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**Capital, Conversion, and Settler Colonialism in Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon***

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**Abstract**

Viewing capitalism as emerging primarily from within the framework of empire rather than the nation state, this essay considers the relationship between capital, conversion, and settler colonialism in Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon, or Over the Range* (1872). It looks, first, at the novel’s critique of Wakefieldian organised settlement schemes as systems sustained by various forms of capital accumulation and free/unfree labour; and second, at its over-arching evangelical conversion narrative, which both frames and structures the main body of the text. The essay argues that, far from directing its satire wholly or even primarily towards metropolitan Britain, the novel enacts two circulating mid-nineteenth-century settler colonial anxieties: concerns about a perceived crisis of diminishing industriousness and economic exhaustion in colonial Australia and New Zealand, and concerns about the efficacy of British humanitarianism and missionary conversion. It considers the former in the context of the disruptions to settlement caused by the gold rushes in Australia and New Zealand in the 1850s and 1860s, and the latter in the context of missionary and humanitarian efforts to ameliorate conditions for Indigenous peoples from the 1830s onwards. The essay’s larger claim is that *Erewhon* presents capital and conversion as structurally interconnected mechanisms of an evolving Anglo-settler state in New Zealand. Radicalising a tradition of economic critique of empire beginning with Adam Smith, Butler satirises the idea of colonialism as an essentially liberal system by showing how much it is intertwined with exploitative practices of territorial expansion, dispossession, capital accumulation, unfree labour, missionary conversion, and racial assimilation.

**Key words:** Samuel Butler; *Erewhon*; settler colonialism; capitalism; political economy; missionary conversion; indentured labour; racial assimilation; humanitarianism; Edward Gibbon Wakefield

**Capital, Conversion, and Settler Colonialism in Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon***

In the middle of a comparative discourse on the relationship between land, labour, and capital in *England and America* (1833), Edward Gibbon Wakefield pauses to describe a surreal dream vision in which he is shipwrecked on the island of Britain’s most celebrated economic castaway. Like Karl Marx, who sees in Robinson Crusoe’s island economy an early stage of primitive accumulation, Wakefield recognises that Crusoe is a ‘capitalist’ and that Friday is a ‘labourer’. But since Crusoe produces primarily for use and Friday ‘takes what he pleases’ in return for labour, Wakefield is able to elide the island’s racialised power structure and characterise their relationship as one of agential equality.[[1]](#footnote-1) When an earthquake and flood subsequently wipe out Crusoe’s enclosure, cracks in the ‘equal’ relationship between capitalist and labourer begin to emerge. Crusoe and Friday are left in the ‘shocking state’ of ‘low wages and low profits’ and, in an attempt to instruct Crusoe in the principles of modern political economy, Wakefield advises him simultaneously to increase his capital so that wages may be higher and to diminish his capital so that profits may be higher. Crusoe’s mirth at this nonsensical double-talk eventually rouses Wakefield, who realises that the only way Crusoe and Friday can ever hope to redeem their original position of ‘high wages of labour’ and ‘high profits of stock’ is by ‘getting back the land they had lost’.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The utopian dimension of land in Wakefieldian settlement schemes has long been recognised, but the economic individualism of the so-called ‘Robinson Crusoe economy’ was not one Wakefield wished his model colonists to emulate.[[3]](#footnote-3) Like Crusoe, Wakefield was determined to build what Marx called a ‘civil society’ in the new world.[[4]](#footnote-4) Unlike Crusoe, however, Wakefield’s schemes were not based on a free market economy made up of ‘isolated cultivators’ or ‘cottiers’.[[5]](#footnote-5) The aggressive individualism of the American and subsequently Australian colonial dream—neatly encapsulated in Charles Rowcroft’s novel *Tales of the Colonies, or the Adventures of an Emigrant* (1843), later appropriately retitled *The* *Australian Crusoes* (1853) for the American market—was exactly what Wakefield hoped to avoid in the New Zealand settlements with which he was associated: Port Nicholson, Plymouth, Nelson, Wanganui, Christchurch, Otago, and Canterbury. In all his writing on colonisation, from *A Letter from Sydney* (1829)to *A View of the Art of Colonization* (1849), but most especially in his and John Ward’s *British Colonization of New Zealand* (1837), Wakefield proposed to keep land prices ‘sufficiently high’ in order to prevent labourers from acquiring land too quickly and turning into ‘capitalists’.[[6]](#footnote-6)

This essay considers the relationship between Wakefieldian settlement schemes, capital accumulation, and missionary conversion in Samuel Butler’s satirical novel, *Erewhon, or Over the Range* (1872).[[7]](#footnote-7) As the novel’s narrator notes when he promises to ‘convert the Erewhonians not only into good Christians but into a source of considerable profit to shareholders’ (p.321), capital and conversion were deeply intertwined in the market logic of the settler colonial system: along with a belief in the ‘civilising’ power of commerce, conversion was used to justify the exploitation of Indigenous peoples and fed into the creation of large indentured labour forces that powered an increasingly global capitalist empire.[[8]](#footnote-8) James Belich has argued that the term ‘conversion’ should be extended from religious conversion to encompass ‘the whole package of agencies by which non-Europeans were to be transformed into something European-like and peacefully subordinated to Europeans’, including the use of Indigenous labour, intermarriage, and other forms of racial assimilation.[[9]](#footnote-9) Understanding conversion in this broad sense, and extending Roger Robinson’s suggestion that the novel amounts to a serious challenge to eurocentricity,[[10]](#footnote-10) I argue that Butler undertakes in *Erewhon* a more overt critique of the exploitative and eliminationist project of settler colonialism than has previously been acknowledged—one that encompasses a challenge to imperialist systems of capital accumulation, forced labour, racial assimilation, and missionary conversion.[[11]](#footnote-11) In so doing, I draw on historical studies of colonial capitalism that are based on the premise that capitalism has ‘historically emerged within the juridico-political framework of the “colonial empire” rather than the “nation-state”’ and, in particular, from within ‘a planetary web of value chains connecting multiple and heterogeneous sites of production across oceanic distances’.[[12]](#footnote-12) I therefore join a growing number of scholars who argue against claims that *Erewhon* is an example of a text ‘set at the margins but about the centre’ in favour of approaches that examine more fully the novel’s depiction of shared colonial and metropolitan intercultures linked by a common web of economic practices and ‘value chains’.[[13]](#footnote-13)

**1. A Society of Crusoes: Wakefield’s Utopia, Humanitarianism, and the Land Question in New Zealand**

Wakefield and Ward’s argument in *The British Colonization of New Zealand* follows Wakefield’s long-standing belief that the granting of free land in the American and Australian colonies had been a grave error, resulting in ‘backward civilizations’ marked by the predominance of land speculators and monopolisers, and by the use of unfree labour such as slaves, bond-servants, and convicts.[[14]](#footnote-14) Wishing to save future colonies from the ‘social pathology’ of the American and Australian frontiers, Wakefield and Ward instead propose small, agrarian communities based on a proportionate dispersion between land and settlers, and bolstered by an emigration fund that would create ‘a system of hired labour’.[[15]](#footnote-15) Their proposal for a series of new colonies in New Zealand accordingly argues for the limitation of frontier expansion in favour of small, self-sustaining landholdings, which would be devoted to the cultivation of pastoral goods and staple crops such as grain and wool rather than cash-crops such as sugar and tobacco.[[16]](#footnote-16) In frontier societies such as America, Canada, and Australia, settlers all had their own land but they also all had to work, disrupting class hierarchies and inhibiting the development of a leisured class and other refinements. Similarly, in plantation economies in the American South, social refinement was restricted by the inherent immorality of slavery. According to Wakefield, a society of these ‘Robinson Crusoes’ produced ‘social barbarism’ and extreme inhumanity towards Indigenous peoples rather than the reproduction of British society abroad.[[17]](#footnote-17)

