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Lovely tender exotics: exploring Victorian female agency in the western Canadian fur trade, 1830-51

by

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Abstract:

This thesis explores the ability of Victorian-era women to demonstrate agency in the colonial setting. The subjects of this study are Frances Simpson, Isobel Finlayson, and Letitia Hargrave, all upper-middle class European women who married fur traders of the Hudson's Bay Company in the first half of the nineteenth century and relocated with their husbands to Rupert's Land. While traveling to, and living in the fur trade, these women recorded their experiences and actions in the form of travel journals and letters, demonstrating how they purposefully and deliberately upheld the expectations placed upon them to be respectable, domestic, feminine women. This thesis argues that by acting in ways expected of them as Victorian-era women, Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave found the ability to display agency and negotiate their physical and social spaces in the fur trade.

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To Bob, Marie, Briana, Eric, and Geoff

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Introduction:

Lovely Tender Exotics and the Western Canadian Fur Trade

In 1830 a young Englishwoman with "grace…in all her steps – heaven in her eye" arrived in western Canada as the new bride of George Simpson, the governor of the Hudson's Bay Company.[1] Ten years later, two other young women, "The English Rose," and the "Bluebell of Scotland,"[2] likewise married fur trading gentlemen of the Hudson's Bay Company – Chief Factor Duncan Finlayson and Chief Trader James Hargrave – and similarly chose to embark on a wife's "most scared and hallowed duty, to follow and share the fortunes of a beloved and affectionate Husband" by moving westwards into the Company's fur trading territories.[3] Frances Simpson (née Simpson), Isobel Finlayson (née Simpson), and Letitia Hargrave (née Mactavish), were among the first white, Victorian ladies to be relocated into the fur trade as the European wives of high-ranking fur traders.[4] Referred to by their contemporaries as "lovely tender exotics,"[5] these women were brought into Rupert's Land not only to fulfil a domestic role as wives and mothers, but also were brought there to introduce an "air of high life and gaiety" into the fur trade,[6] as it was

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[1] Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1980), 187.
[2] James Hargrave, *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, ed. G. P. de T. Glazebrook (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1938), 435.
[3] Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) E.12/5, Isobel Finlayson Notebook 1840, 2.
[4] As Frances Simpson, Isobel Finlayson, and Letitia Hargrave are the principal subjects of this thesis, I have chosen to refer to them using their married surnames, because of the fact that they travelled to Rupert's Land only after they were married. To prevent confusion, when referring to their fur trading husbands, I have attempted to use the men's first and last names.
[5] Hargrave, *The Hargrave Correspondence,* 311. See also Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 173-200.
[6] Hargrave, *The Hargrave Correspondence*, 61.

believed that these women embodied "the civilizing attributes of a Victorian lady,"[7] and thus had the ability to herald "improved standards of morality and gentility" within Rupert's Land.[8]

The arrival of these white, European women as the wives of fur trade officers caused "quite a stir" throughout Rupert's Land (the area granted to the Hudson's Bay Company by Prince Charles II in 1670) as these far-flung, mostly subarctic, British territories had long been considered no place for a white woman.[9] As the Hudson's Bay Company's official policy had prohibited bringing white women into the fur trade, the result was that European fur traders had usually formed a variety of social unions with Native women.[10] While initially fluid and unique in terms of the typical duration and nature of these relationships, they eventually came to duplicate aspects of European marriages, resulting often in the formation of "many tender ties" between the fur traders and their Native partners.[11] The decisions by George Simpson, Duncan Finlayson, and James Hargrave to marry European women rather than Native women essentially broke with centuries of social tradition in Rupert's Land and their actions were considered to have created a significant threat to the pre-existing social position of Native women, as the

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[7] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Simpson, Frances Ramsay (Simpson, Lady Simpson)," http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=38309 (accessed 14 February 2011).
[8] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 187.
[9] See Carolyn Podruchny, *Making A Voyageur World: Travellers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Elizabeth Vibert, "Real Men Hunt Buffalo: Masculinity, Race and Class in British Fur Traders' Narratives," *Gender & History* 8:1 (1996), 4-21.
[10] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 173.
[11] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*; see also: Sylvia Van Kirk, "'Women In-Between,': Indian Women in Fur-trade Society in Western Canada," in *Out of the Background: Readings on Canadian Native History*, 2nd edition, eds. Ken S. Coates and Robin Fisher (Scarborough: Irwing Publishing, 1998), 102-117.

arrival of these new white brides in the early 1800s set important precedents in regards to the future marriage strategies of Company employees.[12]

This thesis does not focus on the Native or Metis women who were impacted by the arrival of Victorian women and European customs, but rather it explores the position of Victorian-era women, such as Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave, within the social and physical structure of the fur trade. These women are the primary subjects of this thesis for several reasons. First and most practically, these women penned narratives about their time in Rupert's Land that still exist for the use of historians today. These documents also make up a commentary on the physical and social landscape of the fur trade from an educated, upper-middle class woman's point of view, providing a unique perspective of her place in the fur trade in the mid-nineteenth century. Historians have used these sources to analyse the social complexities that were introduced into the fur trade with the arrival of European women. However, they have neglected the women themselves and have provided little information on their independent histories in the fur trade territories. This thesis, therefore, returns to the primary sources left behind by Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave in order to place emphasis on the individual women and their actions and provide new insights on how these women occupied spaces in Rupert's Land.

The primary sources that will be analysed in this thesis include: a detailed travel journal written by Frances Simpson in 1830 that documented her sea journey from England to America, and her overland journey from Montreal to York Factory;[13] a nearly identical travel journal written by Simpson's elder sister, Isobel Finlayson, in 1840 that documented

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[12] Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), xv.
[13] HBCA D.6/4, Frances Simpson Journal, 1830.

her own sea voyage from England to York Factory, and her overland journey from York Factory to Red River;[14] and a series of letters written by Letitia Hargrave from 1840-1851, that began with her travels from Scotland to York Factory, and documented the time that she lived at York Factory.[15] These women and their writings will be examined in the context of Victorian-era travelling and civilizing to suggest that they were able, in many respects, to demonstrate agency within the restrictive spaces they had been placed. It will explore the ways in which Frances Simpson, Isobel Finlayson, and Letitia Hargrave purposefully fulfilled the expectations that had been placed upon them as Victorian ladies, which enabled them to negotiate spaces within the physical and social environment of Rupert's Land. A re-reading of the journals and letters that focuses not only on the gender and class of the women, but on their bodies as well, demonstrates that, by acting according to cultural conventions, Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave strengthened and legitimized their presence within the fur trade. These women took advantage of their unique positions as some of the first Victorian women to be in the physically isolated environment of Rupert's Land, not to throw away convention as some of the era's female travellers were doing, but instead to conform to it, which enabled them to display a degree of agency, using Victorian norms of femininity, to define their physical and social situations in Rupert's Land.

The term "Victorian," used throughout this thesis pertains generally to a period spanning the years of the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), one associated with a number of cultural, gender, and racial ideas. It was a time of increased interest in remote

[14] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook.
[15] Letitia Hargrave, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, ed. Margaret Arnett MacLeod (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947).

parts of Empire and the people who lived there, resulting in increased numbers of European men and women moving into colonial areas to explore, and to spread British ideas and ways of life to the people in those territories.[16] This was accomplished by bolstering the European presence in colonies, as well as by implanting formal European institutions and officially sanctioned missions into colonial spaces.[17] It was also a period of economic colonialism, as British companies gained, or maintained, control of the economic resources of colonial spaces. In this way, the Hudson's Bay Company assisted with the colonizing British territories, as it controlled economic resources in North America, and, through trade relations, introduced various degrees of Europeanization to the Native peoples. Historically, colonialism has been viewed as a masculine enterprise because of directly imposed economic, political, and military control, though women certainly were involved in colonizing spaces.[18] In terms of such women and general culture, "Victorian" refers to the era's general agreement on "proper" behaviour, particularly in the separation of the public and private spheres, and social and moral values concerning respectability, domesticity, and the family.[19]

The current historiography of women in the fur trade has focussed almost solely on the placement, positioning, and roles of Native and Metis women. When the European fur traders first arrived in the wilderness of Rupert's Land, they were highly dependent upon the Native peoples due to their unpreparedness for the climate and environment into which

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[16] Catherine Hall, ed., *Cultures of Empire, A Reader: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 5.
[17] See Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) for an example of how colonialism was introduced into British Columbia.
[18] Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, eds., *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 2.
[19] Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1988).

they were moving. Jennifer Brown and Sylvia Van Kirk drew necessary attention to the crucial roles that Native people, and importantly – Native women – had played in ensuring the survival of fur traders. These women provided various kinds of assistance by acting as translators, guides, cooks, outfitters, and most importantly, helped the fur traders to create important kin ties with the Native groups through cohabitation and marriage.[20] These "country marriages," or marriages *à la façon du pays*, were often fluid unions, and could be quite short – lasting only as long as the fur trader was stationed within a certain area. They were initially based on Native customs, however, as time went on and the fur traders became more sedentary and settled in Rupert's Land, it became increasingly possible for fur traders to transmit their customs onto the Native peoples – creating essentially a unique system of fur trade societies.[21]

The general society of the Hudson's Bay Company – the company dominating trade in British territories after 1821 – was highly hierarchical.[22] The model of the Company, similar to other institutions of the time, was akin to that of a "patriarchal family consisting of a married couple, their children, and workers or servants," whereby the act of marriage conveyed a certain degree of status, and separated the "patriarch" from his inferiors.[23]

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[20] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 75-94; Van Kirk, "'Women In-Between': Indian Women in Fur-trade Society in Western Canada"; Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 64-65.

[21] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 28-52; Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 79; Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008), 31-37.

[22] I am only really looking at the social complexities surrounding the Hudson's Bay Company because this thesis deals with a time period after the amalgamation of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, and therefore the main social structure was that of the Hudson's Bay Company. For more information on the different social systems of the fur trade, see Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 23-110, where she compares the different interactions between Hudson's Bay Company men and their Native partners, and North West Company men and their Native partners.

[23] Heather Rollason Driscoll, "'A Most Important Chain of Connection': Marriage in the Hudson's Bay Company," in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, eds. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens, and R. C. Macleod

While the Hudson's Bay Company had initially prohibited the marriage between fur traders and Native women because it was believed that this would distract fur traders and prevent them from fulfilling their duties, essentially complicating relations around trade, the rules were gradually relaxed in regards to the fur trade officers – chief factors and chief traders – who typically resided at a fur trade post for an extended period of time, and thus had the means, and the ability, to form unions with Native women.

Jennifer Brown provided more information on the hierarchical structure of the Hudson's Bay Company and its impact when she demonstrated that this system resulted in an entrenched notion of class status throughout the history of the Hudson's Bay Company in Rupert's Land.[24] Heather Rollason Driscoll further stressed the importance of, and connections between, marriage and class within the fur trade when she examined how marriage could serve as a means for fur trade gentlemen to distinguish themselves from the lower-ranked fur traders of the Company.[25] As certain fur traders "rose through the ranks" of the Company, they began to seek various ways to demonstrate their new positions within the social hierarchy.[26]

Probably the most important point for this thesis raised by Brown and Van Kirk was the attention they drew to the ways that the European understandings of class and upward mobility had an impact upon the Native women in the fur trade by the late eighteenth century.[27] By the late 1700s, "daughters of the country," the mixed-blood female progeny

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(Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2001), 83. Other institutions that resembled a "patriarchal family" included the British army and the merchant marine.

[24] See Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 31-35, 147-152.

[25] Rollason Driscoll, "'A Most Important Chain of Connection'," 94-100.

[26] Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 148.

[27] Brown, *Strangers in Blood*; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*. For more information on the ultimately negative experiences of Native women, see also: Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the Early Settlement Era in Western Canada," in *Out of the Background: Readings on*

of fur trade unions, became increasingly common in the social order of the fur trade, and were replacing their full-blooded Native sisters and relations as marriage partners for fur traders. These girls who had grown up in the West were highly acclimatized to the environment and society, yet due to the involvement of their fur trading fathers, were beginning to look and act in an increasingly European manner. It became important to many of the officers of the fur trade to make their daughters as European as possible, and to separate them from their Native heritage.[28] This was typically accomplished both through increased attention to the education of these daughters of the fur trade, as well as through the importation of European goods such as fashion magazines, jewellery, combs, brushes, and soap,[29] so that the girls, even if they were not European born and had many mixed-blood connections to the Native world, were able to appear more European in their manner and appearance.[30]

Civilization and Europeanization were not confined solely to the girls of the fur trade. Further changes, broadly sanctioned by the Hudson's Bay Company, could be seen in the first decades of the nineteenth century with the creation of the Red River Colony in 1811. The complexities of the Red River colony, its creation, and the struggles that existed for the administrators and the settlers will not be discussed in this thesis, and have been

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Canadian Native History, 2nd edition, eds. Ken S. Coates and Robin Fisher (Scarborough: Irwing Publishing, 1998), 177-195; Sarah Carter, "'Complicated and Clouded': The Federal Administration of Marriage and Divorce among the First Nations of Western Canada, 1887-1906," in *Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West Through Women's History*, eds. Sarah Carter, Lesley Erickson, Patricia Roome, and Char Smith (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 151-178; Sylvia Van Kirk, "'From Marrying-In' to 'Marrying-Out,': Changing Patterns of Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Marriage in Colonial Canada," in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History* eds. Mona Gleason and Adele Perry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 115-123.

[28] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 95.

[29] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties,* 101.

[30] For more information on the acculturation of children, see: Sylvia Van Kirk, "Tracing the Fortune of Five Founding Families of Victoria," *BC Studies* 115/116 (1997-98), 149-180; Juliet Pollard, "A Most Remarkable Phenomenon: Growing up Métis: Fur Traders' Children in the Pacific Northwest," in *Histories of Canadian Children and Youth* eds. Nancy Janovicek and Joy Parr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 57-70.

covered elsewhere;[31] yet the creation of the colony was an important factor in the bringing in of Victorian women because of the conditions that it created in regards to the social and physical environment of the fur trade. Despite being a private enterprise spearheaded by Thomas Douglas, fifth earl of Selkirk, the Red River colony had certain economic and social uses for the Hudson's Bay Company. The creation of the settlement was supported by the Hudson's Bay Company's London Committee because of the belief that the agricultural colony, located on the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers in present-day Winnipeg, would be able to provide provisions for the Company's posts, create a space within the territory of Rupert's Land where fur traders would be able to retire with their Native families, and create a useful pool for future employees of the Company.[32] The first settlers who were to work the land and provide provisions for the Company were Scottish settlers brought out by Selkirk in 1812 amongst which there were "eighteen women above fifteen [years of age], one girl, and eleven children under eight [years of age]."[33] The second party of Scottish immigrants who reached Red River in 1813 consisted of twenty-one men, and twenty women.[34] Less than a decade later, part of the de Meuron regiment was added to the number of settlers at Red River, mainly to assist with the violent

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[31] For more information on this topic, see J. M. Bumstead, *Lord Selkirk: A Life* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), W. L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967); Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress and Present State With Some Accounts of the Native Races and Its General History to the Present Day*, new ed., (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972). For information on the society and population of Red River into the mid-nineteenth century, see John Foster, "The Country-born in the Red River Settlement, 1820-1859," PhD thesis, (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1973); Brian Gallagher, "A Re-examination of Race, Class and Society in Red River," *Natives Studies Review* 4:1&2 (1988), 25-65; Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing); Frits Pannekoek, "The Anglican Church and the Disintegration of Red River Society, 1818-1870," in *The West and the Nation: Essays in Honour of W. L. Morton* eds. Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd, 1976), 72-90.
[32] W. L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History*, 44-45.
[33] W. J. Healy, *Women of Red River: Being a Book Written from the Recollections of Women Surviving from the Red River Era* (Winnipeg: The Women's Canadian Club, 1923), 2.
[34] Healy, *Women of Red River*, 3.

confrontations that had been occurring between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company around Red River. The population was added to throughout the 1820s as further Scottish and Swiss immigrants, including young men and women, arrived in the colony.[35] By 1831, the population of Red River was 2 427, and the number continued to increase so that by the time of the Canadian census in 1871, there was a recorded population of 11 963.[36] While most of the population in Red River remained uniquely mixed-blood in composition, its larger numbers and the agricultural and pastoral economic model that it was founded on helped to create a "base for the introduction of the basic tenets of civilization" within the area of the fur trade.[37] Alexander Ross, a contemporary citizen and historian of Red River's "progress," believed that the increased population of Red River was approximately 5 000 people by 1849, with seven churches and twelve schools numbering among the buildings there.[38]

Introducing "civilization" into Red River and Rupert's Land in general became increasingly possible after 1821, when the Hudson's Bay Company merged with its primary competitor in Rupert's Land, the North West Company. Prior to the amalgamation of the two companies, there had been violence and turmoil that had negatively affected the ability of the Hudson's Bay Company to operate effectively, and Red River to develop as a place of civilization. After 1821, the era of cutthroat competition came to an end and the Hudson's Bay Company took a closer supervisory role over the colony when Selkirk named as his executors Andrew Colville and John Hakett, both important members of the

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[35] Ross, *The Red River Settlement,* 57.
[36] William A. Dobak, "Killing the Canadian Buffalo, 1821-1881," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 27:1 (1996), 42-43.
[37] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 145; Dobak, "Killing the Canadian Buffalo," 42-43.
[38] Ross, *The Red River Settlement*, Appendix A.

London Committee.[39] Further, in 1823, following the mismanagement of one the colony's first governors, the Company allowed its governor of the Northern Department veto powers over the decisions of the Red River government and the Assiniboia council, the colony's executive body. The interest by the Company in regards to the development of Red River was reflected in the actions of some of the fur trade officers who had been concerned with increasing the Europeanization of the society of the fur trade. George Simpson, for example, was a supporter of organized missions and schools within Rupert's Land, and was reported to have sentiments that were "decidedly favourable" towards the improvement of Red River, and he often "took pains" to inform himself on the situation that existed there.[40] He supported the creation of schools in the colony that benefitted not only settlers, but also the children (and especially the daughters) of the fur trade,[41] and proposed to inject money – in one example, £100 on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company, and was planning to encourage the company's officers to raise an additional £200 more – for the building of a "respectable place of worship in the colony that could be used for settlers and fur traders alike."[42]

Both Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries were present in Red River in the first half of the nineteenth century, to benefit not only the influx of European settlers who had been brought to Red River, but also the people who had already been residing in the fur trade area. It was believed that the presence of missionaries would be able to check the

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[39] Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 201.
[40] Church Missionary Society Archives (CMSA) C.1/0 [A-92], Reverend David T. Jones, "Letters and Journals," Incoming Correspondence, Original Letters, Journals and Papers, 1823-1848.
[41] CMSA C.1/0 [A-92], Jones, "Letters and Journals," and HBCA MG2 A7, Transcript of Correspondence between Rev. David Jones and George Simpson, 1832: Simpson demonstrated his desire for the furthering education of girls of the fur trade, as well as a certain kind of education (meaning here, Victorian) when he proposed the creation of an all-girls school.
[42] CMSA C.1/0 [A-92], Jones, "Letters and Journals."

"vicious habits" of the fur traders, and especially the Metis and Aboriginal populations there.[43] The missionaries, like many of the handful of European settlers brought to the colony, were horrified by the perceived looseness and immorality of the fur traders,[44] and while they grudgingly accepted that marriage *à la façon du pays* had once been necessary due to the fact that there had been no religious figures to make the marriages official and legal, the missionaries believed that the custom of the fur traders taking women as wives without church sanction had to come to an end, especially when the marriages existed between European men and women. Reverend John West was the Hudson's Bay Company's first chaplain, and in the three years that he was in Red River (1820-1823) he sanctified sixty-five marriages, some of them between prominent members of the colony and some of them between Hudson's Bay Company officers.[45] In his journals, Reverend David Jones (West's successor) happily reported on any marriages he conducted in the colony, and the "conversation[s] with others on the same subject [of marriage],"[46] demonstrating the degree to which European customs had been introduced into, and entrenched within, Rupert's Land.[47] Further bolstering the population of Red River were the wives of these missionaries who not only assisted their husbands in their work, but also used their femininity to assist with civilization. In 1825, Jones' co-worker, Reverend William Cockran, arrived in Red River with his wife Anne, who was at one time

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[43] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 180.
[44] Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers*, 59.
[45] Van Kirk, "The Impact of White Women on the Fur Trade," in *Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada* ed. J.R. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 184.
[46] CMSA C.1/0 [A-92], Jones, "Letters and Journals."
[47] For more info on missionaries in the colonial setting see: Jonathan Anuik, "Forming Civilization at Red River: 19th-Century Missionary Education of Métis and First Nations Children" *Prairie Forum* 32:1 (2006), 1-16; Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002).

considered for the role of schoolmistress in the colony,[48] and in 1829, Jones brought his own wife, Mary, to live in the colony with him.

In addition to these institutional changes that occurred in Red River, material changes supported by the Hudson's Bay Company affected all of Rupert's Land and made it physically easier to further introduce a degree of Europeanization. Improvements in the transportation of goods were evident in the first decades of the nineteenth century as larger and more efficient inland boats known as York Boats increasingly replaced canoes for the transportation of goods and people.[49] These boats, which were more stable than canoes, could carry twice the number of passengers and goods, making it easier for people such as settlers, soldiers, explorers, and fur traders to move throughout Rupert's Land, and to distribute items such as trade goods, weapons, "church bells, window glass, farm implements, and even livestock,"[50] essentially introducing European goods that reminded the settlers and fur traders of the way of life they had left behind.

These business and infrastructure reforms provided important support for non-labouring, middle-class Victorian women to be brought into the Northwest. While it was true that the farmers who had travelled to Rupert's Land in the first decades of the nineteenth century had benefitted from these European institutions and the services provided, they were not thought to require it for their survival. The "hearty constitution" of the Scottish immigrants, almost all labouring farmwives or daughters, was thought to be enough to enable their survival there. This was not the case with Victorian ladies such as

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[48] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Cockran, William," http://www.biographi.ca/EN/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=4358 (accessed 7 August 2012).
[49] Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 159.
[50] Dennis Johnson, *York Boats of the Hudson's Bay Company: Canada's Inland Armada* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2006), 3.

Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave, however, who were thought to require a certain degree of civilization, and the luxuries associated with it, in order for them to be able to remain in the fur trade territories. Hence, it was a significant moment when upper-ranked women, described as "lovely tender exotics," the "English rose," and the "Bluebell of Scotland," were finally brought into Rupert's Land in the 1830s and 1840s. Plant metaphors of this kind served the purpose of connecting these women with their native countries, demonstrating their Otherness and uniqueness from the fur trade, and underscoring critical gender and class distinctions, yet also served the purpose of stressing their delicate Victorian nature and direct connection to home values and society. The Victorian era saw an increase in the transportation and transplantation of exotic plants and seeds throughout the empire for economic and scientific purposes, which, in many ways, enabled Britain's control over its colonial territories.[51] But these plants and flowers required constant attention and specific conditions in order to survive.[52] In much the same way, these "lovely tender exotics" being transplanted into the "soil" of Rupert's Land likewise needed the constant attention of their male protectors and the addition of certain "nutrients," meaning the comforts and luxuries of the civilized world, for their survival. They both introduced a new civil authority, while requiring inordinate material and infrastructure support for their very survival.

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[51] Lucile H. Brockway, "Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens," *American Ethnologist* 6:3 (1979), 453.

[52] For more information on Victorian gardening, see: Frank J. Scott, *The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds* (New York: Appleton & Co, 1870); Anne Wilkinson, *The Victorian Gardener: The Growth of Gardening & The Floral World* (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2006).

In addition to being fragile and dependent like an exotic flower – a marker of a Victorian woman's respectability[53] – the ideal Victorian woman also possessed "four cardinal virtues – piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity," which were critical attributes in the context of the Red River settlement in 1830.[54] A woman's main ability to embody this ideal was through her actions – remaining within the domestic sphere, submitting to her husband's authority, and acting morally circumspect and with propriety. Independence was considered "unnatural" for Victorian middle-class women because it signified "boldness and sexual deviance."[55] Women thus belonged in the private sphere, as the biological differences that existed between men and women were considered natural markers in regards to what women could and could not do. A woman was to remain within the home, and was expected to be a proper daughter, or wife and mother, and in the instances when women were educated, they learned ornamental arts and accomplishments that would complement their position within the home rather than more "practical" skills such as spelling and arithmetic.[56] The constraints, moral structures, and controlled behaviours personified by a "proper" woman rather than the working-class women that populated the Red River colony or the Native woman of the fur trade, then, had obvious importance in the schemes of "improving" Rupert's Land and especially Red River.

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[53] Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 28. For more information on the ideal woman, Victorian femininity, and the separation of the sexes, see: Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Malden: Polity Press, 2000); Janet Dunbar, *The Early Victorian Woman: Some Aspects of her Life, 1837-57* (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1979); Walter E Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957); Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres* (New York: Longman, 1998); Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London: Croom Helm, 1982).
[54] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18:2 (1966), 152.
[55] Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 28.
[56] Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*, 21.

