

‘Making Shift’:

MARY ANN HODGKINSON AND HYBRID DOMESTICITY IN EARLY COLONIAL NEW ZEALAND



Such were the levels of financial difficulty and personal distress in Nottingham in the early 1840s that some intending emigrants under the New Zealand Company's scheme begged to be allowed to depart England for the new colony at their earliest possible opportunity. Nottingham-based Company agent Mr J.W. Haythorn wrote to the London-based Company officials on their behalf, presenting their cases for early departure. One petition concerned agricultural labourer German Hodgkinson, aged 31, his wife Mary Ann, 26, a framework knitter, and their three children.¹ Writing on 19 April 1842, during the summer stress period in which harvests were not yet in, Haythorn explained, 'Hodgkinson, is quite ready and anxious to go, having only partial employment.' While they could not make a ship that was about to sail, Haythorn requested that he be sent embarkation orders for the Hodgkinsons to leave on the next available vessel.²

The Hodgkinsons, like numerous other emigrating families, were swept up in a wave of betterment migration. 'We had three small children and could see very little hope for them' in Nottinghamshire, recalled Mary Ann.³ German's interest in 'Edward Gibbon Wakefield's scheme of founding a N.Z. colony, for strong hearty men, who were wasting their lives in helpless idleness', coupled with their local minister's encouragement to emigrate, saw them take the difficult decision to leave Hill-Top, near Greasley.⁴ This was a preferable option to the possibility of being confined to a workhouse. In 1834, the Old Poor Law had been amended. Parishes were compelled to form unions to run workhouses to house their collective poor. This was a radical shift in social policy that provided a mechanism for removing the increasing numbers of poor from the streets while reducing the costs involved in providing for their basic sustenance.⁵ Workhouses were governed in such a way so as to dissuade all but the most desperate from seeking their assistance.

Haythorn followed his first petitioning letter of 19 April 1842 with another a week later, dated 26 April, describing how applicant number 5225, German Hodgkinson, was growing increasingly concerned. Hodgkinson, along with shoemaker William Barnett, shepherd and gardener John Griffiths (described as 'a very eligible ... and long waiting' emigrant), and Astle, 'a very useful

little man', had been visiting Haythorn 'almost daily' in the hope of receiving embarkation orders. Unemployment rendered these men desperate to leave Nottingham at the earliest possible opportunity, and as Haythorn assured the New Zealand Company, 'if they cannot go before 15 June [they] will quite despair'.⁶

Their pleas did not go unheeded. When New Zealand Company emigrants started to board the *Thomas Harrison* at 10am on 24 May 1842 (a wet Tuesday) at Deptford, the Hodgkinsons, Barnetts, and Griffiths were amongst them. Astle may have boarded as well, because an agricultural labourer George Castle and his family were recorded amongst the passengers. Two days later, once the stores had been loaded further down the Thames at Gravesend, the ship weighed anchor to sail for Nelson in New Zealand.⁷ During the seven-month sea journey, both Lydia Hodgkinson, aged six, and her three-year-old sister Emma were admitted to the ship's hospital with measles. Their mother later recalled how 'the long dark nights and never-ending roar of the sea' had been 'hard to endure'. But finally, on Wednesday 26 October 1842, the immigrants were landed on the beach at Nelson, where Mary Ann 'shook out' her crinoline and 'straightened the flowers' on her bonnet as she prepared to help her husband German forge a better life for their family in the new colony.⁸

The exodus of colonists from England to New Zealand under the auspices of the New Zealand Company during the 1840s was impelled by a similar set of concerns to those affecting people across eighteenth-century Europe, where it had become increasingly difficult for people to live off the proceeds of their land and/or labour. Focusing on the poor of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France, Olwen Hufton explained how, unlike in earlier times, 'overnight a problem of mass destitution could occur in regions which up to that point had known relative freedom from poverty'.⁹ The sudden onset of an economic depression left townsfolk and rural workers struggling to cope. Adjusting slowly over time to changed circumstances was no longer an option. An underprepared populace turned to traditional modes of ensuring subsistence. Their strategies, Hufton found, included 'an extra job, seasonal migration, turning the children out to beg, [and/or] involvement in some semi-nefarious practice such as smuggling'.¹⁰ She described these phenomena collectively as the emergence of 'an economy of makeshifts'.

Historians researching other locales have adopted and adapted Hufton's idea of the economy of makeshifts as a lens through which to consider poor people's life experiences and the strategies adopted to better their chances of survival under straitened circumstances. In relation to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, Steve Hindle explained how the poor, in making

shift, combined ‘any number of expedients: kin support and complex patterns of co-residence; gentry hospitality and communal charity; migration and mendicancy; petty theft and the embezzlement of perquisites’. Making shift in rural England also involved ‘drawing one’s resources from a range of natural sources’ and could, according to Hindle, be ‘better described as an “economy of diversified resources”’.¹¹

Seasonal mobility, as already noted, was a key strategy deployed by impoverished rural workers in their endeavour to make shift. However, in the mid-nineteenth century when a particularly severe economic downturn impacted on the lives of the poor, people like the Hodgkinsons were prepared to take more drastic measures. Handwritten letters poured into the NZC offices from numerous hopeful applicants all over England (with those who were illiterate, such as German, relying on Company Agents to petition the Company on their behalf) seeking to join its colonization scheme. These letters now fill many brown cardboard box files at the National Archives at Kew in Surrey, England. The level of desperation amongst poor rural labourers was such that many became willing to risk a journey halfway around the world, in the hope of improving their lot as well as their children’s prospects. For those who might later be disappointed, the possibility of ever being able to afford a return passage must have seemed remote. Their migration, far from being seasonal, was almost certainly one way.