In an attempt to avoid some of the excesses of settlement in America and Australia, Wakefield and Ward deliberately framed their New Zealand settlement scheme as an overtly humanitarian mission, claiming that the New Zealand Company had a ‘systematic plan for preserving and civilizing the native race’ through religious conversion, the creation of land reserves, and intermarriage. The efficacy of this scheme was based on the premise that New Zealand ‘natives’ had ‘a peculiar aptitude for being improved by intercourse with civilization’.[[18]](#footnote-18) Conveniently ignoring the enormous cultural, social, and economic differences between various Māori tribal (iwi), subtribal (hapū), and family or kinship (whanau) affiliations,[[19]](#footnote-19) Wakefield and Ward maintain that Māori exceptionalism manifests itself in comparative industriousness and an aptitude for the ‘useful arts’. Most importantly, however, Māori are good capitalists: they ‘save capital’, ‘learn to value the institution of property’, engage in trade, and come to desire ‘the benefits of regular government’.[[20]](#footnote-20) Eliding the signifiers of ‘hard primitivism’ in favour of those of domestic and ‘rustic scenes’, the ‘dark side’ of settlement in *British Colonization* rests not with the relatively domesticated Māori but rather with the vices and crimes committed by lawless European sailors, convicts, and sojourners.[[21]](#footnote-21) Quoting an extract from the ‘report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Aborigines’, which Wakefield and Ward declare ‘will excite a painful interest in the mind of every reader’, the text goes on to present a litany of ‘murders, misery and contamination’ wrought upon Māori by Europeans.[[22]](#footnote-22) Like Charles Darwin, Wakefield and Ward conclude that the ‘work of depopulation is happening fast’ in New Zealand but, unlike Darwin, they ascribe that depopulation primarily to European intervention rather than to a combination of genocidal practices and natural ‘displacement’.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Positioning itself within circulating sentimental and humanitarian discourses concerned with the treatment of Indigenous populations from the 1830s onwards,[[24]](#footnote-24) New Zealand Company policy toward Māori was significantly influenced by the Select Committee Reports (1836-1837) and by the views of the Aborigines’ Protection Society (est. 1837). An appendix to *British Colonization* authored by theAnglican Reverend Montague Hawtrey, a prominent member of the Aborigines’ Protection Society, recommends a system of reserve lands for Māori chiefs, encouraging racial assimilation by intermixing small reserve communities with settler communities.[[25]](#footnote-25) As Damon Salesa has pointed out, the so-called ‘tenths reserves’ system proposed by the Company was explicitly racialised: ‘from the control of land would come the control not only of capital, labour, and thus class (and gender), but also race’ via ‘everyday opportunities for social and sexual intercourse’.[[26]](#footnote-26) The New Zealand Company’s view of the Māori future within an evolving Anglo-settler society was therefore primarily one of coercion, controlled mobility, and racial amalgamation: the communal nature of Māori society would be broken down in favour of propertied Māori settler farmers existing within a predominantly British population as something like ‘brown-skinned’ Europeans. Eventually, these capitalist ‘gentlemen’ Māori would be indistinguishable from European populations in an Anglo-Saxon ‘Greater Britain’.[[27]](#footnote-27)

The Otago and Canterbury Settlements were undoubtedly seen as the most ‘British’ of all the antipodean colonies,[[28]](#footnote-28) but the speculative nature of Wakefield’s schemes was not missed by missionary critics such as Samuel Marsden, who deemed them not just impractical, ‘high wrought’, and ‘utopian’, but also likely to result in the extinction of Indigenous peoples.[[29]](#footnote-29) Such criticism gathered pace in the 1840s and 50s, when the Aborigines’ Protection Society became disillusioned with the attitude of British settlers in New Zealand, and the Company-appointed Bishop of New Zealand, Augustus Selwyn, attacked Company policy towards Māori.[[30]](#footnote-30) But if the Treaty of Waitangi (1840) was perceived by humanitarians and missionaries as a ‘ring fence against the savage utopian thrust of Wakefield’s theory’,[[31]](#footnote-31) Wakefield retaliated by characterising both the Treaty and missionary practices as barriers to cultural assimilation and social modernisation, as well as to the preservation of Māori as a race:[[32]](#footnote-32) ‘the Church Missionary Society’, he claimed, was ‘the unconscious instrument of an inscrutable Providence towards the ultimate destruction of the New Zealanders’.[[33]](#footnote-33) In this Wakefield was remarkably prescient, if self-serving: the very missionaries who argued against the colonisation of New Zealand published travel narratives that were ‘instrumental in securing even greater metropolitan interest in that very outcome’ by providing lengthy descriptions of climate, geography, and mineral deposits such as copper and gold.[[34]](#footnote-34) While these narratives did not explicitly encourage colonisation, they nonetheless amounted to what Robert Grant has called ‘a form of symbolic colonisation’ by imaginatively creating for future colonists a vision of New Zealand transformed ‘from wilderness to farmland, native products to manufactured, natural landscape to cultivated’.[[35]](#footnote-35)

**2. ‘Over the Range’: Wandering, Gold Prospecting, and Capital Accumulation**

That *Erewhon* is concerned with the utopian delusions of Wakefield’s New Zealand Company is clear from the similarities between Erewhonian society and organised settlement schemes such as the Canterbury Settlement. As Sue Zemka notes, Erewhon is a ‘post-mechanical agrarian paradise’ with ‘uncanny and haunting’ resemblances to the present, but its present is both Victorian metropolitan society and settler colonial society.[[36]](#footnote-36) Most obviously, Erewhon is a ‘middle-class life without machines and plenty of land’ just like Wakefield’s New Zealand settlements.[[37]](#footnote-37) The country is described as ‘highly cultivated’ by small farms growing ‘chestnuts, walnuts, and apple-trees’ and populated by goats, ‘small black cattle’, and sheep (p.61), invoking both the middle-class prosperity of the majority of the emigrants to Canterbury, and Wakefield’s idealised, self-supporting subsistence farms, where each small farm would have an orchard, vegetable garden, grain, and livestock.[[38]](#footnote-38) Although Erewhon is explicitly compared to a pastoral European country such as Italy or Spain, the point, as Jodie Matthews astutely notes, is that Erewhon is ‘both similar and different, at home and foreign’, bearing to the Canterbury Settlement the same relationship as colonial New Zealand does to Britain:[[39]](#footnote-39) ‘It was much the same with the birds and flowers on the other side, as compared with English ones … not quite the same as the English, but still very like them’ (p.54).

The narrator, who is only named as Higgs in the novel’s sequel *Erewhon Revisited* (1901), remarks that the country seems around five or six hundred years behind present-day Britain; and in this, too, Erewhon resembles early colonial settlements. Like the Erewhonians, early settlers to Australia and New Zealand often faced primitive conditions and worked using animal and human exertion, with some use of wind and water power but little technology in the sense of machine innovation.[[40]](#footnote-40) Even as late as the 1860s and 1870s, the difficulties of working without machines are outlined in many settler accounts of life in colonial New Zealand, such as Mary Anne Barker’s *Station Life in New Zealand* (1870) and Butler’s own account of bringing material by bullock dray from Christchurch to his sheep station in Rangitata in his *A First Year in a Canterbury Settlement* (1863).[[41]](#footnote-41) At the same time, however, Butler was also struck by what James Smithies calls the ‘rapid mechanization’ of the Canterbury Settlement in the 1860s, which included a telegraph line between Lyttelton and Christchurch, the Ferrymead tunnel, and a railway between Christchurch and the estuary, as well as the insistent mechanisation of extractive resource industries such as gold mining.[[42]](#footnote-42)

Erik Olssen has argued that Wakefield’s scheme in New Zealand was a direct response to the profound post-Enlightenment ‘rupture’ caused by industralisation and the machine age in metropolitan Britain, encouraging a return to the soil and the simplified social organisation of pre-industrial peoples. Certainly, colonial propaganda promoted New Zealand as a boon for those of the laboring classes who were keen to escape the unhealthy vapours of a rapidly industrialising metropole; and Wakefield’s strategy of ‘state-led, preemptive proletarianization’ aimed to mobilise such discontent by drawing on the ‘utopian social relations of the Arcadian tradition’.[[43]](#footnote-43) While Wakefield did not go so far as to propose colonies without machines, his schemes rarely outline how a new colony is to develop economically outside of agrarian settlement, and specifically oppose urbanisation at the expense of small local farms, sometimes even advocating the forced de-industrialisation of imperial dependencies.[[44]](#footnote-44) In *British Colonization*, for example, Wakefield and Ward speculatively consider New Zealand’s geography, rainfall, soil quality, local building material, winds, native population, and prospects for cultivation, but material technology is largely absent from their otherwise detailed settlement scheme. Indeed, in many ways Wakefield’s theories were sorely tested by technology since machines tended to diminish the need for labour and hence for more emigrants.[[45]](#footnote-45)

