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Aboriginalism in South Australia’s state school system
1885 - 1911.

Di Grazul

Introduction

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, education in South Australia was segregated along racial lines. The state had assumed responsibility for the education of European children in 1875 when the Legislative Council passed an Education Act that compelled children between the ages of seven and thirteen to attend primary school. Responsibility for the education of Aboriginal children rested, as it had done since 1839, with the Protector of Aborigines. Most Aboriginal children were educated through the mission school system.

In the mission school system, Aboriginal children were taught to despise their culture and they were led to believe that if they adopted the ways of the ‘superior’ race they would be accepted as equals by the white community. At the same time European children in the state school system were being taught to revere their culture and to believe that there was no place for Aborigines in white society. Much has been written about the mission education system and I do not intend to discuss the subject in this paper. Rather, the purpose of this paper is to examine the role that the state school system played in the construction of Aborigines as ‘Other’.

By looking at Education Department directives to teachers I aim to show that between 1885 and 1911 changing perceptions of ‘Self’ from British to British Australian were reflected in the changing representation of Aborigines as ‘Other’. I aim to show that the representation of Aborigines changed from one of novelty to ‘ignoble savage’ to ‘dying race’ and finally to ‘primitive’ man. I shall argue that the representation of Aborigines as ‘Other’ was used to establish the concept of ‘terra nullius’, and in the construction of a national
identity that was grounded in notions of race. In short, I aim to show that South Australia’s state school system of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is a graphic illustration of the hegemonic power of Aboriginalism.

Briefly, Aboriginalism can be defined as a Eurocentric, power/knowledge discourse in which Aborigines are represented in their absence. Indeed, the principal product of Aboriginalism is representation. Aboriginalism silences the Aborigines. Knowledge about ‘them’ (the Aborigines) is constructed by and reported to ‘us’ (the European Australians). Aboriginalism is a discourse in which ‘Self’ (the European) is defined through the construction of ‘Other’ (the Aborigines). As perceptions of ‘Self’ change so too do the representations of the Aborigines. However, they are always constructed as ‘Other’. When viewed from this perspective, the colonial discourse which included education is one that revolves around a central juxtaposition of ‘them’ and ‘us’ and in which power always rests with ‘us’, the European Australians.  

The 1875 Education Act aimed to provide working-class children with a basic education in the three R’s.  However, this situation changed in 1885 when John Hartley, South Australia’s first Inspector-General of Education, argued that the incorporation of working-class into the middle-class value system required a higher standard of education.  Or, as he put it:

It is too late in the world’s history for us to gravely maintain that our civilization is to be based upon ‘keeping down’ the humbler classes and especially are such views out of place in a community where universal suffrage is the law of the land.

In the same year, Hartley founded *The Education Gazette* as a vehicle of administration and as a means of disseminating new educational ideas and techniques.  In 1889 he launched the *Children’s Hour* which was a monthly publication that was designed to be used as a lesson guide for teachers and as a recreational reader for children.  Under Hartley’s guidance children in the state system were now taught History, Geography, elementary Natural History and Science and Poetry in addition to the three R’s.
Figure 1. Cover of the Children's Hour, courtesy of the Mortlock Library of South Australiana.
From time to time the Department would issue directives on ‘how history should be taught’. In June 1890, the Department was concerned that the children should have an ‘intelligent appreciation of “the Story of Empire”’, rather than ‘exacting knowledge of minute detail’.\textsuperscript{13} It was suggested that teachers use pictures to meet this end. Pictures, ‘which might take a child backward from the present time to the days of “the crows and kites” as Milton calls them, and which would leave upon a child’s mind absolutely indelible impressions of the grandeur and growth of the destinies of our great empire’.\textsuperscript{14}

These notions of Empire were often taught through poetry. One such poem is the ‘Imperial Alphabet’ in which each letter of the alphabet stands for something associated with the Empire, such as: ‘“I” is for India, the land of the rajahs and rice’.\textsuperscript{15} This is not a very imaginative poem, but it does give a sense of the vastness of Empire. Another such poem is ‘The Saxon Tongue’. It begins with the following lines:

\begin{quote}
It goes with Freedom, Thought, and Truth
To rouse and rule the world.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

