Holy Holy Holy

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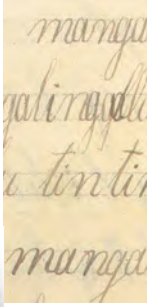

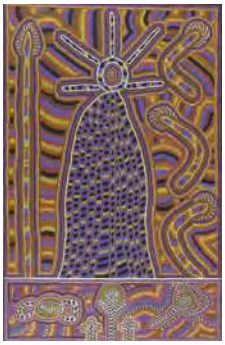

Ian W Abdulla

James Cochran

Nici Cumpston

Julie Dowling

Jarinyanu David Downs

Irene Mbitjana Entata

Christine McCormack

Tjangika Wukula

(Linda Syddick) Napaltjarri

Trevor Nickolls

Michael Riley

Darren Siwes

Alan Tucker

Harry J Wedge

Curator: Vivonne Thwaites

13 contemporary artists explore the interaction between Christianity and Aboriginal culture

Flinders University City Gallery
State Library of South Australia
North Terrace, Adelaide

20 February to 18 April 2004

Opening hours
Mon–Fri 11–4pm Sat–Sun 1–4pm

Extended hours during
Adelaide Bank 2004 Festival of Arts
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Holy Holy Holy

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Julie Dowling is represented by Artplace Gallery, Perth; Trevor Nickolls is represented by Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne; Harry J Wedge and Michael Riley are represented by Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-op, Sydney; Linda Syddick Napaltjarri is represented by Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs; Darren Siwes and Ian W Abdulla are represented by Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide; Irene Entata is represented by Hermannsburg Aboriginal Potters Corporation, Alice Springs; and Christine McCormack is represented by CUBE Contemporary Art, Adelaide.

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Gail Greenwood, Director
Allison Russell, Program Manager
Maggie Fletcher, Collection Manager

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Editor's note: Where spelling has changed we have decided in most cases to embrace current usage.

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Front cover images

Part of Mt Bayley Range near Beltana, South Australia, courtesy Nepabunna Community Council

This Range is the subject of the Toa *Marukutumaninani,* red ochre mines are situated there and Aboriginal people travelled from east of Lake Eyre to fetch ochre from this site.

Killalpaninna mission site graves

Photos by Vivonne Thwaites

Back cover images

Aboriginal men and women outside the second Killalpaninna Church circa 1910

Map overlay of *Pantuni* Toa by Mary Eagle, 2003

Flinders University, through the Flinders University Art Museum, is proud to again be associated with the Adelaide Bank 2004 Festival of Arts. Each Adelaide Festival presents us with a unique opportunity to show a challenging exhibition which enters new territory and encourages debate about contemporary issues within the community.

foreword

Holy Holy Holy continues this tradition. Working with the theme of the 2004 Festival 'to explore the influence of tradition on contemporary arts practice' *Holy Holy Holy* explores contemporary responses to the enduring influence of Christianity on Aboriginal people through an exhibition of contemporary visual art.

Curator Vivonne Thwaites explores this history and presents the work of a group of highly regarded Indigenous and non-Indigenous contemporary visual artists whose work engages with issues of contemporary spiritual expression.

Holy Holy Holy also celebrates our first Festival exhibit-ion at the new location of Flinders University City Gallery at the State Library of South Australia. The relocation of the City Gallery and our association with the State Library of South Australia has enabled us to attempt more ambitious projects and to engage with a wider audience. It has also facilitated opportunities for us to work with other organis-ations in the vicinity and I acknowledge the generous support received for this project from the South Australian Museum and the Art Gallery of South Australia.

By making these links and drawing on these extensive collections, as well as other historical collections such as the Lutheran Archives and the collections held within Flinders University, we have been able to extend the scope of the exhibition and to position new works by contemporary visual artists within an historical context. The inclusion of archival and social history material assists the exhibition to tell a story and brings forth memories that may touch each of us in a personal way.

This history may sometimes be disturbing and confronting, however, it is presented with sensitivity and with respect for different belief systems.

Flinders University values the special role it plays in the production of cultural knowledge as such activity helps us gain a greater understanding of ourselves and thereby come to terms with events in the past which give meaning to the present.

Holy Holy Holy demonstrates the extraordinary depth of the collections held in South Australia as the historical focus explores the work of the missions including the communities at Ernabella and Hermannsburg. Flinders University Art Museum's holdings of Indigenous Australian art are widely acclaimed and this exhibition offers a rare opportunity to show the diversity of that collection. Included are cherished objects from the mission communities and material from our significant Hermannsburg collection.

But above all, an exhibition such as *Holy Holy Holy* gives a voice to the vision and dedication of its curator and we acknowledge and thank most sincerely Vivonne Thwaites who has worked tirelessly on this exhibition for several years. Her enthusiasm and commitment to the project have been inspirational.

We acknowledge the generosity of each of the artists, the scholarly contribution of the writers, and the public and private collectors who have kindly lent their valued artworks and objects.

Generous support has been received for the project from many sources. In particular we acknowledge the Adelaide Bank 2004 Festival of Arts; the Commonwealth Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body; the Government of South Australia through Arts SA; the Gordon Darling Foundation; Legend Press; the Special Collections Library at Flinders University and the Adelaide Theological Library, Adelaide College of Divinity. We also thank the Lutheran Church for providing access to the Lohe Memorial Library and the Lutheran Archives.

This exhibition is supported by Visions of Australia, a Commonwealth Government Program which supports touring exhibitions by providing funding assistance for the development and touring of cultural material across Australia. And finally, we thank Flinders University for its ongoing support and contribution to the cultural life of South Australia.

Gail Greenwood
Director
Flinders University Art Museum

introduction

The phrase 'Holy, Holy, Holy' is etched into the collective psyche of most Australians who grew up in the post-war period. It is part of the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving, one of the central prayers of Christian worship, and conjures up memories of playground assemblies around the flag, drowsy mornings at Sunday school or Christmas and Easter visits to church. But how many remember the rest of the prayer, especially the stanza 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'?

The first sustained contact many Indigenous people had with white society was with missionaries, men 'who came in the name of the Lord'. In South Australia, from 1839, crusading European missionaries such as Teichelmann, Schürmann, Meyer, Ernst, Vogelsang and Flierl ventured into the 'wilderness' to convert Aboriginal people from what they regarded as their heathen state to the way of the Lord. In the process they immersed themselves in the lang-uages, customs and beliefs of Aboriginal people.

In retrospect, we now understand such activities as part of the colonising process that dispossessed Aboriginal people of first their land, and then their social structures, their culture and their traditional way of life. In the 20th century, missions were also complicit in the prevailing government policies of assimilation, that saw the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their parents–the stolen generation. So it is not surprising to find Christianity cast in this light in much recent Aboriginal art, such as the powerful work of Michael Riley.

But in many cases missionaries had a genuine feeling of care for Aboriginal communities, at a time when there was little consideration for them in broader white society. Historically, missions also provided a refuge as tribal lands were claimed for the pastoral industry or for mining, not to mention offering health care, educational opportunities, jobs and so on. The missionaries produced vocabularies, grammars, ethnographic descriptions and religious texts as a result of their contact with Aboriginal people in the 19th century. Indeed, had it not been for missionaries our knowledge of traditional Aboriginal cultures would be significantly less.

It should also be remembered that many Aboriginal people converted willingly to Christianity. Many still hold fast to Christian beliefs, and an increasing number are being ordained as pastors. Still others have found that a belief in Christianity is not inconsistent with the continued practice of their traditional beliefs, as can be seen in the remarkable paintings of Linda Syddick Napaltjarri. While this was anathema to early missionaries, it has been a means by which later missionaries gradually (and sometimes painfully) came to realise the uniqueness and value of traditional Aboriginal spirituality and culture.

Holy, Holy, Holy explores the responses of a selection of contemporary artists–both Indigenous and non-Indigenous–to the history of interaction between Christianity and Aboriginal culture. It comprises an exhibition of artworks, many commissioned, set against a range of material objects drawn from museums and archives, and including photographs, documents, books and key items from the history of mission life.

The second part of *Holy, Holy, Holy* is a comprehensive catalogue featuring commissioned essays by leading scholars in the field, including Rob Amery, Mary Eagle, Bill Edwards, Varga Hosseini and Marcia Langton. Christine Nicholls provides interview text with various artists. Reproduced in the catalogue is a representative sample of the contemporary artworks, and many historical artworks, objects and photographs not included in the exhibition.

Images from left to right

Looking north from Killalpaninna Mission site 2002

Ludwig Becker 1808–1861
Border of the Mud-Desert near Desolation Camp 1861
watercolour
14.0 x 22.8 cm
La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria

He sent, too, the specimen of a corroboree song and tune which a Murray black had dictated in English, and he also jotted down the words and music of a love song...

Ludwig Becker, Artist and Naturalist with the Burke and Wills Expedition, edited and introduced by Marjorie Tipping, Melbourne University Press on behalf of the Library Council of Victoria, 1979, p. 25.

Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra Warlpiri/Luritja born 1932
Tucker Story circa 1972
synthetic polymer on board
63.5 x 46 cm
Private collection

Long Jack Phillipus Tjakamarra was very tall—at least 188cm. Although strongly loyal to his Christian upbringing, he had a formidable tribal knowledge. He was a brilliant hunter and a good family man with five children. I first met Long Jack when he was one of the school yardmen (with Bill Stockman) responsible for the school murals.

Geoffrey Bardon 1999 *Papunya Tula: Art of the Western Desert,* JB Books, Marleston, SA, p. 61. First published by Penguin in 1991.

As is appropriate for a South Australian project, the historical focus of *Holy, Holy, Holy* is local–the missionaries Schürmann and Teichelmann, and the missions at Killalpaninna (est 1866), Hermannsburg (est 1877) and Ernabella (est 1939). The first two in particular were significant as points of early intersection of the Christian and Indigenous traditions– between missionaries of the Lutheran faith and the Diyari and Arrernte peoples.

Hermannsburg also had a pivotal role in the development of Aboriginal self-expression, as it was here in the 1930s that Albert Namatjira learnt to paint in watercolours. His success led to the formation of the Hermannsburg school–the first popular Aboriginal art movement and, until the birth of Western Desert dot painting at Papunya in 1971, the most successful. This exhibition highlights early works by Namatjira and other artists showing the synthesis of Lutheranism and Aboriginal belief systems.

By using such historical works from museum and social history collections, and through the essays in the catalogue, *Holy, Holy, Holy* creates a frame through which to view the contemporary works. This is the exhibition′s primary aim –to understand the range of responses Aboriginal people have had to their experiences of Christianity, whether they have been historical or personal.

Both of the senior Indigenous artists in the exhibition grew up in a traditional way in their own country. Jarinyanu David Downs was already a lawman at the time of his conversion to Baptist-style Christianity in his forties. Thereafter he denounced the contemporary practice of traditional law, while continuing to paint the epic events or story-cycles still celebrated in ceremonies–but with the inclusion of Biblical figures. He felt that as God was the originating power behind Genesis–the creation of everything–so it was perfectly acceptable to reverence His powers in whatever forms they were locally manifested.

Tjangika Wukula (Linda Syddick) Napaltjarri's people, the Pintupi from Lake Mackay in WA, were among the last to leave their homeland. Her painting *Leaving home* 1996, is a poignant expression of this modern day *Exodus to the promised land*. Instead of a land of milk and honey what they found was billy can tea, refined white flour and Christianity. But later Syddick became an avowed Christian, and her art incorporates key Biblical figures and events into her traditional cultural practice. This spiritual inclus-iveness even extends to fictional creations such as ET, the Extra Terrestrial, whom she sees as embodying another form of God.

For younger artists, Christianity has often been an enduring part of life. Usually mission-raised, they engaged with Christianity of their own accord and often still practice it. Ian Abdulla for instance shows us a world in which black preachers preach to black parishioners, in tents on the edge of country towns. But his experience of Christianity also includes personal encounters with angels and spirits, in an intriguing combination of Christianity and Indigenous spirituality. Like Abdulla, Harry J Wedge is often autobiographical and recalls in his art a childhood of unwilling trips to Sunday school and church. But Wedge is also a strident critic of all ideologies, religion included, that encourage people to accept myths unquestioningly and stop thinking for themselves.

Irene Mbitjana Entata lives at Hermannsburg, and grew up with the paintings of Namatjira, Otto Pareroultja and Benjamin Landara. Like her fellow potters, her work records local plants and animals, sculpted in clay on the lids of pots which are then painted with the landscape in which they are found. *In Mission Days/Baptism* 2002 she records on the lid a baptism at the old white painted church at Hermannsburg, with the congregation surrounding the church painted on the pot itself. It is a lovely and endearing image of a community for which the church is a central place.

Images from left to right

Paddy Fordham Wainburranga Rembarrnga, born circa 1932
Missionaries coming to the artist's community circa 1994
Katherine, Northern Territory
natural pigments on bark, 210 x 85 cm
Art Gallery of South Australia, 971P8
Gift of the Friends of the Art Gallery of South Australia 1996
Photo Art Gallery of South Australia

The contemporary Rembarrnga artist Paddy Fordham Wainburranga is renowned for his reflective historical paintings done in the expressive figurative style of south-central Arnhem Land.

...Aboriginal art thus provides a record of early—and later—contact with outsiders. We might imagine it as a passive reflection on an unfolding drama that was beyond their control and was to have a devastating effect on their lives. There may even have been an element of pleasure, an aesth-etic challenge, in recording these new forms. But this may be adopting too European a view on art as representation. Painting was also a means of bringing objects under control, of incorporating them within Aboriginal ways of understanding the world and making them part of an Aboriginal universe.

...Ironically, the additive nature of Aboriginal culture parallels the additive nature of European art: both worlds are accepting of other ideas as long as they fit in with their scheme of things.

Howard Morphy 1998 *Aboriginal Art,* Phaidon Press, London, pp 61-64.

Mission site finds, Killalpaninna, Kopperamanna 2002

Younger Indigenous artists, living in cities and trained at art schools, still have profound responses to Christianity–whether in their own lives or the history of their people. Julie Dowling′s experience of religion was through her education at a convent school. As the text on one painting repeats like a litany, she and her sister were 'female, twins, poor, Catholic, illegitimate, Aboriginal'. Her work features a sophisticated reworking of Renaissance traditions, including those of religious art, applied to the experiences of her extended family.

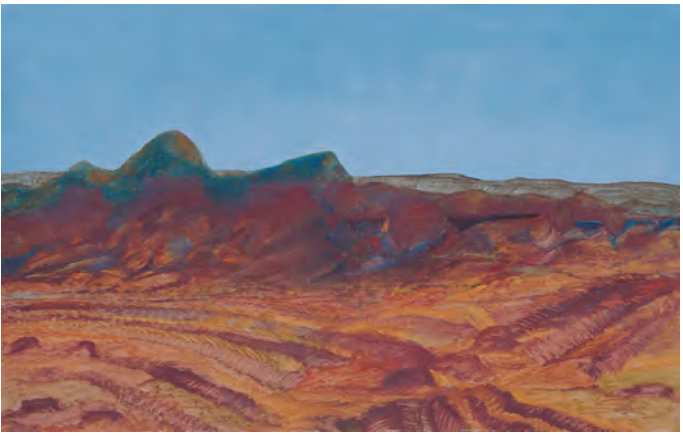
Trevor Nickolls grew up in the sixties, and his art draws on the ideas and images of the counterculture, rather than on specific personal experiences. *Mandala's day* 1976 makes the intriguing connection between the use of concentric circles in Aboriginal art, and Carl Jung′s theory that the mandala is the central symbol of inclusive spirit-uality in all human art. The much less utopian *Postcard from the devil 2000* explores the opposite of godliness–evil–and its enduring attraction to human beings who, since the Fall, must accommodate both good and evil in their souls.

Photographers have been in the vanguard of recent Aboriginal art. Michael Riley's series *Flyblown* 1998 and *Cloud* 2000 explore in a more general way the role of religion in the colonial process. Each work is calm and deeply considered, a complex set of ideas distilled to a single image that carries a powerful symbolic content. Darren Siwes takes a more personal approach, super-imposing his own standing figure over night images of the institutions of colonial power in Adelaide–a Lutheran church, the Proclamation Tree, even the Adelaide Festival Centre, built on a Kaurna sacred site. While the dark suit he wears declares him a contemporary urban Aboriginal who draws strength from his own Christianity, it is the calm insistence of these images that we do not forget, which is their real strength.

Nici Cumpston's work draws on her upbringing in country Victoria. Although Christianity meant little to her personally, the old wooden churches that dotted the landscape were a fixture. In *Abandoned* 2003 she reflects on the failure of the church in general to be meaningful in her life. For her, the scarred old trees that also dot the landscape hold greater spiritual power, being more permanently connected to her land and culture.

The three non-Indigenous artists in *Holy, Holy, Holy* bring a necessarily different perspective, but each begins from a willingness to acknowledge a history for which they must share some responsibility. For over ten years Alan Tucker has sifted through primary sources such as 19th century newspapers, reports and letters to document the early contact of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. Among other things, his ongoing act of collective expiation reminds us that all the institutions of colonial government, even the church, were responsible for the systematic dispossession of Aboriginal people.

Christine McCormack's art charts a different kind of imperialism, a cultural one in which tokens of Aboriginality were reduced to kitsch trinkets for the amusement of a non-Indigenous audience. These objects, mostly collected from junk shops, are arranged and painted in complex tableaux that tease out the underlying power relationships in the colonising process. They make the additional point that such power relationships also operated in the field of popular culture, where they served to normalise and thus excuse such behaviour.



In his art, James Cochran has tried to make a place for religion in the contemporary world. His depiction of Jesus as just another haunted homeless person in Hindley Street, suggests that should the Messiah come again he would be most at home among those with nothing. More recently Cochran spent time with a group of Aboriginal people in Adelaide's parklands, getting to know them and eventually painting them in various ecstatic states. These are not easy works to categorise, but they have an undeniable power that suggests a genuine connection between artist and subject.

As this exhibition demonstrates, the role of the church and Christianity in Aboriginal history remains an enduring subject for Aboriginal artists. For some, those 'who came in the name of the Lord' are far from blessed–they will forever be symbolic of the white invaders. The fact that an institution charged with spiritual welfare and pastoral care should be an agent of dispossession is a bitter irony that will never be erased. Others find inexcusable the church's refusal to acknowledge or understand the validity of Aboriginal belief systems–an attitude very much at odds with the inclusiveness of traditional Aboriginal societies when faced with their own first contact with white colonists. But other artists, demonstrating this same inclusiveness, have accommodated Christianity into their own personal spirituality in an act of personal reconciliation. Each of these responses is different, and each is equally valid. There is no final word, and there never can be.

Vivonne Thwaites

Images from left to right

Killalpaninna mission site finds 2002

Gravesite, Killalpaninna 2002

Sidney Nolan 1917-1992
Musgrave Ranges 1949
oil and enamel paint on composition board
76.8 x 121.7 cm
bequest of Allan R. Henderson 1956
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Many Western art images of Australian landscape come out of an awe of the overwhelming power of nature… That the Spirit Beings are still in the land, there is no doubt.

Djon Mundine 1996 in *Spirit + Place: Art in Australia* 1861-1996, exhibition catalogue, curators Nick Waterlow OAM and Ross Mellick, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, pp. 47–48.

'Already I was finding it impossible to escape the psychological impact of the myths.' He [Strehlow] writes in 1957, 23 years after the event... 'Rabuntja, Ulamba, Eritjakawata, Ulaterka'—he listed them so in his diary, and remarked: 'I saw them all today with eyes drunk with delight and wonder.' In 'Land of Altjira' he says more. 'But I was not merely filled with youthful wonder: I was feeling proud of these jagged bluffs and wild mountains, because they were situated in my own Western Aranda territory. *I felt they belonged to me, as I had come to belong to them.'*

Barry Hill 2002 *Broken Song: T.G.H. Strehlow and Aboriginal possession,* Knopf, Milson's Point, NSW, pp. 554–555.

In paintings and prose, Sidney and Cynthia Nolan recognised both the Indigenous and European elements of Australian landscape, and thereby helped encourage and promote a greater understanding of Australia to audiences, both in Australia and abroad.

Geoffrey Smith 2003 *Sidney Nolan: Desert and Drought,* National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 25.

Holy Holy Holy is dedicated to Manasse Armstrong who was an Arrernte man living at Hermannsburg from the 1930s to the 1950s.

We tried to become like white men, but found we couldn't. Our law was too strong.

Manasse Armstrong was a traditional custodian of Jay Creek and head stockman, drover, tanner, leatherworker, storekeeper, rug-maker and road engineer. In 1941 he was responsible for surveying and constructing a 140km road that crossed the McDonnell Ranges to Haasts Bluff. In conversation with Barry Hill in 1997, Peter Latz, long-term manager at Hermannsburg, described Armstrong as 'the most capable worker at Hermannsburg'.[1]

In the 1930s the missionaries encouraged the Hermannsburg people to tan the hides of kangaroos, and later to sew them into rugs that could be sold as a cash commodity. At the time Armstrong was chosen to work as an apprentice with former missionary RM Williams at his boot-making factory in Prospect, where he learnt to make blucher (workman's) boots. When Pastor Albrecht visited the factory to check on Armstrong's progress, Williams told him bluntly: 'You have to take your man away now.' Albrecht asked: 'What has he done wrong?' to which Williams replied: 'Nothing wrong. But he is too clever for me. If I employ him any longer, I shall have to pay him wages, and I can't do this.'[2]

Included in *Holy Holy Holy* is a rug that originally belonged to Pastor Albrecht now part of the Flinders University Art Museum Collection. It is made from kangaroo skins that Armstrong tanned which were sewn together by Rosa Raggett.

Armstrong is one of the few documented Aboriginal figures whose life reveals some of the dilemmas raised when missionaries attempted religious conversion, followed by language translation, amongst Aboriginal people. He was highly regarded by Albrecht and other mission workers and had an extensive level of contact with white society. But he was also acutely aware of his traditional culture and opposed developments that might further erode it.

In particular he opposed TGH Strehlow's combining of different Aboriginal languages in translating the liturgy into Arrernte. He was adamant about the detrimental effect of the reordering of some of the words in the hymns and fought against the use of language in the newly translated New Testament, *Testamenta Ljatinja: Ankatja Arandauna Knatiwumala,* which was completed in 1949 and published in 1956. The first full translation of the New Testament into an Aboriginal language, Diyari, in 1895 was by Pastor Johann Reuther and Pastor Carl Strehlow, the father of TGH Strehlow. Beginning in 1925 Carl Strehlow published translations into Arrernte of the Gospels and many hymns.

In the 1950s there were two groups at the mission: '...the Christian converts [who] would not object to any usage of their old language as opposed to those closer to their traditional life...who had a sacred interest in their own tongue. Among the former was of course [the evangelist] Moses, who nonetheless saw how hard it was to go all the way with the white teachings and the policy of assimilation.

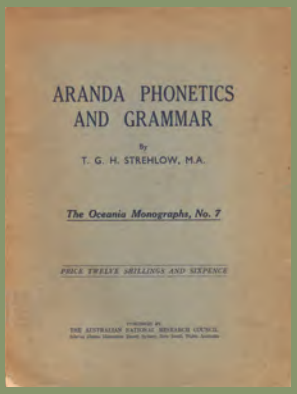
Images from left to right

Manasse Armstrong on horseback
Photo courtesy Lutheran Archives, Adelaide

The tannery at Hermannsburg
Cyril Motna on the right, Manasse Armstrong second from left
South Australian Museum Archives, Wurst Collection

Pastor Albrecht's rug circa 1940s
Tanned kangaroo hide squares with fur, sewn onto woollen blanket
sewn skins: 160 x 113 cm, blanket: 168 x 136 cm
Gift of Hélène and Dudley Burns 1996 (from the collection of the late Reverend and Mrs FW Albrecht)
Flinders University Art Museum 3099

Ellery Creek circa 1940s, Mr Scholz, Ezekial and Mrs Scholtz, kangaroo skins on tree
South Australian Museum Archives



'We tried to become like white men, but found we couldn't. Our law was too strong.' By contrast, men like Reuben and Lukas wanted to uphold the traditional ways even as they had to adapt them to changing conditions. Somewhere in the middle of these groups was Manasse Armstrong who believed that Strehlow was destroying the traditional culture.'[3]

Armstrong and others made a protest by refusing to sing the hymns in church but some elderly men readily accepted the new forms of language use. For many of them an acceptance of Christianity came when they first saw water gush from the pipeline to Hermannsburg. The pipeline linking Hermannsburg to Koperilya Springs was built in 1936 partly with funds raised by an art exhibition organised by Una and Violet Teague, and is recorded in a pokerwork boomerang made by Albert Namatjira. The significance of ritual and spiritual beliefs in bringing rain was eroded. If water was now available at the turn of a tap, what role remained for the senior men and their traditional culture?

Vivonne Thwaites

[1] Barry Hill 2003 *Broken Song: TGH Strehlow and Aboriginal possession,* Vintage, Milson's Point, p. 539.

[2] M Lohe, FW Albrecht, LH Leske 1977 *Hermannsburg: A Vision and a Mission,* Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, p. 69.

[3] Hill, *op.cit.*, p. 541.

Images from left to right

Albert Namatjira Western Arrernte 1902–1959
Palm Valley 1940s
watercolour
37 x 54.2 cm
Art Gallery of New South Wales 93.1986
photograph Ray Woodbury for AGNSW

The cave is in a tight little gully running south from the mission towards the back of Mt Hermannsburg. It is hard to see from the creek bed of huge boulders and shadowy saplings. Nearby is a beautiful oval pool. The pool is the water into which the two boys, the mythic twins of Ntaria, dived into on their journey from Palm Valley to Hermannsburg. The whole area is totemically charged, and to approach without permission or in the wrong way was to violate the sacred pool and trespass upon the approach to a major storehouse of *tjurunga*. But that is what Pastor Albrecht decided to do in the years of Christ militant.

Barry Hill 2002 *Broken Song: TGH Strehlow and Aboriginal possession,* Knopf, Milson's Point, NSW, p. 135.

He (Namatjira) held the status of *kutungula* (or manager) for this country, which he inherited from his mother, Ljukutja (or Emilie as she was known after Christmas 1905). Namatjira's mother belonged to clan country around what is now known as Palm Valley… A complex network of relationships to sacred sites within Palm Valley and its wider region connected many of the Hermannsburg artists, and still connects their descendants today.

Alison French 2002 *Seeing the Centre: The art of Albert Namatjira* National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, p. 107.

TGH Strehlow 1944 *Aranda Phonetics and Grammar*
Australian National Research Council, Sydney

essays

bill edwards

marcia langton

rob amery

mary eagle

varga hosseini

Holy Holy Holy

aboriginal missions: a brief overview

bill edwards

From the early-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century much of the responsibility for the care, protection and training of Aboriginal people in Australia was left to church missions.[1] In this period of land exploration and acquisition, agricultural and pastoral development, mineral prospecting and gold rushes, most Australians paid scant regard to the rights and needs of the Indigenous, but displaced inhabitants, of the continent.

The few official provisions for the preservation of these rights were soon swept aside in the rush of colonial develop-ment. It was Christians in the main whose consciences were pricked by what they saw happening to Aborigines and who resolved to make some efforts to ameliorate these conditions. Colonial authorities were largely content to leave church missions to struggle on with little aid.

During this period missions were established in many regions of Australia by major Christian denominations, smaller sectarian groups and interdenominational societies. Many have survived as major centres of Aboriginal comm-unity life. While these endeavours had their occasional critics, their efforts were generally praised. However Aboriginal missions lacked the exotic interest or heroic figures of overseas missions. More recently Aboriginal missions have come under criticism from several quarters: from anthropologists because of mission interference with traditional cultures and values; from politicians and public servants for their interference in social programs, from historians for their autocratic control of Aboriginal lives; from Aboriginal people who accuse them of destroying their cultural heritage; and from some church members and organisations who are seeking to come to terms with issues such as the removal of children from families.[2]

The establishment of Aboriginal missions in Australia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was part of a missionary movement which developed at the same time as the colonial settlement of Australia. For example, the following missionary societies were established in Europe

during this period: the Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel (1792), London Missionary Society (1795), Scottish Missionary Society (1796), Church Missionary Society (1799), British and Foreign Bible Society (1804), Church Missionary Society (1799), Basel Mission (1815) and the Wesleyan Missionary Society (1817). The Moravian Church, based in Saxony, preceded this wider movement, having commenced missionary activity in 1732. The missionary movement was generated partly because of the new denominations and theologies emerging from the Protestant Reformation and as a result of evangelical revival movements in Britain and the Continent in the eighteenth century, but was also facilitated by the Enlightenment with its broadening of intellectual and geographical frontiers.[3] Michael Christie noted the irony of Enlightenment influence in that while promoting the concept of equality at home, its role in the schematising of human groups adversely affected

views of peoples such as Australian Aborigines.[4] While many comments of missionaries about Aborigines reflected these views, they believed in their common humanity and laboured to educate and train Aborigines in a period when most colonists saw such efforts as doomed to failure.

The history of Aboriginal missions in Australia can be divided into three periods: Early (1821–1849), Middle (1850–1919), and Later (1920–1970s).

Early Period (1821–1849)

Aborigines were neglected by the missionary movement for the first 33 years of settlement.[5] This resulted from the general attitude towards Aborigines, whom some regarded as less than human, the focus of settlers on possessing the land and ignoring the indigenous inhabitants and the influence of the leading churchman in New South Wales, the Rev Samuel Marsden. Although 'of impeccable evangel-ical pedigree', Marsden believed 'that missionary activity was doomed to failure unless civilization had first paved the way for the gospel'.[6] In 1819, Marsden wrote: 'The Aborigines are the most degraded of the human race...
The time is not yet arrived for them to receive the great blessings of civilisation and the knowledge of Christianity.'[7] Marsden showed more interest in the Maoris of New Zealand, whom he considered to be 'a very superior people'.

The first missionary to the Aborigines, William Walker, was appointed by the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1821 to work in the Sydney region. From 1824 to 1826 he was in charge of a Native Institution for Girls at Parramatta. In 1825, the Rev Lancelot Threlkeld was appointed by the London Missionary Society (LMS).
He opened a school at Lake Macquarie, south of Newcastle. Although the LMS withdrew their support he remained in the area until 1841 when the rapid decline in the Aboriginal

Image page 13

Pastor SO Gross with evangelists and assistants at Hermansburg, circa 1930s
Back: Jonathon (West, assistant), Jeremias (Jay assistant), William (Henbury assistant), Julius (West, assistant), Gamaliel (Henbury, evangelist)
Front: Alexander (West, evangelist), Moses (Jay, evangelist), Titus (West, evangelist), Martin (Alice Springs, evangelist) Courtesy Lutheran Archives, Adelaide

Images from left to right

Walter Tjampitjinpa Pintupi circa 1910–1981
Water Dreaming circa 1972
synthetic polymer on hardboard
41.6 x 40 cm
Flinders University Art Museum 1683
© estate of the artist, courtesy Aboriginal Artists Agency, Sydney

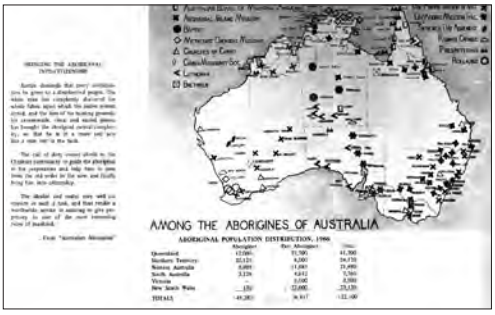
Vogelsang grave site, Killalpaninna 2002

Pastor EFH Proeve on a camel, circa 1949

The first church at Killalpaninna built by Pastor JF Flierl and local Aboriginal people, shown in ruin with Helene Vogelsang in front, circa 1909

On 17 October 1878 after a thirty day trip from Tanunda Johannes Flierl arrived at Lake Bucaltaninna. On 6 January 1879 the first twelve Aborigines were baptised. They were prepared in catechism by Vogelsang and Meyer. They were given German, Biblical or English first names, and kept their tribal names as second names. The mud brick church at Killalpaninna was erected during Flierl the First's period. In 1884 John Flierl (Flierl the Second) arrived at Killalpaninna and concentrated on translating the New Testament and other Christian works into the Diyari language.
The last service to be conducted in the old mud church at Killalpaninna was held by Reidel in September 1909.
Christine Stevens 1994 *White Man's Dreaming: Killalpaninna Mission* 1866-1915, Oxford University Press, pp. 89-90 and pp. 176-178.

Pastor and Mrs Carl Strehlow (Carl Strehlow arrived at Killalpaninna in 1892, served at Hermannsburg 1894–1922 and died Horseshoe Bend 1922) on the occasion of their silver wedding with their son Theodor (Ted) behind with Aboriginal women and children outside the Strehlow residence at Hermannsburg, 1920.



population forced the closure of his work. He recorded the Awakabal language and this legacy is the basis of a current project to revive the language. The Church Missionary Society opened a mission at Wellington in New South Wales in 1832 under William Watson and Johan Handt. They opened a school, provided medical services and commenced agricultural work. Because of limited funding and pressure on land the mission was closed in 1844.

In 1838 Wesleyan missionaries, Francis Tuckfield and Benjamin Hurst established a mission at Buntingdale near Geelong. Pressure on land forced its closure by 1848. Another Wesleyan mission school was opened in 1840 by the Rev John Smithies at Swan River in Western Australia. This was moved to an agricultural settlement at Wanneroo in 1844 and to York, east of Perth, in 1850. It closed in 1855. Lutheran missionaries commenced work at Redcliffe and Nundah in the Brisbane area in 1838. Once again, limited assistance led to its closing in 1843.