Yet even as Wakefieldian and Erewhonian societies seemingly reject the excesses of industrialisation, they nonetheless freeze or arrest the ‘attitudes of a machine culture’ in a ‘pastoral landscape’, reflecting not only the colonial dream’s economic entanglement with the ‘goods, markets, and exploitative costs structures’ of industrial production ‘elsewhere’, but also the capitalist logic underlying that dream.[[46]](#footnote-46) Despite Wakefield’s focus on agrarianism and small dispersed landholdings, Marx recognised immediately that the point of Wakefield’s system was to ‘export and artificially to preserve the class system of a specifically capitalist mode of production’.[[47]](#footnote-47) As he noted in *Capital* (1867), Wakefield’s great triumph was his discovery ‘that capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons, established by the instrumentality of things’. Consequently, where land is too cheap and a society is made up of independent, self-sufficient Crusoes, the capitalist system cannot prosper: ‘So long, therefore, as the labourer can accumulate for himself—and this he can do so long as he remains possessor of his means of production—capitalist accumulation and the capitalist mode of production are impossible’.[[48]](#footnote-48) By attempting to drastically increase the amount of surplus labour in the colonies, the effect of Wakefield’s scheme was to render working-class emigrants structurally dependent on capital owners, thus augmenting ‘instead of diminishing the power of the capitalist’.[[49]](#footnote-49)

*Erewhon* is explicitly framed in a way that anticipates its subsequent and more implicit critique of settler colonialism, and its methods of land monopoly, dispossession of Indigenous peoples, resource extraction, environmental damage, and labour exploitation. The title of the novel’s first chapter, ‘Waste Land’, is a deliberate reference to Wakefield’s own description of unsettled land in the colonies, which drew on the pervasive idea propagated by Emer de Vattel, John Locke, and others that uncultivated land was valueless.[[50]](#footnote-50) Contrary to expectations, however, the novel details the complete lack of available land in colonial New Zealand, referencing the ‘land-scramble’ of the 1850s, which, much to Wakefield’s disgust, saw the replication of a squatocracy culture in Canterbury due to the combined effect of an influx of immigrants from Australia and Governor George Grey’s reduction of land prices: ‘there was not an acre between the sea and the front ranges which were not taken up’ (p. 3).[[51]](#footnote-51) The whole story of *Erewhon* is occasioned, in other words, by the satirical deflation of the utopian discourses of contemporary emigration propaganda, as well as of readerly expectations of a colonial *bildungsroman* of imperial entrepreneurship, capital investment, successful settlement, rebirth, and triumphant return.[[52]](#footnote-52) When Higgs returns to England he does so as a self-deluded pauper and not as a self-made man with land and other profitable capital investments in the new world (pp.316-17).

Higgs’s disappointment in the dream of bettering his ‘fortunes more rapidly than in England’ (p.1) also exposes the underlying capitalist agenda of Wakefield’s schemes, whereby poor colonial immigrants were to work as wage laborers under a ‘fictive “settler contract”’ rather than become independent landowners.[[53]](#footnote-53) Higgs quickly realises that the monotonous labour of herding someone else’s sheep will not make him a Crusoe-like land-owner. It is especially significant that the discovery of Erewhon is enabled by the speculative nature of gold prospecting rather than by the steady and systematic pastoralism of the sheep farm. Unlike Butler himself, who succeeded in building a successful sheep farm in a remote location, Higgs rejects the pastoral agrarianism on which Wakefield’s schemes were based, describing his desire to go ‘over the range’ as a risky venture, a gamble encoded in the language of speculation that Wakefield ostensibly despised: ‘I could not help speculating upon what might lie farther up the river and behind the second range. I had no money, but if I could only find workable country, I might stock it with borrowed capital, and consider myself a made man’ (p.7). Land speculation and borrowed capital soon give way to a more explicit form of speculation involving those ‘golden castles in the air’ that Higgs is unable to banish from his mind (pp. 8, 9). This speculative zeal only increases the further away Higgs wanders from the relative civilisation of the sheep farm: ‘ … I felt that life would no longer be valuable if I were to have seen so great a prize and refused to grasp at the possible profits therefrom’ (p. 28).

Higgs’s venal acquisitiveness and self-interest disrupt the central Wakefieldian proposition that settlers should work for wages before becoming land owners. Higgs himself is wary of the explorative impulse that leads him away from the organised enclosures of agrarian settlement towards the anarchic open spaces of uncultivated land, commenting on the ‘dreadful feeling’ of ‘being cut off from all one’s kind’ (p. 31) and encouraging his readers ‘to remain in Europe if [they] can; or, at any rate, in some country which has been explored and settled’ (pp. 33-34): ‘One begins doubting one’s own identity’ (p. 31). Without specifically relating these feelings of estrangement to ideas of labour and capital, Higgs’s fear of open spaces, and his representation of wandering as a process of powerlessness and alienation that disenables any sovereign sense of identity, entertains no fantasies of emotional investment, ‘indigeneity’, or home-coming in the new world, marking him out as one of those transient colonials who made ‘recursive’ or ‘return migration’ a significant feature of British colonialism.[[54]](#footnote-54) The idea that gold prospecting promoted restless, peripatetic wanderers or adventurers was widespread in the mid-nineteenth century and was seen as ‘a fundamental challenge to the project of community formation’.[[55]](#footnote-55) Prospecting was particularly contrary to Wakefield’s schemes, which were based on cultivating a slow-paced industriousness and controlled, proportionate demographic growth and dispersion. Wakefield understood only too well that owning freehold property was ‘the great means, the chief incentive and the principal reward of colonial industry’, but he argued that the main duty of provincial governments was to encourage the formation of the ‘industrious classes’. That meant that colonial governments should not ‘place the emigrant upon land the moment he leaves his ship … without capital of his own, accumulated by working some time for high colonial wages’.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Gold stood in the way of this kind of organic, steady progress, and encouraged the growth of those frontier cultures that Wakefield despised. Indeed, Wakefield increasingly claimed that the exceptional circumstances of the Australian gold rush had made it almost impossible to apply his theories in New Zealand. As he noted in response to George Grey’s decision to reduce land prices in the New Zealand colonies in 1853, the glut of labourers occasioned by gold discoveries in Australia made it pointless to think of continuing to pay for assisted emigration from Britain. Moreover, because of gold discoveries in Australia, labourers could not be persuaded to stay in New Zealand, aggravating already existing labour shortages and severely distorting the economy in the 1850s.[[57]](#footnote-57) Wakefield accordingly wrote to the New Zealand *Spectator* in October 1852 promoting the ‘large-scale migration of labourers from China’ to New Zealand in order to prevent an economic depression.[[58]](#footnote-58) While the New Zealand economy was substantially boosted in the following decade by the gold rushes of 1861-1862 and 1865-1866, these rushes, as Belich, has pointed out, were like ‘tidal waves’, arriving quickly and taking much of the profit with them, as well as distorting the dispersion of the remaining population by diverting men away from agricultural and other forms of labour.[[59]](#footnote-59) By 1870, the economy was once again under threat,[[60]](#footnote-60) and between the mid-1870s and mid-1890s there was net emigration in some years, reflecting the cycles of ‘boom and bust’ that Belich associates with Anglophone expansion more generally throughout the nineteenth century.[[61]](#footnote-61)

That the Otago gold rush of the 1860s was taking place during Butler’s own time in New Zealand is an important but often over-looked aspect of *Erewhon’s* contextual history.[[62]](#footnote-62) Although Canterbury itself was something of a privileged pastoral enclave, the gold rush not only led to a rapid increase of miners to Otago from Australia—64,000 Australian and 8,600 British immigrants arrived in Otago between 1861 and 1863—but also to the expansion, urbanisation, and commercialisation of Dunedin at the expense of Wakefield’s smaller pastoral settlements[[63]](#footnote-63)—a theme Butler takes up more fully in *Erewhon Revisited* where machine technology develops at a ‘tremendous rate’.[[64]](#footnote-64) It led, too, to the more aggressive use and innovation of technology in New Zealand. While gold miners in California and Victoria had initially tended to use manual methods of digging and cradling, gold extraction increasingly became a much more industrialised mechanical process, using either hydraulic or mechanical methods, or requiring ‘large coordinated labour forces’. Gabriel’s Gully in Tuapeka, Otago, used hydraulic energy from the outset, and in its first twenty-one months the Tuapeka district produced more gold than the comparable period in California.[[65]](#footnote-65) The unusually high output of the Tuapeka Goldfields meant that, in the short term, the area attracted increasing numbers of migrants, transforming it from an ‘orderly Wakefieldian village into a wild frontier town’.[[66]](#footnote-66)