It was these perceptions about Victorian women, their bodies, and their resultant placement in society that contributed to the belief that they were ideal civilizers. Michel Foucault argued that by the eighteenth century, the body was being treated as something "docile that could be subjected, used, transformed, and improved."[57] Bodies were essentially seen in a particular way, and could be used to represent various values and expectations of a specific culture.[58] This was especially true in the Victorian era when women travelled into colonial settings. The whiteness of the Victorian women's skin especially had certain social and racial connotations. A woman's delicate, pale skin suggested her adherence to her role within the domestic, private sphere, and also her class standing – as the whiter and more delicate her skin was, the inference was that she had laboured less during her life and thus set her off in class terms. Further, however, the whiteness of their skin was connected to ideas of race consciousness. The white skin of Victorian women suggested purity and piousness, and increasingly the darker skin of Native women suggested their impropriety and licentiousness. As will be seen, after the arrival of white women, Native women with darker skin were referred to as "bits of circulating copper," and "bits of brown," which not only diminished their status as wives

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[57] Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 180.
[58] David Armstrong, *Political Anatomy of the Body: Medical Knowledge in Britain in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 3. For other works that explore the ways that bodies can represent various ideas, see: Kathy Davis ed., *Embodied Practices: Feminist Perspectives on the Body* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997); Mona Gleason, "Embodied Negotiations: Children's Bodies and Historical Change in Canada, 1930-1960," *Journal of Canadian Studies*: 34:1 (1999), 112-138; Robert Griswold, "The 'Flabby' American: The Body and the Cold War," in *A Shared Experience: Men, Women, and the History of Gender*, eds. Laura McCall and Donald Yacovone (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of their Bodies: Women and their Doctors in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991); Kathy Peiss, "Making Faces: The Cosmetics Industry and the Cultural Construction of Gender, 1890-1930," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, 3rd Ed, eds. Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois (New York: Routledge, 2000), 324-345.

and mothers, but also suggested an itinerant and immoral nature since they were metaphorically transformed and debased into objects of barter and commerce.[59]

As Adele Perry argued in her work *On The Edge of Empire*, white women were seen as the ultimate measure in regards to civilizing the masculine, rough, colonial setting.[60] Since the 1980s, the topic of women, colonialism, and civilization has been undertaken by a number of scholars interested in women's placement throughout the colonial world. As Catherine Hall bluntly pointed out, "women were colonizers too"[61] and thus need to be included within the historical record of colonialism. Historians largely agree that it was the cultural perceptions that existed about women and their bodies that made them such idealized civilizers. The successful placement of middle-class, Victorian women within the private, domestic spheres of England imbued them with both the ability and the authority to construct a British social order in places outside of Europe.[62]

While some women left Europe reluctantly and were not seeking to fulfil a civilizing role, other women were actively trying to relocate from Britain. Some women sought to escape the restrictive moral and gender structures at home as, for some Victorian-

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[59] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 201. See also: Rayna Green, "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in US Women's History,* eds. Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz (New York: Routledge, 1990), 15-21; Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion."

[60] Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 139-201.

[61] Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 18.

[62] Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, 24. See also Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*; Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1992); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995); Kathleen Wilson, "British Women and Empire," in *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850*, *An Introduction*, eds., Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 260-284; Philippa Levine, *Gender and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Nicholas B Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Jean Barman, *Sojourning Sisters: The Lives and Letters of Jessie and Annie McQueen* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

era women, travel offered the opportunity to act independently and escape from the domestic sphere that they were meant to occupy.[63] Modernization and improvements in transportation, such as better roads, railway travel, and steamboats lowered the cost and duration of travel, and also increased its comfort and accessibility for a greater number of people.[64] That being said, travel did not always represent an attempt by women to escape their expected domestic roles in society.

Other women took advantage of their increased ability to move into colonial spaces in order to legitimize their presence both at home and abroad. Antoinette Burton has suggested that British feminists actively sought to move themselves into colonial settings because of political motivations at home, while Myra Rutherdale has drawn attention to the wives of missionaries who left Britain to take up the colonial cause.[65] These women were actively seeking to become involved in colonizing projects because of their sense of racial and class superiority over women in the colonies. Feminists and missionary women alike believed that the attributes they had as nineteenth century European women – domestic, maternal and civilized – legitimized their presence in the colonies and enabled them to save, or improve, their darker sisters.[66]

This study suggests that Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave were, in many respects, "sojourning sisters," to use historian Jean Barman's phrase, who, while not individually seeking to leave their homes in Britain, purposefully upheld the expectations that had been placed upon them as women during the Victorian era, and did not demonstrate behaviour

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[63] Jan Palmowski, "Travels with Baedeker – The Guidebook and the Middle Classes in Victorian and Edwardian Britain," in *Histories of Leisure*, ed. Rudy Koshar (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 115.
[64] Jan Palmowski, "Travels with Baedeker," 105.
[65] Burton, *Burdens of History*; Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God.*
[66] Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God*, 29.

that was contradictory to the roles that had been assigned to them.[67] Their written sources reinforced their positions within Rupert's Land as both proper Victorian women, and delicate "lovely tender exotics" and represented them as acting complicit to the civilizing goals of their husbands, and the British Empire at large. However, their active decision to conform to the restrictions that were placed upon them to be domestic and dependent, (among other things), enabled them to legitimize and strengthen their authority in the fur trade, which then in turn allowed them to essentially negotiate their physical and social locations there. Returning to the primary sources left behind by Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave and analysing them in regards to nineteenth century cultural norms and colonialism, essentially "reading beyond [the] words" on the pages, allows for a greater understanding of the women, their experiences, and their actions as Victorian women in Rupert's Land.[68]

Previous historians have used the diaries of Simpson and Finlayson and the letters of Hargrave to showcase the society of the fur trade from a woman's point of view. Excerpts from Simpson's and Finlayson's travel diaries were published in *The Beaver* with an introduction concerning who the authors were, and briefly, why they were in the fur trade.[69] The letters of Letitia Hargrave were collected by Margaret MacLeod and published by the Champlain society in 1947, and represent an important step towards including women in the historical record of the fur trade.[70] More recent historians have also found these personal narratives useful. The basic information that was included in these journals

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[67] Barman, *Sojourning Sisters*, 4-7.
[68] Jennifer Brown and Elizabeth Vibert eds., *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History 2nd Ed* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003).
[69] Grace Lee Nute, "Journey for Frances," *The Beaver* 284 (December 1953) 50-54; (March 1954), 12-17; 285 (Summer 1954), 12-18; Alice M Johnson, "York Boat Journal," *The Beaver* 282 (September 1951) 32-35; (December 1951) 32-37.
[70] Hargrave, *Letters*.

and letters contained important information on the social history of the fur trade. Historians such as Brown and Van Kirk, for instance, used these documents in the context of the declining social position of Native women to help demonstrate the intensification of class and race that was seemingly introduced with the arrival of these European women.[71]

More recently still, historians and literary scholars have returned to the personal narratives written in the early- to mid-nineteenth century to showcase more about the women who wrote these narratives themselves, and the places into which these women moved. In this thesis I have attempted to take the texts left behind by these women, and put them into a different historical context than that used by previous historians in order to better understand the sources, and the women who left them behind. By doing so, this thesis redirects light on the actions and efforts of the women as they physically and socially placed themselves in Rupert's Land. Scholars who have analysed the unpublished writings of Victorian-era women have drawn attention to the reasons that women were writing, what they were writing about, and the fact that these women were writing purposefully – meaning that they included and excluded certain information, and wrote with a specific audience in mind. The documents left behind by Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave, while presented in different formats, can be analysed according to such purposes, especially if placed in the genre of travel writing. Travel documents, especially those left behind by women, were important documents in the colonization process. Travel records typically connected an audience in Europe with the colonial space that was being moved into, and made the space more "European," with their descriptions of the physical landscape. Travel writing was an increasingly popular method for Victorian women to relate their travel

[71] Brown, *Strangers in Blood*; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*.

experiences due to increased education, as well as improvements in modes of communication, printing, and more convenient writing tools.[72]

One example of how historians have analysed the ways women identified with their landscapes through their personal narratives, and the ways that they responded to the foreign land that they had moved into, can be found in *Early Voices: Portraits of Canada by Women Writers, 1639-1914*, which includes excerpts of Hargrave's letters, and analyses how the letters provide information not only on the physical environment, but the expectations placed upon women such as Hargrave as a wife and mother.[73] This thesis enlarges understandings of these expectations and also develops the view that women like Hargrave used her writings to her advantage and proactively played with expectations placed upon her, especially by using her own body as an instrument of colonization. *The Small Details of Life: Twenty Diaries by Women in Canada, 1830-1996* includes Simpson's diary with an introduction by S. Leigh Matthews. Matthews attempts to read Simpson's diary "within the context of the tradition of Canadian women's diary writing," in order to demonstrate more information about the author, Simpson, as a woman in the fur trade, and explores questions concerning her decision to pen a personal narrative, and the

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[72] For more information on the genre of travel writing, see: Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* 2nd Ed (London: Routledge, 2008); Margaret Hunt, "Racism, Imperialism, and the Traveller's Gaze in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of British Studies* 32:4 (1993), 333-357; Nicola J. Watson ed., *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth Century Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Tim Youngs, ed., *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces* (London: Anthem Press, 2006); Ian MacLaren "Touring at High Speed: Fur-Trade Landscapes in the Writings of Frances and George Simpson," *Musk-Ox* 34 (1986), 78-87; James Buzard: "A Continent of Pictures: Reflections on the 'Europe' of Nineteenth Century Tourists" *PMLA* 108:1 (1993), 30-44; Jan Palmowski "Travels with Badederk"; Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).

[73] Mary Downie, *Early Voices: Portraits of Canada by Women Writers, 1639-1914* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2010), 291-294.

ways in which she wrote about her experience in the fur trade.[74] This thesis focuses more directly on the journal of one of the earliest European women in the fur trade to show how Simpson used her writing, and included information in her journal, to establish and legitimize her place as a woman of a certain class and race in the fur trade.

Helen M. Buss argues that the journals of Simpson and Finlayson, which were "once thought valuable only as social history," have considerable value to literary scholars as well as historians.[75] She compared the content and style of Simpson's and Finlayson's journals, and used a literary framework to discuss the ways in which the journals fit into the genre of travel writing.[76] In another contribution of literary analysis, Kathryn Carter's Ph.D. thesis, "A Contingency of Words: Diaries in English by Women in Canada 1830-1915," demonstrated how these travel documents could be referred to as "journal letters," a form of diary that was written in various instalments, but addressed to a particular audience.[77] Her analysis demonstrated the ways that Simpson and Finlayson included and excluded certain information in order to fulfil a specific purpose – what she identified as an attempt to "maintain their roles as educated women of the British middle class and thereby help to underwrite an imperial project."[78] Following up on this proposition, this thesis nevertheless suggests the ways that such mandates and expectations not only formed the mould of the writing but gave the women involved greater claim, authority, power, and agency in their own surroundings.

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[74] Kathryn Carter, *The Small Details of Life: Twenty Diaries by Women in Canada, 1830-1996* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 38.
[75] Helen M. Buss "'The Dear Domestic Circle': Framework for the Literary Study of Women's Personal Narrative in Archival Collections," *Studies in Canadian Literature,* 14:1 (1989) http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/scl/article/view/8091/9148 (accessed 12 October, 2010).
[76] Buss, "'The Dear Domestic Circle'."
[77] Kathryn Carter, "A Contingency of Words: Diaries in English by Women in Canada 1830-1915," Ph.D. Thesis, (University of Alberta, 1997), 51.
[78] Kathryn Carter, "A Contingency of Words," 80-81.

The first chapter of this thesis focuses on the travel journal that was left behind by Frances Simpson, and argues that she chose to act in certain ways that allowed her to occupy a specific place within the fur trade. While her actions conformed to the expectations that were placed upon her as a Victorian woman, and thus served the purpose of bringing forth the ideas and values of Victorian England, the writing of a travel journal that documented her opinions of the fur trade and her actions within it, demonstrated her personal desire to act in ways that were deemed appropriate for a Victorian woman, and thus helped to entrench and legitimize the placement of Victorian women in the fur trade. This was done despite the fact that by fulfilling the expectations placed upon her as a frail, delicate, and weak woman, she was ultimately unable to survive the rigours of her environment and was soon evacuated to England, ironically, for her health.

The second chapter examines the writings of Isobel Finlayson and Letitia Hargrave, who travelled westwards a decade after Simpson, and similarly recorded information about their time in the fur trade. The information included in the travel journal of Finlayson, and the letters of Hargrave likewise contain information regarding the ways that these women acted while in the colonial setting, but more importantly, demonstrate the ways that these women were able to take advantage of the place that had been created by Simpson's earlier arrival and departure from Rupert's Land. These women made conscious efforts to place themselves within the social hierarchy that existed, and specifically chose to act as proper Victorian women, despite being transplanted into a completely foreign, and harsh, environment. Their writings suggest that they negotiated a number of compromises in their settings, incorporated greater material infrastructure around themselves (both in reality and

in their writing) and, in the end, found a more permanent place for themselves in the colonial setting.

The third and final chapter of this thesis further utilizes the writings of these women in order to analyse the assumptions of frailty and poor health in Victorian women. It will demonstrate that the expectations that were placed on women to be "lovely tender exotics" within the wilderness of Rupert's Land essentially made it impossible for them to survive there for any length of time, and that their actions in fitting into the spaces that had been created for them by their male contemporaries could, and did, throw up challenges to their long-term tenure in these settings. At the same time, such expectations gave these women greater agency and in some cases the ability to remove themselves from their physical and social positions in Rupert's Land when they saw fit.

Frances Simpson, Isobel Finlayson, and Letitia Hargrave conformed well to Victorian mores and gender roles, and fulfilled the expectations that had been placed upon them by their male contemporaries and Victorian society in general. Despite having increased freedoms as Victorian-era travellers, by moving into a space where they easily could have acted differently than was expected of them in England, these women purposefully chose to act in certain ways, and documented their experiences and actions in ways that pleased their audiences viewing them within Rupert's Land. By presenting themselves to their male contemporaries in the fur trade and their audience in Europe as proper Victorian ladies in both their actions and their appearance, Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave were able to legitimize their presence and authority within the fur trade. Their writing allowed them to demonstrate a degree of agency while still upholding their

positions as Victorian women, providing them with the means and opportunity to negotiate for themselves the nature and duration of their tenure in Rupert's Land.

Chapter One:

Legitimizing the Presence of Lovely Tender Exotics: Frances Simpson's Travel Journal, 1830

The 1830s saw a significant change in the society of Red River and the fur trade with the arrival of Frances Simpson, the new wife of Governor George Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company. A true "lovely tender exotic,"[1] of the nineteenth century, she became one of the first white, Victorian-era ladies to travel the inland route from London, England to York Factory, via Montreal. As a refined, educated, and upper-class woman used to societal comforts and family connections, Simpson seemed an odd marriage choice for the governor of the Hudson's Bay Company who prided himself on his ability to "rough it" in the wilderness of Rupert's Land,[2] and who, only several years prior, had held the opinion that women from the civilized world made it "quite impossible" for a fur trader to do his duty because of the distractions that she would provide.[3] By the 1830s, however, attitudes towards the presence of white ladies in the fur trade had changed. In keeping with nineteenth century ideas regarding social rectitude and colonialism, certain fur trading gentlemen such as George Simpson viewed these women as not only being crucial to their personal happiness, but also as being important agents in creating a European space within the North American fur trade.

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[1] James Hargrave, *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, ed. G. P. de T. Glazebrook (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1938), 311.
[2] James Raffan, *Emperor of the North: Sir George Simpson and the Remarkable Story of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2007), 243; Elizabeth Vibert, "Real Men Hunt Buffalo: Masculinity, Race and Class in British Fur Traders' Narratives," *Gender & History* 8.1 (1996), 9.
[3] Sylvia Van Kirk, "The Impact of White Women on the Fur Trade," in *Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada* ed. J.R. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 187.

The impact that these women were perceived to have had on fur trade "society," has been extensively analysed through the lenses of class, social, and racial studies by historians such as Jennifer Brown, Sarah Carter, Frits Pannekoek, Sylvia Van Kirk, and others.[4] New fur trading wives such as Frances Simpson caused such a stir within the fur trade society because of their uniqueness, and the fact that they were among the first white ladies to be imported into Rupert's Land. Historians have suggested that the different societies that existed within the fur trade were challenged by the racial and class expectations they redefined with their arrival. Beyond the emblematic status in hardened social distinctions, the same women were expected to actively work in their environment. Simpson's main function in Rupert's Land was to "perform a wife's most sacred and hallowed duty,"[5] by being a submissive and loving wife to George Simpson, and to use her femininity as idealized by Victorian society to introduce an "air of high life and gaiety" to the colony of Red River.[6] By carrying out this role, Simpson had, without question, a civilizing mandate upon the environment and people of the fur trade. And while Simpson may have not identified herself as a colonizer or a civilizer, she purposefully upheld the class and racial expectations that had been placed upon her, introducing, by example, the customs and values of English middle-class society into the fur trade.

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[4] Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1980); Sylvia Van Kirk, "The Impact of White Women on Fur Trade Society,"; Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Brian Gallagher, "A Re-examination of Race, Class and Society in Red River," *Natives Studies Review* 4: 1&2 (1988), 25-65; Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing); Frits Pannekoek, "The Anglican Church and the Disintegration of Red River Society, 1818-1870," in *The West and the Nation: Essays in Honour of W. L. Morton* eds., Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd, 1976), 72-90.

[5] HBCA E.12/5, Isobel Finlayson Notebook 1840, 2.

[6] Hargrave, *Hargrave Correspondence*, 61.

This chapter will analyse the travel journal that Frances Simpson wrote during her sojourn in Rupert's Land in order to examine how, and why, she acted in certain ways, exploring whether she did so passively, or whether she displayed a degree of agency through her actions as a Victorian traveller and a colonizer. While moving westwards, Simpson included information in her travel journal that demonstrated an attempt to duplicate the way that she would have lived her life in England. By relaying information about her time spent in the fur trade back to an audience in England, including examples of the way she believed was appropriate to act, her opinions of the people she came into contact with, and her impression of the environment and nature of Rupert's Land, Simpson certainly acted in ways that were expected of her as a Victorian lady, and contributed to the "improvement" of the society of the fur trade. However, one must keep in mind that as a Victorian lady moving westwards, Simpson had a degree of freedom that her contemporaries in England would not have enjoyed, meaning that it is significant that she continued to conform to the expectations of respectability and domesticity that were placed upon her by that society. By purposefully acting in ways that were expected of her, despite being free from the censure of her family and friends, and by relaying information about her time in the fur trade back to an audience, Simpson was able to legitimize and strengthen her position, and the position of future Victorian women, within the fur trade.

The arrival of Frances Simpson and Catherine McTavish (the European bride of Chief Factor John George McTavish) in Rupert's Land in 1830 provided a significant change to the fabric of the fur trade societies as they were the first white women to be

formally and legitimately brought into Rupert's Land by fur traders for centuries.[7] The London Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company had forbidden the passage of white women to the Northwest as early as 1686 after an attempt was made by Governor Henry Sergeant to bring his wife and her companion, Mrs. Maurice, to Albany (on the Albany River mouth in present-day Ontario) in 1685. The expectation was that white women would be too much of a burden for fur traders because of the "harsh climate and primitive conditions," that existed in the far northwest,[8] which meant that the multitude of Hudson's Bay Company servants who were married upon entering the service were only permitted to see their European wives when their time in the fur trade was over – which was typically five years – or if they were granted permission to travel back to Europe to visit.[9]

That is not to say that European fur traders were without female contact for these five years. It is true that the Hudson's Bay Company had not been interested in colonization, and thus was not interested in fur traders bringing out European wives to start families in the Northwest, instead focusing its attention on economic resource extraction. However, sexual relations with Aboriginal women, while at first forbidden, were later encouraged by the members of the Hudson's Bay Company for the usefulness they served in forming trade alliances with Native groups, even if the fur traders had wives and families in Europe.[10] While it was initially the chief factors of the posts who were permitted to take Native women as wives, these rules were eventually relaxed, and even fur trading servants

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[7] There were some white women who travelled into the fur trade on their own initiative to follow their husbands. For more information, see Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 175-6.
[8] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 173.
[9] Suzanne Rigg, *Men of Spirit and Enterprise: Scots and Orkneymen in the Hudson's Bay Company 1780-1821* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2011), 129.
[10] This "double family" phenomenon was very common in the fur trade. For more information on the women left behind while men joined the fur trade, see Judith Hudson Beattie and Helen M Buss eds., *Undelivered Letters to Hudson's Bay Company Men on the Northwest Coast of America, 1830-57* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003).

were permitted to marry Aboriginal women according to the custom of the country, also known as *à la façon du pays*. And indeed, even into the nineteenth century, certain fur traders were encouraged to forgo marriage to a white woman and instead form an alliance, either with church sanction (if possible) or *à la façon du pays* with Native women for the benefit that they were perceived to carry in regards to the operation of the fur trade.

With an understanding of the important roles that Native women occupied, and of the societies created within the fur trade based on the unions between fur traders and Native women, it becomes all the more curious that certain fur traders sought to bring white women into Rupert's Land, especially fur traders who had been engaged in country marriages throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century. However, as noted previously, a degree of Europeanization had been ongoing throughout Rupert's Land that enabled certain fur traders by the 1830s, such as George Simpson (who had long expressed prejudices against Native women) to marry a white woman and introduce her into Rupert's Land, firstly for distinctly personal reasons in affirming class status, and also because of their desire to assist with the Europeanization and civilization of the fur trade.

In terms of his personal motivations, George Simpson's bringing a bride into Rupert's Land from England firstly boosted his own status and prestige amongst certain fur traders, and served the purpose of further entrenching the class system of the fur trade, and, in this respect, a European way of life. As the governor of the Northern Department, and later the entire Company, it is likely that George Simpson believed he needed a marker of his position, and thus sought a way to distinguish himself further from the other gentlemen of the fur trade. It is quite possible that George Simpson believed that a white wife might provide to him greater authority with which to make unilateral decisions to improve the fur

trade's more efficient and profitable operation. As previously mentioned, the economic model of Hudson's Bay Company was similar to that of a "patriarchal family consisting of a married couple, their children, and workers or servants," where the act of marriage was capable of conveying a certain degree of status, separating the position and standing of the "patriarch" from that of his wife and children.[11] In regards to the Company, the governor was top of the social hierarchy with "post patriarchs" – the chief factors – below him, and then finally the multitude of fur trading servants.[12] Given the ultimately metropolitan direction of the Company as dictated by the London Committee, it was important that the inland governor had unquestioned, absolute authority. As previously mentioned, the rigid rules concerning the country marriages between fur traders and Native women was relaxed in regards to the officer class of the Hudson's Bay Company, meaning that through marriage, these men were able to achieve a certain status that their underlings were not. However, as it gradually became common for fur traders of all levels to take Native women as wives *à la façon du pays*, marriage to an Aboriginal woman could no longer be used as a means of defining the position of the chief factor above the fur trading servants.

Heather Rollason Driscoll argues that one of the reasons certain fur trading gentlemen married white women was to maintain their status within the social hierarchy of the Hudson's Bay Company. As marriage to Native women became common for all fur traders, it became necessary to find a new way of distinguishing the "patriarch" of the fur trade from the servants and lower-ranked officers, and one of the ways to do this was by

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[11] Heather Rollason Driscoll, "'A Most Important Chain of Connection': Marriage in the Hudson's Bay Company," in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, eds. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens, and R. C. Macleod (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 2001), 83.
[12] Rollason Driscoll, "'A most important chain of connection'," 85-87.

importing a British bride into Rupert's Land.[13] Frits Pannekoek has suggested that another reason for the importation of white women was that a general understanding of respectability regarding marriages was introduced by the newly established clergy in the Red River colony in the 1820s which spurred some fur trade gentlemen to "turn off" their Native wives and look for more suitable marriage partners so that they might experience a greater degree of acceptance within the pseudo-European society emerging in Red River.[14]

It was not just the fact that certain fur traders in the 1830s had white wives while other fur traders did not. A white wife boosted a fur trade gentlemen's status because the mere physical act of bringing out such a woman significantly marked a fur trader's great monetary wealth and social status. Introducing these women into the fur trade, and more importantly, supporting them in Rupert's Land and keeping them happy, required a significant outlay of wealth. As will be mentioned below, fur traders such as George Simpson sought to make his English wife as comfortable as possible, which in many cases meant duplicating an English way of life, and importing European goods into the fur trade, essentially "introduc[ing] a system of extravagance into the place [Red River] that is followed by all that can afford it."[15] The types of goods that were brought into the fur trade firstly to work towards increasing the Europeanization of the people and places of the fur trade, and later to support the newly arrived white women would have undoubtedly amazed a post's staff. These material possessions, which could be spread relatively easily throughout Rupert's Land with the use of York Boats, could include carpets, curtains, rugs,

[13] Rollason Driscoll, "'A Most Important Chain of Connection'," 97.
[14] Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock*, 80.
[15] Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock*, 82.

