

Wakefield, Marx, and the world turned inside out

Gabriel Piterberg¹ and Lorenzo Veracini²

¹UCLA Department of History, 6265 Bunche Hall, Box 951473, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1473, USA
E-mail: gabip@history.ucla.edu

²Swinburne Institute for Social Research, Mail 53, PO Box 218, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122, Australia
E-mail: lveracini@swin.edu.au

Abstract

This article focuses on Edward Gibbon Wakefield's theory of colonization, on Karl Marx's response to it, and on the role that settler colonialism as a global phenomenon played in shaping their thought. Marx's rejoinder to Wakefield's interpretation of an episode in the early colonization of Western Australia, when servants had deserted a wealthy colonist, was a foundational moment in the development of his general argument. Wakefield's reaction to that episode was to develop the theory of 'systematic colonization', which he also proposed as an antidote to the prospect of impending revolution. Marx's notion of primitive accumulation was entwined with his reading of Wakefield's project. We argue that their different approaches to colonization, the prospect of settling 'empty lands' in other continents, can be seen as the starting points of two different political traditions. While revolutionary traditions are well known, this article outlines another global tradition, a political tradition that refuses reaction and revolution equally, and envisages displacement as the best method to produce social transformation.

Keywords colonization, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Karl Marx, primitive accumulation, settler colonialism

After decades of inattention, a number of recent scholarly articles have focused on Edward Gibbon Wakefield and on the ways in which his theory of 'systematic colonization' influenced the development of Karl Marx's critique of capitalism and his understanding of primitive accumulation. The recognition of Wakefield's significance as a theorist of colonization and settler colonialism has indeed witnessed a marked resurgence in recent years. Tony Ballantyne, for example, emphasizes Wakefield's crucial role in finally breaking the hegemony of anti-emigration discourse and in comprehensively reshaping its very idiom. While only dedicating a short paragraph to Wakefield's influence on Marx and responding to James Belich's relative downplaying of Wakefield's importance, Ballantyne concludes: 'Wakefield was central in driving that transformation'.¹ Also emphasizing Wakefield's importance, in a perceptive article

1 Tony Ballantyne, 'The theory and practice of empire building: Edward Gibbon Wakefield and "systematic colonisation"', in Robert Aldrich and Kirsten McKenzie, eds., *The Routledge history of western empires*, London: Routledge, 2014, p. 93. See also James Belich, *Replenishing the earth: the settler revolution and the rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 147.

examining the evolution of John Stuart Mill's views on the settler colonies, Duncan Bell shows the formative influence that Wakefield had on Mill's understanding of settler colonization, but not his influence on Marx.² Mark Neocleous details Wakefield's influence on Marx and yet he does not distinguish, as Marx and Wakefield fundamentally did, colonialism and settler colonialism as distinct modes of domination.³ Nicholas Brown and Glen Coulthard perceptively analyse in their respective works the intimate relationship linking primitive accumulation and settler colonialism, but do not mention Wakefield's role in first detecting it.⁴

Beyond a concern with Wakefield, settler colonialism and primitive accumulation are both concepts that have recently been the subject of much scholarly attention. Settler colonial studies consolidated in the last two decades into a distinct scholarly field, while renewed reflection on 'primitive accumulation' was prompted by a debate concerning its immanence in current modes of capitalist domination.⁵ The linkage between colonialism as a global phenomenon and primitive accumulation has been the topic of an especially significant scholarly literature, and Derek Hall and Onur Ulas Ince provide much needed typological and conceptual clarity on this debate.⁶

In this article we focus on the importance of Wakefield's thought, on its influence on Marx, and on the ways in which primitive accumulation is linked to settler colonialism as a mode of domination producing specific social formations.⁷ We believe that the current global relevance of both settler colonial phenomena and ongoing forms of primitive accumulation makes a focus on Marx's response to Wakefield's theory of 'systematic colonization' a very topical concern.

The article outlines the manifestation of an unexplored political tradition in modern Western intellectual history. We contend that Karl Marx's commentary on Edward Gibbon

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- 2 Duncan Bell, 'John Stuart Mill on colonies', *Political Theory*, 38, 1, 2010, pp. 34–64. Donald Winch's influential work on the early nineteenth century politico-economic debate on emigration and colonies had also downplayed Wakefield's influence on Marx. See Donald Winch, *Classical political economy and colonies*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965.
 - 3 Mark Neocleous, 'International law as primitive accumulation; or, the secret of systematic colonization', *European Journal of International Law*, 23, 4, 2012, pp. 941–62. Helmut Otto Pappé's 1951 *Economic History Review* article on the Wakefield–Marx connection had also failed to notice this crucial distinction: see H. O. Pappé, 'Wakefield and Marx', *Economic History Review*, 4, 1, 1951, pp. 88–97.
 - 4 Nicholas A. Brown, 'The logic of settler accumulation in a landscape of perpetual vanishing', *Settler Colonial Studies*, 1, 4, 2013, pp. 1–26; Glen Coulthard, *Red skin, white masks*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014, esp. pp. 6–15. See also Onur Ulas Ince, 'Capitalism, colonization and contractual dispossession: Wakefield's Letters from Sydney', http://www.academia.edu/1067870/Capitalism_Colonization_and_Contractual_Dispossession_Wakefields_Letters_from_Sydney (consulted 28 August 2013).
 - 5 On settler colonialism see, for example, Patrick Wolfe, *Settler colonialism and the transformation of anthropology: the politics and poetics of an ethnographic event*, London: Cassell, 1999; Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler colonialism: a theoretical overview*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. For an analysis of the evolution of settler colonialism as a category of enquiry, see Lorenzo Veracini, "'Settler colonialism": career of a concept', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 41, 2, 2013, pp. 313–33. On primitive accumulation as an ongoing phenomenon, see Massimo De Angelis, 'Marx and primitive accumulation: the continuous character of capital's "enclosures"', *The Commoner*, 2, 2001, <http://www.commoner.org.uk/02deangelis.pdf> (consulted 23 April 2015); Massimo De Angelis, 'Separating the doing and the deed: capital and the continuous character of enclosures', *Historical Materialism*, 12, 2, 2004, pp. 57–87; Kalyan Sanyal, *Rethinking capitalist development: primitive accumulation, governmentality and post-colonial capitalism*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2007; David Harvey, *A companion to Marx's Capital*, London: Verso, 2010, esp. pp. 289–315; Derek Hall, 'Primitive accumulation, accumulation by dispossession, and the global land grab', *Third World Quarterly*, 34, 9, 2013, pp. 1582–1604.
 - 6 See Derek Hall, 'Rethinking primitive accumulation: theoretical tensions and rural southeast Asian complexities', *Antipode*, 44, 4, 2012, pp. 1188–1208; Onur Ulas Ince, 'Primitive accumulation, new enclosures, and global land grabs', *Rural Sociology*, 79, 1, 2014, pp. 104–31.
 - 7 By 'social formation' we mean the context that contains a mode of production. In the case of settler colonialism, as we outline below, this is a mode characterized by capitalism and by reintroduced yet temporary primitive accumulation.

Wakefield's writings enables us to magnify the divergence between revolutionary traditions and what we define – in homage to Christopher Hill's metaphor of revolution as a 'world turned upside down' – as the 'world turned inside out', or settler colonialism.⁸ We argue that Wakefield's theory of 'systematic colonization' and Marx's theory of the 'primitive accumulation of capital' are premised on a shared understanding of capital as a social relation that rests on the separation of producers from the means of subsistence. Where Marx and Wakefield diverged was on how to manage the crisis springing from the operation of the capitalist mode of production, a crisis they both saw as inevitable. For Marx, its contradictions could not be resolved short of turning this mode 'upside down' through social revolution. In contrast, Wakefield opted for reforming capitalism by exporting it out of the British metropole through settler colonization and primitive accumulation: that is, by turning it 'inside out'.⁹

A word of historicist caution is warranted in order to clarify what is meant by the world turned inside out being 'an unexplored political tradition'. This was not a political tradition in the same way that socialism, liberalism and conservatism were. Under the roof of settler colonization as a political and social programme dwelt Tories, Whigs and even ex-revolutionaries (for example, those who had been defeated in 1848 became settlers in French Algeria and the US). Individuals could identify themselves as socialists, liberals or Tories, but not as 'world-turned-inside-outists'. The transformative magnitude of the global phenomenon of settler colonialism, however, was not only politico-economic. Coupled with one of the historian's main tools – the benefit of hindsight – that magnitude justifies our attention to the relatively neglected ideational aspect of settler colonization. But hindsight *sans* historicist tempering may deteriorate into anachronism.

