

# “To think of your happy fireside”: The Materiality of Home and Belonging in the Letters of James and Letitia Hargrave, 1826–1854

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Résumé de l'article

*Le concept de « chez-soi » peut se référer à toute une gamme de sujets, allant d'une maison ou d'un pays, à la famille et à la communauté, ou même à un sentiment d'appartenance ou d'exclusion. Cet article s'interroge sur la signification du chez-soi pour les employés de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson et leurs familles en prenant comme cas d'étude James Hargrave, employé de la CBH, et sa femme Letitia, et en examinant les différentes façons dont ils concevaient leur chez-soi dans les lettres qu'ils écrivaient à leurs familles au Bas-Canada et en Grande-Bretagne, et entre eux, entre 1826 et 1854. Pour les Hargrave, le mot « chez-soi » avait plusieurs significations qui ont changé au fil du temps en fonction de leur emplacement et des circonstances. La nature instable de la vie dans le commerce des fourrures et l'avenir incertain qu'elle leur réservait, ont créé un sentiment d'anxiété. Les Hargrave se réconfortaient à l'idée d'un chez-soi fondé sur les liens avec leur patrie, leur famille et leur communauté en Écosse et au Bas-Canada, et finalement la famille qu'ils ont fondée. Leur chez-soi avait également des connotations très matérielles, et était intrinsèquement lié à leurs souvenirs, expériences, et conception des gens, des lieux et des choses ; de James Hargrave s'imaginant assis au coin du feu de son père, à Letitia Hargrave chérissant des pots de confiture envoyés d'Écosse par sa mère. En réfléchissant à la matérialité du passé, l'examen des lettres des Hargrave révèle certaines des stratégies qu'ils ont utilisées pour renforcer leurs liens avec leur famille et leurs amis, et comment ces relations ont créé et maintenu un sentiment de chez-soi et d'appartenance.*

# “To think of your happy fireside”: The Materiality of Home and Belonging in the Letters of James and Letitia Hargrave, 1826–1854

ELYSE BELL\*

## *Abstract*

*The concept of “home” can refer to a range of things, from a house or a homeland, to family and community, or even a feeling of belonging or exclusion. This paper asks what home meant for employees of the Hudson’s Bay Company and their families by taking HBC employee James Hargrave and his wife Letitia as a case study, examining the different ways they conceived of home in the letters that they wrote to their families in Lower Canada and Britain, and to each other, between 1826 and 1854. Home had multiple meanings for the Hargraves, which changed over time depending on their location and circumstances. The unsettled nature of life in the fur trade, and the uncertain future it held for them, led to a sense of anxiety. The Hargraves found comfort in ideas of home that were grounded in connections to their homeland, their family and community in Scotland and Lower Canada, and eventually the family that they created for themselves. Home also had very material connotations, and was entangled with the memories, experiences, and imaginings of people, places and things, from James Hargrave picturing himself seated by his father’s fireside, to Letitia Hargrave cherishing jars of marmalade sent from Scotland by her mother. Thinking about the materiality of the past when examining the Hargraves’ letters reveals some of the strategies that they employed to reinforce their connections to family and friends, and how these relationships created and maintained a sense of home and belonging.*

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## Résumé

*Le concept de « chez-soi » peut se référer à toute une gamme de sujets, allant d'une maison ou d'un pays, à la famille et à la communauté, ou même à un sentiment d'appartenance ou d'exclusion. Cet article s'interroge sur la signification du chez-soi pour les employés de la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson et leurs familles en prenant comme cas d'étude James Hargrave, employé de la CBH, et sa femme Letitia, et en examinant les différentes façons dont ils concevaient leur chez-soi dans les lettres qu'ils écrivaient à leurs familles au Bas-Canada et en Grande-Bretagne, et entre eux, entre 1826 et 1854. Pour les Hargrave, le mot « chez-soi » avait plusieurs significations qui ont changé au fil du temps en fonction de leur emplacement et des circonstances. La nature instable de la vie dans le commerce des fourrures et l'avenir incertain qu'elle leur réservait, ont créé un sentiment d'anxiété. Les Hargrave se réconfortaient à l'idée d'un chez-soi fondé sur les liens avec leur patrie, leur famille et leur communauté en Écosse et au Bas-Canada, et finalement la famille qu'ils ont fondée. Leur chez-soi avait également des connotations très matérielles, et était intrinsèquement lié à leurs souvenirs, expériences, et conception des gens, des lieux et des choses ; de James Hargrave s'imaginant assis au coin du feu de son père, à Letitia Hargrave chérissant des pots de confiture envoyés d'Écosse par sa mère. En réfléchissant à la matérialité du passé, l'examen des lettres des Hargrave révèle certaines des stratégies qu'ils ont utilisées pour renforcer leurs liens avec leur famille et leurs amis, et comment ces relations ont créé et maintenu un sentiment de chez-soi et d'appartenance.*

## Introduction: Where (and What) is Home?

In 1826, a young Scottish man named James Hargrave wrote from a distant outpost in North America to a close friend back in Scotland, “I cannot think that any who leave their native Land after coming to years of maturity can ever divest themselves of the ties which are insensibly wound round their hearts by the recollections of ‘early loves & friendships.’ Tis true my relations are now in Canada and a wish to visit that country is the natural consequence, but when I ask myself where is my Home — the blue hills of Scotland are present in my mind with all their attractions.”<sup>1</sup>

Thinking about where home was situated for Hargrave and his family is in many ways inextricable from questions of who, what, and when “home” referred to. For Hargrave, a Scottish clerk and factor for the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) from 1821–1859, and his

Scottish-born wife Letitia (Mactavish) Hargrave, home had multiple meanings that changed over time. The letters that they wrote to friends and relations, and to each other, reveal that for the Hargraves, home was a mutable concept contingent on different factors including their age, marital status, gender, and roles within their families.<sup>2</sup>

This article draws on Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling’s conception of home as not only a physical location, but also a “spatial imaginary”; home is a site of social relations with symbolic and ideological meanings that are central to the construction of people’s identities.<sup>3</sup> As Joanna Long argues, the concept of home “operates on both material and symbolic registers, in the reallocation or reconfiguration of physical spaces and in the imaginative connections with people and places elsewhere in the world, in a remembered past and hoped for future.”<sup>4</sup> These material and symbolic aspects of home can be explored through an investigation of domestic material culture, including both spaces and objects. Focusing on material culture can also allow historians to explore people’s emotional experiences and how meanings were produced in the past.<sup>5</sup> This article engages with the materiality of home, reading the letters with an eye to the physical world that the Hargraves wrote about, as well as the materiality of the letters themselves.<sup>6</sup> Doing so reveals the ways in which the memories, experiences, and imaginings of the material world were associated with notions of family, community, and homeland. It is these connections that most strongly evoked a sense of home for the Hargraves, helping them deal with the geographic and emotional disruptions they faced at different stages of their lives.