It goes on to describe how the English language has spread throughout the world. In the closing stanzas it validates the imperial project by evoking notions of the ‘white man’s burden’:

\begin{quote}
Go forth, and jointly speed the time,
By good men prayed for long,
When Christian states, grown just and wise,
Will scorn revenge and wrong;
When earth’s oppressed and savage tribes
Shall cease to pine and roam,
All taught to prize these English words
Faith, Freedom, Heaven and Home!
\end{quote}

The concept of Empire was also reinforced through stories about colonial territories, which the Department euphemistically called ‘Britain Beyond the Seas’.\textsuperscript{17} In these stories the indigenous peoples are represented as lesser
human beings than Europeans. For instance, in a story entitled ‘Pictures From Central Africa’ the children are told that the African’s bush paths are excellent but for one thing - they are not straight. This, we are informed, is because the ‘natives’ would walk around anything that blocked their way, even something as small as a stone. The children are assured that generations of ‘natives’ would walk around this stone because ‘no native would ever think to move it’. As was the case with the Aborigines, nothing was taught about the indigenous peoples’ cultures.

At this time the attitude of the educationalists towards the Aborigines was one of ambivalence. In 1887, recounting an inspection tour of the south-east, L. W. Stanton noted that there was an abundance of wild fowl around Milang. He went on to note that: ‘Specimens, too, of our noble savage, somewhat deteriorated perhaps by civilization and whisky, are to be met with’. On reaching the Point McLeay Mission Station he ‘found several thoroughbred black boys’ who were proficient in the three R’s. He goes on to note that in the surrounding areas:

... if a stray native or half-caste is to be seen he will be of a more respectable character, and more intelligent demeanour that those we saw in their wurleys at Milang, and may not unlikely, if we converse with him, express his conviction that “drink is ruining the aborigines (not blackfellows, mark you) of the colony, Sir.”

Here, the fringe dwelling Aborigines are represented as the victims of the darker side of ‘civilisation’. They are to be pitied, rather than despised. The mission-educated Aborigines, on the other hand, are represented as the grateful recipients of European culture. They were to be tolerated, provided they kept their place.

Aborigines are first mentioned in the Children’s Hour in 1893 in a short story entitled ‘Station Life’. The writer notes that there is a ‘blacks’ camp’ on Yartoo Station and that there is ‘one old gin who always makes the bread for the rest; her name is Mary’. He then goes on to describe in some detail how
Mary makes the bread and notes that the ‘blacks cook lizards in the same way’. 24

In the same year, Aboriginal ‘bush skills’ are praised in a story about a lost child entitled ‘A Bush Tragedy’. 25 The writer notes that a ‘black and a lubra were untiring in their efforts in searching, even crawling on their hands and knees where the tracks could scarcely be seen. They eventually found the little boy’s body’.

While these stories appear to have been published for their novelty value, they do at least accord the Aborigines some semblance of humanity. Mary’s bread-making is presented as an ordinary human activity. She is described as an ‘old gin’ but she is referred to by name. The Aborigines are the heroes of the story. They are described as a ‘black’ and a ‘lubra’ but their ‘bush skills’ are not represented as some sort of ‘mystical’ racial trait, rather, they are represented as well learned skills. It is their ‘untiring efforts’, as individuals, that makes them the heroes.

By the turn of the century, Australian history was beginning to be taught. For the most part this consisted of stories about the ‘Great Explorers’. In these stories the Aborigines are secondary actors who are alternately cast as ‘wild natives,’ ‘troublesome blacks’ or ‘faithful servants’. This serves to enhance the role of the European hero. Sturt, for instance, is said to have ‘placated the blacks with a kindly smile’. 26 Wylie is cast in the role of Eyre’s ‘faithful servant’. 27 No explanation is given as to why the Aborigines were there in the first place. The children are not told that the lands that the explorers ‘discovered’ and ‘opened up’ were in fact owned and occupied by Aborigines at the time.

The 1910 version of Eyre’s exploits includes a number of pictures and an account of Eyre’s time at Moorundie. There is a picture of Wylie with a caption that reads ‘Wylie, the West Australian black, who travelled with Eyre from Fowlers Bay to Albany, King George’s Sound’. 28 There is also a picture
of Eyre distributing rations at Moorundie. The children are told that at Moorundie Eyre's 'duty was to prevent quarrels between the many blackfellows then living along the Murray and the white settlers' and that 'he won the love of the blacks, and did much to make their lives happier'. The children are not told why the Aborigines and the settlers were 'quarrelling'. The question of dispossession is not addressed and Eyre, like Sturt, is represented as the compassionate hero.