In this article, we argue that Wakefield and Marx's different readings of an episode in the colonization of Western Australia, when a wealthy and well-connected colonist had been abandoned by his servants, can be seen as an *Ansatzpunkt*, a starting point, the moment when two opposing political traditions can be identified in two texts and subsequently magnified. Identifying *Ansatzpunkte* should not be misconstrued as a search for chronological beginnings. Neither settler colonialism nor revolution arguably made their first appearance in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. An important bifurcation emerges, however, from the shared perception of vanishing labour in the nascent Swan River colony (later Western Australia) and under settler colonial circumstances in general. Wakefield and Marx were approaching these problems from very different political traditions. That moment, however, constitutes a bifurcation in terms of the history of ideas that stemmed from their common analysis because their critiques of the classical political economy recognized that the contradictions between labour and capital in Europe – and especially in England – were explosive. On the one hand, Wakefield's attempt to replicate non-revolutionary 'Englands' elsewhere was a response to the intuition of these inherent contradictions. On the other hand, Marx's analysis of the ultimate inevitability of revolution can be read as a response to a response. The joint realization that the capitalism of their time was unsustainable affords us a historical moment in

8 Christopher Hill, *The world turned upside-down: radical ideas during the English Revolution*, London: Penguin, 1972. See also James Livingston, *The world turned inside out: American thought and culture at the end of the 20th century*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010. It is significant that Livingston, like Wakefield, is also talking about the relationships between conservative and progressive traditions during a time of crisis.

9 For this insight about 'inside' and 'outside' in this context, see Derek Hall, 'Rethinking primitive accumulation', p. 1194, where Hall notes that this question 'has received little focused attention in the current literature'.

which these two political traditions can be detected. Reflections on settler colonialism as a specific mode of domination, the topic of the first section, are thus crucial to understanding this evolution.

For us, revolution and counter-revolution are not such a bifurcation because a spatial dimension is absent from their distinction: the bloody clashes between them have been over the power to shape the same geography and the same society. Temporally, there can be no simultaneity: revolution, even if it is brief and abortive – 1848 and 1919, for instance – must occur first. Indeed, we believe that the commonly held view that revolution and counter-revolution are the chief political alternatives is a form of Eurocentrism, and in this study we propose what J. G. A. Pocock calls ‘history from the Antipodes’ as a way to overcome it.¹⁰

The world turned inside out is no less pitted against the world turned upside down than reaction. Rather than countering revolution once it has occurred, however, the world turned inside out pre-empts revolution by means of displacement. What subsequently happen are attempts to recreate the mother country in a *terra nullius*, but in ways that prevent, or at least attempt to avoid, the social tensions that, in the mother country, made revolution a possibility in the first place. James Belich’s fine study, and especially its subtitle, *The settler revolution and the rise of the Anglo-world*, makes it possible for us to suggest an even more far-reaching definition of the bifurcation embedded in this *Ansatzpunkt*.¹¹ We might be looking at two ‘revolutionary’ traditions emerging from the realization of capitalism’s contradictions: one, Marx-inspired, eventually failed; the other – settler-capitalist, ultimately the topic of Belich’s book – was remarkably successful, and from the standpoint of the native peoples and the environment horrifically so.

The article’s first section introduces Edward Gibbon Wakefield. Following Wakefield and Marx, and on the basis of recent developments in the field of settler colonial studies, its second section outlines settler colonialism as a mode of domination resulting in social formations that are distinct from those found in the Old World and in the colonies of exploitation. The third section summarises our methodology for appraising Wakefield’s view and Marx’s response. Based on the early historiography of their relationship and on their writings, the fourth section outlines the ways in which they shared an understanding of colonization. The fifth section focuses on current debates on global primitive accumulation, on primitive accumulation as a Marxian concept, and on its little known grounding in his response to Wakefield’s work. In a brief conclusion we finally point out the current relevance of Wakefield’s insistence that capitalism should be guarded against its excesses.¹²

Edward Gibbon Wakefield

Wakefield was what can retrospectively be termed an entrepreneur and systematic thinker of settler colonialism in the British empire’s future white dominions. He was the first of an important series of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century advocates of a ‘Greater Britain’.

10 J. G. A. Pocock, *The discovery of islands: essays in British history*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. For an analysis of the relationship between Pocock’s neo-Seelyan plea for a new British history and the settler colonies, see Richard Bourke, ‘Pocock and the presuppositions of the new British history’, *Historical Journal*, 53, 3, 2010, pp. 747–70.

11 Belich, *Replenishing the earth*.

12 See Bernard Semmel, *The rise of free trade imperialism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970. Semmel noted that Wakefield’s diagnosis of capitalism’s crisis pre-dated Marx’s analysis by two decades.

The movement bearing that name would appear later, but with hindsight Wakefield can be seen as the one who had set the tone.¹³ His thinking, however, went beyond merely colonial or British issues, and from an initial position of solidarity and partnership with the chief political economists he produced an influential early critique of their theories.¹⁴

Wakefield was born in 1796 in Tottenham, London. The family matriarch, Priscilla, his grandmother, was a formidable Quaker, though Edward Gibbon grew up Anglican. He had a meagre education: brief stints at Westminster and Edinburgh High School. For six years (1814–20) he held a minor diplomatic post in Turin. He had a propensity for eloping with very young women: in 1816 he eloped with a sixteen-year-old heiress, Eliza Pattle, and married her in Edinburgh. She died in 1820 while giving birth to their third child. Desirous of a political career and more fortune, he carefully concocted with his brother William the abduction from her boarding school of fifteen-year-old Ellen Turner, the heiress to a wealthy silk merchant from Macclesfield. He convinced her to marry him, but the contract that had formalized their marriage was later annulled by Parliament. Edward Gibbon and William were prosecuted for abduction, and in 1827 the former was sentenced to three years of imprisonment, most of which he served in London's Newgate Gaol.

This residency is important because it was in Newgate that Wakefield's fascination with settler colonization was formed, out of a reflection on what was wrong with current social circumstances. He felt that it was not normal that normal people such as he were forced into considering desperate actions. The first expression of this interest was the initially anonymous *A letter from Sydney* (1829). He knew that his prospect of career, either in Parliament or in the civil service, had vanished. From that point on, Wakefield's life was dedicated to and influenced by settler colonization. He wrote numerous works and pamphlets on the subject, most notably *England and America* (1833) and *A view of the art of colonization* (1849).

His analysis of the political economy–colonization nexus had significant political outcomes. He was involved in various settler colonial schemes and companies, and spearheaded the Colonial Reform Movement, which included MPs and colonial administrators, most notably Charles Buller and Robert Torrens. Karen O'Brien subtly observes the 'limited affinity' between Wakefield and the Romantic Tories. Both extolled settler colonization but, whereas for the Romantic Tories, not unlike Jefferson, a community of homesteaders was an idyll, for Wakefield the absence of wage labour was tantamount to barbarism.¹⁵

He also played a central (if controversial and unofficial) role in the 1838 Durham Report on Upper and Lower Canada, an official policy document that had – for the first time in the context of the British empire – recommended settler-responsible government.¹⁶ Wakefield had tortuous relationships with British politicians, civil servants, and the political economists of his time, many of whom disliked him (J. S. Mill and Lord Durham were notable exceptions) but

13 See Duncan Bell, *The idea of greater Britain*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.

14 For more detailed descriptions, see Philip Temple, *A sort of conscience: the Wakefields*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2002; Philip Temple, ed., *Edward Gibbon Wakefield and the colonial dream: a reconsideration*, Wellington: Friends of the Turnbull Library, 1997; Ged Martin, *Edward Gibbon Wakefield: abductor and mystagogue*, Edinburgh: Ann Barry, 1997; Ince, 'Capitalism'.

15 See Karen O'Brien, 'Colonial emigration, public policy, and Tory romanticism 1783–1830', in Duncan Kelly, ed., *Lineages of empire: the historical roots of British imperial thought*, Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2009, pp. 161–79.