"expensive carioles," first rate pianofortes,[16] as well as fashion magazines, jewellery, combs, brushes, and soap.[17]

Connected to the increase of European material goods in Rupert's Land was a more general introduction of European values and customs that made it possible for Victorian women to be introduced into Rupert's Land in the first place. By the early 1820s, following the Hudson's Bay Company-Northwest Company merger in 1821, much of the rough practices and cutthroat violence of the fur trade was eliminated. The growing population in Red River made it appear increasingly "civilized." Moreover, institutions such as churches and schools, and a European missionary population independent from the Hudson's Bay Company now existed. Certain fur trading gentlemen who had formed "many tender ties," with their Native wives – meaning they were engaged in monogamous and lasting country marriages – decided to settle in Red River with the civilized comforts and agricultural life prominent there in mind, while still remaining within the territory of the fur trade itself. And Native girls – the daughters of fur trade gentlemen – were increasingly being sent to Red River to receive a proper female education that made them appear increasingly "'quite English' in their manner."[18]

Despite this, there was still a degree of prejudice exercised towards certain fur trade daughters as marriageable material, and some fur trade gentlemen chose to remain bachelors until a suitable white wife could be obtained, even if such a union took place in

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[16] Letitia Hargrave, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, ed. Margaret Arnett MacLeod (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), 62. The actual cost of shipping these items out is not known, but it is suggested that in 1840, a piano cost £50, and that the cost of a European way of life in the fur trade could be "much alarm[ing] and dispirit[ing]" for fur trade gentlemen, see: Hargrave, *Letters*, 80.
[17] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties,* 101.
[18] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 172.

Britain and had to be maintained from a distance.[19] The suitable woman, described as a "perfection unmixed with any alloy,"[20] and as a pure and "pious creature,"[21] was, and continued to be preferred. Traits such as these have been used by historians such as Antoinette Burton and Adele Perry to demonstrate how certain women during the Victorian era were idealized, and with their moving into areas of the Empire, became crucial harbingers of civilization, oftentimes regardless of how physically or emotionally unsuited they were to the environment into which they were moving.[22]

The perception of the women who travelled to Rupert's Land during the Victorian era was that they embodied the essence of civilized life, and that they were capable of transferring notions of civilization into Red River and Rupert's Land with their bodily presence. While these women may not have identified themselves as civilizers of the fur trade, their actions and their appearances expressed the notion that they were adherents to the ideas expressed in the Victorian "Cult of True Womanhood."[23] Their Otherness from the Native, Metis, and lower-classed labouring women in the fur trade resulted in them being portrayed as exotic, delicate flowers, "torn from [their] parent bed,"[24] a cruel

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[19] Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock*, 80.
[20] Hargrave, *Letters*, 57
[21] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Simpson, Frances Ramsay (Simpson, Lady Simpson)," http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=38309 (accessed 14 February 2011).
[22] Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). See also: Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1992); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York and London Routledge, 1995); Kathleen Wilson, "British Women and Empire," in *Women's History: Britain, 1700-1850*, *An Introduction*, eds. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 260-284; Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); Philippa Levine, *Gender and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Nicholas B Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).
[23] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18:2 (1966), 152.
[24] Hargrave, *Correspondence*, 311.

measure perhaps, and indeed, shocking to certain fur traders, yet a necessary burden for colonial Britain. Women such as Simpson who "embodied the civilizing attributes of a Victorian lady,"[25] were believed to have the power to herald "improved standards of morality and gentility" within the fur trade.[26] Indeed, to stress the impact that Frances Simpson's appearance had upon certain fur trading gentlemen, Chief Factor John Stuart described Frances Simpson in a letter:

> The very first sight of her on landing at Bas de la Rivière strongly reminded me of the Picture Milton has drawn of our first Mother – Grace was in all her steps – heaven in her Eye – In all her Dignity & love, while everything I have seen of her since – seems to denote her such as first Lord Lyttleton represents his first Lady to have been – "polite as all her life in courts had been – Yet good as she the world had never seen."[27]

Before she even had the opportunity to act or speak, Simpson's presence alone was enough to recall to the minds of certain fur traders the image of "our first Mother," a reference to Eve in all her physical and moral perfection prior to man's fall from grace in John Milton's poem, "Paradise Lost."[28] Such a praise of her appearance and assumed character positioned Simpson next to the idealized nineteenth-century woman, who was expected to be "modest, submissive, educated in the genteel and domestic arts, supportive of her husband's efforts, uncomplaining, a perfect wife and mother, and an example to all."[29] The connection between Simpson and "our first Mother," not only demonstrated how Simpson was perceived to be pure and pious, but also stressed the expectation that she would soon fill her expected domestic role as a submissive and dutiful wife and mother. Her presence

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[25] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Simpson, Frances Ramsay."
[26] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 187.
[27] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 187.
[28] See John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Dennis Danielson, Parallel Prose (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2012), 354-355 for an example of the way that Eve was described by her male contemporary, Adam.
[29] Sandra L. Myres, *Westering Women and the Frontier Experience 1800-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 6.

and assumed character convinced Stuart that Simpson was as polite as if she had spent her life in court, (and likewise had all of the accomplishments that would be expected of a woman of court) yet was gracious and lovely, and stressed the idea that a woman such as Simpson had never been seen in the fur trade, nor in the world as a whole.

Because of the centuries of traditions that had been set by the policies of the Hudson's Bay Company, and the degree of familiarity that fur traders had with Native women, Frances Simpson's arrival in Rupert's Land was surprising and noteworthy because it broke with so many preexisting social customs. Governor George Simpson travelled to England in 1829 with his close friend Chief Factor John George McTavish, ostensibly on furlough for health reasons, but seemingly in search of a suitable Victorian lady to marry. George Simpson's general displeasure with the idea of marrying Native or mixed-blood women could be viewed as early as 1822 when he sought to disengage himself from an earlier country wife, Betsey Sinclair, the mixed-blood daughter of late Chief Factor William Sinclair. When he referred to her, George Simpson often called Betsey Sinclair "my article," or "my Japan helpmate," and showed a general lack of interest that historian John Galbraith argued "cannot be explained simply in terms of the general attitudes of the fur trade. The woman was indeed an 'article' that has lost its value to him…"[30] Van Kirk suggested that his ambivalence towards Native women was due in part to the fact that he had not served a real apprenticeship in Rupert's Land, and therefore had not been subjected to the traditional socialization process that many other fur traders had received, resulting in him seeing many women as mere "Indian mistress[es]," rather

[30] John Galbraith, *The Little Emperor: Governor Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976), 69-70.

than the country wives that they were.[31] It has been argued that George Simpson had been looking to marry a proper Victorian lady as early as 1824, based upon his behaviour while at Red River where he attempted to act like an "exemplary batchelor [sic]," and shun contact with Native women.[32] Galbraith has further argued that the more involved George Simpson became in his duties as governor, the more he sought a spouse that would "contribute to the kind of social life appropriate to a governor and provide the legitimate children who would carry on his line."[33] At this time, George Simpson's correspondence with Andrew Colville – an old friend and member of the London Committee – also suggested that George Simpson was getting into the "marrying way," as he sought advice on whether he should marry, or travel to Columbia, with the result being Colville advising George Simpson in 1825 that he should refrain from marrying an English woman until his "business gets into more complete order."[34]

Despite this apparent concern with his reputation and his seeming aversion towards forming a lasting union with Native and mixed-blood women, historians have noted that George Simpson continued to be engaged in what most in the fur trade country believed were country marriages. While George Simpson had several illegitimate children in Britain, his first recorded liaison in fur trade country that resulted in mixed-blood offspring was with the previously mentioned Betsey Sinclair. Galbraith argued that while George Simpson accepted paternity of Betsey Sinclair's daughter, their relationship hardly qualified as a country marriage, though when George Simpson tired of the woman, he did make sure that her future would be taken care of according to the custom of "turning off,"

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[31] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 161.
[32] Van Kirk, "The Impact of White Women on Fur Trade Society," 188.
[33] Galbraith, *The Little Emperor*, 75.
[34] Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 125.

Native wives.[35] "Turning off" Native and mixed-blood women had been the normal way of providing for a Native woman when a fur trader's time in the interior was over. In these instances, fur traders attempted to either find a new spouse for the woman (if she could not be absorbed back into her tribe as a full-blooded Native woman might be able to) or were pressured to make financial obligations to her.[36]

The second woman who became attached to George Simpson was Margaret Taylor, in 1825-26. Margaret Taylor, daughter of George Taylor, the sloop master at York, had been "widely admired, not only for [her] beauty, but for [her] 'civilized' womanly qualities."[37] However, especially in the early years of their relationship, George Simpson referred to her as a "commodity," ignoring her praised womanly qualities, and suggesting that she was there for little more than sexual gratification. That being said, it has been suggested by 1828 that their union began to approximate a traditional country marriage, as the governor took her with him on some of his trans-continental journeys, and sought to make sure she was comfortable at Bas de la Rivière when he departed on furlough in 1829.[38] Unfortunately for "Mrs. Simpson," as she was called by Chief Factor John Stuart, George Simpson's placement of Margaret Taylor at Bas de la Rivière was done in order to remove her from his society, and to make way for the successful completion of his marital pursuits in England where he and his close friend, John George McTavish, both sought to find proper Victorian, and in this sense, white, ladies to marry.

George Simpson initially had great difficulty in finding what he considered to be a suitable prospect for marriage, and indeed, had written to John George McTavish inquiring

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[35] Galbraith, *The Little Emperor*, 69.
[36] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 50-51.
[37] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 106.
[38] Van Kirk, "The Impact of White Women on Fur Trade Society," 189.

whether his friend had a "fair cousin or acquaintance likely to suit an invalid like me."[39] The degree to which these men, the highest of the gentlemen of the fur trade, were uncomfortable with British society and were "ill at ease in the intricacies of genteel courtship," was reflected in the correspondence between the two men while in Europe.[40] John George McTavish, who was reportedly "shy with the fair," and out of practice with wooing young women (possibly owing to the fact that he had been engaged in a country marriage for over twenty years[41]) needed to be encouraged by his friend, who suggested that John George McTavish "muster courage [as] 'a faint heart never won a fair lady.'"[42] Fortunately for the two men, their difficulties did not persist. On 22 February 1830, John George McTavish married Catherine Turner of Aberdeenshire, Scotland. For his part, George Simpson's furlough took him to his former home near Inverness to visit family, and shortly after arriving there, he was happy to report to John George McTavish, "would you believe it? I am in love."[43] Mere days after John George McTavish had married, George Simpson married his own ideal fair lady, found at his uncle's house in London. Frances Simpson, his much younger cousin, appeared to have all of the necessary requirements for a wife who would boost his status and help to bring a degree of European civilization into

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[39] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, *185*.
[40] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 183.
[41] Much like George Simpson, John George McTavish had a country wife and family prior to leaving for England in 1829. He had been engaged in a marriage *à la façon du pays* with his country wife, Nancy McKenzie for over twenty years, and the couple had seven children together. There was no question about this union being an official country marriage. McTavish left his Native family at York Factory when he departed on furlough without informing them of his intention to marry in Europe. Upon his return, he left the responsibility of informing his wife that their marriage was over to other fur traders. The improper and callous manner in which he abandoned his wife and family, which was completely out of touch with the proper tradition of "turning off" a Native wife caused a significant amount of backlash against him from other fur traders. For more information on McTavish's country marriage see: *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "McKenzie, Nancy (McTavish; Le Blanc)," http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=38200 (accessed 11 July 2012); *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "McTavish, John George," http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=3555 (accessed 12 July 2012).
[42] HBCA B.135/c/2, Inward Correspondence, Moose Factory, 1746-1864, 33d.
[43] HBCA B.135/c/2, Inward Correspondence, 35d.

the fur trade. She was the daughter of a successful London merchant with connections to the Hudson's Bay Company, and was "brought up with all the accomplishments and graces expected of a Victorian lady."[44] The Simpsons were married 24 February 1830, and after a short honeymoon in Tunbridge Wells, prepared to embark on their journey to Rupert's Land.

Information on the early-married life of Frances Simpson and of her journey from London to Rupert's Land has been preserved in a notebook that recorded her experiences from 4 March 1830 until 25 August 1830. Simpson's travel diary can be referred to as a "journal letter," meaning that it was written in various instalments with the intention of sending it to family and friends in England. The finalized version of the notebook as it was presented to her audience in England was almost certainly a copy created from rough notes taken during the duration of the journey. While the closing page of her journal was dated the same day as her last diary entry, "the neatness and uniformity of her journal writing…prove[d] that it could not be the original hastily composed by campfires."[45] The journal letter, written in various stages, had been a popular means of sharing travel information with loved ones at home, particularly in cases where a sea voyage occurred, as there were few opportunities to send letters home regularly.

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[44] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Simpson, Frances Ramsay."
[45] Kathryn Carter, "A Contingency of Words: Diaries in English by Women in Canada 1830-1915," Ph.D. Thesis (University of Alberta, 1997), 77. As will be mentioned in the following chapter, Finlayson's journal was likewise a copy of notes, as she began her journal in 1840, but ended her narrative in 1843.

That Simpson meant for her journal to be read by her "dear domestic circle"[46] in England was demonstrated by her addressing her readers directly in her final passage recorded on 25 August 1830:

> I shall lay aside my pen: trusting that such of my friends as may take the trouble of perusing the foregoing unconnected Memoranda, will examine them with an indulgent eye; and as they must know that this is my first essay at committing my ideas, or the result of my observations to paper except in the form of a familiar note or letter, I feel assured they will excuse the style, and small degree of merit they possess – it is my intention however, to continue this narrative (if it deserves that name) during my residence in the Arctic Regions, and hope as it progresses, that it will acquire a greater degree of interest.[47]

It can also be realized from the content that was included in her sister's travel journal recorded in Rupert's Land a decade later. Isobel Simpson (who is one of the subjects of the following chapter) married Duncan Finlayson in 1838, travelled to Rupert's Land in 1840, and penned travel journal almost identical to her sister's. Finlayson's notebook contained much of the same content as Simpson's, and the format and Finlayson's attempt to "one up" her sister's earlier account demonstrated the degree to which Simpson's journal had been perused by her family in England.[48]

From the very beginning of her travel journal, Simpson posed as the idealized Victorian lady. She was delicate, (weak, even), completely dependent upon her husband, and used her travel journal to demonstrate her adherence to, and acceptance of, her role as a Victorian woman. The impact that her removal to Rupert's Land would have on her was foreshadowed in the first sentence of her travel journal when she wrote, "on the 4th of

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[46] Helen M. Buss "'The Dear Domestic Circle': Framework for the Literary Study of Women's Personal Narrative in Archival Collections," *Studies in Canadian Literature,* 14:1 (1989), http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/scl/article/view/8091/9148 (accessed 12 October, 2010).
[47] HBCA D.6/4, Frances Simpson Journal 1830, 160-161.
[48] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook. For more information on Finlayson, see following chapter.

March I arose from by Bed, at 5 AM for the first time in my life, with an aching heart and a mind agitated by the various emotions of Grief, Fear and Hope," as she left for her journey to North America.[49] Whether the content was completely factual or exaggerated in some way, the travel journal helped to inform her readers of the space that she had travelled to. According to Mary Louise Pratt, travel records, which could be left behind by women or men, included information that was meant to be amusing or informative for the reader.

> Travel books…gave European reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized…they created a sense of curiosity, excitement, adventure, and even moral fervour about European expansionism.[50]

The typical reports that women wrote about the American colonial settings included:

> A combination of detailed factual information on geography, climate, population, local culture, and industry with the personable autobiographical style of a genteel Englishwoman, who would impress her audience with her high standards of taste and intellectual accomplishments, while maintaining an amused tolerance of the strange spectacles of a ruder culture, a sensitive eye for the grandeurs of nature, and an optimistic attitude to the future possibilities of the land.[51]

Narratives such as the travel journal written by Simpson in an intelligible format easily read by an audience created, essentially, a travel handbook for Victorian women in the fur trade. Handbooks on proper etiquette and behaviour had long been used to educate women during the Victorian era, and official travel handbooks had been used in the first

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[49] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 1. What Simpson actually understood about life in the fur trade is not certain. Her family and the mercantile business that her father was part of had connections to the fur trade, so she likely knew of some of the hardships that existed there. It is unlikely that during her short engagement and honeymoon, however, that she was fully prepared for a life in Rupert's Land that would end up being hard and lonely.

[50] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* 2nd Ed. (London: Routledge, 2008), 3.

[51] Buss, "'Dear Domestic Circle'."

half of the nineteenth-century to give travellers "up-to-date and precise information about sites and tourist infrastructure."[52] A narrative such as the one left behind by Simpson, which was penned by an author carrying out a "sacred role" as a wife, supplied information about the acceptable behaviours and actions that a woman such as herself could employ in order to make her time there as comfortable as possible. "For the majority of travellers, the guidebook 'domesticated' and familiarized a foreign environment not simply by providing information, but by appealing to, and strengthening, preconceived cultural norms."[53] Simpson was undoubtedly aware of the fact that as a Victorian woman travelling from home, her behaviour could be regarded as suspect, as some Victorian female travellers left home to exercise independence, and thus, in many cases, freed themselves from the domestic sphere assigned to them.[54] As Simpson travelled with her husband, there was little chance that she would be able to escape from her domestic role, and indeed, her travel journal reinforced her acceptance of her status and position as a proper Victorian woman within in the wilderness of Rupert's Land, serving as an example and, in a sense, serving as a moral guidebook for any future Victorian women in the fur trade.

Likely the most important way that Simpson sought to entrench her position of authority within the fur trade was by acting in a manner that was expected of her as an adherent to the "Cult of True Womanhood." She did this by consistently reporting her deference to her husband's decisions and actions. Simpson made clear reference in her

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[52] Barbara Schaff, "John Murray's *Handbooks to Italy:* Making Tourism Literary," in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth Century Culture*, ed. Nicola J. Watson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 106.
[53] Jan Palmowski, "Travels with Baedeker – The Guidebook and the Middle Classes in Victorian and Edwardian Britain," in *Histories of Leisure*, ed. Rudy Koshar (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 111.
[54] Jan Palmowski, "Travels with Baedeker," 115.

journal to the importance of her husband's business over her own personal comfort at many times during the trip, and thus acted in ways that supported, rather than challenged his decisions. George Simpson himself had previously commented on the problem of "pettycoat [sic] politicians," – the Metis wives of fur traders – who interfered with their husbands' business decisions,[55] as well as had been of the opinion that for certain fur trading gentlemen, women from the "civilized world" were especially detrimental to the business of the Hudson's Bay Company due to the cost and distractions that they could cause.[56] While it cannot be known if Simpson was aware of the actions of other fur traders' wives, her own actions and behaviour demonstrate for historians a stark contrast to Native women who were married to fur traders. One such example of Simpson displaying her proper wifely duties occurred early in her journey – mere days after departing London. Simpson quickly became violently seasick "to such a degree that I felt at times perfectly indifferent as to whether I lived or died,"[57] and related how her husband was apparently so concerned about her safety that he attempted to bribe the ship's captain $5000.00 to land in Ireland where Simpson could disembark and recover under the supervision of a doctor or clergyman until a member of her family could travel to Ireland to collect her, all the while insisting that George Simpson should "proceed on his journey, which was indispensible."[58]

Simpson's patience and understanding were further tested many other times on the journey. After leaving Montreal, George Simpson made frequent stops at many of the establishments they passed, lengthening the duration of the journey considerably. With such a rushed itinerary there was very little time to spend at these posts in comfort. Indeed,

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[55] Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 128.
[56] Van Kirk, "The Impact of White Women on the Fur Trade," 187.
[57] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 7-8.
[58] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 6-7.

upon reaching Fort Alexander, for example, the party dined at the fort, but then departed at sunset to encamp "about a mile below the Establishment," likely for an early start in the morning.[59] The sheer number of Hudson's Bay Company establishments that had to be visited also had an impact on the speed of their travel and the hours that George Simpson insisted that their party keep. On 30 May for example, Simpson was awoken by her husband's "unwelcome signal of 'Lève, Lève, Lève,' and found on inquiry the time to be a few minutes after 12,"[60] while on 6 June, Simpson remarked on how "Mr. Simpson being anxious to get to Fort Garry (about 100 miles distant) today gave his usual 'Lève, Lève, Lève,' at 12..."[61] Unlike her husband, Simpson apparently had great difficulty falling asleep once the canoe was in motion, and although she was clearly exhausted from the long hours, her journal entries never directly addressed displeasure with George Simpson's decision to move at a break-neck speed.[62] Indeed, rather than complain, Simpson often credited her husband with having alleviated her suffering a great deal by providing for his young wife "every comfort that could be obtained," such as "Indian Rubber Shoes, Umbrellas, a thin Oil Cloth as a covering from the rain &c, &c,"[63] items which were undoubtedly welcomed, yet were meagre replacements for the comforts of England that Simpson had left behind.

And indeed, Simpson's mode of travelling was much more comfortable than it would have been for others not of her class standing. Not only did she have certain amenities such as those mentioned above to make her more comfortable, but she and her

[59] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 111.
[60] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 96.
[61] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 111.
[62] Buss, "'Dear Domestic Circle'."
[63] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 145.

husband also travelled with a number of servants.[64] Further, the Europeans were treated with a degree of deference that, to modern readers might seem comical. Officer-gentlemen and their ladies usually lay down in the boats to get a few more hours of sleep after beginning in the early hours of the morning, demonstrating that they did not usually partake in any of the hard work that was needed for travel. As Carolyn Podruchny points out, rituals around labour were well defined in the fur trade, and the upper ranks maintained servants, leisurely pastimes and managerial roles to uphold their social distance from labourers and voyageurs.[65] Simpson's journal demonstrated this. In more than one instance, the travellers came to a portage where the water was too shallow for the canoes to touch the bank. To prevent their feet from getting wet, Simpson and McTavish were carried to shore in the arms of the voyageurs. The true marker of the status of the European gentlemen of the fur trade, however, was the fact that George Simpson and John George McTavish were likewise carried ashore, not in the arms, but on the backs of the "sturdy Canadians which, (as may be supposed) caused a hearty laugh both at and to such of the company as were novices."[66]

On the rare occasion that the party did stop at fur trade posts, Simpson was sure to report the ladylike behaviour of both her and her travelling companion, Catherine McTavish. While their husbands were engaged in business, and their servants were occupied in "washing and cooking, and other necessary arrangements for a continuation of [the] voyage," Simpson would chat, work, read, and draw, while McTavish "amused herself principally in the study of 'Meg Dodds' on Cookery, from which we befitted by

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[64] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 76.
[65] Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 146-149.
[66] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 31.

some delicious cakes she succeeded in making,"[67] displaying to the men and women at the fort, and to Simpson's audience in England, that acceptable and proper societal roles were being maintained, despite the women's marooning in the wilderness of Rupert's Land. When left to their own devices, the women also engaged themselves in "refined" recreation by walking around the fort, which not only alleviated some of their possible boredom, but also reinforced a common pastime for women in their class at home, and, perhaps, showcased their presence to a greater number of people at the forts.[68]

To further underline her authority within the fur trade, and in an attempt to form a place for herself within the social environment, Simpson consistently contrasted her position and character to the people with whom she came into contact. Her social interactions were often marked by her understanding of her elevated role in society, meaning that the majority of women and men she met were understood to be her social inferiors. The women who were, and were not, acceptable acquaintances for Simpson in the territory of the fur trade had been already established by her husband's attitudes and actions. His unorthodox method of turning off Margaret Taylor prior to leaving on furlough, and his frequent comments on the characters and functionality of Native women (meaning that they were useful for trade alliances and sexual gratification, but not as marriage material) essentially created a space in fur trade society that could only be filled, in his eyes, by the arrival of an accomplished, Victorian woman. Simpson, who was aware of her position within English society, and had been made aware of her position in fur trade society as the governor's wife, not surprisingly reinforced the differences between herself and those she came into contact with throughout her journal.

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[67] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 77.
[68] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 75.

It is true that some of the women and men she met were considered to be acceptable acquaintances, such as Mrs. By, the wife of Lieutenant-colonel John By of Bytown, who Simpson believed was an "accomplished young woman" and who had properly "insisted upon our stopping to breakfast with her,"[69] and Mrs. Moffat, a "genteel pleasant woman," who greeted Simpson "very kindly."[70] Another white woman who seemed to remain an acceptable acquaintance, and was therefore worthy of social calls was Mrs. Mary Jones, the wife of Reverend David Jones, at Red River. The first meeting between the two women was a success as Simpson accompanied her home one evening "in order that she [Mrs. Jones] might try the effect of light Canoe travelling (of which she had heard so much)."[71] Unfortunately, the Simpsons did not reside long within the actual colony of Red River, but instead some miles away at Lower Fort Garry, a distance which apparently made it difficult for the women to frequently meet with one another.

