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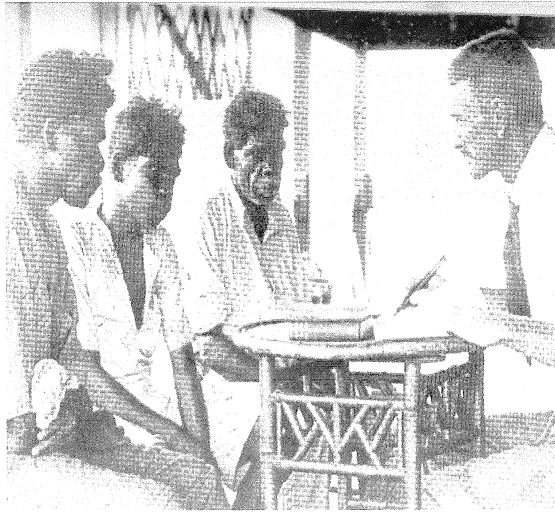
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**CONVERTING SALVATION: Protestant
Missionaries in Central Australia, 1930s-40s**

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CHAPTER TWO: 'Trace of the Other'¹: JRB Love and Aboriginal Australians before Ernabella



In 1972, when a furore erupted in the Adelaide press over suggestions by the then Governor of South Australia, the eminent scientist, Sir Mark Oliphant, that John Flynn had been in sympathy with some of the typically racist views of the early 20thC regarding Aboriginal

people, the prominent lawyer and Presbyterian Howard Zelling wrote to support the remarks of the Governor regarding Flynn.² At the end of his letter, he wrote:

Every time I go to Alice Springs I see the imposing John Flynn Memorial Church...but there is no memorial, imposing or otherwise, to the work among the Aborigines of the Reverend JRB Love, a former Moderator of the South Australian Presbyterian Church, first at Port George IV, and then at Ernabella...When I see a memorial to Bob Love as large as the one to John Flynn, it will be time enough for the Governor's critics to comment as they have done.³

As Zelling pointed out forcefully, the nation's plaudits on work done on its behalf

¹ Emmanuel Levinas, "The Trace of the Other", in *Deconstruction in Context*, ed. Mark Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986): 345-359. The inset photograph is reproduced from Maisie McKenzie, *The Road to Mowanjumb* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1969), opposite p. 72 and is captioned 'The translating team, 1929'. It is a photograph of JRB Love with three Worora people working on the translation of St Luke's Gospel.

² The catalyst for Oliphant's attack was Charles Duguid, who had asked Oliphant to write the foreword to his book *Doctor and the Aborigines* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1972). In this book Duguid repeated the charges of racism and a lack of Christian care regarding Aborigines against Flynn that he had made nearly forty years earlier in the forums of the Presbyterian Church. The Duguid-Flynn feud is an important context for the narrative of the establishment of Ernabella, and one useful mechanism for distinguishing various discourses that related to Aboriginal people in the early to mid-20th century. Zelling's introduction of Love into a debate over the AIM and Aborigines is also significant because it positions him by implication as the 'third party' in the struggle (which Zelling refers to in his letter) between Duguid and Flynn, which is where this thesis places him.

³ *The Advertiser* (SA), 6 Sep 1972, p. 5. Zelling, a Professor of Law at Adelaide University and a Justice of the Supreme Court of South Australia, was a significant lay elder in the Presbyterian Church of South Australia. It is only fair to note that during the controversy, which erupted in the letter pages of the *Advertiser* in September 1972, Flynn had his defenders as well as his detractors on the matter of his attitudes towards Aboriginal people.

in the Outback have not always been handed out in a fair and balanced fashion. Flynn has had churches built for him, suburbs and streets named after him, and his face inscribed on the twenty-dollar note, among other memorials and remembrances of his undoubted achievements. For Love, there are few if any memorials, 'imposing or otherwise'. There is an imbalance in their country's memorialising of these two near contemporaries, the one remembered as an iconic figure, the other (almost) forgotten.⁴

This chapter and the next introduce JRB Love through an examination of the development of his thinking on Aboriginal people prior to his assumption of the superintendency of Ernabella mission in 1941. The conception, establishment and development of that Mission, and a delineation of the discourse that accompanied it, form the core of the thesis. It is important, then, to trace the development of Love's thought up to 1941 and begin to see how that thinking fitted into related national discourses on missionary enterprise, Aborigines, race, culture, whiteness, and civilization.

I wrote '(almost) forgotten': while Love remains a shadowy figure even in the history of Australian missionary activity, it may be helpful to begin with a reading of some 'traces' of him in the literature, both to construct a sense of his current reputation, or representation, in the historiography of church, missions and indigenous Australians, and to use this fragmentary template as a starting point to construct a more comprehensive positioning of JRB Love, but one that may be less certain, more ambiguous and tentative.

friend of the Aborigines

Robert Scrimgeour's 1989 history of the Presbyterian Church in South Australia contains a biographical note on Love who is called 'one of the greatest sons' of the Church.⁵ The note ends with this tribute: 'He was a bushman, explorer, scholar, linguist, anthropologist, soldier, naturalist, minister of the Gospel, and

⁴ The two men were born in the same decade, Flynn in 1880, Love in 1889.

⁵ Robert J. Scrimgeour, *Some Scots Were Here: A History of the Presbyterian Church in South Australia 1839-1977* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1986).

friend of the Aborigines. If ever a man lived life to the full, it was J.R.B. Love'.⁶ It is a fine tribute. If we note, however, that the 'friend of the Aborigines' wrote in 1915 that 'It would be foolish to argue that all men are equal. The blackfellow is inferior and must necessarily remain so', and then note that much later, in 1936, after fifteen years of missionary enterprise, this 'friend' could write in an annual mission report that a mistake of the 'young enthusiast' might be to treat 'the Aborigine as an equal, which can only lead to friction and heartbreak', we see that 'the friend of the Aborigines' is a more complex designation than might appear at first sight.⁷

In his book *Not Slaves Not Citizens*, writing of Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia from 1898 to 1954, Peter Biskup characterises the Presbyterian mission station at Kunmunya (Port George IV) as 'one of the most successful missions of the inter-war years, as well as one of the most interesting.'⁸ He suggests that this success was due almost entirely to 'the wisdom and farsightedness' of its Superintendent, the Rev. JRB Love. Biskup compares Love favourably with other well-known WA missionaries of the time, Ernest Gribble⁹

⁶ Ibid., pp. 215-216, although Scrimgeour has borrowed from Maisie McKenzie, who used similar words regarding Love: see McKenzie, *The Road to Mowanjum* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1969), p. 104.

⁷ JRB Love, *The Aborigines: Their Present Condition as seen in Northern South Australia, the Northern Territory, North-West Australia and Western Queensland* (Melbourne: Arbuckle, Waddell and Fawckner, 1915), p. 29; Presbyterian Church of Australia, "Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia: September 1936", (Sydney, 1936), p. 96.

⁸ Peter Biskup, *Not slaves not citizens: the Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia, 1898-1954* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1973).

