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

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Introduction

Ernabella and Hermannsburg: these two Mission Stations were the sites of two significant Protestant missionizing ventures in Central Australia in the 19th and 20th centuries. Ernabella, a Presbyterian mission established in 1937, was set in Pitjantjatjara land in the Musgrave Ranges in the far north of South Australia, while the white-washed Kraal of Lutheran Hermannsburg, founded some sixty years earlier in 1877, rose up from Arrernte land on the Finke River in the (now) Northern Territory.1 Dotted around them on the map of the Dead Centre of our period, the nineteen thirties and forties, were the cattle and sheep stations of the iconic white settlers of the Inland, the pastoralists. Henbury, Glen Helen, Tempe Downs, Kenmore Park: the stations were the vanguard of the (mis)appropriation of the ancient and aboriginal Central Australian landscape. Vanguard and appropriation are words suggesting contest. Central Australia

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1 The Pitjantjatjara (Ernabella) and Arrernte (Hermannsburg) were the principal, but not the only, Aboriginal peoples with which the two missions interacted. Luritja and Pintubi people, for example, also had dealings with both missions, as well as others. Also, I will generally refer to the indigenous people at Hermannsburg generically as Arrernte (which as a language name includes dialects currently referred to as the Southern, Western, Eastern and Central Arrernte languages) although the Lutheran missionaries generally dealt with the Western Arrernte; similarly, I will refer to the people at or around Ernabella generically as Pitjantjatjara, although, as indicated, other Western Desert peoples attended the missions, including the Yankunytjatjara-speaking people, Yankunytjatjara being a very similar dialect to Pitjantjatjara: see Cliff Goddard, Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara to English Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Alice Springs: Institute of Aboriginal Development, 1992), pp. viii-xi. I have resisted the recent tendency to refer to Pitjantjatjara people as Anangu. Regarding the English spelling of Australian Aboriginal peoples, I use currently accepted variants; in the text, however, in quotations, other variants may be used; a number of variants of Pitjantjatjara have been used historically, and older spellings of Arrernte, for example, include Arunta and Aranda, are common in the literature. Note that a new spelling 'Arranita' is at present being used for the western dialect in Lutheran publications: see Harold Koch and Myfany Turpin, "Book review: 'Eastern and Central Arrernte to English Dictionary' (compiled by Henderson and Dobson 1994)", Aboriginal History 21 (1997), p. 233 and Paul GE Albrecht, From Mission to Church: 1877-2002: Finke River Mission (Adelaide: Finke River Mission, 2002), p. xi. Note: the inset photograph is of the Ernabella homestead and its environs taken before its 'establishment' as a mission.
was (and is) a contested landscape. From 1877, missionaries have been significant actors in that contest, along with pastoralists and Aboriginal people, and others, with their words and actions, discourse and praxis. This thesis seeks to unravel the discourses and practices of the Central Australian missionaries about Aborigines from those of other Europeans, situating these actors within the indigenous landscape, where Europeans acted out their discourses partly as fantasy, partly as narrative, as history. My project is not so much to question the assumption that colonial discourse was a monolithic discourse – such a notion of a singular homogenous discourse has been undermined by the work of scholars such as Ann Laura Stoler and Nicholas Thomas - as to differentiate the discourses about Aborigines of the particular missionaries examined in the thesis from those of other proximate European actors, and in particular from each other. While such a multiplication of

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2 The concept of discourse, and the related Foucaultian notion of discursive formation, are concepts that have now been in common use in the human sciences for thirty or forty years and probably do not need defining at each subsequent use (although I do not suggest the concept of discourse is unproblematical, with Foucault himself using it in different ways; see Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (London: Routledge, 2003)). ‘Discourse’ has become part of the stock in trade of the historian. I might point out however that I utilize an understanding of the term ‘discourse’ as ‘a way of thinking and speaking’ shared by a loosely defined group of people, and as such related to the Foucaultian ‘discursive formation’ defined as a group of statements in which it is possible to find a pattern of regularity defined in terms of order, correlation, position and function: see David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 101. I also follow Nicholas Thomas in noting a general failure of the historiography to acknowledge the contested, conflicted character of colonial discourse, which failure does not allow, as Thomas observes, the ‘Other’ to mark and reformulate that discourse: see Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism’s Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994), p. 3. One of the points I hope to make in this study is the tremendous impact of the Aboriginal people on the missionaries. The point, however, will be made more indirectly than explicitly, as my focus is on the white people. Indeed, by focusing on the missionaries, I face the potential of recapitulating a major colonialist sin of representation and action, that is, to imagine away the indigenous people. That is not my intention and I hope not an outcome of the work. To focus on the complexity and agency of missionaries is surely not to deny the complexity and agency of indigenes: see my discussion below in this chapter.

3 See, for example, Ann Laura Stoler, "Rethinking colonial categories: European communities and the boundaries of rule", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31 (1989) and especially Thomas, *Colonialism’s Culture*. It may also be appropriate here to clarify my use of the (sometimes) contentious word ‘colonial’, and its even more troublesome fellow ‘postcolonial’. I follow Nicholas Thomas and Bart Moore-Gilbert in a broad use of the term ‘colonial’, using it to characterize a certain set of relationships between an ‘intrusive’ metropolitan power or powers and an indigenous people or peoples which may occur or persist either before, during or after a formal constitutional ‘colonial’ relationship: see Nicholas Thomas, *Out of Time: History and Evolution in Anthropological Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997). I use the word then to apply to relationships between Europeans and Aborigines in the early 20thC, after the Australian colonies had federated and dropped their colonial status. I think the phrase ‘the on-going colonial present’ is as apt to this country and relationships between white and black as it is to Africa, India, South-East Asia, despite different sets of circumstances. It can be argued, of course, that what remained as far as the indigenous peoples of Australia were concerned was a form of internal colonialism: see the interesting
discourses may seem to undermine the utility of the concept of discourse, it points more towards a utilization of the notion in a more nuanced fashion so that the complexities, ambivalences and discontinuities that reside in historical situations are taken into account, along with the commonalities that characterize types of global or widespread discourses.4 Both settler-pastoralists, to take one important group of European actors,5 and missionaries, built ‘stations’, and in so doing were constructing more than mere timber and corrugated iron structures, they were constructing representations of themselves and their Others: they were forming structured worlds and small universes, but they were also forming words, sentences, discourses, they were making statements, to the indigenes, to their fellow Europeans, to history. But what were they saying? And what were they doing?