The Hargraves’ changing conceptions of home and belonging cannot be understood without considering the context of the HBC and fur trade society in the first half of the nineteenth century, as well as the wider transatlantic and imperial context of the British Empire. Metropolitan ideals of domesticity and respectability, and their gendered and class-based connotations and associations with ideas of “civilization,” were part of imperial processes in the nineteenth century. Their influence is apparent in the Hargraves’ conceptions of home, especially in their fixation on “settlement” and its proximity to “civilization,” and how these influenced their imaginings of future homes, and the comfort they found in past ones. Their changing roles within their immediate and extended families and households are apparent in the ways they used letters to maintain a sense of connection and belonging, compress time and space, and fulfil obligations and expect-

tations of respectability in line with their social positions and genders. Focusing on the material objects that were sent along with letters, as well as the letters themselves, further illustrates the importance of maintaining connections to friends and family, eliciting emotions, and providing comfort while facilitating their familial and household relationships. Finally, considering the limitations of letters and the idealised aspirations towards a specific type of home and household allows us to draw more general conclusions about the meanings of home in wider colonial and imperial contexts, in addition to shedding light on the multiple and mutable meanings of home and belonging for the Hargraves and other HBC families.

### The Hargraves and the Hudson's Bay Company

In 1819, twenty-year-old James Hargrave left his position as a school-teacher in Scotland to follow his family to Lower Canada. His parents and younger siblings had emigrated the previous year from Scotland in search of a better life than they felt their homeland could offer, and settled on a farm at Beechridge, southwest of Montreal. In April 1820, James joined the service of the North West Company (NWC) as a wintering clerk, continuing his employment with the HBC after the companies merged the following year. He worked at several different trading posts but spent most of his career at York Factory, the HBC's headquarters on the western shore of Hudson Bay. The demands of work and the promise of promotion kept him in Rupert's Land until he finally went on furlough to Britain in 1837, with the intention of finding a wife.

While visiting Scotland he stayed with the family of a fur-trade friend, William (Willie) Mactavish, at Kilchrist, the Mactavish family home. It was there that he met and fell in love with the eldest Mactavish daughter, Letitia. After a period of courtship and delays due to James' work, the two were married at Kilchrist in January 1840. Following a wedding tour around Scotland and England, and time spent in London on Company business, they travelled together to York Factory, where a small house awaited them. The Hargraves resided at York Factory for the next eleven years and had five children together: Joseph James (also known as Beppo and Doch), Letitia (known as Tash), a boy who died shortly after birth, Mary Jane, and Dugald John. Two of Letitia's brothers, Willie and Dugald Mactavish, also worked for the HBC and would visit the Hargraves when business allowed.

In 1851, after years of requests and waiting, James was transferred to an HBC post at Sault Ste. Marie, which was closer to his family in Lower Canada, and provided easier access to communication and transportation networks with Britain. Letitia and the children spent almost a year in England and Scotland, from 1851–2, while James arranged their new situation. Joseph James was already in Scotland attending school, and Tash remained there with him, while Letitia returned to Sault Ste. Marie with the two younger children. Unfortunately, Letitia only survived for two years after moving there, dying in a cholera outbreak along with their youngest child in 1854. After her death, James placed the children in the care of Letitia’s family in Scotland and returned to York Factory, until he finally retired from the HBC in 1859. He remarried and settled in Brockville, living there until his death in 1865.<sup>7</sup>

The level of biographic detail available for the Hargraves is in part due to the remarkable amount of correspondence that survives from them both, although most of the replies from family and friends do not appear to have been preserved.<sup>8</sup> Despite the one-sided nature of the Hargraves’ correspondence, their letters nonetheless provide a vast amount of information about the institutional and social life of the HBC in the first half of the nineteenth century, which had a direct impact on their lives.

From its founding in the seventeenth century, the HBC operated in a large territory in North America known as Rupert’s Land, mainly in the fur trade. The Company recruited many of its officers and servants from Britain, and most of these men went to Rupert’s Land temporarily to earn enough money so that they could return home to settle.<sup>9</sup> Some men formed intimate relationships and established families with Indigenous women in fur-trade country, remaining there for the rest of their lives.<sup>10</sup> While in Rupert’s Land, they inhabited a vast network of trading posts and outposts.<sup>11</sup> The early nineteenth century saw two major changes for the HBC: its amalgamation with its rival, the NWC, in 1821, and the beginning of more formalized British settlements in fur-trading territories.<sup>12</sup>

Prior to this time, the Company had prohibited its employees from bringing British-born wives and daughters to fur-trade country, but the arrival of HBC Governor George Simpson’s British wife, Frances, in 1830 marked the beginning of significant social changes in Rupert’s Land.<sup>13</sup> Other company men followed Simpson’s example, turning away from their country-born wives in favour of white Euro-

pean women.<sup>14</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk opens her classic study on women in fur-trade society with the example of James Hargrave being congratulated on his choice of a Scottish wife by his HBC colleagues.<sup>15</sup> Van Kirk illustrates the impact of the arrival of white women in Rupert's Land, especially among fur-trade elite, and how "their coming underscored the increasing class and racial distinctions which characterized fur-trade society in the nineteenth century."<sup>16</sup> A "genteel British wife" acted as a status symbol, but also emphasized racial differences and hierarchies, and "symbolized the coming of a settled, agrarian order."<sup>17</sup>

Van Kirk's study is a definitive example of the "broader turn towards the social history of Rupert's Land" that began in the 1980s, moving away from a purely economic and commercial focus toward engagement with the interactions and relationships between European traders and the Indigenous inhabitants of the territory.<sup>18</sup> These studies explore issues of race, class, and gender, with a particular focus on intimate relationships, marriage, and family.<sup>19</sup> More recent scholarship on the HBC continues along similar lines while also placing the Company and individuals associated with it in a wider imperial framework, raising questions about the nature of home and identity for employees of the company and their families.<sup>20</sup> The following analysis of the Hargraves' correspondence contributes to both of these areas of scholarship, arguing that while the specific context of social relations in the HBC is important for exploring how James and Letitia conceived of home, these conceptions cannot be understood without also taking into account their transatlantic and imperial connections.

### Locating Home: Migration, Settlement, and "Civilization"

Prior to the nineteenth century, Rupert's Land was relatively insulated from the so-called "civilized worlds" of Britain and Canada, but the changing social context and expanding transport and communication links in the 1820s opened up fur-trade society to the influence of British culture, both directly from Britain and as it filtered through settler societies in the Canadas.<sup>21</sup> Jennifer Brown observes that one of the most significant nineteenth-century British values that pervaded fur-trade society from the 1820s was a growing sense of the importance of upward mobility, and that in general, "respectability and progress towards a civilized life became important personal goals and aims for society in general."<sup>22</sup>

The increasing value placed on upward mobility at this time was also apparent in the wider context of migration in the British Empire, and A. James Hammerton argues that for men especially, there was an understanding that “emigration afforded a greater opportunity for realization of the deeply embedded ethos of self-improvement,” including better financial opportunities and fulfilling the goal of becoming the head of a respectable household.<sup>23</sup> Philippa Levine contends that settlers increasingly conformed to metropolitan prescriptions of domesticity, which were progressively associated with ideas about “civilization.”<sup>24</sup>

Such interpretations are often premised on permanent migration, especially in relation to settler colonial practices of dispossession and replacement, which Catherine Hall argues were “facilitated by settlers with white families and households which provided a base for processes of cultural reproduction.”<sup>25</sup> James and Letitia Hargrave’s trajectory was not a straightforward move from their “homeland” in Scotland to a permanent settlement across the Atlantic. In some ways they resemble those who embarked on what David Lambert and Alan Lester frame as “imperial careers,” Britons who neither settled nor merely travelled around the empire.<sup>26</sup> Emma Rothschild demonstrates how those involved in imperial careering “lived in the future, in a state of expectation; but they also lived in the past, remembering childhood excursions and creating reminders of ‘home’ in far-flung corners of the empire.”<sup>27</sup> The Hargraves did not anticipate moving to different parts of the empire; instead they moved around to a certain extent within the fur-trade “empire” of the HBC, with the goal of eventually settling in a permanent home in Britain or Canada. For these reasons, the strategies they employed to cope with their situation resemble both those of permanent migrants and those involved in imperial careers.

