing with male authority figures (elders) in their respective client peoples than, for example, female figures. This also appears reflected in their discourse. Ganter's article is of interest since her locale in this essay, which critically examines the colonising discourse and production of knowledge on Aboriginal womanhood of early missionaries, is Mapoon, Love's first principal posting as a missionary. Nicholas Hey, Ganter's missionary example, was a Moravian churchman who ran the mission on behalf of the Presbyterian Church. With his departure in 1919, Mapoon became a home mission of the Presbyterian Church of Australia: see Harris, One Blood, p. 496. Harris characterises Hey as 'one of the foremost examples of those missionaries to whom everything Aboriginal was Satanic' (p. 493), although he concedes that Hey mellowed over time. Love began at Mapoon in 1921, only two years after Hey's 24-year regime had ended. The process by which the early Love differentiated his missiology from Hey's, whose shadow must have been a profound influence, perhaps positively and negatively, and the extent to which it was differentiated from Hey's, would be a useful one to examine.

¹⁵ Love, Our Australian Blacks, p. 20.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 34.
that 'it is the Holy Spirit that is able to do such things...the Bible and the religion of Jesus are everything on a mission station.'

Love expresses the hope that 'when our own people realise the duty we owe to these people of our country', hospitals will be established in remote areas where 'the aboriginals can be treated by themselves'. Love's language here is instructive: 'our own people' sets a people or a race apart from another people, 'us' against the Other. It is now 'our country' and we owe a duty to 'these people', who are in a sense our guests. To be treated 'by themselves' completes the separation that Love seems to imply is natural. It is better that they are with 'their own'; that is how it should be. Love's argument for the segregation of Aboriginal people from whites in hospitals prefigures the position he took in the debates, initiated by Charles Duguid, that ensued in later years over the treatment by John Flynn's AIM of Aboriginal people in its outback hostels, and in discussions with the Board of Missions over hospital design. Love was never able to 'imagine' whites and blacks sharing a roof in the intimate and exposed site that was a hospital. The duty of care only went so far.

**duties and debts**

At the end of his booklet, Love proposes an unconventional theory of duty in the colonial context. It begins with wrongs done: the settlers 'took the best of the land for their cattle' and deprived the natives of their hunting and gathering way of life, leaving them exposed to 'the vices of civilization, without its virtues'. At first 'even Christian people did not realise...that they owed any duty to the Aborigines'. Some thought they were 'hopeless', lacking even souls. But 'a change came' and Governments and Churches began to see that they had a duty to the Aborigines. But exactly what circumstance gives rise to the duty? Love has a succinct answer: 'Because we are living on their land.' He continues in full patriotic flow:

> We are proud of this land; it is a good country, full of good things. During the war we fought for it...We do not intend to let any other people take it

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., p. 21.
from us. And we have taken it from the people who first owned it, without paying for it.  

Love is quite unambiguous about the ‘dispossession’, without recompense, of the Other’s property: ‘they owned it’. No *terra nullius* here. But was it right? ‘I think most would agree that they had the right to take the land, which was not being developed, and to put it to better use than the aboriginals were putting it...’ The dispossession, then, was justified. The land had not been developed. This was not, suggests Love, the fault of the indigenous people: it was true that [the Blacks] did not grow any crops nor keep any animals, except the dingo...’ but he patiently explains that ‘the Blacks did not cultivate the soil [because] there is no native plant in Australia that can be cultivated to produce large food crops...so the blackfellow had no chance to develop the country.’ Love’s line of argument countered a common settler discourse of indigenous laziness or stupidity, that the inherent deficiencies of a primitive people were to blame for the lack of development of the country.  

Love, however, does not leave matters there. There is a crucial corollary to the justified dispossession: ‘no honest nor Christian person would say that we have the right to live in a land without taking proper care of the aboriginals.’ So the act of dispossession is done. It is now ‘our country’ yet it was ‘their land’. The failure of the indigenous people to develop the land, though not their fault, conferred a right on the European to take the land. But the right is conditional on an obligation to care for the disposessed, as a partial act of recompense or reparation (we took it without paying for it). Even in the early 1920s Love is beginning to see missionary activity in terms of a national obligation and in a much broader light than a purely conversionary project. The religious element

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19 Ibid., p. 35.
20 Ibid.
21 The Love argument still has to be made today, as the old settler reasoning remains extant: see Jared Diamond, *Guns, germs, and steel: a short history of everybody for the last 13,000 years* (London: Vintage, 1998) for an excellent articulation of the argument that the reason the Aborigines did not create a literate, food-producing, industrial democracy in Australia was environmental, and that the society they did create, of a nomadic, food-gathering lifestyle and economy, with minimal investment in shelter and possessions, was an entirely sensible adaption to the harsh Australian continent’s El Nino-induced resource unpredictability: see ibid., pp. 295-321.
22 Love, *Our Australian Blacks*, p. 35.
remains, since as a Christian, Love cannot forget what God has done for him through Christ. He asks the children: ‘How can we repay Christ for what He has done for us?’ But the response (‘do something for others who need help’) is still framed in terms of the discourse of duty and debt. The debt (to Christ) can never, by definition, be repaid. It is likely that Love would also have seen the debt owing to the indigenous people of Australia as impossible ultimately to repay fully: ‘one will never be even’.\(^{23}\) The duty however remained.