an enigmatic history

The history of Christian missions to indigenous peoples in Australia is an enigmatic, uneasy, recalcitrant history. It is a history of our time (a time when a significant strand of Australian historiography is examining the relationships

discussion about settler colonies and terms such as ‘colonial’ and ‘postcolonial’ in Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, "Settler Colonies", in A Companion to Postcolonial Studies, ed. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 360-376. ‘Postcolonial’ I use interchangeably with colonial (see Ashcroft and co-authors’ problematical definition which extends the meaning of ‘postcolonial’ from all the way back to the beginning of the colonial relationship to the present: B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 2) but generally I restrict the use of the term to what I take to be the ‘postcolonial’ era, i.e. post-World War 2. As I am examining missionary discourse and praxis particularly in the decade of the 1940s, this dividing line comes, possibly fortuitously, in the middle of that decade. I should also add, as a clarification, that in this study I am using terms such as colonial discourse/missionary discourse to refer to discourses relating to Aboriginal people and/or any matters affecting the relationships between indigenous and European people. 4 Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, Routledge Classics ed. (London: Routledge, 2002 (first pub. 1969)); also Thomas, Colonialism’s Culture.

The cast of ‘colonial actors’ in the Centre in our period was probably as colourful and variegated (and similar, taking out the fishermen and trepangers and adding stockmen) as the ‘trepangers, traders, surveyors, miners, administrators, telegraph operators, pastoralists, buffalo shooters, Chinese traders, fishermen, police, adventurers, and missionaries’ of the Daly River ‘white’ social system near Darwin in the 1900s as Deborah Bird Rose describes it: see Rose, "Signs of life on a barbarous frontier: intercultural encounters in North Australia”, in The Archaeology of Difference: negotiating cross-cultural engagements in Oceania, ed. Robin Torrence and Anne Clarke (London: Routledge, 2000), 215-237. In relation to pastoralists, it should be said that while I am satisfied that as a group they were roughly representative of general ‘white’ attitudes towards Aboriginal people, it must be admitted that, in general terms, as Reynolds notes: ‘The pastoral industry was the single most important agent in the destruction of Aboriginal society and the squatters were often the most persistent advocates of racist theories’; Henry Reynolds, Frontier: Aborigines, settlers and land (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), p. 106. While Reynolds is referring more to the 19thC, his point applies with as much force to Central Australian pastoralists in the early to mid-20thC: see C. D. Rowley, The Remote Aborigines (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1972 (first published 1970)).
between the indigenous peoples of this ancient country and recent European intruders) yet not of our time (a time which is secular and uncomfortable with religious conviction and proselytizing). For a period in the tortuous and tortured history of those relationships, missionaries were one of the few groups of white people in the country who not only thought seriously about Aboriginal people (perhaps others did in the safety of their coastal homes) but 'penetrated' both physical and interiorized boundaries and lived with them, in their own way. But this was the thing: in their way. Not our secular, postmodern way. Not the way we would have done it. They are an enigmatic and recalcitrant type, for historians as much as for anyone else.

They have an enigmatic history also because they had become, until very recently, almost invisible in the history of our history, as were the indigenous inhabitants for much of the long two hundred years of writing and contemplating on the European 'settlement' of this continent. The historiographical trajectories of the indigenous peoples and the missionaries who lived with them have been yoked together. When the Great Australian Silence ended and historians began to 'discover' the original inhabitants of this country, as (we told ourselves) Cook had 'discovered' the continent two centuries earlier, we hardly noticed the missionaries.6 This reluctance to examine the missionary factor in Australia is possibly more pronounced than in other countries where missionary activity took place in colonial environments, such as Africa, India, North America. All countries have buried pasts, histories, which they can choose to confront or exorcise or leave hidden. The missionary encounter with Aboriginals is a buried past that has remained, to a large extent, intractable. Missionaries are as alien to us, almost, as Aboriginal people were to the early European intruders; they are the exemplary version of that peculiar Australian phenomenon, a strange breed. They are, in a profound sense, Other to us, and until very recently historians have left them alone as much as possible.

Since the publication of *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions* in 1988 which, with its dense collection of essays, was a watershed in missionary studies in Australian history, there have been an increasing number of fine studies, from differing perspectives, of mission and missionary history, including the work of Stevens, Brock, Halse, Choo and others, as well as an increasing recognition of the place of missions in Australian, religious and Aboriginal history in more general works, such as those of Broome, Carey, Attwood and Rowse. John Harris’s monumental work *One Blood* (1990), while written from a committed Christian (while occasionally critical) perspective, valiantly attempted a history of all significant missionary activity in Australia since 1788. However, apart from Barbara Henson’s sympathetic portrait of Hermannsburg’s FW Albrecht, there has been a dearth of scholarly work on our period relating to the history of the missions at Hermannsburg or Ernabella, although a substantial book on the Namatjira School of art at Hermannsburg contains a number of very useful essays on the Lutheran mission. The Lutheran publishing industry in Adelaide has produced, over the years, a number of non-academic works on Hermannsburg, including Leske’s *Hermannsburg: a vision*.

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and a mission and Scherer’s *Venture of Faith*;\(^{12}\) to describe these as non-academic is not to denigrate them, but merely to indicate their perspective and motivation. FW Albrecht contributed the chapter in Leske’s book that covered the history of Hermannsburg during our period. His son Paul Albrecht’s 2002 book is a welcome contribution to the Hermannsburg literature.\(^{13}\) Overseas, there has been an explosion of scholarly work on missions, with important work by Terence Ranger, Thomas Beidelman, Norman Etherington, Brian Stanley and Andrew Walls, among many others. The most significant, however, without question, has been the work of Jean and John Comaroff, culminating in their magisterial and vastly influential 1991 opus *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* followed in 1997 by Volume 2, *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*.\(^{14}\) The Comaroffs see the missionaries in early 19\(^{th}\) century South Africa as ‘agent, scribe and moral alibi’ for the colonizing project, evangelical bearers of a strident Protestant ideology and involving African natives in a matrix of symbolic and material transactions which bound them hegemonomically to the colonizing project. While I choose to see more hospitality than hegemony in the specific mission sites I study, anyone writing currently in mission history is greatly indebted to the Comaroffs. This thesis then is part of a recuperative historiographical turn that seeks to explore the meaning of the missionary in Australian and Aboriginal history, in a finite but significant slice of time and space, the time being the shift from the protectorate to assimilationism before, during, and immediately after World War Two, the space Central Australia.