⁹ Ernest Gribble, superintendent of the (Anglican) Forrest River Mission from 1914-28, was, according to Biskup, 'headstrong, self-righteous, and authoritarian', much like his father, John Gribble. He resigned his post following condemnation of his treatment of fellow missionaries and Aboriginal people in a confidential report written by AP Elkin and commissioned by the Australian Board of Missions (Anglican) [see *ibid.*, pp. 128-130]. Gribble has received a more sympathetic assessment from John Harris, who though conceding that he was a complex and difficult man, writes that 'He was most difficult, however, to those who sought to harm Aboriginal people, and his anger at their mistreatment drove him to his obsession with isolating and protecting them': see Harris, *One Blood*, p. 517. Yet according to Elkin, his relations with the Aborigines on the mission were fragile: he often resorted to physical assault, family life was discouraged, children were kept in compounds under continual supervision, parents who refused to let the mission take their children were denied access to rations, and tribal marriage laws were completely ignored: see Biskup, *Not slaves not citizens*, p. 129; also see now Christine Halse, *A Terribly Wild Man: a biography of the Rev Ernest Gribble* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2002). Neither Harris or Biskup mention it but the main character in Randolph Stow's fine early novel, *To the Islands*, Heriot, the old, disillusioned missionary, was possibly based at least partly on Edward Gribble, given Heriot's similarly cantankerous compassion for Aborigines, even though Gribble's historical role in the Onmalmeri massacre in 1926 is actually replicated in the novel in the character of Father Walton. Stow worked for a brief time as a storeman on the Forrest River Mission in the late 1950s,

and Rod Schenk.¹⁰ According to Biskup, Love practiced a moderate, tolerant and patient policy of 'enlightened gradualism'.¹¹ There is also commentary on Love's superior education, and his vision of missionary activity as more than 'the mere preaching of Christianity', as well as his use of indigenous spirituality as a foundation on which to construct Christian belief.¹²

While discussing Gribble, Biskup identifies his primary failure as one of lack of tact, and conversely notes Love's 'excellent relations' with the Aborigines Department.¹³ The head of the Department, and Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia, throughout the term of Love's term at Kunmunya was the (in)famous AO Neville, architect of what one commentator has characterised as the 'genocidal moment' in Australian history when he said to a national meeting of Chief Protectors of Aborigines in 1937: 'Are we to have one million blacks in the Commonwealth, or are we going to merge them into our white community and eventually forget that there were any Aborigines in Australia?'¹⁴ Neville was also notoriously anti-mission, as Biskup documents, yet Love's relations with Neville were 'excellent': was it merely tact and patience, or more a mastery of politic and political compromise for the sake of the mission and the people?¹⁵

where he was told the story of the massacre and the early missionaries at Forrest River: see Randolph Stow, *To the islands* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962); see above, n. 25, Introduction; also Anthony J. Hassall, *Strange Country: A Study of Randolph Stow* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1986).

¹⁰ Rod Schenk was a significant non-denominational missionary in Western Australia from the 1920s, working for the Australian Aborigines' Mission (AAM), later to become the United Aborigines' Mission (UAM). He founded and managed the Mt Margaret mission near Laverton, WA, from 1921-1954. While an enthusiastic and resourceful missionary, with 'a concept of Aboriginal welfare which was considerably ahead of the times', in terms of health and education, his attitude towards Aboriginal culture was almost completely negative, which was typical of the fundamentalist, evangelistic brand of missiology espoused by the AAM/UAM: see Biskup, *Not slaves not citizens*, pp. 131-134. Again Harris's assessment of Schenk is more sympathetic. Although he too is critical of the 'narrow-minded, regimental, repressive' nature of his institution, Harris says his intentions were sincerely to do something for Aborigines 'when others were doing nothing': see Harris, *One Blood*, pp. 558-561.

¹¹ Biskup, *Not slaves not citizens*, p. 127.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁴ Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority, *Aboriginal Welfare: The Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities*, Canberra, 1937, pp. 10-11: quoted in Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), p. 237. For the 'genocidal moment', see Robert Manne, "In Denial: the Stolen Generations and the Right", *The Australian Quarterly Essay* (No. 1, 2001): 1-113, p. 40.

¹⁵ Biskup, *Not slaves not citizens*, p. 70.

Apart from representing a powerful nemesis to Aboriginal people in the State, Neville was, to missionaries, anthropologists, and other interested parties, the gatekeeper to funds, resources and access to Aborigines in Western Australia.¹⁶ Love was not the only person to attempt to stay on the good side of AO Neville.¹⁷ But Love was also able to write in 1930, in terms that seem to ominously prefigure those of Neville's seven years later, that 'the solution of the half-caste problem is to train the half-caste to earn his own civilised living...and gradually lose him in the stream of white blood.'¹⁸ Once again, the closer we peer at the portrait of Love as 'friend of the Aborigines', the more complex and 'grainy' it becomes.

we will never tolerate paternalism

Love also gets a good press from Richard Broome in his *Aboriginal Australians*.¹⁹ Broome, in his chapter 'Mixed Missionary Blessings', calls paternalism 'the blot on the humanitarianism of the missionaries'.²⁰ Despite characterising paternalism as 'inherent' in the Christian tradition, Broome suggests that not all missionaries were paternalistic and cites Love as an exception, quoting 'this sensitive observer': 'In this mission (Kunmunya), we will never tolerate paternalism. These people are our equals in intelligence, and our superiors in physique. The only differences are in the colours of our skins and the fact that we have had centuries more practice at becoming civilized.'²¹ Given the

¹⁶ For a vivid portrait of Neville as a nemesis of Aborigines, see the evocative film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002).

¹⁷ Geoffrey Gray has noted the lengths to which AP Elkin went to establish good relations with Neville and argues that this was a part of a discourse of 'helping government': see the articles by Geoffrey Gray, "'Mr Neville did all in (his) power to assist me': A.P. Elkin, A.O. Neville and anthropological research in Northwest Western Australia, 1927-1928", *Oceania* 68 (1997): 27-46; "'In view of the obvious animus': the discrediting of Ralph Piddington", *Aboriginal History* 21 (1997): 113-132; "'[The Sydney school] seem[s] to view the Aborigines as forever unchanging': southeastern Australia and Australian anthropology", *Aboriginal History* 24 (2000): 175-199; "Dislocating the self: anthropological field work in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1934-36", *Aboriginal History* 26 (2002): 23-50.

¹⁸ JRB Love, "What the Missions Are Doing", *Stead's Review* (1 October 1930): 14-16, p. 16; cited in Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the doomed race theory, 1880-1939* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1997), p. 176.

¹⁹ Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians: black responses to white dominance, 1788-1994*, 2nd ed., (St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 1994).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²¹ Quoted from McKenzie, *The Road to Mowanjumb*, p. 88; cited in Broome, *Aboriginal Australians*, p. 105. McKenzie does not give a source or a date for this interesting remark of Love's, which must put at least some small doubt over the statement's authenticity, especially when placed against contrary remarks made at about

paternalism inherent in these last phrases, this quotation from Love raises an acute point: disjunctions between discourse and praxis. This is more than the obvious point that statements cannot be taken at their face value. It is perhaps a problematic of the postcolonialist notion of discourse, born of linguistic studies, and retaining and privileging the pre-eminence of words, statements, language. The actions of historical actors (praxis) may run against the grain of the discourse within which they are or appear situated. With Love, we may note that discourse and praxis are not always aligned.²² The problematic may also lie, it should be said, in a historiographical tradition which privileges (as this thesis does) written sources (books, journals, diaries, reports) over the oral traditions (largely lost now) immanent in the mundane ebb and flow of relationships on a mission site. More (or less) accommodation, more (or less) resistance, more (or less) hospitality may have existed than can be discerned from the intransigent nature of words on pages.