Mobility, though, was just one of numerous strategies used by the poor in making shift. Other survival strategies, as we have seen, were also utilized and these (in various combinations) formed part of the invisible toolkit that accompanied steerage passengers to New Zealand alongside their more tangible luggage. Given that only 40% of the English population was considered literate in 1840, with at least 25% of the working class illiterate and the remaining 75% having achieved only a rudimentary level of literacy, accounts of the lived experiences of working-class people as told from their own perspectives are scarce.¹² This has contributed to their under-representation in the literature pertaining to the experiences of settlers in early colonial New Zealand. Remarkably for a working-class woman, a written account exists recalling the Hodgkinsons’ sea voyage and their early years at Wakefield. While German and his wife Mary Ann were illiterate, their granddaughter Frances Bassett recorded their account in a handwritten manuscript.¹³ While reminiscences such as Mary Ann Hodgkinson’s need to be read critically (looking back on their lives, people can sometimes ‘smooth out experience and gloss over difficulties’), there is nevertheless a wealth of information as to how she and her husband made ends meet in their early years in the colony at Wakefield, near Nelson.¹⁴ As with the Hodgkinsons,

numerous other early settlers later provided accounts of their early years in the colony to their descendants or other interested people. These accounts usefully supplement the Hodgkinson narrative which is central to my research, and corroborate the widespread use amongst the working classes of some of the strategies discussed in this article.¹⁵

Notwithstanding the significant contributions made by colonial men in working to establish their families in New Zealand, my focus is centred on the strategies deployed by working-class women in endeavouring to make shift within the domestic sphere in the colony. I am particularly interested in the ways in which rural-dwelling women, predominantly from England, continued their practice of drawing on natural resources. Focusing on the materiality of their domestic practice is consistent with Tony Ballantyne's recent argument that it is essential to 'pay ... close attention to the material aspects of colonialism'.¹⁶ New Zealand's natural resources were not the same as the bounty that nature could provide in England. Indeed, the early settlers had 'moved to a different social milieu and physical environment, located almost as far as it was possible to be from the British Isles'.¹⁷ Unfamiliarity with their new environs meant that for pioneering women it was essential to their and their families' survival that they learn about local flora and fauna and the domestic uses to which they might be put. The early settlers were not bereft of role models. Māori had successfully colonized New Zealand centuries earlier, and were adept at making use of locally available resources. Working-class women such as Mary Ann Hodgkinson continued to deploy the strategy of utilizing natural resources when making shift in colonial New Zealand, yet in doing so they not only drew on their own English or European backgrounds but demonstrably incorporated aspects of Māori material culture and practices into their own domestic practice. This, I am arguing, resulted in the emergence of what I have called 'hybrid domesticity' among working-class settlers in mid-nineteenth-century New Zealand.

'Hybrid domesticity' can be thought of as a set of domestic practices and attendant economic strategies, neither fully European nor fully Māori, which developed at – and in response to – the unique circumstances of the colonial frontier. It was inflected by the particularities of the new environment within which settlers found themselves. The working classes' reliance on their skills at making shift, brought with them from the old country, were combined with what were for them newly discovered Māori forms of social organization and economic activity. This term is distinct from the domestic hybridity discussed by some postcolonial theorists, literary critics, and legal scholars and is not intended to resonate with these other explanatory frameworks.¹⁸ This paper will consider in some detail illustrative examples of how making shift in the

New Zealand context resulted in the emergence of hybrid domesticity amongst the working class. But first it is necessary to return briefly to Nottinghamshire – the place of origin of the central case study in this paper – to demonstrate the occurrence of Hufton’s ‘overnight ... problem of mass destitution’ (a precondition driving people to adopt the key strategies involved in making shift). Exploring what life was like for Mary Ann Hodgkinson at Greasley, near Nottingham, is also helpful in arriving at a greater appreciation of the background against which she acquired the skills in making shift that she later adapted to colonial circumstances.

Nottinghamshire was described by Daniel Defoe in 1734 as ‘small but ... filled with wonders’, with its largest town, Nottingham, being ‘one of the most beautiful and pleasant towns in England’.¹⁹ This, however, was about to change. While David Wardle has noted that there has been contention over the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution(s) in England, in the case of Nottingham two key changes are not disputed. The first of these, a marked increase in population numbers, is reflected in the burgeoning numbers in the Hodgkinsons’ locale. The population of Greasley in the year of their departure totalled 4589, including those living in the ‘scattered dwellings of Baggerlee and Hill Top about one mile west of Greasley church and seven miles N.W. of Nottingham’, who by the early 1850s numbered 1150 people.²⁰ Greasley’s populace contributed to a total population for Nottinghamshire of 249,773 people in 1842, an increase of ‘24,446 souls’ since 1831.²¹ The second change was ‘a concentration of the bulk of the inhabitants on the hosiery and lace industries’, which explains Mary Ann Hodgkinson’s employment as a framework knitter. These developments, according to Wardle, ‘altered ... the whole appearance of the town and the life of its inhabitants’.²² The impacts on people were profound: overcrowding resulted in unsightly industrial slums and a surplus of labour, as the partially employed German Hodgkinson experienced.²³