**floating on a sea of evil**

In November 1926, while Love was still at Mapoon, the Board of Missions asked him to comment on the future of the Western Australian mission at Kunmunya which was in danger of being abandoned. He replied using an involved marine metaphor:

> There is no question. It [the mission] must go on. For generations the blacks floated on the precarious raft of native custom over the sea of evil. The Church has come to them, reached out a hand, partly pulled them off the old raft, but has not yet set their feet firmly on the safe ship of Christianity. To abandon them now would be to let them drop, not back on to their old raft, but into an abyss of sin without the check of savage law. This would be an act of treachery that the Church cannot contemplate.\(^{24}\)

On the same day, Love wrote to the Heathen Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland and tendered his resignation as Superintendent of Mapoon. He had determined that Kunmunya needed him again. So, in 1927, he returned to the Kimberley mission as superintendent where he began to build a reputation as one of the country’s most respected and learned missionaries.

**missionary speaking and the academy**

Such a reputation was partly attained through Love’s increasing involvement with the worlds of anthropological and linguistic discourse.\(^{25}\) At Kunmunya, he

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\(^{23}\) See this chapter, n. 1.


\(^{25}\) The two worlds were connected by scholars attempting to determine the prehistory and origins of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia through a study of Australian languages and their structure: see, for example,
quickly learned the Worora language and, with assistance from Aboriginal people, commenced translation work on the Gospels.\textsuperscript{26} In some thoughts on the subject in 1931, Love had posed the question: why bother to translate the Bible at all, why not let the Aborigines learn English, ‘the language of all the country’?\textsuperscript{27} Considerable difficulties had been experienced, in Australia and overseas, by missionaries attempting to translate some of the central concepts of the Bible into indigenous languages. Love had two answers to this. One was that ‘the Gospel in English will always be an alien Gospel to them.’ Secondly, he wanted ‘his’ Aborigines to think of their Church at Kunmunya as ‘the black man’s church’: ‘I resolved that my people should have God’s Word – and in their own speech - and come to cherish it, not as the white man’s faith, but their own.’\textsuperscript{28} Love was clearly committed to the indigenization of the English Bible.

At the same time as he was working as superintendent at Kunmunya, Love was completing a Master’s thesis on the Worora language through the University of Adelaide, under the supervision of JA Fitzherbert.\textsuperscript{29} Love’s access to the academic world was also enhanced by his association with AP Elkin, a notable figure in the history of Australian anthropology, and the editor of the important anthropological journal \textit{Oceania} during the 1930s and 40s, in which Love made an occasional appearance as author and letter-writer.\textsuperscript{30} Elkin was especially

\textsuperscript{26} See the photograph at the beginning of chapter 2, above.
\textsuperscript{27} JRB Love, “Series 46: Printed matter 1911-46: Includes typescript of draft manuscript of ‘The Aborigines: Their Present Condition as seen in Northern SA, the Northern Territory, North West Australia and Western Qld’. By JRB Love. 1914. (1 vol 120p)”, in Papers of JRB Love: PRG 214 (State Library of South Australia: Adelaide). Item 14, from which the citation comes, contains the manuscript for ‘The Gospel for the Worora’, printed by the London, British and Foreign Bible Society in 1934 but which is also in abridged form in \textit{The Bible in the World} [a Monthly Record of the Work of the British and Foreign Bible Society] July 1931, pp. 105-7.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., item 14.
\textsuperscript{29} In 1933, Professor (of Classics) Fitzherbert congratulated Love ‘on the way you have completed a very difficult piece of work’, said he would recommend him for the Master of Arts degree, and noted that Love had made ‘an important contribution to our knowledge of Australian linguistics’: Love, "PRG 214, Series 1, general correspondence": item 22: Fitzherbert to Love, 18 Aug 1933. It is interesting to note that, in an earlier letter, Fitzherbert gently but incisively attempted to persuade Love not to label the Worora language as a ‘primitive’ language: ‘There is no reason why the Worora language should be any nearer to the primitive speech of the earliest man than is English. Each represents the same number of years of development from the speech of the Garden of Eden or the Tower of Babel, or wherever you wish to make your starting point’: ibid., item 18: Fitzherbert to Love, 22 June 1931.
\textsuperscript{30} See Tigger Wise, \textit{The self made anthropologist: a life of A.P. Elkin} (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin,
important in interacting discourses between anthropology and missiology because of his connections to the churches (he was an Anglican clergyman and active in church and mission affairs). 31 From the mid-thirties, Elkin had begun encouraging missionaries going 'into the field' to attend lectures in introductory anthropology at Sydney University. The two men first met when Elkin stayed at Kunmunya during a research trip in 1929. Elkin at the time described the mission as the 'best run station' he had ever seen. 32 In 1933, after requests from Elkin, Love published an essay in *Oceania* on the Worora language. 33 There were to be a number of exchanges with Elkin on linguistic matters. For example, in April 1936, Elkin wrote to Love indicating that he wanted to include his short article on the Worora language in a special edition of *Oceania* on Australian linguistics. 34 He asked if Love could provide an outline of the grammar and include a few native texts. He added, in the same letter, that 'the Taylors', who later preceded Love to Ernabella, were at the University of Sydney for some anthropological lectures: 'hardly enough to be of much value but still they provide some insight into the social organization and viewpoint of primitive peoples. 35 Love and Elkin continued to correspond on a number of issues. 36

1985). Love also published articles on various subjects, including Aboriginal mythology, totemism and religion, as well as cave and rock-paintings, in journals such as *The Bible in the World* and the journals of the Royal Societies of South Australia and Western Australia.