Broome also contrasts conservative missionaries (in the majority until at least the 1950s) who believed that traditional Aboriginal religion and culture should be swept away with 'liberal humanitarian missionaries' like Love who held 'more positive views' of indigenous culture, and who saw the possibility of grafting the 'new' religion onto the rites and beliefs of indigenous spirituality.²³ Broome sees Love as the epitome of the liberal humanitarian missionary and quotes him summing up their philosophy:

the same time. I discuss this problematical tendency of McKenzie's below, at footnote 31. It is also interesting to note that, despite the protestations about paternalism, or its absence, Love was apparently called 'Djidjai', a Worora word meaning 'Daddy', and Mrs Love was known as 'Amagunja', meaning 'Mummy': McKenzie, *The Road to Mowanjum*, p. 94.

²² As we will note, this does not always run *against* Love, as it does perhaps here: in fact, it appears a characteristic of him that his discourse runs behind or against his praxis, that is, his actions in the mission enterprise are often more progressive, less ethnocentric, paternalistic and dominating than his expressed attitudes, or those of the discourses in which he participated.

²³ Broome, *Aboriginal Australians*, pp. 109-110. Broome quotes Love on the applicability of some Aboriginal rites to Christian ones such as baptism and the laying on of hands. He wrongly dates the quote from 1914. He has cited McKenzie's *The Road to Mowanjum* as the source of the quote (p. 52) but McKenzie is in fact quoting a large excerpt from Love's *Stone Age Bushmen* (pp. 217-219), published in 1936. One of my points in this chapter is that the Love of 1914 could not have written the passage he wrote in 1936, although it is also noticeable that in some areas, such as questions of hybridity ('the half-caste problem'), Love's thinking was stubbornly resistant to change.

I yield to none in recognizing the real intellectual ability of the Australian Aborigines. I honour their real, and intense, religious sense and practices, and do not seek to overthrow these, but rather to use them as a basis for higher principles.²⁴

John Harris' magisterial overview of mission work in Australia acknowledges Love's work as linguist and translator, and sees him as following in the footsteps of the great early Lutheran translators of the Dieri and Arrernte languages.²⁵ He also approves of Love's progressive missiology. He notes that only one of the 19th century missionaries, James Ridley, characterised Aboriginal religious traditions as 'the thirst for religious mystery, a reaching out to God.' It was, Harris comments, 'to be another sixty years before Bob Love, among the Worora people in the north-west, was to dare to acknowledge that in an Aboriginal ceremony of washing and sharing water to drink, he glimpsed the shadow of the [Christian] sacraments.'²⁶

the exemplary missionary

Maisie McKenzie's *The Road to Mowanjum* (1969) is written firmly within the missionary perspective and is useful for its provision of details of Love's work at the mission site of Kunmunya. McKenzie paints a picture of an exemplary missionary who fashioned a policy of tolerance and non-interference in indigenous life. By imposing explicit prohibitions on practices such as 'witchcraft or brutality' which he could not condone, he believed that he would merely drive the practices underground, 'making them all the more desirable.'²⁷ McKenzie's mission station is an active, productive site: from early morning with the cutting of firewood and milking of cows and goats to prayers to work in the

²⁴ Cited in *ibid.*, (Broome), p. 110 (again quoting from McKenzie, *The Road to Mowanjum*, p. 245, from an annual report on the work of the Kunmunya Mission in 1936).

²⁵ See Harris, *One Blood*, pp. 838-839. Carl Strehlow and JG Reuther translated the New Testament (NT) into Dieri (1897) and Strehlow, when he went to Hermannsburg, in a stupendous feat, also translated the NT into Arrernte (Aranda). Although no complete book was published until after his death, parts of his translation were used at the Mission much earlier. His son, TGH Strehlow, revised the translation and the new Arrernte NT was published in 1956. FW Albrecht was instrumental in assisting and encouraging Strehlow to complete this task. It is important to emphasise also that none of these translation projects would have been completed (or even commenced) without the assistance, often expert, of indigenous associates. Note that Broome also documents Love's linguistic skills and accomplishment in both translating parts of the Gospel into Worora and preaching to the Worora people in their own language: Broome, *Aboriginal Australians*, p. 110.

²⁶ Harris, *One Blood*, pp. 543-544.

afternoon for all, until the singing of hymns at the campsite at night.²⁸ Despite the narrative of mundane, quotidian activity with orchestration and a measure of surveillance from Love, McKenzie argues that his policy was that the Worora were to make their own decisions when it came to important religious and cultural matters: 'He would point them to another way by his example, but he would force no issue that meddled with tribal tradition. "We shall not build Christians,' he was fond of saying, 'by teaching people to despise and neglect their parents.'"²⁹

A pattern emerges in McKenzie's narrative of the *modus operandi* of Love's 'education and example' model of missionary enterprise. An issue would emerge where one person, usually a respected elder, decided to 'come across' to a European, missionary reading of a law, or ceremony, or part of it. He sought the missionary's assistance. Love gave his sympathy, but would refuse to issue a public edict or pronouncement. The elder had himself to make the formal break and attempt to carry the consensus of the community with him. According to McKenzie, it was a successful formula.³⁰ We can only take McKenzie at her word.³¹ In any case, we do not know the context, or alternative contexts, to her narrative of the indigenous initiation of change in the direction the missionary desired. We do not know what subtle pressures may have been brought to bear, and how powerfully they may have acted on the indigenous mind. We are only dimly aware of other, indigenous motives. 'Coming across' must always have been a complex and difficult bridge to negotiate.

²⁷ McKenzie, *The Road to Mowanjum*, p. 87.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 93.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 118.

³⁰ Two examples given of this *modus operandi* are in relation to circumcision and the betrothal of young girls to older men: see *ibid.*, chapter 8.

³¹ When McKenzie cites Love, often no reference is provided, so we sometimes do not know when or where he said it. It is even difficult to avoid the suspicion (quite possibly unjustified) that she is putting words he would (should?) have said into his mouth, that she is creating her own version or vision of JRB Love. It is often especially tempting, even natural, for disciples or admirers to add, to subtract, to shape their 'story'. Perhaps I do it myself here. All writers 'represent', tell a story. McKenzie's narrative is in the triumphalist genre of the Good Civilized Missionary Among Good Savage Natives; she is not writing a thesis, too many references might get in the way of a Good Story. Hers is a fine example of the genre, but to use it as a source for history does raise some problems. The Kunmunya missionary enterprise still requires more historical investigation.

McKenzie's narrative of the 'bright and happy' mission station may be overstated.³² However, there is little doubt that Love had forged a strong bond with the people, and had passed on skills to them to help them coexist, when necessary, with his own society. Encouraging them to retain their own skills, he had also paid a measure of respect to their culture, to their beliefs, to their way of doing things. He had watched the ceremonies and tried to understand them, he had encouraged them to continue to initiate their young, to pass on their traditions, he had shouted goodbye to the corpses laid in tree platforms along with the other men: he had done these things while still telling them about his own God: why else was he there? From the readings of observers like McKenzie, Broome and Biskup, it would be hard to expect much more from a missionary born in 1889. When the Loves left Kunmunya for Ernabella, 'the sobbing of a whole people filled the air.'³³

your elder brother

And yet the discourse is fraught. Love's ringing pronouncement that 'they are our equals in intelligence', made in the inter-war years when the prevailing scientific view was that the mental capacity of Aborigines was less than whites, was a powerful statement.³⁴ Yet we note Love limits the equality to intelligence. The minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia of 1936 have Love endorsing the words of Albert Schweitzer regarding 'natives': I am your brother, it is true, but your elder brother.³⁵ Further on, we read Love pronouncing:

Two extremes are to be avoided in dealing with the Aborigines: one is that attitude, so commonly met in Australia, of regarding the Aborigines as inferior animals, to be treated with contempt and kept in abject

³² She does mention the first visit of a doctor to Kunmunya in 1935 who found 'an alarmingly high proportion of venereal disease, as well as leprosy' on the mission site: McKenzie, *The Road to Mowanjumb*, p. 98. Life on the mission site was not, perhaps, always quite what it seemed.