Gold and land—two opposing forms of capital accumulation in Wakefield’s schemes—therefore both frame *Erewhon* and, I argue, work together in the novel to enact a theory of social regression based on anxieties about declining industriousness and economic exhaustion in late-nineteenth-century New Zealand and Australia. As Wakefield maintained, colonial societies were prone to spontaneous ‘degeneration’ and commonly fell ‘back into the primitive state—to that backward state when every one, or nearly every one, is a cultivator on his own account’, and where kinship and other social ties fail to develop.[[67]](#footnote-67) For Marx, too, settler colonial societies were particularly vulnerable to the cycles of an accelerated form of capitalism or a pervasive ‘boom and bust’ mentality:

The shameless lavishing of uncultivated colonial land on aristocrats and capitalists by the Government, so loudly denounced even by Wakefield, has produced, especially in Australia, in conjunction with the stream of men that the gold diggings attract, and with the competition that the importation of English-commodities causes even to the smallest artisan, an ample ‘relative surplus laboring population’, so that almost every mail brings the Job’s news of a ‘glut of the Australia labour-market’, and the prostitution in some places flourishes as wantonly as in the London Haymarket.[[68]](#footnote-68)

The new world in the 1860s had therefore begun to replicate the old, from the glut or excesses of the Australian labour-market, to the anti-protectionist and competitive importation of English commodities, to the transactions of money and flesh that characterised the London Haymarket. The accelerated and even heightened bourgeois individualism of colonial societies in Australia and New Zealand meant that they were as ripe for decline as any in Europe or America.

**3. ‘Bodily profit’: Industriousness, Racial Assimilation, and the Erewhonian Evangelical Company**

*Erewhon* is precisely about the moment when the new world begins to imitate the old or, in the inverted time scheme of the novel’s parallel future, the old world begins to imitate the new. Despite the Erewhonian’s beauty and emphasis on rude health—which itself echoes contemporary representations of ‘bronzed and stalwart’ colonial inhabitants, as well as a more general colonial cult of health, strength, and physical beauty[[69]](#footnote-69)—*Erewhon* presents a ‘backward’ and decadent society at the point of exhaustion, if not regression and decline.[[70]](#footnote-70) Not only are the eugenic controls in Erewhon highly ineffective, encouraging hypocrisy, dissimulation, and the spread of disease (p.136), but the Erewhonians are also ‘intellectually decadent’, re-enacting on a species level the novel’s utilitarian analogy between physical disease and moral/intellectual disease.[[71]](#footnote-71) Higgs declares them ‘feeble-minded’, gossipy, and insular, unable to emancipate themselves from ‘the bondage of ideas in which [they] had been born and bred’ (p. 123). While Higgs himself is an utterly untrustworthy narrator, equally unable to think outside his own intractable belief-systems, the Erewhonians are singularly unproductive in almost every aspect of life, from work to education to the dependence of their youth, who are ‘as nearly useless as possible’ (p. 206). In this, *Erewhon* invokes circulating discourses about emigration to colonial New Zealand, which, due to New Zealand Company propaganda about a ‘free colony’ without the taint of convicts, absorbed many of the younger sons of the privileged metropolitan gentry. As Mary Anne Barker pointed out in her reminiscences of colonial life in New Zealand, ‘[c]apitalists, even small ones, do well in New Zealand: the labouring classes still better; but there is no place yet for the educated gentleman without money, and with hands unused to and unfit for manual labour’.[[72]](#footnote-72)

*Erewhon* plays repeatedly with the tropes of usefulness, labour, and industriousness. Unlike Wakefield and Ward’s industrious, domesticated Māori, Chowbok (or Kahabuka), for example, is an ‘unregenerate native’ who shirks any ‘regular work’ during the shearing, only ‘pretend[ing] to help in the yards’ (p.10). Despite being ‘a great favourite’ with the gullible missionaries (p. 10), both his labour and religious beliefs are forms of dissimulation. At the same time, Higgs’s own dubious industriousness is associated not with the steady labour of agrarian pastoralism but rather with a speculative frontier culture of gold prospecting. Indeed, as Roger Robinson has noted, the seemingly ‘natural’ master/servant or coloniser/colonised relationship between Chowbok and Higgs is repeatedly inverted, particularly during the gothic challenge to eurocentricity during their encounter in the wool-shed: ‘Of his meaning I had no conception. How could I? All I could feel sure of was, that he *had* a meaning which was true and awful to himself’ (pp.13-14).[[73]](#footnote-73) Higgs also recognises Chowbok’s value and even superiority during his frontier quest: ‘I thought of Chowbok, and felt how useful he had been to me, and in how many ways I was the loser by his absence, having now to do all sorts of things for myself which he had hitherto done for me, and could do infinitely better than I could.’ (p.40)

Yet within this recognition of Māori usefulness lies both the paternalistic reiteration of the Man Friday paradigm and the exploitative commodification of the laboring body or what Higgs specifically calls ‘bodily profit’, which he conceptualises as a form of (failed) contractual exchange: ‘I could neither be of further spiritual assistance to him, nor he of bodily profit to myself’ (p. 40). Like the relation of capital to labour (and Crusoe to Friday), Chowbok’s use to Higgs is based on an unequal division between higher and lower functions: Higgs does the thinking, planning, decision-making, and crucially, the spiritual guidance, albeit via clumsy attempts at missionary-style conversion; Chowbok does the necessary work and provides physical guidance to the land. While this relationship of dependency and relative status is often comically inverted, Chowbok is nonetheless identified as having latent labouring possibilities based on a system of use-value, pre-figuring Higgs’s grotesque labour scheme in which he proposes to sell the Erewhonians into servitude and transform private individual labour into a generic or homogenous system of ‘machinate non-human’ labour—a system of abstracting labour that is pioneered in Erewhon itself where there is a ‘custom of classifying men by their horse-power’ (p. 269).[[74]](#footnote-74)

The Erewhonians are initially coded more as European than as pre-lapsarian ‘savages’, but numerous critics have noted that traces of the Pākehā-Māori or coloniser-colonised relationship linger between Higgs and the Erewhonians, mirroring the framing relationship between Higgs and Chowbok.[[75]](#footnote-75) Zemka has argued that the Erewhonian portion of the novel takes on the form of a mock ethnography with Higgs, transformed from ‘wanderer’ into ‘settler’ figure, variously adopting the roles of missionary and gentleman traveller, and adapting key features of ethnological and ethnographic literature including ‘cross-cultural comparisons’, ‘detached analysis’, and ‘materialist explanations for cultural belief’.[[76]](#footnote-76) Yet, like the actual ethnographic observers Butler parodies, Higgs is very far from truly detached in the field. Even in his precarious position of quasi-incarceration in Erewhon, his aggressive commercialism and unwavering, instinctive belief in his own superiority is palpable (see, e.g. p.134). His eroticised ethnographic curiosity towards the Erewhonians is literalised in the form of his romantic relationship with Arowhena, with her Māori-inflected name. The love scenes demonstrate both Higgs’s ethnocentrism and his paternalistic belief that he is rescuing Arowhena from a lesser society of ‘civilizational infantilism’,[[77]](#footnote-77) while she displays a child-like gratitude for having her best interests secured by an adult imperial master, whose maturity grants him rights of determination: ‘She made no resistance, not a sign or hint of doubt or hesitation’ (p.245).[[78]](#footnote-78)

While Arowhena is initially something of a ‘displaced English “angel”’ with heightened traits of sympathy and compassion, Higgs’s marriage to Arowhena is increasingly represented as a mixed-race marriage into which she must either assimilate or become superfluous. As Diana Archibald points out, Arowhena is at times able to ‘pass’ as Peruvian or Russian, but she ultimately disappears from the novel’s frame, becoming little more than a cipher for Higgs’s subsequent investment/enslavement scheme. In *Erewhon Revisited* it is made clear that Arowhena has failed to adjust to life in England.[[79]](#footnote-79) The idea of mixed-race marriage, which Wakefield and Ward propose in *British Colonization* as a ‘humanitarian’ means of protecting Māori from European mistreatment, therefore becomes in the world of the novel just another form of extinction, silence, and symbolic violence. The ‘brown-skinned’ Erewhonians, like the ‘brown-skinned’ Māori-Europeans Wakefield and Ward envisage in New Zealand, are neither completely European nor completely other.