Clearly her closest companion on the voyage was Catherine McTavish, who was not only in a similarly unfamiliar position as the new bride of a fur trader, but also occupied a similar status to Simpson through her marriage. As the two women had shared a considerable amount together, including the sea voyage to North America, and several hundred kilometres of overland travel, it was therefore hardly surprising that Simpson suffered "very great regret" when it was time for the two women to part ways.[72] This split essentially left Simpson without an acceptable female companion for the rest of her time in Rupert's Land, as the women who lived around her at Red River were separated from her

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[69] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 40.
[70] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 19.
[71] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 123.
[72] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 77. John George McTavish was posted as Moose Factory, over 1000 kilometres from Red River.

not only by distance (though not so great a distance as Red River to Moose Factory), but more importantly, by class.

Interestingly enough, despite the degree of friendship that Simpson had with McTavish, and despite how grateful she was to have a travelling companion, Simpson could not resist including information in her journal that served the purpose of demonstrating her more refined behaviour in comparison to McTavish. Physically and socially, Simpson set herself up as superior to McTavish by suggesting that the other woman's comparably plumper physique apparently slowed down the party on one of the portages that they travelled across when she was too heavy to be carried by one of the voyageurs. The result was that McTavish ended up falling off the man's back and landing in the mud, and that she needed to be dragged to the end of the portage.[73] Clearly an embarrassing moment for McTavish, Simpson perhaps included this incident to amuse her readers at McTavish's expense, but also to demonstrate the decorum which she was able to carry herself in contrast to that of McTavish, further entrenching the idea that the comparatively physically light Simpson (and Simpson alone) was embodiment of perfection while in Rupert's Land.

Farther into the interior of Rupert's Land, Simpson met with a number of fur trade "gentlemen," whom she believed hardly deserved the title. Possibly to demonstrate her husband's superiority to these men as well as her own, Simpson felt the need to draw her readers' attention to certain men she met who were "quite ridiculous" and seemed to her to be a "perfect annoyance."[74] Not all of the men that she came into contact with in the interior of Rupert's Land were part of this group, however. Simpson's husband was

[73] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 60-61.
[74] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 151.

obviously removed from it, as was John George McTavish; and many of the men that she met on their journey she admitted treated her kindly, taking her on tours of the Hudson's Bay Company forts, being sure to accord her the respect and sightseeing diversions expected for a woman in her class. At Montreal, for example, Simpson was "handsomely and kindly Entertained,"[75] while further along in the trip at Lac La Pluie, the party was met by Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron[76] and Chief Trader Thomas McMurray[77] who "received us with a degree of kindness which satisfied me that our welcome was cordial and unaffected."[78] When her husband and Cameron were conducting business, McMurray stepped up and "beaued" Simpson around the fort, acting in a way that caused Simpson to declare that he "surpassed all the Gentlemen I had met in these Wilds as a Lady's Man,"[79] and indeed, a few months after the Simpsons passed through Lac la Pluie, Cameron had it renamed "Fort Frances" in her honour.

However, further along in the journey, and further into the "wilds" of Rupert's Land, Simpson drew attention to men who seemed to increasingly annoy her with their manner and behaviour. That she came into contact with these men later in her journey perhaps indicates her belief that these men had spent too long in the wilderness of Rupert's Land, and were no longer civilized or fit for Simpson's company. The men whom Simpson spent the most time chastising for their annoying behaviour included Chief Factor John Clarke and Chief Factor Colin Robertson. Clarke, who had a "pompous," manner and

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[75] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 23-24.
[76] See: Hudson's Bay Company Archives Biographical Sheet, "Cameron, John Dugald," http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/c/cameron_john_dugald.pdf (accessed 12 July 2012).
[77] See: Hudson's Bay Company Archives Biographical Sheet, "McMurray, Thomas," http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/mc/mcmurray_thomas1799-1843.pdf (accessed 12 July 2012).
[78] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 104.
[79] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 104.

apparently considered himself "far superior in refinement of taste & manners to his neighbours," attempted to race his canoe against Governor Simpson's. Much to Simpson's apparent joy, her husband's canoe was the faster, and after losing the race, "Mr. Clark [sic] was evidently chagrined…and avoided speaking of boat races afterwards."[80] Whether Clarke intended to beat Simpson is not known, perhaps his decision to race canoes with the governor was an attempt to show reverence to the governor and to entertain his European bride. But the fact that Clarke had a "pompous…manner," and seemed to "study every word he utter[ed]," clearly indicated to Simpson that the man's social standing was, irrevocably, much below her own.[81]

Chief Factor Colin Robertson was another "character" that Simpson could not "resist showing up in particular."[82] This man, according to Simpson, considered himself:

> The Chesterfield of Rupert's Land…and never failed expressing his regret (in exceedingly bad English) that the rest of the gentlemen were so little adapted to Ladies' society and apologized for their awkward manners and appearance, eyeing himself at the same time as much as to say 'They are very different men from me.'[83]

In this instance, "Chesterfield," likely referred to the Earl of Chesterfield, and mocked Robertson's capacities in elocution and other marks of the landed elites whose responsibilities included politics and debate. Robertson then went on to apparently talk of "every one of any celebrity, whose names he was acquainted with, as his particular friends, although he frequently blundered the names."[84] Robertson's attempt to impress the Governor's wife by showcasing his own connections and Englishness had an opposite

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[80] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 132-134.
[81] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 132-133.
[82] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 147.
[83] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 148.
[84] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 150.

effect on Simpson, who obviously did not believe he was at all adapted to the society of ladies and clearly considered him boastful and boorish.

While clearly capable of forming her own opinion regarding these men, it is interesting and important to understand that Simpson's comments on Clarke and Robertson were likely an attempt to further demonstrate her deference to her husband's decisions and actions. George Simpson had already formed distinctly negative opinions of these men, and it was likely that his opinion had an impact on the way that Simpson assessed them. George Simpson considered John Clarke "a boasting, ignorant low fellow who rarely speaks the truth and is strongly suspected of dishonesty," with a "commanding appearance & pompous manner." In short, the man was, in George Simpson's opinion, "a disgrace to the 'Fur Trade'."[85] His opinion of Robertson was likewise extremely negative shortly after the 1821 amalgamation between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. Robertson was depicted as a "frothy trifling conceited man, who would starve in any other Country and is perfectly useless here: fancies, or rather attempts to pass himself off as a clever fellow, a man of taste, of talents and of refinement…"[86] Furthermore, Robertson's attempt to introduce his mixed-blood wife into Red River gentry society had offended George Simpson, as they likely threatened his plans to make Red River as civilized an outpost as possible.[87] As Frances Simpson's opinions of the men were almost identical to those expressed by her husband, it is likely that her opinion of the men had been established prior to her meeting them, and her relation of the behaviours of

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[85] George Simpson, "Character Book," in *Hudson's Bay Miscellany, 1670-1870* ed. Glyndwr Williams (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975), 171-2.
[86] Simpson, "Character book," 169-70.
[87] See: Gordon Goldsborough, "Memorable Manitobans: Colin Robertson (1783-1842), *The Manitoba Historical Society*, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/robertson_c.shtml (accessed 12 July 2012); HBCA B.135/c/2, Inward Correspondence, 73.

these men served the purpose of signifying her deference to her husband's decision and opinions, demonstrating her position as a proper Victorian woman.

In addition to remarking on her experiences regarding the society of the fur trade, the physical environment itself was something else that Simpson constantly referred back to in her journal. She described her journey towards Red River, and then on to York Factory as a movement that essentially crossed the boundary "between the civilized and savage worlds," this opinion being justified by the fact that the country she was moving into was "uninhabited by Whites except where a Trading Post of the Hon[ble] Hudson's Bay Compy [sic] occasionally present[ed] itself."[88] The emphasis that she placed on the savagery and masculine nature of the interior of Rupert's Land – equating it to the Arctic, by then held in almost mythical regard by naval explorations as barren and uninhabitable – has been an idea expressed by many historians who have argued that voyageurs, and even upper class men such as George Simpson himself, prided themselves on their ability to showcase their masculinity by taking canoe trips such as the one that Simpson was engaged in.[89] The canoe trip was portrayed as a test for fur traders, and it was necessary that a fur trader overcome the long and arduous journey to be accepted amongst their fur trading comrades. This understanding of the roughness of the fur trade helps to explain why it was so shocking to many of the fur traders that ladies should undertake the overland route – one that was considered dangerous under the best conditions.[90] While the journey itself could be considered a masculine adventure, Simpson sought to stress the fact that she was still a lady, and was attempting to remain that way despite the masculine environment. To

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[88] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 42-43.
[89] Elizabeth Vibert, "Real Men Hunt Buffalo," 9-10.
[90] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties,* 186.

reinforce this, she purposefully stated that, despite having survived the trip, it was not one that she should like to take again, and routinely credited any comfort she did receive on the journey to her husband and the voyageurs.[91]

Simpson's travel journal frequently referred to the landscapes that she passed through in order to situate herself within the physical environment, have it make sense to her, and to have it make sense to her readers in England. Naming and describing natural formations had long been a way of demonstrating one's place within the environment. I. S. MacLaren argued that aesthetically, rather than scientifically, describing an area had been used by travellers and explorers since the mid-sixteenth century, and suggested that this method of describing places served a purpose of making sense of the space to both the person experiencing it visually, and to the people who may be experiencing it second-hand through the reception of the written word.[92] The frequent references that Simpson made to the land, and the degree to which she romanticized her environment, connecting the landscape to the ideas of the Romantic poets of England who glorified nature and natural beauty and, especially, framing it according to the "rules of the picturesque," allowed Simpson to better understand her location, and further enabled her readers to connect with the place that she was in. Travel guidebooks written about the Italian Peninsula in the first half of the nineteenth century made "tourists read the right thing on the spot, which not only meant reading what could be associated thematically, but also what was concerned as being culturally valuable and aesthetically edifying,"[93] something that Simpson could do with her own audience.

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[91] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 143.
[92] I. S. MacLaren, "The Aesthetic Map of the North," *Arctic* 38:2 (1985), 89-103.
[93] Barbara Schaff, "John Murray's *Handbooks to Italy*," 106.

In regards to the physical landscape of fur trade, Carol Podruchny argued that prior to the 1821 merger between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, earlier voyageurs also named their landscapes and identified with certain lakes, rocks, and rivers as a means of placing themselves within their environment, which enabled them to make sense of their surroundings, and essentially make it their own.[94] It is impossible to know whether Simpson was aware of the names French-Canadian voyageurs had given to the landscape, just as it is unlikely that she, or the voyageurs, were aware of the names that Native people had given to the land prior to the arrival of Europeans. However, her attempt to link the world that she was now a part of with her life back in England by discussing the romantic beauty of her surroundings was demonstrative of the ways that she saw the environment, and sought to subordinate it as a hinterland. On 9 May, for example, Simpson described the "Talon" Portage as

> The most wild and romantic place I ever beheld… the approach to this Portage is truly picturesque: the river from being a considerable width, here branches into a variety of Channels, one of which we entered so narrow as scarcely to leave a passage for the Canoe – on either side are stupendous rocks of the most fantastic forms: some bear the appearance of Gothic Castles, other exhibit rows of the most regular, and beautifully carved Corinthian Pillars: deep caverns are formed in some, while others present a smooth level surface, crowned with tufts of Pines and Cedars…[95]

The Dog Portage, or "Portage de Chien," had a "beautifully picturesque" view from the upper end, "overlooking a Lake which is formed at the lower end of the Dog fall."[96] She further sought to describe her environment on 4 June when she remarked that the "dashing Waters sparkling beneath the clear light of the Moon, together with Tents, Fires

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[94] Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World,* 52-85.
[95] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 55-56.
[96] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 89.

&c of the Encampment, form[ed] a picture at once striking and romantic."[97] The "picturesque," in the nineteenth century "grew out of a habit of viewing tracts of land as if they were landscape paintings," and "permitted…the early nineteenth century Briton to see the world with an English eye and to show of his landscape learning."[98] Similarly, romanticism referred to the "tendency, widespread among members of the middle and upper classes…to value feeling and imagination of sensibility, far more than before, to extend or transfer feelings formerly associated with religious experience to the secular realm, and to imbue 'wild nature' with new meaning and value."[99]

Another way that Simpson was able to identify herself within the fur trade environment was by being included in voyageur ritual. Voyageur rituals, which included naming places, and semi-spiritual acts such as "baptisms," could "create, express, teach, and remind participants of the meanings and values of their community and of their identity."[100] On 24 June, Simpson related how the

> Voyageurs agreed among themselves to cut a 'May Pole' or a 'Lopped Stick' [sic] for me; which is a tall Pine Tree lopped of all its branches excepting those at the top, which are cut in a round bunch: it is then barked: and mine (being a memorable one) was honoured with a red feather, and streamers of purple ribbon tied to a pole, and fasted to the top of the Tree so as to be seen above every other object: the surrounding trees were then cut down in order to leave it open to the Lake.[101]

Podruchny explained how this ceremony was done by voyageurs to honour a certain member of the group, and she suggested that the voyageurs might have raised this maypole to make a good impression on George Simpson, or perhaps because they were "awed with

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[97] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 110.
[98] I. S. MacLaren, "The Aesthetic Map of the North," 101.
[99] Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 7.
[100] Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 54.
[101] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 139-140.

the exotic Mrs. Simpson."[102] Simpson herself believed that her "Lopped Stick [sic]," would be "conspicuous as long as it stands,"[103] and since the maypole contained both her name and the date that she passed by, she may have identified it as having been another way to mark her presence into the landscape for future travellers to see. These maypole ceremonies typically resulted in a round of alcohol being distributed to the voyageurs by the person being honoured.[104] In this respect, the construction of a maypole and Simpson's descriptions of it entrenched her elite position and upheld the implicit obligations and privileges of class within the fur trade.

Historians have suggested that Frances Simpson enjoyed her journey by canoe to York Factory.[105] Her frequent references to the romanticism of the environment that she was moving into, the general freedom that she could experience away from her family during the first kind of "masculine"[106] adventure that she had ever experienced definitely may have contributed to this perception of liberty and enjoyment. However, this may be an overstatement, as the reality was that Simpson was poorly suited for such a journey, and that the pleasure expressed in her journal, therefore, needs be read with the understanding that she was acting, and writing, with a specific purpose in mind.

Simpson went to lengths to embody the perfect Victorian lady on her journey into the interior of Rupert's Land, and by doing so, was able to negotiate her social and physical place in Rupert's Land. She embodied the perfect Victorian lady by deferring to her

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[102] Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 139-140.
[103] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 140.
[104] Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 134.
[105] Grace Lee Nute, "Journey for Frances," *The Beaver* 284-285 (December 1953 – Summer 1954); John Galbraith, *The Little Emperor*, 106.
[106] Marian Fowler, *The Embroidered Tend: Five Gentlewomen in Early Canada* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1982), 11. Fowler suggested "the wilderness encouraged women to develop 'masculine' attributes in two ways. On a pragmatic level of action, it demanded initiative and courage…on an imaginative level, the wilderness offered a mirror for the psyche."

husband's authority and decisions, submitting herself to him and his protection, and maintaining and reinforcing an elite social position. The domestic role that was assigned to her as a Victorian woman, and her confirmation of it, gave her the moral authority to judge the men and women that she came into contact with, and further enabled her to form a domestic space within the physical environment of Rupert's Land by placing herself within it, and relating its romantic and picturesque qualities to her audience. In this way, Simpson demonstrated a degree of agency by purposefully adhering to the expectations that had been placed upon her. This gave her the ability to regulate and negotiate her physical and social place in the fur trade and essentially legitimize her position there.

After expressing keen despair at the thought of leaving her family and friends, and enduring a trip that no "English Lady would take for pleasure," which included rising anywhere from 1:00 am-4:00 am every morning, and sometimes remaining in a canoe until midnight; having meager "comforts" such as oilskin and rubber boots; and having the good fortune to be carried over particularly rough portages – all in all, travelling "8000 Miles" in a few months – was a very challenging journey for Simpson, mentally and physically.[107] That she was able to relay it with such enthusiasm represented her attempt to live up to the expectations placed upon her so that she could legitimize and strengthen her position in the fur trade.

The opinion that the remainder of her time within the fur trade was also an ultimately negative and challenging experience can be inferred from the last passage of her journal. Despite having promised that she would continue her narrative of the "Arctic

[107] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 143.

Regions,"[108] Simpson did not leave any more information about the rest of her time in the fur trade. After a few months at York Factory, the Simpsons relocated to Red River where George Simpson believed the couple would be able to happily settle down, owing to the fact that Red River had, by the 1830s, become something of an outpost of civilization within the fur trade, and the most acceptable place for a fur-trading gentleman to retire while still remaining within the territory of the fur trade. However, Simpson was ultimately unable to survive there and experienced substantial physical and mental deterioration while living at Red River. Perhaps significantly, by the time the family relocated from the Red River colony in 1833 for health reasons – removing Simpson from Rupert's Land forever – her letter writing to her "dear domestic circle" had long since ceased.

[108] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 161.

Chapter Two:

Filling the Space Made by Frances Simpson: The Arrival of Isobel Finlayson and Letitia Hargrave, 1840

Despite the fact that Frances Simpson left the fur trade after only three years, her presence in Rupert's Land had helped to substantiate the idea that white women could occupy, and, in some ways, moderate, a place for themselves in the fur trade territories. Simpson's arrival, her documentation of her journey westwards, and her departure from the fur trade, essentially helped create a space for the future arrivals of British wives of other fur traders. Two such Victorian women entered into the society of the fur trade in 1840: Isobel Finlayson, referred to as the "English Rose," and Letitia Hargrave, the "Blue Bell of Scotland," both of whom married gentlemen of the Hudson's Bay Company in the late 1830s and 1840. The arrival of these women within the fur trade was a "direct result of the way that George Simpson's legitimate marriage had unsettled the social hierarchy of the fur trade world," and thus a direct result of Simpson's presence within the fur trade.[1]

Similarly to Simpson, both Finlayson and Hargrave recorded their time in Rupert's Land. This chapter will firstly analyse Isobel Finlayson's travel journal, which contained information about her journey from England to York Factory, and then information of her overland journey from York Factory to her final destination of Red River, to demonstrate the ways that she sought to fill the position that had been created for Victorian women by Frances Simpson. Her travel "notebook," as she referred to it, can, like Simpson's journal,

[1] Jennifer Blair, *ReCalling Early Canada: Reading the Political in Literary and Cultural Production* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2005), 149.

be considered a "journal letter," as she made specific reference to the audience for whose "amusement it [had] been written."[2] This document, which was nearly identical to Simpson's travel journal, represented an attempt to "rise one step above her model," that is, Simpson's journal, "giving a lengthier and more elevated opening, supplementing her description of Natives with drawings, expressing greater homesickness, [and] giving more romantic descriptions of nature."[3] The second part of the chapter will analyse Hargrave's letters, written to her sisters, mother, and father from 1840-1851, which were filled with "the trivia of everyday life, domestic problems rather than business details, [and the] social atmosphere rather than the pounds and pence of the counting house."[4] Much like Finlayson's journal, Hargrave's letters, which contained information about her life at York Factory, demonstrated her acknowledgement and reinforcement of her elevated social responsibility and position in Rupert's Land. Although Finlayson's and Hargrave's narratives took different forms, because of the fact that they travelled together, their primary sources are useful to study in tandem, as the letters often supplemented information included in the travel journal, and vice versa, giving a more complete picture of how they, like Simpson before them, upheld the expectations of femininity assigned to them to similarly dictate aspects of their lives in Rupert's Land. Through their actions and writings, Finlayson and Hargrave essentially filled the space that had been created with Simpson's departure from the fur trade, and took advantage of the earlier woman's experiences there. They carried out the civilizing mandates that had been assigned to them

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[2] HBCA E.12/5, Isobel Finlayson Notebook 1840, 185.
[3] Helen M. Buss "'The Dear Domestic Circle': Framework for the Literary Study of Women's Personal Narrative in Archival Collections," *Studies in Canadian Literature,* 14:1 (1989), http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/scl/article/view/8091/9148 (accessed 12 October, 2010).
[4] W.T. Easterbrook, "Untitled Review of *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science/ Revue Canadienne d'Economique et de Science Politique* 14:3 (1948): 407.

as Victorian women in the colonial setting, but at the same time, were also able to display a degree of agency by using their positions as Victorian women to further legitimize their authority within Rupert's Land, firmly reinforcing their physical and social positions within the fur trade.

In the late 1830s, two "paragons of virtue," within the fur trade, Chief Factor Duncan Finlayson and Chief Trader James Hargrave travelled to Great Britain with the purpose of finding European brides.[5] Their reputations as "paragons of virtue," derived from the fact that neither of these men had recorded country wives, nor did they have recorded illegitimate fur trade children.[6] Indeed, James Hargrave had actually "made a pact against it [country marriages]," due in part to his opinion of Red River: that it was the "best Rupert's Land could offer as a place of retirement, [but] meant for the husband banishment from the cultured and ordered life of settled countries; and retirement elsewhere often brought unhappiness to the wife, and through her to the husband also."[7] Duncan Finlayson, while not having a specific antipathy towards marrying a woman in the country, "appeared to be impervious to the charms of Indian and half-breed ladies alike."[8] Thus unattached, his character was unsullied by fur trade liaisons in the years before he had the opportunity to travel to Britain to find a proper Victorian wife.

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[5] Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1980), 191.

[6] This is not to say that these men had completely stayed away from women while part of the fur trade. James Hargrave had been connected with several women in the earlier days of his time in the fur trade, and indeed, requested the assistance of fur trader John McLeod to get rid of at least one Metis woman who had formed the opinion that they were to be together. For more information on Hargrave's previous intimacies with women in the fur trade, see James Hargrave, *Letters from Rupert's Land, 1826-1840: James Hargrave of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 30-40.

[7] Letitia Hargrave, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, ed. Margaret Arnett MacLeod (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), xxiv.

[8] George Simpson, "Character Book," in *Hudson's Bay Miscellany, 1670-1870* ed. Glyndwr Williams (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975), 187 *n*1.

On 26 May 1838 Duncan Finlayson recorded in his diary, "I have this day been made the Happiest Man on earth by the declaration from the Sweet lips of the amiable & accomplished Miss Simpson that she would be mine forever."[9] The accomplished Miss Simpson, in this case, was Frances Simpson's older sister, Isobel Simpson. James Hargrave's acquaintance with the "amiable mind, superior character & sweet disposition of…Miss Mactavish," likewise enabled him to bring his marital pursuits to a (near) close while on furlough in 1838.[10] Though it had been his intention to get married while in Europe at that time, James Hargrave was called back to York Factory on business, and thus had to use the post to convey his proposal to Letitia Mactavish, the niece of James Hargrave's "old bourgeois," John George McTavish, and wait until winter 1839-1840 when he was permitted to travel back to Scotland to finally marry her.

Both Isobel Finlayson and Letitia Hargrave admitted to the domestic and ornamental roles they were to fulfil in Rupert's Land as delicate, weak, and submissive women, dependent upon male relatives, within the first few pages of their writings. Finlayson affirmed that it was "no love of change, nor idle curiosity" that made her leave her family home in England, but instead her knowledge that she had a specific (and sacred) role to fill as a wife to her "beloved and affectionate Husband," who had been appointed "about eighteen months previously to take charge of a large and distant Settlement belonging to the Hudson's Bay Company in the Interior of the 'Far West'."[11] George Simpson described Duncan Finlayson as:

> A highly upright honourable correct man of good Education and superior abilities to most of his colleagues. Has great influence with and is much liked

[9] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 191.
[10] Hargrave, *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 310.
[11] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 1-2.

> by his Equals, inferiors and the natives…Firm Cool and decisive, one of our best Legislators and most effective practical Men…he may be ranked high among the most respectable and efficient men of his class.[12]

He entered the fur trade in 1815 as a writer – the position below a clerk – and by 1839, after he and Finlayson had been married for a year, was appointed governor of Assiniboia.[13]

Hargrave had similarly expressed her reasons for leaving her family as performing a duty for the sake of her husband when she wrote to James Hargrave that she "estimate[d] very highly the value of your [James Hargrave's] affection, and that if my presence will be of any comfort to you, leaving society will be little or no sacrifice on my part."[14] For his part, James Hargrave was described by his "bourgeois," John George McTavish as having been a "young Gentleman,"[15] and by George Simpson as "a man of good Education and of highly correct conduct and character and very useful…has every reason to calculate on early promotion…"[16] In many respects, the prediction was borne out. He had been involved in the fur trade since 1820, and was permanently stationed at York Factory in 1827. He was promoted to the position of chief trader in 1833, and became chief factor in 1844.[17]

It was on 6 June 1840 that Finlayson commenced her "long journey from England to the Interior of British North America."[18] In keeping with both the style of her sister's narrative, and the expectations and understandings of the "Cult of True Womanhood,"

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[12] Simpson, "Character book," 186-187.
[13] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Finlayson, Duncan," http://www.biographi.ca/EN/EN/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=4423 (Accessed 7 May 2012).
[14] Hargrave, *Letters*, 5.
[15] Hargrave, *Letters*, xxii.
[16] Simpson, "Character Book," 214.
[17] Simpson, "Character Book," 214*n*.
[18] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 1.