³³ Ibid., p. 103.

³⁴ See, for example, Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness*.

³⁵ Presbyterian Church of Australia, "Minutes of Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia [referred to below as GAA]: September 1936", (Sydney, 1936), p. 94. Love is quoting from Albert Schweitzer's *On the edge of the primeval forest* (1922). The quote from Schweitzer continues, in words again that seem to encapsulate Love's missiological approach to relationships with indigenous people: 'The combination of friendliness with authority is therefore the great secret of successful intercourse [between missionaries and 'their natives']'.

humiliation; the other is the error into which the young enthusiast might fall, of regarding the Aboriginal man as his brother, as he surely is, and treating him as an equal, which can only lead to friction and heartbreak.³⁶

The representation of Love that the literature has constructed to this point is incomplete. The image of the 'liberal humanitarian' and 'friend of the Aborigines' needs fleshing out, unravelling, positioning in the discourses of his time.

Russell McGregor's splendid 1997 book *Imagined Destinies*, while only touching on Love intermittently, gives a guide to a broader, more complex sense of the man as situated in the fraught debates in the first half of the 20th century on race, evolution and the future of the Aborigines in Australia. While he acknowledges Love's attempts to integrate Christian faith into the traditional Aboriginal order so as to cause as little disruption as possible to indigenous society, and his Presbyterian belief that a combination of 'the Word' and 'work' could save the Aborigines from the doomed fate to which most other people had consigned them, he also notes that the biological assimilationists such as Neville and JB Cleland appeared to have an ally in Love in the long debates over the 'half-caste problem'.³⁷ Using McGregor's approach as a rough guide, we will attempt to take a fresh look at the development of JRB Love's thinking on missions and Aborigines.

insisting too much on the religious side

Born in 1889 in Ireland, James Robert Beattie Love was a son of a Presbyterian minister, the Reverend George Love and his wife Margaret, and was one of ten children.³⁸ His father came to Australia for reasons of health when JRB Love was only five months old and was a minister, first in Victoria, then in South Australia. His son trained initially as a teacher and was appointed in 1910 to Leigh Creek, a small coal-mining town 300 miles north of Adelaide. Love spent some of his spare time at a nearby Lutheran Mission Station, Killalpaninna. We have Love's account of one of the Killalpaninna visits, in December 1910. Love was only 21 years old. The account is a forty-five page handwritten manuscript,

³⁶ Presbyterian Church, "Proceedings, GAA, 1936", p. 96, in the 'latest report from Kunmunya', unattributed but almost certainly written by Love.

³⁷ McGregor, *Imagined Destinies*, pp. 116-117, 176, 209-210.

³⁸ Some of the details of this brief biographical overview are taken from Scrimgeour's *Some Scots Were Here* and McKenzie's *The Road to Mowanjum*.

a journal of his visit decorated with skilled drawings of Dieri (Diyari) weapons and implements, and various gestures of the Dieri sign language.³⁹ In Christine Stevens' *White Man's Dreaming: Killalpaninna Mission 1866-1915*, a nuanced narrative of the Mission, the author mentions this visit and refers to him as 'a Presbyterian minister'.⁴⁰ He was not that yet; one of the fascinating things about the document is that we catch Love at a very young age, before his epic trek North in 1912-14, before the Great War, before his theological training, commenting and making judgements on a Lutheran mission station.

At the outset of the visit, he is confronted by decisions being made about the removal of Aboriginal children. At an 'outlying camp', where the inhabitants are 'exceedingly filthy and dejected' and 'plainly living lives of immorality', a twelve year-old girl living with her mother and a 'half-caste' man is to be taken to the Mission Station at the request of the mission authorities 'to save the girl from her obvious fate if living with her step-father'. At the last minute, it is decided to send her to Adelaide. Love notes the grief of the mother who threatens to commit suicide 'when totally deprived of the child', and he muses about the future of the young girl, assuming the worst: 'What will become of a half-caste girl in a city of whites, is not pleasant to conjecture?'⁴¹

At the mission site itself, Love, while impressed personally by the Lutheran missionaries, is somewhat more sceptical of their policies:

Although I have the greatest respect for the Lutheran missionaries, they are not practical enough and insist too much on the religious side. I believe the missions should be primarily industrial, ultimately religious, but not solely, nor, necessarily, primarily religious.⁴²

It seems that even at this early stage Love was prepared to advance the notion that the 'primary' purpose of missionary activity was 'industrial', not to convert

³⁹ JRB Love, "Series 3: An Account of a visit to the Lutheran Mission at Killalpaninna, Coopers Creek, SA, Dec 1910. 45 pages, with number of pen drawings by author", in *Papers of JRB Love: PRG 214* (State Library of South Australia: Adelaide).

⁴⁰ Christine Stevens, *White Man's Dreaming: Killalpaninna Mission 1866-1915* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁴¹ Love, "PRG 214, Series 3, Killalpaninna visit 1910".

⁴² Ibid.

souls, although he makes the distinction that the latter was an 'ultimate' goal. He jots down what he calls the 'significant' response of one Aboriginal who ran away from the Mission because 'too much Jesus Christ yabber'. Yet he acknowledges that 'an industrial mission' on the scale he recommends is itself 'impractical' as 'the chief difficulty on this barren mission station' is to find suitable employment for 'the blacks'. As Stevens notes, Love's account does not represent as 'work' the Saturdays when the Aboriginal inhabitants of the Mission are free to engage in their traditional hunting and gathering, although he catches the joy of the young boys, arms full of little boomerangs, imitating their fathers, thrusting at sticks and small mounds of earth as at imaginary enemies.⁴³

The people interest Love: Aboriginal elders are 'scarred old warriors' and the children are 'shaggy-headed little niggers' and 'rascals'. One old 'medicine man', berated by the missionary for his bag of bones which he 'points to kill', particularly impresses Love:⁴⁴

Secretly I was more interested than shocked, and really admired the old man who was guilty of such bloodthirsty designs upon his fellows - two of the five bones were loaded, or had been pointed, which meant that, without the missionary's interference, two men were soon to die. In spite of his crime - and to himself probably, it did not appear as a crime, but merely a custom - the old man had a face full of power and a certain dignity, together with a fine physique...⁴⁵

Significant features of this account of the young Love's visit to the mission are his interest in both the new discipline of anthropology (he mentions several 'anthropological' articles and cites AW Howitt at one point) and the Dieri language.⁴⁶ Translation intrigues the inquisitive visitor: Love notes that the Dieri have 'a curious idea of what borders on the physical and spiritual, [a thing that] hovers between the material and immaterial. The Dieri word for this 'thing' is *tepi*.' Love gives a striking example: if the shadow of a stick falls on still water,

⁴³ Ibid. See also Stevens, *White Man's Dreaming*, p. 228.

⁴⁴ The missionary was Wolfgang Reidel, missionary at Killalpaninna 1908-1914.

⁴⁵ Love, "PRG 214, Series 3, Killalpaninna visit 1910".