This article accepts that the Hargraves do not fit neatly into either of these categories, and instead pays attention to the different phases of their lives and their uncertainty about the future, considering how these factors informed their conceptions of home and belonging. Taking a transatlantic perspective that accounts for their personal relationships, both within their immediate household as well as wider family and community, allows us to focus on their engagement with the concept of “settlement” as a life goal that took on different forms over time and the stages of life. Concerns about “settlement” caused them to turn to familiar and familial places for comfort and stabil-



ity. In the context of migration and empire, these concepts also have inherent connections to nineteenth-century ideals of domesticity, gender roles, and upward mobility that were present in British society, and which manifested in settler and imperial spaces through concerns over “civilization” and “respectability.”

The ways in which James Hargrave used the word “home” in his letters changed over time. In 1828, relatively early in his career, he wrote from Rupert’s Land to his uncle back in Scotland, stating that “I agree with you that in a foreign country the mind is never so happy as in the land of ones nativity, and I am far from being an advocate for emigration when a living is to be had at home.”<sup>28</sup> He continued, however, that his own case was an exception, as he was “yet a single young fellow without incumbrance & could make the circuit of the globe without inconvenience.”<sup>29</sup> His age, gender, and marital status all directly affected his ideas of where and what an appropriate home was. This view was reinforced in a letter to his sister, Mary, praising her choice to settle down with her growing family on their farm, as “single men may ramble about, but a family prospers best when rooted to one spot.”<sup>30</sup> James’ views on settlement corresponded to different life stages, and were also intimately connected to family.

James Hargrave’s plan for his own life aligned with the advice he dispensed to others, and he repeatedly outlined his goals in his letters, often in response to enquiries from both friends and family. He did not see himself settling in Rupert’s Land; his time there was a means to an end, and it was somewhere he could earn enough money to eventually settle elsewhere. He reiterated numerous times to his family that although he was overall healthy and content in this “distant and wild country,” he “never should choose such a place as a permanent one of residence — a country to live and die in.”<sup>31</sup> York Factory was almost never “home” for James, and in his bachelor days he referred to the Factory as his “residence.” In his letters to family, phrases like “my residence is now fixed at this place, in all likelihood while I remain in the country,” elicited the simultaneous security and impermanence of his situation.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, one of the only times he referred to York Factory or Rupert’s Land as “home” in the letters examined here was at a transitional point in his life. After he was recalled to Rupert’s Land during his engagement to Letitia, he wrote to her on his journey back, “I am at present prevented by stormy weather & contrary winds from continuing my voyage towards home and I turn with delight from the gloomy and Savage Scenes around me to that home, from which my

heart has never been absent since you taught me to know its value.”<sup>33</sup> Even then, the use of the word “savage” in reference to Rupert’s Land presents an implicit contrast to the “civilized” home of Letitia’s family that he had left behind in Scotland.

This turn to the comfort of a home in Scotland was reflected in James’ dreams for his future; the “wilderness” of Rupert’s Land was not a suitable place for a permanent home. In his early letters, written while he was a bachelor, he seemed more likely to settle in Britain: “to lay me snugly up in a quiet corner when I return an old & weather beaten Bachelor to Scotland some 10 or 15 years hence.”<sup>34</sup> The following year, he wrote to his parents that “my ruling object, and which is the object of every one who comes hither, is to provide a competency for old age, and then retire to enjoy it — either in Canada — or in Britain.”<sup>35</sup> The location of this imagined future shifted over time to become closer to his parents and siblings in Lower Canada, which he believed offered better opportunities than Scotland could afford him. He wrote to his brother-in-law, James Ross, who had recently secured the money and land required for settlement, that he still had “occasional visions of a snug house in the woods with flourishing crops around it, while a sweet wee lassie sometimes forms part of the imaginary prospect.”<sup>36</sup> Although the precise location and nature of this eventual settlement changed over time, it remained his goal throughout most of his life; once he was married, he would share this imagined future with his wife as well.

Even when James met a “lassie” to his liking, their ideal future was not guaranteed. He explained to Letitia that although his situation was promising, “yet a considerable number of years must be spent in a solitary land before we can attain to perfect independence of fortune & can return to civilization.”<sup>37</sup> In another letter warning her about the hostility of the land she was about to move to, he reassured her that “our mutual affection shall supply all deficiencies during the time our fortunes may render a residence here necessary to us.”<sup>38</sup> The presence of Letitia’s uncle and brothers, who also worked in the fur trade, would provide additional support. The proximity of family and friends, and their affection for one another, could mitigate the loneliness and difficulties of life in the remote wilderness of Rupert’s Land. When James was finally released from service at York Factory, it was to another HBC post at Sault Ste. Marie, which he viewed as a step in the right direction toward his family’s eventual settlement, securing himself a “Station in the Service within — or in the vicinity of — the

civilized world in Canada.”<sup>39</sup> These statements imply that for James, although temporary residence in Rupert’s Land could be borne with the help of kith and kin, “civilization” was a requirement for permanent settlement.

The question of settlement pervaded the letters of both James and Letitia Hargrave and was a source of tension and anxiety for themselves and their families. Even while he was a bachelor, James often wrote to his family and friends of his uncertainty as to when he might be able to settle, either in Britain or in Canada. He wrote to his brother Andrew in 1828, “I see you like the rest are anxious to know when I am going to return to Canada. You ask a question my dear boy, I really cannot answer, as it may be in a year or two, or it may be more [...] this matter does not rest entirely on my wish.”<sup>40</sup> The uncertainty of his future, in James’ reckoning, was bound up with both the whims of fortune and the more immediate decisions of the HBC. His fate rested on his ability to save money and gain a promotion, which at times seemed to hinge on the decisions of Governor Simpson and the Company. James cautioned his father not to get his hopes up for a visit to them in Lower Canada, as “it can only be after I obtain promotion, & that period can never be fixed.”<sup>41</sup>

After James was married, he shared this uncertainty with his wife, and Letitia was equally aware of the circumstances that kept them in Rupert’s Land. After two years there she wrote to her sister Flora, “how much longer we are to remain I have no idea.”<sup>42</sup> Her agitation at this uncertainty seemed to increase over time, and in October 1849 she wrote, “I wish we were at home, I mean settled somewhere before I get older. The feeling of insecurity makes me nervous, for we are constantly expecting an order to move.”<sup>43</sup> This statement is particularly revealing, as it equates the idea of “home” with settlement in her mind, and highlights the anxiety caused by the uncertain future of her family. For people in insecure and unsettled situations, home was often associated with stability and fixity, and was tied to identity, emotional wellbeing, and sense of belonging and community.<sup>44</sup>