16 See Semmel, *Rise of free trade imperialism*; Bernard Semmel, *The liberal ideal and the demons of empire*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993; A. G. L. Shaw, ed., *Great Britain and the colonies, 1815–1855*, London: Methuen & Co, 1970.

could not ignore his pronouncements.¹⁷ The most interesting of these relationships was the one he entertained with the Colonial Secretary of the late 1840s, Viscount Howick, who abhorred Wakefield the person but was highly appreciative of Wakefield the theoretician of colonization.¹⁸

Wakefield's theory of what he called 'systematic colonization' stemmed from a concern that the white settler colonies of his time (primarily America) were eminently defective societies. In his analysis, cheap land and its infinite availability resulted in 'dispersion'. It was not a minor defect: in his understanding dispersion prevented the very development of what he defined as 'capitalist civilization'. He liked capitalism, even if he did not use this term, and did not approve of what he saw as a return to pre-capitalist conditions in the settler colonies. In Wakefield's opinion, contra laissez-faire, the developing settler colonies needed the guiding hand of a metropole in an aggressively interventionist manner in order to place the budding settler colony on the road to 'capitalist civilization'. The 'invisible hand' of a free market in what were deemed empty lands was anathema to Wakefield. The fundamental feature of his colonization theory was that the colonial government should impose a 'sufficient price' on 'wastelands' in the colonies.

That sufficient price would achieve two goals. The first would be to prevent newly arrived settlers from immediately owning land and to force them to become wage labourers in the employment of wealthier settlers. Wakefield's systematic colonization then provided the hope or the pacifying delusion that a sustained period of employment coupled with frugality would enable wage labourers eventually to meet the sufficient price and purchase their own land. The second goal of the sufficient price was to furnish a fund that would pay for the importation of more immigrant families, thereby keeping the colonial labour market well supplied. The gendered dimension of Wakefield's scheme was crucial: it was the sufficient price of land that would guarantee appropriate gender balance and provide for the expansion of the settler labour force via procreation rather than uncontrolled immigration. The resulting division between wage and domestic labour would also sustain a more pacified social body. Wakefield's system would thus offset 'dispersion', for only at the already settled areas could employment be sought. It should already be possible to see why Wakefield was irresistible for Marx: within the latter's analytical framework the former had understood that capital accumulation was predicated on the prior denial of access to means of subsistence and on the subsequent prevalence of wage labour.

At the same time, Wakefield thought that establishing settler colonies around the globe was an especially good idea because they, in turn, would allow the mother country to escape over-capitalization and revolutionary tensions. The colonies would provide an inexhaustible 'field of employment' for over-accumulated capital. Wakefield believed that this was a major contribution to politico-economic analysis, a category that would amend the capital-centric view of Ricardian orthodoxies. He saw unconstrained capitalism producing unsustainable contradictions and unconstrained settler colonialism dissipating capitalist relations. His 'systematic colonization' scheme was to be capitalist civilization's *global* saviour.

The idea that settler colonialism could constitute a pre-emptive response to social revolution remained a minority position. The opposing alternatives of social revolution and settler

17 For Wakefield's formative influence on Mill's view of settler colonization (as distinguished from India), see Duncan Bell, 'John Stuart Mill on colonies', *Political Theory*, 38, 1, 2010, pp. 34–64.

18 On Wakefield and Viscount Howick, see June Phillip's fine study, *A great view of things: Edward Gibbon Wakefield*, Melbourne: Nelson, 1971, pp. 53–67.

colonialism were never clear in the minds of Wakefield's contemporaries, and most of the political economists at the time argued that the problem of 'overcapitalization' and attendant social troubles could be resolved without colonial expansion. While Wakefield's success in breaking this orthodoxy was due to his theory's appeal to conservative opinion and a few liberal political economists, most notably Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, Marx fully recognized the significance of Wakefield's project and explicitly set out to criticize it in *Capital's* thirty-third chapter.¹⁹ As Wakefield and Marx were talking about capitalism, primitive accumulation and the prospect of an impending revolution, they were actually talking about settler colonies as specific social formations, formations that in their understanding were crucially distinct from those characterizing both the Old World and the rest of the colonial world.

Settler colonialism

A letter from Sydney was the first expression of Wakefield's interest in settler colonization. It was a *Prison notebook* of sorts, in which, through reading and mental exertion, Wakefield crafted an epistolary conversation between the author, a colonist in Australia, and a statesman in England. Both its form and content evince the influence upon Edward Gibbon of his grandmother Priscilla. Barely stepping outside London, she had nevertheless written several books describing geographies which she had never visited. In *Excursions in North America* (1806) she had decried the 'regression' of the New World societies and remarked on the ways in which the colonists had dispersed and polite society had disappeared. She had blamed generous land grants: simple houses, hunting, and enhanced mobility had followed, with colonists often 'quitting the spot on which they have bestowed some labour, before it is completely clean, and remove further into the forest'.²⁰ *A letter from Sydney* reproduced these notions.

In that text Wakefield offered a condensed definition of colonization's primary characteristic. This definition contains a multiplicity of meanings precisely because it is so condensed and because he was not intentionally endeavouring to craft a definition at that point: 'colonisation means the creation and increase of everything but land, where there is nothing except land'.²¹ We should dwell on this definition's significance. In Hegelian terms the statement is both objective and subjective: it validly describes what settler colonies were and how they would develop, and it constitutes an articulation of white settler perspective and consciousness.

To address perspective and consciousness first: by stating 'where there is nothing except land', Wakefield's succinct definition already assumes that, prior to white colonization, the said geography had been *terra nullius*. There is no settler consciousness and imagination without *terra nullius*, a concept that can be expressed variously, from the use of the concept in Australian law until the 1990s, through a Judaeo-Protestant narrative in which Exodus is liberation but not elimination, to the Zionist slogan of 'a land without a people to a people without a land'.²² Carole Pateman examines the foundational importance of *terra nullius* to

19 See O'Brien, 'Colonial emigration'.

20 See Ballantyne, 'Theory and practice', pp. 91–3 (quotation at pp. 92–3).

21 We quote from the most authoritative edition of Wakefield's works: M. F. Lloyd-Prichard, ed., *The collected works of Edward Gibbon Wakefield*, Glasgow: Collins, 1968; see *A letter from Sydney*, p. 135. Lloyd-Prichard's introduction to the volume is also an excellent entry point to Wakefield's life and work.

22 On *terra nullius*, see Andrew Fitzmaurice, 'Genealogies of *terra nullius*', *Australasian historical studies*, 38, 129, 2007, pp. 1–15; and, in a more expansive fashion, Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Sovereignty, property and empire, 1500–2000*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, esp. chs. 9 and 10.

the settler consciousness in a masterful essay outlining ‘the settler contract’. The notion of the settler contract emerges from her collaboration with Charles Mills, a partnership that brought together her *The sexual contract* and his *The racial contract*. Their joint study broaches the extent to which a contract entails domination and powerfully questions one of Western civilization’s most distinctive traits: the assumption of a voluntary entry into contracts by equal, free, thinking subjects. Pateman’s critical approach to the contract as such is underlain by a Marxist critique of liberalism. In ‘The settler contract’ she offers a narrative of *terra nullius* in the context of three settler societies: the US, Australia, and Canada. She explores through this term the ideological mechanisms used by the settlers to justify and legitimize their projects, and offers a reading of Grotius and Locke that runs against the grain of Whig scholarship on early modern political theory.²³

Specifically, Pateman’s concern with the settler contract is stimulated by her engagement with Mills’s discussion of an ‘expropriation’ contract. She then offers a succinct definition of her own:

The settler contract is a specific form of the expropriation contract and refers to the dispossession of, and rule over, Native inhabitants by British settlers in the two New Worlds. Colonialism in general subordinates, exploits, kills, rapes, and makes maximum use of the colonized and their resources and lands. When colonists are planted in a *terra nullius*, an empty state of nature, the aim is not merely to dominate, govern, and use but to create a civil society. Therefore, the settlers have to make an original – settler – contract.²⁴

While this definition significantly resonates with Wakefield’s, the conceptual distinction between settler colonialism and metropole-centred colonialism that is embedded in his definition should also be noted (even if he did not use these terms). When Wakefield and many other nineteenth-century writers used the terms ‘colonization’ and ‘colonies’ they meant the settler ones – for them the only ‘real’ colonies. Observing that in a typical colony of exploitation such as India, for example, ‘there is nothing except land’, would have not occurred to them. Marx shared this perception (even if he also did not use ‘settler colonialism’ as a term). He could not have been more explicit than in *Capital*’s thirty-third chapter: ‘We are dealing with true colonies, i.e. virgin soil colonized by free immigrants’.²⁵