32 Biskup, *Not slaves not citizens*, p. 127, quoting *Papers of the Department of the North-West, N. WT.* 242/1927

33 JRB Love, "Worora - an Australian Language with Papuan and Melanesian affinities: also some notes on Wunambal and Narynyin", *Oceania* 3 (1933).

34 The article was subsequently published in *Oceania* where Elkin had succeeded Raymond Firth as editor from March of 1933.

35 Love, "PRG 214, Series 1, correspondence": item 67: Elkin to Love, 1 Apr 1936. Rev. Harry Taylor, after his ordination in 1936, was appointed by the Presbyterian Board of Missions to assist Love at Kunmunya as a missionary. Taylor and his wife attended the preparatory lectures on anthropology at the University of Sydney to which Elkin refers here and arrived at Kunmunya Mission Station at the end of July, 1936. Rev. Taylor was to be the first Superintendent at Ernabella from 1937-1939. Love became Superintendent of Ernabella in 1941.

36 See, for example, items 57, 62, 87, 94, 113 in ibid. Note also in a letter to the Editor of *Oceania* in 1935, (published in *Oceania* 6 (1935) pp. 107-108) the editor was Elkin who significantly edited the original letter sent to *Oceania* (see Love, "Series 1": item 31) significantly (see below)) Love referred again to the practice of 'prenatal infanticide' which he claimed was 'common, almost universal, practice among women of this tribe.' He pointed to the very small proportion of children at that time at Kunmunya (23 under 12 years old as against 332 people in the tribe) and that this threatened the tribe with extinction. He indicated that the practice of infanticide was deplored by missionaries and the people were being urged to 'save the children' to save the tribe. These observations were made in the context of a 'story' of two women who 'announce their
None of this prevented Love from apparently taking issue with some points Elkin had made in an article in *Oceania* in 1935. Elkin had argued that the loss of the central aspects of Aboriginal totemic and ceremonial life was irreparable, and quickly led to Aborigines dying out. Elkin added (in an ‘Additional Note on Missions’) that because missions attacked these fundamental aspects of native culture, they had in some places contributed to this process. However, Love insisted that, contrary to Elkin’s view that missions were choking off the old customs, such as kinship rules and avoidance, his own view was: ‘By all means let them be observed.’ Love maintained his conviction that a mission may ‘build on a foundation, prepared of God, from the fuller revelation of Himself through His Son.’ In fact, this was exactly Elkin’s point: missionaries should attempt a sympathetic understanding of ‘native beliefs and rites’. It is apparent (to us, if not yet to Love) that Elkin and Love were coming to share a similar approach to missionary work among the Aborigines. Their general views were almost identical. Elkin’s 1934 statement that ‘all members of a ‘higher’ and trustee race are concerned with the task of raising primitive races in the cultural scale’ could have been written by Love. Both had doubts about the ‘equality’ of pregnancy’, appear pregnant and yet do not deliver. A Medical Officer in Broome finally on inspection declared that an ‘intense desire for children’ had enlarged their abdomens through dilation of the bowel with gas. Love’s comment was that this was a ‘most interesting glimpse of Aboriginal psychology.’ It could not be doubted, he explained, that each woman had practiced infanticide (in utero) but late in life, they had ‘conceived’ a desire for children. Love attributed this late maturing aspiration in his original letter to *Oceania* to ‘missionary speaking’. Love’s attributions of the intense desire for pregnancies to the efforts of the missionary (presumably himself), which he makes twice in his original letter, were (interestingly) excised by the Editor.

38 Ibid., pp. 145-146.
39 JRB Love, "Series 20: Drafts of published articles, reviews, miscellaneous notes on Worora language and people, 1934-38": item 5 in Papers of JRB Love: PRG 214 (State Library of South Australia: Adelaide). It is not clear whether this ‘draft review’ of Elkin’s article was ever published. Nevertheless, it is still useful for clarification of Love’s developing ideas. Love in this review asks the question that if ‘a tribe is doomed because the old rites can no longer be performed, and the people have lost the will to live’, as he interprets Elkin to be saying, why, on his Mission, ‘when the rites can be performed, and when there is nothing to prevent performance, the women are destroying almost all the children in utero’. Love does not canvass the possible reasons for this; but it may be one clue as to why Love was later so implacable on the issue of removal of children.
40 Elkin, "Civilized Aborigines and Native Culture", p. 146.

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Aborigines compared to whites. Yet both were convinced, at least by the middle of the 1930s, that the crucial task of the missionary was as far as possible to integrate the Christian faith into the existing indigenous order rather than impose it after sweeping that order away.

**becoming an expert**

JRB Love, through his growing reputation as a progressive anthropologist-missionary, was gaining access to the world of the accumulation and distribution of ‘expert’ knowledge about ‘primitive tribes’. He had begun to collaborate with museums in Australia and in the UK, passing on aspects and artefacts of indigenous material culture to these metropolitan collectors of knowledge. For example, in the early thirties, he provided a film of ‘Australian natives’ to the British Museum, with a compendium of ‘scientific’ notes, and followed it up with a Worora double raft in 1935 along with a collection of tools, including spear-heads and implements for making spearheads, and stone tomahawks. However, isolated as he was on a mission station in the Kimberleys, Love needed a conduit and a mediator to facilitate his access to