It is perhaps unsurprising that the unsettled nature of their present condition, and the uncertainty of their future, contributed to both of the Hargraves fixing on their homeland of Scotland as a key node of belonging. Ideas of home and belonging could be grounded in childhood memories, including the place or house one grew up in, and the social and emotional attachments one made.<sup>45</sup> Place and locality have real affective power and strong ties to social and cultural identity, as

Sarah Kathleen Gibson demonstrates in relation to the role that “Scottishness” played for emigrants to Lower Canada in the first half of the nineteenth century in providing a framework for personal identity and relationships.<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth Vibert’s work illustrates how some emigrants never really gave up their past homes, highlighting the ways in which places were not separate, but “present in one another.”<sup>47</sup> Nineteenth-century British emigrants to North America often continued to identify with where they had come from, while also forging new identities.<sup>48</sup>

The entangled nature of place, family, and belonging is evident in the Hargraves’ letters. From his early days in Rupert’s Land, James acknowledged the pull of his family in Lower Canada in addition to that of his homeland, and made specific reference to the landscape of the latter.<sup>49</sup> Several years later, home appeared an even more complicated concept, although he still acknowledged Scotland as his native land. Family was intertwined with ideas of home for James, and he wrote to his mother in Lower Canada that “almost every evening thoughts of you all are the last on my mind [...] and morning brings back to my mind recollections of my Home and of all that is there dear to me.”<sup>50</sup> In contrast, Letitia used the word “home” in her letters most frequently in reference to Scotland, and her family home at Kilchrist more specifically. She even described Scotland as home for her daughter, Tash, who was born in Canada, writing to her mother that “Tash sends her love, she seems to have some faint recollection of home.”<sup>51</sup>

When James finally moved to Sault Ste. Marie and awaited his family’s arrival, he reflected that despite his present loneliness, “this I bear with all equanimity, and when I shall have my little family gathered around me again I feel satisfied this will prove the most comfortable nest I ever occupied in the Service.”<sup>52</sup> Letters that Letitia wrote to James from Britain while he was in Sault Ste. Marie also reiterated the relationship between settlement, family, and home, as when she wrote to him, “I wish we were settled as I am wretched here.”<sup>53</sup> Several months later she wrote to him again while planning her return to Canada, “I am wearying miserably to see y<sup>e</sup> once more & to find myself at home with the children.”<sup>54</sup> Although her circumstances were different from those of her husband, Letitia Hargrave’s conception of home also changed over time. The ways the concept was tied to her family and her role as a wife, mother, daughter, and sister, as well as her age and life stage, illustrate the complex, changeable, and multi-sided nature of home and belonging.

Letitia's untimely death from cholera soon after the Hargraves moved to Sault Ste. Marie, along with the death of their youngest child, destroyed the domestic ideal that the Hargraves had built together. James' subsequent behaviour remains in line with his earlier thinking on settlement, civilization, and the importance of family. His two eldest children had previously been sent to Scotland to be educated, a fairly common practice for fur-trade children that reflected a concern with achieving middle-class respectability.<sup>55</sup> The year after Letitia died, James brought the rest of the children to Scotland. When he was forced by company obligations to return to York Factory, he left the children in the care of Letitia's family in the "civilized" world, while he returned to the "wilderness" of Rupert's Land. The dissolution of his own household caused him to turn back towards the original places that both he and Letitia had looked to for a sense of belonging and support, which continued to have strong connections to family and community.

### Familiar Faces, Sensory Spaces: Maintaining Family and Household through Letters

As illustrated above in relation to questions of settlement, proximity to or distance from family and friends had a strong influence on the Hargraves' conceptions of home and belonging. Correspondence was one way to create and sustain family identities, an especially pertinent concern for those families scattered across multiple locations and vast geographic distances.<sup>56</sup> Examining personal correspondence like that of the Hargraves illustrates the importance of letters as a tool for forging and sustaining relationships across the geographic and temporal distances created as part of large movements of people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Letter writing was a way in which families divided by migration sustained their households and relationships.<sup>57</sup> Kate Smith contends that "letters acted as a key mechanism through which families could perform and convey the 'work' of imagining home."<sup>58</sup> A common feature of letter writing involved the author situating themselves in a particular place and time, often in relation to the recipient, and descriptions of the spaces that writers inhabited brought them closer to absent friends and family.<sup>59</sup> Letters could also serve to compress space and time, at least briefly, with correspondents relying on descriptions of their lives and surroundings in order to maintain emotional proximity despite physical separation.<sup>60</sup>

Letters were therefore a means not only to remain connected to family and friends, but also to sustain household relationships and continue to perform the familial roles and obligations that were often tied to gendered and class-based concepts of respectability and domesticity.

As a young bachelor, it was up to James to keep his family informed of his life and activities, as evidenced above in his discussions of settlement and plans for the future. One strategy that both he and Letitia used to achieve this in their letters was using descriptions that evoked a variety of senses. In a letter from York Factory to his sister, Mary, James gave a detailed description of his working environment and daily activities, effectively painting her “a picture of my labours and of my amusements.”<sup>61</sup> In the same letter he described his proclivity for snuff and smoking, mentioning the “portly Silver Box” posted at his elbow as he wrote, quantifying the large volume of snuff he consumed daily, and pleading with Mary: “do not scold me for could you but at this moment feel the delicious smell that issues from my Box as I now open it, no olfactory nerve could resist the temptation.”<sup>62</sup> This description of his immediate surroundings created an evocative and multisensory impression, bringing the materiality of his present situation to life.

Letitia also evoked different senses in her letters, as in her lamentation of the heat in their house at York Factory. She wrote to her sister, Polly, “I am quite baked with the stove,” despite three windows being open, and compared the sensation to being in a greenhouse.<sup>63</sup> Extremes of temperature seemed common at York Factory, for in the winter both ink and wine froze solid.<sup>64</sup> She described the sounds of the Factory as well, sometimes writing her letters to a soundtrack of the howling of huskies that occurred when the factory bell was rung, “which is always 6 times a day, but on particular days still more frequently.”<sup>65</sup> These multisensory descriptions of Letitia’s immediate and wider surroundings could help distant friends and relations imagine themselves in the remote wilderness of Rupert’s Land.

