

HAYLEY MILLAR BAKER

The trees have no tongues

'*The trees have no tongues*' is a portal to the in-between. It tells of the thousands of years of cultural practices that were dismantled as a result of the introduction of Christianity and the irreparable trauma that ensued. Christianity's guise as the saving grace for the future of a new nation led to the detachment of identity for my family. The heaviness of their spirits scarred the places they touched leaving behind remnants of their stories of bare survival embedded within trauma.

With the settlement of Victoria consuming the land, the corruption of alcohol, white men abducting and molesting black women; the breakdown of traditional life for Aboriginal people was fast accelerating. Frontier violence was increasing, farmers were extending their borders, and as a result traditional food resources were further away, out of reach for Aboriginal people.

Grandmother was eleven-years-old when the Aboriginal Mission Station opened its arms to her preaching protection with food a plenty. In exchange for asylum, Grandmother, uninformed, surrendered her liberty to Christianity – a tool that sought to control, domesticate, and assimilate, a stratagem used to dictate the abandonment of her language, culture, and identity.

Grandma was fourteen-years-old when the Aboriginal Mission Station arranged her relocation and subsequent domestication, so many miles away from home. As Grandma learnt the Western way – the English language, customs, and Christianity – the Aboriginal Mission Station saw potential in my Grandma to serve White homes ensuing a license of integration into the new nation they called 'Australia'.

Gran was seven-years-old when she was rejected by both the Aboriginal Mission Station and the White Australian community. Belonging to neither, as a now domesticated Aboriginal woman, Gran was out of place and fearful. The intergenerational trauma paced through her veins from the attempted apocalypse on her culture. The pain of her foremothers was too strong to endure, Gran surrendered herself wholeheartedly to the new nation in the hope for a merciful future for generations of family to come.

'*The trees have no tongues*' lays bare the trauma that Christianity had on three generations of Aboriginal women.



Untitled (Flight) 2019
Inkjet print on paper
90 x 68 cm
Edition of 5
\$6,000 (unframed)
\$6,500 (framed)

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