Framework knitting, which involved ‘the manufacture of stockings, socks, gloves, vests and underwear on hand frames’, spread beyond London to the provinces in the late seventeenth century and became a common occupation in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire, initially for men and later for women and children.²⁴ Few prior skills were required and little capital was needed to establish oneself as an outworker. The large frames, which dominated the domestic spaces in which they were used, could be hired from hosiers for a set weekly rent. However, because the rent was payable regardless of the amount of work the framework knitter sourced, there was no incentive for those hiring out the frames to the knitters to restrict availability. Consequently, between 1812 and 1844 the number of frames

for hire in England increased from 30,000 to 48,000. Demand for products remained the same, resulting in 'long depressions involving severe hardship for stockings and their families' with 'processions by starving stockings' becoming a regular feature in an industry characterized by an oversupply of labour.²⁵ As other costs associated with their production were deducted from framework knitters' earnings, many handled very little currency. Instead, they exchanged their finished products for more raw materials or other goods and services. Being embedded within an 'exchange nexus' equipped Mary Ann Hodgkinson with transferrable skills that helped her to provide for her family in New Zealand, as did being involved in a trade that required heavy labour.²⁶ Providing evidence to an 1843–1844 enquiry into the condition of framework knitters that published its findings in 1845, framework knitter John Geary said that he thought the frames too heavy for women to work, although he acknowledged that women, like men, were of varying strength.

Rising rents for their frames hit struggling families hard, a problem compounded through a 35% reduction in income over the period 1815 to 1845.²⁷ Framework knitters' wages dropped sufficiently to necessitate 'parochial supplementation'.²⁸ A few became so impoverished that Mary Ann Hodgkinson recalled that 'unfortunate people traipsed the roads barefoot, and some even died by the wayside'.²⁹ Such were the hardships that in 1841 Nottingham hosier and commentator William Felkin described framework knitters as 'mentally depressed and too often morally debased. Ill fed, ill lodged, ill clothed, with careworn and anxious countenances they are a class by themselves and easily distinguishable from most others by their personal appearance.'³⁰ Nevertheless, these working-class people were resourceful. As Pamela Sharpe has shown, particularly from the mid-nineteenth century, stockings demonstrated their adeptness at making shift as they 'proved capable of subtle shifts of location, branch and quality in response to market opportunities and seasonal variations'. This diversification helps explain the survival of the trade into the latter nineteenth century.³¹ The hardships experienced and the resourcefulness exhibited by framework knitters help to explain Mary Ann Hodgkinson's capacity to respond innovatively to changing material and social circumstances. Working-class women from different backgrounds who had similarly fallen on hard times could also reasonably be expected to have acquired skills in making shift. Such skills were transferrable, with some adaptation, to a new, colonial environment.

Most New Zealand Company emigrants found the sea voyage to New Zealand arduous. Imagine their disappointment when their expectations of a well-laid-out town were not met on arrival in Nelson. Sarah Higgins arrived in 1842 with her parents to find 'no roads, it was all flax and mud where the

streets are now. There were no houses, nothing but little huts dotted all over the flax.³² Martha Adams departed England in 1850 and spent just over a year in Nelson, which she described as ‘two or three very poor shops with flax and gorse between them’. She attended church ‘in an old barn’.³³ As Matthew Wright pointed out, ‘Nelson itself was far from the instant town that most had been tempted with back in London.’³⁴ Despite the Wakefields’ vision of



Figure 1: Mary Ann Hodgkinson



Figure 2: German Hodgkinson, later in life

Source: These images, from glass plates, are held in the private collection of the author’s family with the text ‘Taylor’, ‘Photographer’, and ‘Wakefield’ appearing on the reserve of another image in the same series.

a new society with a balanced mix of social classes, an insufficient number of gentlemen was attracted to the new settlement. This was reflected in the relatively small number of passengers who travelled by cabin, rather than steerage, to Nelson in the first two years of emigration: 8.7% in 1841, rising to an average of 12% across the 11 vessels, including the *Thomas Harrison*, which carried New Zealand Company emigrants to Nelson in 1842. An

imbalance developed in Nelson, with a glut of labourers flooding the market. Labourers formed the second-largest group of immigrants (after artisans) in 1841–1842, with agricultural labourers comprising half their number. These men would not find employment as readily as they had been led to believe.³⁵

After the Hodgkinsons disembarked from the *Thomas Harrison*, German unloaded their belongings. While his family waited on the beach, Mary Ann was approached 'by a dark tattooed Maori advancing violently towards me with a club'. Her frightened daughters darted under her crinoline skirt, at which the man 'burst into laughter and said "just like the hera [hen]"'. In his father's absence, ten-year-old George Hodgkinson in the role of protector punched the man's nose. Tensions were diffused when the man's wife explained they were actually being welcomed. According to Greg Dening, 'history is more likely to be born on beaches, marginal spaces between land and sea ... where otherness is both a new discovery and a reflection of something old'.³⁶ That first meeting on the beach, with its misunderstandings, held the potential for hybrid domesticity later realized by the Hodgkinsons at Wakefield, and during the nineteenth century by other emigrants to New Zealand.

The newly-arrived immigrants carried their few possessions up Church Hill to the New Zealand Company depot. While their bundles were 'heavy enough to carry', according to Mary Ann, the goods they had brought with them were 'pitifully scant to start a home in a new land'.³⁷ As Jim McAloon has noted, few settlers thought to bring agricultural implements with them, and ended up having to pay high prices for them in Nelson.³⁸ After initially staying in Nelson, the Hodgkinsons departed on foot for Wakefield, guided by Wera and Winnie, the couple who had greeted them on the beach.