I wish here to retain the ‘enigmatic history’ of the Central Australian missionary, not in the earlier sense of a shadowy, forgotten history but in a more nuanced, postmodern sense, appropriate to the vulnerable, fragile and ambivalent

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\(^{13}\) Albrecht, *From Mission to Church, 1877-2002*.

existence in which they lived, with an Aboriginal Other who was both familiar and alien, an Other whose alterity seemed at times absolute, and yet an Other of whom both the Europeans’ religious and civic culture demanded a convergence into the one, the Same, the Self, an assimilation into a religion, Christianity, and a white nation-state, Australia. It might then be possible to read the experience of the missionaries as a discordant, experimental, ambivalent, postmodernist narrative, as a more hesitant venture or project where both ‘sides’ were reaching out to each other in a sort of tentative amalgam of hospitality and hostility rather than as purely an exercise in arrogance and power, or, along a different trajectory, in Christian triumphalism.

ventures

While I utilize both words venture and project in this thesis in reference to missions, I prefer the former.\textsuperscript{15} Venture has connotations of adventure, which was the attraction to some, the promise and the power of the exotic; a venture of faith, as well as a venture into an unknown Inland, which missions along with explorations usually were, as well into as more metaphorical unknowns. The notion of joint venture is also relevant here as Protestant missionaries saw their missions as partnerships with congregations back in the home churches, with the mission Boards, other missions and missionaries (although sometimes there was also rivalry, particularly with Catholic missions), even with God Himself, who was always with them, as He was with Moses in a similar sort of Wilderness, or so they believed. There was the notion of a joint venture with ‘their people’, the particular indigenous community, tribe, or group the missionaries attached themselves to and to whom they often became conjoined psychologically and emotionally.\textsuperscript{16} Also, to conclude, venture carries with it more easily than project the final, ultimate connotation of failure, the failed venture. All missions existed

\textsuperscript{15} Nicholas Thomas utilizes the term ‘colonial projects’ in his brilliant work Colonialism’s Culture as it conveys something of the fragmentary, fractured notion of colonial culture and discourse he is arguing as opposed to a homogenous or unitary notion; project however gives a little too strongly the impression of a well-organized, boundaryed, defined exercise that did not always apply to the rather chaotic and poorly resourced entities that were missions: see Thomas, Colonialism’s Culture, pp. 105-106.

\textsuperscript{16} The reverse happened as well, at times: the indigenous community itself became attached to particular missionaries, often according them status within the indigenous group.
on a daily possibility of failure and abandonment, and this should be understood if missions and missionaries are to be made explicable at all.

My reading then of the relations between the Central Australian missionaries and the indigenous peoples who ‘came in’ to the mission sites of Hermannsburg and Ernabella suggests a more diffused and ambivalent version of power relations. Even Jean and John Comaroffs' celebrated version, in the South African missionary context, of Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, as qualified and nuanced as it is, is still finally an analysis of missionary and colonial power.\textsuperscript{17} Power in these Australian sites seemed to run much more both ways than even a muted theory of hegemonic relations may suggest. The Australian Aborigines were reluctant to convert to the new religion. Conversion never took place with the rapidity that occurred elsewhere, for example in Africa or in the Pacific. Australian missions struggled to gain converts, hardly a record of the untrammeled exercise of power. The missionary could cajole, persuade, suggest, bribe, yet they often found, in the face to face relation, the disconcertingly recalcitrant ‘cheeky Abo’, the unfathomable Other, who could in the end disappear into the desert and abandon the mission for ever.

Yet they usually came back. For food, clothes, tobacco, or artifacts of western technology which they often adapted for their own purposes. Adaption had ensured their survival in a precarious environment. And they often came back with ‘sly civility’ on the white man’s terms: attend the Sunday church service or perform some work before you get the food.\textsuperscript{18} But they could eat as well on their own terms: the rationed food, the ‘good soup’, was shared with ‘undeserving’ kinfolk. And the mission was invariably a safer, more hospitable place than elsewhere in the white man’s World. But the Aboriginal people had their own World to slip back into, the world of their fathers, their ancestors, the world of their Dreamtime, the world that existed before the white man came, and still

\textsuperscript{17} Comaroff and Comaroff, \textit{Of Revelation and Revolution}, vols 1 and 2.
\textsuperscript{18} Homi Bhabha, "Sly civility", in Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture} (London: Routledge, 1994 (essay originally published 1985)): 93-101.
existed, though rapidly diminishing, beyond the mission border, beyond the creek, beyond the enigmatic missionaries.¹⁹

the ‘construction’ of a mission station

Through a narrative of the creation, construction and early career of a single Mission Station, Ernabella, I examine missionary discourse and praxis about Aborigines in Central Australia in the 1930s-40s. I write here a discursive narrative, telling not so much of the ‘nuts and bolts’ construction of the mission site but using its contested and negotiated beginnings, and the discourse of significant missionaries associated with it, to re-examine the thinking about Aborigines that was going on in the missions of the iconic Centre. My principal characters are Dr. Charles Duguid, the founder of the mission, and Reverend JRB Love, the Presbyterian missionary most associated with Ernabella’s early years.²⁰ As an important backdrop, as context for the study of a new mission in Central Australia, I use the much older, Lutheran mission site of Hermannsburg, with the discourse of its superintendent of these years, Pastor FW Albrecht. Part of my narrative of Ernabella is a contest between Duguid and John Flynn for the ‘hearts and minds’, and pockets, of the Presbyterian Church. So Flynn, a missionary to the white people of the Centre, and his discourse on Aborigines, is also part of my story.

It is the interlocking nature of these four lives, as well as of the discourses about Aborigines in which they participated, which may be useful in providing a context for exploring the history of missionary thinking and action in Central Australia. Their interactions were numerous and significant. Some were friends, some enemies; some formed productive partnerships or temporary alliances with each other to advance their cause; all participated in discourses on indigenous

²⁰ Duguid was not, in a technical sense, a missionary but for a number of reasons, including his very close association with Ernabella Mission, his participation in and contribution to Australian missionary discourse about Aborigines, and for ease of discussion, I include him in discussions in the thesis as a ‘missionary’. Depending on the context, references to entities such as ‘the missionaries’ or the ‘Central Australian missionaries’ refer most often to Love and Albrecht, and sometimes to the missionaries at the Ernabella mission site only, or to all these and Duguid. The context, I hope, will usually clarify to whom the generic term refers.
people which became contested and fractured under the pressures of praxis on the mission site itself.