Lutherans also commenced work in Adelaide in 1838. Christian Teichelmann and Clamor Schürmann opened a school. By 1840 they had published a vocabulary and outline of the language of the Adelaide Plains region. Their volume has been the main source for a revival of the Kaurna language in Adelaide. Support for their work ceased in 1842. Teichelmann moved to Morphett Vale and Schürmann to Port Lincoln. In 1840, Heinrich Meyer opened a school at Encounter Bay and recorded the local dialect.
The failure of these earliest missions to the Aborigines has been well-documented.[8] These missions were founded in areas of intensive colonial settlement. Despite the concern and commitment of the early missionaries, the dispossession of the Aboriginal people of their lands, their placement in unfamiliar institutions, conflicts with settlers and the effect of introduced diseases had the effect of wiping out or dispersing most of those in the care of the missionaries before their very eyes. These failures in the early period of the Protestant missionary era contrasted with reports of success in other regions of the world. The feeling of hopelessness about the likely success of such ventures in Australia were intensified by the current theories of race which placed Australian Aborigines at the lowest end of the scale of human development. It was widely assumed that they would soon leave the stage of world history as a vestige of an earlier stage of development. Such theories gave little impetus to attempts to evangelise, train and educate Aborigines. According to Russell McGregor: 'By the 1830s the doomed race concept had gained a more secure place in the colonial imagination'.[9]

Middle Period (1850–1919)

Despite the early failures, by the mid-eighteenth century some settlers were concerned about the impact of colonial settlement on the indigenous inhabitants and advocated the establishment of missions to care for the remnants of the groups which had been devastated by the initial impact and for groups which had so far had some protection from this impact because of distance. The first mission to survive for several years was established in South Australia by Archdeacon Hale of the Church of England at Poonindie on Eyre Peninsula in 1850. Aboriginal children who had survived in Adelaide were removed to Poonindie where a school was opened and agricultural work commenced. Divisions amongst staff after the departure of Hale in 1856, pressure on land, reduction of the lease and falling population led to the close of the mission in 1894.

In 1859, a group of Christians in Adelaide who had formed the Aboriginal Friends Association, appointed the Rev George Taplin to establish Point McLeay mission on the shore of Lake Alexandrina, near the mouth of the River Murray. While Taplin sought to achieve self-sufficiency through promoting industries such as fishing, boatbuilding and leatherwork, opposition from settlers who resisted efforts to extend the mission's land, limited development. James Unaipon, one of Taplin's first converts, and his son David were well-known preachers. Meanwhile, in 1867, Christians in the copper mining region of Yorke Peninsula invited a Moravian missionary, the Rev JW Kuhn, to conduct

a school for Aboriginal children at Moonta. He established the Yorke Peninsula Native Mission at Point Pearce and achieved some success with agricultural development of the station. The government assumed control of both Point McLeay and Point Pearce in 1916. Both remain today as strong Aboriginal communities for the Ngarrindjeri and Narungga people. The presence of the missionaries was a major factor in enabling these groups to survive.

Lutheran missionaries established a mission among the Diyari people at Lake Killalpaninna near Lake Eyre in 1866. Despite early hostility from Aborigines who had suff-ered at the hands of white pastoralists, the missionaries persevered and produced detailed records of Diyari language and culture. Continuing droughts and isolation forced the closure of the mission in 1915. In 1877, Lutheran missionaries left Bethany, north of Adelaide, on the long arduous trek of 22 months[10] to establish Hermannsburg mission to the west of Alice Springs. Hermannsburg remained a mission until 1982 when control was transferred to an incorporated community. Hermannsburg became a strong centre for Arrernte people from which Aboriginal evangelists reached out to cattle stations and other settlements in Central Australia. It became well-known as the home of the renowned artist, Albert Namatjira.

In 1874, a local merchant, Daniel Matthews, who was concerned about the situation of Aborigines along the River Murray near Echuca, established an independent mission, Maloga. This work was transferred in 1888 to nearby Cummeragunga which was managed by a committee of local farmers with support from the Aborigines Protection Board of NSW. In 1879, the Rev John Gribble of the Church of England established Warangesda mission on the Murrumbidgee River. Following complaints from local settlers, Gribble left in 1884 and the station came under the control of the Aborigines Protection Board.

Following the early failures in Victoria, invitations were issued by some government and church representatives to the Moravian church which had gained a reputation for succeeding in difficult situations. The Moravians, who traced their origins to movements in Bohemia, Moravia and Saxony, had a deep zeal to share the gospel with all peoples.[11] They had a special concern, according to the mission historian Stephen Neill, 'to go to the most remote, unfavourable, and neglected parts of the surface of the earth'.[12] After an initial failure at Lake Boga near Swan Hill, due largely to the disruptions caused in the colony by the gold rush, the Rev FW Spieseke returned to Australia with FA Hagenauer to establish Ebenezer mission in the Wimmera district in 1859. With support from local settlers considerable progress was made. A village was built, gardens, orchards and farming developed and a school and children's home opened.

Images from left to right

Mission Outreach, Aboriginal Population Distribution 1966
The Wattle Press, Adelaide
South Australian Museum Archives 953/9/1

The Church Aid Society of the Church of England. A Christian Ministry to the people of outback Australia 1956
Published by the Bush Church Aid Society in Melbourne

Benjamin Landara Western Arrernte 1921–1985
Crucifixion circa 1960
watercolour on board
53 x 35.5 cm
Flinders University Art Museum 3314

The mission was closed in 1904 as some residents moved away to work on railways and farms and government legislation required part-Aborigines to leave.

At the request of the Presbyterian Church, Hagenauer moved to Gippsland to establish Ramahyuck mission in 1863. He followed the model of building a village and encouraged Aborigines to be self-sufficient with their own gardens, and the development of hops, arrowroot and craft industries. The school at Ramahyuck was highly praised by visiting inspectors. The first convert at Ebenezer, Nathanael Pepper moved to Ramahyuck to assist Hagenauer. Both Ebenezer and Ramahyuck were regarded as successful ventures but the declining Aboriginal population, effect of government legislation and rationalisation of Aboriginal reserves led to the close of Ramahyuck in 1908. As in South Australia, the presence of these missions enabled the survival of Aboriginal groups in these areas.

The Presbyterian Church, encouraged by progress at Ebenezer and Ramahyuck, invited the Moravians to establish a mission in north Queensland where government and church authorities were concerned about the effects of fishing and pearling industries on the people of Cape York. The Rev James Ward and Mrs Ward and the Rev Nicholas Hey established Mapoon mission in 1891. Despite the poor quality of the soil, coconut plantations, gardens and cattle work were developed. Because of limitations imposed by the soil and the granting of bauxite exploration leases in the 1950s Mapoon was closed in 1962 and the people moved to a site near the tip of Cape York. Some returned in the 1970s to establish their own community. From the base at Mapoon, Moravians founded Weipa (1898) and Aurukun (1904) missions to the south. Australian Presbyterians gradually took over the staffing of these missions and established Mornington Island mission in the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1914.

During this period, The Church of England established Lake Tyers (1861), Framlingham (1865) and Lake Condah (1867) in Victoria; Yarrabah (1891) and Mitchell River (1904) in north Queensland; Forrest River (1913) in north Western Australia; and Roper River (1908) in the Northern Territory. Catholic orders established Beagle Bay (1893), Drysdale River (1907) and Lombadina (1910) in north Western Australia; and Daly River (1886) and Bathurst Island (1911) in the Northern Territory. The Methodist Church established Goulburn Island (1915) in the Northern Territory. Lutherans established Hopevale (1886) in north Queensland and Koonibba (1901) on the west coast of South Australia.

In contrast to the early period, many of the missions established in the middle period survived for several decades and many still remain as viable Aboriginal communities. Others have left clusters of Aboriginal populations in the regions where they were situated. Some researchers such as Charles Rowley, while critical of the control exercised by missionaries over Aboriginal residents, have acknowledged that the missions must be credited with the survival of Aboriginal populations.[13] It should be recognised that while the missionaries of this period reflected many of the prevailing views about Aboriginal societies, they did not have available the resources and ideas which emanated from more intensive studies of these societies from the mid-twentieth century. One of the anomalies is that they laboured tirelessly to educate and train Aborigines towards a goal of self-sufficiency, while accepting the prevailing view that the Aboriginal race was doomed to die out.

Later Period (1920–1970s)

Missionary activity continued to expand from the foundations laid in the previous period. The Church of England established Lockhart River (1924) and Edward River (1935) in north Queensland; and Angurugu (1921), Oenpelli (1924) and Rose River (1952) in the Northern Territory. Catholic orders expanded their work in Western Australia with Balgo (1931) and La Grange (1955); and in the Northern Territory with Port Keats (1935), Melville Island (1940) and Santa Teresa (1953). The Methodist Church responded to reports of conflict and abuse in Arnhem Land by establishing Elcho Island (1922–3, 1942), Millingimbi (1925) and Yirrkala (1935). The Brethren founded Doomadgee (1932) in north-west Queensland; and Umeewarra (1937) in South Australia. The Baptist Church stationed missionaries on Yuendumu (1947) and Warrabri (1957) government reserves in the Northern Territory.

An interdenominational mission society, the United Aborigines Mission (UAM), was active during this period at Ooldea (1933), Colebrook Children's Home (1927) and Nepabunna (1930) in South Australia; and Mount Margaret (1921), Warburton (1933) and Fitzroy Crossing (1952) in Western Australia. When British atomic testing forced the closure of Ooldea, the people were moved in 1952 to Yalata which was administered by the Lutheran Church. While the UAM condemned traditional Aboriginal culture as pagan and sought to ban traditional rituals, there was a growing awareness in other missions in this period that aspects of these cultures were compatible with the Christian message. Missions sought advice from anthropologists and linguists such as Professor AP Elkin, Dr Arthur Capell and TGH Strehlow. This change was reflected in the policies laid down by the Presbyterian Church for the establishment of Ernabella Mission in South Australia in 1937: 'There was to be no compulsion nor imposition of our way of life on the Aborigines, nor deliberate interference with tribal custom... only people trained in some particular skill should be on the mission staff, and...they must learn the tribal language.'[14] Missionaries such as the Presbyterian Bob Love, the Methodists Theodor Webb and Wilbur Chaseling, and the Roman Catholic Ernest Worms sought understanding of Aboriginal culture.

During this period, missions were influenced by the prevailing government policies relating to Aboriginal affairs which changed from protectionism before World War II to assimilation following the war. Because of this, churches became involved in such practices as the removal of part-Aboriginal children to be placed in institutions such as Colebrook Home. However, some missions such as Mount Margaret and Ernabella resisted this practice and made it possible for children to remain with their families. Some missionary bodies questioned the policies and suggested changes towards self-management. In 1959, the National Missionary Council issued a policy statement advocating security of land tenure for Aborigines and equal opportunities in the areas of education, health and social service benefits.[15] In accord with these policies, churches supported the incorporation of missions and government settlements as Aboriginal communities and from the early 1970s, handed control of their missions to these communities.[16] This movement in the secular field was accompanied by efforts to encourage Indigenous leadership of Aboriginal churches.

Images from left to right

Gerald Longmair Marrin Garr born 1958
First Old Mission 1998
earth pigments on canvas
76 x 76 cm
Flinders University Art Museum 3392

In 1935, Father Doherty sailed to Port Keats to start a mission. He brought two Aboriginal people with him, they were Albert and Harry. He sent them out to find the tribes that had run off into the bush to bring them back. One went inland and the other into the Moyle swamp lands. They came back with seven different tribes. Shown in the picture are Father Doherty (centre bottom), Albert and Henry (far left and right), the seven elders (one from each tribe) and members of the seven tribes.
Source: Wadeye Art and Craft, Northern Territory

Miss Esther Simpfendorfer, teacher and children playing ball games outside the second church, Hermannsburg, NT, dedicated Christmas 1897. The building was consecrated by Missionary Bogner and subsequently by Missionary Strehlow who spoke in Aranda. The church at Hermannsburg was for 25 years the only Christian church building erected by any denomination in the area from Lake Eyre in the south to the northern tropical fringes of the Northern Territory. From 1898 to 1922, 172 Aboriginal people and 14 white children were baptized in the church.

Conclusion

It has become fashionable in recent decades to condemn missions on the grounds that they imposed new religious ideas, were paternalistic, removed children from families, imposed strict discipline and severe punishments, suppressed traditional ceremonies and prohibited use of indigenous languages. For example, the Aboriginal histor-ian, Ian Clark, writing on missions, asserts that to Aboriginal people 'the word means a place where many of our people were *imprisoned.*'[17] On the other hand, some Aborigines now look back nostalgically to the time of mis-sion control of their settlements as they face severe social problems with unemployment, violence and substance abuse. The anthropologist, Robert Tonkinson, who had written critically of Jigalong mission in Western Australia, observed secular administrators repeating the mistakes of the missionaries. He acknowledged that he had blamed the missionaries for failings which he later came to see were part of a wider problem. 'In other words' he concluded, 'antipathetic attitudes towards colonised others are better explained as aspects of the European cultural heritage than as manifestations of fundamentalist Christianity'.[18]

It is paradoxical that just as Aborigines have suffered from being stereotyped, so missionaries have been subject to stereotyping. As the anthropologist, Kenelm Burridge, has expressed it: 'Christian missionaries are in much the same position. Villains or heroes, a stereotype claims them, twisting reality into preferred conceptions.'[19] In fact, as Burridge indicates, the stereotypes do not take account of the variety in mission activities and approaches.

On occasions, critical references are made to 'missions' when in fact the places referred to are not church missions.

In some instances, the settlements were originally established as missions but were taken over by government agencies many decades ago. In others, there has been a tendency to refer to any Aboriginal settlement as 'mission', whether run by church or other agency.

Another problem that has clouded the evaluation of missions is the tendency to judge them in the light of contemporary knowledge and practices, rather than in the light of the knowledge and practices of their time. As the historian, Bain Attwood, has acknowledged: 'Some historians had tended to write history backwards, adopting perspectives which are often ahistorical. In their rush to empathise with contemporary Aborigines and condemn the European colonisers, historians were apt to forget that *the past is another country*'.[20] Missionaries are subject to criticism because they had a concern for the welfare of Aboriginal people at a time when they were generally ignored. Missions provided education, health services, and training in agriculture, trades and domestic work. They often undertook these tasks with minimal financial support and resources. Mission and church training produced notable Aboriginal leaders including the Rev James Noble, David Unaipon, the Arrernte evangelist Blind Moses, the Rev Lazarus Lamilami, Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, Sir Doug Nicholls, the Rev Djinyini Gondarra, Alan Mungulu, Nganyintja Ilyatjari, Ossie Cruse and Bishop Arthur Malcolm. Diane Barwick noted that the contribution which these Christian leaders made to the development of Aboriginal political movements has often been ignored.[21]

While many missionaries condemned traditional practices, others encouraged Aborigines to retain cultural values and structures. While missions are stereotyped as destroying traditional culture, in many instances they enabled the survival, not only of the people, but of their ceremonies. It could be argued that the missions did more than any other body to assist in this process.[22] The same applies to the preservation of Aboriginal languages.

While some missionaries sought to ban their use, many of them learned and recorded the dialects and these records have enabled language revival projects and bilingual programs.

Several missions encouraged the use of traditional art forms. This was partly due to economic necessity. As missionaries struggled to ensure an economic base for their communities, some found that handcrafts provided opportunities for employment and income. This contributed to the development of such art movements as the Hermannsburg paintings, Arnhem Land bark paintings, the distinctive designs of Ernabella Arts which is the oldest continuing Aboriginal art centre, the Tiwi Islands' Bima art, the Mowanjum Wandjina art, and Catholic art centres in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

Eric Sharpe, writing of the change in attitude towards missions observed: 'In the first phase, the missionary seemingly could do no wrong; in the last, one sometimes wonders whether the missionary can ever be given credit for doing anything right.'[23] A balanced evaluation of the role of missions in Australia requires a more detailed and thorough examination of mission policies, personalities and practices than has often been the case in the past.

[1] Space does not enable reference to all Aboriginal missions in this essay. A comprehensive history of these missions is provided in John Harris 1990 *One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity,* Albatross Books, Sydney. A listing of missions is included as an appendix in David Horton 1994 (ed.) *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia,* Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, Vol. 2, pp. 1301–03.

[2] See Robert Tonkinson 1974 *The Jigalong Mob: Aboriginal Victors of the Desert Crusade,* Cummings Menlo Park, California; David Trigger 1992 *Whitefella Comin': Aboriginal Responses to Colonialism in Northern Australia,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; Bain Attwood 1989 *The Making of the Aborigines,* Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

[3] Brian Stanley 2001 (ed.) *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment,* Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge UK.

[4] MF Christie 1979 *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835-86,* Sydney University Press, Sydney, pp. 31–2.

[5] JD Bollen 1977 'Early Missionary Societies and the Australian Aborigines', *Journal of Religious History,* Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 263-91.

[6] Brian Stanley 2001 'Christianity and Civilization in English Evangelical Mission Thought', in Stanley 2001 (ed.), *op.cit.,* p. 184.

[7] JR Elder 1932 *The Letters and Journals of Samuel Marsden 1765-1838,* Otago University Council, Dunedin, pp. 231–32.

[8] See Hilary M Carey 1997 *Responses to Failure in Pre-Victorian Missions to the Aborigines of New Holland,* North Atlantic Missiology Project, Position Paper Number 26, University of Cambridge; Jean Woolmington 1988 'Writing on the Sand: The first missions to Aborigines in Eastern Australia', in Tony Swain and Deborah B Rose 1988 (eds.) *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions, Ethnographic and Historical Studies,* The Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Special Studies in Religions, No. 6, Bedford Park, South Australia, pp. 77-92.

[9] Russell McGregor 1998 *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1939,* Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, p. 14.

[10] Everard Leske 1977 (ed.) *Hermannsburg: A Vision and a Mission*, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, pp. 8-13.

[11] Bohemia and Moravia were two provinces that comprise the present-day Czech Republic.

[12] Stephen Neill 1964 *A History of Christian Missions,* Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, p. 237.

[13] CD Rowley 1970 *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society,* Australian National University Press, Canberra, p. 308.

[14] C Duguid 1972 *Doctor and The Aborigines,* Rigby, Adelaide, p. 115.

[15] National Missionary Council of Australia 1959 *General Policy on Aborigines,* Sydney.

[16] WH Edwards 1973 'The Changing Climate of Aboriginal Development', *Interchange,* No 14, pp. 70-80.

[17] Ian Clark 1994 'Missions', in Horton 1994 (ed.) *op.cit.,* Vol. 2, p. 706.

[18] Robert Tonkinson 1988 'Reflections on a Failed Crusade', in Swain and Rose 1988 (eds.) *op.cit.,* p. 64.

[19] Kenelm Burridge 1991 *In the Way,* University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, p. 25.

[20] Attwood 1989 *op.cit.,* p. 136.

[21] Diane E Barwick 1981 'Writing Aboriginal History: Comments on a Book and its Reviewers', *Canberra Anthropology,* vol. 4, no. 2, p. 82. See also W. H. Edwards 1978 'The Gospel and Aboriginal Culture', *Interchange,* no 24, p. 204.

[22] Edwards 1978 *ibid.,* pp. 200-02.

[23] Eric J Sharpe 1989 'Reflections on Missionary Historiography', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* vol. 13, no 2, p. 79.

marcia langton

the 'word of God' and 'works of the devil'

Anthropologists have alerted us to the privileged position of 'religion' in Aboriginal life, in as much as religious belief, they said, underwrote Aboriginal social structures and interpretation of the world.

When we look at Aboriginal art and images, often the religiosity of the work is evident as a result of the emblems depicted in the work that we have learnt to be religious symbols, and often as a result of symbols of the historical dialogue with Christianity. The engagement between two religious systems on the Australian continent since the eighteenth century, and the conflict and discourse which ensued, is, for ironic reasons, as much a source of what is labelled Aboriginal 'art' today as is the millennia-old social engagement of the peoples called 'Aboriginal' with this continent.

The justification for the expansion of European interests into most parts of the globe was evangelical, to bring the 'Word of God' to the heathens and the pagans; and it was through this mission that representations of other cultures were sent back to the centres of the imperial world. It was necessary that heathen and pagan art and culture be depicted to those who sponsored the work of the mission-aries—the churches and the upper middle class merchant patrons who were buying their way into heaven—as degraded and 'works of the devil', thus proof of the need for missionary work. The loathing for Aboriginal cultural practices followed this fundamental Christian stance towards the first peoples of the continent.

Portent of debates in the twentieth century among postmodernists, the unresolved conflict between two fundamental views among Christians informed the ambiguous and difficult appreciation of Aboriginal material culture, especially religious sacra, by Europeans: on the one hand, it was held that Aborigines were pagans and thus had no religion, and on the other that they were heathens, with some lower form of religion. If pagan, then Aborigines were not capable of being civilized and shepherded into the fold of the Kingdom of Christ. Without souls fit for heaven, their lives were of little value. If heathen, then their threat to Christian values had to be contended with and any sympathy for their ideas regarded as heretical. The failure to reconcile which stance was the more appropriate has since been an ongoing cause of debate in Australian life. Missions, like the larger process of colonisation, were both creative and destructive, for although the missions provided safe havens for Aboriginal groups from the violence and exploitation of the frontier, they also contributed to the demise of the social and cultural institutions of the classical Aboriginal societies, more so in the nineteenth than in the twentieth century.

In a discussion such as this, on the role of the Christian religion in Aboriginal art and culture, there isn't space to introduce the reader to the many ideas and debates on Aboriginal religion that have circulated in theological, anthropological and other schools of thought. The question of how to deal with Aboriginal religion as a set of sociological phenomena must however be answered by referring, however obliquely, to the many strands of theoretical and epistemological thought on the subject. One scholar stands out from the crowd of curious observers: Emeritus Professor WEH Stanner, author of *On Aboriginal Religion* (1966) and *White Man Got No Dreaming: Essays 1938–1973,* to mention just two of his key contributions. He was an Anglican, and the outstanding anthropologist of his day. In 1976, he delivered the Charles Strong Memorial Trust Inaugural Lecture, which he commenced in this way:

There may still be some who question the rightness of including Aboriginal beliefs, acts and objects within the scholarly scope of Comparative Religion. In this Lecture I will contend that all the intellectual requirements can be, and long have been, amply satisfied.

If, for the purpose, I adopt William James's dictum—that the word 'religion' cannot stand for any single principle or essence, but is rather a collective name—it will not be in deference to the sceptics, but rather in acknowledgment of two things: the Aboriginal materials are too various and subtle for our present stage of professional insight, and we cannot yet make powerful general statements on a continental scale.[1]

The present situation remains much as Professor Stanner described it nearly a quarter of a century ago; and much that we might have learnt then cannot now be discovered with the change of so much traditional religious life in that brief period. According to the many histories of Aboriginal life, remarkable change in the cultures and social ways of Aboriginal people has occurred consistently since settlement, and the archaeological record of human life on the continent since the early Pleistocene bears witness to change on a

Unknown artist
Birth of Christ, undated
earth pigment on bark
78 x 35 cm
on loan to Flinders University Art Museum

continental scale for some 40,000 years. Professor Stanner's view of how Aboriginal religion and its dynamism could have been so misunderstood by Europeans, even at the time of his presentation of the lecture, bears repeating here:

I have remarked elsewhere that only a blindness of the mind's eye prevented Europeans in the past from seeing that 'the ritual uses of water, blood, earth and other substances, in combination with words, gestures, chants, songs and dances, all having for the Aborigines a compelling quality' were not 'mere barbarisms' but had a sacramental quality. I went on to add that 'one doubts if anywhere could be found more vivid illustrations of a belief in spiritual power laying hold of material things and ennobling them under a timeless purpose in which men feel they have a place...' Obviously, one has to look beyond the symbols to what is symbolized; behind the spoken images of myth, the acted images and gestures of rite, and the graven or painted images of art, to what they stand for; beyond the chrism of blood and ochre to what they point to, with the Aboriginal Weltanschauung.[2]

That blindness of the mind's eye is evident throughout Australian scholarship on Aboriginal people. Manning Clark, taking at face value the anthropological view of the three races which scholars at that time asserted to be the inhabitants of Australia, summarized the accepted canon on Aboriginal peoples, in *A History of Australia I. The Earliest Times to Catholic Christendom;* and drew attention to the Christian view of indigenous society, a view both theologically and teleologically fundamentalist, contrasting it with the developing scholarship of Australian intellectual life of his time:

Neither the Negritos nor the Murrayians, nor indeed the Carpentarians, made the advance from barbarism to civilisation. The age of belief was inclined to explain this as a special punishment for their part in the Fall, by which the snake was condemned to go on his belly all his days, the man to produce bread in the sweat of his brow, the woman to produce children in pain and anguish, and the aborigine, together with primitive people in the rest of the world, to suffer the drudgery and the wretchedness of the uncivilised.

A more secular age has looked for material explanations for this failure, rather than ponder the inscrutable ways of providence, or judge a people's moral worth by its material achievements. Historians and anthropologists have written more of the aborigines' intelligent adaptation to their environment, and of the absence of suitable grain for crops or of animals to domesticate as the reasons for their failure to advance from barbarism; while in moments of doubt or spiritual sickness some have esteemed the absence of material refinements and social order as a blessing rather than a curse, as a source of happiness rather than a misery. For all writings on the aborigines both on the mainland and in Tasmania, have mirrored the civilisation of their authors, of those driven by the hope of salvation or the fear of damnation, as well as those in pursuit of some secular millennium, or the advancement of knowledge. But, whatever the reason may have been, the failure of the aborigines to emerge from a state of barbarism deprived them of the material resources with which to resist an invader, and left them without the physical strength to protect their culture.[3]

All society, as Europeans perceived it, was Christian; beyond their borders were heathens, and beyond their borders in turn, were barbarians and savages. All of the highest and most valued forms of art of the European societies, until the Enlightenment, in the late eighteenth century, were religious, and thus it was inconceivable to the explorers who came to the shores of the Southland, or *terra incognita,* from the seventeenth century onwards, whether Catholic Portuguese or Calvinist Dutch, or Protestant English, that the Aboriginal people they observed were fully human, devoid, as they appeared to be, of religion and religious art. The first reliable written report published in English in 1698, William Dampier's *A New Voyage Round the World,* all but dismissed Aboriginal people, their land and its resources as worthless (although he attempted one more visit in search of the fabled gold), and noted, 'I did not perceive that they did worship anything'.[4]

Objects of study

The first British settlement was a military one, aimed at housing at first about a thousand and later, thousands more, convicts. Any appreciation of Aboriginal objects by successive colonists, even though their enthusiastic collection might belie the contempt with which they were held, was said to be for purposes of study only. This quickly became a dominant attitude to Aboriginal people themselves. There was little or no reference to their beauty or the technical and aesthetic complexity of their manufactured objects.

Aboriginal art and artefacts with representational images were emblematic of the engagement with Europeans on the Australian continent. These artefacts include the sketches and drawings executed or collected by explorers and their companions, the much later collections by ethnographers. Andrew Sayers has perceived the complexity in the relationships between Aboriginal artists and Europeans they encountered in his survey of nineteenth century Aboriginal artists. His documentation of Black Johnny's drawings, and his study of the works of Barak, Tommy McRae and Mickey of Ulladulla, alerts us to the difficulty of assessing their works merely as the result of 'white influence'. Sayers writes:

I do not believe that drawings by Aboriginal artists are profitably interpreted by recourse to this simplistic idea...The greatest difficulty for the art historian is to reconstruct past visual worlds, and nineteenth century frontier Australia is as impenetrable as any.[5]

He rejects the simple idea of these works:

...as being halfway along some imagined continuum, away from traditional culture and towards the forms of the colonising culture.[6]

They were not perceived as 'art', or in any way aesthetically, until the twentieth century. The failure of the British evangelists and others sympathetic to the Aboriginal plight on the frontier to succeed in convincing their colleagues of the humanity of Aborigines, or perhaps more correctly, of the inhumanity of their treatment of them, and the failure of the ideas of the Enlightenment in the Australian colonies, was as much a cause of frontier brutality as was greed for land. French visitors, fresh with Enlightenment ideas, such as Péron in 1802 were sure that Aborigines could be civilised, while Governor King and the chief spiritual adviser to the colony, The Reverend Samuel Marsden, could see only a permanent special case, distinct among all humanity.

By 1805 less and less is heard of the early aspirations to civilise the aborigines as a preparation for their becoming members of the mystical body of Christ's Church. Experience was driving more and more settlers as well as civil and military officers to explain the treachery, cruelty, revolting habits and inferiority of the aborigines, and the ineffectual results of all attempts to civilise them, by their innate characteristics as a race. Experience was also convincing more and more people that violence and reprisals were the only methods the aborigines could understand. No one contemplated the extinction of the aborigine with remorse, guilt or regret; nor did anyone testify to a common humanity, let alone to any sense that they too were made in the divine image...The Reverend Samuel Marsden, the missionaries and the chaplains continued to explain the material weakness and the vices as a special punishment of their people for the role of their ancestors in that terrible drama between God and man in the garden of Eden.[7]

The Aboriginal engagement with colonial society

When the First Fleet left England, two missionary societies existed, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (founded in 1698) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (founded in 1701). Jean Woolmington observes that 'no missionary accompanied the first fleet and while Phillip was exhorted to *enforce a due observance of religion* on his charges, he was not instructed to preach to the Aborigines'.[8] This, she suggests, was probably as a result of the rationalism or free-thinking which accompanied the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, and which enabled challenge to the teachings of Christianity, such as atheism, without incurring opprobrium.

The Enlightenment also contributed to a developing attitude of respect towards ancient civilisations (as in India for example); it certainly contributed to the belief that it was not the role of English people to propagate their own religion. It was the growth of the great evangelical revival in Britain which saw the establishment of the major Protestant missionary societies in the two decades between 1793 and 1813. Three of these Societies were to send mis-sionaries to early New South Wales: the London Missionary Society (founded in 1795), the Church Missionary Society (1799), and the Wesleyan Missionary Society (1813).[9]

The first missionary, a Wesleyan, arrived in 1821, thirty-three years after the first settlement, to teach at the Native Institution established following a decision by Governor Macquarie who thought that if Aborigines were educated their 'vindictive spirit' might be tamed. His hope that their resistance to the violence might recede under tutelage was misplaced; nor did the hostilities lessen. In their few attempts in New South Wales at that time, the Wesleyans did not fare well, achieving only the baptism of a few child-ren, including Bennelong's son. Five other missions were run in what was then New South Wales, variously supported by the three aforementioned missionary societies, the Presbyterian Church and the Roman Catholics: at Nundah and Stradbroke Island in the Moreton Bay District; Reid's Mistake near Newcastle, Wellington Valley; and the Port Phillip District near present Geelong. As well as the opposition of Marsden, especially to the Rev Lancelot Threlkeld, they all experienced a range of difficulties, not the least of which was lack of money, but as well, trouble with sponsors, quarrels among the missionaries themselves and failure to persuade the Aborigines to settle down and accept the missionary message.[10]

'wickedness and superstition'

Woolmington's concluding summary of the early missionary achievements in eastern Australia attributes their failure to their thorough lack of understanding of Aboriginal culture and spirituality and their quickness 'to condemn any signs of Aboriginal customs as wickedness and superstition'.[11]

By 1848, only twenty-seven years after Walker's arrival, all of the first generation of missions in New South Wales had been abandoned. They had cost a great deal of money and much heartbreak. They had been run by Methodists, Anglicans, Lutherans, Roman Catholics and a Congregationalist. They had the backing of both the British and Colonial Governments. Three of the missionaries had arrived with previous experience; Handt in Africa, Threlkeld in the Pacific and Father Snell in Bulgaria. All the Lutherans, William Watson and James Gunther had undertaken special miss-ionary training. Yet their training and experience were of no avail. Some useful linguistic work was done and many Aborigines learned to read and write and engage in trades, yet only one adult was baptised and there is no evidence that these first missions managed to leave any appreciable mark of the Christian faith. That had to await future missionary activity.[12]

One of the successful missionary sects in colonial Australia were the Moravians in the Port Phillip District, eventually successful that is, in inculcating allegiance of a sort to institutional practices which ran counter to the cultural traditions of the Kurnai, and in suppressing Indigenous traditions.

Bain Attwood's fascinating study of the missions at Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers was an insightful reconstruction of relations between Aborigines and the newcomers, providing a rich account of the changes which Aboriginal culture underwent in negotiating with the Moravians or United Brethren missionaries.