The Hodgkinsons' working-class propensity for making shift stood them in good stead at Wakefield in the Waimea valley and was complemented by indigenous knowledge, skills, and resources. Their first meal in the bush (shared with Wera and Winnie) consisted of a familiar food, potatoes, cooked in their go-ashore over an open fire. This in itself is interesting in light of my argument concerning hybrid domesticity: potatoes, while South American in origin and introduced into New Zealand in the early 1800s, were cultivated by Māori; and the name 'go-ashore' given to three-legged iron cooking pots may have been adopted early in the colonial encounter from the Māori *kōhua*, related to words such as *kohu* and *kokohu* (meaning 'hollow').³⁹ An alternate account has described how Captain James Cook, on feeling that too many Māori had come on board his ship, repeatedly shouted at them to 'go ashore'. When the visitors failed to understand, he threw a three-legged cooking pot overboard, causing the Māori visitors to dive overboard to try

to obtain the implement. This is said to have caused Māori to refer to these pots as ‘go ashores’. Either way, the first meal shared with Māori following the Hodgkinsons’ arrival at Wakefield contains both material and linguistic elements demonstrating the hybridity of the cross-cultural encounter with particular reference to the domestic sphere.⁴⁰

Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald delineated colonial domesticity for Pākehā women in New Zealand as involving ‘prodigious iron pots, wood-fired stoves in lean-to kitchens, houses that leaked or were draughty or both and could burn to the ground in minutes, clinging mud in winter, dust in summer, the making of “thundering loaves” and pounds of butter, the making of things to do other things with, and above all the weekly struggle with washing, starching and ironing “to keep things going decently”’.⁴¹

Colonial domesticity (as indeed domesticity for working-class women in England) revolved around supplying the necessities of life, food and clothing, under trying conditions. Yet it was also inflected by cross-cultural relationships. Hybrid domesticity is an expression of these relationships, a response to new and changing social environments as well as a colonial adaptation to – or making shift within – unfamiliar physical environs. Women from the working and middle classes could expect to run their homes with little outside interference, but also received very little in the way of outside help. While local Māori contributed knowledge of the area’s resources, and sometimes material items, to the colonial domestic sphere, few were employed in domestic service. The exception to this can be found in the homes of missionary women, where Māori women were taken into the mission house to be trained in ‘civilized habits’.⁴²

One of the first tasks early settlers took on, often with Māori assistance, was to build an initial home. With plenty of timber on hand at Wakefield, German and Wera built a slab hut. As Nigel Isaacs has explained, immigrants brought with them the technology required to create wooden slabs for building. They harvested local timbers such as kahikatea, kauri, rimu, or tōtara and cut slabs about 2 inches or 50mm thick and 10–12 inches or 250–300mm wide. Slab huts had the advantage over raupō huts (often constructed by Māori for newly arrived settlers) of being more fire resistant and were more common in the South Island, where raupō was not as readily available as in the North.⁴³ While slab huts were rooved with either shingles or fern, the Hodgkinsons used the latter. Native timber was also used by German to fashion a bowl in which to grind the family’s wheat once they had cleared the land around their hut, sowed their seeds and reaped their first harvest. Later, when the family moved into a larger house with two rooms, an earth floor and mud walls, the Hodgkinson sons were allotted the task of pulling up the stubble following

the oat harvest and making bundles combining it with locally available raupō and puddled clay. This combination of introduced and natural resources used to reinforce the family home provides another example of a hybridized approach to making shift in relation to building domestic dwellings.⁴⁴

Well before the Hodgkinsons' wheat and oats were sown, their Māori guides were ready to depart. Such a closeness of feeling had arisen between them that tears flowed freely. Mary Ann gave Winnie a paisley shawl, an item surely difficult to replace and of significant value to the original wearer, who later said her newfound friend 'proudly wore it afterwards in Wellington'. Wera and Winnie left a supply of indigenous foods, silver eels and kaka, with the Hodgkinsons to ensure their short-term sustenance.⁴⁵ These were just some of the locally available foods utilized by Māori that became a cornerstone of pioneering diets in the region. Anna Heine, a young German woman who emigrated to Waimea East on the *St Pauli* in 1843 with her husband (a Lutheran missionary), where they lived in a manuka whare, complained that 'meals were very monotonous. Eels were plentiful in the Waimea River and they were eaten often until the children became sick of them.'⁴⁶ Mary Redwood, who came out to New Zealand on the *George Fyfe* in 1842 and initially lived in a tent at Waimea, found that she could purchase flour and groceries from shops in Nelson and potatoes from Māori, but otherwise made shift through relying on locally available bush foods. Like the Hodgkinsons, Heines and other families, the Redwoods ate eel. Other mainstays of their colonial diet were wild duck, quail and native pigeon; it was said that 'in those days ... when the kahikatea (white pine) berries were ripe a man could sit under a kahikatea and shoot pigeons all day long because they were so numerous and so friendly'. Mary roasted the pigeons or turned them into pies and carefully utilized the feathers to ensure her family had warm beds throughout the winter.⁴⁷ Others recorded doing likewise: Lizzie Heath described in her letter of 19 August 1868 to her sister Anne how 'It is my aim not to waste a thing. I dry and bake every feather for feather beds and pillows are thought a great luxury here.'⁴⁸ J.M. Brown outlined similar approaches to making shift further south, writing about families in Otago who supplemented their diets with 'wild duck, pigeon, native quail, and kaka stews' and made use of mutton fat to fuel their lamps and to make soap.⁴⁹ Like pioneers in the Far South, Mary Ann Hodgkinson used animal fat 'for homemade candles which I made myself set in homemade tin moulds in a box'.⁵⁰ With careful domestic management, women fed their families a hybrid diet with elements of the foods to which they had been used in the 'old country' as well as food gleaned locally; they also used leftover materials to make their houses more comfortable and homely.