The thesis will also look at the way discourses of missionary Protestantism were constructed and disseminated between the metropolis and the colonial sites of the missions, particularly through correspondences between the missionaries and their Boards. Each mission station, whether Presbyterian or Lutheran, was under the aegis of a Board of Missions, which administered the Church’s various missions, organized the missions’ budgets, recruited and paid the staff, approved policy and purchases, negotiated with State and Federal governments, and with other agencies of the church, reported to the church’s peak bodies or meetings and, not least, corresponded and negotiated with their missionaries. We need to take into account the broad missionary approaches that were determined at a Board (or higher) level to decipher the impact at the local mission site. A number of missiological alternatives were available to missions in the 1930s and 1940s, from an exclusionary evangelical conservatism that believed that Christianity had to supplant heathen indigenous beliefs through to more moderate, liberal approaches that saw Aboriginal spirituality as complementary to Christianity. Within these broad approaches, we need also to examine the varying religious motivations of the missionaries themselves – particularly the evangelical Lutheran faith of Albrecht and the Moderate Presbyterianism of Love – to see how these may have shaped the discourses in which they thought about Aboriginal people.

It is a stereotype and often a fallacy to see missionaries as rigid, stern Men of the Book, as unchanging and unresponsive as the Rock of Ages, and missionary

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21 Mission (and more general) discourse about Aborigines was, of course, also constructed and disseminated through public and religious media such as newsletters, film, brochures, books, visits, and lectures. To examine this area of the discourse fully would involve a separate (and very useful) study.
23 See Carey, Believing in Australia, pp. 10-19 for a excellent summary of evangelicalism (the traditional mode on Australian missions) and an introduction to the early history of this ‘religious success story of the Australian colonies’: ‘A personal belief in conversion, godliness and mission’ puts its essence in a nutshell. Yet it is still often a matter of degree and judgement as to who is ‘evangelical’ and who is not, and is not always a matter susceptible to objective assessment. JRB Love believed in conversion, godliness and mission, yet I have positioned him as a Moderate progressive for reasons delineated in the text.
discourse as a monolithic discourse focused solely on the spiritual salvation of heathen natives. Henry Reynolds, though recognizing the missionary commitment in Australia to the Aboriginal cause, still characterizes it as 'more interested in Aboriginal salvation than their suffering,' and 'more interested in Aboriginal chances on the fields of heaven than their fate on the sunlit plains of Australia.' An examination of the discourse and praxis of the missionaries of Central Australia during our period suggests that some of the evidence runs counter to this assessment: that it may have become more important or urgent to some missionaries to concern themselves with the suffering of the Aborigines here on earth than the question of salvation in a future world. This exegesis of the missionary experience might tend to undermine the conventional critique of missionaries that, whatever charity, good works, and even food they may have dispensed, it was ultimately only in the service of the 'conversion project'.

Australian historical writing about black-white relationships has tended to oscillate between the two poles of an all-powerful colonizer with a victimized and colonized subaltern population, a 'domination' model, and another pole which privileges Aboriginal agency but itself moves between a 'resistance' model, which stresses Aboriginal struggle in opposition to white intrusion, and an 'accommodationist' model which acknowledges the cooperative and collaborative aspects of past colonial relations. My position in this thesis is more aligned with this latter, accommodationist reading of colonial encounters. My argument will be, not that desires to dominate, reshape, reform and exploit the Other were absent in the missionary dialectic with indigenous people (to a greater or lesser

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25 For a powerful (historical) fictional account of a European evangelical missionary (based on George Augustus Robinson) who, as Emmanuel Nelson has noted, is a metaphor for the imperialist and Christianizing impulse, and who distributes medicine, food, clothes and tobacco as a form of economic and physical control, see Colin Johnson, Doctor Woreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World (New York: Ballantine, 1983) and Emmanuel S. Nelson, "The Missionary in Aboriginal Fiction", Southerly (December 1988): 451-457; but for a more nuanced, complex characterization of a fictional missionary (also probably based on 'real life'), see the character of Father Heriot in Randolph Stow's brilliant To the islands (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1962); see also below, n. 9, chapter 2.
extent they existed in all colonial and postcolonial cross-cultural engagements) but that they were, on some sites, secondary to other considerations. One broad imperative of this work is that missionaries and Aborigines on these two mission sites were in relationships of such physical, psychological, and social proximity and dependence that unidirectional theories of dominance and cultural imperialism on one side or helplessness and victimhood on the other are unconvincing and fail to explain fully the powerful ties of humanity and hospitality that amounted at times to possessory bonds which developed between these missionaries and those they habitually called 'our Aborigines'. Mission stations were sites where relationships of mutual convenience, reciprocity, and hospitality existed.27

the Other

This thesis contends that simplistic (mis)understandings of colonial discourse can be subverted by theoretical criticism and by the study of colonial actors such as missionaries. In examining the lives and discourse of the Central Australian missionaries, I want to utilize the insights of postmodernist and postcolonial history but simultaneously interrogate and question some of them. The most important concept I wish both to co-opt and to contest is that of the postcolonial Other and attendant ideas of desire and possession.28 Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, a seminal text of postcolonial studies, argued that ‘Orientalism’ existed as a construction of the Western imagination and that the West, in writing and producing bodies of knowledge about the Orient, produced a single, abstracted figure, the Arab, Europe’s Other.29 This production was, according to Said, intimately connected to the creation and continuance of Western power and

27 I acknowledge that in arguing that missions were sites of accommodation where relationships of mutual convenience and obligation were developed in environments of apparent and actual inequality is to follow a historiographical tradition which includes works such as Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, First Vintage Books Edition (originally published 1972 by Random House) ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), and, in Australia, McGrath’s *‘Born in the Cattle’* which recognize the complexity of contact zones where hostility and hospitality are inextricably fused.

28 The reader may note that Other is sometimes capitalized, sometimes not. I do not follow a consistent line on this matter, other than to use ‘Other’ or ‘other’ as I think best suits a sentence. I do not mean however anything significant by the use of the alternative. While some scholars posit some analytical difference in the use of the ‘o’ and the ‘O’, I do not.