The missionaries constructed an architectural plan, called by Frederick Hagenauer 'the machinery', aimed explicitly at the social engineering of the whole population–men, women and children–into a hierarchy, each conscious of his or her place in the new ordered system:

Much of the cultural change which occurred can be understood in terms of how missionaries sought to change the Aborigines' notions of space and time. As soon as they founded Ramahyuck, the Moravians busily began to reshape the landscape, just as other colonists had previously transformed the land for their capit-alist purposes. The missionaries' aims, however, were broader and more ambitious. Fundamental to their reconstruction of Aborigines was a plan to produce a carefully defined and ordered social space. In this Hagenauer wanted to create a didactic landscape, an instrument to transmit Christianity and 'civilisation', mould the conduct of Aborigines, and express a conception of what he wished the Aborigines to become...The site on the Avon River was as threatening in its apparently open and disorderly 'natural' state as the 'savages' who gathered there. Thus the missionaries set out to turn all of the mission land into a cultural and economic environment familiar to them.[13]

Despite all the attempts by the Moravians to impose strict Christian, European order on the Kurnai, Aborigines continued to challenge their rule, but, concluded Attwood:

...their challenge was blunted in that they came to fight over matters defined by the missionary system, and their protest tended to reinforce the existing relationship rather than recast it on their own terms.[14]

One of the challenges to the mission came from Billy Macleod and his companions, in 1844, when they organised an initiation ceremony for Alfred Howitt. Billy Macleod (Tulaba) was a Brabiralung man, born near Bruthen in the early 1830s and, following the violent clashes between the Brabiralung and the Europeans, he was taken as a boy and raised on one of the Macleod's pastoral runs. He and other 'traditionally oriented Aborigines' were able to escape the

Images from left to right

Congregation outside the old Killalpaninna church circa 1890s
Photo courtesy Lutheran Archives, Adelaide

Father Altimira gives the first lesson on the sign of salvation circa 1915
Kalumburu 'formerly Drysdale River' Benedictine Mission
North West Australia
A Golden Jubilee Publication, 1908–1958, p. 22
Prepared by Dom Eugene Perez OSB
New Norcia Archives 65044P

mission life and work for pastoralists. Such Aboriginal people were granted certificates by the Protection Board authorising their absence from the missions. Attwood, relying on the accounts in Howitt's papers, describes how the Brabiralung 'asserted their traditional principles of sharing and reciprocity and tried to incorporate the whites into their kinship system'. This involved the Brabiralung men also seeking:

...to cement the bonds by revealing their religious beliefs to the Macleods. Tulaba seems to have regarded both Archibald and John Macleod as initiated Brabiralung men, and compared them with the missionaries who were unable to grasp the Aboriginal religious schema and whom he consequently dismissed as being very stupid. Furthermore, the Macleods did not interfere with the Aborigines' tribal business, and men like Tulaba were able to maintain their connection with the Dreaming and to uphold their Law.[15]

Despite pressure from the missionaries and the government to segregate all Aborigines into the missions, Tulaba and others stayed away, and when Howitt and his wife Liney settled at Eastwood on the Mitchell River in Brabiralung country to grow hops, Tulaba and his wife Mary struck up the traditional Aboriginal relationship of kinship and reciprocity with them, albeit one which the Howitts perceived as a proprietary and paternalistic one. Howitt, the amateur anthropologist, benefited from this relationship, as Tulaba, Long Harry (Turlburn), Bobby Brown (Bundawal) and Big Joe (Takowillin), apparently regarded providing him with information about their culture as part of their reciprocal obligations. Attwood documents from the Howitt papers the freedom from mission control which his employment of Tulaba and sometimes up to seventy other Kurnai residents of Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers offered. As well, Howitt's anthropological inquiries were perceived, apparently, 'as a means of sustaining' their beliefs and practices 'and passing on to other Aboriginal men some of their knowledge'.[16]

Some Aboriginal men eagerly answered Howitt's call to come together for an initiation ceremony in 1884, much to the annoyance of the missionaries, whose vehement opposition probably only provoked some mission inmates to go. Hagenauer dismissed Howitt's work and ridiculed the notion that Aborigines on Ramahyuck had any knowledge of traditional culture: 'these men here know nothing of what he collects,' he argued, 'but they will always go for the fun's sake.' Howitt of course believed otherwise, as indicated in this description of a ceremony Aboriginal men and women had represented for him in the 1870s: 'The actors were in their parts con amore. The past seemed to revive in them. They were no longer the wretched remnant of a native tribe dressed in the cast-off garments of the white men, but Kurnai...performing a ceremony handed down to them through their ancestors.[17]

The missionaries arranged marriages between young Aboriginal men and women in the European tradition, and the Aboriginal marriage rules were disregarded. Attwood suggests that the traditionalist people may have regarded the missionary-arranged marriages as 'the only means of perpetuating their people'.[18] Tulaba had no descendants, and the men and women who joined him in celebrating the Churn rituals were unable to effectively pass on their knowledge to the mission Aborigines, but conveyed it to Howitt and so into European anthropological discourse, 'where it remained alienated from Aborigines until they recently began to seek the riddle of their identity in his ethnographic texts'.[19]

It is clear that despite the loss of population and the loss of land, Aboriginal traditional relationships with land and the ritual expressions of these affiliations were difficult to suppress. Henry Reynolds notes that:

In New South Wales in the 1880s about a quarter of the Aborigines were 'workers and wanderers', that is they combined labour with hunting and gathering in the manner of their grandparents in the 1840s. But the wandering wasn't aimless and often seems to have been confined within traditional tribal boundaries…Numerous other traditions were preserved.[20]

Corroborees and initiations were still being performed in many districts at the end of the nineteenth century. Even the desire to own land had a partly traditional emphasis both in where it was sought and its intended use. A government official in southern New South Wales wrote in 1883:

I have known blacks in Braidwood and coast districts very intelligent, who have been and now are excellent farm labourers, and whose aspirations at all times were to be allowed some land they might call their own in reality; which they might cultivate unmol-ested for the use of themselves and their families; and where aborigines of surrounding districts might meet periodically for the purpose of holding corroborees and other exhilarating games.[21]

From the 1899 records of the South Australian Select Committee on the Aborigines, Reynolds uncovers a telling recollection by FJ Gillen who recorded the Aboriginal cultural traditions of Central Australia. A young man who had been taken away from his people at Charlotte Waters and worked on a station for ten or twelve years, returned speaking perfect English but with little memory of his own language. Gillen recorded that this young man had said to him:

'I think I will go and get cut' - that means the process of circumcision and sub-incision which the blacks undergo - and I said, 'Look here, Jim, you are a fool to submit to that.' He said in reply, 'Well, I can't put up with the cheek of the women and children. They will not let me have a lubra, and the old men will not let me know anything about my countrymen'. [22]

The initiation ceremony of this south-eastern Arrernte man was, within a few decades, no longer performed. The Spanish flu pandemic[23] depopulated the region and later, the sacred objects of his people were collected by Theodor Strehlow who kept them as his private property despite sponsorship of his work by Adelaide University.[24]

Missionaries were active in Central Australia by the 1870s. In western Arrernte country along the traverse of the MacDonnell Ranges, German Lutheran missionaries established the Hermannsburg mission on the banks of the Finke River. In 1932, Rex Battarbee and John Gardner, two artists from Victoria, visited the mission, drawing portraits of Aboriginal people and painting landscapes of the spectac-ular features of the land. They returned in 1934 and held an exhibition of their work in the Hermannsburg schoolroom. Lucienne Fontannaz cites Battarbee's recollections:

...the impact of this collection of paintings was both immediate and lasting. The exhibition was thronged for two days, and of the 300 visitors some sat entranced for hours at a time as they gazed at the various portrayals of the landscape which they knew so well.[25]

Jennifer Hoff makes the point that:

The watercolour style of Hermannsburg in Central Australia is possibly the best known and least understood transitional art movement. It reached its peak of popular appeal in the works of Albert Namatjira. The media attention given to Albert eclipsed the careers of other important artists such as Otto and Edwin Pareroultja and distorted understanding of the movement as a whole. What was not generally known was that this art movement was not founded in the work of two individuals, Rex Battarbee and Albert Namatjira, it was a much broader development which emerged in the drawings of children during the early 1930s and was shaped by the environment of Hermannsburg mission.

Suppression of the expression of traditional Aboriginal culture at the mission and the secret element in some art forms, resulted in the emergence of a new vehicle of expression at Hermannsburg. A transitional landscape style appeared which was not merely copied from the work of white Australian artists but was a reordered system of schemata depicting the central Australian environment.

Characteristics of this style were the 'emphasis on flattening and integration of landscape elements in a two-dimensional composition, the use of vibrant colour contrasts and elaborate surface patterning'. [26]

Namatjira as a child was taught to read and write in Western Arrernte, the language used by white mission staff, and then in English as a second language. The capacity for expression in both Western and non-Western languages makes possible an awareness of how different languages categorise and even create subjects. Given that different perceptions of nature are also embodied in these distinct languages, the conditions existed within Namatjira's own experience for him to explore possibilities for translating between different ways of picturing nature.[27]

Battarbee gave particular encouragement to Otto and Edwin Pareroultja and Ewald Namatjira, as he thought their painting was the most interesting among the young artists. Later, Battarbee saw Otto's work as 'incorporating the concentric circles and wavy lines of traditional Aranda sacred objects'.[28]

In 1948, the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions published a booklet entitled *Friends from the Walkabout, Brief Studies of the Australian Aborigines and of the work of Presbyterian Missions in Their Midst*, which aimed to provide:

in a simple form suited to young folks, as well as to those who are older, a group of studies based on authentic information secured in recent years in the actual field.[29]

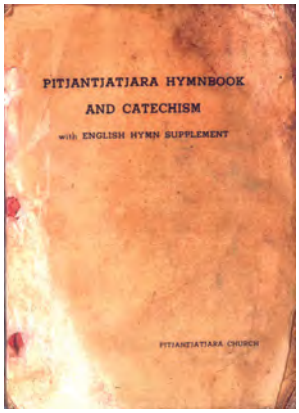
In part V, 'What They Think and Do', the booklet admits a religious life:

He knows which parts of the country are sacred and which are believed to be linked with various ancestors in the mythical past, the eternal dreamtime which can still be recalled in dreams and visions...Much time is spent, especially by the older men, in religious discussion, and much of their most beautiful work is used in religious ceremonies...Their songs—many of them beautiful—have not yet been fully understood, but the words in many cases are real poetry and they express the Aborigine's attitude to life in the world about them. Great Aboriginal schools of art have grown up, too, in certain places. Most of it has been done on smooth stone in sheltered rocks, on bark or wood. Some of it is natural-looking, and some of it represents myths, etc., in designs not easily understood. It has usually been done with yellow, white, and red ochres and black charcoal. The paintings of the well-known Aboriginal artist, Albert Namatjira, are quite unlike examples of their art, being more like that of white men.

Although their art of all kinds is so unlike ours, we can see that it has not been at a standstill through the years but has progressed, just like that of other races. Some white artists have thought it so beautiful that they have used Aboriginal colours and designs in their own paintings.[30]

The pastiche of cultural relativism and Protestant evangelism becomes apparent in Part IX, 'Why They Need Missionaries':

The Aborigines needed friends to live with them so that they would not die out...They learn the value of money and wages. And thus, by trusting their friends the missionaries and learning from them, they become able, not only to live a good Christian life that is full of happy meaning, but also to become independent workers and citizens in our modern Australia.[31]



'under the shadow of one mission or another'

Ronald M Berndt and Catherine H Berndt, whose works of documentation of Aboriginal societies, and hence, necessarily of religious belief, were composed over several decades and exceed all others in sheer volume, wrote in 1988:

Only on rare occasions have we carried out anthropological research in an area that was not directly or indirectly affected by missionary activity. Throughout our professional careers of over 40 years, in almost all of our field research we have been under the shadow of one mission or another. In the circumstances we learnt to take that as a necessary given, part of the overall frame in which we had to work. Conversely, there were, and are few Aborigines who have not been exposed in some degree, at first hand or otherwise, to some form of proselytization.

It is important to acknowledge this in discussing Aboriginal religion because the influence of Christianity is a consistent theme, its incorporation and ownership by ceremonial leaders occurring widely and referred to in the literature on the Adjustment movement.[32]

The Berndts observed:

We are reminded that at Ooldea in 1941 we asked children at the local mission school to draw what they thought God and/or Jesus looked like. When the missionary discovered what the children were doing at our request he was angry, and accused us of being sacrilegious.[33]

We might well ask what God looks like, if we take his existence for granted. The anthropologists' interest has as much to do with their scientific curiosity about what the Aboriginal people might make of the Christian mission, as with their interest in human engagement with the idea of the spiritual world through religion. Aboriginal people themselves asked such questions, and brought into quest-ion even the missionaries' regard for the world of the sacred. What did the missionaries regard as truly sacred? For Aboriginal people, their art and culture plainly demonstrated their view of the sacred, for those who had eyes to see it. So where were the sacra—the powerful objects—of the European world?

In the twentieth century, anthropologists assessing the impact of the Christian missions report that few Aboriginal people were converted, and those that were refused to reject their own religion. The principal effect of the mis-sion settlements was the safe haven which they provided for beleaguered Aboriginal people on the frontiers. The death rates would have been much higher without the presence of missionaries.[34] Indeed, the missions were islands in an ocean of violence against Aboriginal people. This is signif-icant in addressing the complex question of religion in the emergence of 'Aboriginal art' as a phenomena.

The Yolngu Renaissance

In 1957 the clan leaders at Elcho Island prepared a demonstration in full view of all the residents of the mis-sion, Aboriginal and mission staff alike, of sacred poles to protest to the missionaries the existence of their own religion. Such public revelation was unprecedented in Aboriginal life. This was followed in 1962 by the creation of two panels of clan emblems by each of the clan leaders of northeast Arnhem Land at missions at Yirrkala, Dhuwa and Yirritja.[35] These were placed on either side of the altar, and again represented the most sacred and secret of the clan *wangarr,* or ancestral origins and meanings, never before revealed in public. These events involved months of negotiation between the clan leaders at their respective mission settlements and represented a turning point in the relationship between Aboriginal people and the missionaries and other Australians. Ronald and Catherine Berndt.[36] documented the event at Elcho Island in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory which had far-reaching consequences. Their account draws attention to syncretism and adjustment as part of the dynamism between:

The penultimate expression of attempted syncretism is symbolized in the now well-known Arnhem Land Adjustment movement that came into being late in 1957.[37]

To provide a visible, tangible focus for this, a memorial was set up near the old mission church at Elcho Island. A small, open enclosure held a display of formerly secret-sacred religious emblems that were being made public for the first time: the central traditional post had a Christian cross at its apex. We need not go into the reasons for this movement's establishment, or its aims.

Images from left to right

Pitjantjatjara Hymnbook and Catechism with English Hymn supplement
Pitjantjatjara Church Council, SA 1978
With thanks to Michele Wichello

Daynganangan, Lipundja, Djoma, Djikululu, Yuwati, Mamalunhawuy, Wululu and Djimarrdjimbarrwuy
Milingimbi Easter Painting – Yirritja Panel circa 1965
ochre on plywood
183 x 183 cm
On loan from private collection in the Netherlands to the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
Photo Gilbert Herrada

Christmas and Easter were celebrated under the auspices of the Methodist Overseas Missions in the Aboriginal churches of north-eastern Arnhem Land. Against this backdrop two large Easter paintings were produced by the artists of Milingimbi in the mid 1960s. Milingimbi artists were invited to produce the Easter panels—to be painted by the Dhuwa and Yirritja artists respectively. No special instructions were given other than for the artists to reproduce the Christian Easter story as they understood it.

The left hand panel represents the resurrection on Easter Sunday.

The centrepiece of this panel is the tomb containing the grave clothes.

The white T to the right represents the stone that has been rolled away from the tomb. The white horizontal line running to the top right hand corner is a ray of light from heaven. The white figures either side of this ray are the angels. The figures in the left top corner are the women arriving with their jars of balm to anoint the body. The figures in the bottom right corner are the disciples—Peter being represented by the large figure nearest the tomb. The characters bottom left are the Roman guards, depicted by a sword and headdresses.

It is sufficient to say that in this context it emphasised traditional religious equality with Christianity, and had wide socio-political implications…the undoubted stimulus for Aborigines was to put their relations with Europeans on a new footing. This was a particularly significant development, that has no exact parallel elsewhere in Aboriginal Australia. There are certainly other indications, both earlier and later, of a measure of rapprochement being achieved, but none that has been treated so articulately, and is so revealing in its recognition of mission influence and of its wider potentials.[38]

It was a movement of politico-religious significance with an appeal to non-empirical solutions. As Berndt writes 'they did not realise that economically such *rangga* have little or no value cross-culturally'.[39] These events revealed that European society did not value the 'sacred' in any way similar to the observances of the Yolngu and, in particular, could not discern the sacred power of the *rangga.* For the Berndts, Yolngu religious exegetes were not becoming Christian, but rather, exploring its power.

By this time, in Arnhem Land, symbolic representations of Aboriginal religion were moving into the Christian churches at Milingimbi and Elcho Island in the form of Aboriginal designs. At Yirrkala in 1963 a large screen of mythic paintings in ochres, one belonging to each of the two local moieties, was placed on either side of the church altar. This was not, of course, Aboriginalisation of Christian religion. The Elcho movement was incipiently that; but because it remained separate from the 'orthodox' Methodist church, its focus was increasingly on secular matters.

…At Milingimbi, the chairman of the Methodist group of missions told us that he had once arranged a Christmas enactment of the nativity by Aborigines for the edification of a visiting delegation from the Sydney Central Office, but the birth scene was so realistic that commendation turned to condemnation and the religious play was abandoned. However, much has changed since those days. In the Catholic church at Balgo (mid-1980s) in the south eastern Kimberley, large banners are displayed, each relating to a Christian topic - for instance, to the festivals of Christmas and Easter, the Prodigal Son, and so on, along with 'assembly banners' on traditional mythological themes.

Such examples, however, do not represent syncretism per se. There would seem to be no place, or not yet, for material of this kind as far as the Lutherans, Presbyterians and Anglicans are concerned. With the Catholics and Methodists there was at least limited acceptance of Aboriginal ideology; among the Methodists there was more scope for an interchange of ideas, and more flexibility for cross-religious adaptation.[40]

Berndt writes about the Adjustment movement that:

…it set out the requirements of maintaining community integrity and commonality of interest, an attempt to draw people together on the basis of common religious ideology and friendship, the re-establishment of the leadership, and the maintenance of a control centre (Elcho Island) which can be viewed as a seat of government.[41]

For the Berndts:

A more apparent form of indigenisation of Christianity was the preparation of a set of acrylic paintings of the Stations of the Cross, by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr, for the re-established Daly River Catholic mission in 1961. These signal an important innovative departure. While the paintings are stylistically Aboriginal, their subject matter is that of representations of Christ. Such images of God/Christ must undoubtedly have been drawn or painted by Aborigines long before that date; but we know of no other examples being directly placed in a church before.[42]

In contrast to the lack of emphasis on Yolngu belief in Christianity, perhaps because of the waning influence of the missionaries at that time, Ian McIntosh interpreted the Adjustment movement as a conscious attempt at redefining social organisation using the medium of Christianity to legitimize unity.[43] He wrote that the Adjustment movement was 'a sign to the outside world that Aborigines were the land owners and that they controlled the truths responsible for who they were'.[44]

Badanga had said: 'We believe in the old law and we want to keep it: and we believe in the Bible too. So we have selected the good laws from both and put them together'.[45]

McIntosh argues that the Movement leaders were aware of the need for the two laws to overlap and entwine, neither with precedence. Finding a place for Christianity in the Yolngu worldview necessitated a complex re-working of existing beliefs.[46]

The Modernist and Postmodernist fascination with Aboriginal art

Early collections of Aboriginal works of art were prized as fossils from the ethnographic past. The collections of early anthropologists, museums and private individuals aimed to preserve representative assemblages of artefacts from societies at risk of disappearing from the face of the earth under the impact of contact and colonisation. Partly, this sense of foreboding about the fate of such cultures was justified. It was also the case that many societies in the imperial realm were pushed to the edge of survival by the very practices of collecting and removing their material culture. These objects of the colonial conquest were placed on display by enthusiastic museum staff who subscribed to social Darwinist beliefs well into the twentieth century and educated audiences about the place of Aborigines in the evolutionary lineage of humanity. This type of engagement with objects from the Aboriginal world imbues these objects with a social agency that transcends any particular historical moment of the encounter. There is, rather, an appropriation of an imagined culture in order to recirculate the basic values of the settler state as *against the imagined past,* as much work on the social role and *agency* of objects and even intangible entities has shown.[47]

In the early 1970s, an art teacher sent by the Education Department to Papunya, a remote Aboriginal settlement in central Australia, soon found himself as the exponent of what was to become a major Australian art form of internat-ional standing. Geoff Bardon was confronted by the Luritja and Pintupi elders whose religious art he assisted to transfer to the readily available materials of a settlement, acrylic paint on fibro at first, and later canvas. In the desert the symbols of the sacred were disguised by incorporating designs in, or erasing them from, the final works. Nevertheless, these images, seen before only as sand paintings in ceremonies sent a clear message that here was a religion with meanings and explanations as deep and as relevant as any that Christian missionaries might purvey.

The revelatory origins of the 'Aboriginal art' movement can be seen as events of resistance and as public announcements of a renaissance of Aboriginal belief. It is in this context that 'Aboriginal art' is explored as a phenomena, both social and material, in this essay. The relationship between missionaries, teachers, curators, anthropologists and art historians, and the Aboriginal exegetes of the ancient cosmology is the social context in which the sacra of Aboriginal life, or the ordinary things of everyday Aboriginal life, become transformed as 'art' and codified as styles or 'genres'.

Whereas settlers saw an empty wilderness, Aboriginal people saw a busy spiritual landscape, peopled by ancestors and the evidence of their creative feats. The catalogue of the first major scholarly retrospective of Indigenous art by anthropologist Peter Sutton and others was entitled *Dreamings: the Art of Aboriginal Australia,* and here one finds a rigorous grappling with the ideas of Aboriginal cultures of the present. Dreamings are of different types and, depending on type, they can engage different numbers of people in their travelling. Sutton explains the effect of this complexity in the sacred visions of the landscape:

> *Dreamings thus do more than interpenetrate and connect people together. They do so differentially. Some are 'bigger' than others, more important, pulling together as responsible land custodians a wider range of people, and more ritually eminent people, than the minor traditions. And Dreaming tracks have very different physical correlatives. Rain Dreamings typically move in swathes kilometres wide, as do Bushfire Dreamings, often sweeping off in side tracks, as the natural phenomena they figure also do. A Euro Dreaming may, by contrast, hop in a fine line and one direction. Such differences may also spell differences of social inclusiveness, as the lands of families are joined more comprehensively by one than another.*[48]

Gradually, as a result of the catalogues written by experts which accompanied such exhibitions as *Dreamings,* a respectful analysis of Aboriginal art as a system of signs of Aboriginal religious and visual engagement with the world became known to a larger audience.

Then ensued the work of the Australian modernist and post-modern curators who constructed 'genres' and 'styles' as Aboriginal artists and craftspersons created more and more works for their audiences. These new audiences superceded those of the missionaries and their patrons at home in Europe who had created the much earlier interest in Aboriginal art. Increasingly a global art market hungry for

George Mung Mung Gija circa 1920–1991
Mary of Warmun (The Pregnant Mary) circa 1983
64 x 10 x 10 cm
carved wood and natural pigments
reproduced with permission of the Warmun Community, WA
© George Mung Mung 1983

emblems or 'primitivism' and the modernisation of the cultures at the periphery of the empire grew to encompass Aboriginal art as a normalized commodity.

Aboriginal art is an artefact of the colonial encounter. While all human societies have artistic traditions that provide a window on the ideas generated by culture, when artistic traditions become engaged across cultural borders, the results can be complex social phenomena, not easily perceived or understood, especially in the colonial and postcolonial worlds.

For art historians and some visual anthropologists, it is self-evident that many works of art which purport to be, or are asserted to be 'Aboriginal art', are rather artefacts of the colonial encounter. But there remains the problem for observers, aware of this relationship, of the difficulty of mapping out the detailed world of Aboriginal religious life and culture proper, the world which lies behind the encounter, of acknowledging the density of signs, of knowledge, and of images which Aboriginal people bring to this encounter.

I draw attention to it, so as to highlight the distortion of Aboriginal life which certain post-modernist critiques bring to the literature, to overcome the drafting of Aboriginal life into a vortex of concepts such as 'absence', 'ambiguity', 'desire', 'appropriation' and so on. These literary excursions appear to be the fetishizations of the European desires, absences, ambiguities, appropriations and other sentimental features of their imperial history which distance any reality of their nemesis and incubus, the Other.

My principal argument is that a discursive location exists between Christian proselytism and Aboriginal religion. How we understand historically, the invention and construction of Aboriginal 'art' and 'culture' in modern Australia must, in each geographic region and in each community, reflect on the Aboriginal engagement with European religion, as much as with any other aspect of European society.

[1] WEH Stanner 1976 *Charles Strong Memorial Trust Inaugural Lecture,* 1976, p. 19.

[2] *ibid.,* pp. 30-33.

[3] Manning Clark 1962 *A History of Australia, The Earliest Times to Catholic Christendom* Volume I, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, pp. 4-5.

[4] William Dampier 1698 *A New Voyage Round The World,* 3rd ed., London, vol.1. p. 467.

[5] Andrew Sayers 1994 *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century,* Oxford University Press in association with National Gallery of Australia, Melbourne, pp. 8-9.

[6] *ibid.*

[7] Clark *op.cit.,* pp. 168-9.

[8] Jean Woolmington 1988 'Writing on the Sand: The first missions to Aborigines in Eastern Australia', in Tony Swain and Deborah B Rose 1988 (eds.) *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions, Ethnographic and Historical Studies,* The Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Special Studies in Religions, No. 6, Bedford Park, South Australia, p. 77.

[9] Woolmington *ibid.,* pp. 77-8.

[10] *ibid.*

[11] *ibid.,* p. 89.

[12] *ibid.,* pp. 88-9.

[13] Bain Attwood 1989 *The Making of the Aborigines,* Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p. 7.

[14] *ibid.,* p. 31.

[15] *ibid.,* p. 69.

[16] *ibid.,* p. 77.

[17] *ibid.,* pp. 77-8.

[18] *ibid.,* p. 79.

[19] *ibid.*

[20] Henry Reynolds 1990 *With the White People: The Crucial Role of Aborigines in the exploration and development of Australia,* Penguin, Victoria, p. 162.

[21] *ibid.*

[22] *ibid.*, p. 114.

[23] Gordon Briscoe 1996 *Queensland Aborigines and the Spanish influenza pandemic of 1918-1919,* AIATSIS, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra.

[24] They are now the property of the Northern Territory Government who repatriated them from Strehlow's second wife. They are housed in the Strehlow Centre in Alice Springs.

[25] Lucienne Fontannaz 1995 *Then and Now: Pitjantjatjara and Aranda Artists 1930s-1990s,* exhibition catalogue, Australian Exhibitions Touring Agency with Tandanya Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Melbourne, p. 9.

[26] From Jennifer Hoff 1984 *Children's Art at Hermannsburg; Emergence of the traditional style,* paper presented to the AIAS Conference, May, Canberra, quoted in Fontannaz *op.cit.*, p. 9.

[27] Ian Burn & Ann Stephen 1992 'Namatjira's White Mask: A Partial Interpretation' in Jane Hardy and JVS Megaw and M Ruth Megaw (eds.) 1992 *The Heritage of Namatjira, The Watercolourists of Central Australia,* William Heinemann Australia, Port Melbourne, quoted in Fontannaz *op.cit.,* p. 9.

[28] Fontannaz *op.cit.,* p. 10.

[29] Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions 1948 *Friends From the Walkabout, Brief Studies of the Australian Aborigines and of the work of Presbyterian Missions in their Midst,* Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions, Sydney.

[30] *ibid.,* p. 10.

[31] *ibid.,* pp. 13-14.

[32] Ronald M Berndt and Catherine H Berndt 1988 'Body and Soul: More than an episode' in Swain and Rose (eds.) *op.cit.,* p. 45.

[33] *ibid.*

[34] Charles D Rowley 1970 *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society,* Australian National University, Canberra.

[35] See Ann E Wells 1971 *This Their Dreaming: [legends of the panels of Aboriginal art in the Yirrkala church],* University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Qld; Reverend William A Chaseling 1957 *Yulengor: Nomads of Arnhem Land,* Epworth, London; Nancy Williams 1976 'Australian Aboriginal Art at Yirrkala: Introduction and Development of Marketing' in Nelson Graburn, (ed.) 1976 *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expression From the Fourth World,* University of California Press, Berkeley.

[36] Berndt and Berndt 1988 *op.cit.*; and Ronald M. Berndt 1962 *An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia,* Mouton, Paris.

[37] Berndt 1962 *op.cit.*

[38] Berndt and Berndt 1988 *op.cit.,* p. 51.

[39] Berndt 1962 *op.cit.*, p. 85.

[40] Berndt and Berndt 1988 *op.cit.,* p. 51.

[41] Berndt 1962 *op.cit.,* p. 83.

[42] Berndt and Berndt 1988 *op.cit.,* p. 51.

[43] Ian McIntosh 1996 *'Can We Be Equal in Your Eyes?': a perspective on reconciliation from north-east Arnhem Land,* PHD Thesis, NTU, p. 251.

[44] *ibid.,* p. 245.

[45] In Berndt 1962 *op.cit.,* p. 60.

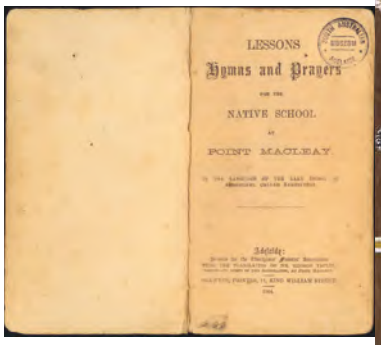
[46] McIntosh *op.cit.,* pp. 256-257.

[47] See for example Mary Douglas 1996 *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (revised edition), Routledge, London/New York, first pub.1979; Arjun Appadurai (ed.) 1986 *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspectives,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; and, in Australia, Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs 1998 *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation,* Melbourne University Press; Nicholas Thomas 1991 *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

[48] Peter Sutton 1994 *Country. Aboriginal Boundaries and Land Ownership in Australia.* Aboriginal History Monograph 3, Australian National University: Canberra: 57. This is why one place can be said to belong more or less to one small group, which also owns a nearby place along with four times as many other people—but all three 'sites' may still be defined as 'in the same estate'. This is because, in the less-well watered inland regions, Dreamings tend to be of three main types: localised Dreamings that travel hardly any distance; regional travellers with known starting and finishing points within the region and, thus, within the social and ritual ken of those with country on such tracks; and continental travellers which come into a region from places more or less unknown, pass through, and continue on to the countries of people little known, perhaps unknown. At certain points in the landscape, Dreamings of all these types may intersect, so that a single place has multiple connections to distinct but overlapping sets of people.

rob amery

The prevailing view amongst Indigenous peoples and wider society is that missionaries were responsible in large part for the suppression of religious practices, the crushing of Indigenous belief systems and the destruction of Indigenous languages and cultures.


LESSONS
Hymns and Prayers
NATIVE SCHOOL
POINT MACLEAY

Whilst there is no denying the negative impact that the Church has had on Indigenous cultures, experience varied and, in at least some cases, missionaries were the primary and sometimes only ones to record numerous Aboriginal languages and cultural practices.

There was a wide range of attitudes towards evangelism and the use of Aboriginal languages amongst eighteenth and nineteenth century missionaries and churchmen. Many saw no place for Aboriginal languages, but rather deliberately set out to 'civilise' Aboriginal peoples whom they regarded as a 'degraded race'. Consequently they taught and tolerated only English. Indeed some, like Samuel Marsden the Senior Chaplain in early colonial NSW, saw no place for evangelism amongst Australian Indigenous peoples until they had first been 'civilised'. A school was set up for Aboriginal children at Parramatta in 1814 by Governor Macquarie, but this school operated in English, and appears to have paid no attention to Aboriginal lang-uages. It wasn't until the arrival of Lancelot Threlkeld of the London Missionary Society in 1824 that serious mis-sionary work was undertaken. Threlkeld outlined his approach in the following terms:

With respect to seeing my system, it can be seen and known in two minutes, namely, first obtain the language, then preach the gospel, then urge them from gospel motives to be industrious at the same time being a servant to them to win them to that which is right.[1]

In South Australia, the first missionaries were Lutherans and, like Threlkeld, they did take Indigenous languages seriously. Clamor Schürmann and Christian Teichelmann arrived in Adelaide in October 1838, within two years of colonisation. They came on the same ship as Governor Gawler and we see from their journals that even on the boat coming out they were concerned about Indigenous languages. They impressed upon Gawler the merits of education using the children's first language as the medium of instruction. Gawler was initially resistant to this idea, believing in English civilisation, but he was eventually persuaded. We see amazing forethought on the part of these missionaries who, even before arrival in Australia, were talking about language preservation. This is revealed in Schürmann's record of their discussions with Gawler as follows:

Surprisingly, His Excellency said that the best way to educate the natives would be to bring them nearer the larger towns. Naturally I spoke against such an idea, and so did Teichelmann. If the natives blended with the Europeans, the language of the natives could be lost. His Excellency and Mr Hall then agreed, and stated they would do everything possible to preserve the native language.[2]

Evidently, Gawler pursued this topic further:

There was further discussion on the extent to which the missionary wished to preserve the natives' language, and on whether that had been ordered by the Mission Society. He answered that he believed the Society would naturally expect the retaining of the language, because in his instructions he had been told that as soon as he could master it, he should translate the Bible. Well then, would he encourage the natives to learn English? Individuals, yes, but not the people as a whole. In church and school I would introduce their own language, and when they had education and ability, I would encourage them to learn their own language to perfection.[3]

Schürmann's words were indeed prophetic, for within ten years of colonisation the children were heard to be talking English amongst themselves in the playground at the English-only Native School Establishment on Kintore Avenue. By the 1860s the Kaurna language had probably ceased to be spoken on a daily basis.

George Taplin, who established Point MacLeay in 1889, also took a keen interest in Indigenous languages, but by contrast with Teichelmann and Schürmann, he regarded them as inferior. He was, however, prepared to use them as a means to an end. Taplin gained some ability to commun-icate in Ngarrindjeri, but seemed to use it somewhat reluctantly, as if it was beneath him. At the request of Ngarrindjeri people, Taplin would often read his Ngarrindjeri translations of portions of the Bible and pray with people in Ngarrindjeri in their dying moments. Taplin reported this with the final comment: 'We cannot stoop too low to save souls'.[4] Taplin had a strong disdain and abhor-rence of Ngarrindjeri culture and frequently found himself in arguments with the Elders.

Mathew Hale, who established Poonindie in 1850, appears to have had no time for Indigenous languages. Poonindie was established to segregate young Aboriginal people, mostly married couples, from the evil influence of Aboriginal Elders and from the evil influence of white society. The core of the

Images from left to right

Lessons, Hymns and Prayers For the Native School at Point MacLeay in the language of the Lake Tribes of Aborigines, called Narrinyeri, 1864 printed for the Aborigines Friends Association from the translation of George Taplin, missionary agent of the Association at Point MacLeay, printed by Shawyer, Adelaide.
South Australian Museum Archives AA319 Taplin

Unknown artist
Crucifixion and Resurrection 1985
black, white and yellow earth pigments on bark
32.5 x 21.7 cm
Private collection, South Australia
Photo MultiMedia Unit, Flinders University

Poonindie institution were those who had attended the government-run English-only Native School Establishment in Adelaide. It was characterised by a diverse population drawn from many different language groups.

Missionaries were not the first to record aspects of Indigenous languages and cultures. In NSW the work of several members of the First Fleet, especially William Dawes and Watkins Tench, long preceded any missionary effort. Numerous others in the nineteenth century compiled wordlists. Edward Curr[5], George Taplin[6] and Wilhelm Schmidt[7] drew on many of these to compile comparative wordlists across many languages. But it was the missionaries, especially those from Germany, who produced the most extensive and best work in this period.

Threlkeld[8] was the first person to compile a grammar of an Australian language when he recorded Awabakal from Lake Macquarie near Newcastle. Teichelmann and Schürmann, drew on Threlkeld's work to some extent in their recording and analysis of the Kaurna language of the Adelaide Plains.