Of all the senses, it was sight that the Hargraves employed most frequently in their letters. Letitia recorded her first impressions of York Factory in a letter to her mother, noting her surprise at the “great swell” of the Factory, and remarking on its beauty and the colour scheme of the buildings and houses.<sup>66</sup> She provided an extremely detailed description of their own house, including the number of rooms and their orientation, effectively taking her correspondents on a virtual tour.<sup>67</sup> She communicated different details to her mother and sisters, with the assumption that they would share information; to her

sister, Polly, she wrote to correct a previous letter to her mother, “I wrote Mama that all the rooms were painted green. It is only however in our house as Harg<sup>ve</sup> thought it good for the sight!! The bedroom is pale blue with a wainscoating color of indigo. What w<sup>th</sup> the huge black stoves & the sombre colored walls we must seem rather gloomy.”<sup>68</sup> In addition to giving a sense of their domestic space, this letter also highlights the fact that she and James shared some responsibility for the decoration of their house at York Factory, adding further support to scholarship demonstrating that middle-class British men played an active role in the decoration and furnishing of the home in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>69</sup>

Letitia’s descriptions of her domestic surroundings likely served a number of purposes. Katie Barclay illustrates how “home” could be integrally tied to a sense of identity and personhood, and how women often “required a physical home-space that reaffirmed her sense of herself as a middle-class, respectable woman.”<sup>70</sup> Domestic material culture had strong emotional implications, and was central to the construction of identities.<sup>71</sup> Letitia’s descriptions of the furnishings and household goods she had brought from Britain, including a piano, carpets, and “a very pretty British plate,” could also reflect her desire to illustrate that despite the remoteness of her new home, the household she established there still maintained certain standards of respectability and taste associated with the mid-nineteenth century middle classes in Britain.<sup>72</sup> Her descriptions of the paint colours and interior furnishings in green, black, and pale yellow, which she referred to as “the uniform of the house,” served to populate the spaces she inhabited as she wrote, providing her reader with the tools to visualise where she was situated.<sup>73</sup> She sent further updates when they made changes to the house, including the addition of a nursery, which she also described in detail in several letters.<sup>74</sup> In addition to giving friends and family a more accurate idea of her new place of residence, providing such details could also reassure them that she was successfully establishing her own respectable household, and making herself as comfortable as was possible in a place like York Factory.

While these examples served to help Letitia’s family members in Scotland imagine where she was situated, James engaged in the opposite practice of projecting himself into the physical spaces of his relations in order to offer advice about how their homes should be arranged. As the eldest brother, who was also supporting his parents and several of his younger siblings financially, James may have felt

both obliged and entitled to comment on their domestic arrangements.<sup>75</sup> As he was not able to be there in person when his parents built a new house, he wrote lengthy instructions in his letters about its proper layout, decoration, and upkeep, including the imperative to “on no account have your Pots & Kettles in the same room that you eat and pass the day in,” perhaps a reflection of his concern with what constituted a “respectable” home.<sup>76</sup> The following year, he wrote with further instructions, which included very detailed descriptions of the type, amount, and estimated cost of plaster and paint for the house and how it should be applied.<sup>77</sup> He continued this practice even after visiting his parents’ new home on his way to Britain. In the postscript of a letter from his trip, he admonished “now do get that abominable chimney of yours cured of smoke,”<sup>78</sup> and a month later, he wrote from London, “P.S. I cannot omit adding that I have not met with one Smoky Chimney Since I left you.”<sup>79</sup> What might seem like a son and brother meddling in the affairs of his family can also be viewed as a strategy for sustaining familial relationships despite separation. James often referenced his parents’ advanced age in his letters, and that it was time for them to “allow your children the pleasure of smoothing the path of declining years.”<sup>80</sup> His letters were therefore a means of fulfilling his role as the eldest male child and attempting to exert material changes on his family’s home from a distance.

Letters extended both the physical and social worlds of their correspondents, often serving as a replacement for the face-to-face conversation people had had in the past, or would have had were they not in separate places.<sup>81</sup> Letitia’s letters contained extensive descriptions of her children, perhaps reflecting her desire to bridge the distance between her family in Rupert’s Land and her parents and siblings in Scotland. She described baby Joseph James in great detail, tracking his growth and development, writing to her mother on one occasion that “he is an enormous size both in height & circumference.”<sup>82</sup> She also described his elaborate outfits, covered in “puffs & buttons,” and his love of incessantly beating a toy drum to the point where he wore through it.<sup>83</sup> Her letters evoked a noisy, active, and rotund child, and provided a physical description of the grandson that she was uncertain her parents would ever meet. They did meet him, and when he was older and had remained in Scotland to attend school, his father wrote to him and included a description of his younger sister: “Tash is now as tall as you were when you left York Factory. She often makes gardens in the ground before her nursery but she cannot plant pease as well as



you.”<sup>84</sup> In this letter James Hargrave drew on shared reference points from the past in order to keep his son connected to the place and people he was separated from.

Changes in physical appearance were not limited to descriptions of the children. Letitia described herself and others as well, both people her family members knew and those from her new fur-trade community. In a letter to her mother in the early years of her life at York Factory, she wrote, “the people in the Fort are all very fat, Willie & I are the thinnest in it.” She continued that her husband James had become so fat that he “cant wear a stitch of the clothes he had before he went home.”<sup>85</sup> This description was quite a contrast to one that James had given to his sister Mary twelve years prior when a bachelor, assuring her that he was happy and healthy despite the fact that his formerly rotund self had become “thin as a Whipping post.”<sup>86</sup> Both James’ and Letitia’s letters expressed concerns about the passage of time making them unrecognizable to faraway family and friends, further emphasizing the importance of maintaining connections. Letitia wrote to her mother in 1843 regarding her family in Scotland, “I suppose every one will be changed, & I am certain that if you had seen me for two months you would not have known me.”<sup>87</sup> Such statements reinforce the importance of keeping up to date with descriptions of people and places, sustaining connections between old and new homes despite physical distance or the passage of time.

### Home Comforts: Material and Emotional Connections

Sometimes descriptions were insufficient, and on occasion the Hargraves and their families exchanged more tangible reminders of their appearances. Letitia sent “a pickle of Ds hair for Mama,” (a lock of hair, most likely from her brother Dugald), as well as a specimen of her son Joseph James’ and her own, adding “mine is quite a new cure having grown completely since my illness.”<sup>88</sup> A year later, she sent her mother another lock of hair enclosed in a letter to her father, “to show how the colour has changed.”<sup>89</sup> These were not only reminders of absent family members, but physical parts of them, which could provide visual and tangible evidence of how people had changed over time, or the features of kin they may never meet, helping to reduce the sense of distance between them.

In a similar way to a lock of hair, a visual representation of a person could also act as their proxy, which James understood when

he requested a portrait of Letitia when they were apart during their engagement. He was quite persistent in asking her for “a Miniature portrait of your own lovely features to be the inseparable companion of my person in this land.”<sup>90</sup> Once the portrait finally reached him, he wrote to her that he welcomed and caressed it as her proxy; but although it was a good likeness, it lacked “the sweet & animating charm that dwells only with the original.”<sup>91</sup> His words acknowledged the limitations of visual representations to fully capture the essence of a person or to adequately replace their physical presence, while still acknowledging the emotional power of such depictions.