29 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1995 edition (first published 1978)). We only need to substitute ‘the Aborigine’ for ‘the Arab’ to catch immediately the power of Said’s conception of the abstracted figure in terms of Australia’s history and history of social relations.
dominance in the Orient. Said's interpretation of the Orient-West encounter was so powerful that the effect of its explications and extrapolations in postcolonial studies has been generally to assume that colonizer and colonized always existed of necessity in conflict with each other, the binary opposition Self/Other seems always antagonistic, and the Other is always a figure seen by Westerners in contemptuous and conflictual terms.  

The concept of the Other in the Saidian sense does have value for us in elucidating the mission site. Figure 1 (the frontispiece) is a photograph of an outdoor Sunday service at Ernabella in 1942 with the white missionaries, dressed in their Sunday best, sitting stiffly in a row on a pew facing, at an appropriate distance, the naked and semi-naked black bodies seated variously on the ground, their Aboriginal Others. While the scene is partly produced from the pious conventions of centuries of 'the Sunday Service', it resonates powerfully as an 'encounter' of the European Stranger with the Native Other. It is instructive that the two groups appear to face each other obliquely, at an angle, as if in some way this might 'deflect' somehow the force of the encounter.

The missionaries also, as Said's Orientalists, became 'experts'; they produced 'the Aborigine' for their Boards, for their congregations back in the metropole, for church newsletters for which they wrote. They represented and constructed an Aboriginal Other for various purposes, some of which may have been related to Said's power and dominance. We need, however, to consider the limitations of the Saidian Other, the focus of the orthodox postcolonial Gaze, which reduces the agency and autonomy of the Other in the light of an absolute power directed from the colonialist side. This postmodernist relationship with the Other seems based upon a dialectic in which the only possibilities are being dominated or dominating. The Saidian Other, while applicable at times, may not always be useful in the missionary context where missionaries were caught within a colonial discourse which saw the Aborigine as savage and primitive, radically...

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30 I have deliberately and very briefly (and inadequately) here described Orientalism in terms of its general reception in the world of postcolonial studies, rather than enter into a debate on the actual arguments of the book: see the Afterword in the 1995 edition of Said's book (see previous footnote). The literature on Orientalism is vast, but see now Valerie Kennedy, Edward Said: a critical introduction (Oxford: Polity Press, 2000).
different and inferior yet were also bound to a Christian discourse that saw the Aborigine as equal to the white man in God’s eyes, equally a sinner but on those grounds equally entitled to salvation.

Said’s analysis has come under scrutiny by some post-colonial scholars for the failure to take into account the nuances and complexities of the relationship between colonizer and colonized. Homi Bhabha, for example, seeks instead to emphasize critical negotiations across the colonial divide. For Bhabha, the relationship between colonizer and colonized is fraught because of contradictory psychic patterns in colonial relations such as the desire for, as well as fear of, the Other. Bhabha, in reworking orthodox notions of the ‘stereotype’, posits a certain ‘fixity’ of colonial representations (the noble savage, for example) yet which have to be constantly repeated, demonstrating complex conflictual anxieties in the colonizer. Bhabha describes the colonial desire for a ‘reformed, recognizable Other’ as being countered by a fear of the Other’s immutable difference. So an important contribution to thought (for our project, as well) is Bhaba’s insight that the dominant discourse constructs ‘otherness’ in an ambivalent manner; that is, while it attempts to construct the Other as radically different from itself, it must also ascribe an element of its identity to the Other in order to justify whatever control it exerts or wishes to exert. These notions of complexity and ambivalence in the relationship with the Other may be useful to us in the project of deciphering missionary discourse.

We may however, in the process, attempt to destabilize some of Bhabha’s own concepts. It is arguable, for example, that the ascription of similarities to the ‘Native’ by the missionary was done as much to defend that ‘representation’ against the dehumanizing and discriminatory prejudices of settler discourses as to exercise power or control. Bhabha’s project is not in the final analysis to decipher the colonial voice, as mine is, rather to decode the silenced native voice,

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to find examples of its ‘intransitive’ resistance. However, Bhabha’s analysis of the Other, for our purposes, is incomplete and unsatisfactory, as the colonizer, even while nervous and ambivalent, remains all-powerful, bent on domination. I suggest that the postcolonial ‘other’ of Said and Bhabha with its relatively fixed and negative connotations cannot fully explain the complex and intricate relationships that the mission contact zone produced between missionaries and Aboriginal people and that some additional explication of ‘other’ may be useful. Thus, in terms of a critique of the notion of the Other as applied to missionary ideology and praxis, I want to utilize some of the insights of the French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas in his delineation of what he called the face to face encounter of the Subject with the Other.

**another Other**

I put forward then the central explorations of the thesis, to what extent ‘saving bodies’ began to take subtle precedence over ‘saving souls’ both in the discourse and praxis of Central Australian missiology during the 1930s and 1940s, and whether this was a deliberate choice by the missionaries, to take on the responsibility for the physical rather than, or at least prior to, the spiritual salvation of ‘their’ Aborigines. It would seem apparent then that any concept of the Other that gestured towards this acceptance of ultimate responsibility for indigenous bodies needs to go beyond the orthodox postmodern/postcolonial Other we have discussed above. In Levinas’s ethical universe, the Other appeals to the Subject to go towards, to welcome and to take responsibility for the Other. This Levinasian encounter also has the sense of an absolute ‘otherness’, an absolute alterity, a ‘noncomprehension’, which sometimes characterized missionary relations with indigenous people. The Other’s moral summons is based, according to Levinas, on the primacy of the Other’s right to exist, and on the edict: ‘Thou shalt not kill’. To Levinas, it is the Other’s difference that commands the response of responsibility: I am responsible to the other (he judges me) and I am responsible for him to the point where I must ‘feed him with

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bread from my own mouth’. Ultimately this responsibility means that the other cannot be left to die alone. Levinas often quotes a line from Dostoevsky: *We are all responsible for everyone else – but I am more responsible than all the others.*