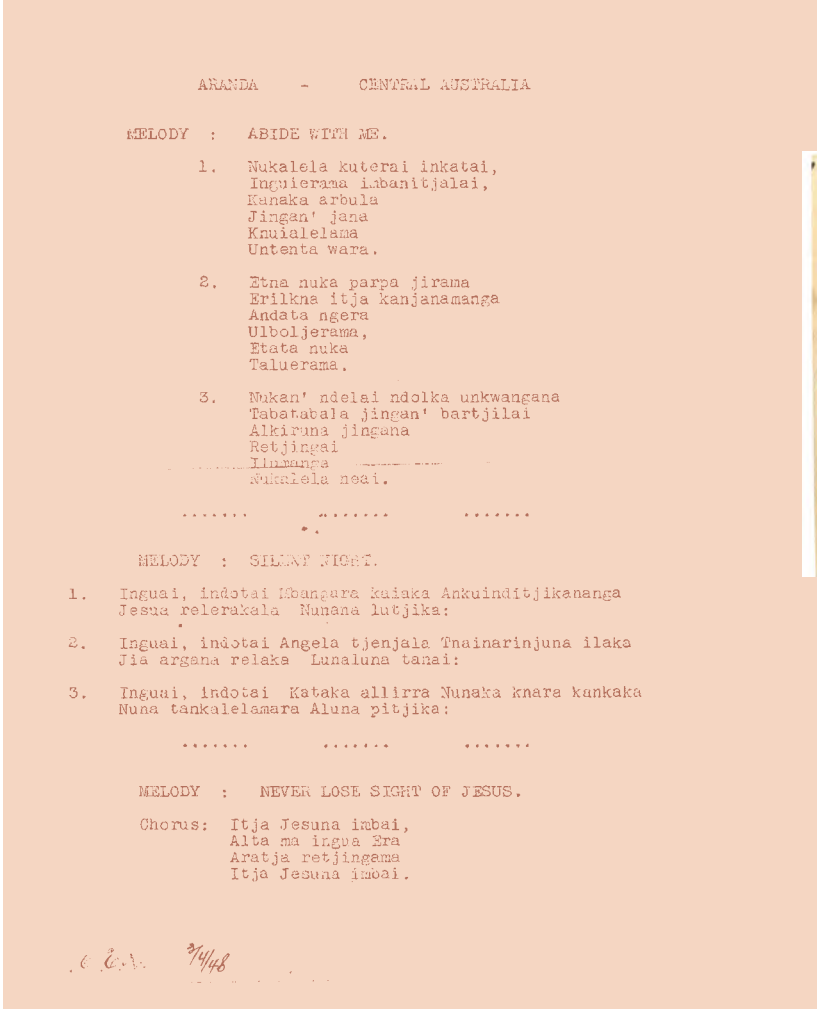
It appears that practically all the grammars of Australian Indigenous languages written in the nineteenth century, prior to systematic recording and analysis by trained ling-uists in the second half of the twentieth century, were written by missionaries. Some of these include: Threlkeld's 1834 grammar of Awabakal (Lake Macquarie, NSW); Teichelmann and Schürmann's 1840 grammar of Kaurna (Adelaide, SA); Meyer's 1843 grammar of Raminyeri (Encounter Bay, SA); Schürmann's 1844 vocabulary and grammar of Parnkalla (Port Lincoln, SA); and Taplin's 1873 Yaralde grammar (Point McLeay, Lake Alexandrina, SA).

One South Australian grammar from this period was compiled by a non-missionary. Mathew Moorhouse, Protector of Aborigines, wrote a grammar of Ngayawang in 1846 with the aid of a Kaurna man who spoke Ngayawang as well. Moorhouse used Teichelmann & Schürmann as a model and employed their spelling conventions.

The primary motive of these missionaries was to undertake Bible translation and produce religious texts. In order to do this they needed to understand the structure of the language, hence they began by writing grammars, though a few, like Thomas Wilkinson, appear to have attempted Bible translations before they had much knowledge of the language at all, with less than satisfactory results.

In several cases the languages were lost before there was a chance to do much by way of translation work. Threlkeld managed to complete a translation of the Gospel of Luke in 1830, revised in 1831, and a translation of the Gospel of Mark in 1837. Four years later Governor Gipps ceased paying Threlkeld's salary because the mission was deserted. Most of the Awabakal had succumbed to disease or massacre whilst the remaining few had taken to prostitution or rum in Newcastle.

The situation was somewhat similar for the Lutheran missionaries in Adelaide. Their work was cut short by government policies and a rapid decline in the Kaurna population. In 1845, less than seven years after their arrival, Governor Grey closed the Piltawodli or 'Native Location' school and forbade the missionaries to preach in Kaurna as they had been accustomed to doing. In 1850 young Kaurna adults who had been educated in the Piltawodli and Kintore Avenue schools were sent to Poonindie, on Eyre Peninsula, far from Kaurna lands. Teichelmann writes in a letter, 18 January 1858, that accompanied his final Kaurna language manuscript sent to George Grey in South Africa that: 'I do not entirely approve of the orthography of the native language, as we have spelt it, but it is useless now to alter any thing after the Tribe has ceased to be.'



ARANDA - CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

MELODY : ABIDE WITH ME.

1. Nukalela kuterai inkatai,
Ingulerama imbanitjalai,
Kanaka arbula
Jingan' jana
Knuialelama
Untenta wara.

2. Etna nuka parpa jirama
Erilkna itja kanjanamanga
Andata ngera
Ulboljerama,
Etata nuka
Taluerama.

3. Nukan' ndelai ndolka unkwangana
Tabatabala jingan' bartjilai
Alkiruna jingana
Retjingai
Ilimanga
Nukalela neai.

MELODY : SILENT NIGHT.

1. Inguai, indotai Mbangura kaiaka Ankuinditjikananga
Jesua relerakala Nunana lutjika:

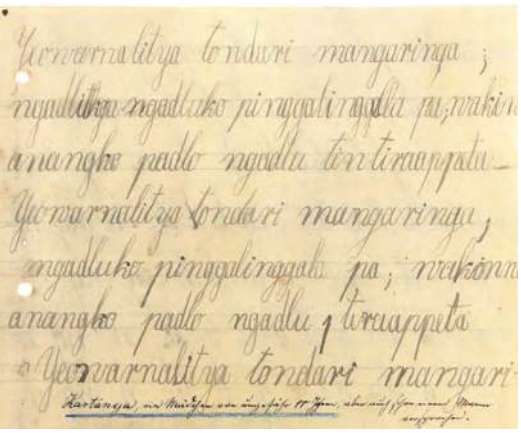
2. Inguai, indotai Angela tjenjala Tnainarinjuna ilaka
Jia argana relaka Lunaluna tanai:

3. Inguai, indotai Kataka allirra Nunaka knara kankaka
Nuna tankalelamara Aluna pitjika:

MELODY : NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF JESUS.

Chorus: Itja Jesuna imbai,
Alta ma ingua Era
Aratja retjingama
Itja Jesuna imbai.

3/4/48



In the case of Kaurna, at least 17 Europeans recorded wordlists of the language from direct observation. These observers included missionaries, government officials, employees of the SA Museum, a naturalist, a surveyor, a ship's doctor, a bank manager and various others. However, it was Teichelmann and Schürmann who compiled the largest, most detailed and most comprehensive vocabulary of around 3,000 to 3,500 words. The next largest wordlist is that of William Wyatt, Protector of Aborigines 1837–1839 and medical doctor, who recorded around 650 words, most of which were also recorded by the German missionaries.

The transcriptions of the two German missionaries were much more accurate and their definitions were often much more detailed than all other nineteenth century observers of Kaurna. Wyatt and others failed to record the initial 'ng' sound in several instances and inconsistently transcribed the vowels. Only John McConnell Black's transcriptions[9] are superior to those of Teichelmann & Schürmann's, but Black recorded a mere 66 words by comparison.

Teichelmann and Schürmann were the only ones to write a grammar of Kaurna and they recorded hundreds of Kaurna sentences illustrative of a wide variety of grammatical structures. A number of other observers recorded a handful of sentences, less than 30, but with the exception of Black, these sentences are all indicative of a Pidgin Kaurna, rather than the authentic traditional language. Furthermore, the German missionaries introduced literacy and preserved a number of texts, some of which were written by Kaurna people themselves.

So if it were not for Teichelmann and Schürmann, the record of Kaurna would be slim indeed. We would have very little idea of how to structure Kaurna sentences and we would be very restricted in what we would be able to do with the language now.

Lutheran missionaries Homann, Koch, Schochnect, Flierl, Reuther and Strehlow also undertook detailed analysis of Diyari in the northeast of SA. In the early twentieth century they extended their work into Arrernte in Central Australia.[10] Missionaries Hoff, JRB Love, Ron Trudinger, Wilf Douglas, Amee Glass and Dorothy Hackett were the first to undertake detailed grammatical analysis of the Western Desert languages prior to studies by linguistics postgraduates.[11]

Images from left to right

Aranda Hymn Sheet - Central Australia circa 1930s. Verso 'Ebenezer, 3.4.48, gladly loan these to you with greetings E. Ern Kramer, circa 1940.'
South Australian Museum Archives AA669 Kramer

In Nov 1840 Klose sent to Dresden a page from a copybook written by Kartanya, an 11 year old girl.
Jehova—to always worship
Always worship Jehova
our creator
He is our creator
Bad from us protects
He protects us from evil
Courtesy Leipzig Mission Archives, Leipzig, Germany
Translation Rob Amery

Christian concepts

Missionaries grappled hard with the difficulty of expressing the basic tenets of Christianity in languages which were geared for expressing very different concepts of religion. Missionaries differed in their approach to encoding Christian concepts. Encoding the very concept of 'God' presented an immediate dilemma. In the 1830s Threlkeld used *Eloi* 'God' from Hebrew *Elohim* 'God' in Awabakal. Several decades later, William Ridley[12] used *Baiame* 'God' in Kamilaroi (now Gamilaraay) in northern NSW. In Tasmania, Robinson used *Parlerdi* 'God', which he defined elsewhere as 'good spirit', whilst Wilkinson[13] borrowed *Godna* from English in his translation of Genesis. In Adelaide, Schürmann initially used Jehova, but then tried to use the Kaurna word *munaintyerlo* for 'God':

Munaintyerlo, who of old lived on earth, but who sits now above, has made the sun, moon and stars, the earth and the visible world in general…As soon as I got this name, I substituted it for the hitherto used Jehova, which they could scarcely pronounce … If further discoveries do not show that they combine too pagan and absurd ideas with the name Munaintyerlo, I mean to retain it for the name of God.[14]

He was forced to abandon its use for he found that:

The Munaintyerlo is not a Noun proper of a person, as I was then led to believe, but meant only a very ancient being, so that it can be justly said, that the Aborigines have an idea of creation, or that the universe has in very remote times been made by some being, but that they have no distinct notions of that being.[15]

Munaintyerlo probably translates as 'in the beginning'[16], but was also mistaken by Wyatt as the name of an ancestor. The German missionaries instead adopted *Yeowa* or *Yowa,* a Kaurna pronunciation of Jehova. Taplin also used Jehova 'God' in Yaralde, a Ngarrindjeri dialect, but made no attempt to assimilate it into the sound system as Teichelmann and Schürmann had done. In 1868, the Hermannsburg missionaries, Homann and Koch, at Lake Killalpaninna in the northeast of South Australia also borrowed *Godna* from English.

More recently, after he and Ron Trudinger had just completed a translation of Mark's Gospel into Pitjantjatjara in the mid-1940s, JRB Love wrote that: '…in the rendering of the sacred name I long ago came to the conclusion that it is not safe to use a native word for 'God'. The Pitjantjatjara speak of an old-man who created the physical features of their land. This, of course, is God. But many of their myths describe the creation of various features to animals and birds. And God cannot share the creation with His creat-ures. Again, in some of their myths, the actions of their mythical heroes are not consistent with the character of God.'[17] Accordingly, Godna 'God' appears in *Tjukurpa Palya Jesunya,* the Pitjantjatjara translations of the Gospels, first published in 1969 and in the full Pitjantjatjara Bible published in 2002.

Most modern Bible translations seem to have borrowed 'God' from English (Gumatj, Warlpiri, Pitjantjatjara), but some have used Indigenous roots. For instance, the Summer Institute of Linguistics' Pintupi Bible translated by Ken and Leslie Hansen uses *Katutja* 'pertaining to that above' for 'God'. Wilf Douglas also used a similar form, *Katunya,* in his Western Desert translations in Western Australia.

Some nineteenth century Bible translators readily borrowed words from English for foreign concepts, and sometimes concepts that were not so foreign. Other translators were extremely reluctant to borrow. When names and words were borrowed from English, some translators integrated them within the grammatical system of the language and assimilated them phonologically. Others spelt them as they are spelt in English and made no attempt to incorporate them into the system of the language, whilst yet others made partial attempts.

In the 1830s George Augustus Robinson, whilst strictly speaking not a missionary, tried to use Indigenous languages to Christianise the Palawa in Tasmania. By contrast with his contemporaries, Threlkeld in NSW and the Lutherans in South Australia, he seems to have made no attempt to write a grammar first. Rather, he cobbled together words from Tasmanian languages in English word order to form a sort of pidgin as follows:

Motti (one) *nyrae* (good) *parlerdi* (God) *motti* (one) *novilly* (bad) *raegewropper* (devil). *Parlerdi* (God) *nyrae* (good). *Parlerdi* (God) *maggerer* (stop) *warrangelly* (sky). *Raegewropper* (devil) *maggerer* (stop) *toogenner* (below) *uenee* (fire). *Nyrae* (good) *parlerwar* (native) *logerner* (dead) *taggerer* (go) *teenny* (road) *lawway* (up) *warrangelly* (sky) *parlerdi* (God) *nyrae* (good) *raege* (white man)... *novilly* (bad) *parlerwar* (native) *logerner* (dead) taggerer (go) *teenny* (road) *toogunner* (below) *raegewropper* (devil) *uenee* (fire) *maggerer* (stop) *uenee* (fire).[18]

It is interesting that in this short text, Robinson has avoided loan words entirely. He appears to use *warrangelly* 'sky' for 'heaven' and *toogener uenee* 'below fire' for 'hell'. But there is no evidence of any Tasmanian morphology. One can only wonder what the Palawa would have understood of this text. Thomas Wilkinson, catechist at the Flinders Island Settlement in 1833, also attempted a translation of portions of the first chapter of Genesis. Like Robinson's efforts, this translation is pretty much a one-to-one translation of the main words (nouns, verbs and adjectives) of the English text. But unlike Robinson's this short text includes a number of English loanwords including 'God', 'heaven', 'divide', 'like' and 'me', all (except for 'like' which appears as *lika*) with the same syllable attached.

To this day, almost nothing is known about the grammar of Tasmanian languages and these texts seem to reveal nothing of Tasmanian grammars, but rather depend entirely on English grammar.

Threlkeld uses a mixture of borrowings and Awabakal roots to encode foreign concepts. For instance, he uses *Marai* 'spirit' and *kurrima* 'to baptize'. Many borrowings are spelt as they are in English (eg Satan, devil, prophet, camel, Nazareth, Simon etc) but we also find words part-ially assimilated (eg Jesu Krist 'Jesus Christ', *Sunagog* 'synagogue', *Sabat* 'Sabbath', *lepro* 'leprosy', *Dabid* 'David' and so on).

William Ridley[19] seems to have gone to greater lengths to assimilate loan words into the sound system of Kamilaroi when he includes *iv* 'Eve' and *layaru* 'Lazarus'. Ridley also prefers to use Immanuel for Jesus as in the caption *Immanuel baluni* under a picture of the crucified Christ.

Whilst Teichelmann and Schürmann included very few Christian concepts in their published vocabulary and grammar, a number are evident in their translations of Kaurna hymns, the Ten Commandments and Governor Gawler's speech. There seem to be only two such words in their vocabulary: *Gadlapinde,* literally firepit, a term used for hell,[20] and *Karra,* height, sky, heaven.[21] In addition there are two sentences in their vocabulary used to illustrate cert-ain words and suffixes that relate to the communication of Christian concepts as follows: *Kuinyunda mai Adamilo yakko ngarkuma, yakko pa padluma,* 'Had Adam not eaten the forbidden fruit, he would not have died'.[22] and *Ngadlukko martuitya madli Christus,* 'Christ died on behalf of us, or for us'.[23]

Images from left to right

Tungarar Jehovald, Yarildewallin
extracts from the Holy Scriptures in the language of the Tribes inhabiting the Lakes and Lower Murray and called Narrinyeri from the translation by George Taplin, missionary agent of the Aborigines Friends Association at Point MacLeay, printed by the South Australian Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Printed 1864, reprinted 1926
South Australian Museum Archives AA319 Taplin

Testamenta Marra: Jesuni Christuni ngantjani jaura ninaia karitjimalkana wonti Dieri jaurani (The New Testament translated into Diyari by JG Reuther and C Strehlow) published by G Auricht in 1897
South Australian Museum Archives AA 681 Leske
Reuther and Strehlow's translation of the New Testament into Diyari took four years to complete.

Christianieli Ngujangujara—Pepa, Dieri—Jaurani
Pepaia Buru Kulnolu, printed by Scrymgour and Sons, Adelaide, 1880
South Australian Museum Archives AA681 Leske

THE COMMANDMENTS.

Tauata itto warranna Yowa pudlotti, wanggi ba :

I. Ngai Yowa, atto ninna pingyatti ; kuma Yowa ngai taikurri yailtyaûrti.

II. Yowarna tura pingyaûrti yakkoakarranangko, yakko yerta anangko, yakko yerlonangko ; turarna mikangga mamba tartarta tikkaûrti. Ngai Yowa, atto ninna pingyatti, marngubinna ai, wakinnanna ai paiereota ; marnninna, ngai numa nakkoanna, warranna aityo yurrekaityanna, tangka waierendai parnakko.

III. Yowarna narri madla pudloriappeûrti; Yowadlo yakko kudnunna yailtyaota parnukko narri madla pudloriappinanna.

IV. Yowarna tindo mukkabando, kuinyundappindo ba ; yerrabula purlaitye tindurna mudliitya worpulaingki ; kudyunurlo tindoûrloYowarna tindo, mudliitya worpulaeûrti. Yerrabula purlaitye tindurna Yowadlo karra, yerta, yerlo, purrudye pingyatti, kudyunurlo tindurlo ba kudla tikketti; namuntya padlo kudla kuinyundappi.

V. Ninkerli, ninkainuma nangando, ninna nurntikki purruna tikkctinna yertangga.

VI. Padlokundaûrti.

VII. Kuma yangarra wandiapeûrti.

VIII. Metteûrti.

IX. Ninko nepo marta martaûrti.

X. Ninko nepukko wodli, parnu yangarra, parnu bullokke, parnu nanto, parnukko purrudye mudlinna, manga mangaûrti.

THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS.

Pulyonna meyunna !

Itto warranna (wa na yellara yurre kaitya) yowarna yerlterittinna, padlo pinkya tindo, yerta, parkanna meyunna, pulyonna meyunna. kutyoanna mudliwodlinna purutye yowadlo pinkya.

Yaintya warranna tindo partanna yurre kaityaninga, mukabaninga.

Na mette-urti.

Tanaringutti, pungoringutti, yerra padlokundaringutti, yerra padlokundaringutti.

Wakwakkunna naakunna padlokunda-urti.

Yangaranna naakunna numma nangainga, taua-urti, kabbakabba-urti, wonda-urti parna. Yowarna takutya, Yesus Christus numma nangainga, parnu padlo nintyerlanna tikkainga.

Tindo partanna pa naalityangga waiendi.

Padlo na wakinna partannunangko tirra pe-uta, marni ngarraitye na padlo yunggo-uta.

Kopurlabinnanna tikka-urti, Kopurlurlo na kumatpi warrangkoarndiappeuta, padloappe-uta.

Wodliappanga tikkainga, *Mullawirra burka* (King John,) *Kadlitpinna* (Captain Jack), *Bukartiwillo*, kutyoanna meyunna turraturrauna.

Na wadliappanna tieta, parkanna meyunna taikurri taieta, ngando marnko-uta.

Ngarraitye turnki tidlinna wailinga *Mullawirra burka*, *Kadlitpinna*, kutyoanna meyunna turraturrana.

Ngarraitye parngutta, cabbage, turnip, kutyoanna mainna ngatpaninga.

Encounter Bay Bob mai yerta padlondi, Karromarranend'ai parnu warrarlo ngatto pa yungoûta, na kutyoanna meyunna yerta kokata, ngatto na yunggo-uta.

Mr. Moorhouse, Mr. Teichelmann Mr. Schürmann, parnakko warranna yurrekaityaninga, wappeninga, parna, na padlondi.

Itto warranna na wappe-uta, na ngunye-uta ; parkanna meyunna, pulyonna meyunna, yunyayungawortanna kumangka tikkata.

Surprisingly perhaps, there are none of these kinds of sentences included within their phraseology or grammar, though there are a number of sentences relating to aspects of Kaurna spirituality and traditional life. By contrast with the two sentences above, almost all Kaurna sentences recorded appear to come from the mouths of Kaurna people. Some relate to known historical events (for example, the hanging of Parudiya Wangutya and Yerraitya in the North Adelaide parklands in 1839) and many relate to daily activities and most likely were not elicited but were recorded in situ. There seems to have been a reluctance to include forms and structure that they had not heard Kaurna people use.[24]

It is evident that many more words that do appear in Teichelmann and Schürmann's 1840 vocabulary were later used to express Christian concepts. Schürmann and Teichelmann were very reluctant to use borrowings for anything but names. They used *Yeowa* for 'God' and *Anggeli* does appear for 'Angel' in a number of hymns, but it exists alongside of *tira mankolankola* 'angel' (from *tira* 'obstacle, barrier' + *manko-* 'to get' + *-la* 'Agent' + Reduplication. *Tira mankolankola* literally means 'the one who protects'). Other borrowings include *Abrami* 'Abraham', *Adami* 'Adam', *Mose* 'Moses', *Bedlemi* 'Bethlehem', *Babeli* 'Babel', *Kristu* 'Christ', *Maria* 'Mary', *Yesus* 'Jesus' and *Sunday worli* 'church' (lit. 'Sunday house').

Other Christian concepts or entities derived from Kaurna roots include: *Tangka waierendi* 'merciful' from *tangka* 'liver' + *waierendi* 'moving'; *Yurritinna* 'wicked' from *yurre* 'ear' + *-tina* 'without'; *Yailtyandi* 'to believe' from; *Yitpi tukkutya* 'spirit' from *yitpi* 'seed' + *tukkutya* 'little'.

It seems that Schürmann and Teichelmann much preferred to extend the meaning of existing Kaurna words (such as *kuinyunda* 'Holy' or *marngandi* 'to pray'), to derive terms (such as *yerlteriti* 'Commandment') or to form compounds from Kaurna roots (as in *gadlapinde* 'hell'). Fortunately in translating the word 'heart' as in 'give us a good heart' *Yungando tangka marninna,* they had the good sense to use *tangka,* the Kaurna word for 'liver', which functions as the metaphorical heart or seat of emotions, rather than *karlto* the anatomical 'heart'.

Teichelmann, who continued to work on Kaurna until the late 1850s, includes a number of other definitions and illustrative phrases and sentences that relate to Christian concepts and contexts, but these are still few and far between compared to the large number that relate to traditional life and Indigenous religious practices.

The early Lutheran missionaries at Lake Killalpaninna in the northeast of the state also came up against the problem of encoding Christian concepts in Diyari in 1868. Homann and Koch report on their work as follows:

We had already used various natives in this work; but none was so much help to us as Pikally, who knows best of all, or rather feels/intuits, what we want. Now for God we couldn't find an appropriate name. And we were not able to take the name for spirits or demons. So we said Goda, God. [This was due to English being the first foreign language at the mission school in Hermannsburg (Germany), which did not have the resources to provide its students with a classical languages education.] The 'a' had to be added because of the declension, and because they have no words that do not end in a vowel. Of course the expression now has to be explained until the Dieri people understand it. For God the Father we have: Aperi = 'Father', pirna = 'big'; for 'God the Son' Jesu, nattamurra kulno 'only begotten son'; Joa = 'Saviour, Helper, Redeemer'.[25]

Images from left to right

The Ten Commandments
The Governor's address
probably printed in Adelaide in 1839
verso 'Gov Gawler address to the natives in Govt House Grounds on May 24, 1839 spoken in English and translated into the native dialect by W Wyatt'
Photo courtesy of the State Library of South Australia
Mortlock Collection

By contrast, Schürmann and Teichelmann seem to have had no difficulty in adapting the traditional word *kuinyunda* for 'Holy' in the Christian sense, nor do I imagine that they had any difficulty with 'Holy Spirit' as *towilla kuinyunda* or *yitpi tukkutya kuinyunda* though I cannot find it documented anywhere.

Heide Kneebone and Cynthia Rathjen suggest that the Lutheran missionaries at Lake Killalpaninna created a 'form of Mission-speak', perhaps a koine or *lingua franca,* an amalgam and simplification of the numerous closely related languages and dialects spoken by people who came into the mission.

Modern Bible translators have taken different approaches to the incorporation of loan words. In the Pintupi Bible all loan words are fully assimilated into the sound system of the language, whilst in the Pitjantjatjara Gospels they are largely unassimilated, though incorporated into the grammatical system as in the following examples:

	Pintupi Bible	*Pitjantjatjara Gospels*
Jesus Christ	*Yiitju Kirritjanya*	*Jesunya Christanya*
Matthew	*Maatjuwukunu*	*Matthewku*
in Bethlehem	*Pitjiliyamangka*	*Bethlehemala*
in Israel	*Yitjurilangka*	*Israelta*
in Egypt	Yitjipingka	*Egyptala*
Herod	*Yiruta*	*Herodanya*
Joseph	*Tjutjupa*	*Josephanya*

The Gumatj Bible also fully assimilates most loan words, but *Djesu* 'Jesus' and *Christ* are two exceptions contrasting with *Yitjak* 'Isaac', *Bawatj* 'Boaz', *Djitji* 'Jesse' etc.

Names in the Warlpiri Bible tend to be unassimilated, though they are integrated into the grammatical system as in the following examples: Jesus-kirli 'with Jesus'; John the Baptist-rli 'John the Baptist' as agent with the ergative case suffix added and Nazareth-ngirli 'from Nazareth'.
A few common nouns borrowed from English are however phonologically assimilated as in *papitaji-mani* 'to baptize', whilst some foreign concepts draw on Indigenous roots as in *Pirlirrpa Tarruku-karlurlu* 'with the Holy Spirit'.

Conclusion

Some early missionaries, such as Threlkeld, Teichelmann and Schürmann, have left a substantial and enduring record of the Indigenous languages with which they worked. Without these records we would have little or no knowledge of these particular languages. Though many attempted to record aspects of Indigenous languages in the nineteenth century, it was often missionaries who, by virtue of their training, were best equipped to document them. By and large, missionaries were the only ones to write grammars of Australian Indigenous languages in this early period, because they needed to understand how they worked in order to perform Bible translation. Most other observers limited their investigations to wordlists as their main interest was in uncovering relationships between lang-uages through the compilation of comparative wordlists.

Missionaries grappled with the task of encoding numerous Christian concepts for which there was no Indigenous equivalent. In so doing they used a variety of different strategies. They faced the very same dilemmas that modern Bible translators face today.

In a number of cases, extensive recordings made by nineteenth century missionaries have allowed sustained language revival efforts to flourish. Such efforts have included the teaching of school language programs, the writing and translation of songs, the preparation of story books, the giving of speeches of welcome and introduction, the preparation of signage and the, as yet, limited use of these languages for everyday interaction and conversation.

Some missionaries, like Teichelmann and Schürmann, had the foresight to see the importance of language preservation. Others, like Taplin, saw Indigenous languages as a means to an end, whilst many others simply ignored or even deliberately denigrated and suppressed Indigenous languages. The record is mixed, but the efforts of some pioneering missionary linguists should be recognised.

Missionary efforts, mainly through the Summer Institute of Linguistics, continue into the 21st century to document Indigenous languages, to translate the Bible and other religious texts, to introduce literacy programs and to train Indigenous people in the arts of interpreting and translation. They continue to play a vital role in the maintenance of many languages in remote areas of northern Australia.

[1] Threlkeld to Saxe Bannister, 27 September 1825, in Niel Gunson 1974 (ed.) *Australian reminiscences & papers of LE Threlkeld, missionary to the Aborigines 1824-1859,* Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, p. 187.

[2] Journal, June 1838, quoted in Edwin A Schurmann 1987 *I'd rather dig potatoes: Clamor Shürmann and the Aborigines of South Australia 1838-1853,* Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, p. 21.

[3] *ibid.,* p. 26.

[4] Rev George Taplin 1874 *The Narrinyeri, p. 56.* Reprinted in JD Woods 1879 (ed.) *The native tribes of South Australia,* Government Printer, Adelaide. Reprint, 1923, Parkhouse.

[5] EM Curr 1886 *The Australian race: Its origin, languages, customs, place of landing in Australia and the routes by which it spread itself over that continent,* 4 vols, Government Printer, Melbourne.

[6] Rev George Taplin 1879 *The folklore, manners, customs, and languages of the South Australian Aborigines,* Government Printer, Adelaide.

[7] Wilhelm Schmidt 1919 *Die Gliederung der Australischen Sprachen: Geographische, bibliographische, linguistische Grundzüge der Erfuorschung der australischen Sprachen,* Druck und Verlag der Mechitharisten-Buchdruckerei, Vienna.

[8] LE Threlkeld 1834 *An Australian grammar, comprehending the principles and natural rules of the language, as spoken by the Aborigines, in the vicinity of Hunter's River, Lake Macquarie, &c. New South Wales,* Sydney. Reprint, John Fraser 1879 (ed.) *An Australian language as spoken by the Awabakal, the people of Awaba or Lake Macquarie (near Newcastle, NSW). Being an account of their language, traditions, and customs, by LE Threlkeld 1834,* Government Printer, Sydney.

[9] JM Black 1920 'Vocabularies of four South Australian languages, Adelaide, Narrunga, Kukata, and Narrinyeri with special reference to their speech sounds', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia 44,* Adelaide, pp. 76-93.

[10] See Mary-Anne Gale 1997 *Dhangum djorra'wuy dhäwu: a history of writing in Aboriginal languages,* Aboriginal Research Institute, University of South Australia, Underdale; Heidi Kneebone and Cynthia Rathjen 1996 'Men with a Mission' *Journal of the Friends of Lutheran Archives,* Adelaide, No. 6, October, pp. 5-40; Carl Strehlow 1907 *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Staemme in Zentral Australie: Mythen, Sagen und Marchen des Aranda-Stammes in Zentral Australien,* Baer, Veroeffentlichungen des Frankfurter Museums fur Volkerkunde, Frankfurt; TGH Strehlow 1944 *Aranda Phonetics and grammar,* introduction by AP Elkin, Australian National Research Council, Sydney; TGH Strehlow 1947 *Aranda Traditions,* Melbourne University Press, Melbourne; TGH Strehlow 1971 *Songs of Central Australia,* Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

[11] Cliff Goddard 1983 *A Semantically-Oriented Grammar of the Yankunytjatjara Dialect of the Western Desert Language,* PhD thesis, Australian National University, Canberra.

[12] William Ridley 1856 *Gurre Kamilaroi or Kamilaroi Sayings,* engravings by W Mason, Empire General Steam Printing Office, Sydney.

[13] Wilkinson 1833, cited in NJB Plomley 1976 *A Word-List of the Tasmanian journals and papers of George Augustus Robinson 1829-1834,* Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, pp. 40-43.

[14] Letter, 12 June 1839 in Schurmann 1987 *op.cit.,* pp. 46-47.

[15] Letter, 3 April 1840 in Schurmann *ibid.,* p. 91.

[16] Rob Amery 2000 *Warrabarna Kaurna!: Reclaiming an Australian Language,* Swets & Zeitlinger, The Netherlands, p. 128.

[17] JRB Love 1946 Article held in Bible Society of Australia Archives, Canberra.

[18] George Augustus Robinson in NJB Plomley 1966 (ed.) *Friendly mission: The Tasmanian journals and papers of George Augustus Robinson 1829-1834,* Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, p. 61.

[19] Ridley, *op.cit.*

[20] Teichelmann and Schürmann, *op.cit.,* p. 5.

[21] *ibid.,* p. 10.

[22] *ibid.,* p. 16.

[23] *ibid.,* p. 21.

[24] Amery, *op.cit.,* p. 94.

[25] *Kirchen und Missionsblatt* 15, 1868, p. 150, quoted by Kneebone and Rathjen 1996, *op.cit.,* pp. 36-37.

mary eagle

holy, holy, holy

'Holy, Holy, Holy!'
Angels call attention
to the divine presence
as the veil is lifted on
the ultimate scene
of worldly existence.
Flying between
heaven and earth,
the annunciating
angels wake the
living and the dead
to witness the final
revelation.

Sidney Nolan shows the *Musgrave Ranges* 1949 between heaven and earth. The visionary scene rises and tilts with the plane in which Nolan was flying, extends outward in ripples like the waves of a red sea, yet describes the obverse of wrinkled water in 'eroded bony mountains', 'old as Genesis', in a 'peculiarly Australian confrontation with the sky'.[1] Land and sky likewise framed Ludwig Becker's outward gaze from the *Border of the Mud-Desert Near Desolation Camp* 1861. His eye journeyed across an empty plain into blinding white light. This sublime scene of desolation and near-nothingness could stand for the failure of the Burke and Wills expedition to fill in the 'ghastly blank' on the Australian map with the factual record of their travel. In another sense, too, the white horizon of Becker's visionary gaze was a foretelling. Beyond lay his imminent death in a small tent north of that plain.

Albert Namatjira's *Mount Hermannsburg with Finke River Valley* c.1942-47 sculpts the mountain in palpable light and recessive shadow so that it alternately sweeps towards and away from sight. This subject he painted many times, living as he did for long periods at Hermannsburg Mission, in the mountain′s presence.

He knew the mountain yet his paintings declare its elusiveness to a constant envisioning. Namatjira, judging from his many images of Mount Hermannsburg, did not share the optimism beneath John Brinkerhoff Jackson's remark that 'no landscape...can be comprehended unless we perceive it as an organization of space: unless we ask ourselves who owns it or uses the spaces, how they were created and how they change'.[2] He knew those aspects of Mount Hermannsburg,

however his paintings suggest that the reality is not to be comprehended: at least not in the Western way, by triangulation, geological survey, or the eye in light. For me, the exhibition's image of greatest extremity and wonder is another work by Namatjira, *Other Refuge Have I None* circa 1930-34. I cannot speak for Namatjira, but the Christian message burnt into mulga wood is a cry of alienation, dependence and amazing faith.

