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*A Genealogy of Unemployment: Press Representations
in South Australia 1890s and 1930s*

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Abstract

This thesis examines the constitution of unemployment during periods of depression in South Australia, in particular, the extreme economic downturns experienced in the eighteen nineties and nineteen thirties. Previous studies have ignored the possibility that the determinate historical conditions established in England by the 1834 Poor Law were transplanted in substantive ways to colonial South Australia. This study follows a trajectory which explores the uncharted ideological and social terrain concerning the impact and significance of the English regime of thought and practice on the liberal mode of governance in colonial South Australia. That there is a direct parallel with the pattern of events in England is investigated through press representations in periods of severe economic contraction. The symmetry as well the discontinuities in relation to these modalities of thought become a central of concern in this study.

The archaeological - genealogical investigation seeks to determine the historical conditions of possibility for the emergence of the workless in terms of gender and race. This understanding of ethical subjectivity is sought in governmental-ethical practices. The kind of political-anatomy and the cultivation of aesthetic styles of existence or conduct are explored in relation to a liberal mode of governance. The multiple processes of discipline by which individuals, in a practice of liberty, gave themselves a particular self-relation, and the mechanisms of individuation which set in motion the ascetic powers of moral experience constitute a key focus of concern in this work.

Moreover, the changing ensemble of power-knowledge that constituted 'lines of force' directly impacting on the subjectivity of the unemployed are analysed in terms of culturally defined conditions which organise and support an exercise of normalising closure on social practices. With particular reference to the printing press the study concludes with an assessment of mass mediated culture and liberalgovernmentality.