Unassimilated Māori, on the other hand, are part of the disavowed ancestral pre-history of the more ‘evolved’ or assimilated Erewhonians. While the disjuncture between Chowbok’s apparent hideousness and the extreme beauty of the Erewhonian people seems initially to place them at odds, Chowbok is compared to the pre-historic statues that stand guard at the gateway to Erewhon: ‘I had come upon a sort of Stonehenge of rude and barbaric figures, seated as Chowbok had sat when I questioned him in the wool-shed, and with the same superhumanly malevolent expression upon their faces’ (p. 43). The barbarousness of the statues, like the implied barbarousness of Chowbok himself, points to the characterisation of unassimilated Māori as temporal anomalies or atavistic remnants of mankind’s primitive heritage arrested in time. In representing versions of Māori in two temporally different states—assimilated and unassimilated, arrested and evolved—Butler draws not only on Wakefieldian assimilationist strategies but also on the extinctionist discourses underlying Darwinian theory: in attempting to ‘put evolution into reverse’ and to deny their own ‘dark-skinned’ origins the Erewhonians ironically conspire to produce their own degeneration.[[80]](#footnote-80) As Patrick Parrinder has noted, *Erewhon* is therefore not so much a parody of Darwinian theories as a novel reflecting ‘post-Darwinian anxieties’ about eugenics, inbreeding, species degeneration, and extinction.[[81]](#footnote-81) While it was Darwin’s cousin, Francis Galton, who focused on the ‘utopian’ potential to bring about improvements in humans, animals, and plants through purposeful selection,[[82]](#footnote-82) by the late nineteenth century the combination of eugenics and social Darwinism threatened ‘the narrative of progress that motored Victorian England’.[[83]](#footnote-83) If Galton himself reflected mainly on metropolitan anxieties about industrialisation in *Hereditary Genius* (1869), Butler brings this kind of anxious, dystopian sentiment to the new world itself, where, despite Higgs’s repeated recognition of their courtesy and good manners (pp.49, 51, 53), the Erewhonians are ultimately represented as backward, degenerate, and racially other.

Higgs’s sense of civilisational superiority returns with a vengeance when he arrives back in England and contemplates the enslavement of the Erewhonians as part of his British birth right. Like the New Zealand Company, the Erewhonian Evangelical Company is to be a joint-stock speculative venture whereby shares in the company are sold and profits paid out to shareholders (p.318). The cost-benefit analysis that ensues depends on an almost ‘unlimited’ ‘supply of Erewhonians’ who can be ‘packed closely and fed at a very reasonable cost’ on their voyage to Queensland to fulfil labour demands in sugar plantations (p. 320). Falling in and out of persuasive versus disciplinary language, and viewing the recruitment of the Erewhonians alternatively through the prisms of free emigration, incarceration, indenture, and transportation, Higgs, in effect, describes a dispensable force of unfree labourers, who will work to produce an enormously profitable colonial cash crop in the manner ostensibly despised by Wakefield. Yet while Wakefield and Ward argue in *British Colonization* that a free-settler New Zealand would allow its Indigenous population to acquire ‘by degrees, a moral equality with the British race’ thereby ‘counteracting the pestilent influence upon surrounding nations of her convict colonies in Australia’, Wakefield’s distaste for unfree labour did not always extend to the use of non-European labour forces.[[84]](#footnote-84) In the ‘Postscript’to *A* *Letter from Sydney*, for example, he embraced the possibility of using unpaid Pacific Island, Indian, and Chinese labourers in return for ‘a free passage to any British settlement’, reflecting a broader view of Southeast Asia and the Pacific as a reserve for indentured servitude.[[85]](#footnote-85)

As Elizabeth Elbourne has noted, humanitarian debates about the treatment of Indigenous peoples in the nineteenth century were very much ‘cast in Christian terms … and heavily influenced by evangelical Christian ideas about sin, repentance and redemption’.[[86]](#footnote-86) Religion was central to the creation of Britain’s so-called ‘moral empire’, which took on its most potent character in colonies of settlement, where larger-scale, state-sanctioned attempts at religious conversion could be put in place. It is significant that along with race, skin, and eye colour, a key factor signaling Erewhonian difference from Higgs is religious difference: ‘They were idolaters, though of a comparatively enlightened kind’ (p.168). Higgs repeatedly notes the Erewhonian lack of ‘religious feeling’, including their non-observance of the Sabbath (p. 74), their lack of interest in a ‘future-state’, their disinclination to consider ‘moral qualities or conduct’ (pp. 180-81), and their hypocritical ‘double faith’ encompassing ‘their entirely anomalous and inexplicable worship of Ydgrun’ (p. 179). Higgs’s criticism of Erewhonian society is, of course, deeply ironic, given the extent to which his own much-vaunted principles waver depending on the precarity of his position: ‘I remembered that to be all things to all men was one of the injunctions of the Gentile Apostle’ (p.58). Indeed, Higgs’s hypocrisy is a persistent form of colonial bad faith that permeates the entire novel. It quickly becomes clear, for example, that the rationale behind the conversionary aspect of his investment scheme is as much for himself and his investors as it is for the ‘heathen’ Erewhonians, since it is a means to prevent ‘any uneasy feeling which might show itself either in Queensland or in the mother country as to the means whereby the Erewhonians had been obtained, and also because it would give our own shareholders the comfort of reflecting that they were saving souls and filling their own pockets at one and the same moment’ (p.321).

In the ultimate satirical conflation of fact and fiction, Higgs points out that this scheme is not even of his own devising and quotes an article from the London *Times* of January 1872 (actually 28 December 1871), noting that the Marquis of Normandy, the new Governor of Queensland, had refuted claims that Polynesian labourers had been brought to Queensland by force and argued that such labourers were being instructed in religion (pp.321-22). Higgs’s Evangelical Company likewise attempts cynically to preserve both souls *and* profits, echoing contemporary complaints about the assimilationist and conversionary rhetoric of New Zealand Company policy by missionaries such as Marsden, Selwyn, and others. Yet Butler does not reserve his satire only for Wakefield, also questioning the efficacy of humanitarian and missionary endeavours themselves. The chapters in the novel on the suffering of animals and plants, whereby both are given extraordinary rights under law, are usually read as a satire on Victorian anthropocentrism.[[87]](#footnote-87) However, the novel’s discourse on animal and vegetable suffering also echoes circulating humanitarian principles emphasising the common human capacity to feel pain. As Jeremy Bentham famously remarked of animal populations and minority groups more generally in his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), the question to be asked was not ‘Can they *reason*? nor Can they *talk*? but Can they *suffer*?’.[[88]](#footnote-88)

Bentham’s related abolitionist argument that ‘the greater part of the species, under the denomination of slaves, have been treated by the law exactly upon the same footing as, in England for example, the inferior races of animals are still’ was resurrected in the 1830s by humanitarian concerns to alleviate Indigenous suffering and ameliorate colonial violence in British settler colonies. In Polemical Pain (2011), Margaret Abruzzo describes the ‘changing place of cruelty in moral thinking’ in the nineteenth century, but she also points out that the humanitarian language of the mid-nineteenth century frequently centred on the infliction of pain on the colonised body rather than on the legal rights of those subjects.[[89]](#footnote-89) In *British Colonization,* for example, Wakefield and Ward draw on eyewitness accounts of Māori suffering in the 1837 Select Committee Report to justify their own, more ‘humane’ colonisation policies, but these ironically involve both racial assimilation and the end of any form of Māori self-government.[[90]](#footnote-90) The Erewhonian’s views concerning the rights of animals and vegetables similarly rest on a humanitarian recognition of the principle of suffering (pp.279, 296), but ‘humane’ Erewhonian attitudes towards plants and animals not only ensure that the Erewhonians face starvation but are also not reflected in their attitudes to the poor, weak, and sick, who are controlled and managed in much the same way as Indigenous peoples are in settler colonial societies, and whose treatment reflects the circumscribed sentimental and social ties of an atomised, non-communal society.