Finlayson declared that "words [could not] express the misery of that day," as she suffered the "agonizing pang of bidding farewell, perhaps for ever, to the best and kindest of Parents, beloved brothers and sisters, and all the fond and pleasing associations of life's earlier years."[19] For Finlayson, the inevitable departure from her home had finally come. Despite the fact that Duncan Finlayson and Isobel Simpson had been married in 1838, Finlayson had been too ill to travel back to Rupert's Land with her husband when his furlough ended. Therefore, Finlayson had remained with her parents in their London home until a "favourable opportunity…at length presented itself," which it did in the early summer of 1840 when she was able to travel under the care and protection of Duncan Finlayson's friend, James Hargrave, who was taking his own new wife to their future home at York Factory.[20] It can be assumed that it was not only the company and protection of James Hargrave that was desired, but also the company of his wife. As will be mentioned below, both Finlayson and Hargrave benefited significantly from each other's presence aboard the *Prince Rupert*, and the two women formed a life-long friendship, despite the fact that their husbands were posted at Hudson's Bay Company posts that were many hundred kilometres apart.

Finlayson's journal contained numerous passages demonstrating her adherence to the opinions that had been formed of her as a Victorian woman. One of the ways that she duplicated her sister's account and sought to demonstrate her acceptance of her role as a proper Victorian lady was by constantly deferring to, and praising, her male protectors. Finlayson's dependence on men was made clear by the decision for her to remain in London until an "acceptable travelling companion" could be found to assist her on her

[19] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 3-4.
[20] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 2-3.

journey westwards, meaning a man of the right class and character, such as James Hargrave. Since Finlayson did not have the support of her husband on this journey, her perceived safety, and certainly her honour, precluded travelling without an escort. It was firstly her cousin and brother-in-law, Governor George Simpson, who "hastily separated" Finlayson from the embraces of her father, so as not to "prolong the pain of parting," before kindly and gently seeing that she was safely aboard the ship.[21] Finlayson further underlined her gratitude to her male contemporaries aboard the *Prince Rupert* who had further formed opinions about her status: "Captain Herd…had very politely given up his own cabin for my accommodation, for which I shall always feel grateful as it proved a great source of comfort to me during the voyage."[22]

Finlayson's gratitude for her husband's presence naturally surpassed the gratitude that she felt for the attention of her other male contemporaries. She claimed that every moment she was kept apart from her husband seemed to feel like an age, and she therefore felt "inexpressible happiness," when the two were finally reunited at York Factory in August 1840.[23] Throughout the remainder of her journal, she drew for her audience a model of companionate marriage by describing the time that the two spent together on their journey, taking pleasant walks in the evenings, and claiming that, "should we be spared to return to our native land, I shall look back to the hours I have passed with him in the solitary wilderness as amongst the happiest I have spent during my sojourn in the 'Far West'."[24] This quote suggests not only Finlayson's acceptance of, and the resultant ways that she acted out, her role as a loving and dutiful wife to her husband, but also her

[21] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 8.
[22] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 15.
[23] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 70.
[24] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 143.

perception of Rupert's Land; the kind and caring nature that her husband possessed was contrasted against the inherent loneliness and isolation that existed within Rupert's Land, which provided her with ample opportunities to praise her husband, and enforce her position as a proper Victorian woman.

The references that Frances Simpson made to the physical environment throughout her travel journal served the purpose of both placing herself within it and making it as "English" and domesticated as possible in order to make it familiar to both herself and her readers. Finlayson's descriptions of the environment that she passed through were consistent with those of her sister's. Finlayson's comments on the physical landscape that she moved into provided information both about herself as a delicate, yet educated, Victorian female, and about the need to transform the rugged and wild physical environment that she moved into. The majority of references that Finlayson made to the environment stressed its romantic, picturesque qualities. As previously mentioned, describing something as "picturesque," in the nineteenth century "permitted…the early nineteenth century Briton to see the world with an English eye and to show off his landscape learning."[25] By referring to romantic portages and picturesque shores, Finlayson gentrified the savage landscape of Rupert's Land, and enabled her readers to identify with it. One example of this was when Finlayson made reference to Lord Byron and the Romantic poets to describe a "picturesque rapid," when she wrote:

> [Lord] Byron has exquisitely remarked that: 'there is a pleasure in the pathless woods, there is a rapture on the lonely shore, there is society where none intrudes,' but never did the truth of those beautiful lines strike me so forcibly as during my short walk through this wild and romantic wood.[26]

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[25] I. S. MacLaren, "The Aesthetic Map of the North," *Arctic* 38:2 (1985), 101.
[26] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 105-106.

The inclusion of Lord Byron in her description of the picturesque and romantic physical environment not only demonstrated Finlayson's own education in regards to literary and ornamental branches, but also strongly connected her audience – who would naturally be aware of the writings of Lord Byron – with the fur trade. She further included various references to romantic islands and woods, and picturesque rivers, trees, and even "Indians," in order to educate her readers on the colonial space, and include them in her colonial travels.[27]

One of the ways that Finlayson truly "rose above" her sister's account, and demonstrated the degree to which Simpson's earlier presence had an impact upon her own experiences in the fur trade was through her description of the comforts and luxuries that she was provided with en route to Red River. Despite claiming upon arrival at York Factory that she had not expected to find any of the "comforts and luxuries of civilized life," and was therefore not "disappointed at the absence of them,"[28] Duncan Finlayson had clearly gone to lengths to make his wife's journey as easy and comfortable as possible. On account of her husband's attentions, Finlayson used proper cutlery and dinnerware such as "knives, forks, spoons, glasses, cups and saucers, a cruet stand &c and the large crystal flagons for wine and other liquids,"[29] and dined on fare such as "cold beef, ham, tongues and venison pie," food that Finlayson correctly stated was, "with port and white wine…no bad fare in the wilderness."[30] This mode of travelling was in stark contrast to Simpson, who had apparently received "every comfort that could be obtained," during her journey to

[27] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook: romantic islands and woods: 100, 106; picturesque rivers and Indians: 93, 102.
[28] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 74.
[29] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 85.
[30] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 85.

Red River, though she described a much more meagre fare, such as "Rubber Shoes, Umbrellas, a thin Oil Cloth as a covering from the rain &c &c."[31]

Finlayson was further made comfortable – or rather, she further made reference to her comfort – when she described their pace of travel on their way to Red River. Unlike Simpson, who had been forced awake anywhere from 1:00-4:00 am, Finlayson reported leaving their campsites at times closer to 6:00am. The elder sister also described the "very large and comfortable tent" that she shared with her husband, and slept on a bed made of two large buffalo robes, pillows, and blankets, which allegedly, if spread out on a flat rock, was as comfortable as a bed of down.[32] Finlayson also mentioned that she travelled with two personal female servants and had previously had a cook in her employment, but was forced to let one of the women go upon arriving at York Factory due to information that she had received regarding her conduct aboard the *Prince Rupert*.[33] In addition to this, Finlayson had two "Indians" apparently attach themselves "particularly" to her during the trip from York Factory to Red River who not only made sure that she had additional comforts such as pine brush to put under her bed to make it softer and more comfortable, but were also quick to assist her with her personal items, which one can assume would have been many.[34] Not all of Finlayson's references to her mode of travel were superior to those that Simpson had enjoyed; there were some commonalities from 1830 to 1840, such as travelling with servants, and the fur trading ladies and gentlemen not partaking in the

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[31] HBCA D.6/4, Frances Simpson Journal 1830, 145.
[32] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 88. It can be assumed that bringing European goods into Rupert's Land to make his wife as comfortable as possible was relatively easy in regards to transportation, due to the invention of the York Boat in the early 1800s that enabled the transportation a larger number of goods, see Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 159-160 and Dennis Johnson, *York Boats of the Hudson's Bay Company: Canada's Inland Armada* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2006), 3.
[33] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 80.
[34] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 88-89.

strenuous work that was required throughout the journey from York Factory to Red River.[35] While Finlayson's references to the ways that she was treated as she moved westwards may have been little more than an attempt to one up her sister's previous account and demonstrate Finlayson's dependency on her husband, the differences that existed in regards to material comforts between her, and her sister's journey through Rupert's Land suggests that fur traders better understood the degree to which Victorian women needed to be taken care of – a realization likely obtained from Simpson's presence within the fur trade. Within their own descriptions, too, Finlayson and Hargrave were finding greater place for themselves in the same environs, at least in respects to their material comforts. Duncan Finlayson clearly went to lengths to ensure that his wife had all of the comforts that could be obtained for the survival and longevity of his delicate "lovely tender exotic" within the fur trade, and Finlayson certainly benefitted from Simpson's example, and her husband's acceptance of her frailty, and left detailed descriptions to that effect.

To entrench the understanding of her social superiority to people within the fur trade, Finlayson compared herself to the people with whom she came into contact. Though Simpson's travel journal made occasional reference to the Native peoples that she had come into contact with, she typically referred to Native people in a way that demonstrated her understanding of her position as superior, and her deference to her husband's actions in regards to his treatment of them.[36] Finlayson's journal contained more detailed information about the Native peoples she met, which not only demonstrated her opinion

[35] Finlayson made reference to how it was common, and expected for her and her husband to lay down to sleep in their boats at the beginnings of their journey, HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 95.
[36] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 114.

that she was a superior being to them, but also demonstrated the degree to which many of the Natives had yet to be civilized according to her standards, in many respects affirming her presence and role in the further Europeanization of Rupert's Land. That she came to Rupert's Land with pre-conceived notions of the Native people was demonstrated by her comment that it was altogether impossible to find "the true native character of the Indian in the neighbourhood of the Settlement."[37] She suggested that the "subdued and melancholy look" that could be found on the faces of many of the Native peoples was likely due to them no longer being "the lords of the soil to which they have a right," because of the inevitable "power of the 'white man'."[38]

The first account that her party experienced with Native peoples was when their ship was near the northern shore of Hudson Strait. Finlayson, who had been feeling poorly, "was aroused by…unearthly yells, hootings [sic] and screams,"[39] and hurried to join the party on deck where she saw,

> in the centre of the water deck two Esquimaux [sic], a man and a woman were dancing while crowds of them were clinging to the bulwarks, rigging and sides of the Ship screaming and yelling in the most discordant manner to attract attention as they did plied various articles for barter.[40]

Like other women of her social position and background, Finlayson had no comprehension of the customs of the Native people with whom they came into contact, and assumed their complete savagery and inferiority. While she may have sought to find a noble, redeeming quality to the Inuit, her descriptions of their practices and appearance, and especially their modes of exchange and bartering – which were so reminiscent of street hawkers in

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[37] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 181.
[38] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 181.
[39] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 43.
[40] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 44-45.

England – suggested a degree of disappointment in their apparent savagery. Her opinions of these people were firstly confirmed when, for her amusement, one sailor attempted to demonstrate to her that an Inuit mother would sell her baby for the possession of a few beads. During this display, the sailor

> Seized hold of a little child…and holding up the tempting articles [some combs, beads and a looking glass] to her [the mother] pointed to the child. It was some time before she comprehended his meaning, as she began to undress the little creature thinking he wanted its clothes…[41]

Whatever this display suggested of the sailor's moral standing, Finlayson directed her displeasure and censure to the mother of the child who, after undressing her baby in order to trade its garment, left the "poor child without an article of clothing till her caprice or tenderness recalled her attention to its unhappy situation."[42] In another instance, Finlayson witnessed a seal hunt, where she saw the Inuit attack and kill a seal, "cutting it up and devouring it almost alive, while many of [the Inuit] went down on their knees to drink the blood which is considered one of their greatest delicacies."[43] The latter activity was "the last sight I had of these uncivilized beings, for I was so much disgusted with them after the scene that had just occurred that I went to my cabin and did not return to the deck until we had left their canoes so behind that they could scarcely be seen in the distance."[44] Finlayson next described North American Native peoples that were employed by the Hudson's Bay Company as labourers and boatmen as "a most lively and active set of beings, admirable boatmen…orderly, well behaved and attentive, and I believe most of

[41] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 55-56.
[42] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 57.
[43] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 59-61.
[44] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 61-62.

them were Christians."[45] She credited the establishment of religious missions, as well as the work employment with the Hudson's Bay Company for introducing a "degree of civilization to the Natives that was not to be found among the wild and savage tribes in the plains," as well as among the previously mentioned Inuit traders.[46]

While not necessarily the case with Finlayson, who only moved from England in order to fulfil her role as a wife to Duncan Finlayson, some Victorian-era women actively sought to be moved into the colonial settings because of their perception that their culturally prescribed feminine virtues provided them with inherent moral superiority when in the colonial setting.[47] This meant that Victorian-era feminists saw themselves as crucial to the colonizing missions because they were ideally placed, socially and physically, to be able to save their unfortunate "sisters" of darker skin colour.[48] Despite Finlayson's proclamation that "it is not my intention to enter into any details respecting the manners, habits, or mode of life of the inhabitants of this settlement,"[49] effectively dismissing them in importance, she spent several pages towards the end of her travel journal entrenching her domestic and maternal role by voicing her negative opinion of the lifestyle of the Native peoples.

Finlayson's description of the Inuit women whom she met during the sea voyage, for instance, set up the idea of the "squaw drudge" as an explicitly bodily condition.

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[45] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 83. This was in agreement to the views of men of the time: see Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress and Present State With Some Accounts of the Native Races and Its General History to the Present Day*, new ed., (Edmonton, Hurtig Publishers, 1972), 275-276.
[46] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 173.
[47] Antoinette Burton, "The White Woman's Burden: British Feminists and 'The Indian Woman,' 1865-1915," in *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* eds. Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 138.
[48] Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 137.
[49] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 183-84.

Finlayson wrote that it was her belief that because of the "hardships and privations to which they [Inuit women were] exposed," they became "old and haggard in their appearance almost before the season of youth is passed."[50] Her description of the Natives, and especially that of the women, around Fort Garry was as follows:

> An Indian has generally two or three wives who are not infrequently sisters and these poor creatures have all the labour and drudgery to perform as the men pass their time in smoking and sleeping when they are not engaged in war or the chase, the women drag the sled, carry the pack pitch the tents, fetch the water, and paddle the canoe, and their children are always carried either in the blanket or a cradle slung at their backs which is supported by a band passing across the forehead.[51]

This description of the Native women, commonly made by Europeans throughout Rupert's Land, clearly demonstrated Finlayson's belief that the women were poor unfortunates who were being taken advantage of by lazy husbands, who apparently were not employees of the Company, and thus prone to such lifestyles. The men in this quote were presented in strong opposition to the "lively and active," boatmen that had conducted her and her husband to Red River, and it can be inferred that she believed a continued "improvement" of the lifestyle of people around the Fort and its economy would have a positive impact on the conditions of these women when their men became wage earners, and Native society became subordinated to the larger British presence.

As Finlayson's superiority over the Native peoples was largely assumed, she also included information about her female travel companions in order to firmly situate herself within the social structure of the fur trade. Unlike Simpson, whose only travelling companion was Catherine McTavish, Finlayson travelled with Letitia Hargrave, as previously mentioned, and two other Victorian women – Miss Jane Ross, the daughter of

[50] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 53-54.
[51] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 180-181.

Chief Factor Donald Ross, (who was stationed at Norway House), and Miss Allan, the future governess of the Red River Academy. The comments that Finlayson and Hargrave provided on their travelling companions, and on each other, may be viewed as an attempt to entrench their positions within the fur trade hierarchy by setting themselves either as equal to each other, and above the other women that they travelled with. As both Ross and Allan were Englishwomen, and had been educated in the "ornamental arts" in Europe, they were already seen as being much more "civilized" than the other women in the fur trade. However, Finlayson and Hargrave clearly did not view these women as being their social equals, and by comparing their actions to the other women, Finlayson and Hargrave sought to further enforce a European class-consciousness in regards to their own social circle, and entrench the position that they had inherited within the social hierarchy of the fur trade through marriage to officers of the Hudson's Bay Company.

When describing Hargrave, Finlayson made constant references to her kindness, and alluded to a degree of gratitude for having her as a travelling companion. It can be assumed and understood that these two women were part of the same social circle, both through their previous placement in Britain, and through their marriages to their respective husbands. Finlayson's kind comments on Hargrave's character truly set her up as a proper Victorian lady who accepted, within the prescribed limits of a female's constitution, her hardships with equanimity and grace. Finlayson reported that she often sat at the bedside of Hargrave, "who was an invalid," flattering the woman by suggesting her acceptance of the cultural assumption that she was a properly fragile and submissive woman.[52] And when the party finally reached York Factory, Finlayson reported that she was contented

[52] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 18.

with the way that Hargrave acted upon seeing her new home at York Factory for the first time, saying that she was "pleased to observe that [Hargrave's] spirits were not depressed with the quiet change that must have struck her" upon seeing her new home – much unlike the one she had left behind in Scotland.[53] When the two women parted ways in September 1840, Finlayson dramatically declared that Hargrave's

> Affectionate attention and pleasant society had been the greatest source of comfort to me during the voyage. We were now to be separated far from each other with little prospect of meeting again and I felt in parting with her I was losing the only female friend I possessed in this land of Strangers.[54]

Finlayson's and Hargrave's opinions of their other travelling companions were less glowing, however. The descriptions that Finlayson included of Miss Allan especially demonstrated the inferior social position that Allan occupied. Allan, a "regular old maid & an old maid too of fifty," was brought into the fur trade territories to be the governess of the Red River Academy.[55] This institution, which was to benefit the "daughters of Gentlemen connected with the Fur Trade"[56] had had several governesses since it was formed in 1832. However, these women were often taken as wives by retiring fur traders, as they appeared to have the required breeding as a Victorian woman, in opposition to the mixed-blood women that were being educated in the Victorian fashion at the Red River school. Some of the schoolteachers who married fur traders included Mary Lowman, who married retired Chief Trader John Bird in 1835; Sarah Ingham, who married retired Chief Factor Robert Logan in 1838; Anne Armstrong, "an aspiring governess," who married retired Chief Factor J. P Pruden in 1839; and Margaret Macallum, who married Chief

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[53] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 74.
[54] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 82.
[55] Letitia, *Letters*, 46.
[56] HBCA MG2 A7, Transcript of Correspondence between Rev. David Jones and George Simpson, 1832.

Factory John Charles in 1844.[57] Unlike her predecessors, Allan, who was described as "eccentric," was not believed to be suited for what she had to do, as she was apparently "…without capacity to teaching much less organizing an establishment & managing old & young."[58] And indeed out of the early British schoolmistresses, Allan was the only one not to marry into Red River society.[59]

Rather than bear her trials with composure (as Hargrave had done), Finlayson reported that Allan would often scream when the ship occasionally scraped against an iceberg, an event that Finlayson suggested happened frequently enough that the other ladies aboard were able to get used to it.[60] When the sea journey was over and the party was making their way to Red River, Finlayson made a point of reporting how "poor Miss Allan…bitterly bemoaned her hard fate," while she, acting like a proper Victorian lady, was "so much amused with the whole scene that I felt much more disposed to laugh than to give way to useless lamentations."[61]

The negative opinion of Allan was reinforced in Letitia Hargrave's letters. According to Hargrave, Allan talked "nonsense," was "the diversion of the whole ship,"[62] and "kept up constant grumbling till the moment she left us [at York Factory]." The governess had "even wore out [James] Hargrave's civility, she was so tiresome & queer."[63] In addition to this, both Hargrave and Finlayson seemed to think that their travelling companions engaged in a degree of frivolity that was unnecessary and improper. Finlayson rather comically remarked on Allan's decision to bring

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[57] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 189.
[58] Hargrave, *Letters*, 46-47.
[59] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 189.
[60] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 41.
[61] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 107.
[62] Hargrave, *Letters*, 49.
[63] Hargrave, *Letters*, 70.

> a large portion of her wardrobe on board, in bandboxes and baskets, which were piled up to the ceiling of the berth…The berth being very small and confined, the door was seldom closed and during the storm these frail packages had rolled from their places and burst open, to her horror and dismay, she discovered all her treasured Caps, artificial flowers, gloves and ribbons strewn over the floor of the main cabin in dire confusion to the no small amusement of the officers who were assembled at breakfast.[64]

And Hargrave wrote that when Allan decided to sell some of her things in later years, Hargrave's son apparently reported that Allan had "the most elegant box of trash out of the ship he ever saw."[65] From the comments of Hargrave and Finlayson, and even Hargrave's son, it was clear that, despite having been educated as a proper Victorian woman, Allan was failing in her ability to fulfil that role. At fifty-years old, it was unlikely that Allan would get married, and even less likely that she would bear children.[66] Her ability to fill a domestic role was further questioned when Finlayson and Hargrave brought attention to Allan's inability to organize her possessions, demonstrating her inability to keep a proper home. Further, her behaviour aboard the ship was presented in stark contrast to the behaviour of the proper Victorian ladies such as Finlayson and Hargrave who, instead of making a fuss and constantly complaining, acted in accordance with the expectations of Victorian women, regardless of the fact that they were likewise in an unfamiliar place in Rupert's Land.

Miss Jane Ross, much like Allan, was portrayed as being frivolous and silly. Only seventeen years old, the girl had been attending school in England and was, in 1840, returning to her parents in Rupert's Land.[67] While Hargrave initially admitted that the girl

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[64] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 35-36.
[65] Hargrave, *Letters*, 210.
[66] A retired fur trade officer, Chief Factor James Sutherland was supposed to marry her, but he died in 1844. See Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 189-190.
[67] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 14.

was "obliging," she was also of the opinion that she was "rather fierce looking,"[68] and it was not long before she declared that she was "pretty sick" of her travelling companion's irritating behaviour and presence.[69] Hargrave also drew attention to Ross' material goods aboard the ship to York Factory, suggesting a degree of frivolity that was not only in poor taste, but also unnecessarily extravagant for her social station.

> Miss Ross has made her appearance in a scarlet & green Saxony cloak, bare neck in the cabin except a pink crape scarf & boots […] elegantly glazed – She has brought rosewood dressing case & work box, pale grey satinet [sic] gown short sleeves &c. & paid 18/ for a scarf – Altogether her outfit is perfect …Mr. Ross has not saved sixpence there, so he will not easily meet the consequences of her extravagance…[70]

And indeed, according to Hargrave, the girl's father, Chief Factor Donald Ross was:

> much alarmed & dispirited by the heavy accounts Miss Ross brought upon him…one of them amounted to £85 for dresses, another for a shawl satinet gown lace mits [sic] embroidered with gold of £20 – and many others. He says that her residence of 2 years & a half in London has cost him £500 – Her board at school was £30 - & she only studied the ordinary branches, not the piano, which was the principal thing he had in view when he sent her.[71]

As a Victorian woman's respectability was demonstrated by her appearance, Hargrave's comments strongly suggest that Ross was anything but respectable. Her "fierce" looking face and extravagant clothing aboard the ship was a contrast to the pleasing appearance and modest dress that a proper Victorian woman should have had.[72] While Finlayson and Hargrave undoubtedly had fine clothing, they did not bring it out during the sea voyage. Ross' clothing, which was impractical except for formal occasions, may have formulated

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[68] Hargrave, *Letters*, 45.
[69] Hargrave, *Letters*, 70.
[70] Hargrave, *Letters*, 48.
[71] Hargrave, *Letters*, 80.
[72] Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1988), 13.

the opinion that she was demonstrating a resistance in accepting her proper role within the domestic sphere, or making a bid to exceed her own social standing.[73]

And indeed, while Hargrave was considered "a figure of interest at York, with her personal maid, and the 'showiness' of her fashionable gowns both out on the platforms taking the air and in her own home,"[74] she was not considered frivolous or improper as two of her traveling companions had been. That she was considered a proper Victorian lady was demonstrated by the comments of her contemporaries. Finlayson's comments on Hargrave were mentioned above. One fur trader, when writing to James Hargrave, praised Hargrave as being the "most amiable young lady," and was sure that she possessed "every intellectual & personal charm requisite to give happiness to the married life,"[75] while a doctor who was temporarily present at York Factory, Dr. John Helmcken, expressed his opinion that,

> Mrs. Hargrave was one of those nice ladies one occasionally meets with, kind and affable. Altho not handsome, she had a decidedly nice face and a very pleasing expression – with a very good figure – her house was a few yards from the Fort proper – small but of course nice and nicely kept…[76]

Helmcken's attention to Hargrave's pleasing and welcoming, if not motherly and kind face quite starkly compared to Hargrave's own description of Ross' "fierce" appearance. Helmcken's notice of their house, which was "nice and nicely kept," similarly complimented Hargrave's ability to correctly occupy the domestic sphere that she had been placed within, and displayed his opinion of her respectability through his comments on her appearance.