Marx realized how the distinction between colonial and settler colonial phenomena depended on the colony’s subordinate integration in international markets and, consequently, on its native policy: ‘The treatment of the aborigines was, naturally, most frightful in plantation-colonies destined for export trade only, such as the West Indies, and in rich and well-populated countries, such as Mexico and India, that were given over to plunder. But even in the colonies properly so called, the Christian character of primitive accumulation did not belie itself.’²⁶ For Marx it was a lack of exploitable indigenous peoples and plantation-produced commodities that defined settler colonialism. The antithetical conceptualization of the two types of colonialism has been much reflected upon and systematized by the developing

23 Carole Pateman, ‘The settler contract’, in Carole Pateman and Charles W. Mills, *Contract and domination*, Cambridge: Polity, 2007, pp. 35–78.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

25 Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1, London: Penguin, 1990 (reprint of 1976 Pelican edition), p. 931, n. 1.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 917.

field of comparative settler colonial studies. The distinction, however, was very clear in the nineteenth century, even if it became less so in the twentieth.²⁷

In addressing the objective side of Wakefield's definition, it is crucial to understand, as Pateman does, that there is a qualitative difference between the labour and sexual contracts and the 'settler contract'. The former contracts do, indeed, entail domination, but the dominated remain a party to the contract because they are essential for the socioeconomic formation that is thereby made legal. The settler contract is unilaterally created by the settlers among themselves, in the context of a relation of some sort to the metropolitan power. The indigenous communities who own and people the land are absent from the contract even as a dominated party because they have become superfluous in the socioeconomic formation that the settlers have the ability to force upon them. It is in this sense that Wakefield's definition is meaningfully valid both subjectively and objectively. Put differently, the objective validity condensed into Wakefield's ruthless statement lies not in the fact that objectively there were no natives on the land, but in the fact that the settlers were successful in creating a land-labour formation in which 'there is nothing except land', on which, in turn, capital can exercise its expansionary drive without obstruction. This drive is, in Wakefield's formulation, 'the creation and increase of everything but land'.

This objective aspect of Wakefield's definition is further illuminated by the seminal intervention of another scholar, Patrick Wolfe. The originality and insight of Wolfe's writings on this issue lie in his appreciative critique of anti-colonial writers such as Amílcar Cabral and Franz Fanon, and of later ones such as Gayatri Spivak. Wolfe also underscores the antithetical distinction between metropole-centred and settler colonialisms. 'For all the homage paid to heterogeneity and difference,' he observes, 'the bulk of "post"-colonial theorizing is disabled by an oddly monolithic, and surprisingly unexamined, notion of colonialism.' He argues that one of the reasons for this

consists in the historical accident (or is it?) that the native founders of the post-colonial canon came from franchise or dependent – as opposed to settler or creole – colonies. This gave these guerrilla theoreticians the advantage of speaking to an oppressed majority, on whose labour a colonizing minority was vulnerably dependent But what if the colonizers are not dependent on native labour? – indeed, what if the natives themselves have been reduced to a small minority whose survival can hardly be seen to furnish the colonizing society with more than a remission from ideological embarrassment?²⁸

Wolfe attributes decisive explanatory significance to the fact that, in contrast to the colonial formation that Cabral or Fanon confronted, the settler colonies were 'not primarily established to extract surplus value from indigenous labour'. Rather, they were 'premised on displacing indigenes from (or replacing them on) the land'. The bottom line is a formulation that other scholars of settler colonialism understandably cite: 'Settler colonies were (are) premised on the elimination of the native societies. The split tensing reflects a determinate feature of settler colonization. The colonizers come to stay – invasion is a structure not an event.'²⁹

27 For an outline of the ways in which 'colonialism' was essentially settler colonialism in the nineteenth century, see Tadhg Foley, "'An unknown and feeble body": how settler colonialism was theorized in the nineteenth century', in Fiona Bateman and Lionel Pilkington, eds., *Studies in settler colonialism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 10–27.

28 Wolfe, *Settler colonialism*, p. 1.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 2.

Within the scholarly taxonomy of settler colonies, Wolfe is really interested in what D. K. Fieldhouse called the ‘pure settlement’ colony.³⁰ The gist of the land–labour formation in this case is that it is based exclusively on white settler labour, a point already outlined by Donald Denoon in his 1983 comparative book.³¹ What is desired from the indigenous society is all the land and none of the labour (true, some indigenous labour may be required, but, crucially, either in marginal areas or as a temporary measure). In this formation, from a settler perspective, the indigenous people are superfluous. In the present context we want to emphasize that, although he obviously did not use this terminology, and even if he aimed to stunt their autonomy and tie them to the metropolitan power, the colonies that Wakefield was interested in were pure settlement formations: Australia, New Zealand, the northern US (he objected vehemently to the slavery-based plantations), Canada, and Argentina (specifically Buenos Aires and its hinterland in the pampas).

This relation between Wolfe’s insight and Wakefield’s concerns makes the former’s insight appear tailor-made to illuminate the ‘nothing’ in the latter’s definition of colonization. Wolfe observes that the pure settlement formation created a situation in which it was ‘difficult to speak of an articulation between colonizer and native since the determinate articulation is not to a society but directly to the land, a precondition of social organization’.³²

A starting point in the form of bifurcation

In 1833 Wakefield published his largest work: *England and America*. Towards the end of the second volume we find a section in which he devastatingly criticizes slavery on the grounds ‘of its moral evils’ and because in his opinion it hinders the very development of capitalism. He then turns ‘to those new countries in which the people [i.e. settlers] have had superabundance of good land without slavery. Not a single one of these societies has greatly prospered: many have perished entirely, and some remain in a deplorable condition. From these last, two striking examples may be selected.’³³ The two negative examples that Wakefield examined in greater detail were Argentina, ‘the pampas of Buenos Ayres [*sic*], and the last colony founded by Englishmen ... on the west coast of New Holland [Australia]’.³⁴

The latter was then known as the Swan River colony. Here is how Wakefield described and explained that failure, with special reference to Thomas Peel, the founder of the abortive colony:

Why this failure with all the elements of success, a fine climate, plenty of good land, plenty of capital, and enough labourers? The explanation is easy. In this there never has been a class of labourers. Those who went out as labourers no sooner reached the colony than they were tempted by the superabundance of good land to become land-owners. One of the founders of the colony, Mr. Peel, who, it is said, took out a capital of £50,000

30 For a comprehensive typology of different colonial formations, a typology that includes the ‘pure’ settlement colony, see D. K. Fieldhouse, *The colonial empires: a comparative survey from the eighteenth century*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966. Significant re-workings of Fieldhouse’s taxonomy were offered by George Fredrickson, *White supremacy: a comparative study in American and South African history*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983; and Gershon Shafir, *Land, labour, and the origins of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, 1882–1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

31 Donald Denoon, *Settler capitalism: the dynamics of dependent development in the southern hemisphere*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.

32 Wolfe, *Settler colonialism*, p. 2.

33 Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *England and America*, in Lloyd-Prichard, *Collected works*, p. 482.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 484.

and three hundred persons of the labouring class, men, women, and children, has been represented as left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river In such a state of things it was impossible to preserve capital. While Mr. Peel was without servants his capital perished; but as soon as his capital had perished for want of servants, those who had been his servants insisted on his giving them employment. Having tried a life of complete independence, and felt the pains of hunger, they now wanted to become labourers again. At one time Mr. Peel was to be seen imploring his servants to remain with him, at another escaping from their fury at his not being able to give them work.³⁵

Marx found Wakefield's analysis so thought-provoking that the final chapter of the first volume of *Capital* is actually entitled 'The modern theory of colonization'. The chapter is essentially a debate with Wakefield, three decades after *England and America* was first published. This commentary, however, goes deeper than the analysis of an episode in the early colonization of what would become Western Australia. Indeed, as Marx set out to criticize capitalism, he explicitly noted that Wakefield had 'discovered' it by looking at the settler colonies. Marx was indeed following Wakefield; after all, he had begun writing *Capital* after realizing the fundamental impact that the discovery of gold in California and Australia had had on the world economy.