Sometimes the objects sent across the Atlantic were not as directly connected or visually representative of those who sent them, but their symbolic meanings could be just as powerful. Considering material things in the past can reveal more than just people’s tastes and behaviours; it can also tell us about the thoughts and feelings of those who used and interacted with them.<sup>92</sup> Recent work on materiality and emotion argues that “placing material culture at the centre of human emotional experiences in the past offers new ways of exploring how objects have produced, regulated, symbolized, and represented human emotions through history.”<sup>93</sup>

One such category of emotionally charged objects was gifts, which could demonstrate affective relationships with friends and family, providing people with material evidence of their current lives and creating a set of shared reference points.<sup>94</sup> Clothing and food were some of the most frequent items sent between the Hargraves and their family and friends, although other items are also mentioned in their letters. In a letter thanking his mother for sending him a “handsome” pair of mittens, James reflected that “as coming from you my dear Mother they are more prized by me than the richest present could have been coming from another.”<sup>95</sup> When Letitia received jam and other preserves from her mother in Scotland, she wrote that “I shall not open the strawberries till I see if Dug<sup>d</sup> [her brother Dugald] comes,” making sure to save a taste of home for her brother.<sup>96</sup> On several occasions, jars of marmalade broke in transit, but she managed to salvage as much as possible.<sup>97</sup> She also wrote that “the little hams we brought from home look well & have kept perfectly, but we will not use them till the Holidays,” further indicating the preciousness of things sent from home and how long they were kept (and possibly also a reflection of the sometimes questionable provisions available at York Factory).<sup>98</sup>

In addition to hair and hams, paintings and preserves, the letters sent back and forth between family members were physical objects in their own right, what Gibson refers to as “the material remains of an international network of kith and kin.”<sup>99</sup> The materiality of letters themselves was important in sustaining connections between correspondents, and the Hargraves often reflected on the significance of letters as things. James often reassured his readers that the length of his letters was not a reflection of his regard for them. “I know that, short as my letter may be,” he wrote to his sister, Mary, “you will believe my affection for you to remain as warm as if I had written quires.”<sup>100</sup>

The physical circumstances in which letters were written were sometimes reflected on the pages themselves. Writing to James while he was away from York Factory in 1851, Letitia’s words (and handwriting) belied her surroundings as she wrote, “I lost my only pen & now write with a little stump w<sup>ch</sup> has no handle & is a great worry to me. Hoping you will graciously excuse blots &c. caused by bullying the children, & Tash drying them with her pinafore...”<sup>101</sup> In this instance, the letter itself bore traces of the context in which it was written. Letters could also provide physical reassurance of the writer’s welfare, and handwriting was recognized in the same way a person might be. After her sister Flora was ill, Letitia rejoiced in receiving a letter in her handwriting, indicating she was recovered enough to write.<sup>102</sup> James wrote to his close friend in Scotland, William Lockie, that “after those of my revered parents I feel my heart gladdened by the sight of your well known hand.”<sup>103</sup>

Beyond their handwriting, letters could come to represent or embody the sender, and provide a tangible reminder of them while they were separated by distance or death. James asked his mother to take good care of a letter in her possession from his friend in Scotland, for it was the last letter he had from him before his death.<sup>104</sup> James also wrote that he saved the letters his father sent him as a record of the fatherly advice given to him over the years, and that “every one of these have been treasured up by me among my most valuable papers.”<sup>105</sup> The physical nature of letters themselves, much like other objects, could help connect disparate and distant friends and family, strengthening and sustaining familial bonds, and in turn embodying connections to different nodes of home and belonging.

### Conclusion: Ideal Homes and the Limits of Letters

James Hargrave occasionally reflected on the power of letters in bridging the geographic distance between himself and his family and friends. He commented on how much he enjoyed reading letters from his brother Andrew, as they allowed him “to see as through a glass by your letters, that every year you improve in what renders this life desirable in a temporal point of view.”<sup>106</sup> Reading these letters allowed him to imagine himself among family and friends, in ways that were often specifically tied to the physical locations from which the letters originated. Although James admitted the power of epistolary description in imagining himself as physically present with his correspondents, there were some things that could not be captured in a letter. He often wrote himself into the homes of his correspondents, imagining himself seated at their fireside or table, where he would be able to fully communicate all he desired, as when he lamented in a letter to his friend, Lockie, “But Oh! for a fireside chat of only one evening, and I would pledge myself to a better answer, than what a ream of letters could contain.”<sup>107</sup>

The image of the fireside featured in a number of James’ domestic imaginings, past, present, and future.<sup>108</sup> In a letter drafted to his father from York Factory in July 1827, James wrote that “distance cannot weaken affection, and tho’ absent in body In spirit I am often with you. To think of your happy fireside, to figure to myself your little circle engaged in your evening devotions [...] pours consolation over my sometimes melancholy mind.”<sup>109</sup> In response to his father’s suggestion that he purchase some land near his parents’ farm in Lower Canada, James wrote that he would rather wait until he had saved enough money, “in the hope that this will be in time to spend many a pleasant evening with you and my other dear relations around both your and my own fireside.”<sup>110</sup> These two letters bring together a number of the factors and forces at play in the continual shaping, maintenance, and meaning of family, home, and belonging for the Hargraves. The fact that James did not have time to send the first letter because he was too busy with work, and his continued anxiety about saving enough money to allow him to settle comfortably, are at odds with his desire to be with his family and to finally settle in his own home, with his own fireside.

Whether an imagined conversation with family members around a faraway fireside, a detailed description of sights, sounds, smells,

and sensations in the space in which one was writing, or a tangible reminder of loved ones separated by vast distances, the materiality of home and family was evoked by the Hargraves to create a semblance of stability and security in their unsettled lives. It is important to remember that despite the incredible detail and extent of the Hargraves' correspondence, their letters present a mostly one-sided and very intentional representation of their lives and experiences. The letters therefore also illustrate how they wanted themselves, and their domestic situations, to be perceived by their family and friends. The techniques that the Hargraves employed to bring their worlds to life for their correspondents can provide historians at least a glimpse into their material, sensory and emotional experiences of home and belonging. At the same time, the strategies they used to maintain their household and family relationships invariably upheld mid-nineteenth century ideals of middle-class respectability, gender roles within the family, and ideas of domesticity and "civilization." These concepts had widespread influence both in the context of fur-trade society in relation to increasing racial and class prejudice, and also in the wider British Empire, highlighting the ways in which personal domestic networks supported and were intertwined with processes of colonialism and imperialism.<sup>111</sup> In its most general sense, however, this research encourages us to consider the complex and contingent nature of home and belonging, especially for those whose futures were not entirely within their own control.

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## Endnotes

- 1 James Hargrave to William Lockie from Red River, 3 January 1826, in *Letters from Rupert's Land, 1826–1840: James Hargrave of the Hudson's Bay Company*, ed. Helen E. Ross (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 55.
- 2 Due to the abundance of published letters, this paper relies on published correspondence as its source base, and I am greatly indebted to the work of the editors who compiled these collections: Ross, ed., *Letters from Rupert's Land*; Margaret Arnett MacLeod, ed., *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947); Cecily Devereux and Kathleen Venema, eds., *Canada*, vol. 3 of *Women Writing Home, 1700–1920: Female Correspondence Across the British Empire*, ed. Klaus Stierstorfer (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006). The letters span the time period 1826–1854. Ross' edited collection presents the draft personal letters that James Hargrave wrote from Rupert's Land to family, friends, and acquaintances in Scotland, Lower Canada, and New York State until his marriage to Letitia Mactavish in 1840. Additional letters from James Hargrave from after this date are included in an appendix in McLeod's edited volume of Letitia Hargrave's letters. Several previously unpublished letters written by Letitia Hargrave are available in Devereux and Venema's edited volume, alongside letters from two other fur-trade wives, Frances Simpson and Isobel Finlayson.
- 3 Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2.
- 4 Joanna Long, “Diasporic Dwelling: The Poetics of Domestic Space,” *Gender, Place and Culture* 20, no. 3 (May 2013): 341.
- 5 Stephanie Downes, Sally Holloway, and Sarah Randles, eds., “A Feeling for Things, Past and Present,” in *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions through History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 8.
- 6 The definition of “materiality” used here is influenced mainly by studies of material culture, and refers to the meanings that people ascribe to the physical world (including objects, as well as the built environment and natural landscape). The term also includes how people's interactions with and uses of material culture shaped their practices, relationships, and understandings of themselves and the wider world. For further discussion, see Katie Barclay, “New Materialism and the New History of Emotions,” *Emotions: History, Culture, Society* 1, no. 1 (March 2017): 161–83; Karen Harvey, ed., “Introduction: Historians, Material Culture and Materiality,” in *History and Material Culture: A Student's Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2018), 1–26; Daniel Miller, ed., “Materiality: An Introduction,” in *Materiality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 1–50; Frank Trentmann, “Materiality in the Future of History: Things,