A second critique of British humanitarian and missionary culture emerges in the novel’s conversion narrative, where missionary zeal is satirised as overwhelmingly unsuccessful. As the son of a Church of England clergyman, Higgs sets his heart on making the ‘hypocritical’ Chowbok ‘a real convert to the Christian religion’ (p.38). The ideological deception involved in this conversionary act is, however, placed more firmly on the narrator than on Chowbok, with Higgs admitting ‘that the conversion of Chowbok might in some degree compensate for the irregularities and short-comings in my own previous life’ (p. 39). Unlike spiritual conversion narratives, which traditionally disavowed the wastefulness of youth specifically to imagine their former selves as a blank space that could be filled by faith,[[91]](#footnote-91) Higgs does not undergo a process of personal or spiritual growth in the novel. He is also singularly unsuccessful in converting Chowbok, who is described as particularly ‘stony ground’ (p. 40).

Shaken by his experience with Chowbok in the wool-shed, Higgs’s conversionary zeal and commercial acquisitiveness are reignited by his discovery of Erewhon. Once again encoding his religious zeal in the commercial language of chance, risk, and speculation—‘My heart beat fast and furious as I entertained the thought … What folly it would be to throw such a chance away!’ (pp.55-56)—Higgs explicitly characterises himself as a missionary, noting that if the Erewhonians were ‘the lost ten tribes of Israel’ then he ‘would certainly convert them’ (p. 56). Higgs’s subsequent experience in Erewhon involves a dual process of attempted assimilation and ethnographic observance, but the idea that he undergoes something of a ‘conversion experience’ from ‘confident proselytizer’ towards ‘ethnographic subjectivity’ is less convincing, first, because of his own status as an ethnographic subject in Erewhon, where like Indigenous displayed peoples he is paraded in court in constant fear for his life either through illness/disease or through the violation of some unknown moral code; and second, because of his ongoing proselytising impulse, which ironically counteracts any movement towards personal or spiritual growth.[[92]](#footnote-92) While Higgs acknowledges that he has not managed to convince a single Erewhonian of the truth of any of his ideas and is even aware that attempts to undermine native faith might have ‘frightful consequences’ (p. 175), his desire to convert the Erewhonians is nonetheless represented as ‘so deeply rooted in the English character that few of us can escape its influence’ (p. 202).

In a seeming vindication of inherent British evangelical tendencies, the novel ends with a native missionary, the Reverend William Habakkuk, touring Britain to great acclaim. Habakkuk turns out to be none other than Higgs’s old guide Chowbok, who has traveled from periphery to metropole, returning to the centre the very model of evangelical Christianity exported by British missionaries abroad. Despite his great success in metropolitan Britain, Chowbok seems no more sincere in his conversion to Christianity than on the sheep station in New Zealand. Still clinging to his talismans—Adelaide, the Queen Dowager and Mary Magdalene—Chowbok produces ‘prolonged and rapturous applause’ (p.323) in an audience looking to validate Britain’s success in bringing Christianity to the ‘savages’.[[93]](#footnote-93) In part, this representation of Chowbok satirises the circulating idea that mimicry was an essential characteristic of the Māori character,[[94]](#footnote-94) but Chowbok’s self-serving simulation of the parading missionary on display in the metropole is also represented as the logical outcome of a system that justifies its own existence by attempting to ‘civilise’ and recreate others in its own image. If Chowbok is ultimately more successful than Higgs in playing the imperial system, he nonetheless remains the same kind of displayed ‘curiosity’ that Higgs was himself in Erewhon. Simultaneously ethnographic subjects and ethnographic observers, Chowbok and Higgs are mirror images of each other in the ‘double discourse’ of British imperial culture.[[95]](#footnote-95)

**5. Conclusion**

As many commentators have noted, Erewhon is partly a simulacra of Victorian society in a far-off place, an ‘elsewhere’ or, in the novel’s own terms, a ‘nowhere’ and a ‘now-here’.[[96]](#footnote-96) In a twist on Victorian time-travel narratives, the narrator stays in the present, albeit in a geographically removed, post-industrial present that represents a kind of virtual or parallel dystopian future. The broken machines left as curiosities in the Erewhonian museum represent the auto-exoticising curation of a dead culture, reflecting the antiquarian and ethnographic impulses of metropolitan Victorian society, while also providing a critique of those impulses as practiced in the settler colonial peripheries. Put simply, the satire treats the Victorian present in much the same way as administrators and so-called ‘salvage ethnographers’ treated ‘dying’ Indigenous cultures in colonies and displayed peoples in the metropole.[[97]](#footnote-97) If Butler deliberately leaves Erewhonian racial identity ambiguous so that the Erewhonians can function variously as British settlers, metropolitan Britons, and evolved/assimilated Indigenes, he nonetheless presents Erewhonian society as being in a state of temporal anomaly, presciently sensing within newly published Darwinian theories of descent, selectivity, and competition the hardening of those racial attitudes that were increasingly used to justify imperial exploitation from the 1880s onwards.

A culture that criminalises the ill, weak, and poor, and denigrates child-birth, has its most obvious target in mechanistic Malthusian theories of metropolitan over-population, themselves influential on Darwin’s ideas surrounding natural selection.[[98]](#footnote-98) Yet Butler’s satire applies equally to neo-Malthusian settlement schemes as Wakefield’s, which attempted to keep the ‘unindustrious’ poor out of colonial settlements on the basis that they had no experience in cultivating land, as well as to strictly regulate class hierarchies and the proportion of people to land. Wakefield’s schemes not only perpetuated a British class-based system in which labourers were structurally reliant on capitalists, but also showcased the ways in which utopian settlements, ostensibly premised on communities of free individuals, relied on the coerced labour of non-European populations, from Māori guides like Chowbok to ‘alien’ labour forces like the Erewhonians. That Higgs’s missionary zeal is essentially a ‘cover’ for slavery is suggestive of the extent to which Butler saw unfree Indigenous labour as part of the logic of settler colonialism and imperial capitalism more generally.[[99]](#footnote-99)

In internalising the Darwinian and eugenic principles of Erewhonian culture, Higgs, a caricature of the abstracted and reified ‘made man’ or bourgeois individualist symbolised by Crusoe, ironically attempts to re-enact the very logic of ‘The Book of Machines’: that the evolutionary development of machines will lead to human enslavement or extinction.[[100]](#footnote-100) Yet if, as Anna Neill suggests, the ultimate ‘machinate mammal’ (p.267) is the made man himself, it is important to recognise that Higgs is neither a successful capitalist nor a successful missionary.[[101]](#footnote-101) Unlike those classic *bildungsromans* of nineteenth-century metropolitan fiction he fails to reach his ‘maturation by domesticating itinerant (false) tendencies’ and gaining ‘a legal or moral right to land’.[[102]](#footnote-102) The closest thing to a successful missionary figure in Erewhon is not Higgs but the straighteners, who are described as ‘a class of men trained in soul-craft’ and whose name ‘literally means “one who bends back the crooked”’ (p.97). While Higgs carries over to Erewhon the nineteenth-century Englishman’s assumption of racial and moral superiority, as well as an established order of coloniser and colonised, it is nonetheless an order marked by repeated reversal and failure. In deliberately pointing to the failure of missionary conversion, humanitarianism, and Wakefieldian theories of industriousness, Butler’s novel brings to the surface the tensions between the illiberal origins of global capitalist relations—with its violent record of dispossession, land exploitation, slavery, and resource extraction—and the theoretical efforts of liberal thinkers and political economists such as Adam Smith, David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, and Wakefield himself to ‘explain, navigate, and justify the coercion inherent in colonial economic relations’.[[103]](#footnote-103) It also suggests that, far from being utopias, colonial societies reproduced the same social and ideological problems as metropolitan Britain, from speculation and monopoly to intellectual/moral decadence and bad faith.