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[73] Sharon A. FitzGerald and Alicja Muszynski, "Negotiating Female Morality: Place, Ideology and Agency in the Red River Colony," *Women's History Review* 16:5 (2007), 675-676.
[74] Hargrave, *Letters*, xliii
[75] Hargrave, *Hargrave Correspondence*, 371.
[76] Hargrave, *Letters*, cx.

To confirm the opinion that the doctor had formed of her, Hargrave happily reported the degree to which she enjoyed the domestic space that had been created for her at York Factory. Their house was "a good size, 1 bedroom off each sitting room & men servants room off the kitchen and a very large closet off the diningr^{m},"[77] and she suggested that it was made even better by the addition of European material goods such as "56 y^{ds} of the gayest print to make curtains of," and "good strong Kidderminster" carpets that she was sure would not lose colour.[78] In addition to this, while in England, Hargrave was given 50 guineas by James Hargrave ("at least it [was] not to be less") to buy a piano,[79] which was promised to be "an instrument wh^{h} will distinguish itself for its make & tone price-worthiness & capabilities of endurance of heat & cold."[80] Hargrave described the instrument as being "very fine…& the handsomest I ever saw. The wood is beautiful & Mr. Finlay[son] is croaking for one the same."[81] Despite Dr. Helmcken's opinion that their house was "small," Hargrave reported that it was the largest house in York Factory and the surrounding area. When James Hargrave added onto their house to build a nursery in 1842, Hargrave reported to her father in a letter that,

> [James] Hargrave was very nervous about building it as our house is larger than Mr Chief Factor Ross' & he has 8 or 9 children, but their liking a hubbub was no reason for my doing it & I asked very pressingly & at last he yielded & has had great satisfaction in it already.[82]

The material changes that Hargrave brought to York Factory demonstrated her elevated status in regards to those around her, and allowed her to maintain this position,

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[77] Hargrave, *Letters*, 62.
[78] Hargrave, *Letters*, 72.
[79] Hargrave, *Letters*, 17.
[80] Hargrave, *Letters*, 43.
[81] Hargrave, *Letters*, 62.
[82] Hargrave, *Letters*, 121.

and assist with the improvement of the fur trade, as there was no easier way for Hargrave to replicate life in Great Britain than through the acquisition of material goods that reflected the culture and society of Britain. In addition to having goods such as carpets and curtains, Hargrave also had numerous servants at her disposable. She had the pleasure of having an old family servant imported from Scotland as well as a personal cook and a man to serve as butler.[83] Her inclusion of such information in her letters informed her family about what her life at Hudson Bay was like, and in doing so, Hargrave demonstrated the degree to which certain aspects of the fur trade (and life at fur trade posts) had been Europeanized by her presence and home-making. Similarly to Finlayson's experience with European goods, it is possible that James Hargrave had discovered, through the example of the Governor's wife, which European goods were necessary for the survival of Victorian women within the fur trade, and thus actively sought to make sure that his wife would be as comfortable as possible. In turn, Hargrave elaborated on them in her writings, showcasing the degree to which the fur trade environment was altered with her presence.

When presented with European goods such as these, it was hardly surprising that historians and fur traders alike expressed the opinion that Hargrave had reconciled herself to living at York Factory.[84] This acquiescence of her role and position within the fur trade was suggested by the fact that she did not outwardly complain about her position in the fur trade, and instead expressed happiness and gratitude to her husband. James Hargrave was most pleased to declare that his wife "indeed takes kindly to her new kingdom and…I feel firmly persuaded I could have found none so well fitted to make me happy & to be happy

[83] Hargrave, *Letters*, xliii.
[84] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 192.

herself amid such deserts."[85] Hargrave was praised for having borne up wonderfully under personal stress, and that "not one expression was dropt from her indicating a wish that we should leave the station where we now are, or that a visit to her friends would tend to relieve her spirit."[86] That is not to say that Hargrave was not often critical of the physical and social environment of the fur trade in the letters that she wrote to her family or that she did not express dissatisfaction with her presence there, as she was, and did, both. However, Hargrave carefully restricted her occasional lamentations of her place in the fur trade to uphold her position as a Victorian lady. She seems to have been careful not to attribute her unhappiness to her husband, but rather with the physical and social environment at York Factory.

Although James Hargrave had optimistically referred to the climate of York Factory when he wrote that:

> It certainly tries the stamina of a man more than an equable and temperate atmosphere; but with adequate aid in the performance of duties there, no Scot, who has made a bed among the heather with no cover but his plaid and no shelter but the lee-side of a hill, need fear a Coast of fog more than a Scotch one,[87]

and had managed to link his description of the area to the climate and environment of Scotland – making it seem both more civilized and more familiar – the fact remained that the climate at York Factory was difficult for even male fur traders to endure. And indeed, the comments of Hargrave's male contemporaries regarding the climate legitimized any dissatisfaction that Hargrave may have had with living at York Factory. It was hardly surprising that Hargrave referred to York Factory as "eternally [barren]…and…not very

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[85] Hargrave, *Letters*, xlvii.
[86] Hargrave, *Letters*, lxxvii.
[87] Hargrave, *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 292.

enlivening to the spirits," after hearing the comments of fur traders in regards to the place.[88] One fur trader acquainted with the Hargraves, Francis (Frank) Ermatinger, expressed despair at the thought that Hargrave would be "doomed to the solitude [and] swamps…of York Factory," and questioned what sort of constitution would be able to survive it.[89] The unhappy prospect of remaining for an extended period of time at York Factory and her assumed inherent unsuitability was perhaps reflected in her mentioning her brothers, William and Dugald, who were employed by the Hudson's Bay Company. She related that William was "determined" to go away, "at least from York."[90] And although she had not been physically restricted to remaining within the fort, Hargrave sadly reported to her family that after spending two years at York Factory she had never been more than four miles from the Fort.[91]

Socially, Hargrave's letters reveal the degree to which she could be quite critical of the people that she perceived to occupy a social position lower than her own, as demonstrated previously in her opinions of Miss Allan and Miss Ross. Once in the fur trade, Hargrave accepted her position as the "first lady" at York Factory, by relating to her family how people that she came into contact with at York treated her. James Hargrave had described her future position in the fur trade to her in 1839 when he wrote that she would be considered a "queen" of the "Kingdom of York,"[92] and indeed almost

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[88] Hargrave, *Letters*, 146. Some of the fur traders' comments include: John Ballenden on hearing of Hargrave's application to leave York: "I am not surprised at you wanting to get rid of York. I am only astonished that you should have remained there so long. The very name gives me the Colick and the worst news I could now receive would be that I was again to winter there. How Mrs Hargrave could become reconciled to such a place I cannot imagine, and were it only for her sake I really wish you snug quarters in a more congenial climate," Hargrave, *Letters*, xcii.
[89] Hargrave, *Letters*, cxi.
[90] Hargrave, *Letters*, 148.
[91] Hargrave, *Letters*, 124.
[92] Hargrave, *Letters*, 280.

immediately upon her arrival at York Factory, several women already within the fur trade attempted to pay their respects. She reported that Native women around York Factory called her "Hockinaw Erqua, (literally Chieftainess) of the Factory," and brought her gifts of flowers and berries,[93] "an Indian half cast lady" sent Hargrave "6 pairs of "mocassins [sic]," while another "embroidered covers of fine scarlet cloth for the dogs that draw my cariole…"[94] Settlers as far Red River showed their respect to the new chief trader's wife. A Scotchwoman at Red River upon "hearing that [Hargrave] was a country woman sent a couple of huge highland looking cheeses with her kindest complements,"[95] and apparently "all the whites [men] stand and stare," when Hargrave left her house, especially when she travelled in her cariole. Even children who had never been to Europe understood her elevated position and apparently cheered loudly when they saw Hargrave out of her home.[96] It was Hargrave's unique appearance at York Factory that resulted in good measure in such admiration. Just as Simpson, and her body, had been praised by fur traders upon her arrival in Rupert's Land, Hargrave's body was also clearly the object of attention, as the goods that she was presented were often ornamental in nature, or were designed to compliment her appearance, and ultimately make her more comfortable within the fur trade – such as Native clothing and various kinds of luxury food items.

The woman that Hargrave considered to be her closest social equal was the only other "lady" at York Factory, Mrs. Harriet (née Vincent) Gladman who, while being a "member of the aristocracy of the country," was a mixed-blood woman who had long lived

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[93] Hargrave, *Letters*, xlvii.
[94] Hargrave, *Letters*, 73.
[95] Hargrave, *Letters*, 73.
[96] Hargrave, *Letters*, 89.

in the interior of Rupert's Land.[97] Despite the fact that the Gladmans had a family crest that they used to seal their letters and used silver when dining, Hargrave's first opinion of Gladman was that she was "fully…vulgar looking."[98] Her description of Gladman at their first meeting was that she was:

> As large as a lady can be & dressed to death in a Waterloo blue Merino, moccasins, a straw bonnet lined with lilac satin with a profusion of lilac blue & white ribbon & a cap border of very broad blonde, the same depth all round no gloves & a silk shawl, the old fashion white around & green pattern.[99]

This description of Gladman suggests that Hargrave considered the woman unacceptable due both to her appearance and the fact that prior to their meeting, Hargrave knew she was a mixed-blood woman. Indeed, it was only through Finlayson's insistence that the two women met at all. It was not until after meeting with the woman several times that Hargrave was better able to understand Gladman's social position in the fur trade. Gladman was a product of the Europeanization that had occurred in Rupert's Land in the early nineteenth century. She was the daughter of Chief Factor Thomas Vincent and his country wife, Jane Renton, and as such was considered to be one of the "daughters of the fur trade."[100] Her education took place at the Red River Academy where Gladman would have certainly received a classical and ornamental style of education, at least the rudiments of education that a young woman in England would have received at the same time; the Gladmans owning of a barrel organ suggested that her training in musical appreciation was

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[97] Hargrave, *Letters*, xliv.
[98] Hargrave, *Letters*, 74.
[99] Hargrave, *Letters*, 73.
[100] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Vincent, Thomas," http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=3184 (accessed 17 May 2012).

at least complete.[101] Despite the degree to which Gladman had been Europeanized, and the friendship that had grown between the two women (demonstrated by the fact that Hargrave named Gladman as Godmother to her first child, and the fact that Hargrave and Gladman kept up a correspondence after the Gladmans were moved from York Factory[102]), Hargrave still kept up a distinction between herself and the Metis woman, and fully separated her own bodily place in fur trade society when she described her "horror," at seeing Gladman sitting amongst a group of forty "squaws" at a ball given by the fur trade gentlemen with "nothing on their heads but their everlasting blankets smelling of smoke and everything obnoxious."[103] Hargrave's friendship with Gladman represented a significant change in regards to the socializing of Victorian women in the fur trade. As will be mentioned in greater detail in the following chapter, Frances Simpson was severely isolated from other women during her time at Red River, likely part of the reason she was unable to secure a place for herself there. That Hargrave was encouraged to become friends with the Metis woman perhaps demonstrated an appreciation of a necessary social compromise in Rupert's Land, and an example of Hargrave taking advantage of Simpson's earlier experiences in the fur trade.

Although Hargrave had a close female acquaintance at York Factory in the person of Gladman she did suffer from social isolation during her time at York Factory. James Hargrave often kept certain people from being introduced to his wife who he perceived as being of too low moral repute for her company.[104] In addition to this, the distance that

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[101] Hargrave, *Letters*, 63.
[102] Hargrave, *Letters*: godparents, lvii; reference to continued correspondence, 129.
[103] Hargrave, *Letters*, 94-95.
[104] Hargrave, *Letters*, 127. Hargrave writes: "there is a party going on board with Harg[ve] [sic] *I* was not asked – The ship is anchored about 6 miles from this & unloaded by 2 schooners. There are 2 ½breeds going home,

existed between York Factory and the next major post – Norway House – made it difficult to visit families that occupied the required social standing to be introduced to Hargrave. That being said, Hargrave was able to keep up several correspondences with women throughout the country such as Finlayson and Ross, as well as other women of a specific class who lived in Rupert's Land – mainly in Red River. These women included the previously mentioned schoolmistresses, the wives of missionaries, and other wives and daughters of certain fur traders.[105] While these acquaintances provided the opportunity for Hargrave to widen her social circle, her attempt to maintain her class position and entrench her social superiority to women often resulted in her refusing the company and correspondence of certain families. Hargrave had become acquainted with a second English family that lived at Norway House – the family of James Evans, a Wesleyan missionary, who lived there with his wife and daughter (the other English family at Norway House being the previously mentioned Ross family). While Hargrave was not in a position to travel to Norway House to visit the women there, the Evanses had spent time at York Factory, and Hargrave was therefore acquainted with them. However, rumours and gossip, and James Evans' own controversial criticism of the Hudson's Bay Company and

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a boy to school & a grown *youth* to study for the Church. I suppose they are not very genteel as they have not been brought to me."

[105] It is difficult to determine the exact number of "respectable" women in Red River with whom Hargrave would have been able to correspond. Her letters reference a number of women in the fur trade, and it seems as though she corresponded, or had the chance to visit, with around thirty women during her time in the fur trade (Hargrave, *Letters*, index), though this did not necessarily mean that the women were all European, as the daughters and wives of certain fur traders may have been considered respectable acquaintances for her, such as Harriet Gladman was. For more information on women in Red River, see W. J. Healy, *Women of Red River: Being a Book Written from the Recollections of Women Surviving from the Red River Era* (Winnipeg: The Women's Canadian Club, 1923) and Brian Gallagher, "A Re-examination of Race, Class and Society in Red River," *Natives Studies Review* 4:1&2 (1988), 25-65. In addition to her own perceptions of her superiority, Hargrave was also given information about her female contemporaries through networks of gossip and rumor. Frits Pannekoek, goes into greater detail about the social tensions that existed between the various groups of people living in Red River: Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing), 79-142.

its use of Christianized Native people on the Sabbath, when combined with Hargrave's assumption of her own superior social standing in the Established Church, largely dictated her opinion of the women, resulting in her declaring that Mrs. Evans was a "mere Methodist,"[106] and "downright unprincipled," and that her daughter was "no great matter."[107] The fact that Mrs. and Miss Evans apparently fabricated stories about the Rosses and Isobel Finlayson caused Hargrave to answer their letters by "meeting their My dear friend with dear Madam till I suppose they got sick of it," until they finally gave up writing to Hargrave – an occurrence that she expressed relief at.[108]

Isobel Finlayson and Letitia Hargrave acted in ways conforming to the expectations that had been placed upon them as Victorian women in the fur trade, reinforcing their "inherent" domesticity and femininity, which allowed them to negotiate, and fill, certain spaces in Rupert's Land. Frances Simpson's experience in the fur trade ten years earlier had helped to create a specific place for Victorian women in Rupert's Land, and these later women were, in many ways, able to take advantage of her arrival, and departure, from the fur trade to further better their situations. Finlayson and Hargrave benefitted materially and socially from Simpson's earlier presence; however, they also individually acted in ways that maintained their positions within the fur trade. Despite having moved westwards where they would have experienced less censure regarding their actions and appearance, Finlayson and Hargrave upheld the expectations that were placed upon them as Victorian-era women to fill the spaces that Simpson had created for them, yet also negotiate these

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[106] Hargrave, *Letters*, lvi.
[107] Hargrave, *Letters*, 182.
[108] Hargrave, *Letters*, 182.

spaces on their own terms, demonstrating a degree of agency by essentially making these spaces their own.

Despite the civilizing measures that had occurred throughout fur trade society, arguably done in part to make Victorian women more comfortable in Rupert's Land, both Finlayson and Hargrave suffered hardships and ill health, which might not seem surprising given the frailty expected of Victorian women's bodies. Much like her sister, Finlayson did not remain long within the fur trade. After a few short years, marked by continued frailty and ill health, her husband left his position as the governor of Assiniboia and was posted to the civilized world – the Hudson's Bay Company post at Lachine. Hargrave, on the other hand, remained at York Factory for eleven years, though her letters included frequent references to her poor health, and indirect comments about her general unhappiness with her physical location at York Factory. The enigma of Victorian women's delicacy within the fur trade will be examined in the following chapter, as will Simpson's, Finlayson's, and Hargrave's reactions to the expectations and realities of their supposed frailty in Rupert's Land.

Chapter Three:

Surviving the Fur Trade? Lovely Tender Exotics and Their Health in Rupert's Land

Frances Simpson, Isobel Finlayson and Letitia Hargrave acted in ways that conformed to the expectations made of women more generally in Victorian society. By recording their experiences to an audience, essentially submitting their actions to the censure and critique of their families, these women assisted in the colonization that was implicit in the commercial enterprises of their husbands. Moreover, as has been demonstrated in the previous chapters, their decisions to act in ways that upheld the expectations of Victorian femininity gave them the ability to entrench their positions within the social hierarchy and negotiate aspects of their physical and social presence there. This chapter takes a deeper look at the implications of a paradox implicit with their assigned roles in the fur trade territories. While upholding the cultural ideas of Victorian femininity and respectability – in particular that a women was ideally frail, weak, and dependent – ideas concerning their female frailty and delicacy often imperilled their health, and, ironically, shortened their presence, though not necessarily their impact, within the fur trade.

The commonly held Victorian understanding of women was that they were biologically different from men, and that these biological differences caused women to be inherently weaker. Girls were raised with the understanding that they should seek the protection and authority of a man – usually their husbands, and were taught to expect elaborate sympathy from others in regards to their physical travails, and demonstrate their

emotions and pain through tears, unlike boys and men who were meant to bear it "stoically."[1] The corresponding cultural understanding of women's weakness during the Victorian era then was that they were more likely to become ill than men.[2] This contributed to some instances where illness became "fashionable," as a woman's poor health often created opportunities for her contemporaries to comment on, or offer sympathy for the suffering woman, putting her at the centre of attention.[3] Further, being ill could, in some cases, be a marker of social status as only certain women during the Victorian era could afford to be ill for any length of time.

It was therefore hardly surprising that Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave, while experiencing real illness, engaged in Victorian-era socialized activities around their perceived poor health. Considering the physical and social environment that these women moved into, it is possible to demonstrate that they may have acted within the microcosm of fur trade society in telling ways. The roughness of the physical environment, which affected the health of even rugged fur traders,[4] resulted in an expectation of being and seeming ill, while the society of the fur trade which was attempting to become increasingly Victorian and "civilized" proved a fertile context in which women could make displays of their frailty and weaknesses. While they certainly suffered from real illnesses, it is also apparent through a reading of their personal narratives that illness was not only

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[1] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 199.
[2] Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of their Bodies: Women and their Doctors in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 49.
[3] Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 208; Ann Douglas Wood, "'The Fashionable Diseases': Women's Complaints and Their Treatment in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* IV: I (1973), 27.
[4] Fur traders frequently succumbed to illnesses due to the climate of the country such as lung complaints, "gout, fevers, and vapours, scorbutic disorders…cancers…frostbite, and snow blindness," see: E. E. Rich, "The Fur Traders: Their Diet and Drugs," *The Beaver* 307 (Summer 1976), 47.

experienced, but also dramatized by these women. Simpson's, Finlayson's, and Hargrave's complaints and afflictions, reported throughout their narratives, demonstrate the ways that upholding certain Victorian ideals could negatively impact their health as Victorian women, and their duration in the fur trade. The frequency of their reports, and the fact that they had made such an effort to conform to the notions of femininity and respectability that had been assigned to them by Victorian society, suggests that, like many of their Victorian-era female counterparts, these women may have manipulated understandings of Victorian female frailty in order to gain agency, and improve their situations, particularly within the harsh confines and demanding civilizing roles assigned them in the fur trade.

The actual cause of female illness during the Victorian era that was offered by medical professionals greatly depended on what the woman seemed to be suffering from, and the degree to which the doctors believed and propagated the cultural understanding of female frailty. Most doctors agreed with the assumption that biological differences between men and women made women weaker, and thus contributed to their poor health. The typical ailments in the nineteenth century included "pelvic disorders, sick headaches, general nervousness," in short, vague "female complaints," that had to do with their nervous system, purported thinness of blood, and malfunctioning female sexual organs, specifically, the uterus.[5] In many instances, these women did not show obvious outward manifestations, and doctors had to listen to their testimony and complaints to make informed decisions regarding their female patients. In addition to this, women were

[5] Wood, "'The Fashionable Diseases'," 28.

encouraged to self-diagnose themselves in many situations which gave them the ability to legitimize their perceptions of their frailty and resultant illnesses.[6]

Ann Douglas Wood and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg suggest that some women, in addition to seeking simply to appear interesting, were able to use their illness to control their own bodies, or to rebel against their situation in society.[7] The actual act of being ill, of course, was natural to the human body at all times, but the perceived severity, and the fact that Victorian women were increasingly seeking medical treatment, was not. It has been suggested that this differentiated many women of a certain social class and culture in the nineteenth century from their counterparts in the eighteenth century. The earlier women did not "define themselves through sickness," and sought to minimize, rather than maximize their illnesses.[8] Because of the acceptance and expectation of female frailty in Victorian society, women who understood the values and expectations placed upon them were, in many ways, able to "exploit" their illnesses to change their position in society or demonstrate displeasure with their physical location.[9] This opportunity to manipulate the cultural understandings of female frailty was aided by both the vague nature of many of these women's complaints, and the degree to which medical science and Victorian-era doctors were knowledgeable about women's bodies. Treatment could oftentimes include doses of various chemical remedies and prescribed bed rest. Women who were "knocked out" or put on bed rest were essentially able to transform the domestic sphere in which they

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[6] Wood, "'The Fashionable Diseases'," 27.
[7] Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 197-216; Wood, "'The Fashionable Diseases'," 27.
[8] Wood, "'The Fashionable Diseases'," 27.
[9] See also Pauline B. Bart "Social Structure and Vocabularies of Discomfort: What Happened to Female Hysteria?" *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 9:3 (1968), 188-193. Bart's study suggests that women who understand the rhetoric around mental illness are more likely to identify with mental illnesses. This can be applied to Victorian women. Those who were more aware of the expectations of their frailty were likely more apt to identify with their illnesses and frailty than rural, or less educated woman would have done.

were supposed to play a critical part. Rather than put her children and family first, women who were ill were in positions where they were able to hush their children, darken their rooms, and suspend their onerous entertaining responsibilities without negative social repercussions.[10]

Victorian women who sought to use their bodies and the assumption of their illness in order to enhance their agency in otherwise constrictive social hierarchies and gendered roles did so for many reasons. Some were unhappy in their marriages, some were afraid of pregnancy and childbirth, and thus used illnesses to prevent or forestall sexual activities, while some were simply seeking a release from stressful situations in their lives. It has been suggested that "a certain percentage of nineteenth century women," who were suffering from personal stress or "situational anxieties," might have found refuge in affected illness, and may have regressed "toward the childish hyper-femininity of the hysteric" in order to better deal with their situation.[11]

It is important to note that not all women who suffered from poor health were able to use their illness to their advantage, or indeed tried to. Firstly, not all women likely understood their ability to manipulate the Victorian values assigned to illness in a way that would allow them to change their position, and many may have been happy with their place and position in society. Some illnesses, too, were serious and visible, and were not imagined or exaggerated in anyway. The Victorian-era was host to a series of very serious crowd infectious diseases and illnesses that affected men, women, and children. For women who displayed violent or dangerous mental illnesses, the risk of being removed from society or committed to a mental institution was a very real threat. Further, many

[10] Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 208.
[11] Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 215.

doctors believed that the solution to a woman's vague ailments (even headaches or migraines) could be realized by treating her uterus, which could often be extremely damaging to the female patient. Termed "local treatment," some doctors used leeches, injections, and even cauterization of the uterus to treat nineteenth century female complaints.[12] It was therefore the women who suffered from vague "complaints," who were of good moral character, and who properly upheld the ideals expressed in the Cult of True Womanhood, that were more able, and possibly more willing, to use illness to their advantage than women who suffered from serious physical or mental illness.