Seemingly the exhibition and catalogue represent as many variations of Christianity and Revelation as there are works of art. The artists express devoutness, awe, trust, rage, irony, doubt; and in quite disparate ways. I see awe but not necessarily Christian feeling in Nolan′s and Becker′s landscapes; a Christian story shrewdly applied by Margaret Preston; in Namatjira′s images I see landscapes from which the artist is typically sidelined by the horizontal sweep of landforms and light[3] and by comparison with which, Jarinyanu David Downs boldly invokes his locality and the full weight of its lore and law in re-forming Christian stories.

An exhibition of such Christian diversity could do with pointers to the central issue of how human beings give meaning to their world. The curator's model has been translation. Vivonne Thwaites began with revelation—the *Holy, Holy, Holy* of the title—before moving into a study of missions with, as the main consideration, the acts of translation involved in bringing the Word of God to Aboriginal peoples. She soon rejected the idea that translation was in any way adequate in capturing the essence of what was expressed. The missionaries admitted that the languages were not equivalent, so their translations would be unavoidably skewed, and to the Aboriginal people could mean something quite different from what was intended. Translation raised some vital issues, not least that of how 'translatable' religious beliefs, deep-seated loyalties, visualisation, poetic metaphor and mental associations actually are. She stayed with the model—currently a focus of academic attention—while putting it to a magnificent test.[4]

It is singularly appropriate to bring the translation of religious ideas to bear upon art. If you think in terms of texts rather than speech, the missionaries' translations of Biblical texts may be seen (deceptively) as so many acts in the past. Likewise the exhibition's works of art represent past acts of creative expression. Yet what is conveyed by an image (whether it is visual or textual) is so bound up in ambiguity and intuition that each partaker has to engage in a fresh act of interpretation. Translation is an on-going process for works of art, and for religion, poetry and mythic story, which have the same, never-ending need of interpre-tation. Their style of expression contrasts with scientific, mathematical and legal expression which seek to close meaning. Art's lack of independent meaning makes it an appropriate vehicle for thinking about religious translation.

The other reason for invoking translation is, of course, Australia's history since British settlement, which has fostered a tradition of two cultures, Indigenous and provincial European. For most of that time languages (and cultures too) have been intermixed, overlapping and changing. Consequently translation, as a model, has no stable positions.

Images from left to right

The interior of Hermannsburg church during worship service in 1910. Missionary O Liebler (Hermannsburg 1910–1913) in pulpit. Mr W Beisel, teacher also facing congregation.
Photo courtesy Lutheran Archives, Adelaide

Grave site of Herman Heinrich Vogelsang 1832–1913, Killalpaninna
Photo by Vivonne Thwaites 2002

Aboriginal men and women outside the second Killalpaninna church circa 1910, which was dedicted on 5 December 1909. 'At its first service Ludwig Kaibel gave the opening discourse, drawing the Aborigines' attention to the generosity of the Mission Friends, and asking them to make donations themselves towards the construction and upkeep. Black shearers and shepherds agreed to donate from their wages, and to earn their extra living expenses from dingo scalps.'
Christine Stevens 1994 *White Man's Dreaming: Killalpaninna Mission 1866–1915,* Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 177.

To think of cultural transmission in terms of translation's practical role in language would be to assume too much: that two distinct (rather than overlapping) systems are involved, that an essence is exchanged, that 'culture' is analogous to language, and so on. The basic problem is that words alone don't make meaning. Rather, *people make meaning.* Compared with the rich opacity of what goes on between people, language translation is incisive. It cuts to the chase, conducting a routine transport from one system to another. However its usefulness is supreme in being able to record that something is introduced—the Word of God/ Christian iconography/ Creation story—and *because it is in translation,* there is already a local context for it, an envelope of language or visual signs. Entering via translation—therefore, as it were, synthetically enculturated—the imported Word/Sign comes by possibly inexplicable association to mingle with local things that may be expressed the same way.

This exhibition disturbs the concept of translation by bringing to notice inflections of communication. The national language of the majority of the artists has been English though many have been multi-lingual. Pastor Reuther read the Bible in German and Diyari, David Downs in

Walmajarri, Margaret Preston in English. Communication systems include a wide repertoire of styles of visual expression, the diversity of which matches the many and mixed religious messages. For some artists, Christianity is one of their religions. The diversity of expression is a reminder that religious meanings are a matter of faith and commitment rather than logical definition. So, if the translation model tends to retain the idea of an essential message separate from the subversive distortions of local interpretation, the imagery of belief offsets the tendency. One has to ask what religious meanings are not interpretations? Within the Biblical texts (themselves endlessly translated from who knows what original sources) there are many gnomic interpretations of the Word of God. And Ancestral stories swing on personal authority.

Among these works there are no fixed boundaries separating one group from another; rather, the historical dimension of the exhibition shows that differences have been fluid and changeable, defined and re-defined between groups. A more radical extension of that idea is that difference is *constructed* instrumentally as a position, point of activity and process of negotiation rather than being innate, systematic and essential.

The concept of translation, if it is to have a special insight into visual art, has to discern poetic images reconstituted from one visual context to another where the message is equally inspired and equally (though differently) at home. In this exhibition, the message pertains to religion, and is by no means neutral. On one hand it is no less than God′s Word; on the other (equally a founding statement) it is Creation stories, Customary Law, Land rights. In practice the translators have exercised the right of possessing the Truth. Translation of the Word of God for a long time belonged to missionaries, whose belief led them to bring Aboriginal people into communion with God. Yet their interpretations of God′s Word were geared to current circumstances, goaded by the authoritarian paternalism of the colonising period and white people′s belief in their own superiority. That is to speak of the mission-in-time: now a time in the past. Most of the works in the exhibition are by Aboriginal Christians of our own day. Their Christianity is a sub-theme in a broader, present-day movement by Indigenous people to represent their religious beliefs with the intention, at times explicit, of educating Australians at large to an Aboriginal, local way of thinking.

Historically, the people addressed by acts of translation were not required to reciprocate. Mission Aborigines weren′t expected to respond to the gift of God′s Word with a translation of Creation stories or Customary Law (though I say below that the Toas collected at Killalpaninna Mission may have been just that). Nor, today, are Australians in general asked to respond to the revelation of Indigenous Customary Law with their own dreaming of the land. Rather, the recipients of acts of translation will be invited to show knowledge and endorsement of the translated Word of God/ Land rights. At the simplest level, acts of faithful translation on the part of European missionaries and present-day Aboriginal elders are recognised as such when they have already added to the beliefs of the peoples addressed. In both instances enlightenment is a goal, and intercultural agreement is affirmed in the social and legal practices of both groups.

The impulsion (or pressure) to express, find support for, or enforce, one's beliefs describes the creative acts of persuasion by Aboriginal and other Australian artists. This seems to be the process, rather than a neutral and systematic operation of translation.

At the Lutheran mission of Killalpaninna, around the turn of last century, Johann Georg Reuther collected four hundred Toas (or way-markers) from the Diyari and other people from east of Lake Eyre. A number of nineteenth-century writers mentioned these sticks, topped with clay and/or grass and pointing in the direction of travel, that were employed widely in the eastern part of the continent. In 1882 Samuel Gason wrote to Alfred Howitt about the Diyari and Pillatapa: 'they use sticks ...to denote to traveling [sic] blacks whare [sic] they have shifted a camp, viz, a camp of blacks remove their quarters to a place the name of Napa-tunkina [possibly Apatooganie waterhole, a short distance from Killalpaninna]—at the old camp they leave a stick bent in the direction of Napa-tunkina (stinking water) and on the top place a puddled clay cup containing stinking water [ie, they modelled the clay-gypsum top to symbolise their place of destination]—So travelling blacks have no difficulty in finding [the] main camp.'[5] Way-markers were also observed at scenes of death. Thus the teacher at Cummeragunja mission on the NSW side of the Murray River opposite Barmah, wrote to R.H. Mathews in 1898, 'When a death occurred in the camp, the Aborigines immediately after the burial removed their camp to a distant spot and, before leaving, a long pole with a big lump of mud at one end, supported by a forked upright, was left for the information of visiting tribes. The pole indicating the direction of the new camp and the mud the cause of the removal'.[6]

The Diyari of East Lake Eyre were known to paint sacred designs on ceremonial sticks.[7] According to anthropologist Ronald Berndt the Toas were 'public religious statements available for all to see, although the designs on them were not unlike those on secret-sacred objects'.[8] The three Toas selected by the curator for this exhibition are simple in form yet these red-painted sticks topped in each case with the modelled figure of a dog, demonstrate how directly place was identified with ancestral knowledge and laws of inheritance.

Pirrilaninani (Toa 21/160), wrote Reuther, is a dog belonging to the Ancestor Darana that had a white patch on its forehead and upper nose. The place denoted is the bare Pirrila sand hill on which Killalpaninna mission stood.[9] Reuther's map of the desert region east of Lake Eyre, with 2,468 local place-names, has Pirrila twice, at the mission, and at Lake Hope—an indication of how a repeating pattern of place-name and founding legend corresponded to a rhythmic repetition in the geography of that country.

Pantuni (Toa 245/97), wrote Reuther, means 'to Lake Hope'. The top disc represents the shape of the lake, which doubles as a dog's head (on the side generally reproduced).

Images from left to right

Albert Namatjira Western Arrernte 1902–1959
[Mulga plaque] (Other refuge have I none) circa 1930–34
pokerwork on hardwood
50 x 21 x 2 cm (irreg.)
inscribed pokerwork

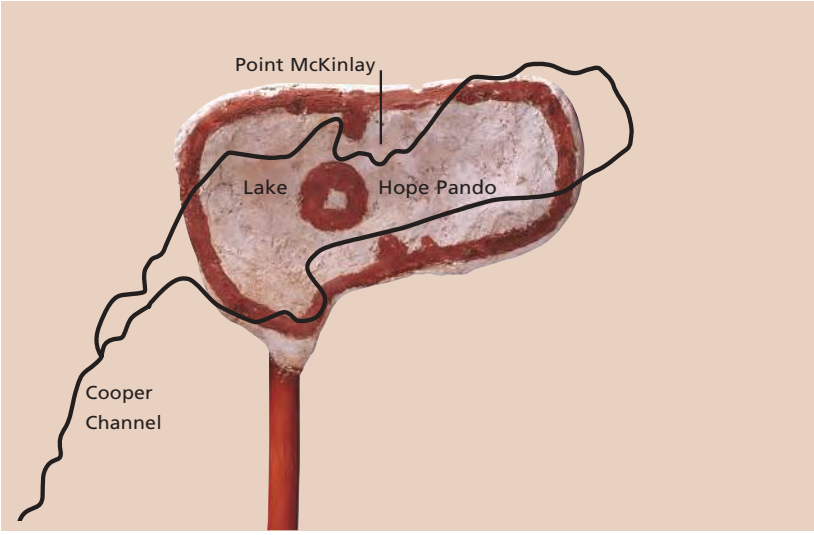
Gift of Hélène and Dudley Burns in memory of Pastor FW Albrecht, 1988
(from the collection of the late Reverend and Mrs FW Albrecht)
Flinders University Art Museum 2740

Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.
Leave ah! Leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me,
All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.
The Australian Hymn Book 2001 Collins, p. 162.

Ruins of the former home of the main missionary at Killalpaninna
(the Reuther-Reidel residence) circa 1949

The ‘eye’ or navel, a red painted circle in the centre, is the deepest part of the lake where water remains longest as the lake dries out. This waterhole is where the bitch Pantupajani had her young ones and the Muramura (Ancestor) Ngattanimarumaru joined them. At the same place-of-origin the Muramura Nurawordubununa emerged, whose journey from the lake in the form of a snake formed the bed of the connecting part of Cooper’s Creek. Two red marks pushing in at the sides of the lake—the trees at Point McKinlay and the opposite point—were fishing posts between which a third Muramura, Pintanganina, stretched his fishing-net at a time when the lake was full of water and abounding with fish. Reuther does not mention the reverse side but in the pictorial code indicated for the Toas it could represent the lower end of the lake filled with water and the flats along the creek entrance covered with trees.[10]

Marukutumaninani (Toa 372/223) means a much-prized red ochre (described as ‘soft, silvery-looking red and oleaginous’), a narrow seam of which was mined in a quartz fastness near Beltana. Expeditions from east of Lake Eyre ‘travelled five hundred kilometres to the south to fetch this ochre’.[11] Reuther described the vertical stripe flanking the Toa’s gypsum head as ‘the track along which the natives go up into the hills. The ochre-mine...is situ-ated at the top. The red ‘nose’ signifies projecting cliffs [elsewhere he says ‘ledge’]. The yellow mountain-top is ...stones. White denotes something more like limestone’.[12] In 1882 TA Masey, mining entrepreneur, bribed two Aborigines to take him to the mine. Crossing several ranges they came to a ‘precipitous gorge’, up which ‘a beaten path was clearly discernible’. Following ‘up the steep gorge, and over immense boulders and rocks, brought us to another spur branching off from the main range. About 50ft up the steep slope...[were] the celebrated ochre caves.’ Most of the burrows had fallen in (a regular occurrence and fatal if an expedition was there at the time), however a small excavation remained, which was just ‘sufficiently large for a man to crawl into’.[13] Philip Jones has observed that there were two mines in the vicinity, the Ancestral associations of which included the pursuit, fight and deaths of an emu and some dogs. The ochre was identified as the blood shed by those animals as they died, the emu at one ochre cave and the dogs at another, even more restricted, source of the glistening ochre.[14]



In 1986 Philip Jones and Peter Sutton suggested that since the Toas collected by Reuther were so many, they must have been produced expressly for him. That 1980s interpretation would make these Toas an early instance of Aboriginal translation from a first, practical purpose to collectible art. Those writers also shed light on another form of translation that was involved in building the large collection of Toas. Reuther, between the early 1890s and 1905, assiduously questioned the Aborigines at Killalpaninna while writing several dictionaries of words, personal names, place names and, latterly, catalogues of his collections—including the Toas—plus incomplete accounts of Mardus and Muramuras.[15] He made no attempt to connect the information across the texts. The possibility I’d like to raise is that the Toas in effect re-did Reuther’s work, but in Aboriginal terms, and reconnected what he broke apart, namely the synthesis of place, Ancestral story and living people (who were tied to place through personal name/s, birth, kinship, classificatory system, Muramura and Mardu).

Works of art speak for their makers, whose process of expression is strategic and authorial, coming from the heart, rather than translative, in the sense of neutral carr-iage. The 'voice' is rhetorical and persuasive. Namatjira chose what some people have seen as the outermost of his rightful modes, namely European watercolour painting, and his work attracted local people as well as Euro-Australians of the cities. The Toas, while being Aboriginal in form, addressed the two Europeans, who systematically translated their code and meanings into German words and ethnographic line drawings.[16] And as Marcia Langton points out in her essay for this catalogue, the missionaries were obliged to couch their work in ways satisfactory to their sponsors as well as their flock.

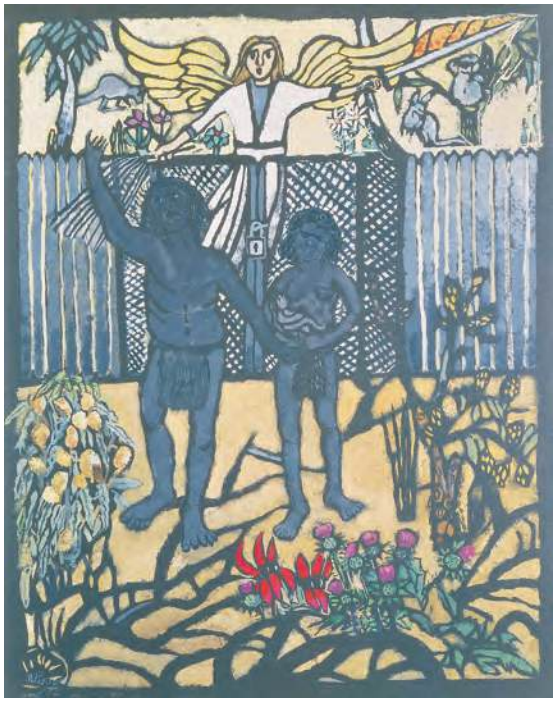
A vital factor in this story of inter-cultural art is that of changing perceptions over time. I mentioned above that artistic expression is characteristically suggestive rather than literal, which means that although in one sense the work is fixed to the context of its making, perceptions just as certainly are mobile and interpretive even at the time of origination. The great value of translation as a theory is in the matter of audience perception. What people are able to see in a work of art relates as much to the prepared mind as to the object itself. We see what we are able to see, what our minds and imagination prepare us for. The possibilities of the object therefore change, the alteration being entirely in the relations between object and audience. The New Testament speaks of the alacrity of seeing something clearly after peering doubtfully through dark glass and Walter Benjamin said the same in a famous essay about art. There are always obscured elements in a text or image yet those aspects to which the mind is aligned can assume great clarity: to some they shed the brilliant light of an epiphany. So viewers today are able to see Namatjira's sensitive paintings as being redolent with his experience as an Aboriginal, the Toas as having a special air of cross-cultural exposition, and Nolan′s and Becker′s landscapes gaining their power from the sublimity of the European unknown.

The works in the exhibition represent a time in history when Australians are open to local readings of history and place. In the past few decades familiarisation with Indigenous readings of the land has sped to a point where many non-Indigenous people (including Australians) find illumination in the landscapes, stories, styles, speech and practices of the first Australians. But the history has been asymmetrical. Indigenous Australians were colonised earlier and by forcible means; and the institutional bias against them remains. Through their works of art these people show their Australianness at several levels. They express their personal experience in a context that is shared by viewers whose experience may be different. The exhibition's visual art reflects the relativities of who speaks for, and to, whom. The fact that artist and viewer are both engaged as translator or interpreter is clear from the art and apparent in the responses to story-telling pictures. For example, the authority of the Bible is invoked deliberately by Margaret Preston and by Jarinyanu David Downs, with Preston turning God's Word against the missionaries, and Downs purposefully identifying with God′s acts of creation and salvation.

Diyari people of Killalpaninna mission *Pantuni* Toa created between 1895-1905
gypsum plaster, wood, red-ochre pigment
36.5h x 22.5w x 5.5d cm
South Australian Museum A6200 245

The Toa as a free-standing object represents Pantu (Lake Hope) from underneath as well as from the sky. The side painted with dots (trees) is the view from the sky. It corresponds with a conventional map. The side showing the lake from underneath has a small inner circle of great significance. It is the eye of the dog Pantupajani, the birthplace of Panutpajani's pups, and the lowest place in the lake, where the Muramura Nurawordubununa came out of the earth, travelling from there to form the bed of Cooper Creek.

Map overlay on *Pantuni* Toa by Mary Eagle, 2003



Margaret Preston's *The Expulsion* 1952, modest in scale, domestic or even childlike in story-telling mode, packs a punch when the content is spelt out. An authoritative Preston scholar, Roger Butler, sees that 'the Aborigines, Adam and Eve, are cast out of their native garden by a white angel into a land overrun with imported thistles.
The cyclone wire gate has been locked firmly behind them and a corrugated iron fence blocks out the earthly paradise. It is hard to read this print as anything but a scathing attack on the white settlement of Australia and the dispossession of Aboriginal land; on the church that helped destroy Aboriginal culture; and on the...Government which was so uninterested in the rights and welfare of the original inhabitants of Australia'.[17] A stencil in the same series, *Christ Turning the Water into Wine* 1951, may be perceived as equally scathing about the futility of mission work. Aborigines in the shade of an open-sided mission building watch Jesus in the dusty foreground turning their water into wine. If the irony of that idea were not sufficient to impress 1950s viewers (the provision of alcoholic drinks to Aborigines was forbidden by law), there was also a sub-theme in an absurd little font wasting the life-giving water from an adjacent corrugated-iron tank.

More recently, Jarinyanu David Downs's magisterial *Genesis—God, Star, Rain and Heaven* 1991 enacts the story of Genesis. Duncan Kentish knew the artist well and observed the circumstances from which the painting arose. *God's presence is represented here as 'Glory', surrounded by all the 'million million star' of his created firmament,* writes Duncan. As often happens when the responsibility for a dead artist has to be carried by a living representative, there is a mingling of viewpoints: the living representative is conscious of carrying a particular burden. In Duncan Kentish's account, the Creator, Downs and Duncan, are highly prepared for creation. '*Glory' seems possessed with a driven quality and an excitement at the immensity of his undertaking, focussed both into the near and far, mindful of the awesome responsibility of bringing Creation into being, and perhaps also burdened by foreknowledge of the actual nature of men and women.* Observing the artist from the point of view of one who cared for him, literally, Duncan tells us that the work was painted: *soon after Jarinyanu's first cataract operation in January 1991...In preparing Jarinyanu beforehand, the sister's warning about percentages of risk involved with this operation had to be formally translated... Jarinyanu interrupted impatiently, flourishing a line drawing he'd picked up after Church the previous Sunday, which showed Jesus healing the blind. He told the sister that the doctor was 'same like Jesus' and would similarly spit on earth to make mud with which he would touch Jarinyanu's eye and heal it.*

When his bandage was first removed, Jarinyanu was both excited and alarmed at how everything now seemed edged with an overpowering brilliancy of light. Initially he found this painfully intense but a few days afterwards... told me he was going to paint 'Genesis'.
Duncan's responsibility extended beyond the capacity of an artist to note his own procedure. He observed that Downs first: *read aloud from his Walmajarri Bible, providing a Kriol gloss as he progressed; saying 'God been make'im light first, sun, we call'im—you look'im!—and after he been make'im sky, ground and star, cloud and rain. And grass and tree,' pausing to break off a twig, and to lean down and pluck a handful of grass; saying 'You see!' Finally, he shut the Bible, 'Well, I gotta paint'im now.'*[18] (See page 76–77)

Translation in art and religion is a world without end. As a concept of exchange it ducks away from the complexity of human interaction only to return to it again and again. Analysis that is narrowed to one issue, that of crossing boundaries, thereby draws attention to the unique intermingling of semi-independent signs and particular contexts in a work of art. Finally and always, the translation is in us.

[1] Jane Clark 1987 *Sidney Nolan: Landscapes and Legends,* National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 111.

[2] John Brinkerhoff Jackson quoted in Lucy Lippard 1997 *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicultural Society*, New York Press, New York, p. 8.

[3] I became conscious of this in 2002 when looking at the wonderful retrospective exhibition *Seeing the Centre: the art of Albert Namatjira 1902-1959* curated by Alison French. Statistically, even Namatjira's images of gap and gorge, the subject of which projects the viewer into the landscape, were reticent about connecting the foreground with the natural passage: quite a number mask the passage. On the other hand, more recently, the route by which the eye travels inward has been made explicit by a Namatjira apprentice, Wenten Rubuntja, who has painted images of some of the same places.

[4] My thinking about translation was stimulated by Vivonne and by a discussion group on translation led by Amanda Macdonald and Debjani Ganguly, April-June 2003, Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, ANU, Canberra.

[5] Gara [Samuel Gason], Blanchewater, to AW Howitt, on reverse of a letter written by Howitt, 20 March 1882, Howitt papers, AIATSIS, Box 6, paper 6, folder 2.

[6] James to R H Mathews, 31 May 1898, R H Mathews papers, AIATSIS ms 1606.

[7] Lutheran missionary Otto Siebert to A.W. Howitt, Howitt papers, AIATSIS Box 7, folder 4, paper 3.

[8] Ronald Berndt 1986 'Foreword' in Philip Jones and Peter Sutton 1986 *Art and Land: Aboriginal Sculptures of the Lake Eyre Region,* South Australian Museum, Adelaide, p. 8.

[9] Reuther XII, Toa 160, in Scherer translation, AIATSIS.

[10] I had the privilege of being taken to the place by Tony Hamilton, during the early stage of researching the Toas. Vivonne Thwaites and Helen Printer came too, and contributed to the business of 'seeing the landscape'. Bill Watt and Michael Sincock, of the SA Department of Land Services, generously gave access to relevant maps and fieldbooks.

[11] Philip Jones and Peter Sutton, *op.cit.,* Toa 372.

[12] Reuther XII, Toa 223; XIII, Toa 223, in Scherer translation, AIATSIS.

[13] *Port Augusta Dispatch,* 9 June 1882, p. 3. I thank Bruce Ford for telling me about this article.

[14] Philip Jones 1984 'Red Ochre Expeditions: An Ethnographic and Historical Analysis of Aboriginal Trade in the Lake Eyre Basin', *Journal of the Anthropological Society of South Australia* (Adelaide), vol. 22, no. 7, pp. 3-10, no. 8, pp. 10-19.

[15] He claimed to have also written a book of Aboriginal songs, which has not been located. Chris Nobbs, Education Officer at the South Australian Museum, who has spent many years researching the ethnographic writing of Otto Siebert, notes that Reuther was indebted to Siebert's research.

I am indebted to Kim McCaul for transcripts and translations of many of Siebert's letters to AW Howitt.

[16] The second was Harry Hillier, English teacher of the children at the mission, collector of natural history specimens for European museums and presumably for Reuther as well. He assisted Reuther in drawing up a map to show place-names and in cataloguing and illustrating the collections. See Ian Coates 1999 *Lists and Letters: An Analysis of Some Exchanges Between British Museums, Collectors and Australian Aborigines (1895-1910),* doctoral thesis submitted to the ANU, Canberra.

[17] Roger Butler 1987 *The Prints of Margaret Preston: A Catalogue Raisonné,* Australian National Gallery and Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 27.

[18] From a text by Jarinyanu David Downs and Duncan Kentish, 1991-2003.

Margaret Preston 1875–1963
The Expulsion 1952
colour stencil, gouache on thin black card with gouache hand-colouring
60.5 x 48.5 cm
Gift of Mr W G Preston, the artist's widower 1967
Art Gallery of New South Wales DA64.1967
Photo Art Gallery of New South Wales

In 1952 she (Preston) began a series of five narrative stencil prints illustrating Bible stories. Adam and Eve are depicted as Aborigines and the Garden of Eden is resplendent with Indigenous Australian flora and fauna.

It stood to reason that as Australian aboriginals were the oldest people in the oldest land it was natural that the Garden of Eden was here, and that our own birds and animals should be in the picture too!

The Prints of Margaret Preston, Roger Butler, Australian National Gallery and Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 27.

The very awkwardness of some of her [Preston's] Aboriginal compositions drew attention to the indigenous forms that seemed unsatisfactorily translated. Just as the 1941 Australian Museum exhibition inadvertently revealed the aesthetic strength of indigenous forms that were introduced only to display their potential 'applications', Preston's work deflected viewers' attention, drawing them not toward her grand notion of a national culture, but 'irresistibly' toward the neglected indigenous art traditions themselves. Those traditions pointed in turn toward the indigenous presence, spotlighting a stubborn and enduring obstacle to the idea of settler nationhood.

Nicholas Thomas 1999 *Possessions: Indigenous Art, Colonial Culture,* Thames and Hudson, London, p. 143.

varga hosseini

The concept of translation has gained widespread currency in contemporary critical theory as a framework through which scholars from a range of different disciplines have explored the logistics and politics of cross-cultural exchange.[1]

One particular area where translation has played a pivotal role in the transference and transformation of cultural knowledge has been the encounter between Christianity and Indigenous Australian cultures. This essay endeavours to provide a theoretical background into the evangelical (and– according to some scholars– imperialistic) role that translation played in Christianity's historical expansion across cultures, and the response of Indigenous cultures to translated Christian texts in Australia. More specifically, this essay will formulate a particular conception of translation for reading the complex, multifarious and overlapping depictions of Christian themes, narratives and symbolism in the oeuvre of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian artists featured in *Holy, Holy, Holy*.

In the aftermath of more than a century of missionary activity throughout Australia, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian artists have portrayed the history and impact of Christianity, its practices, doctrines, narratives, iconography and the ways it was introduced and promoted throughout the continent in a plurality of ways.

Christianity and Translation

Now the whole earth had one language and few words. And as men migrated in the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heaven, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad, upon the face of the whole earth.'
Genesis: 11:1-4

Translation is a process that has often been implicated in conflicting theories of language. On the one hand, there is a view that the most complex, profound and intimate concepts and expressions in one vernacular can never be communicated in another. On the other hand, there is an assumption of the existence of universal ideas, which suggests that corresponding meanings between different languages do exist and thus equivalent transferrals of ideas are possible.[2]

The latter conception of translation has been recognised by theorists and theologians as one of the defining markers of Christianity. The significance of translation as a process through which Christianity historically introduces and implants its doctrines across cultures is one of the themes that Lammin O Sanneh examines in great depth in *Translating the Message: the Missionary Impact on Culture*.[3] Sanneh posits the hypothesis that Christianity, from the earliest stages of its development, adopted translation as a means of relativising its Aramaic and Hebrew roots, broadening its social and geographical trajectory and entering new territories and cultures. He singles out translation as the distinguishing feature of Christianity[4] and the primary source of the global expansion of the religion.

Both Catholics and Protestants were eager to translate the Bible and engage with Indigenous languages and cult-ures. This eagerness was bolstered by the perception of the Bible as a text whose scriptures, doctrines and principles were deemed by its followers as valid for, and applicable to, all cultures. Moreover, Christianity—Sanneh insists—is distinguished by its effortless ability to enter living cultures and—through translation—*render itself compatible with 'all cultures'*.[5] This universalistic agenda legitimised the evangelical ambitions of Christian missionaries.

Images from left to right

Detail bottom left Lutheran Bible illustration, 1550

Julie Dowling Badimaya/Budimia–Yamitja born 1969
Born for you, 2000
acrylic, red ochre & gold on canvas
100 x120 cm
Benedictine Community of New Norcia Australian Art Collection
New Norcia
© Julie Dowling 2000/Licensed by VISCOPY, SYDNEY 2003

Christine West Ngaanyatjarra born 1952
First Christmas Father-happy on! 2001
acrylic on canvas
99.5 x 12.95 cm
Warburton Community Collection
Courtesy Warburton Arts Project
From the exhibition *Mission time in Warburton*
Tjulyuru Regional Arts Gallery, WA 2002

Reuben Pareroultja, evangelist and artist, 1970.
Reuben Pareroultja was born at Hermannsburg in 1916 and like his brothers Edwin and Otto, went to mission school and then worked at the mission at Hermannsburg.
Photo courtesy Lutheran Archives, Adelaide.

Reuben Pareroultja Arrernte 1916–1984
Nicodemus the man who came to Jesus 1954
watercolour on paper
26.4 X 36.7 cm
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory
The Battarbee Collection
Photo Steve Strike, Outback Photographics

If early Christians believed that God is the universal source of life and truth, then they were obliged to pursue that conviction across cultures. This conviction also implies that no culture would be fundamentally alien to the source of life and truth, and therefore mission was assurance of contin-uity with that source.[6]

Translators in the Christian tradition accepted as given that God's universal truth was compatible with all cultural and linguistic frontiers, whereby the message of salvation as represented by Christ was expected to cohere in the local vernacular of any culture. In turn, the question of language became the foundation of the mission of Christianity, and translation proved the most pertinent and cogent method for the dissemination of the gospel.[7]

Sanneh identifies two primary approaches to missionary activity: *mission by diffusion and mission by translation.*

Under the former model, a religion expands from its initial cultural base and is positioned in other societies, retaining and implanting its inseparable cultural assumptions, such as the language, scripture and law of its exponents. Sanneh identifies Islam as the exemplary mode of mission as diffusion, since the religion entails *the indispensability of its Arabic heritage in Scripture, Law and religion*[8]; while Christianity is identified with mission by translation. Whereas the mission as diffusion model requires assimilation into a predetermined religious environment, mission as translation endorses the critical reflection and conviction of a particular Indigenous community. Sanneh acknowledges the problematic duality he sets up between these two forms of missionary activity[9], but remains convinced that *mission as diffusion is unquestionably the stronger strand in Islam, whereas mission as translation is the vintage mark of Christianity.*[10]

Sanneh's insight into translation's integral place and privileged status within the Christian tradition is both pertinent and problematic in the context of missionary activity in Australia. Translation has played a pivotal role in the exchanges between Christian missionaries and Indigenous Australian peoples.

However, contrary to Sanneh's view of Christian mission as primarily responsive to, and accepting of Indigenous vernacular and culture, the use of translation by certain missionaries in Australia was fuelled by more complex and divided interests and intentions, and in some cases was directed against Indigenous languages and beliefs.

Translation and Power

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, 'Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they not understand one another's speech'.
Genesis 11: 5-7

A number of contemporary theorists, among them Nikos Papastergiadis and Barry Hill, have critiqued the univers-alist conception of translation espoused by the followers of Christianity. Papastergiadis renders problematic the assumption that words in one idiom will easily carry foreign ideas into, or find equivalents within another idiom, arguing that such a presupposition is founded on the idea that there is only one universal truth, namely Christianity.[11]

In *Broken Song: TGH Strehlow and Aboriginal possession*[15], Barry Hill explores the esteemed and authoritative status accorded to translation within the Protestant tradition and its use by German Lutheran missionaries in Australia. For Hill, the primacy of translation for Lutheran missionaries was grounded in their staunch faith in the ability of language to transmit the word of the Bible across time and space regardless of the discrepancies between cultures.[16]

It is important to take into account Hill's observation that whilst one of the aims of the missionary endeavour in Australia was the substitution of one culture for another, much would depend on the quality of the person who happened to be the missionary at a particular place at a particular time.[17]

The focus here will be on two groups of Lutheran missionaries and their particular approach to translation and Indigenous languages. These missionaries include Clamor Schürmann and Christian Teichelmann who commenced their work in South Australia in 1838, and Friedrich Albrecht who served at Hermannsburg in Central Australia from 1926–1962.