While the Hodgkinsons and other colonial families generally had enough to eat – Mary Ann noted ‘there were plenty of kakas and pigeons in the bush’ at Wakefield – in one particularly hard season the family had to dig up their seed potatoes and eat them to survive.⁵¹ Jim McAloon described how the prosperity initially enjoyed by settlers in the wider Nelson district rapidly diminished due to a shortage of capital, an outcome of depressions from mid-1842 in Britain and the nearby Australian colonies that translated into a fall in demand for land at the new settlement. At the close of 1843, emigration of groups of colonists to Nelson was halted until the end of the decade.⁵² By 1844, the Nelson district was in crisis, with many families enduring famine. Mary Woodley identified two key causative factors: the New Zealand Company called a halt to its public works around Nelson (therefore wages dried up), and anticipated supply ships failed to arrive. Native leaves and roots became even more sought after, and some people resorted to boiling up grass. Those who dug up their potatoes, such as the Hodgkinsons, ‘carefully cut out [the “eyes”] and replanted’ them to ensure the viability of the next crop.⁵³

Famine impacted elsewhere in New Zealand in the 1840s, including Taranaki, which meant that pioneering women needed to be inventive in order to feed their growing families. The same would have been true for poor rural women in England when times were tough economically. When food was short in the colony, women at New Plymouth harvested the top of the fern tree, which, once peeled, looked like a turnip. It was cut into pieces and cooked with vinegar, sugar, and cloves to create a ‘quite palatable’ fruit pie.⁵⁴ The practice of harvesting local flora and converting it into a recognisably European dish was widespread.⁵⁵ Amy Kane’s grandmother, who lived in Wellington after arriving on the *Martha Ridgeway* in 1840, also recalled making sweet pies from fern buds. When families ran short of vegetables, children gathered sow-thistle which became known as ‘colonial cabbage’ or ‘Māori cabbage’. This plant, which resembled rape, was over-harvested and is no longer extant in New Zealand. It may have been descended from cabbage seeds given to Māori by James Cook.⁵⁶ An account of Betty Guard’s life as a sealer’s wife at Marlborough from 1827 to 1834 reveals how, following an altercation with Māori, she and her companions were forced to subsist on whale meat and wild cabbage or turnip tops, the latter being ‘probably the fruits of the seeds presented to the Sounds’ natives by Cook and Bellinghausen on their respective voyages.⁵⁷ Accessing these freely available greens helped pioneering families and Māori to keep scurvy at bay, just as eating what they called ‘Macquarie Island cabbage’ had afforded early whalers and sealers some protection from this disease.⁵⁸

In nineteenth-century New Zealand, James Cook was attributed with introducing not only cabbage but also pigs. The numerous feral descendants of the first pigs are known colloquially as 'Captain Cookers'.⁵⁹ Immigrant families made use of feral pigs; Mary Ann described how she used wild pig's lard to spread the bread she served to destitute Māori women and children along with potatoes, after they begged her for food, calling out 'kai, kai, bergoo'. (Bergoo, or porridge, a pot of milk thickened with flour and known to them as 'thick dick', provided the Hodgkinsons' daily breakfast.) The women parted on good terms, with Mary Ann finding 'a few extras for them such as a wooden doll, a tiny handkerchief, and a bangle of beads I had made for Lydia [her daughter]'. The visiting Māori were still sufficiently unfamiliar with Pākehā to touch Mary Ann's fair hair 'with wonder' before departing.⁶⁰ In her representation of this encounter, Mary Ann portrayed herself as a frightened yet compassionate woman. Absent from her account is any understanding and appreciation of the extent to which the British intrusion onto Māori land led to competition over resources and the consequent starving condition of some Māori and paved the way for asymmetrical power relations. The 'violation of physical space' that took place as the immigrants intruded onto Māori land has seen 'the history of white "settlement"' described by Terry Goldie as 'clearly a history of physical violence'.⁶¹ Yet within this violent history space remained for moments of compassion.

The Hodgkinsons were called on multiple times for food. Indeed, their home could be theorized as one of what Ballantyne has called the 'knot-like conjunctures where the ceaseless small-scale mobilities of life in a location interlocked into the more extensive networks that enabled the regular movement of people, things, and words'.⁶² These networks were predominantly Māori and Pākehā, although people of other ethnicities also visited. Mary Ann described how Māori travelling to 'a summer fishing camp' at a lake to the south of Wakefield were frequent visitors, as were (in latter decades) men from the Californian and Australian goldfields who tried their luck at Whangapeka and Canvastown. Food was sometimes scarce. However, the Hodgkinsons secreted a supply in a store box built by German that could be hidden in their earthen floor, a system which demonstrated their adaptation to their new environment. Mary Ann then emptied her cupboards for migrant Māori, assisting with their sustenance, while keeping enough on hand for her family. Another of her techniques involved carefully saving and drying used tea leaves, a valuable commodity enjoyed infrequently by the Hodgkinsons. As Mary Ann said, the dried tea leaves 'made a second brew for the Maoris on the track and were much appreciated'. Some of the gold diggers were considered dangerous. Mary Ann's strategy for warning them off was to take

down a double-barrelled gun from its rack inside the front door and say ‘You get, this gun is bloodthirsty’.⁶³ While she played a part in facilitating mobility within her colonial world, a strategy she would have been familiar with as a means of making shift, Mary Ann exercised agency when it came to deciding who to help and how much.

