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**Conversions and Transformations:
Missiological Approaches to Religious Change**

Paper Proposal:

Fiction as Missiology: a Creative Christology in Drusilla Modjeska's 'The Mountain'

Stanley Skreslet (*Comprehending Mission*, 2012) argues that missiology has been slow to examine historical fiction from outside the West. A way to respond to his challenge is presented in *The Mountain* (2012), a novel by acclaimed Australian writer, Drusilla Modjeska. Book One describes the five years leading up to independence in Papua New Guinea in 1973 and ends with a 'gift child': a hapkas boy. Book Two describes his return – the child of a black mother and white father - to the land of his birth.

In the book an account of conversion and transformation in Papua New Guinea is offered. "Of all the applause, of all the cheers, the greatest is for the Christian missions, the priests who cross the stadium with their crucifixes and their bibles 'Jesus,' ... 'good' man true" ... 'He die on a tree. Very good. He die for PNG.'" (*The Mountain*, 291). It is a surprisingly positive portrayal of conversion and transformation, referencing indigenous approval ("the greatest [applause] is for the Christian missions") and indigenization ("He die for PNG.")

The paper will take this notion of Jesus as *good man true* and analyse how this Christology interweaves with themes in *The Mountain* of ancestor, gift and *hapkas*. It will argue that *The Mountain* offers a distinct and creative Christology, one that offers post-colonial insight into the interplay between missiological notions of pilgrim and indigenizing and the complex journeys between there and here. Such a Christology is one result of religious change in PNG.

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