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42 In fact, even in 1929, an educated, progressive, Christian humanitarian such as AP Elkin could still write in terms similar to the 1915 and the 1936 Love: ‘The fundamental unity of human races...does not mean that all races are biologically equal with respect to all their powers...the Australian Aborigines and the African negroes are human and have their powers, but they are not necessarily equal to the white or yellow races, especially as regards those traits which are most important for the development of advanced culture’: AP Elkin, "The practical value of anthropology", *The Morpeth Review* 1 (1929): 33-44, pp. 34-35: cited in Russell McGregor, "The concept of primitivity in the early anthropological writings of A.P. Elkin", *Aboriginal History* 17:2 (1993): 95-104, p. 99. Even in 1932, Elkin pointed to the physiological fact that the Aboriginal brain was on average twenty percent smaller than ‘ours’: it was, said Elkin, ‘a handicap in the brain machinery’ with obvious consequences for the question of adaptation to a civilization dreamed up by those ‘whose brain capacity is so much higher’: AP Elkin, "Cultural and racial clash in Australia", *The Morpeth Review* (1932): 35-45, p. 38, cited in McGregor, "Early anthropological writings of A.P. Elkin", pp. 99-100. Yet *contra*: Henry Reynolds quotes Elkin as saying in 1934 to a Sydney audience that Aborigines ‘seem to be our equal in intelligence’: Reynolds, *This whispering in our hearts* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1998), p. 234, himself citing *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 Aug 1934.


44 Love, "PRG 214, Series I, correspondence": see item 59, which notes that ‘this collection of Worora artefacts has been made by permission of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Perth, WA’. Love was asked by a number of other organisations for artefacts and implements, including a request, for example, from the Curator of the Cranmere Ethnographical Museum, Kent on 17 January 1935 for ‘up to six skulls’, offering 20 shillings a skull or 30 shillings if complete with jaw: ‘you’re doing important work with natives possibly doomed to extinction in a comparatively short time’: ibid.: item 32. Whether Love responded to this request is unclear. Love also periodically sent botanic material to Australian museums: for example, a letter to Love from the WA State Botanist on 29 January 1932 acknowledging gifts of botanical specimens, grasses, a silky
nodes of power and knowledge in the metropolitan centres. During the 1930s, this role was filled by HR Balfour, a member both of the Melbourne Establishment (judging by the number of Cabinet Ministers he knew) and of the Presbyterian Board of Missions. Balfour seems to have acted as an intermediary and collaborator with Love on a number of matters, including the transfer of artefacts to museums and provider of news regarding missionary, church and 'native' matters. He kept Love up to date, for example, with the activities of people interested in Aboriginal affairs such as Charles Duguid and TGH Strehlow. He also interacted with anthropologists on Love's part as well as his own. An example of their communication is Balfour's letter to Love of 17 May 1935. He mentions that Professor Wood Jones and he discussed 'illnesses of the native', includingVD and yaws; comments that he has arranged for Minister Paterson to meet with 'young Strehlow'; and notes that Duguid gave a 'telling' address on the position of Aborigines in Central Australia; 'it was certainly very sad', Balfour commented on Duguid's revelations, a Committee had been set up 'to keep the ball rolling', and to facilitate this, Balfour had arranged 'to get it in the papers'. This was the beginning of Charles Duguid's campaign to establish a Mission in Central Australia, in which Love would become increasingly implicated. By such means, the isolated Love was kept abreast of the discourse of men that mattered in the church and in the country.

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oak and a hibiscus collection: ibid., item 32. Also see item 33: a letter from the Entomologist, the National Museum, Melbourne on ant species submitted by Love for identification.

45 For example, Balfour wrote in January 1935 that he was having 'a good time at the Science Congress' (probably the ANZAAAS Congress) and had attended most of the sessions of the Anthropology groups. He told Love he had shown 'the cine film of the native industries...I only gave a short talk?' but pointed out how you were able to let the men keep their age-old rites and yet become Christians. The film was highly spoken of: ibid., item 51: Balfour to Love, 30 Jan 1935.

46 Professor Frederick Wood Jones, physical anthropologist and Professor of Anatomy, Adelaide University, 1919-1926, and Professor of Anatomy, Melbourne University, 1930-1938, part of the first group of scientists and experts - biologist, pathologists, anthropologists - to make Central Australian Aborigines a special and controversial object of study: see Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness*. It was Love's reputation as a scholarly and progressive missionary that gave him comfortable entry to this world, so that, for example, when he was about to take up his Ermabella superintendency in 1940-41, he conducted 'leisurely discussions' with 'the Adelaide academics' as an important part of his preparation for the task ahead.

47 Thomas Paterson, Minister of the Commonwealth Department of the Interior, 1934-1937, with responsibilities for Commonwealth Aboriginal Affairs, and a (lay) elder of the Presbyterian Church.


49 Duguid had become the first lay Moderator of the South Australian Presbyterian Church in early 1935 and was now busy gathering support for his campaign to establish a mission station in Central Australia. Melbourne, where Balfour heard his address in May 1935, was a prime target of this campaign, being the locale of the Board of Missions.
to see with the eye of his savage people

In 1936, as we have seen, Love published *Stone-Age Bushmen of Today: Life and Adventure among a Tribe of Savages in North-Western Australia*. The title and subtitle immediately place the book in the framework of evolutionary and racial thinking of the time. The ‘savages’ are primitives caught in amber, representations of what Europeans once were, back in the Stone Age. As Tom Griffiths has observed: ‘The stone age’ was the term most used to characterise Aboriginal culture in the first half of the 20thC. It was a powerful metaphor of primitiveness. The photographs in the book represent the Worora as an industrious but primitive people, spinning string, climbing trees for honey, making spearheads; as exotic and savage, men with emu plumes in their hair; as capable, the lugger with black seamen, the double raft; and as spiritual, believing in child spirits. Love presents himself as ‘an expert’ on ‘blackfellows’ and as a ‘bushman’: ‘It is often said that good stock country is poor ‘blackfellow country’, and vice versa. There is a good deal of truth in this saying’. Love was saying: the land had been taken, it could not now be given back, and if it turned out that the white men could live on the plains and the blacks in the hills, so much the better. Again, there appears to be a strong separatist strain in Love’s thinking. Some part of Love thought that different races ought to live apart, that this was the natural order of things, the way things were.