⁴⁶ Alfred William Howitt (1830-1908), prominent Australian explorer, geologist and early anthropologist, who lived for a time among the Dieri.

there will be a shadow from that shadow on the bottom of the pool. This shadow's shadow is *tepi*. The missionaries, Love writes approvingly, use *tepi* in speaking of the soul.⁴⁷

Towards the end of the manuscript, Love suggests that 'on occasion', under threat of starvation, Dieri practised cannibalism on their children. He concedes that this was probably very rare as 'none could be kinder, or more indulgent to their children, than these blacks, if once they have decided to let a child live after its birth, and if indeed, the woman permits the birth of a child'.⁴⁸ In his early writing on Aborigines, Love often returns, almost compulsively, to these spaces of death, cannibalism and infanticide, which seem to act for him as significant markers of 'savagery' and 'evil'. The young Love, reading his ethnography and anthropology, disciplines which were permeated in the early 20th century, as was popular discourse, by notions of social Darwinism, is already beginning to articulate the evolutionary logic of an upward progression of societies from savagery and barbarism to civilization, with Aborigines somewhere near the bottom rung.

the grand pilgrimage

In 1912, at the age of twenty-three, after two years of teaching, JRB Love undertook a commission from the Presbyterian Church of Australia to investigate the conditions of life for Aboriginal peoples in the Interior. His Report, *The Aborigines: Their Present Condition*, was the outcome of a two-year journey.⁴⁹ Love traveled largely alone, and on horseback, from Leigh Creek, north of Adelaide, to Darwin, then south-west to Victoria River, and then east across the entire width of the Northern Territory to Camooweal and Charleville in Queensland from where he joined a droving team and worked his way home. It was an epic journey, in the footsteps and style of the explorers, the lone traveller(s) against Nature, against the Land, 'against' the Aborigines (Love is

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ JRB Love, *The Aborigines: Their Present Condition as seen in Northern South Australia, the Northern Territory, North-West Australia and Western Queensland* (Melbourne: Arbuckle, Waddell and Fawckner, 1915).

constrained to carry a gun). In keeping with the explorer genre, Love self-consciously keeps a diary, written on the run. His journey, while it looked back to the great explorers, also prefigured 'the grand pilgrimage' to the Centre, that 'land rite of continental size', in Tom Griffiths' words, which began to become popular in the 1920s and 30s and has remained so ever since.⁵⁰ In *Hunters and Collectors*, Griffiths refers to this impulse of the early 'white pilgrims' to draw the Land into their grasp 'with a net of meanings and ceremony, filling its spaces and defending its silences. They championed an indigenous culture, a white indigenous culture, that denies, displaces and sometimes accommodated Aboriginal traditions.'⁵¹ While his discourse was weighted on the side of accommodation, Love, 'friend of the Aborigines', always felt the strength of the white pilgrim impulse.

Love's Report was published in 1915⁵² and, according to the historian of the church in South Australia, 'enabled the Presbyterian Church of Australia to obtain a clear picture of its responsibilities to the people of the North, especially the Aborigines.'⁵³ The Church may indeed have obtained a clear picture of its responsibilities but it largely ignored them: no new Presbyterian mission for Aborigines was established anywhere in Australia until Ernabella in 1937, twenty two years after the 1915 Report, and that with some opposition from the Presbyterian John Flynn's AIM.⁵⁴ In 1915, the Presbyterian Church had only two missions for Aborigines in Australia: in the Kimberleys, at Port George IV Sound (established 1912, later called Kunmunya) and at Mapoon in Queensland (1891). There were a number of overseas missions, in New Guinea, Korea, and in the Pacific, which often seemed more interesting and exotic to church pew donors, as well as more successful in terms of numbers and conversions, than

⁵⁰ Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: the antiquarian imagination in Australia*, (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 174.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁵² The cost of publication was 'generously borne', according to the Foreword, by the prominent South Australian philanthropist Robert Barr Smith. All the photographs in the Report are attributed to 'J. Flynn': one of John Flynn's enthusiasms was photography, which he used to great effect in his publications, such as the *Inlander*: see Brigid Hains, *The Ice and the Inland: Mawson, Flynn, and the Myth of the Frontier* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), especially pp. 129-130.

⁵³ Scrimgeour, *Some Scots Were Here*, p. 215.

⁵⁴ See chapters 4-6 below.

missions working with the historically more recalcitrant material of Aboriginal people in Australia.⁵⁵

History often surprises us with its coincidences and ironies. In 1912, the same year that JRB Love set out on his expedition North on horse to report to the Church on 'the present condition' of the Aborigines, John Flynn was also commissioned by the same Church to conduct a survey of 'religious conditions' in the Northern Territory. Flynn's 'expedition' was far better planned and financed than Love's venture. Flynn was nine years older than Love: one reason perhaps for his superior organisational skills at this time. In any case, these skills, as well as allied promotional and political abilities, became characteristic of his later career. In 1912, the ambitious and far-sighted minister from Victoria, working among scattered white settlers in the Beltana Smith of Dunesk Mission in South Australia, had been thinking for some time of extending the model of that Mission to the 'great empty spaces' of the Centre and the North. According to his first biographer, his preparations prior to leaving for the North concerned 'aborigines as well as whites': 'He had many discussions with his friend Robert Love, a young schoolteacher at Leigh Creek. Later Love was to win distinction as the anthropologist author of *Stone Age Bushmen of Today*, and the Superintendent of the Port George IV Mission Station in Western Australia.'⁵⁶

⁵⁵ To give some indication of the Presbyterian Church's interest and overall orientation concerning missions to Australian Aborigines, the mission work of the Church in Australia in the early years of the 20th century was carried out through the 'Foreign Missions Department'! Note that the corresponding department in the Methodist Church was the 'Overseas Missions Department': see Max Griffiths, *The Silent Heart: Flynn of the Inland* (Kenthurst, N.S.W.: Kangaroo Press, 1993), p. 16. Similarly, the Anglican church in Australia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries placed Aboriginal missions very low on its order of priorities: see Noel Loos, "Concern and Contempt: Church and Missionary Attitudes towards Aborigines in North Queensland in the Nineteenth Century", in Swain and Rose, *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions*: 100-120, p. 104; also see Noel Loos, "The Australian Board of Missions, the Anglican Church and the Aborigines, 1850-1900", *The Journal of Religious History* 17 (1992): 194-209.

⁵⁶ W. Scott McPheat, *John Flynn: Apostle to the Inland* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963), p. 60. For details of Flynn's careful and very political management of the appeal, the survey and the final Report to the General Assembly of the Church that initiated and established the AIM, see chapters 5-7 of McPheat's sympathetic biography. I exclude as a 'biographer' Ion Idriess and his famed book, *Flynn of the Inland* (1932), which is more hagiography than biography, albeit one of the great, iconic hagiographies of Australian literature: see Geoffrey Dutton, *The Australian Collection: Australia's Greatest Books* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1985), pp. 143-146.

Apart from these discussions with Love, presumably about Aborigines, the indigenous people of Australia did not figure largely in Flynn's 'plot', Report or plans for an Australian Inland Mission (AIM).⁵⁷ This body was speedily established and given the imprimatur of the Presbyterian Church by its General Assembly in 1912. Love's Report was not received until December 1914. By then the Great War was under way and the question of establishing new missions to the Aborigines, even if it had ever been seriously considered, was deferred indefinitely. In another irony, given Love's subsequent and deserved eminence within the church as a missionary to the Aborigines, his Report could be read as a cry for more missionary work to be applied to the white people of the Interior as well as Aboriginal people and, as such, an imprimatur on the developing work of Flynn and the AIM. As well as being a firm supporter, along with Flynn, of the discourse of developing and populating the North and Centre with white settlers, Love saw the 'uplifting' of white moral standards in the bush as a task, so far unfulfilled, for the church.⁵⁸ It was, of course, this alternative reading, initiated by Flynn and reinforced by Love, that was taken up with some vigour by the Presbyterian Church that fell in behind the powerful and popular force the AIM eventually became.⁵⁹ Curiously, the paths of the two men crossed during their respective 'expeditions', at a brief, inconsequential meeting at Alice Springs in May 1912. The discourses on Aborigines of Flynn and Love were to coalesce, and occasionally collide, during the next thirty or so years.