Federation marked a turning point in the teaching of history. In March 1901, the Department ruled that a history lesson 'properly given should appeal strongly to the imagination and patriotism of the listener'. Reflecting a growing sense of national identity, the Australian component of the subject increased markedly.

In February 1901 the Children's Hour featured a history of white settlement entitled 'From "Colony" to "State"'. The notion of a national identity is established in the opening paragraph when the children are told: 'We are now, more that ever, Australians, not colonists'.

The concept of 'terra nullius' is established in the following way:

For long, long ages this vast island continent of Australia was unknown to any white people. Only black savages wandered over its hills and valleys or across those vast plains on which millions of sheep and cattle now safely graze, or where the sound of the reaper cheers the farmer's heart.

Some writers tell us that people from Europe touched upon Australian shores as early as 1606, and I believe that some ten years later some ships sailed along the western coast, but our chief interest in the country only goes back to the time when Captain Cook sailed into Botany Bay in 1770, set up the English flag on its shores, and claimed the land for the King of England. He gave it the
name of New South Wales because it reminded him of South Wales.\textsuperscript{34}

It goes on to give brief accounts of the settlement of each state. Aborigines are not mentioned in any of them.\textsuperscript{35}

What is made clear here is that prior to the coming of the British, nobody ‘legally’ owned Australia. Australian history begins not with the Aborigines, or with the coming of the Europeans as such, but, rather, Australian history begins with the proclamation of British sovereignty and the naming of New South Wales. It begins when the British declare themselves to be the ‘legal’ owners of Australia. Once this has been established, the question of the dispossession of the Aborigines does not arise. Australia too, can be viewed as ‘Britain Beyond the Seas’.

The representation of Aborigines as the ‘ignoble savage’ is brought into play in the teaching of the settlement of South Australia which was taught, for the most part, through reminiscences and biographies. An example of the reminiscences is ‘Port Lincoln in The Early Days’ which gives an account of the ‘trials of the early settlers’. It begins in the following way:

A family of early settlers had gone out to muster sheep, leaving the father, who was acting as cook that day, at home. When they returned they naturally went to see what had been cooked for their meal.

The camp-oven was used in those days, and when they lifted the lid they saw their father’s head inside of it. The blacks had robbed the house and murdered the father!\textsuperscript{36}

The story continues in the same vein, recounting a number of attacks by Aborigines on settlers, including one in which a woman and baby are attacked. These accounts end with the author noting that they had soldiers there too in those days and that:
On one occasion when the blacks were very troublesome, the whites mustered forces, and drove the blacks over the cliffs into the sea. That place is now called ‘Waterloo Bay’.  

This story is representative of the reminiscences that appear in the *Children’s Hour*. The only ‘trial’ that the early settlers seem to have had was the Aborigines. The Aborigines are represented as being both treacherous and barbaric. These representations validate the retaliatory violence of the settlers which, in this instance, is elevated to the status of a military campaign. The ‘defeat’ of the Aborigines is commemorated by naming the place where they were driven into the sea after a major British military victory.

The Aborigines’ defeat is reinforced in the concluding passage when the author gives the following account of Poonindie mission: Archdeacon Hale started a school for natives, first at Boston Island, and then at Poonindie, about ten miles from Port Lincoln. The good Archdeacon used to astonish his blackfellows by telling them what they did when they were a long way from the house. They could not understand how he knew so much, but the reason was very simple. The Archdeacon would watch them through a powerful telescope. They soon had a great respect for a white man who could tell them of deeds they had done which they thought no one but themselves knew of.

Here, the representation of the Aborigines has changed from the ‘ignoble savage’ to one of foolish victims of the white man’s ‘superior’ technology.

In 1906, a more sophisticated version of the ‘ignoble savage’ appeared in a biography of the explorer and pastoralist, J. A. Horrocks. In the opening passage, the author notes that the Horrocks family had produced many distinguished men and that ‘over two hundred years ago there was an ancestor, Jeremiah Horrocks, who was a clergyman and an astronomer’.  