He describes the ‘hordes’ (using it in the anthropological sense) camped at the Kimberley Mission, the old men with their wives; the young men without wives, few children. One man stood out: to Love, he had an ‘evil eye’ and disturbed the missionary: Though he was but a naked old blackfellow and I a white man, supposed to have some education, he could look me in the face and make me feel quite queer. Sensing his hostility, Love searches for a reason: ‘Probably he sensed in the white man a newcomer with authority that would eclipse his own.

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50 In a 2001 article, Russell McGregor refers to Love’s book as ‘unfortunately titled’: McGregor, "From Old Testament to New", see n. 27 on p. 45. This may be so, but it does accurately reflect Love’s conservative evolutionist approach to the anthropology of the Aborigines.
53 Ibid., p. 31.
In this he was perfectly correct. Yet Love wishes to preserve the authority of the elders: he had ‘small admiration’ for the type of missionary who would ‘break down the authority of the old men.’ But, while anxious to conserve the discipline and good order in the tribe, and eager to work in co-operation with the elders of the tribe, ‘the missionary, with the Gospel of Christianity, must inevitably come into conflict with some institutions of savagery.’ Then in a classic statement of his ‘enlightened gradualism’, Love states: ‘I believe that we should be willing to go slowly, letting in a better light, that will, of its own power, in time drive out the darkness of an evil tradition.’ But he was prepared for conflict, when that was necessary: ‘There arise, however, occasions when not all the missionary’s willingness to see with the eye of his savage people can tolerate a frank and unmitigated evil. In these cases the war is on.’

Love’s respect and admiration of the local language is evident in his book, as is his careful search of Worora, through his indigenous assistants, for the appropriate translations for key biblical words and concepts such as cross, sin, the Beginning and the End, God the Father. At times, Love finds the translation into the vernacular improves the English version: as the Worora phrase ‘to have one’s ears’ means to be wise, the verse ‘He that hath ears to hear, let him hear’ was buttressed with a ‘splendid’ secondary meaning. It was ironic that, given his impressive credentials in the indigenization of the Christian faith at Kunmunya, later at Ernabella, Love was to be accused of not sufficiently privileging the local language.

rites akin to the most sacred observances of the Christian faith

The most significant part of Stone-Age Bushmen of Today and one that has justly won Love a reputation for breaking with orthodox missionary discourse comes towards the end of the book. Love writes of some of ‘the most remarkable rites that I have witnessed’ when the Worora men gave a welcoming ceremony to a party of strangers from another tribes, attracted, according to Love, by the fame

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54 Ibid., p. 32.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., pp. 32-33.
57 Ibid., p. 50.
of the Mission. The gravitational pull of mission sites for neighbouring or travelling Aborigines was very powerful. Love describes the ceremony:

When all the visitors had been washed, the Worora men took water and held it to the lips of each visitor in turn. The visitors bowed their heads and drank from the drinking cup held in front of them. None touched the vessel with his hand, but bowed his head and drank from the vessel held by his host. After all had drunk, food was brought, broken, and passed round by the Worora to their guests. None of the Worora men themselves ate, but they all stood behind their visitors and watched them eat, handing food to every man, asking one another, ‘Has this man eaten?’ till all the strangers had done so.\(^{58}\)

Once the impressive formalities of hospitality had ended, ‘the tension slackened’ and a final burst of singing ‘brought to a close the day of greatest nervous tension that I have witnessed.’\(^{59}\) Love reflected:

As I looked at these rites, the amazing realization flashed upon me that here, among one of the most primitive tribes of some of the most primitive savages on earth, I had been witnessing rites akin to the most sacred observances of the Christian faith. I had been witnessing, in all their primitiveness and crudeness of administration, the rites of the Laying-on of hands, of Baptism, and of a sacred meal that could without irreverence be called a Communion. When our Lord instituted the Last Supper he gave us no new observance, but took an age-old rite, sublimated it and gave it a new content. The sacred rite of baptism, as a ceremonial lustration with a deeper meaning than that of a mere outward cleansing; and the laying-on of hands, as a symbol of the communicating of spiritual power; all were here, practised in the spirit of the deepest reverence and awe by naked savages in north-western Australia.\(^{60}\)

Love’s sensitive observances of these indigenous rites, and their implications for the discourse and praxis of missionary ventures, have been seen, with some justice, as symbolising the entry point of liberal, progressive missiology into white-black relationships in 20th century Australia.\(^{61}\) We should be clear, nonetheless, about what Love was saying. It was not a suggestion regarding the possibilities of syncretism, of reconciling and combining two different frames of religious thought.\(^{62}\) When a few years later Love spoke to Pastor Albrecht of