⁵⁷ 'Plot' is the term given by McPheat (p. 49) to Flynn's clever machinations in both planning for a survey of the North and in ensuring the positive reception of the recommendations of the Report of the survey, one of which was the establishment of a Mission to the 'far-flung white pioneer settlers' of the Inland. This Mission was to be the AIM.

⁵⁸ Flynn and Love shared, to some extent, the general public's conceptions of the Inland/ the Bush that were permeated with social Darwinist emphases on the survival of the fittest and the superiority of the white race. For an argument that these conceptions had by the early 20th century replaced earlier, more complex understandings of 'the bush', see Richard Waterhouse, "Australian Legends: Representations of the Bush, 1813-1913", *Australian Historical Studies* 115 (2000): 201-223.

⁵⁹ Love was to remain a strong supporter of the AIM throughout his life, with the exception of its treatment, or often more precisely, non-treatment of Aborigines. It was on this point that he formed a (temporary) alliance with Duguid: see below regarding the establishment of Ernabella, esp. chapters 4-6.

this extremely interesting and most neglected race

Love prefaces his Report by hoping that his suggestions will aid in the 'uplifting' of this 'extremely interesting and most neglected race'.⁶⁰ He insists that his first concern is for the children 'of aboriginal and mixed blood, who are now growing up, mostly in idleness and, I am convinced, almost invariably in immorality, in the camps'. This was a Presbyterian man to whom idleness was almost a form of immorality. The solution was to give them 'a sound Christian and industrial training' to allow them 'to live a decent and useful life'.⁶¹ But would enough children survive, even if 'uplifted' into missions such as Killalpaninna?⁶² That mission, Love notes, had had one birth to 18 deaths in 1910, and only 13 children out of a mission population of 165.⁶³ He predicts (accurately, unfortunately) the demise of the Mission and its people.⁶⁴ Of the country north-west of Oodnadatta, including that of the Musgrave and Petermann Ranges, Love writes prophetically: 'Here lies a very alluring field for the missionary, and ethnologist. Living absolutely under primitive conditions...they still maintain the ancient customs which have largely disappeared from the settled parts'.⁶⁵ These 'primitive stone-age bushmen' were a magnetic mission 'field', attracting the missionary and the anthropologist. Perhaps they were calling 'alluringly' for a missionary-anthropologist, two for the (colonial) price of one.

⁶⁰ Love, *The Aborigines: Their Present Condition*, p. 7. The Report was submitted to the Board of Missions in December 1914.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

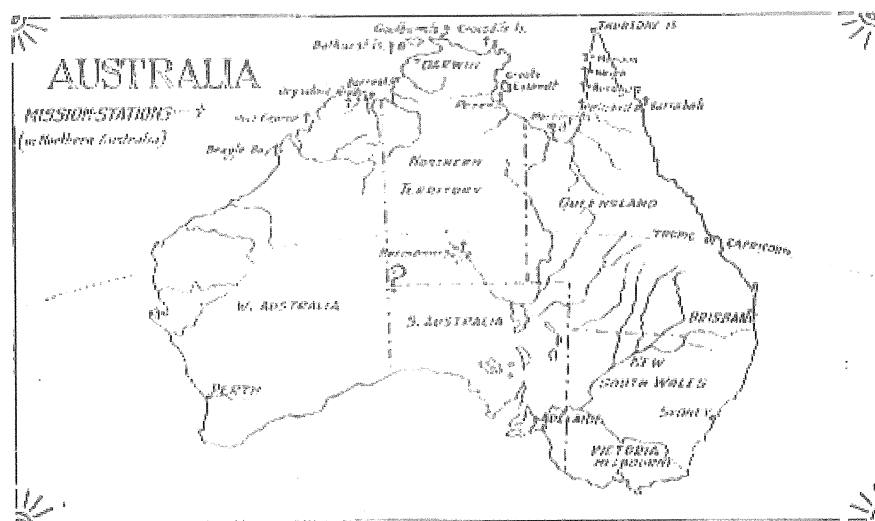
⁶² The survival, or non-survival, of indigenous children seems an obsession with Love and, in different contexts, he refers to the theme repeatedly: it is part of the discourse and context within which he finds it acceptable to remove children from the environment of 'the sordid camps'.

⁶³ According to Christobel Mattingly and Ken Hampton, eds., *Survival in our own land*, revised ed. (Sydney: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992 (first published 1988)), the figures for 1910 were 1 birth to 15 deaths.

⁶⁴ On the eventual fate of the mission and the Dieri, see Stevens, *White Man's Dreaming*, esp. chapter 9, and Mattingly and Hampton, eds., *Survival in our own land*, chapter 22.

⁶⁵ Love, *The Aborigines: Their Present Condition*, pp. 12-13. Note Love's recommendation of a promising area for missionary activity, not implemented for 25 years until the establishment of Ernabella. In a comment which betrayed Love's (and the nation's) developing obsession with the 'half-caste' problem, he notes, with the use of (unconscious) sexual imagery, how the presence of a 'fair-haired boy' from the Petermanns proves that the white man's influence had 'penetrated' to even this 'remotest corner of the desert': *ibid.*, p. 13. In fact, Aboriginal children often had (have) very fair hair when young which invariably darkens as get older. Love's assumption of miscegenation was just that, an assumption.

An interlude: in 1922, Love published Our Australian Blacks.⁶⁶ It carried a rudimentary map of Australia with (appropriately) crosses where Protestant missions existed at that time in northern Australia. Love placed a question mark in the area (roughly) of the Musgraves and Petermanns to which he had referred in his 1915 Report. I reproduce it here as a map, for geographical orientation, but also as a 'map' of Love's vision.



Back to the Report: often, Love's instincts seem in 1915 to be 'with the whites': Aboriginal killing of sheep or cattle is without excuse; cattle station managers get a sympathetic portrayal from Love ('managers invariably ensure that the old and decrepit get a share [of bullocks killed for the Aborigines]⁶⁷; the wage of an Aboriginal stockman may seem small but 'one acquainted with the blacks' will understand that, supplemented by the managers' kindnesses, the wage is 'more just than at first it might appear'⁶⁸; police sub-Protectors in the Territory 'are usually willing to do what they can to help the blacks'⁶⁹; the Government 'kindly' supplies rations to Aborigines at isolated depots and station:⁷⁰ truly a pastorate of pastoralists, paternalists and protectors. Conversely, the representations of the indigenous people that Love selects for the Report are generally negative, although not always so: the positive images, however, the 'bright and happy faces', are usually due to the 'kindly' intervention of white missionaries or

⁶⁶ JRB Love, *Our Australian Blacks* (Melbourne: Brown, Prior & Co. Pty. Ltd., 1922).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

station managers. The life of Aboriginal people, in their traditional setting or where they have come into contact with low whites, is represented by Love as nasty, brutish, and occasionally shortened (by disease or by whites with guns).

