

**England Elsewhere: Edward Gibbon Wakefield and an
Imperial Utopian Dream**

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Abstract

British colonial reformer Edward Gibbon Wakefield (1796-1862) is most widely known in scholarly literature for the role that he played in the planning, promotion, and establishment of the British colonies of South Australia and New Zealand. Always a controversial historical figure, Wakefield's career as an advocate of British imperial expansion is a subject that continues to challenge modern scholars. Some view him as a contemptible, deluded capitalist visionary who had little practical impact upon the political landscape of his day. Others argue that his advocacy of a regulated, 'systematic' form of colonization provided the impetus for the rapid increase in British emigration to Australia and New Zealand in the 1830s and 1840s. What is common to almost all of the scholarship on Wakefield's life and works, however, is the view that his plans to colonize South Australia and New Zealand were attempts to create an ideal, utopian colonial society. The utopian qualities of Wakefield's works have been especially recognized in the historical literature of New Zealand. In general, however, his works have been assessed in the context of colonial and imperial history, rather than as an important contribution to Western utopian literature. With its modern genesis in Thomas More's *Utopia* of 1516, the canon of Western utopian literature is large and has received extensive scholarly interest and investigation. Although utopian thinking is a multifarious literary and theoretical tradition open to diverse interpretations, there is nonetheless a readily identifiable canon of texts and authors that scholars have categorised as being 'utopian.' Wakefield's works are generally excluded from this canon and it is this gap in the intellectual history of the Western utopian tradition that this thesis addresses.

Plagiarism Declaration

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