The birth of children during the early years of contact in the wider Nelson region provided further opportunities for Māori and Pākehā to interact. Breastfeeding – perhaps one of the most intimate and embodied female practices – brought people from different cultures closer together. Mary Ann recounted how on more than one occasion Māori women saved ‘delicate’ Pākehā babies by breastfeeding them. A Pākehā woman did likewise for a chief’s ailing baby. In return, whenever this woman was taking produce such as butter to Nelson to sell, Māori always carried her goods and remained on hand to take her newly acquired stores home to Wakefield. Mary Ann, too, was the recipient of kindness from Māori as the birth of the fifth of her eleven children (her namesake, Mary Ann) drew near. Despite having lived in New Zealand for three years, she later recalled feeling fearful when a Māori man she did not recognize came through her front gate. When Mary Ann greeted him she was relieved to find that he came bearing a gift: ‘a lovely woven rug of dressed flax’. Knowing that the Hodgkinsons’ floor was bare earth, and that they were expecting a baby, his family had made Mary Ann the rug in return for her kindness in providing his wife with tea, bergoo, and bacon.⁶⁴ Providing the Hodgkinsons with a gift of hand-woven fibre was also a means through which good social relationships could be cemented. Writing in the context of garments rather than soft furnishings, Amiria Henare has highlighted how, for Māori, such taonga (treasures) were integral to social relations. Māori particularly valued ‘the power to make relationships’.⁶⁵

Pioneering women sought to enter more fully into the Māori sphere to impart their knowledge to, and impose their practices on, local women. Alison Clarke has explained how for Māori ‘Aotearoa was densely populated with gods, legends and ancestors, but most colonists took little notice of those except as romantic fairy tales’.⁶⁶ Ignorant or dismissive of Māori beliefs, women like Mary Ann found in God the source of ‘the spirit and determination to push ahead with all the work we had undertaken’. She and other women at Wakefield saw part of their role as taking up the work begun by ministers and teachers of ‘teaching the Māori better ways’, work that missionary wives were also heavily engaged in as ‘role model[s] of feminine behaviour’ who ‘could teach useful domestic skills to “native” women’.⁶⁷ Mary Ann and her colonial companions ‘taught the wahines [Māori women] sewing, hygiene and our [English] language’.⁶⁸ Similarly, Mrs Wohlers (a young English

widow living in Wellington who remarried to a German missionary who lived on Ruapuke, an island off the coast of Bluff) was later described by her granddaughter, Mrs P. Macdonald, as having created 'a social and economic revolution among the Maoris as only a woman filled with energy and strength of will could accomplish'. Mrs Wohlers instructed Māori women in the arts of 'cleanliness, sanitation, and the healthy upbringing of children'. British staples such as wheat and potatoes were introduced, as was dairying, with the success of this venture demonstrated through substantial trade with colonists around Invercargill.⁶⁹

The similarities in character attribution between Frances Bassett's account of Mary Ann Hodgkinson's reminiscences and Mrs Macdonald's account of her grandmother suggest that their life histories are inflected by mid-twentieth-century sensibilities in that they take on the role of 'larger-than-life heroines'.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, it is instructive to note how working-class women took on similar roles to those usually attributed to missionary wives in 'instructing the natives ... in the arts and practices of civilisation'.⁷¹ In fulfilling such roles, these women were playing out a scene that was familiar across the British Empire. Ballantyne has described 'the Protestant tradition' as 'a central element in British empire-building during the nineteenth century', which the empire's global reach 'carried ... to Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Pacific'.⁷² In New Zealand, Christianity was significant in 'the transformation of Māori culture and the creation of a colonial culture'.⁷³ Indeed, the initial impetus to have Pākehā provide 'European-style instruction' for Māori originated in a request dating back to 1811, when the rangatira Ruatara asked the Reverend Samuel Marsden (at the time resident in Sydney) to provide teachers for Māori who were interested in becoming more familiar with European spiritual beliefs and cultural mores.⁷⁴ The transformational significance of Christianity has gained increasing recognition in New Zealand historiography over the last decade with the emergence of revisionist histories that challenge the idea of 'secular New Zealand'. John Stenhouse, for example, recently explained that although he had argued previously 'that religion was socially marginal and especially unpopular with the working class', further research convinced him of the fallacy of this earlier argument. Stenhouse has, therefore, worked extensively over the last decade to write religion back into histories of colonial New Zealand.⁷⁵

Māori worked actively to transform the new understandings gained from colonists and to indigenize newly acquired knowledge. For example, the Bible was translated into Te Reo Māori. Some Māori utilized Christianity as a 'potent idiom for diplomacy, politics and cultural criticism'.⁷⁶ Consistent with this active engagement with knowledge, Māori women were not

simply passive recipients of the pioneering women's instruction. Mary Ann described a complex set of reciprocal social relations in which breastfeeding each other's infants was part of a wider whole. Another aspect of these interactions involved Māori women carrying white women across the river when the latter were on their way to Nelson. The local women said to the newcomers, 'Pākehā women want dry feet.' Such intimate relations at the colonial frontier have also been noted by other scholars: in her biography of Jane Maria Atkinson, Frances Porter described how in the early years of contact Māori were 'door-to-door traders' on whom New Plymouth settlers relied for staple foods, and Tanya Fitzgerald showed how, during their husbands' frequent absences from the mission station, Church Missionary Society missionary wives were expected to 'negotiate with ... local Māori'.⁷⁷