The question of language played a central role in the colonisation of South Australia in 1836. The official government policy in this period was intent on the so-called 'civilisation' of the Indigenous peoples and their assimilation into European modes of labour, settlement and life style.[18]

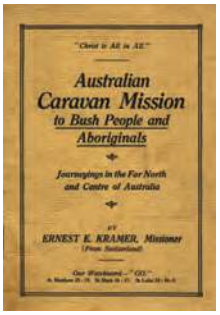
It was not until the arrival of the German Lutheran missionaries Schürmann and Teichelmann and the establishment of their school at Piltawodli that the government's policy of mastering the Kaurna language and educating the local Indigenous population commenced.[19]

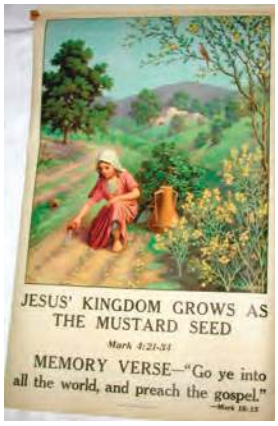
Images from top left to right

Dorothy Ward Ngaanyatjarra born 1959
What the missionaries brought, 2001
acrylic on canvas
12.92 x 94.2 cm
Warburton Community Collection
Courtesy Warburton Arts Project
From the exhibition *Mission time in Warburton*
Tjulyuru Regional Arts Gallery, WA 2002

Albert Namatjira Western Arrernte 1902–1959
Mt Hermannsburg with Finke River Valley circa 1940s
watercolour and gouache over pencil on beanwood
13.1 x 26.5 cm
Flinders University Art Museum 2738
Gift of Hélène and Dudley Burns 1988 (from the collection of the late Reverend and Mrs FW Albrecht)

The Bible translated by Martin Luther. This edition is by the famous printer Hanslufft who printed many of Luther's writings. It has unusually beautiful hand-coloured illustrations. Published 1550, Luther died in 1546. Presented to the Luther Seminary in the 1950s but may have been in Australia since the nineteenth century. On bookplate: Ex bibliotheca Familiae Kraftianae.
Lohe Memorial Library, Luther Seminary, Adelaide





Upon their arrival, Schürmann and Teichelmann immediately set about learning and recording the Kaurna language. Linguists and historians have emphasised these missionaries' rapid mastery and skilful documentation of the Kaurna language, and the close relationship they established with the main Kaurna leaders of the time.[20]

Whilst historians like John Harris and linguists like Rob Amery have praised Schürmann and Teichelmann's sensitivity towards and respect for the Kaurna language, its validity and the importance of its preservation[21], Amery has also indicated their underlying assimilationist agenda: *it is evident from his journals that Schürmann made use of every opportunity to 'Christianise' and 'civilise' [Kaurna peoples].*[22]

Unlike their enthusiasm for the Kaurna language, Schürmann and Teichelmann dismissed and denigrated Kaurna beliefs as *religious imaginings.*[23]

The use of translation by missionaries as a vehicle for cultural assimilation was also evident at the Hermannsburg mission.

The official policy of the German Lutheran missionaries was the preservation of Aboriginal peoples and their so-called salvation and assimilation into the wider Australian society through an educational program based on Biblical precepts and gender-specific practical activities.

Pastor Albrecht, the superintendent of Hermannsburg from 1926–1962, claimed that the Arrernte peoples required the assistance of the missionaries since they were *held back by their past, by their mythology and the whole social environment.*[24] For Albrecht, the Arrernte peoples had once developed their own culture and belief, but their heritage was no longer of any value to them in their attempts to assimilate into the wider non-Indigenous community.[25]

The role of the missionary, Albrecht argued, involved continually assisting Aboriginal peoples to perceive their life and work within the light of God's Word, and to find the answer as they follow God's precepts.[26] The translation of Biblical texts in the Arrernte language was a means of facilitating the Arrernte peoples' assimilation to Christianity.

Images played a pivotal role in Albrecht's evangelism. Picturesque landscapes were used as visual aids for his Biblical classes. Thus prior to their exposure to the landscapes of John Gardner and Rex Batterbee in 1934, the Arrernte community encountered landscape painting in a folio of Biblical illustrations entitled *Palestine in the Time of Christ.* Distinguished by their vivid colours and strong play of light, these illustrations portrayed different scenes from the life of Christ and promoted Christian notions of productivity, faith and loyalty.

However, despite Albrecht's plan to convert the Arrernte, his son Paul Albrecht, writing years later, envisioned that the translation of the Bible in Arrernte would serve another purpose; namely to enable the Arrernte to *make up their minds as to what belonged to the essence of the Christian faith and what was the missionaries' interpretation.*[27]

Paul Albrecht's remark indicates the possibility of translation to exceed the intentions of its promoters and to generate new meanings for new audiences.

Translation and Difference

So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth: and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.
Genesis 11: 8-9

One of the interesting ironies of the Western missionary enterprise is that the evangelical motive to Christianise Indigenous populations through translation resulted in a range of interpretations that surpassed the motives and methodology of the missionaries and their particular take on the Bible.[28]

Sanneh argues that no matter how strongly one may wish to resist or curb the consequences of translation, *little can be done to stop the repercussions from spreading.*[29] Using a rather fatalistic analogy to reinforce the unpredictable impact of translation, he claims *when one translates, it is like pulling the trigger of a loaded gun: the translator cannot recall the hurtling bullet. Translation thus activates a process that might supersede the original intention of the translator.*[30]

One major consequence identified by Sanneh is the radical critique of Christianity through the translation of its discourses into new languages.[31]

When transplanted in new soil, translations of Christian texts *are potentially capable of transcending the cultural inhibitions of the translator and challenging their authority and presuppositions.*[32] Different nations and cultures will ultimately formulate and follow a particular version of the faith expressive of their character.[33]

However, criticism of Christianity and the displacement of its narratives and principles are not the only effects produced by translation. In the context of contemporary Christian Australian art, the interpretation and representation of Christianity's precepts, narratives, iconography and the ways the religion was and is implemented, have assumed a variety of guises.

Images from top left to right

Ernest Kramer
Australian Caravan Mission to Bush People and Aboriginals: Journeyings in the Far North and Centre of Australia, circa 1930s printed by Swinnerton Bros. and Co., Melbourne
South Australian Museum Archives AA669

A group of Aboriginal people with a religious picture used to preach by Ernest Kramer in the bush circa 1930
South Australian Museum Archives AA669

Palestine in the Time of Christ
Standard Picture Roll edited Dorothy Errett, First Quarter, 1933 January–March
Jesus' Kingdom Grows as the Mustard Seed Mark 4:21–34
Memory Verse *Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel*
Mark 16:15
Vol XXV No 3 Part VIII, February 19, 1933
Jesus Stilling a Storm, Mark 4:35-41
Memory Verse *In God I have put my trust*
Ps. 56:4b
Vol XXV No 3 Part IX, February 26, 1933

Illustrations donated to the South Australian Museum by Mrs Hélène Burns, 1989. They belonged to her father Pastor Albrecht of Hermannsburg Mission. The illustrations are of the type used during evangelical bush expeditions by missionary Ernest Kramer, who used Hermannsburg as a base during the 1930s.
South Australian Museum Archives 964
Hélène Burns Collection

Translation and Visual Culture

Can we not, then speak of God's jealousy? Out of resentment against that unique name and lip of men, he imposes his name, his name of father; and with this violent imposition he opens the deconstruction of the tower, as of the universal language; he scatters the genealogical filiation. He breaks the lineage. He at the same time imposes and forbids translation. He imposes it and forbids it, constrains, but as if to failure, the children who henceforth will bear his name, the name that he gives to the city…translation then becomes necessary and impossible…
Jacques Derrida, *Des Tours de Babel*

Throughout this essay, excerpts from the Genesis account of the construction of the tower of Babel and its de-construction have preceded the discussion of the status accorded to translation in the Christian tradition, the imperialistic usage of translation in the hands of Christian missionaries, and the unpredictable and critical adoption of translated texts by Indigenous peoples. The above excerpt from Jacques Derrida's reading of the Babel narrative and its assertion of the possibility/impossibility of transferring meaning across cultures[34] highlights the conventional idea of translation as a process concerned with coherence and fidelity.[35]

Valder Pinder has observed that *the Latin derivation of the word 'translation' remains at the root of the original and still current meaning, which is 'to move something across'*.[36] Derrida has emphasised the inadequacy of this model of translation and its inability to *sufficiently consider the possibility for languages to be implicated more than two in a text.*[37]

In employing the concept of translation as a framework for interpreting the responses to Christianity by the artists included in *Holy, Holy, Holy*, this essay endeavours to divert from the notion of translation as a linguistic process concerned exclusively with fidelity and transference. Papastergiadis argues that the use of translation as a medium to explore cross-cultural exchange requires challenging its confinement to the mere communication of meaning from one language to another.[38]

The model of translation used here recognises that the movement of narratives and symbols from one culture and belief system to another does not culminate in one reading or interpretation but generates a plurality of new meanings in a single text. Furthermore, translation in the context of this exhibition also identifies the shifting and sometimes

conflicting representations of Christian themes, narratives and symbols within the output of the artists.

These modes of translation can be identified as: critical accounts of the repercussions of Christianity on Indigenous peoples, their cultures, identities and environments; ambivalent, autobiographical recollections of experiences within the Christian faith or within mission reserves; and the fusion of Christian and Indigenous narratives and iconography.

It is important to note that these three modes of translation are not static but alternatively fluid, flexible and permeable, particularly as the experiences of some artists in this exhibition traverse these categories, enabling them to employ one or more of these approaches. The fourth and final group of artworks dealt with here defy any easy categoris-ation within this tripartite structure.

Critiquing the Endeavour

In his paintings and their accompanying narratives, **Alan Tucker** documents the interchange between numerous missionaries and Indigenous communities across Australia. Schürmann and Teichelmann's interaction with the Kaurna peoples in South Australia form the subject of Tucker's painting *The Truth of the Religion* 2003.[39] Tucker draws attention to the missionaries' determination to convert the Kaurna to Christianity and their disparaging perception of Kaurna religious beliefs, but the artist also credits the

missionaries for their interest in the Kaurna vernacular and the importance of their linguistic work for the reclam-ation of the language.[40]

The photographic practice of **Michael Riley** explores the encounter between the missionary endeavour and Indigenous peoples, but through a less historically specific approach than that adopted by Alan Tucker. Growing up on an Aboriginal mission in Dubbo, Riley's own experiences with Christianity and mission life inform his 1993 *Sacrifice* series of photographs, a body of work that boldly explores the *infiltration of Aboriginal society by Christian religions, particularly through the mission system.*[41]

In this compilation of fifteen black and white gelatin silver prints, Riley's camera renders Christian icons like hands, water, fish and the crucifix, in sometimes stark and crisp, and at other times blurry and spectral close-ups. Riley's itinerary of icons and their loaded moniker *Sacrifice,* concoct a bleak commentary on: the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples and the destruction of their lands; the sacrifices made by Indigenous peoples in order to survive in the wake of colonisation and Christianity; and the treatment administered to Aboriginal peoples in mission reserves.

Throughout his career, contrasting perspectives on Christianity have emerged in the art of **Trevor Nickolls**.[42] The missionary endeavour comes under attack in works such as *Running From the White Spirit* 1994, where cross-hatching and Christian iconography are combined to assert the authoritarian, capitalistic and parasitic character of Christianity and its forceful imposition on Aboriginal peoples. However in paintings like *The Garden of Eden* 1982, Nickolls employs the narrative of Adam and Eve to consider a more harmonious relationship between Christian and Indigenous modes of spirituality. *The Garden of Eden* has been described as:

An extraordinary blend of Byzantine and Aboriginal spiritual imagery, and can be seen as relating to both the past present and future. It is thus an allegorical painting, but is also autobiographical, in the sense that the artist painted the figures as representations of himself and his bride, living harmoniously in the landscape.[43]

A more ambiguous and perhaps ambivalent engagement with Christianity is evident in the art of **Darren Siwes** whose photographic practice problematises stereotypical representations of Indigenous peoples and identifies the tension between the absence and presence of Indigenous history, memory and location.

In many of his images, Siwes projects himself as a suited, spectral figure in front of various recognisable locations across Adelaide. This visual device, wavering between solidity and transparency, presence and absence, has been read by John Kean as conveying *the capacity to be standing on the concrete Plaza in 1998, but also to represent an Aboriginal presence at the site for millennia. It is also a transparency that infers that Aboriginal people will persist in the future.*[44]

The ghosting effect utilised in many of Siwes' photographs generates a wide variety of meanings and possibilities regarding the nexus between Christianity and Indigenous peoples. It can refer to both the obliteration as well as the survival of Indigenous cultures in the aftermath of Christian missions and, on a more iconographic level, to the polarity between light and dark, purity and sin, in Christian symbolism as well as notions such as the ascension and resurrection.

Images from left to right

Julie Dowling Badimya/Budimia–Yamatji born 1969 Perth
A welcome of tears 1999
acrylic, red and white ochre and silver on canvas
100 x 120 cm

Collection Karen Hughes
This is about my great auntie Dot, and my grandmother, Mollie, who were taken away to an orphanage. One of her mates died and they sent her back to her ancestors with a little ceremony.
Julie Dowling

Michael Riley Wiradjuri/Gamileroi born 1960
Untitled (Cross) from the *Flyblown* series 1998
C-type print, ed 6/10
82 x 108 cm
Private collection, Sydney

Reflecting Back: History, Memory and Ambivalence

The inhumane treatment that some Aboriginal peoples have received in mission reserves is a theme that **Julie Dowling** consistently addresses in her output, drawing from her family's histories of encounter with the Christian religion.

Dowling highlights the power relations and prejudice behind the missionary endeavour in paintings like *A Welcome of Tears* 2000. Employing an oral history passed onto her by her grandmother, this painting is a commentary on the heinous treatment of Aboriginal girls at St. Joseph's mission in Subiaco.

In the composition Dowling portrays her grandmother– who resided on this mission as a young girl–conducting a funeral ceremony with other Indigenous girls for one of their closest friends who died as a result of complications after pneumonia caused by starvation and hard labour.
In commenting on this painting, Dowling writes: *I wanted to paint this event as a message to my family of what my family had to endure and how many in our community grew up within prejudice.*[45]

However, in paintings like *Mary's Dream* 2000, Dowling borrows from Renaissance representations of Christ and Mary, to compose a more tender visual meditation on the emotional and spiritual link between Aboriginal children removed from their homes, and their mothers. In this work, Dowling depicts the bond that existed between her great-grandmother Mary Latham and her daughter, who was removed from her and placed in a missionary institution.

Like Dowling, **Harry J Wedge** also offers personal insights into his particular encounter with Christianity. Born in the late 1950s at Cowra, New South Wales in the heart of Wiradjuri country, Wedge's experiences of growing up on the Erambie Aboriginal mission have formed the basis of many of his paintings and installations.

In a number of paintings, Wedge articulates acerbic attacks on the missionary endeavour, the racist attitudes of some missionaries towards Indigenous peoples' beliefs, and the role missionaries played in the disintegration of Indigenous cultures and religions. In paintings like *Not Accepting the Bible* 1990 and *Brainwash* 1994 Wedge respectively portrays the violent displacement of Indigenous peoples through the introduction of Christianity, and the psychological impact of Christian teaching on his own family.[46]

However, in other works like *Singing the Gospel* 1993 a more endearing memory of life on Erambie mission is conjured, whereby Wedge teases out the sense of community present at the reserve, and the fair treatment the Indigenous residents received from some of the missionaries.[47]

The ambivalence towards Christianity expressed in some of the paintings of Dowling and Wedge are mirrored in some of **Nici Cumpston**'s stirring photographs. Like Dowling and Wedge, personal experiences with Christianity inform and buttress Cumpston's visual commentaries on Christian institutions like the church. However she also translates concepts associated with Christian tradition– like the tree of life–in terms of an Indigenous Australian relationship to land and spirituality.

In the colour photograph *Abandoned* 2002 a church looms in the middle of a field of dry yellow grass, its white wooden panels cracked, punctured and withered. The sense of decay and isolation evoked by this rustic scene is punctuated by the worn cross that has become unhinged from the apex of the building's roof. Cumpston's various encounters in Australia and abroad with Christianity have been the catalyst for *Abandoned*. More specifically, both the subject and the sombre atmosphere of *Abandoned* symbolise her feelings of abandonment from the Lutheran church, the disparaging and judgmental attitudes of some of its members towards Indigenous Australian peoples and the ecological impact of the church on the River Murray community.[48]

The paintings and books of **Ian W Abdulla** canvas an affirmative, nostalgic and endearing picture of missionary life, documenting the childhood experiences of the artist and his residency on numerous mission reserves. Born at Swan Reach in 1947, Abdulla later relocated to Gerard Mission where he lived and worked for ten years. Abdulla acknowledges the influence of Christianity on his life and explains how his main ambition as a youth was to become a minister in order to help his community overcome their problems with alcohol and drugs.[49]

In a number of paintings, Abdulla renders the spiritual background that Gerard Mission provided for Aboriginal peoples through references to Christian practices and the use of Christian icons. The artist's recollection of his childhood encounters with Christianity at Gerard and his later experiences at the Church in Berri are comically evoked in paintings like *Prayer Meeting in a Tent* 1992[50] and *Getting the Evil Spirit Out* 1996. In other images, Abdulla more directly portrays his own encounters with God and Christianity. In *Thinking of My Children...seeing God speak to one of his followers* 1997, Abdulla documents his experience of witnessing an angel conversing with God during a trip to the River Murray.[51]

Fusions

The long history of Christianity at Hermannsburg and the legacy of Albert Namatjira's watercolour landscapes and those of other Arrernte artists have culminated in contemporary works that reference Christianity in media other than painting. The history of pottery at Hermannsburg stretches back to the 1960s when the mission employee VA Jaensch established a workshop that encouraged the Arrernte men to produce hand-modelled animals and figures of Aboriginal peoples.[52] The body of work produced at Hermannsburg in the early sixties set a precedent for the reintroduction of the medium in the late 1980s with the appointment of Naomi Sharp as an instructor and the establishment of the Hermannsburg Aboriginal Potters Corporation in 1992.[53]

An eclectic range of subject matter has distinguished the work of contemporary Hermannsburg potters like Hedwig Moketarinja, Judith Inkamala and **Irene Entata**. Apart from representations of bush tucker and the sur-rounding landscape of Hermannsburg, mythical animals, cinematic icons and Christian symbolism (crucifixes, Santa Claus) and events (Easter, Christmas) are also evident in the pots produced by these artists.[54] Irene Entata, for example, depicts the baptism of three Arrernte children by Pastor Gross in her work *Mission Days/Baptism* 2002, setting the event in front of the Hermannsburg church.

Correspondences between Christian and Indigenous doctrines and religious figures are boldly visualised in the paintings of **Jarinyanu David Downs**. Upon his encounter with fundamentalist Protestant missionaries at Fitzroy Crossing in the 1960s, David Downs embraced the theology of the missionaries alongside his own traditional Law and represented the co-existence of these two belief systems in many of his artworks.

Similarities between Biblical characters and narratives, and the ancestor beings from his own *Wati Kutjarra* (Two Man) Dreaming are asserted in paintings such as *Moses and God and the Ten Commandments* 1989. In this work, the artist portrays the convergence of Biblical commandments with his own traditional Law through a large, central motif that represents the two conjoined cosmologies.[55]

Images from top

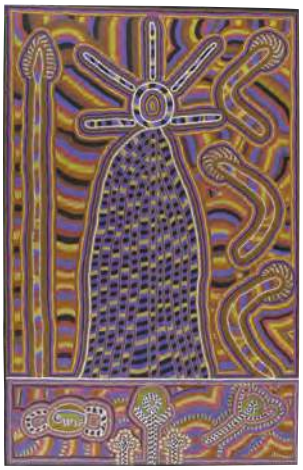
Charlene Carrington Nyawana/Gija born 1976
Christ on Cross 2000
earth pigments on canvas
60 x 45 cm
Flinders University Art Museum 3895

Charlene was born in Perth in 1976 but has lived most of her life in Warmun Community. At high school she was inspired to start painting by Hector Jandany and Queenie McKenzie who both came to Warmun School to teach the children Ngarrangkarni (Dreaming) stories and how to paint in the 'traditional' way. Charlene comes from a family of artists. Her parents Churchill Cann and Sadie Carrington are both established artists. Her grandfathers are Hector Jandany and Beerbee Mungari. Her grandmother, Betty Carrington, is also establishing a developing painting career. Charlene's strong sense of country and talent is clearly evident in her paintings. Charlene still spends a lot of time sitting and listening to the old people. In her youth, Charlene would often sit with well-known artist Jack Britten and watch him paint. Charlene has five young children whom she cares for with her partner, Wayne. She has painted the Catholic/Christian influence that has evolved in many of the early works from the Warmun Community.

Harry J Wedge Wiradjuri born circa 1958
John the Baptist 1997
synthetic polymer on paper
35 x 50 cm
The Vizard Foundation Art Collection of the 1990s, acquired 1997
On loan to the Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne

In other works, the interconnection between Christianity and Downs' Walmajarri world-view are evoked through a reference to the figure of Christ. Duncan Kentish interprets paintings like *Jesus preach'im all people–same like me, I been preach'im all over place* 1992 and *God been send'im elders all over place–gotta preach'im all the people* 1995 as self-portraits that reflect the artist's affiliation with Christ and God.[56]

The correlations between Indigenous and Christian practices and cosmologies are also played out within the vivid and colourful paintings of **Tjangika Wukula Linda Syddick Napaltjarri**, a Pintupi artist who resides in South Australia, and who practices Christianity alongside her traditional ancestral religion.[57]



Napaltjarri's ongoing engagement with Christianity has culminated in visually striking translations of Biblical narratives in paintings like *The Messiah* 1996 and *The Eucharist* 1998, where Christian characters are portrayed through an alluring blend of dot painting and Christian iconography. In the former work, Napaltjarri incorporates a number of Christian figures and events together to visualise the contrasting themes of power, modesty and sacrifice. The commanding central figure that dominates the composition is the prophet Isaiah, whose authority and divinity are invoked by the towering spear and the three boomerangs (symbolising the Trinity) that surround him. Below this imposingly powerful prophet, in the lower panel of the painting, Napaltjarri tenderly and skilfully evokes three phases of Christ's passion–namely his birth, crucifixion and ascension–in a lively tapestry of tones.[58]

The Eucharist 1998 sees Napaltjarri adopt as her subject matter one of the central rites of Christianity, whose words and actions re-enact the Last Supper and also symbolise the sacrifice of Christ at Calvary. In her optically opulent interpretation of this monumental sacrament, elements associated with the Eucharist–namely the bread and the chalice of wine (respectively symbolic of Christ's body and blood) are juxtaposed against what appears as a recognisably Australian context. Uluru serves as the setting of Napaltjarri's version of the Eucharistic drama, whose part-icipants include: the disciples of Christ, symbolised by the eleven U-shaped conduits situated at the base of the central cross; Judas as an outstretched snake poised directly above his fellow disciples; the Holy Trinity invoked by the three boomerangs surrounding the cross; and two Kangaroo ancestors located on the lower corners of the canvas. Napaltjarri's treatment of the Holy Communion–with its merging of visual traditions affirms both the flexibility and permeability of her own Dreaming and the mutually supportive union between Christian and Indigenous belief systems.

Slippery Translations

In the art of **James Cochran**, Christian narratives such as the miraculous appearance of Christ before his disciples after his crucifixion, and Christian figures like St Francis of Assisi are appropriated and contextualised in the urban and suburban landscapes of Adelaide. In some works, Cochran re-presents what he classifies as moments of 'revelation', 'conversion', 'transformation', 'compassion' or 'ecstasy'–inspired by the Biblical narratives and depictions of St Paul and St Anthony or Christ.

In his most recent works Cochran combines his interest in historical representations of Biblical figures during moments of 'ascension' or 'ecstasy' *à la Caravaggio*, with his identification with the underprivileged and homeless citizens of Adelaide. Cochran's recent works take as their subject matter various Indigenous peoples whom he has met in the Adelaide parklands. Cochran's extended interaction with Indigenous groups at the West Terrace parklands has culminated in portraits like *The Ascension (portrait of Rodney)* 2003. In this work, one of the Indigenous individuals Cochran befriended is portrayed in what appears as a miraculous moment of ascension. Despite his affiliation with what he calls *the street, the underbelly, the underprivileged, moments of extremity,* Cochran's work positions itself within the problematic history of non-Indigenous representations of Indigenous Australian peoples, a discursive regime sometimes described as *Aboriginalism*.[59] Of this predicament Cochran is aware, acknowledging the controversial character of his undertaking.[60]

The result of introduced Christianity into Indigenous Australian cultures and the representation of Aboriginal peoples in tourist souvenirs are two recurring themes in the art of **Christine McCormack**. An avid collector of kitsch and curios from the 1950s onwards, McCormack's paintings tease out the ethnocentric and sexual connotations implicit in some of the mass-produced objects she has acquired. McCormack addresses missionary preferences towards sexual intercourse in her humorously titled painting *Missionary Position* 2002.

The trivialisation of renowned figures in Indigenous Australian culture in the realm of tourist kitsch is developed further in McCormack's painting *Souvenirs—The Coming of the White Man* 2002. Like the former work, *Souvenirs* showcases a range of objects that are loaded with sexual and religious connotations. A ship with its mast assuming the form of a cross is portrayed alongside decorated shells and an ashtray bearing the image of an Indigenous warrior. Through this combination of images, McCormack seeks to convey the impact of colonisation and the tourist industry as well as Christianity on Indigenous Australian cultures.

Conclusion

In Australia, missionaries sought to inculcate their particular model of Christianity in Indigenous peoples through the translation of Christian texts in the native vernacular of the communities they encountered. Despite this attempt at displacing Indigenous cultures and converting the people to Christianity, the translation of the Bible in Indigenous languages has triggered a range of different but not mutually exclusive interpretations, particularly in the context of contemporary Australian art.

In the aftermath of the long history of missionary activity throughout Australia, Christian narratives and symbols permeate the broad body of works featured in *Holy, Holy, Holy*. In reading the art in this exhibition the essay has diverted from the conventional conception of translation as a process concerned exclusively with the accurate transference and fidelity of meaning across languages and proposed a more fluid model of translation for interpreting the wide spectrum of nuanced and intersecting depictions of Christianity.

Images from top

Pastor PA Scherer and congregation (and possibly Namatjira on left) around the font outside Haasts Bluff church, 1955
Photo courtesy Lutheran Archives, Adelaide

Tjangika Wukula (Linda Syddick) Napaltjarri Pintupi/Pitjantjatjara
born circa 1937
The Messiah 1996
acrylic on linen
169 x 108 cm
Courtesy Gallery Gondwana

[1] See Homi Bhabha 1994 *The Location of Culture,* Routledge, London and New York, p. 173 and J Rutherford 1990 'The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha', in J Rutherford (ed.) 1990 *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference,* Lawrence and Wishart, London, p. 210. For an extended discussion of the relationship between translation and other concepts linked to cross cultural exchange—namely syncretism and hybridity—refer to Nikos Papastergiadis 2000 *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalisation, Deterritorialisation, and Hybridity,* Polity Press, Cambridge.

[2] Papastergiadis 2000, *op.cit.,* p. 129.

[3] L O Sanneh 1989 *Translating the Message: the Missionary Impact on Culture,* Orbis Books, New York.

[4] *ibid.,* p. 211. Sanneh distinguishes between Christianity and Islam with his contention that: 'There are striking differences between Islam and Christianity in spite of their common missionary ambition, yet nothing is more fundamental than their contrasting attitudes to the translatability of their respective Scriptures. Scriptural translation, as we have said, is the vintage mark of Christianity, whereas for Islam universal adherence to a non-translatable Arabic Qur'an remains its characteristic feature.'

[5] *ibid.*, p. 51.

[6] *ibid.,* p. 37

[7] *ibid.,* p. 37.

[8] *ibid.,* p. 29.

[9] *ibid.,* p. 29. Sanneh admits 'we are not here pretending that these two ways are always separate or, for that matter easy to disentangle.'

[10] *ibid.,* p. 29.

[11] Papastergiadis 2000, *op.cit.,* p. 129.

[15] Barry Hill 2002 *Broken Song: T G H Strehlow and Aboriginal possession,* Knopf, Milson's Point, N.S.W.

[16] *ibid.,* p. 513.

[17] *ibid.,* p. 525. Hill's line of thought is supported by Bill Edwards in this catalogue.

[18] Rob Amery 2000 *Warrabarna Kaurna!: Reclaiming an Australian Language,* Swets and Zeitlinger, The Netherlands, pp. 54-5.

[19] *ibid.,* p. 57.

[20] Rob Amery 2000 'The First Lutheran Missionaries in South Australia and their contributions to Kaurna language reclamation and the reconciliation movement', in *Journal of Friends of Lutheran Archives,* no.10, October 2000, p. 32.

[21] J Harris 1990 *One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: A Story of Hope,* Albatross Books, NSW, pp. 320-28.

[22] *op.cit.,* Amery 2000 (*Warrabarna Kaurna*), pp. 59-60.
Amery argues that Schürmann, during his conversations and hunting trips with Kaurna men, spared no opportunity to instruct these individuals about the main principles of Christianity.

[23] *op.cit.,* Amery 2000 (*The First Lutheran Missionaries*), p. 40.

[24] F Albrecht 1977 *'Hermannsburg 1926 to 1962',* in Everard Leske 1977 *Hermannsburg: A Vision and A Mission,* Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, p 89.

[25] *ibid.,* p. 89.

[26] *ibid.,* p. 76.

[27] P Albrecht 1994 'The Finke River Mission Approach to Mission Work Among Aborigines In Central Australia', in *The Churches: Native to Australia or Alien Intruders?* 1994 The Galatians Group, Armadale Victoria, p 35.

[28] *op.cit.,* Sanneh 1989, p. 213.

[29] *ibid.,* p. 54.

[30] *ibid.,* p. 53.

[31] cf. Bhabha 1994, p. 104. A commonly quoted example of translation culminating in a critique of Christianity is provided by Homi Bhabha. In his essay *Signs Taken for Wonders,* a group of peasants in Delhi, upon receiving translated versions of the Bible in their native tongue, perceive the introduced text as a gift sent to them directly from God. An Indian catechist, who is puzzled by the peasants' strong affiliation with the Bible, informs the group that the translated Bible was not directly sent to them, but in fact promotes the religion of the Europeans. The peasants however refuse to associate the Bible with a culture of non-vegetarians and further resist attempts to be converted according to Christian practices. The group insist on converting to Christianity on their own terms, which in their case means a refusal to receive sacrament, since 'the Europeans eat cow's flesh and this will never do for us'.

[32] *ibid.,* p. 53.

[33] *ibid.,* pp. 1–2.

[34] cf. G Bennington 1993 *Jacques Derrida,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, pp. 174-5. 'The essential fact [of Derrida's reading of the Babel narrative] hangs on this: by imposing his name (confusedly perceived as 'confusion') against the name of names (Shem), God imposes both the necessity and the impossibility of translation. The dispersion of the tribes and languages on earth will condemn them to confusion, and therefore to the need to translate each other without ever managing to achieve the perfect translation, which would come back down to the imposition of a single language.'

[35] Jacques Derrida 1985 *Des Tours de Babel,* in J F Graham 1985 (ed.) *Difference In Translation,* Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

[36] V Pinder 2002 'Kristeva and an Archaeology of Sources and Translation', in *Hecate: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Women's Liberation,* 2002, vol. 28, no. 2, p. 103.

[37] *op.cit.,* Derrida in Graham 1985, p. 171.

[38] *op.cit.,* Papastergiadis 2000, p. 129.

[39] It is worth quoting in length Tucker's analysis of Teichelmann and Schürmann's perceptions of Kaurna beliefs. Tucker writes: Schürmann wrote about the 'gross credulity and superstitions of the Aborigines' and described how, after listening to a religious lecture, an Aboriginal man bluntly told Teichelmann: 'we do not believe in Jehovah's words'. On another occasion a Kaurna man became angry that his beliefs were called 'lies'. He asked Teichelmann: 'Why do you charge us with a lie? We do not charge you with lies; what you believe is good and what we believe is good'. The missionary could not accept that and replied: 'Only on one side the truth would be and that was ours.'

[40] *ibid.,* p. 14. In praising Teichelmann and Schürmann's accomplishments, Tucker states: To their credit, Schürmann and Teichelmann were interested enough in the Kaurna people to live among them and travel out bush with their families.

[41] Hetti Perkins 1996 'Michael Riley', in K Campbell 1996 (ed.) *Abstracts: New Aboriginalities,* SWAPP, Brisbane, p. 30.

[42] Trevor Nickolls and Rover Thomas 1990 *Venice Biennale, 1990, Australia: Rover Thomas, Trevor Nickolls,* Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, p. 49. cf. L. Thompson 1990 *Aboriginal Voices: Contemporary Aboriginal Artists, Writers and Performers,* Simon and Schuster, p. 110. Explaining the symbolism prevalent in many of his paintings, Nickolls remarks: I use four symbols regularly: the dollar sign, the crucifix, an antenna representing technology and a test tube for science. I think they are the four energies which are most at work in the world today.

[43] Quote from accompanying notes to painting, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

[44] John Kean 1998 'Shorthand Adelaide, exposing the 'Aboriginal Location' in *3 Views of Kaurna Territory Now: Agnes Love, Nicole Cumpston, Darren Siwes,* exhibition catalogue, curated by Vivonne Thwaites, Adelaide Festival Centre, Adelaide, p. 3.

[45] pers. comm., 2002.

[46] H J Wedge 1996 *Wiradjuri Spirit Man,* Craftsman House and Boomali Aboriginal Arts Co-operative, N.S.W, p. 82 and p. 60.

[47] *ibid.,* p. 78-79. In commenting on *Singing the Gospel,* Wedge remarks: Every Sunday, the Christian people used to come up and get everything ready at the hall and that, and we'd be having our Sunday dinner and then we got to do all the washing up before we go to Sunday school… We come back around five o'clock, and they get all of us kids to go with them and just walk around the mission and sing songs you know, like 'My Cup is Full Runnin' Over' and 'Yes, Jesus Loves Me'. There was a couple of songs I can actually remember, that was really good because we used to have really good fun walking around in the dark…we had a great time singin' and that's a little bit I can share with you of my Christian life.'