The fact that Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave resided in Rupert's Land, rather than in England or Scotland, actually provided them with more opportunities to manipulate the understandings of their weaknesses than their female counterparts in Europe. As mentioned in the previous chapters, these women were among the first Victorian ladies in the fur trade territories, and thus were free from being compared to the behaviours of other Victorian women. In addition to this, Simpson, Finlayson and Hargrave were removed from European urban centres and therefore were free from removal to hospitals, mental institutions, and the majority of doctors' surgical offices. This is not to say that there were not doctors present in fur trade, or that the Hudson's Bay Company was not concerned with the health of its traders.[13] Before the Hudson's Bay Company had even been chartered, it was recorded that a French surgeon, Pierre Romieux of Trois Rivières, had accompanied a group of fur traders on the voyage of the *Nonsuch* in 1668. Walter Farr, an English surgeon, replaced Romieux in 1674, and the Company continued to employ surgeons and

[12] Wood, "'The Fashionable Diseases'," 30.
[13] For more information on the Hudson's Bay Company as a public health unit, see Paul Hacket, "Averting Disaster: The Hudson's Bay Company and Smallpox in Western Canada during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth centuries," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 78:3 (2004), 575-609.

doctors throughout its history.[14] This did not always mean that skilled medical attention was offered, however. James A. Hanson argues that after the late eighteenth century there was a "general rejection, or at least, a general lack of interest, in professionally trained medical practitioners," meaning that the doctors that were present at posts, and the fur traders themselves, typically relied heavily on medical manuals and medical kits, some of which were based on "Indian cures."[15] The surgeons employed by the Hudson's Bay Company in the 1830s and 1840s were not only medical professionals, but were also traders for the Company. This meant that their placement within Rupert's Land, and their location at various posts, was not due solely to their medical abilities, but also their skill and worth as a trader. These doctors largely seemed to propagate "Old Country ideas"[16] regarding women and their health, essentially agreeing with, and propagating, the previously mentioned ideas and understandings of Victorian women and their inherent weaknesses. Information included in medical journals from York Factory, for example, suggest that when women were treated by doctors at York Factory, the majority of treatments were for gynaecological disorders.[17]

It is difficult to assess the degree to which Frances Simpson was able to use her frailty to her advantage while in the fur trade due to the nature of her written sources. Simpson's journal, written in 1830, contained reports of her suffering through her illnesses and discomfort quite "stoically," meaning that while she reported the hardships that she had to endure, she did not constantly reiterate her suffering, or make any direct connections

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[14] Rich, "The Fur Traders: Their Diet and Drugs," 47.
[15] James Hanson, "Bad Medicine: Medical Knowledge and Practice of the Upper Missouri Fur Trade," *Museum of the Fur Trade Quarterly* 40:3 (2004), 2.
[16] Letitia Hargrave, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, ed. Margaret Arnett MacLeod (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), l.
[17] Jody F. Decker, "The York Factory Medical Journals, 1846-1852," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 14:1 (1997), 126-127.

between her suffering and her situation in the society of the fur trade. That is not to say that Simpson did not adhere to the ideas of feminine frailty. Simpson made references to her future hardships when she suggested that departure from her family had made her physically and mentally ill when she described an "aching heart" and a mind "agitated by the various emotions of Grief, Fear and Hope," on the day of her departure from her family.[18] The grief that she felt was from parting with her "beloved Parents and a large and united family of brothers and sisters from whom [she] had never been separated," her fears were centred on the possibility that negative changes could potentially affect her family in her absence, while the hope that she felt was directed not towards her future life in Rupert's Land, but rather to the desire that she would, at some point, return to the "home of [her] infancy."[19] Her emotional frailty was confirmed when she declared that saying farewell to her father was a "moment of bitter sorrow," that caused her to "throw a veil," over any attempt to further describe her feelings.[20]

Simpson demonstrated the degree of her physical delicacy when she declared that "immediately upon clearing the dock gates," she "felt the Cabin reel and saw every colour of the Rainbow dancing before [her] eyes."[21] Simpson's experience with seasickness – likely her first – left her confined to her cabin for three full weeks.[22] George Simpson's reaction to his wife's sudden and serious indisposition was to attempt to bribe the captain of the ship to land off the coast of Ireland with the idea of sending his wife back to her

[18] HBCA D.6/4, Frances Simpson Journal 1830, 1.
[19] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 1-2.
[20] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 3.
[21] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 6.
[22] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 6.

family in England.[23] That Simpson recorded this event uncomplainingly is interesting. By doing so she certainly was able to portray herself as a proper Victorian lady by accepting her husband's decisions and agreeing that he should "proceed on his journey which was indispensible,"[24] as mentioned in Chapter One. However, the calm way in which she relayed being quite possibly abandoned in Ireland in the company of strangers until such a time as her brothers or father could leave London to collect her, may indicate that Simpson would have been quite happy if the severity of her illness so necessarily delayed her journey to Rupert's Land. This is, of course, only a possibility. As mentioned in Chapter One, it is difficult to determine the degree to which Simpson was prepared for a life in the fur trade; after having spent some time with her husband, (whom she referred to un-affectionately in her letters as "Mr. Simpson," a stark contrast to Finlayson's journal, in which Duncan Finlayson was referred to as "my dear husband") it is possible that she may have realized that she was unprepared for a journey to the fur trade with a man that she had only been married to for a few weeks, who was many years her senior, and was renowned for an irascible temper. She might have sought to use her illness, and her husband's reaction to it, to attempt to prolong her stay with her family and friends in England. Unfortunately, the captain was unable to accept the bribe of $5000.00 as the stormy weather made it too dangerous to attempt a landing, and Simpson had to continue her journey to North America.[25]

After Simpson recovered from this seasickness – perhaps when it became clear that she would not be able to return to England – her references to her own frailty fall out of the

[23] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 6.
[24] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 6-7.
[25] HBCA D.6/4, Simpson Journal, 6-7.

narrative, and instead she spent the rest of her journal describing her experiences within Rupert's Land, as analysed in Chapter One. However, once Simpson was established within the fur trade in the confines of Red River society, where social, racial, and class tensions were rife, she again appeared to suffer acutely from poor health, and her decision to act in ways that upheld the perception that had been formed of her as a proper Victorian lady proved a conundrum as she balanced illness with pressures on her condition. When considering both the harsh climate that existed in the fur trade and the pressures on Simpson as she acted in order to fill the space that had been created for her as a Victorian lady, it was hardly surprising that she went from being described as a picture of perfection and the true embodiment of a Victorian woman, to being described simply as "delicate," and an "amiable *little* woman," who would suffer from her time spent in the fur trade for the rest of her life.[26]

Part of the repercussions of being among the first "lovely tender exotics" in Rupert's Land in the mid-nineteenth century was the reality of almost total social isolation. In order to stress the superior social position of his wife, George Simpson actively prevented fur trading gentlemen from introducing their native or mixed-blood wives to her.[27] In 1831, Chief Factor Colin Robertson brought his mixed-blood wife Theresa Chalifoux to the Red River settlement, clearly oblivious of the impressions that both Frances and George Simpson had formed of him (mentioned in Chapter One). When

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[26] James Hargrave, *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, ed. G. P. de T. Glazebrook (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1938), 115. (My emphasis)

[27] This was a tactic that George Simpson had employed in 1824 when he had prevented Captain Matthey, a settler in Red River, from introducing his mixed blood wife to Governor Pelly and his European bride so that he could stress his respectability and separateness from fur trade liaisons. See: HBCA MG2 A1, Thomas Douglas, 5th Earl of Selkirk Collection, vol. 25-29 (1769-1870), 8224; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 204.

Robertson attempted to introduce his wife to Simpson, George Simpson commented on Robertson's actions:

> Robertson brought his bit of Brown with him to the Settlement this Spring in hopes that she would pick up a few English manners before visiting the civilised world; but it would not do – I told him distinctly the thing was impossible, which mortified him exceedingly…[28]

George Simpson's hopes to insulate incoming wives from Native and mixed-blood women were shared by his close friend, Chief Factor John George McTavish. Much like George Simpson, John George McTavish, who resided with his Scottish wife, Catherine, at Moose Factory also actively kept her from interacting with Hudson's Bay Company officers' mixed-blood wives and daughters. George Simpson lauded and supported his friend's stern measures when he confirmed that it was "the height of presumption," for fur trader officers to think that their "bit[s] of circulating copper," would, or should, be welcomed into the society of Victorian ladies.[29] It is important to note that once George Simpson had introduced his delicate European "divinity"[30] into the fur trade, the Native and mixed-blood women that had once been considered ideal marriage partners were reduced to disembodied, circulating bits. That these women were referred to as "bits of brown" and "circulating bits" demonstrated not only their disembodiment, but also suggested their immorality, firstly through the references to the skin colour, and secondly through the idea that they "circulated," seemingly from one partner to another, as debased denominators in commercial exchange. Simpson's prejudice against Native women was so strong that it appeared even his regard for their fur trading husbands would not alter his

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[28] HBCA B.135/c/2, Inward Correspondence, Moose Factory, 1746-1864, 73.
[29] Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1980), 205.
[30] Hargrave, *Hargrave Correspondence*, 57.

opinion of the wives. For example, despite recording that he was "most pleased," with Chief Factor Joseph Beioley's "whole demeanour conduct and management," and considered him "one of the most valuable members of the Fur Trade,"[31] George Simpson still supported John George McTavish's decision to keep Beioley's mixed-blood wife, Isabella, away from the society of Catherine McTavish.[32] As many of the fur traders and their mixed-blood wives had considered themselves to be part of the upper echelons of fur trade society, the result was that emotions and tensions ran high. The chief factors were angry at this treatment, and their mixed-blood ladies at Moose Factory were scarcely less so, being described as "violent and indignant at being kept at such a distance" from the society of Catherine McTavish.[33] This decision to socially subordinate fur traders who had liaisons with Aboriginal and mixed-blood women not only affected the fur trade officers who had mixed-blood wives, but also the fur traders who were of mixed-blood themselves, and had a Native, or mixed-blood mother. Men such as Chief Trader George Gladman, for example, who had a fur trading father and an Indian mother, were "highly incensed at this treatment," yet George Simpson's perception of the superiority of his wife and John George McTavish's wife helped to form his opinion that "the greater the distance at which [mixed-blood women] are kept [from Victorian women] the better,"[34] in order to form a white space within the fur trade where respectability would take root. The fact that the Native women that George Simpson was shunning were already "quite English in [their] manner," clearly did not alter the governor's convictions. His decision to raise the status of

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[31] George Simpson, "Character Book," in *Hudson's Bay Miscellany, 1670-1870* ed. Glyndwr Williams (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975), 178.
[32] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 205.
[33] HBCA B.135/c/2, Inward Correspondence, 74.
[34] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 205.

his wife over other fur traders' wives helped to entrench his own position at the top of the social hierarchy, as well as seemingly domesticate the fur trade with the introduction of women praised for their appearance and abilities to keep a domestic space.

The effects of being so socially isolated were undoubtedly devastating to Simpson. The opportunity for women of the Victorian era to socialize with other women of their social standing was an important way for women to bond and find a place for themselves in society, but the very small number of suitable socialites precluded Simpson from fulfilling this mandate. Moreover, without this ability to gossip and share her life with other women, Simpson rapidly found herself with "no Society, no Friend, no Relative," in Rupert's Land except for her domineering husband, who was frequently off on long journeys for the business of the Company – essentially abandoning her "in the hands of strangers…some of them very unfeeling."[35] When combined with the fact that Simpson's husband often treated her like a child, the reality of being in an unfamiliar and relatively harsh environment that was devoid of friends and family likely caused Simpson a considerable degree of stress which contributed to her already delicate condition. The reality of the colonial social scene, then, tended to isolate the female colonizer, and ironically, it isolated "lovely tender exotic" to her very peril.

A number of fur traders made reference to Simpson's failing health shorty after her arrival in Rupert's Land, and by 1831 a doctor had been called to Red River to permanently observe and treat Simpson. It had been predicted by at least one fur trader that Simpson would not be able to survive an extended period of time in the fur trade as early as 1831

[35] HBCA B.135/c/2, Inward Correspondence, 83. Interestingly enough one of the only native women that Simpson came into contact with was Nancy McKenzie, the previous country wife of John George McTavish, who served her in strictly a menial role.

when he reported that Simpson "had been ailing since Christmas," and that it was "strongly apprehended that the climate of this country will not agree with her."[36] This letter also hinted at the notion that Simpson, who was not only expected to be present to receive fur traders that visited the Governor, but was also meant to use her "fascinating accomplishments" as a Victorian lady to give Red River "an air of high life and gaiety,"[37] was soon reportedly ailing to such a degree that she was not able to fulfil the socializing roles expected of her. And while her "ailment" was apparently not considered to be dangerous by the resident doctor at Red River, it was predicted that her condition was deteriorating to such a degree that "her stay [in Red River] cannot be much prolonged," which may have been an outcome that she found appealing.[38]

Simpson's poor health deteriorated further in 1831 when she became pregnant with her first child. Isolated from female companionship, and more importantly, from women who may have been able to assist her with her pregnancy, Simpson was instead attended by Chief Trader William Todd, a surgeon for the Hudson's Bay Company, who had been called to Red River by George Simpson that year. While "lack of skilled medical attention" was cited as one of the main reasons that her pregnancy proved to be so difficult,[39] Todd was regarded as an "attentive doctor who was extremely scrupulous on points of honour and etiquette."[40] Todd placed Simpson on bed rest for the duration of her pregnancy, and kept close watch over her until he delivered her son in September 1831. However, to exacerbate her delicate physical condition, the infant did not survive past the

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[36] Hargrave, *Correspondence*, 68.
[37] Hargrave, *Correspondence*, 61.
[38] Hargrave, *Correspondence*, 68.
[39] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Simpson, Frances Ramsay (Simpson, Lady Simpson)," http://www.biographi.ca/EN/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=4187 (accessed 14 February 2011).
[40] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Todd, William," http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?BioId=38344 (accessed 9 July 2012).

spring of 1832. Simpson was understandably much affected by this loss, which further imperilled her already delicate condition. As previously mentioned, "a certain percentage of nineteenth century women" who suffered from personal stress or "situational anxieties," such as Simpson understandably was afflicted, might have took recourse in exploiting the benefits illness could afford her in order to better deal with her placement, the trauma of personal losses such as these, or to actually remove herself from especially stressful social, or domestic, situations.[41] Situational stress and illness certainly prevented her from fulfilling her proper domestic role, as she was reported to have suffered from "an unspecified complaint as a consequence of giving birth," which baffled doctors in Rupert's Land and likely removed her from all entertaining duties.[42] Simpson was finally removed from the fur trade in 1833, and spent several years in London with her family before permanently relocating to Lachine, Quebec with George Simpson in 1845. She was said to have never fully recovered from the time that she had spent in Rupert's Land, and indeed, upon being relocated to England in 1833 was placed under further medical attention. These attentions did not prove to be sufficient, however, and Frances Simpson passed away in 1853 at the age of forty-one.[43]

Despite leaving Rupert's Land after only three years, Simpson's presence in the fur trade can be assessed through different optics. By purposefully acting in accordance with Victorian values and writing down her experiences in the fur trade, Simpson assisted with the creation of a more European society within Rupert's Land. It is ironic that the qualities that were so admired in Victorian women, such as delicacy and dependency, made it

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[41] Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 215.
[42] Arthur J. Ray, "William Todd: Doctor and Trader for the Hudson's Bay Company, 1816-1851," *Prairie Forum* 9:1 (1984), 15.
[43] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Simpson, Frances Ramsay."

impossible for her to remain within the fur trade, and indeed the very attributes so praised seem, in the end, to have been factors that undermined her long-term tenure in the fur trade. By purposefully fulfilling the expectations that had been placed upon her by society by acting submissively, domestically and femininely, Frances Simpson was able to work towards creating a place for herself as a Victorian woman within Rupert's Land. When it became obvious that she would not be able to happily remain in Red River, Simpson may have exploited the Victorian expectations of frailty by exaggerating some her illnesses in order to remove herself from stressful domestic and social situations, and eventually from the physical environment of the fur trade altogether.

Much like Frances Simpson, Isobel Finlayson and Letitia Hargrave also suffered from real physical and emotional difficulties while in Rupert's Land. As further representations of the idealized Victorian woman, they had similar expectations placed upon them that they sought to fill through their actions, which, in many ways, also prevented them from adapting to life in the fur trade. However, these women were arguably more prepared for a life in the fur trade than Simpson had been. Not only were Finlayson and Hargrave older, and thus likely approached life in the fur trade with a greater degree of maturity, (Finlayson was thirty-years-old when she travelled to Rupert's Land, and Hargrave was twenty-seven) both women had knowledge about life in the fur trade (from both Frances Simpson and from their husbands), and thus had an established understanding of what being a Victorian woman in the fur trade would be like. Further, Simpson's experience in the fur trade likely had an impact on the future position of other Victorian ladies travelling into the fur trade. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Finlayson and Hargrave seem to have been much more comfortable within the fur trade

because of the material goods they had been provided with, as compared to those that Simpson had been granted, and also were more emotionally and socially comfortable than Simpson had been. Even if this greater material support was the effect of more detailed writing on the part of the last two women – meaning that they may have simply written in more detail about their material comforts – their descriptions of their material comforts suggest that a more established place had been created for these "exotics" in Rupert's Land. It is certainly evident that there had been an increase in the number of Victorian women in Red River that were considered to be acceptable companions for these women, and attitudes towards certain mixed-blood women had changed as well. Rather than be kept separate and removed from other women in the fur trade, Hargrave, for example, had actually been encouraged to form a long and mutual friendship with a Metis "lady" of the fur trade, Harriet Gladman. However, this did not mean that Finlayson and Hargrave did not uphold certain expectations about their placement as frail Victorian women in Rupert's Land. These women certainly sought to maintain their class standing, but also found the means of drawing a form of companionship from their racially inferior "friends" for the sake of their mental and physical survival. An analysis of the documents left behind by Hargrave and Finlayson, when read with the previously established understanding of female health in the nineteenth century, confirms that these women, too, acted in ways that not only conformed to the ideas and ideals that had been assigned to them as Victorian women, but also exploited the understandings of female frailty in order to gain a degree of control over their positions and status within the fur trade.

An understanding of Isobel Finlayson's frailty had been established prior to her relocation to Rupert's Land, when her health and strength had been considered too weak to

endure a long sea voyage. Married in 1838 to Chief Factor Duncan Finlayson, Isobel Finlayson remained in England for two years until she had sufficient strength to join her husband in Rupert's Land. She documented the first months of her departure from England in the form of a travel journal, which contained information with how she viewed and experienced the fur trade, including frequent references to her poor health, delicate nature, and easily taxed sensibilities. The type of illness that Finlayson suffered from prior to her departure from England was not disclosed. Because of this vague reference to her health, it is possible to suggest that Finlayson, who would have been made aware of the cultural understandings of Victorian frailty and proper femininity, may have taken advantage of the assumption of her weakness as a Victorian lady and actually exaggerated her frail state so that she might remain with her family in England for as long as possible. Finlayson's descriptions of her homesickness are one of the main subjects for the first eleven pages of her journal, in which she described the "utter desolation and misery" at parting from her family.[44] In true Victorian fashion, Finlayson expressed her pain by throwing herself into a corner of her carriage where she "cover[ed] [her] face with [her] handkerchief," before she "gave way to such emotions as may be felt but can never be described."[45] Finlayson alluded to the idea that her homesickness had actually caused her to become physically ill when she declared that she thought her "heart would burst," when the anchor was lifted and their journey began.[46] Feeling "desolate and alone," Finlayson put herself in such a state that she was "unable to rouse" herself from her bed for the remainder of the day.[47]

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[44] HBCA E.12/5, Isobel Finlayson Notebook 1840, 10.
[45] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 6.
[46] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 10.
[47] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 11.

The comments of Finlayson's contemporaries while aboard the *Prince Rupert*, when combined with her actions – remaining in England as long as possible, and allowing herself to become so emotionally distraught that she became physically sequestered to bed – foreshadowed the frailty, weakness and emotional distress that would mark her condition for the duration of her stay in Rupert's Land. Hargrave made several references to the poor health of her travelling companion, and offered a great deal of sympathy in the letters that she wrote to her family in Scotland. Miss Allan and Miss Ross likewise sought to demonstrate their concern for Finlayson's apparent illnesses by occupying Finlayson's cabin and attempting to boost the other woman's spirits with their company.[48] The types of illnesses that Finlayson suffered from during the voyage out were, for the most part, vague and feminine in nature. Finlayson made reference to having suffered from seasickness and headaches, while Hargrave offered her own opinion of the woman, saying that "poor Mrs. Finlayson has suffered a good deal all night," and that she was reluctant to leave her because "Mrs. F[inlayson]…did not seem in such good spirits."[49] Finlayson apparently endured "a good deal of sickness," including what was diagnosed by Hargrave as being an "inflammation of the spine attended with a violent headache."[50]

All the same, Finlayson's poor health (established by both her illness in England and her sister's previous experience with frailty within the fur trade) provided her with certain comforts that her sister had not had. Finlayson's male contemporaries sought ways to make her more comfortable as she was better accommodated than her companions,

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[48] Letitia Hargrave, *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, ed. Margaret Arnett MacLeod (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), 68.
[49] Hargrave, *Letters,* 70.
[50] Hargrave, *Letters*, 48.

thanks to the actions of Captain Herd, who, "at the request of my kind friend Mr. Drew,[51] had very politely given up his own cabin for [Finlayson's] accommodation…which provided a great source of comfort to [her] during the voyage."[52] And further, as mentioned in the previous chapter, while en route to Red River, Finlayson was presented with a vast array of European goods – many more than her sister had claimed to have enjoyed ten years earlier. These included a large and comfortable tent and bedding, proper cutlery and dinnerware, the aid of servants, and port, wine, and venison pie to dine on.[53] It is possible that, in addition to the improvements in transportation, Duncan Finlayson simply better anticipated his wife's frailty than George Simpson had his own wife's. He therefore sought to provide these goods to make Finlayson's time in Rupert's Land as comfortable as possible. While Finlayson did not make direct correlation between her illnesses and the steps that had been made for her own comfort, it is entirely possible that she was aware of the advantages that could be obtained from appearing ill, and thus continued to exploit the advantages won by becoming and remaining frail.

Once she was actually in Red River, Finlayson's journal entries foreshadowed the hardships that she would suffer while there. Upon seeing Lower Fort Garry, which had been Frances Simpson's place of residence in the early 1830s, Finlayson wrote that she "vainly endeavour[ed]" to conceal her emotions, but that her "heart at length found relief in a flood of tears."[54] For Finlayson, seeing the place that her sister had "formerly given life and cheerfulness to," recalled memories and emotions that were seemingly too much for

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[51] Hargrave, Letters, 46: "Mr. Drew" was referred to as "Cap[n] Drew," by Letitia Hargrave, perhaps he was second mate aboard the ship.
[52] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 15.
[53] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 85, 88.
[54] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 155.

Finlayson to bear.[55] It was reported that soon after she came to Red River in 1840, Finlayson was "ailing," and had been "since her arrival [in Red River]."[56] Her husband credited her poor health to the fact that his wife was "too tender a plant," for the "Siberian climate," that existed in the fur trade.[57] Though it is extremely likely that Finlayson did suffer because of the temperature and climate of Rupert's Land, it is also possible that her "ailments" while in Red River were exploited to escape certain socializing roles that were expected of her as the wife of the Governor of Assiniboia, and further, to escape from her physical location in Red River itself – a place that had seemed to cause considerable anguish for Finlayson by the sight of it alone.

While ten years previously Simpson had been isolated from female companionship, the situation had changed by 1840, but not necessarily for the better. Finlayson may well have used her bad health as a pretext to escape from unwanted female acquaintances. Hargrave's letters suggested that the attentions of Miss Allan and Miss Ross were an irritant to Finlayson's already fragile state, and that to save herself from associating with these women (particularly Miss Allan and her unacceptable outbursts), Finlayson used her ill health – usually headaches – to excuse herself from the company of women who she found to be unacceptable companions, yet all the while acing as a "pattern as far as amiability & good breeding are concerned."[58] Further accounts of Finlayson hiding behind a pretext of bad health were demonstrated when the social situation at Red River became increasingly strained between mixed-blood women and white women in the colony. Throughout the 1830s there had been an influx of white women brought into Red River as

[55] HBCA E.12/5, Finlayson Notebook, 155.
[56] Hargrave, *Correspondence*, 331.
[57] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 199.
[58] Hargrave, *Letters*, 52-53.

plans were devised to construct an establishment for the "education of girls, the daughters of Gentlemen connected with the Fur trade."[59] Rather than find a woman already in the fur trade to teach the mixed-blood daughters of fur trade gentlemen, it was now considered necessary to bring out:

> A Lady regularly bred up to the Situation of Governess and qualified to instruct the children in the ornamental, as well as useful, Branches of Education, in short, an accomplished and well bred Lady, capable of teaching Music drawing &c &c of conciliating disposition & mild temper and if of a certain time of life to guard in some degree against the chance of her changing her condition so much the better.[60]

The arrival of established missionaries and their wives and daughters, and the presence of increasingly Europeanized wives and daughters of fur traders further bolstered the population of respectable women in Red River. One of the results of increasing the numbers of white women in the area of Red River was that these "accomplished and well bred" ladies clashed with lower-classed European ladies as well as the increasingly Europeanized mixed-blood women already within the country. Hargrave actually made reference to this in her letters when she reported that Mrs. Mary Evans and her daughter, the family of the Methodist minister and missionary, James Evans, were the

> Derision of the whole passers by for their finery and exhibition of good education and knowledge of astronomy as Mrs. E[vans] used to say – whereas Mrs. Ross & Jane [Ross] did not know the names of the commonest stars –[61]

Despite their attempts to appear as educated, upper-class women, the Evanses instead were shunned by women such as Finlayson and Hargrave for their pretentious attempts to appear better than they were.[62] The interactions between established, upper ranked Anglican

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[59] HBCA MG2 A7, Transcript of Correspondence between Rev. David Jones and George Simpson, 1832.
[60] HBCA MG2 A7, Transcript of Correspondence Rev. Jones and G. Simpson.
[61] Hargrave, *Letters*, 151.
[62] Hargrave, *Letters*, 182.

women and their Methodist counterparts, such as Mary Evans, was further exacerbated given the rancour between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Methodist ministers on the issues regarding converted Native peoples and labour on the Sabbath.[63] This was another example of Finlayson and Hargrave maintaining their elite positions in regards to the Evanses, and demonstrating their deference to their husbands' actions and opinions of the Methodist missionary.