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The story goes on to note that J. A. Horrocks ‘treated the blackfellows kindly’ and that ‘as a rule the natives behaved well, though at times their savage nature showed itself’. On one occasion ‘the savages had attacked a shepherd with their “waddies”, and were on the point of lifting him up to dash his body on some rocks when they were startled by the report from the station manager’s gun’. Horrocks and a party of police troopers set off to track ‘the savages down’. After three days:

they caught sight of one of the culprits, who, from his great height, was recognized as the chief. The horsemen gradually forced him to a hill on which a tree grew. Up this the native clambered like a monkey, and the party closed around him. Horrocks gave instructions that he was, if possible, to be taken alive. Suddenly the black chief dropped on the horseman below. There was a brief struggle, during which the native fought like a wildcat; He tried to escape, when one white man shot him dead. A grave was dug for him near a high rock. This spot was ever after called ‘The Black Chief’s Grave.’

This is followed by an account of how Horrocks had transformed ‘the wilderness’ he found when he arrived in Penwortham ‘into a valuable farm’. A ‘fine stone house had been built’ and ‘twenty four white people lived at Penwortham’. The story concludes, with the author noting that when Horrocks visited England he entertained his friends with exhibitions of his skills with a stock whip.

In this story, the ‘racial’ superiority’ of Europeans is established in the opening passage. Horrocks is British, and his ancestry is one of both religion and science which places him at the top of the evolutionary scale. By contrast, the Aborigine is represented as ‘monkey-like’ which places him at the bottom of the evolutionary scale. European farming culture transforms the Aborigines’ ‘wilderness’. Horrocks built a ‘fine stone house’ - a mark of civilisation. Horrocks is kind and just and he lives by the rule of law. The Aborigines, on the other hand, are represented in a stereotypical way as the
'ignoble savage' - ungrateful, unpredictable, violent and barbaric. Where the opening paragraph establishes the European’s superior ‘racial’ heritage; the concluding paragraph gives notice that the European is the real ‘Australian bushman’, not the Aborigine.

As Barry Morris has pointed out, the representation of the ‘ignoble savage’ empowered the Aborigines’ ‘otherness’. “Treachery” signified a power to wreak disorder and destruction because its efficacy lay in its seemingly undisciplined, unpredictable and arbitrary nature. It justified the excessive use of violence against the Aborigines and, as Morris notes, ‘such representations of reality sought to explain the conflict caused by the very existence of the colonial society’.

In February 1899, in an account of a recent train trip to Victor Harbour, the educationalist Oliver D. Jones noted that:

At Goolwa a blackfellow pushed his way into the carriage. He took his seat with as much ease as a white man, made himself comfortable, and began to smoke. When the guard came to collect the tickets our blackfellow handed his to him, and when the three-cornered piece had been taken out of his ticket he held his hand out for it, and it was promptly put into his waistcoat pocket. I could not help putting on my thinking cap, and I thought that sixty years ago his forbearers were a terror to the early settlers, that they were a naked, ignorant race, and scores of murders were laid at their doors.

In his representation of Aborigines, Jones transforms what is after all a very ordinary occurrence into a spectacle. Every action that the Aboriginal man makes is recorded. Furthermore, in his concluding remarks, Jones is compelled to represent Aborigines as ‘ignoble savages’ in order to make the point that no matter how ‘civilised’ the Aborigines became, they would never be civilised enough to enter white society.
By 1905, the representation of Aborigines had changed from ‘ignoble savage’ to ‘the dying race’. This representation appears first in a story entitled ‘The Old Red Gum and The Young Oak’. Briefly, the story is as follows. On the banks of the Murray River stand an old red gum tree and a young English oak. The young oak shades the station children when they play. The old gum tree is dying and the young gum tree asks the old one to tell its life story. ‘You are so old you must have seen and heard many wonderful things’, says the oak. The gum tells of the many gum trees that used to be around it and how there were kangaroos instead of sheep. It tells of the birds that used to nest in its branches and of the ‘blacks who used to camp under it’ and how they used to ‘take the bark from the tree to make their mia-mias’. It notes that Aborigines had an abundance of food and it describes a corroboree. Then the gum tree tells the oak that:

These people grew fewer in number; and there came a day when instead of a visit from the blacks, I and the other gum trees had a visit from the whites. They arrived on horseback with wagons and cattle and sheep. It took them longer than the blacks to make houses to live in, but they did not go away after they had settled down.