Significantly, this chapter not only concluded the volume as a whole but also the final section on what he called 'so-called primitive accumulation'. This is not just any passage; it is the moment when the 'secret' of primitive accumulation is finally revealed.³⁶ From the outset Marx makes it clear precisely what made Wakefield so interesting: 'It is the great merit of E. G. Wakefield to have discovered, not something new *about* the colonies, but, *in* the colonies, the truth *about* capitalist relations in the mother country He discovered that capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things' (Marx had, however, already analysed money as a 'social relation' in the *Grundrisse*).³⁷

To illustrate how Wakefield's basic understanding of capitalism resembles his own, even if their politics would always remain adversarial, Marx immediately refers in a note to an observation he had already published in *Wage labour and capital* (1849):

A negro is a negro. In certain relations he becomes a slave. A mule is a machine for spinning cotton. Only in certain relations does it become capital. Outside these circumstances, it is no more capital than gold is intrinsically money, or is the price of sugar Capital is a social relation of production. It is a historical relation of production.³⁸

Marx then proceeds to relate Wakefield's description of Mr. Peel's woes in the abortive Swan River colony. Quoting verbatim Wakefield's horrified description, 'Mr. Peel was left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river', Marx, the ironist *par excellence*, concludes: 'Unhappy Mr. Peel, who provided for everything except the export of English relations of production to Swan River!'³⁹

35 *Ibid.*

36 See Neocleous, 'International law', esp. p. 947.

37 Marx, *Capital*, p. 932 (emphasis in the original). Marx misquoted Wakefield on the size of Mr. Peel's entourage: where the latter had three hundred people, the former says three thousand.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*, p. 933.

As mentioned, we believe that Marx's ironic response to Wakefield's rendering of the Swan River failure can be seen as an *Ansatzpunkt*, a starting point, the moment when two political paths become visible. We borrow this method from Carlo Ginzburg's developing thought on microhistory. Ginzburg, in turn, borrows the notion of *Ansatzpunkt* from Erich Auerbach, who asked: 'How can a philologist from a single cultural tradition approach a world in which so many languages, so many cultural traditions interact?' Ginzburg's response is as follows: 'Auerbach believed that one has to look for *Ansatzpunkte*, that is, for starting points, for concrete details from which the global process can be inductively reconstructed.' It is noteworthy that the subject matter of Ginzburg's study is the settler-colonization schemes of an eighteenth-century Calvinist from Neuchâtel, Jean-Pierre Purry, in South Africa, Australia, and later South Carolina.⁴⁰

Marx's remark on Mr Peel and his predicament, and his response to Wakefield's work, is an *Ansatzpunkt* for an inquiry of two related traditions: 'the world turned upside down' and its antithetical opposite, 'the world turned inside out'. It is the moment when two traditions take shape. Arguing that each individual emigrant-settler in the nineteenth century had a 'world turned inside out' consciousness, or assuming that such a sensitivity is documentable, would be inappropriate. We deal here, however, with the history of thought on colonization and with articulate theoreticians and planners of settler colonies. They left substantial corpora of texts and documents, and even if they did not use our expressions to refer to this contradiction, the opposition between revolution and settler colonialism was very clear to many of them. Many 'languages' and 'cultural traditions' interact, and we seek an *Ansatzpunkt*, even if, as already clarified in the introductory passage, by seeking a starting point we do not search for a chronological beginning.

After the Napoleonic Wars, Wakefield's formative decades in Britain were the 1820s and 1830s. In his last large composition, *A view of the art of colonization*, published not long before he migrated to New Zealand, he revealed his anxiety vis-à-vis what he perceived as a brewing 'world turned upside down'. This anxiety had, however, informed the whole of his opus:

I look upon chartism [*sic*] and socialism as representatives of discontent. The honest chartists and socialists ... are people of the working class, who have got more education than the rest ... and I cannot help expecting that as education spreads – as the dullest of the common people become more knowing – chartism and socialism will spread likewise, and in the same proportion. If so, in the end, chartism and socialism will be able to disturb the peace of this country. I do not pretend that either is likely to triumph for a long while yet: ages hence perhaps, both will have triumphed; chartism first, then some kind of socialism: but it seems plain to my apprehension, that with the continuance of discontent and the spread of education amongst the common people, chartism and socialism will have many a struggle for the mastery over a restricted franchise and private property: and in these struggles I perceive immense danger for everybody.⁴¹

This was in the metropole. What then would happen in the white settler colonies that were to come? After all, the core of Wakefield's life work was to ensure that these colonies, too, would

40 Carlo Ginzburg, 'Latitude, slaves and the Bible: an experiment in microhistory', *Critical Inquiry*, 31, 3, 2005, pp. 665–83. For comparison with a previous pronouncement on this approach, see Carlo Ginzburg, 'Microhistory: two or three things that I know about it', *Critical Inquiry*, 20, 1, 1993, pp. 10–36.

41 Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *A view of the art of colonization*, in Lloyd-Prichard, *Collected works*, p. 794.

become locales characterized by ‘capitalist civilization’. What would prevent an eventual eruption of the conflict between capital and labour that Wakefield had identified as inherent to capitalism at home?

This is where the organic bond between settler colonialism and primitive accumulation is added to our analysis of the world turned upside down versus the world turned inside out bifurcation. What Wakefield envisaged for the settler colonies, even though, again, he did not formulate it in this language, was perpetual primitive accumulation, at least in the sense that social conflict is deferred *ad infinitum* because those whose labour is rendered a commodity are given the seemingly realistic prospect that they themselves will one day become landowners.⁴² Marx’s ironic response was underlain by the fundamental intuition that this was ultimately impossible: like Wolfe’s notion of settler colonialism, he understood capitalism as a dynamic structure and not as an originary event.

Noting that ‘both primitive accumulation and settler colonialism are increasingly theorized as structures’ and their ‘ongoing or continuous character’, Nicholas Brown has recently argued that the two should be regarded as essentially alike.⁴³ We agree, even if we do not insist on the rigidity of the bond between the histories of primitive accumulation and settler colonialism, on whether these histories should be collapsed into one narrative or whether they remain intimately entwined. We do insist that the bond was real, however, both objectively and in the minds of important nineteenth-century thinkers (and indeed earlier ones). This connection comes forth forcefully in Wolfe’s apt formulation:

As John Locke had provided, in texts that would profoundly influence Euroamerican colonial discourse, private property accrued from the admixture of labour and land. To put it very simply, [in the US] Blacks provided the former and Indians the latter – the application of enslaved Black people’s labour to evacuated Indian land produced the White man’s property, a primitive accumulation if ever there was one.⁴⁴

Primitive accumulation thus relates to the temporarily dispossessed settlers, who would in due course be replaced by newly temporarily dispossessed ones via the enforcement of a government-regulated ‘sufficient price’ of land, to permanently dispossessed slaves, and to indigenous peoples disappearing forever. Thus, as the Wakefieldian scheme thundered against the existence of the second group and comprehensively foreclosed the third, his settler ‘worlds turned inside out’ were to be characterized by perennial primitive accumulation.

Convergence and divergence

As outlined above, Wakefield’s most effective and succinct definition of settler colonization assumes both *terra nullius* and capital’s expansionary needs. But the Wakefieldian project is also necessarily premised on considering both capital and population as inherently mobile factors of production. While Marx also responded to the political economists, he equally saw capital and population as typically mobile, but the issue of settler colonialism disappeared from successive renditions of his critique and from later orthodox Marxism. In the context

42 See also Ince, ‘Capitalism’.

43 Brown, ‘Logic of settler accumulation’, p. 4.

44 Patrick Wolfe, ‘Race and the trace of history: for Henry Reynolds’, in Bateman and Pilkington, *Studies in settler colonialism*, p. 275.

of a discussion of the role of settler colonialism in the development of Marxist theory, we want to emphasize the notion of transfer that arises from an emphasis on mobility. Whereas metropole-centred colonialism is characterized by exploitation, settler colonialism is primarily characterized by transfer: the transfer of indigenous peoples and land ownership, but also the transfer of settlers from one locale to another, and the transfer of specific social forms.⁴⁵ It is a selective type of transfer. What we define here as the ‘world turned inside out’ is, after all, a set of political traditions concerned with the possibility of transferring everything except growing contradictions; even land, though obviously not literally, is to be transferred.

Wakefield was equally preoccupied with England’s revolutionary potential (hence the need for colonization) and with American unconstrained realities (hence the need for ‘systematic’ in ‘systematic colonization’). It is significant that, faced with revolutionary possibilities and what they perceived as Jeffersonian adventurism, between the 1790s and 1810 US federalists had also espoused a theory of ‘systematic’ colonization.⁴⁶ At the same time, Wakefield thought that the transfer of sociopolitical bodies and appropriate social relations could be seamless and that the mechanism he had devised could prevent contradictions from either being imported from the outside or from eventually germinating within. Marx disagreed, and his intuition that contradictions are inevitable and that one cannot transfer a sociopolitical body without transferring its contradictions informs the whole of his opus. ‘Unhappy Mr. Peel’, Marx noted in *Capital*, as we have seen, discovering Wakefield discovering capitalism:

First of all, Wakefield discovered that in the Colonies, property in money, means of subsistence, machines, and other means of production, does not as yet stamp a man as a capitalist if there be wanting the correlative — the wage-worker, the other man who is compelled to sell himself of his own free will. He discovered that capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons, established by the instrumentality of things. Mr. Peel, he moans, took with him from England to Swan River, West Australia, means of subsistence and of production to the amount of £50,000. Mr. Peel had the foresight to bring with him, besides, 3,000 persons of the working class, men, women, and children. Once arrived at his destination, ‘Mr. Peel was left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river’. Unhappy Mr. Peel who provided for everything except the export of English relations of production to Swan River!⁴⁷

Marx was thus aware that settler colonialism is a formation initially charged with a fundamentally non-capitalist character. A capitalist with capital but no capitalism: ‘Unhappy Mr. Peel’ indeed!