*Erewhon’s* vexed utopian projects—and ultimately its vexation with utopianism itself—are suggestive of the novel’s radical disenchantment with the individualist capitalist system emerging from within an imperial framework. The satiric deflation of the principles of capitalist bourgeois individualism, typically encoded by the colonial *bildungsroman* and other realist literary forms,[[104]](#footnote-104)is echoed on a larger scale by Butler’s satire of Wakefield’s understanding of the orderly way in which colonial settlements would reach the kind of economic maturity required for self-government. Instead of orderly development, *Erewhon* showcases the failure of economic organisation, productive work, spiritual growth, and technological progress in the colonial context, presenting an ideological critique of the imperial capitalist system and its machinate abstraction of human value. The novel’s over-arching missionary conversion narrative also has in its sights the supposedly liberal humanitarian framework of the British Empire from the 1830s onwards, which, as the novel demonstrates, could just as easily operate as a means of erasing Indigenous peoples’ racial and cultural differences through assimilationist and eugenicist practices as it could be a means of ‘protection’. Erewhon is not, then, just a parodic replica of British society elsewhere—a Britain in the South Seas—but also an indictment of the dynamics of colonial settlements like the Canterbury Settlement; in particular, of a specifically settler colonial mode of capitalist accumulation bolstered by various forms of unfree labour, religious conversion, and racial assimilation.

1. Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *England and America: A Comparison of the Social and Political State of Both Nations*, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1833), 1. 112. Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. David Fernbach, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 874. On agential equality, see Matthew Watson, ‘Crusoe, Friday and the Raced Market Frame of Economics Textbooks’, *New Political Economy*,23 (2018), 544-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Wakefield, *England and America*, 1. 112, 113, 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. On Wakefield’s utopian logic, see Jonathan Lamb, *Preserving the Self in the South Seas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), p. 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus(1857-1858; London: Penguin, 1973), p. 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Edward Gibbon Wakefield and John Ward, *The British Colonization of New Zealand* (London: John W. Parker, 1837), pp.8, 13. For Wakefield’s attack on liberal economic orthodoxy, see Philip Steer, ‘On Systematic Colonization and the Culture of Settler Colonialism: Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s *A Letter from Sydney* (1829)’, BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History, ed. Dino Franco Felluga <<http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=philip-steer-on-systematic-colonization-and-the-culture-of-settler-colonialism-edward-gibbon-wakefields-a-letter-from-sydney-1829>> [accessed 13 November 2018]. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Wakefield and Ward, *British Colonization of New Zealand*, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Samuel Butler, *Erewhon, or Over the Range* (London: Trübner and Ballantyne, 1872). Page numbers are cited in the main text. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Clare Anderson, ‘Convicts and Coolies: Rethinking Indentured Labour in the Nineteenth Century’, *Slavery and Abolition*, 30 (2009), 93-109. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of New Zealanders, from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 124-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Roger Robinson, ‘Mountain Gothic and Other Variants: Samuel Butler and M. K. Joseph’, *Journal of New Zealand Literature*,35.2 (2017), 151-72 (esp. pp. 155-56). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. On settler colonialism as a distinct form of colonialism, see, e.g., Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London and New York: Cassell, 1998); and Lorenzo Veracini, ‘Introducing Settler Colonial Studies’, *Settler Colonial Studies*,1.1 (2011), 1-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Onur Ulas Ince, *Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Diana C. Archibald, *Domesticity, Imperialism, and Emigration in the Victorian Novel* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2002), p. 109. For readings of *Erewhon* that foreground its New Zealand contexts and/or settler colonialism, see, among others, Sue Zemka,‘“Erewhon” and the End of Utopian Humanism’, *ELH*,69.2 (2002), 439-72; Roger Robinson, ‘From Canterbury Settlement to *Erewhon*: Butler and Antipodean Counterpoint’, in *Samuel Butler, Victorian Against the Grain: A Critical Overview*, ed. James G. Paradis(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 21-44; James Smithies, ‘Return Migration and the Mechanical Age: Samuel Butler in New Zealand 1860-1864’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*,12.2 (2007), 203-24; Jodie Matthews, ‘“Being cut off from all one’s kind”: Samuel Butler, New Zealand, and Colonial Identity’, in *Islands and Britishness: A Global Perspective*,ed. Jodie Matthews and Daniel Travers (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp. 245-60; Philip Armstrong, ‘Samuel Butler’s Sheep’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 17.4 (2012), 442-53; Anna Neill, ‘The Made Man and the “Minor” Novel: *Erewhon*, ANT, and Empire’, *Victorian Studies*,60.1 (2017), 53-73; and Benjamin Morgan, ‘How we Might Live: Utopian Ecology in William Morris and Samuel Butler’, in *Ecological Form: System and Aesthetics in the Age of Empire*, ed. Nathan K. Hensley and Philip Steer (New York: Fordham University Press), 139-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Wakefield and Ward, *British Colonization of New Zealand*, pp. 8, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Erik Olssen, ‘Mr Wakefield and New Zealand as an Experiment in Post-Enlightenment Experimental Practice’, *New Zealand Journal of History*,31.2 (1997), 197-218 (p. 204). Wakefield and Ward, *British Colonization of New Zealand*, pp. 19-20, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Angela Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies: Self Government and Imperial Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 39. On nineteenth-century New Zealand society as an Arcadian ideal, see Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and its Enemies. The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society 1850-1900* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Olssen, ‘Mr Wakefield and New Zealand’, 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Wakefield and Ward, *British Colonization of New Zealand*, pp. 28-29, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Damon Ieremia Salesa, *Racial Crossings: Race, Intermarriage, and the Victorian British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 23. On the profound differences between Indigenous groups in New Zealand, see Angela Ballara, *Iwi: The Dynamics of Māori Tribal Organization from c.1769-1945* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Wakefield and Ward, *British Colonization of New Zealand*, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Robert D. Grant, ‘From Cannibal to Commerce’, *Journal for Maritime Research*,5.1 (2003), 52-73 (p. 65). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Wakefield and Ward, *British Colonization of New Zealand*, pp. 32, 33-34; see also section 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Wakefield and Ward, *British Colonization of New Zealand*, p. 34. Tony Barta, ‘Mr Darwin’s Shooters: On Natural Selection and the Naturalizing of Genocide’, in *Colonialism and Genocide*, ed. Dirk Moses and Dan Stone (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 20-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See, e.g., Alan Lester and Fae Dussart, Colonization and the Origins of Humanitarian Governance: Protecting Aborigines Across the Nineteenth-Century British Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Wakefield and Ward, *British Colonization of New Zealand*, pp. 30-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Salesa, *Racial Crossings*,p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See Angela Wanhalla, *Matters of the Heart: A History of Racial Intermarriage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. On emigration propaganda, see Archibald, *Domesticity, Imperialism, and Emigration*, p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Lamb, *Preserving the Self*, p. 291. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. On missionary criticism of Wakefield, see Lamb, *Preserving the Self*,p. 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Lamb, *Preserving the Self*, p. 300. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand’s Colonial Past* (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2012), p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Cited in Lamb, *Preserving the Self*, p. 299. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Grant, ‘From Cannibal to Commerce’, 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Robert D. Grant, *Representations of British Emigration, Colonisation and Settlement: Imagining Empire, 1800-1860* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Zemka, ‘End of Utopian Humanism’, 447. Smithies, ‘Return Migration’, 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Lamb, *Preserving the Self*, p. 294. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. A.W. P. Whimpress, ‘The Wakefield Model of Systematic Colonisation in South Australia: An Examination with Particular Reference to its Economic Aspects’ (PhD diss., University of South Australia, 2008), p. 170 <<http://search.ror.unisa.edu.au/record/UNISA_ALMA2171701690001831/media/digital/open/9915951887301831/12146718360001831/13146717500001831/pdf>> [accessed 29 November 2018]. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Matthews, ‘Samuel Butler, New Zealand, and Colonial Identity’, p. 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. See, e.g., Geoffrey Blainey, *Black Kettle and Full Moon: Daily Life in a Vanished Australia* (London: Penguin, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Roger Robinson, ‘Samuel Butler, 1835-1902’, *Kotare*,7.2 (2008), 65-78 (p. 66). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Smithies, ‘Return Migration’, 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Olssen, ‘Mr Wakefield and New Zealand’, 203. Smithies, ‘Return Migration’, 220. Ince, *Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism*, p. 9. Armstrong, ‘Samuel Butler’s Sheep’, 443. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Whimpress, ‘The Wakefield Model of Systematic Colonisation’, pp. 133, 147-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, p. 46. Similarly, in Erewhon a lack of machines results in a society composed primarily of labouring shepherds and white-collar workers rather than industrial workers. See Joshua A. Gooch, ‘Figures of Nineteenth-Century Biopower in Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon*’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 36.1 (2014), 53-71 (p. 60). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Lamb, *Preserving the Self*, p. 293. Zemka, ‘End of Utopian Humanism’, 467. On the ecological implications of pastoral utopianism and its ‘externalization of environmental damage’, see Morgan, ‘How we Might Live’, esp. pp. 148, 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Lamb, *Preserving the Self*, p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Marx, *Capital*, pp. 514, 515. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Wakefield cited in Douglas Pike, *Paradise of Dissent: South Australia, 1829-1857* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1957), p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. On this point, see Steer, ‘On Systematic Colonization’, n.p. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Archibald, *Domesticity, Imperialism, and Emigration*,p. 108. This was Butler’s personal experience. See Robinson, ‘Samuel Butler’, 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Matthews, ‘Samuel Butler, New Zealand, and Colonial Identity’, pp. 245-46. On Butler’s method of satirical defamiliarisation, see Robinson, ‘From Canterbury Settlement to *Erewhon*’, pp. 21-44 (esp. p. 27). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ince, *Colonial Capitalism*, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Smithies, ‘Return Migration’, 208. On the essential structural relation between enclosure and identity formation in the English novel, see Robert P. Marzec, ‘Enclosures, Colonization, and the *Robinson Crusoe* Syndrome: A Genealogy of Land in a Global Context’, *boundary 2* 29.9 (2002), 129-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Tony Ballantyne, ‘Mobility, Empire, Colonisation’, *History Australia*, 11.2 (2014), 1-37 (p. 10). [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Edward Gibbon Wakefield, ‘Letter to the Editor’, *Wellington Independent*, 1 June 1853, cited in M. F. Lloyd Prichard, ‘Wakefield Changes his Mind About “Sufficient Price”’, *International Review of Social History*,8.2 (1962), 251-69 (p. 262). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Wakefield, ‘Letter to the Editor’, 262. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Edward Gibbon Wakefield, ‘Dangerous Condition of the Australia and New Zealand. To the Editor of The “Spectator”’, *New Zealand Spectator and Cook’s Strait Guardian*, 23 October 1852, p. 4, cited in Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Belich, *Making Peoples*, p. 346. Ballantyne, ‘Mobility, Empire, Colonisation’, 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Smithies, ‘Return Migration’, 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 309-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. See, however, Smithies, ‘Return Migration’, 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Tom Brooking, *The History of New Zealand* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 2004), p. 74. Belich, *Making Peoples*, pp. 345-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Archibald, *Domesticity, Imperialism, and Emigration*, p. 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Nicol Allan MacArthur, ‘Gold Rush and Gold Mining: A Technological Analysis of Gabriel’s Gully and the Blue Spur, 1861-1891’ (PhD diss., Otago University, 2014), p. ii