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\(^{58}\) Ibid., pp. 218-219.
\(^{59}\) Ibid., p. 219.
\(^{60}\) Ibid.
\(^{61}\) See the comments of Harris, Biskup, Broome and McGregor discussed above in chapter 2.
\(^{62}\) Ulrich Berner, "The Notion of Syncretism in Historical and/or Empirical Research", Historical Reflections
these things, Albrecht was horrified by the spectre of syncretism that he divined was the trajectory of Love’s insights. Instead, Love was commenting on the types of mentalities and modes of spiritual thought behind what he called ‘primitive and crude’ rites that could be peculiarly responsive to Christianity, in God’s good time. He had ‘discovered’ Aboriginal spirituality for himself, and, he must have felt, promising affinities between an alien and hitherto almost impenetrable religion and his own.

inevitably to become white

From 1935, JRB Love was increasingly interested and implicated in Charles Duguid’s campaign within and without the Presbyterian Church to establish a Mission in Central Australia. This involvement inevitably exposed the complexities of his thinking on Aborigines to a wider and more critical audience. We will examine this involvement in some detail in the remainder of this thesis. But an instructive prelude to the next venture of his life and discourse was an exchange of views over ‘the half-caste problem’ with TGH Strehlow on the eve of Love’s transfer to Ernabella. In 1937 Love had forgone part of his furlough to conduct a surveillance tour of the Ernabella region in far north-west South Australia with HR Balfour and his brother, Dr LR Balfour. The ‘young Strehlow’ of HR Balfour’s news-bearing letters to Kunmunya had become, in 1936, the first patrol officer for the Department of Native Affairs in the Northern Territory. Strehlow had been asked officially to comment on the establishment of Ernabella, and had written to Love over what he saw as the most serious and important disagreement between them: the ‘half-caste problem’. Strehlow found it impossible to agree with Love’s view, as he paraphrased it, that ‘the future of the half-caste is inevitably to become white, whether through marriage

27 (Fall 2001): 499-509.
63 See below, chapter 8.
64 Strehlow was twelve years old when his father Carl, the great missionary figure of the early Hermannsburg, died in 1922. He was to retain intimate lifetime connections to the Mission, its missionaries and Aboriginal inhabitants, through his patrol work and through his research and writing as a leading anthropologist and ‘renowned European authority’ on the Arrernte people: see now Barry Hill’s brilliant biography, Broken Song: TGH Strehlow and Aboriginal Possession (Sydney: Knopf, 2002).
65 A position recommended by the Cleland Report after the inquiry into the killing of an Aboriginal man at Ayers Rock [as it was then] by Constable William McKinnon in 1934; see Hill, Broken Song, pp. 231-237.
66 Love, "PRG 214, Series 1, correspondence": item 83: Strehlow to Love, letter Jan 1938 (postmarked Jay Creek, via Alice Springs, CA).
or through prostitution.’ Why not encourage marriage among half-castes? he asked Love. Strehlow turned to his Hermannsburg experience, and the effect of what he called a ‘plain Mission education’ upon half-castes. There was never any effort at Hermannsburg, claimed Strehlow, ‘to force those few half-castes who live there to segregate themselves from the native community.’ He was bitterly critical of institutions where half-castes were segregated and all too often turned out into ‘apish imitations of poor quality whites’. Scientific breeding, ‘advocated as usual by impractical office-chair Chief Protectors and old musty Professors’, meant, in practice, that ‘the half-caste women must be abandoned wholesale to low whites.’ Strehlow’s final riposte was: And whom are the half-caste men to marry?67

We have no record of Love’s response to ‘young Strehlow’s’ powerful questions on hybridity. He may have met Strehlow at Hermannsburg in 1913 on his first ‘grand pilgrimage’ into Central Australia. Strehlow would have been four years old, ‘young’ indeed. Love may not have appreciated an alternative argument to his being put so cogently and incisively by the young patrol officer. He may not have appreciated being put in the company of armchair Protectors and musty Professors. He was, after all, a man with his own strong and stubborn views. But the emergence of a powerful counter argument on the sensitive issues of hybridity from a man using Christian and missionary imperatives from Central Australia, a man rapidly becoming an ‘expert’ himself, must have given him pause as he began to take an even closer interest in church mission developments in the Centre. How would he meet the challenge of a new mission? How would his particular brand of missiology merge with the new, ‘radical’ vision of Duguid? And how would Love deal with being caught in the cross fire between the discourse of a militant humanitarianism on the march for the Aboriginal cause and that of the entrenched, white pilgrim culture of John Flynn’s Australian Inland Mission?

67 Ibid.
an out-of-the-way-intellectual

By the late 1930s, JRB Love was, in Warwick Anderson's phrase, an 'out-of-the-way intellectual' who had lived for most of his adult life in remote places. Yet he had been to war, to university and theological college and had retained an interest in and made a contribution to the discourses on race, civilization, and the Aborigines. What sort of nation was Love imagining by the end of the 1930s and to what extent did it include 'Aborigines'? Who were the 'Aborigines'? Was there a place for full-bloods, apart from being marooned in segregated reserves in ever-decreasing numbers? And were the the hybrid 'half-castes' merely destined to disappear 'in the white blood stream'?