Wakefield’s project envisaged a controlled and self-managing system: in our expression, a world turned inside out rather than upside down, a world controlled through the surreptitious reintroduction of primitive accumulation via the ‘sufficient price’ and through

45 On settler colonialism as transfer, see Veracini, *Settler colonialism*, esp. pp. 33–52. On population transfers and on the way in which Zionism as a settler colonial formation is premised on transfer, see Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: the concept of ‘transfer’ in Zionist political thought, 1882–1948*, Washington, DC: Institute of Palestinian Studies, 1992. On Zionism as a settler colonial movement, see Gershon Shafir, *Land*, and Gabriel Piterberg, *The returns of Zionism*, London: Verso, 2008.

46 See Andrew R. L. Cayton, *The frontier republic: ideology and politics in the Ohio country, 1780–1825*, Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986.

47 Marx, *Capital*, pp. 932–3. The figure of 3,000 is incorrect: Wakefield had given the number of people as 300.

governmental intervention. This was a proposition that went against the most cherished tenets of classical political economy. But as well as disrupting *laissez-faire* a century before Keynes outlined his economic theories, Wakefield's project also disrupted imperial centralization. At that point, colonialism had been primarily about the ways in which the mother country could benefit from overseas possessions. For Wakefield, 'systematic colonization' was about the mutual benefits that would follow displacement and decentralization.

Wakefield aimed to give form to the world turned inside out, to control it, and simultaneously to exorcise the world turned upside down. After intense engagement with Wakefield and with the possibility of emigrating to America – as a young man, he had asked the mayor of Trier for an *Auswanderungsschein* (an emigration certificate) – Marx decisively embraced the revolutionary option.⁴⁸ And yet Wakefield's significance in this context was neglected for a long time. Indeed, much of the scholarship on him is primarily concerned with the interaction between him and the classical economists and almost completely ignores Marx. Winch's book is typical of this interpretative stance.⁴⁹ In that rendition, Wakefield responded to those who preceded him, dared to break away from them, and was thus a renegade best forgotten. Accordingly, the worlds turned inside out that he hoped to create and control dissolve in a multiplicity of polities at the periphery. These dispersed 'fragments' would be appraised together only in the 1960s by Louis Hartz, but their role in shaping the evolution of the political traditions of the Old World would not be recovered.⁵⁰

Winch also fails to emphasize the opposition of many to Wakefield and those who had preceded him in advocating settler colonial expansion, and the general hesitation of even those who supported emigration. Moreover, he does not deal with Marx although he could have. Earlier in *Capital*, Marx explains why surplus – that is, unemployed – labour is so crucial for the industrial capitalist. He offers a taxonomy of that surplus labour force, of which the most important category is what he calls 'floating labourers'. We think that the political economists' main objection to emigration, as capitalism's organic intellectuals, may be related to the potential loss of 'floating labour'. On the other side of the political spectrum, the Chartists would be mostly in favour of 'emigration', as Wakefield was, but consistently opposed the Wakefieldian attempts to reintroduce primitive accumulation (even if they did not use this term), because they realized that Wakefield's plan was fundamentally premised on a determination to reproduce the workers' subjugation. Unlike Wakefield, the Chartists thought that the sociopolitical bodies that were to be exported to the colonies needed to be endowed with inherently novel social relations; they did not seek Wakefieldian replication, or, to use his words, the replication of the 'stratified society of England to the colonies by means of a strictly enforced social constitution'.⁵¹

Finally, Winch is also not cognizant of the profound difference between Wakefield's plans and the proposals of those who had advocated emigration before him. The underlying difference is evinced by the language. They debated 'emigration' as an issue, and thereby retained the mother country's vantage point. Wakefield's title, on the contrary, was 'colonization' and thus shifted the concern to the settler colony rather than England. The former focused on the

48 See Robin Blackburn, *An unfinished revolution: Karl Marx and Abraham Lincoln*, London: Verso, 2011, p. 2.

49 Winch, *Classical political economy*.

50 See Louis Hartz, *The founding of new societies: studies in the history of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia*, San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1964.

51 Wakefield as quoted in Pappé, 'Wakefield and Marx', p. 90.

absolute need to prevent the local explosion of contradictions, and they were primarily social reformers who aimed to offload social pressure on the outside. Wakefield envisaged the new societies he aimed to build elsewhere as constituting a template model that would eventually be re-imported to the metropole, a perspective that would have horrified people who thought that, by definition, nothing good could ever come from a colony.

An imaginative transfer had transformed Wakefield's consciousness. A global gaze from the Antipodes is already in evidence in *A letter from Sydney*. There he imagines a farewell from his grandmother, whose significance is overlooked by those who remain solely focused on the Old World. She had noticed how marginal Australia and New Zealand were on the map, but he had torn it, reattached it at the opposite margin, and turned it upside down.⁵² His act shifts the focus from the mother country to the settler colony. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that this de-centring would develop into a significant historiography, which one could call 'history from the Antipodes'. The most sophisticated articulation of this is probably Pocock's *The discovery of islands*, but Belich's global history and even settler colonial studies as a global intellectual endeavour also emanate from 'remote outposts'.⁵³ It is remarkable that Wakefield somehow viscerally sensed this possibility through sheer mental exertion. After all, *A letter from Sydney* was a fictitious epistolary book.

Similarly, as also noted in a recent essay on Marx's thought on colonialism, orthodox Marxism has generally neglected the Wakefield–Marx nexus.⁵⁴ Scholars in this field typically see the Marxian critique as a direct response to the capitalist mode of production, not as a response to an ultimately hopeless attempt to escape growing contradictions through displacement, and focus on what he wrote on the colonial question, not the settler colonial one.⁵⁵ Linking Marx with a settler-thinker famous for contributing to the establishment of some of the most thoroughly capitalist societies on the planet was apparently counterintuitive. But this attitude should be corrected, and Marx always emphasized the significance of the white settler dominions as a potentially important development in the trajectory of capitalism.⁵⁶ Ultimately, neither the liberal nor the Marxist tradition sees the bifurcation between revolutionary and world-turned-inside-out traditions, even if there are different reasons for their lack of vision.

However, beside the previously mentioned recent articles that deal with these issues, there is an important exception to earlier oversights. In a 1951 article, O. H. Pappe highlighted the remarkable convergence between Marx and Wakefield. We have already noted that he, too, had failed to set apart settler from metropole-centred colonization. Nonetheless, he emphasized how Wakefield and Marx had started out from parallel critiques of the political economy and from an expectation of its crisis.⁵⁷ He saw them as largely agreeing on the analysis, even if they disagreed on the remedies. While Wakefield wanted to tame the revolutionary potential of the new colonies established on 'empty lands', and Marx knew that growing contradictions could not be permanently escaped, Pappe pointed out that both stressed the importance of

52 Wakefield, *Letter from Sydney*, p. 140.

53 Pocock, *Discovery of islands*; Belich, *Replenishing the earth*.

54 Neocleous, 'International law'.

55 See, for example, the 1972 edition of a collection of Marx's articles: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On colonialism: articles from the New York Tribune and other writings*, New York: International Publishers, 1972.