- Practices and Politics,” *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (April 2009): 283–307.
- 7 The biographical information about the Hargraves in this section was compiled from Ross, “Introduction,” *Letters from Rupert’s Land*; MacLeod, “Introduction,” *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*; Devereux and Venema, “Introduction: Epistolary and Empire: Women’s Letters and the Construction of Colonial Space in Canada,” in *Women Writing Home, Vol 3: Canada*. For more information, see Sylvia Van Kirk, “Hargrave, James,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 30, 2020, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/hargrave\\_james\\_9E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/hargrave_james_9E.html); Sylvia Van Kirk, “Mactavish, Letitia,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 30, 2020, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mactavish\\_letitia\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mactavish_letitia_8E.html).
  - 8 For example, Helen Ross notes that James Hargrave’s is “among the largest surviving outgoing correspondence of any fur trader in Rupert’s Land.” Ross, “Introduction,” *Letters from Rupert’s Land*, 4.
  - 9 Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980), xii. See also Judith Hudson Beattie and Helen M. Buss, “Introduction,” in *Undelivered Letters to Hudson’s Bay Company Men on the Northwest Coast of America, 1830-57* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003); Cheryl Ann Purdey, *Orkneymen to Rupert’s Landers: Orkney Workers in the Saskatchewan District, 1795-1830* (MA thesis, Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2010); Scott P. Stephen, *Masters and Servants: The Hudson’s Bay Company and Its Personnel, 1668-1782* (PhD thesis, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 2006); Suzanne Rigg, *Men of Spirit and Enterprise: Scots and Orkneymen in the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1780-1821* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2011).
  - 10 For foundational works on this subject, see Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, and Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1980). See also Jennifer S.H. Brown, “Partial Truths: A Closer Look at Fur Trade Marriages,” in *From Rupert’s Land to Canada: Essays in Honour of John E. Foster*, ed. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens and R.C. Macleod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001); Heather Rollason Driscoll, “‘A Most Important Chain of Connection’: Marriage in the Hudson’s Bay Company,” in *From Rupert’s Land to Canada: Essays in Honour of John E. Foster*, ed. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens and R.C. Macleod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001).
  - 11 For more on specific HBC posts, see Michael Beauchamp Payne, *Daily Life on Western Hudson Bay, 1714 to 1870: A Social History of York Factory and Churchill* (PhD thesis. Ottawa: Carleton University, 1989); Stephen Royle, *Company, Crown and Colony: The Hudson’s Bay Company and*

- Territorial Endeavour in Western Canada* (New York: I.B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011).
- 12 Driscoll, “‘A Most Important Chain of Connection’,” 82.
  - 13 Driscoll, “‘A Most Important Chain of Connection’,” 81.
  - 14 Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 132.
  - 15 Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 1.
  - 16 Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 5.
  - 17 Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 5.
  - 18 Brown, “Partial Truths, 59.
  - 19 For example, see Brown, “Partial Truths”; Brown, *Strangers in Blood*; Driscoll, “‘A Most Important Chain of Connection’”; Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*; Kathleen Venema, “Letitia Mactavish Hargrave and Hudson’s Bay Company Domestic Politics: Negotiating Kinship in Letters from the Canadian North-West,” in *ReCalling Early Canada: Reading the Political in Literary and Cultural Production*, ed. Jennifer Blair, et al. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2005), 145–72.
  - 20 For example, see Cecilia Morgan, *Travellers through Empire: Indigenous Voyages from Early Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017); Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Adele Perry, “‘Is your Garden in England, Sir’: James Douglas’s Archive and the Politics of Home,” *History Workshop Journal* 70, no. 1 (Autumn 2010): 67–85.
  - 21 Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 147.
  - 22 Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 148.
  - 23 A. James Hammerton, “Gender and Migration,” in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 165.
  - 24 Philippa Levine, ed., “Introduction: Why Gender and Empire?” in *Gender and Empire*, 8.
  - 25 Catherine Hall, “Of Gender and Empire: Reflections on the Nineteenth Century,” in Levine, *Gender and Empire*, 67.
  - 26 David Lambert and Alan Lester, eds., “Introduction: Imperial Spaces, Imperial Subjects,” in *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careerings in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.
  - 27 Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 195.
  - 28 James Hargrave to James Mitchell from York Factory, 29 August 1828, in *Letters from Rupert’s Land*, 143.
  - 29 James Hargrave to James Mitchell from York Factory, 29 August 1828, in *Letters from Rupert’s Land*, 143.
  - 30 James Hargrave to Mary Ross from York Factory, 24 June 1830, in *Letters from Rupert’s Land*, 178.



- 31 James Hargrave to his parents from Fort Garry, 29 January 1827, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 82.
- 32 James Hargrave to Jane Hargrave from York Factory, 1 July 1829, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 149.
- 33 James Hargrave to Letitia Mactavish from Lake of the Thousand Islands, 27 May 1838, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 326.
- 34 James Hargrave to James Mitchell from York Factory, 6 September 1826, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 64.
- 35 James Hargrave to his parents from Fort Garry, 29 January 1827, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 82.
- 36 James Hargrave to James Ross from York Factory, 21 July 1828, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 126.
- 37 James Hargrave to Letitia Mactavish from London, 23 February 1838, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 311.
- 38 James Hargrave to Letitia Mactavish from York Factory, 16 July 1839, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 356.
- 39 James Hargrave to Dugald Mactavish Senior from York Factory, 22 August 1845, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 288–89.
- 40 James Hargrave to Andrew Hargrave from York Factory, 18 July 1828, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 122.
- 41 James Hargrave to his father from York Factory, 22 October 1829, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 160.
- 42 Letitia Hargrave to Florence Mactavish from York Factory, 9 September 1842, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 124.
- 43 Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, 30 October 1849, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 248.
- 44 Katie Barclay, “Marginal Households and their Emotions: The ‘kept mistress’ in Enlightenment Edinburgh,” in *Spaces for Feeling: Emotions and Sociabilities in Britain, 1650–1850*, ed. Susan Broomhall (New York: Routledge, 2015), 99.
- 45 See, for example, Elizabeth Vibert, “Writing ‘Home’: Sibling Intimacy and Mobility in a Scottish Colonial Memoir,” in *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire*, ed. Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 67–88.
- 46 Sarah Katherine Gibson, “Self-Reflection in the Consolidation of Scottish Identity: A Case Study in Family Correspondence, 1805–50,” in *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity*, ed. Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 29–44. For a useful discussion of the relationship between place and identity, see Christopher Tilley, “Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage,” *Journal of Material Culture* 11, nos. 1–2 (July 2006): 14.
- 47 Vibert, “Writing ‘Home,’” 71.