JRB Love seems to have shared the common Australian article of faith of this time in 'whiteness' as a dominant racial type. This belief, however, even allied to an assertive nationalism historically defined and emotionally charged by Federation and the Great War, was essentially insecure. The obsessions and anxieties with miscegenation in Australia during the 1920s and 30s, when

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68 Anderson's term to describe some of the Australian doctors, scientists, and anthropologists whose views he examines in his book The Cultivation of Whiteness. The notion relates to their 'removed' status from the metropolis that mattered (London) in the late colonial era of the late 19th/early 20th: see Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, p. 3. Love at Kummunya and Ernabella was then twice removed from centres of power and influence. This perhaps accounts for the occasional contradictions in his thinking, not being subject to the refining process of intellectual friction in the cities of the nations. On the other hand, the confusions, contradictions, and circumscriptions of much racial thinking of the time - perhaps of any time - also afflicted others in different intellectual circumstances: see McGregor's critique of AP Elkin's earlier racial thought ('his arguments are notable more for their confusedness than for their clarity') in McGregor, "Early anthropological writings of A.P. Elkin": 95-104., esp. p. 99. It could be argued that this sort of 'confusedness' came with the territory of racial thought and racial science, which have provided a history of ideas, or discourses, characterised, amongst other features, by irrationality, illogility and emotionalism: see, for Australia, Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, and Griffiths, Hunters and Collectors; also generally, John Cell, The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), and George W. Fredrickson, A Comparative Study of American and South African History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

69 It is curious to note with Love, as with so many of the 'out-of-the-way intellectuals', that his notions of the 'civilized white man' does not appear to have been much disturbed by the atrocities and horrors of the Great War of the 'civilized' countries. It seems Love went to war, won his medals, and came home and rarely or only selectively used the experience as a referent. However, it is possible that his experience of war in some way drove him to a lifetime of service to Aboriginal people, that in some way it heightened a sense of responsibility and obligation towards them. He was born a son of the cloth, and was interested in Aborigines and missionary activity prior to the war, so his career choice does not come as a surprise; however, there are significant changes in attitude and language towards Aborigines after the war and the completion of his university and theological studies.

70 See Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, especially the Introduction.
significant interest in scientific studies of the capacities of ‘hybrids’ began, were complex and multi-layered. At a point when the white race in Australia was represented as having ‘achieved a triumphant form in Australia’, part-Aborigines provided a most unsettling problematic; thus the efforts to urge the absorption of hybrid Australians into White Australia, to breed out the black.71 Scientists such as JB Cleland assured a nation anxious about race degeneration that absorption would not ‘introduce a low type of mentality’.72 Love spoke in 1930 of ‘losing the half-caste in the stream of white blood’ and yet even the early Love had seemed to question whether this biological absorption could be done ‘honourably’, and that, if done, it could attract the shame of extinction.73 To Strehlow, however, by the late thirties, it was clear that Love’s view was that the future of the ‘half-caste’ was inevitably to become white. It is indeed hard to see Love disagreeing in 1937 with the (in)famous resolution of the Aboriginal Welfare Conference that ‘the destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not of the full-blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth’.74

(more than) a trace of the Other

Love seems convinced, by 1936, of the superiority of his own civilization and the primitivity and savagery of the Aborigines, despite his sympathetic portrayal of ‘his’ Wororas in Stone-Age Bushmen. The vision of that book, following Moderate Presbyterian missiological imperatives, was to ‘raise’ and ‘uplift’ savage Aborigines through industry and education, through ‘settled modernisation’ and

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71 Ibid., p. 6. See especially McGregor, Imagined Destinies, particularly chapter 4, ‘Civilisation by Blood’.
72 Cited in ibid., p. 205.
73 Love does not clearly address questions relating to the process of this biological absorption. It was a matter of much debate in early 20th C Australia and views ran from highly coercive mechanisms (involving removals and regulations) to much less coercive stratagems. While Love favoured removal from camps, his reservations on whether any process would be ‘honourable’ suggests he may be situated at the ‘less coercive’ end of the spectrum of views on this matter.
74 Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, Government Printer, Canberra, 1937, p. 21: cited in McGregor, Imagined Destinies, p. 178. ‘The half-caste problem’ produced a variety of responses, beyond a simple assimilation/non-assimilation dichotomy. One of the more bizarre, and one which gives some context to Love’s convolutions on the subject, was the response of the 1937 Australian National Missionary Conference which objected to assimilation on the grounds that overseas experience warned against ‘an unrestrained policy of inter-marriage’ and that ‘half-castes’ were better ‘uplifted’ in ‘self-contained communities’ segregated from both full-blood Aborigines and white: Imagined Destinies, p. 176.
the ‘soft’ diffusion of Christianity.\textsuperscript{75} His views were formed not so much through Evangelical and fundamentalist perspectives, common to many missionaries of the 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, that focused on the innate sinfulness of men, saw pagan practices as the work of Satan, and possessed an evangelical urgency to stamp them out, but rather through an evolutionary framework that saw these societies as ‘primitive’ yet ‘functional’, as earlier stages of civilization, redeemable over time through patience and precepts. There is the occasional paean to indigenous intelligence, but, more often, Love’s representations of Aborigines focuses on an extreme range of physical and cultural differences between ‘whites’ and ‘blacks’ with an emphasis on cannibalism, infanticide, and the betrothal of young girls to old men. The ‘blacks’ are represented as very different, Other, from another Time. Love’s strong sense of racial solidarity with ‘whites’ tended to exaggerate the ‘traces of the other’ in the Aborigines. To Love, they were savages, but unlike other colonial actors who depicted the Aborigine as irredeemably ‘savage’, to the missionaries the natives were ‘saveable savages’, not beyond redemption.\textsuperscript{76} Salvation, however, was an ambiguous notion. How were they to be ‘saved’? And who were to be saved? If the ‘imagined destiny’ of half-castes was to become white, that only left the full-bloods. While Love’s categories may not have been as clear as Olive Pink’s, there is little doubt that the logic of his racial discourse led ineluctably to the conclusion that the ‘Aborigines’ he was attempting to save were full-blood Aboriginal people.\textsuperscript{77}