Jacques Derrida is one of the most eminent commentators on Levinas. I wish to take part of Derrida’s gloss on Levinas in *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, and apply it selectively and suggestively to missionary discourse and praxis. The book is a farewell to Levinas, written soon after his death. It is also an extended meditation on what Levinas wrote about the French word *adieu* and an interpretation of Levinas’s ethics as the ethics and politics of hospitality and welcoming. I am interested particularly in the ‘welcome’ that Derrida sees as the first Levinasian gesture in the direction of the Other. Derrida in his delineation of a Levinasian encounter uses the French word *hôte* which denotes both host and guest. We are reminded, he says, *of the implacable law of hospitality; the hôte who receives (the host), the one who welcomes the invited or received hôte (the guest), the welcoming hôte who considers himself to be the owner of the place, is in truth received in his own home. He receives the hospitality that he offers in his own home; he receives it from his own home, which, in the end, does not belong to him. The hôte as host is a guest. The dwelling opens itself to itself, as a ‘land of asylum or refuge’. The one who welcomes is first welcomed in his own home. The one who invites is invited by the one whom he invites. The one who receives is received, receiving hospitality in what he takes to be his own home, or indeed his own land. Derrida then speaks of ‘this originary dispossession’, this withdrawal by which the ‘owner’ is expropriated from what is most his own.*

While Derrida does concede that it is difficult to convert Levinas’s hospitality, his ‘welcome’, to a political or cultural space (such as a mission site), the passage

39 It includes the eulogy for Levinas delivered by Derrida at the cemetery in Patin on 27 December 1995.
40 Ibid., pp. 41-42 (slightly amended for my purposes).
above is extraordinarily resonant in terms of the nuanced dynamics of the missionary-Aboriginal encounter.\textsuperscript{41} Using the language of Levinas provocatively, sometimes literally when he meant it metaphorically or abstractly, can we argue that the missionaries saw their coming to Central Australia as a form of ‘welcoming’ and hospitality, that they wanted the Aborigines to see their ‘face to face encounter’ as an act of generosity, as a ‘welcome’ because it stood sharply against the mean-spirited harshness of general settler/colonial discourse and practice? Were they attempting, awkwardly and often gracelessly, to acknowledge the primacy of the Aboriginal right to exist (‘Thou shalt not kill’) and live in their ‘household’ (whose ownership is ambiguous) or mission site as an ‘asylum or refuge’? But caught in the resonating ironies of the Derridean articulation of the \textit{hôte}, did not the best of the missionaries sense that they were, in a profound way, being invited by those they had invited, that their guest was in fact their host?

The Pitjantjatjara also have words to match these Levinasian and Derridean notions. The ‘face to face encounter’, for example, has a lovely equivalent in the Pitjantjatjara word \textit{tjunguringanyi} that has a primary meaning of coming together, to assemble, to meet, with a secondary, euphemistic sense of making love or sexual intercourse. We also note, as an accompanying motif, the Pitjantjatjara word \textit{walytja}, meaning ‘one of the family, someone you care for and who cares for you.’ Pitjantjatjara people, as other Aboriginal Australian peoples, have an all-inclusive or classificatory system of relationships, which gives permission to people to be addressed as though they were a member of one’s close family. Even unrelated outsiders may be considered \textit{walytja} if they behave appropriately and are accepted by the community.\textsuperscript{42} Rarely, but significantly, some European missionaries have been accepted as \textit{walytja} by Pitjantjatjara people.\textsuperscript{43} Such a bestowal may have been given for a myriad of reasons and motivations, most of which may be irretrievable or undecipherable. But the

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., pp. 20-21.
\textsuperscript{42} For these definitions and explanations, see Cliff Goddard, \textit{Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara to English Dictionary}, 2nd ed. (Alice Springs: Institute of Aboriginal Development, 1992).
\textsuperscript{43} Information provided to the author by Ron Lister of Ara Irititja Archives in 2003.
gesture of reciprocal hospitality and the desire to possess the (European) other as indigenous motives cannot be discounted.

**desire and possession**

I am also interested in the topographies of Mission Sites as metaphorically suggestive of missionary-Aboriginal dynamics. Thus the Ernabella Creek that ran between the European mission buildings and ‘the blacks’ camps’, as Love called them, suggests itself to me as a sort of controlling metaphor for the thesis: the creek (*karu*) as a liminal space where the encounter between Aborigine and missionary takes place. In the nature of metaphors, this merges both actual and symbolic, as the creek bed was the locale for the first school class at Ernabella, with a white schoolteacher wearing a suit facing his others: naked Aboriginal boys and girls squatting in the sand, the first exchange of knowledge, the first gestures, the first gaze, the first halting words of the Comaroffs’ ‘long conversation’. The *karu* serves as the boundary between buildings of the mission compound – the marks and signs of possession by these Europeans – and the Aboriginal camps; it is both a representation of the maintenance of a social distance between missionaries and the Aborigines, and a porous buffer through and around which to negotiate the meanings, gestures, glances, the structures of the ‘contact zone’. The spatial organization of the Hermannsburg mission site, the *Kraal* as Paul Carter calls it, was quite different to Ernabella: the social distance that existed on the Presbyterian site evaporated at Hermannsburg so that the Arrernte lived in African-style huts in close proximity

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44 I am indebted here to the imaginative uses that Greg Dening makes in his Pacific histories of ‘the beach’ as a similar (but different) metaphor for the ‘place’ where the encounters between Natives and Strangers take place: see Dening, *Islands and Beaches: discourse on a silent land: Marquesas 1774-1800* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980) and *Mr Bligh’s Bad Language: passion, power, and theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).


46 See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), especially the Introduction. Pratt’s phrase ‘contact zone’ is one useful way to conceptualise the colonial site, although I would query whether some of her emphases regarding ‘intractable conflict’ and ‘coercion’ are applicable to (some) mission zones. The notion, according to Pratt, treats the relations between colonizers and colonized in terms of ‘copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power’: again, on my readings of these mission ‘contact zones’, where I suggest that the subtle diffusion of power relations gave indigenous people more ‘power’ and ‘control’ than has been accepted by the historiography, I would modify Pratt’s statement.
to the white missionaries. An Ernabella missionary visiting the Lutheran mission in the 1950s commented that ‘the first thing you noticed was that the Aboriginal homes were right against the missionaries’ homes, and you looked out the window and you saw the Aborigines’ homes and they walked past the window. There was no getting away from them, they were on top of you all the time.’ Possession and proximity in the theatre of mission came in many guises.

Possession also came in the guise of need. The missionaries needed the Aborigines as much as ‘the natives’ needed them: for their survival, the missions had to be seen to be attracting a clientele so as to justify their role and draw funds from church and government. So statistics on indigenous numbers at church, at school, at camp flowed back constantly from mission sites to Boards in correspondence, newsletters and reports. Yet always there was the powerful and countervailing ability of the Aborigines on the Missions to come and go at will, despite the conditions of safe haven and rationing regimes as powerful attractions. At Hermannsburg, it could be argued that the eye of the missionary could reach everywhere due to the architectural topography of the mission, that the panoptical gaze was exercised, and where everyone lived in fairly close proximity. Yet even here, as Paul Albrecht has noted in relation to his argument that the Arrernte have retained much of their culture, ‘they only had to take a five minute walk and they were on their own and could do what they liked, without any interference from the missionaries. So they kept up all the customs and practices that they wanted to and gave up only those they wanted to give up.’