- 48 Elizabeth Jane Errington, *Emigrant Worlds and Transatlantic Communities: Migration to Upper Canada in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 5.
- 49 For an evocative example, see the quotation that opened this article.
- 50 James Hargrave to his mother from York Factory, 1 November 1827, in *Letters from Rupert’s Land*, 103.
- 51 Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, 30 October 1849, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 248.
- 52 James Hargrave to Donald Ross from Sault Ste Marie, 10 Dec 1851, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 300.
- 53 Letitia Hargrave to James Hargrave from London, 5 October 1851, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 265.
- 54 Letitia Hargrave to James Hargrave from Kilchrist, Scotland, 31 January 1852, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 268.
- 55 For further discussion of fur-trade children being sent to Britain to attend school and become part of English and Scottish family networks, see chapter 4 of Morgan, *Travellers Through Empire*.
- 56 Kate Smith, “Imperial Families: Women Writing Home in Georgian Britain,” *Women’s History Review* 24, no. 6 (November 2015): 844.
- 57 For example, see Errington, *Emigrant Worlds*; Laura Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About: British Family Correspondence and the Settler Colonial Everyday in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019); Sarah M.S. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- 58 Smith, “Imperial Families,” 845.
- 59 Leonie Hannan, “Making Space: English Women, Letter-Writing, and the Life of the Mind, c.1650–1750,” *Women’s History Review* 21, no. 4 (September 2012): 598, 601; Venema, “Letitia Mactavish Hargrave,” 160.
- 60 Hannan, “Making Space,” 599, 601; Elizabeth Jane Errington, “Webs of Affection and Obligation: Glimpse into Families and Nineteenth Century Transatlantic Communities,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 19, no. 1 (2008): 4; Barclay, “Marginal Households,” 100.
- 61 James Hargrave to Mary Ross from York Factory, 2 November 1827, in *Letters from Rupert’s Land*, 108.
- 62 James Hargrave to Mary Ross from York Factory, 2 November 1827, in *Letters from Rupert’s Land*, 108-9.
- 63 Letitia Hargrave to Polly from York Factory, 1 September 1840, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 74.
- 64 Letitia Hargrave to her mother, 16 May 1842, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 112.
- 65 Letitia Hargrave to her father from York Factory, 2 September 1840, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 79.

- 66 Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, September 1840, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 62.
- 67 Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, September 1840, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 62; Letitia Hargrave to Polly from York Factory, 1 September 1840, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 70–5.
- 68 Letitia Hargrave to Polly from York Factory, 1 September 1840, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 74.
- 69 See, for example, John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Jane Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-Class Families in England, 1850–1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).
- 70 Barclay, “Marginal Households,” 106.
- 71 Leora Auslander, “Beyond Words,” *The American Historical Review* 110, no. 4 (October 2005): 1021. See also Hamlett, *Material Relations*; Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).
- 72 Letitia Hargrave to her mother from London, 5 May 1840, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 17.
- 73 Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, 1 December 1840, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 88.
- 74 Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, 14–16 May 1842, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 102; Letitia Hargrave to her father from York Factory, 8 September 1842, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 115.
- 75 For more on familial obligation for nineteenth-century emigrants, see Errington, “Webs of Affection.”
- 76 James Hargrave to John Hargrave from York Factory, 4 July 1828, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 120.
- 77 James Hargrave to John Hargrave from York Factory, 1 July 1829, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 151–2.
- 78 James Hargrave to his parents from New York, 9 October 1837, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 298.
- 79 James Hargrave to his parents from London, 7 November 1837, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 301.
- 80 James Hargrave to his mother from York Factory, 24 June 1830, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 178. In a letter to his father of the same date, James wrote that his father was now 75 years old.
- 81 Smith, “Imperial Families,” 845; Errington, “Webs of Affection,” 3.
- 82 Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, 14 May 1842, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 105.
- 83 Ibid.; Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, 1 April 1843, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 141.
- 84 James Hargrave to Joseph James Hargrave from York Factory, 1 December 1848, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 293.

- 85 Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, 14–16 May 1842, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 111.
- 86 James Hargrave to Mary Ross from York Factory, 24 June 1830, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 178.
- 87 Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, 1 April 1843, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 142.
- 88 Letitia Hargrave to Flora from York Factory, 9 September 1844, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 188–89.
- 89 Letitia Hargrave to her father from York Factory, 1 September 1845, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 202.
- 90 James Hargrave to Letitia Mactavish from Lake of Thousand Islands, 27 May 1838, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 328.
- 91 James Hargrave to Letitia Mactavish from York Factory, 16 July 1839, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 352.
- 92 Hamlett, *Material Relations*, 1.
- 93 Downes, Holloway and Randles, “A Feeling for Things,” 8.
- 94 Smith, “Imperial Families,” 848.
- 95 James Hargrave to his mother from York Factory, 20 July 1827, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 90.
- 96 Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, 14–17 September 1843, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 172.
- 97 Letitia Hargrave to her father from York Factory, 2 September 1840, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 78; Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, 5 September 1845, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 202.
- 98 Letitia Hargrave to her father from York Factory, 2 September 1840, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 78.
- 99 Gibson, “Self-Reflection,” 30.
- 100 James Hargrave to Mary Ross from York Factory, 19 July 1828, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 123.
- 101 Letitia Hargrave to James Hargrave from York Factory, 12–13 August 1851, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 261.
- 102 Letitia Hargrave to her mother from York Factory, 10 April 1843, in *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, 142.
- 103 James Hargrave to William Lockie from York Factory, 1 August 1828, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 126.
- 104 James Hargrave to his mother from York Factory, 20 October 1829, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 156.
- 105 James Hargrave to his father from York Factory, 26 July 1834, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 260–61.
- 106 James Hargrave to Andrew Hargrave from York Factory, 18 July 1828, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 122.
- 107 James Hargrave to William Lockie from York Factory, 1 August 1828, in *Letters from Rupert's Land*, 130.

- 108 On the importance of the “imagined familial fireside” in letters from Scottish migrants, see Errington, “Webs of Affection,” 15–16.
- 109 James Hargrave to his father from York Factory, 23 July 1827, in *Letters from Rupert’s Land*, 87. There is a note in the letterbook below this letter that reads: “The above letter has not been sent. I was obliged to write a few hurried lines instead under the same date.”
- 110 James Hargrave to his father from York Factory, 3 July 1828, in *Letters from Rupert’s Land*, 119.
- 111 For specific arguments about the relationship between family correspondence and settler colonialism, see Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About*. For more on the personal and domestic side of British imperialism, see Alison Blunt, “Imperial Geographies of Home: British Domesticity in India, 1886–1925,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24, no. 4 (1999): 421–40; Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Margot Finn, “Anglo-Indian Lives in the Later Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries,” *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33, no. 1 (February 2010): 49–65; Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*; Perry, *Colonial Relations*; Rothschild, *Inner Life of Empires*; Smith, “Imperial Families.”