56 See John Nichols, *The 's' word: a short history of an American tradition ... socialism*, London: Verso, 2011.

57 Pappe, 'Wakefield and Marx'.

wage labour in creating wealth, and both opposed ‘those political economists who worship capital’.⁵⁸ He concluded by remarking on a ‘significant affinity’:

Wakefield’s idea of making the labourers, as potential purchasers of land in the colonies, pay for the immigration of future workers appears to be a striking illustration of Marx’s surplus value theory. The statement that ‘labour creates capital before capital employs labour’ seemed to anticipate Marx’s version: ‘By its surplus labour this year, the working class creates the capital that will next year employ additional labour.’⁵⁹

Pappe’s ‘significant affinity’ can also be used to magnify the two thinkers’ political divergence. Wakefield and Marx were both suspicious of the disappearance of primitive accumulation in uncontrolled frontiers, but for different reasons: Wakefield resented a mode of production that did not reproduce the hierarchical structure of the Old World and the primary conditions of capital accumulation, while Marx understood that the availability of free land constituted an alluring and dangerous alternative to embracing a revolutionary consciousness. Wakefield especially resented what he perceived as the threatened disappearance of a middle class and the inherently revolutionary prospects that its disappearance implied. In *England and America* he had suggested that ‘one chief end of colonization is to prevent tumults, to keep the peace, to maintain order, to uphold confidence in the security of property, to hinder interruptions of the regular course of industry and trade, to avert the terrible evils which, in a country like England, could not but follow any serious political convulsion’.⁶⁰ He called this endangered middle class ‘the uneasy class’, a remarkably insightful definition of the ‘settler classes’, and set out to recreate it in the colonies.⁶¹ A surreptitiously reintroduced form of primitive accumulation would enable and drive this replication.

Primitive accumulation: finite or repeatable?

Whereas Wakefield argued for a return towards primitive accumulation, Marx envisaged a forward movement through it. Marx knew the structural difference between Europe and the settler colonies, between a maturely capitalist order and a world turned inside out: in England especially, primary accumulation was a done deal, but this was not so in the colonies. For him, in the ‘empty lands’ characterizing the settler colonies (as we have noted, in Marxian terms the only ‘colonies proper’), ‘the capitalist regime encounters on all hands the resistance of the producers who own the means of production with which they work and who gain wealth for themselves by their own labour instead of working to enrich a capitalist’.⁶² His laboratory for the discovery of how capitalism had ‘become’ should therefore be sought at the end of the world in a ‘wasteland’ entirely surrounded by salt and sand, not only in the locales identified by his most quoted passage on ‘the chief moments of primitive accumulation’:

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting

58 Wakefield, *England and America*, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 92.

59 Pappe, ‘Wakefield and Marx’, p. 89.

60 Wakefield, *England and America*, quoted in Pappe, ‘Wakefield and Marx’, p. 92.

61 Wakefield, *England and America*, p. 356.

62 Marx quoted in Pappe, ‘Wakefield and Marx’, p. 89.

of black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation. On their heels treads the commercial war of the European nations, with the globe for a theatre. It begins with the revolt of the Netherlands from Spain, assumes giant dimensions in England's Anti-Jacobin War, and is still going on in the opium wars against China, &c.⁶³

The organic bond that we identify between settler colonization and primitive accumulation in the nineteenth century requires a brief revisiting of the split in Marxist thought into two interpretative traditions of primitive accumulation. Massimo De Angelis offers a helpful reconstruction. He calls the first 'historical primitive accumulation' and the second 'inherent-continuous primitive accumulation' and he identifies Lenin's *The development of capitalism in Russia* (1899) as the foundational text of the first tradition and Rosa Luxemburg's *The accumulation of capital* (1913) as that of the second. Among the more recent articulators of these approaches he mentions Maurice Dobb and Robert Brenner for the first, and Samir Amin for the second.⁶⁴

For the first tradition, primitive accumulation was a prerequisite for the passage from feudalism to capitalism. Divorcing a growing number of people from their means of subsistence, it would force them to sell their labour in order to survive, a situation commonly epitomized by the enclosures in late medieval and early modern England. This tradition contends that primitive accumulation, having occurred once and ushered in mature capitalism, is an unrepeatable socioeconomic formation. The second tradition, on the contrary, depicts a 'messy' capitalism, insisting that mature capitalism has itself created the ongoing recurrence of primitive accumulations. Most crucially, the second tradition emphasizes the extra-economic way of primitive accumulation's 'becoming', as distinguished from the economic reproduction of capitalism's 'being'. 'Becoming' and 'being' are Marx's metaphors and they may evince his Hegelian formation; the insight on the resort to extra-economic means for primitive accumulation 'to become' is Luxemburg's. De Angelis, however, does not address settler colonialism as a distinct formation and is more interested in an exploration of the contemporary North–South divide.⁶⁵ Similarly, Rosa Luxemburg emphasized the structural and inevitable simultaneity of capitalist and primitive accumulation, but, departing from the Marxian text, sought this coexistence in the dependent colonies rather than in the settler ones. It is striking that, again, unlike Marx, this approach failed to notice the intimate connection between settler colonialism and primitive accumulation in the nineteenth century, the period that Belich identifies as fundamentally characterized by the 'settler revolution'.⁶⁶

De Angelis lays much emphasis on 'separation' as primitive accumulation's underlying feature, a characteristic that opens up the investigation of various forms of primitive accumulation temporally and spatially, and notes that it is 'separation' that distinguishes primitive accumulation from accumulation proper.⁶⁷ But whereas settler colonization is predicated on a multi-layered series of transfers, as we have argued, transfer is indeed a form of separation. First, the indigenous peoples are separated from their land. Then – and this was the cornerstone

63 Marx, *Capital*, p. 915.

64 See De Angelis, 'Marx and primitive accumulation', pp. 2–4.

65 Massimo De Angelis, *The beginnings of history: value struggles and global capital*, London: Pluto Press, 2007, esp. ch. 10, 'Marx and the enclosures we face', pp. 133–41, and ch. 11, 'Enclosures with no limits', pp. 142–50.

66 Belich, *Replenishing the earth*.

67 See especially De Angelis, 'Marx and primitive accumulation'.

of Wakefield's colonization theory – large numbers of arriving settlers are separated from the land they could access and, rather than being allowed to subsist from it directly, are forced to earn wages from labouring on it, albeit only for a time. Finally, the separation of settler and indigene must be kept rigid in the spheres of both land (and space writ large) and labour. In congruity with Luxemburg and De Angelis, the 'becoming' of settler colonization as primitive accumulation thus entails ongoing extra-economic measures. These chiefly comprise warfare and violence at both the frontier and statehood stages, and 'lawfare' (for example, the *terra nullius* doctrine, the so-called treaties that US governments imposed on American Indian tribes, and the 1950 Law of Absentees' Property in Israel).⁶⁸ Indeed, Wakefield's very mechanism of a government-sanctioned sufficient price, devised precisely to separate immigrant settlers from the land, was an extra-economic measure put forth by a passionate proponent of 'capitalist civilization' who was nonetheless suspicious of the market when left to its own devices.

Marx was similarly suspicious of the market, but his criticism of Wakefield focuses primarily on the 'unnatural' character of Wakefield's scheme. He realized that enforcing Wakefield's 'sufficient price' inevitably involved extra-economic coercion. It operated *through* the market, even as it regulated it, but he knew that it was not by chance that Wakefield sought to test his theories in colonial contexts, where governments could operate in an unrestrained fashion and routinely resort to dictatorial powers. Primitive accumulation was also eminently unnatural for Marx, and at the same time he understood that as long as 'empty lands' remained available, an anti-capitalist charge was still present:

Here the mass of agricultural colonists, in spite of the fact that they bring with them more or less large amounts of capital from the country, is not a *capitalist class*, and neither is their production *capitalist*. They are more or less self-working peasants (1) to whom at first the most important thing is to produce *their own means of subsistence* (2) whose main production therefore does not become a *commodity* and is not destined for trade. (3) They sell the surplus of their products, above their own consumption, exchange them against imported manufactured commodities, etc.⁶⁹

Marx knew that a settler society is primarily focused on reproduction, not production. Settlers produced for global markets, but, as Belich has demonstrated, this articulation was not what ultimately fuelled their astonishing growth.⁷⁰

Marx did not think that the transfer of sociopolitical bodies was impossible. As noted, he always remained interested in the settler colonial world and the revolutionary possibilities that it opened up. However, unlike many of his comrades and defeated 1848 revolutionaries, he did not emigrate from Europe.⁷¹ At the same time, he thought that Wakefield's project of selectively exporting specific social relations without attending contradictions was

68 John Comaroff coined the term 'lawfare' as 'the effort to conquer and control indigenous peoples by the coercive use of legal means'. See J. L. Comaroff, 'Colonialism, culture, and the law: a foreword', *Law & Social Inquiry*, 26, 2001, p. 306.

69 Marx quoted in Henry Mayer, *Marx, Engels, and Australia*, Melbourne: Cheshire, 1964, p. 132 (emphasis in original).

70 See Belich's *Replenishing the earth*. For an example of the 'staple theory' of settler economic development that Belich rejects, see Daniel Drache, ed., *Staples, markets, and cultural change: selected essays of Harold Innis*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995.