civilised constructions

By these sorts of representations, Love self-consciously sets himself up as an 'authority' on indigenous matters. Tom Griffiths has noted the tendency of visitors to Central Australia, from about the 1930s, to become self-appointed experts, 'authorities' legitimised by their new knowledge to 'pronounce' on the 'Aboriginal problem', the 'half-caste problem', the development of the North and so on. Love, if not a pioneer of the frontier, was perhaps a precursor of these visitors.⁷¹ A photograph in Love's Report of a Aboriginal boy in a camp has the unfortunately ambiguous title of 'An Ugly Blot on Australia'. As Love used John Flynn's photographs, here is a case where their discourses literally coalesced into one stereotypical representation of the Other. The text opposite the photograph refers to 'the shabby and dirty little 'humpies' where some Aborigines live, while at Alice Springs and Henbury Station, according to Love, indigenous huts are 'quite respectable' and of a 'civilised construction', with thatched roof and walls.⁷² In the camps, however, the attitude of 'the black gin' to her child is 'incomprehensible'. She seems not to care, according to Love, whether she keeps the baby or not: [she] will quite crudely discuss the matter with a white man: 'might be me kill 'em, piccaninny no good'.⁷³ Yet, if the children survive, notes Love, their kin treat them with 'lavish kindness'. He describes their games and mimicry and is struck by the similarity with children 'the world over'; yet underneath, suddenly, the 'true savage' is revealed by the children's love of dismembering birds and small animals.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 37.

⁷¹ Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p. 178. Of course, there was a difference: Love eventually 'stayed' in the Centre and became a 'real expert' (at least in European terms), that is, someone who lived in the Centre and, like Said's Orientalists, could pronounce on 'the Aborigine' with 'authority'.

⁷² Love, *The Aborigines: Their Present Condition*, pp. 14-17.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 55.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 59-60.

Back in the 'sordid' camps, Love is 'startled' to see 'quadroons':

Of course, these children are no better than the others, yet it seems particularly painful that these children should be growing up to the life of the camps – in a word, white savages...[t]he blame rest largely with ourselves, in that we allow children to grow up to such a life, and make no effort to take them from it and lift them to a higher level.⁷⁵

We note the young Love's use of the word 'painful': it is the pain from the shock of seeing something that to Love is of almost primeval disorder, disjunction, *dis-ease*. There is little or no acknowledgment in the Report of any 'pain' to Aboriginal mothers on removal of their children: to us, a troubling omission. Love even raises the necessity for the removal of children to a moral crusade. As for 'immorality', there is enough around for all: 'the gin...is at the disposal of any passing traveller for the price of a stick of tobacco or a piece of damper', often sent by her Aboriginal husband to the white man, who has 'no limits'. Love sees the whole 'camp' in moralistic terms: the black woman is immoral yet the plaything of both black and white men. Along with most commentators of his time, he denies her any agency or autonomy in these intricate tripartite situations.⁷⁶

uplift them to useful men and women

Against the 'sordid' camps of the 'blacks' outside the cattle stations and small white settlements, Love sets the (even then) iconic Central Australian mission, Hermannsburg. Love had arrived at Hermannsburg during a crisis in its history. Baldwin Spencer, as Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Territory, had recommended Hermannsburg's transfer to government control.⁷⁷ Love rejects

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

⁷⁶ Most missionaries of this and earlier eras took this position. But so did almost every white commentator: see for example Charles Chewings, *Back in the Stone Age: The natives of Central Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1936). See here generally Ann McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*, especially chapter 4 (Black Velvet). We should note that the position of Aboriginal women in indigenous society, and its myriad representations, are still the subject of considerable debate, as well as whether the primary divide in contemporary (black/white) society is gender or race: see Diane Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, 2nd ed. (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1993); also Helen MacDonald, "Speaking Objects: Diane Bell and the Making of 'Aboriginal Woman'", *Melbourne Historical Journal* 27 (1999): 1-19.

⁷⁷ Spencer's antipathy towards Hermannsburg was well known. The matter of closure in 1913, when Love was at the Mission Station, was moot by the time Love's Report was published as Spencer's advice had been rejected by the Administrator, JA Gilruth: see Derek John Mulvaney and John H. Calaby, *So much that is new: Baldwin Spencer, 1860-1929, a biography* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1985), pp. 309-

the criticisms made by Spencer of poor hygiene and ragged dressing on the part of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Hermannsburg although he concedes 'the habit of personal cleanliness is hard to instil into the aboriginal mind'. On the thorny question of dormitories for children, Love dismisses this criticism of Hermannsburg: he saw them as 'an absolute necessity'.⁷⁸

The principal defect of missions, including Hermannsburg, claims the young Love, is that 'not sufficient opportunities for self-reliance are allowed the blacks'. While many believe the 'blackfellows' cannot be trusted, 'minor positions' ought to be possible. Caught in the wider racist settler discourse, Love explains it patiently to the Board of Missions: 'it would be foolish to argue that all men are equal. The blackfellow is inferior and must necessarily remain so, but he is by no means so inferior as to be unable to rise above the level of a working animal.'⁷⁹ To Love, the strongest argument in favour of Christian missions was in the 'bright, happy faces of mission blacks', a contrast to those of cattle station blacks: 'while religion without sound industry is idle, industry without religion is worthless...work among the aborigines is not a question of successfully raising stock. It concerns the souls of men.'⁸⁰ This was the language the Board wanted to hear: while 'the blackfellow was inferior', his soul was (presumably) equal, at least in the eyes of God, to white souls. Nevertheless (Love went on) 'work' was necessary, for the Aborigines and the nation, as the land requires 'men and women to develop it':

It is a question of rescuing and uplifting boys and girls who, under present conditions, are most certainly doomed to a life of vice, sloth and disease, and of starting them in life equipped to take their places as useful men and women.⁸¹

Love's discourse here is one of 'rescue' from the sordid, diseased and slothful native camps, the development of blacks for the greater development of

310. Interestingly, Love does not mention the source of the criticisms of the mission, although he mentions Spencer as author in connection with the fame of the Aranda 'to the ethnological world': Love, *The Aborigines: Their Present Condition*, p. 23.

⁷⁸ Love, *The Aborigines: Their Present Condition*, p. 30. Spencer had criticised the locking up of girls overnight in dormitories by the missionaries.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Australia, the 'equipping' of Aborigines to 'take useful places' in White Australia.⁸² The most vulnerable, even if rescued and taken to Adelaide, are the half-caste girls: who, asks Love, will marry a 'coloured woman' when white women are available? Love is, however, sufficiently sceptical of settler discourse to interpret the 'white bushman's cry' to 'leave the blacks alone' as meaning, in effect, that 'we have here a source of cheap labour and unbridled license [so] do not interfere with us'. Against this isolationist discourse, Love posits the intervention of Christ's Great Commission, the injunction to preach the Gospel to every nation. In any case, he argues, white 'interference' is inevitable: the only question is its nature. In the Interior, because of pastoralism and the overland telegraph route, a system of protective reservations 'is not possible'⁸³ and Love recommends the alternative establishment of 'training stations', that is, 'industrial training on a sound religious basis' with a view to Aborigines 'going out and fighting their own way in the world when fairly equipped, so far at least as half-castes are concerned, we may save the Central Australian blacks from shameful extinction.'⁸⁴

'Fighting' here was perhaps a Freudian slip for 'finding': either way, it indicates Love's concern for the 'struggle' Aboriginal people faced 'in the (white) world'. Love's racial thought, however, becomes unclear here: he seems to be saying, train Aborigines and then set them loose 'in the world', the half-castes are more likely to survive (because they are better 'equipped' with skills, intelligence, or white blood?), thus averting shame falling on the good name of the nation. So the race may not be doomed. But of whom does the surviving 'race' consist? If

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 32.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 34-39. It is instructive to examine the discourse of Inland development as was produced in Australia and compare, for example, Flynn and Love who both participated in and privileged this discourse. Flynn can be said, of course, to have been instrumental not only in the production of the narratives of nation-building, character-building, and indeed (attempted) race-building but in creating the infrastructure, through the initiation of medical facilities, wireless links and aerial medical assistance, for developmental realities on the ground (and in the air!). But it should be said that both Love and Albrecht (as well as Duguid) attempted to include the indigenous people of the nation in this discourse, whereas Flynn's tendency (in which he was hardly alone) was to exclude them, explicitly or implicitly: see Max Griffiths, *The Silent Heart*, pp. 68-69, 168; *contra*, see Hains, *The Ice and the Inland*, but see below, chapter 6.