[48] pers. comm. April 3 2002. In explaining the background for her photograph *Abandoned* Cumpston has written: I have decided to interpret the theme of *Holy, Holy, Holy* by drawing on my personal experiences and understanding of my own spirituality. As a child my mum, brother and I went to church in Canada. We seemed to be constantly on the move so it was a good way to meet people and to be a part of the community. I have fond memories of these times but this practice didn't continue into my adolescence once we returned to Australia…

As the years have gone by I continue to come across examples of behaviour that I don't agree with and feel are morally wrong amongst people who called themselves Christian. This image represents my feelings of abandonment from what I was led to believe and what I have eventually learnt and seen within some aspects of Christianity. Judgemental behaviour that condemns people will eventually come back on you and lead to abandonment. This church was once part of a community along the River Murray and it was one of only a few buildings now left in this ghost town. I think it interesting that a whole town can be centred around a church, everyone knows that a church is there for you to express your spirituality. The only trouble is that if you are a little bit different from the town folks then you would not have been made to feel welcome entering the church and especially if you were Aboriginal.

[49] H Chryssides 1993 *Local Heroes,* Collins Dove, Victoria, p. 20.

[50] John Kean 1993 'Ian Abdulla' in *Australian Perspecta* 1993, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, p. 2.

[51] Christine Nicholls 2002 *River, Land and Memory: the work of Ian Abdulla,* Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide, p. 9.

[52] M. West 1996 'From Dinosaurs to Santa Claus: Making Pots At Hermannsburg', in *Hermannsburg Potters: now we are working with clay,* Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, p. 5.

[53] *ibid.,* pp. 5-6.

[54] *ibid.,* p. 12.

[55] *The Serpent and The Cross* 1991, video, Aspire and Ronin Films, Canberra, ACT.

[56] Duncan Kentish 1995 *'You Listen Me!' – An Angry Love: Writings in Honour of Jarinyanu David Downs,* Duncan Kentish Fine Art, North Adelaide, p. 14.

[57] Christine Nicholls 2000 *From Appreciation to Appropriation: Indigenous Influences and Images in Australian Visual Art,* Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide, p. 9.

[58] Unpublished notes, Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs. The accompanying text to this particular painting reads:

In this very bold, colourful work the artist deals with the contrasting themes of Authority (represented by the central commanding figure), Humility and Sacrifice (represented by the life of Jesus depicted in the lower panel). The central figure is both the prophet Isaiah and the part of his prophecy which said: 'And the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and The Prince of Peace'. On the right of the above, the three arc-like motifs represent boomerangs, which are symbolic of return and the Trinity. To the left a spear is depicted—a symbol of authority.

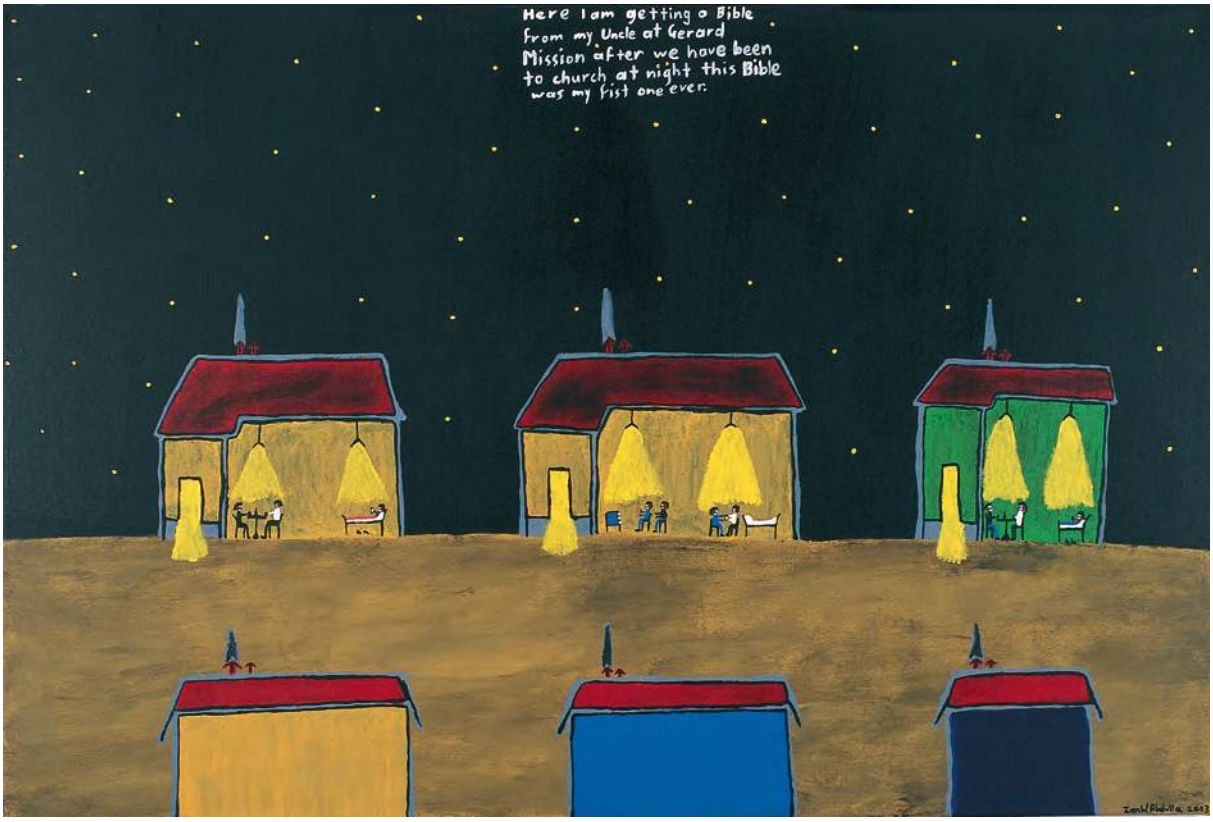
[59] B Hodge and V Mishra 1991 *The Dark Side of the Dream,* Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

[60] pers. comm. Remarking on his recent works, Cochran states: They're going to be controversial. But the thing is, now I know I can bear the responsibility…of whatever I get attacked with. I know I've got no problems. I feel kind of justified in what I am doing. Mainly because of my rapport or relationship with these people.

ian w abdulla

Ian W Abdulla
born 1947
My first bible 2003
synthetic polymer on canvas
92 x 137 cm
Photo Mick Bradley
Courtesy Greenaway
Art Gallery, SA

Ian and his twin Rodney were born in 1947 under a tree on the banks of the lower River Murray at Swan Reach Mission. In 1961 Ian's family moved to Gerard Aboriginal Community which had been purchased in 1945 by the United Aborigines Mission. By 1961 the South Australian Government had taken control of the site. Ian's mother Jemima Hunter was a Ngarrindjeri woman from Raukkan (Point McLeay) and her name appears on one of the earliest lists of families at the mission established at Swan Reach on the lower River Murray in 1926. The artist's recollection of his childhood encounters with Christianity at Gerard and his later experiences at Church in Berri are evoked in many of his paintings.


Here I am getting a Bible from my Uncle at Gerard Mission after we have been to church at night this Bible was my fist one ever.

james cochran

James Cochran
born 1973
The Ascension (portrait of Rodney) 2003
oil and enamel on canvas
148 x 79 cm

In his art, James Cochran has tried to make a place for religion in the contemporary world. More recently Cochran has spent time with groups of Aboriginal people in Adelaide's parklands and areas of regional SA, incorporating people he has come to know in his work. In *The Ascension (portrait of Rodney)* Rodney is portrayed in a state of grace transcending the struggle of day-to-day living in the parklands. In each of the paintings in this exhibition Cochran seeks out an inner beauty from his subjects.

nici cumpston

Nici Cumpston
born 1963
Abandoned 2003
silver gelatin print, hand-coloured
with oils and pencils
80 x 100 cm

Nici Cumpston's work draws on her upbringing in country Victoria. Although Christianity meant little to her personally, the old wooden churches that dotted the landscape were a fixture. In *Abandoned*, she reflects on the failure of the church in general to be meaningful in her life.

julie dowling

Julie Dowling Badimaya/Budimia-Yamatji
born 1969

Minority Rites I, II, III 2003
synthetic polymer, blood, red ochre
and plastic on canvas (triptych)
80 x 50 cm each
Courtesy Artplace Gallery, WA

This triptych shows three generations of my family who have had contact with Christianity. It is also a celebration of the colours of the Aboriginal flag designed by Harold Thomas in 1971. The flag was designed to be a rallying symbol for Aboriginal people and a symbol for unifying strength. The black represents the Aboriginal people, the red the earth and our spiritual relationship to the land,
and the yellow the sun, the giver of life.

The painting on the right in black is a depiction of my great-great grandmother Melbin who was taken from the bush near Yalgoo in the Gascoyne region of Western Australia. She is standing with her daughter Mary who
was taken from her to live with wudjula (white) people. The crucifix symbol is on the top of the horizon while the bottom is the lay of the land symbolised by concentric lines. The central painting in yellow shows my great grandmother, Mary Latham while pregnant with her daughter May (the eldest of her many children). The background shows the same symbol for land. The painting on the left
in red shows my great Auntie May as a young woman in the 1940s in her best dress. The background shows the land symbol within a circle around her head as well as small hands reaching for the Yamatji symbol for water and river lines. Below the symbols for Ngapi (water) are more crucifixes. I wanted to also illustrate the tensions, which have existed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cult-ures regarding the use of religion as a colonising tool.
I also wanted to reflect on the history of forced removal and the tug of war between religions to get Indigenous souls to convert within Western Australia. My great grandmother, Mary Latham was taken from her mother Melbin who was 'saved' from the bush and was baptised in the Church of England. Melbin's daughter, Mary Oliver was taken from her and baptised Anglican. Mary Oliver's daughter, May Latham was also taken from her mother
and she was subsequently baptised Catholic. This took less than 40 years to achieve.

Julie Dowling 2003



This work depicts the Genesis Creation of the world, before the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. God′s presence is represented here as 'Glory', surrounded by all the 'million million star' of his created firmament. 'Glory' seems possessed with a driven quality and an excitement at the immensity of his undertaking, focussed both into the near and far, mindful of the awesome responsibility of bringing Creation into being, and perhaps also burdened by foreknowledge of the actual nature of men and women.

The compound structure of Jarinyanu's stars is more like that of flowers, and this form may be related to the fact that the work was painted soon after Jarinyanu′s first cataract operation in January 1991, in the company of rain, jasmine and sunshine.

...When his bandage was first removed, Jarinyanu was both excited and alarmed with how everything now seemed edged with an overpowering brilliancy of light. Initially, he found this painfully intense but a few days afterwards Jarinyanu told me he was going to paint Genesis.

Usually, he would announce the Story he was going to paint and perhaps sing a few words of the associated corroboree and then proceed, occasionally singing as he painted the particularity of Story characters, as though he was summoning up a vision that inflected the brushstrokes he was laying across the canvas; sometimes followed at the end of the day with a summary and reiteration in Song, finishing with 'That one now!'.

However, Christian Stories lack an inaugurating Song, so in place of these, Jarinyanu substituted the Word. Firstly, he read aloud from his Walmajarri Bible, providing a Kriol gloss as he progressed; saying, 'God been make'im light first; sun, we call'im—you look'im!—and after, he been make'im sky; ground and star, cloud and rain.
And grass and tree'; pausing to break off a twig, and to lean down and pluck a handful of grass; saying, 'You see!' Finally, he shut the Bible, 'Well, I gotta paint'im now'.

Jarinyanu's paintings nearly always involve strongly contrasting forms and colours, but this work is also a meditation on light and dark and his restored ability to make more precise discriminations. Three banks of low cloud edged with dark pink portend the rains of Genesis. God causes these to manifest as Gurdarl, the regional Rain Man of the southern Kimberly, in their rapid unfolding and tumbling in his characteristic form as short, cheeky clouds, visually echoed by the enormous flights of cockatoo that herald the rainy season; the upper pair of cloud-banks resting on bands of blue water indicating the abundance of the Wet. However, these cloud-banks could also be viewed as horizons of hills, studded with subterranean springs of Gurdal as 'living water'. The lowest cloud-bank disgorges lines of driving rain, replenishing a billabong edged with grass. Here Jarinyanu has painted his vision of bounty: a billabong, or southern lake, surrounded by fruit-laden trees, which he called 'Garden Eden', lying 'kulira'—south. Maybe this reference is a synonym for that degree of 'plenty' he associated with both 'Garden Eden' and southern Australia.

But for Jarinyanu, God's presence can manifest anywhere — even as 'Garden Eden' in Australia. In this sense, the mid-panel may be read as a boundary between his life at Looma and Fitzroy Crossing, and the more temperate summer of southern Australia, representing an escape from the heat and swollen population caused by the lay-off of cattle station workers during the Wet, when boredom, drinking and mindless vandalism sometimes turn northern communities into a living hell for old people. As we were taking our leave from Jarinyanu's relations in late January 1995, he spoke to them, saying 'I'm going to Heaven', in a mixture of matter of fact acceptance of mortality, and excited pleasure at the prospect of once again journeying south to Adelaide. Or perhaps we can have it both ways—with this southern Heaven of plenty and desired social order simply being the model he employed for visualizing the hereafter. As Jarinyanu would say, 'I don't know—might be!'

jarinyanu david downs

Jarinyanu David Downs
Wangkajunga/Walmajarri
1925–1995
Genesis—God, Star, Rain and Heaven 1991
synthetic polymer and earth pigments on Belgium linen
183 x 122 cm
Collection of Duncan Kentish
Photo Clayton Glen

irene mbitjana entata

Irene Mbitjana Entata
Arrernte/Luritja born 1946
Mission Days/Baptism 2002
handcrafted terracotta
clay, underglaze
45 x 32 cm
Collection of Helen Read
Photo Multimedia Unit,
Flinders University

This is Pastor Gross baptising three babies. Many people come to church in those days but not so many now.

Irene Mbitjana Entata 2002

The long history of Christianity at Hermannsburg and the legacy of Albert Namatjira's watercolour landscapes and those of other Arrernte artists have culminated in contemporary works that reference Christianity in media other than painting.

christine mccormack

Christine McCormack
born 1953
Other refuge have I none 2003
oil on linen
54 x 33 cm
Courtesy CUBE
Contemporary Art, Adelaide

Christine McCormack's art charts a different kind of imperialism, a cultural one in which tokens of Aboriginality were reduced to kitsch trinkets for the amusement of a non-Indigenous audience. These objects, mostly collected from junk shops, are arranged and painted in complex tableaux that tease out the underlying power relationships in the colonising process. They make the additional point that such power relationships also operated in the field of popular culture, where they served to normalise and thus excuse such behaviour.


12
1
2
10
9
8
7
HOLY
BIBLE

linda syddick napaltjarri

Tjangika Wukula (Linda Syddick) Napaltjarri
Pintupi/Pitjantjatjara
born circa 1937
Leaving Home 1996
synthetic polymer on canvas
166.5 x 164 cm
Collection Sir James and Lady Cruthers

The Pintupi people from Lake Mackay in WA were among the last Aboriginal groups in Australia to leave their homeland. The bottom panel shows the Pintupi's home country covered by vegetated sand hills. There is no one here now—only the spirits.


TEA
FLOUR

trevor nickolls

Trevor Nickolls
born 1949
Postcard from the Devil 2000
oil on canvas
90.2 x 61.3 cm
Private collection, Sydney
Photo Willie Mobbs

I was still forced to go to Sunday school when I was a kid and, and like I said earlier I had me nightmares and bad memories and you know I was scared and, and, so I didn't have, very good memories from it you know it was only negative memories and then that's about all but I, I couldn't help begin I guess, as I got older, just being an artist using it to, to find some expression to, to put in symbols like, or thinking about what the effect of Christianity has been on society.

Varga Hosseini, interview with the artist
29 December 2002

michael riley

Michael Riley Wiradjuri/Gamileroi
born 1960 Dubbo
Untitled (Angel back) from the
Cloud series, 2000
C-type print, edition 6/10
82 x 108 cm
Collection of Dr Suzanne Thwaites

Colonisation by means of the agricultural seed and the word of the Bible are identified as two of the dominant means which have led to the desacralisation of the landscape and culture of Aboriginal communities.

Nikos Papastergiadis 2000 on Michael Riley in *Beyond the Pale, 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art,* exhibition catalogue, curator Brenda Croft, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, p. 76.

Michael went to school in Dubbo and was also sent to Sunday School, this was seen as the right thing to do...However Michael seems to have found the Christian experience very 'creepy'. Christian missionaries espousing the Dreaming stories and beliefs were primitive and evil. An image of the Bible, a recurring theme, throughout his autobiographical work, comes out of this time. He always wanted a Bible but, 'They wouldn't give me one, all the other kids had one.'

Djon Mundine 2000 'On a Wing and a Prayer' in *Cloud: Michael Riley,* exhibition catalogue, curator Francisco Fisher, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, p. 7.

darren siwes

Darren Siwes
Ngalkban/Dutch
born 1968
Church I 2000
cibachrome photograph, ed 6/6
100 x 122 cm
Private collection, Sydney
Photo Mick Bradley
Courtesy Greenaway Art Gallery, SA

In South Australia, the first missionaries were Lutherans and like Threlkeld they did take Indigenous languages seriously. Clamor Schürmann and Christian Teichelmann arrived in Adelaide in October 1838, within two years of colonisation. They came on the same ship as Governor Gawler and we see from their journals that even on the boat coming out they were concerned about Indigenous languages. They impressed upon Gawler the merits of education using the children's first language as the medium of instruction.

'Early Christian Missionaries', *Holy Holy Holy*
Rob Amery, p. 37.


Lutheran
Church

alan tucker

Alan Tucker
born 1952
The Truth of the Religion 2003
acrylic on canvas
76 x 60 cm

They said that the Whites believe in Jehovah and the Blacks have their own beliefs. We are right and they are right. I said: 'How can both be right?' Then they asked if I had seen Jehovah, and if he looked like a man or an animal, and if he'd been in my house. Dec 4 1839

Edwin A Schurmann 1987 *I'd Rather Dig Potatoes, Clamor Schürmann and the Aborigines of South Australia 1838–1853,* Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, p. 75.


Christian Teichelmann and Clamor Schurmann
learned the Kaurna language so they could
teach the "truths of the religion with more
authority authority authority."
The Aborigines have a great number of fabulous traditions handed down to them by their forefathers all of which are characterised by a high degree of improbability and monstrosity, as will be sufficiently apparent
The Kaurna were not willing to compromise their religious beliefs.
A Kaurna man said, "What you believe is good and what we believe is good."

harry j wedge

Harry J Wedge
Wiradjuri
born circa 1958
Blind Faith 1992
synthetic polymer on
composition board
80.2 x 61.8 cm
purchased through
The Art Foundation of Victoria
with the assistance of
Waltons Limited, Fellow, 1994
National Gallery of Victoria
Melbourne

The right side of the painting shows the soldiers escorting the tribesmen as they were chained up like dogs away from their homes to be locked up in prison and some of them died in these ratholes. The middle of the painting shows men, women and children being killed because they placed their trust in the strangers but the strangers like a snake blinded them with false promises and false hopes.

The demonical snake, like barbed wire threaded through the eyes of Indigenous Australians, blinding them to the truth of their own culture, forces the viewer to ponder this 'image of modern evil' laid bare in a vision of Blakean power.

Judith Ryan 1996 in 'The Art of HJ Wedge' in *Wiradjuri Spirit Man,* Craftsman House and Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-op, NSW, p. 21.


H.J. WERGE.9

interviews with artists

christine nicholls

Holy Holy Holy

Ian W Abdulla

When we were boys at Winkie, we all joined Christianity. We all had church in the scrub.

I am for Christianity—I believe it is a good religion for everyone, Aboriginal and white. I don't really paint about Christianity in my artwork, although I do paint about being in church when I was a teenager—ducking down because the preacher was looking at us and we didn't like it. But it didn't put us off Christianity, we still went to church.

(Interview 18 July 2003)

James Cochran

The Christian tradition has been the main religious influence on my art, as it relates to its rich pictorial tradition. I am interested in the narratives, which I believe can be correlated to other religions as well.

Extreme psychological states have [also] been an interest for me, as in the conversion or ecstasy narratives, for example, 'The Blinding of St Paul' or 'St Francis in Ecstasy'. It is these moments that I [attempt to connect with] the contemp-orary urban environment.

There is something in these stories that I want to explore and re-illuminate. In this way, I am asking myself, what is spirituality? I see it in the streets, and I am playing with the possibility of transcendence or conversion in the context of the profane, at street level.

(Interview April-June 2003)

Nici Cumpston

I am concerned about the negative influence that the institution of the church can have over people. Yet Christianity has influenced me in my life, despite my questioning its validity. I don't follow any particular belief system, I feel guided by thoughts that just come to me. I am not sure if this has its basis in information that I was brought up with and have forgotten but then the memory of it comes back. My mum has had the strongest influence on my morality.

In terms of other artists, I find the work of Michael Riley intriguing, and I am also inspired by Kate Breakey, William Yang and Dennis Del Favero.

(Interview 2003)

Julie Dowling

I'm intrigued by Christianity...I've got a long family history with it. My grandmother was taken by her Wadjala father to a Catholic convent to look after nuns and Wadjala foundlings, working as a domestic servant for them.

My mum and I went to one of the same Catholic schools where my grandmother worked as a cleaner. My grandmother's favourite saying is: 'The only thing that will save you from the government is the church!'

Many of my family members were taken away to different places, up and down the coast. I'm always investigating the psychological layers of this family and community history via my work—through the imagery and iconography of Christianity.

My grandmother, who's now 87, still clings to the Catholic Church—but I have a high level of ambiguity about it.

[Wadjala - whitefella, white person, non-Indigenous person]

(Interview 2 June 2003)

Jarinyanu David Downs

Jesus preach'im all people - same like me, I been preach'im all over place.

According to Duncan Kentish, Jarinyanu David Downs dedicated all of his paintings as a collective form of *witness'im for Lord Jesus.*

Jarinyanu David Downs and Duncan Kentish 1995 *You Listen Me! An Angry Love: Writings in Honour of Jarinyanu David Downs,* exhibition catalogue, Duncan Kentish Fine Art, accompanying solo exhibition *Southern Explorations,* Adelaide Central Gallery, p. 3.

Christine McCormack

My own spiritual faith is rooted in Christianity...[but] I guess I do have an ambiguous and critical view of Christianity and of other faiths as well.

On the one hand, I hate the propaganda that promotes racial hatred and religious intolerance. The idea that any one faith might provide the only 'true' path to follow and that one ought to 'forsake all others' [I find off-putting]. But I also believe that there is strong humanitarian doctrine within the church's teachings and most certainly in the Buddhist faith, that is fundamental to our potential salvation as a human race.

(Interview May/June 2003)

Michael Riley

...I hated it. [the church] I thought they were creepy. I'm not a Christian, I'm not really against Christians, I just don't like hypocrites.

Michael Riley 2000 in *Cloud: Michael Riley,* exhibition catalogue, curator Francisco Fisher, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, p. 7.

Darren Siwes

My Christian faith is part of who I am, despite the fact that I realise that many see Christians as hypocritical and as putting themselves on a pedestal–I agree, but at times isn't everyone hypocritical and judgemental? I am at times. I don't like to judge anyone as it's not for me to judge. I also realise that we all have different codes of living. I just try to live according to my own code and respect everyone else for theirs, as I ask for them to respect mine. While in London I go to a Church of England church, although I don't really like labels for churches. I don't think Christians should be labelled.

In the past I have received a lot of criticism [for my adherence to the Christian faith]. Let's be real, the church's history has been poor and it has done a lot of damage to a lot of Aboriginal people. There is scarring that can never be healed. I myself understand this and try to tread gently with these people.

I do not set out to put forward my Christian faith in a conscious way in my work. I just create work on things for which I have a passion. I think some issues are common through all humanity. But I would probably see things a little differently to those who don't believe in a God. Nevertheless, I would say I am also honest about the church and the role it has played in the past. In this way I have been critical of the impact of the Christian church and this side has been shown in my work. I guess I am critical from the inside because I see many faults. Yet there are also good points about Christianity that don't get noticed. I do think that at times the church can be very judgemental, sometimes discriminatory, though many within the church don't see it that way.

My belief is that the church needs to understand that many won't forgive the church [for what it has done in the past] and that has to be understood. Christianity–and the church–has to be real.

(Interview 2003)

Linda Syddick Napaltjarri

...I'm painting Christian way manu Jukurrpa way–both together, that's how I'm painting–Jukurrpa and Wapirrajarra.

[translation–I'm painting Christian way and Jukurrpa [Dreaming] way–both together, that's how I'm painting–Dreaming and the Christian God, both together.]

(Interview 2000)

Alan Tucker

I distrust all forms [of religious expression] once they become institutionalised and set in Scripture. I trust searches and enquiries more than answers/doctrines. [Nonetheless], the Christian church has better opportunities than most individuals to reach a wide audience and to put in place programs that facilitate reconciliation between the church bureaucracy/leadership, church congregations and Aboriginal communities. It can show the way to the wider Australian community by demonstrating practical reconciliation. One example of this was the transfer of rocks on John Flynn's grave [to their traditional owners].

I am interested in most spiritual responses to life on earth but trust none absolutely. I enjoy trying to understand individual responses to humanity's place in the universe. [Who is the artist who has influenced me most?] Van Gogh. His free flowing style and swirls [seem to] bind the heavens, earth and people into one interconnected and harmonious world. I believe his work has a spiritual dimension [I also appreciate the work of] Aboriginal painters who use dot technique to create story paintings. These may or may not have a spiritual dimension. I [also] enjoy looking at the Community Aid Abroad cards that reproduce the works of Indigenous people, from Australia and from around the world, for Christian occasions/festivals. [And I also take pleasure from] political posters that use words and images to make a statement. Perhaps these are not spiritual.

Many works of art capture a sense of spirit as seen through individual eyes–they have a spiritual dimension that may be deliberate or subconscious. My late 1970s landscape paintings of Yorke Peninsula were responses to the space experienced in that part of the country. The depiction of small-scale human constructions nestled on the land beneath vast blueskies and night stars was a personal, spiritual response to the relationship between heaven and earth.

[My own creative work arises from] an urge to express something that makes me feel uncomfortable. I feel better when that urge is out than in! Over the past decade I have painted canvases in response to the British invasion of Australia, Pauline Hanson and her One Nation party, the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas and the Tampa standoff. Through the act of painting I try to understand what I feel rather than depict any answers derived through rational thought in response to particular world events. My paintings are part of the understanding process rather than any attempt to express a final word or opinion.

(Interview April 2003)

Ian W Abdulla was born in 1947 at Swan Reach in South Australia and is a member of the Ngarrindjeri people. In the 1960s the Abdulla family moved to Gerard Mission. He produced his first works–screen prints–in 1988 at the Jerry Mason Memorial Centre, Glossop with Steve Fox and his first solo exhibition was in 1990 at Tandanya. Recent solo exhibitions have been: *River, Land and Memory* curated by Christine Nicholls, Flinders University Art Museum, Adelaide, 2002; Niagara Gallery 2001 and Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide, 2000 and 2003. Recent group exhibitions have been *Beyond the Pale, 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art,* Art Gallery of South Australia, *The Art of Place,* The Fifth National Indigenous Heritage Art Award, Old Parliament House, Canberra, both the *17th and 18th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Awards,* 2000, 2001, MAGNT, Darwin and in 2001 *Federation,* Melbourne Museum, Victoria. Abdulla is now the subject of three books: *Elvis has left the building,* Wakefield Press 2003, *Tucker,* Omnibus Books, 1994 and *As I Grew Older,* Omnibus Books, 1993. His work is held in many major private and public collections.
See www.greenaway.com.au

James Cochran was born in the UK in 1973 and came to Australia in 1978. He completed a Master of Visual Arts, University of South Australia in March 2002. In 2003 the artist showed at Gitte Weise Gallery in Sydney and at the Contemporary Art Centre Project Space in Adelaide. In 2001 he exhibited at BMG Art in Adelaide, other recent exhibitions have been *From Walls to Canvas,* Axis Gallery, Adelaide and *Seeing the Light,* Red House Gallery in 2000. Cochran has exhibited in over fifteen group exhibitions throughout Australia since 1997. In 2002 Cochran was awarded the Gunnery Studio Residency in Sydney by Arts SA. In 2002 and 2003 he was a finalist in the Brett Whiteley Scholarship. Over the last ten years Cochran has received numerous mural commissions and contributed to a large range of community art projects in both the city and regional areas of South Australia. Cochran was funded by Arts SA to produce new work for *Holy Holy Holy.* He is represented in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia.
See www.akajimmyc.com

Nici Cumpston was born in Adelaide, 1963 of Aboriginal, Afghan, Irish and British descent. She graduated from the South Australian School of Art in 2001 with a Bachelor of Visual Arts and is currently lecturing in Photography at Tauondi Aboriginal Community College at Port Adelaide. Recent group exhibitions include *17th and 18th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards* 2000, 2001, MAGNT, Darwin, and *The Peter Bailie Acquisitive Art Award,* Flinders University Art Museum, 2001, *Nakkondi/Look Indigenous Australians 1999-2000* a collaboration with Andrew Dunbar, exhibited as part of the Adelaide 2000 Festival of Arts at the State Library of SA and *3 Views of Kaurna Territory Now,* Artspace, 1998. *Nakkondi* toured to Noumea and then to regional New Caledonia, for the *8th Pacific Festival of Arts.* In 2002 Cumpston worked on *Weaving The Murray* a collaborative project commissioned by the Centenary of Federation. In 2002 she was Artist in Residence at Wilderness School and held her first solo exhibition, *Reflections,* at Tandanya. Her work is held in the collections of Adelaide Festival Centre Foundation; Flinders University Art Museum; Wilderness School; South Australian Museum; Mortlock Collection, State Library of SA; National Museum of Australia, Canberra; and the Kluge Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, University of Virginia, USA.

Julie Dowling was born in 1969 in Perth. Her heritage is Badimaya/Budimia-Yamatji. She completed a Diploma in Art at Claremont School of Art in 1989 and a Bachelor of Fine Art at Curtin University in 1992. Group exhibitions include *Beyond the Pale, 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art,* Art Gallery of SA; *Mum Shirl tribute exhibit-ion,* Boomalli Aboriginal Arts Cooperative, Sydney; *Side by Side,* Art Gallery of WA and *Across*, Canberra School of Art and touring nationally, all in 2000, *16th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award,* 1999 MAGNT, Darwin; and *Generations: The Stolen Years of Fighters and Singers,* Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, University of Western Australia, Perth, 1999. Recent solo exhibitions have been at Span Galleries in Melbourne, 2001; Artplace WA, 2000; Artspace, Adelaide Festival Centre, Galerie Gaswerke Schwabach, Germany and Artplace WA in 1999. Dowling's work is held in many major public and private collections.
See www.artplace.com.au

Jarinyanu David Downs was born circa 1925 in Wangkajunga country in the Great Sandy Desert of Western Australia, south of Lake Gregory. He died in 1995 in Adelaide. His heritage is Wangkajunga/Walmajarri. The artist lived in his birthplace until his early 20s, then at various cattle stations and the communities of Balgo, Christmas Creek, Derby, Gogo, Junjuwa, Fitzroy Crossing, Loona and in Adelaide. He exhibited in numerous group exhibitions in Australia and internationally and his solo exhibitions extended from 1988. His last show was organised by his close associate Duncan Kentish at Adelaide Central Gallery in 1995. Downs converted to Baptist-style Christianity in his 40s though he was already familiar with Christianity through Catholic priests and Uniting Aborigines Mission preachers who were active in Aboriginal fringe camps around stations and other settlements. Early missionaries encouraged converts to denounce the contemporary practice of traditional Law as an element of 'witnessing'. The reasons behind Jarinyanu's acceptance of this are complex and partly connected with a concern to identify with the power elite of the Church. Initially working with carving Jarinyanu later included Christian stories in his paintings, reflecting his close involvement with the local Junjuwa Peoples Church of the United Aborigines Mission. His work is held in many major private and public collections. A publication on his work *You Listen Me! An Angry Love: Writings in Honour of Jarinyanu David Downs* was published by Duncan Kentish in 1995.

Irene Mbitjana Entata was born in 1946 at Hermannsburg. Her heritage is Aranda/Luritja. Her father is Rolf Entata a Luritja/Western Arrente man and her mother is Millicent Entata, a Warlpiri/Luritja woman from Wynparrka. Irene Mbitjana Entata went to school at Hermannsburg and recalls watching Albert Namatjira paint. She began making pots at Tjamankura with her sister Virginia Rontji in 1990 and is one of the most dedicated potters and the most talented animal maker at Hermannsburg Pottery. Most recent exhibitions have been *Pmara Nunaka,* Bundaberg Regional Gallery, Qld; *Pmara Nunakana, Our Country,* Indigenart, Perth, WA; *and Nanah Etatha Nunaka,* Alcaston Gallery in Melbourne, all in 2002. The artist was represented in *Transitions, 17 Years of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Award* which toured Australia in 2001 and was represented in *Spirituality and Australian Aboriginal Art,* Madrid, Spain and touring Australia, 2001. She was one of five artists invited to conduct workshops at the *6th South Pacific Festival of the Arts 1992* in Rarotonga, Cook Islands. She also conducted workshops at the Pacific Arts Association's 5th International Symposium, *Arts, Performance and Society 1993* at the South Australian Museum in Adelaide and was involved in the *7th Annual Torres Strait Festival of the Arts 1993* on Thursday Island. Her work is held in many major private and public collections.
See www.hermannsburgpotters.com.au

Christine McCormack was born in Adelaide in 1953. Studies include a Graduate Diploma in Fine Art, South Australian School of Art, 1992 and a Diploma of Fine Art, South Australian School of Art, 1973. Since 1992 she has lectured and taught at various art schools in SA, most recently at the University of South Australia. Recent solo exhibitions have been at Greenaway Art Gallery, SA and *Lurid* at Gallery 482, Brisbane, Queensland, both in 2000. In 2003 she exhibited at CUBE Contemporary Art Gallery, Adelaide. In 1999 she participated in the *Artists in Windows* project, University of SA Art Museum.