71 See Bruce Levine, *The spirit of 1848: German immigrants, labor conflict, and the coming of the Civil War*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992.

ultimately hopeless. For Marx, the frontier was only initially a classless world, and briefly so. He explained why the Wakefieldian measures were not needed and could not ultimately work:

It is very characteristic that the English Government for years practised this method of ‘primitive accumulation’ prescribed by Mr. Wakefield expressly for the use of the colonies. The fiasco was, of course, as complete as that of Sir Robert Peel’s Bank Act. The stream of emigration was only diverted from the English colonies to the United States. Meanwhile, the advance of capitalistic production in Europe, accompanied by increasing Government pressure, has rendered Wakefield’s recipe superfluous [i.e. it had temporarily solved the overcapitalization crisis]. On the one hand, the enormous and ceaseless stream of men, year after year driven upon America, leaves behind a stationary sediment in the east of the United States, the wave of immigration from Europe throwing men on the labour-market there more rapidly than the wave of emigration westwards can wash them away [establishing an industrial reserve army]. On the other hand, the American Civil War brought in its train a colossal national debt, and, with it, pressure of taxes, the rise of the vilest financial aristocracy, the squandering of a huge part of the public land on speculative companies for the exploitation of railways, mines, &c., in brief, the most rapid centralization of capital. The great republic has, therefore, ceased to be the promised land for emigrant labourers.⁷²

Primitive accumulation did not need to be surreptitiously reintroduced. It was rapidly proceeding anyway, especially in the US, where the Wakefieldian policies had not been introduced.

And yet, despite their divergences, Marx and Wakefield importantly shared the fundamental intuition of impending upheaval. Wakefield’s plan was born in the explicit understanding that ‘the crisis is coming’. He noted that, as the condition of labouring poor ‘must be worse before it can be better, the crisis is coming’.⁷³ Unless something was done – and done fast – the revolution would come. In his analysis, there is a constant and direct connection between the prospect of revolutionary upheaval and the need to create settler colonies. As we have seen, in *A view of the art of colonization* he had prophesied that Chartism and socialism ‘will be able to disturb the peace in this country’. The world turned inside out is routinely imagined as an alternative to growing revolutionary possibilities.

Wakefield’s fear of socialism is linked to an expansive idea of revolution: for him any distortion of what he understood as the natural order was inherently revolutionary. This included workers organizing and educating themselves, as well as, crucially, the possibility that the ‘middle class’ would disappear. His 1849 observation that the ‘hurtful competition of labourers with each other is an old story among political thinkers’, but that competition between the other classes ‘had not been noticed till it was pointed out by the colonizing theorists of the 1830s’, is also crucial.⁷⁴ His project is not primarily designed to reduce social pressure from below; it is designed to reduce what he perceived as the enormous social pressure that was squeezing the middle class.

In *The art of colonization* Wakefield noted ominously that a ‘ruined man is a dangerous citizen’ and that ‘there are at all times in this country more people who have been ruined than in

72 Marx, *Capital*, pp. 939–40.

73 Wakefield, *England and America*, p. 353.

74 Quoted in Foley, “‘An unknown and feeble body’”, p. 18.

any other country'.⁷⁵ And of course he knew: he was one of them. His imprisonment and the very public nature of his fall made him an exemplar of this trend. For him an existential challenge to the middle class was as much a revolutionary development as popular education. That the working poor were poor and often not even working was entirely normal, but the replicas of England about which he fantasized were to be reserved exclusively for 'the uneasy class'.

Conclusion

Wakefield and Marx foresaw a general crisis but they went their separate ways. In an article entitled 'Revolution and counter-revolution', published in the *New York Tribune* in September 1851, Marx commented (with Engels' contribution) on the defeat of the revolutionary movement in Germany:

The first act of the revolutionary drama on the continent of Europe has closed A more signal defeat than that undergone by the continental revolutionary party – or rather parties – upon all points of the line of battle, cannot be imagined. But what of that? ... The times of that superstition which attributed revolutions to the ill-will of a few agitators have long passed away. Everyone knows nowadays that wherever there is a revolutionary convulsion, there must be some social want in the background, which is prevented, by outworn institutions, from satisfying itself. The want may not yet be felt as strongly, as generally, as might ensure immediate success; but every attempt at forcible repression will only bring it forth stronger and stronger, until it bursts its fetters. If, then, we have been beaten, we have nothing else to do but to begin again from the beginning. And, fortunately, the probably very short interval of rest which is allowed us between the close of the first and the beginning of the second act of the movement, gives us time for a very necessary piece of work: the study of the causes that necessitated both the late outbreak and its defeat; causes that are not to be sought for in the accidental efforts, talents, faults, errors, or treacheries of some of the leaders, but in the general social state and conditions of existence of each of the convulsed nations.⁷⁶

Wakefield's attempted double pre-emptive counter-revolution-through-displacement ultimately failed. The passage of the 1854 Waste Land Bill in New Zealand is a case in point because it received his own imprimatur.⁷⁷ On that occasion he had to abandon the 'sufficient price' method, the fundamental cornerstone of his scheme. He said that the discovery of gold in Australia had changed everything, and that the primary device for ensuring the importation of primitive accumulation to the colonies had to go. This was not even the first time that he had to abandon it. Earlier, in Canada, the proximity and availability of 'empty lands' in the US had also prompted a similar rejection on his part. And yet, even if the implementation of 'systematic colonization' was never systematic, an uncontrolled world turned inside out was also never the case. Even if selection and homestead legislation would ostensibly win in Australia, New Zealand, and North America, and even if attempts to place selectors and homesteaders on the land would go on for a long time, speculators, elevators, and the other 'moneyed interests' were never far behind.

⁷⁵ Wakefield, *Art of colonization*, p. 799.

⁷⁶ Marx quoted in Nichols, *The 's' word*, pp. 81–2.

⁷⁷ See M. F. Lloyd-Pritchard, 'The general assembly', in Lloyd-Pritchard, *Collected works*, pp. 79–82.

Gold rushes and ‘empty lands’ are famous dissipaters of capitalist labour relations, and everyone who could simply went. Tales of gentlemen whose servants leave overnight to reach the goldfields is a classic trope of all gold rush historiographies. Much like Mr Peel, these gentlemen are routinely described as having to prepare their own breakfast and fetch their own water. But they survive, and capitalism eventually, even if not immediately, expands. At home, the Chartists did not get their charter but workers did eventually get access to some education. The revolution did not come.

We noticed that the mood that Wakefield had set undergirded the movement of Greater Britain a few decades later. With marvellous irony, Virginia Woolf captured that mood in *Mrs. Dalloway* in 1925:

Hugh was very slow, Lady Bruton thought She was getting impatient; the whole of her being was setting positively, undeniably, domineeringly brushing aside all this unnecessary trifling ... upon that subject which engaged her attention, and not merely her attention, but that fibre which was the ramrod of her soul, that essential part of her without which Millicent Bruton would not have been Millicent Bruton; that project of emigrating young people of both sexes born of respectable parents and setting them up doing well in Canada. She exaggerated. She had perhaps lost her sense of proportion. Emigration was not to others the obvious remedy, the sublime conception. It was not to them ... the liberator of the pent egotism, which a strong martial woman, well nourished, well descended, of direct impulses, downright feelings, and little introspective power (broad and simple – why could not every one be broad and simple? she asked), feels rise within herself, once youth is past, and must eject upon some object – it may be Emigration, it may be Emancipation; but whatever it be, this object round which the essence of her soul is daily secreted becomes inevitably prismatic, lustrous, half looking-glass, half precious-stone; now carefully hidden in case people should sneer at it; now proudly displayed. Emigration had become, in short, largely Lady Bruton.⁷⁸

Gabriel Piterberg is a professor of history at UCLA. He has lived in three settler societies (Argentina, Israel, and the USA), and in the metropolitan centre (England). He teaches and writes on the history of the Ottoman empire, and on settler colonialism and Palestine/Israel. Among his publications are An Ottoman tragedy (2003) and The returns of Zionism (2008). He writes for New Left Review and the London Review of Books.

Lorenzo Veracini is Associate Professor in History at the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia. His research focuses on the comparative history of colonial systems and settler colonialism. He is the author of Israel and settler society (2006), Settler colonialism: a theoretical overview (2010), and The settler colonial present (2015). He is managing editor of Settler Colonial Studies.

78 Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, Ware, Herts: Wordsworth Classics, 2003, p. 80.