\textbf{a gesture of reparation}

Three discourses seem to have coalesced in Love’s thinking by the late 1930s: one, the Christian articulation of the unity of mankind under the Christian God allied to the Great Commission to preach the gospel to all nations via a slow and

\textsuperscript{75} See the delineation of Moderate Presbyterianism, the religious and missionary tradition in which Love (and Duguid for that matter) seems most comfortable, in Stanley, ed., \textit{Christian Missions and the Enlightenment}. Also, in relation to the various strands that have shaped British (and thus, indirectly, Australian) Protestant missionary enterprise, see Andrew Porter, “Church History, History of Christianity, Religious History: Some Reflections on British Missionary Enterprise since the late Eighteenth Century”, \textit{Church History} 71 (Sept 2002): 555-584, esp. pp. 583-584. Porter uses the phrase ‘settled modernisation’ to characterise the sort of ‘soft’ or progressive diffusion of Christianity through the use of church and plough, schools and hospitals, that Love represented.

\textsuperscript{76} A phrase used by Kim Greenwell in her paper “Picturing ‘civilization’: Missionary narratives and the margins of mimicry”, \textit{BC Studies} (Autumn 2002): 1-21.

patient process of settled modernisation; two, the discourse of ‘race’, civilization, and ‘whiteness’, an evolutionary logic that put the white race and European civilization at the apogee of human history and development, much higher than primitive blacks; and three, a discourse of responsibility, of obligation, requiring a ‘gesture of reparation’ towards the Other to discharge a debt incurred by a history that could not be erased or reversed, but which threatened the survival of the savages.78

Tom Griffiths has argued trenchantly that the 1930s were a watershed in Australian public opinion about Aborigines as opposing ideas regarding indigenous people were brought into ‘sharpest proximity’ and when, for example, while racism became even more entrenched, it was powerfully challenged by a coalition of activists, humanitarians and anthropologists.79 One of the more interesting things about Love is that these sorts of opposed discourses were brought into similar proximity in his own thinking. In some ways, his body of thought is one template for the intellectual battlefield on which various discourses competed for dominance. At no point is the record wholly free of ambiguity and ambivalence. The ethics and discourses of conquest and development clash and merge in Love’s thought with those of reparation, responsibility, and redemption. Love himself had written in 1930:

We rejoice to see the wilderness blossoming as the rose, we are proud of the national type of white Australian that has been developed; but we see with sorrow and compassion the passing of the Aboriginal and we are concerned for his fate... We are [also] concerned for the honour of our people among the nations of the world in our treatment of this native race, and we are anxious, as members of the Church of Christ, to deal honourably and wisely with the Aboriginal.80

78 A ‘gesture of reparation’: a splendid phrase which carries some of the ironies and ambivalences in the attempt to repay a Levinasian debt to the Other ‘that can never be repaid’. Anthony Hassall uses these words in relation to the old missionary character Heriot and his mission station in his reading of Randolph Stow’s To the Islands: see Anthony J. Hassall, Strange Country: A Study of Randolph Stow (St Lucia: UQP, 1986). p. 32. A similar ‘gesture’ is apparent in Love’s thinking. For example, Maisie McKenzie gives his response to an article in a church paper that questioned the value of missions, given their high expense. Love’s retort was that ‘the mission is worth every penny’ and in a characteristic sally, added: ‘I am proud to be your representative in helping to pay some of our national debt to the Aborigines’: McKenzie, The Road to Mowanjum, p. 98.

79 Griffiths, Hunters and Collectors, p. 83.

80 Cited in McKenzie, The Road to Mowanjum, p. 260, from an article Love had written in 1930.
Much that was characteristic of J.R.B. Love, and indeed of most of his contemporaries, is contained in these words; the pride in the ‘white race’ and the particular configuration of that race, the Lamarckian ‘type’ that had rapidly evolved in the antipodes, the white Australian;\(^{81}\) the discourses of honour and decency of national conduct; the loftiness apparent in ‘honour’ and ‘this native race’ which, again, evokes Schweitzer’s ‘older brother’ dictum.\(^{82}\) Yet something in Love understood, in some ways against the grain of his own powerful instincts for imperialism and ‘whiteness’, the fundamental and moral nature of the obligations conferred on Europeans by the original sin of dispossession. In the end, too, it was more than just an understanding. He took it, and to his great credit, as a call to action. For a man enmeshed as he was in the discourses of empire, of race and white civilization, of blood and soil, of church and conversion, JRB Love by the end of the 1930s was making an effort, as were men like Albrecht and Duguid in their way, ‘to deal honourably and wisely with the Aboriginal’.

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\(^{82}\) For contrast, see an argument regarding 19thC Presbyterian missionaries in North America as paternalistic, supremely ethnocentric, who wrote of ‘Indian’ people as depraved, ignorant, mired in heathen darkness, yet used egalitarian language regarding their natives and were not (it is argued) racist: Michael C. Coleman, “Not Race, But Grace: Presbyterian Missionaries and American Indians”, *The Journal of American History* 67 (1980): 41-60. While Love did use ‘egalitarian language’, I suggest here that he was himself at least partly ‘mired’ in racial and racist discourses of the time, as was John Flynn: see below, chapter 6.