At Ernabella the boundary set up by the Creek not only ensured that appropriate social distance was maintained but also that the missionary gaze or eye stopped at the Creek. This foreshortening of the panoptical gaze allowed a certain freedom to the Aborigines to be Other, to retreat to the Camp across the karu. Children at Ernabella were taken from their school desks and sent after their parents if they had been left behind on a walkabout. In a sense they were almost

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47 Paul Carter, The Lie of the Land (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), for example, p. 23.
being forced to be Other, they were being dis-possessed, sent back across the boundary that separated them from their World, sent across the Creek in a radical inversion of centuries-old missiological policy that said: we have the child now, fixed in and by our gaze, let us possess them until they are truly ours and the Lord's. So there was possession and dis-possession on these sites, along with hospitality and hostility, on both sides. Complexity was built into the psychic and physical structures of the mission site, just as it was into Genovese's slave plantation and McGrath's cattle station.

clarifications

Some clarifications and acknowledgements: first, my major emphasis is on missionary discourses regarding Aboriginal people and the way the missionaries, through the discourses, represented Aboriginal people and culture, and the encounter with them, to themselves, to their Boards, and other parties of interest, and to indigenous people. But I am also interested in how the discourse was conducted on the ground, in the Landscape of Central Australia, with the Aborigines; that is to say, I am also interested in praxis. So I examine missionary discourse through the imagining and establishment of a mission, with its predecessor in the Centre as context, and through the words and acts of significant actors in the histories of these missions.

The scope of my study is not synoptic. I look only at the two missions and principally at Ernabella, although to understand the discourse of Duguid, and of Love in particular, it will be necessary first to move backwards in time from 1937, the date of Ernabella's establishment. My interpretation also is limited to these Missions and their missionaries. I do not intend or expect that any suggestions offered regarding these two missionary ventures and their actors to apply beyond them, although they may add some caution to attempts to dismiss missionaries quickly as vanguards of colonialism and imperialism, wielders of inordinate power or cunning constructors of hegemony.

I acknowledge that a focus on white European missionaries may allow a vision of indigenous people as ephemeral actors, flitting briefly across the white
missionary stage, playing bit parts, not belonging. Conversely, from such a perspective, the missionaries, in their Mission Station, may be fixed as the centre of their particular universe, as the major actors, as belonging. It takes a effort of imagination to recall that the indigenes were in their land, their country, it was they who belonged, and in most cases it was the missionaries who were ephemeral, alien, and who eventually left the mission site to ‘go home to their own people’. By concentrating on the missionaries, I even face the danger of making the Aborigines invisible, erasing them from my (hi)story. I hope that my indirect delineation of the impact of Aboriginal people on the missionaries, which I see as profound, unstabilizing, subtle, nuanced, impassioned, and poignant, may be sufficient to deflect this danger.

The focus on missionaries, and especially on Duguid, Love, Albrecht, and Flynn, four dead, white, European males, also raises questions of gender and power, and will tend inevitably to minimize the significance of other actors in these colonial encounters, such as their wives (all had wives intimately involved in their enterprises); as well as other missionaries, and colleagues, members of Boards of Missions, and administrators. There are also related problems with writing about small universes or bounded landscapes, such as the mission station. As the South African historian David Bunn suggests, there is a danger in analyzing a closed system: one can be drawn into the narrow universe of the mission enclave and not see or account for external elements (perhaps of coercive power) which may be forceful, if often subtle, influences on what happens inside the mission compound.

The focus on the missionary discourse is, then, from a number of perspectives, problematic. It is especially so on the question of agency. My (necessarily limited) perspective may give an impression that all the thinking, the discourse

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50 Deborah Bird Rose gives the stark example of the Jesuits who began their mission on the Daly River in high ethnocentric hopes and yet it all ended suddenly, in tears and abandonment, with the mission investment in stock and buildings (to which the indigenes had contributed their labour) sold off to the highest bidder: Rose, "Signs of life", 215-237. We should note here, too, that a number of mission sites, including Ernabella and Hermannsburg, have been ‘given back’, under land rights legislation, to the original custodians of the sites.

51 See n. 2 above.

about the Other, in fact was happening on one side only, thus replicating to some extent the hegemonic discourses of knowledge and power which the West brought to the encounter between colonizer and indigene. My use of the postcolonial and philosophical concept of the Other in a work of history is, also, not without its problems, as it is with any collectivist, 'historically voided' abstraction. In a work that deals with one side of a particular colonial encounter (even the word 'side' tends to elide differences and fractures within each side), the use of some (ultimately inadequate) abstraction, whether 'Aborigines', 'indigenous Australians', 'Other', even 'Europeans', is unavoidable. In the end, it is a matter of judgement whether more is gained than is lost from the use of a particular abstraction. One has to acknowledge that all perspectives and all approaches are limited and circumscribed. The emphasis in this thesis on the missionary discourse and praxis may well have the danger of understating Aboriginal agency, individuality and difference, but one hopes this is at least partly counter-balanced by the recognition that the narrative of the missions in this period in the Centre was not a monolithic process directed and formulated only by European discourses and actions. In any case, in regard to the above difficulties, I acknowledge them at least, even if I cannot always account for them or resolve them.

sources

First, some general notes on sources for this essay, then some specifics. It was Ann Laura Stoler who observed that anthropologists and ethnographers have often treated colonizers and their communities as 'unproblematic' and their political agendas as 'self-evident' yet if these characterizations were applied to the colonized, 'our ethnographic sensibilities would be disturbed'. Missionaries have similarly been treated historiographically in homogenizing, totalizing terms,

53 See Anne McClintock, "The angel of progress: pitfalls of the term 'postcolonialism'", Colonial Discourse, Postcolonial Theory, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 252-266, where McClintock warns that 'historically voided categories' such as 'the Other', 'the subject', 'the postcolonial' and other similar abstractions run the risk of 'telescoping crucial geopolitical distinctions into invisibility' (p. 255). It is a fair warning. The Aboriginal Other may differ in important historical and political aspects from the Asiatic or Oriental Other of Said, although this may be more of a problem here if we were relying more on the orthodox postcolonial constructions of the other. As it is, the Levinasian construction originates, at least, on a more ethical and universal plane while it is conceded that a problematic arises in its application to geopolitical realities.