Even Duncan Finlayson expressed dissatisfaction with the social climate at Red River when he wrote that Red River "required a 'Beau Nash' to regulate the movement of fashionable Red River couples,"[64] and declared that he did not wish to live in a place where there were so many "conflicting opinions and passions."[65] Social tensions were exacerbated during the 1840s between European and Metis women, and eventually erupted in two sexual scandals in the colony that irrevocably pitted white women against Metis women.[66] Reports existed of Finlayson "sighing for home," apparently dissatisfied with the society that existed in the colony, which rapidly caused her husband to announce that he was "endeavour[ing] to leave the settlement" as quickly as possible so that they might distance themselves from these social complexities.[67]

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[63] For more information on the tensions between the Hudson's Bay Company and Methodist ministers such as James Evans, see: *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Evans, James," http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=3376 (accessed 26 July 2012).
[64] Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties* 218.
[65] HBCA D.5/7, George Simpson Correspondence Inward, 1841-1843, 192.
[66] Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1991), 119-168; Sylvia Van Kirk, "'The Reputation of a Lady': Sarah Ballenden and the Foss-Pelly Scandal," *Manitoba History* 11 (1986) http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/11/fosspellyscandal.shtml (accessed 5 October 2010); Sharon A. FitzGerald and Alicja Muszynski, "Negotiating Female Morality: Place, Ideology and Agency in the Red River Colony," *Women's History Review* 16:5 (2007), 661-680.
[67] HBCA D.5/7, George Simpson Correspondence Inward, 96d.

As with other women during the Victorian era, it is impossible to determine the degree to which Finlayson brought her body and its ailments to bear on the assumption of female frailty that existed at the time, as records of her time in Rupert's Land are few, and were often recorded from the point of view of her contemporaries. The Finlaysons departed from Red River in 1844 and moved to Lachine where Duncan Finlayson was to supervise the Montreal Department.[68] Shortly after relocating to Lachine, Frances and George Simpson moved in with the Finlaysons, and Isobel Finlayson, who remained childless, helped to take care of the Simpson family. Much unlike her sister, Finlayson appears to have survived her short sojourn in the fur trade, as she lived to be seventy-nine years old. Although there is every possibility that Finlayson was struck with the common diseases that existed throughout the fur trade at that time,[69] her vague descriptions of her illnesses and, in the end, the longevity of her life, perhaps indicates her use of a strategy of using poor health to escape the objectionable society, and general personal unpleasantness that she found at Red River.

Due in part to the type of sources left behind, it is easier to demonstrate certain instances when Letitia Hargrave purposefully acted in ways that allowed her to use ill health as a means of improving her situation within the fur trade. Married in 1840 to Chief Trader James Hargrave, Letitia Hargrave travelled westwards with Finlayson in 1840, and documented her time in the fur trade in a series of letters written to her family and friends

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[68] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Finlayson, Duncan," http://www.biographi.ca/EN/EN/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=4423 (accessed 7 May 2012).

[69] Some of the typical illnesses that caused death at York Factory in the eighteenth century included infection disease, drowning, scurvy, drowning, and alcoholism. In the nineteenth century, "tuberculosis and influenza were the principal infections causing death, but pneumonia, meningitis, dysentery and bronchitis were also often fatal," William B. Ewart, "Causes of morality in a subarctic settlement (York Factory, Man.), 1714-1946," *Can Med Association Journal*, 129 (1983), 572-573. See also: Cynthia Toman, "George Spence: Surgeon and Servant of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1738-41," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 18 (2001), 17-42; and Decker, "York Factory Medical Journal."

in Scotland, which contained more direct information concerning herself and her life in the fur trade than the travel journals of the Simpson sisters. Hargrave's letters demonstrate a strong affection for her husband and her children, and there is little evidence of an attempt to escape from her role as a wife or mother. Rather, early references to Hargrave's poor health suggest that she may have been seeking to remove herself from certain socializing situations that she found distasteful, yet were expected of her as the wife of a chief factor. Once Hargrave was established at York Factory and it became apparent that her family's relocation to the "civilized world" was not immediately forthcoming, her references to poor health increased, perhaps in an attempt to demonstrate her unhappiness with her physical location, and a desire to be relocated away from York Factory, proactively using this strategy in order to adhere to the strictures and expectations of the times.

While still in London, Hargrave, facing the first of her disagreeable social obligations, claimed that she had been "very unwell with horrid sickness, nausea and headache," and declared that it was probably due to the "dullness" of her location at the George and Vulture Hotel, likely making the same afflictions known to her attentive husband.[70] In another instance, Hargrave reported suffering from a vague illness that caused her to "run to her bed," which saved her from having to look in on the landlady of the hotel, an "honour" she claimed she could not even be bothered to dress for.[71] She later expressed "rage and grief," at having missed the engagement that the landlady had

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[70] Hargrave, *Letters*, 24. Historian Margaret MacLeod suggested that the George and Vulture hotel was suggested as a place to stay by Governor Simpson because of its location "practically round the corner from Hudson's Bay House on Fenchurch Street, and for that reason was much patronized by the Company's officers on furlough in London," which suggests that Hargrave should have had a fair amount of socializing expected of her there as the new wife of James Hargrave: Hargrave, *Letters,* xxviii.
[71] Hargrave, *Letters*, 10.

prepared, apparently in her honour, when she was shown "a large room arranged for dancing & then [shown]…another with a most magnificent supper laid out for upwards of 100!!!"[72]

Her frailty during the voyage to North America once again prevented her from having to entertain and spend extended periods of time with some of her travelling companions such as Miss Allan, (mentioned previously), whom Hargrave called "affected and foolish," as Hargrave was able to retreat to her cabin to escape the woman's presence.[73] Hargrave also made reference to her illnesses as having allowed her to gain more comforts than her travelling companions when she managed to convince the doctor aboard the ship, Dr. W.D. Gillespie, that her health was so delicate that she required a fire in her cabin, despite the fact that she was located above the ship's gunpowder supply, and that having a fire in her cabin had the potential to put everyone aboard at risk.[74] Gillespie was to be the doctor who would take care of Hargrave for the first several years of her time at York Factory. He travelled with the Hargraves to York Factory in 1840, and remained there until 1845. Described by Hargrave as

> Perfectly educated, has not only a Diploma but has done as much towards graduating as M.D. as his years will admit of. Likewise, he is son to a Dr. Gillespie of Edin[borough] who was flourishing in high repute 20 years ago…"[75]

[72] Hargrave, *Letters*, 10.
[73] Hargrave, *Letters*, 49.
[74] Hargrave, *Letters*, 68.
[75] Hargrave, *Letters*, 41.

She remarked to her family that she had "good reason to be grateful to him" during the five years that he was stationed at York Factory, and credited her very survival after childbirth to his attentions.[76]

In many of the other references that Hargrave made to her poor health, one has to wonder whether she was using her frailty to gain some advantage in her situation, as she did not always directly correlate her illnesses with situational unhappiness. As mentioned in the previous chapter, historians have suggested that Hargrave had managed to successfully adapt to life at York Factory, as she remained there for eleven years. However, the continued frequency of which she reported her illnesses while at York, despite every effort being made to ensure her comfort, suggests less ill health – as York Factory seemed to have been a healthy place, at least seasonally[77] – and more of a general unhappiness with her lot in life. Indeed, her first view of York Factory caused her such emotional distress that the first thing Hargrave did upon landing there was to turn her back on the company and cry herself sick.[78]

Some fur traders were shocked that Hargrave had agreed to move to York Factory, especially as the climate was considered sufficiently harsh enough to affect even the health of a sturdy, Scottish fur trader. One fur trader wrote to James Hargrave, "I most sincerely wish that the climate of the Country may not injure Mrs. Hargrave's health as in such an event you would probably be obliged to leave the country…"[79] while another expected that Hargrave, as a "lovely tender exotic," would "pine and languish in the desert" of Rupert's

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[76] Hargrave, *Letters*, 97.
[77] Decker, "York Factory Medical Journals," 115, 117: fig. 2.
[78] Hargrave, *Letters*, 58.
[79] Hargrave, *Correspondence*, 314.

Land.[80] These comments by her male contemporaries demonstrated the restrictive nature of York Factory, yet also served the purpose of underscoring the weaknesses that were expected of a Victorian lady, legitimizing Hargrave's own actions and reactions to her surroundings.

James Hargrave had spent several years at York Factory prior to his marriage, and thus he was well aware of the harsh climate that existed there. He had certainly been apprised of both Frances Simpson's poor health during her time in Red River, and Isobel Finlayson's poor health following her marriage to Duncan Finlayson perhaps with these precedents in mind, he spared no effort to ensure that his home at York Factory would be as "civilized" and as "European" as possible so that Hargrave would have every comfort there. As mentioned in the previous chapter, their home was not only the largest in the area, (and made bigger after the arrival of their second child) but it was full of imported goods, such as carpets, patterned fabric for curtains, and other European luxury goods.[81]

Despite the comforts around her, Hargrave still expressed the difficulty of living at York Factory. Her letters contained reports of how her time in the fur trade had had serious impacts upon her physical body; according to Hargrave, upon arriving at York Factory she had been so much changed by the long voyage that her own brother did not recognize her thin cheeks and hollow eyes.[82] Her body continued to transform significantly during her stay at York Factory. She frequently mentioned how thin she had become, eating in four days what she used to consume in one back in Scotland,[83] and declared that if she were to ever return to Scotland, she would not want to see anyone but her closest acquaintances and

[80] Hargrave, *Correspondence*, 311.
[81] Hargrave, *Letters*, 62.
[82] Hargrave, *Letters*, 59.
[83] Hargrave, *Letters*, 100.

family, as she did not think she would be able to stand the inevitable criticism that would come regarding her changed appearance.[84]

In one letter home, Hargrave claimed that she frequently felt weak and useless, and was often "harassed" by visitors at the Fort,[85] an occupational hazard facing a chief factor's wife in the most important factory in Rupert's Land, which saw the yearly arrival of Hudson's Bay Company ships from England to Rupert's Land. As the "first lady" of such a post, she was expected to carry out tasks such as planning and attending dinner parties, hosting houseguests, and delighting visitors with displays of her accomplishments, all of which would have suffered when she experienced poor health. In another letter, Hargrave remarked on how her son was turned out of the nursery due to the "stupefying" noise that he was making as having been a major irritant to her delicate condition,[86] demonstrating the degree to which she was unable to continue carrying out her expected role as a wife, mother, and keeper of the domestic sphere. While not necessarily an exaggeration of her frailty, Hargrave here demonstrated to her family the degree to which life at York Factory was affecting her health, and thus her ability of fulfil her proper socializing and domestic roles.

Hargrave's letters also reported that York Factory was affecting her husband's health as well as her own. He looked "old and worn," and suffered from sporadic bouts of paralysis which Hargrave seemed to believe would be alleviated if they were in another place.[87] This opinion was supported by the doctor at York Factory who confirmed that

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[84] Hargrave, *Letters*, 145.
[85] Hargrave, *Letters*, 222.
[86] Hargrave, *Letters*, 215.
[87] Hargrave, *Letters*, 245.

"one cause underlying [James Hargrave's] ailments…was York."[88] And indeed, York Factory had caused James Hargrave considerable hardships in regards to his health during his time stationed there. He had suffered from the mysterious "York Factory Complaint," in 1834, and had relapsed in 1835-6, and the reason for his furlough in 1838 was due in part to his poor health.[89] In such a way Hargrave became a prime lobbyist for her husband's reposting, hopefully, to a better place.

Hargrave's increasing dissatisfaction with York Factory and her continued poor health caught the attention of her doctors, who were constantly offering suggestions and remedies to treat her illnesses. After Dr. Gillespie left the fur trade area in 1845, Dr. Smellie, "the son of a Free Church minister in Orkney & a regular M.D.", attended Hargrave,[90] who often suggested that the best cure would be for her to relocate to a different area away from York.[91] In this way, Hargrave's poor health and its impacts on her placement in the fur trade caught the attention of her husband, who likewise began to petition Governor George Simpson to leave York Factory. James Hargrave referred to York Factor as a "dreary place," where he had endured many years of "servitude," and instead sought relocation to a post closer to the "civilized world," so that his family could be happier, healthier, and more able to spend time with one another.[92] Upon hearing of his application to leave York Factory, a friend in the fur trade, Chief Factor John Ballenden, expressed astonishment, though not at the Hargraves' desires to leave. Instead, his surprise

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[88] Hargrave, *Letters*, cxxv.
[89] It seems possible that these "bouts of paralysis" were actually connected to living at York Factory, as when Hargrave had suffered from the mysterious "York Factory Complaint" in 1834, and relapses in 1835-36: Charles G. Roland, "Saturnism at Hudson's Bay: The York Factory Complaint of 1833-1836," *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 1 (1984), 68, 73.
[90] Hargrave, *Letters*, 207.
[91] Hargrave, *Letters,* 221.
[92] Hargrave, *Letters*, xcii.

was directed towards the length of time that the Hargraves had already lived at York Factory.[93] Much to both Letitia and James Hargrave's disappointment, however, the Governor was reluctant to let them leave York Factory, and it was not until 1846 that they were granted permission to temporary leave York Factory and travel to Scotland.

Hargrave credited her poor health, and the limitations that it had caused to her domestic and social roles as the reason for their furlough to Scotland. While suffering from an irritation of the womb that she believed could be cured by a change in location, Hargrave wrote that, "the governor was here for 10 days and gave Hargrave permission to go home as I have been complaining since the month of March last."[94] Unfortunately, this was only a temporary escape from York Factory, and the family soon returned. Once back in the fur trade, Hargrave continued to experience weakness and frailty to the degree that she eventually felt compelled to "ease her mind," and report to her mother that she was suffering from hysteria and over-excitement.[95] These ailments were a stark contrast against those that were experienced by the labourers of the fur trade, and thus are demonstrative of both Hargrave's social standing within the fur trade, and femininity as a Victorian woman.[96] Although there is every possibility that Hargrave had, in fact, fallen into clinical depression, it is still the case that she became the couple's greatest champion for leaving the northern posting. The Hargraves were eventually permitted to leave York Factory permanently in 1851, and after having spent some time in Scotland, eventually settled in Upper Canada. The "domestic happiness" that was procured from this relocation to Sault

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[93] Hargrave, *Letters*, xcii.
[94] Hargrave, *Letters*, 221.
[95] Hargrave, *Letters*, 230.
[96] As previously mentioned, fur traders frequently succumbed to illnesses due to the climate of the country such as lung complaints, "gout, fevers, and vapours, scorbutic disorders…cancers…frostbite, and snow blindness," Rich, "The Fur Traders: Their Diet and Drugs," 47, rather than headaches and bouts of hysteria such as Hargrave suffered from.

Ste Marie did not last long, however, as Hargrave contracted cholera and passed away in 1854.[97]

Frances Simpson, Isobel Finlayson, and Letitia Hargrave were the embodiments of the ideal Victorian woman. They fulfilled the roles that society demanded of them by maintaining impeccable reputations as pure, pious women who understood the importance of getting married and submitting themselves to the authority and protection of their husbands. Although in some respects, the fulfilment of these roles prevented Victorian ladies, such as themselves, from being able to adapt to life in Rupert's Land, and very possibly contributed to emotional, mental, and physical afflictions; the most ironic outcome was that their roles made them inherently unsuitable for a life in the fur trade, and the civilizing mission it implied. That being said, however, upholding these expectations placed upon them, which allowed them to exaggerate or manipulate the understanding of female frailty that existed during the Victorian era, enabled them to better their situation in Rupert's Land. Not only were there few other Victorian ladies with whom their actions could be compared to, Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave were also quite safely removed from hospitals, mental institutions, and the majority of doctors' surgical equipment, and were instead under the care of doctors who often appeared to support the cultural assumptions of women's frailty and resultant illnesses, which opened up the opportunity for these women to improve their situations, or even escape from them. While these women maintained their social status in the fur trade, with time, Finlayson and Hargrave gained the much needed social support from other women – albeit of a lower class and race – by developing companionate, but distant, relationships in their settings. In such

[97] *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, "Mactavish, Letitia (Hargrave)," http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=4048 (accessed 29 November 2010).

circumstances, they advantageously deployed frailty as a common means of maintaining distances from even their "dear" Metis counterparts. They frequently took to the sick bed to avoid certain onerous social duties, undesirable visits by their inferiors, or social mixing not on their own terms. Thus by acting in ways that were expected of them as domestic, dependent, and frail Victorian ladies, Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave were in positions where they were able to demonstrate agency to gain a degree of control over their own lives.

Conclusion:

The arrival of Frances Simpson into the territories of the fur trade in 1830, and Isobel Finlayson and Letitia Hargrave in 1840, fit into the context of broad socializing changes that had been on-going in Rupert's Land for decades. European customs were increasingly replacing Native customs in interactions between the two groups, and certain fur trading gentlemen of the Hudson's Bay Company began to devote more time, energy, and expenses into making their families – and their mixed-blood daughters especially – as European as possible. European immigrants not employed by the Hudson's Bay Company entered Rupert's Land in 1812 as settlers destined for the newly created agricultural colony, Red River, located at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. The creation of this colony, which was to be essentially an "outpost of civilization" within the wilderness of Rupert's Land hosted further waves of settlers and missionaries in the 1820s and 1830s, and the creation of formal European institutions such as schools and churches soon followed.

Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave were purposefully brought into the fur trade because of the belief that, as female representatives of the Victorian era, they would be able to further the creation of domestic spaces within the fur trade, and help to increase civilization in Rupert's Land. Many factors contributed to the belief that these women could affect change in colonial territories. The Victorian ideal saw a woman as feminine, delicate, respectable, and domestic. Her main role was to be a wife and mother, and to remain within the private sphere of the home. As such, middle-class women during the Victorian era were thought to embody the attributes of their society and affect change

abroad. By adhering to the roles that had been assigned to them as Victorian women, respectable female travellers in the nineteenth century were imbued with a certain moral authority that enabled them to create domestic – and essentially, more civilized and European – spaces within the colonies.

This civilizing mandate was one in which Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave, in many respects, succeeded in accomplishing. Although none of the women remained within Rupert's Land for the remainder of their lives, and indeed, all three left it as soon as they were able to, their actions while in Rupert's Land served the purpose of introducing a European way of life and key class and racial understandings in the fur trade territories. Frances Simpson's travel journal, written in 1830, Isobel Finlayson's travel notebook written in 1840, and Letitia Hargrave's letters, penned from 1840-1851, documented their perceptions, and reactions to the physical and social spaces into which they were moving. By recording their experiences and sharing them with an audience in Britain, these women were able to connect their audience to the colonial spaces. Thus, they sought to make Rupert's Land more familiar to the audience reading about it, and find a place for themselves within in. References to the physical landscapes of Rupert's Land as "romantic" and "picturesque" served the purpose of gentrifying the environment and making it more familiar to both the women, and their audience, enabling the people reading their narratives to identify with the women's surroundings. By acting submissively to their husbands, and upholding their roles as delicate, feminine women, Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave enjoyed greater authority over the other women in the fur trade, which legitimized and strengthened the impression that these women were colonial civilizers.

As this thesis has demonstrated, these women were not simply passive participants in the schemes of Empire and colonialism even though they did assist with bringing a more European way-of-life to the fur trade. It was by upholding and fulfilling the expectations placed upon them and assisting with the civilization of the fur trade that these women were able to actively negotiate their places in Rupert's Land, and demonstrate a degree of agency. As previously mentioned, by acting as colonial agents, the women made the environment more familiar not only to their audience, but also to themselves, which allowed them to essentially make it more their own. By purposefully upholding their positions as Victorian women, Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave were able to actively take control over certain aspects of their physical and social location in the fur trade and entrench their position there, make themselves more comfortable, and essentially exist there on their own terms. These women used the expectations that were placed upon them to be domestic, submissive, dependent, fragile, and feminine to entrench themselves within the upper echelons of the fur trade social hierarchy, and increase their physical and material comforts at Red River and York Factory. With time, they were able to make critical compromises to class-based social isolation and broker companionate relationships with Metis and lower-class women around them; yet were able to maintain important distinctions between themselves and those below, through the use of their physical and social bodies. Upholding expectations of their physical frailty allowed these women to take advantage of their situations within Rupert's Land, as they were able to exaggerate, in many cases, the degree of their weaknesses and illnesses in order to further demonstrate agency, determine social mixing on their own terms, abdicate for periods of time from their family responsibilities, and flout some of the onerous expectations of upper-ramked

officers' wives. They could even demonstrate this agency by exaggerating their poor health to such a degree that they were able to depart from the fur trade territories altogether.

That Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave chose to uphold societal expectations while in Rupert's Land is interesting, as there were other Victorian-era women who travelled outside of Britain during this time period who used their distance from their families and homes to break away from social convention and show independence. This was increasingly possible due to the improvements that had occurred in regards to travel, which made it easier, and cheaper, for single women to travel. While part of the reason that Simpson, Finlayson and Hargrave did not shirk their expected duties could have had to do with the fact that they travelled with their husbands, it seems clear from their primary sources that these women realized the advantages that could be obtained by properly representing the customs and ideals of the Victorian era.

Simpson, Finlayson and Hargrave were not the only women in the fur trade in the first half of the nineteenth century. Native and mixed-blood women had previously occupied important positions in the fur trade by assisting fur traders in various ways, and immigration to the Red River colony had greatly bolstered the number of European women in the area. This thesis focussed on displays of agency by Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave instead of the other women present in the fur trade for several reasons. Most practically, these women left behind narratives of their time in the fur trade. This fact, when added to the reality that these women occupied important social positions as the wives of governors and chief factors, meant that they were present in the contemporary historical record, and had been included in more recent historical writings on the fur trade.

That being said, while having been included in other histories of the fur trade, Simpson, Finlayson and Hargrave were not the primary subjects of those works, and thus are worthy topics of further studies.

Just as the opportunity existed to turn more attention to Simpson, Finlayson, and Hargrave, there is room for further work on other women who existed in the fur trade. It is entirely possible that the women who travelled westwards, whether they were settlers, governesses, missionary's wives, or other fur trade wives, may have likewise acted in specific ways in order to gain a measure of control over their positions there. Furthermore, the experiences of the men of the fur trade deserve more attention through the same optic. As mentioned in this thesis previously, the Hudson's Bay Company was a strict, highly hierarchical company that was run by the London Committee. The traders were placed into specific social positions dictated by their effectiveness in carrying out their roles as traders for the Company. In the same way, these fur traders, whether they were servants or officers, had specific roles to fill within the fur trade, and it is possible that they may, or may not, have likewise acted in certain ways to better their personal situations and positions in Rupert's Land.

Being Victorian in Rupert's land during the nineteenth century gave European women the ability to negotiate and regulate aspects of their physical and social positions there. By portraying themselves to their contemporaries and their audiences as proper Victorian women, Frances Simpson, Isobel Finlayson, and Letitia Hargrave were able to assist with the Europeanization of the fur trade, and, while doing so, were able to demonstrate agency and negotiate their physical and social spaces within the fur trade. Frances Simpson's actions while in Rupert's Land helped to entrench her position, and the

position of future Victorian women in the fur trade, simply by acting how her contemporaries expected her to act. Finlayson and Hargrave, who also duplicated their behaviours from Britain, were able to fill the space that Simpson's departure from Red River had created, and by continuously perpetrating the expectations placed upon them, these two women further domesticated their physical and social spaces in the fur trade. Arguably, one of the clearest ways in which all three women were able to demonstrate agency was by using their bodies, and the cultural expectations placed upon them, to exaggerate or manipulate their weaknesses in order to remove themselves from certain situations, make their physical and social environment more comfortable, or to even relocate themselves from the fur trade entirely. Thus, Frances Simpson, Isobel Finlayson, and Letitia Hargrave, while appearing as passive agents of colonialism, moved into the territories of the fur trade and took advantage of the expectations placed upon their bodies in order to negotiate the physical and social spaces they occupied.

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