It goes on to tell how the whites transformed the environment. They shot the kangaroos and possums but ‘they brought others to take their places’. They cut down the trees so that ‘they could build houses and fences’ and ‘so that crops could be grown’ but ‘they planted others where they wanted them’. The story ends with the gum noting that the oak would live for another 200 years ‘but’, says the old gum to the young oak tree, ‘I do not think that you will see as many changes as I have’.

This story establishes the notion of a hierarchy of cultures which legitimates the taking of Aboriginal land. Aboriginal culture is replaced by the ‘superior’ European culture. This is represented as an act of evolution, rather than an act of violent dispossession. Aborigines are represented as being a part of ‘nature’. By contrast, Europeans control nature, ordering it as they wish. The Aborigines and the indigenous flora and fauna are represented as old and
'dying out'. European culture on the other hand is represented as young, vital and non-threatening - the young oak tree shades the station child. Most importantly though, European culture is represented as lasting.

A similar story to this appeared later in the year entitled 'The Life Story of A Eucalypt'. In it the eucalypt tells of how it thought its flowers were perfect in the days before the white settlers came. However, on reflection, it states that 'they were not so beautiful as those I now bear'.

The concept of the 'dying' race was reinforced in a history series called 'Our Own Country'. In 1906, in a brief history of Penola the author notes that:

The aboriginals are all extinct. The last one, “Yallum Jackie,” who was king of his tribe, died in the Adelaide Lunatic Asylum quite recently. He lived for many years on the Yallum Estate, and was well cared for by the late Mr John Riddoch.

In the same year, a photograph of Yallum Jackie was used in a history of Coonawarra. The caption reads, 'An old and faithful servant; once king of his tribe'.

In 1907, Henry Kendall’s ‘The Last of His Tribe’ appeared in the Children’s Hour. The editor’s note that accompanied it reads as follows:

No doubt you will be able to understand what the poet wishes to describe in this fine poem. Ask some old resident in your district to tell you of the tribe of blackfellows who lived in your locality. Have they all disappeared?

The attitude that is expressed here is an illustration of the hegemonic power of Aboriginalism. Aborigines are represented not as human beings but, rather, as curiosities that can be studied, judged, and represented at will - even by children.
By 1905, the representation of Aborigines had been stripped of all semblance of humanity. Aborigines were now represented as part of the flora and fauna. In 1905, in a lesson entitled ‘The Australian Opossum’, the children are told that the opossum was a standard source of food for the ‘blackfellows’. The author goes on to describe how the Aborigines cooked the opossum and notes that ‘after eating the best parts the remainder was thrown over the shoulder for the gins and the dogs to finish’. This is followed by a description of how the tree creeper bird lines its nest with opossum fur at the end of which the author notes that ‘in the colder parts of South Australia and Tasmania before Government blankets were given to the blackfellows, most of the natives possessed an opossum skin rug’. The author then describes how the rugs were made and, in conclusion, notes that:

I once had one purchased from an old blackfellow on the Lower Murray for the sum of 9s 9d, the whole of the available cash that our shooting party could muster. Though satisfied with his bargain, the old warrior shook his head over the threepenny bit, calling it a “little pfellar sixpen”.

The use of pidgin here gives the children a laugh at the Aborigines’ expense. At the end of the text there is a drawing of the tree creeper making its nest with some opossum fur. This is overlaid by a drawing of an Aboriginal man and woman wearing opossum skins rugs in a bush setting. The caption reads: ‘Native with opossum skin rug. Tree Creeper, which lines its nest with opossum fur’. Here, the Aborigines, and the flora and fauna are represented as one and the same.

In the construction of Aborigines as Other, photographs are often used in the Children’s Hour. One such photograph is of an Aboriginal woman who is sitting on the steps of a brick building. She is wearing western style clothing. There are two bundles by her side and a hand woven basket is propped up against her. The photograph appears to have been published for its curiosity value as it is placed in the middle of an unrelated text. The caption reads ‘A Real Australian’. Judging by the pattern and style of the basket, the woman
is not so much ‘A Real Australian’ as a real Ngarrindjeri woman.\textsuperscript{61} This is an example of the way in which Aboriginalism homogenises the diversity of the Aboriginal peoples into ‘the Aborigines’. It is a process that robs the Aboriginal peoples of their particular cultures and histories.