⁸³ Interestingly, some 25 years or so after making this judgement, Love became superintendent of Ernabella Mission, a 'protective reservation' that provided what Love then described as 'the last, best hope' of the Aborigines of the Musgrave Ranges.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 40 (my italics).

'half-castes', what of the 'full-bloods'? A few lines later, he again raises the spectre, clearly 'painful' to him, of the 'practically white child in a blacks' camp' and cites an unnamed writer on 'the aboriginal problem': 'The sooner this miserable drop of blood is fused in the common reservoir, the better.' Love does not necessarily approve of this sentiment, but again his drift is hard to catch:

Whether fusion, extinction, or separate existence shall be the ultimate fate of the race is beyond our ken. We are concerned with the blacks as they now are. If such fusion is to take place upon honourable terms, well, did the writer quoted contemplate that?⁸⁵

Love seems to be feeling his way, uneasily, towards some 'honourable' solution to 'the aboriginal problem'. All the possible 'final solutions', 'fusion, extinction, or separate existence' appear to be still open in 1914, although as two of the alternatives carry potentialities of great 'shame and dishonour', and 'separate existence' appears 'not possible', the way forward appears almost impenetrable to the young observer.

we are their (uninvited) guests

Love's diary or journal of his trek is a very different document to the Report.⁸⁶ Unrestrained by the terms of a commission, it is written in the genre of the explorer-adventurer, adopting the laconic, humorous style of the bush traveller. The Land is the underlying reality in Love's journal and he writes of it in terms of death and decay: 'the whole place looks prehistoric'; 'the numerous large anthills give the country the appearance of a deserted cemetery'. A lonely grave reminds him of 'the horror of playing one's last card in vain on this Godforsaken, starving track'. The 'blacks' themselves play a secondary role. Love is, curiously, more sympathetic to the Aborigines, yet somehow more disdainful of them, in the journal than in the Report: 'Visited in evening by an old nigger...No-one could

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ JRB Love, "Series 6: Journal of an expedition undertaken for the purposes of inquiring into the conditions of life among the Aborigines of the interior of Australia under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church of Australia: 27 Dec 1912 - 29 Mar 1914", in *Papers of JRB Love: PRG 214* (State Library of South Australia: Adelaide). As the journal was a private communication, apparently not designed for publication, the author is permitted to say things outside the scope of the discourse of the Board of Missions. The ways in which Love's journal clarifies, obfuscates, amplifies or contradicts the Report is fascinating, and a more thorough comparison of the two documents than can be essayed here would be instructive.

refuse these poor old chaps a feed, especially seeing that we are, in a sense, their guests, uninvited ones to be sure.⁸⁷ We find, perhaps for the first time, some inchoate recognition in Love of the harsh realities and (in)hospitalities of dispossession.⁸⁸ The condition of old Aboriginal women, however, particularly seems to disgust Love. It offends his sense of order, decency, cleanliness, as it does his sense of justice; these women seem simultaneously to attract his compassion and his contempt:

Nearly every camp contains one or two loathsome creatures - poor brutes, it is not their fault that they are suffering, for whom nothing is done, except that occasionally white men who see them give them some iodiform,⁸⁹ vaseline or whatever remedy they may have, to put on their sores...Did not the law forbid it, one could put a bullet through the head of some [of] these piteous creatures, and feel that the act was only merciful and not unchristian.⁹⁰

In the Report, Love, for the benefit of the Board of Missions, had framed a 'pastorale' of Central and Northern Australian race relations, with 'kindly', well-meaning whites and docile, (potentially) doomed blacks. Here, in the journal, it is different: 'White men here all flashing revolvers on belt or saddle. Several nigger smoke signals going up in the distance.'⁹¹ There is violence and rumours of violence, amid fears and suspicions of 'the blacks' engendered by years of frontier wars. After a white man was killed, 'there is much furbishing up of revolvers, every man in the country is now wearing his gun when on the road'. Police and trackers gather. Then 'another murder is reported from Broome': 'the blacks are apparently looking for trouble now. These police raids will probably lead to [battles?], where many things will occur that may not be published.'⁹² Here, in Love's private journal, we are in the dark, dangerous world of Reynolds'

⁸⁷ Love, "PRG 214, Series 6: journal of an expedition", p. 52.

⁸⁸ It is possible that Love's 'mournful and melancholic' treatment of the Land is a projection of the colonialist guilt and fear about the dispossession of the indigenes of the land (which he evidently is beginning to feel) onto the Bush: see Bernard Smith, *The Spectre of Truganini* (Sydney: ABC, 1980 (Boyer Lectures)), and Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, pp. 3-4.

⁸⁹ Love means iodoform, a chemical compound with antiseptic qualities.

⁹⁰ Love, "PRG 214, Series 6: journal of an expedition", pp. 74-77.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 96-100.

Frontier.⁹³ At times, Love is despondent: 'The whole country is a poverty-stricken place, the Aboriginal question is not regarded seriously, and even the Church is apathetic.'⁹⁴ He expects to be setting off to Victoria River in a week or two, 'to collect more useless information about the blacks'. He is becoming aware of the force of opposition. The 'pastorale' is breaking down. He spends a night arguing with the mailman about the Aborigines:

In fighting for the blacks, the aboriginal missionary has, in addition to the native evils, to contend with opposition, often active and strenuous opposition, from most of the whites.⁹⁵

Love was beginning to imagine what it would be like being a missionary to the Aborigines in white settler society.

⁹³ Henry Reynolds, *Frontier: Aborigines, settlers and land*: see the discussion in the Introduction above at n. 5. If the historical memory of the ruthlessness and harshness of the white invasion and appropriation of this continent ever dims, I would suggest re-readings of this salutary book. In both discourse and praxis, word and deed, the Australian colonial settler (with some honourable exceptions) was a frightening and implacable enemy of the indigenous inhabitants. It is against the terrifying portrait of Reynolds' Frontier that I place the (relative) benignity of the Central Australian missionaries: also see the brief discussion of the notion of the Frontier as a historical construct in notes 3-4, chapter 3, below.

⁹⁴ It is, however, curious that Love does not mention, either in his Report or journal, that Baldwin Spencer was Chief Protector in the Territory at this time. He claims that there was little interest in Aborigines, yet Spencer was there, perhaps the most eminent and qualified man in Australia regarding Aborigines! However, it was apparently true that the Administrator JA Gilruth had little interest in Aboriginal welfare, as Love intimated after meeting him. Even Spencer, a friend, said of him: 'I think it may be fairly said that he has neither the faintest sympathy with, nor the slightest understanding of, the Aborigines': cited in Mulvaney and Calaby, *So much that is new: Baldwin Spencer, 1860-1929, a biography*, p. 306.

⁹⁵ Love, "PRG 214, Series 6: journal of an expedition", p. 154.