54 Stoler, "Rethinking colonial categories", p. 136.
without a more subtle and nuanced approach that is alive to their complexities and the differences between their discourse and that of other colonial actors, and the somewhat fractured nature of their own discourse. Missionaries often possessed intimate knowledge of indigenous customs and ceremonies, and linguistic competences based often on many years of living with native people. For these reasons alone, missionary writing is worth reading. But whether a mission newsletter, a propaganda tract, a serious book, or correspondence unintended for publication with Boards or colleagues, the material may be useful in delineating missionary discourse. There are always limitations of the genre. Much missionary primary literature is propagandist in nature and singularly positive about missionary achievements. The indigenous voice is usually absent. Yet even the 'simplest' or most strident missionary’s journal, diary, letter may be a useful source of discursive inflections, ambivalences, and information about the Other, as well as revelatory of the writer. As W. van Wyk Smith has argued, a critique of the textual record of Europe’s encounter with indigenes must yield ‘radically different readings’ as its ‘disarticulations’ reach back into the colonial texts of the past: ‘Any examination of a range of primary [colonialist] texts will reveal varying distances between speaking voice and object, widely different degrees of percipience and empathy, significant variations in willingness to shed preconceptions and engage with the unfamiliar, and spectacularly different demonstrations of the ability to do so.’55 While it is inevitable that European notions and stereotypes will pervade all Western representations, missionary sources are now increasingly seen by most historians and ethnographers working in indigenous studies as providing a potentially rich vein for understanding the encounter between black and white.56

My most important primary sources were the correspondences between missionaries and Board, particularly during the administrations of JRB Love and

56 Nicholas Thomas notes that anthropologists have often refused to draw on missionary sources as these were labeled by traditional anthropology as paradigms of ‘biased’ unprofessional description. He makes the point that both ‘professional’ ethnographic accounts as well as non-ethnography such as missionaries’ correspondence, should be scrutinized and used as a means ‘to understanding the metropolitan intrusions which make observation and description possible’: Thomas, Out of Time. p. 14.
FW Albrecht respectively.\textsuperscript{57} The collection of Presbyterian Church records at the Mitchell Library in Sydney are a rich source of correspondences between Love (and other missionaries at Ernabella) and his Board, while the Lutheran Archives in Adelaide and the Burns-Albrecht Collection in the South Australian Museum are repositories of Albrecht’s communications to and from his Board as well as comprehensive sources for Albrecht’s prolific output in letters, articles, newsletters, and booklets. The JRB Love Papers, held at the Mortlock Library in the State Library of South Australia, are a voluminous collection of Love’s letters, journals, diaries, articles, and notes written over a lifetime and give the reader insights into the thinking of this interesting and scholarly missionary, as do his published output, including his 1936 book, \textit{Stone-Age Bushmen of To-day}. The Blue Books recording the official life of the South Australian Presbyterian Church history are also in the Mortlock Library, along with other Papers of the Church, including AIM Papers. The State Records Office in Adelaide among other things houses the records of the dealings of the Aboriginal Protection Board (APB) with missions in South Australia and is a treasure trove of information and documentation. The large set of Duguid Papers held in the National Library is supplemented by Duguid material in the South Australian Museum, as well as his published output. The John Flynn Papers at the National Library are important sources for Flynn, as are his (at least) four biographies. The Ara Iritijja Archives in Adelaide now hold considerable material, documentary, oral and photographic, on the early history of Ernabella, including the Ernabella

\textsuperscript{57} Their correspondences (in Love’s case) with Rev HC Matthew of the Presbyterian Board of Missions, and with the Reverend J Reidel of the Finke River Mission Board in Albrecht’s case, are invaluable sources: because of their volume and their semi-confidential nature – they were not public letters, but letters between colleagues on the (unwritten) understanding that they were essentially private and confidential communications, often in relation to sensitive material concerning other colleagues, other churches, government agents and agencies, and, not least, where attitudes towards Aborigines, particularly Aborigines and their encounter with Europeans and the European culture, could be aired and discussed without prejudice, as it were. These were the days of letters that took weeks, sometimes (due to floods, truck breakdowns) months to get through; few telephones; and telegrams usually used only in relative emergencies. For Superintendents of mission stations, their principal line of communication was with their Board, or, specifically with the Secretary of the Board. It was a matter of time and space. Time was often of the essence here, yet in most cases, to gain approval for a course of action, approval was needed from the Board. All superintendents inevitably found this difficult and frustrating. The space, the mission station, was their responsibility, they were the people on site and yet permission was needed from men (only men on these Boards) who had little or no experience of mission station life. Frustration was built into the structures of frontier mission station administration.
Superintendent's Logbook, a significant (and daily) source for JRB Love's views on superintending the new Mission and its (occasionally willful and intractable) inhabitants, both indigenous and white!

**schema**

The basic scheme of the thesis is as follows: after this Introduction, chapter one is a foundational impression of the first mission established in Central Australia, Hermannsburg, with its superintendent FW Albrecht, from 1926 to the 1940s, to provide some context and comparison for the later study of Ernabella and its missionary discourse. Chapters two and three examine the thinking about Aborigines of JRB Love prior to the establishment of Ernabella mission, to which he was appointed in 1941 after an already distinguished missionary career in north Queensland and Western Australia. Chapters four, five and six explore the humanitarian and activist discourse of Charles Duguid as reflected in the narrative of the struggle within the Presbyterian Church, and particularly Duguid's struggle with John Flynn and the AIM, over money and resources for the establishment of a mission to the Aborigines. The remaining five chapters cover the Love regime at Ernabella, which ended in 1946. The first two of these, chapters seven and eight, concentrate on his early years on the mission site, including his preliminary and preparatory visits to the area in 1937, immediately prior to its establishment, introduce some significant issues, and end in a 'gestural moment' in 1942, when Love and Albrecht meet at Ernabella. Chapters nine, ten and eleven, covering the last four years of Love's administration, are more thematic, examining discursive issues of power and control in relation to indigenous bodies, including 'half-caste' bodies, and discipline and surveillance; biomedical, rationing and feeding issues, and the problem of 'work'; and, lastly, tensions and fractures in missionary discourses of translation and language. A Conclusion follows.