Two photographs appeared with a letter from a Dr Ramsay Smith which was published in the \textit{Children’s Hour} in 1908. The letter was written to his daughters who were at school in Adelaide and it tells of life in Port Darwin. The first photograph is of an Aboriginal man and two children. The man is wearing white trousers and a white shirt and looks immaculate. One of the children is sitting on his shoulders; the other is standing by his side. He is holding a rifle and the caption reads ‘Going To Look For Kangaroo’.\textsuperscript{62} The other photograph is of a group of Aborigines, 5 men and 5 women, in western dress. The men are standing in a row and women are sitting in front of them. The caption reads ‘Blackfellows In Camp Near Port Darwin’.\textsuperscript{63} Both photographs are obviously posed and are unrelated to the text which reads:

... the black picaninnies are very funny. They run about with nothing on ... When they grow older they get their first piece of clothing. This is usually a bracelet ... I saw a little black baby with very neat feet, but when I looked more closely I found that he had only four toes in all on each foot. I believe his mother had never noticed anything unusual about them. Black people are not fond of counting, although in some things they are very clever.\textsuperscript{64}

Dr Ramsay Smith was an anthropologist who had carried out studies of the Aborigines of southern South Australia and the Northern Territory around the turn of the century. He believed that:

Centuries ago, nature ‘side tracked’ a race in Australia. At the present time, despite some drawbacks or interference from outside, that race remains, to a large extent in primitive conditions. It is capable of casting light on the evolution of human races in a way and to an extent that probably no other can equal.\textsuperscript{65}
Hence, the interest in the baby’s feet and the authoritative statements about the Aborigines lack of fondness for counting.

By 1910, the Education Department was also concerned with concepts of race. History, it now argued, was ‘a subject of human interest; by it a child is brought into touch with his race’.66 The directive went on to note that:

our children must be trained to look at the past from two points of view. We are the descendants of a European race whose achievements in literature and science, in social and political government, in naval and military engagements make up a glorious history . . . but we are also the descendants of people who explored and settled a part of Britain beyond the seas, and while we must remember the history of the motherland, we must not neglect the many opportunities to instil in our pupils a love for their own country.67

The Department’s concerns were reflected in the curriculum. By 1910, the ‘new course’ had given children in the state school system a scientific world-view in which all things, including human beings, could be classified. In 1909, the Children’s Hour had featured articles about Linnaeus, Cuvier and Darwin.68 This scientific world-view was further expanded to include concepts of race when the Department recommended Walter Howchin’s The Geography of South Australia for use as a text book in high schools.69 Representation of Self and Other were now constructed through the pseudo-science of racial theory. In order to prove the racial ‘superiority’ of Europeans, the Aborigines had become a subject of scientific study.

When Howchin wrote The Geography of South Australia he was a lecturer in Geology and Palaeontology at Adelaide University.70 He is the ‘scientific expert’ and in this work, his voice only is heard. He devotes a chapter to Aborigines in which every aspect of their being is commented on, including their feet, which he describes in the following way:
The Australian Aborigine’s... foot is not arched, as in the foot of the European, but has nearly a flat sole, and the toes are relatively more mobile enabling their owner to grip objects and to climb trees with great dexterity.\textsuperscript{71}

The implication of this passage is that the Aborigines, on the scale of evolution, were closer to monkeys than human beings.

In his construction of Aborigines as Other, Howchin elevates European culture and history to lofty heights by placing the Aborigines out of history and representing them as a people with no culture. He judges Aborigines in relation to Europeans, rather than how they view themselves. Anything that is not recognisably European is deemed to be ‘primitive’.\textsuperscript{72} By definition then, everything Aboriginal is deemed to be evidence of the ‘primitive’ state of the Aborigines. On his scale of ‘races’ Howchin places Aborigines between ‘Palaeolithic’ and ‘Neolithic’.\textsuperscript{73}

In his assessment of Aboriginal languages, Howchin notes that:

The primitive condition of the people is illustrated in that the languages are almost destitute of words of an abstract nature. They have not learnt to generalise in their thinking, or to form mental ideals—they have neither philosophy nor poetry.\textsuperscript{74}

When commenting on the Aborigines diet, Howchin makes the following, unchallenged observation:

The Australian aborigine is not at all particular (except under ceremonial restriction) as to his diet, either as to its kind or condition, eating with a peculiar relish animal food which is in a high state of putrefaction.\textsuperscript{75}