<<https://ourarchive.otago.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10523/4933/MacArthurNicolAllan2014MA.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>> [accessed 29 November 2018]. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Brooking, *History of New Zealand*, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Wakefield and Ward, *British Colonization*, p. 7. On this point, see Steer, ‘On Systematic Colonization’, n.p. In a curious echo of Wakefield’s arguments, Miles Fairburn has argued that the atomisation caused by large-scale immigration to New Zealand led to frontier chaos, violence, and ‘interpersonal conflict’ until the eventual introduction of various forms of state regulation. Fairburn, *The Ideal Society*, pp. 193, 260. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Marx, *Capital*, p. 518. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Mary Anne Barker, *Station Life in New Zealand* (London: Macmillan, 1870), pp. 22, 37, 41, 60, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Patrick Parrinder, ‘Entering Dystopia, Entering “Erewhon”, *Critical Survey*,17.1 (2005), 6-21. This representation of Erewhoniansociety partly draws on European views of Māori attitudes towards illness and partly on ideas surrounding the supposed degeneration or decadence of the Māori race, which, it was argued, appeared to be robust and healthy but was only so because disease carried off a large proportion of sickly children. See, e.g., Joshua Henry Kirby’s novel *Henry Ancrum: A Tale of the Last War in New Zealand*, 2 vols (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872), 1. 87. On circulating ethnographic arguments, which argued that Māori had degenerated into cruelty and barbarism from an ancient civilisation because of isolation from Old World cultures, see John O’Leary, ‘“Tableaux of Queerness”: The Ethnographic Novels of John White’, *Kunapipi* 23.2 (2001): 7-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Parrinder, ‘Entering Dystopia’, 20. On the discourse of utilitarianism in *Erewhon*, see Gooch, ‘Biopower in Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon*’, 63-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Barker, *Station Life in New Zealand*, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Robinson, ‘Samuel Butler, 1835-1902’, 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Neill, ‘The Made Man and the “Minor” Novel’, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. See, e.g., Zemka, ‘End of Utopian Humanism’, 441 450. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Zemka, ‘End of Utopian Humanism’, 449, 455. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Uday Singh Mehta, ‘Liberal Strategies of Exclusion’, *Politics and Society*,18.4 (1990), 427-54. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Archibald, *Domesticity, Imperialism, and Emigration*,p. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Archibald, *Domesticity, Imperialism, and Emigration*,pp. 153, 158. The idea that Māori were lighter skinned than other Indigenous peoples was often put down to New Zealand’s climate, which caused the Māori to lose his ‘dark hue’ so that ‘many of the race, when dressed in European clothes, might be taken for natives of the southern part of that portion of the globe, being certainly not darker than some Spaniards and Italians’. Kirby, *Henry Ancrum*, pp. 86-87. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Parrinder, ‘Entering Dystopia’, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Parrinder, ‘Entering Dystopia’, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Francis Galton, *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences* (London: Macmillan, 1869), p. 340. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Anna Johnston, ‘“Greater Britain”: Late Imperial Travel Writing and the Settler Colonies’, in *Oceania and the Victorian Imagination: Where All Things are Possible*, ed. Richard D. Fulton and Peter H. Hoffenberg (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 31-43 (p. 39). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Wakefield and Ward, *British Colonization of New Zealand*, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Woollacott, *Settler Society in the Australian Colonies*, pp.41-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Elizabeth Elbourne, ‘The Sins of the Settler: The 1835–36 Select Committee on Aborigines and Debates over Virtue and Conquest in the Early Nineteenth-Century British White Settler Empire’, Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History, 4.3 (2003), 1–39. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. See, however, Armstrong, ‘Samuel Butler’s Sheep’, 446-53. On Butler’s critique of western humanism, see Zemka ‘End of Utopian Humanism’; and David Amigioni, *Colonies, Cults, and Evolution: Literature, Science, and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 149-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ed. J. H. Burns and H. L. A. Hart (1789; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 282n. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Margaret Abruzzo, Polemical Pain: Slavery, Cruelty and the Rise of Humanitarianism (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Wakefield and Ward, *British Colonization of New Zealand*, pp. 40-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. See, e.g., D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. ‘Zemka, ‘End of Utopian Humanism’, 455. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Robinson, ‘Samuel Butler, 1835-1902’, 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Kirby, *Henry Ancrum* p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. On this term, see Sarah Comyn, *Political Economy and the Novel: A Literary History of “Homo Economicus”* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (1968; New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 333, n. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Grant, ‘From Cannibal to Commerce’, 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Peter Vorzimmer, ‘Darwin, Malthus, and the Theory of Natural Selection’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 30.4 (1969), 527-524. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Robinson, ‘From Canterbury Settlement to *Erewhon*’, p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Neill, ‘The Made Man and the “Minor” Novel’, 54. On Butler’s three essays on machine culture published in New Zealand, see Parrinder, ‘Entering Dystopia’, 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Neill, ‘The Made Man and the “Minor” Novel’, 69, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Marzec, ‘Enclosures, Colonization, and the *Robinson Crusoe* Syndrome’, 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Ince, *Colonial Capitalism and the Dilemmas of Liberalism,* p. 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. See, e.g., the arguments in Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957). [↑](#footnote-ref-104)