Finding themselves and their families at the far reaches of civilization saw colonial helpmeets such as Mary Ann faced with the task of providing clothing for their growing families, a chore that would have been familiar to them at their places of origin. Sometimes times got tough. When the 1844 famine struck, garments had to be fashioned for the Hodgkinsons from sacks. Over time, their situation improved. Her relatives in England sent Mary Ann a lace-making machine, although, as she lamented, 'alas, my girls wore no lace in the bush'. Nevertheless, Mary Ann put it to good use. Taking on another job (another strategy typically engaged in by those endeavouring to make shift), she made lace that was sold in Wellington. The income earned was sufficient to buy moleskin with which to sew trousers for her sons. With a severe shortage of thread hampering women's efforts with the needle, Mary Ann learned to use dried flax in lieu of cotton to stitch her children's clothing.⁷⁸ Mary Ann sewed by hand, as did other women at the time, including Mrs Birdling, who lived further south at Wairewa on Banks Peninsula from 1842 onwards. Mrs Birdling obtained fabric from visiting pedlars, sewing moleskin trousers, corduroys and flannel shirts for her family. 'Sewing', it has been said, 'loomed eternally before the woman of that day.' Mrs Birdling is said to have lain 'unconscious for three months before her death, [during which time] she was constantly threading needles'.⁷⁹ Women regularly stitched well into the night by the light of their homemade candles, straining their eyes as well as their fingers. In the absence of cotton, pioneering women followed the example of local Māori and utilized flax in its stead.

After 18 years in New Zealand, Mary Ann Hodgkinson had been sufficiently successful in supporting her family that German was able to purchase from prominent settler Edward Baigent part of his Crown Grant at Waimea South. The working-class family was able to fulfil an aspiration that may have been very distant in England: they could become landowners,

with all the class connotations that implied. The deed of conveyance, dated 31 December 1860, described German Hodgkinson as a farmer, a word which signified his rise in social rank from agricultural labourer, an outcome unlikely to have been achieved in England. His newly acquired block, labelled 7D on plans of the Nelson district, cost £20. It was 'twenty acres and thirty-eight perches ... bounded on the north by a road ... on the east by a continuation of the said private road [belonging to Edward Baigent] on the south west partly by a public road and partly by other part of the said section numbered VII on the said plan belonging to John Fowler the Younger and on the south by section numbered 89'. Two farmers from Waimea South, William Price and Edward's brother Isaac Baigent, witnessed the transaction. The latter was the Hodgkinsons' new neighbour, whose wife Jane became a close friend to Mary Ann. In the absence of midwives, they delivered each other's babies.⁸⁰

Mary Ann Hodgkinson, like her neighbour Jane Baigent and her numerous colonial counterparts across mid-nineteenth-century New Zealand and indeed working-class women in England, worked hard to keep her family clothed and fed. She used her needle and cooking skills to transform the raw materials she procured or was provided with by her husband into garments and sustenance for her growing family. Under often difficult circumstances, working-class women worked tirelessly to fulfil what they saw as their roles in advancing the fledgling colony. As the examples discussed above have demonstrated, working-class women's propensity towards making shift stood them in good stead and enabled some to climb the social ladder. They were able to procure and utilize native birds and vegetation, adopting and adapting practices commonly used by Māori as they learned how to make the most of the natural resources available in their new environment. Working-class women were often frugal, ensuring full use was made from whatever raw materials came their way, for example, through drying feathers from their pot-roasted pigeon for stuffing pillows and quilts or drying tea leaves to ensure a second pot for travelling Māori.

As well as providing an invaluable source of labour and contributing to the economic well-being of the family, working-class women such as Mary Ann Hodgkinson played significant social roles. It fell to such women to forge relationships with local Māori, in part to ensure the ongoing safety of their families (as their fears and trepidation, while sometimes misplaced, must be acknowledged) but also to enable these women to fulfil what they saw as their roles with regard to the 'civilizing mission'. However, the instruction provided to Māori women was not a one-way transaction. As Vincent O'Malley recently demonstrated, the 'conventional wisdom' through which it was believed that 'acculturation was unilateral, a one-way street' in colonial New Zealand -

whereby Māori were increasingly assimilated into Pākehā culture and society and were the only people to be changed through intimate cross-cultural encounters at the frontier - was misplaced.⁸¹ As I have shown, in the Nelson region, and elsewhere in New Zealand, some pioneering women's houses became adorned with Māori soft furnishings, their family's clothes were stitched together with flax, they took to eating a diet that regularly included native birds and eels, and some of their babies were suckled by Māori wet nurses. In turn, Māori adopted some Pākehā practices, occasionally utilizing white wet nurses and increasingly learning English, adopting Christianity, and growing and marketing British foodstuffs. Pioneering working-class women's skills in, and experiences of, making shift – particularly with regard to their use of natural resources – were transferrable from their homelands to their new homes in the New Zealand bush or at mission stations, albeit with some modifications. The domestic practices engaged in by working-class women were inflected by Māori socio-economic practices, resulting not in a straightforward transplantation of English customs into nascent New Zealand homes, but rather the emergence of hybrid domesticity.