In the authoritative voice of the ‘scientific expert’, Howchin explains why the Aborigines have no culture:
The Australian is by nature a hunter - a nomad - he must follow the game. When food becomes scarce in one place he must remove to another. These conditions have powerfully reacted on the race in retarding mental development and in the introduction of the higher arts. He has no architecture, ample materials are at hand for making permanent structures. A "wurly," constructed of a few branches to provide a shelter from the wind, answers all his purpose as a temporary camp - he has no permanent dwelling. It has never entered his mind to improve the conditions of life by cultivating useful plants, or rearing animals for food. The only domesticated animal he has is the dog.  

Clearly, Aborigines have no culture simply because Aborigines do not do what Europeans do. However, the logic of racial theory enables Howchin to represent Aborigines as remnants of a Prehistoric Stone Age. For children in the state school system, the notion of European racial 'superiority' had now become a scientific 'fact'.

In 1911, the Department’s belief in the cultural ‘superiority’ of Europeans was demonstrated in an article entitled ‘Our West Coast’, in which Assistant Inspector Nicolle recounted a recent trip to the area. He had visited Ceduna, Denial Bay and Yalata amongst other places. The theme of the article is ‘progress in the west’ and a number of photographs of solid looking brick buildings are used to make the point. There are photographs of schools and churches and other public buildings. The last photograph is of an Aboriginal fringe camp. The Aborigines’ make-shift dwellings are made out of tin and hessian sacking. The caption reads, ‘Blacks Camp, Denial Bay’. Aborigines are not mentioned in the text other than to note that ‘from a certain kind of Mallee root the blacks could extract enough water to quench thirst, and many a life has been saved in this way’. The juxtaposition of ‘us’ and ‘them’ could not have been made more obvious. European ‘progress’ in the west is made to look all the more ‘real’ through the seeming lack of progress of the Aborigines.
Conclusion

To sum up. Education in South Australia’s state school system of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is a graphic illustration of the hegemonic power of Aboriginalism. The changing perceptions of ‘Self’, from British to British Australian, were reflected in the changing representations of Aborigines. In 1890, the Department was concerned to instil in the children a sense of Empire. At this time, the representation of Aborigines was one of novelty. By 1901 the Department was concerned to inculcate in the children a sense of national identity. In response to this growing sense of national pride the Australian content of the curriculum increased and the children came to know ‘the Aborigine’ through the representation of Aborigines as the ‘ignoble savage’. This representation was used in histories and reminiscences to establish the concept of ‘terra nullius’ and the notion of a national identity that was still British but, at the same time, distinctly Australian. The growing self-confidence of the Europeans was also reflected in the representation of the Aborigines as the ‘dying race’. This representation established the notion of a hierarchy of cultures and the concept of evolution. By 1910, the Department was concerned to engender in the children a sense of racial as well as national pride. The curriculum that Hartley had introduced in 1885 gave children in the state school system a scientific world-view. This was expanded to include notions of race. In order to ‘prove’ European racial ‘superiority’, the Aborigines were made into a subject of scientific study. Through the circular logic of racial theory the representation of Aborigines changed to that of ‘primitive’ man. By 1911, the representation of Aborigines as ‘Other’, which had been constructed from the juxtaposition of ‘us’ and ‘them’, had become a scientific ‘fact’.

When Hartley introduced the new course in 1885 he was concerned to incorporate working class children into the middle class value system. Unlike class, ‘racial theory’ held out no promise of social mobility. There was no
escaping one’s origin. This was true of both the European and the Aborigine. Children in the mission school system could learn the ways of the ‘superior’ race but they could never acquire the ‘glorious history’ that children in the state school system had been taught to revere.

Endnotes
1 South Australian Government Education Act, 1875. High schools were established by regulation in 1908. C. Thiele, *Grains of Mustard Seed*, p. 84.


6 ibid., pp. i-xi.

7 The Education Act, 1875, op. cit., p. 37. The Act states that: ‘“Compulsory Standard’ shall mean competency in reading, writing, and arithmetic to the satisfaction of an Inspector of Schools or other person authorised by the Council’.

8 C. Thiele, op. cit., p. 59.

9 ibid., p. 51.

10 ibid., p. 50.