Tjangkiya Wukula (Linda Syddick) Napaltjarri, was born circa 1945 in the Gibson Desert at Lake Mackay, WA. Her heritage is Pintupi/Pitjantjatjara. The Pintupi people from Lake Mackay were the last Aboriginal group in Australia to leave their homeland. In 1948, when she was six years old, she and her family walked out of their desert homeland and settled at Haasts Bluff. Most recent solo exhibitions have been at Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide, 2001, and at Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne, Victoria in 1998. In 2000 she was the runner up in the 5th National Indigenous Heritage Art Award, Canberra, ACT. In 1999 her work was included in *Spirit Country,* The California Palace of the Legion of Honour, San Francisco, USA and in 1996 in *Spirit and Place: Art in Australia 1861–1996,* Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and *Dreamings of the Desert,* Art Gallery of South Australia. Her work is held in many major private and public collections.
See www.gallerygondwana.com.au

Trevor Nickolls was born in 1949 in Adelaide. He studied art in South Australia before moving to the Northern Territory for several years where he was exposed to traditional Aboriginal art. Nickolls held a solo exhibition in 2002 at Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne titled *Other Side Art* after a visit to Rover Thomas at Turkey Creek.
In 1992 he completed a design proposal for a mural that is still extant on the rear wall of the amphitheatre, Adelaide Festival Centre. Nickolls represented Australia with Rover Thomas at the *Venice Biennale* in 1991. In 1978 he was a lecturer in Art (Black Studies Course), Swinburne Institute of Technology, Melbourne. Nickolls has held numerous exhibitions in Australia and Europe, including a survey exhibition at Deutscher Fine Art, Melbourne in 1989. Other exhibitions include: *Koori Art '84*, Artspace, Sydney; the Bicentennial exhibition *The Face of Australia*, touring, 1988; *A Koori Perspective*, *Australian Perspecta*, Artspace, Sydney, 1989; *Crossroads*: *Towards A New Reality*, MOMA, Kyoto and Tokyo, Japan, 1992. His work is held in many major private and public collections.
See www.vivienandersongallery.com

Michael Riley was born in 1960 in Dubbo, New South Wales. His Father was Wiradjuri and his Mother was Gamileroi. Riley lived as a child on Talbragar Mission. In 1982–3 he attended a photography workshop at the Tin Sheds, University of Sydney, became a technician in Sydney College of the Arts darkroom and worked as a freelance photographer before becoming a trainee at Film Australia. Riley was a founding member of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative in Sydney in 1987. He has held six solo exhibitions in Australia and the UK and fifteen group exhibitions nationally and internationally. In 1999 Riley showed work at the *48th Venice Biennale.* He has directed over fifteen films and videos including most recently *Return to Guwanyi* for the Museum of Sydney. A recent group exhibition was *Centenary vs. Eternity,* Boomalli, Sydney, 2001. In January 2003, the artist's work *Cloud,* a sequence of photographs addressing the parallel meanings associated with Indigenous and Christian beliefs, which toured nationally from the Australian Centre for Photography, was presented as a panoramic banner stretching over 50 metres at Circular Quay Railway Station. The project was part of *Meridian*, Museum of Contemporary Art exhibition for 2002 *Sydney Festival.* His work is held in many major private and public collections.
See www.culture.com.au/boomalli/

Darren Siwes was born in Adelaide in 1968. His heritage is Ngalkban and Dutch. Siwes studied art at Adelaide Central School of Art and the University of South Australia where he completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours) in 1996. In 1997 Siwes completed a Graduate Diploma of Education, University of South Australia. From 1997–2001, he was a Senior Lecturer in Painting and Drawing at Tauondi Aboriginal Community College at Port Adelaide. Siwes received a SAMSTAG scholarship in 2001. His most recent solo exhibition *Mis/Perceptions* was shown at Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide, Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne in 2001 and in 2002 at Garage Regium, Madrid, Spain. He was included in the exhibitions *3 Views of Kaurna Territory Now*, Artspace, 1998; *Living Here Now: Art and Politics,* Australian Perspecta, Art Gallery of NSW, 1999; *Beyond the pale, 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art,* Art Gallery of South Australia; *Chemistry: Art in South Australia 1999-2000,* Art Gallery of South Australia, 2000; ARCO, *International Art Fair,* Madrid, Spain with Greenaway Art Gallery in 2001; *Recent Acquisitions,* 2002, Adelaide Festival Centre; *Kaurna Reconciliation Public Artwork,* a collaborative public artwork, Adelaide Festival Centre forecourt, Adelaide and the *Biennial of Sydney,* 2002. Darren Siwes' work is held in the Art Gallery of South Australia, Artbank, Flinders University Art Museum, Art Gallery of Western Australia, and the Queensland Art Gallery.
See www.greenaway.com.au

Alan Tucker was born in Adelaide in 1952. He held his first solo exhibition, *Civilized men and savages,* at Prospect Gallery in 1993. During the past decade Alan has written and illustrated five books: a trilogy that explores race relations in Australia (*Too Many Captain Cooks, Side by Side* and *Homelands and Frontiers*), an illustrated book about the worst abuses of the convict system (*Iron in the Blood*) which won the CBCA Eve Pownall Award in 2003 for information books and an historical fiction portraying the experiences of a teenager during the bombing of Darwin (*My Story: The Bombing of Darwin: The Diary of Tom Taylor*) which won the 2003 NSW Premier′s History Award for Young Readers. He is currently researching and writing two books: a historical fiction about the sinking of HMAS Sydney and HSK Kormoran in November 1941, and an illustrated book about the testing of British Atomic bombs in Australia in the 1950s. During 2000–2001 Tucker was the collaborating writer in Victor Harbour Primary School and Fregon Anangu School's twenty year celebrations and *Local Symbols of Reconciliation* project.

Harry J Wedge was born in 1957 on Erambie Mission, Cowra, in New South Wales. His heritage is Wiradjuri. Wedge worked as a drover and fruit picker until he went to Sydney and enrolled at the Eora College. In 1991 he exhibited with Ian Abdulla at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative, the following year he became a member of Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-op and in 1993 was represented in *Australian Perspecta,* Art Gallery of New South Wales. A book on Wedge's work *Wiradjuri Spirit Man* was published in 1996. His work is held in many major private and public collections.
See www.culture.com.au/boomalli/

Rob Amery completed a Masters in Linguistics at the Australian National University in 1985 researching the rise of Dhuwaya, a koine variety of Yolngu Matha spoken at Yirrkala in the Northern Territory, and a PhD at the University of Adelaide in 1998, published in 2000 as *Warrabarna Kaurna!: Reclaiming an Australian Language,* on efforts to reclaim and re-introduce the Kaurna language. He currently teaches Kaurna, Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal Health at the University of South Australia. Research interests include Kaurna linguistics, language planning and language revival, linguistics and health, and Indigenous languages in schools.

Mary Eagle is an art historian/curator who is currently a PhD candidate at the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research at the ANU in Canberra. For many years she was the Senior Curator of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Australia. She is the author of several books about Australian Art, including *Peter Purves Smith: A Painter in Peace and War* (2001), *The Story of Australian Art* with John Jones (1994), *The Oil Paintings of Arthur Streeton in the National Gallery of Australia* (1994), *The Art of Rupert Bunny* (1991), *Australian Modern Painting Between the Wars* (1990) and *The George Bell School* (1981). Her doctoral project is a history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australian art over two hundred years, told through works of art and the contexts of their making.

Bill Edwards is an Adjunct Senior Lecturer in the Unaipon School, University of South Australia. He is a post-graduate candidate in history at Flinders University, his thesis topic is *The Moravian Aboriginal Missions in Australia.* A minister of the Uniting Church, he was superintendent of Ernabella Mission (1958–72), Mowanjum Mission (1972–73) and Pitjantjatjara Parish Minister (1976–80). He lectured in Aboriginal Studies at the South Australian College of Advanced Education and University of South Australia (1981–96). He is the author of *An Introduction to Aboriginal Societies* (1988). He has written extensively on Pitjantjatjara history, language, religion, education and politics.

Varga Hosseini is a writer and postgraduate candidate at Flinders University. Hosseini's doctoral topic is *Christian Influences and Symbolism within contemporary Indigenous Australian art, 1980 – present.* He has contributed reviews to local and interstate publications and written catalogue essays. In 2003 he was writer in residence at Nexus Multicultural Arts Centre.

Marcia Langton holds the Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies, Indigenous Studies Program at the School of Anthropology, Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Melbourne. She is an Indigenous Australian and one of Australia's leading authorities on contemporary social issues in Aboriginal affairs. Langton completed a doctoral thesis in the Department of Geography at Macquarie University and was Ranger Professor of Aboriginal Studies at the Northern Territory University. She has been a member of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Director of the Centre for Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resource Management and has acted as a consultant to the Northern Land Council and the Australian Film Commission. Langton has published extensively on issues in Aboriginal affairs such as land, resource and social impact issues, Indigenous dispute processing, policing and substance abuse, gender, identity, art, film and cultural studies. She has also prepared reports to major Indigenous organisations such as the Central and Cape York Land Councils. In 1993 she was made a Member of the Order of Australia.

Christine Nicholls is a writer, curator and Senior Lecturer in Australian Studies at Flinders University. From 1982–1992 she worked at Lajamanu, a remote Aboriginal settlement in the Tanami Desert of the Northern Territory, first as a linguist and then as Principal of the local Warlpiri Lajamanu School. She subsequently held the position of Principal Education Officer with responsibility for the Northern Territory's bilingual education programs in Indigenous languages and English. Christine Nicholls has published many articles about Indigenous Australian art and languages, as well as chapters in the books *Kathleen Petyarre: Genius of Place* (2001) and *Dorothy Napangardi: Dancing up country* (2002).

Vivonne Thwaites is a freelance curator based in Adelaide, South Australia. Some of her curatorial projects have been: *Home is where the heart is,* 2001–2002; *Karra/Karrawirraparri,* 2000; *3 Views of Kaurna Territory Now,* 1998 and *Talking.Listening.*, 1994. Cross-cultural work has been a major focus in setting up dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, communities and the general public.

list of works

Holy Holy Holy

All works in collection of artist unless otherwise stated.
All measurements are in centimetres, height precedes width.

Ian W Abdulla born 1947 Swan Reach
My first bible 2003
synthetic polymer on canvas
92 x 137 cm

Ian W Abdulla born 1947 Swan Reach
Jokes after church I 2003
synthetic polymer on canvas
92 x 122 cm

Ian W Abdulla born 1947 Swan Reach
Jokes after church II 2003
acrylic on canvas
92 x 137 cm
Collection of Paul Greenaway

Ian W Abdulla born 1947 Swan Reach
In the early days 1999
screenprint, edition: 30
48 x 67 cm (image size)

James Cochran born 1973 UK
The Ascension (portrait of Rodney) 2003
oil and enamel on canvas
148 x 79 cm

James Cochran born 1973 UK
Blessed 2003
oil on canvas
120 x 77 cm

James Cochran born 1973 UK
Michelo in the night 2003
oil on canvas
108 x 80 cm

James Cochran born 1973 UK
Desert Angel 2003
oil on canvas
95 x 101 cm

Nici Cumpston born 1963 Adelaide
Abandoned 2003
silver gelatin print, hand-coloured with oils and pencils
80 x 100 cm

Nici Cumpston born 1963 Adelaide
Abundance 2003
silver gelatin print, hand-coloured with oil paint and pencils
70 x 90 cm

Nici Cumpston born 1963 Adelaide
Respect 2003
silver gelatin print, hand-coloured with oil paint and pencils
70 x 90 cm

Julie Dowling Badimaya/Budimia – Yamatji, born 1969 Perth
Minority Rites I 2003
synthetic polymer, blood and plastic on canvas
80 x 50 cm
Courtesy Artplace Gallery, WA

Julie Dowling Badimaya/Budimia – Yamatji, born 1969 Perth
Minority Rites II 2003
synthetic polymer, blood and plastic on canvas
80 x 50 cm
Courtesy Artplace Gallery, WA

Julie Dowling Badimaya/Budimia – Yamatji, born 1969 Perth
Minority Rites III 2003
synthetic polymer, red ochre and plastic on canvas
80 x 50 cm
Courtesy Artplace Gallery, WA

Jarinyanu David Downs Wangkajunga/Walmajarri 1925–1995
Genesis—God, Star, Rain and Heaven 1991
acrylic and earth pigments on Belgium linen
183 x 122 cm
Collection of Duncan Kentish

Jarinyanu David Downs Wangkajunga/Walmajarri 1925–1995
Snake been tell'im Eve—star and sky and garden and tree 1991
earth pigments and acrylic on Belgium linen
112 x 84 cm
Collection of Duncan Kentish

This one Adam Eve Story

Well, this one Eve. [touches black figure reaching for brown 'fruit']

First time, God been make him sister and brother. He never make him for this one [hand-signing 'sexual intercourse']—*only for work.*

Well, this bugger—snake [touches brown snake, hanging from black tree] *he tell'im Eve 'You gotta tuck out this one fruit—make'im you wife now!'.*

First time, two fella never make'im this one [signs 'sexual intercourse']. *Eve, he only got'im little one something, you know? Like a mungga* [young girl]. *Only for piss—'muddy water'. He got no 'river'. Adam too, he stop same way—no 'river'.* [In traditional times, both men and women could only marry after initiation, which is still the case for certain groups and communities.]

Well, this tucker, two fella been tuck out from snake. Two fella tuck out… well woman been make him… [makes suction sound]—*got him big one now! And man too…* [makes suction sound]—*got him river now!* [The fruit eaten was a nut from a tree, like a small walnut. The large slit on one side represented the woman, while the smaller slit on the other side represented the man]. *Two fella get him from tucker* [bush walnut], *and from wine and rum* [all equally forbidden items of consumption to Jarinyanu.].

Two fella tuck out from snake—well God been wild now. 'I gotta tell you!', he been say. Hunt him out from Paradise. Put him big fence all around. Two fella can't come back. Stop there in his own country now.

[Jarinyanu constructs his Adam Eve Story as three panels, enclosed by his signature preference for a series of framing borders, here surrounding the black void of a time before Genesis. The top panel shows the creation of 'Sky and Ground'—represented by an earthy border of hills framing a pale Sky horizon. The centre panel represents the more distant overhead 'Stars of Heaven'. The lower panel shows the 'Garden Eden' of trees bordered by a perimeter of green, with the unfolding drama of man's acceptance of himself as being truly human, being confined to the minimalist elements of Brown Snake, Eve, Tree and Waterhole and forbidden Fruit. There is an exquisite delicacy about this shy drama, where the simple frailty of human desire is represented by the slender, overly long arm of Eve, appropriately dwarfed by the immensity of God's creation.]

Jarinyanu David Downs Wangkajunga/Walmajarri 1925–1995
Jesus Preach'im all people-same like me, I been preach'im all over the place 1992
earth pigments and acrylic on Belgium linen
112 x 84 cm
Collection of Duncan Kentish

This portrait celebrates Jarinyanu following the role of Jesus, preaching God's word to all the people. The mushroom ochre body of Jesus-Jarinyanu is over-painted with white; Sunday-best clothing of long white trousers and white long-sleeved shirt, arms raised in benediction blessing all the people. He is sitting cross-legged on the ground, a form that Jarinyanu wrestled with in a number of paintings but never so well.

Here the curving legs and tucked-in feet are elegantly positioned, echoing the sweep of his raised arms, which seem to be manifesting the sparkling stars of an unbounded Heaven. The lower part of the image is grounded within a band of ochre, a vestige of Jarinyanu's signature border. The face is particularly animated with the urgency of God's message—with a touch of the driven proselytiser—and the halo of white-tipped strokes of red is comp-limented by black whiskers, giving the face a magisterial sense of enclosure. Jarinyanu was wearing a beard again. The Jesus figure reveals the contra-dictions Jarinyanu had to balance, displaying the knowing innocence of the God-child beneath his own created wonder of the 'million million star', while contending with the tormented conviction of the caring religious fanatic: a slight figure, distraught by the ravages wrought by alcohol among his people, who would bravely face up to home-invasions by drunken bullies, and attempt to close the local hotel single-handed; or wake at 5am, and in the form of prayer, berate his family for their shortcomings.

Converted to Baptist-style Christianity in his 40s, he was a loner, somewhat isolated from traditional fulfilment by his proselytising against traditional Law, and often involved in heated arguments with his Lawman brothers. Nonetheless, he remained highly respectful towards Ngarrangkarni (Dreaming) Story-cycles, believing them to be true, and somehow coexisting with, and permeating, Christian Story-cycles. Disbelief in traditional stories was an artefact imported by missionaries, requiring ritualized mantras of rejection, or 'witnessing' from their converts, but had little effect on how people conceptualised their world.

Indeed, Jarinyanu continued to paint the epic events or Story-cycles still celebrated in ceremonies—and did so with tender authority. He explained his apparent, contradictory approach quite simply. God is the originating power behind the Genesis creation of everything in the natural world, so it is perfectly acceptable to reverence His powers in whatever form they are locally manifested. God has created rain, and Kurtal is simply a vehicle for the expression of this creation: and performance was simply an associated aspect. 'Only rain water!' he would reassure. 'Nothing to do.'

Already a church Elder, Jarinyanu's art gave him wealth which gradually reinserted him into society as a tribal elder deserving respect. And just as oddly, the universal respect for money licensed him to invoke Ngarrangkarni (Dreaming) Story-cycles and reanimate his previous Lawman identity. He was curious about the world and would investigate it fearlessly, often speculating how it linked in with his traditional and Christian orientations.

So his art curiously granted him a platform on which he could dedicate all his art works as a form of 'witness'im Lord Jesus'. Indeed, Jarinyanu would sometimes take a painting to church, depicting a fairly 'safe' traditional Story such as Rain Man Gurdarl, and reassure his spiritual keepers with a short, safe description, ending his performance by placing $50.00 in the collection bag—a sum not to be argued with. So 'Art' for Jarinyanu event-ually became that safe place where he could display the full kaleido-scope of his mercurial interests; Law, Ceremony, God, natural phenomena, social and spiritual concerns, and autobiography.

Jarinyanu David Downs Wangkajunga/Walmajarri 1925–1995
Self-Portrait: Dream of the Three Lights 1993
earth pigments and acrylic on linen
112 x 84 cm
Flinders University Art Museum 2968

I was baptising people in the Fitzroy river on the eastern side of Nookambah Station. Me and Pompey Siddon and my brother Benny Jukula. We baptised my brother Jimmy Yai and his second wife Yulpira, and two other young girls who have now passed away.

Well the Holy Spirit gave me light and rain right there. I'm a rainmaker—this one—David Downs Jarinyanu. And Jimmy went back to 'Law'! God gave me this one—three light. I've forgotten that corroborree. God gave that story—right up to Nookambah…sing him three fella…No Matter!

Two fella Jimmy and wife were baptised, but they went back to eating tobacco and making trouble. After this we went back to baptising at Junjuwa [a community close to Fitzroy Crossing].

Well my brother Jimmy hit me on the head when I was a kid. And my other brother Spider hit me again just a few years ago. Three lights came to me from that. I had headaches all the time from those three lights. Well God made the three lights join into one light now. No more headaches.

Spider had taken the side of Lucy Walkerie, along with my last brother Michaelangelo. My son Phillip had belted his wife-daughter from Lucy. She never looked after their son properly—little Kelton. Lucy summonsed Phillip and the police locked him up. Later on they let him go.

I got Kelton and looked after him. Well, now Lucy's mob have taken him back again—he's a Catholic now. [This was a bitter dispute between two sets of grandparents about who should have custody over their badly neglected grandson Kelton.]

Alright, Spider hit me over the head with a club and I fell down. Everybody was crying all around me, thinking I was dead. Well I got up and walked back to my place at the old UAM Mission. I've still got depression in my skull from where Spider hit me.

This is my body. The white around my head is rauwl [long 'dreads' of hair] and cloud-half and half—because I'm rainmaker. There is a Wapuru painted on my forehead. This was first painted by the Two Men so that women would like them. The mark painted on my chest is Jangkarti—my skin. And under that is my Jingil [navel] from being born. Around my middle I'm wearing Nyimbara—from hair and from kangaroo leather.

And these three light here—God put them right here. Dreaming, today, in Adelaide. And after I was dreaming again, and God made those three lights join. One light now. No more headaches.

Irene Mbitjana Entata Aranda/Luritja, born 1946 Hermannsburg
Mission Days/Baptism I 2002
handcrafted terracotta clay, underglaze
45 x 32 cm
Collection of Helen Read

Irene Mbitjana Entata Aranda/Luritja, born 1946 Hermannsburg
Mission Days/Baptism II 2002
handcrafted terracotta clay, underglaze
45 x 32 cm
Collection of Dr Suszanne Thwaites

Christine McCormack born 1953 Adelaide
Souvenirs – the coming of the white man 2002
oil on canvas
36 x 61 cm
Private collection, Adelaide

Shells are items of bargaining for the Aboriginal people and they believed that the mother of pearl lustre endowed the shell with the spirit of rain—the rainbow.

You wouldn't normally find a shell like that along the beach where I was walking in SA. I decided to place a shell ship I had found in an op shop, on top of this newly found shell—using it in the painting to create the feeling of a ship sailing on top of swirling waves. I arranged the other objects to make a pattern of islands or stepping stones—the approaching white man would be able to step from island to island leaving in his wake a thriving tourist industry that often denigrates and trivialises the natural attributes of each place. Souvenirs are also gathered from the sailors' voyages around such islands.

The dappled shell with the camouflaged kangaroo is a beautifully subtle item—makes me think how the true inhabitants of the land have been hidden and subdued—rendered down to ghost-like images.

The ashtray with the kadaitcha man painted on it is the shape of a footprint. Like the one that Robinson Crusoe discovered on his desert island when he realized he was not alone. It is the mark of man—the man who has travelled all over the place and now it bears his mark where once it was pure and untouched. In an inverted way this is the white mans foot print—and the derogatory placement of the kadaitcha man symbolic of that which has been trivialised and popularised—rendered cute, collectable, safe for white man's homes.

The mermaid and ship is from a book of tattoo images—most sailors sported at least one tattoo. Traditionally the mermaid has been linked with sailors—their long voyages at sea without women giving rise to wishful thinking and fantasy that grew into myth and legend. The ship's mast forms a cross—as well as being a symbol of Christianity it is a phallic symbol. The ship as a whole, the whiteness, the curve of the shell indicating the testicles —suggests the domination of the white man bringing with him in his dream cloud, the white mermaid—the seeds of his own myths, religions etc to take root and grow in the newly discovered lands. It is the white man's rain/reign that 'comes' in the shell ship.

Christine McCormack, 2003

Christine McCormack born 1953 Adelaide
Missionary Position, 2002
oil on canvas
45 x 76 cm
Private collection

The two decorated emu eggs were provided by Helen Fuller. I had already found the long dish (made in Australia) depicting a nubile Aboriginal girl—very 50s in style and almost European in appearance (apart from the skin colour). The long shape of the dish already implied a phallus and with the placement of the emu eggs for testicles the image was complete.

I found the small ashtray figurine of a native boy wrestling with a crocodile (or alligator) in an antique shop in Glenelg—the owner told me he purchased the piece from a small shop in England on his last visit there. The boy is African—and the feeling of the piece was very 'colonial'—hence the mis-sionary connections suggested in the overall work. I found the image of the rabbit with the large phallus on a post card of a prehistoric cave drawing— the implication in the work is that "they breed like rabbits"—therefore they must be controlled.

I find these objects and ornaments hearken back to childhood – the early 60s, the ornaments on the mantlepiece or coffee table in the suburban home.

I also like to arrange them in scenarios—a sense of play, of control, of make believe—also related to my doll's house and arranging the furniture as a preliminary for play.

These kitsch objects reveal a certain view of the world, a Disney world where nothing is too serious and there is always a nice middle class white view of how things should be—even if some of the objects are racist or sexist by today's standards—the view back then was different. We were all lulled in the comforting thought that the Aborigines were happy and contented in 'Arnhem Land' just as the North American Indians were happy on their 'reservations'. We gained these views from our social studies books at school and while at Sunday School and church we were told to love one another and be good Christians—so what was done to these people was 'for their own good' and done by good Christian people who 'knew better' and were wise and powerful. The American Indians referred to the President as 'The Great White Father' and we all knew that from the TV Westerns we used to watch at home.

The arrangements of objects I set up take on a life of their own. I initially view some of the objects with horror. I see lots of possibilities when I look at these objects and I like to use a set of layered ideas as puns and I develop a sense of an aesthetic, to formulate a different view. I use ornaments as players in my dramas.

Christine McCormack born 1953 Adelaide
Other refuge have I none 2003
oil on linen
54 x 33 cm
Courtesy CUBE Contemporary Art, Adelaide

Tjangika Wukula (Linda Syddick) Napaltjarri Pintupi/Pitjantjatjara
born circa 1937 Lake Mackay
Leaving Home 1996
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
166.5 x 164 cm
Collection Sir James and Lady Cruthers

Tjangika Wukula (Linda Syddick) Napaltjarri Pintupi/Pitjantjatjara
born circa 1937 Lake Mackay
The Eucharist 1998
acrylic on canvas
127 x 168 cm
Courtesy Gallery Gondwana

The painting depicts The Eucharist or Holy Communion, a ritual where celeb-rants re-enact the Last Supper of Jesus Christ. In the centre of the painting we see the cross (which represents the Crucifixion) set against a very distinct-ive Australian background featuring Uluru (Ayers Rock) while bread and wine either side of the cross symbolise the body and blood of Christ.

The remaining symbols convey the artist's own Aboriginal interpretation of the event. The three boomerangs either side and to the top of Ayers Rock denote the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They also symbolise the promise of return made by Jesus. The series of small eleven U-shapes to the base of the cross represent Christ's disciples. Directly above, the horiz-ontal snake symbolises Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus.

To the bottom of the painting the large blue U-shape denotes a participant in Holy Communion, while either side a Kangaroo ancestor signifies Aboriginal spirituality and belief.

Linda's life has been influenced by Lutheran missionaries, hence the syncretic nature of her work. Whilst upholding her traditional belief system she is attempting to reconcile this contemporary issue though her art; a fusion of Christianity and the Dreaming.

This serves to remind us that the Dreaming is essentially a dynamic process which incorporates the totality of life, rather than a static historical, mythical past. The Dreaming deals with all issues; past, present and future.
Gallery Gondwana

Tjangika Wukula (Linda Syddick) Napaltjarri Pintupi/Pitjantjatjara
born circa 1937 Lake Mackay
The Messiah 1996
acrylic on linen
169 x 108 cm
Courtesy Gallery Gondwana

In this very bold, colourful and symbolic work the artist deals with the contrasting themes of Authority (represented by the central commanding figure), Humility and Sacrifice (represented by the life of Jesus-depicted in the lower panel).

The central figure is both the prophet Isaiah and the part of his prophecy which said: 'And the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and The Prince of Peace.' On the right of the central figure three arc-like motifs represent boomerangs which are symbolic of return and the Trinity. To the left a spear is depicted—a symbol of authority.

The lower panel comes from further writings of Isaiah where he says in Chapter 53: 'For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant and as a root out of dry ground…he is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief…'

The painting covers all the themes used by Handel in his *Oratoria,* it is essentially Handel's *Messiah,* rendered as a visual art work.
Gallery Gondwana

Trevor Nickolls born 1949 Adelaide
Postcard from the Devil 2000
oil on canvas
90.2 x 61.3 cm
Private collection, Sydney

Trevor Nickolls born 1949 Adelaide
Mandala's day 1976
acrylic on cotton duck canvas
117.5 x 118 cm
Private collection, Sydney

Michael Riley Wiradjuri/Gamileroi, born 1960 Dubbo
Untitled (Cross) from the *Flyblown* series 1998
C-type print, 6/10
82 x 108 cm
Private collection, Sydney

Michael Riley Wiradjuri/Gamileroi, born 1960 Dubbo
Untitled (Bible) from the *Flyblown* series 1998
C-type print, 5/10
82 x 108 cm
Private collection, Sydney

Michael Riley Wiradjuri/Gamileroi, born 1960 Dubbo
Untitled (Bible) from the *Cloud* series, 2000
C-type print, edition 5/10
82 x 108 cm
Collection of Dr Suszanne Thwaites

Michael Riley Wiradjuri/Gamileroi, born1960 Dubbo
Untitled (Angel back) from the *Cloud* series, 2000
C-type print, edition 6/10
82 x 108 cm
Collection of Dr Suszanne Thwaites

Darren Siwes Ngalkban/Dutch born 1968 Adelaide
Church I 2000
cibachrome photograph ed 6/6
100 x 122 cm
Private collection, Sydney

Darren Siwes Ngalkban/Dutch born 1968 Adelaide
Yellakiana Beginnings 1998
cibachrome photograph, 4/6
100 x 122 cm
Private collection, Sydney

Alan Tucker born 1952 Adelaide
Holy Trinity Church Through Time 2003
acrylic on canvas
51 x 51 cm

Alan Tucker born 1952 Adelaide
The Truth of the Religion 2003
acrylic on canvas
76 x 60 cm

Alan Tucker born 1952 Adelaide
Frederick Hagenauer and Bessy Flower 1999
acrylic on canvas
90 x 60 cm

Harry J Wedge Wiradjuri born circa 1957 Erambie Mission, Cowra
Blind Faith 1992
synthetic polymer paint on composition board
80.2 x 61.8 cm
Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of Waltons Limited, Fellow, 1994
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Harry J Wedge Wiradjuri born circa 1957 Erambie Mission, Cowra
If we don't go to Sunday School 2003
acrylic on canvas
80 x 199 cm

Sunday afternoon after we had dinner especially when it's hot or cold and you don't feel like go'n to church at all, you just feel like go'n to the river or stay'n at home, Mum's always push'n us to go to Sunday School and if we don't go we get a flog'n or we have to clean up. We decide to go to church the other kids are run'n to go to Sunday school.
As we are walk'n to Sunday school I'll be drag'n the chain, swear'n and curse'n that we have to go to Sunday school to learn about God and that. At Sunday school the teacher would be sing'n out to us to hurry up but as I'm walk'n, I'm think'n about other things I could be do'n instead of sit'n at the church for an hour or so. As we are sit'n and talk'n about god and that, my mind is somewhere else. I wish time would hurry up and fly so I can get outta this place.
But as we are sit'n there talk'n we ask them questions about God and Jesus they seem not to answer my questions. We ask them about Adam and Eve and about the fruit they ate, how do they know it was an apple? It could have been an orange or someth'n. Then when you get into it, time seems to fly, then when you leave you get a lolly pop and sneak down to the river so your mum don't ask you to do anything.

That's why I hate Sunday school. I always wished that there were a Saturday and a Monday and never a Sunday when I was a kid.

Harry J Wedge Wiradjuri born circa 1957 Erambie Mission, Cowra
We are not animals 2003
acrylic on canvas
84 x 189 cm

Since the English came out to this country they came over and took over our land very easily they started building towns, farming and spreading out across the land, then they started putting Aboriginal people on missions where they controlled our lives. Then there was some Aboriginals who did try to fight back but the trouble makers were moved from their land to be chucked into jails where they were all crowded up, they would be locked up in cells all day and maybe let out for fresh air and water, a lot have died in prison but they still fight for what they believe in just like religion. There are a lot of Aboriginal people dying in there from being locked up. At least 10-15 people per cell if you don't believe that, there's an island off WA Perth called Rottnest Island. When I went there to see it myself it made me think what it was like to be locked up like animals and treated like animals, There was a lot of Aboriginal people who died on that Island that is why people shouldn't be treated like this.

Harry J Wedge Wiradjuri born circa 1957 Erambie Mission, Cowra
Brainwash 1994
synthetic polymer paint on paper
38.6 x 27 cm
Queensland Art Gallery Foundation 1995.108

Down through the history of our life, our people was learning all the time. Passing their knowledge on to other people. So they learn about things, about the Dreamtimes, and everybody knew and learning about new things about their tribe and their ancestry what they been passing down. Everybody was very, very happy—but they didn't know that their luck was going to change. All of these things would be stopped, nobody would have the knowledge at all. But there are some tribes and some people still teaching this special gift what they have got. Like with me, I haven't got no gift at all. What I got is my dream to dream about the past to tell what has happened to my people in the past. It hasn't stopped—it's still going on today. That's devious way. My mother before her mother and so on and so on. The Christian people was the meanest of all. They spread the word about God—they pumped it into our heads and pumped and pumped till it got stuck there. When they grew up and had children too they was doing the whitefella's job—pump and pump into our heads. I know my mother today when I talk about the white Christians she says I will burn in hell—that's how much she been brainwashed herself. She forgot what her people was about. There's still lot of things she believe about her people. She been brainwashed that much herself. I could remember when I was a kid we had to go to Sunday school to learn while they're pumping it into our heads. When we go to school they still pump it into us. Never talk about what happened to the Aborigines, never talk about treaties to sign the land over to Captain Cook, Englishmen, the Queen whatever. I'm pretty good in my history. ASK ME WHEN NED KELLY GOT HANGED IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, I KNOW THIS MUCH FOR SURE. LIKE WHEN CAPTAIN COOK DISCOVERED AUSTRALIA, AFTER THEY CHANGED THE NAME OF IT, THAT WAS THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. YOU CAN ASK ME ABOUT WORLD WAR II – WHO STARTED IT? WHO WANTED TO CONQUER THE WORLD? HE WAS MY HERO. ASK ME ABOUT WHAT THE WHITE PEOPLE PUMPED AND PUMPED INTO MY HEAD. ASK ME ABOUT MY FUCKING DREAMTIME YOU BASTARDS.
I can tell you fuck all. 'Cause these people stopped my people passing down their knowledge to us. Like it shows in this fucking painting of this Aborigine boy sticking his fingers in his fucking ears. He stands up in the classroom screaming, 'I don't want to learn about this shit! I want to learn about my ancestry, about their Dreamtimes'
Wiradjuri Spirit Man, p. 60.

Harry J Wedge Wiradjuri born circa 1957 Erambie Mission, Cowra
Not Accepting the Bible 1990
acrylic on watercolour paper, framed
60 x 30 cm
Collection of Reg Richardson

In this painting it shows a priest he's really a white person but back in them days water was really precious—it was like gold. So they didn't bathe much in those days. So that's why he's dirty and it shows a couple of men came along and he tried to convert them to his Christianity and when they don't accept the Bible he'll hang them. It's a joke the way the Christian people go around spread the good Lord's word and I find it's a very hypocritical way. They supposed to love their neighbours, love their enemies. Love their enemies alright, they sure did. They destroyed them cause they didn't believe in something. They had their own belief—their own God. What give the right for somebody else to come destroy their belief—to believe in this God of theirs. We never know if we worship the same god, only way we are going to find out is when we die.
Wiradjuri Spirit Man, p. 83.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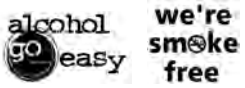
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