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NOTES

1 *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1841*, National Archives (NA), Kew, Surrey, England, 1841. While some descendants have suggested that Hodgkinson's first name was 'Germain', the phonetic spelling 'Jermyn', recorded on the 'Examination of Emigrants' sailing on the *Thomas Harrison* dated 27 May 1842, indicates that 'German' (as listed in the Embarkation Records) is in fact correct. NA, Kew, CO208/30; CO208/275. His name is also recorded as 'German' on his marriage certificate to Mary Ann (nee Dexter). Radford St Peters Registers 1563–1900, Fiche 52, Nottingham Archives.

2 J.W. Haythorn to the New Zealand Company, 19 April 1842, NA, Kew, CO208/275, 46/2104.

3 Hodgkinson manuscript, p.1. The Hodgkinson manuscript forms part of a private collection owned by the author. The handwritten manuscript was reproduced by the author's mother as a typescript and was submitted by her great-grandmother, Frances Bassett, to the Federated Farmers' magazine *New Zealand Countrywoman*, in which it was subsequently published (probably in 1960). A copy of this manuscript is held at the Nelson Provincial Museum. It was also reproduced in full by Adelyn Cameron in her family history *Longslip-Ben Avion: The Station and Its People*, Christchurch, 1976.

4 *Ibid.*, p.1.

5 David Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in Britain: From Chadwick to Booth, 1834–1914*, London, 1998, p.1.

6 J.W. Haythorn to the New Zealand Company, 19 April 1842 and 26 April 1842, NA, Kew, CO208/275, 46/2104.

7 Embarkation List, *Thomas Harrison*, NA, Kew, N1161, CO208.275; Thomas Renwick, Ship's Surgeon's Journal for the *Thomas Harrison*, NZC34/9/10, Archives New Zealand (ANZ), Wellington.

8 Hodgkinson, p.3.

9 Olwen Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750–1789*, Oxford, 1974, p.17.

10 *Ibid.*, p.15.

11 Steve Hindle, "'Not by Bread Only': Common Right, Parish Relief and Endowed Charity in a Forest Economy, c.1600–1800', in Steven King and Alannah Tomkins, eds, *The Poor in England, 1700–1850: An Economy of Makeshifts*, Manchester, 2003, pp.41, 65.

12 R.S. Schofield, 'Dimensions of Illiteracy in England, 1750–1850', in Harvey J. Graff, ed., *Literacy and Social Development in the West: A Reader*, Cambridge, 1981, p.201.

13 Hodgkinson, see note 3, above.

14 Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald, eds, *'My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates': The Unsettled Lives of Women in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand As Revealed to Sisters, Family and Friends*, Auckland, 1996, p.13.

15 Sources that have been particularly useful in informing my understanding of working-class women's experiences in mid-nineteenth-century New Zealand include Porter and Macdonald; A.E. Woodhouse, ed., *Tales of Pioneer Women Collected by the Women's Institute of New Zealand*, 2nd ed., Christchurch, 1940; Miriam MacGregor, *Petticoat Pioneers: North Island Women of the Colonial Era*, 2 vols, Wellington, 1973, 1975; and Barbara Harper, *Petticoat Pioneers: South Island Women of the Colonial Era*, III, Wellington, 1980.

16 Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past*, Wellington, 2012, pp.228–44.

17 Robert Peden and Peter Holland, 'Settlers Transforming the Open Country', in Eric Pawson and Tom Brooking, eds, *Making a New Land: Environmental Histories of New Zealand*, 2nd ed., Dunedin, 2013, p.89.

- 18 I am thinking, for example, of work such as Margery Sabin, *Dissenters and Mavericks: Writings About India in English*, Oxford, 2002; Christine Bell, *On the Law of Peace: Peace Agreements and the Lex Pacificatoria*, Oxford, 2008; and Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: South-East Asia in Global Context, c.800–1830, II: Mainland Mirrors: Europe, Japan, China, South Asia, and the Islands*, Cambridge, 2009.
- 19 Daniel Defoe, *Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, London, 1734, p.329.
- 20 Francis White, *Nottinghamshire: History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County, and of the Town of Nottingham: With a Variety of Commercial and Statistical Information*, Sheffield, 1853, p.374.
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- 22 David Wardle, *Education and Society in Nineteenth-Century Nottingham*, Cambridge, 1971, p.4.
- 23 For a useful discussion on the causes and extent of seasonal unemployment for agricultural labourers, see K.D.M. Snell, 'Agricultural Seasonal Unemployment, the Standard of Living, and Women's Work, 1690–1860', in Pamela Sharpe, ed., *Women's Work: The English Experience 1650–1914*, London, 1998, pp.73–121.
- 24 Pamela Sharpe, 'The Shiners: Framework-Knitting Households in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, 1840–1890', *Family & Community History*, 3, 2 (2000), 105–20, pp.105-120.
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- 27 Sharpe, p.107.
- 28 Humphries and Snell, in Lane, Raven and Snell, p.7.
- 29 Hodgkinson, p.1.
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- 31 Sharpe, p.114.
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- 33 Martha Adams, *Martha: Reminiscences of Martha Adams, Wife of William Adams*, Blenheim, 1978, p.6.
- 34 Wright, p.92; Katherine W. Orr, 'Higgins, Sarah' in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 1 Sep 2010, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/1h18/1>
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- 42 Ibid., p.146.
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- 51 Ibid., pp.13–14.
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- 53 Mary Woodley, 'The Settlement of Nelson: Early Days at Motueka', in Woodhouse, *Tales of Pioneer Women*, p.139.
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