11 ibid., p. 52. Classes 2, 3, 4, and subsequently Classes 4&5, had their own version of the Children’s Hour. Text books, as such, appear to have been used only at high school level.
Theile, op. cit. p. 51.

*The Education Gazette*, vol. 4, no. 49, p. 62.

ibid., p. 62.


*The Education Gazette*, vol. 26, no. 286, p. 60.

‘Pictures From Central Africa’, the *Children’s Hour*, vol. 6, no. 49, Class 2, 1894, p. 6.

ibid., p. 7.

*The Education Gazette*, vol. 3, no. 24, p. 53.

ibid., p. 53.

‘Station Life’, the *Children’s Hour*, vol. 5, no. 37, Class 4, 1893, p. 10.

ibid., p. 10.

ibid.

The *Children’s Hour*, vol. 5, no. 43, Class 4, p. 77.

ibid., vol. 5, no. 46, Class 3, 1899, p. 50.

ibid., vol. 5, no. 48, Class 3, 1899, p. 49.

ibid., vol. 14, no. 176, Class 3, 1910, p. 25.

ibid., p. 28.

ibid.

*The Education Gazette*, vol. 17, no. 173.

‘From “Colony” to “State”’, the *Children’s Hour*, vol. 7, no. 68, Class 3, 1901, pp. 20-27.

ibid., p. 20.

ibid., pp. 21-22.

ibid., pp. 23-27.

‘Port Lincoln in The Early Days’, the *Children’s Hour*, vol. 12, no. 131, Class 3, 1906, p. 88.

ibid., p. 90.
The analogy with Waterloo was not uncommon in this type of representation. See for example, B. Morris, 'Frontier Colonialism as a Culture of Terror', B. Attwood & J. Arnold (eds), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, 1992, p. 75.

'Port Lincoln' op. cit., p. 91.

'J. A. Horrocks, or Sixty Years Ago', the *Children's Hour*, vol. 18, no. 201, Classes 4 & 5, 1906, pp. 131-137.

ibid., p. 133.

ibid.

ibid.

ibid., p. 137.

Morris, op. cit., p. 85.

ibid., p. 87.

'Cymro's Letter', the *Children's Hour*, vol. 5, no. 44, Class 3, 1899, p. 29. Jones wrote under the pseudonym of Cymro in the *Children's Hour*; he was made Headmaster of Parkside school in 1913. Colin Thiele, op. cit., pp. 195, 124.

'The Old Red Gum and The Young Oak', the *Children's Hour*, vol. 11, no. 122, Class 3, 1905, pp. 126-128.

ibid., p. 128.

ibid.

'The Life Story of A Eucalypt', the *Children's Hour*, vol. 17, no. 189, Classes 4 & 5, 1905, p. 136.

'Our Own Country, Penola', the *Children's Hour*, vol. 17, no. 192, Classes 4 & 5, 1906, p. 183.

'Our Own Country, Coonawarra', the *Children's Hour*, vol. 18, no. 193, Classes 1906, 4 & 5, p. 5.

'The Last of His Tribe', the *Children's Hour*, vol. 19, no. 206, Classes 4 & 5, 1907, p. 17.

'The Australian Opossum', the *Children's Hour*, vol. 11, no. 122, Class 3, 1905, p. 118.

ibid.
ibid.
ibid.
ibid., p. 17.
‘A Real Australian’, the *Children’s Hour*, vol. 17, no. 187, Class 3, 1911, p. 12.
This observation arises from personal experience. On a recent visit to Camp Coorong which is run by the Ngarrindjeri Lands and Progress Association, I was fortunate enough to witness a demonstration of Ngarrindjeri basket weaving.
The *Children’s Hour*, vol. 7, no. 74, Class 2, p. 90.
ibid., p. 91.
ibid., p. 89.
*The Education Gazette*, vol. 26, no. 286, p. 60.
ibid., p. 60.
The *Children’s Hour*, vol. 21, no. 231, p. 51; no. 237, p. 49; no. 239, p. 241, 1909.
*The Education Gazette*, vol. 26, no. 279, p. 36.
Walter Howchin, *The Geography of South Australia*, title page.
Howchin, op. cit., p. 290.
ibid., p. 294.
ibid., p. 288.
ibid., p. 293.
‘Our West Coast’, the *Children’s Hour*, vol. 10, no. 113, Class 2, 1911, pp. 163-75.
ibid, p. 166.